# LITERATURE AND FAVORITISM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

For writers in the early modern period, thinking about royal favorites inevitably meant thinking about the uneasy intersection of the personal and the public in a political system traditionally organized around patronage and intimacy. Depictions of favoritism in a variety of texts including plays, poems, libels, and pamphlets explore the most fundamental ideological questions concerning personal monarchy and the early modern public sphere, questions about the nature and limits of prerogative and about the enfranchisement or otherwise of subjects. In this study, Curtis Perry examines the ideological underpinnings of the heated controversies surrounding powerful royal favorites and the idea of favoritism in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period. Perry argues that the discourse of corrupt favoritism is this period's most important unofficial vehicle for exploring constitutional unease concerning the nature and limits of personal monarchy within the balanced English constitution.

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Though no section of the present volume more substantial than a half-paragraph has been printed elsewhere, I would like to note a number of related essays that have played a role in my thinking about early modern favoritism and that overlap with this book in minor ways. Two printed essays represent early stages in my thinking about Marlowe's *Edward II* and the problem of favoritism. They are "The Politics of Access and Representations of the Sodomite King in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 1054–83, and "Inwardness as Sedition in Heywood and Marlowe," in *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends, and Opportunities for Research*, ed. Roger Dahood (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1998), 109–28. Though neither of these pieces has been repackaged here, some sentences and key formulations have found their way from each of these essays into the present study and I am grateful for permission to reuse the material. Likewise, a handful of sentences scattered throughout chapters 1, 3, 5, and 6 of this book appear in a very different context in "1603 and the Discourse of Favouritism," forthcoming in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, and Jason Lawrence (New York: Palgrave). My basic argument about Elizabeth Cary in chapter 6 of the present study is extended and recontextualized (though none of the specific language is reproduced) in

"'Royal Fever' and 'the giddy Commons': Cary's *History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II*," forthcoming in *Elizabeth Cary*, ed. Heather Wolfe (New York: Palgrave).

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# *A note on texts*

When quoting from edited or unedited primary texts, I have for the most part reproduced spelling and punctuation from the editions of the documents that I have consulted. Except in other people's titles, though, I have modernized i/j and u/v, and in a small number of cases I have silently expanded contractions, emended obvious typographical errors, or repunctuated unedited Renaissance texts in order to make them legible to modern readers.