

The Progress of the Virgin: The Construction of Elizabeth I

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This thesis investigates the construction of Queen Elizabeth I's Virgin Queen persona, exploring her affiliation with virginity across her reign, from her ascent to the throne, throughout her marriageable years, and during her transformation into the Virgin Queen. It shall examine who had control over her public image and determine viable reasons for the persona's emergence, including its value as both an imperial and nationalistic image. The first chapter shall establish Elizabeth's religious image as a precursor to the latter Virgin Queen, as both sought to establish national unity under the central image of monarchy. This, and the contemporary reception of her religious settlement, will be examined through a study of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. The second chapter shall gauge Elizabeth's apparent commitment to virginity and reluctance to marry, resulting in the emergence of the Virgin Queen image. Through studying two reinterpretations of the Judgement of Paris story, the painting *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* and George Peele's *The Araygnement of Paris*, it shall demonstrate how Elizabeth's image became imbued with allegorical symbolism pertaining to virginity, and its evolution across her reign. The third chapter explores Elizabeth's own literary and artistic output, recognising how the public Virgin Queen emerged as she adapted to her role as queen in a historically patriarchal society.

Contents

List of illustrations

List of abbreviations

Acknowledgements

Introduction 1

The outline 17

Chapter i

A martyr to martyrdom 35

Restoring the state religion 39

The issue of the cross 46

The first edition of *Acts and Monuments* 51

William Cecil 58

The image of Elizabeth in print 61

The second edition of *Acts and Monuments* 78

Interpreting the truth 86

Chapter ii

Elizabeth of Troy 99

Mary I 103

‘The Clopton Portrait’ 109

“I am Richard II, know ye not that?” 112

Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses 116

Analysis of the painting 126

Elizabeth’s marriageability 132

Recognition as the Virgin Mary 136

The Phoenix emblem 141

Variation on a theme 146

Continuation on a theme 160

Chapter iii

Elizabeth the writer 170

The model student 172

Family correspondences 181

Addressing the accession 187

The Queen of Scots 199

The final marriage negotiation 212

The Armada and the aftermath 216

Elizabeth’s ‘Golden’ image 225

Conclusion 241

Bibliography 287

List of illustrations

- Fig.1: Matt Collishaw. *The Mask of Youth*. Queen's House. April-September 2018 · 33
Including *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Armada Portrait'), the 'Drake' version, artist unknown, c.1588, Royal Museums Greenwich · 34
- Fig.2: The Frontispiece to the Bishops' Bible (copy), 1568, The Royal Collection Trust · 95
- Fig.3: The Frontispiece to the Great Bible, 1539, The Royal Collection Trust · 96
- Fig.4: The initiated 'C' ('Elisabetha Regina') from *Acts and Monuments*, 1563, The Royal Collection Trust · 97
- Fig.5: *Mary I*, Hans Eworth, 1554, Society of Antiquaries of London · 98
- Fig.6: *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Clopton Portrait'), artist unknown, 1558, private collection · 164
- Fig.7: *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Coronation Portrait'), artist unknown, c.1600, National Portrait Gallery, London · 165
- Fig.8: *Richard II*, artist unknown, mid 1390s, Westminster Abbey · 166
- Fig.9: *The Wilton Diptych*, artist unknown, c.1395, National Gallery, London · 167
- Fig.10: *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*, attributed to Hans Eworth, 1569, The Royal Collection Trust · 168
- Fig.11: *Queen Elizabeth I* ('Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses'), attributed to Isaac Oliver, c.1590, National Portrait Gallery, London · 169
- Fig.12: Elizabeth's translation of *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, 1544, Bodleian Library, Oxford · 237
- Fig.13: The presentation copy of Elizabeth's translation of *Prayers and Medytacions*, 1545, The British Library · 238
- Fig.14: *Elizabeth I when a Princess*, William Scrots, c.1546, The Royal Collection Trust · 239
- Fig.15: The inscription in Elizabeth's French book of Psalms, 1558, The Royal Collection Trust · 240
- Fig.16: *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Darnley Portrait'), artist unknown, c.1575, National Portrait Gallery, London · 284
- Fig.17: *Sieve Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I*, Quentin Metsys the younger, 1583, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Sienna · 285
- Fig.18: *Elizabeth I* ('The Ditchley Portrait'), Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, c.1592, National Portrait Gallery, London · 286

List of abbreviations and frequently cited names

BL: British Library

Cecil: William Cecil, First Baron Burghley

Grey: Lady Jane Grey, the ‘Nine Days Queen’

Hertford: Edward Seymour, First Earl of Hertford

MS: Manuscript

Parr: Katherine Parr, sixth and last wife of Henry VIII

PRO: Public Record Office

Seymour: Thomas Seymour, First Baron Seymour of Sudeley

Somerset: Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England

Quotations, when necessary, have been updated in line with modern printing. Alterations are identified by italics, unless stated otherwise.

In memory of Auntie Kay and Uncle Ian

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Introduction

Writing about his 2018 exhibition *Behind the Mask of Youth*, the artist Mat Collishaw described propaganda portraiture in the Elizabethan period as the reserve of the rich and powerful, representing the ability to curate an image to present a persona to the world.¹ Etymologically, persona derives from the Latin *persōna* ('mask'), and denotes an assumed character or role, particularly that which is displayed to and perceived by others.² The Virgin Queen appears as a persona *par excellence*. As part of the exhibition, Collishaw created an animatronic reproduction of Elizabeth's face, which he refers to as a 'mask', as modelled from portraiture, contemporary descriptions, and her effigy. It was displayed opposite one of the three existing versions of the iconic painting, 'The Armada Portrait' (*fig.1*. This, and all subsequent images, can be found at the end of each chapter), with the mask intended to approximate her actual appearance contemporary with the painting, when she was fifty-five years of age. Whilst it is not possible to gauge her true visage, it is possible to gauge and interpret her persona, which was an artificial construct. By 'mirroring' each other, the exhibition contrived to situate the aging and ageless Elizabeth in dialogue.

This thesis will engage in that dialogue, examining why Elizabeth adopted the persona of a Virgin Queen and how it evolved across her reign in both literature and portraiture. The dynamic of Collishaw's exhibition starkly indicated how false the connotative image of Elizabeth, with a porcelain white, youthful face and red wig, was from reality, and the blatancy of this gap warrants investigation. The complexity of the Virgin Queen image through its associated allegory is an indicator that it was also constructed over a prolonged period, which similarly warrants study. Surviving visual portraiture of Elizabeth also presents a stark contrast

¹ Mat Collishaw, 'The Mask of Youth – Queen's House, Greenwich', Mat Collishaw, <https://matcollishaw.com/exhibitions/queens-house/>.

² The title of Collishaw's exhibition is itself derived from the term 'mask of youth', first coined by Roy Strong in the 1970s. The mask of youth was used to recognise Elizabeth's constructed Virgin Queen image, or the persona that Collishaw defines, which portrayed her, in part, as eternally youthful.

between the later, archetypal Virgin Queen visage when compared with images dating from earlier in her reign. It is apparent she did not accede the English throne as the Virgin Queen, thus there must be an explanation behind its appropriation. To answer that may also explain why later portrayals remain more memorable and recognisable than the understated regal treatment of her earlier portraiture.

First recorded in a 1578 pageant by the poet Thomas Churchyard, the Virgin Queen epithet has since come to encompass what was part of Elizabeth's highly effective propaganda.³ Frequently used by later generations, Elizabeth has remained synonymous with her most recognisable epithet over four centuries after its inception. One imagines she would be proud it has remained the most enduring, for it associates her with ideas worthy of veneration and worship. Although it garnered criticism in her lifetime, and was not her sole creation, it has ultimately become her defining image, establishing her as a distinctive monarch in English history. This individualisation distinguishes not just herself but her reign, which is celebrated for its triumphs when faced with such threats as the 1569 Northern Rebellions, the 1586 Babington Plot, and most famously the Spanish Armadas beginning in 1588. It helped establish England upon the world stage. The emergence of the Virgin Queen has furthermore been summarised by Tracy Borman as the birth of national identity, with that identity inextricably linked to Elizabeth.⁴ John Morrill writes:

The adulation bestowed upon her both in her lifetime and in the ensuing centuries was [...] the result of a carefully crafted, brilliantly executed campaign in which the queen fashioned herself as the glittering symbol of the nation's destiny. [...] The latter half of the 16th century in England is justly called the Elizabethan Age: rarely has the collective life of a whole era been given so distinctively personal a stamp.⁵

³ This is defined as the dissemination of information, to promote a cause or point of view, with the intent to persuade or influence.

⁴ Simon Winchcombe, 'Endgame', DVD, *Armada: 12 Days to Save England* (BBC, 2015).

⁵ John Morrill, 'Elizabeth I', Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elizabeth-I>.

However, the positive association we have with the Virgin Queen contrasts with historic records. Helen Hackett and Karen Hearn isolated 1593 as a year which exemplified varying difficulties besetting Elizabeth. In that one year, Parliament sought funds for ongoing overseas campaigns, coinciding with the continued threat of Spanish invasion. Plague epidemics swept the country, with Elizabeth's annual progress withheld, whilst immigrants (largely reformists seeking refuge from religious unrest overseas) who viewed England as a safe outpost were met with hostility. These factors all contributed to a year of economic hardship. In the same year, the French king Henri VI reverted to Roman Catholicism, depriving England – and Elizabeth – of an important ally in international affairs.⁶ Meanwhile, the issue of succession was debated in Parliament, a prevalent subject given recent assassination attempts upon Elizabeth.⁷

This study shall engage with ascertaining how, when, and why the Virgin Queen image came into existence, and how its ramifications changed over time. History is written by the victors, and Elizabeth had been determined to write her own epitaph. During a 1559 speech, Elizabeth was recorded to conclude her answer to Commons with a hypothetical statement upon how she would be remembered:

Lastly, this may be sufficient, both for my memory and honour of my name, if when I have expired my last breath, this may be inscribed upon my tomb:

Here lies interred Elizabeth,

A virgin pure until her death.⁸

⁶ Helen Hackett and Karen Hearn, 'Elizabeth I at 60' (UCL Festival of Culture 2018, UCL, Roberts Building, G06 Lecture Theatre, 4 June 2018).

⁷ Elizabeth took threats against her life so seriously that in 1576 she purchased a unicorn horn (though actually a narwhal tusk) from Sir Martin Frobisher for the sum of ten thousand pounds; weight for weight, it was more valuable than gold. It was believed unicorn horn could detect and neutralise poisons. However, the Unicorn was also a symbol of virginity, so it is plausible the purchase also correlated with Elizabeth's emerging recognition as a Virgin Queen. Sharmilla Choudhary and Hilary Jeffkins, 'A Curious Twist', DVD, *David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities*, 2014.

⁸ William Camden's printed Latin translation, retranslated in *Annales: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth* (London: for B. Fisher, 1625), bk. 1, 27-29. Printed in Leah S Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 60.

Ascending to the throne as a marriageable woman of twenty-five, Elizabeth died at Richmond Palace aged sixty-nine, unmarried and childless, and reputedly still a virgin. In later years, Elizabeth filled her court with beautiful and ever younger courtiers whom she sought to imitate, wearing fashions denoting maidenhood whilst disguising her face behind white makeup. Cleverly orchestrated opportunities allowed her to display both an enduringly youthful physique and her many accomplishments, whether dancing the galliard, conversing in foreign languages, or playing the virginals. She retained an image of the eternal virgin.

First, however, it is important to interpret the ‘Virgin Queen’ epithet, and how it is understood. ‘Virgin’ implies chastity and is connotative of purity. Ecclesiastically, and in conjunction with ‘Queen’, it denotes affiliation with the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven, which also conjures themes of divinity and motherliness. Virgin may also indicate a first occurrence, promoting Elizabeth as unique, a theme carried over through her comparison with the mythologic Phoenix. Elizabeth was also known by the names of several classical mythological figures, as Thomas Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus* (1599) demonstrates:

1. Are you then travelling to the temple of Eliza?
2. Even to her temple are my feeble limes travelling. Some cal her Pandora: some Gloriana, come Cynthia: some [B]elphoebe, some Astraea: all by several names to expresse several loves: Yet all those names make but one celestiaall body, as all those loves meete to create but one soule
1. I am of her own countrie, and we adore her by the name of Eliza.⁹

Gloriana originates from Edmund Spenser’s allegory *The Faerie Queene* (1590), with its titular character defined in the author’s letter: ‘[I]n my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queene, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in

⁹ Thomas Dekker, *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus*, (London: Printed by S. S[tafford] for William Aspley, dwelling in Paules Church-yard at the signe of the Tygers head, 1600), sig. A1^v.

Belphoebe[.]’¹⁰ ‘Glorious’, in recognition of a person, denotes illustriousness and great renown. They collectively generate a positive image and signify worthiness, a view still upheld.

The twenty-first century reception of Elizabeth is predominantly positive. A wave of new publications, seeking to readdress historic gender inequalities and the imbalance in female representation across history, recognise and celebrate the Virgin Queen as feminist. In an age when, internationally, women only represent twenty percent of the world’s political ruling elite, influential figures both present and past are being recognised for their contribution towards establishing equality. Elizabeth’s decision to remain unmarried – hence the Virgin Queen – is understood to have defied male subordination of women, establishing her as a positive model. In 2015 Elizabeth was recognised as one of Simon Schama’s ‘Faces of Britain’ and has since been categorised amongst influential female figures from across world history, in titles including *A History of Britain in 21 Women* by Jenni Murray and *Bad Girls Throughout History* by Ann Shen, both published in 2016. Elizabeth was also included in the highly commended *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*, another 2016 publication which became a catalyst for the revised representation of women throughout history to a younger audience.

Image is power, and Elizabeth arguably understood the power of art more than any other monarch in English history. Simon Schama describes her as England’s first ‘national fetish’.¹¹ Many portrayals remain recognisable, whether a visual painting, etching, or print, or a literary portrayal encompassing the ‘Virgin Queen’ motif. Her image evolved as a response to the issues she had to live with and became a dynamic force. What is commonly termed the ‘cult of Elizabeth’ is widely considered to have emerged after her final marriage negotiation, presented as cleverly orchestrated propaganda. In her final years, Elizabeth was frequently portrayed as semi-divine and immortal, queen over land and sea, protecting England from foreign threats

¹⁰ ‘Belphoebe’ itself fashioned from Cynthia (as depicted in *The Ocean to Cynthia* by Sir Walter Raleigh, to whom Spenser’s letter is addressed) and Phoebe, both names for the Roman Virgin Goddess Diana.

Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 16.

¹¹ Simon Schama, *The Face of Britain: The Stories Behind the Nation’s Portraits* (London: Viking, 2016), 36.

and betokening peace and prosperity. Some scholars define this manner of portrayal as a political necessity, including Charlotte Bolland:

The disparity between Elizabeth's actual likeness and the images that aimed to display the rhetoric of her beauty grew more apparent towards the end of her reign. It was then that images emerged which bore little resemblance to the aging queen, but rather idealised her behind the so-called 'mask of youth'. The motivation behind the production of these images is very understandable – without a direct heir, her closest advisors wished to project an image that suggested that there were many years in hand in which to solve the question of the succession.¹²

Thus, we tentatively begin to unravel some reasoning behind the image: Elizabeth had defied expectations by refusing to marry; providing no heir of her body, she then refused to name her successor.¹³ From 1570, Elizabeth faced an increased threat of assassination following her denunciation as a heretic by Pope Pius V in the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis*. It not only sanctioned her death but encouraged it. If overthrown or eliminated, a further counter-reformation could have viably reinstated Catholicism.

Yet these explanations remain insubstantial. For example, they do not explain why Elizabeth, as queen and the last direct Tudor heir, refused to marry. There is no explanation for why the Virgin Queen image was not used at her reign's outset, nor when and why it was latterly introduced. By re-examining existing evidence, including literary portrayals and visual portraiture, this thesis will answer such questions pertaining to the Virgin Queen image, determining its origins, inception, and development. Though I concur that it had a propagandistic use, I do not accept that this was the sole, or even primary, purpose. Nor did

¹² Charlotte Bolland, 'The Mask of Elizabeth', National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/blog/the-mask-of-elizabeth>.

¹³ Her reasoning appears logical, for naming the successor posed a risk of civil war through drawing attention upon the future incumbent: she compared her predicament with the sun, fearing people would look towards that which was 'rising' (her successor) whilst she would be 'setting'.
Leanda de Lisle, *After Elizabeth: The Rise of James of Scotland and the Struggle for the Throne of England* (New York: Ballantyne, 2005), 17.

Elizabethans necessarily employ the printed image as ‘propaganda’ in the modern sense of a calculated programme of mass communication.¹⁴ And its use may be understood as compensating for the regime’s failings. Many Elizabethans would never have seen Elizabeth in person: her public appearances became rarer as she aged, and throughout her life were predominantly restricted to the southern half of England, in travelling distance of London. Nor would many people have had access to some of her propaganda images, such as paintings. These were often commissioned by courtiers to accompany pageantry or other national celebrations, or to mark festivities during annual progresses. Along with coinage, it was engravings and other printed portraits accompanying dedicatory religious or political publications which were the most commonplace visual images of Elizabeth.

A wealth of pre-existing literature examines portrayals of Elizabeth. The introduction to *The Elizabethan World* (2011), edited by Susan Doran and Norman Jones, provides a potted history of scholarship upon the Elizabethan era, establishing the emergence at the end of the twentieth century of studies contextualising Elizabethan politics. Previously, the focus had been biographic studies, Elizabethan foreign policy, or religion. An example of Elizabethan political studies includes Wallace MacCaffrey’s *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (1969), which outlined Tudor monarchy’s divine lieutenancy, and brought the interrelationship between Elizabethan politics and religion to the forefront. These spheres, historically dominated by men, had both fallen under female jurisdiction. I expand upon this, establishing a connection between Elizabeth’s religious settlement and her latter Virgin Queen image, gauged by the fact both sought apparent unification under the image of Elizabeth, first as Governor of the Church of

¹⁴ Prints were not distributed free of charge to the general population but had to be purchased by those sufficiently interested and with sufficient means. Richard Williams considers preaching to have been the preferred and far more effective means of communication in the sixteenth century.
Richard L. Williams, ‘The Visual Arts’, in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. Susan Doran and Norman Jones (London: Routledge, 2011), 582.

England, and then through an imperial image of monarchy. Both, I shall argue, helped to restore a sense of national identity.

Amongst the most prolifically cited work by fellow academics is Roy Strong's *Gloriana* (1987), itself an updated reworking of his 1963 publication, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*. He assessed the chronological progression and alteration of Elizabethan portraiture, recognising its relationship and reaction to contemporary social and cultural climates. Some observations have been invalidated in intervening years, yet his studies of allegorical and iconographic symbolism remain invaluable, as are the collected essays by the scholar Frances Yates (also Strong's supervisor) published as *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (1975). These broadly discuss imperialism throughout the Renaissance world, with the essay 'Queen Elizabeth I as Astraea', first published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 10, 1947, central to the theme. Collectively, these meticulous studies helped gauge the altering application of allegory, with the emphasis frequently upon its use and meaning in portraits. More recent scholarship has built upon this, analysing Elizabeth's own appropriation of the Virgin Queen image, though it is a field of interest examined more broadly across the arts. This could include artist's (and arguably their commissioner's) incorporation of biblical and classical imagery, and Elizabeth's own representation, in an apparent contest of authority.

Marie Axton, in *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (1977) focused upon the construct of Elizabeth's image. Although her research was primarily her representation in Elizabethan drama, Axton's approach has wider application, including analysis of other contemporary literature as well as visual arts. Elizabeth's image was interwoven into the everyday fabric of Elizabethan life, appearing on coinage, as printed

portraits in publications, and in literature.¹⁵ Artists and courtiers are widely understood to have sought control over Elizabeth through her image, restoring patriarchal power, and Axton explores how drama was used to criticise the queen. Central to her study is the concept of the Bodies *politic* and *natural*.¹⁶ This is derived from Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), a study of the monarchical state as developed from both Christian and medieval political theology. Axton was directly responding to Kantorowicz, reinterpreting his work to include female monarchy and the issue of gender.

The application of the two Bodies concept is not restricted; its initial application in legal parameters filtered out into literature, particularly drama (the focus of Axton's study), which was widely accessible – and presumably understandable – to prospective contemporary audiences. Another loosely paralleled concept which Kantorowicz studies is the *persona mixta*.¹⁷ This was used by Tudor jurists following Henry VIII's reformation, with himself subsequently established as head of both the Church and nation. It shall be factored into my study of Elizabeth, given the similar affiliation between her religious and monarchic roles, which the complex allegory of the Virgin Queen image also conveyed. The nature of the Body *politic* also introduced another avenue of enquiry, for if it served a correctional capacity, it could verifiably impact upon others' viability to question Elizabeth's governance and theological stance, particularly if one considers her a *persona mixta*. From a gender

¹⁵ Hacket and Hearn discern a similar appropriation of such portraiture, and people's familiarity with it, in the twenty-first century. Elizabeth II's portrait is the most reproduced worldwide, appearing on coinage, stamps, memorabilia, and in numerous publications, whilst she – and her wider family – are the subject(s) of documentaries and drama, which since 2016 has acquired international attention following the release of *The Crown*. Hacket and Hearn also underlined how such imagery is a construct, often differing from the Queen's true visage, and sought to demonstrate how the sixteenth century Elizabethan society would have had similar access to equally misrepresentative images of their monarch. Hackett and Hearn, 'Elizabeth I at 60'.

¹⁶ A king (or queen regnant) was recognised as possessing two bodies, the Body *natural* and Body *politic*. The Body *natural* is the material, mortal sovereign body, subject to age and infirmities; the body *politic* is immortal. Comparable to a soul, the latter departs a deceased sovereign's body and continues within their successor, surviving *in perpetuum*. Inseparable from the Body *natural* yet its own, it ensures the sovereign governs effectively. Preceding the Body *natural*, it also serves an almost correctional capacity.

¹⁷ A 'mixed person' combining varying capacities, in this instance spiritual and secular.

perspective, I shall continue Axton's example and examine its specific relation to female monarchy, for Elizabeth (and Mary) were the first English examples of a queen regnant in centuries. *The King's Two Bodies* also served as a source for understanding the Christian application of allegorical imagery, such as the Phoenix, allowing me to expand upon Yates' (now dated) imperialistic study, and progress towards interpreting an imperial *thema* which preceded Elizabeth's adoption of the Virgin Queen image.

Doran and Jones summarise that the Elizabethan world, broadly, is now understood through cultural history, with insights gleaned from fields including gender studies, literary theory, and sociology amongst others. Similar interdisciplinary approaches inform Early Modern studies more generally. Laura Gowing, for example, provided a gender and sociologic study in *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (2012). My study of the Virgin Queen image also seeks to bring varying fields together, from religious, political, and historic studies relevant to the preceding religious settlement, literary and art historic studies of contemporary texts incorporating the Virgin Queen image and its associated symbolism, and an overarching biographic study which also engages with gender and social studies. This multi-faceted approach shall provide new insight towards the formation of the Virgin Queen image and challenge long-established assumptions, such as the date of its inception.

Doran's extensive biographic analysis of Elizabeth, research into Elizabethan politics, and contributions to numerous Tudor and Elizabethan exhibitions and publications, benefited numerous avenues of research. Her work casts light on the viability of Elizabethan portraiture as propaganda, the interpretation of an image's allegorical symbolism, the relationship between Elizabeth and her contemporaries, and helped to gauge Elizabeth's personal response(s) to situations in her life and reign. Doran also highlighted the unlikelihood of ever being able to fathom a 'true' understanding of Elizabeth due to the manipulation of her image for public consumption both during her reign and beyond, concluding that everything past and present is

an educated, informed interpretation of the evidence. This correlates with Collishaw's 'dialogue' between an approximated mask of Elizabeth's face and her Virgin Queen persona. It is a reassuring reminder that everything, including my own findings, remains conjectural.

The multiplicity of Doran's research indicated how Elizabeth should not be analysed as an isolated figure, even though she embodied one as the Virgin Queen. Though arguably seeking to appear distinct, it is logical to presume her public persona was responsive, be it following the example of another, a reaction to criticism or advice, or in recognition of how she was portrayed by others. Her portrayals were predominantly produced by other people, and her life shaped through relationships ranging from intimate and familial (family and certain courtiers) to official and detached (the populace). One might argue Elizabeth herself was regarded less as a person, more an embodiment of State, and I shall gauge whether this was factored into her decision to remain unmarried, a consequence which impelled her towards the Virgin Queen image. Relationships could appear conflated, such as her distant yet doting parents (and stepparents), who also embodied a detached image of state and religious governance. Relationships were also susceptible to change, such as those with Mary I and Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots (1542-1587), and those with both her courtiers and the wider populace. The latter quintessentially voiced public opinion (sometimes opposition) towards issues including the state religion and Elizabeth's potential marriages.

Another important relationship was with William Cecil (1520-1598), amongst the most formative of her life and reign. The scholarship of Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas Freeman is beneficial to understanding Cecil's (probable) contribution to both visual and literary portraits of Elizabeth, and their circulation, and whether his political role gave him additional influence. Evenden and Freeman's research is otherwise focused upon examination of John Foxe (1516/17-1587) and his work, and more broadly the religious and political developments across Elizabeth's reign. Publications include their collaborative *Religion and the Book in Early*

Modern England and article ‘John Foxe, John Daye and the Printing of the *Book of Martyrs*’, Evenden’s *Patents, Pictures and Patronage*, alongside Freeman’s contribution to ‘The Acts and Monuments Online’ (or TAMO). Their addressal of criteria governing the artistic production of portraiture, alongside the physical production and dissemination of such, helped shape the overall thematic structure of this thesis (as outlined below). With their focus primarily upon the religious and political portrayal of Elizabeth pertaining to her religious settlement, my recognition of a connection between that and the Virgin Queen image expands upon their findings, establishing the latter to have emerged partially in reaction to Elizabeth’s biblical image.

The scholarship of Sydney Anglo focuses upon both the artistic and political significance of pageantry and ceremony in Early Modern culture, recognising it as a reaction, and sometimes catalyst, to its contemporary environment. Principal texts include *Images of Tudor Kingship* (1992) and *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (1997). These resources, however, focused on collected studies of an individual monarch’s pageantry or ceremony as comprised of numerous components, occasionally at the expense of tracing alterations to a given theme or motif. For example, Elizabeth’s coronation progress incorporated mythologic representation much like the coronation of her mother, Anne Boleyn (1501-1536). Yet there are also noticeable changes, associated with fluctuations in English policy during the intervening years, and the relationship between both women to their wider patriarchal society. His studies lacked detail relating to these changes, with emphasis instead placed upon the components to each woman’s progress. My study further accounts for the unique example Elizabeth embodied, relating again to her jurisdiction over fields historically controlled by men, and shall garner how this was addressed in her portrayals. Pivotally, she was to become capable of embodying and projecting an image of queenhood surpassing any other in English history, though whether this was her achievement or the result of how others

fashioned her image, is brought to debate. Anglo's research also brought into consideration the unity of the Tudor monarchy, which he terms the Tudor idea. Readings into the 'continuity' of the Tudor line, despite differences in gender, politics and/or religion, contributed to my interpretation of Elizabeth's relations with, and responses to, her family, especially her father and half-sister.

To research religious developments, sources included Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars* (1992), which offered a broad history of English Catholicism, and the impact of the Henrician Reformation and thereafter, and Patrick Collinson and Christopher Haigh provided further insight upon the course of the English Reformation and eventual Elizabethan settlement. There is no definitive answer to the question of how effectively, or swiftly, Elizabeth's settlement took effect in England, though Duffy demonstrates how reform was affected regionally, by factors including geographic location, the religious sensibilities of local landowners, and whether the area received royal or ecclesiastical visits, amongst others.

If such factors affected the spread and dissemination of religious ideas, it seems logical therefore that similar factors affected the spread of Elizabeth's image, and its effectiveness; localised religious sensibilities and royal visits could play an equally important role. A royal visit would have provided a rare, or the only, opportunity for the majority to see Elizabeth in person. As for forms of portrayal such as paintings, audiences were limited. Even portrayals intended for wider dissemination could logically be hindered by setbacks including illiteracy or overly-complex allegory. Furthermore, successful Elizabethan propaganda, particularly following threats such as the Spanish Armada, portrayed a starkly black-and-white religious divide, yet other evidence indicates the religious settlement brought contentment amongst differing religious factions, and that disparity warrants investigation. Should the effectiveness of the reform lie in its constancy, a view upheld by Neil MacGregor in *Shakespeare's Restless World* (2012), then I shall consider the Virgin Queen image less as a response to the political

climates around her but as a natural progression. This regards Elizabeth's continued state of virginity and follows from an apparent commitment to that state formed during adolescence, then maintained during the marriageable years of her reign.

The move away from the biographical scholarship of the twentieth century has not meant it has entirely disappeared. Publications by historians including Tracy Borman (*Elizabeth's Women*, 2009), Helen Castor (*Elizabeth I: A Study in Insecurity*, 2018), Lisa Hilton (*Elizabeth: Renaissance Prince*, 2014), Elizabeth Norton (*The Temptation of Elizabeth Tudor*, 2015), Alison Plowden (*The Young Elizabeth*, 1971), and Anna Whitelock (*Elizabeth's Bedfellows*, 2013) noticeably continue in a predominantly celebratory vein; the scholarship of John Guy, in particular *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years* (2016), has provided a rarer, discernibly critical perspective. Regarding Tudor history more broadly, Borman's *The Private Lives of the Tudors* (2016) and Leanda de Lisle's *Tudor: The Family Story* (2013) provided reference; for information pertaining to Mary Tudor, Linda Porter's *Mary Tudor: The First Queen* (2007); and for Mary Stuart, Kate Williams' *Rival Queens* (2018).

No thesis concerning the portrayal of Elizabeth would be complete without examination of her own literary output. For this, the editorial work of Leah Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, who collated, organised, and analysed her varying literary pursuits along with her correspondences, provided insight into her public and private realm. The preface to their collection *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (2000) further discerns a gap in Elizabethan studies, pertaining to her productivity as a writer:

Biographers describe her impressive education and stress instances of her unusual verbal and linguistic powers but seldom offer more than cursory attention to the content of her writings.¹⁸

¹⁸ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, xi.

To this, I also add artistic output, asserting that Elizabeth was also an emblemist. Formerly, her output was used as documented examples of her religious or political policies, or to charter her relations with Parliament, her Privy Council, or specific individuals. Her works were also used to analyse the ‘strategic gendering of Elizabeth’s self-representation.’ My re-examination yields fresh insight to Elizabeth’s character beneficial to understanding her Virgin Queen image, particularly if it is understood as a development in her constant dedication to virginity, and therefore not solely ‘created’ to compensate for the lack of an heir. Her self-representation, when studied in collation with biographic studies, indicates how Elizabeth understood and interpreted her role as queen and the duties it entailed, as well as the role – and limitations – of a woman. These collectively contributed towards her adoption of the Virgin Queen image, as well as towards her state of remaining unmarried and childless. Examining some of her writing as a viable tool for personal and public expression shall revise the portrait of an unmistakably literary queen.

Underpinning this study into the development of Elizabeth’s Virgin Queen visage, I shall also gauge its importance as an imperial image. Imperialism may pertain to a system of governance under the rule of an emperor, but it also encompasses the extension and maintenance of a country’s power or influence, achievable through varying factors which include, though are not restricted to, trade, diplomacy, military, or cultural dominance. The arguments for kingship (or queenship, in the case of Elizabeth) became related, with those opposed to papal authority arguing that monarchy should equate to an imperial title of complete sovereignty in their kingdom. Although a lack of territorial expansion was addressed in a 1593 speech at the closing of Parliament, Elizabeth did express her capability to have done so:

It may be thought simplicity in me that all this time of my reign have not sought to advance my territories and enlarged my dominions, for both opportunity hath served me to do it,

and my strength was able to have done it. [...] [O]nly, my mind was never to invade my neighbours, nor to usurp upon any, only contented to reign over my own and rule as a just prince.¹⁹

Given there were expeditions to the American continent, Africa, and Asia during Elizabeth's reign, one might gauge she was deploying false modesty. 'Just' is indicative of conforming to the required standard, and of taking appropriate action, though it may also pertain to judgement, acting with reason and fairness. The inference is that other monarchs act unjustly, thus lack good judgement, reason, or fairness, differentiating Elizabeth from her royal contemporaries (particularly Philip II of Spain, whom she proceeds to name). It highlights her singularity, but also England and its recognition upon the world stage, as it were, through having an independent female monarch and Reformist religion. When referring to her reign 'over my own,' one is not able to discern whether it refers to her own territory, or her people, though nevertheless it perpetuates an already firmly established idea of England as isolated and unique, but also imperially superior.

The Elizabethan era was a time of expansion. The population steadily rose and global trade increased, as did consumerism. People quick to profit from an increasingly modernised world had money to spend, and an increase in personal wealth allowed for 'luxuries' such as books, textiles, and artwork, of which Elizabeth was a prominent subject. This material culture flourished, evidenced in the number of surviving artefacts. Elizabeth herself benefited, from luxurious fabrics imported from overseas, gifts of jewellery set with precious stones (also sourced overseas), and improved access to Humanist literature from across Europe, all of which contributed to producing her magnificent image as the Virgin Queen.

During a reign understood to have forged English national identity, that repelled numerous threats from foreign nations, and which shaped state religion, Elizabeth emerged as

¹⁹ BL, MS Cotton Titus F.II, fols. 98v-99v. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 329.

a figurehead. This was the archetypal Virgin Queen. The cultural impact of the Elizabethan period is vast, but to understand how and why events transpired, it is necessary to understand Elizabeth's decisions: how she interpreted her role as Head of the English Church as well as queen of England; how she withstood societal expectations regarding her gender and status; and how she sought to present herself both amidst her court and before the wider populace. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the contemporary reaction to Elizabeth and her policies, untainted by the nationalistic appraisal that propaganda effectively achieved beyond her death. Literary portrayals and visual portraiture offer a window, reflecting both individual and nationalistic reactions to the changing spheres of Elizabethan society and its queen.

The Outline

i. A martyr to martyrdom

Concerning the themes of religion and politics in Elizabeth's image

To begin this investigation, I will undertake a study of Elizabeth's religious settlement, her religious depiction, and its connection to the later Virgin Queen image. Elizabeth seemingly sought peaceful, amicable relations with Catholics, although these deteriorated as her reign progressed. Predominantly, scholars regard her religious settlement as having sought a religious middle-ground. Too reformist for orthodox Roman Catholics, yet not reformed enough for Reformist factions such as Calvinists, its intent appears to have been to end religious discord. Ian Crofton discusses Elizabeth's famous declaration that she 'would not open windows into men's souls':

[B]roadly speaking, her religious policy aimed to enforce outward conformity to Protestantism while not enquiring too closely as to her subjects' privately held beliefs. Elizabeth steered a middle way (*Via media*) between the ardent and absolutist Catholicism

of Mary and her Habsburg relatives on the one hand, and the levelling theocrats of Calvinism on the other.²⁰

Helen Castor summarises it as a settlement reminiscent of her father's idiosyncratic 'modified Catholicism-without-the-Pope'.²¹ As Benjamin Woolley explains, Henry VIII reformed, not renounced, Catholicism:

The Reformation did not split the world between Catholicism and Protestantism quite as neatly as many historical accounts suggest. Militants on both sides were prepared to kill and die for their cause, but the vast majority, including many of the Reformation's leading figures, were much more ambivalent. Throughout his life, Henry VIII himself clung to many Catholic rites and attitudes, even those concerning divorce.²²

Although a primary motive driving the Henrician reformation was recognisably Anne Boleyn, Henry came to believe (or claimed to come to believe) that marrying his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, contravened God's law. When papal annulment of the marriage was denied, Henry undertook measures to assume authority. Doing so, he sought to return Catholic worship to a state of pre-papal authority, which John Guy outlines:

In the reign of William the Conqueror, it had been kings, not Popes, who were superior in their realms – who appointed bishops, and took order for the reform of the Church. Then, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, pontiffs such as Innocent III and Boniface VIII had proclaimed themselves superior to temporal princes, claiming that St. Peter himself had given them a controlling authority over the government of Church and State.²³

Theologically centred upon the 'Word of God' (the Bible), with power invested in monarchy, Henry could annul his first marriage without papal consent. This 'new' religion was shared and

²⁰ Ian Crofton, *The Kings and Queens of England* (London: Quercus, 2011), 149.

²¹ Helen Castor, *Elizabeth I: A Study in Insecurity*, Penguin Monarchs (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 36.

²² Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror: The Life and Magic of Dr. Dee* (London: Flamingo, 2002), 49.

²³ John Guy, *Henry VIII: The Quest for Fame*, Penguin Monarchs (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 45.

influenced by Anne.²⁴ Elizabeth appears to have followed her parents' example, though has – perhaps unfairly – garnered recognition as a product of her father's reformation.²⁵ She was the sole surviving child from Henry and Anne's marriage, another identifiable 'product' of Henry's reformation, whilst her settlement is recognisably closer to his vision of a reformed Church than her two half-siblings'. To label Elizabeth 'Protestant' is problematic, however. Nick Page summarises the difficulty of labelling varying Reformist groups and ideas. 'Protestant' is a prime example, for contemporarily it did not denote a religious group, but a political grouping of rebel states and cities. Early Reformists used terms such as 'Evangelicals', whereas Puritan(ism) started as a form of abuse.²⁶ Therefore, I shall use Reformist opposed to Protestant, unless quoting source material.

Following Mary I's death, Count Feria's correspondence to Philip II of Spain noted Elizabeth's admiration for her father, and his belief she would divert from Mary's Catholicism.²⁷ Feria was neither wrong nor right. Whilst Mary's Roman Catholic reign was to be England's last, Elizabeth modelled her religious settlement upon their father's 'restoration' of a pre-Romanised Catholicism.²⁸ The Westminster Conference of 1559, as documented by Foxe, differentiated:

As for the judgement of the whole controversy, we referre unto the most holy scripturs,

²⁴ It was Anne herself who, in 1530, steered the reformation upon introducing Henry to a publication by William Tyndale. *The obedience of a Christian man and how Christian rulers ought to govern* (1528) is duly summarised by its title, and decrees God's ordnance is one king and one law in every realm. Therefore, the Pope held no true dominion over England.

²⁵ It has been stated that Elizabeth was '[v]ery much a child—if not, in fact, *the* child—of the English reformation.' Alison Plowden, *Elizabeth I* (Great Britain: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 62.

²⁶ Nick Page, *A Nearly Infallible History of the Reformation: Commemorating 500 Years of Popes, Protestants, Reformers, Radicals and Other Assorted Irritants* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2017), 6.

²⁷ Printed in Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), 117-118.

²⁸ Not all scholars agree. Christopher Haigh asserts that Elizabeth ascended to the throne resolutely Protestant, was publicly identifiable as Protestant, and deliberately adopted a Protestant image. He recognises the government conceding to Catholic pressures during the formation of a religious settlement. Although Elizabeth's conservatism when pressured to introduce more ardent reform is noted, alongside her retainment and reinstatement of select aspects of Catholic worship, Haigh concludes these merely 'blunted' the Protestantism of her government's original programme of reform. Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I, Profiles In Power* (Harlow: Pearson, 1998), 29.

and the catholicke church of Christ (whose judgement *unto us* ought to be most sacred): notwithstanding by the catholick church we *understand* not the romishe church, wherunto our adversaries attribute such reverence, but that which saint Augustine & other fathers affirme oughte to be sought in the holy scriptures, a(n)d which is governed and led by the spirite of Christ.²⁹

After debates lasting several days, the 1559 Bill ‘to restore the Supremacy of the Church of England to the Crown of the Realm’ (henceforth referred to as the Supremacy Bill) proceeded through the House of Commons before being presented to the Lords, where Elizabeth and her council battled getting it passed. Eventually it went before a committee in which Catholic Lords held majority; they heavily amended the Bill before issuing the revised draft to Commons. In the interim, Commons began repealing Marian heresy law to introduce further (although limited) religious toleration. As further appeasement, a third draft of the Supremacy Bill re-labelled Elizabeth as Supreme Governor (rather than Head) of the Church.³⁰ It also revived the acts of consecrating bishops and licensing communion under both kinds. This successfully passed through the Houses of Commons and Lords, following minor alterations. Paralleling this was another Bill, the Act of Uniformity, requiring all Englishmen to attend church on Sundays and holy days. The 1559 Westminster Conference (narrowly) passed in favour of the Reformers, resulting in a new edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*.³¹

Revised from the previous 1549 and 1552 editions produced by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* contained significant amendments,

²⁹ John Foxe, ‘The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO’ (The Digital Humanities Institute, Sheffield, 2011), 1603, 1803. <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe> (all following extracts are taken from this source, with italics denoting the edition, followed by the page number).

³⁰ This was necessary because she was a woman, and thus she could not be the leader of the Church, even though she was the monarch. Parliament would not have allowed Elizabeth to become the Supreme Head for this reason, and Elizabeth needed that control over the Church in order to exact the changes she wanted to. She also did not force the laity to take an oath of allegiance to the Supreme Governor, only the Church and Government officials, because she did not want to force her people to choose between their Queen and their religion.
Anna Keaton, *Elizabethan Church Settlement: An Examination* (Oregon, Western Oregon University, 2009), 9.

³¹ Rosemary Sgroi, ‘The Elizabethan Settlement’, History of Parliament Online, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/periods/tudors/elizabethan-settlement>

particularly regarding the communion service. Designed to be widely acceptable, it implied Christ was physically present in the bread and wine (theologically acceptable to Catholics and Lutherans, but denied by Calvinists), followed by a phrase emphasising the memorial aspect of the service, with the consumption undertaken in remembrance of Christ's death. Further traditional aspects were retained, including the receiving of communion while kneeling. Bibles were also reissued, with some, including the 1560 Geneva Bible (and 1559 Geneva Psalms), dedicated to Elizabeth. To summarise, the revision of some liturgy alongside retention of some Catholic traditions reflects Elizabeth's apparently conservative preference.

Henry's reform had retained many aspects of Roman Catholic worship; becoming Head of the Church of England was arguably driven by political rather than doctrinal motives. But Elizabeth appears a pragmatist rather than a devotee. Whilst recognisably Reformist in many aspects, her settlement similarly retained Catholic traditions. It not only affected religious practice, but political, social, and artistic spheres throughout her reign. It characterised her literary portrayals and visual portraiture, whilst its impact affected the everyday lives of the population as well as England's relations with neighbouring and overseas countries. The first chapter shall study Elizabeth's contribution to the settlement, substantiating her intent for inclusivity whilst accounting for varying personal experiences which viably shaped that decision, before progressing to the wider reception of this settlement and its impact upon her portrayal. The primary text shall be Foxe's martyrologue *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, touching matters of the Church wherein ar comprehended and described the great persecutions and horrible troubles that have been wrought and practised by the Romish prelates, speciallye in this Realme of England and Scotland, from the yeare of our Lorde a thousande, unto the tyme nowe present....*, also commonly known as the *Book of Martyrs* and (henceforth) as *Acts and Monuments*. First published in 1563, it provided a visual portrait and literary portrayal of Elizabeth, with subsequent editions spanning her reign and

beyond. Work on the first edition was undertaken prior to the Elizabethan settlement's conclusion, and as well as serving a historiographic purpose, it recognisably instructed – and anticipated – Elizabeth upon a path of religious reform.

The second edition (1570) was the most amended, forming the basis for all subsequent others, so I shall concentrate upon alterations between this and its predecessor, examining the revised representation of Elizabeth in her religious capacity, and chartering changing perceptions of her religious obligation(s) and the perceived fulfilment of her duty to her Church and nation. However, the accuracy of such portraiture is subjected to scrutiny, for the reformist zeal of Foxe and his associates was counter to the recognisably inclusive quality that Elizabeth had sought in her settlement. I shall gauge how early images of Elizabeth were outside her control and may be considered as equally misrepresentative of her as the later Virgin Queen construct.

Acts and Monuments demonstrated how the portrayal of Elizabeth could alter in a comparatively short timespan (seven years), with later criticism attributable to the intervening finalisation of the religious settlement. Alterations to her portrayal reflected contemporary attitudes to Elizabeth and disapproval of the settlement, sustained over a prolonged period. Furthermore, research has unearthed how Cecil was actively involved in the text's production, indicative of pressure upon Elizabeth to act in accordance with council and clergy petitions for greater reform, undoubtedly reinforced when *Acts and Monuments* became more publicly accessible from the second edition onwards. This notion of dissatisfaction jars with the generally positive appraisal of Elizabeth's reign, from the perspective of a twenty-first century audience.

However, although it indicates apparent dissatisfaction, Elizabeth withstood sustained pressures to impose reform, which must have required considerable fortitude. The reason, I argue, was that Elizabeth risked further religious factionalism if she succumbed to external

pressures, when what she sought was unity. Furthermore, this was a unity under her sole, individual image of queenship, as she had inherited the post as leader of the Church despite her gender. It is my premise that this act of unification was a precursor to the later image of the Virgin Queen, which would have been inappropriate at that early date due to the advantage of Elizabeth appearing marriageable, a topic for discussion in chapter ii. Thus, the settlement and the Virgin Queen appear linked, one preceding the other but each seeking to restore monarchic authority and a sense of nationalism.

ii. Elizabeth of Troy

Concerning the themes of marriage and virginity in Elizabeth's image

The investigation proceeds towards gauging Elizabeth's apparent commitment to virginity and reluctance to marry, and the emergence of a Virgin Queen image, which was then subjected to scrutiny during a succession crisis before being reclaimed by Elizabeth and her supporters as a nationalistic image. Despite apparent ambivalence towards marriage, from 1559 petitions persisted until Elizabeth passed marriageable (or childbearing) age, beyond which the Virgin Queen 'cult' is widely accepted as having emerged. Varying theories explain her apparent disinclination to marriage despite appearing 'marriageable', some pertaining to events preceding her ascent to the throne. Though such examination (short of any confirmatory evidence) is conjectural, it would be an oversight to dismiss their viability, particularly as many theories concern people with whom Elizabeth formed strong attachments with during her formative years.

One theory relates to the death of her mother. The uxorious Henry was infatuated by Anne (as surviving – and amorous – letters testify), possibly *vice versa* if Henry's youthful beauty and physique had not waned (he was forty-one when he married Anne, who would have

been approximately twenty-seven). Love matches were rare amongst the aristocratic classes; principally, matches were for political, dynastical, and/or monetary advantage. The reformation enabled Henry's remarriage and it was hoped Anne would provide a son, securing the dynastic succession and justifying the departure from papal authority. But after Elizabeth, Anne suffered stillbirths and miscarriages, casting her childbearing capability – and, for Henry, the validity of their marriage – into doubt. In a coup orchestrated by Henry's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, her reportedly sexually provocative behaviour led to accusations of numerous affairs and witchcraft. Anne was tried, condemned, and executed. The infant Elizabeth was absent throughout these events, and her memories of Anne were likely to have been scant. She would have remembered the loss of her stepmothers, however: Jane Seymour died after childbirth; Anne of Cleves was divorced and removed from court; and Katherine Howard (a blood relation, being first cousin to Anne) was executed for similar – and proven – charges of adultery. Elizabeth could readily comprehend that love and marriage were dangerous for women in a patriarchal world.

Another theory derives from the remarriage and death of Henry's last wife, Katherine Parr (1512-1547). When Henry died, Elizabeth was entrusted to her care. Parr remarried Thomas Seymour (1508-1549) and fell pregnant. Delivered of a daughter, Mary, Parr died eight days later of suspected puerperal fever. Varying mother figures in Elizabeth's life illustrated the perils of marriage, including the possible damage to a woman's reputation, risks from childbirth, and the potentially ruinous outcome of being incapable of having children, or having children who did not survive.³²

The most recurrent marriage candidate was Elizabeth's 'favourite', Robert Dudley (1532-1588). Affectionately nicknamed her 'lids' or 'eyes', it is believed they met during

³² Maternal mortality was low, but it was still a fear shared by most women who wrote about the experience. Child mortality rates were high, with approximately one in four children dying before the age of one. Laura Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson, 2012), 22.

childhood, and both were imprisoned in the Tower during Mary's reign. However, to marry an Englishman of non-royal lineage could have generated factionalism, and Dudley was further hindered by the suspicious death of his wife, Amy Robsart, in 1560.³³ Although cleared of involvement, his reputation was previously inhibited by family history since his father and grandfather were executed for treason. Perhaps his greatest handicap (to Elizabeth at least) was his zeal for religious reform, which she opposed. Rumours of a relationship were rife, but Elizabeth could never marry Dudley: it could have antagonised people, provoked unrest, or threatened civil war; it may have been interpreted as validating scandalous rumours; and it could have been the catalyst for reform, for as his wife she would have risked subservience to him.

However, Elizabeth's marriageable condition featured prominently in early portrayals, especially paintings. Representations of her virginity then underwent a transition from marketability for marriage towards validation of its avoidance. Many writers and artists appropriated figures, creatures, and objects from classical mythology to convey these messages, and the second chapter shall explore Elizabeth's virginity through these themes, across a perceived division in her reign labelled the marriageable and post-marriageable years, though to benefit my study it will also be prudent to study periods of Elizabeth's life preceding her ascent. The study shall focus upon the Judgement of Paris, a common *thema* in Renaissance art, with primary texts including the painting *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* (1569), varyingly attributed to Hans Eworth (c.1520-1574) or Joris Hoefnagel (1542-1600), and the play *The Araygnement of Paris* (1584) by George Peele (1556-1596). A critical re-examination of allegory pertaining to virginity in *The Three Goddesses*, alongside consideration over the debatable authorship, shall reveal this painting to be an early representation of Elizabeth as a

³³ Official investigations concluded accidental death from falling down a flight of stairs, but rumours suggested Dudley – and possibly Elizabeth – colluded in her death, leaving him – or them – free to marry.

Virgin Queen, differing from the traditional view that the cult materialised after her marriageability waned. The degree of control Elizabeth held over this representation is given due consideration, as is her own – conjecturable – private dedication to virginity, a decision I judge was premised upon her personal experiences prior to acceding the throne.

Acts and Monuments demonstrated how Elizabeth's portrayal was used to convey the religious and political ideals of its author (amongst other contributors), a situation plausibly repeated with *The Three Goddesses*. However, as I shall argue, Elizabeth's progression towards her Virgin Queen apotheosis was an endeavour to regain autonomy, adopting varying allegorical representations of herself in her own visage, subsequently assuming control. I posit that Elizabeth appropriated allegory used in portrayals (such as *The Three Goddesses* painting), whether it originated as positive appraisal or to convey criticism. Remaining unmarried and childless did, however, preclude a succession crisis, which was partially offset through the propagandistic upcycling of allegorical representations of virginity in both literature and paintings. This further contributed towards Elizabeth's public adoption of the Virgin Queen image. However, both literary portrayals and visual portraiture remained the product of a predominantly male authorship, whose idealised representations of Elizabeth could still arguably have benefited their own agendas.

The Judgement of Paris story, and its incorporation in portrayals of Elizabeth, demonstrate how the theme of individualising a woman for praise also subjected her to male authority, and its continued use encapsulated the ongoing predicament Elizabeth faced when reclaiming ownership of her identity and image. It demonstrated a continuing power contest between how Elizabeth sought to portray herself and how others envisaged her and therefore instructed her to act. Yet the Virgin Queen image can also be recognised as the development of Biblical imagery deployed since her accession, particularly with its strong affiliation to the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, her religious duty recognisably resulted in a commitment to

virginity unseen in monarchy since the reign of Richard II (1367-1400), a figure Elizabeth is known to have compared herself to.

iii. Elizabeth the writer

Concerning the literary output and public persona of Elizabeth

The investigation turns towards Elizabeth's own writing, classified as either private or public, analysing how she interpreted her situation as both a woman and a queen in a historically patriarchal world whilst using religious imagery to establish rapport with her populace, literature to explore her personal struggles, and the spoken word to present a public image of an imperial Virgin Queen. In 1586, before Parliament, Elizabeth lamented that 'Princes, you know, stand upon stages so that their actions are viewed and beheld of all men.'³⁴ She played the part well. Elizabeth's face would be daily daubed in white paste, with rouged cheeks and painted lips. Her sumptuous dresses were threaded with gold, pearls, precious stones, and adorned with jewellery. Anna Whitelock perceives the necessity of this display:

Whilst Elizabeth's virginity was now being championed as a great political asset, it was also important that she not be seen to age or be regarded as the post-menopausal woman that she now was. [...] [I]t became ever more necessary for the Queen to always appear radiant and youthful to reassure her subjects of her good health and longevity.³⁵

Cosmetics disguised her naturally aging complexion and some smallpox scarring. In combination with her finery, make-up also attempted to emulate the divinities she was compared with in literature and art. As a Virgin Queen she did not appear natural, though that was often not the intention in visual representations, for it contradicted the second

³⁴ Cambridge UL MS Gg.III.34, 304-308. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 189.

³⁵ Anna Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 190.

commandment according to Reformist interpretations of the Bible (see Exodus, 20:4).³⁶ A solution was sought from Roman examples, which were often heraldic, providing an alternative to the depiction of the human form. Heraldry was an anti-naturalistic mode of visual expression, described by Jennifer Woodward as an ‘acceptable face of art in a deeply iconophobic society’.³⁷ Consequently, Elizabethan portrayals were ‘read’ via symbols and emblems. Such images became statements of social standing and the antiquity of lineage.

Early engravings accompanied many religious publications, whilst later (predominantly male) poets and playwrights adulated Elizabeth as a religious saviour and heavenly maiden, circulating their work as manuscripts or through print. Outwardly, they express devotion, though it is probable that they sought patronage, monetary reward or – when the work of courtiers – elevation and favour. Peele provides one such example in the preceding chapter. Courtiers were also largely responsible for the commissioning of paintings, for despite the number of surviving artworks, Elizabeth never appointed an official court painter. It was therefore necessary to monitor their production. Visual images were censored to ensure favourable representation: unfavourable (or unflattering) portraits were condemned. A proclamation from 1567 prohibited the depiction of unsanctioned images, whilst a 1596 order by the Privy Council called for the destruction of unseemly portraiture. Paintings were often commissioned to accompany a masque or banquet held in Elizabeth’s honour, and these were also apposite occasions for poetic and theatrical praise. Such meticulously organised, lavish – and costly – events typically formed part of the annual progress. Integral not only to the continued maintenance of royal residences, progresses also allowed the populace an opportunity to behold their queen.

³⁶ Jennifer Woodward highlighted the stress Reformist leaders laid upon the second commandment, with a desire to eradicate all images, both painted and sculpted, from religious worship. She describes it as a ‘strong iconographic bent’ with the commandment, which held a central place in the reformist psyche.

Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 39; 103.

³⁷ Woodward, *The Theatre of Death*, 103–7.

But with attention lavished upon numerous Elizabethan writers, artists, and their *oeuvre*, Elizabeth's own output is frequently overlooked or reduced to a mere, heavily edited insert accompanying a biography. This is an oversight, for Elizabeth was a skilled linguist and translator. In her youth she made gifts of translations of religious and philosophic texts, demonstrating her accomplishment and learning. A master rhetorician, as queen she composed many of her speeches. These, alongside her prayers, were commonly printed and disseminated with permission. Through repeatedly likening herself to Biblical figures in particular, Elizabeth affected how her public image was received by her spectatorship and/or readership. Her work reveals contrasting aspects of her character, which I shall label public and private; consequently, her output might loosely be categorised under those labels, although the categorisation of an individual piece could alter over time. Work categorised as public includes speeches and prayers, whilst private includes letters, poetry, and illustrations, for my research has also revealed that Elizabeth was an emblemist.

Elizabethan poetry, especially that circulated at court, was understood to serve as a declaration of fealty. Arthur Marotti writes:

[P]oems and speeches at royal tilts and entertainments as well as complimentary letters and verse all expressed social, political, and economic suits in the language of love, metaphorising the ambition Elizabethans paradoxically valued and condemned [...] particularly after the establishment of the cult of the Virgin Queen at the start of the third decade of Elizabeth's reign[.]³⁸

A vast array of dedicatory literature across varying genres can be interpreted thus. Patronage was a major factor; if a writer acquired an influential patron, it helped guarantee wider circulation of their work. Elizabeth was the most highly sought as female patronage became increasingly more prominent. Writers commonly addressed their desired patron directly,

³⁸ Arthur F. Marotti, "'Love is Not Love': Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order," in *ELH* 49, no. 2, Summer 1982, 39.

consequently perpetuating the long-standing tradition of courtly love poetry. It also became a negotiation of Elizabeth's monarchical power, for her gender had upset the recognised balance of the monarch (masculine, thus ideally a king) wedded to the nation (feminine).³⁹

However, if Elizabeth was the focus of everybody's suit, then her own output, particularly poetry, warrants more specialist attention. It does not fit in Marotti's analysis, thus other factors need consideration. Elizabeth's poetry frequently addressed the personal impact of issues affecting her life and/or the stability of her reign. Privacy must have been difficult for Elizabeth to obtain. From marriageability, fertility, personal relations with courtiers, or communications with foreign sovereigns, every factor of her life was considered a matter of State importance. Even in her most private quarters, Elizabeth was attended by ladies-in-waiting who slept in her immediate vicinity (although the concept of personal space was less developed, and many people would not have slept alone). Writing understandably provided a rare outlet; alongside her letters (an extensive collection of her written communications to varying correspondents survives), poetry appears to have been private, or as close to private as Elizabeth could achieve, to be read only by herself or the occasional recipient(s). Poems were rarely granted permission to be printed, although many nonetheless did end up in circulation, so that their categorisation as private or public, and their impact once available to a wider readership, must be addressed.

However, Elizabeth was also capable of orchestrating and perpetuating the public façade of the Virgin Queen. This visage was accentuated further by equally magnificent 'stages', the lavish interiors of royal residences. It was expected that monarchy live according to their estate and surround themselves in brilliance. Elizabeth's eventual Virgin Queen manifestation circulated beyond palace walls, chiefly through literary portrayals and visual portraits but also through circulation of her own written and spoken word. Collectively, Elizabeth's work

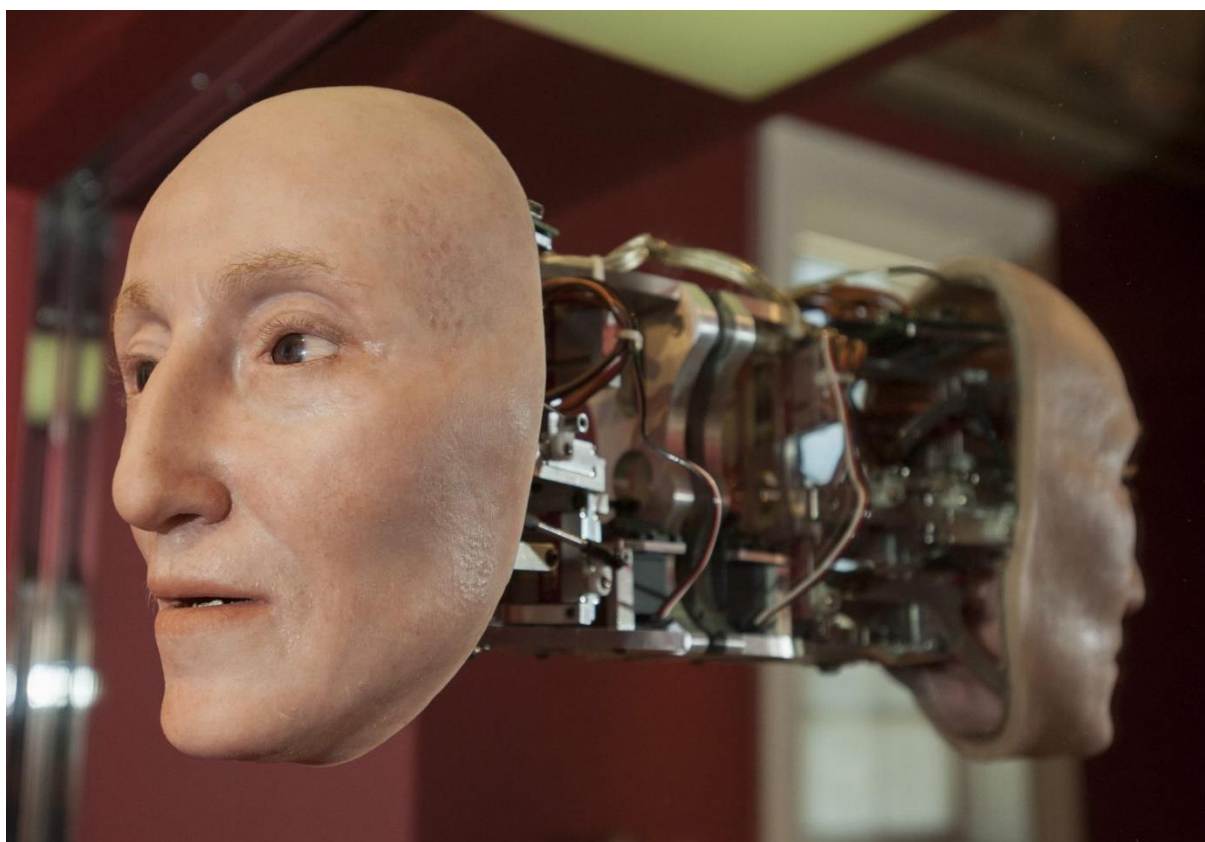
³⁹ Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*, 29.

presents a tantalising glimpse of the Gloriana she inspired alongside the woman behind closed doors, embodying the ‘dialogue’ Collishaw conveyed in his exhibition. Private, more personal writings offer a unique and rare insight to the princess (or Lady, depending upon the state of her legal legitimacy at the time of writing), whose reputation was once tarnished by scandalous gossip and tainted by treason, raised to the unenviable state of a queen governing a patriarchal society. To satisfy an all-male troupe of councillors, clergy, military and naval commanders, judges, lawyers, theologians, etc., she had to become the ‘Prince’ famously with the heart and stomach of a King. But her public image was also characteristically feminine – the enfeebled body of a woman, but also the maiden; the mother; the Virgin – ideas acceptable to her populace. The Virgin Queen emerged as a perfect embodiment of masculine and feminine attributes, but importantly presented an acceptable public front for her private decision to remain unmarried.

