Imagined Polities, Failed Dreams, and the Beginnings of an Unacknowledged Britain: English Responses to James VI and I's Vision of Perfect Union

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Abstract The regal union (and James VI and I's desire that it be perfected) produced varied responses to Scotland, not just hostile reactions. Plays, pamphlets, treatises, and manuscripts accompanied parliamentary debate in England and queried the precedents for, as well as the future potential of, something called Britain. They also engaged with the nature of sovereignty. Authors thus deployed both negative and positive descriptions of the Scots, and they were unified less by Scotophobia and more by a tendency to privilege a distinctly English narrative despite a specifically British problem. Such Anglocentric narratives circumvented the issue of the Anglo-Scottish relationship, postponing English engagement with the realities of their new context. This was possible only because the Scots occupied a position somewhere between sameness and difference in the English imagination.

During the seventeenth century, the regal union, also known as the union of the crowns, linked England and Scotland. The product of Elizabeth I's stalwart refusal to fulfill one of her primary duties as monarch by providing an heir of her own body, this union came into being when her cousin, King James VI of Scotland, succeeded her on the English throne on 24 March 1603, linking the two crowns in his person and dynasty. The problem was that although James's right was relatively straightforward, the nature of the union between the English and the Scots was not. England and Scotland shared a Protestant faith, but their churches upheld divergent disciplinary practices; they shared a language, but strong dialects persisted; they shared a monarch, but there were no joint legislative, religious, or legal institutions; and they shared an island, but there were vast disparities in the quality and quantity of land in each kingdom, as well as the levels of trade and urban development.[1] England was stronger, bigger, and richer, but the Scots were both aggressively defensive of their Kirk

[1] This is not to say that Scotland was not experiencing economic growth, particularly in the carrying trade, in which Scotland's small light boats sometimes gave it an advantage. But England was generally richer and growing faster.

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and quick to point out that they were a sovereign nation joined to England under a Scottish king.

This "awkward" situation, the Scottish preferments that resulted from it (which piqued the ire of English courtiers), and a medieval history of Anglo-Scottish border conflicts have often led scholars to assume that the English approached their northern neighbors in a purely hostile and condescending manner in the wake of 1603.[2] The most detailed study of the early years of the regal union, for example, has argued that there was an "enormous residue of misunderstanding and ill-will."[3] Most famously, Jenny Wormald has identified an unapologetic English hatred for the Scots that helped to fuel the Gunpowder Plot, to smear the reputation of James VI and I, and to ruin negotiations for a closer union.[4] "Hatred of the Scots," she claims, "ran through every stratum of English society—merchants, lawyers, academics. What had hitherto been indifference tinged with contempt now became open and bitter resentment."[5] Moreover, this is not simply an outdated historiographical model. Some newer scholarship argues that the relationship was more complex, but this literature exists alongside work that envisions English political expansion later in the century as possessing an aggressively imperial edge that denied Scottish sovereignty and civility, emphasized English superiority, and presumed a Britain founded on English self-righteous assurance.[6] Although the latter body of work centers on the midcentury troubles, it gives the impression that Wormald was unconditionally correct in her assessment of the earlier period.

A reexamination of the materials produced in the wake of James's English ascension, however, demonstrates that English commentators used the idea of Scotland in myriad ways. A strong anti-Scottish strain of discourse was indeed present, but an extremely careful negotiation of the new Anglo-Scottish dynamic was also occurring.[7] This sheds light on the nature of the developing British state and exposes an

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[2] The idea that England and Scotland were awkward neighbors is taken from Allan Macinnes and Jane Ohlmeyer, eds., *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century: Awkward Neighbours* (Dublin, 2002).

[3] Bruce Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland, 1603–1608* (Edinburgh, 1986), 164; William Ferguson's oft-cited survey of Anglo-Scottish relations also claims that "the whole attempt at union had been premature and had foundered because the two nations were still poles apart … and still animated by the ill-will born of centuries of bitter antagonism." William Ferguson, *Scotland's Relations with England: A Survey to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1977), 103.

[4] Jenny Wormald, "Gunpowder, Treason and Scots," *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985): 141–68; Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?" *History* 68 (1983): 187–209; Jenny Wormald, "Thorns in the Flesh: English Kings and Uncooperative Scottish Rulers, 1460–1549," in *Authority and Consent in Tudor England*, ed. G. W. Bernard and S. J. Gunn (Aldershot, 2002), 61–78; Jenny Wormald, "The Creation of Britain: Multiple Kingdoms or Core and Colonies?" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series* (1992): 175–94; Jenny Wormald, "The Union of 1603," in *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603*, ed. Roger Mason (Cambridge, 1994), 17–40.

[5] Wormald, "Gunpowder, Treason and Scots," 160.

[6] Derek Hirst, "Text, Time, and the Pursuit of 'British Identities,'" in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge, 2002), 256–66; Claire McEachern, "The Englishness of the Scottish Play: *Macbeth* and the Poetics of Jacobean Union," in *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century: Awkward Neighbours*, ed. Allan Macinnes and Jane Ohlmeyer (Portland, 2002), 94–112; Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Revolution, 1629–1660* (New York, 2005); Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge, 2003); Mark Stoyle, *Soldiers and Strangers: An Ethnic History of the English Civil War* (New Haven, 2005).

[7] Jason White has expertly explored some ways in which the idea of "Britain" shifted after the regal union; however, his focus was on a genuinely British militant Protestantism that was responding to a

unexpected form of Scottish agency within it. The Scots and the union were discussed in a variety of venues—by the king himself, in parliamentary debates, in print and manuscript treatises, and in more popular printed materials, such as plays, pamphlets, and histories—but they appeared in many guises, were used to multiple ends, and faded in and out of view. The Scots occupied a position best described as familiar alterity, or the space between sameness and difference. It was this position, more than a simple English disdain for all things Scottish, that best explains the Anglo-Scottish relationship. English commentators on the union thus had to expend enormous amounts of energy trying to process what life more closely tied to the Scots would look like. In addition, whether or not the Scots possessed traditional forms of power and influence within a nascent Britain, their presence alone was disruptive, indicating that they were not as easily dismissed as English observers would have liked.

Upon his ascension, James immediately asked his Parliaments cooperatively to enact a more perfect union, forcing his two peoples to look one another in the eye. Faced with a vague call to complete a process already begun in the king's person, the Scottish Parliament chose to remain reactionary, while English MPs bickered and stalled until they felt they had definitively wrecked the project.[8] The question of union brought the English polity itself under scrutiny, as those members of society who were politically engaged grappled with how and why the realm of England might expand. Put another way, the potential agglomeration of England and Scotland challenged the idea that England was an empire unto itself by proposing that it was part of an expansionist project in which there were no assurances of English supremacy. This made some English commentators profoundly uneasy, and the ambiguous position that the Scots occupied as their partners in this endeavor only aggravated the situation. In the end, English commentary moved from discussing the union to bemoaning the threat unification posed to the English constitution, thus drawing the arguments back to England itself, avoiding the problem of the Anglo-Scottish relationship by pretending that none existed. Although James failed to create a perfect union in the opening decades of his rule, the union that he did create was imbued with the same slipperiness possessed by the Scots. This gave it an impressive durability and capacity to evolve, establishing a British dynamic that would remain important in the years to come.

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It should be noted that negative commentary about the Scots did indeed exist, even if its pervasiveness can be overemphasized. The MP Christopher Piggott, for example, is regularly cited for his February 1607 outburst in the House of Commons, during which he complained that the Scots were perfidious, barbarous, faithless, bloodthirsty traitors who had not suffered above two kings to die in their beds.[9] Less

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pan-European apocalyptic battle. This article focuses instead on English ideas about the Scots and the more mundane situation at home. Jason White, *Militant Protestantism and British Identity, 1603–1642* (London, 2012).

