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Twin Souls: Monarchs and Favourites in Early Seventeenth-Century Spain

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I

Twin souls: monarchs and favourites in early seventeenth-century Spain

ANTONIO FEROS

In 'Of friendship', one of his most fascinating essays, Francis Bacon refers to what seemed to him a general phenomenon in Europe during his time: the existence of royal favourites.¹ Writing in the early seventeenth century, Bacon asserted that every man needs a friend and the same is true for monarchs. Certainly, monarchs have higher qualities and more important roles in the community than the rest, which in theory could deny them the opportunity to have friends, unless 'they raise some persons to be as it were companions and almost equals to themselves. . . The modern languages give unto such persons the name of *favourites*, or *privadoes*, as if it were matter of grace, or conversation.' Not only weak monarchs had favourites, but

also the wisest and most politic that ever reigned; who have oftentimes joined to themselves some of their servants, whom both themselves have called friends, and allowed others likewise to call them in the same manner, using the word which is received between private men.

Unlike Francis Bacon, modern historians have not paid particular attention to the language of friendship as it pertains to monarchs and their favourites in early modern Europe. In our own time, the notion of friend-

I would like to thank Professors Richard L. Kagan, J. G. A. Pocock, Orest Ranum and Sir John Elliott for their support and advice. I also owe a great deal to Irma T. Elo for her assistance, comments and inexhaustible support. All translations are mine unless otherwise attributed.

¹ Francis Bacon, 'Of friendship', in his *Essays*, ed. John Pitcher (Harmondsworth, 1985), p. 139. Written ca. 1607, 'Of friendship' first appeared in print in 1612. This paper represents a summary of parts of my doctoral dissertation, 'The king's favorite, the duke of

ship refers to a private association between individuals and the language used to describe it does not encompass the political connections these individuals have with the state and the society. Friends should be creatures of a private world, and when friendship and politics combine the result is usually perceived as corruption, the infringement of private interests on the public good.

Analysis of political culture must avoid what Dena Goodman describes as 'rigidly oppositional thinking that assumes two spheres or two discourses, one public and the other private'.² In seventeenth-century Spain, as elsewhere, various languages were used to talk and act politically. The language of friendship was among them and, as we shall see, it was central not only to Bacon's understanding of England's political reality, but also integral to Spanish political discourse during the first half of the seventeenth century.

I

In early modern Europe friendship referred to what we now know as a patron-client relationship,³ or to what was then defined as 'common friendship'. Such a friendship was one in which individuals helped each other as allies, protectors and advisers in an effort to improve their opportunities for advancement at court.⁴ In contrast, 'ideal friendship' was understood as 'the permanent union of the lives of two men' and as the perfect state towards which all men should strive.⁵ 'Nothing else in the whole world is so

Lerma: power, wealth and court culture during the Reign of Philip III', The Johns Hopkins University, 1994.

² Dena Goodman, 'Public sphere and private life: toward a synthesis of current historiographical approaches to the Old Regime', *History and Theory*, 31 (1992), 14.

³ On the increasing importance paid to the language of love and friendship to analyse patron-client relationships, see Maurice Aymard, 'Friends and neighbors', in *A history of private life. III: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1989), pp. 447-92; Sharon Kettering, 'Friendship and clientage in early modern France', *French History*, 6 (1992), 139-58; and Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic experience and the origins of modern culture: France, 1570-1715* (Berkeley, 1993), chapter 3.

⁴ Baldassare Castiglione, *El Cortesano* [Spanish edition by Boscán, 1534] (facsimile edition, Madrid, 1985), 1, pp. 148-9. For an English translation see *The book of the courtier*, ed. George Bull (London, 1967), pp. 137-9.

⁵ Marsilio Ficino, to Giovanni Cavalcanti, in *The letters of Marsilio Ficino*, ed. Oskar Kristeller (London, 1975), 1, letter 51, p. 96. In the following pages, I draw my argument and quotations from Spanish authors, or from authors who influenced Spanish ideas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There are many others who also addressed this topic, but I have attempted to keep the number of quotations to a minimum. On early modern

completely in harmony with nature', wrote Cicero, 'and nothing so utterly right, in prosperity and adversity alike.'⁶ The intimate and exclusive nature of the ideal amity made it, as Michel de Montaigne put it, 'indivisible: each one gives himself so wholly to his friend that he has nothing left to distribute elsewhere'.⁷ A friend was to share with the other his feelings and ideas and 'the occupation (whatever it is) that constitutes his existence, or makes life worth living'.⁸ True friendship was thus viewed as the communion of wills, a complete sharing of feelings and ideas, a fusion of the souls that transformed friends into 'one soul in two bodies'.⁹ This fusion of the souls, the human element that determines personality and outer image, allowed classical and early modern authors alike to assert that friends were identical. Seeing one's friend was akin to seeing one's own image in a mirror.¹⁰

This ideal friendship needed to be nourished through shared experiences and intimacy. Thomas Aquinas, for example, assured that 'living together is required for friendship as its proper act'. He added that friends tended to live together because of the 'likeness of friendship to sensual love, in which we observe that lovers desire most of all to see the persons they love. They prefer this sense, sight, to the other external senses because the passion of love begins especially by seeing ... and is preserved by this sense.'¹¹ In addition, friends had several obligations towards each other. In contrast to a flatterer (false friend), whose sole reason 'to court' the other is to obtain an

theories on ideal friendship, see Mark Morford's excellent book *Stoics and neostoics: Rubens and the circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, 1991), chapter 2.

⁶ Cicero, 'Laelius: on friendship', in *Cicero: on the good life*, ed. Michael Grant (London, 1971), p. 185. Cicero's essay on friendship was one of the most influential works in early modern Europe, including Spain; for the numerous editions of Cicero's 'On friendship' in Spain, see José Simón Díaz, 'Autores extranjeros traducidos al castellano en impresos publicados durante los siglos XV-XVII', *Cuadernos bibliográficos*, 40 (1980), 23-52.

⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, 1958), book 1, 28, pp. 140-1; on the influence of Montaigne in Spain, see Juan Marichal, 'Montaigne en España', *Nueva revista de filología hispánica*, 7 (1963). For similar remarks, see Juan Pérez de Moya, *Comparaciones o símiles para los vicios y las virtudes* (Alcalá, 1584), fos. 69r-73r.

⁸ Aristotle, *The nicomachean ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thomson (London, 1976), book ix, xii, p. 310.

⁹ Juan Luis Vives, *De anima et vita* [1538], in Juan Luis Vives, *Obras completas*, ed. Lorenzo Riber (Madrid, 1948), II, p. 1260; see also Cicero, 'On friendship', p. 187.

¹⁰ See, for example, Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi di amore*, Spanish trans. by Garcilaso de la Vega, el Inca, in 1590 (facsimile edition, Seville, 1989), fo. 20v. On Ebreo's influence in Spain, see M. Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas* (Madrid, 1974), chapter 6.