Spenser, in his author’s letter prefacing the *Faerie Queene*, recognised Elizabeth ‘beareth two persons’, the Royal Queen and Empress alongside the virtuous and beautiful Lady.⁴⁰ She was the Virgin Queen, but also a woman, which in Spenser’s poem is established through the allegorical representations of Elizabeth as Gloriana alongside other characters, such as Belphoebe and Una. There was more than one definable aspect to Elizabeth’s person. By lifting the veils of propaganda, the third chapter proffers a new and refreshed image of Elizabeth: the public Virgin Queen which has withstood the passage of time, coinciding with a private and literary woman. It examines her output to establish whether any correlation exists between her public, propagandistic persona and her notions of identity and purpose. What degree of privacy a woman constantly chaperoned by attendants could hope to achieve will be explored through the apparent dissemination and publication of ‘private’ work in her lifetime, whilst considering whether this was an invasion of privacy or a deliberate act calculated to

⁴⁰ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 16.

affect the wider readership's attitude towards her.

Fig.1

Matt Collishaw. *The Mask of Youth*. Queen's House. April-September 2018.



Unknown. *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Armada Portrait'), the 'Drake' version. c.1588.
Oil on panel. 110.5 x 125 cm. Royal Museums Greenwich.

i. A martyr to martyrdom

Concerning the themes of religion and politics in Elizabeth's image

After all the stormie, tempestuous, and blustering windie weather of queene Marie was overblowne, the darkesome clouds of discomfort dispersed, the palpable fogs and mists of most intollerable miserie consumed, and the dashing showers of persecution overpast: it pleased God to send England a calme and quiet season, a cleare and lovelie sunshine, a quitsest from former broiles, of a turbulent estate, and a world of blessings by good queene Elisabeth.⁴¹

Holinshed, *Chronicles*

The Bishops' Bible frontispiece (*fig.2*) depicts Elizabeth enthroned between the Cardinal Virtues Justice and Mercy, whilst Fortitude and Prudence hold her throne. Described by Plato in Book IV of the *Republic*, and enshrined in Christian theology, the Virtues comprise – in brief – the basic principles of just social and political organisation. Elizabeth, being crowned and supported by the Virtues, embodies them, signifying her reasonable and appropriate governance alongside leniency and mercy. Produced in 1568, the Bishops' Bible was compiled by at least eleven bishops and other scholars to counteract the perceived radical nature of the Geneva Bible and to correct translation errors in the Great Bible. The latter had been the first complete English bible translation commissioned during the reign of Henry VIII, and its frontispiece (*fig.3*) similarly depicted the magnificence and superiority, as well as the beneficence, of monarchy, whilst also portraying Henry's role as God's representative upon earth, following the Henrician Reformation's recognition of the monarch as Head of the Church of England. Henry is seen bestowing the Great Bible on the clergy, accompanied by the repeated phrase *Verbum Dei* ('The Word of God'). It gradually trickles down to the populace adoringly chanting *Vivat Rex* ('Long live the King'). Both frontispieces defended and

⁴¹ Raphaell Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 1965), 155.

demonstrated the right of Elizabeth and Henry, respectively, to rule.

Elizabeth had grown up worshipping from the Great Bible, which depicted her father receiving the Word of God directly from Christ, a figure relegated to the topmost margin. Henry had realised art could make a statement about royal power and supremacy. Through an alliance of monarch and art(ist), monarchical portraiture depicted power emanating from God's earthly representative, as typified in *Henry VIII* (c.1536), originally by Hans Holbein, who took employment as the King's Artist in 1536. Robert Davis and Beth Lindsmith summarise Holbein's role as providing a mirror to which Henry (and his court) could see how they could – and should – appear.⁴² Although the original painting was lost in a 1698 fire at Whitehall, many copies were produced. Henry is depicted full-length, with a bejewelled costume indicating his wealth. His bulky, intimidating body challenges the viewer, accentuated by his direct, penetrating gaze. His muscular legs posed slightly apart, along with an imposing codpiece, signify his virility; his perception of power is his capability to guarantee and secure the succession for his religiously reformed nation.

Through portraying Henry's vigour, it was implied that England too would prosper under his monarchy, suggesting he would achieve a level of power and dominion to rival the Pope's. In many respects, Elizabeth can be understood to have modelled herself upon her father, and in religion she initially appears little different: leader of a religion premised upon scripture, free from papal authority, and governed by monarchy. However, Henry's reformation, though arguably driven by personal motives, had nevertheless sought to restore Catholic worship to a pre-Roman state. This generated a religious schism, between Reformers and Catholics, that widened during the theologically contrasting reigns of Edward and Mary. I propose Elizabeth sought to suture that division with her religious settlement. After chartering

⁴² Robert C. Davis and Beth Lindsmith, *Renaissance People: Lives That Shaped the Modern Age* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2019), 234.

its development and implementation, this chapter shall gauge the consequent effect of the settlement upon her religious image, within literature and the visual portraiture disseminated in religious publications.

Elizabeth was actively involved in theological debate. By directing religious faith and worship from varying branches, Catholic and Reformist, towards a unifying collective, she recognisably sought to re-establish a state religion that was inclusive, but also restored a sense of national identity. Although the finalisation of her religious settlement preceded the emergence of her Virgin Queen image, it was nevertheless fundamental, for it not only sought to restore national identity irrespective of religion but also under the dominant image of monarchy. From this perspective, it may be gauged a precursor to the latter, and recognisably imperialistic, image. It also demonstrated the contest of control exerted over her public image from the outset of her reign, for many writers, artists, and publishers used religious imagery to renegotiate male superiority over Elizabeth, particularly regarding her role as leader of the Church, a position historically assumed by men. Furthermore, the apparent inclusivity of her settlement was counter to expectations placed upon her by some Reformers, which was to be reflected in her religious portrayals. This is typified in the successive editions of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the primary text of this chapter, which recognisably progressed from celebration of Elizabeth's accession towards later critiques at her lack of reform.

From 1450-1550, capacity to print and distribute books improved exponentially, which both Church and monarchy deployed for their advantage. Printing reached England in 1476, yet by 1500 there were still only five printers. William Caxton (1422-1499) is the most notable English printer of this period (although he trained in Cologne, before setting up a printing workshop in Bruges), returning to England under Edward IV's royal patronage. After Caxton's death his apprentice, Wynkyn de Worde, continued his practice, but without royal patronage his publications targeted less aristocratic, more general audiences. Increased availability of

printed texts coupled with rising literacy created a demand, consequently impacting several areas: the standardisation of languages; trade, of both books and the materials of production, alongside the economic opportunities that monopolies offered; access to portraiture via printed illustrations; and, crucially, the distribution and accessibility of knowledge. But knowledge was not necessarily straightforward to publish; on 16 November 1538, proclamation made it necessary for printers to acquire a license to distribute books in English:

(2) No person to print any English book except after examination by some of the Privy Council or other persons appointed. The words *cum privilegio regali* not to be used without *ad impremdum solum*, and the whole copy of the effect of the license to be printed underneath.⁴³

It was a reaction against ‘seditious’ texts, arising from the political and religious unrest engulfing Europe.

In Elizabethan England, some Reformers desired faster progress in alignment with religious developments across continental Europe. The 1560 Scottish Reformation established a reformed Presbyterian Church, severing the traditional alliance between Catholic France and Scotland. This partially explains Elizabeth’s later reluctance to assist Mary Stuart’s return to Scotland; restoring Scottish Catholicism would have situated England between it and Catholic France. The latter country also experienced a religious schism, with Reformers (known as Huguenots) engaged in a lengthy war. England received immigrants from several countries undergoing religious dispute, placing additional strain upon often stretched resources, as well as introducing new, Reformist religious texts and the establishment of new Churches. Elizabeth was as dismissive of extreme Reform as she was of ardent Catholicism, for both threatened the precarious stability of her religious settlement.

⁴³ Lindsay Crawford, James Ludovic, and Robert Steele, *A Bibliography of Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns and of Others Published under Authority, 1485-1714* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 19.

In 1559, Elizabeth confirmed the charter of the Stationers' Company and a system of licensing, conferred by the Crown or its nominees. This movement towards control meant seditious texts could be lawfully suppressed, with the Stationers' Company almost obliged to do so in the interest of protecting their monopolies. Not every book was seditious, however. Printed texts held equally advantageous benefits, especially for a monarch whose image was to play an integral propagandistic role. This control had an impact upon the distribution of Elizabeth's image, for many texts included a dedicatory preface and/or portrait. Woodcut portraits were the most circulated image of Elizabeth, such as that in the Bishops' Bible. These portrayals consistently emphasised her perceived role as the restorer of the true faith and hope for the Reformed Church. However, as shall be elucidated upon, this construct of Elizabeth as a Reformist queen often differed from the apparent inclusivity of her eventual settlement. Furthermore, the nominee system of licensing allowed influential individuals to actively bring into circulation texts which sought to instruct, correct, or critique Elizabeth and her course of religious reform.

Restoring the state religion

In Lord Keeper Bacon's opening speech to the 1559 Parliament, he relayed Elizabeth's desire to establish 'an uniforme order of religion'.⁴⁴ 'Uniform' is ambiguous. It could imply something occurring in the same form and which remains the same, with no difference or variation, and exhibiting or preserving consistency. In that context, it could indicate a religious settlement seeking reform, an interpretation which some scholarship supports. Haigh argues that Elizabeth's religious settlement was decidedly Reformist, and cites the Bishop John Hooper, who in 1550 described Elizabeth as 'inflamed' with the same religious zeal as Edward

⁴⁴ Sgroi, 'The Elizabethan Settlement', History of Parliament Online.

VI.⁴⁵ But this was documented both prior to Elizabeth's acceding the throne, and when the likelihood of her becoming queen seemed slim. Haigh also cites Elizabeth's translation of Marguerite de Navarre's *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, a text that will be studied in greater detail in chapter iii. Haigh labels it Protestant and believes it was evidence of Elizabeth's initial commitment to religious reform. This assertion is one I find problematic for numerous reasons. Firstly, the translation was again undertaken before Elizabeth became queen, and at a date when it appeared unlikely she would ever accede, rendering its viability as evidence towards her settlement is tenuous. Secondly, *Le Miroir* exemplified the programme of double translation taught by Elizabeth's tutors, and it was commonplace for young ladies to acquire a patroness figure: Katherine Parr, who received the translations as a New Years' gift, appears to have been Elizabeth's.⁴⁶ The text has also been interpreted as criticising her father (refer to chapter iii), further destabilising its status as a Reformist text.

The eventual publication of *Le Miroir* cannot be confirmed as intentional either. Its publication followed Parr's own foray into the field, substantiating the notion of her being a patroness Elizabeth perhaps sought to emulate. But it was the Bishop John Bale (1495-1563) who published *Le Miroir* in 1548, after making his own amendments. It is impossible to ascertain how Bale acquired the text, whether through Elizabeth or a member of her extensive entourage. Plausibly, it could have been published commemoratively, following Parr's death a year previously. Bale's motives for publication may be found in the inclusion of a female monarchy 'catalogue', which would indicate he had favoured Parr to have served as Queen Regent whilst Edward was in his minority. Whilst he praised Elizabeth for her philological prowess and model piety, he similarly praised others whose work(s) he published, including Anne Askew, a martyr burnt at the stake for her reformist beliefs in 1546.

⁴⁵ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 87.

⁴⁶ Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 95–96.

Once queen, Elizabeth's reformist stance was arguably confirmed by several of her contemporaries, including notable figures like the Duchess of Suffolk and the Scottish reformer Alexander Alesius, who had served at Anne Boleyn's court.⁴⁷ Haigh writes that concessions identifiable in the religious settlement, including the communion service, 'blurred' the departure from England's Catholic past. These are considered conservative political actions, following the Catholic bishops' opposition to the Supremacy Bill and their support from a significant portion of the peerage. To acquire a settlement, concessions were made but not enforced:

Limited toleration of Catholics made good political sense: repression would be administratively difficult, especially with so many conservatives among the justices and clergy, and possibly counter-productive. So Elizabeth made tolerant virtue out of political necessity.⁴⁸

Other evidence would indicate tactics intended to affect Parliamentary results. Following the failure of the first draft of the Supremacy Bill, the 1559 Westminster Conference was recognised as an act of disinterested enquiry. Though held as a formal disputation, staged between nine Reformers and Catholics apiece, it was purportedly rigged to favour the Reformers, with the Catholic faction denied access to necessary source materials. When the Catholic faction refused to participate, this was considered a plausible excuse for their arrest, thus preventing them from attending the House of Lords. Given the Act of Uniformity was eventually passed by a margin of twenty-one votes to eighteen, the significance of such tactics could have clearly had an impact upon results. Considerable effort appears to have been taken to ensure it triumphed over Catholic opposition. Although the Supremacy Bill did pass, only in 1563 did a convocation assemble to define the doctrines of the English Church, culminating

⁴⁷ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 33.

⁴⁸ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 43.

in the Thirty-Nine Articles. The Forty-Two Edwardian Articles are identifiably Reformist, yet these core doctrines, arguably premising Elizabeth's Reformist religion were to remain unaltered for a span of four years.

As queen, Elizabeth's perceived distrust of Catholic bishops can be traced to her entry into London shortly after Mary's death, where she was met by the mayor and alderman. Having proffered her hand when greeting the assembled, she retracted it when meeting the Catholic Bishop Edmund Bonner (1500-1569), purported to signal both a theological and political break from the past.⁴⁹ What should not be overlooked, however, is that Elizabeth's purported dislike of 'Bloody Bonner' plausibly derived from his active involvement in persecuting heretics during Mary's reign, or that he reconciled himself back to Catholicism despite initially supporting Henry's religious schism.

However, 'uniform' may also imply a collective being of the same form, character, or kind, pivotally acting in agreement or accordance. This collective conforms to a standard rule, yet there is nothing to dictate that the individual components of the collective are each of similar disposition; they may differ, but collectively work in uniformity to achieve agreement. This interpretation would suggest Elizabeth strove for a religion that directed variances towards a collective, shared settlement. It appears a political manoeuvre, whilst Elizabeth's decision to go through Parliament helped ensure the church settlement appeared lawful and legitimate before both Reformers and Catholics. Despite the apparent likelihood of tactics deployed to affect the course of reform and hinder Catholic opposition, the motives are not determinable. It may be Elizabeth did desire a stronger, reformist settlement, or it may be that she wished to finalise a settlement she considered (and which recognisably was) inclusive, but which in likelihood would never satisfy the Catholic clergy and nobility that posed the greatest obstacle

⁴⁹ Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror*, 59.

to its finalisation.

Elizabeth would not permit her Council to drive reform as Edward's Regency Council had done so zealously. Extremists such as John Knox (c.1514-1572), a leader of the Scottish Reformation, were barred from England, though his views on female monarchy may have also contributed. Elizabeth was a shrewd politician, and recognised good Catholic relations were essential for maintaining peace nationally and internationally: a percentage of her subjects identified as Catholic; she remained the sole female figurehead of a Reformist island nation surrounded by powerful Catholic neighbours; many marriage negotiations involved Catholic suitors; and the heir apparent, Mary Stuart, was Catholic. Perhaps most tellingly, her fathers' religion was recognisably a form of reformed Catholicism. He too had been wary of reform, despite the zeal of both Anne and Parr (for further detail, refer to chapter iii). Henry had even refuted Martin Luther's *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) in the *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* (1521), though this preceded his own reformation.

Elizabeth's view that there was only one Jesus Christ, and the rest a dispute over trifles, is widely reported. Alison Weir references this statement, spoken during a conversation between Elizabeth and the French Ambassador, Andre Hurault.⁵⁰ During Mary's reign, Elizabeth had been forced to participate in Catholic worship. For her part, Mary too had been treated badly throughout the latter half of their father's reign and into Edward's for abiding by her Catholic upbringing. Elizabeth arguably recognised the religious worship and practises an individual had been taught cannot necessarily be overruled. Her settlement supports this view, as would her eventual editorial role over Convocation's articles.

The Elizabethan Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were a revision of the Forty-Two Edwardian, which dated from 1553 and had been produced by Archbishop Cranmer. The later revisions, originally in Latin, were submitted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew

⁵⁰ Alison Weir, *Elizabeth, The Queen* (London: Random House, 2011), 54.

Parker (1504-1575), the former personal chaplain to both Anne and Edward.⁵¹ He was aided by the Bishops Richard Cox of Ely, Edmund Gheast (sometimes spelt Guest) of Rochester, and others who had been previously active in the revised Prayer book. However, Elizabeth personally amended those put forth by Convocation. Changes to article twenty gave the Church power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority should controversies of faith arise. This legitimised Elizabeth in taking necessary action to resolve religious discord arising from reform (or lack thereof, as some perceived). Another, article twenty-nine, was omitted entirely to avoid offending Catholics. This included a protest against the ubiquity of Christ and had denied that the unworthy partake of his body and blood. Alec Ryrie describes the articles as latitudinarian, phrased to allow varying interpretations, be that from a Lutheran, Reformed, or Catholic viewpoint.⁵² For example, the settlement accepted the presence of Christ in the Sacrament but without definition, which allowed for varying views of the Eucharist. The Articles were ratified and approved in 1563 before being published by the royal press. An authorised English edition was later produced in 1571, edited by Bishop Jewel of Salisbury. Once the doctrines were approved before parliament, clergymen were required to subscribe to them.

That included Parker. He was more moderate towards ecclesiastical reform when compared with many of his peers (a topic to be discussed in due course), a characteristic noticeably shared with Elizabeth. Previously, he had also accepted Henry's religious schism. Many Marian bishops had similarly accepted it at that time before later renouncing it, and Parker's responsibility was to encourage them back into the fold:

[Parker] was both reluctant and underqualified to be primate of all England. But in 1558-1559, Elizabeth did not need a politician, an administrator, a theologian or a pastor at Canterbury as much as she need a conciliator. Parker never concealed his distaste for Catholic doctrine, but his learned and generous career in Cambridge meant that he was

⁵¹ Anne had also given Parker the responsibility of overseeing Elizabeth's spiritual education.

⁵² Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stuart Realms 1485-1603* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 198.

probably better trusted than any other prominent Protestant.⁵³

From 1559 he spent a year attempting to persuade dissenting Catholic bishops who had voted against the Act of Uniformity to change their minds. Parker was a Reformer but, like Elizabeth, was also conservative. He had strong reservations about the pace of proposed reform, despite some of his contemporaries considering it too slow. Woodward writes:

In 1565, Elizabeth made it clear to Parker that she regarded religious uniformity as a mainstay of successful government, and that variation was a threat to the State. Yet she and her government were pragmatic, with the catholicity of government-sanctioned ritual indicating a recognition that a uniformity of religious practice was best served by retaining some traditional forms. It was anticipated that the majority would accept the reformed religion, and old practices gradually wane, with Elizabeth unyielding to amend the 1559 settlement.⁵⁴

Parker was disinclined to eradicate some aspects of traditional services, such as clerical vestments. This was a view shared by Elizabeth, who allowed copes, a form of vestment, to continue to be worn, although she remained steadfastly opposed to clerical marriage (though she was arguably averse to all marriages).

Evidence indicates that Parker viewed Elizabeth as the dual head of Church and nation. Following his death, his library was bequeathed to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Amongst the donated works were medieval tracts by an unknown cleric, since referred to as the Norman Anonymous. These tracts included observations upon what would later be defined as the *persona mixta*, ('mixed person'). Such an individual comprises various capacities. The Norman Anonymous wrote that Bishops, but also kings, represented the blending of secular and spiritual powers in one body (though papal doctrine by the Roman Catholic Church would later heavily reduce monarchy's clerical power). For example, they were thought to possess

⁵³ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, 198.

⁵⁴ Woodward, *The Theatre of Death*, 56.

healing powers, and themselves to be immune to infectious disease. Monarchy was recognised as a twin person, descended from nature and grace.⁵⁵ There are also parallels between the *persona mixta* and the concept of the Two Bodies. The secular, individual monarch (their Body *natural*), is anointed and consecrated by grace and becomes spiritual, paralleling the Body *politic* transferral that bestowed monarchical superiority. That Parker bequeathed this text, amongst others, to a university which trained clerics would suggest his intent that Elizabeth be regarded as such, a twin person imbued with secular and spiritual capabilities.

The issue of the cross

Stuart Prall observes the nature of the Elizabethan Church can be summarised as the outward signs (the clerical hierarchy and the Prayer Book) being Catholic, whereas the inward part (the doctrine) was Protestant.⁵⁶ Anna Keaton meanwhile perceives an ambiguity in the Book of Common Prayer concerning the presence of the Crucifix and candles on the altar, recognisably keeping moderate dissenters appeased though angering the more extremist minority. It perceivably gave the English Church the appearance of acquiescing to the Catholic demands from the 1559 Westminster Conference, and the appearance of a possible conversion, without making any real theological changes.⁵⁷ I consider ‘the appearance of a possible conversion’ a problematic evaluation. England was a historically Catholic country, and both parishes’ and individuals’ attachment to religious artefacts can be discerned by the number of artefacts which survived Henrician and Edwardian church scourges, to be reinstated under Mary.

The symbol of the cross merits a brief discussion. Elizabeth seemingly favoured it, even

⁵⁵ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 42–48.

⁵⁶ Stuart Prall, *Church and State in Tudor and Stuart England* (Arlington Heights: Harland Davidson, Inc, 1993), 81.

⁵⁷ Keaton, *Elizabethan Church Settlement*, 15.

retaining a crucifix in her private chapel, although it could have been labelled idolatrous. It triggered a strong backlash and was desecrated twice; each time, Elizabeth had it reinstated or repaired.⁵⁸ Similarly, the great cross of Cheapside was saved through her intervention. It does not stand to reason that these cases were diplomatic appeasement, be it towards resident Catholics, visiting dignitaries, or suitors. Patrick Collinson believes it could indicate her desire that crosses (or roods) were to be restored countrywide, although the 1561 Royal Order to ecclesiastical ministers decreeing rood screens be replaced with a crest (typically the royal arms) would counter that. And yet, as Collinson wrote, it is hard not to believe Elizabeth was personally addicted to her little cross.⁵⁹ Ryrie proposes it stemmed from Elizabeth's relationship with Parr, who in *The Lamentacion of a Sinner* (1546-1547) described the crucifix as a spiritual book on which Christians should meditate.⁶⁰ As Richard Williams notes, an image could serve as a didactic tool and means of remembrance (opposed to serving a solely devotional function).⁶¹ Alternatively, Carole Levin proposes it echoed the cults of saints Frideswide and Uncumber, both daughters of kings recognised for their devotion to virginity and associated with the image of the cross.⁶² However, we are unlikely to ever fully understand Elizabeth's apparent fondness for the cross.

Replacing the cross with the royal arms does appear significant, however, by symbolising the conjunction of Church and State in the monarch as achieved by the Acts of Supremacy. The symbol of resurrection became interwoven with the continuity of monarchy through the perpetuating Body *politic*. Hence the royal arms are depicted, rather than those of

⁵⁸ Iconoclasts attempted to destroy the cross in 1562 and 1567: in 1562, Bishop John Pankhurst wrote it had been broken into pieces and reduced to ashes; in 1567, de Silva wrote to Philip II of an Englishman casting down the cross and stamping it before being later imprisoned in the Tower.

Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 17-18.

⁵⁹ Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays*, 111-13.

⁶⁰ Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation*, 202.

⁶¹ Williams, 'The Visual Arts', 582.

⁶² Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 18-19.

an individual monarch.⁶³ This may have been a propagandistic measure to counteract concerns surrounding succession; I propose it also alludes to Elizabeth's continuation of a programme of religious reformation begun by her father, and one more in alignment with it than those of her half-siblings. Furthermore, whilst the use of religious images was considered popish, royal portraiture and monarchical paraphernalia (crowns, swords, and orbs) was not a sin. Recognising the cross in association with royalty thus diminished its classification as an idolatrous image.

The eventual settlement might be summarised as taking the hierarchy and structure of the Catholic Church combined with milder Reformist ideas. Neil MacGregor identifies the chalice used in church services as an example of inclusivity, retained and incorporated in reformed religious practices to become what he labels a team-building exercise: a new, communal experience, not solely a religious innovation but a social and a political one, in which everybody could join. Drinking from the cup meant that you were a loyal subject to the queen, regardless of religion.⁶⁴ Such chalices were an apparent push towards conformity, being part of a political calculation factored on the premise that, after a decade of gradual reforms, reverting to Catholicism seemed unlikely. It was a form of physical propaganda; a new, simpler, Reformist aesthetic to replace Catholic tradition without necessarily obliterating it.

Following the Catholic reign of Mary I, Elizabeth could have sought the stronger reform requested by numerous advisors and clergymen, although this may have appeared unnecessary. Early in her reign, she initially received little repudiation from the Pope or overseas Catholic monarchs, despite widespread assumptions that she would return England to the reformed

⁶³ Woodward, *The Theatre of Death*, 39–40.

⁶⁴ Neil MacGregor, *Shakespeare's Restless World* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 21.

religion of Edward.⁶⁵ Although many Marian exiles remained cautious about returning to England, Doran and Christopher Durston acknowledge that most English Catholics conformed, taking comfort from reformed services containing features compatible with their religion.⁶⁶ During the 1568 progress, a Catholic bystander is recorded as calling ‘*Vivat Regina*’, with Elizabeth informing the Spanish Ambassador, ‘This good old man is a clergyman of the old religion.’⁶⁷ Furthermore, it appeared plausible that Elizabeth might still marry a Catholic, or that the throne would be inherited by the Catholic Mary Stuart in the event of Elizabeth’s premature death. Nor were Catholics forced to convert – unlike Reformers during Mary I’s reign – provided they outwardly complied, although clergy were obliged to recognise Elizabeth’s settlement. ‘Elizabeth’s main concern was to enforce obedience to the law rather than change people’s beliefs.’⁶⁸ Recusancy was considered unlawful and subject to fines; many Catholics were likely to have considered that an incentive to attend services. Conforming Catholics were so common that by the 1580s they acquired a popular label, ‘church-papists’.

It would not be inaccurate to state most Catholics were relatively tolerant of the settlement, and that Puritans – disliking the vestiges of Catholic faith still retained – presented some of the greatest opposition through their desire for a settlement void of anything non-scriptural. In her 1585 speech at the closing of parliament, Elizabeth was resolute not to ‘animate Romanists’ nor ‘tolerate ‘newfangelness’, a reference to Puritanism. She reminded her audience that God entrusted her to rule over the Church: ‘For if I were not persuaded that

⁶⁵ When Elizabeth inherited the throne, England remained at war with France. The French King Henri II proclaimed his niece and daughter-in-law, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots and Reine-Dauphine of France, lawful Queen of England through her descent from Henry VIII’s sister, Margaret. If recognised, this would have united France, Scotland, and England, posing a threat to Spain and its trade and communication links with territories in the low countries. Determined to keep England and France apart, Philip II supported Elizabeth’s claim and tolerated her settlement, but remained optimistic that her commitment to the reformed religion was not irrevocable (he later proposed to Elizabeth).

⁶⁶ Susan Doran and Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors, and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 121.

⁶⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Spanish, 1568-1569I*, 50-51. Printed in Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 37.

⁶⁸ Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors, and People*, 121.

mine were the true way of God's will, God forbid that I should live to prescribe it to you.'⁶⁹

Keaton writes that the Thirty-Nine Articles demonstrated Elizabeth's desire for moderation, for when used in conjunction with the Elizabethan Prayer Book one has what has been labelled the *via media*:

This is achieved by an outward appearance of Catholicism, with a [Reformist] doctrine. The English Church kept, for a large part, the trappings of any good Catholic country. They used a prayer book, which was similar to the books used to structure Catholic Masses, but it differed in content and did not have the approval of the Pope.⁷⁰

By 1563, Elizabeth sought to maintain her settlement despite pressure for stronger ecclesiastical reform from councillors, bishops, and Members of Parliament. The settlement's immediate success is debatable; it did not entirely quell the religious and political unrest which spanned Elizabeth's reign – as made apparent in the above extract from 1585 – but its legacy is recognisable, for the Church of England still requires ministers to publicly assert their belief in the Articles over four hundred years later.

In brief, I summarise the Elizabethan settlement as a sensible solution to a difficult situation, and believe Elizabeth was well intentioned, although it should be noted that the settlement reflected the state of affairs in Elizabeth's early reign, and persecution of Catholics and more staunch Reformers would increase during the 1580s and 1590s. Given the religious divide engulfing not only England but continental Europe, it was inevitably not going to appease everybody. Yet it presents Elizabeth as a sensible and well-reasoned individual, with the tenacity to achieve her desired outcome (even if underhand tactics were possibly deployed). However, the settlement did not come without setbacks which significantly affected subsequent portrayals of Elizabeth before her contemporaries. The middle-ground tactic was interpreted as

⁶⁹ BL, MS Additional 15891, fol. 148. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 182.

⁷⁰ Keaton, *Elizabethan Church Settlement*, 14.

indicating her reluctance, or incapability, to take decisive action; to her male councillors, it almost certainly testified to an unwillingness to heed advice.

Being neither wholeheartedly Reformist nor Catholic isolated not only England, but Elizabeth herself. In years to come this compromised state would help perpetuate an image of uniqueness which, culturally, would be celebrated, recognising God's favour upon England and the restoration of a Golden Age under Elizabeth's rule. But that itself can also be viewed as a smokescreen for difficulties that arose, recognisably, from the outcome of the religious settlement. In 1563 Elizabeth was an unmarried, childless queen. The expectation was that she would – and should – marry to provide an heir, but the issue of state religion cast matrimonial negotiations into increasing difficulty. Consequently, this would eventually mean no heir of her body. Meanwhile, some deemed her religious settlement lacklustre, with Elizabeth herself unyielding to the behests to enforce more stringent reforms. This is not intended as criticism, however: her non-compliance became integral to the deployment of propaganda, resulting in her most enduring epithet, the Virgin Queen.

The first edition of *Acts and Monuments*

At the outset of her reign, before the settlement was finalised, the printed image of Elizabeth portrayed a queen who would quell religious unrest. This was not envisaged through a programme of religious compromise, but a series of reforms. Furthermore, predominantly male authors used religious imagery to negotiate control over Elizabeth, making parallels with such figures as Deborah to signify her divine status yet impede her through the notion of male counsel. One widely distributed religious text was *Acts and Monuments*, printed by John Day (c.1522-1584), which would, by the fourth edition in 1583, be four times larger than the Bible. It became equally available to the public, for many churches acquired a copy from 1570. Foxe

was commissioned to produce his ecclesiastical history by Bishop Edmund Grindal (c.1519-1583). Beginning with a history of the Church, Foxe differentiated the Early Church from the Roman Catholic Church, a *thema* prevalent in other contemporary works including *Image of Two Churches* (1545) by Bale. The Catholic Church was posited as a corrupting threat, as Frances Yates outlines:

Put very briefly, [Foxe's] point of view is that the English reform is no new development but represents a pure Catholic Church which has always existed. In the early ages of Christianity, the Church as a whole was pure; in later ages wickedness crept into high places in Rome, and the impious 'Whore of Babylon' oppressed the true Church.⁷¹

The majority of Foxe's martyrologue is comprised of accounts of persecuted Reformists condemned as heretics, dating from the 'Year of our Lord a thousand unto the time now present,' with especial focus on the reign of Mary I in the fifth book. In this first edition, the portrayal of Elizabeth sought to starkly – and favourably – contrast her with Mary, envisaging the former as a reformist queen who would purge the church of Roman Catholicism and restore it to a pure state. After failing to heed by these expectations, however, Foxe's revisions to the second edition, and in particular his portrayal of Elizabeth, can be interpreted as a critique of her settlement. This can also be understood as a group endeavour, with research indicating it was an opinion shared with Day and Elizabeth's chief advisor, William Cecil, who as a probable patron was influential to the text's production and circulation.

Images were also an important asset to *Acts and Monuments*, for it was the only Reformed English martyrologue to be illustrated. Andrew Pettegree writes of a discernible movement against illustrations in religious texts in England (though arguably this does not include dedicatory monarchical portraiture), though on the European continent Protestant

⁷¹ Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Pimlico, 1975), 43.

illustration had developed its own tradition.⁷² The inclusion of illustrations is plausibly linked with the use of continental source materials, themselves often martyrologues. However, with the indication being that *Acts and Monuments* would achieve public display, images may have benefited those with little to no literacy, whilst their inclusion also demonstrated Day's proficiency and skill as a printer. The images include an illustration of Elizabeth, used first in conjunction with the emperor Constantine, and then Christ, but in both instances conveying expectations placed upon her as queen. Thus, despite the adulatory dedication, Elizabeth was disempowered, for writer, publisher, and patron emphasised her religious duty to God through comparison with male examples.

In the first edition, Foxe portrayed Elizabeth as a virtuous 'Lady' (for he primarily recounts her imprisonment prior to accession) saved by divine providence:

I meane those which beinge in the very middest of all daunger, and invironed rounde aboute wholly with jeoperdy, and no lesse constant in the truthe, by the singuler grace of God, John & danniellike, most miraculouslye and against all mens expectations in savety were delivered from the wicked and wolvishe handes of their enemies. In the whiche table and cataloge pleaseth the Quenes most excellent majesty, and our redoubted Lady, amongst the chieftest to bee accompted and wrytten. For is it not more clere then the lighte, yea and more bright then the sunne, that her grace was only preserved by the mighty hand of the helper Christ, and playne miracle of divine providence. Otherwise verely it could not possible be, that her majesty so longe in safetye could contynue, being a Ladye of so excellent vertue, so well qualyfied, so godly disposed, so constant in Christes religion, and beinge placed in the daungerous tyme and hurlyburly amongst the thickest of her enemyes, at whome only they shotte, and by all kinde of wayes and policies trayterously & violentlye sought to dispatch. (1563, 1775)

To include Elizabeth in the blanket description 'Daniel-like' is a subtle reference to her

⁷² Andrew Pettegree, 'Illustrating the Book: A Protestant Dilemma', in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2002), 134.

coronation prayer, which addressed her former incarcerations through similar Biblical imagery (refer to chapter iii). This was not uncommon; for example, the preface to the Geneva Bible, discussed further in due course, thanked God for saving Elizabeth from the lions, a comparison to Daniel being saved from the same threat by God's intervention:

For considering God's wonderful mercies towards you at all seasons, who hath pulled you out of the mouthe of the lyons, and how that from your youth you have bene brought *up* in the holy Scriptures, the hope of all men is so increased, that they cannot but looke that God shulde bring to passe some wonderful worke by your grace to the *uniuersal* comfort of his Churche.⁷³

Such widely circulated portrayals of Elizabeth also served as excellent propaganda. Foxe's seemingly vague description deftly acknowledged both contemporary religious portraiture alongside Elizabeth's coronation oration, whilst agreeing with their sentiment. Elizabeth's perceived constancy in upholding Christ's religion (the Early Church upon which her father's reformed religion was premised) through her hardships is a qualifying attribute, entitling her to become queen. Furthermore, surviving past threats is testament to the divine favour and intervention she received. Elizabeth has been saved, as Foxe's historiography recounts, thus nobody had cause to dispute her legitimacy or eligibility to govern. Thus, *Acts and Monuments* serves as a demonstration of fealty, reinforced through the contrasting – and damning – account of Mary:

The causes layd agaynst Ladye Mary, were as wel for that it was feared she would mary with a straunger, and therby entangle the crowne, as also that shee woulde cleane alter religion, *used* both in kyng Henry her father, and also in kynge Edward her brothers dayes, and so bryng in the Pope, to the *utter* destruction of the realme, whyche in dede afterward came to passe, as by the course and sequele of thys storye maye wel appeare. (1563, 969)

⁷³ *The Geneva Bible* (Geneva: Rowland Hall, 1560), 3.

As noted above, Elizabeth is predominantly referred to as Lady, for Foxe recounted her life before ascension. However, Mary's title is reduced: with Henry and Edward both referred to as 'kyнге', Mary should have been entitled queen, not 'Ladye'.

Despite the similarity of title, it was necessary to portray Elizabeth in stark contrast to Mary, for it counter-balanced Knox's misogynistic tract *The Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558). A former chaplain to Edward, Knox was forced to resign following Mary's succession and fled to Geneva, where he continued to preach and write pamphlets (though he returned to Scotland when Elizabeth became queen). In *The Monstrous Regiment*, he wrote:

The insolent joy, the bonfires, the banqueting which were in London and elsewhere in England when that cursed Jezebel [Mary] was proclaimed Queen did witness to my heart that men were becomen more than enraged. For how else could they so have rejoiced at their own confusion and certain destruction?⁷⁴

He upheld a widespread assumption that God created a natural order. Citing biblical sources, God's punishment of Eve made her man's subject, with it therefore virtuous for women to serve men. When Mary became queen, this power reversal was deemed 'unnatural'. However, Foxe argued women could rule, and sought to demonstrate that the issue of religion, not gender, was the cause of Mary's perceived inefficiencies. Other writers similarly sought to repudiate Knox. Bishop John Aylmer countered the argument against female government in *An Harborowe for faithfull and trewe subjects* (1559). Elizabeth is described through imagery of the Virgin Mary, described as a 'mother' to England chosen by God. Bale also likened Elizabeth to the Virgin Mary in the dedicatory epistle to *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae ... catalogus* (1559). On a brief aside, such literary portrayals of Elizabeth as a Marian figure contrast significantly with contemporary visual portraiture. I argue that

⁷⁴ John Knox, *The Political Writings of John Knox*, ed. Marvin A. Breslow (London: Associated University Presses, 1985), 58.

connotations of virginity were present in visual portrayals, to detract from slanderous rumour of Elizabeth's purported affair with Seymour, but they were not intended to be Marian (refer to chapter ii for a more detailed analysis). Doran likewise believes there is no trace of Marian imagery in early, often printed, visual portraits, which instead allegorically referenced Elizabeth's role as governor of the Church of England.⁷⁵ Any visual reference to the Virgin Mary would be considered iconographic and thus inappropriate.

Aylmer thought 'true religion' would be restored, though he did not consider Elizabeth to rule independently. England was not a monarchy, he argued, but a mixture of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy, as seen in parliament. Any monarch, male or female, relies upon parliament, for it is law that rules. England would prosper because God would guide Elizabeth and because parliament – comprised of men – would provide necessary advice. Dale Hoak details how this coincided with Aylmer's portrait of Elizabeth as Deborah; wife, prophetess, judge, and mother, who gave cause for the foes of Israel to take flight, but who also took counsel.⁷⁶ Such a portrait was also presented before Elizabeth during her coronation, with the fifth and final pageant depicting 'Debora the judge and restorer of the house of Israel'. Yet alongside the figure representing Elizabeth as Deborah were players representing nobility, clergy, and the wider populace, with a banner reading 'Debora with hir estates consulting for the good government of Israell'. Richard Grafton wrote of the pageant in *Abridgement of the Chronicles of England* (1562), and the official account of Elizabeth's coronation published by Richard Tottel, a specialist in legal publishing, similarly reinforced that she should heed counsel:

[Elizabeth] might by this be put in remembrance to consult for the worthie government of

⁷⁵ Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', 172-178.

⁷⁶ Dale Hoak, 'A Tudor Deborah? The Coronation of Elizabeth I, Parliament, and the Problem of Female Rule', in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2002), 76-78.

her people, considering God oftymes sent women nobly to rule among men [...] and that it behoveth both men and women so ruling to *use advise of good counsell*.⁷⁷

Aylmer also supplied Foxe with a manuscript copy of a 1550 letter by Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554), whom Aylmer had tutored. It was considered to demonstrate her piety and learning, as this extract from the later 1570 edition of *Acts and Monuments* demonstrates. Grey had written:

[L]et the sweete *consolations & promises* of the Scriptures, let the example of Christ and his Apostles, holy Martyrs and Confessours encourage thee to take faster hold by Christ. Harken what hee sayth: Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you for my sake: rejoyce and be glad, for great is your reward in heauen: for so persecuted they the Prophetes that were before you. (1570, 1621)

Named Edward VI's successor, Jane had formerly embodied the hopes of those seeking the furtherance of 'true religion'. Speaking of revulsion and persecution from others, yet being blessed for maintaining Christ's teaching throughout, it bears obvious parallels to Elizabeth's imprisonment and her own comparisons in prayer with 'Prophetes that were before'.

By chronicling the past and evaluating the unsatisfactory rule of Mary, Foxe's emphasis was firmly situated upon the 'time now present'. Elizabeth had become the new embodiment of hope and reform, a recurrent message formerly portrayed in the pageantry of her coronation procession. It indicated an aspiration that Elizabeth would uphold the religion of the Early Church. In relation to this, the imagery of light is an important aspect. It posits Elizabeth early in her reign as the sun, thus the centre of her court (refer to chapter iii). The 'light' she emitted also provides clarity; Elizabeth was a shining exemplar, signifying that adherence and commitment to a reformed religion would be awarded by the divine. She must also hold the

⁷⁷ Richard Grafton, *Abridgement of the Chronicle of England* (London, 1572), fol. 195v. Printed in Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 352.

torch aloft, so to speak, and lead by example, conferring upon Elizabeth an obligation.

William Cecil

Acts and Monuments was envisaged as a text comparable with the bible, both in terms of subject and volume of pages, that could similarly serve as propaganda: Henry VIII had formerly commissioned the Great Bible for English churches, signifying his newfound religious governance; foreseeing similar implementation, the Elizabethan equivalent is an extensive, English language martyrologue chronicling the history of the Church, defending the reformed religion as one modelled upon the ‘True’ religion preceding papal intervention. Both texts, Henrician and Elizabethan, fundamentally upheld monarchical governance of religion, as depicted in their accompanying visual portraiture. Thus, a literary portrayal and visual portrait of Elizabeth was widely circulated throughout England, slandering Roman Catholicism and defending the Reformed religion, denouncing Mary whilst glorifying Elizabeth.

Foxe asserted the accuracy of his hagiography, for the ‘whole cloth was drawn and woven together from the archives and registers of the bishops themselves,’ including those taken from diocesan records through co-operation with Grindal.⁷⁸ It also wove extensive interviews with witnesses, principally the families and acquaintances of those persecuted in living memory. Foxe began preliminary drafts of *Acts and Monuments* prior to Elizabeth’s accession, as can be inferred from the preface to his published letter of the Marian martyr Nicholas Ridley, printed by Day in 1559:

First to begin with this littel treatise of Doct. Nicholas Ridley, late Bysshoppe of London,

⁷⁸ Beforehand, Foxe had been in regular receivership of martyrological manuscripts from Grindal, whilst employed as a corrector at the printing house of Johannes Oporinus. Some of these communications were latterly incorporated into *Acts and Monuments*.

John N. King, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25.

this shalbe to desire the (gentle Reader) to accept it, and studioslye to peruse it in the meanetyme whyle the other volumes be addressing which we are about touching the full historie, processe, and examinations, of all our blessed brethren, lately persecuted for righteousnes sake[.]⁷⁹

Its publication indicates Foxe and Day may have been in correspondence, potentially a partnership, whilst Foxe was exiled in Basel, although no evidence confirms their acquaintance prior to 1559. Evenden and Freeman suggest Cecil introduced them: Foxe was acquainted with Cecil from the Reformist circles he frequented prior to Mary's accession, following his employment as tutor to the family of the Duchess of Richmond, and Cecil had also lent support for Foxe's earlier work, a Latin grammar handbook; it is likely that Day knew Cecil through his former partnership with William Seres, Cecil's client. One of the first books Day printed, the *Cosmographical Glasse* (1559), was dedicated to Cecil, potentially as proof of his printing abilities, but plausibly a bid to secure lucrative monopolies.⁸⁰ When Mary gained the throne, Foxe fled into exile overseas, but Day and Cecil remained in England; the latter supported a clandestine printing press, and Day was arrested in 1554 for producing seditious – or 'naughty' – texts.⁸¹ Cecil's acquaintance and patronage not only brought both men together, but recognisably gave him significant influence over *Acts and Monuments*.

I perceive *Acts and Monuments* as the fulfilment of Cecil's propagandistic agenda, with the likelihood that he pressured them to print. It exhibits an express desire to manage Elizabeth's image, assuming control over her and the course of religious reform. Cecil himself was a keen Reformer, having formerly numbered amidst a circle of similar-minded individuals at the court of Henry VIII, including Sir Anthony Cooke, John Cheke, and Parr. This apparent effort to direct the course of religious reform may, should it have been successful, be interpreted

⁷⁹ Nicholas Ridley, *A Frendly Farewel*, ed. John Foxe (John Day, 1559), unpaginated preface.

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 112.

⁸¹ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 116–21.

as a forerunner to his attempts at influencing other prevalent issues, such as Elizabeth's marriage. As Bernard Beckingsale writes:

[Cecil] saw that his duty was to give the Queen his best advice and then to carry out whatever policy seemed expedient to her. [...] His contribution to policy-making was his intuitive appreciation of the national interest, which he strove to convey to the Queen.⁸²

Cecil is in many ways synonymous with Elizabeth, and together they formed one of the greatest political pairings in English history. Guy highlights his influence, being an individual 'marinated' in the ways of court since Edward VI's reign. Cecil was Privy councillor before becoming Elizabeth's principal secretary upon her accession. In this position, he 'coaxed the then highly inexperienced twenty-five-year-old into a decidedly more Protestant Religious Settlement than she would later have countenanced,' before threatening to resign if she did not acquiesce to his suggestion of sending troops to Scotland, in retaliation to a French garrison stationed there.⁸³ In one letter, Cecil audaciously wrote that 'to serve Your Majesty in anything that myself cannot allow must needs to be an unprofitable service.'⁸⁴

Despite conforming to Catholicism under Mary, Cecil did not achieve the political distinction he formerly held when in service to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England (1500-1552). During Mary's reign, Cecil was employed as administrator of Elizabeth's properties which, alongside his relationship to her gentlewoman Blanche Parry (they were cousins), helped forge their partnership. Upon accession, Elizabeth appointed him Secretary of State, and in 1572 Cecil was awarded the vacant Lord Treasurer's post. Upon conferring the post of Secretary, Elizabeth's speech to Cecil (amidst other lords) at Hatfield is recorded:

⁸² Bernard Winslow Beckingsale, 'William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley', Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Cecil-1st-Baron-Burghley>.

⁸³ John Guy, *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years* (London: Viking, 2016), 13.

⁸⁴ BS, Lansdowne MS 102, fo.1; BS, Lansdowne MS 103, fo.3. Printed in John Guy, *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years* (London: Viking, 2016), 13.

I give you this charge, that you shall be of my Privy Council and content yourself to take pains for me and my realm. This judgement I have of you: that you will not be corrupted with any manner of gift, and that you will be faithful to the State, and that without respect to my private will, you will give me the counsel that you think best, and if you shall know anything necessary to be declared to me of secrecy, you shall show it to myself only. And assure yourself I will not fail to keep taciturnity therein, and therefore herewith I charge you.⁸⁵

The diplomat and Privy Council clerk Robert Beale would later provide a summary of this office in *Treatise of the Office of a Counsellor and Principal Secretary to her Majesty* (1592). Cecil's duty was to produce agendas for council meetings, impart matters arising in council to Elizabeth, and maintain records. It was also Cecil's responsibility to have a detailed knowledge of England and its noblemen, and to be principally concerned with matters of religion. One way he could actively address that issue was through involvement with a text that, following publication, would be approved by Reformers and furthermore portray Elizabeth as the model reformist queen.

The image of Elizabeth in print

The visual portrait of 'Elisabetha Regina' in *Acts and Monument* (fig.4) depicts her enthroned, bearing the ceremonial sword and orb, in a decorated initiated 'C'. This was not an uncommon form of portraiture; Mary I had been similarly depicted in an initiated letter in the 1553 Plea Rolls.⁸⁶ The Elizabethan design is comparable to Seals of the Realm, the authorisation of Government jurisdiction. Recalling Cecil's secretarial role of officiating royal documents, he may be interpreted as figuratively placing his stamp of approval upon *Acts and Monuments* and

⁸⁵ PRO, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth 12/1/7; copy. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 51.

⁸⁶ Susan Doran, *The Tudor Chronicles: 1485-1603* (London: Quercus, 2008), 238–239.

its favourable portrait, celebrating Elizabeth reforming religion and restoring Godly rule. Below her, under the lower curvature of the 'C', a serpent attacks the Pope, prostrate and naked, illustratively 'stripped' of power since Elizabethan policy again broke with papal authority. The benefits are evident in the uppermost curvature of the 'C', a cornucopia of rich harvests and roses. Cupid, arguably intended to indicate England's future prosperity through Elizabeth's marriage, straddles the cornucopia and bears an English shield with his left hand. The shield's design features the quartered Royal Arms of Edward III (quartered to include the Royal Arms of France alongside the English, representing Edward's claim to the French throne), the form adopted by both Henry V and Elizabeth. In his right hand Cupid holds a bouquet containing roses, signifying the bounty England shall yield. The roses also represent the Tudor dynasty, which in conjunction with rich harvests further anticipates Elizabeth providing an heir. Similar emphasis was made during her coronation through ancestral portraiture, culminating with Elizabeth herself. Her grandparents' procreative marriage was celebrated in the first pageant, 'The uniting of the two houses of Lancastre and Yorke', through the union of their house roses.

The portrait illustrates Cecil's participation in *Acts and Monuments*, for it has been argued he is featured. Three figures stand in attendance to the left of Elizabeth. Yates identified them as the Three Estates of the Realm, these being clergy (the First Estate), nobles (the Second Estate), and peasants (the Third Estate).⁸⁷ John King identified Day as the figure at the back, and the figure next to him as Foxe.⁸⁸ The third, however, proved elusive to identify: Edward Hodnett described an unspecific court official;⁸⁹ King thought it to be the politician and writer Thomas Norton.⁹⁰ Given the anti-Catholic stance of *Acts and Monuments*, it is an

⁸⁷ Yates, *Astraea*, 43.

⁸⁸ John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 435; John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 156.

⁸⁹ Edward Hodnett, *Image and Text: Studies in the Illustration of English Literature* (London: Scolar Press, 1982), 32.

⁹⁰ King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, 156.

understandable nomination, for Norton's persecution of Catholics earned him the reputation of 'rackmaster-general'.⁹¹

A more compelling argument is provided by Evenden and Freeman, who have identified the third figure as Cecil by comparing the image with a contemporary 1562 sketch for a planned family tomb.⁹² The 'C' is printed in the conventional place for dedicational imagery and as indicated by its preface, the overall work is figuratively presented by the trio to Elizabeth. Collectively, they stand in attendance upon Elizabeth, proud of their achievement, although their presence is also indicative of subservience.⁹³ Yet the foregrounded Cecil takes precedence over both author and printer. He, not they, is the foremost member of the council 'Deborah' should heed, the incorruptible and faithful individual who will put the needs of State before those of Elizabeth's 'private will', as instructed to do in 1558.⁹⁴ Following Mary's reign, Foxe wrote 'Nowe wee see thinges done with *moore advisement*, and lesse haste, no man nowe presuminge to violate orders godlye taken.' (1563, 1789) And should Elizabeth seek 'advisement', she need look no further than *Acts and Monuments*, in which her image is presented not as a representation of the queen but as a pattern for her to follow.

Constantine was an appropriate figure that Foxe associated with Elizabeth via an image, as he was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. This conversion, in context, could represent the expectation that Elizabeth 'convert' England away from Catholicism, and one

⁹¹ S. R. Johnson, 'Norton, Thomas', History of Parliament Online, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/norton-thomas-1532-84>.

⁹² For the evidence supporting this identification, refer to Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, 'John Foxe, John Daye and the Printing of the "Book of Martyrs"', in *Lives in Print: Biography and the Book Trade from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century*, ed. Michael Harris, Giles Mandelbrote, and Robin Myers (London: The British Library, 2002), 27–33.

⁹³ In the latter, 1570 edition, the dedicatory 'C' came to represent Christ, not Constantine (more upon that in due course). However, the inference to Christ is *not* absent in this first application, for the depiction of three men in attendance upon a divine figure bears evident parallels with the story of Christ, who at birth was attended by three shepherds. Jesus' birth was the divine will of God to save the world from sin; Elizabeth's accession is interpreted likewise, to save the Christian world from papal 'sin'.

⁹⁴ Cecil would also de-politicise the Privy Chamber: consequently, the Henrician Privy Chamber's control of the Privy purse and royal signature were restored to the secretaryship, the position Cecil held. Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis, 1558-1569* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32.

might argue that Constantine's convocation of the First Council of Nicaea (which produced the Nicene Creed) be emulated in Elizabeth's ongoing religious settlement. Furthermore, the figure of Constantine reinforced the necessity of a solution to tyranny. Historically, he defeated the tyrannous Maxentius to become emperor and restore peace. Thus, an indicted tyrant provides moral justification for the hero's action: the implication is that Elizabeth was the Constantine to Mary's Maxentius. This is repeated through Constantine's war with his brother-in-law Licinius (another representation of Mary), who persecuted Christians and gave Constantine (Elizabeth) justification to act. Constantine's story is told in the preface, but the *thema* of divided relations reappears in the culminative fifth book, portraying the tyrant, Catholic Mary and the hero, Reformist Elizabeth (discussed in due course). It also morally defended former uprisings and revolts against Mary, with which Elizabeth was suspected of involvement (though this remains unproven). Michael Pucci writes:

As an answer to the problem of persecution, Constantine shone as a contrasting light, wholly justified in his actions compared to the persecutors. As a prescriptive *exemplum* he was offered as the only Roman model worthy to be emulated by Christian princes[.]⁹⁵

Elizabeth, like Constantine, is a pacifier and establisher of the true Church of Christ, for Foxe 'could not enter mention of the one, but must nedes wryte of the other.' (1563, 6) Constantine was furthermore a suitable figure as he had been appropriated in British legend as the son of Saint Helen(a), the Colchester-born princess. Helen arguably represented Anne, whose formerly tarnished reputation was re-envisaged following her daughter's accession, as Elizabeth's coronation pageantry had displayed: out with the taint of adultery, incest, and witchcraft, and in with the forward-thinking religious reformer, dutiful queen and mother, and famous beauty.

⁹⁵ Michael S. Pucci, 'Reforming Roman Emperors: John Foxe's Characterization of Constantine in the Acts and Monuments', in *John Foxe*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999), 37.

Helen and Anne's stories loosely correlated. Traditionally, Helen is a persecuted heroine.

As Laura Loomis outlines, her story:

[...] told of the laborious, humble life of Helena and her child, of the winning of the father's attention by [Constantine's] grace and charm, of the revelation of the lad's identity, and of the reunion of the humbly situated mother with the boy's father.⁹⁶

Helen remained separated from her husband (executed in Anne's case) until her son's charm and grace triumphed (or until Elizabeth acceded the English throne). It was appropriate, therefore, that the genealogical *thema* of the first pageant in Elizabeth's coronation resituated 'worthie' Queen Anne alongside Henry.⁹⁷ Foxe recognised Elizabeth as a 'Prince', thus contextually perpetuating the comparison with Constantine, defending her legitimacy through the recognition of royal status, and attesting to the validity of her parents' marriage. Although propagandistic, Anne and Henry's marriage was never officially sanctioned. Unlike Mary, who revalidated her father's first marriage, Elizabeth shrewdly drew little public attention to Anne: her marriage was never ratified, nor her remains reinterred in a location more befitting a queen consort and mother. Abstaining from the bold gestures of Mary (who had sought to garner favour and validate her claim) prevented Elizabeth from possibly antagonising people whose memory of Anne was plausibly tarnished by the poor treatment Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, received.⁹⁸

Constantine was also the instrument of God's temporal limitation on persecution,

⁹⁶ Laura Hibbard Loomis, *Medieval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), 29.

⁹⁷ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 347.

⁹⁸ Admittedly the circumstances differed, for Mary perhaps felt impelled to validate her claim following victory against Jane Grey, whom Edward VI had named successor above both his half-sisters. But the legitimisation of her parents' marriage was also an inevitable outcome of her religious settlement. After Henry divorced Catherine, Mary had been bastardised and (temporarily) removed from the line of succession. Henry was succeeded by Edward, who was a devout Protestant (Grey), whereas Mary had remained staunchly Catholic. Retaining Edward's Protestant settlement would have undermined Mary, for it would give validity to the Henrician Reformation and thus recognise Henry's divorce from Catherine, rendering Mary illegitimate. The re-establishment of Catholicism consequently legitimated her parents' marriage, and therefore herself. Leanda de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story* (London: Vintage, 2014), 292.

prefiguring the final, impending triumph of Christ. Fundamentally, his actions restored peace, the 'contrasting light' dispelling the darkness of tyranny. This bore striking similarity to later, allegorical portraits of Elizabeth as Astraea, who was prophesied to restore a second, Golden Age. The parallel, between Constantine's restoration of a unified religion and subsequent end to tyranny, with Astraea's restoration of an age heralding peace and prosperity despite humankind's degradation during the intervening ages, is noticeable. However, Constantine was the more appropriate figure at this early date due to his provision of a (male) heir, whereas Astraea was a virgin goddess, an inappropriate model for a perceivably marriageable queen.

If Anne is Helen, then Foxe is Eusebius, Constantine's bishop. Foxe not only instructed Elizabeth on religious matters, but also sought patronage, premised on the model of Constantine's support of Eusebius' historical research.⁹⁹ In the preface alone, he praised Elizabeth and her mother whilst deferentially celebrating the reformed religion of her father. By appropriating the past to represent the present, Foxe was also capable of condensing several hundred years of history in a timespan more negotiable to human understanding; the parallels between Constantine and Elizabeth provide a bridge through time, bringing the ancient past into his present, when the religious persecution witnessed during the Marian regime would still have been remembered by the majority:

The second and principall cause why I haue induced this foresayde matter of Constantine and Eusebius, is this: for that your Majestie in markyng the humble petition of the Byshop, and the gentle graunt of the Emperour, maye the rather be intreated to accept this my poore and simple endevoure, in setting forth this present history, touching the Actes and Monumentes of suche godly Martyrs as suffered before youre reigne for the like testimonie of Christ and his truth. For if thē such care was in searching and setting forth the doynge and Actes of Christes faithfull servauntes, suffering for his name in the primative tyme of the Church: why should they now be more neglected of vs in the latter church, suche as geve their bloud in the same cause and like quarell? For what should we say? Is not the

⁹⁹ King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*, 94.

name of Christe as precious nowe, as then? Were not the tormentes as great? Is not the cause all one? (1563, 7)

Ultimately, Foxe represented Elizabeth as a second Constantine, a representative of the true faith and person of great historic renown (although she had only ruled for four years), whose governance over the Church would have equally lasting, defining consequences. Introducing Elizabeth as Constantine was an appropriate use of prolepsis, prefiguring Elizabeth's own achievements.

Following the dedicatory preface, *Acts and Monuments* predominantly details the persecution of long-deceased martyrs. The fifth book chiefly concerns the reign of Mary, yet culminates in a brief literary portrayal of Elizabeth, 'The Life and Preservation of Lady Elizabeth' from childhood through to her accession and religious settlement. Concluding with a dedication to the reign of Elizabeth, it signified the perceived reforms she would enforce. A succession of similes favourably contrasted Elizabeth's accession with Mary's: 'She commeth in like a mother, not like a step dame, like a Lambe, not lyke a Lion.' 'Mother' and 'Lamb' carry biblical connotations, with the mother figure of the Virgin Mary (and God's chosen) bringing Christ, the Lamb of God, into the world to take away sin. Consequently, Elizabeth is both the Constantine archetype of the preface, and the Christ-figure whom he echoed. 'Step dame' implies a substitute for an actual mother figure, and a figure of non-biological family connection. This has significant overtones when addressing the two siblings' contrasting religious policies, whilst alienating Mary in that respect from her father and stepsiblings. Though kingly, a lion is mature, dominant, fierce, and a killer, an appropriate image considering the detailed documentation of Marian persecutions, whereas a lamb connotes youth, vulnerability, innocence, and pliancy. Along a similar tangent, when narrating Elizabeth's incarceration at Windsor, she is again described as 'tanquam ouis, that is, lyke a

shepe to the slauhter' (though admittedly a sheep is not a lamb). In the 1557 Geneva New Testament, the letter to the readership is addressed to 'simple lambs' in the Church of Christ, to which Foxe's 'lambe' could be understood as pertaining.

