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Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst's letters from the Low Countries 1587, the 'quarrels of my lord of Leicester' and the rhetoric of political survival*

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Abstract

When Lord Buckhurst defied Elizabeth I and the earl of Leicester to champion Anglo-Dutch relations he exposed complex tensions within the queen's 'inner circle' that cut across presumptions about political alliances and ideologies often taken for granted. Analysis of Buckhurst's letters shows how the rhetoric of counsel actually operated in circumstances of acute pressure, and how relationships among the Elizabethan political elite developed accordingly. Buckhurst's description of letters as 'weapons of defence' in the dangerous quarrel that developed with Leicester summarized his strategy for political survival and reveals a rhetorical modus operandi that is too little regarded.

Historical interpretations of the culture of Elizabethan high politics have largely been dominated by two schools of thought. In the early twentieth century John Neale and Conyers Read each developed the concept of a powerful 'inner ring' of men who were personally close to the queen and operated at court, in their localities and in parliament. Narrative biography has been a key methodology in studies of such 'great men' since Robert Naunton's seventeenth-century character sketches. However, when 'revisionist' historians, such as Geoffrey Elton, turned their attention to the processes of government their studies of the mechanisms of power also prompted reassessments of the nature of special interest groups, or 'factions', in sixteenth-century politics. John Guy's analysis of the court and culture of the fifteen-nineties as, in effect, a 'second reign' of Elizabeth I revealed the factional divisions identified with personal and political tensions between the earl of Essex and Robert Cecil. By contrast, in their fathers' day privy councillors operated in a relatively collegial atmosphere. But this does not mean that relationships among the inner circle or between the queen and her individual councillors remained static. As events of 1587 reveal, in difficult circumstances, some important relationships at the centre of the regime changed. John Guy inaugurated the 'second reign' in the

*Early drafts of this article were presented to the I.H.R. Tudor and Stuart research seminar in November 2015 and to the triennial conference of the International Association of University Professors of English, in London, in July 2016. Later, Professors Malcolm Smuts and Michael Questier and the anonymous peer reviewers for *Historical Research* generously gave of their time and expertise by reading and commenting on fuller versions of this article. The author thanks them all most warmly. The author remains responsible for the views expressed. In quotations from manuscript sources original spelling and punctuation have been preserved, but abbreviations and contractions expanded in keeping with local spellings. (A biography and edition of Buckhurst's letters are in preparation by the author.)

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period 1587–8 and reminded us that the execution of Mary queen of Scots 'resolved one political and constitutional crisis, but precipitated another'.[1] By February 1587 Elizabeth found herself at odds with her privy council and feared that her prerogative in foreign policy might be compromised or manipulated just as it became clear that Philip II intended to invade England as soon as possible.

The religious 'turn' in Elizabethan historiography – led by Patrick Collinson, John Bossy, Peter Lake and Michael Questier – reintroduced close study of confessional affiliations in local and national Elizabethan politics. As Questier reminded us, in the context of 1587, even the vexed question of antipathy to Mary queen of Scots was not merely a confessional matter: some English catholics disparaged and feared her as much as their protestant neighbours did.[2] English interventions in the Dutch Revolt or Eighty Years War have been linked to confessional motives – such as an English desire to protect Dutch Calvinists. And yet, Simon Adams has argued that the political impact of various religious sensibilities and tendencies attributed to the queen and her councillors should not be exaggerated. Debate about whether or not England should intervene in the Netherlands did not end with the Treaty of Nonsuch in 1585: not least because the financial costs of the war expanded alarmingly, and the queen responded to several different proposals to make peace with Spain – behind the backs of Leicester and the northern Dutch allies, the United Provinces. As Adams explained, 'the years of Leicester's governor-generalship (1586–7) created a novel dual focus for Elizabethan politics and brought to the surface the ambiguities of Elizabeth's foreign policy'.[3]

Elizabeth had not wanted to give Leicester military command in the Netherlands; but he persuaded her to change her mind. When he effectively betrayed her trust, in 1586, by increasing her expenditure through unilateral pay rises for officers and by accepting the title of governor-general which implied sovereignty over the United Provinces that Elizabeth had explicitly refused, she was furious. Yet when her anger subsided she wrote to urge him to check the activities of his treasurer at war, using the privilege of a personal letter in which she addressed him as 'Rob' and 'eyes' (her pet name, signified by two circles).[4] As Susan Doran's latest study of Elizabeth I reminded us: 'sixteenth-century monarchical government operated through the interplay of individual personalities … Therefore, only by studying the nature, contexts, and contemporary representations of Elizabeth's relationships can we begin to understand the high politics and culture of her reign'.[5]

Broader studies of the cultural codes and literary backgrounds of Elizabethan social elites – males and females – have highlighted the importance of the rhetoric of counsel, in different literary kinds or genres – including letters, pamphlets and court drama

[1] *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. J. Guy (Cambridge, 1995), p. 1. Cf. S. Adams, 'Eliza enthroned? The court and its politics' (1984), in his *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 24–45. Adams discusses the 'relative internal cohesion of the Court' which prevented the development of 'true factionalism', at p. 35. The author is greatly indebted to Simon Adams's many publications.

[2] M. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006), see pp. 136, 145, 150, 166 on Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague, and Mary.

[3] Adams, p. 33.

[4] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, ed. L. S. Marcus, J. Mueller and M. B. Rose (Chicago, Ill., 2000), pp. 282–3 (19 July 1586).

[5] S. Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle* (Oxford, 2015), p. 1. Cf. N. Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 33–72 ('Politics of intimacy').

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– reminding us that counsel was regarded as a political duty in Elizabethan England.[6] Good counsel in public life was especially complicated by the difficulties inherent in frankness within a highly regulated hierarchical community. In one of the most important guides to court culture, Balthasar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1527), one of the speakers explained why it was necessary for a good courtier to establish both a personal reputation and a good relationship with the ruler he or she served: so 'that he may breake his minde to him, and always enfourme hym francklye of the trueth of everie matter meete for him to understande, without feare or perill to displease him'. The nature of this advice was principally understood as moral guidance, but this purpose for counsel was also extended to those with public functions granted by the prince who was advised to

> pike out a certain number of Gentilmen emonge his subjectes, of the noblest and wisest, with whom he shoulde debate al matters, and give them authority and free leave to utter their minde francklye unto him without respect … that they maye well perceive, that in everie thinge he woulde knowe the truth and abhor lyinge.[7]

In England, the importance of such social conventions based on cultural and personal affiliations was reflected through a variety of contemporary printed works. Court culture and its representations came to dominate popular as well as elitist Elizabethan literature; Thomas Sackville, lord Buckhurst was one of those who actively promoted the transmission of Castiglione's text in English and Latin translations.[8]

This article draws together several of these historiographical approaches to explore textual representations of the real-life 'interplay of individual personalities' in letters exchanged in 1587 between Buckhurst and his privy-council colleagues, as well as the queen. The dynamic, ever-changing qualities of these contemporary relationships are often underestimated or unconsidered, yet are most vividly illustrated in subtle, rhetorical forms of expression, in responses to change, uncertainty and strain. The focus here is therefore on Buckhurst's responses, under extreme pressure in the context of war in the Netherlands, to the crises he faced in 1587 when he found that 'the quarrelles of my lord of Lester [were] now [made] the chalenges of her maiestie'.[9]

The textual evidence for the period of his brief embassy to the Low Countries is especially rich because the quarrel related to actions that took place abroad when councillors were obliged to communicate in writing. Because these actions were controversial and later subject to investigation over many months, the written evidence produced by Buckhurst especially, as the principal defendant, was carefully copied,

[6] For approaches to the rhetoric of counsel, relating the cohesion of Elizabethan rhetorical practice to the classical underpinnings of education, see P. Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002; repr. 2005), pp. 176–214 ('Political argument'), and pp. 215–52 ('Parliamentary oratory'). See further, J. Guy, 'The rhetoric of counsel in early modern England', in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. D. Hoak (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 292–310; M. T. Crane, 'Video et Taceo: Elizabeth I and the rhetoric of counsel', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, xxviii (1988), 1–15; and *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric, and Politics*, ed. C. M. Bajetta, G. Coatalen and J. Gibson (Basingstoke, 2014). On the political engagement of protestant and catholic critics of the regime and the concept of a 'conspiracy of evil counsel', see P. Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford, 2016).

[7] Balthasar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby (1561), ed. V. Cox (1994), pp. 295 and 320.

[8] See R. Zim, 'Thomas Sackville, lord Buckhurst, first earl of Dorset', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24450> [accessed 26 Nov. 2018].

[9] Hatfield House, Cecil Papers (hereafter C.P.), 165.106, Buckhurst to William Cecil, Lord Burghley (25 Sept. 1587).

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preserved and organized at the time. Some seventy letters by Buckhurst on Netherlands business and the quarrel with Leicester survive among the state papers and in collections made by Robert Beale now in the British Library. The majority of these letters written between 26 March and 25 December 1587 are in his own hand; six are copies of what were probably Buckhurst's holographs originally; another three are in the hand of an amanuensis, but all are signed, addressed and/or annotated (including some lengthy postscripts) in his hand. (They include two letters to Sir Francis Walsingham in which Buckhurst apologized for using an amanuensis and explained that he had been injured by his horse and was unable to write much in his own hand.)[10] Besides the intrinsic interest of a concentrated body of writing from this pivotal year of crisis at the core of the Elizabethan regime, these letters reveal how relationships within this 'inner ring' were created, modified and developed in shared cultural codes based on the study of rhetoric and dialectic.