[8] Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 129.

[9] Piggott's comments were angrily rehearsed by Sir Thomas Craig despite the Commons not wanting to record words that were, according to Edward Montagu, "so odious & so unpleasing." Simon Healey, "Debates in the House of Commons, 1604–1607," in *Parliament, Politics and Elections, 1604–1607,*

well known, but equally impolitic comments issued in the Commons include Mr. Hare's calling of the Scots beggarly and Nicholas Fuller's snarling that Scottish merchants were really just peddlers given a more respectable name.[10] Outside of parliamentary debate, a list of objections against the union warned that the Scots would prey on every man's estate, adding, like Piggott, that a history of Scottish political unrest meant they were dangerous to the king's person.[11] Moreover, a manuscript described by Bruce Galloway as the "Paper Book" responded to the proposition that Scots might become naturalized as English subjects by warning about the dangers posed by "the incroaching of Scotts on our ground." Metaphors about transplanting trees, moving hungry livestock, and the impossibility of finding enough room for two great ships in one small harbor were all deployed. They culminated in the inflammatory complaint that "Pharaos [*sic*] Lean Kyne will feed upon our fatt pastures, Whereas wee (on the Contrary parte) shall think it hard and indeed needless to send ours to the cold [Scottish] moores"—a statement offensive enough to James that he made specific reference to it in his 1607 speech to the English Parliament.[12] The tract ended by comparing a closer union with the Scots to marrying a "suttle widow," who would make away with all the groom's goods before the wedding day.[13]

Private people also reacted to the increased visibility of the Scots after the regal union. John Tawte, a cobbler in Chichester, got drunk one night in 1603 and ran up and down the streets shouting that the Scots had brought the plague into England with them.[14] Even in 1608, after the union project was formally dead, John Bacheler of Newcastle found himself in trouble for wishing that Elizabeth had had a son so that the "Scotes men should not dominier no more in this land."[15] Another Englishman, writing a letter to his nephew in London in 1607, closed his letter: "Away with Scots and Danes and English atheists, their complices or woe to England for ever."[16] This might be a reference to what were, from the English perspective, unorthodox Scottish religious practices, or it might simply be another outburst against the generally damnable Scots.[17] Either way, the anger and disgust generated by a specific set of pseudo-foreigners is still palpable today.

Camden Fifth Series 17, ed. Chris Kyle (Cambridge, 2001), 131; Sir Thomas Craig, *De Unione Regnorum Britanniae Tractatus*, trans. and ed. C. Sanford Terry (Edinburgh, 1909), 356; Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 104–05.

[10] Both of these comments are recorded in the State Papers, but they came to my attention via David Harris Willson, ed., *The Parliamentary Diary of Robert Bowyer, 1606–1607* (New York, 1971), 203n–04n, 208n.

[11] More Objections to the Union, ?1604, The National Archives (TNA), State Papers Domestic 14/7, f. 59.

[12] Untitled Objections to the Union, Harley MS 1314, ff. 45$_v$–47$_v$, British Library (BL); Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *King James VI and I*, 312.

[13] Untitled Objections, Harley MS 1314, f. 56$_r$, BL.

[14] The Examination of George Tawte of Chichester, 3 October 1603, TNA, State Papers Domestic 14/4, f. 2.

[15] Traitorous speeches, 14 April 1608, Salisbury Papers, Microfilm 485, reel 29, BL.

[16] Letter from an uncle to his nephew, ?18 July 1607, Salisbury Papers, Microfilm 485, reel 26, BL.

[17] Under Elizabeth, the divergence between the English and Scottish disciplines had become much more obvious. Sir Henry Spelman thus worried that despite the fruitful sharing of clerics in the past, England might now be plagued by "fiery spirited ministers" from the north. Galloway and Levack, *The Jacobean Union*, 176.

Furthermore, Catholics also had a difficult relationship with the idea of union, as is clear from the fact that the Gunpowder Plot included the alleged desire that all the Scots in England would be blown back into Scotland.[18]

In Edward Sharpham's *The Fleire*, the theme of Scottish poverty was addressed in a lighter spirit, though James's government and inability to maintain decorum were critiqued as part of this, showcasing the problems of a specific Scottish monarch as well as the Scots more broadly.[19] Faithlessness and dishonesty were connected to James's union schemes, and in the play a courtier named Ruffles explains that "I did pray oftner when I was an Englishman, but I have not praid often, I must confesse since I was a Brittaine: but doost heare Fleire? canst tell me if an Englishman were in debt, whether a Brittaine must pay it or no?"[20] The Scottish character of Sir Jacke-have-little also makes an appearance. As a generic anti-Scottish figure, he explains at one point that he was knighted in order to "get me a good wife." Subject to various ruses and jokes about oatcakes and Scottish jigs, he represents the poverty and simplicity of his people, yet he and his bride are redeemed at the end of the play when order is restored and their union blessed.[21] In *The Fleire*, unlike in the scenario rehearsed in the "Paper Book" where Anglo-Scottish marriage is about exploitation, both parties benefit from the union, and anti-Scottish complaints are ultimately tempered.

There was thus a level of ethnic hostility between the English and the Scots (and between the English and other British nations), but it is also important that historians do not exaggerate such tensions or dismiss anti-Scottish sentiments without exploring how the idea of Scotland functioned as a whole. By 1603, there had been a prolonged period of peace along the Anglo-Scottish border. Keith Brown has tellingly described the two parties as a middle-aged couple who had already been living together for the better part of forty years.[22] This meant that English comments about the Scots were of a different nature than those about the Turks, the Spanish, or even the Irish. It is thus essential that alternative languages about the Scots and the union be investigated, and that hostility and acceptance are both fully evaluated before any final judgments are made about the Anglo-Scottish dynamic.

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Any assessment of English responses to their new position within a still nebulous Britain must therefore consider less hostile discourses about the Scots as well. James's own vision should be the starting point for any such investigation because he set the parameters of the discussion. James, as is well known, was an active participant in the controversies of his day, always championing the moderate approach. His tactic was to open discussion on contentious issues, provide a forum in which the debate could take place, separate moderate voices from more radical ones, and reward any acceptably moderate positions by incorporating them within official institutions.

[18] Wormald, "Gunpowder, Treason and Scots," 161.

[19] Michael Redmond, "'Low Comedy' and Political Cynicism: Parodies of the Jacobean Disguised-Duke Play," *Renaissance Forum* 7 (2004).

[20] Edward Sharpham, *The Fleire* (London, 1607), C$_3$r.

[21] Ibid., F$_1$r–F$_1$v.

[22] Keith Brown, "A Blessed Union? Anglo-Scottish Relations before the Covenant," in *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603–1900*, ed. T. C. Smout (Oxford, 2005), 42.

This tactic meant that his initial proposals always operated on the general level, leaving room for respondents to maneuver and suggest multiple solutions to a given problem, so long as those solutions were not too extreme. At appropriate moments, James would provide his perspective, thus reestablishing the boundaries of acceptability.[23] This is the procedure he followed at the Hampton Court Conference, in his calls to convene a general council of Christendom, and, most important for our purposes, in his approach to the regal union. James's role as moderator reinforced his authority, but it also placed him in a reactionary role once the debate was opened, naturally clustering his input around certain key events—in the case of the union debates, around parliamentary sessions.