Throughout *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe addresses his readership:

Wherefore what cause wee have to render thankes and supplications for this so worthy and excellent a Prince, let all Englyshe mennes hartes examyne and consider wyth themselves.
(1563, 1790)

He poses a question, then states each 'Englyshe mennes harte' must reach their own conclusion, prompting re-examination and consideration of information previously relayed; the reader is encouraged to assess Mary and Elizabeth, ultimately Catholic and Reformist religion. Foxe's historiographic documentation of the Marian Articles of Religion portrayed Mary's sole intent of restoring Roman Catholic worship and papal authority, despite her father's and half-brother's attempts to restore the Church to a purer state. Bonner considered the people 'bound' by 'the ordinaunce of the Catholike church', and clergy were bestowed power to oversee the reinstatement of pre-reformation worship:

Item, that every byshop and all other persones aforesayde, do dyligently travayle for the repressing of heresies and notable crimes, especially in the Clergie, duely correcting and punyshyng the same. (1563, 992)

In comparison, Elizabeth governed a kingdom that 'standeth by coaction [and] that is governed with gentilnes.' The coaction could indicate varying religious practises coming together harmoniously, but Foxe's stance against Catholicism renders that unlikely. Instead, as King posits, it is likely that it referred to the collaboration between Church and State as existed under the rule of Constantine.¹⁰⁰ Alternatively, it could pertain to Aylmer's view of England as a

¹⁰⁰ King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*, 94.

tripartite combination of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy, as encompassed through parliament, and is therefore extricating power from Elizabeth through the affirmation that she should heed the advice of advisory bodies. From the declaration to the 1559 Westminster Conference which Foxe printed:

SO it pleased (the) quenes most excellent majesty, having heard of diversity of opinions in certayne matters of religion amongst sundry of her loving subjects, and being very desirous to have the same reduced to some godly and christian concord, by the advise of the Lordes and others of her privy Councell, aswell for the satisfaction of persons doubtfull, as also for the knowledge of the very trueth in certayn matters of difference: to have a convenient chosen number of (the) best learned of either part, and to conferre to gether ther opinions and reasons, & therby to come to some good and charitable agreement.¹⁰¹

Elizabeth, like Constantine, shall endeavour to harmonise Church and State through political negotiation, for she had allowed Reformist and Catholic clergy the opportunity to confer, and ultimately settle, the religious debate.¹⁰² Her adoption of a cohesive, yet still Reformist, religion will dispel the ‘tyranny’ of papal Catholicism which, as proficiently evidenced, resulted in religious persecution. Yet Foxe’s interpretation does not allow for Roman Catholicism *per se* in a cohesive settlement, but a reformed religion that restores Christianity to a pre-papal state.

Foxe’s use of the first-person pronoun created inclusivity between himself and his readership. But it encompasses inclusivity amongst the readership regardless of religion, for post-publication backlash from Catholics indicates that they too read *Acts and Monuments*. This, arguably, is another incentive for the – principally Catholic – readership to assess; the detailed – and illustrated – accounts of execution and suffering under Catholic governance,

¹⁰¹ John Foxe, ‘The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO’, 2011, 1563, 1802, <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe/>.

¹⁰² However, Foxe’s documentation of the official accounts of the 1559 Westminster Conference was originally produced by the Bishops Jewel and Cox, who both numbered amongst the nine Reformists: this account is arguably biased to favourably portray their party, whilst also countering accusations of reported underhand tactics to sway results.

situated in stark contrast with clement, patient Elizabeth. Foxe was unusually tolerant and opposed the death penalty in all cases concerning heresy. His subject was not so much the martyr, but the persecuting and victimising force. He perceived the Catholic Church was not at fault for causing confusion and division, but for its use of malevolent cruelty. Collinson believes this was ‘the sheet anchor for Foxe’s ecclesiology, for a cruel Church would never be a true Church.’¹⁰³ Therefore, if victims of the Catholic Church were burnt for being considered deluded or unintellectual, then it was a cruel and tyrannical Church. But Elizabeth would stop persecution, even against her perceived enemy:

[M]anye other excellent and memorable examples of her princely qualities and singuler vertues mighte here bee noted: but none in my mynde more worthy of commendacion, or that shal set forth the same of her heroicall and princely renowne more to al posteritie, then the christian pacience, and incredible clemency of her nature, shewed in her afflictions, & towardes her enemies declared. (1563, 1791)

Foxe emphasises this through repetition:

Yet this wil I saye by the waye, that then she must nedes be in her affliction marvelous pacient, which sheweth her selfe now in this prosperitie to be vtterly without desire of revenge: or els would she have geuen some token ere this daye of remembraunce, howe she was handeled. (1563, 1792)

It starkly contrasted descriptions of Mary, who had to ‘turn’ her subjects when garnering support (an ambiguous term indicating either the necessity of persuading people, or enforcement), alongside the detailed accounts of martyrs put to death, records which included eye-witness accounts.

Foxe’s source of disapproval lay not in Catholicism, but adherence to papal authority, and those who upheld it whilst seeking the suppression of the ‘true’ religion. He served to

¹⁰³ Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays*, 162.

instruct and guide the readership, paralleling Elizabeth's sense of her religious duty. In the 1585 closing speech to Parliament, Elizabeth did not purport to 'prescribe'; she served to guide, being 'persuaded that mine were the true ways of God's will.'¹⁰⁴ She professed the belief that a person's private worship was their own affair, and was not to be decreed by another, so long as their actions remained in lawful parameters. Thus, she would not outwardly show herself to be against Catholicism, though she would take necessary action against any whose behaviours contravened law. Whereas Foxe (and Day and Cecil) celebrated Elizabeth for her clemency alongside their perception of her obligation to ensure reform, and guide people upon the correct religious path, to the extent that the Church be cleansed. Fundamentally, they anticipated further religious reform.

The conclusion drawn from Foxe's work is that Mary, or her settlement, had been unpopular with a significant percentage of English people from the outset of her reign.¹⁰⁵ To substantiate, Foxe recounted the Wyatt rebellion, which resulted in the execution of Grey who, as mentioned above, had embodied hope for the continued reformation of religion. Her execution was necessitated not from involvement (her imprisonment denied her that), but for providing a figurehead for rebels – which could also be said of Elizabeth. Foxe included some of Jane's poetry:

Do never thinke it straunge,
Though now I have misfortune.
For if that fortune chaunge,
The same to thee may happen.¹⁰⁶

The misfortune befalling her may, through reversed fortunes, befall another. Foxe's

¹⁰⁴ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 182.

¹⁰⁵ Concern about governance by a queen regnant might be one contributing factor to this wariness, opposed to the nature of her religious settlement.

¹⁰⁶ Foxe, 'The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online', 2011. 1563, 990, <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe/>.

appropriation of the quatrain indicted Mary, whose fortunes reversed through illness, death, and the de-(Roman) Catholicised policy of her successor. Meanwhile Jane's misfortune had reversed, for she was subsequently celebrated for her pious and learned qualities. Jane's fate was also presented as having presaged Elizabeth's incarceration and imperilment; the two are aligned, suffering imprisonment for their belief. Another of Jane's quatrains identified their favour from God:

If God do helpe thee,
 Hate shall not hurte thee.
 If God do fayle thee,
 Then shall not labour prevayle thee.¹⁰⁷

Through God's intervention, hatred shall not succeed. For her labours, Jane died a martyr, remaining true to God through commitment to reform, preserving her from 'hurte', interpreted not solely as physical pain (or execution) but also the damage to her reputation, which the Marian regime had sought to tarnish. Whereas God 'fayled' Mary, for her laborious pursuance of a counter-reformation was ultimately unsuccessful.

The 'hate' Elizabeth experienced included her imprisonment in the Tower merely on 'suspension' of involvement in rebellion, opposed to any confirmatory evidence. Foxe portrayed Elizabeth like Jane, as both an innocent and martyr:

And therefore as we have hitherto discoursed the afflictions and persecutions of th'other poore members of Christ, *comprehended* in this history before: so likewise I see no cause why the communion of her graces [Elizabeth's] afflictions also, among th'other saintes of christ, ought to be suppressed in silence, especially seing the great and meruelous workinge of Gods glory, chefely in this story appeareth above all the reaste. (1563, 1791)

'Suppressed' suggests that Elizabeth's story was not common knowledge, or that details

¹⁰⁷ Foxe, 'The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online', 2011. 1563, 990, <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe/>.

formerly propagandistically favoured Mary, as one endangered by the wicked machinations of her half-sister (whether Mary had cause for such fear is a subject for another discussion), just as Jane had endangered her claim to the throne. However, accounting for the fact that *Acts and Monuments* was planned for dissemination in churches across England, it would consequently inform the populace of Elizabeth's – and Jane's – ordeal, fulfilling a viably propagandistic usage. This resonated with Elizabeth's own projected image, as truth had been the primary *thema* of her coronation. Before the first pageant, a child greeted Elizabeth with the gift of 'true hertes', for 'faithfulnes have wonne, and al untruthe driven out'.¹⁰⁸

Themes of innocence and purity were similarly emphasised through Elizabeth's dress, which was more modest than many of her aristocratic female contemporaries:

[S]eauen yeares after her fathers deathe shee hadde so little pride of stomacke, so little delight in glisteringe gases of the worlde, in gaye apparell, riche attire, and precieuse jewelles, that in all that tyme shee never loked upon those that her father lefte her, & which other Ladies commonly be so fonde upon. (1563, 1791)

On occasions when she was richly dressed, it was 'onely once, and that against her will':

And moreover after that, so little gloried in the same, that ther cam neither gold nor stone vpon her head, till her sister enforced her to laye of her former sobernes, and beare her company in her glistering gaines: yea and then she so ware it, as every man might see, that her body bare that which her harte mysliked. (1563, 1791)

The contrast to Mary's rich apparel could not be more distinct. Linda Porter writes of Mary's passion for finery and particular love for jewellery, for its beauty as well as indication of rank.¹⁰⁹ The portrait *Mary I* (1544, fig.5) by Hans Eworth (c.1520-1574) depicted Mary before a red velvet cloth of honour, in a lavish gold, intricately patterned dress. Her status and piety

¹⁰⁸ Richard Grafton, *Abridgement of the Chronicles of England* (London, 1572), fol. 195r. Printed in Anglo, *Spectacle, Pagaentry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 347.

¹⁰⁹ Linda Porter, *Mary Tudor: The First Queen* (London: Piatkus, 2009), 83.

are indicated through her jewellery, including a lavish cross at her neck suspended from a pearl necklace, a large brooch and enormous drop pearl at her breast, and reliquary decorated with the four evangelists suspended from a chain at her waist. It differed greatly from Elizabeth's style of dress from a comparative date, as described by Foxe and as depicted in portraiture. Whilst Mary dressed richly and elaborately to signify royal status, Elizabeth retained a plain appearance. This appropriation of piety garnered followers who were opposed to Mary's settlement, which intensified from 1555 following the persecution of Reformist clergy. Mary's image also starkly contrasted how Elizabeth would be portrayed after an equivalent lapse of time in her own reign (see chapter ii). Politically, it served Elizabeth's interest to initially maintain a plain visage; anything too elaborate may have been a visual reminder of Mary. Only with the introduction of the Virgin Queen image later in her reign would Elizabeth's visage begin to draw parallels with her half-sister's, yet this served to portray her as a semi-divine goddess figure and played an important part in her allegorical representation, opposed to solely emphasising her monarchical status, as shall be investigated in chapter ii.

The literary portrayal which *Acts and Monuments* provided, alongside detailed accounts of Elizabeth's own word and action during events such as her coronation, importantly counteracted slander against her which had circulated during Mary's reign whilst simultaneously (and propagandistically) portraying her as innocent and virtuous. This essence of purity further coincided with the state that she was preconceived by many of her reformist contemporaries to be restoring religion towards, which was implied further through favourable religious comparisons including Daniel, Constantine, and Deborah. The most immediate and striking images, however, were arguably generated through accompanying visual portraiture. They demonstrated the virtues Elizabeth possessed, as depicted in the Bishops' Bible. But such images could also indicate how her governance was directed by guidance, whether by divine

intervention such as Daniel experienced, or from the counsel figures like Deborah received. Though never diminished of her status as Queen or Head of the Church, the indication was nevertheless that she was supplicatory when necessary, particularly to the advice of male advisers, as demonstrated in the initiated 'C'.

Foxe's use of biblical imagery pertaining to Elizabeth's perceived 'obligation' to restore the true religion, alongside Cecil's active involvement, cannot be overlooked. But despite Cecil's participation, Foxe could not have predicted the outcome of the religious settlement whilst still sourcing and compiling prior to publication. Therefore, the portrait of Elizabeth as a restorer of faith is Foxe's (and Day's, and Cecil's, and other similarly minded individuals) own creation. As already ascertained, the inclusivity and tolerance that Foxe accredited to Elizabeth did not include Roman Catholicism, which Elizabeth's settlement does appear to have encompassed. Elizabeth's own allusions to biblical sources during her coronation (and beyond) may have spawned the subsequent portrayal of her, but it was nevertheless pre-emptive to conclude that she was going to introduce greater reform than previous Reformist governments, or effectively remove all traces of Catholicism from religious worship. There are several plausible explanations for Elizabeth's own appropriation of religious imagery (refer to chapter iii), but it is surmisable that Foxe re-appropriated the most convenient religious and historic comparisons to promote his own agenda, religious reform.

Acts and Monuments was a huge – and financially precarious – commitment. It has been estimated a work on the scale of the first edition should take approximately sixty-one weeks to typeset, and a hundred weeks (nearly two years) to print, provided two presses were available and no other works were printed alongside;¹¹⁰ however, the eventual 1563 edition was compiled, written, organised, and printed in eighteen months.¹¹¹ Furthermore, Foxe and Day

¹¹⁰ Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Delaware: Winchester and New Castle, 1995), 54-55.

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage: John Day and the Tudor Book Trade* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 64.

collaboratively printed four editions, each increasing in volume, although Day did acquire more presses, with four available for the 1583 edition. The first edition required considerable investment before any recoup was possible from sales. It contained errors, paste-ins, and interpolations, and the necessity of acquiring more paper during the print run resulted in the incorporation of poorer-quality material. Indicating a rushed job, it implies considerable pressure to publish, as well as a purported ‘fervent desire on the part of the great and the good in Elizabethan England for the book to appear.’¹¹² With its early plan for dissemination in churches, *Acts and Monuments* would also be accessible to the public, with the aspiration that it could emulate the celebratory nature – and reception – of the ‘Byble in Englishe’ presented to Elizabeth at the fourth pageant of her coronation procession. As Richard Mulcaster recounted:

[W]hen her grace had learned that the Bible in English should there be offered, she thanked the City therefore, promised the reading thereof most diligently, and incontinent [immediately] commanded that it should be brought. At the receipt whereof, how reverently did she with both her hands take it, kiss it, and lay it upon her breast, to the great comfort of the looker-on! God will undoubtedly preserve so worthy a prince, which at His honour so reverently taketh her beginning. For his saying is true and written in the book of truth: he that first seeketh the kingdom of God shall have all other things cast unto him. Now, therefore, all English hearts and her natural people must needs pray God’s mercy, which have sent them so worthy a prince, and pray for her grace’s long continuance amongst us.¹¹³

This presentation also served as a reminder to Elizabeth to remain on the correct path both politically and religiously. Sydney Anglo concludes:

The blessed qualities [...] were present in the new queen: and, like the virtues, they must

¹¹² Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 124.

¹¹³ Richard Mulcaster, *The Passage of Our Most Dread Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth through the City of London to Westminster the Day before Her Coronation* (London: Richard Tottel, 1558/1559). Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 55.

be maintained in order that queen and country should enjoy a prosperous reign.¹¹⁴

With licensing conferred by the Crown or its nominees, Cecil provided financial security for Day by bestowing printing monopolies for bestselling texts including the *ABC* and *Catechism*, and metrical psalms printed in English (viewed as preparation towards printing *Acts and Monuments*).¹¹⁵ From 1566 he also relaxed laws governing the number of overseas workers allowed in the printing press, to assist Day with printing the second edition. Having provided necessary financial aids to compensate the huge investment required, he also advocated *Acts and Monuments*' publication in the vernacular, despite Foxe's concerns about damaging his literary reputation (having previously published in Latin). The 1563 edition documented what was understood to be a historic moment of religious transition and transformation. While it lamented past tragedy and persecution, optimism was found in Elizabeth's accession and, as Haigh summarises, the changes this was believed to herald:

[...] the optimistic mood of the opening years of the reign of Elizabeth I, when nationalistic Protestants welcomed the cessation of religious persecution and expectations were high for the implementation of thorough-going ecclesiastical reform.¹¹⁶

Following completion of the first edition of *Acts and Monuments*, Day retained his printing monopolies and was appointed to a senior position in the Stationers' Company, whilst Cecil secured Foxe a clerical position and the prebend of Shipton at Salisbury Cathedral.¹¹⁷ Providing both income and accommodation, it crucially allowed Foxe time to collate materials and continue writing in view of subsequent editions.

¹¹⁴ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pagaentry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 351.

¹¹⁵ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 112.

¹¹⁶ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 93.

¹¹⁷ A prebend being the estate or portion of land from which a stipend is derived to support a canon of a cathedral or collegiate church, or a member of its chapter.

The second edition of *Acts and Monuments*

Despite the settlement's apparent 'conclusion' in 1563, emphasis upon a perceived necessity for further religious reform continued, nor were individuals opposed to the settlement to remain silent on the topic. Publications like *Acts and Monuments* reiterated the danger that Catholicism was perceived to still pose. Woolley writes:

[*Acts and Monuments*] is a significant historical document, but by no means a politically or religiously neutral one. Though covering the entire history of religious persecution, it focuses with particular intensity on 'the bloody murdering' of 'godly martyrs' during Mary's reign. Through the testimony of Mary's Protestant victims accompanied by gruesome illustrations of beatings and burnings, Foxe embroidered a vivid but decidedly Protestant picture of Catholic cruelty.¹¹⁸

Foxe, and other similarly minded individuals, were conscious of England's future. Perceiving the settlement to be lacklustre, they used literature to portray the danger inaction posed through historic examples of religious persecution, and portrayed Elizabeth as the individual capable of alleviating that threat but had yet unfulfilled that requirement. This essentially foretold the future of England as precarious, especially when factoring other contemporary issues, including Elizabeth's marriage (pertinent at the time of the second edition's publication) and the succession (pertinent from the second edition onwards).

There were significant alterations to the second edition, first and foremost the title.¹¹⁹ Greater emphasis was placed upon its historiographical content, which could have served to strengthen its scholarly credentials in response to criticism of the first edition from Catholic

¹¹⁸ Woolley, *The Queen's Conjuror*, 45.

¹¹⁹ It was re-entitled *The Ecclesiastical History, Contaynyng the Actes and Monuments of thyngs passed in every kynges tyme in this Realme, especially in the Church of England principally to be noted, with a full discourse of such persecutions, horrible troubles, the sufferynge of Martrys, and other thinges incident, touchyng aswel the sayd Church of England, as also Scotland, and all other foreine nations, from the primitive tyme till the reign of K. Henry VIII.*

detractors. The dedicatory preface to the queen in the second edition was subsumed by Foxe's outrage at the volume and vehemence of Catholic backlash, and many of its additions were similarly defensive.¹²⁰ These included a Reformist history preceding Lutheranism, and further resources – especially personal testimonies – which served to validate Foxe's accounts of Catholic hostility and brutality. These all served to highlight the necessity of reform, which was emphasised in his revision of Elizabeth's literary portrayal. As I shall examine, this was in response to a perceived lack of action: too few reform measures had been undertaken to assuage the 'horrible troubles' of the past. Her visual portrait, though retained in its original form, was consequently affected by alterations to the preface, with the 'C' capitalising 'Christ' instead of 'Constantine'. Elizabeth was no longer compared with a notable male model of comparable monarchic and imperial rule, but directly with Christ. This implied a specific and unavoidable obligation upon Elizabeth, pressuring her to fulfil a role as God's emissary.

One may gauge that its readers were presented with Elizabeth's perceived shortcomings and failures, and that the mass-production of this text in conjunction with proposed dissemination amongst churches applied pressure upon her to act accordingly and appease a supposedly – or perceivably – agitated populace. The most notable difference is the emphasis upon an Elizabethan political theology of godly rule, as premised upon the Gospel of Christ. As Wesley Goudy writes:

[C]onfronted with Roman Catholic criticism of this 1563 history, and reformist Protestant dismay over the queen's ecclesiastical policy, Foxe's second edition [...] would redirect the attention of his Elizabethan readership from the Roman persecutions to a "godly" magisterial defence of the true visible Church, as it had existed previously in old England and continental Europe.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Foxe vehemently attacked the Catholic detractors, paralleling their reception of his book with that formerly shown to the Great Bible. As outlined earlier, it had been anticipated that *Acts and Monuments* would become recognisably comparable to a bible, and therefore be considered as instructive as well as a history text; Foxe would appear to (modestly) concede that feat is achieved by according his book equal prestigiousness.

¹²¹ Wesley Miles Goudy, 'Constantine in Scriptural Mode: John Foxe's "Magisterial" Revisions to *Acts and Monuments*' Second Edition (1570)' (Toronto, University of Toronto, 2018), 3.

The initiated 'C' capitalising Christ marks a significant change in Elizabeth's portrayal, for whereas Constantine fundamentally acted of his own volition, Christ was specifically tasked to rid the world of sin. Elizabeth was 'defendour of the fayth' in 1563, but by 1570 the epithet is explicitly defender of 'Christes Fayth and Gospel'. Later, Mary I is described as 'a vehement adversary and persecutour against the sincere professours of Christ *Jesus* and of his Gospel.' (1570, 2337) It was Christ, Prince of all Princes, who placed Elizabeth on the throne, an indication of his superiority and her subservience. She was committed by his charge to provide an example to all good princes, and to not do so was a failure of duty and responsibility. As a son, Christ may draw attention to the issue of Elizabeth's succession; if she were to provide a good example as queen, she would marry and produce a (dynastically preferable) male heir.

The Thirty-Nine Articles was perceived as complacent by Foxe and unequal to the necessary reform required. Consequently, through an unfavourable parallel with Mary, Foxe implied Elizabeth had not done enough to separate England from the corrupting influence of Roman Catholicism. Whilst the first edition starkly contrasted Mary and Elizabeth, the lion and lamb respectively, such distinctions became noticeably less marked in Foxe's revision. The substitution of Constantine with Christ was significant in other ways, for Elizabeth had failed to emulate him by fundamentally failing to unite Church and State. As Governor of the Church, she failed to initiate stronger reform. And as 'Deborah', neither had she acquiesced to counsel, as numerous petitions from her Parliament attest. Church and State should have unified, but instead remained in ongoing debate over religion, Elizabeth's marriage, and the succession.

Foxe referenced the presentation of the 1563 edition of *Acts and Monuments* to Elizabeth, having believed at that time his 'trevailes' were at an end. According to King, devoting the dedication of the second edition to polemical controversy rather than appealing

for patronage is unusual, and corresponds with a tempering of Foxe's original praise.¹²² Whilst the provocation which prompted this subsequent revised edition is primarily attributed to Catholic detractors, his reference to Elizabeth is significant, for the assumption that his work could cease also manifested the belief that, following the sufferings of martyrs throughout the history of the Church, Elizabeth's reign should have restored true faith. In 1563, Foxe foretold of 'entringe into the time and reigne of such a worthy Princes, and Quene' who, amongst a list of beneficial qualities, 'uniteth hartes, and love with forren enemies, helpeth neighbours, reformeth religion, quencheth persecution, [and] redresseth the drosse.' (1563, 1789) Uniting hearts recognisably alluded to bringing Reformist and Catholic faiths together through the restoration of the state religion to the pre-Romanised true religion, or to the idealised union of Church and State; its plausible connection to love with foreign enemies similarly attested to peaceable relations with overseas, predominantly Catholic nations, with the potential prospect of Elizabeth's marriage to a foreign dignitary (though given Foxe's recognisable disdain of Mary I's Habsburg marriage, his advancement of a Catholic suitor seems unlikely); helping neighbours may pertain to the religious atmosphere in Scotland, in which Protestant factions held control of government yet which had a Catholic queen, to contemporary religious disputes such as the French Wars of Religion, or to aspects of internal politics; reforming religion, as discussed above, related to the hope that Elizabeth would continue a programme of reform; and quenching persecution meaning she would do so peaceably. 'Redressing the dross' is more ambivalent. Etymologically, 'dross' derives from dregs, usually worthless, unwanted residue matter following a process (dregs left over from the brewing process, or dross material from metal foundries). To 'redress' can mean to rectify, remove, or even abolish, a perceived fault. Presumably, such redressal would be directed upon the 'dregs' remaining after uniting hearts, reforming religion, etc., which contextually would be Catholic in nature – those who refused

¹²² King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*, 116.

to recognise Elizabeth as queen or accept her Reformist religion, or the threat from neighbouring or overseas nations similarly refuting Elizabeth. Though how such dross would be redressed is unspecified.

Yet Foxe's queen 'so Godly disposed' had not implemented the essential theological reform. He indirectly implied that Elizabeth, like her father, had not cleansed the Church of popery, failing to fulfil a conferred obligation. Events, including the Northern Rebellions, were indicative that Catholicism still posed a threat. They certainly attested to a lack of united hearts. Regarding love with foreign enemies, Elizabeth had been denounced by Pope Pius V earlier in 1570, whilst the Northern Rebellions had sought to place Mary Stuart upon the throne. If Mary had acquired the throne through conquest, or through Elizabeth's premature death, she would undoubtedly have initiated a further counter-reformation. The latter scenario had already appeared all too possible when in 1562 Elizabeth contracted smallpox, prompting a succession crisis. Although she survived, by 1570 Elizabeth still had no heir of her body, thus failing to fulfil another obligation. Whilst the question of Elizabeth's successor had remained unchanged, Mary had a son, James, strengthening her candidacy to the throne by guaranteeing succession of a male heir.

Foxe presented and dedicated his revised work to Elizabeth, without whose reign his book could not have been compiled (particularly as he would have remained in exile). He desired Elizabeth accept the work as a testament of service and good will, but crucially, that she be amongst those who acknowledge its necessity:

[Y]et I shall desire both you and them [learned people], to consider in it the necessitie of the ignorant flocke of Christ committed to your government in this Realme of England. Who, as they have bene long ledde in ignoraunce, and wrapt in blindnes for lacke specially of Gods word, & partly also for wanting the light of history, pitie I thought but that such shuld be helped, their ignorance relieved, and simplicities instructed. (1570, 9)

The ‘ignorant flocke’, representative of the English populace, required guidance and were still awaiting to be led from their state of ignorance and blindness towards the light. This unspecified duration of time could encompass the scope of the history *Acts and Monuments* chronicles; it could also, arguably, encompass the seven years between the first and second editions. Foxe trusted that all quarters and countries of the realm be furnished with the ‘voyce of Christes Gospell’ and ‘faithfull preachyng’, preceded with the brief yet expressive remark it be undertaken ‘speedely’ in parenthesis. Essentially, Elizabeth was encouraged to proceed with haste. With a documented history of the Church both presented to her and at her disposal, Elizabeth cannot remain ignorant, and is indirectly tasked with correcting the state of religious affairs through a method of reform governed by Christ’s Gospel:

I thought also not unprofitable to adjoyne unto this your godly proceedings, and to the office of the ministry, the knowlege also of Ecclesiasticall history [...] that [...] the people may learne the rules and preceptes of doctrine [and that] they may have examples of Gods mighty working in his church, to the confirmation of their faith, and the edification of Christian life. (1570, 9)

Highlighting the ongoing need to save the unlearned from ignorance coincided with the necessity that Elizabeth instigated reforms that would achieve that result. In brief, and to concur with Goudy, Foxe presented a case for godly magisterial rule.¹²³

‘The Life and Preservation of Lady Elizabeth’ was also amended, with Elizabeth’s deliverance through the intermission of God stressed from the outset. Coinciding with the alterations to the preface, her subservience to a higher power is made clear. However, in an address to the reader, ‘we’ are asked to consider the state of misery and degradation Elizabeth must have endured whilst imprisoned during Mary I’s reign. Factoring recent threats to Elizabeth’s reign, the emphasis upon imagining such an experience of imprisonment implied a

¹²³ Goudy, ‘Constantine in Scriptural Mode’, 3.

situation that would have been repeated if the Northern Rebellions had been successful. Although we understand ‘Queene Mary her sister’ to be Mary I, Mary Stuart was also referred to as ‘sister’ by Elizabeth. The description of imprisonment is followed by the request to ‘consider agayne [...] all this notwithstanding, how straungely or rather miraculously from daunger she was delivered.’ (1570, 2328) The readership could not fail to recognise the inference, of Elizabeth being miraculously spared in both situations from the injustices of a Catholic queen Mary, and that a chief factor in Elizabeth’s imperilment on both occasions was the continued presence of Roman Catholicism in England. Now twice spared by divine intervention, Elizabeth is again brought to the throne to govern and defend ‘Christes Fayth and Gospel’. Though subtle, Foxe’s reference to the Northern Rebellions signified an apparent lack of progress, with further reforms necessary for the preservation and stability of Elizabeth’s reign, the ‘princely seate of rest and quietnes wherin now she sitteth, and long may she sit, the Lord of his glorious mercy graunt we besech him.’ (1570, 2328) Elizabeth was further criticised for her compliance during the reign of Mary I by attending Mass (though it would be difficult to interpret her attendance as stemming from piety) whilst others – including those martyrs persecuted under the Marian regime – incurred considerable risks by refusing to.

Foxe’s emphasis upon divine intervention and the Word of God paralleled the Bishops’ Bible (which similarly depicted Elizabeth as the upholder of the gospels) and the dedicatory letter of the Geneva Bible. Foxe was amongst the number who helped produce the latter in England following Elizabeth’s ascent to the throne. Prior to this, the Geneva Bible’s translation and initial 1557 publication was undertaken in Calvinist Geneva, where many English reformers had fled the Marian regime.¹²⁴ In its dedicatory letter, Elizabeth was asked to consider ‘how much greater charge God have laid upon you in making you a builder of the

¹²⁴ Whilst in exile himself, Foxe had worked with John Bale as a proof-reader, participated in religious debates, and received commissions from Grindal.

spiritual Temple',¹²⁵ after a prolonged period of corruption, false prophets, and so forth. The translated scriptures were dedicated to her, serving as a tool to spread God's Word:

For seing he is our God, of duetie we must give him this preeminence, that of ourselves we entreprise nothing, but that which he hath appointed, who only knoweth all things, and governeth them as may best serve to his glory and our salutation. We ought not therefore to prevent him, or do anything without his worde, but assone as he hath reveiled his wil, immediately to put it in execution.¹²⁶

Elizabeth was to set an example by having steadfast faith in Christ. Foxe's dedication served as a reminder of Elizabeth's duty, that one that must comply with God's word (therefore discrediting her existing religious settlement premised upon compromise). Through such parallelism, Foxe also continued to attribute *Acts and Monuments* similar prestigiousness with the Bible. Just as the Geneva Bible is essentially dedicated to Elizabeth as an aid, so *Acts and Monuments* could serve similar instructive purposes. Foxe expressed this, writing in the preface that monarchy and subjects should diligently peruse and follow such monuments of history and lay them in sight. (1570, 11) Optimism pervaded his work. As Goudy writes:

Foxe and the reform-minded leadership believed that they had recovered in the 'godly' magistrate a historical linchpin by which to hold the Elizabethan establishment together – uniting all reformist Protestants, Anglicans and English Catholics under one temporal sword – while motivating civil and ecclesiastical elites toward greater ecclesiastical reform.¹²⁷

This consideration of Foxe's changes to *Acts and Monuments* demonstrates how the Elizabethan settlement, and Elizabeth's leadership as Head of the Church, were viewed as insufficient to the degree of reform perceived necessary. With the biographic portrayal of Lady

¹²⁵ *The Geneva Bible*, 1560, 2(reverse).

¹²⁶ *The Geneva Bible*, 1560, 3(reverse).

¹²⁷ Goudy, 'Constantine in Scriptural Mode', 6.

Elizabeth relatively unchanged, recounting a virtuous woman imperilled by her Catholic half-sister, the revisions primarily concerned Elizabeth's salvation and ascent to the throne through divine intervention. This is emphasised on a greater scale, as is the lack of reform on Elizabeth's part, consequently a failure to restore the true faith and uphold Christ's Gospel. Despite a continued defence of her eligibility to reign, her capability to do so independently of guidance is further reduced, for whereas Constantine had his beneficial though nevertheless inferior advisors, recognition alongside Christ subsequently interweaves an inescapable obligation to a divine and incontestably superior power. The Henrician imagery of Christ's limitation and the monarch's earthly superiority, as portrayed in the Great Bible, is subsequently diminished, with Elizabeth subject to the authority and guiding influence of Christ and, as demonstrated in the continued inclusion of the initiated 'C', her attendant male advisors.

Interpreting the truth

The second edition was split into two volumes: the first began at an earlier chronological point, detailing a greater number of persecuted martyrs; the second began with Henry VIII's reformation, with significant emphasis upon royal supremacy and monarchy's religious duty. However, there is criticism of Henry's failure to cleanse the Church and introduce more ardently reformist theology, a precursor to Foxe's pressure upon Elizabeth herself to introduce the necessary reform. Cecil remained influential, acting as a primary instigator in printing the second edition. King believes he was instrumental in its dissemination, ensuring public access to the book – including in churches – with the aim that it would influence reception of the religious settlement.¹²⁸ But whilst the canons published by Day in 1571 indicate *Acts and*

¹²⁸ It is likely that Day had foreseen (or sought) the book's implementation in churches, and was thus responsible for the inclusion of a calendar that imitated traditional liturgical calendars. He is also considered the key individual behind the inclusion of illustrations, to potentially impress or attract patrons with his printing capabilities.

Monuments was ordered to be placed alongside the Bible in the house or hall of every Bishop, and that Deans were to bestow copies on their cathedrals, there is no documentation of an express order that the text be placed in parish churches.¹²⁹

Despite its reformist zeal, its praise of Elizabeth, and apparent backing from Cecil, factors would indicate the immediate impact of the book was not recognised by everybody. Sales of the first edition were poorer than anticipated.¹³⁰ This may be attributed to its high cost, one downside to its sheer size. Many would have been unable to afford it, and a percentage unable to read it. Dissemination of the text in churches would have allowed it to occupy a space alongside the Bible, signifying (though not confirming) its auspicious status, and high-ranking officials were encouraged to acquire copies for readings in public places. However, its dissemination in churches followed publication of the second edition, so to concur with Collinson, it appears *Acts and Monuments* was primarily used as a private text (however much Foxe, Day, and Cecil desired it to be otherwise), and that public usage was not its primary purpose.¹³¹ (Optional) church or public readings were therefore not guaranteed, so to recognise that the book's content reached the wider populace – at least by 1570, over a decade into Elizabeth's reign – is contestable.

King believes this desire for public access coincided with a nationalistic reaction against Catholic challenges to Elizabeth, including the Northern Rebellions and papal excommunication.¹³² Catholics, under papal legislation, were no longer bound to obey Elizabeth and encouraged to overthrow her. Yet this followed a previous message from the papal envoy Lawrence Vaux in 1566, instructing that Catholics should not attend Reformist

Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 126-127.

¹²⁹ Daniel Scott Kastan, 'Little Foxes', in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2002), 118–19.

¹³⁰ *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 136.

¹³¹ Patrick Collinson, 'John Foxe and National Consciousness', in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2002), 26.

¹³² King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture*, 115.

services, which appears to have had little impact (hence the later papal bull). And it was over a decade later that conforming Catholics acquired the term church-papists, indicating that many would remain unaffected by papal legislature. Therefore, some avenues for the public to access the book (church readings, for example) may not have been deemed necessary if there was little indication of dissention from Catholics.

Poor sales alternatively suggest a lack of interest, or cautiousness. To an Elizabethan subject, recent history would not have favoured her longevity as queen. Printed portraiture of Elizabeth could portray her as God's elect, clement and pious, devoted to her cause, but history presented an alternative outlook. The reigns of her two half-siblings were brief and childless, and the brevity of each meant that religious reform was unable to gain a foothold. With no heir(s) of their bodies, there was no natural successor nor guarantor of their settlement. Elizabeth was in her twenties, unmarried and childless, and had nearly died from smallpox. She had not been the only claimant to the throne, and the heir apparent was Catholic and had a male heir. It would be understandable if people were wary of committing to another religious reformation following upheavals during the preceding decade.

King describes a 'nationalistic reaction', but against whom? As outlined above, Elizabeth had sought to make her settlement inclusive. Given the relative peace in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, it appears most Catholics, excepting a small minority, were politically quiescent. From 1559, the reformed religion was taught and enforced by both royal and episcopal injunctions, by catechism, and through official and non-official sermons and homilies. It was propagandistically defended by publications, including Bishop Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1562), which identified the faith not as 'new' but primitive and apostolic. Furthermore, papal denunciation only released Catholics from obedience to Elizabeth after 1570; prior, they were subject to her, which the majority appear to have recognised.

One could argue Foxe's displeasure with the progress of reform subsequently equalled his fervour to produce a true and accurate history of the Church. But he was not always accurate himself, omitting details – however minor – that may be interpreted as an endeavour to affect his work's portrayal. For example, he omitted that the vision Constantine saw in the sky was of a cross which bore the inscription 'Conquer by This'. He changed the inscription to *in hoc vince* ('In this overcome'), and as an aside informed his readers not to induce superstitious worship or opinion of the cross (contrary to Eusebius' accounts) in an apparent effort to disassociate Constantine from Catholic idolatry.¹³³ Foxe's critical assessment of the scale and pace of reform was also not one necessarily shared by his contemporaries. Parker was one of the most important of Foxe's collectors, and aided him with compiling resource materials for the second edition.¹³⁴ He also provided eyewitness testimony, whilst maintaining a circle of scholars who helped prepare the work prior to printing. However, Evenden and Freeman suggest Parker was not always in agreement with Foxe. They write:

This powerful desire to lay a secure historiographical foundation for the English Protestant Church also led Parker to accept without comment – perhaps even to tolerate – features of the *Acts and Monuments* that were distinctly uncongenial to him, notably its insistent attacks on the wearing of ecclesiastical vestments and its less subtle and even vehement impatience with the torpid pace of Elizabethan ecclesiastical reformation.¹³⁵

Furthermore, scholars such as Collinson have taken issue with the portrayal of some of Foxe's martyrs, bringing the validity of his work as a 'true' history into further dispute.¹³⁶ Some martyrs were recognisably radicals, and would have been likely to have faced trial and punishment if they had lived during the reigns of any sixteenth century regime, Reformist or

¹³³ Pucci, 'Reforming Roman Emperors', 36–37.

¹³⁴ Parker was also acquainted with Day, who published twenty copies of the former's *Antiquitate Britannicae Ecclesiae* in 1572. One copy of these collected biographies of former archbishops was gifted to Elizabeth, perhaps in continuation of Parker's role of overseeing Elizabeth's spiritual education.

¹³⁵ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 158–59.

¹³⁶ Collinson, *Elizabethan Essays*, 166–168.

Catholic. This would even include Elizabeth who, as previously mentioned, was opposed to ‘newfangledness’. Yet in *Acts and Monuments*, such information is suppressed, with the martyrdom ‘truth’ partially corrupted to favour and advance Foxe’s cause. Though what cannot be denied is the degree of unfalsified research and documentation still put forth to support his view:

Previous English Protestant writers – William Tyndale, John Bale, William Turner and John Jewel among them – had, with varying degrees of successes, sought to demonstrate the English Church was indeed Protestant before Luther, but none had done so with the detail and the documentation that Foxe was able to muster. This detail gave the English Protestants an enormous polemic edge of their English Catholic opponents. To undermine Foxe’s interpretation of the history of the English Church, Catholics had to be able to refute his massive documentation in detail. [...] Protestants countercharged that these chroniclers were Catholic and therefore inherently biased, and so sought to conceal the ‘truth’ revealed by the documents that Foxe, Parker, and scholars supported by Parker had printed.¹³⁷

However, it should be noted that *Acts and Monuments* came to fruition under a reformist government, thus accessibility to the necessary source materials was undoubtedly easier. Foxe had support from Cecil, Grindal, Parker (plus his team), amongst others willing to contribute to his book or provide access to records. Publication was arguably less problematic too, especially through Day’s connection with Cecil, the latter of whom could also push for its public accessibility. Conversely, as the example of the 1559 Westminster conference demonstrated, Catholics were not granted similar accessibility to materials, nor could their written and/or vocal opposition be raised without the threat of potentially serious ramifications, such as imprisonment.

The second edition of *Acts and Monuments* offered a more critical portrait of Elizabeth. It

¹³⁷ Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England*, 157–58.

became the foundation for the subsequent three printed in Elizabeth's lifetime, indicative of continuing and sustained frustration at the perceived lack of religious reform. But with Elizabeth's settlement enduring the test of time, it could be argued Foxe, Day, Cecil, and other similar-minded individuals who strove for reform, cloud the waters of history, and thus obscure the image of Elizabeth. The Elizabethan world is often presented as somewhat black and white, Catholic and Reformer. But what about, as Collinson asks, the percentage of the population who might not neatly fit into the categories of Papists and Gospellers?¹³⁸ The populace could never be so easily categorised, and nor, do I believe, should Elizabeth. The evidence suggests she sought inclusivity, with a settlement intended to restore the Church her father envisioned, without alienating a percentage of her populace.

There was gradual acclimatisation to the new. Initially, some reluctance and non-conformity would have been anticipated, as with any new regime. But as Duffy notes, there was predominantly obedience. He describes an 'ingrained sense of obligation towards the crown', as well as the laws of the realm and the proceedings of higher powers.¹³⁹ Gradually the memory of the Catholic cultus faded (described by Duffy as a 'changing of the guard'), and slowly Elizabethan order was accepted. Generations born and educated after Elizabeth's accession gradually replaced those who could remember the Catholic reign of Mary.¹⁴⁰ In concurrence, and as MacGregor aptly notes, towards the end of Elizabeth's reign an individual

¹³⁸ Collinson, 'John Foxe and National Consciousness', 26.

¹³⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 570.

¹⁴⁰ Duffy also describes Catholic accommodation towards the new settlement. Unable to withstand the stripping of church décor, defacement of religious artefacts, destruction of religious texts, etc., they sought solace by finding a 'middle-ground' of their own. This is not the same as Elizabeth's recognisable efforts to ensure religious worship could be accessible to both Reformists and Catholics. Instead, it was recognising that new traditions, or the implementation of a new religious text, could provide an accommodating outlet for what had been lost or replaced. For example, some religious ceremonies including the feast Day of St. Hugh of Lincoln, celebrated throughout the Lincoln Diocese but which were banned, instead were adopted into Elizabeth's Accession Day celebrations, merging imperceptibly. The prayer book was another meanst; the saints' days, fast days, kneeling, signing with the cross, and other 'rags of popery' were a method of preserving old observances.

Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 590.

would need to have been around fifty years of age to remember the mass taking place in an English Church.¹⁴¹ For the majority it was beyond living memory, as would be the stripping of church décor and ornamentation. By that time, the Elizabethan settlement would, for the majority, be the norm.

The portrayal of Elizabeth gleaned from *Acts and Monuments* swings from celebratory optimism towards subtle critique and condemnation over a perceived lack of inaction, in a span of seven years. She is transformed from a Constantine figure of Christian reform, with the might and power to quell opposition, into a Christ figure whose presence is necessitated, and furthermore subservient to the will of God; the obligation was no longer conferred solely by Foxe and his cohort, but from the Almighty. This recognisably dismissed the role Elizabeth embodied as Governor of the Church, through whom God's word is conveyed, and she is effectively being corrected (though never outright). It seems many individuals – predominantly men – considered Elizabeth to be ineffectual, needing to be governed and receive counsel like Deborah. This sits in contrast to both the contemporary and propagandistic image of Elizabeth as a celebratory figure of virtue, glory, and independence.

But her refusal to defer to male authority would contribute to the later Virgin Queen image, which by the 1580s was becoming firmly established, just as the religious settlement had been. In 1586, in a speech to Parliament, Elizabeth readdressed the settlement in the past tense, suggestive of her regard for it as resolved and fully implemented. Referring to when she 'first came to the sceptre and crown':

[I] did think more of God who gave it me than of the title. And therefore my first care was to set in order those things which did concern the Church of God and this religion in which I was born, in which I was bred, and in which I trust to die, not being ignorant how dangerous a thing it was to work in a kingdom a sudden alteration of religion.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ MacGregor, *Shakespeare's Restless World*, 26.

¹⁴² Cambridge UL, MS Gg.III.34, 312-316. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 199.

By that date, most of the populace were united under the image of monarchy, church-papists were a norm, and Elizabeth was simultaneously Governor of the Church and the imperial Virgin Queen. Despite the continued production and dissemination of *Acts and Monuments*, Cecil would fail to induce Elizabeth to reform her Church (or to marry). Elizabeth maintained a steadfast determination to defy male-gendered superiority, amidst calls for reform she appears to have considered both unnecessary and disadvantageous to the progress or success of both her reign and image.

Since 1571, Elizabeth's settlement has largely withstood the test of time.¹⁴³ For a substantial span of years, it allowed England to remain comparatively at peace nationally and internationally. Neither papal excommunication of the previous year, nor the later Spanish Armadas, were enough of an incentive for the settlement to be radically altered. Elizabeth forbade further discussion upon some of the Bills, and when proposals were made between 1584-1587, she again prohibited debate.¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth appears astute enough to recognise religious reform would be a greater enticement to national and international unrest than her perceived 'inaction' by a Reformist minority, no matter how widely distributed their views. More so than any other Tudor monarch, Elizabeth appears to have practised patience. This attains a particular significance when one factors in that she would reign for an unprecedented duration of time, not that she was to know that herself. Yet her patience was rewarded. The final edition of *Acts and Monuments* printed in her lifetime was in 1596-1597; Foxe had been

¹⁴³ In the 1571 Parliament, the formerly omitted article twenty-nine, which included a protest against the ubiquity of Christ and which denied that the unworthy partake of his body and blood, was re-included, although an additional canon asserted the articles agreed with the Catholic bishops and fathers of the Early Church, and insisted they be interpreted accordingly. I suggest that it served to counter Elizabeth's excommunication in the papal bull of the preceding year releasing all subjects from her. The canon would thus be particularly important, for paralleling the Thirty-Nine Articles with the Early Church reinitiated the argument put forth by the Henrician reformation, that God ordained one king (or queen) for each realm, bestowing Elizabeth higher authority than the Pope through her roles as monarch and Governor of the Church. However, the re-inclusion was unlikely to have been authorised by Elizabeth, particularly as she sent a message banning further debate and vetoed an anti-Catholic Church attendance bill supported by the bishops, privy council, and both Houses.

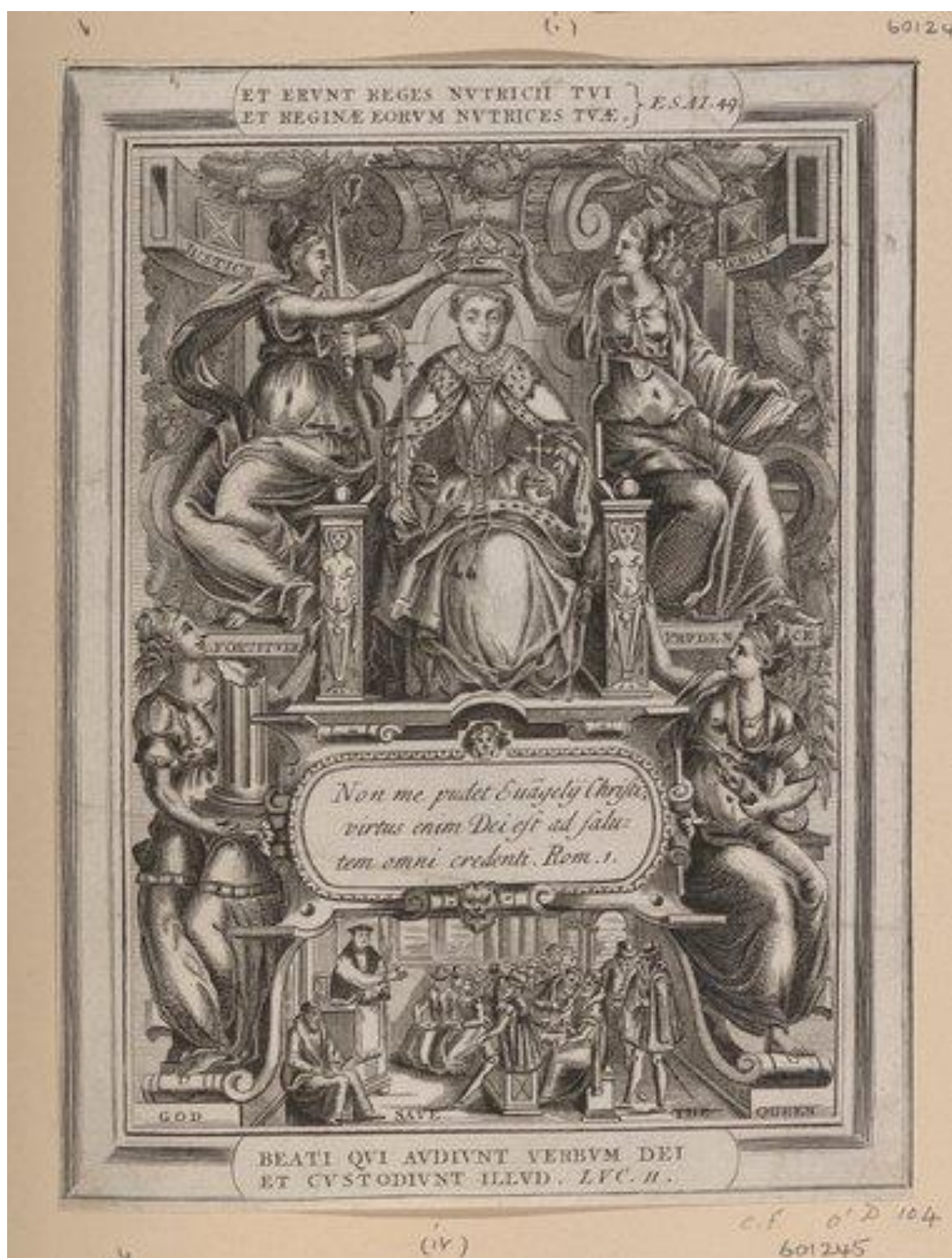
¹⁴⁴ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 38.

dead for approximately a decade, Day even longer, but Elizabeth still lived and her settlement endured.

Stabilising the national religion through the settlement was the first step towards bringing disparate factions together and restoring amicable relations; the long-term problem of ensuring this endeavour had a guaranteed future, particularly pertinent given the contemporary concern regarding the succession, remained ongoing. However, the settlement remained steadfast, and following her death in 1603, has ultimately contributed to Elizabeth's lasting memory, much like her father and his reformation, though without the disruptive (and destructive¹⁴⁵) impact upon the course of English history that the Henrician reformation heralded. The prospect of an imperialistic England could only have been successfully initiated if a disparate populace were corralled in a common, shared identity. A logical means to achieve that would have been to unify them under a state religion which was tolerant of varying branches, Reformist or Catholic, but united under the governorship of the monarch, and enforceable through the justices of law, to which all were subject. Making the settlement lawful was a tactical step towards enforcement and abidance, but also harkened to the view upheld by Aylmer that monarchy did not rule independently. The unification of the populace under an inclusive religious settlement, and one that remained comparatively stable, was what I perceive to have been the initial act towards restoring national identity, contributing to the imperial image of Elizabeth that arose under her Virgin Queen banner. As the next chapter shall explore, this became interwoven with the connotation between Elizabethan England and the prophesised return of a mythical Golden Age, heralded by a celestial virgin. Thus, the Virgin Queen.

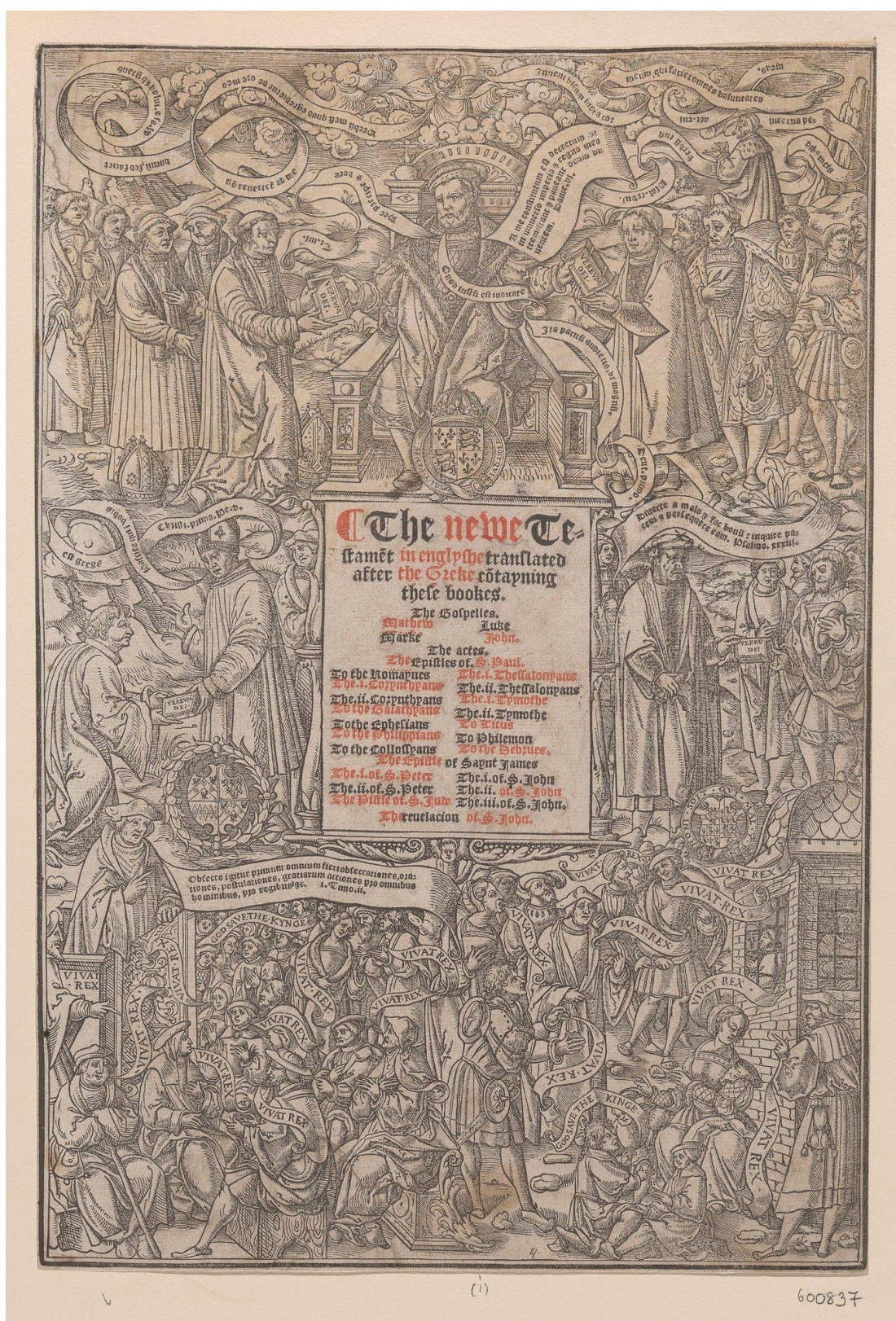
¹⁴⁵One of the biggest casualties of the Henrician reformation befell Church properties, from buildings down to accoutrements. Church lands were seized and monasteries plundered for their wealth, reduced to rubble that was reclaimed for building materials and with what remained left to ruination. Parish churches and surviving monastic buildings had their interiors stripped of ornamentation, with idolatrous imagery replaced with monarchical insignia, such as the royal coat of arms. This continued into the reigns of Edward VI, and latterly Elizabeth. Surprisingly, despite restoring Catholicism and papal authority, Mary I never returned formerly seized properties to the Church.

Fig.2



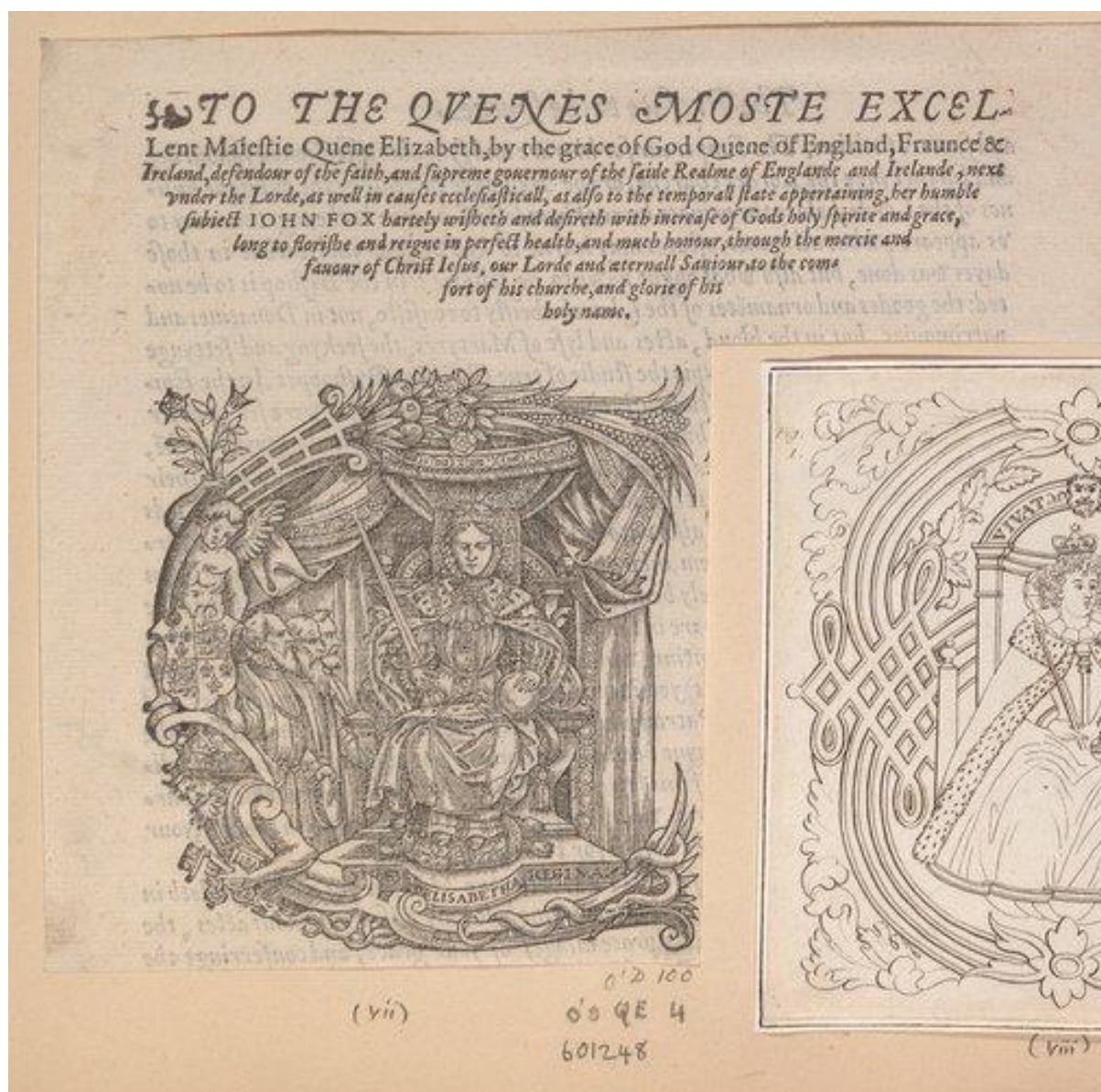
The Frontispiece to the Bishops' Bible (copy). 1568
Engraving on paper. 20.1 x 14.8 cm. The Royal Collection Trust. RCIN 601245.

Fig.3



The Frontispiece to the Great Bible. 1539.
Woodcut print on paper. 35.0 x 23.7 cm. The Royal Collection Trust. RCIN 600837.

Fig.4



The initiated 'C' ('Elisabetha Regina') from *Acts and Monuments*, 1563,
 Woodcut print on paper 16.1 x 18.0 cm. The Royal Collection Trust. RCIN 601248.

Fig.5

Hans Eworth. *Mary I*. 1554.
Oil on panel. 104 x 78.5 cm. Society of Antiquaries of London.

ii. Elizabeth of Troy

Concerning the themes of marriage and virginity in Elizabeth's image

Women are seen as wives, as mothers, and when they are seen as doing anything other, that is seen as being too ambitious. Whenever a woman becomes visible and powerful and vocal, we start trying to understand what is wrong with her. We do not do such things to male leaders.¹⁴⁶

Elif Shafak

By 1563, Elizabeth had overseen the implementation of the religious settlement. However, as the example of *Acts and Monuments* demonstrated, discontent towards it also affected the image of Elizabeth presented before the wider public. Both the literary and visual portrayals in the first edition are identified as presenting an idealised outlook of Elizabeth and her religious policies, followed by a more critical reassessment from the second edition onwards. What both demonstrate is that Elizabeth's representation was often beyond her control, whilst being governed by expectations placed upon her as a queen. To this, I also add woman, for this chapter shall examine the subject of the succession alongside the expectations upon women in Early Modern society to marry and provide children.