Letters are vital signs of the culture of the age that can provide lasting evidence for the otherwise ephemeral signifiers of high politics at court where the most important relationships were often played out in face-to-face meetings (although letters sometimes indicate that these texts were to be supplemented by oral messages relayed by the letters' couriers).[11] Personal access to the royal presence denoted intimacy with power and thus importance and influence. But personal access leaves little behind that can be usefully interpreted as evidence of knowledge, power or personal commitment, liking, dislike, fear, jealousy or even raised eyebrows. Nevertheless, careful attention to the styles, signs of audience awareness (including attempted manipulation) and general levels of rhetorical confidence by an accomplished letter writer can also guide readers to the subtleties of personal communication and the performance of personal relationships in writing. Peter Mack's great contributions to the study of Elizabethan political argument deserve much closer attention from historians.[12]

Buckhurst was a prolific letter writer and had access to the privy chamber long before he was appointed, at the age of fifty, to the privy council on 2 February 1586. He was a trusted, cultured, eloquent kinsman of the queen with a reputation for diplomacy in pursuit of such lost causes as Elizabeth's marriage negotiations. But in 1587 he was still a relatively junior councillor. According to the French ambassador, Guillaume de L'Aubespine, in a long newsletter to Mary Stuart, Elizabeth was angry at Leicester's behaviour in the Netherlands, 'fearing lest he make himself too great. Mr Walsingham is his friend, and supports him here as much as he can; but my lord of Burleigh is contrary to him'. Buckhurst's appointment to the council (alongside Archbishop John Whitgift and William Brooke, Lord Cobham) was said to have been engineered by Lord Burghley, behind the earl of Leicester's back; all three new councillors were deemed by the

[10] Buckhurst's farewell to Walsingham explains in his own handwriting that he is 'lieng lame in my bed and therfore forced to vse my servants writing' (The National Archives of the U.K, SP 84/14, fos. 123–4, dated from Utrecht, 28 Apr. 1587); cf. a signed letter to Walsingham, dated 30 Apr. (British Library, Additional MS. 48078, fos 93–4v). For a signed letter to the privy council with a long postscript in Buckhurst's hand (19 May 1587), see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 65.

[11] See further, J. Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512–1635* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 18; and cf. pp. 137–40.

[12] See esp. P. Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002); *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380–1620* (Oxford, 2011); *Reading and Rhetoric in Montaigne and Shakespeare* (2010; repr. 2015); and *Rhetoric's Questions, Reading and Interpretation* (Cham, 2017).

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ambassador to be 'of the faction' (that is, Burghley's) 'against which the Earl of Leicester and his followers are much irritated'.[13] If taken at face value, this explanation presumes that Leicester and Burghley routinely confronted each other as leaders of different factions (perhaps on the analogy of French politics) and that Leicester would have opposed Buckhurst's appointment.[14] This seems unlikely; there is no reason why the existence of this report should be taken as the ambassador's endorsement of the reliability of what he relates as English court gossip. Nevertheless, the report – even if untrue – suggests that in 1586 Leicester, lording it in the Low Countries, was perceived as a powerful, polarizing figure who was likely to be sensitive to criticism and personal slights. Elizabeth reserved overall foreign policy making to herself in conjunction with her appointed councillors who would adopt ad hoc combinations of interests – personal, regional, financial and confessional – whenever necessary, rather than consider themselves members of party blocs or factions. Furthermore, given the usual glacial speed of the queen's deliberations on important appointments, Buckhurst's membership of the council is likely to have been mooted well before Leicester left England in December 1585.

For two generations the Sackvilles and the Cecils had been close colleagues in royal service;[15] similarly, Leicester and Buckhurst had known each other for thirty years (and more). In late 1561, as a student at the Inner Temple, Buckhurst had actively promoted Leicester's royal marriage prospects by co-writing the inn's Christmas play, *Gorboduc*, with Thomas Norton who has become known as William Cecil's man of business.[16] According to William Fleetwood (recorder of London), Leicester and Buckhurst often engaged in learned discourse while riding on court business 'for they be both marveilously

[13] G. de L'Aubespine, Baron de Châteauneuf to Mary Stuart, 6 March [1585/6], *Calendar of the State Papers, Scottish*, viii, pp. 247–53, at p. 248. Thomas Morgan, in a 38-page newsletter for Mary, also claimed that Whitgift, Cobham and Buckhurst were 'opposed to Leicester and his designs' (*C.S.P. Scot*. viii, pp. 262–78, at p. 267). Presumably both writers sought to encourage or comfort Mary by relaying court gossip, specifically Elizabeth's fury at Leicester's acceptance of sovereignty over the United Provinces. However, Walsingham's report to Sir Edward Stafford in Paris (5 Feb. 1585/6) states that the queen, finding 'her Council by the decease of the late Lord Admiral … and the absence of my Lord of Leicester was now grown somewhat naked, hath lately made choice of [these 3 new councillors] to supply the places of councillors' (*Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, xx, pp. 352–3). The appointments of Sir Thomas Heneage and John Wolley in Sept. 1586 brought the council up to its Elizabethan maximum of 20 members.

[14] Conyers Read argued that 'generally speaking', from 1587 the council was split between two groups, but that it would 'perhaps be misleading to speak of these groups as political parties'. He placed Walsingham in Leicester's 'group' which 'formed the nucleus of an aggressively protestant party in the council', and Buckhurst (with Lord Hunsdon and Sir James Croft) in Burghley's 'group' ('Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth's privy council', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, xxviii (1913), 34–58, esp. pp. 39–41). See also C. Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (1960), pp. 309–34; W. T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572–88* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), pp. 436–58; and P. E. J. Hammer, 'Patronage at court, faction and the earl of Essex', in *Reign of Elizabeth I*, pp. 65–8 on embryonic court 'faction' before the 1590s.

[15] Buckhurst's father, Sir Richard Sackville, was (like William Cecil) a privy councillor from Nov. 1558 until his death in 1566. In 1573 Buckhurst and Burghley considered a marriage between their children Robert Sackville and Elizabeth Cecil (see Brit. Libr., Lansdowne MS. 17, fos. 39–40). Buckhurst's letters to Burghley in 1587 are often addressed 'My singular good Lord', a salutation he used to no other correspondent so far as this author is aware.

[16] For a contemporary report of the performance on Twelfth Night 1561/2 (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48023, fo. 359v), see H. James and G. Walker, 'The politics of *Gorboduc*', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cx (1995), 109–21. See further, M. Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (1977), pp. 38–54; cf. S. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I* (1996), pp. 55–7. On the career and reputation of Norton see M. A. R. Graves, *Thomas Norton the Parliament Man* (Oxford, 1994).

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given to be antiquaries'.[17] There is no direct evidence to indicate that Leicester would have opposed Buckhurst's promotion in 1586. On the contrary, until March 1587 Leicester appears to have had a warm regard and respect for him.

In June 1586 Leicester wrote to the council reminding them of his earlier request that they 'procure a wise, discreet person to come over from her majestie to the states'. At the end of July, Leicester wrote twice more (to Walsingham) of his hope 'to heare of some person of good qualitye to come hether speedilye'; he then specifically suggested 'My lord of Buckhurst, mythinks, would doe gret good here'.[18] Although Leicester was under pressure, he remained fully committed to the Anglo-Dutch cause and there is no reason to suppose he was being disingenuous in proposing Buckhurst; he was seeking a reliable ally to safeguard his increasingly fraught and complex mission as governor of the United Provinces that had offered Elizabeth their sovereignty and were actively resisting the armies of their former Spanish rulers. Leicester proudly regarded himself as a military leader – hence his jealousy of more capable soldiers under his command, such as Sir John Norris – but he knew that he needed the support of someone who had political credit with the queen: someone, as he wrote to Walsingham (also a longstanding advocate of support for the Dutch), 'whoe shall see plainlie that all shalbe trew I write or advertise … My Lord of Buckhurst would be a very fitt man; I praie you furder him to it; he shall neuer liue to doe a better service'.[19] It was another nine months before the queen sent Buckhurst to the Netherlands as her special ambassador. Leicester had by then returned to England in late November 1586 for an indefinite leave of absence. Both men soon had cause to regret Buckhurst's appointment, but Buckhurst's letter to Leicester on 3 November, urging his return to England, indicates that relations between the two men remained cordial.

Leicester's nephew, Sir Philip Sidney, had died on 17 October 1586 at Arnhem; his uncle was with him when he died. Within days of the news reaching England Buckhurst wrote a carefully crafted letter of condolence (in his best neat italic hand), dividing his clauses with the emotive heavy pauses signified by colons. This authorial punctuation creates a slow, extended rhythmic line in keeping with the solemnity of the subject, thereby sustaining a decorous balance between the letter's ideas and style:[20]

> My very good Lord: with my grete greif do I write thes lines vnto you: being forst therby to renew to your remembauns: the deceas of that noble gentelman your nephew: by whos death not only your lordship and all other his frendes and kinsfolkes: but even her maiesty and the whole Relme besides: do suffer no small losse and detriment.

The general tenor of his language suggests kind, yet formal and understated (*no small loss and detriment*) sympathy. The religious ideas are entirely conventional: 'So as I dout not but that your Lordship in wisdome: after you haue yelded somwhile to the imperfection of mans nature: will yet in time remember: how happie in truth he is:

[17] *The Name of a Queen: William Fleetwood's Itinerarium ad Windsor* (1575), ed. C. Beem and D. Moore (New York, 2013), p. 24.

[18] *Correspondence of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leycester, during his Government of the Low Countries, in the years 1585 and 1586*, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Soc., xxvii, 1844), pp. 312, 364.

[19] *Correspondence of Dudley*, p. 378 (30 July 1586). The council sent Thomas Wilkes who was warmly welcomed by Leicester but later disparaged when he informed the council about Leicester's finances. See further, S. Adams, 'Elizabeth I and the sovereignty of the Netherlands 1576–85', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, xiv (2004), 309–19; and C. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (1970). On the difficulties with Norris, see n. 39 below. [Correction added on 13 Feb 2019, after Online publication on 17 Jan 2019: Revision from "n. 40" to "n. 39".]

[20] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 7, 3 Nov. 1586.

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and how miserable and blind we are: that Lament his blessed chaunge'. Up to this point, any educated Elizabethan might have written in these terms to a bereaved friend.[21]

However, the tenor of the second paragraph is both more relaxed and intimate as it summarizes what appears to be a general view among their elite circle of the queen's intentions. Buckhurst followed this by offering his own opinion which he reinforced (enthusiastically) by invoking the name of God:

> Her maiesty semeth resolute to call home your lordship and intendeth presently to think of some fit personage that may take your place and charge. And in my opinion her highness had never more caus to wish you here than now. I pray god send it spedely. I shall not nede to enlarge my letter with any other matters for that this messenger your lordships wholy devoted can sufficientlye informe you of all.