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the nicomachean ethics of Aristotle*, trans. C. I. Litzinger (Chicago, 1964), II, pp. 726, 854. See also Seneca, *Epistolae morales*, trans. Richard M. Gummere (London and New York, 1925), 1, letter ix, p. 49; Vives, 'Of both loves indistinctly', *De anima et vita*, II, p. 1261. In Spanish the words *amigo* and *amiga* also have the meaning of 'lover'; see Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* [1611] (facsimile edition, Madrid, 1984), pp. 109-10.

immediate benefit for himself, true friends offer trust and support at times of trouble.¹² A true friend is straightforward: he always tells the truth; he is companionable and congenial; he will not criticize or listen to other's criticism; and he will always defend his friend.¹³

These characteristics made true friends ideal companions at the court, which was often viewed as the locus of vicious feuds, a place where individuals depended on 'their faith in God's mercy and the help of loyal and prudent friends'.¹⁴ Even monarchs, it was said, needed the support of those who loved them, their friends, to help them weather moments of tension and frustration. During the sixteenth century, however, monarchs had two types of friends, a distinction that resulted from the theory of the king's two persons. 'Every Prince has two persons', wrote Fadrique Furió Ceriol in 1559, 'the first, the *natural person*, is a simple product of nature and its essence is the same as in other human beings. The other, the *public person*, is a reward of fortune and heaven created to govern and protect the public good.'¹⁵ This division helps to explain references to specific types of royal friends, among them, the royal counsellors, who – as expressed originally by Aristotle – 'must be friends of the monarch and of his government; if not his friends, they will not do what he wants'.¹⁶ Following Aristotle, sixteenth-century Spanish political writers attributed to royal counsellors some of the qualities that characterized ideal friends – truthfulness, loyalty to the interests of the monarch, *et cetera*. Yet the same writers recognized the obstacles that prevented these counsellors from becoming the monarch's true friends. For one thing, they were too many; for another, counsellors were supposed to be friends of the kingdom and obliged to defend its interests, even if they conflicted with those of the king. The council, states Furió Ceriol, is 'for the people as a father, as a tutor and curator. *Both, the king and the council, are God's vicars upon earth.*'¹⁷

¹² Cicero, 'On friendship', p. 191. See also Antonio de Guevara, *Avisos de privados y doctrina de cortesanos* (Valladolid, 1539), 'Introduction', which is a discourse on friendship.

¹³ Cicero, 'On friendship', p. 210.

¹⁴ Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Tratado de la tribulación* [1589], in *Obras escogidas del padre Pedro de Ribadeneira*, ed. Vicente de la Fuente (Madrid, 1944), p. 384.

¹⁵ Fadrique Furió Ceriol, *El concejo y consejeros del príncipe* [1559], ed. D. Sevilla Andrés (Valencia, 1952), p. 95; emphasis added.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *The politics*, ed. S. Everson (Cambridge, 1988), 1287b12–36; on Aristotle's presentation of the royal counsellors as the king's friends and *participes curarum*, see Frederick W. Conrad, 'A preservative against tyranny: the political theology of Sir Thomas Elyot' (doctoral thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 1988), esp. pp. 34–45. For a summary of the theories of Spanish writers about the role of the royal counsellors, see Feros, 'The sacred council', in 'The king's favorite'.

¹⁷ Furió Ceriol, *El Concejo*, p. 108, emphasis added; see also Juan López de Hoyos, *Real aparato y suntuoso recibimiento con que Madrid recibió a la serenísima reyna doña Ana de*

Better suited than the counsellors for the role of the king's ideal friend was the royal favourite or *privado*. In theory, his devotion to the monarch enabled him to defend the king's interests even against those of the kingdom. Moreover, by spending his time in the company of the monarch the *privado* developed an almost exclusive intimacy with the king that automatically transformed him into the friend of the king's natural person. It was this relationship between a king and his favourite, or *mignon*, that Johan Huizinga referred as 'sentimental friendship', a relationship that sixteenth-century monarchs liked to boast about in public, as Emperor Charles V did at the time of his abdication.¹⁸

Despite the apparent importance of this relationship, sixteenth-century political writers rarely refer to the royal favourite in terms of the king's ideal friend. Their reluctance to do so is difficult to explain, but it seems to have been connected with the notion that ideal friendship could not exist between two unequal individuals. If, as noted above, friendship led to equality between friends, how could a king have a friend and thus create another king? Thomas Aquinas made a similar point when he wrote that friendship was impossible between gods and humans as well as between kings and 'people in humbler walks of life'.¹⁹ In *The courtier*, Castiglione also recognized both the possibilities and the limitations of the *privado*'s role as the king's friend. The perfect courtier's main goal was to attract the attention of the prince in the hope of gaining 'the love of his master in such a complete way as to become his *privado*'.²⁰ But Castiglione was also aware that his prescription for the role of the *privado* touched upon the question of equality between two unequal individuals. I know, he wrote, 'that to talk of a courtier being conversant with his prince in this way *implies a certain equality that can hardly exist between a ruler and his servant*, but for the time being we shall let this go'.²¹

The difficulties of envisioning the existence of an individual equal to the monarch deterred political writers from depicting the relationship between the king and the favourite as a relationship between two ideal friends. Another hurdle impeding the portrayal of the favourite as the king's friend was the tendency of sixteenth-century monarchs to have more than one

Austria [1572] (facsimile edition, Madrid, 1976), fo. 28v, where the author called the counsellors 'fathers of the common-wealth'.

¹⁸ Johan Huizinga, *The waning of the Middle Ages* [1924] (English translation, New York, 1954), p. 54.

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on nicomachean ethics*, II, p. 738.

²⁰ Castiglione, *El Cortesano*, II, p. 115; *The book of the courtier*, p. 287.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 132; *The book of the courtier*, p. 125. Emphasis added.

favourite. As a result, writers tended to view royal favourites as counsellors of the king and sometimes, given their closeness with their masters, as the monarch's chief counsellors. In fact, during the reign of Philip II the word favourite or *privado* took on the meaning of chief counsellor.²² Marco Antonio Camos, for instance, could refer to 'the *privado*'s office' (*el oficio de privado*) in 1592, and claim that the royal favourite's privileged position rested on 'having been selected and approved by the King' to help him govern the monarchy.²³ The variety of meanings associated with the word *privado* at the end of sixteenth century is evident in Luis Cabrera de Córdoba's description of Cristóbal de Moura, Philip II's most influential minister and favourite during the 1590s. Cabrera de Córdoba refers to Moura as a member of the king's 'privy chamber', as a 'favourite', and also as 'a minister of higher authority (who assisted) the Prince out of love and fidelity... so that the King might enjoy respite from the responsibility of dealing with persons and affairs'.²⁴

How these different images of the royal favourite intermingled with the theory of the king's two persons and theories of friendship can be seen in Luis de Zapata's *De la amistad y amigos grandes de estos tiempos* ('On friendship and great friends of these times'), a chapter in his *Miscelánea*, written at the end of the sixteenth century.²⁵ After reviewing current theories on friendship, Zapata expresses his own ideas concerning the characteristics of the king's friend, using Emperor Charles V as an example. The emperor, Zapata wrote (pp. 184-5):

had Don Luis de Avila... as his *privado*... and this friendship (because love made them equal), that among princes is called *privanza*, lasted until they were old... Charles also had another great *privado*, Don Francisco de los Cobos... but this *privado* was different. Charles was like Alexander who also had two *privados*, Hephaestion and Craterus. During Alexander's time it was said that Craterus was the King's friend, and Hephaestion Alexander's friend. Thus, Cobos was the King's friend, and Don Luis de Avila was Charles' friend.