On 19 May 1603, James issued a proclamation "for the uniting of England and Scotland" that outlined that the union already begun in his person was to be "perfected" and the borders erased, with the advice of the Parliaments of both kingdoms.[24] As straightforward as this statement may seem, it encapsulates two central tenets in James's vision of union. First and foremost, he was careful to note that a union of some sort had already been brought into being once he held both crowns. This, however, meant that the union operated on the level of the royal dynasty and absolute prerogative, over which English subjects possessed no control. It was unclear to his subjects how the situation affected England or how such an arrangement might be broken if the implications proved undesirable.[25] The second and related issue was that when James did attempt to ensure that the implications of such a union were articulated and codified, he provided only vague instructions to the English Parliament, asking that the union simply be perfected. He told the Commons that he did not seek conclusions, "but only a Commission that it may be disputed considered upon and reported into you and then will you be your owne Cooke so dresse it as you list," prompting the creation of a cross-border committee for union that was formed later in 1604.[26] There was a desired trajectory, but James appears to have been willing to take what he could get, encouraging this new commission to lay down its own guidelines. Part of the muddiness existed because he was trying to cement the dynastic union through Parliament

[23] See especially Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I," *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985): 169–207; W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge, 1997).

[24] James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. 1, *Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603–1625* (Oxford, 1973), 18–19.

[25] Glenn Burgess, *The Politics of the Ancient Constitution: An Introduction to English Political Thought, 1603–1642* (London, 1992), 102, 127; Conrad Russell, "The Anglo-Scottish Union 1603–1643: A Success?" in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (Cambridge, 1994); Conrad Russell, "Composite Monarchies in Early Modern Europe: The British and Irish Example," in *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*, ed. Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer (New York, 1995), 146.

[26] James's Letter to the Commons Concerning Union, 1 May 1604, TNA, State Papers Domestic 9/208, f. 5. It must be noted that once the commission had presented an Instrument of Union to Parliament, and the Commons still remained particularly unruly, James became more specific, saying he desired "a perfect Union of Lawes and persons, and such a Naturalizing as may make one body of both Kingdomes under mee your King," defending the commission's proposed alterations. But even this statement left a good deal open to interpretation, especially when it came to how the technicalities would play out. Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards, and Joseph Marshall, eds., *King James VI and I: Selected Writings* (Aldershot, 2003), 309.

without undermining his prerogative rights—Henry VIII's will, confirmed in statute, had forbade foreign successors, and James had inherited based on dynastic right in direct conflict with this legislation—but part of it seems also to have been an unwillingness to commit himself publicly to a particular plan.[27]

James thus encouraged the view that the union sprang from and was "inherent in his Majesties Royal Blood and Person" and that it was from this starting point that a "further conjunction and nearness of mutual Love and friendship" must progress.[28] To make his point, he restyled himself king of Great Britain by issuing a proclamation to that effect in October of 1604.[29] But James's new subjects did not find union so easy; there were endless delays and many questionable remarks about Scottish poverty. Negotiations were stalling by 1607 because some felt the process threatened the very essence of England. To help calm fears, James explained that England's seniority within the union would protect it from an influx of foreign people and customs, upholding English institutions and culture. This idea brings us to the third part of his vision: the union would be of a tiered nature, allowing for hierarchy within unity and distinctiveness within homogeneity. James was emphatic that England would be the dominant partner in any union with Scotland. "Can you imagine," he asked, "I will respect the lesser, and neglect the greater?" "You are the husband," he continued, "they the wife: you conquerors, they as conquered."[30] The English would be husband to Scotland, and only after this would James become husband to the newly formed Britain. Similarly, he compared the process of union to the means whereby "little brookes lose their names by their running and fall into great Rivers, and the very name and memories of the great Rivers swallowed up in the Ocean."[31] The Scots were the little brook, important but small and without much force or current, while the English were the great river into which they would spill. Together, they would merge into an ocean, the kingdom of Great Britain, over which the "imperial crowne" would rule.[32]

From the start, James believed this work was providential and pointed to the many signs that God wanted a more perfect union to take place, warning his subjects that they ignored such signs at their own peril. In the proclamation announcing his new royal style, he explained that "the Isle within it selfe hath almost none but imaginarie bounds of separation without, but one common limit or rather Guard of the Ocean Sea, making the whole a little world and mind."[33] Even more explicitly, in his 1604 instructions to the Commons, he expounded upon the value of an Anglo-Scottish union and pointed out that to ignore "Gods benefit so freely offered unto us is to spit and blaspheme in his face by preferring war to peace, trouble to quietnes, hatred to love, weaknes to strength and division to union."[34] He reminded the

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[27] Conrad Russell, "1603: The End of English National Sovereignty," in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, and Jason Lawrence (New York, 2006), 1–14.

[28] Authorization for commissioners of the two kingdoms to treat of union, 1604, Add. MS 17747, BL.

[29] Larkin and Huges, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 94–98.

[30] Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *King James VI and I*, 309, 312, 317.

[31] Ibid., 296–97.

[32] Larkin and Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 95.

[33] Ibid.

[34] James VI and I's letter to the Commons concerning union, 1 May 1604, TNA, State Papers Domestic 9/208, f. 5.

English of their long history of warfare with Scotland and the previously ever-present concern that continental powers would use Scotland to attack England through a "backe-doore."[35] A closer relationship with the Scots was not just beneficial to the English, it was necessary; and now it was being bestowed upon them freely and without wars.

As negotiations progressed, James made note of what he felt was a strong dislike for the Scots and, more important, an English inability to hold their tongues on the subject. After Piggott's insensitive 1607 outburst, James gave a long speech to Parliament, reminding his listeners that such statements would only weaken the union.[36] He emphasized the imprudence of talk that he would prefer Scotsmen over Englishmen for offices and the complaint that the Scots would swarm south. "I owe no more to the Scottish men than to the English," he claimed. "I was borne there, and sworne here and now raigne over both." Moreover, James noted that, technically, the larger quantities of unoccupied territory in Scotland might encourage the English to deposit their idle poor there, not vice versa, urging the English to leave off such "foolish and idle surmises."[37] He begged that when Parliament met again they would take up the "trewth and sincerity" of his vision and "advance the greatnesse of your Empire seated here in England."[38] Instead, Sir Edwin Sandys moved to scrap debate on the 1606 Instrument of Union produced by Union Commissioners, suggesting Parliament return to the possibility of an immediate and perfect union. Because no one could agree on how this could be achieved, negotiations were, for all intents and purposes, permanently halted. Of the instruments' goals, which James had endorsed, only the revocation of the hostile laws was realized before Parliament abandoned the project. Free trade was permanently undermined and naturalization temporarily stalled until it was settled in Calvin's Case of 1608.

James therefore established a context within which his English subjects had to address the Scottish question. He was aggressive enough in promoting his vision that he elicited a number of responses that, taken as a whole, constitute a limited public reaction to his proposal. This is not to say that everyone in England felt the same way about the union, but rather that a group of interested individuals had begun thinking through the same issue in a variety of forums, beginning a debate that served to connect them in an intangible way.[39] What these commentators said when faced with this situation was constrained by the king's own Scottish nationality, his obvious desire that the union succeed, and his overt distaste for any rude

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[35] There are passages in the proclamation establishing the new royal style, as well as in the 1604 and 1607 speeches to parliament. Larkin and Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 95; Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *King James VI and I*, 296, 323.

[36] Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *King James VI and I*, 311.

[37] Ibid., 312–16.

[38] Ibid., 324.

[39] I use the term "public" here in terms of *a* public, or in the limited sense of a body of people virtually connected by interest in a topic and whose relationship is fundamentally discursive, rather than in terms of *the* public, or society as a whole attempting to express a unified viewpoint. The nature of the union issue, as well as early modern literacy rates, means that this group was largely male. For clarification on the idea of a multiplicity of publics, see Wilson and Yachnin, *Making Publics*; Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, 1993); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, 2005); N. Crossley and J. M. Roberts, eds., *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford, 2004); Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1992).

comments about impoverished Scots. But much was still said. Moreover, James's proclamations were read from the pulpits for all to hear, and his speeches to Parliament were of enough interest that they were later published in his *Workes*.[40] Much of the evidence surveyed below originates from London, but it is important to note that the printed element of conversation allowed for a potentially wider audience as well, because print had a habit of finding its way further afield. Diaries from outside the London confines record the circulation of union treatises and the announcement of a new British flag in 1606, perhaps confirming one critic's observation that "there is nothing now more in the mouthes of men then discounting ye Union of England and Scotland."[41] Thus, although there is disagreement over how frequently the Anglo-Scottish union was of interest to the English, a conversation had clearly begun and it had, to some degree, breached the confines of court and Parliament.[42] It is to this discourse that we must now turn.