The final sentence assumes that face-to-face communication with this messenger, probably Sir Thomas Gorges, will reveal more; the three men are assumed to share a bond of mutual loyalty, secrecy and privileged royal service.[22] The wider context suggests that he encouraged Leicester's return perhaps because he felt that this was what Leicester would want; he would also have been aware that Leicester's administration had run into dangerous difficulties: financial, military and political. However, Buckhurst's reference to the queen's need of Leicester, and those unspecified 'other matters', implies, at this date, matters arising from the recent trial of Mary Stuart. A few days after writing this letter Buckhurst was nominated to the joint parliamentary conference that petitioned the queen to execute Mary. When Leicester returned to England (about three weeks later) he joined the campaign to persuade Elizabeth to act. If there is more than Sidney's death being discussed in this personal letter of condolence, Buckhurst's political sub-text (to be elaborated by its trusty bearer) relates to Mary. This letter demonstrates how the culture of high politics operated through the interplay of individual personalities within a closed inner circle.

Although the story of England and the Dutch revolt has been told many times before, and Leicester's involvement has been the subject of important work by Charles Wilson, Simon Adams, F. G. Oosterhoff and Malcolm Smuts (among others), the nature of the political rhetoric it generated in letters, and the impact this correspondence would have had on contemporary assessments of policy and individual relationships among the political elite are seldom considered.[23]

[21] Buckhurst hoped it would be not 'the lest comfort vnto you: That as he hath both livde and died: In fame of honor and reputacion to his name: In the worthy servis of his Prins and Countrie: and with as grete love in his lief: and with as mainy Teares for his death: as ever any had: So hath he also by his good and godlie end: so gretly testefied the assurans of gods infinite mercie towardes him: as there is no dout but that now he liveth with imortality: fre from the cares and calamities of mortall misery: and in place therof remaineth: filled with all hevenly ioies and felicities such as can not be expressed' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 7, 3 Nov. 1586).

[22] Gorges, a gentleman of the privy chamber, carried a packet of letters including condolences to Leicester from the queen ('a few lynes of her own hand'), Burghley and William Davison, despatched from London on 4 Nov. (*Correspondence of Dudley*, pp. 454–5); it is likely that Buckhurst's letter (dated 3 Nov.) was also included. On Gorges and his wife Helena Snakenborg, Marchioness of Northampton, and their close relations with the queen see Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, pp. 209–10; see further, *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1558–1603*, ed. P. W. Hasler (3 vols., 1981), ii. 208.

[23] See n. 19 above, and S. Adams, 'A puritan crusade? The composition of the earl of Leicester's expedition to the Netherlands, 1585–6' (1988), in Adams, *Leicester and the Court*, pp. 176–95; R. Malcolm Smuts, a research paper (unpublished) delivered at the Tudor and Stuart Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, University of London (22 June 2015); and F. G. Oosterhoff, *Leicester and the Netherlands 1586–7* (Utrecht, 1988). On the wider cultural and political effects of the Dutch revolt, see also H. Dunthorne, *Britain and the Dutch Revolt 1560–1700* (Cambridge, 2013).

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In the Netherlands, Leicester's absence created opportunities for the leaders of a newly dominant State of Holland, whose outspoken dissatisfaction with Leicester's leadership gained political traction upon his departure. Early in 1587, the provinces of Holland and Zeeland succeeded in undermining the council of state that had been established by the Treaty of Nonsuch, and included two English councillors – Thomas Wilkes and Sir John Norris at that time (both briefing Burghley and Walsingham about Leicester's difficulties) – as well as several Dutch representatives nominated by Leicester.[24] It soon became clear that Leicester's welcome in the Low Countries, should he return to his command, could not be guaranteed. Holland's superior resources in talent and wealth and its strategic coastal position also enabled it to aggregate its powers in the states general (where England was not represented) under the leadership of Johann van Oldenbarneveldt and the very young military leader, William the Silent's son, Prince Maurice of Orange-Nassau. By early 1587, and especially in Leicester's continued absence, many of the Dutch leaders were convinced that they would have to rely upon themselves to protect their religious and constitutional liberties.[25] And yet, just as they had resisted Leicester's often clumsy attempts to dominate them in the more centralized council, the various conflicting motives of Dutch leaders undermined their military effectiveness against the duke of Parma's forces. Sir Thomas Cecil, governor of The Brill (one of two cautionary towns handed over as security for English loans under the 1585 treaty) had written to his father in July 1586: 'Our affairs here be such as that which we conclude overnight is broke in the morning; we agree not one with another but we are divided in many factions, so as if the enemy were as strong as we are factious and irresolute, I think we should make a shipwreck of the cause this summer'.[26] They needed a diplomat of high social status, infinite patience, imagination and amiable sympathies. In March 1587 this impossible role was entrusted to Buckhurst.

Several of the objectives for his embassy were mutually incompatible. For ten years interventionists on the privy council had believed that the freedom and security of the maritime states of Holland and Zeeland were essential for the security of England: 'they ar the provinces that [her maiestie] must not lose, yf she will sitt safe at home', wrote William Davison to Leicester – one of the earliest and strongest advocates of English intervention – in 1577.[27] Yet in March 1587, when relations between the queen and her council remained blighted by her extreme reaction to the execution of Mary Stuart, Elizabeth's supplementary oral instructions for his embassy impressed upon Buckhurst her sense of the need for England to retire from the conflict by persuading the Dutch to accept hitherto secret proposals for peace with Spain. (Such talk about peace, channelled by foreign merchants in London and promoted within the privy council by Sir James Croft, further destabilized Anglo-Dutch relations when Spanish agents informed the Dutch about them.) Buckhurst's written instructions ordered him to resolve the

[24] See Oosterhoff, pp. 139–59.

[25] For a review of local politics and military failings, especially the surrender of Deventer and the fort at Zutphen by Sir William Stanley and Rowland Yorke who took most of their troops into service with the enemy, see P. E. J. Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 133–5, 140; Oosterhoff, pp. 128–50. Wilkes (unhelpfully) reminded Leicester that he had promoted Stanley and Yorke, ignoring Dutch warnings about them: 'your lordship answered that you would undertake for [Yorke's] fidelity as for your brother, whereat they seemed extremely to marvel' (*C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 2, Wilkes to Leicester, 24 Jan. 1587, pp. 330–2.)

[26] *C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 2, pp. 97–8, at p. 98, Thomas Cecil to Burghley, 21/31 July 1586; cf. Wilson, p. 95.

[27] *Relations politiques des Pays-Bas et de l'Angleterre sous le règne de Philippe II*, ed. J. M. B. C. Kervyn de Lettenhove (11 vols., Brussels, 1882–1900), ix, no. mmmdlxv (Antwerp, 19 Sept. 1577), pp. 523–5, at p. 525; cf. Wilson, p. 57.

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dangerous disagreements between Holland and Utrecht, as well as those between Holland and the other states; but he was also required to rebuke the Dutch whom the queen threatened to abandon to their own defence because their insubordination, 'breedinge some dislike' of her lieutenant general, Leicester, had impugned her honour; the queen regarded them as 'unthankfull' and careless of their own safety.[28]

The first of the queen's written instructions stressed the unprecedented financial pressures of her existing commitments: 'in regard of the greate charges we doe daily susteyne … in putting our Realmes and Kingdoms in order of defence against diuers mightie and potent enimyes that threaten to assaile vs, which principally falleth out in respect of the ayde and support we haue yealded vnto them'.[29] Most importantly, the final clause in her instructions stated that because it was impossible to cover all eventualities and because the queen 'repos[ed] an especiall confidence aswell in [Buckhurst's] wisdome and iudgment, as also in [his] care to dispose al thinges to the benefytt of [her] saide service', anything not specified in his instructions 'we doe referr to your owne good discrecion'.[30] Presumably this clause could also provide cover for his persuasions to peace. However, as soon as Buckhurst showed signs of using his own judgment and initiative, by insisting that the queen would never make a good peace without the backing of a strong army in the field (which had to be properly paid for), he was attacked by the queen. If Elizabeth might earlier have considered Buckhurst as sympathetic to peace talks, by March 1587 in the aftermath of the execution of Mary Stuart, when he had tried to defend Secretary Davison and had written to the queen warning her to moderate her response, he had clearly recognized the inevitability of continued war.[31] In any case, local circumstances delayed the opportunity to broach the possibility of peace talks.

His first letters from the Netherlands report on what he saw and heard; he apparently got on well with the more experienced English administrators and soldiers there, and he was well received by Dutch leaders. He was cautiously optimistic – at first – that he was restoring unity and respect among the Dutch allies whom he nevertheless suspected of telling him what he wanted to hear: about how they forgave Leicester's malice and incompetence and would all be friends again, if Leicester would only return with more money. Buckhurst was told by Philip Marnix van St. Aldegonde that upon Leicester's 'arival here al thes cloudes wil prove but a somer shour'.[32] Within three days of Buckhurst's arrival he wrote urgently to Walsingham to say that he needed more money in order to feed the 'pore soldiers [who] ar like to perish'; to strengthen the impact of this message he linked the sense of poverty and perish (as cause and effect) in alliterative

[28] See Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48014, fos. 428–32, esp. fos. 428r–v [13 March 1587]; for the main substance of his mission see also point 10 (fo. 429v). Buckhurst later informed Walsingham that at his departure from England, and before '(for in this matter of peace her maiestie hath specially vsed me this good while)', the queen had 'infinitly' commanded, prayed and persuaded him to 'farther and to hasten the same with all the spede possible that might be'; he explained further, 'how on the other side' he had 'continually ben the man and the meane that haue most plainly dehorted her from such post hast and that she shold never make good peace without a puissant army in the feld' (Brit. Libr., Cotton MS., Galba D I, fo. 93, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 13 June 1587).

[29] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48014, fo. 428.

[30] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48014, fo. 431 (point 19).

[31] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48116, fos. 151–2, Buckhurst to Elizabeth I.

[32] See Buckhurst's letter to Walsingham, dated from Middelburg, 26 March 1587 (T.N.A., SP 84/13/119, fo. 82v).