Zapata's ideas no doubt were rooted in the political culture of the sixteenth century, but his treatment of the two kinds of royal favourites – one the friend of the king's natural person, the other the friend of the king's

²² On this topic, see Feros, 'A new kind of favorite', in 'The king's favorite'.

²³ Marco Antonio Camos, *Microcosmia y gobierno universal del hombre christiano* (Barcelona, 1592), pp. 120-1. Emphasis added.

²⁴ Luis Cabrera de Córdoba, *Felipe segundo, rey de España* [1609] (4 vols., Madrid, 1876), II, p. 144; III, p. 217 and IV, pp. 65-6.

²⁵ Luis de Zapata, *Miscelánea*, in *Memorial histórico español*, XI (Madrid, 1859), pp. 182-7. I am grateful to Dr Fernando J. Bouza Alvarez for bringing Zapata's work to my notice.

public person – distinguished him from previous writers on this topic. Zapata also parted from his predecessors by making a clear distinction between the king's friend, who should be *one*, and the king's counsellors, who should be *many* (pp. 182–3). In other words, Zapata defended the idea that the king should have just *one* favourite and that this favourite could be depicted – despite the different qualities between the monarch and his subjects – as the king's sole friend.

II

After the turn of the century other writers also began to refer to the possibility of a friendship between two unequal individuals, and specifically to that between the monarch and the favourite, suggesting at the same time that such a friendship would benefit the whole kingdom. Juan Fernández de Medrano, for example, wrote that the king's many responsibilities required him to have 'a faithful friend [*amigo fiel*] . . . whose duties are to moderate the prince's passions, help him support the weight of government and tell him the truth'.²⁶ This redefinition of the political discourse concerning the royal favourites did not come about simply as the result of a linguistic evolution; it mirrored a changing political reality. As J. G. A. Pocock has reminded us, 'history consists of actions, events, and processes'.²⁷ Hence, in the analysis of the past we need not only to reconstruct different political languages and their evolution, but also to comprehend how political acts 'modify the contexts they are performed in, and how some of these modifications lead to the creation and diffusion of new languages and new contexts'.²⁸ In the case of the Spanish monarchy one political act definitely modified the political context, and thus the political discourse on royal favourites: Philip III's announcement, in September 1598, that he had a royal favourite, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, duke of Lerma (1552?–1625), and that the duke would play an important role in palace and governmental matters.

The duke of Lerma rose to power at the moment when one of the most

²⁶ Juan Fernández de Medrano, *República mixta* (Madrid, 1602), p. 83. Medrano dedicated his book to the duke of Lerma.

²⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, 'Texts as events: reflections on the history of political thought', in *Politics of discourse: the literature and history of seventeenth-century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley, 1987), p. 22.

²⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, 'The concept of a language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice', in *The languages of political theory in early-modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), p. 30. See also Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'History, historicism, and the social logic of the text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 59–86.

important characteristics of the Spanish kings, 'their invisibility, and indeed their sheer inaccessibility', was solidly established.²⁹ In this sense, Philip III was as invisible and inaccessible as his father Philip II. Educated in the grave court ceremonial imposed by his predecessor, Philip III preferred 'solitude, with very little court',³⁰ and he made it clear that access to his person and privy rooms was going to be even more difficult than during his father's reign.³¹ The political importance of Philip III's privacy was perfectly captured by an anonymous adviser who in 1598 affirmed that Philip II 'was obeyed and feared even when he had locked himself into his rooms', and that Philip III should do the same to establish his authority.³²

Philip III, however, did more than simply model himself after his father. During his lifetime, the king's inaccessibility evolved into an enduring political axiom, a veritable religion of state that distinguished the Spanish monarchy from its European counterparts. In effect, although other European monarchs tried to isolate themselves from public view and political pressure by retreating into an aristocratic milieu, this practice hardly replaced the accepted principle that good monarchs were public monarchs, accessible to their subjects and open to the advice of the body politic.³³ The French writer Pierre Mathieu, a contemporary of Philip III, observed the uniqueness of the Spanish monarchy when he noted that the French needed a visible and accessible king because otherwise they will believe that there is

²⁹ John H. Elliott, 'The court of the Spanish Habsburgs: a peculiar institution?', in his *Spain and its world, 1500-1700* (New Haven and London, 1989), p. 148. See also, Fernando Checa Cremades, 'Felipe II en El Escorial. La representación del poder real', in *El Escorial. Arte, poder y cultura en la corte de Felipe II* (Madrid, 1989), pp. 17-20; Javier Varela, *La muerte del rey. El ceremonial funerario de la monarquía española (1500-1885)* (Madrid, 1990), pp. 44-8; M. J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The court of Philip II of Spain', in *Princes, patronage, and the nobility: the court at the beginning of the modern age, c.1450-1650*, ed. Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke (Oxford, 1991), pp. 212-19; Fernando J. Bouza Alvarez, 'La majestad de Felipe II. Construcción del mito real' in *La corte de Felipe II*, ed. José Martínez Millán (Madrid, 1994), pp. 37-72; and Feros, 'The invisible king', in 'The king's favorite'.

³⁰ Simeone Contarini to the Venetian Senate, 1605; cf. Elliott, 'The court of the Spanish Habsburgs', p. 148.

³¹ On this topic, see Feros, 'Looking for intimacy', in 'The king's favorite'.

³² BNM, ms. 18275, 'Memorial que dieron al Duque de Lerma, cuando entró en el valimiento del sr. Rey Felipe III', fo. 2r.