The issue of Elizabeth's marriage persisted for several years, until she reached an age when she was unable to have children. Consequently, the succession remained a constant topic for the rest of her reign. This chapter shall explore how Elizabeth and her courtiers used images to engage with marriage and motherhood. Beginning with a brief biographic study of her earlier experiences before her ascent to the throne and a study of her predecessor Mary I, whilst considering the wider position of women in Early Modern English society, it will establish the conundrum of a queen regnant in a historically patriarchal society and country, and how

¹⁴⁶ Louise Hooper, 'Power', *The Ascent of Woman* (BBC, 2015).

Elizabeth as both a woman and queen was expected to marry for her health and the dynastic succession. To counter this, she adopted the persona of a Virgin Queen, assuming control over her image and using it to defy societal expectations.

The imperial image of the Virgin Queen became an integral aspect of Elizabeth's response to the situation surrounding her successor. However, as this chapter shall identify, the allegorical allusions to virginity associated with Elizabeth, and which remain so recognisable to a modern viewership, were frequently not of her own design. Their association with Elizabeth consistently has origins pertaining to patriarchy, and the renegotiation of power between a male subject and female monarch. *Acts and Monuments* followed a similar pattern. It is therefore necessary to consider the degree of control Elizabeth held over her visual portraiture and literary portrayals, and how she sought to garner autonomy over her image.

After establishing Elizabeth's early precedent for virginity, the chapter charts its application in portraiture and literature, first as a measure to counteract slanderous gossip, then its incorporation into portrayals that visually denoted her eligibility to marry. From this, it became increasingly incorporated in her public and propagandistic image, before finally lending itself to the enduring epithet of the Virgin Queen. By demonstrating how the theme of virginity in her image was a shifting dynamic, its application will be shown to have frequently misrepresented what may be evaluated as Elizabeth's commitment to virginity. The primary sources for this chapter are reconfigurations of the Judgement of Paris myth, incorporated in varying texts spanning Elizabeth's reign, and reinterpreted to represent Elizabeth's virginity. The first text, the painting *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* attributed to Hans Eworth, identifies the earliest portrayal of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen. It champions her unmarried state and uniqueness, as the sole Reformist queen regnant, whose kingdom had provided sanctuary for reformist exiles. The second text is *The Araynement of Paris* by George Peele. Similarly celebratory, it defends Elizabeth's virginity in the wake of the succession crisis but

could be argued to appropriate her image with the view to profit. Assessing the altered application of this *thema* will also help gauge the changing social, political, and religious climates.

Furthermore, the commissioner(s) and/or artist(s), sometimes debated, introduce another necessary consideration. Elizabeth's portraiture and portrayal consistently appear to be outwardly celebratory, but were also capable of veiled criticism, or may have been produced to fulfil the personal agenda of the commissioner(s) and/or artist(s). This may have included seeking patronage, have borne a political and religious purpose, or, for an artist, served as an advertisement of their artistic skills before prospective clients. Such factors need to be accounted if one is to discern the accuracy of Elizabeth's portrait in her ever-evolving manifestation towards the Virgin Queen.

When recalling a sequence of historic situations and their conclusion, it is understandable to read the outcome as inevitable. Yuval Noah Harari asserts this as incorrect; for those alive at decisive moments in history, no outcome is truly determinable.¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth's marriageability provides an example. In hindsight, many suitors appeared unsuitable, whether because of religion, nationality, age, or a combination. Factor in the fate of Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, and her disinclination towards marriage appears logical. However, Elizabethan society held different views. For the young Elizabeth to remain unmarried would have been largely inconceivable. Marriage was considered advantageous for women, and Elizabeth's duty was to provide an heir. She herself was raised and educated in that system of thought. Her unmarried state and rise as a Virgin Queen were therefore never 'determinable', but the consequence of a series of events, predicaments, and situations during the span of her 'marriageable' years. The images I discuss below chart this trajectory.

¹⁴⁷ Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (London: Vintage, 2014), 462.

Beginning this study into Elizabeth's association with virginity, it is prudent to briefly examine her life whilst a princess. When her father died, Elizabeth became the ward of his sixth wife (and widow), Katherine Parr. She promptly married Thomas Seymour, but they had not sought or received permission from Council, in particular Seymour's brother, Somerset. Parr fell pregnant, and was delivered of a daughter, Mary, on 13 August 1548 before dying eight days later of suspected puerperal fever. As well as her biological mother, another prominent mother figure in Elizabeth's life also came to evince the risk to a woman's reputation should she marry for love, and the potential dangers associated with childbirth.¹⁴⁸

Seymour damaged Parr's reputation, but almost ruined Elizabeth's. Under his wardship, their relationship was beheld to grow increasingly flirtatious. Possessing a key to her bedchamber, Seymour would enter the room, bare legged (though reportedly slippered), in a loose-fitting nightgown which only reached his knees.¹⁴⁹ Whilst easier to forgive a young and naïve teenager for her apparent infatuation, Seymour was old enough to be her father. Staggeringly, Parr initially encouraged the behaviour, sometimes joining Seymour in the bedchamber, or once (in)famously restraining Elizabeth whilst Seymour shredded her dress with a sword. Belatedly recognising the danger to the reputations of all involved, Parr had Elizabeth removed from the household in May 1548, and as a result she was absent during Parr's confinement and death.¹⁵⁰ The situation deteriorated further when Elizabeth's governess, Kat Astley (described by Lisa Hilton as a 'kamikaze Emma'¹⁵¹), encouraged Seymour to marry Elizabeth, potentially a misguided attempt to save Elizabeth's reputation following seditious rumours pertaining to their flirtatious behaviour.¹⁵² However, Elizabeth was aware her

¹⁴⁸ Anne was also vindicated for perceivable difficulties in having children (Elizabeth was her only surviving child), as well as having been thought unable to provide a son.

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Norton, *The Temptation of Elizabeth Tudor* (London: Head of Zeus Ltd, 2016), 123.

¹⁵⁰ Lisa Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd, 2015), 68-70.

¹⁵¹ Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince*, 70.

¹⁵² Six months into her pregnancy, Parr purportedly feared that if she died, Seymour would seek to marry Elizabeth.
de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 246-47.

marriage was not her decision to negotiate, and was able to evade interrogating questions from the Privy Council concerning the nature of her relationship to Seymour. After attempting to bribe Edward VI to garner support, Seymour was arrested, and so was Astley, who under interrogation revealed the episodes between Seymour and Elizabeth. Consequently, Seymour was tried and executed, and Elizabeth briefly entrusted to the care of Lady Tyrwhitt. Elizabeth was further required to petition that scandalous slander, reporting her imprisonment in the Tower and suspected pregnancy, be officially repudiated.¹⁵³

This episode in Elizabeth's youth set the seed for rumours of affairs and illegitimate children that persisted throughout her life.¹⁵⁴ It was at that moment in her life that I consider the idea of a dedication to virginity spawned, even if it was not resolute or made public. Elizabeth's first relationship with a man had left her reputation damaged, cost him his life, and brought about the removal of her governess, another recognisably substitutive mother figure. It does not require a leap of imagination to believe it must have been a traumatic experience for a young woman, particularly as it was a far from private affair. Furthermore, it must have made manifest the precarious situation of woman in a male-orientated world, whilst providing an unpleasant insight into the downfall of her late mother, and how swiftly such a fall from respectability could occur.

Mary I

As memorable as the Virgin Queen epithet is, it is also unique in English history. Prior to Elizabeth, the concept of a monarch, particularly a queen regnant, remaining unmarried was preposterous. Monarchy and marriage were closely interwoven constructs, in a patriarchy that

¹⁵³ Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince*, 72.

¹⁵⁴ These rumours still circulate: a variant of the Oxford theory, contending that Shakespeare's plays were in fact written by the Earl of Oxford, proposes he and Elizabeth were lovers who had a child. This theory was dramatized in the 2011 film *Anonymous*.

theorised the household and State symbiotically. Laura Gowing writes:

Patriarchalism presented a parallel between the household and the commonwealth, and accordingly between the father and the king. The head of the household has power over his subjects, the family, and responsibility for them, in the same way as the monarch had over his. Resistance and disobedience undid the harmony of a kingdom, and likewise of a family.¹⁵⁵

Marital sex led to legitimate children:

In theory, fatherhood was the essence of patriarchy: the domestic authority of men was the bulwark of national order. Motherhood, less charged with the rhetoric of authority, had its own political associations with protection, peace and nurture of the generations necessary to national expansion. The model of the nursing mother was strong enough to be cited by [...] monarchs describing their own role: the biblical image of the 'nursing father' united paternal authority and maternal care.¹⁵⁶

England had historically been a patriarchal society that assumed the monarch would be male and whose marriage would produce male children, guaranteeing the succession and ensuring dynastic security. Henry VIII's fear of failing these perceived obligations partly contributed to his reformation. However, when Edward, his only legitimate son, died in his minority in 1553, both heirs apparent were women, in accordance with the 1543 Third Line of Succession Act.¹⁵⁷

Many historians and biographers portray Mary as a frustrated tyrant, whose brief and

¹⁵⁵ Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*, 29.

¹⁵⁶ Gowing, 38.

¹⁵⁷ For Edward, dynastic issue took second place to religious ideology. Believing (correctly, as it transpired) that Mary would undo his religious reforms, he excluded her from succession on the grounds of her illegitimacy under the 1536 Act of Succession. Consequently, to exclude one half-sister meant excluding the second; despite her Reformist upbringing, Elizabeth too was struck from the succession, with Edward favouring heirs from his aunt, 'The French Queen' Mary, Henry VIII's younger sister. And so Jane Grey was named his successor. See de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 259.

exaggeratedly homicidal reign warranted the epithet ‘Bloody Mary’.¹⁵⁸ That is unjust. She faced the unenviable predicament of being the first queen regnant in four hundred years.¹⁵⁹ Her distant forebear, the Empress Matilda, did not provide an inspiring model, since she had only maintained power for a few months. She had led a successful campaign to conquer England in 1139 but failed to garner support, and subsequently faced opposition from the English, resulting in a civil war. Consequently, she was never formally crowned Queen of England, and left for Normandy in 1148.

Mary had been denounced by Edward on grounds of illegitimacy and, like Matilda, had to muster forces to seize the throne. She overthrew Lady Jane Grey, whom Edward had appointed queen, and Mary succeeded to the throne on October 1, 1553. Borman outlines the consequent upheaval in the royal household. Because a queen must be attended by female servants, the Privy Chamber was deprived of much of its political power, for a man (who could also maintain a position on the Council) was forbidden a post there.¹⁶⁰ Parliament bestowed upon Mary the rights of a king, meaning she retained status and property once married. She also retained the King’s Chambers, and would be seated to her husband’s right, reversing royal protocol. However, coinage minted after her marriage depicted Mary opposite her husband, Prince Philip of Spain (later Philip II, described as the ‘tyrannical evangelist of the Counter-Reformation’¹⁶¹), beneath a floating crown which suggests the couple possessed equal

¹⁵⁸ Mary is unjustifiably described as unable to overcome her ‘long standing’ hatred of Elizabeth, yet during Elizabeth’s infancy, Mary was an attentive sister (and godmother) who bestowed gifts and corresponded regularly. Her fears at being overthrown by Elizabeth’s supporters were not unsubstantiated. Scholars such as Hilton also highlight records of Mary’s petty rebuttals against Elizabeth, including her tart statement that Elizabeth bore similarity to Mark Smeaton (Smeaton was the lowest born of Anne Boleyn’s alleged lovers). Yet does this behaviour differ from Elizabeth’s petty antagonization of Mary Stuart’s ambassador, asking him to judge who was the most accomplished queen? See Lisa Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd, 2014), 83–85.

¹⁵⁹ Arguably the second, if you include the nine-day reign of Jane Grey. In the wake of Henry VIII’s death, many thought Mary, as the closest relation to Edward, should have been regent during his minority. She was instead bought off, being awarded an annual income equivalent to a duke. This allowed the King’s Protector, Somerset, to begin enforcing reform without intervention. His coronation was centred upon his obligation to rid the Church of ‘papal tyranny’.
de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 243–45.

¹⁶⁰ Tracy Borman, *The Private Lives of the Tudors* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2017), 248.

¹⁶¹ Hilton, 144.

power.¹⁶² Therefore, logically, Mary was not recognised as an independent Queen of England, having become one half of a dual monarchy.

On paper, Mary acted in exemplary fashion. Following regales from crowds lining the streets to witness her coronation procession, in her first parliament she began brokering a religious settlement to re-establish Roman Catholicism, initially proclaiming her subjects were not compelled to follow her own religion, though this was later overturned in 1555 under revised heresy laws that stringently enforced Catholic worship.¹⁶³ She commissioned new English translations of religious texts and commanded their dissemination in print. These focused upon education and reviving religious arts such as liturgical music.¹⁶⁴ Intent upon securing the newly Catholic state, and despite her age (thirty-seven upon her accession), Mary sought a husband, Philip. They were married on July 25, 1554, in the face of Parliament's displeasure.

Unfortunately, Mary's gender was against her. Despite her triumphant procession through London, a female ruler was considered abhorrent and unnatural (as encapsulated by Knox). Mary herself is likely to have considered her gender an impediment; marrying meant her burden could be offset onto the king consort. However, Philip was unpopular amongst the xenophobic English, who wished to maintain independence and not be subsumed into the Habsburg Empire (and its wars). When he returned to Spain to claim his inheritance, Mary was abandoned. Although two pregnancies were announced in September 1554 and July 1557, Mary never had a child; whether these were phantom pregnancies, or other medical conditions, remains open to speculation. Subjected to ridicule, her health steadily declined.

¹⁶² Simon Winchcombe, 'Armada', DVD, *Armada: 12 Days to Save England* (BBC, 2015).

¹⁶³ Often portrayed as a Catholic fanatic, Mary actually retained some aspects of her father's and half-brother's reformed religion. Nor did she return lands and properties seized during the Henrician reformation to the Church. Legally, she also had to retain (however temporarily) the title of Head of the Church of England, which she purportedly loathed.

John Edwards, *Mary I: The Daughter of Time*, Penguin Monarchs (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 38.

¹⁶⁴ de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 292.

Often confined to a couple of chapters in Tudor histories, Mary's reign appears as a Catholic interlude, and she is cast as the chief threat upon the young Elizabeth's life. Such representation later appeared in propagandistic Elizabethan texts, including *Acts and Monuments*. Yet neither Mary, nor her reign, were failures; she sought to fulfil every expected duty before illness (probably cancer) claimed her life in 1558. Religion aside, little differentiated Mary from Elizabeth. Each received an exemplary education, were skilled linguists, and masters of rhetoric. Both experienced the humiliation of bastardisation, loss of status, then unexpected reversals in fortune. Each was famed for possessing a fiery temper. During her reign, Elizabeth also received the soubriquet 'Bloody', following swift retributions against the Northern Rebellions, and there were over two hundred executions throughout her reign on identifiably religious grounds. Each initially sought religious tolerance to broker peace. Both were female figureheads, occupying a court filled predominantly with men, presiding over councils orchestrated by men, and drawn into political and religious quagmires with neighbouring countries governed by men. Where Mary unknowingly faltered was through compliance. Attempting to fulfil both monarchical and womanly duty at every turn though unfortunately failing (through no fault of her own, in many situations), she unwittingly indicated to the patriarchy that women were incapable of ruling effectively.

Mary had paved the way for Elizabeth to succeed, for the royal household (and its political ramifications) were already restructured to accommodate a queen regnant. Elizabeth even adopted some of Mary's tactics, notably of a 'marriage' to the nation. Mary used it to summon support following news of Thomas Wyatt's rebellion.¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth alternatively recycled it as a delaying tactic against marriage. In one version of her answer to a Commons' petition, dated 10 February 1559, in which the House pleaded that Elizabeth should marry, she is recorded as replying:

¹⁶⁵ de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 284.

But when the public charge of governing the kingdom came upon me, it seemed unto me an inconsiderate folly to draw upon myself the cares which might proceed of marriage. To conclude, I am already bound unto a husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you.¹⁶⁶

This is not evidence of an outright refusal to marry, given the union of monarch and nation forms part of the coronation ceremony, and had been cited by Mary (and would latterly be used by James VI and I). However, Elizabeth's use of 'folly' indicates that she assessed marriage as unprofitable, and that her union to England was adequate. Her statement that it should suffice the petitioners served to defend her independent monarchy as well as defending a woman's capability to rule.

In her speech at Hatfield in 1558, Elizabeth informed William Cecil and the others assembled that 'without respect to my private will, you will give me that counsel that you think best[.]'¹⁶⁷ Consequently, Council repeatedly pleaded over a period of fourteen years that Elizabeth marry. It may be that they desired a dual monarchy, as witnessed under Mary, to restore an ideal *status quo* as well as a step towards guaranteeing succession through an heir. Marriage also represented a model of female subordination to male authority.¹⁶⁸ But Early Modern society also expected women to marry for their health.¹⁶⁹ It was considered another route to salvation and was thought to prevent unruly sexuality. Elizabeth's marriage would also have been viewed as advantageous: politically, it could ally England with European countries (simultaneously waylaying threats from others); financially, a marital alliance could promote

¹⁶⁶ William Camden's printed Latin translation, retranslated in *Annales: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth* (London: for B. Fisher, 1625), bk. 1, 27-29. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 59.

¹⁶⁷ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 51.

¹⁶⁸ Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*, 33-34.

¹⁶⁹ The humoral understanding of the body attributed women with strong sexual desires, although sexual activity outside wedlock was considered sinful. However, young women were understood to require sexual fulfilment; to postpone marriage (and consequently sexual fulfilment) induced the risk of chlorosis, a melancholic disease considered specific to women. Gowing, 17.

greater trade and investment opportunities in Europe and further abroad; and dynastically, it could ensure succession through children. However, whenever an eligible candidate's suit was put forward, Elizabeth delayed.

Political, monetary, and dynastic advantages formed the bases whenever Elizabeth's Council sought to negotiate marriage. The question, however, was to whom? Parliamentary laws under Mary enabled Elizabeth to maintain monarchical power, but it was probable marriage would significantly bolster her husband's standing if he were not of royal descent. Thus, the religious and political affiliations of suitors required consideration. And Ian Crofton indicates that, should Elizabeth have married an Englishman, it could have been interpreted as favouring an individual family, and have consequently generated factionalism amongst the aristocracy.¹⁷⁰

'The Clopton Portrait'

It is already possible to discern Elizabeth's disinclination towards marriage. However, long before recognition as a Virgin Queen, her virginity was advantageous to her Council, particularly when marketing her marriageability. This is manifest in a portrait known as 'The Clopton Portrait' (c.1558, *fig.6*), the earliest surviving painting of Elizabeth as queen and a crucial early text in terms of her image-making. In this painting, Elizabeth's attire is relatively plain in comparison with contemporary court fashions, although her status is made evident, not least by the inscription *Elizabeth Regina*. She is depicted at three-quarter length facing the viewer, wearing an un-patterned, close-fitting black dress draped in an ermine collar. Black and white were Elizabeth's colours: heraldically, black represented constancy, whilst white (or silver) represented sincerity, purity, and faithfulness; when combined, they represented

¹⁷⁰ Crofton, *The Kings and Queens of England*, 149.

virginity. Emblematically, the black and white ermine featured in images of the triumph of Chastity, depicted upon banners at the front of her procession.¹⁷¹ In one hand Elizabeth holds a pair of gloves, in the other a book, possibly a religious text. Phillip Mould proposes it is Cranmer's Prayer book, formerly banned during Mary's reign.¹⁷² The gloves (symbolising elegance¹⁷³) garner attention to Elizabeth's hands, of which she was particularly proud. Otherwise, she possesses significantly fewer accoutrements when compared to the extravagance of later portraiture. And when compared to more instantly recognisable paintings of Elizabeth, such as the Armada Portrait, it is undeniably bland.¹⁷⁴

The portrait was possibly produced for brokering marriage negotiations; copies, including miniatures, would suggest wider circulation. It 'advertises' her virginity and purity, alongside porcelain features and beautiful digits. She is depicted as a woman, not an icon. Reproductions may have also begun to satisfy a rising demand for her image. However, following the dismissal of Mary's court painter, Eworth, there was neither an officiated painter nor model/template for the continuing production of Elizabeth's portrait. One explanation for this lacklustre quality in portraiture at the outset of her reign, for Elizabeth not sitting for an official portrait, and for the reliance upon earlier portraiture as a model and template, could be that she perceived more urgent matters needed redress, predominantly the religious settlement.

The 'regression' in Elizabethan portraiture from the more naturalistic artwork of Henrician artists, such as Holbein, may be accredited to England's continuing isolation from mainstream Europe following the reformation.¹⁷⁵ However, it is undeniable that to look upon

¹⁷¹ Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 115.

¹⁷² Philip Mould, 'Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I "The Clopton Portrait" 1558c.', Historical Portraits. <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=451&Desc=Queen-Elizabeth-I-English-School>.

¹⁷³ 'Symbolism in Portraits of Elizabeth I', Royal Museums Greenwich, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/symbolism-portraits-elizabeth-i>.

¹⁷⁴ Strong labelled it 'extremely depressing', with its copies collectively described as 'never ris[ing] above the mediocre.'

Roy Strong, *Gloriana*, 59.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, 'The Visual Arts', 576.

a painting of Elizabeth, particularly from later in her reign, is to look upon a constructed work imbued with allegorical symbolism. Although there remains ongoing discussion when ascertaining the significance of the symbols, their relation to Elizabeth, and more broadly their impact upon the viewer or their connection to the artist(s) and/or commissioner(s), what can be stated is that the ill-proportioned, ‘flat’ visual portraiture is meritorious but inaccurate. For Schama, the ‘tangible presence’ of earlier Renaissance portraiture was lost, replaced with a sense of distance and remoteness.¹⁷⁶ One might surmise Elizabeth is powerful yet unobtainable, impossible to emulate, ultimately unique. Conversely, these images may be the result of less refined artistic skill (in comparison with artwork being produced on the European continent). Or, and as was the case with Elizabeth, it was deliberate misrepresentation for propagandistic purposes.

Elizabeth had deliberately dressed without ostentation in her youth, a habit attributed to a desire to avoid attention. Explanations converge upon the intent to appear chaste, particularly after her (former) bastardisation following her mother’s disgrace; non-ostentatious images of piety and chastity certainly contrast with records of Anne’s flirtatious behaviour. The Clopton Portrait’s motif of piety emphasised chastity, fundamentally Elizabeth’s suitability to rule despite accusations against her mother. The jewel hanging from the double chain, ‘The Mirror of France’, had been her father’s, confirming paternal lineage alongside legitimacy.¹⁷⁷ Ermine, aside from being fashionable, signified royal status alongside moral purity; in legend, an ermine would *potius mori quam foedari* (rather die than be defiled/soiled).¹⁷⁸ Such portraiture also helped quash scandalous rumours besetting Elizabeth in the aftermath of her relationship with Thomas Seymour.

¹⁷⁶ Schama, *The Face of Britain*, 36.

¹⁷⁷ Mould, ‘Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I “The Clopton Portrait” 1558c.’ Historical Portraits.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Symbolism in Portraits of Elizabeth I’, Royal Museums Greenwich.

“I am Richard II, know ye not that?”

The Clopton Portrait is the earliest surviving portrait of Elizabeth as queen, but it was not the first. That would have been her now lost coronation portrait. Fortunately, several decades later, a surviving copy was commissioned (c.1600, *fig.7*). Though impossible to compare, if the example of other reproduced portraiture is taken as an example, such as copies of the Armada Portrait, it was probably accurate to the original. This can be supported by the fact it was likely to have been commissioned to commemorate Elizabeth's Accession Day, with a close reproduction intended to visually exemplify Elizabeth's motto, *Semper Eadum*. Such an unnatural depiction of youth so late in Elizabeth's reign would also support her representation as an ageless, semi-divine figure. For a copy to have been made, the original was recognisably accessible, which indicates it was an approved image of Elizabeth.

If accepted as an accurate copy, what is surprising is that, outwardly, there is an apparent indication of a commitment to virginity at the outset of Elizabeth's reign. The coronation portrait was clearly modelled upon the *Westminster Portrait* (c.1390, *fig.8*) of Richard II. It would have been a logical choice, for Richard typified the medieval concept of *divina majestas*, the iconographic image of a divinely ordained monarch and earthly representative of God. It was he who introduced the royal addresses 'your highness' and 'your majesty' and expected subjects to kneel in his presence. Significantly, Richard was also the last English monarch with an undisputed claim to the throne, serving to strengthen Elizabeth's tenuous claim. Elizabeth's father was similarly depicted in *Henry VIII and the Barber Surgeons* (c.1541), to convey power and the divine right of monarchy, useful propaganda in the aftermath of reformation. It also affirmed monarchy's new religious position; as the individual who combined worship of the divine God and the semi-divine king, Richard was an appropriate model for Henry, who had entwined religious and monarchical roles upon the formation of the

Church of England. The same held true for Elizabeth, but unlike her father, another aspect of Richard's reign remained available for appropriation: virginity. Minor differences between the paintings – the sceptre and orb held in different hands, causing the teardrop shape of the flowing cloak to fall to the opposite side – indicate Elizabeth 'mirrored' her forbear.

Richard understood the capability of art to project power and to influence others, using it effectively to proclaim authority as an ordained king alongside his religious devotion, best exemplified in his private altarpiece, the *Wilton Diptych* (1395, *fig.9*). However, Richard also deployed art to quell increased national unrest and insurrection (although with less successful results) following the death of his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, in 1394. Despite twelve years of marriage, they produced no heir. Richard would eventually die childless, after marrying the nine-year-old Isabel of France in 1396, a marriage which was never consummated. The diptych depicts Richard's response to the increasing concern surrounding his succession by portraying him, quintessentially, as a Virgin King.

Richard became devoted to Edward the Confessor, who in the diptych's composition is depicted as a saint beside him. He is also accompanied by Edmund the Martyr, recognised in the Middle Ages as the Patron Saint of England. With Edmund representing England, Edward represents chastity, for he also produced no heir, and in the *Vita Edwardi* commissioned by his widow, Edith of Wessex, their marriage was stated as chaste.¹⁷⁹ They surround Richard, who is interpreted as the Virgin King of England. Richard kneels before the Virgin Mother and Child, having presented them with a pennant. He is bearing the Cross of St. George, which is capped with a small orb upon which is printed a miniature map of England, and collectively represented Richard's kingship and kingdom. Symbolically, he surrendered England through his devotion to God (for his celibacy will end his royal lineage), an outcome which Christ

¹⁷⁹ This (claimed) celibacy was a contributing factor to his canonisation, but whilst impossible to verify, it is probable to assume Edith wished to protect their reputation.

openly accepts, with his hand raised in blessing. The Mother and Child, surrounded by eleven angels, stand upon ground carpeted with flowers and abundant with life, signifying an Eden to which Richard will restore England. The intermediary angels, accepting the pennant from Richard to bestow on Christ, wear Richard's white stag emblem, indicating his divine status.¹⁸⁰ Each angel carved into the roof of Westminster Hall, another commission of Richard II's, similarly possesses a shield bearing his coat of arms.¹⁸¹

With Elizabeth's coronation portrait emulating Richard's, she was presented as the perfect paradigm of monarchy which he had formerly embodied: devout and ordained by God. Monarchy and State's interrelationship were seen to reflect domestic ideals; the male (monarchy) wedded to the female (England). This was an ideal thought best achieved with a king. However, monarchy combined male and female characteristics (even a king 'nurtured' the nation), which partially explains Elizabeth's appropriation of male titles throughout her reign, and how she was able to draw upon such diverse elements as virginity and princehood.¹⁸² The comparison with Richard viably offset the preconceived limitations of her gender. Whether the artist(s) or commissioner(s) anticipated Elizabeth would become a Virgin Queen to equal Richard's King is unknown, though given societal expectations it seems highly unlikely. At that early date in his own reign, Richard was unlikely to have been conceived as virginal and would have been expected to father heirs. Instead, Elizabeth's coronation portrait sought to emulate Richard's pomp and majesty whilst referencing his undisputed claim to the throne; only the 1600 reproduction can logically be thought to pertain to Richard's virginity. Thus in 1559, Elizabeth was not the Virgin Queen, but she was represented as a virgin queen.

¹⁸⁰ An alternative interpretation is that Christ presents England (through his angel intermediaries) to Richard, who kneels in acceptance of this gift. However, Christ's hands are outstretched, with the digits curved in a grasping motion. His lean towards the pennant, reaching out of his mother's arms, suggests anticipation to receive this gift, the greatest sacrifice that a king could make in his honour. The orb atop the pennant could represent that conferred upon monarchy during coronation; fundamentally, Richard is rescinding his role as conferred during his coronation.

¹⁸¹ The emblem was also a pun on his name, 'Richart' in French, for a stag is also known as a hart.

¹⁸² Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*, 70.

Elizabeth therefore appeared marriageable, and there was pressure upon her to wed one of a number of suitors. Petitions were made throughout 1563, beginning in January when the Commons beseeched that she marry. Lords petitioned again in February, and their petition is recorded:

Most gracious sovereign lady, the lamentable and pitiable state and condition wherein all your nobles and councillors of late were when it pleased God to lay His heavy hand over you, and amazedness by the bruits that grew of your sickness that brought most men of understanding unto, is one cause of this petition.¹⁸³

Elizabeth was required to address the issue again that April. Other events from that year included a failed attempt to occupy the Channel port of Le Havre, indicating England's military and naval weakness alongside the threat overseas nations posed. More importantly, Elizabeth also contracted smallpox. Leanda de Lisle writes the scarring was 'a reminder that while her life had hung by a thread, so had the fate of her kingdom.'¹⁸⁴ Her death posed risks of another reformation through varying Catholic claimants to the throne. Elizabeth named Dudley England's Protector if she were to die, although he was an unpopular candidate. Her eventual recovery renewed Council's marriage fervour. Similarly, Commons petitioned repeatedly from November 1566 until Parliament's closure in January 1567, coinciding with the existing heir apparent, Mary Stuart, giving birth to a son, James. With a male heir, her threat to Elizabeth's reign increased since she could guarantee the succession. The 1569 Northern Rebellions were an attempt to displace Elizabeth in favour of Mary, whom some English Catholics still considered to be the rightful heir. After a decade, discord had begun to manifest.

The necessity to counteract slanderous rumours presumably had a significant impact

¹⁸³ PRO, State papers Domestic, Elizabeth 12/27/35[A]. fols. 135r-138v. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 82.

¹⁸⁴ de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 330.

upon Elizabeth's mental wellbeing, and if my earlier surmise that the Seymour scandal brought a commitment to virginity is accurate, the 1560s viably revived it. This commitment was not initially expressed through public recognition as a Virgin Queen, but by the fact Elizabeth did not marry, despite all external expectations and pressures. For Elizabeth, virginity is likely to have appeared to bring advantages, foremost of which would have been an end to the debacle of marriage negotiations constantly dividing opinion amidst her advisors and the wider populace. As demonstrated by the example of Richard II, virginity was recognised as a purer, superior state, bringing the individual closer to God. As Amanda Foreman explains, for a woman to dedicate herself to virginity was to take herself beyond sexuality and become unshackled from the labels and stigma of her gender.¹⁸⁵ This also rendered obsolete the preconceived disadvantage of her gender. The concept of purity, and of remaining pure, would further quash rumours of Elizabeth's affairs with people like Seymour and Dudley. Later portraiture of Elizabeth became increasingly imbued with allegorical and iconographic symbolism, particularly imagery pertaining to virginity, and would become an integral part of Elizabeth's projection as divine and ordained, and eventually as an imperial queen of England.

Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses

The Clopton Portrait exemplifies how portraiture produced after the coronation adopted symbolism of virginity to indicate Elizabeth was marriageable, and that she was a virgin queen. However, the events of the 1560s necessitating a re-commitment to virginity would result in alterations to her portrayals. But it was not until 1569, a decade after she had taken the throne, that a painting emerged which appeared to represent a public commitment to virginity by portraying her as a Virgin Queen. *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses* (fig.10) henceforth

¹⁸⁵ Hooper, 'Power'.

abbreviated to *The Three Goddesses*, marked a notable change in Elizabeth's portraiture through its incorporation of classical allegorical symbolism. Despite Elizabeth still being of marriageable age, the composition proclaims – and celebrates – her as a Virgin Queen, emerging as political propaganda which re-emphasised the benefits Elizabeth's virginity brought. Although piety was not the dominant *thema*, it resonates with her coronation portrait by emphasising singularity and uniqueness, an 'otherness' that raises her above the merely mortal and into the spheres of the divine. Like the example of Richard, virginity had also enabled Elizabeth to establish a connection to God, with whom England's future has been entrusted. A schism in *The Three Goddesses*' composition between virginity and marriage will be outlined. Elizabeth's triumph over bodily (and to a contemporary audience, female) weakness demonstrates her possession of, and is seen to instil her with, a power greater than her predecessors were able to attain. Such early recognition, and apparent celebration, as a Virgin Queen (though admittedly without biblical connotations of the Virgin Mary at that date) preceded the end of Elizabeth's 'marriageable' years by over a decade.

The Three Goddesses depicts Elizabeth shadowed by two ladies-in-waiting, emerging from a medieval building to the left. The background depicts a springtime pastoral landscape, with a distant castle identifiable as Windsor, the ancestral seat of English monarchy and situating the composition in England. It is also unusual for its landscape format; contemporary portraiture was typically portrait, square, or circular.¹⁸⁶ Unlike the Clopton Portrait, Elizabeth is crowned and carries the ceremonial sceptre and orb. The interior of the room from which they have departed is also royally decorated, containing a canopy of State embroidered with her coat of arms, and a frieze featuring the Tudor coat of arms on the cornice.

The composition is inspired by the mythological tale of the Judgement of Paris. Prince Paris of Troy was raised as a shepherd to escape the prophecy he would cause the city's

¹⁸⁶ It is also unique as the only painting to depict Elizabeth wearing gloves.

downfall. He was selected to judge the beauty contest between Juno, Minerva (whose epithet was Pallas), and Venus, the Roman equivalents to the Greek goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite respectively. The decision to use their Roman equivalents stems from the painting's inscription, which reads:

IVNO POTENS SCEPTIS ET MENTIS ACVMINE PALLAS
 ET ROSEO VENERIS FVLGET IN ORE DECVS
 ADFVIT ELIZABETH IVNO PERCVLSA REFGIT OBSVPVIT PALLAS
 ERVBVITQ VENVVS¹⁸⁷

Paris was to award the victor a Golden Apple, formerly thrown by Eris, goddess of discord, after she was barred from the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Paris chose Venus after her promise to make the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Sparta, fall in love with him. Unfortunately, Helen was already married to King Menelaus of Sparta, and her elopement with Paris (now re-established as a Trojan prince) sparked a ten-year war between the Greeks and Trojans, culminating in the sacking of Troy and fulfilment of the prophecy. However, the painting's reinterpretation omits Paris' role and the essence of judgement entirely. Emerging onto a raised dais and interrupting the three goddesses' beauty contest. Elizabeth is acknowledged as the outright victor, eradicating discord and its subsequent cataclysmic events.

To fully interpret the painting's allegory, it is necessary to briefly introduce the goddesses. Juno was goddess of marriage, and queen of the gods. She possessed two contrasting aspects: revered and worshipped as goddess of marriage, but conversely denigrated as a vindictive, quarrelsome, and jealous shrew. Minerva was a virgin goddess of wisdom and crafts, dedicated to chastity and celibacy. She presided over battles and – during peacetime –

¹⁸⁷ 'Pallas was keen of brain, Juno was queen of might
 The rosy face of Venus was in beauty shining bright
 Elizabeth then came, And, overwhelmed, Queen Juno took flight
 Pallas was silenced: Venus blushed for shame'. Translation provided by the Royal Collection Trust

domestic arts. Lastly, Venus was the goddess of love and beauty. Only the virgin goddesses (Minerva, Diana, and Vesta) possessed immunity to her. Many vied to marry her, but she eventually wed Vulcan (Hephaestus in Greek mythology), god of the forge and patron of artisans: their marriage produced no children, and their marriage represents the union of beauty and craft, from which art arises.

Trojan mythologies were popular in Early Modern literature. Amongst Caxton's early publications was *Recuyall of the Histories of Troye*, the first book published in English.¹⁸⁸ Adapting the Judgement of Paris to praise individual women also became commonplace. It appeared in pageantry celebrating the marriage of James IV of Scotland and Princess Margaret Tudor, and was incorporated into the wedding masque of Frances, daughter of the Earl of Sussex, and Mr. Myldwaye, in June 1566.¹⁸⁹ Poetically, it had been adapted by Ariosto in *Orlando Furioso* (1516):

Had Paris, the Phrygian shepherd, set eyes upon her in the valley of Mount Ida, I cannot say how far Venus, though she surpassed those other goddesses, would have surpassed Olympia in beauty; nor perhaps would he have ventured to Sparta to violate the sacred law of hospitality.¹⁹⁰

(C.11, l.70)

It was also the *thema* for the seventh pageant in the coronation progression of Anne Boleyn.¹⁹¹ An actor playing Paris appeared poised to present Anne with the Golden Apple by the Great

¹⁸⁸ Davis and Lindsmith, *Renaissance People*, 96–97.

¹⁸⁹ George Peele, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, ed. R. Mark Benbow, Elmer Blistein, and Frank S. Hook, vol. 3 (London: Tale University Press, 1970), 20.

¹⁹⁰ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 114.

¹⁹¹ Juno, Pallas, and Venus (alongside other mythological deities) were also depicted during the second pageant: Apollo announced Anne shall bring better times, before being praised by the Muses, who offer wishes for a prince to be born soon (Anne was already pregnant). Then other deities – Juno, Pallas, and Venus included – descend to salute Anne, promising to bestow better fortune than before. Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 251–252.

Conduit at Westminster Abbey, announcing:

yet, to be plain,
Here is the fourth lady now in our presence,
Most worthy to have it of due congruence.¹⁹²

Conventional interpretations depict a woman judged by a man. For Anne, it perhaps carried mild overtures of warning and obligation. ‘Congruence’, or agreement, indicates the award was conferred after deliberation with more than one party. Given the religious and political upheaval Henry undertook to marry Anne, it implies she was chosen not only for her beauty, but to fulfil a purpose: provide a son. It differs little from the original; Paris selects Venus upon obligation she provides for him. But Anne did *not* receive the apple, for her Crown Imperial is considered a far greater prize; the apple was still bestowed to Venus. Anne had no involvement – or freedom of choice – and left empty-handed, for her crown was conferred during her coronation. But she is described as uniting beauty, chastity, high degree, and great riches; fundamentally, the goddesses cannot bribe Paris with anything that Anne does not already possess, as she was the greatest prize. Venus received the apple:

Because it was
To lowe and bare
ffor your good grace
And worthynes.¹⁹³

Although lauded, Anne perhaps ought to have taken it as an omen. Whilst deemed too good for an apple, she effectively remained powerless, and subjected to the judgement of men. And it was still a man – Henry – conferring a substitutive apple – the crown – upon her. Yet in *The*

¹⁹² Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince*, 16.

¹⁹³ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 256.

Three Goddesses, Elizabeth replaces Paris to become both judge and victor combined, attaining both freedom of choice and natural superiority. This gave her supremacy in a categorically patriarchal society, reminiscent of her status as queen, whilst the freedom of choice is pivotal, given pressures upon her to marry and have children.

The painting's composition, I argue, harkens to a sense of spectacle one might associate with the pageantry of a progression. There is a carnivalesque quality of movement, with the left-hand side indicative of a pause in activity, as though Elizabeth and her entourage have stopped to witness the three goddesses' pageant. It imbues the painting with a celebratory nature, evocative of the productions staged during Elizabeth's coronation, as implied by the inclusion of her ceremonial accoutrements. As Sydney Anglo wrote in a summary of the coronation:

It is clear [...] that court and country were at one in rejoicing at the prospect of a Protestant revival and an end of reactionary persecution; and nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the pageant series prepared by the City of London to greet the queen[.]¹⁹⁴

The painting discernibly marked the fulfilment of the court's and country's prospects. Elizabeth's reign had – thus far – been comparatively peaceful, and had outlasted her two predecessors, in particular Mary's. It presented a stark contrast, not only through the direction of the religious settlement, but in how each queen chose to govern; whereas Mary married and relinquished her independence as well as England's through union to a foreign consort, Elizabeth chose to remain unmarried, much to the portrayed benefit of England. It defended Elizabeth's Reformist rule and the capability of female monarchy to govern effectively.

As with *Acts and Monuments*, Cecil's involvement has again been debated, on this occasion as

¹⁹⁴ Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 345.

a potential commissioner. His Humanist education would support an argument otherwise premised upon his intent for Elizabeth to marry. Juno's gesture is interpretable as beckoning. Therefore, compositionally from left to right, the painting might read as follows: Elizabeth; marriage; rationality; children. The last is implied through Venus and Cupid (Eros in Greek mythology). Cupid was the son of Venus and Mars (Ares), the god of war. His inclusion may also be indicative of the dynastic preference for male heirs. Strong wrote: 'It is a celebration not of a triumphant virgin queen but of a ruler who was still expected to marry.'¹⁹⁵ Compositionally, Juno is centralised and foregrounded, diverting attention from Elizabeth and indicating marriage is the dominant *thema*. The name of Juno's Greek counterpart, Hera, translates as 'Great Lady', and is the feminine form of the word 'hero', signifying emphasis is placed upon her.

It is also the case that strategy, practicality, and tangible results were hallmarks of Minerva's wisdom. She valued rational thinking and represented the dominion of will and intellect above instinct and nature, which Elizabeth is encouraged to heed. In political terms, Minerva also sided with patriarchy, thus her wisdom would encourage Elizabeth to heed patriarchal advice (chiefly that of Cecil, if he is acknowledged as the commissioner). As she was normally depicted next to a male, this absence of men in the painting drew attention to the contemporary absence of a king consort in the world beyond the painting. And Venus inspired poetry and persuasive speech, and symbolised the transformative and creative power of love, ultimately seeking to consummate relationships and generate new life; for Elizabeth, the implication concerned the production of an heir.

However, there is substantial reason to dispute Strong's initial reading, particularly as the inscription upon the frame indicates that Juno is fleeing opposed to beckoning. This is the original frame, and the inscription is contemporary. A revised examination of Elizabeth and

¹⁹⁵ Strong, *Gloriana*, 65.

her apotheosis as a virgin monarch provides another, more affirmative interpretation. It is often proposed that the cult of the Virgin Queen arose after Elizabeth's final marriage negotiation, to signify that her unmarried, childless state served a higher religious cause. But a re-commitment to virginity, particularly following the death of Amy Robsart, and Elizabeth's earlier history with Seymour, was necessitated far earlier. Plausibly, *The Three Goddesses* was designed to fulfil that necessity, and if understood correctly to proceed from a defence of Elizabeth's character into a declaration of chastity, it would seem unlikely that Cecil was the commissioner. The message of the painting instead conveys the disadvantages marriage would entail, and instead celebrates Elizabeth's unmarried, virginal state. It was to mark the beginning of a significant change in Elizabeth's image and persona, heralding the Virgin Queen.

The question of the painting's authorship has divided opinion. The Royal Collection Trust currently recognises the Flemish artist Hans Eworth, a former court painter to Mary before dismissal by Elizabeth. The *Three Goddesses* may mark an effort to acquire his former post. His portraiture predominantly consisted of royal or aristocratic portraiture, with the subject(s) depicted half-length, seated at an angle, in an interior setting. He also designed sets and costumery for Elizabeth's court entertainments, and this aspect of his work is arguably reflected in the carnivalesque quality of the painting. He had resided in England since 1545, so could have witnessed Elizabeth's coronation progression. Although allegorical and iconographic content is identifiable, often through an object held by the subject(s) or incorporated compositionally, pastoral landscapes and mythologic settings such as that in the painting are uncharacteristic of his *oeuvre* but not unknown; the painting *Allegory of the Wise and Foolish Virgins* demonstrates he could employ allegorical schemes. His authorship is leant further support by the discernible cursive monogram HE.

However, *Allegory of the Wise* has been recognised to differ stylistically; the figures and composition were outdated by 1569, whilst *The Three Goddesses* is considered by Strong to be

allegorically new. He categorically insisted the latter was not by Eworth, but one of Frans Floris' circle. Floris (1519-1570) was a Flemish artist known for painting allegorical, mythological scenes.¹⁹⁶ Strong argued the monogram HE (Hans Eworth) is in fact HF, thus *Hoefnagel Fecit* [made/produced by Hoefnagel].¹⁹⁷ Joris Hoefnagel, also Flemish, was a Humanist painter, illustrator, miniaturist, and emblemist. He was an accomplished landscape painter also known to have sketched Windsor castle whilst he resided in England from 1568-1569. As mentioned above, Windsor is incorporated in *The Three Goddesses*' composition, and the painting's date correlates with Hoefnagel's residence. He too was familiar with classical mythology through his Humanist education, and was a follower of Floris. Edward Wouk believes Hoefnagel sought Floris' work so that 'they could carry the lessons of their master far from Antwerp.'¹⁹⁸ His work commonly depicted mythological subjects with an accompanying inscription (for he was also a poet), with examples including *Diana and Actaeon* and *Allegory on the friendship between the artist and Joannes*.¹⁹⁹ Whilst Eworth's early life is

¹⁹⁶ Roy Strong, 'Hans Eworth Reconsidered', *The Burlington Magazine* 108, no. 758 (1966): 230–33.

¹⁹⁷ Strong, *Gloriana*, 68.

¹⁹⁸ Edward H. Wouk, *Frans Floris: Imagining a Northern Renaissance* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 215.

¹⁹⁹ Across these examples are notable similarities, particularly depictions of the human form, which I shall briefly outline. Facial detailing is relatively bland and generic, unlike the detailed portraits Eworth produced, and figures are frequently depicted in motion, opposed to statically facing the viewer. Their postures often correlate, for example, the upwards, overhead sweep of Juno's arm is seen in numerous figures in *Diana and Actaeon*. The nymph to the far right of this composition is comparable with Venus, and the two central nymphs incline towards one another similarly to Elizabeth's ladies-in-waiting. In *Allegory on the friendship*, the posture of the figure to the left, particularly the legs and feet, is comparable with Minerva. Fabrics are rendered similarly, with deep creases accentuating the contours of the body (modelled upon the damp-fold technique commonly used in book and manuscript illustration; Hoefnagel was an illustrator). All the scenes depict foregrounded figures against a pastoral landscape, with *Allegory on the friendship* further depicting a vague, background castle and detailed, foregrounded building to the far left. The compositions are divisible into two recognisable halves. Stylistically, the technique to render the tree's foliage is repeated, and rich tones applied to the foregrounded figures are predominantly absent in the backdrops, with this muted palette producing a hazed effect. There are strong similarities in *The Three Goddesses*' depiction of Venus and Cupid with another, later work by Hoefnagel, *Venus disarms Amor*, including the position of Venus' arms in relation to her body, the hand upon Cupid, the reclining pose, and hairstyle. Cupid is also similar, particularly regarding the shape and placement of his wings. Yet there are also discernible irregularities in each. In *Venus disarms Amor*, Venus' leg 'disappears', despite her pose suggesting the right leg crosses it, whilst Cupid's right leg is too thickset, and taking his left as guide, is posed too low (his right foot would rest below ground level); in *The Three Goddesses*, Venus' right leg is disproportionately longer, with an awkwardly posed knee, whilst Cupid's waist is too large and the curvature of his spine too pronounced. It suggests an artist less experienced in depicting the human form. Eworth specialised in painting people, whereas Hoefnagel was widely known for his landscapes, topographic, and still-life work.

relatively unknown, it is believed Hoefnagel received no official artistic training, though Edward Town proposes he practised in secret, since his father seemingly anticipated his son would take up a career as a merchant.²⁰⁰

What may be of greatest significance, however, is that these two candidates were foreign religious exiles. As well as Hoefnagel, Strong proposed the painting may have been presented to Elizabeth by a group of Protestant Flemish exiles, amongst whom Hoefnagel may have numbered (although the monogram recognisably only identifies either Eworth or Hoefnagel individually). Other exiles whose names he put forth include John de Critz, Lucas de Heere (an apprentice to Floris, and close friend of Hoefnagel), and Marcus Gheeraerts the younger. All had motive to celebrate Elizabeth's virginity: those in exile would desire England's continued isolation from continental Europe, which many of Elizabeth's marriage negotiations would have jeopardised. As my re-examination will demonstrate, this would explain the production of a painting that recognisably established and defended Elizabeth's disinclination to marry, and why an otherwise marriageable woman was cast a Virgin Queen. With its provenance unknown, it is impossible to verify whether the painting was gifted by artist(s) or a courtier. But the Royal Collection Trust does indicate it was a gift, therefore not commissioned by Elizabeth.²⁰¹ Thus, her representation as a divine Virgin Queen is recognisably not of her design, but a status awarded by another (or others). With its discernible celebration of divine virginity tantamount to a goddess, it seems reasonable to propose it was neither commissioned nor gifted by a member of the Privy Council, who repeatedly petitioned for Elizabeth's marriage.

²⁰⁰ Edward Town, 'A Biographic Dictionary of London Painters, 1547–1625', *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 76 (2014), 109.

²⁰¹ The prestige of the artist was governed by their capability to display magnificence, for individuals of high status were expected to make a demonstrative outward display. Although painted portraits were not so highly sought after due to the comparative cheapness to produce; a better display of wealth could be anticipated through gifts of expensive fabrics or jewellery. However, the demand for portraiture increased across a broader spectrum of society. Williams, 'The Visual Arts', 568–569.

Analysis of the painting

Across the visual portraiture of Elizabeth, one feature frequently changes: her crown. Several existed, worn for varying ceremonies, before their destruction during the Commonwealth interregnum. An artist's potential inability to depict Elizabeth's crowns from life, instead relying upon sketches and previous depictions, could explain some variations (Elizabeth is only recorded as having sat for her portrait on five occasions). Yet the crown depicted in Elizabeth's Coronation portrait and *The Three Goddesses* is identical. It is the Tudor Crown, and an example of the increased custom for a monarch to bestow their crown to their rightful heir, opposed to said heir fashioning a new one. Initially, this could have served propagandistic purposes, validating the Tudor monarchy by indicating their capability to both legitimately claim the throne (and fashion a crown), and secure the succession (bestowing this crown to successive heirs). For Elizabeth, its recurrence was an important element in her self-representation, serving as a proclamation of her legitimacy, bearing similar properties to the 'Mirror of France' jewel in the Clopton Portrait.

However, the sceptre, orb, and Tudor Crown are distinct visual reminders of, even allusions to, the earlier coronation portrait, thus indicative of Elizabeth's unchanged stance as a virgin queen. The sceptre is a symbol of good governance, a rod of righteousness. The orb symbolises godly power, with the monarch acting as God's earthly representative. Its division into three represents a medieval belief that the world had three continents, which the monarch dominated. It is surmounted by a cross, referencing her spiritual authority to rule, as does the crown.²⁰² Such magnificence became an extension of its wearer; only the semi divine and ordained could possess such splendour. Richard II wanted his crown to represent not only

²⁰² In the context of virginity, the cross may have also inferred the crosses of saints Frideswide and Uncumber (discussed in chapter i), both the virgin daughters of kings.

power and leadership but to become an object of worship, and for monarchy to be venerated.²⁰³ One further piece of ornamentation is bestowed during coronation: a ring, signifying the ‘marriage’ between monarchy and nation. It was a union Elizabeth upheld, and which would consequently contribute towards her recognition as the Virgin Queen through forsaking marriage to a king consort.

To establish *The Three Goddesses*’ declaration of Elizabeth’s virginity, one need only address the portrayal of motion in the composition. Juno does not appear to beckon Elizabeth *pace* Strong, but to flee. In the process, she loses a slipper and her sceptre, the latter of which may have been discarded in acknowledgement of defeat. Minerva’s right foot is lifted at the heel, and the shape of the leg beneath her clothing suggests a swivelling motion, indicating she also verges upon flight. Whilst she has not dropped her pennant, the drooping banner signifies defeat. Venus shows no initial indication of movement. However, her swan-drawn chariot depicted in the background is directed away from Elizabeth, arguably representing a method of flight. As with Juno’s sceptre, Venus’ roses strewn upon the floor are an acknowledgement of defeat, whilst the discarded linen smock situated beneath her reposing body leaves her exposed, which can be interpreted as vulnerable. Cupid also appears to have fled, seeking his mother’s comfort, and has discarded his bow, quiver, and arrows. These four figures are diminished, and Elizabeth is triumphant. It is therefore necessary to reinterpret Juno’s centralised, foregrounded position; rather than encouraging Elizabeth to marry, it represents Elizabeth having conquered marriage through virginity. Juno has lost her power, which either the artist(s) or commissioner(s) has chosen to emphasise compositionally.

It is safe to assume that, following her coronation, Elizabeth did not meander through her royal residences wearing the Tudor Crown and carrying the ceremonial orb and sceptre

²⁰³ A rare survival can be found in the Residenz Palace, Bavaria. Originally the crown of Anne of Bohemia, Richard II’s wife, it left England upon the marriage of Princess Blanche, daughter of Henry IV, to Louis III, Elector Palatine. The magnificence of the crown is a testament to Richard’s vision of a king’s (and his queen’s) opulence and splendour.

wherever she ventured. It was commonplace for monarchical portraiture to depict royalty in possession of them, usually in a static position, often enthroned, with iconographic symbolism re-emphasising power, divinity, and governance. What renders *The Three Goddesses* so unusual is the portrayal of movement. Elizabeth's motion is indicated by two ladies holding her train aloft. As mentioned above, this movement is connotative of pageantry and progresses. In full royal regalia, she encounters the three goddesses during their competition. Exceeding them all, Elizabeth is uncontestably victorious. Her possession of the orb, sceptre, and crown at this decisive moment is critical. The goddesses are diminished, losing their majesty through the loss of their apparel. However, Elizabeth cannot claim the sceptre of Juno (marriage), nor the roses of Venus (fertility) unless she were to discard her orb and sceptre. To claim her 'victory' by picking up their tokens of power, her good governance and role as God's representative must be cast aside. To further establish Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen, the only goddess not to physically discard their token is Minerva, who still holds her pennant. Interpretively, her immunity to the goddess Venus is reciprocated with the figure of Elizabeth, herself becoming another embodiment of divinity. Fundamentally, whilst Elizabeth maintains motion – equivocally, whilst she reigns – she will retain her reason, piety, and now virginity, at the expense of marriage (to a person at least), patriarchal governance, and an heir, consequently establishing a connection with God unseen since Richard II. Furthermore, whilst Elizabeth would not have traversed her royal residences with the Tudor crown or ceremonial orb and sceptre, the one token she would retain would be the coronation ring that represented her 'marriage' to England.

One significant alteration from the source is the diminished role of men. Paris is not required to judge for Elizabeth is unanimously victorious and the three goddesses united in defeat. Here, the orb takes the place of the apple, and Elizabeth retains it. The only male in the composition, Cupid, seeks comfort from Venus for his power has diminished; one of his arrows

lies broken in the foreground, signifying Elizabeth's impenetrability to the weakness of love. She may also shield her ladies-in-waiting, for Elizabeth insisted upon their espousal of virginity too. This immunity to Venus and Cupid further appears to credit Elizabeth with the divinity of a virginity goddess, arguably establishing her as a Virgin Queen. However, the association of her ceremonial accoutrements and her ladies in attendance contrastingly portrays her as mortal: she is the incumbent monarch of England. Instead, her dedication to virginity and triumph over the deities become associated with sacred virginity, such as Richard II had sought to achieve. Elizabeth's virginity is recognised to be in service to England, bringing her to a purer state and achieving a closer connection to God, hence her depicted superiority to four mythologic deities. This connection is what would enable Elizabeth to restore the true faith, as the first edition of *Acts and Monuments* had sought to portray, and in this context is logically celebrated by an artist(s) likely to have been seeking religious exile.

With Juno dividing them, the placement of Elizabeth and Venus on either side represents two opposites, virginity and sex respectively, with marriage the divisive – and decisive – choice. Between Juno and Venus stands Minerva, who as goddess of war becomes an omen of the consequence marriage might entail. Elizabeth received offers of marriage from overseas suitors seeking political alliances with England, though to accept would have risked embroiling England in foreign conflicts. The union between Mary and Philip had exemplified that outcome through England's involvement in Spanish wars with France. Furthermore, as the child of Venus' affair with Mars, Cupid allegorically symbolised love and war. In antithesis, the space between Juno and Elizabeth depicts a pastoral landscape and Windsor castle. Virginity, it is implied, will ensure England remains peaceful and bountiful.²⁰⁴

The bird erupting from the ground is commonly interpreted as a peacock, the sacred

²⁰⁴In the allegorical painting *The Family of Henry VIII: An Allegory of the Tudor Succession*, this motif of Elizabeth providing peace is again re-emphasised, for Elizabeth is depicted leading Peace and Plenty. Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', 185.

animal of Juno which traditionally drew her chariot. It served as watcher, possessing a tail decorated with a thousand eyes, and was bestowed with beauty since it lacked the nightingale's song. Being in shadow, one could argue its beauty and capability to watch are hindered to again signify Juno's defeat, as does the bird's apparent departure. The peacock was also a symbol of immortality, for it was believed that their flesh never decayed, and in Christian art was frequently used to symbolise resurrection. However, the hues of the bird's plumage are identifiably reddish-orange, not the emerald-blue typical of peacocks. This cannot be explained away by the shadow cast by the building, nor could it be the drab plumage of a peahen, for they do not possess the eye-bedecked tailfeathers – Juno's peacock is thus always male. Instead, the fiery colouration arguably envisages a Phoenix, a symbol of immortality, with its blackened state signifying renewal from its own ashes. Its asexual reproduction could be recognised as an allegorical representation of virginity (a topic discussed further in due course), but as the sole individual of its species, the Phoenix's isolation became a trope for people considered exceptional: an appropriate emblem for the sole Reformist queen regnant in Europe.

Another, though conjectural, argument for the painting's representing Elizabeth's virginity arises from an unlikely source: Juno. To establish this, one must address the season in which the painting is depicted, spring. In Greek mythology the worship of Juno's counterpart, Hera, was associated with the seasons. She had three epithets and corresponding sanctuaries where she was worshipped throughout the year. She was celebrated as Hera *Teleia* in the summer and autumn – that is, Hera the Perfected, or Fulfilled. In winter, she became Hera *Chera* – that is, Hera the Widow. However, in the spring, she became Hera *Parthenos*, the Maiden or Virgin. Jean Bolen outlines how these three epithets correlated with the three 'states' in which a woman lives her life: as a virgin, a wife and mother, and a widow.²⁰⁵ Thus Elizabeth, in the 'spring' of life, is plausibly celebrated as a virgin through the centralised figure

²⁰⁵ Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 141–42.

of the Hera figure in springtime.

Similarly, Venus' Greek counterpart, Aphrodite, possessed varying epithets. Plato, in his *Symposium*, described the goddess as inhabiting two mythopoetically distinct forms, the Heavenly Aphrodite Urania (Venus Coelestus), and the Common Aphrodite Pandemos (Venus Vulgaris). Urania was the motherless daughter of Uranus (Caulus, in Roman mythology), older, free from 'the lewdness of youth', and heavenly, symbolising divine beauty; Pandemos was daughter of Zeus (Jupiter) and Dione,²⁰⁶ younger, and associated with sensual pleasures. This latter is an embodiment that people can more easily contemplate, and she was linked with procreation.²⁰⁷ But according to the Greek traveller Pausanias, when worshipped alongside Peithos, the goddess of persuasion, Pandemos was also capable of uniting people socially and/or politically and procreating new views as well as new life.²⁰⁸ This split-persona deity, both heavenly and earthly, perfectly encapsulated Elizabeth's representation of herself as the chaste yet sensual, heavenly yet earthly queen who sought to unite England following years of social, political, and religious upheaval. She achieved this through word rather than action, as evidenced through her religious settlement.

Yet spring naturally transforms into summer. In the context of the painting, Elizabeth may have been expected to transform too, passing from one state into another. Does Juno discard her sceptre in defeat or as an example, thus indicating Elizabeth forego her virginal righteousness? And is Venus of the heavens or the earth? Regardless of the interpretation, *The Three Goddesses* could never lose its pertinence, for Elizabeth would always remain victorious over the goddesses' beauty whether as virgin, wife and mother, or widow. Each of the three

²⁰⁶ Dione has no Roman equivalent. However, her name, which translates as 'Goddess', means she is sometimes recognised as a 'She-Zeus', and considered a female equivalent to the King of the Gods. Thus, Aphrodite Pandemos is also a motherless daughter, if you etymologically interpret her mother as being akin to her father. Given Elizabeth's mother had been whitewashed from history, it was an appropriate representation.

²⁰⁷ Plato, *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 465-466.