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sound play that is both emotive and emphatic, and urged 'for Jesus sake hasten with al spede'.[33]

Most of the money he had brought over to supply the army for the next four months was already spent, so he had to use this forward budget to pay off existing debts to local people for food and resources, and in back pay owed to troops. The soldiers were literally starving because they had neither cash nor credit. In the same packet of letters Buckhurst also wrote separately to the queen to warn her of the seriousness of the situation and its likely consequences, linking the logic of her option to remedy the situation, by providing further resources, with his hope to give acceptable service. The conclusion of his letter was designed to give the impression of his having carefully weighed their options: in a series of balanced rhetorical and logical clauses he beseeched her 'to geve present remedye therefore, without which I am so far from hoping to do your highness any acceptable servis here as I do rather loke for al confusion ruine and daungerous events'.[34] This highly emotive argument was at odds with the queen's first instruction for his mission and seems designed to convince her (by anticipating and rhetorically amplifying the consequences of any failure) to provide the immediate 'remedy' of more money: the triple horror signified by confusion, ruin and dangerous events denotes mutiny. This was not a new message. Thomas Digges, the queen's muster master, had reported in the same terms exactly a year before.[35]

On 13 April Buckhurst wrote to Walsingham laying out his considered assessment of the situation which was dangerously conflicted by rumours that the queen would abandon the cause and give the Dutch no further aid (which is exactly what she had threatened in her instructions to Buckhurst and had implied by responding to tactical offers of Spanish peace negotiations):

The states also they have determined to abandon the defens of all (save of holland and zeland only) which if it shold be doon it is resolved by thos of best understanding here That er a yere go about/ Ther will followe a general revolt to the king of spain for hitherto thes states having made their war with promise of grete pay and small performans: with the terror of mainy thousands of men in bokes but not in being And the captaines on the other side having requited them with the assurans of thousands for their defens which whan they came to the fight were scars full hundreds: They have past on without pay: order: or discipline. So as all thinges being brought to confusion it is to be wondred That the enemy hath prevaild no more against them. The only salve to all this sore hath ben the very name and countenans of her maiestie.[36]

The core of this passage is an explanation for his initial statement and its longer-term corollary in a general revolt. Buckhurst's stylistic amplification begins with the alliterative triplet in *promise, pay and performance* and utilizes witty antithesis – *great pay and small performance* – *in books but not in being,* and *the assurance of thousands* that *were scarce full hundreds.* This extended explanation builds to a brief climax in the three key terms linked by their dependence on the crucial negative 'without' – *pay: order: or*

[33] Cf. 'And if her maiestie send not mony and that with al spede for the paiment of her pore soldiors I am afraid to think what mischefes and miseries ar like to folow' (T.N.A., SP 84/13/119, fo. 83).

[34] T.N.A., SP 84/13/120, fo. 77, Buckhurst to Elizabeth I, 26 March 1587.

[35] Cf. Thomas Digges, 'Advertisement of the Present State of these Low Countries' (3/13 March 1586): 'our own soldiers notwithstanding great numbers of them be paid with earth in their graves are so ill contented of their due for the time past, that, if pay come not speedily, before they be drawn to deal with the enemy, I doubt [fear] some worse adventure than I will divine beforehand' (*C.S.P. Foreign*, xx. 437–8, at p. 438); cf. Wilson, p. 95.

[36] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fos. 111–13v, at fo. 111.

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discipline. His logical conclusion and new statement after this climax (*So* …) introduces the emotive medicinal metaphor which identifies the queen's name and countenance (rather than money or any numbers of troops) as 'the only salve to all this sore'). In reality these remedies of name and countenance would amount to the same things: financial credit, more powerful forces and renewed trust. However, their association with the image of the queen is a deliberate rhetorical tactic, and overtly political ploy, to summarize and reinforce his argument. Buckhurst knew that the queen's attitude was crucial but critical; she controlled the direction and the operation of the policy and was not only perceived as less committed to the strategic importance of the war than most of her council but also concerned (rightly) at the vast and unsustainable financial resources it required.

Buckhurst went on to explain the motives of the Dutch people most of whom, he said, were 'papistes: and not making their war in truth for religion but for their country and libertie only and to resist the Tiranny of the Spaniard'.[37] Even so, he concluded, they will mutiny and give up the struggle 'whan they shall se her maiestie to faile in their defens and them selves disceved of their expectacion therin/ as men brought in to a hopeles and desperat case … will vndoutedly turn and revolt to the enemy with whatsoever condicions'. However, there was yet hope, if the queen would reconsider the case, not least because he had been busy writing more letters. He also emphasized the necessity of counsel, using alliteration again to enhance the force of his negative statement: without counsel the cause was neither *possible* nor effective (*well plotted or preserved*):

Nevertheles if her maiestie wilbe plesed to think wel vpon the waight of this caus: and how mightely it importeth both the safty of her self and of her whole relme and peple beside/ and to folow the advise of grave councell without which it is not possible that this caus can either be well plotted or preserved: Ther is yet left hope sufficient to resettle the same with an assured defens against the enemy. For the fartherans wherof this good beginning my coming hath alredy made That by my severall letters to the Townes I have both fully recomforted the peple and also staied the staggering states with hope of her maiesties gracious assistans. I have procured a certein cours to be settled and agreed vpon for the having of sufficient garrison and army to defend thes provinces.[38]

Paradoxically there was hope *sufficient* for an *assured* defence indicating, realistically, that a minimal effort could yet be successful. As usual, alliteration draws attention to the key phrase: *stayed the staggering states*. The rhetorical effort is immense – he has stabilized the situation merely on the *hope* of the queen's assistance. The substantive matter at hand was a new financial deal that required a massive loan from the queen of £50,000 to supplement the £100,000 he had negotiated as the states' new contribution to the charges of the war 'over and above their ordinarye contribucion'. 'I have', he continued, 'reduced al matters of differens and vnkindnes to love and unity'. He was even emboldened to attempt 'to renew good will and frendship betwixt my lord of lester and Sir John Noris'.[39] So, he concluded:

[37] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 111v. On catholic resistance, see J. Pollmann, *Catholic Identity and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1520–1625* (Oxford, 2011).

[38] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 111v.

[39] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 112. In June and July 1586 Leicester had asked Walsingham at least twice to 'ridd me of Mr Norris' (*Correspondence of Dudley*, pp. 305, 379); for the antagonism between them and Leicester's jealousy of this career soldier, see D. J. B. Trim, 'Sir John Norris', *O.D.N.B.* <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20276> [accessed 26 Nov. 2018].

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Thinges here being thus redoulced and restored to some lief again I perswade me self That they ar now ready to receave her maiestie and her succours with all love and fidelyty both towardes her and hers. The lord above he only seeth and knoweth the secret of their harts but surely in apparans, it is so pretended [claimed]. Now if her maiestie shal either deny or delay (for now both thos wil bring furth on[e] effect) we shal sure se a sodein mutacon of thinges here daungerous I dout [fear] to the subversion of this estate never more to be had or recoverd again.[40]

In other words: it was now safe to send Leicester back to the Netherlands, but this critical moment of stability and opportunity would not brook delay.[41]

This conclusion that his efforts had 'redoulced and restored' relations was clearly over-optimistic (the queen refused a new loan of £50,000), but it was also tactical because if Buckhurst had – as he says – persuaded himself that this new money would be transformative, he would have needed to reassure others, especially Walsingham who used his discretion on which council letters he took to Elizabeth, that local conditions were propitious for this new investment. However, in the absence of further funding Buckhurst's English rhetoric would remain the sole instrument of his diplomatic and political influence.[42] The value of his letters written to the Dutch towns, the English privy council, to Secretary Walsingham, the queen (and others) lay not simply in what he said, but how he said it. His language in the surviving English letters has gravitas; his rhythms, use of isocolon, doublet and triplet forms and tactical sound play (such as 'redoulced and restored') guide his reader's attention and impart a sense of inevitability to the political analysis (thus, to 'deny or delay' the loan are not offered as real alternatives, they become identical in sound and sense). His style is vigorous (but never inadvertently blunt), confident, weighty (even ponderous, but never tortuous) and he had no trouble controlling long embedded strings of clauses. He used metaphor and simile sparsely for its greater impact, and seems to have had a good sense of his readership and their concerns.

However, it must have seemed that he was trying to get blood from a stone. In his next despatch he told the queen that 'the kepinge of your maiesties treasure in your cofers doth yeld no interest vnto you'. And he later told Burghley he was 'stark wery with writing'.[43] He must also have been exhausted riding around to meet and negotiate with influential men in the several towns: The Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Haarlem and Leiden. He soon became aware that letters lobbying for more money produced diminishing returns from the queen. But he did not give up. In a long letter to the privy council about troop movements and numbers, dated 19 May, he wrote of his acute frustration, and Norris's regret: Norris especially 'Being most sorrowfull, that the comming over of thos 2000 men, for the supplie of the decaied bandes here (a thing so

[40] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 112v: 'redoulced' (not in *O.E.D.*) appears to be an Italianate neologism signifying restoration of sweetness and harmony.

[41] Buckhurst's package of letters, all dated 13 Apr., included one to Leicester encouraging his return: 'Only this I say That your lordship shall come hither a most welcome man to the peple in truth and so shal you also to the States … If your lordship will haue this caus to prosper and do well you must come away with all spede possible/ veni veni veni/ you can not come sone enough and you may esely come to late' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fos. 109–10). The courier was Leicester's secretary, Arthur Atey: he 'can better tel you the state of thinges then I can write them and therfore to him I refer you'.

[42] Later, when he pleaded for his recall, Buckhurst complained that his lack of the necessary languages made him dependent on others, i.e., chiefly Wilkes and the civil lawyer Dr. Bartholomew Clerke, who were Buckhurst's most trusted partners in his mission. Diplomatic and social relations were conducted mainly in French and Dutch.

[43] See Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 107, Buckhurst to Elizabeth I, 19 Apr. 1587; and T.N.A., SP 84/14, fo. 133, to Burghley, 30 Apr. 1587.

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nedefull, even withall expedition, to haue bin furthered) dooth now, by this order [of the council], receive so greate protraction'.[44] On his own behalf Buckhurst reiterated and resumed his usual plea for more money:

I haue so often and so ernestlie written for mony, to relieue the poore soldiors here; and so plainelie signified, the great Povertie and penurie that they endure, with the fearefull daunger that seemeth to approach vs all, by meane of this wofull want [lack] of pay; as if the same doo not alreadie moove; neither can I think that writing more, will moove.