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James's rhetoric has led to speculation that his aggressively patriarchal approach and potentially absolutist language frightened the Commons because he appeared at times to be trying to coerce Parliament into union and subjugation.[43] One scholar has even argued that James's oft-quoted statement that he ruled Scotland with his pen did not placate English fears of Scottish unruliness; it heightened anxieties that England would be similarly cowed.[44] Nevertheless, accepting this approach is to focus on only part of what was said and on only part of the context. James's insistence on hierarchy within unity counteracted language that might otherwise imply he was interested in undermining England's liberties in favor of an expanded royal prerogative. Instead, the problem lay in the relationship between the dynastic union and the quest to perfect it. As both Glenn Burgess and Conrad Russell have argued in different ways, the threat was not absolutism on James's part but the indirect challenge to the common law posed by the very idea of extending the union.[45] Interactions between the sovereign's two kingdoms occurred at the level of the absolute prerogative and thus operated in a separate forum from, though not above, the common law. By attempting to extend the union, and especially by restyling himself as king of Great Britain through proclamation alone, James blurred the boundaries between his ordinary and absolute authority, calling the common law

[40] Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall, *King James VI and I*, 17.

[41] Tristan Marshall has unearthed these references in the diaries of Adam Winthrop and Walter Yonge. Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (New York, 2000), 3; Anonymous, "A Brief Replication to the Answere to the Obiections Against the Union," in Stowe 158, f. 34ᵣ, BL.

[42] Keith Brown claims that the issue of union was rarely of interest, except at specific moments like James's accession, while Brian Levack believes the union was one of the most constant and controversial topics of the seventeenth century. Keith Brown, *Kingdom or Province? Scotland and the Regal Union, 1603–1715* (New York, 1992), 2; Brian P. Levack, *The Formation of a British State: England, Scotland and the Union, 1603–1707* (Oxford, 1987), 14.

[43] Anne McLaren, "Monogamy, Polygamy and the True State: James I's Rhetoric of Empire," *History of Political Thought* 25 (2004): 446–80; J. P. Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603–1640* (New York, 1986).

[44] McLaren, "Monogamy."

[45] Burgess, *Politics of the Ancient Constitution*; Russell, "The Anglo-Scottish Union."

itself into question by threatening the place to which that law was tied. James himself might have been willing to recognize distinction within unity, but the Commons worried that the erasure of England would be the by-product of the creation of Britain. Both James's dream and the opposition it elicited were thus complicated by lack of clarity about where the distinction lay between England and Scotland, and their two peoples, once he had inherited the English throne.

Perhaps the most influential text responding to these issues was the "Objections Against the Change of the Name or Style of England and Scotland into the Name or Style of Great Brittany." Generated by the Commons as a reaction to James's proclamation of a new style, the "Objections" were circulated in manuscript and printed in full in John Thornborough's *Discourse Plainely Proving the Evident Utilitie and Urgent Necessity of the Desired and Happie Union* (1604), where they were reproduced in order to refute them. Thornborough, then bishop of Bristol, was an enthusiastic supporter of the union project, so it is hardly surprising he sought to contradict the "Objections." But his decision to publish the text in full is noteworthy because it led him to publicize what should have remained a confidential part of the parliamentary debate. It is unknown how widely his pamphlet circulated, but the Commons was concerned enough about the breach that it attempted, unsuccessfully, to have Thornborough's work supressed.[46]

The "Objections" alleged that there were multiple problems with the king's new title, subdividing the issue into four groups for clarity: matters of common reason, matters of estate inward, matters of estate foreign, and matters of honor. When speaking of the state itself, the document went straight to the heart of the issue, explaining that a change in the royal style necessitated the dissolution of the old kingdom and the creation of a new one because the ancient constitution was dependent upon having an *English* king-in-parliament. Parliamentary summons, the great seal, laws, oaths, and courts would all be undone by the death of an English monarchy and the birth of a British one.[47] The English and the Scots might share an allegiance to the same king, but the English kingdom was defined by its laws, which were in turn defined by the customs of a specific land. Given the nature of this territorially bounded legal system, the question of union with the Scots therefore quickly morphed into a defense of the indigenous legal structures that defined England proper.

The denial that there was need for, or gain to be had from, a change in style was buttressed throughout the "Objections" by the belief that there was no precedent for such an action.[48] Moreover, the spiteful opinion of many that a closer union would "draw on a deluge of poore people" also did not help.[49] These were concerns that consistently appeared in other texts questioning and supporting the union, and the issue of needing precedent in order to justify a closer union with Scotland was a particularly common theme. But precedent could be further broken down into the

[46] Brett Usher, "Thornborough, John (1551?–1641)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, online ed., January 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27339 (accessed 2 February 2012).

[47] Objections against the change of the name or style of England and Scotland into the name or style of great Brittany, 1604, TNA, State Papers Domestic 9/210, f. 47.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Obiections against the Change of the name of England into the name of Britanie, TNA, State Papers Domestic 14/7, f. 58.

search for a specifically British model and an exploration of continental experiments. One might assume that Galfridian myth and British precedent proper supplied the obvious answer to the problem of a union that would otherwise create something dangerously new: if Geoffrey of Monmouth's account was true, Britain was not being created but resurrected. It was already part of English history and thus posed no threat to England's law and identity. Unfortunately, by 1603, the Tudor celebration of a direct connection to the Britannic past was beginning to fade in favor of a gothic version of history that focused on the influence of invading German tribes, everywhere but in the grand religious arena, where the alleged proto-Protestantism of the ancient Britons was a useful tool.[50] This Germanicist consensus might have been circumvented by ventriloquizing British mythology about a once and future king into Welsh mouths, but the question of whether Britain ever really existed, or at least whether it existed as the Britain of legend and could thus easily merge Scotland and England without threat to the common law, was uncertain.[51]

Knowing this, James decided to try his luck at touting British precedent anyway, because it provided the perfect model of an ancient, incorrupt, and imperial kingdom that spanned the entire island. He argued that Britain was indeed the "true and ancient Name, which God and Time have imposed upon this Isle" and encouraged others to present him as a new Brutus.[52] Predictably, he was met with a level of apprehension. Sir Francis Bacon—James's spokesman for the union project in the Commons—noted a level of unease with the idea that the island had ever been a single unified kingdom. The "Objections" themselves had, after all, complained that James ignored the fact that a people's status was "guided by [the] antiquitye of Kingdomes," implying that Britain was not ancient, while England was.[53] Moreover, in a manuscript treatise of 1604, Sir Henry Spelman cautioned that England was giving up a glorious past in favor of an old and dusty one, which no one remembered, even if Britain had once been a historical reality.[54] Spelman was an increasingly prominent historian and antiquarian who would eventually receive a pension from the king, but even he had reservations. Although his treatise probably possessed only a limited audience, another anonymous manuscript echoed his sentiments, stating that "surely if Brittaine get life new again it must neede be newe."[55]

There were also those who supported James's use of British symbolism. Thornborough was among them, celebrating the "ancient name" of Great Britain in his

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[50] Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), 75, 101; Roger Mason, "The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism," in *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994), 186; Daniel Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), 23–24.

[51] Philip Schwyzer, "British History and 'British History': The Same Old Story?" in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge, 2002), 11–23.