²⁰⁸ Pausanias, *The Description of Greece*, ed. Thomas Taylor, vol. 3 (London: R. Priestley, 1824), 56.

goddesses can be categorised separately: Minerva was a virgin goddess, Juno a vulnerable goddess, and Venus an alchemical goddess.²⁰⁹ Elizabeth, victorious over them all, thereby comes into possession of their seemingly conflicting attributes (as the painting's inscription attests), explaining her capacity to be presented as virginal yet marriageable, or logical yet sensual. Its very ambiguity, between defiant virginity on one hand and potential to marry on the other, whilst nevertheless praising Elizabeth as a person tantamount to a goddess, perhaps explains its prominent display throughout her reign.²¹⁰ Elizabeth may not have had control over the composition or her initial portrayal as the Virgin Queen, but she recognisably approved of it enough to have it upon her wall. This single painting perfectly encapsulated Elizabeth's capability never to fully commit, to keep several options available, yet to always demand reverence. But primarily, at the date it was produced it identified and celebrated her as the Virgin Queen opposed to a virgin queen, which – I argue – marked the next step in her progression towards an imperial image.

Elizabeth's marriageability

There is considerable evidence to support Elizabeth's disinclination to marry from a young age, and that her representation as a virginal figure developed from a display of marriageability into a defence of her virginity whilst Elizabeth was still deemed of marriageable age. However, it nevertheless remained advantageous for Elizabeth to present herself as marriageable, particularly upon the international stage. Strong writes:

²⁰⁹ These are categorisations devised by Bolen. The virginity goddesses represent independency and self-sufficiency; the vulnerable goddesses represent traditional roles of wife and mother, and are relationship-orientated archetypes whose identity and well-being depend upon a significant relationship; and the alchemical goddess is one open to, and susceptible to, change.
Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman*, 16–17.

²¹⁰ In 1600, Baron Waldstein, a visiting German, described the interior of Whitehall, and a painting 'which shows Juno, Pallas Athene and Venus, together with Queen Elizabeth.'
Strong, *Gloriana*, 65.

The iconic, unapproachable, doll-like figure of the coronation portrait existed simultaneously with the endlessly desirable heiress, [...] the most eminently marriageable woman in Europe, demure and virtuous, [and] wonderfully accomplished, [...] always increasingly splendidly dressed and displaying astonishing jewellery, an indication of how rich a prize she would constitute for any husband.²¹¹

Prospective marital unions with numerous overseas suitors (with whom Elizabeth could toy for years) helped maintain relatively amicable international relations, allowing England a comparatively stable period of trade and prosperity. Competition among suitors helped enable the cultivation and retainment of the ‘cult of Elizabeth’, the magnificence of which increased with the passage of time. Stephen Orgel writes:

Mary [I]’s marriage [had been] a course of action with no options left available to her. Elizabeth, however, left her options perpetually open, raising flirtation to an instrument of policy, which could remain effective so long as she remained marriageable but unmarried.²¹²

Courtiers also praised Elizabeth with increasing grandiosity, organising pageantries and festivities celebrating her person and accomplishments. National celebrations for Elizabeth began to increase following her papal excommunication in 1570, including Accession Day festivities (November 17) and Elizabeth’s birthday (September 7).

Numerous theories are put forth to explain Elizabeth’s apparent disinclination to marry and have children. My own, pertaining to her experiences in childhood and early adulthood provide one plausible reason. It may also be Elizabeth feared for her capability to have children, an anxiety which may have stemmed from varying medical conditions suggested to have

²¹¹ Strong, *Gloriana*, 17.

²¹² Stephen Orgel, ‘Prologue: I Am Richard II’, in *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Alessandra Petrina and Laura Tosi (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 18.

affected her fertility.²¹³ Her mother's recorded difficulties with conception and pregnancy following Elizabeth's birth may have accentuated this fear, though Anne's difficulties could be sourced to factors including her age, or stress-related illness (given the pressure upon her to provide a male heir).

Whatever theory one may or may not choose to accept, however reserved or bold, well-reasoned or seemingly indiscernible, by the waning of the failed Alençon negotiations in the early 1580s it became apparent Elizabeth – then in her mid-to-late-forties – was unlikely to marry and would not provide an heir of her body. For years, people at court had not – or would not – credit her commitment to remaining unmarried. As Hilton states, that she should wish to remain a maid and never marry was unconceivable.²¹⁴ It defied all expectations placed upon the monarch as well as a woman. Consequently, the succession remained in question, whilst Elizabeth's eventual incapability to produce children became an inescapable testament to her aging body. Having reached its zenith, the sun appeared to have begun its slow descent upon her reign.

A drawback to being aligned through portraiture with Richard II was his eventual deposition. It would appear, in an exchange between Elizabeth and the antiquarian and politician William Lambarde (1536-1601), that the subject of Richard arose through his name appearing in historical documents taken from the Tower of London. During their conversation, in which Elizabeth is famously quoted as saying 'I am Richard II, know ye not that?', she referred to owning one of his portraits, which had recently been rediscovered in a basement. This painting was Richard's coronation portrait. It appears, as her accession became ever more distant, that the suitability of being paralleled with Richard had steadily decreased, for fear of drawing attention to his eventual deposition. Thus, his image had been removed from display.

²¹³ Borman, *The Private Lives of the Tudors*, 290–93.

²¹⁴ Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince*, 146.

Elizabeth, noticeably, had not acquiesced to the wishes of Lord Lumley (who had made the re-discovery), who had asked that the painting be reinstalled with the line of ancestors and successors. By telling Lambarde ‘I will command Thomas Kneavet, Keeper of my House, to show it unto thee’, it indicates the painting (perhaps unsurprisingly) had remained off public display.²¹⁵ Richard had been deposed by a cousin; Elizabeth spent much of her reign fearing the same from Mary Stuart (her first cousin once removed), the possibility of which must have cast a dark and continual shadow. The Northern Rebellions had formerly sought to depose Elizabeth and crown Mary queen, and although foiled, others attempts followed, resulting in Mary’s execution, itself a catalyst for the threat posed by the Spanish Armadas.

Rather than the celebratory nature now associated with the modern reception of the Virgin Queen, a rational evaluation of the contemporary situation during the 1560s and 1570s would suggest Elizabeth’s virginal state was, above all else, problematic. The Body *politic* always transferred to the next incumbent monarch; however, there was no heir of the body, nor would Elizabeth name her successor. Meanwhile Mary Stuart had a son and could trace her lineage to the Tudors, substantiating her claim. Comparing the aging Elizabeth with the apparently virile Stuart line, several courtiers (including both William and Robert Cecil) cast their eyes northwards. As James grew into adulthood, Elizabeth attempted to ensure he never overstepped himself, effectively keeping him leashed through gifts of an annual pension. Mary, meanwhile, was placed under house arrest in 1568.

But as the likelihood of Elizabeth marrying grew increasingly unlikely, there arose a need to justify the outcome. A commitment to virginity was required, propagandistically, to restore faith in Elizabeth’s polity. And thus, Elizabeth publicly began to become the Virgin Queen, fully embodying a form of representation first seen in *The Three Goddesses*, which extended into other artworks and the wider textual culture. It was also a political move, tactfully

²¹⁵ Orgel, ‘Prologue: I Am Richard II’, 11–12.

helping Elizabeth sidestep the topics of her unmarried state, lack of an heir of her body, and the issue of succession. Whether cast as Gloriana, classical goddesses such as Diana, or biblical figures such as the Virgin Mary, it helped enable her reign to be envisioned as a prophesied Golden Age that would last *in perpetuum*. Elizabeth would eventually come to fully embody her *Semper Eadem* motto.

Recognition as the Virgin Mary

It would be a mistake to believe Marian imagery was associated with Elizabeth from the outset of her reign. Earlier paintings, as discussed above, were predominantly commissioned by courtiers, and could have served in marriage negotiations. Virginity may have advertised her eligibility, but connotations of biblical virginity would hinder marriage prospects. Other visual portraits, such as book frontispiece engravings and woodcuts, were commissioned by the author(s), printer, and/or publisher, as *Acts and Monuments* typified. These forms of portraiture were again not Marian, for it was still anticipated she would marry and provide an heir, who would inherit the religiously reformed England and avoid another counter-reformation.

The Virgin Mary's role in Catholicism made her an important figure of worship. Frequently depicted with a crown, she is regarded as the Queen of Heaven. However, as Marina Warner analyses, her appearance underlined arguments and tenets of the Catholic Church, including the power of the Church, for which the Virgin often stood:

[A]s the bride of Christ and the Queen of Heaven she reveals the [Catholic] Church's most profound ambitions for itself, both in the afterlife, when it hopes to be reunited like the New Jerusalem with Christ the Bridegroom, and on earth, where it hopes to hold sway in plenitude of spiritual power.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 103.

She held an important place in medieval art, and her image can be summarised as signalling triumph, through her virginity, over human weakness and evil, as well as being an intercessor with Christ. Warner also discerns how the image of the Virgin in triumph served a twofold purpose: it asserted the orthodoxy of images; and its content indicated the powers of the Pope as the ruler of Christian hearts and minds, secularly and spiritually.²¹⁷ However, one portrait of a virgin queen can be interpreted as severing that connection: the initiated ‘C’ within *Acts and Monuments* figuratively strips the Pope of his power, also indicating the eradication of idolatrous imagery in the Reformed religion. This provided an opportunity for Elizabeth to eventually affiliate herself with Mary through establishing herself as her secular successor, consequently avoiding accusations of idolatry by essentially becoming substitutive.

Only from the 1570s onwards did Elizabeth’s image appropriate imagery more connotative of the Virgin Mary. By indirectly recognising her as Mary, it was – theoretically – possible to avoid accusations of appropriating deconsecrated Catholic iconography. Existing symbols of the Blessed Virgin – such as the rose – could take on new meanings in respect of Elizabeth. The Tudor rose symbolised its namesake dynasty, and through uniting the roses of Lancaster and York also symbolised peace, but from a religious perspective the rose had been a medieval symbol of the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, Warner writes that the honour paid Mary as queen rebounded to the honour of queens, to the exclusion of other women.²¹⁸ By recognising herself as Mary’s successor Elizabeth was able, through her image, to transcend from being a woman and queen into a superior and divine figure.

The first use of the soubriquet ‘Virgin Queen’ which could be interpreted as associating Elizabeth with the cult of the Virgin Mary was recorded in a pageant by the poet Thomas Churchyard in 1578. This formed part of the festivities arranged by Edward Seymour, First

²¹⁷ Warner, *Alone of all her sex*, 109.

²¹⁸ Warner, 104.

Earl of Hertford, during Elizabeth's annual progress.²¹⁹ Churchyard had previously been employed to produce a pageant for Elizabeth in 1574, and in 1593 received a small pension from her; there is a discernible monetary incentive to impress either his employer or Elizabeth, which would indicate his use of the comparison was praiseworthy.

Hertford, however, had a chequered history with Elizabeth following his clandestine marriage to Lady Katherine Grey. As the younger sister of Jane Grey and another cousin to Elizabeth, she also held a substantiative claim to the throne. When the marriage was discovered, Hertford and Katherine were imprisoned, their children bastardised, and he was fined for seducing a virgin of royal blood. Katherine died whilst imprisoned in 1568, when Hertford was subsequently released and restored at court. For Elizabeth's first recorded description as a virgin queen to originate in a pageant organised by an individual who had married a royal virgin with a claim to the throne and two male heirs (starkly contrasting Elizabeth's unmarried, childless condition) leaves interpretation open to speculation: was it part of a programme of festivities celebrating Elizabeth, resolidifying Hertford's relationship to her; or was it veiled criticism of a childless queen whose actions had caused the death and disinheritance of viable successors?

This is not the only example of Elizabeth's recognition as a virginal figure being attributive to another. Gascoigne appears to have been the first to represent Elizabeth as the hunting goddess Diana, in *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting*.²²⁰ In one self-portrait he is depicted kneeling before Elizabeth, who is marginalised. Like the composition to *The Three Goddesses*, the centralised figure – the courtier, Gascoigne – is instead emphasised. Elizabeth is portrayed as part of an interconnected relationship which destabilises her authority as queen. Although she is recognised as the allegorical huntress and commands power over courtiers'

²¹⁹ de Lisle, *Tudor: The Family Story*, 358–59.

²²⁰ For the evidence supporting this, refer to Stephen Hamrick, "'Set in Portraiture": George Gascoigne, Queen Elizabeth, and Adapting the Royal Image', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11, no. 1 (2005): 34–35.

fates (her ability to raise – or lower – their status is equivocated with Diana’s transformative power), for such an allusion to work she is dependent upon the continuing role of the ‘subservient’ male portraying her as such, or as Stephen Hamrick describes, is ‘immediately dependent upon continued performance and service.’ Thus, Gascoigne ‘represents power dynamics in the cult as reciprocal and interdependent and not emanating solely from a deified monarch[.]’²²¹ It was a theme which continued beyond the 1570s; during the late 1580s, Sir Walter Raleigh promoted the cult of Elizabeth as a moon goddess in his poem *The Ocean’s Love to Cynthia* (pre.1591, though exact dates are unknown), which inspired Spenser’s *Gloriana*. Raleigh poetically depicted her ‘riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, [and] walking like Venus’.²²² Again, it was the courtier who held some semblance of control over Elizabeth’s image.

One area favourable for drawing comparisons between Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary were auspicious dates: Elizabeth’s birthday was coincidentally (or not, as propagandists emphasised) the eve of the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the very end of her reign another auspicious date presented itself, though it served Elizabeth little use: she died on March 24, the eve of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. Outwardly, Elizabeth appears to have become a substitute for the Virgin; for example, courtiers hosting her and her retinue during progresses claimed that their houses were ‘blessed’.²²³ For this recognition to follow Elizabeth’s stay demonstrates her recognition as divine, very much a substitute for the Virgin Mary and a figure both connected to and representational of God.

Elizabeth was also portrayed as the celestial virgin Astraea (‘Star Maiden’), a daughter of Zeus who represented innocence, purity, and justice, and subsequently the Virgin Mary. In Virgil’s *Eclogue IV*, her return to earth was to herald a new, utopian Golden Age and an

²²¹ Hamrick, ““Set in Portraiture”: George Gascoigne, Queen Elizabeth, and Adapting the Royal Image”, 28.

²²² Christopher Morris, *The Tudors* (London: Collins, 1966), 140.

²²³ Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 30.

everlasting springtime, first reinterpreted to represent the Virgin Mary, and later appropriated to represent the Virgin Queen Elizabeth and her increasingly enduring Reformist reign. Thought to signify God's favouring England above Catholic enemies, it is a specifically English (and Reformist) interpretation of the poem. The 'everlasting springtime' is recognisably envisaged in *The Three Goddesses*' spring pastoral setting. The enduring use of virginity, initially paralleling the semi-divine Richard II to its later embodiment of the sacred Virgin and other divinities, offset (or compensated for) the lack of a bodily heir. Alternatively, the monarch's Body *politic* was considered to offset, or compensate for, the Body *natural*. It was a propagandistic ruse, for portrayal as an immortal figure meant succession would never become an issue: Elizabeth would retain the immortal Body *politic* 'spirit' and thus continue to govern. Thus, the sun was not beginning its descent; Elizabeth was the sun, in all its constancy, a star maiden presiding over a new Golden Age.

It is plausible this later adoption of Marian imagery also re-associated Elizabeth with Constantine. As previously detailed, Elizabeth's affiliation had been withdrawn from the second edition of *Acts and Monuments* onwards. Whilst studying Virgil's *Eclogue IV*, Yates recognises Constantine as the first notable individual to make a public claim upon the Eclogue as prophetic, interpreting the returning virgin as the Virgin Mother, Christianizing the story to pertain to Mary ushering a 'Golden Age' Christian Era through her divine Son.²²⁴ Constantine appropriated this imagery, interpolating the advent of a new Christian religion alongside his imperialistic vision of a Golden Age. Thus, Elizabeth is re-established as a Constantinian figure (whose rule was a return to the true Church of Christ after a period of tyranny,) via his recognition of Astraea with the Virgin Mary; they heralded a Golden Age and new Christian Era respectively, which he collectively achieved. Elizabeth, however, not only embodied Constantine's capabilities, but the sacred virginity of Astraea and Mary.

²²⁴ Yates, *Astraea*, 34–35.

The Phoenix emblem

The allegorical symbolism of the Phoenix also grew increasingly significant. Latterly, it too came to be a motif symbolising the fecund virginity of the Virgin Mary, arising asexually from its ashes to begin life anew. In a Biblical context it was a symbol of the Resurrection. It can also be linked to the ‘resurrection’ of Elizabethan England amidst the return to an Astraeon Golden Age. However, according to Ernst Kantorowicz, the Phoenix’s exemplification of virginity is ‘only a side issue’; its singleness and uniqueness are of greater importance.²²⁵ Emblematically, the Phoenix is concerned with the nature of rulership, with noticeable parallels to the monarch’s Bodies *natural* and *politic*. It is paradoxically mortal yet immortal, dying and rebirthing in perpetual succession, whilst immune to the effects of age, illness, and infirmity. It became an enduring emblem of Elizabeth: it was depicted on a 1574 medal bearing Elizabeth’s monogram and a 1603 medallion commemorating her death. It also lent its name to ‘The Phoenix Portrait’, produced between 1572-1576 by Nicholas Hilliard.

If the bird in *The Three Goddesses* is recognised as the Phoenix, its placement could be correlative to that of Venus and Cupid. Kantorowicz’s study details the bird’s asexuality, drawing upon the observation by Lactantius (an advisor to Constantine) that it entered into no compacts with Venus.²²⁶ The earlier observation that Juno divides the composition between virginity and marriage remains viable, although another level of interpretation can be applied; she divides Elizabeth and the Phoenix from Venus and Cupid, representative of asexual and sexual reproduction respectively. The Phoenix’s asexual reproduction is representative of a state of immortality, whereas sexual reproduction is indicative of mortality, for children continue their parents’ bloodline. Potentially, it signifies Elizabeth’s altering allegorical

²²⁵ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 389.

²²⁶ Kantorowicz, 390.

representation from the merely virginal towards the immortal, whilst as propaganda it encapsulated Elizabeth's *Semper Eadem* motto. Figuratively, time stopped: England would exist under a Reformed Golden Age forevermore.

Being an androgynous creature (it was 'female or male or neither or both,' according to Lactantius), the Phoenix was suitable for adoption as an emblem by both men and women. It had previously been used by Elizabeth's own predecessors. These include Edward, who adapted the Phoenix symbol to show reverence for his mother, Jane Seymour (who had died shortly after his birth).²²⁷ Another was Anne, and interpretively, Elizabeth could be understood to have arisen in her mother's stead. Rather than public, potentially contentious displays however, her reverence was undemonstrative and often private. A ring, worn from 1575 until her death, contained a secret compartment behind her diamond initial. Inside are two miniature portraits, one of a relief of Elizabeth and another purported to be Anne (identified by her French hood). A Phoenix is enamelled upon the back of the oval bezel.²²⁸ Aside from being an emblem of Elizabeth, its property of resurrection appears indicative of Elizabeth's belief she arose in her mother's wake.²²⁹ This arguably discredits a common conclusion that Elizabeth 'airbrushed' Anne from memory, which other evidence supports. The dynastic portrait *The Family of Henry VIII* (c.1545) depicts Henry enthroned beneath a canopy of State: to his right, with an arm upon his shoulder, stands his heir Edward; to his left, Edward's mother Jane Seymour (who had died eight years previous). This trio is ensconced by four pillars, beyond which stand Henry's daughters: to his right, Mary; to his left, Elizabeth. Close examination reveals Elizabeth is wearing a pendant with an 'A', thought to have been her mother's.

²²⁷ Strong, *Gloriana*, 82.

²²⁸ Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', 178–79.

²²⁹ This ring was possibly gifted by Hertford for the Phoenix was also his device. Outwardly it appears a token of affection, a demonstration of fealty, or an effort to garner recognition, though its content possesses an alternative interpretation. It depicts Anne and Elizabeth, a queen and mother alongside her daughter and heir, within a Phoenix mount indicative of resurrection. Yet with Elizabeth childless there was no future resurrection. This gift follows Elizabeth's actions against Seymour and his (then deceased) wife Katherine, which included illegitimizing their children, denying him the legal heir Elizabeth (and, following her divorce and execution, Anne) had failed to provide.

Whatever credibility either Elizabeth or her court gave this propaganda remains speculative, as does the question of whether anybody believed the idealising allegory. Conjecturally, Elizabeth became unduly trapped in displays of pomp and circumstance. Her efforts to appear ageless, lithe, fashionable, and accomplished were intended to draw attention away from her steadily aging body. The artificiality of Elizabeth and her court was itself a drama which became inescapable – dropping the façade would acknowledge her age, infirmities, and mortality, shattering the illusion propaganda sought to achieve. It is little wonder she compared her life with one put forth upon the stage. Rather than address the ramifications of mortality, Elizabeth fashioned then perpetuated a public aura of divinity. Portraiture grew increasingly imbued with allegorical imagery, and the mask of youth became commonplace in later portraits.

The term ‘mask of youth’ has come to define the understanding of Elizabeth’s portrait, and has had a noticeable impact upon her portraiture in subsequent film and drama. Sue Pritchard defines it as a term to describe the illusion of youthfulness in the latter stages of her reign, controlling both the image and propaganda of herself by creating a sense of timelessness.²³⁰ Although its application in visual portraiture was the responsibility of the artist, Elizabeth would only retain portraiture she deemed favourable, thus as she aged it was those depicting her ‘mask’ that predominantly endured. This gave her some degree of control over her image. She herself adopted a make-up regime that perpetuated her agelessness and youthfulness, including foundations of white lead mixed with vinegar to whiten her face, and raw egg-white glazes to improve her complexion. Her lips were likely to have been reddened with vermillion, and her eyebrows and hairline plucked to suit contemporary fashions. Wigs

²³⁰ ‘Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I’, Royal Museums Greenwich,
<https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/portraits-queen-elizabeth-i>.

were also commonplace, with the added benefit that they could also be decorated with precious stones and jewellery.

Her attire altered too, from merely fashionable to opulently magnificent, interwoven with pearls and precious stones and further decorated with jewellery, then paired with an enormous ruff that was a substitute for a halo, or which was the ‘rays’ to Elizabeth’s ‘sun’. Elizabeth, as God’s anointed and head of the political Body, could also not afford for her face to show signs of aging and ailment. Her appearance is described by Borman as startling and frightening (I would propose imposing); she no longer sought to look like an ordinary human being but a semi-Godlike figure.²³¹ Elizabeth had to look the most magnificent of all; she possessed the finest silks and the largest ruffs, which were visual markers of status. Court ladies could not dress in clothing either matching or outshining Elizabeth’s. Any who wished to marry also faced difficulties, for to perpetuate her Virgin Queen status, Elizabeth still required her ladies remain similarly chaste (a pre-requisite from the outset of her reign). Unfortunately, some had other ideas, and clandestine relationships and secret marriages were a semi-frequent occurrence.²³²

Courtiers were also trapped in the masquerade surrounding Elizabeth’s image – to seek advancement, it was necessary to perpetuate the emergent cult of Elizabeth which, as my study of *The Three Goddesses* reveals, can now be traced back to the late 1560s. Being entrapped, they contributed to emphasising Elizabeth’s grandeur, whether willingly or not, for if an individual courtier sought advancement, then flattery was required. Be it poetry, pageantry, portraiture, or plays, these would – outwardly, at least – praise Elizabeth, comparing her with classical goddesses and her Reformist reign with a Golden Age.

There is a difference between the examples provided above and Elizabeth’s own

²³¹ Winchcombe, ‘Armada’.

²³² When Lady Mary Shelton’s marriage to John Scudamore was discovered in 1574, Elizabeth was reputedly so angered she broke Mary’s finger with a hairbrush. Whitelock, *Elizabeth’s Bedfellows*, 153.

manifestation as a Virgin Queen. *The Three Goddesses*, alongside examples from both Churchyard and Gascoigne, are evidence of Elizabeth being portrayed as a Virgin Queen in celebration, yet to also serve the interests of the artists involved, or as a renegotiation of power. In all examples, a male reassumes control of Elizabeth through her portrayal as either a virginal deity figure or the Virgin Mary. To recap, the artist(s) and/or commissioner(s) of *The Three Goddesses* celebrated Elizabeth as a Reformed queen and indicated the benefits her unmarried status brought herself and England. She is portrayed victorious and in possession of power, wisdom, and beauty, whilst England is verdant and peaceful. Consequently, there is pressure upon Elizabeth to remain unmarried, leaving England an isolated stronghold for religious exiles from overseas. With Churchyard, there is a clear motive for monetary reward or patronage, be it from his employer or Elizabeth herself, as well as an opportunity to demonstrate his artistic talent. Furthermore, if Hertford was involved in the portrayal, the possibility of seeking to reclaim his prestige is understood to overshadow veiled critique of a royal virgin who reduced his and his heirs' status. Gascoigne used classical allegory to reconfigure the power dynamic between an independent alpha female and her male courtiers, seeking recognition that her elevated status remains dependent upon men (including himself).

Elizabeth appears to have appropriated these comparisons and incorporated them in her own visage and persona. This was important in two ways. First, she was able to regain control over her image. If an individual had formerly sought to compare her with a virginal figure for the advancement of their own cause, by then appropriating that figure, all subsequent portrayals inevitably recognised Elizabeth as that figure. Thus, she became the living embodiment of a goddess and the sacred Virgin. Secondly, as her reign both lengthened and confronted difficulties, such as the Northern Rebellions and papal denunciation, it was important for Elizabeth to present herself as vital and regal, and to become the living embodiment of England. The whole Elizabethan court became a place of spectacle and splendour, a demonstrative show

designed to express England's strength and stability, following the initial unification under her religious settlement. To all the foreign dignitaries and overseas visitors, it was the chief indicator of England's burgeoning imperial might, with its Virgin Queen presiding as both figurehead and mascot.

Variation on a theme

The Araynement of Paris (henceforth abbreviated to *The Arayngement*), by Peele, was published anonymously in 1584. As the title indicates, it too is a retelling of the Judgement of Paris. However, in the fifteen years since *The Three Goddesses* was painted, the recognition of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen was establishing itself rapidly in the public imagination. By 1584 she was at an age perceived too old for marriage, thus the story was no longer necessary to defend Elizabeth's judgement amidst overwhelming pressure to marry. Instead, Peele's retelling of the story focuses upon celebrating the advantages of Elizabeth's decision against marriage, and its positive effect upon England. Peele celebrated Elizabeth's beauty and accomplishments, and sought to recognise Elizabeth's divinity by acknowledging her as a victor over the three goddesses. However, whereas *The Three Goddesses* denotes a discernible interest in the preservation of England's isolated state, to the benefit of reformist exiles, Peele's interests would appear to include prospective personal gain, which undoubtedly affected his portrait of Elizabeth.

The Araynement is one of two celebratory plays produced after Peele's graduation from Oxford. The other, *The Hunting of Cupid*, survives only in scant excerpts printed in *Englands Helicon* and *Englands Parnassus*.²³³ *The Araynement* follows the chivalric tradition

²³³ David H. Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele*, vol. 3 (London: Yale University Press, 1963), 71.

of addressing and praising Elizabeth, although it is Peele's second known treatment of Troy mythology.²³⁴ This revisited subject may be in response to an increased demand for, and the popularity of, theatrical entertainments. It was also an appropriate format for a graduate hoping to earn money through his writing. Peele himself was part of a group now known by the name of the University Wits. This included fellow Oxford graduate Thomas Lodge and Cambridge graduates Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe, amongst others, who all contributed to the revitalisation of English drama in late Elizabethan England. G K Hunter wrote:

[T]hey were able, drawing on their Humanist education, to create a complex commercial drama, using the nationalization of religious sentiment to reach out to a population similarly caught in the contradictions and liberations history had imposed – drama being the genre most responsive to the tastes and demands of society.²³⁵

However, Hunter does concede that *The Araygnement* is a play which seems, by its existing form, incapable of being successfully performed outside of court, for it requires the participation of Elizabeth herself in the final act.

It is conjecturable that the published edition of *The Araygnement* was a revision from an earlier version intended for performances before a wider audience. Charles Prouty supports this claim primarily through records pertaining to the Children of the Chapel, the company which performed *The Araygnement* before Elizabeth and her court, and with which Peele was affiliated. During the year of the play's publication, they were performing at Blackfriars theatre prior to its early closure. Its publication would viably recoup some of the losses the closure generated. But producing an amended version of a pre-existing play for a court performance, which actively involved participation from the greatest patronage figure available, appears a

²³⁴ It followed *The Tale of Troy*, which Peele probably began whilst an Oxford student from 1571-1575 and 1577-1579.

²³⁵ G. K. Hunter, *English Drama 1586-1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Clarendon Press, 1997), 22.

logical tactic to garner financial award from Elizabeth. Furthermore, they may not have profited much financially from this single performance at court, indicative that another version pre-existed it. Records show that the company had previously received £15 for two earlier performances at court (though what was performed is unknown).²³⁶ However, no explanation is made for why the amended edition was published and not the original, particularly if – as Hunter highlights – it was not suitable for wider performances.

Impromptu amendments for a single performance would also explain unresolved elements in the play (as well as the concluding praise and individualisation of Elizabeth). These include the undelivered promise of ‘the Tragedie of Troie’ during the prologue, and the abrupt disappearance of Oenone in the third act; arguably, a previous edition may have focused either on Paris’ cause in the fall of Troy (which, I conjecture, would then align the play closely with Peele’s *The Tale*), or his relationship with Oenone, both left unresolved in the revised edition.

Although Peele produced two works re-telling the same mythological tale, there were differing sources and noticeable differences, which Prouty identifies. Whereas *The Tale* is a retelling of medieval, chivalric histories pertaining to the Trojan wars, including Caxton’s *Recuyell* and Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, *The Araygnement* developed the story from both medieval and classical sources, including the *Iliad*, *Aeneid*, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*.²³⁷ In *The Araygnement*, Paris’ involvement and decision are also identified as pre-destined from the outset; the Fates already know that he will choose Venus’ offer, which will lead to Troy’s fall. To exemplify:

Ate: Beholde I come in place, and bring beside
 The bane of Troie: beholde the fatall frute
 Raught from the golden tree of Proserpine.
 Proude Troy muct fall, so bidde the gods above,

²³⁶ Peele, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, 3: 11–12.

²³⁷ Peele, 14–15.

And statelie Iliums loftie towers be racet
 By conquering handes of the victorious foe[.]
 [...]

 And Priams younger sonne, the sheepeherde swaine,
 Paris th'unhappie organ of the Greekes,
 So loath and weerie of her heavie loade
 The Earth complaynes unto the hellish prince,
 Surcharged with the burden that she nill sustaine.²³⁸

(*Prologue*.ll.5-10;15-19)

It implies that the actions and decisions of an individual will not affect, or alter, pre-destination; Paris' decision with the 'fatall frute' is, ironically, fruitless, since one of the Fates, Atropos, shall nevertheless cut 'the threede of Troie' asunder (*Prologue*, ll. 22-23). This is significant, factoring the fraught contemporary political and social climate that included England's growing hostilities with continental Europe and involvement in religious wars between the Spanish and Dutch.²³⁹ Written to be performed specifically before Elizabeth, this view on pre-destination exonerates her from any blame associated with those conflicts, just as Paris is exonerated for his poor judgement. It also resonated with the contemporary concerns surrounding succession. Troy was ruled by King Priam who (depending on the source) had at least two legitimate male heirs, the princes Hector and Paris: the colloquial heir and spare. It encapsulated the patriarchal ideal yet was still predestined to fall, regardless of apparent dynastic stability, signifying England's future could never be guaranteed merely by Elizabeth producing a child.

Both *The Three Goddesses* and *The Araynement* depict a pastoral setting. This serene landscape is then subjected to discord upon the arrival of the goddesses, brought to Earth by

²³⁸ George Peele, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, ed. R. Mark Benbow, Elmer Blistein, and Frank S. Hook, vol. 3, 64 (all following extracts are sourced from this edition, with any translations by Mark Benbow).

²³⁹ Spain inherited the Netherlands from ancestral connections to King Charles I, through the House of Burgundy. However, Lutheranism prompted uprisings from 1566, and the Spanish Duke of Alba and his army were deployed to restore order. Outnumbered, the Dutch sought aid from England, and the Treaty of Nonsuch was signed on August 20, 1585. This was interpreted by the Spanish as England's declaration of war.

Hermes under Zeus' instruction. Notably, a male introduces discord, and neither can a male (Paris) resolve it. Only Elizabeth can restore peace to the pastoral, attesting to her capability to govern effectively. Peele's combination of the mythological and pastoral was unusual in a dramatic form, representing the earliest surviving play of this format. As in the painting, the play depicts the three goddesses' unquestioned acknowledgement of defeat when confronted with Elizabeth. In the painting, Elizabeth's youth, beauty, and majestic power dominate, and as detailed above, the goddesses take flight whilst discarding their tokens, signifying their loss of power before the might of England's queen. In Peele's play, there is no flight. Initially, the play follows the traditional story, with Paris' judgement of Venus as the most beautiful goddess. Peele then introduces Paris' trial before a conclave of gods, and cleverly resolves the discord generated by his judgement by having the goddess Diana recast judgement, with the Golden Apple redirected to the nymph Eliza (Elizabeth), thus honouring her as the competition's victor directly before her court. After this, the goddesses mutually agree to Diana's decision, and contribute their own additional praises:

Pal: I can remember at her day of birthe,
 How Flora with her flowers strewed the Earth,
 How everie power with heavenlie majestie,
 In person honored that solemnitie.

Juno: The lovely graces were not farre away,
 They threw their balme for triumph of the day.

Ven: The fates against their kinde beganne a cheereful songe,
 And vowed her life with favour to prolonge.

(V.i.11.1178-1185)

These lofty verses correlate with pre-existing portraiture of Elizabeth as a powerful and heavenly queen. Flora's flowers strewn on the Earth is indicative of spring (Flora was the spring goddess), recapturing the pastoral setting of *The Three Goddesses* alongside Venus' roses

strewn upon the ground.²⁴⁰ Spring suggests growth and abundance, with the promise of harvest, signifying England's prosperity under Elizabeth's rule. The Fates going 'against their kinde' primarily suggests the unnaturalness of these harbingers of death singing 'a cheereful song'. However, following Pallas' previous reference to Elizabeth's birth, it also alludes to fate conspiring against the patriarchal desire for a male heir, with 'their' indicative of the opposite sex. They cheerfully welcomed a daughter, and future queen, upon whom they bestowed favour and longevity (something they did not confer upon England's previous Reformed king, nor – when concerning the longevity of her reign – the former Catholic queen). There is one noticeable difference, which is that Elizabeth does not assume the role of judge herself; she is chosen, after being judged by Diana. However, rather than signifying a decline in Elizabeth's majesty and power, it is an alteration that denotes Peele's personal veneration for Elizabeth. As the playwright, it is he who elects her victor of the competition and composes the honorary and adulatory verse. This was presumably a formality, in his efforts to seek patronage or recoup financial losses.

It is in the fifth act, following the impartial judgement of Diana, that Eliza is awarded the Golden Apple (the 'fatall frute'), with the three goddesses in mutual agreement. This prompts the arrival of all three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who perform before her:

Cloth: *Humanae vitae filum sic volvere Parcae.*

Lach: *Humanae vitae filum sic tendere Parcae.*

Atrop: *Humanae vitae filum sic scindere Parcae.*

Cloth: *Clotho colum baiulat.*

Lach: *Lachesis trahit.*

Atrop: *Atropos occat.*

Tres simul: *Vive diu foelix votis huminúmque deúmque:*

Corpore, mente, libro, doctissima, candida, casta.

²⁴⁰ It should not be overlooked that earlier portraiture, for example Steven van der Meulen's *Hampden Portrait* (c.1563), similarly depicted floral bounty, with a wall laden with greenery and flowers.

They lay downe their properties at the Queenes feete.

Cloth: *Clotho colum pedibus,*

Lach: *Lachesis tibi pendula fila,*

Atrop: *Et fatale tuis manibus ferrum Atropos offert.*

*Vive diu foelix, etc.*²⁴¹

(V.i.11.1208-1217)

The Fates, who had control over life, were also ‘Th’unpartiall dames of destinie’. They bestow this role upon Eliza following Diana’s judgement; prior, she too was subject to the Fates, and could not alter pre-destination (as implied in Ate’s opening prologue). Following her victory over the goddesses, it is the Fates who accredit Eliza as one herself:

Lach: *Tet amen in terries unam tria numina Divam*

Invita statuunt naturae lege sorores,

*Et tibi non aliis didicerunt parcere Parcae.*²⁴²

(V.i.11.1230-1232)

Elizabeth is recognised as a goddess upon Earth who eclipses those of the heavens and is thus bestowed with properties befitting her magnificence. The Fates’ gifts ensure immortality (unless she chooses to cut her own thread of life) and control over destiny, both her own and

²⁴¹ Cloth: Thus the Fates spin the thread of human life.
 Lach: Thus the Fates measure the thread of human life.
 Atrop: Thus the Fates cut the thread of human life.
 Cloth: Clotho bears the distaff.
 Lach: Lachesis measures
 Atrop: Atropos cuts.
 The Three Together: Live long, happy in the prayers of men and gods,
 Chaste in body, pure in mind, most skilled in learning.

They lay downe their properties at the Queenes feete.

Cloth: Clotho places the distaff at thy feet,

Lach: Lachesis gives thee the pendent threads,

Atrop: And Atropos puts into your hands the fateful shears.

The Three together: Live long, happy, etc.

²⁴² Lach: The three divine sisters, despite the laws of nature,
 appoint thee a goddess unique, though on earth; and thee
 and no others have the Fates learned to spare.

that of those whom she rules. She is furthermore recognised by Atropos as a ‘noble Phoenix of our age’, connotative of previously discussed allusions to resurrection and rejuvenation, but also immortality and virginity. Her kingdom, ‘Elizium’,²⁴³ is comparable with Diana’s:

Dian: A Kingdome that may well compare with mine.

An auncient seat of kings, a seconde Troie,

Ycompast rounde with a commodious sea:

Her people are ycleeped Angeli,

Or if I miss a letter is the most.

She giveth lawes of justice and of peace[.]

(V.i.11.1152-1157)

The English are described as Angels, or Angeli: omitting the letter e, it becomes the Latin for England, *Angli*. Casting back to medieval imagery including the *Wilton Diptych*, the continued association between England and angels indicates a kingdom favoured by God, attesting to Peele defending Elizabeth and her Reformist rule. Hilton writes that an association with holy angels was a consistent factor in the understanding of sacramental kingship from the thirteenth century onwards, fusing the stately and the spiritual in royal supremacy.²⁴⁴

One constant in all the sources pertaining to the Trojan wars is that Troy would fall. Peele envisaged it as an unavoidable fate from the outset through Ate’s prologue. Following Troy’s sacking, the stories of varying mythological figures were continued, including the homeward journey of many Greeks or Trojans resettling in foreign lands. One such tale is told in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which narrates the story of the Trojan warrior Aeneas, also the son of Venus. Mythologically, England and its monarchy were founded by Brutus, Aeneas’ descendent. As Diana narrates, the royal line of English sovereigns has culminated in Eliza, queen of Elizium

²⁴³A pun on Elysium. As a proper noun, it was the place in Greek mythology where favoured heroes were conveyed, by the gods, after their death. As a noun, it indicates a place or state of pure happiness.

²⁴⁴Hilton, *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince*, 108.

(Eliza-land, or England). Thus, England is recognisably the second Troy, for its monarchy can be traced to a Trojan source. Curiously, having been awarded the prize, and command over fate, Elizabeth now controls the force which consequentially gave rise to her kingdom and queenship. However, this variance from the mythological source is inconsequential. Whether Paris had proceeded in his judgement, or whether Diana intervenes and awards the prize to Eliza, neither scenario can alter the emergence of England as the second Troy, nor Elizabeth as its queen: if Venus had received the prize, her distant grandson Brutus would still proceed to found England; if Elizabeth is awarded the prize, it was partially in recognition of her attributes as queen over the second Troy, which still remains founded by Brutus.

This is supported by another variation from the traditional story. It is Ate who ‘trundles’ the Golden Apple into place, instead of it being thrown by Eris. This occurs during a storm, amidst which the three goddesses seek shelter in Diana’s Bower. The act is undertaken whilst the goddesses are in a location associated with Diana who, once nominated to name the victor, elects a nymph who honours Diana herself. Ate, who cried ‘Fatum Troi’ whilst placing the apple, knew Diana would be elected, and knew that Elizabeth would be victor, thus her decision to set events into motion at that specific location was intentional. It was predestined that events would transpire as they do: that Troy shall fall; that Elizabeth shall emerge triumphant; and that England shall arise as a second Troy.

The play defends the capability of a woman to rule effectively, with judgement a pivotal theme. If Troy can fall, it implies a king, even with male heirs, cannot guarantee a kingdom’s sustainability or stability. England’s two previous kings had exemplified that outcome. Henry divided England following his break from Rome, whilst Edward attempted to alter succession (generating a period of discord) before dying prematurely and childless. Neither the gods nor Paris are capable of an impartial decision regarding the three goddesses. The gods feared retribution from either of the losing goddesses, hence traditionally nominating Paris as judge.

Peele has Paris obligated by the goddesses themselves to nominate one of them as a victor. Yet despite his outpouring of love for his wife Oenone, his judgement is quickly susceptible to bribery. His poor decision created discord, whereas Diana's wise decision restored peace. Whilst she is capable of impartially judging the fairest, Eliza is worthy of distinction because she is the 'gracious Nymph' who honours Diana for her chastity. This encapsulation of Diana is pivotal to her victory, for if she is virginal, pure, and impartial, then through emulating her Eliza (Elizabeth) is too.²⁴⁵

Neither Diana nor Eliza sought to claim the Golden Apple for themselves, testifying to their moral purity and lack of vanity. Meanwhile, through efforts to sway Paris' decision, Juno, Pallas, and Venus baselessly attempt bribery through prizes befitting a king: wealth, strength (through arms), and a beautiful queen. Paris can be recognised as embodying a suitor, particularly one whose social position would be significantly elevated through an advantageous union. It must be remembered that Paris, although a prince, is unaware of his royal lineage at this stage (although the audience would be aware of his true status). After choosing Venus, who offered Paris the love of Helen of Sparta, he would theoretically ascend from a shepherd to a King consort. Furthermore, this union with Helen would provide him with the wealth offered by Juno, and the military strength offered by Minerva. Helen, for her part, is a pawn. After falling in love with Paris, she will unwittingly embroil two countries into a war spanning a decade because of her union to a foreign suitor. Elizabeth, however, is a Virgin Queen, significantly differentiating her from the already married Helen. Her affiliation as a virgin goddess furthermore gives her immunity to the power of either Venus or Cupid, as previously

²⁴⁵ Diana was the perfect affiliation for Elizabeth. Her capability to hunt was an embodiment of female strength and power, but without the martial qualities of the Amazons (and would arguably nod to Elizabeth's skill in horsemanship and hunting, where she famously shone). Diana's punishment of Actaeon was considered an exemplary display of curbing uncontrolled passions (which Elizabeth herself had mastered, both over herself and her ladies). And in her role as the moon goddess, her command over tides – changeable yet constant – affiliated her with the Phoenix (and again bore connotations with monarchy's Bodies *natural* and *politic*). Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', 189–90. (work in brackets my own).

visualised in *The Three Goddesses* through the inclusion of Cupid's broken arrow. Elizabeth therefore presents an alternative view of queenship, as one whose virginity has given her command over her judgement, and an immunity from the potentially dangerous consequences of a marital union (especially to a foreign suitor) and the effects of love. These attributes qualified her to win the contest, since her moral and bodily purity simultaneously makes her superior to the three goddesses, then qualifies her to be recognised as one by the Fates. Elizabeth need not resort to, nor rely upon, bribery to be judged the victor.

Peele uses the characters of Oenone and Helen to make his case against marriage. The nymph Oenone represents the potential outcome of marriage; she was wed to Paris, as alluded to in the fifth scene of act one through song, followed with Paris' line 'My vowe is made and witnessed[.]' (I.v.1.316). These vows were made under a poplar tree, a symbol of inconsistency, which became prophetic once Oenone was abandoned by Paris. She is written out of the play in Act III sc. iv, waiting under the poplar whilst Mercury summons Paris before Jove to answer for his actions. By the conclave's conclusion, Oenone is fundamentally forgotten, eclipsed by the emergence of Eliza. Respectively, they represent marriage and virginity, the two idealised states of womanhood. However, by marrying, Oenone embodies a loss of independence and mobility. Marriage has rendered her dependent upon male authority, and helpless when abandoned by her husband. In the myth, Oenone was left upon Mount Ida awaiting Paris' return, and turned bitter, lonely, and reclusive. In the *Arraynement* she 'pynes' though pledges to 'write my answere to his vow, that everie eye may see' (III.v.11.131); ironically, nobody is to see it, although the audience does witness her abandonment and dissociation, whilst the act of being unable to voice her reply (she writes her answer) has equivocally silenced her. There is an evident reduction in her status affiliative with being married.

The other married female protagonist, Helen, is predominantly absent, only used as Venus' visual pawn to entice Paris. In that respect, she is the equivalent of a disempowered

woman in a marriage suit, contracted into a union in which she would be inferior. However, Peele surprisingly portrays her as akin to Diana. Translated from the Italian:

If Diana is a star in heaven,
 bright and shining, full of splendor,
 giving light to the grieving heart;
 If Diana is a goddess in hell,
 who gives comfort to the tormented souls
 who on account of love have died in despair;
 If Diana, who on earth is of the nymphs
 the reigning queen of sweet flowers,
 amid woods and groves gives death to shepherds;
 I am Diana gentle and rare
 for with my glances I can make war
 upon Diana in hell, in heaven, and on earth.

(II.ii.11.497-508)

Thus, preceding Diana's acknowledgement of Eliza as victor, which also recognised Elizabeth as alike Diana and celebrated her as a virgin goddess, Helen is also portrayed as a Diana figure. It may be interpreted as representing two contrasting states of womanhood, and ultimately celebrates Elizabeth for her close embodiment of the 'true' Diana. The first three representations of Diana described by Helen are disassociated from herself; Helen uses the hypothetical 'if' to create distance. The three representations are recognisably Diana's triple deity forms, each with links to Elizabeth. As a star in heaven she was Luna or Selene, a moon goddess connotative of Elizabeth through the latter's white visage and association with pearls as jewels and as symbols. A star is also connotative of the sun, pertaining to Elizabeth's celestial sphere emblem (see chapter iii for further details), and identification as the celestial virgin Astraea. As a goddess in hell she was varyingly Hecate or Proserpina, and in this variant bridges the void between life and death, recognisably a trait shared with the Phoenix and its resurrection, one of Elizabeth's emblems. The third was Diana in her earthly form and is 'of

the nymphs', arguably pertaining to the nymph Eliza whom Diana herself later nominates. Furthermore, she is recognised as 'the reigning queen', a direct reference between the triple deity and Elizabeth. 'Death to shepherds' may allude to Diana protecting herself and her nymphs from men such as Actaeon, recognising her – and Elizabeth's – dedication to virginity. Though in the context of the play, and the fact it is spoken by Helen, the death to shepherds is likely to pertain to the traditional fate that befell Paris.²⁴⁶ The fourth representation, however, is Helen's personal identification as Diana, a distortion which would make war upon the triple deity. Peele appears to represent two states of womanhood in direct antithesis, with Helen's marriageability possessing the capability of inciting and inducing war, whilst Elizabeth's virginity only has the capacity to restore peace and provide comfort and safety. It is a repeat of the motif in *The Three Goddesses*, with a division between peace and warfare hinging upon marriage. Lastly, it also attests to the poor judgement of Paris, and more broadly of men, for despite Helen's oration he still claims her by choosing Venus.

There are noticeable parallels between the union of Paris and Oenone with that of Philip and Mary, with both husband figures effectively abandoning their wives. It also epitomised the perceived danger of a union to the 'other'. Many of Elizabeth's suitors were foreign suitors and/or Catholic; Mary's marriage to an overseas Catholic was likely to have been perceived, in hindsight, as having been disadvantageous, subsuming England into an empire that brought involvement in continental wars, and the eventual failure to produce an heir. The introduction of the virginal nymph Eliza verifiably counteracts the perceived detriment of such a union, for her chastity has contributed to a kingdom arising that will be the equivalent to Troy, signifying Elizabeth's unmarried, virginal state had ultimately been beneficial to England.

Control over fate is bestowed to Elizabeth once the Fates have lain their properties at

²⁴⁶After the fall of Troy, Paris was mortally wounded and returned to Oenone on Mount Ida. Theoretically, he was reduced to his former status as a shepherd. Oenone refused to accept him, and he died from his wounds. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths: The Complete and Definitive Edition* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 688-689.

her feet. She recognisably had Peele's own fate in her hand – arguably an enticement for monetary reward – but crucially, she only comes into possession of fate at that stage. This liberates Elizabeth, entitling her to make decisions of her own choosing, a similar concept to that displayed in *The Three Goddesses*. Although the artisans in either example may have made a verifiable claim upon Elizabeth, they also rendered her free to make her own decisions, be that pertaining to marriage and virginity or her capability to bestow reward and patronage. Furthermore, *The Araynement* was produced late in Elizabeth's reign, and as the play demonstrated, the Fates had controlled Elizabeth's life up until that time. This exonerates her, for any criticism about the contemporary social and political environment, or her past decisions, could not be held to her account; it had all been the product of fate.

The Araynement was a positive appraisal of Elizabeth, the divine, immortal, unique, and isolated Reformation heroine who would reign forevermore over the prophesied Golden Age. However, unlike *The Three Goddesses*, which portrayed Elizabeth as the undisputed winner without any judge or dispute from the goddesses, in *The Araynement* her prize still had to be awarded. Although there is variation, with the judge an impartial female opposed to the corruptible male, it nevertheless aligns Peele's interpretation of the mythology with that witnessed during the coronation procession of Anne, suggesting that Elizabeth's victory, regardless of how much she merits the award, was in expectation of service to England. Although it could be safely assumed that Elizabeth was no longer expected to produce an heir, the play's concluding focus upon the rise of a second Troy would indicate that her service to England was of imperial purpose.

Continuation on a theme

By the 1580s, the English were presented with an aging queen: to appear immortal, virginal, and imperial, she had to look the part, and thus was daily transformed into her Virgin Queen persona. Courtiers and artists were recognisably resolved to perpetuate this image to promote their own cause, which I have deduced Peele to have demonstrated, with the probable amendments almost certainly done to seek patronage or monetary recoup of some form. The incorporation of fate, and its outcomes, may have been to infer that Elizabeth was thenceforth to be held accountable for her actions, and as such may be interpreted as the male author again renegotiating the power dynamic between an alpha female and himself, akin to Gascoigne. But I would conclude that this was unlikely. There is a marked difference in Peele's appraisal of Elizabeth, following her appropriation of the Virgin Queen image. Whereas Gascoigne compared the mortal Elizabeth with Diana, Peele recognises her to be a nymph, a mythological deity figure who is also the apotheosis of Diana in all but name, and the only member of her retinue singled out for praise. She is furthermore superior to Juno, Pallas, and Venus, and a far greater prize than the mortal queen Helen, who is established as her antithesis. Elizabeth has become a goddess, transcending the mortal queen of earlier portrayals. This significantly contrasts *The Three Goddesses*, for even though it arguably introduced Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen she was still associated with mortality, by being accompanied by her ladies and possessing ceremonial accoutrements that recognised her as one of a long line of monarchs dating back through history.

Furthermore, Peele recognised Elizabeth as an imperial queen, perpetuating her image through performance and print. He was a devout Reformist, and his other writings, which comprised poetry, plays, and pamphlets, celebrated Elizabeth alongside her reform whilst condemning Catholicism. For example, in 1585 he produced a pageantry entertainment in

which players represented geographic locations (i.e. London), professions (i.e. sailors), and virtues (i.e. Loyalty), who all praised the rising sun (Elizabeth) and the positive change it brought.²⁴⁷ It possessed a distinctly imperial theme, with a focus upon the authoritative icon of the Virgin Queen governing England (London), expanding its reach (sailors), and with a populace united through subservience to an imperial queen and their affiliation with their country (Loyalty). This is opposed to subservience to a foreign power, such as papal authority or a foreign dignitary, or England's subsumption within another empire. A rising sun would also encroach upon darkness, a suitable metaphor of imperial growth and expansion. It may also be construed as bringing light to darkness, which has distinctly religious overtones when one factors the religious settlement was perceived as the restoration of the true religion.

If the Reformist Elizabeth is the sun, then the 'rising sun' interpretively dispelled the dark night that was Mary I's Catholic rule, or the threat of night still posed at that time by Mary Stuart or Philip II. The threat the latter two posed would have been pertinent, particularly after the threat of religious upheaval and civil war formerly posed by the Northern Rebellions and papal denunciation, and the ongoing conundrum of Mary Stuart's imprisonment. Whilst the northern uprisings and – to some degree – Mary Stuart were swiftly dealt with (though unwilling to execute her, Elizabeth found little difficulty in imprisoning Mary), Elizabeth's apparent aversion to direct involvement in religious wars appears to have been primarily tactical, attempting to keep the weakly defended England out of costly political wars. Many, however, desired more swift and direct action, whilst Elizabeth received repeated pleas for military and/or monetary aid from both Flemish and French royalty. Therefore, returning to the notion of fate in *The Araynement*, which portrayed Elizabeth as being granted its control, it may represent Peele's encouragement for her to undertake action against threats to England, or to strengthen its imperialist stance. If this were to include aiding other Reformist nations and

²⁴⁷ Horne, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele*, 1, 75.

actively countering overseas Catholicism, it instils a degree of religious imperialism, with the restored true religion vanquishing the Roman Catholic faith.

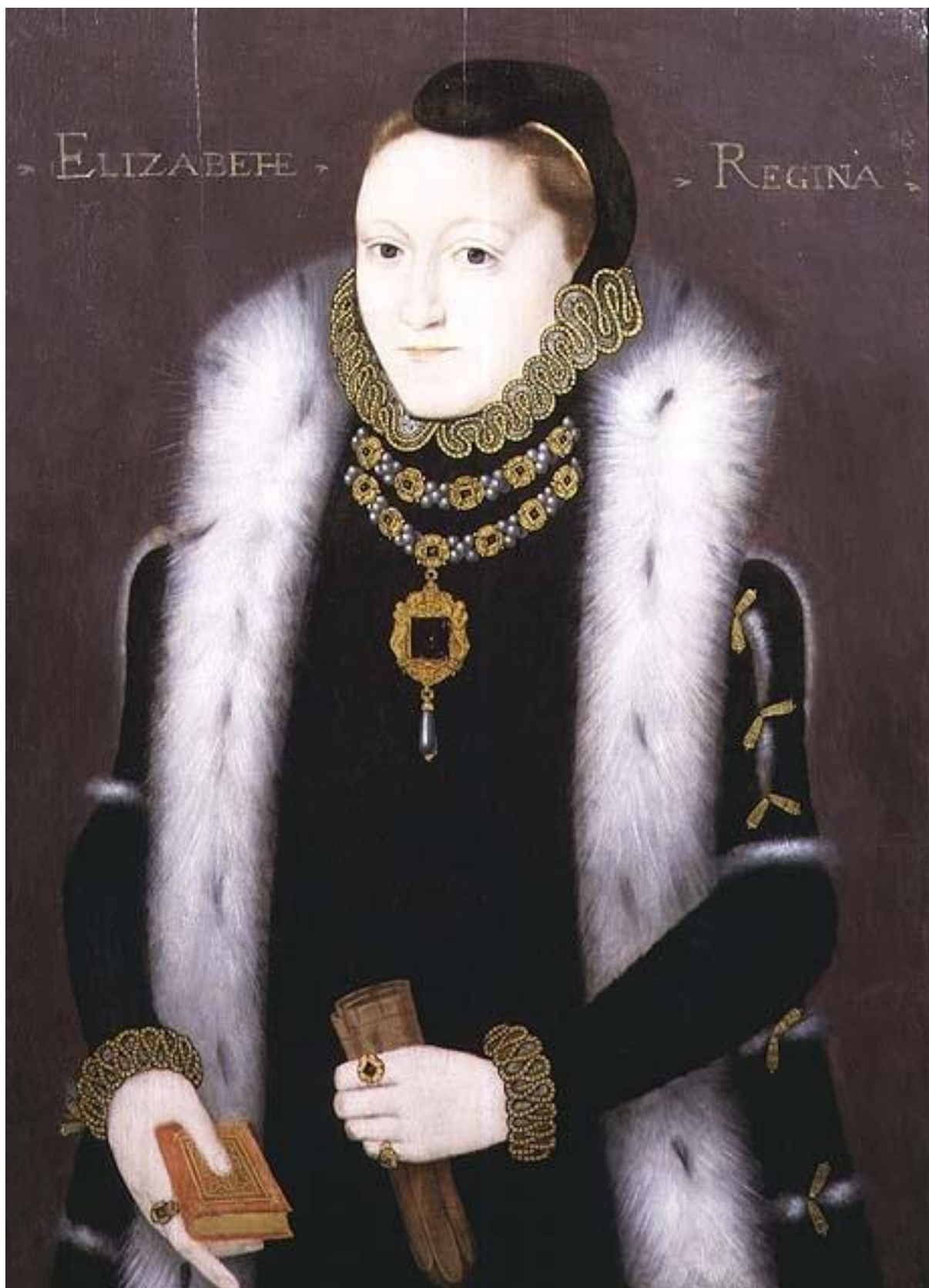
In *The Araynement*, whilst Eliza is judged by Diana, the latter's nomination is decided by the conclave of gods. They encourage her towards a decision which will restore peace out of discord, thus she elects Eliza. Indirectly, Peele may have anticipated a similar scenario for, as playwright, he has nominated Elizabeth. The outcome of the Judgement of Paris traditionally precipitated the Trojan Wars, but the intervention of Diana avoided that outcome. It is plausible that Elizabeth's 'victory' of the Golden Apple was similarly intended to resolve discord and restore peace. When one also factors in the pageantry of the following year, it is perceivable that the sense of unity Elizabeth was precipitated to restore, first through a Reformist state religion then latterly through an imperialistic vision, was peace, and that it was this which would contribute to England's recognition as the second Troy.

Others also reimagined the Judgement of Paris story in continuing praise for Elizabeth. A miniature reproduction of *The Three Goddesses* composition (c.1588, *fig.11*), currently attributed to Isaac Oliver, was possibly commissioned by Diederik Sonoy (a Dutch military commander), though probably presented by Oliver himself. The subject and composition are alike its larger predecessor, but there are notable differences. Elizabeth's face has adopted the 'mask of youth' model, instilling a more confirmatory notion of immortality compared to the original painting; she has become constant and ageless. Her magnificent dress is updated to contemporary fashions, with an extravagant ruff. The crown is unchanged, but the orb differs: it is no longer surmounted by a cross, and the division into three less evident. It is more accurately described as a globe, perhaps pertaining to England's imperial expansion and naval prowess following victory against the Armada (the Armada Portrait also depicts Elizabeth with her hand upon a globe). Its golden colour is connotative of the apple, and it is again retained

by Elizabeth. Possessing the 'Golden Apple' opposed to the ceremonial orb is another indicator that Elizabeth is cast as the veritable Virgin Queen.

Sceptres, both Elizabeth's and Juno's, are omitted from the composition, and the position of Juno's right hand is also altered. Rather than being raised, it is directed towards Minerva and Venus. The original dilemma is absent, and Elizabeth need not sacrifice one sceptre for another. Instead, Juno's gesture suggests acceptance or recognition: that to triumph over them is to number amongst the goddesses. She does not indicate rapid flight, but graceful motion, a gait inviting Elizabeth towards companionship. There is a resonance of peace, indicative of a quality Elizabeth instils between warring parties. Elizabeth is undisputedly the Virgin Queen, and the composition is no longer justificatory or defensive of Elizabeth's commitment to virginity. Instead, it is celebratory, with her 'Astraeon' Golden Age (denoted by the colour of her dress and the orb) shown to have restored peace and posterity.

Fig.6



Unknown. *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Clopton Portrait'). 1558.
Oil on panel. 67.5 x 48.9 cm. Descent of the Clopton family, now in a private collection.

Fig.7

Unknown. *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Coronation Portrait'). c.1600.
Oil on panel. 127.3 x 99.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 5175.

Fig.8



Unknown. *Richard II*. Mid 1390s.
Oil on panel. 213 x 110 cm. Westminster Abbey.

Fig.9



Unknown. *The Wilton Diptych*. c.1395.
Tempera on wood. 53 x 37 cm. The National Gallery, London. NG 4451.

Fig.10

Hans Eworth (attr). *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*. 1569.
Oil on panel. 62.9 x 84.4 cm. The Royal Collection Trust. RCIN 403446

Fig.11



Isaac Oliver (attr). *Queen Elizabeth I* ('Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses'). c.1590.
 Watercolour and bodycolour on vellum. 11.5 x 15.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London.
 NPG 6947.

iii. Elizabeth the writer

Concerning the literature and public persona of Elizabeth

The previous two chapters have outlined Elizabeth's position upon the interlinked issues of religion and politics, and marriage and motherhood. These factors helped define Elizabeth's public persona, both before her contemporaries and to a modern audience. Collectively, they contributed to the eventual projection of an imperial image through the construct of the Virgin Queen, the image credited with having brought the disparate populace together under an inclusive state religion, and which defied the gender expectations of a woman and queen through Elizabeth's espousal of chastity. This established her closer connection with God, and eventually she presented herself as the apotheosis of a sacred virgin, bringing biblical and classical allegory together and heralding the prophesised return of an imperial Golden Age.