The subject of this passage is his rhetoric, and not only the poverty of the troops; he knew that his rhetorically trained readers shared his assumptions that to persuade people it was necessary to move their wills and affect them. His patterns of repetition in the intensifications of his politically impotent actions (*so often*, *so earnestly*, *so plainly*), like the sound play on their consequences (*written … relieve*) and the usual amplification of alliteration on *poor … poverty and penury* displayed his impotence to his colleagues; but at the same time he (paradoxically) opened a new campaign to amplify his old argument by offering, in the next passage, a contrast between his worn out human skills in diplomacy and the extraordinary possibility of divine intervention.

His declamatory style of prophetic utterance in the next passage (*Yea …*) realizes the extremity of the situation that he goes on to argue is well nigh impossible: his sparse use of metaphor also enhances the significance of the 'painted' or counterfeit 'pillars' he designates as signs of false hope as well as the instruments of his own weakening rhetorical powers. Yet he was careful to distinguish in his findings between what was observable (in behaviour) and not observable (in belief):

Yea so long, haue I vpheld theis Provinces, with the painted Pillars of hope and expectacion (whom I founde in manner desperate, and as it were beleeving certeynlie that her Maiestie wolde abandon them) as if neither Meane, be stablisht, how to govern their estate: nor Men transported, to defend [ward off/repel] the enimy: nor Mony sent, wherewith to pay the soldiors … as except it pleas Almightie God, of his mercifull goodnes, towards vs, even sodenlie to rise vp, and by some miracle to defend vs, yt is withowt [beyond] the compas of mans Reason to [fo. 65v] beleve, how it is possible for this estate, in any sorte, to susteyne the force, and fury, of so resolute and so potent an enimy.

Things were so bad, it would take a miracle to remedy their situation: it was not 'possible' for their own 'power' to 'preserve' them because their forces were so 'contracted', signifying their depletion as well as their being legally engaged:

Surely if God stretche not owt his hand from heaven to defend them; yt is no waies possible, for their own power, and theis contracted forces of her Maiestie, any long tyme, to preserve them; whereof, in myne owne poore Judgment, I being so certeynlie perswaded, doo thinke me self, in dutie, bounde to declare the same, vnto your Lordshipes speciallie, sith my consciens telleth me, how greatelie, the good or bad successe, of this caus importeth both her Maiestie, and her whole Realme of Englande:

Although he felt that he was duty bound and morally compelled by 'conscience' to offer his colleagues his assessment and counsel – he repeats the first-person pronouns to this end – in his farewell formula he begged 'pardon' for 'this my rude and playne writing; which … I recommende vnto your Lordshipes even in the abundance of my loyall loue, and dutie, both to her Maiestie, and my Cuntrie'. However, by the time

[44] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 65 (cf., *Cabala, siue scrinia sacra: Mysteries of State and Government* (3rd edn., 1691), pt. 2, pp. 35–6, for readings of damaged text).

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this letter was despatched a shipment of new treasure had arrived. So (as he concluded in a long postscript), it only remained for the queen to make up her mind either to send over Leicester (or another governor general) or to resolve to send no one and let the Dutch look after themselves: 'for this irresolucion is of all other the worst, and wilbe their vtter confusion'.[45] Superlatives (*worst*, *utter*) emphasize his message that clarity of purpose and effective leadership were both lacking: this amounted to explicit criticism of the queen, but he had said as much directly in previous letters addressed to her.[46]

The more persuasively Buckhurst wrote in explaining what he had said and done to recover workable relations among the Dutch and between the Dutch and English, the more clearly he revealed the prevailing state of poor relations among the allies. Although he mitigated and suppressed Dutch criticism of Leicester, his reports of negotiations and the state of the war inevitably further exposed the misfortunes and incompetence of Leicester's regime that were already known to readers in England. Leicester's troubles in the Netherlands had made him a difficult colleague and a dangerous enemy (especially when he felt threatened) because the impact of his arrogance and choleric temperament was compounded by his closeness to the queen.[47] Leicester's power depended upon his retaining her trust. By the end of April Buckhurst must also have realized that his own relationship with Elizabeth, as her trusted counsellor and special ambassador, would be damaged the more he questioned the several contradictory objectives of war and peace, and the abrasive methods specified in her instructions which he clearly modified, as he was entitled to do, in using his own discretion. On 30 April he had written a long letter giving four reasons for not acting on the queen's instruction to arrest Philip, Count Hohenloe-Langenberg who was accused of slandering Leicester. Buckhurst explained that he had examined the case, with Wilkes and Norris, and decided there was no evidence against Hohenloe; moreover the likely consequences of pursuing the charge were considered so grave that they had forborne to carry out the queen's order at that time.[48] This reasoned refusal of their orders was presented as a tactical postponement, but in arguing back Buckhurst was only fulfilling his duty to give the queen his best counsel

[45] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 65v.

[46] Cf. Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 107, Buckhurst to Elizabeth I, 19 Apr., where Buckhurst warned that 'even to graunt it [the loan of £50,000] slowlie is to denie it vtterlie'.

[47] In Sept. 1586 Wilkes was recalled to report to the privy council (cf. above n. 19). As a result, Leicester's actions were more closely directed from London, and he blamed Wilkes. When Wilkes returned to the Netherlands in Oct., he became Leicester's scapegoat (see C. Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (3 vols., Oxford, 1925), iii. 161, 164); after Leicester returned home Wilkes begged Burghley to ensure that his dispatches should 'be no occasion of my hurt or undoing; being (as I am credibly informed) dangerously threatened at home for my plain dealing in my former voyage' (*C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 2, pp. 313–14, Wilkes to Burghley, The Hague, 12 Jan. 1587). By Apr., Wilkes was both urging Leicester's return to the Netherlands (as the only figure with the status and influence to bolster Dutch unity) and his own recall from The Hague: 'I pray you to consider how incompatible my stay here will be with my lord's opinion of me, if he returns, "whose nature is not facile to forget as ready to revenge", and though he will never be able to prove that I have dealt undutifully, it is not safe for me to remain in this service' (*C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 3, p. 19, Wilkes to Walsingham, 13 Apr. 1587). Buckhurst had anticipated his own disgrace, before handing over to Leicester in the Netherlands on 4 July, when he wrote separately to Burghley and to Walsingham begging for his recall: 'I besech you sir for the love of god to get me hens for when my lord of lester comes It wilbe wors than before for I am resolved to continue that which my consciens doth tel me is best for her maiesties servis and for the caus and I fear ther wilbe more offens than already/ for if nedes the trobles and disgrace of the world must come vpon me they cold never come with more comfort to me than now knowing that my consciens assureth me that I shall suffer them without caus' (T.N.A., SP 84/15, fo. 137, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 22 June 1587, deciphered). Cf. Buckhurst to Burghley, in similar terms in T.N.A., SP 84/15, fo. 135.

[48] See Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fos. 99–100, at fo. 99, Buckhurst to Elizabeth I. (Hohenloe was supposed to have accused Leicester of plotting to murder him.)

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without fear or favour. Elizabeth was a reasonable woman and normally sensitive to the demands of justice. But Leicester's sensitivity towards criticism and his animosity at being crossed in his pursuit of Hohenloe was anything but reasonable, and yet he had persuaded the queen to command action – action that Buckhurst and his associates had refused or deferred for the greater good.

Although Buckhurst would have known that in the politics of personal relationships at court, advantage lay with those close to the queen's person, he seems not to have been prepared for the injustice of being condemned unheard – as he claimed – nor for the bitter personal attacks of Leicester and the queen who identified her honour with Leicester's standing as her proxy. In a letter of stinging rebuke, dated 3 May 1587 – and thus written before she received his explanation for not arresting Hohenloe – she had made her anger and disapproval of his mitigation of Dutch responses crystal clear. Her criticisms are of Buckhurst's style of diplomacy in general: 'we see great cause to mislike your loose manner of proceeding herein … [for] you ought to have urged them [the states general] either to have yeilded better satisfaction … or els to have acknowledged their faultes and sought our favour by some offer of amendes hereafter'. As her ambassador Buckhurst should not have been so careless of her honour as to seek to mitigate matters of so great contempt and contention:

For we cannot but thinke our honour greatly touched to haue a minister of ours of your qualitye and Iudgement … should put up matters of so great contempte as the said states stand charged withall after so weake and slender a manner, moved thereunto (as we perceaue by your letters) for that you conceyved … that a more sharper manner of proceeding would have exasperated matters to the prejudice of the service and therefore dyd thinke yt more fytte to washe the woundes rather with water then with vinegar: wherein we could rather have wished on the other syde, that you had better considered that festering woundes had more nede of Coros[iv]es than Lenetyves. For your owne Judgment ought to have taught you that suche a slight and milde kynde of dealing with a people so ungrate and voyd of Consideracion as the States have shewed them selves to be of towardes vs, is the ready waye to increase their Contempt.[49]

Elizabeth's scorn for his political judgment and pusillanimous course of action is forcefully projected through the emotive metaphor of their different treatment plans – water or vinegar – for the festering wounds of Anglo–Dutch relations. And yet, in the more subtle (axiomatic) postscript, she appears to hold back – but only just – from calling him an outright fool: 'There is small disproportion [no difference] betwyxt a foole that vseth not wytt [reason or judgment] because he hathe it not, and him that vseth yt not when it should avayle him'.[50] A month later she rebuked him again and added another postscript (slightly more in sorrow than in anger): 'Oh wegh deepelier this matter then with so shallow a iudgement to sperill [imperil] the cause, impaire my honour and shame your self, vse your witt that once was supposed better then to loose a bargayn for the handling'.[51] Her complaint was that he had used his own judgment and discretion albeit she had specifically allowed for this in

[49] T.N.A., SP 84/14, fos. 184–5, Elizabeth I to Buckhurst, 3 May 1587. Buckhurst received this letter on 22 May; he had earlier written to Walsingham, 'her maiesties mislike doth bring some sorrow to me/ but being brought vnto her without fundacion it can not chose but fal and come to nothinge' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 71, 11 May 1587).

[50] The copy of this letter used in the examination of Leicester's charges against Buckhurst does not include Elizabeth's postscript; it may be that the omission was ordered by Walsingham; cf., Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fos. 87–9.

[51] T.N.A., SP 84/15, fo. 27, Elizabeth I to Buckhurst, 4 June 1587.