[52] Larkin and Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 97; Marshall, *Theatre and Empire*, 27; Keith Thomas argues for the continuing significance of the idea of Britain and the once and future king in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), 416–18.

[53] Francis Bacon, *A Brief Discourse Touching the Happie Union of the Kingdomes of England, and Scotland* (London, 1603), A₇r; Objections against the change of the name or style of England and Scotland into the name or style of great Brittany, 1604, TNA, State Papers Domestic 9/210, f. 47.

[54] Bruce Galloway and Brian Levack, eds., *The Jacobean Union: Six Tracts of 1604* (Edinburgh, 1985), 170.

[55] Ibid., lxx; Stowe 158, f. 35ᵥ, BL.

writings.[56] Similarly, the king's soon-to-be historiographer, Sir John Hayward, claimed Britain was an ancient kingdom now reestablished by James's accession, and in a more poetic vein, William Herbert's *Englands Sorrow, a Farwell to Essex* (1606) dramatized an encounter with Britain's ghost, whom he found adrift on the Severn in a boat with a broken oar. Herbert was a poet and adventurer who would accompany Sir Walter Raleigh on his last ill-fated journey to Guyana and who had no specific ties to the court, but as a literary figure, he would have seen the worth of writing things that would please the king.[57] He thus unequivocally cast Britain as England's predecessor, who was now "Banisht by those that by my glory gaine." Although it was ostensibly written to eulogize England's great lords, the poem is often more concerned with Britain's righteous anger at being forgotten than it is with Essex and his peers. Britain chastises the English for their bad behavior, reminding them that her other children are more amenable to her return.[58] Following God's providential decree, she demands a closer union and finds only English cooperation was wanting, chiding them and explaining:

> You have one God, one King, one land you have,
> One watry wall doth both your coast engire,
> yborne alike yee be, and have like grave
> Both valiant, wise, attempt with like fire,
> You onely want one name, and one desire:
> Wish you home peace; This you secures, in warre
> Valure united growes more valiant farre.[59]

As the poem closes, James proclaims the return of Britain throughout the land, pointing toward a glorious future because, once risen, she will "never fall again."[60] Britain undoubtedly existed in the past, but this existence was cut short, and James's reign now offers the opportunity to right that wrong.

Britain's palpable anger in *Englands Sorrow* points to the instability in this type of nostalgic argument. Although Herbert clearly intended to chastise England for an apparently matricidal existence, Philip Schwyzer has usefully countered that in Herbert's scenario, Britain's desire for a genuine resurrection implied the monstrous consumption of her children.[61] The potential backlash resulting from this imagery, then, led others to handle the question of Britain more gingerly. Hayward, for one, asserted a British past only to move as quickly as possible to the question of whether historicity was the issue at all. He suggested that even if Britain had never existed, the

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[56] John Thornborough, *A Discourse Plainely Proving the Evident Utilitie and Urgent Necessitie of the Desired Happie Union of the Two Famous Kingdomes of England and Scotland* (London, 1604), 5; John Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting the Two Mighty & Famous Kingdomes, England & Scotland into their Ancient Name of Great Brittaine* (Oxford, 1605?).

[57] Leo Daugherty, "Herbert, William (1583?–1628)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, online ed., January 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13057 (accessed 2 February 2012).

[58] William Herbert, *Englands Sorrow; or, A Farwell to Essex* (London, 1606), C_2v, G_3r.

[59] Ibid., H_1r.

[60] Ibid., C_3r.

[61] Philip Schwyzer, "The Jacobean Union Controversy and King Lear," in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. Glenn Burgess, Rowland Wymer, and Jason Lawrence (New York, 2006), 37–38.

constitution would not be undone by a change in name. Pointing to various historic examples of changing titles and the inability of kingdoms to make treaties with one another if a change in name voided all contracts, Hayward asked "that wee bee not too much amazed at everie accidentall change, fearing we know not what, like a Deere, which then looketh most about when he cometh to the best feede." The benefits of union—enlarging the power and dominion of the realm—far outweighed unjustified fears. By uniting with the Scots, the burdens of the state would be distributed, liberty and prosperity would be increased, and glory and security would be ensured with the help of this warlike people.[62]

The other debate over precedent involved whether or not there were any general European examples of the type of perfect union James desired. According to Galloway, this was a central feature of the debate. His observation is supported by the lengthy contemporary discussions of the unions of Castile and Aragon, Scotland and France, Poland and Lithuania, Wales and England, Brittany and France, Spain and Portugal, and other such examples.[63] In the Commons, Sandys followed the vague denial that any precedent for a perfect union existed with a speech giving specific case studies. Norway, Denmark, and Sweden were all united at one point, he explained, but never conglomerated under a single name—and this was just one of many such cases. Furthermore, he argued, a change in royal title must be followed by a change in the name of the kingdom, and because a kingdom must be indivisible, the separate states of England and Scotland could not be encompassed in the single kingdom of Britain.[64] All of this indicated that the separate jurisdictions, peoples, and cultures of England and Scotland could not be merged as easily as James suggested and that simultaneous unification and distinction were impossible.

Other treatises looked to past and current unions in order to protect the English common law more explicitly. Treatise authors noted that Spain and Portugal had maintained separate jurisdictions, as had the kings of England while they remained the dukes of Normandy. Even the conquered principality of Wales was not immediately subject to English law nor given place in the English Parliament, the implication being that a union created by dynastic succession could hardly hope to forge closer bonds than one born of conquest. This example betrays a certain desire just to annex Scotland and be done with it, emphasizing that the problem did not lie with expansion but with the type of expansion offered by the union project.[65] Conquest could expand the common law's jurisdiction without threatening to undermine it, but not James's drive for a perfect union of sovereign kingdoms. Legal-historical concerns about the change in royal style therefore reflected a determination to protect Englishness. Either the Scots must be pushed away, or, if they were to be accepted, they must be swallowed up and anglicized. The true fusion of the two nations was not viable because it would destroy the best and most fundamental elements of English society. The problem was that the semifamiliar and sovereign status of the

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[62] Sir John Hayward, *A Treatise of Union of the Two Realmes of England and Scotland* (London, 1604), 3–6, 35–51, 56.

[63] Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 47.

[64] Healey, "Debates," 99.

[65] Discourse on the Union of Kingdoms as fourfold, 26 April 1604, TNA, State Papers Domestic 14/7, f. 65; Memoirs by J. D. of the principal unions of kingdoms that have taken place in Europe, ?27 April 1604, TNA, State Papers Domestic 14/7, f. 80.

Scots ruled out conquest, but the fact of the personal dynastic union meant they could not be wholly ignored either.

In contrast, some authors attempted to find precedents for kings and kingdoms successfully changing their titles and expanding through combination as a response to antiunionist fears. The process of conjunction, these authors argued, did not necessarily entail the obliteration of the historic component kingdoms in order to create something new. Thornborough, for example, echoed the sentiments of James's river metaphor, explaining, "many villages make one Shire, many Shires one kingdom, many kingdomes one Imperial Monarchy."[66] He also gestured toward the medieval union of the Heptarchy, the seven individually named Anglo-Saxon kingdoms that became England. This was an uncontested example of beneficial change that Bacon also used when speaking in favor of naturalizing the Scots, and one that entailed a significant erasure of old names and boundaries but did not challenge the ancient nature of the common law.[67] Non-English examples also supported unification and a change in name, one author claiming that a process of gathering was universal. The Holy Roman Empire, the Swiss Cantons, even France and Spain were all collections of smaller, previously independent units that gathered strength as they gathered territory.[68] They did not have to reconstitute themselves with every accretion and new name.