³³ On this topic see, R. Malcom Smuts, 'Public ceremony and royal charisma: the English Royal Entry in London, 1485-1642', in *The first modern society: essays in English history in honour of Lawrence Stone*, ed. A. L. Beier, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge, 1989), p. 85; Orest Ranum, 'Courtesy, absolutism, and the rise of the French state, 1630-1660', *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980), 426-451. For the Russian case, see Valerie A. Kivelson, 'The devil stole his mind: the tsar and the 1648 Moscow uprising', *The American Historical Review*, 98 (1993), 733-56.

no king, while the Spaniards believed that the power of the royal majesty will increase when the king is invisible and inaccessible.³⁴

In the early seventeenth century Spanish political writers also wrote about this distinctive character of the Spanish kingship. Juan Fernández de Medrano, for example, advised the king not to let himself be seen by his subjects: 'it is a certain kind of religion to retire from your subjects. You should not become familiar with anyone, except with the person who is your oracle, because *Continuus aspectus verendo minos magnus homines ipsa societate facit*.' There were many historical examples to support this viewpoint, but Medrano selected the Emperor Tiberius as his model because he had lived '*Occultum, ac subdolum fingendis virtutibus*'.³⁵ As suggested by these precepts, the king's invisibility meant that the monarch should speak only with a small group of selected individuals. The author of *Discurso de las privanzas* suggested, for example, that if the king were to talk with all of his subjects he would lose their respect and obedience and, again using Tiberius as a model, further noted that 'in [Tiberius] times the only permitted way to address the prince was by writing, even when the prince was present'.³⁶ Silence rather than rhetoric was considered the ideal way for the Spanish king to establish his pre-eminence, because 'the death of a man is hidden under the tongue; for this reason, the king has to regard silence as the true guardian of his life'.³⁷ That Philip III understood the value of 'regal silence' is demonstrated by the advice he gave to his daughter Anne of Austria – queen of France through marriage to Louis XIII – 'speak as little as possible . . . because with words you can win a reputation but also lose it'.³⁸

³⁴ BNM, ms. 9078, 'Breve compendio i elogio de la vida del rey Don Phelipe segundo de felicissima memoria escrito en francés por Pierre Matiu choronista mayor del Reyno de Francia', fos. 32r-v; cf. Bouza Alvarez, 'La majestad de Felipe II', p. 51.

³⁵ Medrano, *República mixta*, p. 32. See also Baltasar Alamos de Barrientos, *Aforismos al tácito español* [1614], ed. J. A. Fernández-Santamaria (Madrid, 1987), 1, pp. 99–100, and Lorenzo Ramirez de Prado, *Consejo y consejeros de príncipes* [1617], ed. José Beneyto (Madrid, 1958), p. 24. These three books were dedicated to the duke of Lerma.

³⁶ 'Discurso de las privanzas', in Francisco de Quevedo, *Obras completas*, ed. Felicidad Buendía (Madrid, 1960), II, p. 1393.

³⁷ Francisco de Gurmendi, *Doctrina física y moral de príncipes* (Madrid, 1615), Book 1, chapter 6: 'De la importancia y excelencia del silencio', fo. 22v; Francisco de Gurmendi dedicated his book to the duke of Lerma.

³⁸ 'Instrucción que el rey Don Felipe III dio escrita de su mano a su hija la infanta doña Ana, cuando fue a ser Reina de Francia', in Antonio Rodríguez Villa, ed., 'Cartas autógrafas de Felipe III a su hija Doña Ana, Reina de Francia', *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos*, 1 (1897), 17. On the silence of England's Charles I as a way to rule his monarchy during the period of 'personal rule', see Kevin Sharpe, 'The king's writ: royal authors and royal authority in early modern England', in *Culture and politics in early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, 1993), pp. 131–4.

The reclusiveness of the Spanish monarchs and the principles that justified it helped to transform the king's chamber (or as the Spaniards called it at the time, the *retrete*, 'the most secret part of the house'), into 'a dreadful place where [the invisible] Power lurks'.³⁹ For those fighting for power and influence, however, the monarch's chamber was also the place to be. The monarch's invisibility had irrevocably altered the old meaning and function of the royal palace as 'the place where the king exercises justice personally, where he eats and talks with his subjects'.⁴⁰ Increasingly, the monarch's chamber came to be seen as the monarch's private space, a place where the monarch could withdraw accompanied only by a small, select group of servants. These servants were by definition intimate with the king; individuals who talked with the monarch, shared his thoughts, his ambitions, and ultimately his power.

Physical intimacy with the monarch became thus the key to success at court, and a political commodity that favourites and other palace officials used to their own advantage, transforming court politics into 'a politics of intimacy'.⁴¹ To gain intimacy with the monarch, however, one needed a palace office, especially one that offered to its holder access to the king's privy chamber. To understand these palace officials' potential for influence and power, it is important to consider how Spaniards themselves viewed the individuals commonly known as *palaciegos*. From our point of view, many palace servants carried out quite menial tasks, but – as pointed out by David Starkey – 'the numinous powers of a king – that god upon earth – transmuted the humblest act of personal attendance into something worthy of the best blood in the kingdom. With the king, the ordinary social conventions were actually inverted, and the more minutely personal the attendance, the more honourable it was.'⁴² To serve in the king's chamber, to have the

³⁹ These are the words used by Roland Barthes in his analysis of Racine's plays; see *On Racine*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992), pp. 3–4. On the importance of the court etiquette to limit access to the king's chamber and as instrument of distance, see Elliott, 'The court of the Spanish Habsburgs', pp. 146–54. On the meaning of the word *retrete* in seventeenth-century Spain, see Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*, 'Retrete'.

⁴⁰ For the old view of royal palace, see *Las siete partidas*, part II, tit. IX, law. xxix, 'Qué cosa es palacio'.

⁴¹ This term comes from David Starkey, 'Intimacy and innovation: the rise of the privy chamber, 1485–1547', in David Starkey *et al.*, *The English court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), p. 118.

⁴² David Starkey, 'Representation through intimacy', in *Symbols and sentiments*, ed. Ioan Lewis (London, 1977), p. 213. This was exactly the meaning of Luis de Zapata's assertion: 'to serve the monarchs, help them dress and put on their spurs is something that belongs only to great lords and princes', in Zapata, *Miscelánea*, p. 97.

opportunity to help the king in his most intimate actions, was for the philosopher Juan Luis Vives the same as 'to be invited to eat at the gods' table'.⁴³ For many Spaniards, in fact, palace offices were far more important and coveted than those of royal secretaries and council presidents, as is illustrated by the count of Portalegre's advice to his son:

As far as peacetime offices go, be advised that palace offices have an advantage over the rest. They might seem less weighty, but they do not hinder, indeed they nourish and facilitate, possibilities of advancement ... because the prince has more knowledge of those who are in his presence.⁴⁴

No one was in a better position to discern the importance of the palace offices than Philip III's favourite, the duke of Lerma, who arranged to be appointed *sumiller de corps* (groom of the stole) in December 1599.⁴⁵ The *sumiller de corps*, as the head of the privy chamber and thus as the king's closest servant,⁴⁶ had as his most important practical function – and certainly the one that gave this office its eminence – to assist the king during the *lever* and *coucher*, and while the king ate in his privy chamber.⁴⁷ Palace etiquette explicitly established that the king 'should never withdraw from the sight' of the *sumiller de corps*, who must always accompany the king in public audiences, visits to the queen's chamber, public ceremonies, and when the king retires to his privy chamber.⁴⁸ Hence, the *sumiller de corps* was viewed as the most important of the palace functionaries because he was 'more continuously in the king's presence and conversed with the king more frequently than others, and he was always the king's most secret counselor'.⁴⁹ Some seventeenth-century authors even likened the *sumiller de corps*, or the *camarero mayor*, to the king's 'brother' with whom the monarch

⁴³ Vives, *Exercitatio linguae latine* [1538], dialogue XVIII, 'Regia', in his *Obras completas*, II, p. 945.