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his written instructions. Leicester's complaints were even more personal: referring to himself as Buckhurst's 'poore frend' and to his 'particuler grief' at Buckhurst's betrayal in pursuing 'a flatt contrary course from that you bothe semed and faithfully promised to me you would take'. Leicester supposed that for 'the meanest frend that you had had any estimacion of, your lordship could not have done lesse'. In other words, Buckhurst had been too ready to accept excuses from the Dutch and their 'discredyt' of Leicester: 'there was little regard had for my credytt which I did wholie and altogether recomend unto your … frendly care'. Leicester concluded therefore that he had cause to judge his 'frendshipp in small accompt with' Buckhurst.[52] By early May 1587, Buckhurst's relations with the queen and Leicester were toxic: a month was a long time in Elizabethan politics.

About the same time, and probably not inconsequently, Buckhurst's letters show that he grew closer to Walsingham.[53] As we have seen, political relationships among members of the queen's inner circle were developed and modified by the substance and style of their collegial correspondence, especially when they were not in daily personal contact. By late April Buckhurst was sending personal letters to Walsingham – alongside his official letters – in which he asked his 'especial dere frend' to mediate for him with the queen if she took offence at his actions.[54] Buckhurst cultivated this relationship and built on his knowledge of Walsingham's personal experience of royal service and the exhausting frustrations of diplomatic service in the Low Countries.[55] He may also have been aware that Walsingham's financial difficulties after the death of his son-in-law, Philip Sidney, were exacerbated by Leicester's refusal to accept any responsibility for his late nephew's debts for which Walsingham became liable. On 16 December 1586, in a letter to Burghley, Walsingham had complained of the queen's 'unkind dealing' (in refusing to ease his financial burden) that had 'so wounded me as I could take no comfort to stay' at court: 'But seeing the declining state we are running into, and that men of best desert are least esteemed, I hold them happiest in this government that may be rather lookers on than actors'.[56]

[52] T.N.A., SP 84/14, fo. 129, Leicester to Buckhurst, from the court at Croyden, 30 Apr. 1587.

[53] Buckhurst and Walsingham had worked together in Paris to secure a marriage proposal to Elizabeth from Henri, duc d'Anjou (Feb.–March 1571); see further Dudley Digges, *The Compleat Ambassador: or two Treaties of the Intended Marriage of Qu: Elizabeth* (1655), pp. 33–70. After Walsingham became principal secretary they would have met when Buckhurst came to court. There are few surviving letters from Buckhurst to Walsingham prior to his appointment to the privy council and these relate to his judicial functions in Sussex. See esp. T.N.A., SP 12/164/58 (26 Dec. 1583, on George Lawe, suspected catholic) for reference to an intervention on Buckhurst's behalf by Philip Sidney and Walsingham who helped to mollify the queen: 'for', as Buckhurst wrote to Walsingham, 'it is not inough with princes to be fre from fault but also to be clered even from al suspicion of fault'.

[54] T.N.A., SP 84/14, fo. 126, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 29 Apr. 1587. Cf. n. 49 above: Buckhurst's letter to Walsingham (11 May) indicates that he had also written 'at large' to the vice chamberlain, Sir Christopher Hatton, 'of my lord of lesters hard conceites taken against me/ and of her maiesties mislike toching my procedinges here' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 71).

[55] Walsingham went to the Low Countries in 1578 with instructions to promote peace between Philip II and his subjects and to discover what the French were proposing to the Dutch. Walsingham reported from Antwerp that 'the peoples heartes here' were 'greatly alienated' by Elizabeth's prevarications, and that they would no longer depend upon English support. (The Dutch later offered their sovereignty to François, duc d'Anjou.) After three months abroad Walsingham was exasperated and weary: 'God send me well to return and I will hereafter take my leave of foreign service' (Walsingham to Thomas Heneage, 2 Sept. 1578). For these quotations, see Wilson, pp. 66–70.

[56] On the debt, see Read, *Walsingham*, iii. 167–9, including (at p. 169) this letter to Burghley (SP 12/195/64). Cf. Walsingham to Leicester (5 Nov. 1586), *Correspondence of Dudley*, pp. 453–4. See also Read, *Burghley*, p. 333.

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The relationship between Buckhurst and Walsingham in 1587 is represented in the rhetorical tactics of a very subtle letter he wrote to Walsingham dated from The Hague on 25 May:[57]

Sir: by the contents of your late letter vnto me/ I se how much and how affectionatly you love me/ for the which/ if I knew how to be so thankfull as you deserve/ or as my hart desireth/ I shold than suffitiently satisfie both you and me self to/ Now not being able/ I satisfie neither/ so as what to say or what to write I know not/ (if not only this) That more yours than already I am I can not be/ and surely les I will never be/

This opening paragraph develops well beyond any conventional trope of gratitude for a letter received; its elegance and serious, yet playful, mirroring of balanced clauses and individual words (*deserve*, *desireth*) suggest a complex attempt to please its reader. The density of tightly entwined personal pronouns enacts a persuasively authoritative language of personal affection that offers a serious pledge of political loyalty, as well as gratitude. Buckhurst went on to prove this pledge by trusting Walsingham with a remarkable indiscretion: a complaint against their royal mistress. It might be argued that when a canny lawyer and shrewd diplomat with a reputation (however tarnished in Elizabeth's eyes) for wisdom, wit and discretion risks committing such complaints to writing, he is being reckless. However, as in Walsingham's letter to Burghley from the previous December, claiming that 'men of best desert are least esteemed', the more indiscrete the writer appears to be the more he is also flattering and 'courting' his correspondent by offering a sign of confidence and trust. Buckhurst's meditative analysis of his current personal situation is part of a sustained rhetorical campaign to cultivate the favour of a strategically important person and engage his sympathies.

Although Buckhurst made several points that appear to voice bitter personal recrimination against the queen, on closer inspection these are couched in general or universal terms – except where he downplays his own reaction to her letter received three days earlier:

The straunge and sharp letter which her maiestie lately sent me/ signifieng her so greate misliking of my procedings here/ hath not a litle greved me/ Not for the matter/ her maiestie being therin either wrongfully misenformed/ or els vtterly mistaking the same/ (as I dout not but er long her highnes shal fully vnderstand from me self) but onlie for that her maiestie hath so sodenly and so grevously (inaudita causa) condemned me/ So that now/ if for all my cares paines travailes and daily expences/ wherwith here continually I wast both my mind my body and my substauns/ I may yet receaue so much favour/ as not to be condemnd vnhard/ me thinkes (as my case stands) I must esteame it for a speciall grace/ so hard is my misfortune/ and such for the most parte are the frutes of our servis in Court/ where to desier to come to aunswer stands for a sute and reconcilements for reward/

As noted earlier, his style is characterized by understatement, alliterative triplets (*misliking … mistaking … misfortune*) and balanced clauses: *her so great misliking … hath not a little grieved me … so grievously … condemned me*. He presents himself as reasonable, in considering alternative explanations for the queen's reaction; and he implies that he could talk his way through any royal misunderstanding, which is presumably why his complaint that she has condemned him unheard is so extended, and repeated – the Latin parenthesis is emphatic. The substance of his complaint is more serious than

[57] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 63. Cf. Walsingham's personal letter to Buckhurst, supplementing the contents of an official letter 'with such particulars as are meet for your knowledge' (T.N.A., SP 84/14, fo. 231, 17 May).

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the elegant understatement would suggest: the queen – in whose name the process of justice operated – has treated him unjustly, while he has 'wasted' his resources of mind, body and worldly substance in her service. And yet, in return, he was expected to be grateful for so much grace and favour as not to be condemned unheard: the right in law of any defendant. The climax of this sentence verges on sarcasm. Buckhurst then turns to draw in his reader's sympathies by appealing to their common experience of the paradoxical 'fruits of *our* service in Court'. His subsequent explanation in the conclusion of this passage is especially pointed and memorable because it both generalizes – suggesting an aphoristic quality to the situation – (*such for the most part*), and uses sound play to mirror the patronage relationship of service and reward that is disrupted by an implicitly ungracious mistress. In truth, Buckhurst needed permission to approach the queen and therefore he needed to reassure her secretary that the facts of his case, were they known and properly understood by her, would exonerate him. The problem, as he finally defined it, was one of process (compounded by the politics of malicious disinformation) and not peculiar to his situation.

Buckhurst's observations about his misfortunes in serving the queen, and the danger that she might push some (but not him) too far, are always just ambiguous enough to be innocent. Nevertheless, while it would remain a calculated risk to write in such ironic (one assumes) and potentially sarcastic terms about the queen, it would have been a finely calibrated risk when taken within a close inner group of councillors, especially after their recent experience of the queen's reaction to the execution of Mary Stuart. In the final paragraph, Buckhurst, affecting a philosophical insouciance belied by the frustration already vented, retires from the field, blessing the queen and praying that God send her no worse meaning servants than himself, as if intentions were actions. The irony of such a case is mirrored in antithetical repetition (*with all fidelity … without respect*) and emphasized in the triple alliteration of 'she shalbe sure':

> God bles her maiestie and her affaires and send her no wors meaning servants than me self/ and than she shalbe sure to be served with all fidelity/ and that without respect of any particuler person whatsoever/ And yet thus to greave a faithfull hart iniustly/ might perhaps in some/ impresse a deper discomfort/ then all the comforts of her maiestie can remove again/ wherin her highnes may do well to haue regard towards other though for me self it skilleth not how sone my daies were ended/ being altogether an vnprofitable servaunt/ and far to simple/ to prove worthy to be a skoler in the skole of so rare a mistres/

'Unprofitable', 'simple', 'worthy' and (above all) 'rare' are all loaded words with multiple senses for coded criticism of an imperious queen. Buckhurst most likely also counted on Walsingham recognizing the echo of this ironic literary conceit in his late son-in-law's bitter-sweet court poetry: 'Alas poore wagge, that now a Scholler art | To such a Schoole-mistris, whose lessons new | Thou needes must misse, and so thou needes must smart'.[58] Buckhurst trusted Walsingham to see behind this ironic image of himself as a faithful servant (unjustly and deeply hurt) whose days (as a privy councillor, at least) might very well soon have been ended, unless he could persuade the secretary to identify with his predicament enough to protect him from the queen's anger. Walsingham who had seen all these problems before (not least in this context in 1578, and in relation to the queen's anger against Leicester's acceptance of sovereignty over the rebel Dutch states in 1586, as well as in the aftermath of Mary's execution)

[58] Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, sonnet 46, ll. 9–11 (*Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella* (Thomas Newman, 1591), p. 19); the 'poore wagge' addressee of the poem is Cupid.