Sir Henry Savile's widely circulated "Historical Collections" was the most nuanced example of this style of argument, and it comprehensively rehearsed historical precedent.[69] Savile was a scholar who used his knowledge to range through classical and contemporary examples, explaining that, despite personal preferences, the new name of Great Britain was necessary to bury ancient hostilities. He then used historical data to generate a number of suggestions for making any union perpetual: the king should be tender to his nonnative nation, there must be servants from both nations around the king, high civil and ecclesiastical offices in a particular kingdom should be held by natives of that kingdom, and councils for each kingdom should sit near the king to dispatch business. In the Anglo-Scottish case, the laws must also remain distinct, as should burdens like taxation and wardships, indicating that Savile still felt some unease with the idea of fully embracing the Scots and was compelled to protect the common law that defined England. He also clearly worried about the financial burdens that partnership with a poorer country could bring.[70] Even when defending the new style, authors explicitly stipulated the maintenance of the common law, simultaneously embracing Scotland and erecting barriers that would continue to separate it from the English polity.

Discussions of precedent therefore demonstrate how conversations about union with Scotland quickly morphed into monologues about protecting England. Any arrangement that threatened England's legal-political framework was

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[66] Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting*, 7.

[67] Thornborough, *A Discourse*, 10; James Spedding, ed., *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon: Including All His Occasional Works* (London, 1868), 3:120.

[68] A discourse on the proposed union, Harley MS 6850, BL.

[69] Savile was a scholar whose tract both promoted James's union scheme and simultaneously critiqued it. His position was thus more neutral than those seeking patronage. Galloway and Levack, *The Jacobean Union*, lxxiv, lxxvii.

[70] Ibid., 209–39.

incomprehensible, and proposals for change were undermined by the lack of a historical template. This is why Steven Ellis believes that the English wanted Scotland to be either a dependent kingdom like Ireland or an incorporated region like Wales, making it absorbable without alteration to England itself.[71] It would be more accurate, though, to say that most simply wanted the Scottish issue to go away. As Russell put it, "If their king chose, on his spare time, to be king of the Scots, that was nothing to do with them."[72] The problem of Britain, and the awkward nature of the various historical examples of unions that did not quite fit the current situation, indicated that the enterprise was best abandoned. But this was not necessarily because the Scots themselves were odious; it was because they were already obnoxiously intertwined with Englishness. England was already perfect the way it was, and so those engaging with the union question sought ways of disentangling themselves from their neighbors. Why, after all, when it was "already in a good state of body mind goods and manner of Government," would anyone want to put the kingdom "all in adventure by some new manner of mingled, unaccustomed and cold kind of Phisick, and so by seeking to cure a little kind of Qualm in ye stomack or ill taste in ye mouth only will endanger the disturbance of the hole body?"[73]

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Not all of the discussion about Britain, however, was centered on the past, and there were those who looked toward a promising future. These contributors believed, like James, that the two kingdoms were providentially ordained to be ruled by a single king, a fact that was evident in the geography and culture of the island. The idea that God willed an Anglo-Scottish union was not new and had been rehearsed extensively during the so-called rough wooing, when Henry VIII and then Protector Somerset tried to force a marriage between the future Edward VI and Mary Stuart.[74] Although the aggressively imperialist thrust of Somerset's campaign was soon tempered for religio-political reasons, the imagery of a providentially united island reappeared with the regal union. A treatise titled "The Divine Providence in the Misticall and Reall Union of England and Scotland" noted that the two kingdoms comprised "one Island unsevered, but closed and bounded with Ocean," brought together by God in language, monarchy, and religion. Pushing the argument further, the author explained that the island was also roughly the shape of a triangle, with Wales, England, and Scotland each in one corner, which he thought was important because this was the only nondivisible geometrical shape.[75]

Another treatise extended this allusion, playing on the aural similarities between triangle and Anglia to arrive at the conclusion that the three British nations represented "the three persons of the Trinitye."[76] Here, the union was not just

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[71] Steven Ellis, "From Dual Monarchy to Multiple Kingdoms: Union and the English State, 1422–1607," in *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century: Awkward Neighbours*, ed. Allan Maccinnes and Jane Ohlmeyer (Portland, 2002), 48.

[72] Russell, "The Anglo-Scottish Union," 249.

[73] Untitled Objections, Harley MS 1314, f.16, BL.

[74] Mason, "The Scottish Reformation," 170–75; White, "Militant Protestants," 162.

[75] The divine providence in the misticall and reall union of England and Scotland, both by nature & other coherence, Add MS 38139, f.42r, BL.

[76] John Gordon, *A Panegyrique of Congratualation for the Concord of the Realmes of Great Britaine in Unitie of Religion, and Under one King* (London, 1603).

providential; it also possessed a divine quality within itself. Moreover, the author of this treatise, the Scottish-born and boundlessly ambitious John Gordon, soon complemented it with the publication of a sermon in which he argued that unity was divine and that disunion was the seed of all destruction—a belief he was not alone in possessing.[77] The English needed to embrace the Scots unless they wished to contradict God's will, or to spit in God's face, to use James's words. The new name was central to this process because "if the olde enmity of English, and Scottish be removed, and yet the names stil remaine, I feare that the verie names woulde ever put ill men in minde of olde grudge, and incite new variance."[78]

But why was God so invested in Britain? Several scholars have argued that the answer lies in radical Protestant idealism and a focus on the great apocalyptic battle. Together, they have outlined a specifically Puritan support, often gathered around the young Prince Henry, for a united kingdom that would function as a Protestant bulwark against the antichrist.[79] It is true that many of the positive responses to James's call for a closer union included an aggressive edge that gestured toward expansion instead of retrenchment. The creation of a Protestant bulwark, however, was not the only issue raised by those interested in empire in the first years after James's accession. The providential nature of the union meant that the religious aspect was always present, but union supporters tended to try to convince their audiences by making heavy references to the more worldly gains that God was offering as well. Scotland was a Protestant brother in a global struggle—and agreement in religion was consistently touted as one of the signs of God's will—but the potential threat to English security if it remained on its own, and the future English glory if it accepted and partnered with Scotland, were of equal value. While union negotiations were still alive, the long-term meanings that could be superimposed on Britain were varied and included other goals alongside the great apocalyptic struggle. Besting Spain and destroying the antichrist were never very deep under the surface when the English looked beyond their borders, but the lure of peace and prosperity at home and worldly prestige abroad should not be overlooked either.

Gordon described God raising James like a new Constantine, while Sir William Cornwallis, a member of James's privy chamber, conjured a battle between true and false faiths, but a great deal of space was also dedicated to the immediate and mundane gains of union.[80] The most obvious benefit stemmed from the creation (or re-creation) of Britain was security from foreign attack and freedom from civil war. Robert Pont, a Scottish-born writer whose Latin treatise was printed in

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[77] Alexander Gordon, "Gordon, John (1544–1619)," Rev. David George Mullan, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, online ed., October 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11061 (accessed 15 July 2010); John Gordon, *EnΩtikon; or, A Sermon of the Union go Great Brittannie, in Antiquitie of Language, Name Religion, and Kingdom* (London, 1604); Harley MS 6850, f. 35, BL; Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting*, 14.

[78] Thornborough, *The Ioiefull and Blessed Reuniting*, 48.

[79] Jason White, "Militant Protestants: British Identity in the Jacobean Period, 1603–1625," *History* 94 (2009): 154–75; White, *Militant Protestantism*; Arthur Williamson, "Britain and the Beast: The Apocalypse and the Seventeenth-Century Debate about the Creation of the British State," in *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture: The Millenarian Turn*, ed. J. E. Force and R. H. Popkin (Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2001), 15–27; Marshall, *Theatre and Empire*.

[80] Gordon, *A Panegyrique*, 6; Sir William Cornwallis, *The Miraculous and Happie Union of England and Scotland* (London, 1604), D$_2$v.