⁴⁴ 'Instrucción de don Juan de Silva, conde de Portalegre, quando envió a don Diego, su hijo, a la corte' (n.p., n.d.), fo. 17r. The original manuscript was written in 1592; on this instruction and in general on Portalegre, see Bouza Alvarez, 'Corte es decepción. Don Juan de Silva, conde de Portalegre' in *La corte de Felipe II*, pp. 451–502.

⁴⁵ Archivo General del Palacio Real (AGPR), Expedientes Personales, 548/4.

⁴⁶ Officially the titular of the privy chamber was the *camarero mayor* (the grand chamberlain), but from the second half of the sixteenth century Spanish kings never appointed a grand chamberlain, passing the responsibility of the privy chamber to the groom of the stole.

⁴⁷ On the palace etiquette and offices, see Antonio Rodríguez Villa, *Etiquetas de la casa de Austria* (Madrid, 1913), and Elliott, 'The court of the Spanish Habsburgs', pp. 143–7.

⁴⁸ Villa, *Etiquetas*, p. 48.

⁴⁹ Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Libro de la cámara real del príncipe don Juan*, ed. J. M. Escudero (Madrid, 1870), p. 14.

shared everything and also the king's 'companion and friend, whom [the king] will ask for advice on all matters'.⁵⁰

As *sumiller de corps* Lerma was both the closest person to and the principal servant of Philip III's natural person; but as the king's favourite he also became the closest person to and the principal minister of Philip III's public person. Lerma's political power became evident when, immediately after his confirmation as the king's favourite, he was given responsibility to control the day-to-day administration of the monarchy. Lerma became in fact the vital conduit between Philip III and his councils, and he alone had the right to consult in person with the king. In turn, Philip III's other servants could only communicate with the king on paper, through written *consultas*.⁵¹ Lerma's role as an intermediary between Philip III and the royal institutions transformed the way in which affairs of state were managed. Hence, if until Philip III's reign the royal institutions received their orders through communiqués signed by the monarch, during Lerma's *privanza*, from September 1598 to October 1618, debates in the royal institutions began only upon the receipt of Lerma's *billetes*, the notes through which the duke transmitted Philip III's orders.⁵² In October 1612 Philip III made this practice, which had operated informally until then, explicit in an order sent to the council of State, and most likely to others as well:

Since I have known the duke of Lerma, I have always seen him serve the king my lord and father [Philip II], and me with much contentment from both. Every day I am more satisfied with how he handles all matters I ask of him, and how well-served I feel. Given this and how much he has helped me sustain the weight of state affairs, I order that you obey the duke in all matters. All members of the council are obliged to tell him all he wants to know, and although this system began from the moment I inherited these kingdoms, I have decided explicitly to tell and order you now.⁵³

⁵⁰ Miguel Yelgo de Vázquez, *Estilo de servir a príncipes, con ejemplos morales para servir a Dios* (Madrid, 1614), fo. 15v. As *sumiller de corps*, Lerma was also in charge of controlling entry to the king's chamber, a role perfected thanks to his functions as *caballerizo mayor* (master of the horse), an office he obtained in August 1598. See AGPR, Expedientes Personales, 548/4. Thus, inside and outside of the royal palace it was impossible to see or talk with Philip III without first confronting the figure of the duke of Lerma, the shadow of the king.

⁵¹ On the government of the monarchy during Philip III's reign and the role of Lerma, see Feros, 'The art of ruling', in 'The king's favorite'.

⁵² There are thousands of *billetes* Lerma sent to the councils and other royal institutions among the papers produced during the reign of Philip III. The last *billete* with these characteristics I have found was written on 30 September 1618, just a few days before Lerma's dismissal from power on 4 October 1618. Lerma always began his *billetes* with the phrase: 'The king orders ...', and the royal institutions responded accordingly: 'Complying with what the King has ordered through the duke of Lerma'.

⁵³ AGS, Est., leg. 4126, fo. 59: 'Copia de lo que Su Majd. ordenó al Consejo de Estado por Octubre 1612 tocante al Duque de Lerma'. This document has been published by Francisco

The political problem that Lerma and his supporters had to confront was how to justify the duke's role. At the time, many political writers found it difficult to defend the fact that a royal favourite was managing the affairs of state with the blessing of the monarch himself. Most early seventeenth-century writers believed that royal power 'had to be exercised personally' by the king,⁵⁴ and considered the notion of a king delegating his sovereignty to one of his subjects a contradiction in terms. The Jesuit Francisco Suárez noted in the same year, 1612, that a monarch could not delegate sovereignty to another individual. To do so, he wrote, the king would create two monarchs, it would be 'like having a body with two heads, a monstrous result that could only harm the government of the realm'. Suárez also claimed that the monarch could not even delegate the daily administration of the kingdom to others, because '[t]he crown is the responsibility of the monarch ... and [he] cannot neglect that responsibility or delegate it to someone else; he cannot separate the power of sovereignty from his duty to rule the kingdom'.⁵⁵

Confronted with such ideas, Lerma's supporters found other ways to justify the duke's role in the government of the monarchy, turning in particular to the language and concepts of friendship. An important milestone in this regard was a pamphlet, *Discurso del perfecto privado*, written in 1609 by Lerma's confessor, Pedro de Maldonado.⁵⁶ Dedicating the first few paragraphs of his pamphlet to the concept of friendship, Maldonado asked whether common precepts of friendship could describe the relationship between a king and his favourite. Maldonado believed strongly in the importance of friends for monarchs and argued vehemently against those who claimed that the king should not have a friend. The rest was relatively easy because, given the hierarchy of the court at the time, if the monarch could have a friend this could only be the royal favourite. 'The *privado*', Maldonado wrote, '[is] a man whom [the king] has chosen among the rest for a particular kind of equality based on love and friendship, and with whom the king discusses all matters' (fo. 2r).