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probably needed little prompting.[59] Buckhurst's farewell and postscript repeat and amplify his gratitude for Walsingham's favour, by contrast with the impression of 'a deeper discomfort' that he had stated could not be removed by all the queen's 'comforts': 'fareyouwel good Mr Secretary and let me stil dwell in your happie love and favour/ which I assure you I do reckon among the nomber/ even of my chefest comfortes'.[60] This letter demonstrates Buckhurst's sense of grievance and danger, but also his confidence in his rhetoric of political survival, just at the moment when he claimed that his invention and powers of expression had failed him: 'what to say or what to write I know not'.

By mid June there is further evidence of their mutual co-operation. When Walsingham wrote that he was commanded by the queen to tell him she disapproved of his failure to pursue Leicester's charges against Hohenloe, 'which her maiesty conceaveth to touch her in the person of the said Earl [Leicester] very deeply in honour', he had added on his own behalf: 'Sorry I am that such like occasyons should fale out to wounde and greave your lordship in your careful and painful servyce there'.[61] While Elizabeth had insisted that Buckhurst should write to her, rather than the council (rightly sensing perhaps that she was being marginalized by those councillors who were sceptical of the prospects for peace with Spain), Buckhurst tipped off Walsingham: 'I have written to her maiestie toching the matter of peace and … written somwhat in ciphre so as I am sure you shalbe cald for to disciphre it'.[62] Some weeks after his return to England when he was refused access to the queen, barred from court and placed under house arrest (at his own home), Buckhurst wrote to thank Walsingham for his information that new charges from Leicester were forthcoming. Buckhurst also urged him 'to send … by this bearer all my bokes and writinges which I comitted to you and now at my being in the Country I will caus copies to be made for you and retain the original for me self as the weapons of my defens'.[63] This explicit metaphor of weaponized language summarized his campaign strategy for political survival.

In late July, Buckhurst, Norris and Wilkes were separately examined on charges submitted by Leicester from the Netherlands and collated by Sir Thomas Heneage and Walsingham in London. Leicester complained that they had conspired to slander and undermine him as governor general and therefore that they had been unfaithful to the

[59] As Walsingham explained to Wilkes: 'The late severe dealing used by her Majesty towards Mr Secretary Davison and others of her Council maketh us very circumspect and careful not to proceed in anything but wherein we receive direction from herself' (*C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 3, p. 18, 13 Apr. 1587). Walsingham had escaped the worst of the queen's fury in Feb. 1587 because he was ill when Mary's signed death warrant was sealed; however, Elizabeth knew that he had signed the papers despatching the executioner to Fotheringhay.

[60] The postscript also reassures Walsingham that other people approved of his support for Buckhurst: 'Besides the testimony of your own letter/ by letters from my lord admiral [Charles Howard] and other my good frends I did likewise vnderstand of your gret good love vnto me' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 63).

[61] T.N.A., SP 84/15, fo. 104v, Walsingham to Buckhurst, 15 June 1587, draft.

[62] Brit. Libr., Cotton MS., Galba D I, fo. 93, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 13 June 1587. In a letter to the queen (also dated 13 June:), he criticized her judgment in seeking to reopen the case of Leicester's 'letter piquant' to the States, while 'Hoping nevertheless that god who blesseth and guideth all your maiesties doinges/ will also conduct your proceding in this caus vnto some happy end', thereby letting her personally off the hook (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 42).

[63] T.N.A., SP 12/203/14, fos. 24v–25, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 17 Aug. 1587. For a draft report (in Burghley's hand), sent to Leicester (25 July 1587), recounting what had happened to Buckhurst, Norris and Wilkes upon their return to England, see T.N.A., SP 84/16, fo. 180; cf. *C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 3, pp. 196–7.

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queen's cause in the Low Countries.[64] Leicester's malice, self-regard and personal abuse were preponderant and prejudicial. For example, Buckhurst had replied to Leicester's charge (objecting to their action with respect to the rotation of places on the Dutch council of state) that Leicester's instructions were unconstitutional and could not have been implemented. Leicester would have none of this:

I think my Lord's Law will never keep him within a better Compass of Duty than my natural due Affections and Faithfull Service in all Allegiance hitherto hath made proof of towards her Majesty. I would either his Law or Learning, matcht with such Doctors and Sophisters as he was, had taught my Lord better consideration of his Duty and Service.[65]

And he went on to claim that Buckhurst's 'malice went before his wisdom'. This whole episode shows Leicester abusing the bureaucratic and judicial institutions and structures of the Elizabethan state to defend his own reputation and political actions.[66] Buckhurst had earlier complained to Walsingham that 'my calumniacions ar made greate with the lofty vois of mighty men/ but whan their substauns shalbe sene and cyfted/ they wilbe found I dout [fear] a vain sound of wordes and no better'.[67] It was surprising that Leicester retained the queen's support for as long as he did. For months Buckhurst, Norris, Wilkes and Dr. Bartholomew Clerke, were repeatedly forced – as suspect men – to answer Leicester's stream of charges.[68] Yet, even when the oral and written testimony they provided separately corroborated and exonerated each other's actions and statements, Leicester refused to back down. He considered that his honour had been tainted and he retained the queen's support for so long as she identified her honour with that of her lieutenant general.

Buckhurst's tenacity in self-defence was formidable, but eventually the quarrel proved wearisome to all. Yet this prolonged disgrace that had endangered his political future was especially hard to bear because – as he wrote to Burghley – it was for a 'private' man's respect and that man but a 'subject' of the queen, like himself.[69] In mid August, when Buckhurst was commanded to oversee the defences of Sussex, he told Walsingham that he was going to leave 'a gentleman of mine' at court to follow developments in the case because he was worried that he would be disadvantaged by his absence.[70] Walsingham and others also kept Buckhurst informed of developments. But Buckhurst's final rhetorical tactic to recover access to the queen and her goodwill and confidence

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[64] See Leicester's thanks to the privy council for sending him the answers of Buckhurst, Norris and Wilkes 'tending to the impairing of my credit … so far as in their malicious wits and slanderous tongues did lie to devise and utter; so have I now sent you … such most true replies as I upon mine honour will always be ready to maintain'; he asked further 'that I being found clear and they in those high degrees to have slandered me, I may have that remedy against them which in justice is due' (*C.S.P. Foreign*, xxi, pt. 3, pp. 252–3, 19 Aug. 1587).

[65] From Leicester's reply to Buckhurst's answer to Leicester's 7th charge (*Cabala* (1691), pt. 2, p. 59).

[66] As Professor Smuts has explained: Leicester's 'view – biased, but not entirely groundless – was that he had saved the Netherlands from collapse and that maintaining his reputation (on which his ability to lead depended) might well prove crucial to the future survival of the Dutch' (personal communication, 27 Oct. 2016).

[67] Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 50v, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 8 June 1587.

[68] There are numerous copies of documents relating to these charges and their handling; see 'A Declaration of such causes as haue moued the Erle of Leycester to thinck him self not well dealt with by [Buckhurst, Norris and Wilkes]' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48116, fos. 51–79; cf. T.N.A., SP 84/16, fos. 164ff). Buckhurst answered Leicester's 'objections' on several occasions from late July 1587 (see T.N.A., SP 84/16, fos. 160–3 and Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fos. 137–8; cf., *Cabala* (1691), pt. 2, pp. 55–71).

[69] C.P., 165.106, Buckhurst to Burghley, 25 Sept. 1587.

[70] See Buckhurst to Walsingham: T.N.A., SP 12/203/14, fo. 24, 17 Aug. 1587, and SP 84/17, fo. 97, 18 Aug., with thanks for new advice from Charles Howard (joint lord lieutenant of Sussex) and Walsingham that he should 'stay here a while to aunswer my lord of lesters acusacions now comeng'.

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– without which he could not function politically – was a direct approach in a petition to his 'most gracious sovereign' that exploited the Elizabethan courtier's code of courtship.

We only know about this petition, in which he mixed sycophancy with a stoutly self-righteous matter-of-factness, because ten days later he sent a copy of it to Burghley, with information about its reception by the queen. Buckhurst's petition had concluded with a peroration pleading with her

not to suffer this disgrace any longer to oppress my greeved minde, who haue withall fidelitie, care and dutie, sought to farther your best service withowt particular regard to any; And that I may behold that rare and Royall face, the onely sight whereof hath power to rais vp and recomfort my wofull harte, which hath so long time mournd and languisht for the lack therof.[71]

This courtly language, in which a faithful lover's heart languishes for the lack of its beloved's presence, describes the impact of his disgrace first on his mind (or motives in serving her) and then on his heart, which stand metonymically for the whole of his life and career. Disgrace is defined and caused by the queen's withdrawal of her grace, but as it can be remedied by the mere sight of her face – admission to the royal presence – the power of her face to 'recomfort' her servant is indeed 'rare'. He implies that his loyalty to her best service has not been compromised by any consideration of Leicester's interests (*without particular regard to any*). At the very least this should suggest to the queen that he has suffered enough for his impartiality in the common cause.

As he told Burghley, whom he thanked for his 'frendly dealing' on his behalf, the letter was delivered to the queen by 'my cosin' John Wolley:[72]

it pleased her maiestie after reading therof/ to showe her self at the furst/ most graciously beant for mine accesse vnto her presens/ But within a while after/ falling in to a new rehersall of mislikes/ and that which most of all doth greve me/ making the quarrelles of my lord of Lester/ now the chalenges of her maiestie/ she became quite altred from her furst intention/ and therby left me vnto a new sute and menes/ for mine accesse vnto her presens/

The next paragraph offers a striking and witty variation on the literary metaphor of the wheel of fortune; Buckhurst connects the repeating cycle of the queen's response and his consistently inconstant fortunes – rolling upon the wheel of sorrows and uncertainties – with a further level of punning wordplay on weal (as state, and scar or wound). The perpetual motion leaves his comfort or restitution of grace always deferred (*still upon protractions*) with an ironic pun on 'still' as motionless: he is effectively going round in circles going nowhere:

Thus rolleth my fortune vpon the wheele of sorowes and vncertenties/ and my comfort still vpon protractions/ which is a most straunge thing vnto me/ whan I consider/ what herein I haue mearited/ what heretofore my former servis hath deserved/ what I haue alwaies bene and wilbe to her maiestie/ and what withall even her highnes self/ hath pleased to be evermore to me/ yea and (I am sure) still is in her most gracious hart towardes me/ and last of all/ both what his lordship is/ and what I am me self/ And that all thes notwithstanding/ I shold be thus disgraced for a privat mans respect/

[71] C.P., 16.25. Buckhurst to Elizabeth I, 15 Sept. 1587.