London and formally translated into English as part of the domestic debates there, devoted considerable space to the issue.[81] For Pont, a more complete Anglo-Scottish union would create an empire founded on shared godliness and great in that it would allow for the "increase and augmentation" of the people. The newfound imperial strength would withstand foreign invaders, tame the Irish and the wild Islanders of Scotland, and prevent any future unrest between England and Scotland that might otherwise follow.[82] Cornwallis compared the process to buying new strength and youth for one's body, making the newly "increased dominions . . . terrible to the world without any terror to ourselves."[83] Hayward even claimed that the Scots were particularly propitious partners because they "commit their lives to any adventure, not only for the safetie, but for the glorie of their state."[84] To hammer the point home, he also drew upon dystopic visions of a fragmented island as well as visions of ineffective involvement in European battles if England continued to stand alone.[85]

Within the discourse of empire building, the Scots therefore acquired a positive position, one that the English were unable to ignore from that point on, no matter how bad relations between the two kingdoms became. This was as the arsenal of empire, a role that English authors could envision the Scots filling even within the notoriously controversial and allegedly anti-Scottish *Eastward Ho!* (1605). The play is best known for the fact that its playwrights were imprisoned following a complaint by Sir James Murray that they had libelled the Scots with their work, an offense made more problematic by an imprudent joke targeting James's recent cheapening of knighthood.[86] However, a closer examination of the allegedly anti-Scottish passage in *Eastward Ho!* as it appeared in print (although likely in an already revised form) betrays much more equivocal thinking about the Scots. Before a drunken and ill-fated attempt to sail for Virginia, one of the play's main protagonists explains to another adventurer:

> And then you shall live freely there,
> without sergeants, or courtiers, or lawyers, or
> Intelligencers—only a few industrious Scots, per-
> haps, who, indeed, are dispersed over the face of
> the whole earth. But as for them, there are no
> greater friends to Englishmen and England, when
> they are out on't, in the world, than they are. And
> for my part, I would a hundred thousand of 'em
> were there, for we are all one countrymen now,
> ye know; and we should find ten times more
> comfort of them there than we do here.[87]

[81] Galloway and Levack, *The Jacobean Union*, xlvii.

[82] Ibid., 8–19.

[83] Cornwallis, *The Miraculous and Happie Union*, B$_4$v, C$_1$v.

[84] Hayward, *A Treatise of Union*, 5.

[85] John Skinner, *Rapta Tatio: The Mirror of his Majesties Present Government, Tending to the Union for his Whole Iland of Brittonie* (London, 1604), F$_1$v–F$_2$r.

[86] R. F. Patterson, ed., *Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden* (London, 1923), 25–26; Joseph Quincy Adams, "Eastward Hoe and Its Satire against the Scots," *Studies in Philology* 28 (1931): 689–701; Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland*, 80.

[87] George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, *Eastward Hoe*, ed. R.W. Van Fossen (New York, 1990), III, iii, ll.42–52.

Here, the New World was presented as a place of escape from the accepted plagues of English society: sergeants, lawyers, courtiers, and intelligencers. The joke, however, was that no matter how far one traveled, it was impossible to escape the universal pests otherwise known as the Scots. And yet within the context of the burgeoning British Empire, the play was still careful to note that Scots might prove useful in the peripheries, providing comfort abroad when they had only served to vex at home.[88]

The threat of more mouths to feed might be the worst nightmare of some in England, but as these texts insisted, more mouths also meant more hands—and hands could cultivate land, sail ships, and fight in wars. Any Scots who might previously have sought to stir trouble by looking toward England would now be redirected toward the bounds of the peripheries, defending Britain against foreign invaders. The Scots were allies in more than just spiritual matters, and Cornwallis described them as England's missing half.[89] Nevertheless, in some ways, the space created for the Scots in an expanding British Empire was still a way of keeping England distinct. Scottish energy, and Scottish people, could be deflected away from England and into the world at large, creating a partnership that would benefit England without threatening the foundations of the kingdom, straining English resources, or tainting England with Scottish backwardness in any way. This particular image of expansion was thus just as successful at policing English boundaries as rhetorics of exclusion, because it declined to offer the Scots any useful or productive place within the bounds of England itself.

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The complicated and messy relationship that was being worked out between England and Scotland is perhaps best encapsulated in the homage issue. Only the more insensitive of the English commentators broached the topic of homage during the Jacobean union debates, although it was a theme that would reappear in the heated exchanges surrounding the parliamentary union of 1707. The topic gestured toward the possibility of English territorial expansion based upon clear-cut English superiority and is part of the reason some scholars have argued that the Scots were dealing with a potentially aggressive imperial power. The Scots, though, were Protestants who insisted on the historic sovereign status of their kingdom; as such, they complicated the relationship among union, conquest, and empire.[90]

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[88] This complements Steve Murdoch's argument that one of the places where an identification with Britain did occur was in the Stuart diplomatic corps and continental forces. Steve Murdoch, "Diplomacy in Transition: Stuart-British Diplomacy in Northern Europe, 1603–1618," in *Ships, Guns and Bibles in the North Sea and Baltic States, c. 1350–1700*, ed. A. I. Macnnes and F. G. Pedersen (East Linton, 2000): 93–107; Steve Murdoch, "James VI and the Formation of a Scottish-British Military Identity," in *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1550–1900*, ed. Steve Murdoch and A. Mackillop (Leiden, 2002), 3–32.

[89] Cornwallis, *The Miraculous and Happie Union*, D$_3$r.

[90] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 36–60; John Robertson, "Empire and Union: Two Concepts of the Early Modern European Political Order," in *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge, 1995), 4–14. Arthur Williamson has also addressed this issue in Arthur Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI: The Apocalypse, the Union and the Shaping of Scotland's Public Culture* (Edinburgh, 1979).

Questions of sovereignty and authority were naturally going to occur during the union debates, and even Savile's otherwise careful treatise explained that the Scottish kings had indeed owed homage to English kings in the past—and not just for their possession of Cumberland and Huntington—before quickly changing the subject and moving on to the general qualities of successful unions.[91] However, not everyone was so brief. The argument received book-length treatment in Edward Ayscu's *A Historie Contayning the Warres, Treaties, Marriages, and other Occurrents between England and Scotland* (1607). In what was a detailed account of the various battles that the English had won over the Scots and the many marriages between English noblewomen and Scottish kings, Ayscu unapologetically rehearsed the instances in which Scottish monarchs paid homage to their acknowledged superior in England. The message was not lost, and the owner of the edition now held by the Cambridge University Library added a pointing hand in the margin in order to highlight where the text discussed the Scottish promise *perpetually* to serve the English king.[92]

What is notable about the belief that Scotland was technically a feudal dependency of England is that it undermined both the notion that Scots were truly foreign— because it meant they were already technically dependents of the English crown— and the possibility that they were equal and sovereign partners. In other words, Scotland was neither different enough nor similar enough to be easily categorized and dealt with from there. Neither conquest nor union would work when trying to combine Scotland with England. In order to avoid this problem, Ayscu tried to anglicize the Scots, citing the nine separate English intermarriages with the Scottish royal line.[93] This allowed him to stress that the union was really just the formal possession of an already colonized society. It was also why he was careful to note the long years of peace with Scotland under Elizabeth and James's uneventful accession to the English throne: the Scottish king was not really Scottish at all.