However, as has been established, her image was not always in Elizabeth's power to control. For example, portraits of her in religious texts were often noticeably inaccurate, subject to the agendas of writers and artists who wished to support the Reformation, and equally, although there has not been space to discuss them here, there are unfavourable depictions of Elizabeth in contemporary Catholic texts. Either way, these images appear considerably distanced from the inclusivity of her settlement. In *Acts and Monuments*, her portrayal continued to be comparatively unaltered from the second edition onwards, even though there were to be significant alterations to Elizabeth's own public visage. Her vision of the imperial Virgin Queen remained contested by portrayals which upheld others' perception of what was necessary for the restoration of the true religion. As such, portrayals which celebrated her at the outset of the reign could later convey a sense of unease and displeasure at her inaction, towards reform amidst other issues.

That included the succession. Marriage and motherhood were roles pressed upon Elizabeth, despite the evidence to indicate her disinclination towards either. I have proposed

that virginity was her private dedication which then became a public status, and now the most iconic association of Elizabeth – and arguably any British monarch – in history. Research indicates that aspects of this Virgin Queen image did not originate through Elizabeth herself but were her appropriation of allegorical images first deployed by other people. Though the depictions of Elizabeth in this respect are generally positive, there is also perceivable evidence of the portrayer seeking the furtherance of their own agenda; occasionally underlying criticism is also perceptible. I have proposed that Elizabeth adopted others' allegorical representations of her, resuming control over her image, and that this amalgamated into the cult of Elizabeth commonly referred to today.

Elizabeth's religious stance withstood external pressures and subsequently materialised into the present-day Anglican Church, despite portraiture and literary portrayals pushing other approaches. And Elizabeth's apparent commitment to remaining a virgin preceded the pomp of her Virgin Queen portraiture by decades, preceded numerous marriage negotiations, and again withstood external pressures. It is easy to overlook, amidst all the portraiture and literary portrayals, that Elizabeth also had her own voice, and the means to express it. Her literary output is extensive, and evidence would suggest she was also an occasional artist, more accurately an emblemist.

This chapter shall explore the image of Elizabeth as expressed through her own penmanship and voice, across what I have labelled private and public correspondences. Her commitment to the written word can be traced back to her childhood, so when prudent this study shall also include texts preceding her accession. I shall debate Elizabeth's internal thoughts and struggles as expressed in her communications, in comparison with her projected public image. There will be a focus upon Elizabeth's understanding of her role as a queen and woman, her sense of duty, and how these contributed towards the formation of her Virgin Queen persona. When appropriate, the altered categorisation of her work, from private to

public, shall also be assessed in respect of her reign's progression, whilst returning to the previous question of how much control Elizabeth was able to command over her image once placed in the public sphere. However, even a text categorizable as 'private' can offer insight at how Elizabeth constructed her public image, particularly that of the Virgin Queen, for such texts offer the impression of insight at what Elizabeth's persona had to 'mask'. This includes issues pertaining to her relations with family and fellow sovereigns, and her emotional responses to situations that arose across her reign, which could not safely enter the public sphere without potentially affecting her public perception.

The model student

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.

Timothy. 2:11-15

The constitution of [Elizabeth's] mind is exempt from female weakness, and she is endued with a masculine power of application. No apprehension can be quicker than hers, no memory more retentive. French and Italian she speaks like English; Latin with fluency, propriety and judgment; she also spoke Greek with me, frequently, willingly, and understanding well. Nothing can be more elegant than her handwriting, whether in the Greek or Roman character. In music she is very skilful but does not greatly delight. With respect to personal decoration, she greatly prefers a simple elegance to show and splendour, so despising the outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, that in the whole manner of her life she rather resembles Hippolyta than Phaedra.²⁴⁸

An extract from a letter by Roger Ascham to John Sturmis,

²⁴⁸ Hippolyta (or Hippolyte) was an Amazonian queen who famously wore a girdle Heracles was tasked to retrieve in his labours. She, and her sisters, were powerful women who only reckoned descent through the mother. Although deemed 'unnatural', they were famed for their warrior nature (which included a lack of finery in their costume) and were affiliated with Artemis, goddess of the moon and chastity. Whereas Phaedra, wife of Theseus, though respected and refined, became embroiled in a dispute between her step-son Hippolytus and the goddess Aphrodite. Phaedra was made to fall in love with Hippolytus, causing Theseus to curse Hippolytus and bring about his death. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 486-487; 356-357.

Rector of the University of Strasbourg, 1550

Of course, Elizabeth was never expected to be queen regnant of England. Edward was named Henry's heir and successor, and even though Elizabeth was reinstated to the line of succession, she was the younger sister of the next heir apparent, Mary. As such, she was raised as a royal child but not in expectation of becoming queen of England. Despite her recognition as the 'second bastard daughter' of Henry, Elizabeth still received an education befitting her royal status. Being a woman, she could not participate in chivalric pastimes as male monarchs would do, though could receive something much admired in princes: an education. The knowledge that she acquired, and particularly her proficiency in language, later became a crucial tool in helping to fashion her public image.

Following the birth of Edward, Elizabeth was placed in Astley's care and taught by renowned tutors including Roger Ascham, who had formerly been granted a pension by her father. Elizabeth studied languages from the age of four, and learnt through the double-translation method, translating passages of text back and forth (e.g. Latin-English-Latin), with the final translation required to match the original. Languages were central in a Humanist education, though for Elizabeth they became a continuing pastime. In 1593 she undertook a translation of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*:

But if the mind itself, with conscience good, dissolved from earthly jail, all freed seeks heaven, would she not all earthly things despise, who, heaven enjoying, joys earthly things to want?²⁴⁹

Thematically, Boethius' work seeks consolation in divine providence as a means of escaping earthly troubles; an unsurprising choice, given the succession of difficulties besetting Elizabeth

²⁴⁹ Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, trans. Elizabeth I, in Elizabeth I, *Translations, 1592-1598*, ed. Janel Mueller and Joshua Scodel, 45-368 (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 167.

in 1593, as outlined in the introduction. However, her pastime of translation originated from childhood, and became a hobby.

As a child, Elizabeth gifted her translations, notably to her father and Katherine Parr. It was traditional to present gifts at New Year instead of Christmas, and in 1544 Elizabeth presented a pair of bound texts. Henry probably received a (now lost) French translation of Erasmus' *Dialogus Fidei* (*Dialogue of Faith*). Parr received an English translation of Marguerite de Navarre's *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (fig.12), sometimes re-entitled *The Glasse of the synneful soul*. James Carley considers Navarre's devotional tract on the love of the soul for God and Christ a 'fit tribute from the daughter of Anne Boleyn.'²⁵⁰ However, Doran believes the gift(s) 'betray an unsettling ambivalence in [Elizabeth's] inward feelings,' particularly towards her father.²⁵¹ These conflicting readings indicate Elizabeth's capability to 'veil' personal feelings and generate ambiguity, even from a young age. Fundamentally, it appears that Elizabeth could surreptitiously reveal yet conceal private thoughts through literature. Castor notes that Elizabeth's tutelage ensured she was a 'sophisticated linguistic technician', capable of deploying language, whether written or spoken, that could flatter, persuade, argue, or conceal.²⁵² Later in life it became a political necessity that enabled her to navigate topics of marriage, state religion, and succession, as well as contributing to her self-representation as the Virgin Queen.

Le Miroir's binding provided further opportunity to demonstrate her artistic skills. The cover is decorated with embroidered pansies and a cypher of Parr's initials, and the handwritten text is composed in italic script. The splendour of this work is indicative that her father's gift was equally magnificent. The content was well-conceived, encompassing Parr's interest in

²⁵⁰ James P. Carley, *The Books of Henry VIII and His Wives* (London: The British Library, 2004), 140.

²⁵¹ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Her Circle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 17.

²⁵² Castor, *Elizabeth I*, 12.

translation alongside her religious sensibilities.²⁵³ The alternative title recognisably alluded to *Miroure of Golde for the Sinful Soul*, translations by Elizabeth's paternal great-grandmother, Margaret Beaufort.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, the embroidered pansies punned on the French *pensées* ('meditations', or 'thoughts') whilst denoting 'think of me' in the language of flowers, suggesting that Parr – and by extension, Henry – should retain affection for Elizabeth.²⁵⁵ In political terms, references to Elizabeth's paternal ancestry signified her conformity and allegiance to her father. Although subtle, they garner attention to her newfound eligibility to inherit, following the reinstatement of Henry's daughters to the line of succession.²⁵⁶ Henry had been highly influenced by his studious and devout grandmother; referencing her probably stood Elizabeth in good stead.

However, Doran discerns darker undertones. Elizabeth transgressed Navarre's meditations on family relations as a medium for understanding the nature of God's love. God was originally presented as a great king, who showed kindness to daughters and mercy to adulterous wives. In Elizabeth's translation, adultery, incest, and bastardy are alluded to,

²⁵³ There was a commonality between Parr and Navarre (other than rhyming surnames). Jonathan Gibson details how both translated the *Imitatio Christi* (*The Imitation of Christ*) by Thomas à Kempis (c.1380-1471); Navarre translated book iv, whilst Parr adapted book iii in her *Prayers and Medytacions* (1545). Although the latter was published after Elizabeth's gift, it strongly implies that Parr read Navarre's translations too, for she clearly possessed a vested interest in the text.

Jonathan Gibson, "Katherine Parr, Princess Elizabeth and the crucified Christ," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 36.

²⁵⁴ Gibson discerns a link between Parr and Beaufort, through Parr's almoner, George Day. Day was chaplain to John Fisher, a Catholic martyr close to Beaufort. The one influenced the other, although Fisher officially served as Beaufort's confessor and spiritual guide (and was formerly a bishop to Henry VIII). Records verify that Parr and Day exchanged religious texts, which could easily have included Fisher and/or Beaufort's work. Katherine is also the most likely person to have translated Fisher's psalms and to have contributed the prayers at its conclusion (although it cannot be verified). Furthermore, Beaufort also translated a section of the *Imitatio Christi*.

Gibson, "Katherine Parr, Princess Elizabeth and the crucified Christ," 35-36.

²⁵⁵ These connotations of thoughts and memories derive from the petal's vague semblance to a human face. The three traditional colours of pansies (before modern cultivars were introduced) were white, yellow, and purple, earning it the name of 'herb trinity'. The colours represent purity (white), joy (yellow) and mourning (purple), pertaining to the Virgin Mary's life. They were also a symbol for merriment, befitting for a New Year's gift. 'Symbols and Meanings in Medieval Plants', Living History Today, <https://livinghistorytoday.com/2010/04/12/symbols-and-meanings-in-medieval-plants/>.

²⁵⁶ Henry reinstated Mary and Elizabeth as heirs in the 1544 Act of Succession. It would be appropriate for Elizabeth to address this in her gift to Parr, for she was influential to the Third Succession Act being passed.

described as ‘sensitive subjects’ for a daughter of Anne Boleyn to dwell upon. Presuming these allusions acknowledge the accusations for which her mother was tried and executed (adultery with four Gentlemen of the King’s Chamber and incest with her brother), then along with Elizabeth’s subsequent bastardisation, the book arguably criticised her unmerciful father. Why the memory of her mother troubled Elizabeth at this stage of her adolescence is unclarified, though it may correlate with her increasing attendance at court. When Edward (whom Elizabeth spent much of her childhood in companionship with) was stripped of his female attendants in 1554, Elizabeth was unable to remain in his household. She henceforth began visiting court, and it is possible that familiarity with the new environment brought her in earshot of defamation of her mother’s character and memory. Conversely, she may have incorporated fractious family relationships she experienced; Doran summarises Elizabeth’s relationship with her parents as ‘dysfunctional even by sixteenth-century standards.’²⁵⁷ Her 1544 translation gift to Parr, in a plausible act of solidarity with Parr’s own forays into publishing, were later printed in 1548 as *A Godly Medytacion of the Christen Sowle*. As Doran has noted – and in view of her interpretation of the text – it is intriguing this was published after Henry died. However, as discussed in chapter i, it is impossible to verify whether Elizabeth permitted its publication, or whether alterations were her own or are attributable to its publisher, Bale.

In 1545 Elizabeth presented two new translations at New Year. Parr received an English translation of the first chapter of Calvin’s *Institution de la religion chrestienne*, and Henry a trilingual translation of Parr’s *Prayers and Medytacions* (fig.13) This latter gift is bound in red cloth of gold and again heavily embroidered, with an elaborate cypher depicting an entwined ‘H’ (Henry) and ‘K’ (Katherine). Whilst impossible to compare with Henry’s lost gift from the previous year, the individual monogram on Parr’s suggests Henry’s was individually ciphered too. The following year they appear entwined, signifying support for their union. Elizabeth

²⁵⁷ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Her Circle*, 24.

exemplified a model student, with the text (comprising Latin, French, and Italian translations) not containing a single error in either the translation or script. It indicates that extreme care and attention was taken. The translation was also politically shrewd, by indicating Elizabeth's religious sympathies were aptly on a par with Parr, but also her father, whose religious views at this point appear to have been in harmony with his wife's. Carley suggests it paid homage to Parr, the individual who took personal responsibility for Elizabeth and Edward's religious instruction.²⁵⁸

An introductory letter preceded both 1545 translations. In her letter to Henry, Elizabeth begins by recognising his superiority through acknowledging his incomparable majesty, just as an immortal soul is superior to a mortal body.²⁵⁹ It recognised Henry's Body *politic* counter-measuring his Body *natural*, conferring upon him unprecedented power and authority. However, Doran again perceives underlying ambivalences, pertaining to a purported uncertainty surrounding Elizabeth's legitimacy. The repeated motif of Henry as a kind individual to whom she is indebted is interpreted as want of confirmation of her status, indicated by references to her ancestry which include her paternal grandmother (and namesake) Elizabeth of York. The decorated cover also incorporated an eglantine rose, York's symbol. Doran writes:

This constant reference to her royal bloodline is indicative, perhaps, that Elizabeth still did not feel confident of her place in her father's affections and had some anxiety that in the future she might again be ousted from the succession.²⁶⁰

Whilst perfectly plausible, this reference to York had an equal chance of endearing itself to Henry, who had adored his mother. Unusually for royal households, York had lived with her

²⁵⁸ Carley, *The Books of Henry VIII and His Wives*, 140.

²⁵⁹ BL, MS Royal 7.D.X., sigs. 2r-5r; translated from Latin. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 9–10.

²⁶⁰ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Her Circle*, 19.

children and was close to her family. The shrine Henry commissioned for his parents at Westminster Abbey (his first act once he became king) is testament to his love as much as duty. If Elizabeth is correctly understood to have referenced paternal relations in the previous year's gift(s), its repetition is also unsurprising. Furthermore, rose symbolism was integral to the House of Tudor. As Anglo explains:

[A] double flower, celebrating the peace that had come to England through the marriage of York and Lancaster [...] was the symbol *par excellence* of the Tudor dynasty's historical mission.²⁶¹

The eglantine rose became personal to Elizabeth, perhaps through association with her grandmother. Composed to celebrate her birthday (several decades later), Peele declared in his *Anglorum Feriae* (1595):

Wear Eglantine,
And wreaths of roses red and white put on
In honour of that day, you lovely nymphs,
And paeans sing and sweet melodious songs.²⁶²

It is amusing to propose Elizabeth may have sought to address her legitimacy by referencing her grandmother, for it was through York that her children and grandchildren also inherited the famous flame-red Tudor hair.

Elizabeth's letter addresses Henry as a 'matchless and most benevolent father'. His divinity is re-emphasised as a person 'whom philosophers regard as a god on earth' and is praised, whilst he is recognised as possessing the capacity to bestow favour. This individual has also fathered an equally magnificent daughter, though Elizabeth cannot express it outright, for she acknowledges that she is 'humble'. Outwardly, the letter acknowledged the perceived

²⁶¹ Sydney Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London: B A Seaby Ltd, 1992), 97.

²⁶² George Peele, *The Works of George Peele*, ed. A. H. Bullen, vol. 2 (London: J C Nimmo, 1888), 344.

inferiority of a woman in a patriarchal society. However, it may be interpreted that Elizabeth recognised that the connection to her father provided an opportunity to overcome restrictions otherwise placed upon her because of gender. Her own connection with the king was reconfirmed through her legitimacy, which she acknowledged. She does not imitate, but pivotally ‘inherits’ her father’s virtues, a term which absorbs her legal status as his daughter. She continued:

Wherefore I do not doubt that your fatherly goodness and royal prudence will esteem this inward labor of my soul not less than any other mark of honor and will regard this divine work as more to be esteemed because it has been composed by the most serene queen, your spouse, and is to be held in slightly greater worth because it has been translated by your daughter.²⁶³

Her reinstatement to the succession is discreetly acknowledged by identifying Parr as queen and author of the original text, though relegating her by asserting this translation is ‘greater’. Equivocally, Elizabeth’s superiority is premised upon her legitimacy; although her likelihood of becoming queen must have appeared minimal, she is nevertheless an inheritrix to the English crown, whilst Parr is only queen consort (or the ‘spouse’).

Henry was committed to the expansion of England’s prestige, which included leading campaigns in France. When Henry was campaigning there during 1544, Parr ruled as queen regent. If he had died overseas, she was to have remained regent until Edward reached his majority. Although amendments to Henry’s will before his death saw this clause removed, the adolescent Elizabeth witnessed a woman effectively governing a predominantly male environment, deciding upon all matters of State. Borman writes:

Elizabeth was observed to be in constant attendance upon her stepmother, both in public and private. It would prove a hugely formative experience for the young Elizabeth. She

²⁶³ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 10.

looked on as courtiers and ambassadors paid court to the queen with as much state as they had to her father. [...] The sight of some of the most powerful men in the country bowing low before made a profound and lasting impression.²⁶⁴

By addressing and confirming her direct (and legitimised) descent from her father, the princess Elizabeth was already fashioning herself in his image. The example of Parr serving as regent also demonstrated that it was possible for a woman to attain power in a patriarchal world. Whether Elizabeth anticipated becoming queen (or queen consort) or not, her eventual monarchical portrait would bear comparisons with her father's, including the magnificence of his presence, the direct and penetrating gaze upon the viewer, and displays of opulence and wealth. Other factors were altered to reflect differences, but bear similarities for the focus placed upon them compositionally. For example, Henry's codpiece emphasised his genitalia, and how through his body he would guarantee England's continued imperialistic growth by fathering heirs; Elizabeth's portraiture would frequently have this area of her body obscured, through a prop such as a fan or a sieve, or with a decoration such as a pearl. It likewise drew attention but instead pertained to her virginity and Virgin Queen image, which was also interpreted to have brought benefit to England through associating her virginity with the Virgin Mary and Astraea, and their links to the Golden Age. The image of Elizabeth garnered from her early translations indicates how she recognised her royal descent and used it to defend her legitimacy, and that the image of her father – the king, the male – could yield the greatest impact and results. It would be fundamental to her later image as a strong and capable queen, counteracting her feminine, virginal image through the masculine titles of king and prince.

²⁶⁴ Borman, *The Private Lives of the Tudors*, 214.

Family correspondences

The letter prefacing Elizabeth's 1545 gift to Parr indicated her influence upon the former's penmanship through elaboration upon the artistry of letters, considered to be humankind's greatest artistic invention (there is nothing similar in the corresponding letter to her father).²⁶⁵ Thus, it may be established that Elizabeth recognised the capacity for a man to convey power through his image (as the example of her father demonstrated), but that a woman could achieve similar results with words, written or spoken. Elizabeth described the functionality of letters before putting it into practice, describing how letters allow God's Word and Scripture to be seen, heard, and known, as necessary for salvation. Her translation achieves this, which she had produced – then gifted – so that 'I may assist the fervent zeal and perfect love that you bear towards the selfsame God.' She appears as the protégée who recognised a kindred spirit, having learnt from Parr's guidance in her capacity as stepmother, correspondent, and guardian.

Parr herself used the written word to great effect. As a debater and writer, she was passionately – even radically – reformist. The 1570 edition of *Acts and Monuments* recorded that 'she would not fayle to use all occasions to move [Henry VIII], according to her maner, zealously to proceede in the reformation of the Church.' (1570, 1462) Literature was an avenue through which to spread her religious views, although as wife to the Head of the Church, this was potentially dangerous territory. As God's earthly representative, it was Henry's role to interpret and dispense his Word (as the Great Bible frontispiece narrates). For Parr to contradict that through calling for greater religious reform was unsanctionable. She received more than mild reproofs: warrants were drafted for her arrest, and Elizabeth Norton's research indicates Henry considered a possible divorce in favour of Catherine Willoughby, the Duchess of

²⁶⁵ Edinburgh, Scottish Record Office, National Archives of Scotland, MS NAS RH 13/78, fols. 1r-7r; translated from French. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 10–13.

Suffolk.²⁶⁶ Though whatever the reasoning, he did not go through with it.

Undeniably devout, Parr may also be surmised to have been bold, headstrong, and impassioned, as her latter remarriage to Seymour indicates. She became involved in her stepchildren's instruction and education, whilst openly using literature to broach topics including reform and Catholic worship. Though chastised for it, Parr confronted both the patriarchal state and contemporary religious affairs in her effort to further the cause of reform (to the distaste of many of Henry's Councillors), even, as noted above, successfully championing Mary and Elizabeth's restoration to the succession. Parallels with Elizabeth's confrontations before her own patriarchal Council over state and religious affairs, and her often unmitigated refusal to acquiesce to their pleas, become apparent, particularly her response to repeated requests concerning marriage and the issue of succession. Elizabeth's active involvement and participation towards her religious settlement could also be attributed to Parr, who had demonstrated how a female force could broach the subject of reform and have her view heard. And unlike her example, Elizabeth was not subject to the 'correctional' or limiting restraint of a husband, since her position as queen gave her authority over male advisors. An attentive scholar and ward, Elizabeth seemingly followed Parr's lead. Whereas Parr's literary output actively broached the topic of reform, Elizabeth's early translations allowed her to broach topics including her mother alongside the precarious issues of her legitimacy and place in the succession, before she latterly tackled the subject of state religion once queen. But with regards to her own image as queen, Elizabeth would come to wield the powerful monarchic image of her father alongside the literary prowess of Parr, fusing the two into a frequently androgynous portrayal of feminine deportment imbued with masculine strength and vigour.

²⁶⁶ Norton, *The Temptation of Elizabeth Tudor*, 78–79.

The young Elizabeth also corresponded with her half-siblings. After their father's death her relationship with Mary deteriorated, following the increasing religious divide that engulfed England in the wake of Edward's (or more accurately his Council's) increasingly Reformist stance. Perhaps due to their shared Reformist upbringing and education, or closeness of age, Elizabeth's relationship with Edward remained steady. In a letter to Edward dated 15 May (now believed to date from 1547), Elizabeth acknowledged his majesty through contrast with her self-acknowledged inferiority.²⁶⁷ It is in reply to Edward's (lost) request for a painting of her. The portrait the letter accompanied was 'a thing not worthy the desiring'; writing with humility (reiterated three times), she signs off as his – humble – servant, prioritising this inferior position above her status as his sister. It provides an early example of Elizabeth using her image – the weaker and inferior woman, in this instance – to sway her audience.

Alluding to the original letter, Edward did not bid but 'commands', and Elizabeth acknowledged her incapability to adequately meet his expectations. Whilst ostentatiously flattering and giving credence to Edward, Elizabeth must have been aware such correspondence would be read by others. Edward acceded during his minority, and it was decreed in Henry's final will that the realm be governed by a Regency Council, who would collectively rule until Edward reached his majority. However, his eldest maternal uncle, Somerset, was appointed Protector (although financial rewards bestowed to his fellow Councillors hint at bribery). Edward was kept under Somerset's wardship and access was severely restricted, with communication to the king both in person and through writing stringently controlled. Parr was denied access, as was Seymour, though he would try to gain access through bribery; it appears to have been a family trait.

Elizabeth would have been aware her chance of inheriting the throne was marginal, especially if Edward and Mary had children. Nonetheless, as a legitimate half-sister to Edward

²⁶⁷ BL, MS, F.III, fol. 48. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 35–36.

with a substantial inheritance and valuable properties, Elizabeth was considered an advantageous union who could increase her husband's status. Before marrying Parr, Seymour had sought Elizabeth as his wife (as well, though not at the same time, as Mary). Much debate – including my own – proposes Elizabeth decided to abstain from marriage early in life, and it would be logical to assume her relationship with Seymour contributed to an apparent commitment to virginity. However, that relationship began after the current date attributed to the letter, so therefore it may be surmised that, at that time, Elizabeth's future was thought to be dependent upon an advantageous marriage, which would have fallen to the Protector to negotiate. And as ascertained above, she was conscious of her re-legitimised status, as garnered through her letter to her father, and recognised through the example of Parr that a viable means for a woman to attain power and influence was to build connections with a powerful and influential man, including through marriage. Thus, her letter to Edward, almost guaranteed to be read by his guardians, offhandedly advertised her virtues through ample demonstration; she was respectful, modest, accomplished, and educated. Furthermore, the image her composition conveyed was supported by a visual portrait. The Royal Collection Trust write:

[T]he sentiment in the letter indicates the princess' attitude to having her portrait painted. She described the portrait as 'the outward shadow of the body' and expressed a wish that her 'inward minde' could be more often in her brother's presence.²⁶⁸

The letter does not describe the portrait in detail. However, Janet Arnold's meticulous research provides a strong case for the painting having been *Elizabeth I when a Princess* (fig.14), attributed to William Scrots, although this remains unconfirmed; it is plausible the painting was commissioned by Henry as a companion to Edward's earlier 1546 portrait. Now part of the Royal Collection, its curators remain cautious regarding its provenance. Attention

²⁶⁸ 'Elizabeth I When A Princess', Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/404444/elizabeth-i-when-a-princess>.

is drawn to the fact it was first recorded in the royal collection of Edward, not Henry, described as ‘the picture of the Ladye Elizabeth her grace with a booke in her hande her gowne like crymsen clothe’.²⁶⁹ If commissioned by Henry, it seems illogical for Edward to have requested another painting so soon. One logical explanation could be that he requested the portrait following his coronation in February 1547, with Elizabeth out of mourning and ready to please her half-brother. A painting of that scale would take approximately six to eight weeks to complete, for which there was sufficient time between February and May.

The three-quarter length portrait depicts Elizabeth in a crimson dress detailed with a pomegranate pattern traced with interwoven gold thread. There is jewellery on her hands and around her neck, and pearl decorations to her headpiece. The letter indicates a large painting on panels, opposed to the common practice of gifting a portrait miniature. The painting ‘may give by weather’, interpreted as ‘an apt description of warped wood panels with flaking paint after exposure to excessive damp and/or very warm conditions’.²⁷⁰ Whereas a miniature was a personal item, discreetly worn by the receiver or kept in private, a portrait of that scale would probably be publicly displayed, especially if intended to accompany an official portrait of the king. One reason for modelling the composition upon Edward’s portrait could be ease of production; if both are attributed to Scrots, it is reasonable to assume he had retained preparatory sketches. Another reason might involve Elizabeth emphasising her status and legitimacy as premised upon her close relation to Edward. It would be beneficial to reinforce that image through modelling her portrait upon his. These similarities enable *Elizabeth I when a Princess* to serve as a striking, visual testament of fealty, reinforcing their kinship. Her letter re-emphasised this:

And further, I shall most humbly beseech your Majesty that when you shall look on my

²⁶⁹ ‘Elizabeth I When A Princess’, Royal Collection Trust.

²⁷⁰ Janet Arnold, “The ‘Pictur’ of Elizabeth I When Princess,” in *The Burlington Magazine* 123, no. 938, May 1981, 303.

picture you will witsafe [vouchsafe] to think that as you have but the outward shadow of the body afore you, so my inward mind wisheth that the body itself were oftener in your presence.²⁷¹

Such compositional similarities between the two portraits acknowledged a bond: both were raised under the reformed religion imposed by Henry VIII, unlike the devoutly Catholic Mary; they each lost their mother at an early age; and both spent much of their childhoods together at varying royal residences.

Elizabeth's letter is, amongst other objectives, a statement of devotion. The painting may deteriorate, but her loyalty would never wane:

For the face, I grant, I might well blush to offer, but the mind I shall never be ashamed to present. For though from the grace of the picture the colours may fade by time, may give by weather, may be spotted by chance, yet the other nor time with her swift wings shall overtake, not the misty clouds with her lowerings may darken, nor chance with her slippery foot may overthrow.²⁷²

There is regret that her loyalty can only be expressed through words rather than in person. But Elizabeth demonstrates amenability (alongside her education) by hoping to learn from Horace, whom she quotes: *Feras non culpes quod vitari non potest* ('What cannot be cured must be endured'). The piety of her 'inward mind' is conveyed in her portrait through the inclusion of two books. The larger is probably the Old Testament. By lying open upon a lectern, it signifies Elizabeth's education and plausibly recalls extensive periods of tutelage received alongside Edward (a practice still relatively unorthodox for girls). The smaller book, held by Elizabeth, is probably the New Testament. Her finger marks a page, which in combination with the open book indicates (ongoing) studiousness and piety. However, the smaller book, which her right hand draws attention to, is of similar dimensions to her handwritten gifts, presented to people

²⁷¹ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 35.

²⁷² Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 35.

capable of bestowing favour in return. Other than custom, these were acts of dutifulness and obeisance to her superiors, who could themselves bestow favour. Arguably, Elizabeth may have sought similar from Edward – or Somerset – after gifting her portrait.²⁷³

Addressing the accession

Despite the odds being against her, Elizabeth did become Queen of England. Philip II had already left England and did not contest the throne passing to Elizabeth, though did later offer to marry her. Upon receiving news of Mary's death at her Hatfield estate, Elizabeth purportedly recited Psalm 118: 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes,' beneath an ancient oak tree in the grounds. Though unlikely to have been true, it served as propaganda. Nobody can truly ascertain Elizabeth's response to the news of Mary's death. Some biographers suggest that Elizabeth was prepared for the news and had been preparing in advance (since Mary's declining health had been widely reported), though this cannot be clarified.

Becoming queen regnant of England was something of a step into the unknown. Mary had only tested the waters for a comparatively short time before succumbing to her ill-health. Meanwhile, authors such as Knox expressed a widely held view of the inefficacy of female monarchy. One imagines it was a daunting prospect for Elizabeth, assuming a role that she would not have been expected to inherit and knowing that a considerable percentage of her populace considered her insufficient to fulfil it. There were also the additional pressures of placating and unifying a religiously divided kingdom and restoring England's fortunes. In the

²⁷³ The painting prompts another interpretation: the subtlest proclamation of power. If correctly understood to be Elizabeth's gift, then she cleverly juxtaposed herself as the plain, religious devotee alongside an understated depiction as Edward's equal. Crucially, Elizabeth had been reinstated to the line of succession, so was a recognised heir to the throne and (despite his deathbed attempt to exclude her) Edward.

advent of her succession, Elizabeth expressed personal thoughts upon her situation in a private text, and would also directly confront the situation during her public coronation prayers. Both texts were reliant upon biblical imagery in the creation of her self-portrayal and each, as shall be seen, can be understood as representing her early dedication to the unification of the populace, the first step towards her eventual persona of the Virgin Queen.

Elizabeth's private musings upon her pending coronation were inscribed in a French book of psalms (*fig.15*). This comprises of a signed quatrain poem, accompanied by an ink drawing of a celestial or armillary sphere situated above an open bible inscribed *Verbum Domini* ('The Word of the Lord'). A brief note to the application of 'emblem'. The noun's common usage refers to a representative image. For example, the dove is a peace emblem. However, what shall be labelled a canonical emblem, as defined by Mara Wade, is a tripartite composition. It comprises a brief motto, typically in Latin or a European vernacular language (the *inscriptio*), an enigmatic picture (the *pictura*), and an epigram (the *subscriptio*), although they need not all be present. As a genre, it began with the publication of Andrea Alciati's *Emblemattica* (1531) and popular emblem books were widely published.²⁷⁴ The celestial sphere was a recognised emblem of monarchy, for as the sun was the centre of the celestial model, so the monarch was central to their court, kingdom, and in its later appropriation, empire. It also represented wisdom and knowledge and was used as a device for charting the heavens, with the motion of the earth, moon and planets measured in relation to the sun. Astronomy had also become one the liberal arts promoted by Humanists, and thus the celestial sphere may also be seen to signify Elizabeth's unprecedented education.²⁷⁵ The bible was an emblem for both God and his Word. Beneath the ink drawing is a line of Petrarchan verse, *Miser e che Speme in cosa mortal pone*

²⁷⁴ Mara Wade, 'What is an Emblem?', Emblematica Online.
<http://emblematica.grainger.illinois.edu/help/what-emblem>.

²⁷⁵ Susan Doran, 'Age of Power', in *Seven Ages of Britain* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2009), 97.

(‘Wretched is he who places hope in a mortal thing’). Elizabeth’s poem, presented in a format different from the original to demonstrate the *abab* rhyme scheme, reads:

No croked legge, no blered eye,
no part deformed out of kinde,
nor yet so uglye halfe ca be,
as is the inward suspicious minde.²⁷⁶

It was probably produced shortly before Elizabeth’s succession.²⁷⁷ Michael Hall deduces this from the style of her signature (which altered after her accession).²⁷⁸ This was not an uncommon practice; Mary I’s royal signature also underwent similar alterations following her accession.²⁷⁹

Analysis has proven the ink used to write the quatrain also produced the drawing and Petrarchan verse, suggesting all were Elizabeth’s work. It is only possible to conjecture, although the fact they were in one of her private texts indicates the inscriptions were personal to Elizabeth, whilst the use of the same ink suggests a correlative relationship between the text and image. Whilst it may be that somebody else produced the drawing, there is no reason to dismiss the possibility Elizabeth possessed some artistic skill, given the breadth of her education and the quality of her New Year gifts, some of which she also decorated. Another possibility is that Elizabeth commissioned the image and another individual produced it to her instruction.

Collectively, the three components of a typical canonical emblem are present: a *pictura*

²⁷⁶ Windsor Castle, Royal Library. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 132.

²⁷⁷ A later date of 1565 is posed by Marcus et al, based upon a reference made by Burghley, who noted Elizabeth having written an obscure sentence in a book at Windsor. Other vague estimates range from anytime during the 1560s to the 1570s. However, Hall’s observation of Elizabeth’s changing signature, alongside my own analysis of it as a canonical emblem, favour the earlier date of c.1558.

²⁷⁸ Michael Hall, *Art, Passion & Power: The Story of the Royal Collection* (London: BBC Books, 2017), 48.

²⁷⁹ John Edwards proposes she added ‘the Queene’ to parallel herself with her maternal grandmother, Isabella of Spain, an undisputed queen regnant. John Edwards, *Mary I: The Daughter of Time*, Penguin Monarchs (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 37.

(ink drawing), *inscriptio* (Petrarchan verse), and *subscriptio* (quatrain). The reciprocal interplay between text and image created meaning. Wade writes:

[The components] redirected readers' thinking, and were intended to change their perspective, for example, to produce new insights, to make political, social, ethical, and religious commentary, to make a joke or a pun meaningful, and to juxtapose visual and textual meanings, thereby creating new knowledge.²⁸⁰

The suspicious mind, which may encompass doubt, is an uglier attribute than any physical impairment, such as a crooked leg or bleary eye. Elizabeth addressed those who suspected her of involvement in treasonous plots to place herself upon the throne, or who doubted her eligibility to inherit. Though accused of involvement in varying plots against Mary, nothing was ever proven against Elizabeth. Whilst the reported Psalm recital at Hatfield is almost certainly untrue (but with potential propagandist overtones), it does indicate Elizabeth, or at least her supporters and propagandists, viewed God as instrumental to her ascent. This is corroborated by the *pictura*: Elizabeth, emblemised by the sphere, had figuratively placed trust in God, emblemised by the bible. Such faith is also apparent in the literature she produced whilst suspected of treason. During her imprisonment in the Tower of London, Elizabeth composed the following prayer:

Help me now, O God, for I have none other friends but Thee alone. And suffer me not (I beseech Thee) to build my foundation upon the sands, but upon the rock, whereby all blasts of blustering weather may have no power against me, amen.²⁸¹

Referencing Jesus' parable in Matthew 7:24-27, the rock foundation supporting her faith is the reformed religion of her father she was raised to worship. Her later canonical emblem conveys

²⁸⁰ Wade, 'What Is an Emblem?', Emblematica Online.

²⁸¹ Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrons* (London: H Denham, 1582), "The Second Lamp of Virginity", 35-36. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 48.

a similar message. Those who built foundations upon sand, symbolising those who supported Mary and Catholicism (which had endangered Elizabeth), are wretched. Whereas those who built foundations on rock, or who accepted the Reformist faith and therefore support Elizabeth, are blessed. With her succession pending, her faith and trust in God is recognised as having been rewarded.

As Rosalie Colie explains, the emergent use of emblems affected poetic practice in two ways:

[I]ts condensation of meaning contributed to the intensity of some highly visual poetic vignettes, and its expectation of the reader's effort towards revelation modified expression on poems not particularly visually emblematic.²⁸²

Visual emblems in the *pictura* contrast with, and thus highlight, the *subscriptio*'s imagery. Adjectives 'croked', 'blered', 'deformed', and 'uglye', denote imperfection, whilst the reader is informed those with 'suspicious minds' are worse still.²⁸³ This is contrasted by the 'perfection' of the celestial sphere and bible. Emblems in the *pictura* represent religious reform and queenship, including Elizabeth's role as Governor of the Church, encapsulating similar properties to bible frontispieces. As God's representative, Elizabeth is entrusted to dispense the Word of God and consequently reform religious practises. Another interpretation is that the known world (as sustained by God) has been placed in the care of an entrusted representative of God (Elizabeth).

'Suspicious minds' are recognisably Catholic opposition. The primary detractors to Elizabeth, her legitimacy, and her religious settlement were Catholics championing Mary Stuart as Mary I's rightful successor. However, 'suspicious' is ambivalent: it may mean to be

²⁸² Rosalie L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance* (London: University of California Press, 1973), 37–38.

²⁸³ With one property of an emblem being to 'produce new insights', it is noteworthy that Elizabeth's adjectives describe potentially transitory states; cloudiness and blairiness, for example, can clear.

open to, deserving of, or exciting suspicion, whilst also referring to a person or object of suspicion, or to be suspected. Therefore, it could be argued that Elizabeth possessed the suspicious mind, suspecting others of ‘uglye’ characteristics. Consequently, the canonical emblem possessed similar properties to her New Year gifts, for without direct expression, meaning is variable upon an individual reader’s interpretation. Although it was inscribed in a private religious text, Elizabeth masked her own personal views and opinions. Despite being sequestered in one of her own books, Elizabeth must have understood any openly defamatory material targeting Catholicism could, under different circumstances, be incriminating. Ambiguity and secrecy were wise precautions given her pending reign was not yet secured. For although Mary named her as successor shortly before her death, Edward’s will still barred Elizabeth from the throne.

Elizabeth’s adoption of the celestial sphere was significant. It was visually reminiscent of the coronation orb commonly featured in monarchic portraiture, and also symbolised good relations between the monarch and their courtiers, as indicated by its structure, with courtiers ‘orbiting’ the monarchical ‘sun’. Some Elizabethan courtiers appropriated this metaphor themselves. Thomas Screven, in correspondence with the Earl of Rutland on 6 February 1583, wrote: ‘The Courte remaineth in one estate and the sonne shineth still in one place.’²⁸⁴ As an emblem, an orb was also recognised as a defence against love, thus appropriate for Elizabeth’s virginity. In the period since her correspondence with Edward, Elizabeth appears to have swung from potential advertisement of her marriageability to the appropriation of an emblem which indicated her immunity to love, and therefore suggests her commitment to remain unmarried and virginal was already formed. If the celestial sphere, or orb, was evidence of her impenetrability to love, it preceded the similar allegorical motif encapsulated by Cupid and his

²⁸⁴ John Rutland, *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland : Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, ed. Richard Ward, Robert Campbell, and John Horace Round (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Off., by Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1888), 160, <http://archive.org/details/hists52199677>.

broken arrow in *The Three Goddesses* painting by a decade, and would later contribute to an important aspect of her future imperialistic Virgin Queen image. Her recognition as the sun would feature prominently in later, imperial portraiture. In the Armada Portrait, her stylised ruff represented the sun's rays, whilst in 'The Rainbow Portrait' (c.1601), varying attributed to Isaac Oliver or Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, Elizabeth clutches a rainbow in her right hand beneath the inscription *Non sine sole iris* ('No rainbow without the sun').

An occasional tutor and later advisor to Elizabeth was the astrologer John Dee (1507-1608/09), also a keen advocate for colonial expansion, which he addressed in *General and Rare Memorials Pertayning to the Perfect Arte of Navigation* (1577). It also marked one of the first references in print to a 'British Empire'. He argued that England (or Britain) had historic associations with colonisation:

Through varying sources, Dee believed part of North America held by the Spanish had already been previously colonised by the English, first by Arthur, King of the Britons in 530 AD and secondly by the Welsh Prince Madoc Owain Gwynedd in 1170 AD. By colonising North America, Dee believed England would be restoring the Empire of Arthur.²⁸⁵

The title page of *General Memorials* depicts Elizabeth at the helm of a ship sailing westward towards the Americas. Many of her emblems are present, including the sun, moon, and stars, portraying her allegorically as varying goddess figures, whilst also pertaining to the navigational properties of the book. Her divinity, however, is further emphasised by a glowing sphere in the upper right-hand corner bearing the tetragrammaton, Hebrew letters representing the name of God; it implied Elizabeth's imperialism was divinely blessed.

²⁸⁵ Alex Grover, 'Mathematics, Navigation and Empire: Reassessing John Dee's Legacy', Royal Museums Greenwich, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/blog/curatorial-library-archive/mathematics-navigation-empire-reassessing-john-dees-legacy>.

Although Elizabeth did not publicly endorse Dee's proposals,²⁸⁶ it is noteworthy that she adopted the celestial orb, a spherical device with both astrological and nautical usage, given England's burgeoning imperial interests. Globes also feature prominently in Elizabeth's later portraiture, particularly after England's successful victories against overseas adversaries and the colonisation of foreign territories. Her hand rests upon a globe in the Armada portrait, and in the painting commonly known as 'The Ditchley Portrait' (1592) by Marcus Gheeraerts the younger, she stands atop one. Two highly decorated globes, produced by the mapmaker Emery Molyneux, were gifted to Elizabeth following English colonisation on the American continent. One charts the position of the known continents, and the other the positions of astrological constellations, which collectively allude to her emblem of the celestial sphere.

Astronomy also associated Elizabeth with her father. One need only look at the complex astronomical clock adorning Henry's favourite palace, Hampton Court, to garner his interest. His personal library contained cartographic and astrological publications, including those by the Hydrographer Royal, Jean Rotz. One treatise, *On the variation of the magnetic compass and of certain notable facts hitherto unknown concerning the errors of navigation* (1542), depicts an illustration of a differential quadrant, another spherical device used as both a nautical and astrological guide. Printed on the opposite page is the inscription *Dieu et mondroyt*, or *Dieu et mon droit*, the motto for English monarchy as adopted by Henry V. The printing of Rotz's works was personalised for Henry, as the inclusion of the motto exemplifies. It is arguable the celestial sphere was entwined with Elizabeth's memory of her father and her concept of monarchy, subjects presumably occupying her thoughts whilst producing the *pictura* if undertaken shortly before accession.

²⁸⁶It has been recognised that she feared Spanish and Portuguese reprisal, although she would privately enable others to explore the Americas, including expeditions during the latter part of her reign such as Martin Frobisher's expeditions in the late 1570s that Dee supported financially, and a colonisation attempt at Roanoke Island early in the seventeenth century.

Alex Grover, 'Mathematics, Navigation and Empire: Reassessing John Dee's Legacy', Royal Museums Greenwich.

Her thoughts may have also dwelt upon her mother. As queen, Anne received a tributary copy of *The Ecclesiastes*, believed to have been authored by Solomon. It contained numerous emblematic initials including a celestial sphere with an anchor suspended from it. The celebratory nature of the edition suggests it was gifted between Anne's marriage on 25 January and Elizabeth's birth on 7 September 1533, after which Anne began falling from favour.²⁸⁷ By substantially preceding Rotz's dedication to Henry however, the emblem was independently associated with Anne. Furthermore, Elizabeth is likely to have had access to her mother's library, and the *Ecclesiaste* does not appear to have left the royal collection until the nineteenth century.²⁸⁸

Dee was also consulted about the date of Elizabeth's coronation, which was held on 15 January 1559, the most propitious date he could decipher. With spectacles designed to display Elizabeth's magnificence, it was celebratory but equally propagandistic, demonstrating her princely majesty, her legitimacy, and thus reassuring the populace that a queen regnant was a worthy successor to Mary. Pageants provided entertainment whilst reinforcing the image of Tudor dynasty. *The uniting of the two houses of Lancastre and Yorke*, built across Gracious Street, consisted of three stages representing a partial family tree: Henry VII and Elizabeth of York; Henry and Anne, 'mother to our most sovereign Ladie quene Elizabeth that now is'; then Elizabeth, enthroned. A child orated an accompanying poem about the uniting of the houses,

²⁸⁷ In her correspondence with Navarre, Anne states her 'greatest wish, next to having a son, was to see you again.' Doctors and astronomers all predicted a boy, and draft proclamations preceding the event announced the arrival of a prince; an additional 's' was hastily added following Elizabeth's birth.

²⁸⁸ Evidence strongly suggests that Anne's library also included Navarre's *Miroir*. Anne and Henry jointly owned a Bible translation by the Evangelical scholar Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples, a known intimate of Navarre, whilst Anne possessed a manuscript attributed to Navarre's protégé, Clement Marot. She and Navarre were even paired (as were Henry and Francis) in the manuscript's introduction. Anne had spent her formative years in the French court of Navarre's brother, Francis I, and remained in correspondence. It is clear they held similar religious views, and it is reasonable to assume Anne owned Navarre's own publications. Carley proposes that Anne represented herself as an English version of Marguerite: a pious follower of the teachings of French reformers. If Anne did possess a copy that Elizabeth had access to, it renders her speculative critique of Henry yet more astounding.
Carley, *The Books of Henry VIII and His Wives*, 124–25.

the end of civil war and ceased bloodshed, and the peaceable, ‘quiet’ state thereafter. Ceased bloodshed alluded not only to the War of the Roses (resolved by the marriage of Henry VII to Elizabeth of York, uniting the warring houses of Lancaster and York), but revolt witnessed during Mary’s reign, with peace restored upon Elizabeth’s accession. The populace understandably sought reassurance; in a span of thirty years England had undergone successive religious upheavals, transforming it from an isolated island nation into a country at the centre of international religious and political debate.

However, Elizabeth was unlikely to have had much involvement with the creation and content of these displays, which instead were the design of the organisers. Thus, Elizabeth was portrayed as others envisaged her, with an emphasis upon her religious role, the necessity for peace, and her dynasty (which feeds into themes of marriage and children). But her progress also allowed Elizabeth a chance to fashion her own image and broadcast it publicly. Her progress began on the eve of her coronation at the Tower of London, and she marked the occasion by orating a prayer which incorporated biblical references:

And I acknowledge that Thou hast dealt as wonderfully and as mercifully with me as Thou didst with Thy true and faithful servant Daniel, Thy prophet, whom Thou deliveredst out of the den from the cruelty of the greedy and raging lions.²⁸⁹

By comparing herself with Daniel, Elizabeth portrayed herself as courageous when faced with adversity, and identified herself as the worthy equal of any King. Yet she was modest, not stating outright but through comparison, whilst conceding to being ‘overwhelmed’ before God’s deliverance. Such modesty befitted contemporary societal expectations upon women, as did her piety and purity. This was also a sensible tactic, for it was able to resonate with spectators irrespective of their religious leaning, and deftly enabled Elizabeth to indirectly

²⁸⁹ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 55.

address her former incarceration by Mary.

It was a well-devised piece of literature and, I argue, excellent propaganda. Like Daniel, her deliverance was due to unwavering faith in God. Her accession had befallen through his grace, exonerating Elizabeth of former accusations of treason, for Daniel also decreed he had done no harm before the King. Daniel was furthermore able to change the King's perception; as intimated through analysis of her canonical emblem, states of cloudiness and bleariness can clear. Intrinsically, Elizabeth aspired to dispel doubts or aspersions people may possess regarding topics including her legitimacy, the pending nature of the religious settlement, or perceived disadvantages that may have been associated with her gender. Her comparison with Daniel was a tactic similar to her representation as a 'prince', imbuing her image with characteristics associated with male leadership. As a prophet, Daniel not only spoke the Word of God (a role Elizabeth was to undertake) but was imbued with foresight, and thus heralded something new. Equivocally, a new Elizabethan era was foreseen, including scope for a religious settlement premised upon inclusivity. A subtle warning also manifests, for Daniel's accusers were ultimately fed to the lions.

Daniel was a biblical figure who denoted unwavering worship of the true God and faith, despite his captivity and the hardships he endured. When his life was threatened, his devotion to God was rewarded, and he was saved by divine intervention whilst his accusers were destroyed. Daniel also received wisdom from God, which allowed him to prophesy the return of His true kingdom. The process towards that restoration has subsequently led to his label as an apocalypticist:

Like the prophets before them, the apocalypticists saw in the working out of history, which they divided into well-defined periods, a purpose and a goal. The evil in the world might lead men to despair, but God's predetermined purpose could not be frustrated. A future age of righteousness would replace the present age of ungodliness, fulfilling God's purpose. This literature, then, is a mixture of pessimism – times would become worse and

worse, and God would destroy this present evil world – and of optimism – out of turmoil and confusion God would bring in his kingdom, the goal of history.²⁹⁰

There is a strong affiliation between this surmise and the prophesised return of the Golden Age. There are also parallels between the story of Daniel with Virgil's retelling (and its Protestant interpretation) of Astraeon mythology in his *Eclogue IV*, which suggests Elizabeth's allusion to the former in her prayer served to imply a Golden Age revival. In the biblical story, Daniel was the only individual capable of interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. He had dreamt of a giant statue comprised of four metals, which was destroyed by a stone sent from heaven. The statue's components represented four kingdoms which would be eradicated but then replaced by God with His kingdom. In classical mythology, the celestial virgin Astraea was the last immortal to live on earth with humans. Rather than four kingdoms, Ovid's retelling recounted the four ages of man: the first Golden Age, when the Gods inhabited the Earth; the Silver; the Bronze; and then the Iron. Astraea abandoned the earth in this last age (she ascended to heaven to become the constellation Virgo), but her prophesised return would herald the end of these four ages and a return to the Golden. However, through its Christian appropriation, Astraea was interpreted as the Virgin Mary, and thus this return to the Golden Age was reinterpreted as the coming of the Christ Child and the true religion, so was also understood to represent the return of God's kingdom through Christ. Elizabeth incorporated imagery of Astraea and the Virgin Mary in her Virgin Queen image but anticipated the *thema* of a kingdom's restoration (that kingdom being England) much earlier, through her identification with the prophet Daniel.

The prayer was recorded and disseminated in print, as well as being spread via word of mouth. It survives in an eyewitness account written by the Humanist (and codifier of football)

²⁹⁰ Robert L. Faherty, 'Biblical Literature - Daniel', Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/biblical-literature>.

Richard Mulcaster, whilst the official account was published a fortnight later by Tottel. Unlike a prayer composed under incarceration or a translation given as a gift, an emblem jotted in a devotional text or the private communication of a letter, Elizabeth could finally broadcast her voice – although at this early stage in her reign it was indirectly, being masked by biblical imagery.

The Queen of Scots

Despite the attempt towards inclusivity as established in her religious settlement, Catholicism still posed a viable threat to Elizabeth. An early precedent to her reign was decreasing the potential of civil war presented by Mary Stuart, who returned to Scotland in 1561 (despite the Scottish Reformation abolishing Catholicism the previous year). In 1560, *The Treaty of Edinburgh* was drawn between Commissioners of Elizabeth, Scottish Lords, and French representatives of King Francis II to establish Anglo-Scottish accord. Once signed, it was anticipated to ensure Mary recognised Elizabeth as rightful queen, and consequently renounce her claim to the English throne and use of the English arms. Unsurprisingly, Mary never signed. The treaty was intended to promote harmonious accord with Scotland and consequently France, two historically Catholic nations whose ongoing religious reformations could have affected England. During negotiations Elizabeth addressed Mary as her successor but refused its legal ratification, fearing ensuing civil unrest. Diplomatically and publicly, she strove to maintain peace and amicable relations, as evident in recorded conversations with the Scottish Ambassador William Maitland from 1561 (printed in 1562 in *A Letter from Mary Queen of Scots to the Duke of Guise, January 1562*).²⁹¹ Elizabeth was recorded as saying:

²⁹¹ BL, MS Royal 18.B.VI, *Tractatus et Literae Regum Scotiae 1448-1571*, fols. 263r-265r; fols 270r-271v. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 60–70.

And as my proceedings have made sufficient declaration to the world that I never meant no evil toward her person nor her realm, so can they that knew most of my mind bear me accord that in time of most offense, and when she by bearing my arms and acclaiming the title of my crown had given me just cause to be most angry with her; yet could I never find in my heart to hate her, imputing rather the fault to others than to herself.²⁹²

The circulated image of Elizabeth in print outwardly attested to her good relations with Mary and suggested an almost familial accord. This undoubtedly served to bolster Elizabeth's public relations with her Catholic subjects following her religious settlement. However, she remained aware of the threat Mary posed, as addressed in her poem *The Doubt of Future Foes* (c.1571):

The doubt of future foes
Exiles my present joy
And wit me warns to shun such snares
As threatens mine annoy

For falsehood now doth flow
And subjects' faith doth ebb,
Which should not be if reason ruled
Or wisdom weaved the web.

But clouds of joy untried
Do cloak aspiring minds
Which turns to rage of late repent
By changed course of winds

The top of hope supposed
The root of rue shall be
And fruitless all their grafted guile,
As shortly you shall see.

²⁹² Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 62.

Their dazzled eyes with pride,
 Which great ambition blinds,
 Shall be unsealed by worthy wights
 Whose foresight falsehood finds.

The daughter of debate
 That discord aye doth sow
 Shall reap no gain where former rule
 Still peace hath taught to know.

No foreign banished wight
 Shall anchor in this port:
 Our realm brooks no seditious sects—
 Let them elsewhere resort.

My rusty sword through rest
 Shall first his edge employ
 To pull their tops who seek such change
 Or gape for future joy.²⁹³

The poem was written after Mary's flight to England in 1568, following her failed attempt to reclaim the Scottish throne: she was the 'foreign banished wight' who Elizabeth desired 'elsewhere resort' (though difficult to achieve with Mary placed under house arrest). Lodged in England, Mary became a focal point for Catholic resurgence, encapsulated by the second stanza. The quatrain addresses formerly complacent subjects' faith in Elizabeth and/or her religious settlement wavering. If reason and wisdom ruled their logic, they would not 'ebb': the evidence presented Mary as an incapable queen who lost her kingdom whilst tarnished by rumour of mariticide. Yet reason is interpretable as separate from wisdom. Falsehood and wavering faith would cease through reason or wisdom. Contextually, web referenced a fabric, cloth, or any woven material, though metaphorically the process of 'weaving' represented the

²⁹³ Folger Library, MS V.b.317, fol. 20v. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 133–34.

passage of life and/or history. Interpretively, if wisdom dictated such passages of time, then faith in Elizabeth would not waver.

The final quatrain references execution, with Elizabeth prepared to behead ('pull their tops') those endangering her reign, an equally plausible rebuke against the Northern Rebellions. By concluding the poem, it signified execution was the last resort. The sword had rusted, for her peaceful reign had hardly required it; nobody had been executed on religious grounds since her accession. Only those seeking change – deposition of Elizabeth and religious overhaul – merited execution. That distinction is crucial for, in a religious context, it re-emphasised the premise that an individual's private devotion is permissible provided outward conformity was to the Elizabethan settlement, and that they posed no unlawful danger. In her own words:

'[I]n the sacrament of the alter some thinks a thing, some other, whose judgement is best God knows. In the meantime, *unusquisque in sensu suo abundant* ('everyone abounds in his own feeling')'²⁹⁴

The poem possesses a sense of self-justification. Elizabeth would act as necessity dictated, whilst directing blame for her action(s) elsewhere.

It is therefore surprising that *The Doubt* was widely anthologised from the late 1560s, throughout the 1570s, and then reappeared in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), anonymously published though attributed to George Puttenham (1529-1590). I propose *The Doubt* originated as a private piece of literature which, following unintended circulation and publication, was redeployed as propaganda, effectively allowing Elizabeth to regain a semblance of control over her image whilst substantiating the necessity of Mary's execution in 1587. Once in the public sphere, it could also have bolstered her imperial image as a Virgin Queen, for it expressed how

²⁹⁴ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 62–63.

she would defend England against threats and, following Mary's execution, testified to her monarchic strength and vigour; Elizabeth was too powerful to be threatened.

Like the earlier *subscription* of her canonical emblem, it is arguable that Elizabeth recognised *The Doubt*'s potential for irreparable damage, being (mis)interpretable as desiring Mary's death, especially following previously published conversations in which she was recorded as stating she could never hate nor hurt Mary. Upon publication, *The Doubt* became popular amongst people proposing Mary's execution, with renewed popularity after that eventuality came about. Though convenient it is to believe Elizabeth desired Mary's execution, circumstances suggest otherwise. Mary was imprisoned for nineteen years, ample time to produce a verdict condemning her. She was denied an audience with Elizabeth, but also prevented from returning to Scotland or France, where she could have posed a greater threat. Imprisonment effectively kept her leashed. Recognisably the strongest claimant to succeed Elizabeth, Mary was, in Elizabeth's own words, 'of the blood of England, my cousin, and next kinswoman[.]'²⁹⁵ She favoured Mary above her Suffolk cousins, further claimants who resided in England and thus posed a viable threat should dissenters seek to supplant her. Indicating (but never verifying) Mary was her heir helped counteract any claim the cousins could stake, whilst Mary's imprisonment ensured she could not act directly whilst simultaneously protecting her from reformist hostility. From Elizabeth's conversation with the Scottish ambassador, we learn:

[T]he succession of the crown of England is a matter I will not mell [meddle] in; but as in the sacrament of the alter some thinks a thing, some other, whose judgement is best God knows. In the meantime, *unusquisque in sensu suo abundant*, so leave I them to do with the succession of the crown of England. If her right be good she may be sure I never hurt her, and I here protest to you in the presence of God I (for my part) know none better, nor that myself would prefer to her[.]²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 62.

²⁹⁶ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 62–63.

This is later reiterated:

Howsoever it be, so long as I live, I shall be queen of England; when I am dead, they shall succeed that has most right. If the queen your sovereign be that person, I shall never hurt her[.]²⁹⁷

Pivotaly, Mary was a queen, and Elizabeth was wary of executing a fellow monarch. Furthermore, Mary's death could have set a precedent for her own regicide amidst probable Catholic reprisals.

The Doubt's publication is therefore problematic. Studies establish multiple sources behind its journey to print.²⁹⁸ The primary is a theft by Lady Willoughby, identified in a letter from Elizabeth's godson, Sir John Harrington:

My Lady Willoughby did covertly get it on her majesty's tablet and had much hazard in so doing, for the queen did find out the thief and chid for spreading evil bruit of her writing such toys when other matters did so occupy her employment at this time, and was fearful of being thought too lightly of for so doing.²⁹⁹

Willoughby copied the poem and, judging by Harrington's description of being 'chid' (chided) for 'spreading evil bruit', circulated it. Her motive remains unclear, but one hypothesis is a misguided demonstration of loyalty. Lady Willoughby (or Anne Neville) had a nephew, Charles, the sixth Earl of Westmorland, who was a leader during the Northern Rebellions. It is proposed Willoughby stole the text to indicate fealty to Elizabeth, circulating it as propaganda.³⁰⁰ We may never know, though it is plausible she sought Mary's execution;

²⁹⁷ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 65.

²⁹⁸ Full a full account, see chapter four, "Other Texts From Manuscript Sources", in Arthur F. Marotti and Steven W. May, *Ink, Stink Bait, Revenge, and Queen Elizabeth: A Yorkshire Yeoman's Household Book* (Cornell University Press, 2014), 173-210.

²⁹⁹ John Harrington. *Nugae Antiquae* (Bath: W Frederick, 1769), 58.

³⁰⁰ Marotti and May, *Ink, Stink Bait, Revenge, and Queen Elizabeth*, 185.

assuming Elizabeth would never ‘pull the top’, she anticipated circulating the poem would gather support for that outcome. Her son, Fulke Willoughby, was friends with Harrington, which goes toward explaining the latter knowing how the poem entered circulation.

Some scholars, including Marotti and Steven May, propose Elizabeth intended *The Doubt* to enter wider circulation. Envisaging her tablet left for discovery, they summarise: ‘it is difficult to believe that anybody but Elizabeth herself could have authorised this breach of royal privacy’.³⁰¹ In his travelogue, Frederick, the Duke of Wirtemberg, describes his tour of royal residences, and whilst at Hampton Court writes of numerous writing tables decorating several rooms.³⁰² If a foreign dignitary and his entourage were capable of seeing those whilst on tour, then one might argue that members of Elizabeth’s court could have seen content left out for deliberate discovery. Its deliberate circulation would have brought one evident benefit, for the poem expressed Elizabeth’s dedication to the continued preservation of England, which was furthermore contrasted with the incapability of Mary to preserve her own kingdom. It could have greatly bolstered Elizabeth’s public image and contributed to her public association with virginity, which was emerging from the late 1560s onwards, for her situation was presented as the stark antithesis of Mary’s, who was married, widowed, then remarried. Mary had also been accused of mariticide and forced to abscond, thus her marriageability and capability to provide an heir was of little value without a kingdom. Though unmarried and childless, Elizabeth was portrayed as the mightier of the two queens, for she possessed a kingdom whose populace (until the arrival of Mary) maintained faith in her.