[72] C.P., 165.106, Buckhurst to Burghley, 25 Sept. 1587. Wolley was the queen's Latin secretary. The author has not traced the nature of the kinship claimed.

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His next idea develops the corollary of this contrast between past favour and present opprobrium to expound the memory trope that leads to his conclusion that he would have been better off without the 'favour' found in 'royal sight', which had led him to think (falsely) he stood 'upon so great a suretie'. (Seneca, and the early Tudor court poets who imitated him, provided precedents for this performance of irony that Buckhurst would have known Burghley and their political friends would recognize.)[73]

Much better had it bene for me/ that I had never found favoure in her roiall sight/ which now doth but renewe greif vnto my hart/ by remembrauns of that wonted grace and goodnes/ which it hath pleased her maiesty heretofore/ so oft and so benignly to bestowe vpon me/ wherby so mainy of my frends/ which now haue quite forsaken me/ did than esteame me for so happy a man/ and I me self did thinke I stoode vpon so great a suretie/

But lo what is the faith and fortune of this world/ wheare neither state nor frends are certein/ nor Princes favors may be made frehold/ Sola salus seruire deo, sunt cetera fraudes.[74]

The literary metaphor of the wheel of fortune may have evoked memories of tragic histories – such as Buckhurst, in his youth, had written and enjoyed reading in *The Mirror for Magistrates*.[75] It had led Buckhurst into a meditation on his past career and the strange injustice of his current disgrace, because, as his balanced clauses instantiate, the queen had made the 'quarrels' of Leicester into 'challenges' of herself; yet he also used the image of the circular motion (*still*) to hint at his hopes for the restitution and continuity of the queen's regard. Nevertheless, in the final unattributed proverb that encapsulates the tenor of biblical wisdom literature, he concluded that the only safety in this fickle world was to depend upon God. Burghley, whose career in Elizabeth's service had given him occasion to consider similar arguments (not least in February 1587), responded sympathetically: on Christmas Day Buckhurst wrote to thank him for his 'fatherly care and love'.[76]

Leicester's enmity remained entrenched, but there are signs that everyone else, including the queen by this time, was losing patience. Nevertheless, in early February 1588 Buckhurst still needed Walsingham's help in gaining access to court (for an opportunity to answer and satisfy Leicester, yet again), and he felt obliged to apologize for being 'thus troblesome vnto you'. A month later, he still needed Walsingham's aid in presenting a petition to the council when Leicester would be present. (Cousin Wolley was by this time afraid to meddle further in the matter, and Buckhurst was also keen that he should desist.)[77] By late May Buckhurst's campaign for political survival and restoration

[73] Cf. Seneca's chorus (*Thyestes*, ll. 391–403) and Sir Thomas Wyatt's epigram 'Stand whoso list upon the slipper top | of courts estates'; both in Wyatt, *Complete Poems*, ed. R. A. Rebholz (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 94 (text) and pp. 371–2 (notes and the version printed from 1557 by Richard Tottel as 'Stand whoso list upon the slipper wheel | of high estate').

[74] The Latin quotation is unattributed, but widely diffused. Cf. 'It is better to trust in the Lord, then to put any confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lorde, then to put any confidence in princes' (Book of Common Prayer, Psalm, CXVIII: 8–9).

[75] For Sackville's 'Complaynt of Henrye duke of Buckingham', first published in 1563, see *The Mirror for Magistrates Edited from Original Texts in the Huntington Library*, ed. L. B. Campbell (Cambridge, 1938; repr. New York, 1960), pp. 318–45. His poem includes the metaphor of the unstable 'whele | Of slipper Fortune' (ll. 250–2, cf. ll. 747–8).

[76] T.N.A., SP 12/206/52, fo. 87, Buckhurst to Burghley, 25 Dec. 1587.

[77] See T.N.A., SP 12/208, fo. 78, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 9 Feb. 1588. Wolley's reluctance to intervene made Buckhurst appreciate 'the differens betwixt your honorable frendly mind/ and his ferful spirite' (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48078, fo. 67, Buckhurst to Walsingham, 3 March 1588).

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of the queen's trust had reached a successful conclusion: he had resumed attendance at meetings of the privy council and rejoined her inner circle. By mid July, as the Spanish Armada advanced towards the English Channel, the queen's delegates recognized the futility of formal peace talks eventually held near Ostend, and Buckhurst, a lord lieutenant of the county, took charge of the defence of the Sussex coast.

There is one last short note to Leicester who died unexpectedly in early September, which reveals Buckhurst's complex personality, tenacity, rhetorical wit and political modus operandi. The context is essentially trivial. On 26 August 1588 Buckhurst wrote, in his own hand, to announce the gift of a stag that he claimed to have killed with his own hand, sporting prowess that might have appeared incredible:

> My veary good Lord/ though I know you wilbe very hard of belefe/ in the opinion of my skill in hunting yet I hope your lordship will not reafuse to geve credit vnto profe of Demonstracion/ for that maner of profe was never yet reapeld by any/ And therfore having striken a stag with mine own hand/ although I wot [know] well your lordship may comaund mainy hundreds/ I am bold yet to present him to your good Lordship as a pore token of my skillfull cunning/[78]

He hopes that Leicester will not refuse to believe his own eyes, however sceptical he may be of Buckhurst's skill in hunting. This suggests that Buckhurst knew he could not ignore their troubled recent history when Leicester had refused to credit Buckhurst's other skills and their 'proof of demonstration'. So, he offers a reasonable argument in carefully balanced clauses (*I know … yet I hope … And therefore … although I wot well … I am bold yet*). Logically, the insignificance of this *poor* token does not undercut the craft or skill of the hunter however closely they are associated. Buckhurst's playfulness is subtle, but not spineless. Whereas during the previous summer Leicester had resorted to insulting him as just another clever lawyer, here (by contrast) was tangible (edible), ocular proof of his skilful cunning in more gentlemanly pursuits, as Leicester at least might have perceived them. The writer's humour and self-deprecating irony anticipate and thus mitigate any lingering anxiety or antipathy towards him. And yet, it remains ambiguous whether he speculates that Leicester might hesitate to accept the gift because it comes from him, or (with a sly hint of fawning bombast), because of Leicester's opportunity to 'command many hundreds' of such gifts:

> and if your lordship shold make dout in that sort to accept him/ yet I trust you will pleas to receaue him as a faithfull testimony of my good will vnto you/ and so I besech your lordship to do/ for even such he is sent vnto you/ I wish to your good Lordship increase of all honour and happines/ even to your own noble hartes deasier/ And so do recomend your lordship to the protection of the almighty.

These last main verbs (*I trust … I beseech … I wish … and recommend*) all suggest the writer's benevolence and deference.

Leicester's recent health had not been strong but neither he nor Buckhurst could have known that they would not have to work together in the queen's service for many years to come.[79] So, after the resolution of this prolonged and bitter quarrel – and in the immediate aftermath of the national emergency when the inner circle of the Elizabethan regime recovered its ultimate common purpose in defence of the realm – Buckhurst made this personal offer of a gift which he trusted would be received 'as a faithfull

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[78] Longleat House, Dudley Papers, II/259; dated from Buckhurst, Sussex.

[79] Leicester died on 4 Sept. at Cornbury House, Oxfordshire, where he was taken ill, on his way home to Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire. He had left court one day after Buckhurst wrote from Sussex, so he probably never received Buckhurst's gift.

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testimony' of his goodwill. Gift giving is a complex cultural process often revealing attitudes of deference by the gift giver and imposing conventions of reciprocity on the receiver.[80] In 1587 Buckhurst, Norris and Wilkes had been hounded as Leicester's quarry. Yet in August 1588 the stag is associated here by Buckhurst with his actions rather than himself – it was 'stricken' with his own hand. This holograph note is also a literal and material sign of the writer's hand, implying a friendship restored. Buckhurst's gesture is subtle, patient and clever as well as personal. It shows clearly that he not only had faith in the potency of his own rhetoric to ensure his political survival by withstanding Leicester's prolonged intransigence and the queen's scorn, but also that he was tenacious in both courting strategic allies and exercising his talent for cultivating personal and political relationships through his writing.

This story reminds us that relationships, as well as policies developed among Elizabeth's inner circle, were fluid and subject to changing circumstances; these included the pressures of war, financial constraints and the political vulnerabilities of individuals serving abroad who were reliant on remote access to the queen and her council through letters and personal intermediaries. In March 1587 Buckhurst was clearly considered a safe pair of hands by Elizabeth who considered it her Christian duty to pursue all and any prospects for peace with Spain. For different reasons Leicester also assumed that his friend and colleague would support him in the Low Countries. By April 1587 both were disappointed because Buckhurst had explored the situation, travelling and consulting widely in Holland and the neighbouring provinces, and he changed his mind. He then fulfilled what he believed to be his duty, to speak truth to power frankly and persuasively, because the safety of the realm and individual lives were at stake in a critical and pivotal year for the Elizabethan regime. He failed to persuade the queen to act on his political advice and he alienated one of the most powerful men in her government: within weeks of Buckhurst's arrival in Holland the collegiality of the privy council was placed under greater strain by the queen's decision to support Leicester in his quarrels rather than her own ambassador. And yet, paradoxically, the survival of Buckhurst's career and his recovery from disgrace – 'calumniacions … made greate with the lofty vois of mighty men' – depended upon the same personal gifts and character traits that had caused his failure. At the very least, his experiences in 1587 confirm that good writing and what we today call 'people skills' were also important aspects of the culture of high politics in Elizabethan England.

[80] See further F. Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2014) and I. Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008).

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