Tomás y Valiente, *Los validos en la monarquía española del siglo XVII* (Madrid, 1982), p. 157. On the political context of Philip III's decree, see Feros, 'Losing control', in 'The king's favorite'.

⁵⁴ Richard Bonney, 'Absolutism: what's in a name?' *French History*, 1 (1987), 99.

⁵⁵ Francisco Suárez, *De Legibus* [1612], ed. L. Pereña *et al.* (Madrid, 1971-7), v, pp. 119-21.

⁵⁶ BNM, ms. 6778, Pedro de Maldonado, *Discurso del perfecto privado* [1609]; Maldonado presents himself as Lerma's confessor to whom he dedicated his work. Maldonado's *Discurso* was never printed, but it had an enormous influence on all subsequent works on royal favourites; on the influence of Maldonado's 'Discurso', see Tomás y Valiente, *Los validos*, pp. 131 ff. Further references in the text.

In a few brief pages, Maldonado revolutionized the way others wrote about royal favourites and it greatly helped those who wanted to legitimize the political role of the royal favourite. Maldonado's definition of the favourite, for instance, deeply influenced many of the plays written after 1609. 'Great friend of mine', 'particular friend', 'confidant of the secrets of my soul', and 'I will make you my equal', are only a few examples of how kings addressed their favourites in many of these plays. A typical example of this kind of dialogue is found in Mira de Amescua's *Comedia famosa de Ruy López de Avalos, o primera parte de Don Alvaro* in which the characters are King John II of Castile (1406-1454) and his favourite Alvaro de Luna (1385?-1453). After promising each other 'their most loyal and pure friendship', King John asks Alvaro de Luna: 'If you were the king what would you give me as a proof of your love?'

Alvaro de Luna: My *potestas* would be yours,/ you would be king;/ I would be a mute statue/ following your will,/ my being would unite with yours,/ and both together our two natures would look like one/ and thus, I would not give you anything,/ because already you would be the absolute master of the kingdom and me.⁵⁷

The opinions of Mira de Amescua on the absolute equality between monarchs and favourites were more extreme than those of other contemporary political authors. Most of Lerma's supporters in fact refrained from such language in order to avoid charges that Lerma was usurping the king's prerogatives. They simply wanted to demonstrate that a special relationship between the monarch and his favourite did not necessarily imply that the latter should be viewed and treated as another king. Gil González Dávila used this particular concept of the royal favourite as the king's unequal partner in a mutual friendship to define the relationship between the duke of Lerma and Philip III. In explaining Lerma's rise to power, for example, González Dávila noticed that:

the King declared his grace to the marquis-duke, and asked Lerma to help him with affairs of state given that Lerma was his Friend, which is the major honour that a king can give to one of his subjects. In all the papers of the King answering Lerma's

⁵⁷ Antonio Mira de Amescua, *Comedia famosa de Ruy López de Avalos (Primera parte de don Alvaro de Luna)*, ed. N. E. Sánchez-Arce (Mexico, 1965), p. 61. For plays on favourites, see Mary Austin Cauvin, 'The *Comedia de Privanza* in the seventeenth century' (doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1957); Raymond MacCurdy, *The tragic fall: don Alvaro de Luna and other favorites in Spanish golden drama* (Chapel Hill, 1978), and Luis Caparrós Esperante, *Entre validos y letrados. La obra dramática de Damián Salucio del Poyo* (Valladolid, 1987).

reports, and I have seen many, the King always signs *Your Friend*, and the duke always responds with these words, *Humble Slave of Your Majesty*.⁵⁸

But, if the favourite was a lesser partner in relation to the monarch, that did not discourage political writers from present a quite appealing view of the roles reserved to the favourite in the ruling of the monarchy. Maldonado, for example, claimed that the favourite was 'the best part of the king' (*la más rica parte del Rey*) (fo. 2r.), and that an honourable favourite was more crucial than a good king for the well-being of the community. This is why the *privado* should be helped by good advisers since 'the favourite has the same duties as the king [towards the kingdom]' (fo. 3v). The *privado* in fact appeared as the essential intermediary between the king and the kingdom,⁵⁹ 'the neck through which the king (the head) communicates his virtues and goodness to other members of this *corpus mysticum*' (fo. 7r). He became the monarch's chief counsellor or prime minister, a kind of 'philosopher-favourite' modelled after the 'Philosopher Plato' in his role as Dionysus' counsellor.⁶⁰ In this role, Pedro de Maldonado noted, the favourite's task was not only to help the king govern the monarchy, but also to make certain that the monarch did not shrink from his obligations towards the community (fos. 7r-16r).

More important is that in using the concept of the favourite as the king's friend, political writers could present new images in support of the royal favourite that would have been inconceivable in former times. All humans had the right to have a friend and the monarch as a private individual also possessed this right, explained the duke of Uceda, Lerma's oldest son, in 1622. But, because the monarch was also a public person, the head of the community, his friend-favourite could also speak in the king's name, because:

in all matters the favourite, we have to suppose, is only a mere executor of the king's will, and thus no one can limit the favourite's actions in public life [*en lo exterior y público*] because every time the favourite leaves the king's chamber [*retrete*] he is an incarnation of the prince [*viene su príncipe transformado en él*].⁶¹

The favourite 'is his master's voice in all matters concerning the community, not because of his office but because he is the incumbent of his master's favour', and no one has the right to interfere with the favourite's activities

⁵⁸ Gil González Dávila, *Historia de la vida y hechos del inclito monarca, amado y santo Don Felipe Tercero* (Madrid, 1771), p. 40. This book, although published in 1771 was completed in the 1620s to 1630s.

⁵⁹ 'Discurso de las privanzas', II, p. 1393. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II, p. 1396.

⁶¹ BNM, ms. 11569, 'Memorial del pleito contra el duque de Uceda', fo. 220r.

just as no one has the right to interfere with the king's actions.⁶² Hence, when the favourite recommended a course of action or when he ordered something, it was not because he had usurped the king's power but because he was the king's other self. The monarch and his favourite – as one of Lerma's supporters noted in a reference to Philip III and Lerma – just had similar wills and natures because 'they are joined together as if they were only one'.⁶³

III

This new conception of the favourite as the monarch's ideal friend did not go unchallenged. The *privanza* of the duke of Lerma, especially after 1614, was in fact threatened by the attempts of Lerma's foes to recast and control the political discourse on favourites with arguments aspiring to demonstrate that the existence of a royal favourite depicted as the king's friend undermined the integrity of the Spanish political system itself. Fray Juan de Santa María's *República y policía christiana* (1615) was the finest example of these efforts.⁶⁴ Given that favourites were products of the king's pleasure, Santa María noted that the mere fact of being selected as a favourite transformed the individual into a friend of the king. 'But, friendship can only exist between two equals and for this reason it seems to me impossible that one of the king's subjects could be his friend' (pp. 281–2). If a king has a friend-favourite, the king and the kingdom face two dangers, both with deadly consequences. In having a friend, the king 'lowers himself to the level of his subject making him his equal. The king is and should be the head of the body politic, and he cannot diminish the sovereignty God has given him by becoming equal with one of his subjects' (p. 282). Alternatively, if the king has a friend-favourite he may 'aggrandize his friend' and thus create a monster, a body politic with two heads. To avoid this horrifying fate, Santa María advised the king to have *many* favourites who could help him. But do not let them, Santa María advised, have any say in matters of justice and government, and always remember that the advice of your favourites is not as important as that of 'your wise counsellors and councils' (p. 295).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Francisco Fernández de Caso, *Oración gratulatoria al capelo del ilustrísimo y excelentísimo señor cardenal duque* (n.p., 1618).