However, there is no reason to discredit Harrington’s account of a seemingly genuine theft, nor cause to doubt his validity, given his close relationship with Elizabeth and Fulke. It is argued Elizabeth could have prevented Lady Willoughby’s copy from circulating, but others

³⁰¹ Marotti and May, 186-188.

³⁰² William Brenchley Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth & James the First* (London: J. R. Smith, 1865), 18.

could have copied Willoughby's own prior to Elizabeth's discovery (this is one explanation for variances across surviving editions). The tablet, imported into England during the 1520s, was a small, portable, and erasable medium for writing, ideal for jotting private thoughts. Peter Herman argues that *The Doubt* was a private, self-revealing moment of frustration towards Mary that Elizabeth never intended to afford permanent status, hence being written upon a tablet.³⁰³ It is possible the poem was drafted on a tablet before being written upon a more permanent medium, yet Elizabeth's surviving handwritten speeches indicate she heavily edited and amended her written works. It seems illogical to spare one poem similar treatment.

The Doubt appears to have been composed as a reply to a poem Elizabeth received from Mary following her arrival in England. Translated from the French:

A sole thought keeps me, day and night,
 Bitter and lovely, rocks my heart without end.
 Between doubt and fear, it oppresses me
 And while it is here, rest and peace flees from me.
 Ah! I have seen a ship freed from constraint
 On the high seas, very close to port,
 And peaceful times turn to difficult.
 But yet I am, in fear and worry,
 Not afraid of you but that I will be the toy
 Of fortune that rents the strongest tied chain.³⁰⁴

Although naval imagery was a common poetic trope (and specifically Petrarchan), Elizabeth redeployed Mary's use of it through simile. As an overture – or guarantor – for peace, Mary sought an audience with Elizabeth, but her request for a safe port was denied; no 'foreign

³⁰³ Peter C. Herman, *Royal Poetrie: Monarchic Verse and the Political Imaginary of Early Modern England* (Cornell University Press, 2010), 111.

³⁰⁴ BL, MS, Caligula, D 10, 90. Printed and translated in Kate Williams, *Rival Queens: The Betrayal of Mary, Queen of Scots* (London: Hutchinson, 2018), 238.

banished wight' would anchor in England, for the realm brooks no 'seditious sects', a reference to Mary's Catholicism. Elizabeth was a ('worthy') wight, indicating her poem addressed a person of equal status: a fellow queen regnant who similarly stated a claim to the English throne. Elizabeth refused to aid Mary, and 'shuns such snares' as her sonnet posed. She doubted Mary, remaining cautious of her influence upon formerly loyal subjects. But denying this 'oppressed' sovereign's plea for aid does constitute a viable reason for keeping *The Doubt* private, and thus the privacy of a tablet appears rational. Elizabeth was arguably trying to protect and preserve her public image, and may also have wished to protect her precariously established rapport with many of her Catholic subjects, itself the culmination of her efforts when overseeing the religious settlement. To be publicly seen to deny a Catholic sovereign aid without substantive justification could have damaged public relations.

Outwardly, Mary effectively placed herself at Elizabeth's mercy, fearing herself to be the toy of fortune (whoever rents the strongest chain). That, perceptibly, was Elizabeth, who still held a position of monarchic power, whereas Mary had been deposed, defeated, imprisoned, and was subsequently fleeing. However, she did not fear Elizabeth *per se*, only the power she possessed. This deftly recognised their equal status, and implied it was only Mary's loss of power that warranted her admission of unease, or of living 'in fear and worry'. The ship was a metaphor for her person, with the port representing England. Like a ship in stormy seas, Mary needed help, but feared the calm sea (England) would turn stormy upon her arrival, thus reducing her recognised status as queen or causing undue harm. A port is connotative of safety and refuge, indicative of what Mary ultimately sought by travelling to England. The imagery of the high seas poetically mirrored the ceaseless rocking of her heart, with the swell of water juxtaposed against the bitter and lonely thoughts plaguing her. She would have no peace of mind until, like a ship, she reached the safety of a port. Her fear of fortune and the strongest chains indirectly challenged Elizabeth; Mary must have been aware of the danger she was

placing herself in, and by bringing it to Elizabeth's attention is essentially seeking assurance that her fear is unfounded. The only way Elizabeth could effectively do so would be to guarantee Mary's safety. Mary effectively held all the cards: if Elizabeth replied in writing to decline Mary's request, it would be guaranteed to circulate and damage Elizabeth's reputation; if she publicly declined Mary's request, it would be counter to the circulated image of herself as printed in *A Letter from Mary Queen of Scots*; but if she acquiesced, she was inviting her rival into England.

Marotti and May parallel *The Doubt* with two poems Elizabeth originally inscribed at Woodstock Palace whilst imprisoned by Mary I, and use those examples to propose that Elizabeth did intentionally seek the distribution of her poetry.³⁰⁵ My examination re-evaluates this broad conclusion by studying the differing circumstances between these poems' initial compositions and later publications. Despite the manner of their inscription, they can be considered to have originally been private. The couplet 'Much suspected by me / Nothing proved can be' was inscribed with a diamond upon a windowpane, whilst an accompanying poem was written in charcoal on the reverse of a window shutter:

O Fortune, thy wresting, wavering state
 Hath fraught with cares my troubled wit,
 Whose witness this present prison late
 Could bear, where once was joy flown quite.
 Thou causedst the guilty to be loosed
 From lands where innocents were enclosed,
 And caused the guiltless to be reserved,
 And freed those that death had well deserved.
 But all herein can be naught wrought,

³⁰⁵ Marotti and May, *Ink, Stink Bait, Revenge, and Queen Elizabeth*, 188-189.

So God grant to my foes as they have thought.³⁰⁶

Following Elizabeth's interrogations at the Tower, such verse was contentious. The guilty are free, causing the guiltless (the imprisoned) to act with reserve, for fear of incrimination. Meanwhile those who are free – and guilty – deserve death. Although each poem appears to have been sardonically signed Elizabeth the prisoner, simply closing the shutter would conceal them. It may appear absurd that such poetry could go unnoticed, but Woodstock was inadequately equipped to accommodate Elizabeth and her retinue, with their hapless 'gaoler' Sir Henry Bedingfield ill-prepared for the task.³⁰⁷ It is not unsurprising the poems could remain undiscovered, and therefore can be categorised as private. That her retinue knew about the verse appears probable – Elizabeth retained three of her women, who were alone with her for extensive periods of time – but being in service to her, it was in her interest for them not to broadcast the verse.

Their latter manuscript circulation began after Mary's death and does appear intentional. There are variations across surviving copies, attributed to poor preservation, recitation from memory, or the copyist's own amendments. If attributable to copyists, it may indicate their own perception of Elizabeth, altering the text to sway the readers' opinion. This presents the most logical explanation, for the public were permitted access to the originals after Elizabeth became queen. Guided tours of Woodstock included the room where the poetry was graffitied, and Elizabeth herself revisited Woodstock four times during progresses. Marotti and May identify it as a Reformist Shrine, undoubtedly arising from her martyrdom imprisonment there.³⁰⁸ With public accessibility factored in, attempting to censure the poems' manuscript

³⁰⁶ The poem as copied by Baron Waldstein, reproduced by G. W. Groos, trans., *The Diary of Baron Waldstein: A Traveller in Elizabethan England* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981). Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 45–46.

³⁰⁷ For further information about Elizabeth's imprisonment at Woodstock, refer to David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London: Vintage, 2001), 149–60.

³⁰⁸ Arthur F. Marotti and Steven W. May, 'A New Manuscript Copy of a Poem by Queen Elizabeth: Text and Contexts', *English Literary Renaissance* 47, no. 1 (January 2017): 4–5.

circulation would have been a meaningless endeavour. And allowing her poetry to become publicly accessible testified to her suffering, steadfastness, and innocence during Mary's reign, culminating in the deliverance as described in Elizabeth's coronation prayers through her comparison to Daniel. The poems' usage distinctly changed, from an exercise of personal thought and recognisable rebelliousness (Elizabeth had been denied ink and writing mediums as she was not permitted communication with people beyond Woodstock) into a propaganda tool, similarly to *The Doubt*.

However, the difference is that the Woodstock poems' public accessibility indicates their circulation was intentional, whereas evidence would indicate *The Doubt* was circulated without consent. The 'covert' nature of Willoughby's act suggests theft from an intimate, confined space permitted to few individuals. The natural assumption is that it was taken from Elizabeth's private rooms, which should have ensured the poem's security. The eventual execution of Mary Stuart triggered a Catholic backlash, and Marotti and May propose that Elizabeth had good reason to re-issue her defiant lyric to defend her action before her subjects.³⁰⁹ However, *The Doubt* would already have been in (unpermitted) circulation, if we accept the account of Willoughby's theft in the wake of the Northern Rebellions. Therefore, a natural response would be to deliberately recycle it as justification, and vindication, for Elizabeth's act. The poem indicated Mary had been forewarned of the danger she placed herself in should she threaten Elizabeth, consequently exonerating the latter; Mary committed treason regardless, and once caught was lawfully executed. Significantly, this reiterates Elizabeth's stance towards religious toleration; people were not tried for their private religious practise, but for failing to abide by the law.

The Doubt's circulation demonstrates how the most personal writing could, in altered circumstances, fulfil a necessary propagandistic use upon entering the public domain, but

³⁰⁹ Marotti and May, *Ink, Stink Bait, Revenge, and Queen Elizabeth*, 187.

suggests not every poem was destined for public consumption. It evidences the challenges Elizabeth faced keeping her writing private, further exemplified by her canonical emblem. Leah Marcus *et al* put forth evidence that it was discovered by Burghley in August 1565, with the *subscriptio* described as an ‘obscure sentence’ sequestered in ‘a book at Windsor’.³¹⁰ If Hall’s surmise is accurate, and Elizabeth kept her own personal library at Windsor, then it was not a text likely to be easily accessible.³¹¹ Furthermore, it was inscribed in a private devotional text. Should Elizabeth have deigned reveal it to Burghley, any attempt at privacy was consequently scuppered by his – recorded – discussion of it. Whilst a Princess (or Lady), Elizabeth must have expected, perhaps anticipated, that ‘private’ correspondence was to be read by others, which were almost certainly disseminated amongst other members of her father’s court. If Elizabeth had anticipated such intrusions to alter upon her succession, and for her private writings to remain so, evidence suggests that she would have been disappointed.

What can be garnered, however, was that Elizabeth was conscious – and cautious – about her private writing entering the public sphere, for it could irreversibly affect her public image. Her reported reaction to Willoughby’s theft is indicative of how seriously she took such matters, for her private thoughts were often counter to recorded and disseminated work. That which was permitted to enter the public sphere appears to have been judged beneficial to her public image and, as her reign progressed, helped bolster her Virgin Queen persona, whether showing her as a powerful defender of her nation or by demonstrating her unwavering service to England. But as the examples of *The Doubt* and the Woodstock poems indicate, Elizabeth was capable of turning a situation to her public advantage, if the opportunity arose.

³¹⁰ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 132.

³¹¹ Hall, *Art, Passion & Power*, 47-48.

The final marriage negotiation

What became Elizabeth's final marriage negotiation began in 1579 with Francois, Duke of Alençon, or her 'Frog' as she nicknamed him. He had formerly been proposed by his mother, Catherine de Médicis, as early as 1571, following failed negotiations between Elizabeth and Alençon's elder brother, The Duke of Anjou. These earlier negotiations are likely to have failed on religious grounds, though it has been suggested Anjou's alleged bisexuality and transvestism were also factors.³¹² Contrary to the previously discussed manifestation of virginity, Elizabeth does appear to have taken Alençon's suit seriously. Politically, a French alliance would have supported anti-Spanish forces in the Netherlands, but Levin believes Elizabeth recognised this opportunity was likely to be her last at both marriage and motherhood.³¹³ However, Elizabeth was forty-six, so motherhood may not have been likely. Arguably the biggest setback to marriage negotiations, however, was the ongoing religious conflict in France (encapsulated by the Bartholomew's Day massacre), which left the English uneasy with a potential French alliance. This caused dissension amongst the populace towards the match, although it did not prevent Alençon personally visiting England in August 1579. As the first foreign suitor to acquiesce to Elizabeth's stipulation she meet a potential husband in person, it offers a potential insight to how seriously the marriage was considered. However, it was not only religious issues which prompted anxiety: '[A]fter her people had been begging Elizabeth for two decades to marry, now many worried that marriage and potential pregnancy were too dangerous for a woman of Elizabeth's age.'³¹⁴ Whether she heeded the concerns of others, recognised the potential political fallout, or simply did not wish to marry, Alençon's suit would be unsuccessful.

³¹² Mike Ashley, *A Brief History of British Kings & Queens* (London: Constable & Robinson Ltd, 2002), 256.

³¹³ Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 60.

³¹⁴ Levin, 60–61.

The following poem, entitled *On Monsieur's Departure* and widely attributed to Elizabeth, was written circa 1582 following what became Alençon's final visit to England:

I grieve and dare not show my discontent;
 I love, and yet am forced to seem to hate;
 I do, yet dare not say I ever meant;
 I seem stark mute, but inwardly do prayt.
 I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned,
 Since from myself another self I turned.

My care is like the shadow in the sun—
 Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it,
 Stands, and lies by me, doth what have I done;
 His too familiar care doth make me rue it.
 No means I find to rid him from my breast,
 Till by the end of things it be suppressed.

Some gentler passion slide into my mind,
 For I am soft, and made of melting snow;
 Or be more cruel, Love, and so be kind.
 Let me float or sink, be high or low;
 Or let me live with some more sweet content,
 Or die, and so forget what love e'er meant.³¹⁵

The opening stanza presents a series of contradictory states or emotions: love and hate, speech and muteness, burning and freezing. It indicates how Elizabeth identified her two personas, which may be labelled public and private, with the latter necessarily concealed in the past to perpetuate her then present image of queenship. For example, the private self may grieve, but publicly, as queen, she 'dare' not, for it could be interpreted as a weakness. It must be remembered that this was the woman who had perpetuated an aura of virginity but also strength

³¹⁵ Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Tanner 76, fol. 94r. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 302–203.

of character, overcoming temptation in service to God and her country. She visualised herself as she had been portrayed in *The Three Goddesses*, an individual impregnable to love, whose stipulation against her ladies marrying further generated an aura of virginity that surrounded her. From the 1570s her portrayal came to incorporate biblical connotations to present a divine individual brought closer to God. The example of Mary I further demonstrated the potential setback of a queen marrying for love, and of that love being – as one can deduce in the example of Philip II – unrequited.

It is impossible to know to whom this poem is addressed. Its date correlated with Alençon's departure, and the use of the French 'Monsieur' is a further indicator, but the referral to his departure may indicate the moment in Elizabeth's life when the poem was composed, opposed to the subject addressed. The poem is otherwise unspecific, only using the pronouns 'his' and 'him' in the second stanza. Alençon does appear to have had a profound affect upon Elizabeth, taking the marriage suit seriously enough to visit England twice. It is not impossible to believe she felt genuine affection towards him. However, the general theme of unrequited and unfulfilled love has wider resonances; it could, for example, be a reflection upon her relationship with Dudley. Or it may refer to no specific individual, but the absence of one, given Elizabeth's predicament regarding the suitability of marriage candidates. It may refer to her capability to love which was overruled by her commitment to virginity, for varying reasons as discussed in chapter ii. The use of 'turned' in the opening stanza's final line is ambiguous: did the private Elizabeth turn towards her public persona (the detached, virginal, display of queenship), or turn into it; consequently, was the public persona a choice, or the consequence of suppressing her true self? It may be that Elizabeth had 'turned' away from sexual relations by 'turning' into the artificial manifestation of virginity which, by that date, was beginning to accelerate; as outlined in chapter ii, Elizabeth was already being allegorically aligned with classical figures and the Virgin Mary.

This theme resonates in the second stanza, with the ‘suppression’ of her love in the twelfth line. Again, ambiguity prevails, for when shall it be suppressed, and in what context? ‘By the end of things’ could be interpreted as death, which indicates that Elizabeth would live with the consequences of suppressed emotions until she died. However, it could refer to the end of the marriage negotiations, which in respect of Alençon were already failed by that date, hence the poem’s composition: with the suit ended, she felt free to express her private persona through her poetry. The end could also pertain to the wane of her marriageability. Elizabeth must have understood that her desirability arose not necessarily from her appearance, or education and accomplishments, but her title, kingdom, and wealth. A prospective husband stood poised to acquire these whilst superseding Elizabeth through the patriarchal and societal superiority of men. Thus, the resonance of love throughout the poem may pertain to what Elizabeth perceived as the unlikelihood of her love being truly requited, with her suitors’ affection driven by advantage opposed to amour. Meanwhile her marriageability was intrinsically linked to her capability to have children. That eventual inability constituted the end of marriage negotiations, consequently an end to suppressing her responses to an unrequited love; without the suitors, she would have no need to rid ‘him’ from her breast.

The plausibility of Elizabeth feeling her emotions were unrequited, or that her suitor’s love did not compare with her own, can be established in the third stanza. It can be interpreted that Elizabeth, with the assistance of Love (Cupid), desired her suitor to express a stronger emotion so that she may free herself from her current state. She wished to float or sink, be high or low, indicative of an emotional response to either scenario. The final two lines parallels these two states with life and death; However, it could relate to Elizabeth’s two personas, the public and private, with their future dependent upon the cruelty or kindness proffered. Privately, she could live ‘with some more sweet content’, despite the unlikelihood of being able to act upon

it. Though if he was cruel the private shall die, ‘and so forget what love ever meant’, and the public persona of a detached, emotionless, virginal queen endure.

One might describe this poem as existing on the cusp of the full embracing of Elizabeth’s Virgin Queen image, since her alternative course of marriage and children was to diminish after that time. The internal conflict is evidence that Elizabeth’s commitment to virginity was a conscious decision made selflessly, for it is clear she experienced periods of inner torment. Her decision was understandably to benefit England, since Alençon had embodied many of the concerns regarding her marriage suitors including their faith and nationality. Regarding Elizabeth’s image, the poem offers a rare insight into her internalised conflict and, interpretively, appears to indicate how the Virgin Queen was a construct to mask the ‘weaker’ aspects of her character. The implication is that Elizabeth had loved (though whom we do not know for definite), but that her duty as queen could not allow her to act upon that emotion, nor publicly reveal it either. She had to appear detached and isolated, ultimately unique, if she were to preserve her powerful image as queen. I propose this was a continued means of justifying at her capability to rule; she would not take the same course of action that her mother, Parr, or Mary I had, for whom marriages of love had invited criticism and damaged their reputations. Elizabeth’s only marriage would remain that to her nation.

The Armada and the aftermath

In England, circumstances were to change following the execution of Mary Stuart. Despite her imprisonment, she had still posed a threat through her claim to the throne; several Catholic plots sought her release and the deposition of Elizabeth. Shrewdly, Elizabeth had had Mary imprisoned when she came to England. Outwardly, imprisonment protected Mary from the threat of English reprisal; inwardly, it kept Elizabeth safe, for the rallying figure of her Catholic

detractors was under her control. Furthermore, any threat that sought to depose Elizabeth in favour of Mary risked endangering the life of the latter. For example, Philip II came to support Mary's claim to the throne as part of his vision of restoring England to Catholicism. His initial support of Elizabeth's reign (in the interests of trade) had waned following her aid of Reformist rebels in the Netherlands, and the English piracy of Spanish ships returning from America. But Spain did not actively threaten England whilst Mary lived, and the two countries existed in a cold war standoff for years.

When Mary's alleged guilt in the 1586 Babington plot was proven, Elizabeth's hands were tied. The plot had intended Elizabeth's assassination and Mary's release from imprisonment at Chartley Castle to claim the vacant throne. Mary may have committed treason, but she nevertheless remained a fellow queen, and God's anointed. Her death could furthermore justify Elizabeth's own execution whilst providing the motive, and she was presumably aware that Mary would also appear to die a martyr, further fuel for potential retributive acts. Mary did not disappoint; once on the scaffold, her gown was revealed to be crimson coloured, the liturgical colour of martyrdom in the Catholic Church. Her execution was also inexpertly performed, undoubtedly perpetuating the sense of travesty that some perceived the situation to encompass. It triggered a strong backlash, becoming further justification for Philip to launch his 1588 Armada against England, with the purpose of deposing Elizabeth.

By August that year, England was threatened with Spanish invasion. At Tilbury, Elizabeth delivered a speech to troops, since (and now widely) referred to as the Armada Speech:

My loving people, I have been persuaded by some that are careful of my safety to take heed how I committed myself to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery. But I tell you that I would not live to distrust my faithful and loving people.³¹⁶

The following study will demonstrate how Elizabeth offset the precariousness of the situation (for both herself and England) through reconfirming her inter-relationship with God, her continued dedication, and the rewards that this service had bestowed upon her and ultimately England. Though to re-establish an affiliation between herself, a unique person of power and status, with the rag-tag army assembled to defend England, she fractured that portrait by alluding to herself as a ‘normal’ woman also prone to weakness and feebleness who, like those before her, can be emboldened and strengthened through faith in a higher power. For her, that was God; for the populace, that was to be her.

In a masterpiece of rhetoric, Elizabeth’s human weakness, ascribed to her female body, is strengthened by her ‘behaviour’ under God, through which she has subsequently placed her trust in the loyalty and goodwill of her subjects; she is effectively a conduit between her people and God. Henry was portrayed as such, exemplified in the frontispiece illustration to the Great Bible; Elizabeth lifted such inference from the page and proclaimed it, presenting herself before an assemblage of seventeen thousand troops. Any perceived deficiency of her gender is thus corrected and strengthened, with the weak and feeble body reanimated with the heart and stomach of a king. Her referral to a king of England paradoxically glorifies the country whilst isolating it. England’s isolation was, contemporaneously, amongst its chief problems, for it had few international allies. However, it is rhetorically used to instead signify uniqueness, and through Elizabeth’s connection with God is allusive to the Golden Age revival her reign had propagandistically been portrayed as heralding.

³¹⁶ BL, MS Harley 6798, art. 18, fol. 87. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 325–26.

There is ambiguity in her self-portrait. She established herself as a weak bodied woman imbued with the heart and stomach of a king, probably alluding to her sustained strength through her relationship to God, though it may also refer to her lineage. Propagandistically, it counteracted the deficiency of her sex whilst alluded to the dynasty which had kept England relatively stable since the conclusion of the Wars of the Roses through associating her with the strong image of kingship her father embodied, also recognising the individual who had begun England's religious reformation. Although Henry's actions had contributed (however distantly) to England's subsequent involvement in wars of religious conflict, he was also recognised as initiating the sequence of events in England that had premised the restoration of religion to its perceived purer state, allowing England to eventually prosper in its revitalised Golden Age. It had also been Henry's departure from papal authority which consequently led to the birth of his future successor, Elizabeth. Reference to both male and female properties instilled an almost androgynous quality to her self-portrait, associated with emblems from visual portraits, such as the Phoenix.

Despite her status, Elizabeth displayed humility, announcing she would 'venter' into the field. The likeliest interpretation is to 'venture'. In so doing, she aligned herself directly with her troops, establishing rapport with them. However, in the field she would act as 'general, judge, and rewarder', traditionally and stereotypically male roles which at first-hand testify to a masculine strength of character. It also has connotations to biblical roles, signifying that the troops' defence of England would be rewarded by God, which Elizabeth reiterates: 'I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fail of them.'³¹⁷ Her trust in their service and loyalty is stressed at the beginning of the speech. They are addressed as 'my loving people' before Elizabeth dispels a fear held by some that standing before armed troops could endanger her life

³¹⁷ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 326.

by treachery. She reassured that she does not distrust her faithful and (repeatedly) loving people, and in doing so tactfully acknowledged her gender; at that moment, she was the weak and feeble woman standing before an army of men, threatened by the ‘scorn’ of Parma (the Duke of Parma, a regent of the Spanish Netherlands under Philip II) or any prince of Europe, before defiantly rising above it. One can easily imagine how it emboldened the troops in their duty of protection towards both queen and country. Though it may be interpreted as seeking to take advantage upon their masculinity, and the perceived role of the male to ‘protect’.

England’s victory against the 1588 Armada prompted national celebration. Propaganda swiftly established God as having favoured England, substantiating the concept of a restored Golden Age with Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen. What follows is a brief examination of how Elizabeth’s Virgin Queen image became subjected to critique, probably following the threat(s) England faced, and the increasing uncertainty of England’s future in result of her unmarried and childless state. However, it would be an oversight to dismiss the threat that had been posed, or to believe that pageantry and celebration could quell national unease. The fact that much of the propagandism focused upon Elizabeth’s virginity is strongly indicative that it was *not* a state necessarily celebrated by all.

Most portrayals did remain positive – at least outwardly – well into Elizabeth’s old age and up to, then beyond, her death. But these co-existed with some that belied critique, including satire, ridicule, and overly sexualised content relating to the female body. One such example is material published in *The Arte of English Poesie*, in which *The Doubt* was recirculated. It also included some of Puttenham’s earlier *Partheniades*. Lisa Gim describes Puttenham acknowledging the workings of courtly politics and the position of Elizabeth in his panegyrics, which embodies the re-negotiated stance of writers seeking favour and patronage through the

tradition of courtly love poetry.³¹⁸ *The Arte* served as a guide to becoming a successful courtier-poet, with Puttenham confidently establishing himself as one. The *Partheniades* was dedicated to Elizabeth (though evidently anticipated a wider audience), but described her as a ‘cunning counterfeiter’, due to her embodiment of numerous classical figures.³¹⁹ There is reference to her representation as ‘victor’ in the Judgment of Paris story, which would appear to be related specifically with Peele’s *The Arraignment*, for his interpretation had incorporated the goddess Diana to ‘judge’ the victor Eliza. However, Peele did not deem Elizabeth a victor, or the equal of the goddess(es), but an ‘imitator’.

Belying this is an underlying sense of critique at Elizabeth, and the date of re-circulation appears correlative with the ‘celebration’ of a Virgin Queen who had ‘saved’ England from the Armada. In the months following the English victory, the English navy was left unsupported, its crews impoverished, and many succumbed to illness and poverty. More individuals died post-battle than during them.³²⁰ Then in 1589, a counterattack was launched by England against Spain, the expenses of which subsequently placed the economy under further pressure. Hostilities with Spain eventually lasted until 1604, so Puttenham’s apparent dubiousness about the notion Elizabeth had ‘saved’ England is perhaps justified. The Virgin Queen had not restored peace in 1588 but only won a short-lived victory, the effects of which wore off as England was faced with the economic difficulties of a war that, in 1589, did not look set to be quelled. Furthermore, the 1589 counterattack was a failure, and its (unrecouped) costs had further depleted the English treasury. Thus, the ample beneficence of Elizabeth’s eroticised body appeared in stark contrast to the deprivations besetting England.

The seventh *Partheniades* outwardly appears celebratory, comparing individual aspects

³¹⁸ Lisa Gim, ‘Blasoning “The Princesse Paragon”: The Workings of George Puttenham’s False Semblant” in His “Partheniades” to Queen Elizabeth’, *Modern Language Studies* 28, no. 3/4 (1998): 77.

³¹⁹ George Puttenham, ‘The Arte of English Poesie’, (Representative Poetry Online: University Libraries of Toronto), 3, <https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/content/arte-poesie-1589>

³²⁰ Winchcombe, ‘Endgame’.

of Elizabeth's body with 'a natural thing of excellent perfection'. It conventionally likens her complexion to lilies and roses and her eyes to shining, guiding stars. However, the latter half contains eroticised metaphor:

Her bosome sleake as Paris plaster,
Helde *up* two balles of alabaster,
Eche byas was a little cherrie:
Or els I thinke a strawberie.³²¹

Puttenham's imagery played upon the contemporary image of Elizabeth's bosom left exposed as an indication of her unmarried and virginal state, exaggerated through the exposure of her breasts.³²² Though apparently flattering, by envisaging the aging Elizabeth as a young and sexually desirable woman, it was thinly veiled mockery of the discrepancy between her advancing age and the youthful style of dress she favoured (as depicted in *The Rainbow Portrait*, for example). This garners further momentum when it is factored that it was republished in *The Arte*, by drawing attention to the fact nothing had altered in the intervening timespan, imbuing a farcical quality to Elizabeth's appearance and behaviour as well as criticism of remaining unmarried. The provocative nature of her behaviour was also indicative of a humoural imbalance thought to affect women who remained unwed.

Elizabeth's exposed breast, described by Anna Whitelock as the source of 'royal beneficence', was transformed, satirising the queen's two Bodies and their inaccessibility.³²³ Elizabeth was commodified, rendering her body fit for (sexual) consumption. Cherries and strawberries are also seasonal fruits, therefore a fleeting extravagance; as a metaphor for a nipple, it suggests the exposal was brief, imbuing a teasing and flirtatious quality to the action.

³²¹ Puttenham 'The Arte of English Poesie', 205.

³²² The humoural understanding of the body attributed sexual desire to women, who were believed to need sexual fulfilment (only permissible through marriage); to postpone both made women ill. With female lust both natural and sinful, chastity became aspirational.

³²³ Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows*, 276.

This is also representative of the lustful nature unmarried women were thought to possess. One can also equate this ‘brevity’ of exposure with the scarcity of Elizabeth’s public appearances, which may be critical of Elizabeth’s public absence throughout the threat of the Armada.

As with the earlier example of *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting*, there is a realignment of the power balance, with the alpha Elizabeth again rendered submissive to a male, although Puttenham also deployed sexual objectification. Through his authorial position as witness to Elizabeth’s exposed and undeniably feminine body, Puttenham further emasculated her portrayal as the equivalent of a strong and imperial king. As Gim outlines:

While overtly [Puttenham] is paying a supreme compliment to her beauty, he is also turning his queen into an object of erotic display through the male gaze and as viewing subject, the writer gains power over her as represented object. The reading subject of these poems, in appropriating the male gaze at Elizabeth as the eroticized object, gains power over the sovereign representationally as well.³²⁴

It has been observed that Elizabeth, trapped in her displays, effectively entrapped courtiers who were required to perpetuate them. However, that power dynamic is disrupted if the courtier ridiculed, particularly when deploying ‘celebratory’ verse that itself served as a demonstration of poetic art. Gim also acknowledges this rebalance, with Elizabeth either compelled to identify as the object, not the subject, or alternately to adopt a male gaze and disassociatedly view her body as objectified.³²⁵ Elsewhere in *The Arte*, Puttenham describes aspects of a prince’s reign worthy of celebration inapplicable to Elizabeth, including solemn rejoicing for marriages, and for the nativity of prince’s children.³²⁶ Beneath the veneer of praise existed an apparent, underlying critique.

In Thomas Lodge’s *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, also published in 1589, the description of

³²⁴ Gim, ‘Blasoning “The Princesse Paragon”’, 80.

³²⁵ Gim, 80.

³²⁶ Puttenham ‘The Arte of English Poesie’, 37.

Glaucus' mistress – allusive to Elizabeth – similarly included 'fruity' alabaster breasts:

Her pollisht necke of milke white snowes doth shine,
 As when the Moone in Winter night beholdes them:
 Her breast of alablaster cleere and fine,
 Whereon two rising apples faire unfolds them
 Like *Cinthias* face when in her full she shineth,
 And blushing to her Love-mates bower declineth.
 But why alas should I that Marble hide
 That doth adorne the one and other flank,
 From whence a mount of quickned snow doth glide;
 Or els the vale that bounds this milkwhite banke.
 Where *Venus* and her sisters hide the fount,
 Whose lovely Nectar dooth all sweetes surmount.³²⁷

Milk white skin alongside marble and snow colourations denotes an unblemished state pertaining to virginity, though it was not presented as a virtuous celebration. The previously inaccessible is visually detailed in language suggestive of male dominance and female sexual availability. 'Milk white' implies unexposed, paler flesh, eroticising the concept of a body revealed for the first time, and one that surrenders to sexual desire upon her lover's bower. Lodge describes the body's contours through geographic imagery, with 'mount' also possessing sexual connotations. Gowing discerns how dramatists and satirists were mesmerised with the body's potential for grotesque behaviour, with the female body satirised as 'leaky'. This, in part, was due to the medical understanding that women's bodies were imbalanced (through an excess of fluid humours) and were consequently inferior to men's.³²⁸ The concealed fount is recognisably a reference to the vulva, and the nectar (the 'leaky' aspect) suggests cunnilingus. Although portraiture allegorising Elizabeth's virginal state has previously been understood to celebrate her commitment to chastity, Anna Whitelock

³²⁷ Thomas Lodge, *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge* (Glasgow: Robert Anderson, 1883), 15.

³²⁸ Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*, 7–8.

summarises Lodge as rejecting the cult of virginity she embodied.³²⁹ The eroticism, in contrast to Elizabeth's true age, further discredited the 'mask of youth' commonplace in Elizabeth's later portraiture and an important aspect of her Virgin Queen persona.

There was discernible criticism of the succession too. Venus (and Cupid) is connotative in art with the Fountain of Youth (interpretively the 'fount' Venus hides), with the indication that love is the true rejuvenator. With Venus embodying the antithesis of virginity, there is clear indication that Elizabeth's unmarried – and loveless – virginal state had produced the opposite to its desired effect, garnering ridicule. Bolen categorised Venus as an alchemical goddess, one susceptible to change.³³⁰ This similarly contrasts with Elizabeth and her *Semper Eadem* motto. Remaining unchanged had resulted in England's uncertain future beyond her death, for another interpretation is that rejuvenation occurs through children. Venus and Cupid were mother and child, with rejuvenation interpretative as successive, essentially inherited by the next generation. Recall that Elizabeth was arguably regarded less as a person, more an embodiment of state. For monarchy, such an interpretation would further correlate with the Body *politic*, which would (ideally) transfer to the incumbent's eldest son. However, Elizabeth's unchanged virginal state had resulted in no heir of the body. Such a portrayal is therefore not merely satirical, but critical and condemnatory.

Elizabeth's 'Golden' image

In the introduction I outlined some of the difficulties besetting Elizabeth, and more generally Elizabethan England, in 1593, to provide an example of how difficult it is to situate her Virgin Queen persona as one of triumph and 'greatness' in the context of her reign. To recap,

³²⁹ Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows*, 277.

³³⁰ Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman*, 224.

Parliament sought funds for overseas campaigns and faced the continued threat of Spanish invasion. Plague was epidemic, which alongside increased immigration placed the country under greater economic strains, worsened by a succession of under-productive harvests. Elizabeth's succession also remained a contentious topic. 1588 marked a noticeably definitive moment for Elizabeth, following which some formerly stabilising factors fell away. Many important figures from her life and reign died. These included Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Dudley, by then the Earl of Leicester, shortly after the Armada. Walsingham followed in 1590, and Sir Christopher Hatton in 1591. These government representatives were replaced by a younger generation impatient with their aging queen, yet deeply competitive for her attention, as her favour could lead to greater privilege and wealth. The consequence to this was increased factionalism in court. Despite their fervour in seeking patronage, Elizabeth did not possess the same sway over the new generation of courtiers that she had formerly had over their predecessors. Elizabeth is frequently regarded as having been jealous of her ladies-in-waiting, who also became ever younger as her reign progressed. They naturally possessed the youth and beauty which Elizabeth could only strive to emulate, whilst also drawing attention away from Elizabeth herself.

There are strong indicators to suggest that she experienced a decrease in public popularity too, as indicated above in the poetry of Puttenham and Lodge. Following the 1588 Armada, other contributing factors included taxations to finance England's overseas campaigns, a lack of remuneration for people who had served in England's military, and an expanding population (both native and from overseas) faced with food shortages and the rising price of commodities. The repression of English Catholicism also increased in the aftermath of the Armada. Whilst this may seem a logical manoeuvre from our modern perspective, given the threat that had been posed by Spanish Catholic forces, and a fear that their failure in the Armada would incite insurrection in England, for the majority of English Catholics who had conformed

with the settlement, (the church-papists identified in chapter i) it must have been a troubling development. Some estimates, such as that by Borman, assert that up to half the populace may have remained faithful to Catholicism.³³¹ However, this differs from MacGregor's assertion that the old religion was gradually replaced (by 1593, many would have been unable to remember Catholic ritual in England churches),³³² Collinson's view that the populace could not be clearly defined as either Reformist or Catholic,³³³ and Duffy's belief that English Catholics were largely accommodated to the settlement.³³⁴

Elizabeth increasingly relied on granting monopolies as a cost-free system of patronage. This, I propose, may also have been an effort to maintain control away from the male-dominated environment of Parliament, rather than herself having to seek subsidies through that body. However, it resulted in price-fixing, placing increasing burden upon an already heavily taxed populace whilst the patronised courtier(s) accrued increasing wealth. On the 30 November 1601, the issue was addressed in the House of Commons. In a speech to a deputation of members, Elizabeth discussed the issue of royal patents whilst claiming ignorance of the corruption her system had caused, with promises of redressal.

Mr. Speaker, we perceive by you, whom we did constitute the mouth of our Lower House, how with even consent they are fallen into the due consideration of the precious gift of thankfulness, most usually least esteemed where it is best deserved.³³⁵

But it also provided an opportunity to address and reflect upon her role as queen, her relationship with God and her subjects, and her sense of royal duty and responsibility. It was

³³¹ Simon Winchcombe, 'The Battle for England', DVD, *Armada: 12 Days to Save England* (BBC, 2015).

³³² MacGregor, *Shakespeare's Restless World*, 26.

³³³ Collinson, 'John Foxe and National Consciousness', 26.

³³⁴ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 570.

³³⁵ A full transcription from the Commons journal of Hayward Townshend, MP for Bishopscastle, Shropshire. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Rawlinson A 100, fols. 97v-101r. Printed in Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 335-40.

an opportunity for the aging queen to burnish her Virgin Queen image, and all its associative benefits, before the delegation and, via its circulation, the wider populace.

A sense of humility pervades through the speech, though it differed from much earlier demonstrations, such as her letter to Edward and the public addresses surrounding her coronation. In those circumstances, humility and demureness were not only expected in association with her gender, but arguably formed part of a negotiation in acquiring what she sought. With the letter, that could be recognition from her half-brother or – as I argue – Somerset, with a view to her prospects. At that date, the likelihood of her becoming queen must have seemed remote; attracting the attention of powerful and influential men would have stood her in better stead for an advantageous marriage, or the conferral of titles and properties, amongst other potential prospects.

In her public addresses around the date of her coronation, humility was a quality that could be interpreted as endearing; she sought a positive public consensus, following the disruptive reign of Mary and in respect of the perceived disadvantage her gender still posed. To be humble before God consequently humbled her before the crowds of spectators, though demonstrating that she was worthy of assuming the duties of queen for she had acquired that status through her faith in Him. Elizabeth would come to declare that there is only one God and the rest disputes over trifles. Perhaps the significance of that statement has been overshadowed by the circumstances which surrounded the religious settlement. If one presumes this was a longstanding view, then that may have included the date of her coronation. To be humble before God is to be humble before the one God. Therefore, irrespective of whether the spectator be Reformist or Catholic, Elizabeth demonstrated that she was subservient to a higher power, arguably striving for approval from everybody. Biblical portrayals were equally appropriate in that circumstance, for they were again acceptable and understandable to both religious factions.

However, in the Golden Speech, Elizabeth's humility possessed a placatory quality, for her actions have been understood as contributory towards contemporary difficulties. Elizabeth began her address to those assembled, directed to the Speaker Sir John Choke, by expressing 'consideration', by being 'grateful', and acknowledging that their expressed thanks are accepted with 'no less joy than your loves can have desire to offer such a present.' This is followed by the assurance that no prince loves their subjects better, or that no jewel can be worth more than the value of their love, which is summarised as 'unvaluable'. Elizabeth represented herself as a demure, and what may be labelled feminine, character. She isolated herself amidst the multitude, though less to the effect of insinuating her uniqueness, but instead denoting that her potential is only made possible by the continued contribution (the continuing love) of her people, which is granted equal merit with her God-bestowed position: 'This makes me that I do not so much rejoice that God hath made me to be a queen, as to be a queen over so thankful a people.'³³⁶

Whilst impossible to understand Elizabeth's motives, logical explanations can be deduced. Given the contemporary displeasure at the monopoly system, it would be sensible for Elizabeth to appease the delegation which brought the issue before her. Elizabeth would also have been aware that the meeting would be recorded and granted wider public access, thus her humble and deprecatory address may have been deployed to help restore waning public opinion. She continued by stating she owed a duty to, whilst wishing for nothing more than, the contentment of her subjects. Roles are blurred, with Elizabeth perceiving herself beholden to her people as much as her people are beholden to her. It betokened a form of contract: a state of inter-dependency between monarch and subject, much like Gascoigne addressed in *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting*. This symbiotic arrangement was the basis for her successful reign, which is reflected upon with a fondness and affection one might describe as motherly.

³³⁶ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 337.

Elizabeth posited herself very much in roles expected of Early Modern woman: subservient (she was before a delegation of men) and maternally caring. This motherly nature furthermore possessed a sense of selflessness, for to be mother to all she forewent marriage and motherhood, thus portraying her virginity (and the Virgin Queen) as a positive benefit.

Proclaiming herself as God's deliverer and instrument had preserved people from envy, peril, dishonour, shame, tyranny, and oppression. These logically refer to former threats posed by such events as the Armada, propagandistically establishing Elizabeth as a saviour figure whose victory can be credited to God. However, it could also be problematic and in some circumstances she could be perceived to have failed: the monopoly system, for example, did not preserve the poorer strata of society from some of the agues listed. Before addressing that issue directly, Elizabeth absolved herself of blame by concentrating upon her generosity, which is bestowed with the outlined intent of benefitting everyone.

My heart was never set on worldly goods, but only for my subjects' good. What you bestow on me, I will not hoard it up, but receive it to bestow on you again. Yea, my own properties I account yours to be expended for your own good, and your eyes shall see the bestowing of all for your good.³³⁷

Thus, the implication is that others were to blame if the bestowal of her properties (such as monopolies) is appropriated by the receiver for their individual gain. Their 'eyes' shall see that, indicative that Elizabeth will successfully persuade doubters of her good intent.

Implication is subsequently made statement of fact, marking a distinct shift in address. There is a discernible break, in which Elizabeth bid the kneeling delegation stand. Purportedly it is in respect to the length of the speech, therefore easing the comfort of her listeners, but I argue both the timing and act are significant. Those assembled are no longer subservient in posture; the speech is continued on what may be perceived as a more equal footing. This small

³³⁷ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 338.

gesture reinforced Elizabeth's earlier stance of being as dependent upon them as they are upon her. She does not even command they stand, only wishes it. Yet being requested to stand is a subtle indicator that the key issue is to be discussed; effectively, they are to stand and take note of what she has to say, demonstrating her capability to undemonstratively wield power still, however subtle. This is then proceeded by another instance of humility, discernibly counteracting the power she had wielded: 'I have more cause to thank you all than you me.'³³⁸ A repetitive pattern emerges, with Elizabeth acquiescing to her gender and human foibles before demonstrating that she still held governance.

Elizabeth spoke of having risked error – but not of committing any. She thanked those assembled and the Lower House for knowledge of the situation but indicated it precedes, and prevents, misjudgement on her part. It is exonerating, whilst eclipsing the situation entirely; her subsequent actions in lieu of this knowledge will prevent anything unfavourable from arising. Blame is shifted without any direct accusation made, beneficial to Elizabeth as the monopolies she granted were for her benefit as well as the receivers'. Noticeably, she does not say how those perceived as guilty will be reprimanded:

That my grants should be grievous unto my people and oppressions to be privileged under colour of our patents, our kingly dignity shall not suffer it. Yea, when I heard it I could give no rest unto my thoughts until I had reformed it.³³⁹

Throughout her reign, Elizabeth repeatedly conceded to hearing and understanding the counsel given to her, and that she would act in accordance with it. Though she would often conceal the nature of the accordant action, or when it would be undertaken, or if the action itself is the desired outcome of the petition. In this scenario, the difficulty is in ascertaining what she has 'reformed'. It appears, by casting the aspersion away from the bestowal of monopolies towards

³³⁸ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 338.

³³⁹ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 339.

the ‘varlets and low persons’ unworthy of the name of subjects, that the reform pertains to the negative impact upon her ‘kingly dignity’ (in effect her public image), which the speech is anticipated to correct. So much so, that in her thanks to the members and the Lower Houses she was ‘exceedingly grateful’ for their incapability to let her suffer any diminution to her honour. Elizabeth exonerated herself further by acknowledging her subservience to a higher Judge, God, who she hoped would not lay the ‘culps and offences’ of the varlets at her charge. Her use of the pronoun ‘we’, though indicative of Elizabeth acknowledging she is answerable to God’s higher authority (being in possession of two Bodies, the use of a plural pronoun still signifies her individually), may also be indicative that everybody, including those who have abused her generosity, is to be held accountable before the great Judge. That they went unnoticed by her did not mean they would escape punishment.

Towards its conclusion the tone of the speech changed again, to reveal a distinctly personal aspect. She reflects on the role of being a queen (or king), stating that it is not an easy burden, nor one anybody else present could relate to: ‘To be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasant to them that bear it.’³⁴⁰ ‘Bear’ is connotative of a struggle, and persistence through difficult or adverse conditions. To bear a burden also implies selflessness, that an action is undertaken for the benefit of others. Elizabeth also assured the assembled that the title of king had not ‘dazzled the eyes of our understanding’, but that ‘we know and remember that we also are to yield an account of our actions before the great Judge’.³⁴¹ This strips Elizabeth of some of her glory, again re-equating herself with her audience. To ‘know’ and ‘remember’ indicates a state of self-reflection and experience. This may pertain to being interrogated as an adolescent, be that over the Seymour scandal or (accused) involvement in plots against Mary I, for which she also had to yield accounts to

³⁴⁰ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 339.

³⁴¹ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 339.

vindicate herself. To acknowledge that her actions are judged by God attests to this serving as a guiding influence. She was aware her actions will be answerable, both as an individual person as well as in her role as queen. It implied that no action by her was ever undertaken without thought being given to its judgement, implying that she had acted piously and without self-interest. The inference could be that God acted in a correctional capacity to Elizabeth's own interests.

Elizabeth remarks that she was never enticed by the glorious name of a king or royal authority of a queen. There is more than one interpretation to that statement. First, it is an acknowledgement that she was never raised in expectation of being monarch. Secondly, that she was never enticed by the example of other monarchs, whether a king or queen. This could encompass marriage suits by foreign kings and princes, pleas received from Mary Stuart, or individuals such as Catherine de Médicis, who had put forth potential marriage suitors for Elizabeth. Rather than being enticed, Elizabeth was instead delighted 'that God have made me his instrument to maintain His truth and glory, and to defend this kingdom (as I said) from peril, dishonour, tyranny, and oppression.'³⁴² Elizabeth's actions as queen are reiterated as being undertaken in God's service. To maintain his truth and glory (interpretive as God's Word, therefore relating to her religious settlement), she has defended England. This has been partly achieved through her unmarried state, in consequence of which England has maintained its independence. The repeated list of agues now warrants a revised interpretation, as the threat posed by the villainous 'other', be it an individual person (which may include a marriage suitor), a country, or religion (including Catholicism, but also branches of Reformism).

Elizabeth was sixty-seven years of age at that time and – without acknowledging it outright – implies in the speech that she is a mortal woman, despite all the allegorical manifestations of a divine and immortal Virgin Queen her portraiture widely adopted. 'For it

³⁴² Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 339.

is not my desire to live nor reign longer than my life and reign shall be for your good.’³⁴³

Immortality is instead implied through the capacity of human memory:

And though you have had and may have many more princes more mighty and wise siting
in this seat, yet you never had or shall have any that will be more careful and loving.³⁴⁴

She would be remembered as the most careful and loving monarch, again reiterating motherly qualities. A mighty and wise ruler may be associated with other pursuits, such as conquest and the expansion of their empire, or the accumulation of wealth and power, or their capability to guarantee succession, but Elizabeth would be remembered foremost for her commitment to England and its people, protecting both from threats. To establish this, Elizabeth indirectly references her speech at Tilbury, repeating a trope from that earlier example. She rhetorically asks if anything should be ascribed to her ‘sexly weakness’ (or the body of a weak and feeble woman), before asserting she had the heart given to her by God that has never feared any enemy. This is the heart of a king (‘and a king of England’) which defended from both ‘foreign or home enemy’. Everything that she had achieved, including the unification of the populace in a tolerant state religion, defending England from varying threats to its stability and increasing imperialistic growth and prestige, to the creation of a memorable reign worthy of distinction, had been achieved through her appropriation of a Virgin Queen image.

It was to be one of Elizabeth’s last prominent speeches, before her death in 1603. Although she could not have known when she would die, the fact most people with whom she had grown up alongside, and who had been her companions from the outset of her reign, were pre-deceasing her, probably brought an awareness that her own life was nearer its end. This would explain the reflective quality of the speech towards its conclusion, speaking of princes who had

³⁴³ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 339–40.

³⁴⁴ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 340.

preceded and who will succeed her. My view is that Elizabeth, all too aware of her mortality, had begun to lay the foundation for her immortality in the national consciousness. Knowing that she would not physically live forever, she could endeavour to do so in memory. Her speech isolates and celebrates her reign as one of unique distinction which shall never be equalled, all through her service to God. This she has achieved, in part, through her virginity, which by that date was publicly manifested as the Virgin Queen. Surprisingly, there is no outright reference to virginity in the speech; it is only implied, through reference to her commitment to God and to England, the latter of which has been saved. Thus, virginity is portrayed as not having been a personal choice, but one that evinced her dedication to a higher cause, similar to her predecessor Richard II. It was a selfless act which, although problematic in respect of the succession, was done in service to England, and will continue to be recognised of service to England by future generations.

The evidence would indicate Elizabeth's foundations ultimately succeeded. After her death, the Golden Speech was frequently recited and reprinted. The name denotes its high value and significance, though may also relate to a particularly propitious or advantageous moment. Marcus et al write that it served as an example of royal assent to the redress of public grievances.³⁴⁵ But I propose it served more than that purpose alone. It was an example of how monarch and people are dependent upon each other, and that the most successful monarchs are those who generate rapport with their subjects. Magnificence is best accompanied with humility and gratitude. I do not believe Elizabeth forgot the obstacles she overcame during her journey to the throne. Furthermore, that journey gave her first-hand experience of the precariousness of a person's status, which could change in a brief span of time, and which she had encountered from a young and formative age. Her security as queen depended upon garnering, then retaining, the support of the English people. Hence, every decision served their

³⁴⁵ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 336.

interests at heart, or had to be presented as such. She successfully acquired an image of virginity which enveloped her public visage, and which became widely associated with her care and attention over England, a devotion which the Golden Speech re-emphasised throughout. The speech warrants its golden credit as it encapsulated Elizabeth's Virgin Queen reign as a successful and glorious period of English history.

Fig.12



The cover of Elizabeth's translation of *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, 1544,
Bodleian Library, Oxford, Cherry MS 36, cover.

Fig.13

The presentation copy of Elizabeth's translation of *Prayers and Medytacions*. 1545,
The British Library, Royal MS 7D.x, cover.

Fig.14

William Scrots. *Elizabeth I when a Princess*. c.1546.
Oil on panel. 108.5 x 81.8 cm. The Royal Collection Trust. RCIN 404444

Fig.15



The inscription in Elizabeth's French book of Psalms.
 The Royal Collection Trust. RCIN 1051956.

Conclusion

This is a study seeking to ascertain a more concise understanding of the development of the public persona of the Virgin Queen. One might summarise Elizabeth's reign as a continual game of one-upmanship between herself and those who portrayed her, which began with her religious image. For example, her initial self-fashioned portrayal as the biblical prophet Daniel was consequently reclaimed by the collective compilers of the Geneva Bible, seeking to restrain her independence and ensure she conform to the perceived expectations and duties of her status and gender. The multi-faceted nature of such Biblical comparisons inevitably brought problems. For example, Deborah was a prophet and the sole female judge in the Bible, making her appear an appropriate image for Elizabeth to adopt. But Deborah was also a wife – therefore the property of a man – and by receiving counsel her independence was inhibited. Each party could deploy one facet to countermeasure the other, though there was no discernible conclusion through such methodology.

Elizabeth's persona developed throughout her reign in response to her contemporary environments. Her capability to respond to public scrutiny coincided with her deft awareness of the inferior political – and social – position of women generally. The image of the Virgin Queen, through varying allegorical and biblical sources, emerged in response to the perceived shortcoming of her gender, and to countermeasure concern and critique about Elizabeth's marriage and the succession. But unlike her religious image, which was appropriated by others, I posit that it was Elizabeth who appropriated her Virgin Queen image, allowing her to maintain both her independence and authority. I propose that *The Three Goddesses* was the first example of Elizabeth depicted as a Virgin Queen, and the first recognition of her dedication to virginity before a wider public. Earlier portraiture had drawn attention to her virginity, but it was to indicate her eligibility as a wife by quashing scandalous rumours. I do not believe it was in

Elizabeth's remit to control the allegorical representation in *The Three Goddesses*, but her evident approval of it (for why display the painting in her royal residence(s) for thirty years otherwise?) set in action a course of further allegorical representations across the arts alongside her own fashioning of a Virgin Queen persona, embodying an image of womanhood and queenship worthy of veneration. But before the Virgin Queen image began to materialise in the late 1560s, it had been preceded by a religious settlement which similarly sought to achieve unification behind the figure – and image – of Elizabeth. One recurrence across both images was the theme of her uniqueness. As the last (legitimate) child of Henry VIII and of the Tudor lineage, she capitalised upon this apparent isolated state by cultivating an image connotative of individuality.

Within literature, Elizabeth is remembered for her Virgin Queen glory and magnificence, whether as Spenser's allegorical Gloriana or through comparisons with Diana, Minerva, and other mythological deities, as exemplified by the dramatic works of Peele. Elizabeth became the unobtainable and unique queen in English history. Her Virgin Queen epithet would be recognised as substitutive for the Virgin Mary, a comparison also connotative to the restoral of a Golden Age of wealth, influence, power, and prosperity. Her visage itself underwent a significant transformation, with great success: many of her images – particularly later portraits – are instantly recognisable today, with the highly connotative white face, red hair, and magnificent costume. Similarly, her verbal self-representation, particularly in speeches, also adapted to her Virgin Queen persona, and like later portraiture, these works remain amongst the most memorable and iconic of her literary output. For example, the Armada speech is frequently recited in film and television adaptations (with or without the

debated body armour) and is recognised to epitomise Elizabeth's linguistic and literary skills.³⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the Golden speech is identifiable as Elizabeth's most celebrated speech, especially following her death, due to the proliferation of copies, reprints, and its circulation in the seventeenth century and beyond.

This study has benefited from examining Elizabeth's life prior to becoming queen, during her formative years. Much of this period in her life I would summarise, in brief, as isolating. During her infancy, she was distanced from much of her direct family, residing at a separate residence to her parents. Her mother died when Elizabeth was only two, and her closest family interactions would have been with her half-siblings. Mary and Elizabeth became increasingly distanced because of differences in their religious upbringings, as well as differences in age. Then Elizabeth was separated from Edward in 1554, although they had formerly spent their childhood together under a shared tutelage. Though these were not unnatural occurrences for the children of monarchy and the aristocratic classes, it recognisably prepared Elizabeth for a life of individuality and what may be analysed as distance. Royal children were generally brought up solely by women in their early years, and in likelihood, the most constant male influence throughout her early life were her tutors.

Elizabeth received a thorough education, which was uncommon for women and often considered unnecessary, since they were largely excluded from civic and public life. It undoubtedly benefited her when she became queen, but it was not intentionally preparatory to that role. Edward would have been prepared for monarchy, and expected to provide heirs, then

³⁴⁶ During an interview between Foreman and actor Fiona Shaw, the latter elucidates upon the proliferation of words entering the English language during the Elizabethan period, and how Elizabeth used language to retain power. Focusing upon the Armada speech, which is understood to express a battle between thought and feeling, the structure of the speech emphasised select words. 'Feeble woman' is emphasised but essentially corrected through the following, again emphasised assertion of 'heart and stomach' and 'King'. Interpretively, the external, feeble 'thought' was compensated for by an internal 'feeling' of masculine strength. Hooper, 'Power'.

in the event of his premature death Mary was the elder sister. Elizabeth was not educated to become a queen, but received an education befitting a royal, specifically a prince. Being in receipt of an education that attested to her high status plausibly served to benefit her future marriageability. This education left her the equal of many of her male contemporaries, but it had one obvious disadvantage. Foreman asserts that Humanist education was steeped in patriarchal ideals, perpetuating the view of female inferiority.³⁴⁷ Elizabeth, therefore, was raised in a system that endemically considered her inferior, regardless of her accomplishments and status.

It is unsurprising, given her upbringing predominantly amidst women, that the early relationships she forged with men were those which subsequently had a significant impact on her life. Elizabeth perceptibly grew up naïve in respect of men, as demonstrated by her relationship with Thomas Seymour. She was a royal teenage heiress when she received flattering attentions from a reputedly handsome man. Nobody can ascertain if she was aware his attentions were, as may be gauged from his similar interests in Mary, focused upon her wealth and societal position, and that he was probably seeking to take advantage of her relation to Edward (by that date under the wardship of Somerset). The consequences that followed Seymour's actions, I propose, spawned Elizabeth's commitment to a life of virginity – or at the least an extreme cautiousness towards suitors – despite the difficulties it brought once she was elevated to the status of queen, and the internalised conflict it clearly exacerbated, as is exemplified by the content of *On Monsieur's Departure*.

William Cecil had become an integral part of Elizabeth's life from 1550, serving as an administrator over her lands. He was present whilst her fortunes fluctuated during Mary I's reign (and beyond) and was immediately awarded the post of Secretary of State when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne. An aspect of Elizabeth's early character is revealed in her first

³⁴⁷ Hooper, 'Power'.

recorded speech, for there is a conferral of responsibility upon Cecil (and more broadly her elected advisors) which mirrored her own responsibilities as queen, though without an outright expression of such. She sought his counsel on the grounds that it would benefit her and England, initially irrespective of her private will. It is indicative that Elizabeth felt, however temporarily, ill-prepared for a role she had not been raised to inherit, perhaps due to an education and upbringing that established the inferiority of the female gender. As she began her reign, Cecil was charged to offer advice that offset her own potential towards misjudgement:

Because historians have generally been happy to portray Elizabeth as the master puppeteer of the court, controlling, manipulating, and guiding, it has been difficult to ask a crucial question. It is, in some ways, more than a little subversive: who exercised power in the early Elizabethan state? The Queen or her councillors?³⁴⁸

Yet Elizabeth would frequently, and consistently, fail to heed the advice of Cecil or the wider Privy Council, or Commons. The resulting image of the young Elizabeth is more complex than first perceived. That which I present is of a woman who, in her formative years, did not accept that she was inferior simply because of her gender. As the example with Cecil indicates, there were moments when she may have felt at a disadvantage; in a comparatively brief timespan she had been elevated from a state of imprisonment to queen. Now controlling the largest estate of all – a kingdom – it is not unfathomable that she sought advice from a trusted man of experience. Other examples from her reign also evidence this occasional sense of disadvantage: when it was deemed necessary for Mary Stuart to be executed in accordance with English law, Elizabeth apportioned blame between several individuals as it was disadvantageous for herself to be incriminated outright; and during the 1588 Armada, Elizabeth gave authority to the Lord High Admiral, Charles Howard, on matters of naval procedure, with decisions to be made at

³⁴⁸ Pucci, 'Reforming Roman Emperors', 31.

his discretion. She only reclaimed authority when decisions over expenses were required.

But initial inexperience waned. Predominantly, Elizabeth adapted to her role as queen, learnt how to govern men as opposed to solely heeding their advice, and took command. Although a lone woman in a man's world, Elizabeth, it appears, could turn disadvantage into advantage. The notion of her female inferiority, for example, was offset by her recognition as God's elect. This allowed her to defy conventionally patriarchal-dominated spheres, including education, religion, marriage, and war, to accrue power and influence and defy the expectations of others. This was partially achieved through her masterful deployment of language and rhetoric, and an understanding of the power and capability of art to make a statement. Here is the portrait of a woman who defied conventions.

Elizabeth's education may have been steeped in patriarchy, but it also instilled knowledge of how to counter the subordination and suppression of female voice, thought, and action. For Humanism also encouraged everything be questioned. Her tutors, principally Ascham, are recorded as having encouraged her studies and praised her studiousness. One text known to be in her possession was *Le Livre de la cité des dames*, or *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), a revisionist history of prominent female figures written by Christine de Pizan (1364-c.1430). When her father was appointed as astrologer to the court of Charles V of France, Christine also relocated to Paris and, like Elizabeth, received an extensive (and rare) education for a woman. The first section of the *City of Ladies* introduces the three Virtues Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, with whom Christine communes, before she produces a list of numerous women whom she champions. The City of Ladies becomes a metaphoric citadel, constructed from bricks representing heroic female figures throughout history and culture, who thus contribute to the 'defence' of women. She demonstrated how women were beneficial to society, and directly challenged the contemporary misogynistic portrayal of women. She indicated to her female readership that they could overcome their marginalised state, as exemplified by all

the heroic women who had preceded them. As for the male readership, it challenged them to reconsider their opinion.