But if the Scots were neither familiar nor foreign, how should they be approached? The possibility of treating them like an irritating distant cousin who had come to stay indeterminately at the family home was broached in the Commons. According to Robert Bowyer's diary entries for March 1607, many felt that the Scots wanted union because it would grant them all the advantages of Englishmen without any of the rules or responsibilities. They therefore needed to be taught what was best for them—led with the carrot and the stick to see the cost-benefit exchange of becoming English. It was suggested that they should be allowed to keep their separate laws and privileges but be refused naturalization, because their resultant suffering would make them beg for a perfect union on English terms, safeguarding England's traditional identity and enlightening the Scots in the process. Laurence Hyde even suggested that a time limit be put on this process, ensuring that all ties would be severed if the Scots did not learn to cooperate in a timely fashion.[94] Others countered that the Scots should be treated with respect. In their union treatises, Cornwallis and Hayward thus tried to undermine perceptions of extreme Scottish poverty by claiming that the Scots simply desired less. They were an able, brave, and godly people

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[91] Galloway and Levack, *The Jacobean Union*, 191.
[92] Edward Ayscu, *A Historie Contayning the Warres, Treaties, Marriages, and other Occurrents between England and Scotland* (London, 1607), 118.
[93] Ibid., 250–51.
[94] Wilson, *The Parliamentary Diary*, 220, 231, 280.

whose kingdom met their needs.[95] The anonymous pamphlet *Rapta Tatio* went even further, explaining that it was the English who owed the Scots a great debt: "They have bred us a King, they have brought him safe, they have brought him every way perfect; of nature, good; learning great, vertues many; of issue fruitfull; and on his head a crown, before he came here."[96]

Much of this was, of course, fueled by ulterior motives. In Parliament, where MPs were predisposed toward the protection of English sovereignty and the common law, a general condescending attitude toward any group that implicitly challenged those things is to be expected.[97] Furthermore, many of the treatises written in favor of a more perfect union were authored by the recipients of royal patronage or by men who can safely be assumed to have aspired to it, explaining the cluster of tracts that appeared in 1603–04, right after James first made his appeal. Descriptions of the Scots were thus of a utilitarian nature and often defined by internal English matters, giving characterizations of things Scottish an incredible amount of flexibility. So much so, in fact, that one treatise even claimed that "brotherly love" between the two peoples was precisely the reason that a new royal style and a closer union were not required, completely inverting the dominant discourse.[98] The removal of the hostile laws alone would allow the two kingdoms to grow together, the author claimed, reminding his reader that "you must give Scotland a new place, not a new name, if you feare such a *Backdoore*."[99] If the Scots were universally reviled, an editorial gag-reflex should have kicked in, preventing this argument from being made. But the Scots were never statically one thing, and their English meaning was usually defined by *English* contexts.

The position between sameness and difference that the Scots inhabited—and that made them useful and their meaning flexible—is best encapsulated in Bacon's terminology. He described them to the Commons as *alterinos*, or other ourselves: different in external lands and goods, but the same in mind and body.[100] A fine balance would therefore have to be maintained with regards to expansion, integration, and preservation if England was to unite with Scotland and become "one of the greatest monarchies, in forces truly esteemed, that hath been in the world."[101] In a collection of thoughts on the union that Bacon drew up for the king, he weighed the points of conjunction and separation between England and Scotland—a process he shared with Solicitor-General John Dodderidge's union treatise, also composed in 1604. Both men noted that the problem was one of equality and that neither the Scots nor the English could be left feeling aggrieved if a closer union was to be achieved.[102] Serious work was required to join the two peoples together, and if any issue was ignored, it could cause the entire project to collapse. To emphasize his point, Bacon explained that at least some laws dealing with British issues needed to be

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[95] Hayward, *A Treatise of Union*, 5; Cornwallis, *The Miraculous and Happie Union*, C₃r.

[96] Skinner, *Rapta Tatio*, F₄v.

[97] White, "Militant Protestants," 163.

[98] A Brief Replication to the Answere to the Obiections against the Union, Stowe MS 158, ff. 36ᵣ–37ᵦ, BL.

[99] Ibid., 39ᵥ.

[100] Spedding, *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, 315.

[101] Ibid., 323.

[102] Ibid., 218–34; Galloway and Levack, *The Jacobean Union*, 143–51.

harmonized, otherwise "libels may be devised and written in Scotland, and published and scattered in England," or "treasons may be plotted in Scotland and executed in England."[103] Notably, this is exactly what the Covenanters would do under Charles I a little over three decades later.

In a union treatise that he published in 1603, Bacon also said that only time and nature could cement an Anglo-Scottish union. A single name, language, law, and purpose should all be established (although he, like most, soon backed away from the idea of fully merging the two legal systems), but ultimately it was a matter of letting the greater draw the lesser.[104] For him, the Scots would not remain *alterinos* forever; they would eventually become fully same. Furthermore, because this process was one that only time could facilitate, Bacon's perspective only encouraged the English desire to focus on themselves and their own future in the meantime. Whether reactions were friendly or hostile, then, discussing the Scots was a way of getting back to England. Further union was not blocked by Scotophobia; it was prevented by an English disinclination actually to engage with Scotland.

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Commentary about Scotland isssued from a number of different venues, addressing precedents for James's perfect union, the Protestant imperial potential present in such a union, and the nature of English and Scottish sovereignty. Those who contributed to the union debates could either emphasize coming together, by envisioning the creation of Britain, or moving apart, by denying that such combination was possible or reverting sometimes to anti-Scottish diatribes. While different forums for debate did privilege certain perspectives, a common set of themes and differences of opinion were present everywhere, albeit with variations in argumentative depth and willingness to be critical. It was dangerous to be too rude about the Scots and potentially lucrative to argue for their acceptance, so self-censorship and personal agendas were going to come into play. Nevertheless, there were still questionable things said in print, as well as what appear to have been genuine moments of recognition that the Scots might prove useful as the English became more aggressive in the global arena.

Most of these discussions ultimately resolved themselves by writing around Scotland and the idea of Britain, and coming back to England itself. This was a trend that continued past 1607, and Christopher Ivic has observed that although John Speed's *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (1611) positioned itself in support of James's vision, the text cannot help but betray a certain level of anxiety as well. England and Scotland are shown embodied beside their maps, but Britain remains amorphous and unrealized in corporeal form. The only exception is the frontispiece, but here the Briton is an archaic and primitive man, meant to depict diversity and not provide a symbol of unification. Furthermore, the idea of Britain associated with him is one of the past and not of the present.[105] The reason, it has been argued, that Britain did not, and could not, materialize was because the English failed to

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[103] Ibid., 232.

[104] Bacon, *A Brief Discourse*.

[105] Christopher Ivic, "Mapping British Identities: Speed's Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine," in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge, 2002), 135–58.

find a partner with whom they could build her. This is not to say that Scotland was not present and willing to negotiate; rather, it is to conclude that the English were more interested in talking to themselves and about themselves than in engaging in a conversation between equals. This is because such a conversation would have threatened the common law, which was the very basis of English society. Moreover, English commentators could not even decide with what type of a people they were supposed to be having this conversation in the first place, and where the Scots fell on the gradient between sameness and difference. The shock of being forced into negotiations for a closer union with Scotland therefore initiated a conversation about partnership, but the narcissistic English gaze soon settled back onto that with which it was most comfortable. When Scotland did come up, it was an imagined Scotland, designed to serve English needs, and not the Scotland that actually sat across the border.

English perceptions of Scotland were therefore varied and utilitarian, but they were not, as a corpus, purely hostile. This is an essential distinction to make when understanding the Anglo-Scottish dynamic and the role that that dynamic played in other political negotiations throughout the century. Once we accept this, the "awkwardness" of the regal union starts to make more sense. The undefined and in-between position of the Scots is precisely the reason they appeared in so many guises in such a varied literature and also why they were able to phase in and out of view. It is also why English commentators were never wholly comfortable in approaching the Scots as a subordinate people, as they did with the Irish or even, at times, the Welsh. Anglo-Scottish relations during the regal union would therefore remain relatively calm and amicable until, at various moments, the Scots demanded to be heard on their own terms. At those moments, English commentators were forced to digest the Scottish presence anew and the issue of Britain could, and often did, become more pressing.