⁶⁴ Fray Juan de Santa María was an active player in the opposition against Lerma before and after 1618. His book became a best-seller with editions in Madrid (1615), Barcelona (1617, 1618, 1619), Valencia (1619), Lisbon (1621) and Naples (1624), and was translated into English in 1632, during Charles I's personal rule, under the title *Christian Policie*. I used the edition published in Naples in 1624; further references in the text.

Not surprisingly, Lerma tried to impede the distribution of Santa María's book, although in the end his efforts to do so were counterproductive because they only increased attention on Santa María and his ideas.⁶⁵ But, even if Lerma had managed to silence Santa María, he still had to confront a series of books and pamphlets which also claimed that the existence of *one* friend-favourite was detrimental to the well-being of the community. This was certainly the case with Francisco de Quevedo's *Política de Dios y gobierno de Cristo* (1617), which explicitly attacked weak monarchs and 'evil favourites'.⁶⁶ All monarchs, claimed Quevedo, and especially weak monarchs, should remember that Jesus did not let 'one of his followers be superior to the rest'. Jesus did not have 'favourites but disciples'; the king should not have favourites but simply subjects (pp. 602–3, 623). Moreover, a monarch has to remember that 'he is a public person and that his crown represents his duty towards his kingdom' (pp. 635–6). Recalling the temptations suffered by Jesus when he retired to the desert, Quevedo assures that the king who is alone becomes dominated by one of his subjects, by one Satan who soon will ask the monarch 'to kneel before him, to adore him . . . He will try to change his role of a servant for that of the master, and transform his master into a simple servant' (p. 649).

These arguments, sharpened after Lerma's downfall in October 1618 and again after Philip III's death in March 1621, convinced the new king, Philip IV, and the new favourite, the count of Olivares (soon to be count-duke), that they needed to approach the topic of royal favourites from a new perspective.⁶⁷ An illustrative example of this new approach was *Discurso sobre los privados y cómo se ha de gobernar el príncipe con ellos* ('Discourse on the *privados* and how the prince should behave towards them'), a pamphlet written by an anonymous author in the last months of 1621.⁶⁸ Focusing on the monarch's need to rule with the advice of his subjects, the author noted that in former times those who counselled the monarch were known as the king's friends, but that in modern times these counsellors are called *privados* (151r–v). There were, however, various kinds of *privados*. Because the monarch has two persons, as the *king* he should have a 'political or civil' *privado* with whom he has to discuss all matters of government. This

⁶⁵ See Juan de Vitrián, *Las memorias de Felipe de Comines con escolios propios* (Antwerp, 1643), II, p. 414. I am grateful to Julio A. Pardos Martínez for bringing Vitrián's book to my notice.

⁶⁶ Francisco de Quevedo, *Política de dios y gobierno de Cristo*, in his *Obras completas*, I, pp. 599–655; the first part of this work was written in 1617, although it was not published until 1626 when it was dedicated to Philip IV and the count-duke of Olivares.

⁶⁷ On how criticism against Lerma affected Olivares, see John H. Elliott, *Richelieu and Olivares* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 34–5.

⁶⁸ BNM, ms. 17772/6. References to folios in the text.

'political *privado*' was no doubt the best kind of favourite, although he should never become the monarch's sole source of counsel. As a *man*, the king could also have a '*familiar*' favourite, whom the king should love and esteem but with whom he should not discuss matters of government. The final type of favourite, and the worst, was 'the *personal* favourite', a favourite who played both roles, the friend of the king's two persons and who – due to his enormous power and influence over his master – could destroy the king and the kingdom, as had happened during the reign of Philip III (1514–2152r).⁶⁹

Adhering to these principles during the first years of his *privanza* Olivares kept himself as Philip IV's familiar favourite, while Olivares' uncle, Baltasar de Zúñiga, occupied the role of chief minister.⁷⁰ Even more revealing is that from 1622, following Zúñiga's death in October, Olivares 'had every inducement to disclaim for himself the title of favourite'. Olivares' desire was to be identified as 'a "minister" – the king's "faithful minister" – emphasizing the official, and not the personal, character of the high position' he had assumed.⁷¹ To understand Olivares' approach to the topic of favourites and how his ideas affected the political discourse, one needs only to compare Mira de Amescua's *Comedia famosa de Ruy López de Avalos*, in which the favourite is depicted as an ideal friend of the king, his equal, and Francisco de Quevedo's *Cómo ha de ser el privado*, in which the royal favourite Valisero – an anagram of Olivares – is characterized as the king's faithful minister, his humble and obedient servant fully cognizant of his lesser stature.⁷²

This is not to say that during Olivares' *privanza* all things changed. If anything, both political practice and discourse under Olivares showed more continuity than discontinuity.⁷³ For instance, many of the theories and

⁶⁹ The Flemish author Carolus Scribani defended similar theories in his *Politico-christianus* (Antwerp, 1624), a book he dedicated to Philip IV; see Robert Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation prince: anti-machiavellianism or catholic statecraft in early modern Europe* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990), pp. 174–5.

⁷⁰ See John H. Elliott, *The count-duke of Olivares: the statesman in an age of decline* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp. 42–3.

⁷¹ Elliott, *The count-duke of Olivares*, p. 169; see also Elliott's *Richelieu and Olivares*, pp. 39–40.

⁷² On Francisco de Quevedo's *Cómo ha de ser el privado*, see Elliott, 'Quevedo and the count-duke of Olivares', in Elliott's *Spain and its world*, pp. 189–209.

⁷³ For a comparison between Lerma's and Olivares' behaviour, see Antonio Feros, 'Lerma y Olivares: la práctica del valimiento en la primera mitad del seiscientos', in *La España del conde-duque de Olivares*, ed. John H. Elliott and Angel García Sanz (Valladolid, 1990), pp. 197–224; for the continuity of the theories on royal favourites during Olivares' *privanza*, see 'Epilogue' in Feros, 'The king's favorite'.

concepts used by Lerma's supporters to describe the royal favourite were used by Olivares' supporters, and in 1641 Olivares received a book entitled *El privado christiano* which reproduced, word by word, Maldonado's definition of the *privado*.⁷⁴ Continuity also characterized the rhetoric of the opposition that emerged against the count-duke of Olivares, who – after trying to disassociate himself from the negative elements linked to royal favourites – had to contend with criticisms similar to those that Lerma had previously endured. Their opponents agreed, for instance, on the favourites' desire not only to control the monarchs but also to become monarchs themselves. Hence, Lerma was often accused of being 'the real king', while Philip III was urged to become 'the king' and imitate his father Philip II.⁷⁵ Similarly, Olivares was denounced as a tyrant and usurper, as 'a count who is a king', while Philip IV was depicted as 'a person whom the count-duke seeks to conserve in order to make use of the office of king – a mere ceremonial ruler'.⁷⁶

These attacks against Lerma and Olivares uncovered the Achilles' heel of those theories which likened royal favourites to protective shields that enabled their masters to remain aloof from political controversy. As pointed out by numerous seventeenth-century political writers and as practice itself demonstrated, attacks against royal favourites had immediate repercussions for their masters.⁷⁷ Even worse, royal favourites became, as the duke of Rohan, a French aristocrat, put it 'the pretext for all the quarrels that occur' in a monarchy.⁷⁸ During the last years of his *privanza* Olivares was in fact depicted as the root of all evils, and his policies and attitudes were denounced as the spark that initiated the revolts of Catalonia and Portugal against Philip IV.⁷⁹

The picture of a monarchy crumbling into pieces forced many royalist writers to assert that the preservation of personal monarchy – what Juan de Vitrián called 'the despotic government of the monarchy' – required monarchs to redefine the public role of the royal favourite.⁸⁰ Early modern political writers were aware of the importance of reputation for monarchical rule and they consequently advised princes to be mindful of how their

⁷⁴ José Laynez, *El privado christiano* (Madrid, 1641), p. 25.

⁷⁵ On condemnations of the Duke of Lerma and criticism against Philip III, see Feros, 'The king's favorite', chapter 6 and epilogue.

⁷⁶ Elliott, *The count-duke of Olivares*, p. 316, and *Richelieu and Olivares*, p. 101.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Barrientos, *Aforismos al tácito español*, I, p. 312.

⁷⁸ Cf. J. H. M. Salmon, 'Rohan and the reason of state', in Salmon, *Renaissance and revolt* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 106.

⁷⁹ See Elliott, *The count-duke of Olivares*, chapters 14–15.

⁸⁰ Vitrián, *Las memorias de Felipe de Comines*, I, p. 284.

subjects perceived them.⁸¹ As the Jesuit Juan de Mariana had reminded Philip III in 1599, 'in government, as in public life, the opinions of the people have more influence than the reality. When prestige dies, so does power.'⁸² Similarly political writers in the 1630s and 1640s believed that Philip IV had to present himself as a flawless 'divinity', a paragon of perfection, if he wanted to avoid weakening his authority. True, no one – not even a king – was totally free of weaknesses, but in those circumstances the best attitude was to conceal them.⁸³ Perhaps the monarch, like other human beings, needed favourites-friends to support him in moments of frustration and help him to cope with his duties, but to have favourites invariably brought forth contempt. The monarch could solve this dilemma, however, if he relegated his favourites to the shadows of the royal palace, by keeping them as friends and *bon compagnons* of the king's natural person. For his part, the monarch had to monopolize the public sphere as the glorious head of his kingdoms. As Vitrián alleged, in the universe there was only one God, in each household one master, in each body one soul; the monarch 'as a human god, the master and the soul of the body politic' can only be one.⁸⁴

Philip IV, after the experience of Olivares' *privanza*, understood that a public favourite was a political liability, a sign of personal weakness and an invitation for anyone seeking to challenge his authority. Yet it was not a question of eliminating royal favourites entirely, but of determining how favourites were to be presented in public and their roles in the monarch's public affairs. Philip IV referred to these matters in a letter to Sor María de Agreda, one of his spiritual counsellors, in January 1647. Reminding her that even the wise and prudent Philip II had a select group of servants to help him rule the monarchy, Philip IV assured her that 'this kind of government has taken place in all monarchies – ancient and modern – since in all of them monarchs have had a principal minister or a close servant', who helped their masters to rule the kingdom because it could not be done without assistance. Philip also acknowledged that he still had a favourite. After Olivares, he asserted, 'it is true that I gave my confidence and approval to one of my servants [don Luis de Haro] who grew up with me'.

⁸¹ See Quentin Skinner's introduction to Machiavelli's *The prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge, 1988), pp. xx–xxiii.

⁸² Juan de Mariana, *De rege et regis institutione*, ed. Luis Sánchez Agesta (Madrid, 1981), p. 44.

⁸³ Baltasar Gracián, *The art of worldly wisdom* [1647], trans. Martin Fischer (New York, 1993), p. 23.

⁸⁴ Vitrián, *Las memorias de Felipe de Comines*, I, p. 31, and II, p. 114.

But he qualified this admission by claiming that 'I always *refused to give him [Haro] the character and name of minister* to avoid the past troubles.'⁸⁵

Philip IV's words signalled the beginning of a new era marked by the disappearance of favourites perceived both as the king's ideal friend and as the king's chief minister. The era of omnipotent favourites such Lerma and Olivares was over.⁸⁶ Similar developments occurred in other European monarchies, notably in France where opposition to Louis XIV's chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin, helped to trigger the Fronde.⁸⁷ Chastened by this experience, Louis XIV promised himself never to permit the emergence of figures similar to Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin. What 'makes for the greatness and the majesty of kings', he wrote in his *Mémoires*, 'is not so much the sceptre that they bear as the manner in which they bear it ... [and thus there is] nothing more shameful than to see on the one hand all the functions and on the other the mere title of king'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Philip IV to Sor Maria de Agreda, January 1647; cf. Tomás y Valiente, *Los validos*, pp. 172–3. Emphasis added.

⁸⁶ After Olivares' fall there were royal favourites in Spain, but none of them reached the power and influence enjoyed by Lerma and Olivares. See I. A. A. Thompson, 'The government of Spain in the reign of Philip IV', in his *Crown and Cortes: government, institutions and representation in early-modern Castile* (Aldershot, 1993), chapter 4, pp. 57 ff., and Tomás y Valiente, *Los validos*, pp. 15–31. See also Robert Stradling, *Philip IV and the government of Spain, 1621–1665* (Cambridge, 1988), chapters 9 and 10.

⁸⁷ On the Fronde, see now Orest Ranum, *The Fronde: a French revolution* (New York and London, 1993).

⁸⁸ Louis XIV, *Mémoires for the instruction of the dauphin*, ed. and trans. Paul Sonnino (New York, 1970), p. 31; see also pp. 238–40.