I argue that Elizabeth was inspired by the *City of Ladies*, and this can be supported by her early appropriation of the biblical figure Deborah, then allegorical allusions to female divinities throughout the latter half of her reign, as reflected in her visage and alterations to her portraiture, which contributed to her Virgin Queen persona. One example is her adoption of pearls, predominantly as jewellery but also incorporated in the material of her clothing and occasionally wigs. In early portraiture, the appearance of pearls on crowns or similar is recognisably a detail that denotes the value of the item. Yet they are noticeably absent from her attire nor woven into her dresses in her depictions in the Coronation, Clopton, or *Three Goddesses* portraits; those instead rely on intricate patterning to convey wealth, plus additional symbols of status such as a crown or inherited jewellery. Pearls became increasingly incorporated from the 1570s onwards; the Armada Portrait from the late 1580s contains over eight hundred. This is known not to be purely artistic licence, for Hentzner described seeing her silk gown bordered with pearls the size of beans.³⁴⁹ Allegorically, they came to represent purity, therefore Elizabeth's virginity, whilst portraying her in alignment with goddesses such as Minerva and Cynthia, the latter of whom was also the Moon Goddess (the pearl's shape and colour being connotative of the moon), and the Virgin Mary. These female figures, and others like them, were to become Elizabeth's defence against patriarchy and misogyny.

Christine also demonstrated that it was possible for a woman to survive independently through her education. She had been widowed by twenty-five and survived off her writing alone; she never remarried, and eventually retired to a convent. Hers, like Elizabeth's, was a life that can be summarised as championing the role of women. Elizabeth came to rely heavily upon literature and language throughout her life. She was a master rhetorician, capable of

³⁴⁹ Rye, *England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth & James the First*, 105.

deploying language to appease, sway, and endear her audience, be it an individual or a crowd. But the same could also attack and incite, or command power, respect, and reverence. Language could affectively counter perceived limitations of her gender, and as queen she would be addressed as your highness or your majesty. She referred to herself as a prince, or compared herself with a king, since the preferred gender of monarchy remained male. Elizabeth wrote about the importance of letters in her correspondence with Katherine Parr, who I believe to have been another highly influential female figure in Elizabeth's formative years, in an educational, parental, and monarchical capacity.

Parr played a part in Elizabeth's religious education, but also exemplified the limitations of a woman's influence when in thrall to a man, as denoted by Henry VIII's repudiation of her when she petitioned for stronger religious reforms. This understandably made Elizabeth aware of the precariousness of reform too, and the necessity for balance; her subsequent middle-ground settlement can be likened to Henry's similarly cautious approach, with her disdain for 'newfangledness' an awareness it only widened the religious divide. She sought an equilibrium. However, Parr still held significant power and knew how to wield it effectively, reigning in Henry's stead whilst he forayed overseas. For Elizabeth – and presumably Mary – this must have been an indicator that women were as capable as men in undertaking monarchic responsibilities. And for Elizabeth in particular, it showed that they could do so independently; Henry was absent for the period in which Parr reigned.

It is my view that Parr's most significant contribution to Elizabeth's eventual image, however, fell after the death of Henry VIII. It was her actions in the ensuing weeks and months which made Elizabeth aware of the precarious situation of women politically. Changes to Henry's will had already prevented Parr from ruling as consort, in the event his death preceded Edward reaching maturity. Significantly, she was overturned in favour of the male relatives to the male heir. Parr remarried hastily and – in view of the evidence – unwisely, for despite

romantic involvement with Seymour prior to Henry seeking her as his wife, there are established reasons to explain Seymour's proposal: theoretically, it brought him closer to Edward and his influence; an elevation of status, since Parr was the former queen consort; monetary advantages; and a closer relationship to her ward, Elizabeth, a royal daughter and inheritor.

Elizabeth witnessed a woman marry unwisely before herself becoming embroiled in what might fairly be described as a love triangle. This negatively impacted her reputation (with enduring repercussions) along with her relationship to an individual who had been mother, tutor, and (I posit) a mentor. It also impacted upon her relationship with other women, including Astley. It is from this period in her life that I believe Elizabeth passed the naivety of youth and confronted, through her own experience, a realisation that a woman in her society – and particularly of her status – could only be beheld as one of two labels: good or bad.

Tillyard expounded upon the 'constitution of the world' in the Elizabethan era, a continuation of the Medieval construct of an ordered universe arranged in a fixed system of hierarchies: 'Everything had to be included and everything had to be made to fit and connect'.³⁵⁰ Judith Herrin outlines how the Early Modern world, broadly, was distinctly polarised: good and bad; right and wrong; heaven and hell, a view corroborated by Malcolm Gaskill in his overview of English society during the successive reign of James I/VI.³⁵¹ In its Christian application towards women, such polarisation constituted two possible identifications: Mary and Eve. Arguably, first Parr, then Elizabeth, were perceived as 'Eve' figures through their association with Seymour, and it is my view that to rectify and limit the damage, Elizabeth recognised the most prudent option before her was gradual identification as 'Mary', or essentially to become virginal. As Herrin explains:

³⁵⁰ E M W Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1945), 3.

³⁵¹ Hooper, 'Power'.

Female sexuality was always very dangerous. If you could not be as elevated as the Virgin Mary herself, the Mother of God, you had to be Eve. And this classification of women into either pure evil and wickedness, or the impossible to achieve Christianity of the Mother of God, [left] no middle-ground[.]³⁵²

To achieve her eventual imperial image as a Virgin Queen required drawing upon all her numerous resources, including her upbringing and education, relations with her family and associates, political and religious beliefs, and early understanding of the social position of women. An extensive education equipped her with the ability to effectively deploy rhetoric, whilst her acquaintance with Parr gave her a thorough understanding of the efficacy of literature; the capability of the written word to document one's own perceptions and beliefs yet also sway, impress, or appease others when necessary. To this I would also add 'unite'. Under Parr's guardianship, she witnessed the capabilities but also limitations of a woman in a position of power when in thrall to a man, whilst through her religious upbringing in the aftermath of her father's reformation she experienced the disruption and fractionalization of a religiously – and politically – divided nation. However, it was Henry VIII's actions which allowed for the restoration of what can be construed as an imperial religion archetype, from which Elizabeth laid the groundwork for her own royal supremacy over both Church and State.

Elizabeth's commitment to God is ascertainable through her canonical emblem. Herself emblematised through the celestial sphere, its placement upon the bible is indicative that Elizabeth's trust is, figuratively, placed in the Word of God. It also reflects an isolated status; she was a unique individual holding office alone. To opt for the *pictura*'s celestial sphere as a mode of self-representation may hint at Elizabeth's inclusive attitude, for it represented good relations with her courtiers and populace, seemingly irrespective of religion. Thus, by placing her trust in God, Elizabeth is anticipating good relations with all, whether Reformist or

³⁵² Hooper, 'Power'.

Catholic. For this canonical emblem to be concealed in a private text was not only cautionary, given the sensitive *thema* of the *subscriptio*, but indicative of her isolated self; it is probable it went unseen by others unless Elizabeth elected to disclose it. That may have been in anticipation of possible Catholic reprisal against her rule, or of Reformists' opposition to a plausible representation of religious toleration.

The Petrarchan *inscriptio* further identifies Elizabeth as both unique and isolated. Opposed to the trope of courtly love poetry, in which the male poet addresses and professes his love, Elizabeth challenged the relationship between gender and power, undermining the patriarchal inferiority of the 'distanced' woman by granting this traditionally unobtainable representation of womanhood a voice, having already assumed a status superior to her male contemporaries. 'Wretched is he who places hope in a mortal thing' has a dual interpretation: in relation to the *pictura*, it implies Elizabeth is not wretched but blessed, as her hope is placed in God who is immortal; yet it also implies, to those about to place their hope in her, that her self-portrait is something other than 'mortal', achieved through her role as God's representative, and which would lead to her future manifestation as a goddess-like Virgin Queen.

As queen, Elizabeth was required to overcome the perceived setback of her gender, partially offset through androgynous traits (such as in her address, and identification as a 'prince' or 'king'), though predominantly through the recognition as the pure version of womanhood: the virgin. This image of control, strength, and imperviousness, as well as motherly and nurturing qualities by association with the Virgin Mary, was duly appropriated and allowed Elizabeth to orchestrate an image of imperial strength and durability. This was further bolstered by the longevity of her reign and her settlement whilst reinforced through her own visual presence and literary portrayal. By the end of her reign, she had visually transformed herself into an

immortal, virgin goddess motif, which reiterated England's consequential prosperity and good fortune both at the present time and for future generations.

She did not begin her reign as a Virgin Queen, however. At the outset, her public commitment to virginity was non-existent; instead, she publicly dedicated herself to God and England, as can be evidenced in her coronation portrait. It was logical to model it upon the composition of Richard II's as he was the last king with an undisputed claim to the throne. Imposing, intimidating, and magisterial, it had provided a model for Henry VIII, and the incomparable portraiture of Edward VI and Mary I feels eclipsed, with Elizabeth reconnecting directly to the authority figure of their father whilst providing credential as his equal. It may also serve to acknowledge that other factors in her reign, such as the direction of her religious settlement, were to realign with her father's. It helped to re-instil respect for the power and authority of the monarch, and their judgement, and I believe it was intended to create a good and striking first impression. Richard's dedication to God merged into the sacrificial. His personal effects attest to his devotion, with his eventually gifting England to Christ and the Virgin Mary. He sacrificed his birth-right in reverence, recognisably the greatest attribute a monarch could surrender. Though, to reiterate my earlier finding, the primary use of the Richard II model in the coronation portrait was *not* as an indicator of Elizabeth's virginity.

Another factor, important for this early date in Elizabeth's reign, also warrants consideration. It has previously been ascertained that Richard's deposition latterly caused issue with Elizabeth's identification with him, hence his portrait's removal from public display. Yet at the start of the reign, he arguably evinced the threat of Elizabeth's deposition, for a fellow claimant to the English throne was Elizabeth's cousin Mary Stuart, now cast in the role of Richard's cousin, Henry Bolingbroke (latterly Henry IV). Though successful in deposing Richard, Henry IV's reign sparked a series of events which contributed to the Wars of the Roses. That civil war was ended by the Tudors, thus the painting had notable propagandistic

purposes, signifying the benefits of letting the ‘true’ claimant to the English throne accede and not be deposed. This can be supported by the cloak Elizabeth is depicted wearing; it was the one formerly worn by Mary I during her coronation. Whilst it could be an early example of Elizabeth’s thrifty attitude to money, it probably drew attention to the eligibility of female rulership and her dynastic lineage. Mary I had herself successfully overthrown an ineligible claimant (Jane Seymour), just as Elizabeth superseded Mary Stuart’s claim to the English throne.

Elizabeth’s earlier visual portraiture leaned towards regal opposed to magnificent, as typified by the Clopton Portrait. Her style is restrained, yet elegant. The white and black colour scheme is virginal, but also contrasting, and offsets her pale, alabaster visage. This was a status symbol of wealth and nobility (for the individual was understood to not have to labour out-of-doors, hence their paler skin), as well as being fashionable amongst women. Its formulaic pattern, and numerous copies, suggest it was not done from life though was approved, hence its wider circulation. As proposed above, the probable reason for the lacklustre quality of this early, post-coronation portraiture was the need for Elizabeth and her Council to direct their attentions towards other issues, particularly the religious settlement.

Before her ascendancy, the ongoing religious disparities had inhibited, even threatened, Elizabeth’s life, as they also had Mary I’s. For many, the example of Mary was unlikely to have instilled confidence in the capability of a woman to effectively govern. However, as has been argued above, Mary’s actions were often exemplary; it all pivots upon interpretation. She had married, and although the union was unpopular, it offered substantial benefits; although England became involved in continental European wars, it had been subsumed into the Spanish empire, the largest and wealthiest across Europe, itself at the epicentre of international trade, which any children of that marital union would have been poised to inherit. As befitted her

status and gender, Mary had proven keen to marry and provide an heir, and to her credit appears to have been a loyal and devoted wife. She did everything that was expected of her. But despite following the rulebook, Mary's marriage left her unpopular. It destabilised her, by involving England in costly overseas wars and leaving her dependent upon a husband who, heir to the largest empire in Europe, eventually abandoned her. England had been subsumed, then left with a queen who, without a 'correctional' male authority figure by her side, was directionless and seemingly unable to act.

Elizabeth appears to have had the foresight not to follow the same trajectory as Mary. Her religious settlement sought cohesion and, most importantly, unity. Astutely, Elizabeth must have recognised that abidance to one religious faction risked alienating the other, and entailed potential threats, as witnessed with the Wyatt Rebellion during Mary I's reign. Elizabeth's *via media* approach was sensible, on religious and political grounds. The emergent image of Elizabeth early in her reign has strong Biblical origins. However, neither Elizabeth nor others presented a portrayal that appeared as anything other than a mortal with a strong connection to God. Elizabeth recognised (and established) herself as a figure comparable with Daniel, having endured and overcome difficulties whilst being favoured by God. His prophetic capabilities as acquired through his connection with God, his unwavering faith, and the parallels between his story with reinterpreted Astraeon mythology and its imperial theme, were appropriate for Elizabeth's self-portrayal in the wake of Mary I's reign. Daniel had foreseen better things to come through the return of God's true kingdom. Fundamentally, Elizabeth also presented herself as a *persona mixta*, both secular and spiritual, having been subject to human imperilment yet imbued with divine protection. Cleverly, it meant criticism of her eventual settlement could be parried by her position as God's elect, whom she repeatedly recognised herself as representing upon earth. By establishing herself as acting in accordance with God, theoretically nobody had ground to dispute her actions. This was an essential aspect of restoring

unity, as was the eventual legality of the settlement as enforced through law. The comparison with Daniel was also appropriate for another reason. Elizabeth had endured successive setbacks and hardships, whilst as a bastardised princess with two elder siblings the likelihood of her acquiring the throne would have appeared minimal. It may not be inaccurate to therefore surmise that she truly believed God had favoured her and brought about her ascendancy to the throne. Whether she believed this or not, the comparison with Daniel certainly helped fashion a self-portrait relatable to her experiences which many would understand, and which bolstered her public image.

Religious portraiture was initially the most prominent and widely distributed of Elizabeth, representing her role as Governor of the Church, recognising her positive attributes, and her embodiment of classical Virtues. Stylistically, it loosely correlated with portraiture of her father, the composition of which recognised both his religious and monarchic role combined, strengthening her claim upon the throne through paternal affiliation, and helping to offset the perceived disadvantage of her gender; she was a 'prince' like her father, possessed of male strength and character, and like Daniel was also possessed with a strong connection to God. However, this biblical portrait would later be used by the group of scholars who produced the Geneva Bible, and the comparison with Daniel was reinterpreted. Rather than sufficing as a biblical metaphor to summarise her previous difficulties, Elizabeth was re-envisaged as being saved primarily to fulfil God's work, conferring an obligation upon her.

Despite her self-fashioned comparisons to Daniel, to the patriarchal society of Tudor England Elizabeth's gender brought disadvantages. A perpetual body of people was set upon instructing and quintessentially correcting her, for the preconceived inferiority of women was thought to render them less capable of ruling effectively, which the reign of Mary I was (I argue inaccurately) perceived to have demonstrated. Biblical imagery was partially capable of diffusing the situation, for parallels with other figures including Deborah recognised the

capabilities select and godly women could possess. An androgynous portrait consequently emerged, of the feminine Elizabeth imbued with the character and strength of a man. It was a mode of representation she retained as the Virgin Queen, as demonstrated by its application in both the Armada and Golden speeches several decades later. As the example of Daniel exemplified, this form of self-representation in speeches was also significant, for it was a portrayal that Elizabeth held some degree of control over. It also allowed her to perpetuate the concept of her own uniqueness, which would later become incorporated in allegorical symbolism such as the emblem of the Phoenix.

However, the comparisons with Deborah were frequently drawn by men, and it cannot be overlooked that, through the inference of her receiving counsel, the perceived deficiency of the female is counter-balanced by the male. It was an expectation Elizabeth was repeatedly subjected to. Aside from her ladies, everybody in her immediate vicinity, and particularly in an advisory capacity, was male. This notion of male counsel extended beyond those in her closest retinue, with authors and artists offering an instructive portrait of Elizabeth, biblical or otherwise, premised upon their expectations of her. Consequently, there is a disparity between Elizabeth's own use of biblical representation with that ascribed by others.

Although Richard Grafton's *An Abridgement of the Chronicles of England* (1563) plausibly sought to placate people on the issue of Elizabeth's gender, with Deborah exemplifying how 'women by the spirite and power of almyghte God have ruled both honourably and politiquely',³⁵³ Carol Blessing recognises the repeated comparison as relegation to object status, altered to fit the contemporary political and religious moulds.³⁵⁴ Undeniably, Deborah was unique, a lone female entitled to legitimise and reinforce her

³⁵³ Richard Grafton, *Abridgement of the Chronicle of England* (London, 1572), fol. 195v. Printed in Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy*, 352.

³⁵⁴ Carol Blessing, 'Elizabeth I as Deborah the Judge: Exceptional Women of Power', in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 20.

authority as judge, a role for understanding, interpreting, and adjudicating Hebrew Law. Thus, she was an appropriate figure for the sole Reformist queen regnant in Europe. Yet Deborah was a predominantly biblical rather than political example, which as Blessing observes, glosses over the female entitlement to rule by concentrating on her capacity to receive male counsel.³⁵⁵ I would add that, like the example of Daniel, her spiritual communion with God is interpreted as a conferred obligation, again emphasizing her subservience and the perceived necessity for reform. As well as heeding to a council, Deborah was also understood to be the wife to Lapidoth. In that role, she recognisably abided to Elizabethan society's expectation for a woman to marry both for their health and to provide children, particularly pertinent in relation to Elizabeth's identification as queen and the last legitimate Tudor heir.

Elizabeth's recognition as the biblical Deborah bears parallels with Foxe's portrayal of her as Constantine: both overthrew an oppressive leader, established true religion, and restored peace. Constantine was not only an embodiment of the male, as preferred by Humanists, but was again an individual who readily received counsel, and the initiated 'C' in *Acts and Monuments* starkly demonstrated that Elizabeth was receiving similar. It retained its purpose in the second edition, for the revision of Constantine to Christ allowed for reinterpretation of the three attendant figures: three shepherds tending to their 'lamb' Elizabeth; or three wise men proffering a gift, namely *Acts and Monuments*. This re-emphasised the fact that, although Elizabeth was God's elect, she was recognised as a mortal woman susceptible to error and misjudgement. Pivotaly, Constantine listened to the advice of his councillor, and Foxe presented himself as the equivalent of Eusebius. Cecil's established participation in the production and (latter) distribution of the book could also amount towards the 'fulfilment' of the duty obligated to him by Elizabeth at Hatfield. *Acts and Monuments* served as a martyrological, historiographic

³⁵⁵ Blessing, 21.

guide, and anticipated that Elizabeth would heed its advice – and expectations – through the continuation of a programme of religious reform.

Foxe's portrayal of Elizabeth as a pious and virtuous woman comparative with Constantine bypassed the perceived deficiency of her gender perceived by some of his contemporaries, such as Knox, whilst the subject of religion differentiated Elizabeth favourably from Mary despite the fact she was expected to abide to some similar roles, principally marriage which would lead to an heir. This early comparison with Constantine imbued Elizabeth with a masculine quality which might be construed as compensatory. Primarily, however, I propose that Foxe's choice was calculated to confer upon Elizabeth the responsibility of reform that Constantine embodied as the first Christian emperor.

From the second edition onwards, Elizabeth becomes affiliative with Christ, which can be interpreted as Foxe perceiving Elizabeth's reforms deficient and conferring upon her an obligation parallel with Christ's. However, there is conjectural cause for reconsideration. If Constantine represented the archetypal emperor (notably chosen for his Christian conversion), then it is understood that Elizabeth was anticipated to also restore religious worship to its early form in an imperial State. It hearkens back to a state free of papal dominion, a world united, and the world into which Christ himself entered. Although the Donation of Constantine had historically associated him with the papacy and Roman Catholicism, Foxe disregards this in the first edition of *Acts and Monuments*, acknowledging the Donation's fraudulency: [T]hat whiche the Romaine church at this present calleth the donation of Constantine, whiche [...] be forged and counterfeited of themselves (as no doubt it is)[.] (1563, 6). Scholars, including Yates, recognise the first use of the initiated 'C' as the return to the Constantinian, imperial Christianity free of papal shackles, which Foxe regarded as pure.³⁵⁶

Foxe's historiography recounts the collapse of that system across his four ages of the

³⁵⁶ Yates, *Astraea*, 44.

Church. In brief, the second age is deemed ‘Of the flourishing age of the churche’, during which Constantine converted to Christianity:

But to our purpose, concerning the youthfull age, of the virgin and spouse of Christe the churche, which now grew vp, by litell and litell, through the mighty gift of God, to a more complet state of age, what time Constantinus themperour relinquishng his idols submitted himself openly to the sacrament of Christ, being baptysed in the name of the father, the sonne, and the holy Ghost. And in this time the fathers of the christen churche convented together and made assembles, to discus such matters as apperteyned to faythe: for before that time, they could not well congregate together, for feare of persecution. (1563, 24)

Christianity flourished, and without a ‘generall or *universall* bishop’ (the papacy). By the middle ages, the Catholic Church is described as in its infancy and innocent, but as its influence and authority increased the ‘Patriarchs of Rome’ countered it, arguing that clergy ought to be subject to the consent of princes and emperors. By the third age, described as full of pomp, avarice, and tyranny, Catholicism is recognised as corrupted and corruptive, before acquiring control:

Religion begot promotion, and the daughter murdered the mother, so time after did well verifie the same. For Popes and prelates, being thus exalted by prynces and Emperours [...] began to forget *themselves*, after their increase, falling againe to decay and ruine. (1563, 26)

The dual system of the empire and papacy proved unworkable, and the encroachment of papal supremacy undermined imperial power. Foxe then proceeded to write of the papal oppression of the English Church and monarchy, until the reign of Henry VIII:

And thus much hast thou good reader, touchynge the kynges devorcement, by occasyon wherof it pleased God so to worke throughe his secrete & *unsearchable* wisdom, that the pope which so long had plaid rex in England lost his whole *jurisdiction* and supremacy. (1563, 511)

As his successor, Elizabeth was arguably portrayed as the Constantinian emperor of the early Church in its ‘flourishing’ age, representing the union of an imperial State and the true faith, before her revised portrayal as Christ, the true restorer of religion, who is also interrelated to the prophesised return of an imperial Golden Age. The return of the virgin Astraea heralded humankind’s deliverance from sorrow through her son. Thus, the revision can be seen, imperialistically, to perpetuate the *thema* of the Constantinian portrait, with the restoration to an imperial State first foreshadowing a conversion to the ‘true’ religion and the eventual restoral of the Golden Age under Christ. Foxe’s history of the Church in its four ages also correlates again between the four kingdoms of Daniel’s vision and the four Ages of the world described by Virgil, and again are similarly reinterpreted as being restored through the coming of Elizabeth.

The agenda of Foxe, Cecil, and Day appears unshared by Elizabeth, who had striven for inclusivity in her settlement and personally oversaw the Articles of religion. Revisions to her portrayal from the second edition of *Acts and Monuments* onwards recognisably conveyed unease at the state of reform and criticised the inadequacy of the settlement, though it would be inaccurate to label this as the predominant view beheld by a majority. To expand upon McGregor’s earlier surmise, that number would likely have increased during her reign, as the number of people able to remember Catholic worship decreased, whilst successive generations were raised to worship the Reformist religion. I concur with Collinson and other scholars who propose the religious divide was not so clear-cut; it is my contention that the enduring propagandistic image of Elizabeth has not benefitted our evaluation of Elizabethan society, with the propaganda surrounding events in the latter half of Elizabeth’s reign frequently blinkering our perception and understanding of what befell before.

The propagandistic Virgin Queen persona and everything that it embodied, from

English naval triumph to imperialism, has been so successful that it has partially obscured the reality of the contemporary situation. For example, we remember Elizabeth's triumph against the threat of the Spanish Armadas without necessarily considering they chiefly posed the threat of conquest, not Catholicism. English Catholics too would have faced disadvantage if England had been subsumed into the Spanish empire. In the aftermath, propaganda successfully established the 'Catholic' threat Philip II posed, from which we are subsequently prone to focusing upon a Catholic/Reformist 'divide'. It disregards the fact that Philip proposed to Elizabeth early in her reign, and that his motives for conquest were arguably driven by his unease at English piracy, privateering, or English imperial expansion in the Americas, which threatened his own colonial interests. Elizabeth was repudiated by the Pope in 1570, though the Armadas attacked almost two decades later; Phillip was not swift in undertaking action to save English Catholics from their Reformist queen. Evidence indicates that the majority of English Catholics were, by degree, compliant. Their acquiescence to the settlement can be taken as evidence that they recognised and accepted monarchic authority. If Elizabeth had acted decisively against Catholicism, we may presume she would have encountered an equivalent to the Wyatt rebellion much earlier in her reign; instead, she was able to placate any significant threat constituted by rebellion until the Northern Rebellions, an event itself precipitated by the unpredictable Scottish deposition of Mary Stuart in 1567 and her subsequent flight to England.

Elizabeth instead fashioned her own image through her commitment to virginity. Frequently overlooked in current scholarship is the fact that, upon ascending the throne, Elizabeth possessed a significant degree of command over her future and was able to assume authority over such issues as religion and politics but also her marriageability. During Elizabeth's infancy, Henry VIII had arranged numerous marriage contracts for her and her half-siblings. Elizabeth had almost certainly been raised to believe that her marriage was a forgone

conclusion, regardless of her inclination, and posed another reason for her exemplary education as a showcase of her royal status. Her recognition of this is ascertainable from her formative years – preceding her involvement with Seymour – through the example of her 1547 letter to Edward. One can recognise Elizabeth's presentation of herself as a marriageable bargaining tool, which served a purpose once queen, when she would sometimes protract marriage negotiations out for years at a time. Marriage subsequently became a political rather than personal stratagem. As a negotiating tool, it served as a stopgap, allowing Elizabeth to establish international relations despite clashes of religion and politics. This 'marriageable' period allowed England to prosper, for Elizabeth's relations with overseas suitors supported an increase in trade that led to colonial expansion. It was the beginning of an emergent imperialism. However, remaining unmarried would keep England independent, and the Virgin Queen would preside over a kingdom whose groundwork had been built up over several years. It was a long and drawn-out political game which Elizabeth eventually won.

Conversely, prospective male suitors probably perceived an apparent dynastic necessity for Elizabeth to marry or may have sought to garner influence over England through the recognised male superiority in marriage. Elizabeth, who was likely to have been aware of their perception and expectations because of the example of Mary and Philip's power balance in marriage, consequently recognised prospective suitors but would never commit. So long as she did not relent whilst appearing to consider the possibility, she was reasonably secure. It was not until the emergence of *The Three Goddesses* in 1569 that, I argue, the portrayal of Elizabeth underwent significant alteration. Without being able to ascertain the authorship of the painting nor potential commissioner(s), it is impossible to determine the reason for its production. It incorporated a widely known and used mythological story to allegorically portray Elizabeth as an individual tantamount to a goddess. By championing the three goddesses, Elizabeth is not their equal but superior, in possession of the titles, intellect, and beauty of her competitors.

However, her immunity to love acknowledges her as a virgin, whilst her triumph over the centralised queen of the gods merits her recognition as a Virgin Queen. Arguably painted by Reformist exiles, Strong wrote of their impact upon the image of Elizabeth:

[W]hat is important is that the cult [of Elizabeth], in terms of allegorical portraiture, began not with the native tradition but in that of the Protestant exiles: for them, Elizabeth's role as the leader of Protestant Europe was already greater than that of a mere ruler of the small impoverished island kingdom of England.³⁵⁷

Elizabeth's role is considered greater than that of queen of England; to be perceived as a leader throughout Europe carries imperial overtones. The pastoral representation of England not only envisaged the vistas of Mount Ida, but also connected England to the imperial theme of the Golden Age, which was widely envisaged as an eternal and bountiful spring. It supports the conclusion that the painting was celebratory, with the Virgin Queen image ensuring the continued prosperity of England through her commitment to virginity. Elizabeth is a figurehead of veneration and worship, not just for her nation but for Reformists internationally.

However, *The Three Goddesses*, and her portrayals by Churchyard and Gascoigne, demonstrate how Elizabeth's alignment with deities and honorific figures was predominantly conferred by others, preceding her own adoption and appropriation of such figures in the ensuing years. Though outwardly celebratory and dedicatory, they represented a sustained tension in the Elizabethan power dynamic pertaining to gender, with Elizabeth having upheaved long-established patriarchalism. Recognisably, Mary's reign had introduced similar upheaval, yet she had been more supplicant by conforming to several expectations of her gender, such as marriage and her intent to have children. As an unmarried woman, Elizabeth held free rein over her male subjects, which courtiers in particular chose to address. Gascoigne's allegorical depiction of Elizabeth as Diana designated her to fulfil a perceived role

³⁵⁷ Strong, *Gloriana*, 69.

whilst signifying the necessity of her male courtiers towards her representation. Establishing a relationship between Elizabeth and her courtiers which was co-dependent, it can be equated to female subordination to a male through marriage. *The Three Goddesses* conferred a responsibility through necessitating that she remained unmarried if England were to continue prospering (and be able to provide refuge to religious exiles). My earlier surmise that the role of the male is diminished in the painting may warrant revision, for the evidence would propose men controlled its composition.

At that time, the emergent affiliation between Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary would further perpetuate the Virgin Queen persona. The first example of Elizabeth bestowed with that title, in Churchyard's pageant, was unlikely to have been included if not first approved by his employer, Hertford. Although conjectural, Hertford's personal history with Elizabeth does warrant consideration at the use of that honorific title. To consider both possibilities, its intent to bolster and secure Hertford's re-established relationship with Elizabeth would coincide with it as an ironic 'celebration' of a state of virginity which, by that date, preceded a succession crisis. Elizabeth's treatment of Hertford, his late wife, and sons is also a factor, though I propose it was predominantly included in celebration, with the outlook of securing benefit for both Churchyard and Hertford. However, given that twenty-first century scholarship has considered the possibility of critique, it seems probable that its contemporary audiences were similarly able to discern other underlying meanings.

Throughout the 1570s, Elizabeth's increasingly public recognition as virginal culminated in first her appropriation of, then eventual manifestation as, the Virgin Queen. It was an image correlative to the nation's growing international status and confidence on the one hand; and an image that served a correctional capacity and offset the succession crisis on the other. It also offered a natural progression from the biblical representations of her earlier portraiture, capitalising upon her commitment to God and attesting to her faithfulness by

achieving a purer, closer connection to the Almighty as encompassed by the Virgin Mary. The eradication of idolatrous Catholic images provided an opportunity for Elizabeth to adopt aspects connotative to the Virgin Mary when constructing her own Virgin Queen persona – establishing herself as her secular successor re-emphasised her identification as a divine, heavenly queen, and an intercessor who could convey the Word of God through her role as God’s elect. Tillyard would describe it as Elizabeth inserting herself ‘into the constitution of the medieval universe.’³⁵⁸ Elizabeth became synonymous with the Biblical Virgin Mary but without appropriating her image, therefore avoiding accusations of idolatry. She also represented the ‘perfect’ state of womanhood through achieving profound control over the perceived weakness of the female body. The ‘essence’ of Mary interwoven in Elizabeth’s image indicated her strength and dedication whilst placating concerns about the future succession. It also imbued a sacrificial quality comparable with Richard II, reassociating her image with him since her life and reign was similarly interpretable as being dedicated to a greater cause. Just as Richard was depicted restoring England to an Eden-like state in the Wilton Diptych, Elizabeth would restore the true religion of God and a Golden Age, whilst simultaneously avoiding the potential dangers of marriage and childbirth which she may have associated with people including her mother Anne, and stepmother Parr. This *thema* of renewal and regeneration surrounding the image of Mary was also appropriated emblematically through Elizabeth’s identification with the Phoenix, and her family’s affiliation with the symbol of the rose.

From the outset of her reign, Elizabeth would often say, in word and through appearances, that she was blessed; that God was on her side. It can be interpreted as a defence stratagem, for to dispute her would constitute disputing God, but Elizabeth’s constancy in both the belief that she was blessed and the moderation of her settlement, is indicative of her devout

³⁵⁸ Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, 6.

nature. Elizabeth was moderate and did not want to force people's consciences, but she did expect obedience, to herself and, by dint of association, God. As her reign progressed, in the religious society of Elizabethan England, many must have inevitably come to believe that she was blessed, for she eventually reigned for longer than any monarch since Edward III, and longer than any English monarch since Penda. Even her coronation had befallen upon the most propitious date that Dee had forecast.

The painting widely known as 'The Darnley Portrait' (fig.16) can be recognised to demonstrate Elizabeth retaining control of her image, in defiance of male subordination as premised solely upon her gender. Suspended from Elizabeth's waist is a pendant jewel, comprised of a large ruby set in an ornate mount; above stands Minerva, on the left side is Mars, to the right are Venus and Cupid, and below is Jupiter. There is a strong correlation between this miniaturised composition with the earlier *The Three Goddesses*. Juno is substituted with Mars, which indicates that Minerva is representational of wisdom opposed to warfare. Compositionally, Mars and Venus (and Cupid) represent two potential outcomes – war and children, respectively – when pertaining to marriage. However, Minerva's wisdom is superior, casting Jupiter to the bottom of the design. Jupiter is not only representative of a king, but arguably of the role of men. Therefore, feminine wisdom has triumphed over matrimony (and men), relegating the equally probable outcomes of war and children whilst eclipsing the necessity of a king entirely. And it is notable that Minerva was a virgin goddess. I do not believe it was coincidental that this jewel was chosen for inclusion in a composition taken of Elizabeth in life; its presence is indicative that Elizabeth covertly sought to be viewed as wise, that her virginal state was the result of her wisdom, and that virginity was advantageous to England and its prosperity: it was through international trade that the fan and pearls also depicted were probably imported. Fundamentally, the painting attests to Elizabeth's own appropriation of allegorical representation; deities she had formerly been affiliated with have been adopted in

her own self-portrait, to reclaim her representation from male authority. Elizabeth is visually constructing a defence comparative to the archetypal City of Ladies.

It is a rare example of Elizabeth's portrait believed to have been taken from life, and provided a facial pattern in her portraiture for several years. Being painted from life, we can ascertain how she chose to present herself before the sitter. Her pale complexion is not a mask of youth, nor does this painting epitomise her Virgin Queen image fully, though it was in the process of adopting tropes. Although her face is pale, red tones have naturally faded, so her complexion was once rosier and livelier. Thus, she did not embody a pale-faced deity figure at that date. Colouration in her attire has faded too; originally it was richly detailed with gold and red. The doublet is described as 'mannish';³⁵⁹ it contrasts the prominent ostrich fan in her right hand.³⁶⁰ The painting subtly exudes a sense of androgyny: a severe-faced woman in attire that is a mixture of masculine and feminine. The original fiery colouration may be interpreted as an allusion to flames, suggestive of the Phoenix. Furthermore, the masculinity of the queen's Polish-style doublet has been identified at equating Elizabeth with her male counterparts in continental European countries.³⁶¹ Mary Beard concludes that it was a frequent trope for women in power to be portrayed masculinely, with the feminine body concealed.³⁶²

The position of the fan across the approximate area of Elizabeth's genitalia suggests virginity, representing a barrier. Virginity is also allegorically implied by the double string of pearls, allegorical for varying mythologic and biblical virginity figures. Both the fan and pearls were probably gifted by courtiers, and the painting itself a probable commission by one. They also serve as symbols of wealth and status, though not solely Elizabeth's – they represent

³⁵⁹ 'NPG 2082; Queen Elizabeth I - "Darnley" Portrait', National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02075/Queen-Elizabeth-I>.

³⁶⁰ Ostrich feathers were highly prized ornamentation amongst Elizabethan women.

³⁶¹ 'The Queen's Likeness: Portraits of Elizabeth I', National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/case-studies/the-queens-likeness-portraits-of-elizabeth-i>.

³⁶² 'Symbolism in Portraits of Elizabeth I', Royal Museums Greenwich.

England's burgeoning international trade. Through her attire and accoutrements, Elizabeth can convey a message of power and uniqueness correlative to her virginity. Opposed to the benefit a courtier may have sought to ascertain through presenting Elizabeth with gifts, Elizabeth reverts the power dynamic by indicating that it is she, and her reign, which have made England prosperous and subsequently made such commodities available to the consumer. It repudiates Gascoigne through the implication that Elizabeth is the sole benefactress to her courtiers.

With the Virgin Queen image widely established by the 1580s, it offered artists an opportunity to deploy its presentation for their own advantage, as Peele demonstrated by seemingly amending *The Arayngement* for performance before Elizabeth. It evidences the ongoing renegotiation of the power dynamic, maintaining co-dependency between Elizabeth and her portrayers. Elizabeth's image was a ready commodity for an individual's prospective gain, whether seeking to discredit or honour it through print. One could argue that Peele reduced Elizabeth's status further by actively requiring her participation – fundamentally, a queen was receiving instruction from a male playwright, and before her court. Although the exact details of the performance itself are unverifiable, it would not be illogical to presume the audience consisted of numerous high-ranking dignitaries consisting predominantly of men. Although an audience would have witnessed Elizabeth glorified as the goddesses' victor, it showed her taking instruction whilst required to fulfil a role identified by a male: not too dissimilar from the role of Anne in the story's adaptation for her procession through London. To refuse the role, or substitute another, could have generated an impression she was not worthy of the distinction Peele awarded her.

However, and like the earlier painting, this very component of the play retained the mythologic story's recurrent usage of complimenting an individual woman by singularly identifying her uniqueness and beauty. With regards to Elizabeth, it pivotally celebrates her virginity. Peele celebrated her Virgin Queen image, for it is pivotally the absence of the male

monarch (a prince or king) that has restored England's fortunes. In her description of 'a figure of the Queene', Diana says:

The place Elizium hight, and of the place,
Her name that governs there Eliza is,
A kingdome that may well compare with mine.
An auncient seat of kings, a seconde Troie,
Ycompast rounde with a commodious sea[.]
(V.i.1150-1154)

Diana elected Eliza(beth) because she honoured her chastity, again reiterating celebration of the Virgin Queen motif. The image and glory of Elizabeth is highlighted through Peele's incorporation of her in the play, and by honouring her thus celebrates her image as one which shall remain unrivalled. With the play's outcome effectively inconsequential (whether Paris had proceeded in his judgement, or Diana intervened and awarded Eliza the prize, the eventuality is the emergence of England as the second Troy and Elizabeth as its queen), this achieves a perceivable distortion of time and place, suggestive of a lasting affiliation between England with Elizabeth throughout history, constituting part of her memorial portrait. It also perpetuates the notion of a second coming, which supports the Golden Age imperial theme.

Themes of virginity and imperialism pertaining to the mythology of Troy had previously been interwoven in *The Sieve Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I* by Quentin Metsys (1575, fig.17). This is one of a number of collectively entitled 'Sieve' portraits, portraying Elizabeth as the Roman Vestal Virgin, Tuccia. Mythologically, Tuccia was a priestess of Vesta, goddess of hearth and home. Having taken a vow of chastity, she was falsely accused of unchasteness, but demonstrated her chastity through a miracle, carrying water with a sieve. In the painting, the retention of Elizabeth's virginal black and white colours now emphasised her emergent Virgin Queen status. Upon the imperial column, medallions depict the story of Dido and Aeneas. Through the legendary decent of English royalty from Brutus, Elizabeth is again

portrayed as establishing a ‘second Troy’. However, this *thema* of a Golden Age revival possesses one significant amendment, for unlike Astraea, or his mother, Aeneas was mortal. This plausibly enabled the viewer to reassociate themselves with Elizabeth the person, portraying her as an approachable, recognisably human figure amidst the allegory of star maidens and goddesses. Recognition as an Aenean ruler adapted Elizabeth’s image to comply with the preference for male monarchy as well as the imperial theme of monarchy’s complete sovereignty. The imperialistic theme is denoted further by the inclusion of a globe, with shipping routes suggesting colonisation of the Americas.

Referencing descent from Brutus imbues the portrait with a ‘kingly’ quality, including military renown and conquest, to counter the passive, queenly role of wife and mother and imbue the portrait with an androgynous quality. Pivotal, Aeneas was also able to provide for future generations, with the implication Elizabeth will achieve the same despite abstaining from marriage: the painting’s production was undertaken around the same time as the Alençon suits. One possibility is that it was commissioned by Sir Christopher Hatton (thought to be a figure in the background, identified by his white hind badge) to signify his disapproval at the prospective marriage.³⁶³ Sieve in hand, Elizabeth can metaphorically ‘sieve’ and remove threats to her sovereignty, including a foreign suitor. Its rim is inscribed *A terra ilben / Al Dimora in sella* (‘The good falls to the ground whilst the bad remains in the saddle’).

By the date of *The Araynement*, Elizabeth’s Virgin Queen image was widely recognised. Aspects of this persona were represented in her own output, particularly her speeches recorded and disseminated in the written word. The Armada speech provides one example and imbues

³⁶³ This theory is further supported by the sieve as an emblem of wisdom. Whereas chastity is further symbolised through the Petrarchan quote in the bottom left regarding the folly of love, and the column; Laura was often depicted with a pillar of jasper, a stone with the power to quench passion. And the symbol of the sieve plausibly derived from Petrarch’s *Triumph of Chastity*.

‘Sieve Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I’, The British Library,
<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/sieve-portrait-of-queen-elizabeth-i-c1583>.

an imperial quality pertaining to her Virgin Queen persona, instilling the populace with faith in England, its religion (for it was favoured by God), and its military might. As outlined previously, invasion posed a threat to the entire populace, Reformist or Catholic. Thus, as with her settlement, Elizabeth can again be recognised as attempting to unify people irrespective of faith, particularly when factoring that the speech was disseminated swiftly across England. Tellingly, she never once refers to a specific faith, despite the issue of religion acting as a major catalyst for the Armada. Ultimately, the image of imperialism Elizabeth encapsulated in her stage-crafted self-portrait became another method of unification, restoring a collective national identity among her populace regardless of religious as well as political or social spheres. At that time, Spain was the largest empire in Europe, yet Elizabeth's confidence in victory creates an inversion, portraying England as the greater imperial strength.

Acknowledgement of her subjects' allegiance is both identified and celebrated:

I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fail of them.³⁶⁴

It follows Elizabeth's pledge to vent her blood with her troops, and serve as general, judge, and rewarder. But whilst the context would appear to be in the midst of battle, they are roles with a broader application. Similarly, it may just as easily be interpreted that the entire English populace warrants the rewards and crowns. Elizabeth's assurance in their acquisition instils confidence, but the promise of rewards and crowns, the latter of which must be claimed from another country, attests to England's military (and naval) strength but with an imperialistic theme of conquest. Whilst the individuality of Elizabeth is often recognised – the sole female figurehead of a Reformist island nation – the nation itself was also unique for having such a monarch, and I construe that it is the equally the populace, in entrusting Elizabeth as their

³⁶⁴ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 326.

queen, who will be rewarded. Thus, England will benefit through its Virgin Queen, with rewards forthcoming as the result of victory against the Spanish, furthering Elizabeth's future memorialisation,

When Elizabeth addressed her troops at Tilbury, her rhetoric can be said to have instilled courage and fortitude and established Elizabethan England as blessed by God. Elizabeth portrays herself as a woman every bit as powerful as a king, a queen who herself was prepared to die in defence of her nation alongside her people. However, it is noted by several scholars, including Robert Hutchinson, that English victory was ensured by that date: England had won a major naval victory and dispersed the Armada.³⁶⁵ Thus, it is argued that Elizabeth was secure in the knowledge that her speech would correlate with God's perceived favour upon England, and that she (and her troops) would not endanger their lives resisting invasion. As well as propagandistic, it appears opportunistic, particularly when acknowledging that the speech would also be recorded and disseminated rapidly. Many scholars have criticised Elizabeth for this action, monopolising upon her early knowledge of English naval victory to bolster her public image, in an act precursing the ensuing portrait of herself as God's favoured sovereign. However, the threat of invasion probably seemed real, if one applies Harari's outlook that no eventuality is ever truly determinable.³⁶⁶ Crucially, it also demonstrated Elizabeth was a masterful tactician herself, deploying rhetoric to instil courage but also a sense of national identity.

The prospect of an imminent battle is presented less as England's defence but its triumph. There is no doubt of a famous victory, which may pertain to Elizabeth's prior knowledge of the English navy's dispersal of the Armada. However, it is arguable she recognised that English victory against Spanish forces would inevitably become 'famous',

³⁶⁵ Winchcombe, 'Endgame'.

³⁶⁶ Harari, *Sapiens*, 462.

given the vast contrast between the two countries' size, wealth, and resources. Furthermore, she recognised that it represented a singular opportunity to portray England's imperial might with herself as its figurehead. Thus, it was propagandistic for both herself and the nation. The unification of her subjects, and of them alongside herself – '*we* shall shortly have a famous victory-' – is succeeded by the individualisation of herself – '-over these enemies of *my* God and *my* kingdom,' indicative that Elizabeth – despite being the weak and feeble bodied woman – was nevertheless the pivotal component. The importance of Elizabeth being publicly recognised, as the embodiment of her Virgin Queen persona was imperative, for being a female ruler she sought to impress how she was the equal, recognisably superior, of male monarchy; she arguably sought to conclude the renegotiation of power that had perpetuated her reign, seeking to portray herself as the incontestable favoured monarch by God.

The Armada Portrait commemorated the most famous conflict of Elizabeth's reign, but despite her age it depicted a woman not only considerably younger, but artificial. She is very much the constructed persona that Mat Collishaw identified. Taking the 'Drake' version of the portrait, even by Elizabethan standards the facial detail is unnatural. But as well as numbering amidst the most iconic portraits of Elizabeth, it is amongst the most imperialistic, and the epitome of her Virgin Queen visage. This artificial mask of youth fed into an imperialistic *thema*, for by obscuring the reality of her visage, her youthfulness portrayed years of imperial might ahead, especially when combined with the extensive allegorical symbolism. Elizabeth is sumptuously dressed in virginal black and white colours, her costume interwoven with pearls and bows. The pearls are allegorical for virginity through their connotation to purity and virgin goddesses, and the knotted bows indicate Elizabeth is intact, collectively symbolised by the large bow and drop pearl in the region of her genitalia. There is also a fan in her left hand, and the motion of her arm would mean, if raised, it would again provide another barrier. Elizabeth's face is 'pearly' and almost luminescent, which when combined with the huge, stylised ruff

signified her as the sun, denoting her celestial sphere emblem as centre of court and, *in situ*, empire. The size of the drop pearl also denotes wealth, interpretative as no prize being of high enough value for Elizabeth to surrender her virginal state, whilst fundamentally portraying both Elizabeth and England as impregnable. This is reiterated in the scenes behind Elizabeth, showing the English navy defeating the Spanish Armada (with the propagandistic ‘Protestant Wind’). A carved mermaid represented the peril Elizabeth posed, luring sailors to their deaths, as well as denoting her complete mastery of the sea. The naval might and imperial strength of England, under the rule of Elizabeth, is emphasised by her hand upon a globe, specifically upon the Americas, which also anticipated further colonial expansion. The pearls, fan, and assorted jewellery and precious stones also denoted wealth and England’s prosperous trade and commerce. Compositionally, the globe is also situated beneath an imperial crown, also representative of English monarchy. The Golden Age was perceived as having returned, and the victory against Spain recognised as the start of England’s rise; eventually, it would become the greatest empire in the history of the world, and the Virgin Queen, depicted as an empress of the world, would be remembered as one of England’s greatest queens.

The Ditchley Portrait (*fig.18*) depicts Elizabeth standing atop a globe. Though interpretable as a token of forgiveness,³⁶⁷ the painting is notable for its imperial theme. It displays Elizabeth standing upon England, identifying it as the centre of imperialism and herself as its – literal – overlord. Her centralised position is again divisive, separating calm from tempestuous weather. Discernibly, the calm is westward, in the direction of the American New World upon which England was staking its claim. Elizabeth is foregrounded in relation to the inclement weather, representative of her being able to dispel unrest and opposition and

³⁶⁷ The description given by National Portrait Gallery suggests the painting, produced as part of an entertainment for Elizabeth by Sir Henry Lee, marked his forgiveness from the queen for living with his mistress, Anne Vavasour. Lee was the Queen’s Champion, and the originator of the annual Accession Day Tilts on 17 November. These were chivalric events honouring Elizabeth and became the most important court festival. ‘NPG 2561; Queen Elizabeth I - “The Ditchley Portrait”’, National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02079/Queen-Elizabeth-I-The-Ditchley-portrait>.

restore order. It may also pertain to the 'restoration' of the Golden Age, with the golden light from the west interpretively heralding a new dawn, connotative of a new era. The composition also posits Elizabeth as the sun, which is corroborated by the celestial sphere suspended from her left ear, and her white costume representing light. In this context, the celestial sphere as featured in her canonical emblem has a broader application than representing Elizabeth as the central figure at court; she, and England upon which she stands, are the central figure of imperialism. The sphere was also a navigational tool, strengthening the painting's theme of territorial expansion and trade, as also represented by the ships entering and leaving areas of England known for their ports. These ships are also defending the route by which Spanish forces attempted their invasion, indicative of England's strength against foreign enemies.

The white dress, low-cut bodice, pearls, and rose, all identify Elizabeth as a virgin. Her sheer height, as well as status as queen, also identifies her as God's representative upon earth; she is figuratively seen reaching the heavens, serving as an emissary. This, and the rose, affiliates her to the Virgin Mary, whilst through her identification as the sun alongside a celestial sphere which mapped the heavens, she is also affiliated with Astraea and the Golden Age. And as God's representative, she is paralleled with the Christ figure sent to restore religion and rid the world of sin. She was the light that banished the dark and illuminated the future. Her depiction is every bit the glorious Virgin Queen, a Reformist heroine who had defended England, and thus became the central figure to the success of England as an emergent world superpower.

Then around 1600, an unknown person commissioned her coronation portrait to be recopied. Amidst all the allegorical symbolism and classical motifs of later portraiture, and the equally celebratory portrayals in literature, this reproduction evinces a noticeable appraisal of what had not changed during Elizabeth's reign. There was recognisably a reverence and strong sense of appreciation towards the queen whose stance as a virgin had remained constant since

the original's production. The Virgin Queen was deemed to be a success.

However, its reproduction, although flattering Elizabeth by adopting a mask of youth and signifying her triumphant reign, is itself indicative of succession and a successor. There is an unavoidable association between it and finality, given her own coronation followed the death of Mary I. By 1600, Elizabeth was aging, and although the allegorical imagery she herself had appropriated perpetuated themes of immortality, the truth was she was mortal. Therefore, Elizabeth discernibly addressed that issue by implying immortality less through life but image. In her Golden Speech, Elizabeth isolated herself from princes past and present, but also future:

There will never queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country, care to my subjects,
and that will sooner with willingness venture her life for your good and safety, than
myself.³⁶⁸

Speculation upon future incumbents to the throne is indicative that Elizabeth was conscious of how she would be remembered, suggesting a stage-crafted performance as well as persona, that maximised the potential of her 'immortality' amidst future generations: '[Y]et you never had or shall have any that will be more careful or loving.' It is plausible that the speech's subsequent recognition as the 'Golden' speech is itself reflective of the 'Golden Age' she was retrospectively acknowledged to have restored England to. For as Yates summarised, the Elizabethan age was the pinnacle of the English Renaissance, behind which the Golden Age theme lay, a theme identified as the Italian Renaissance's roots in the medieval conception of a world empire.³⁶⁹

Elizabeth indicated how England's prosperity was the result of her reign, which also pertains to her imperial power. Towards the beginning of the speech, she is recorded as stating 'There is no jewel, be it of never so rich a price, which I set before this jewel – I mean your

³⁶⁸ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 339.

³⁶⁹ Yates, *Astraea*, 38.

loves.’³⁷⁰ If she had finished upon ‘jewel’, one might gauge she was referring to England, given Elizabeth’s previously delivered comments concerning her subjects and estate. Furthermore, such recognition of England as a jewel had formerly been deployed by Shakespeare in *Richard II*, describing the island metaphorically as:

This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands[.]³⁷¹

(II.i.11.46-49)

In its original context, Gaunt laments England’s situation by hearkening to this former glory; it is patriotic through rhetorical praise of the land.³⁷² It is plausible that Elizabeth sought to allude to a description celebrating the pinnacle of England’s magnificence, envisaging the former ‘Golden Age’ encapsulated in Gaunt’s dialogue as something her reign had restored. This surmise is supported by her subsequent indication of how England’s renewed prosperity is the consequence of trade established under her rule, especially given the likelihood some monopolies upon imports were the reason for the speech being delivered before the Commons; fundamentally, although there were issues with the monopoly system to be resolved, it was through the beneficence of her reign that such prosperous trade even existed, fundamentally contributing to England’s interpretive reidentification as ‘this other Eden, demi-paradise,’ a ‘blessed plot’ governed by its blessed queen.

In her own words, Elizabeth may have been the weak and feeble woman, but her Virgin Queen

³⁷⁰ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 337.

³⁷¹ William Shakespeare, *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan Publisher Ltd, 2008), 847.

³⁷² Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 830.

construct allowed her to portray herself as something beyond the mere mortal whilst remaining the recognisable queen of England, land and sea. As she herself acknowledged, to be a queen was to be upon a stage, and thus she assumed the necessary role. She clearly understood the importance of presenting a powerful and enduring image, which would transcend the vibrancy and optimism of her early reign into her later years. Poetry compared her to goddesses such as Diana and Venus; religious texts portrayed her as a Reformist saviour; and pageantry and drama presented a queen beloved by Englishmen. Elizabeth's own speeches recurrently emphasised her – reciprocated – love for her country and people; paintings depicted her as a radiant beauty, ethereal and divine, which she emulated with her own visage and dress. Through such means, a cultivated image of a good and glorious Virgin Queen flourished, perpetuated, and persevered.

Public appearances, when she could adopt the full visage, were the fuel that fed the flames of the myth of the Virgin Queen. She recognised the capacity of both literature and art to serve as political propaganda tools, and how her own visage could also tap into those resources.³⁷³ She sought to become the sole focus of attention amidst large retinues of people. This offers another explanation for her lavish clothing and, particularly later in her reign, extensive cosmetics. It was not only a sign of her power and wealth, or the perpetuation of her semi-mythic status as a divine individual, or a desire to appear youthful; it made her a memorable sight. Simply put, she stood apart from the crowd, though also from her predecessors and successors as much as her contemporaries. Whilst her reign progressed and the cult status surrounding her continued to develop, the spectacle grew in grandeur. When Peele summoned her to receive the Golden Apple, she would have been the most magnificent

³⁷³I disagree with Williams's observation that Elizabethan propaganda was removed from a modern understanding of its application. Undoubtedly some methods did require the willingness of the consumer's participation, such as his example of print purchases, though the same may be said of many methods active today; media such as newspapers, or even mediums such as television, require the consumer to pay yet are still used regularly for propagandistic purposes.

figure in the room, and one can easily imagine how she embodied a Virgin Queen apotheosis, with her white visage, opulent dress, and pearls and jewellery. He described Elizabeth's attire: 'Her robes of purple and of scarlet die, / Her vayne of white, as best befits a mayde.' (V.i.11.1160-1161). The extreme alteration to Elizabeth's visage, from the cosmetics to her costumery, appear too extreme for somebody trying to merely hide smallpox scarring or the visible signs of aging. Though one could hardly discredit her for desiring to look impressive, was it perhaps Elizabeth's intent from the outset to become a woman recognisably different, set apart and unique? As Schama writes:

Elizabeth's portrait was meant to create distance, an unapproachable remoteness, the veil of mystery which, on selective occasions, could be parted to reveal tantalising glimpses of the actual woman.³⁷⁴

Elizabeth was never remiss when it came to making small, personal gestures towards the crowd and occasionally an individual; she was never *quite* so remote as to miss a good public relations opportunity. Ultimately, she was unique. When this goddess-like apotheosis took opportunity to address those gathered, one can only imagine what impression that would have left.

As the *inscriptio* of her canonical emblem specified, *Miser e che Speme in cosa mortal pone* ('Wretched is he who places hope in a mortal thing'). Was this Elizabeth reminiscing upon her faith in God instead of people or, given the astute date prior to her accession, a consideration upon her own self-presentation once she became queen? We can be certain that she possessed the knowledge of classical mythology necessary to interpret allegorical symbolism, not only through her education but by the fact courtiers used it in their representation of her, with the clear intent that she would understand the subject. Even though articles such as jewellery, which frequently incorporated allegorical symbolism, were gifted to

³⁷⁴ Schama, *The Face of Britain*, 36.

her, it was Elizabeth's choice to wear it. Not only could it identify fealty to the gift bearer, but it also serves to identify her with the classical or biblical *thema*. Furthermore, she understood how her visage would be represented artistically, in literature and across the visual arts.

In the wake of no marriage and heir, emphasis became increasingly placed upon England's – and Elizabeth's – strengths. As Yates writes, purity, as expressed through virginity, symbolised the righteousness and justice of her governance, and was a composite statement expressing both the triumph of her reformed imperial rule and of her personal triumph as a chaste heroine.³⁷⁵ Astraeon allegory provides one obvious example through association with the Golden Age of prosperity, though other evidence can support Yates' surmise, including the Darnley Portrait. Represented as Minerva, Elizabeth was portrayed as a virgin goddess of war and wisdom, construable as England's imperial defender. Although Elizabeth was often prepared for war and infrequently involved England in overseas campaigns, she preferred peace; quintessentially, her preference for amicability can be associated with a Minervan quality of wisdom, yet her victories, against such threats as the northern rebellions and latterly the Spanish Armadas, conveyed her military capability alongside England's imperviousness to foreign enemies.

This essence of individuality and independence was to last beyond her reign. It is commonplace to recognise the latent symbolism of Astraea and other immortal deities, the biblical imagery of Godly individuals, or images such as the Phoenix and unicorn, as emergent almost solely in response to criticism that was directed at her, and construable as a countermeasure to issues including religion, gender, and particularly the succession. Though perhaps we have interpreted this, if not incorrectly, then incompletely. The Virgin Queen instilled a sense of Elizabeth's continuity in life through allusion to immortality and regeneration. Yet being an inescapably mortal woman, her image was arguably intended to

³⁷⁵ Yates, *Astraea*, 114.

exist beyond her death, becoming embossed upon the national consciousness through the recognition of Elizabeth, and Elizabethan England, as the epitome of imperial might, strength, and durability.

It is my conclusion that, although Elizabeth did not provide an heir for England, she sought to portray herself as providing an England for her heirs. I argue that Elizabeth sought to restore unity, first through an inclusive settlement and degree of tolerance towards religious variance, then secondly through an imperial image of England as a strong and independent nation, with herself as the figurehead monarch. By ever appropriating and renegotiating control of the allegorical themes introduced in her portraiture, Elizabeth ultimately sustained an image of herself as the Virgin Queen and retained authority over it. Particularly in the latter, post-marriageable years of her reign, that allegorical imagery grew increasingly associated with imperialism. The frequent recognition of Elizabethan England as a Golden Age is connotative with colonial expansion (Virginia was named after the ‘Virgin’ Queen), though it more recognisably reflects burgeoning international trade throughout continental Europe and into regions of Africa and Asia, as well as Russia. We do not refer to, nor remember, the reigns of her half-siblings, father, or grandfather in the same vein. Elizabeth’s is ultimately recognised to have been unifying, predominantly peaceful, and prosperous, and furthermore a reign which witnessed a proliferation in arts and culture also accreditable to England’s international reach and impact.

Elizabeth’s death was followed by a period of national mourning. She was given a lavish state funeral and then interred at Westminster Abbey. Her successor, James VI/I, commissioned a monument to celebrate both her and her reign. The inscription upon it, when translated from Latin, reads as follows:

Sacred to memory: Religion to its primitive purity restored, peace settled, money restored to its just value, domestic rebellion quelled, France relieved when involved with intestine divisions; the Netherlands supported; the Spanish Armada vanquished; Ireland almost lost by rebels, eased by routing the Spaniard; the revenues of both universities much enlarged by a Law of Provisions; and lastly, all England enriched. Elizabeth, a most prudent governor 45 years, a victorious and triumphant Queen, most strictly religious, most happy, by a calm and resigned death at her 70th year left her mortal remains, till by Christ's Word they shall rise to immortality, to be deposited in the Church, by her established and lastly founded. She died the 24th of March, Anno 160[3], of her reign the 45th year, of her age the 70th.

To the eternal memory of Elizabeth queen of England, France and Ireland, daughter of King Henry VIII, grand-daughter of King Henry VII, great-grand-daughter to King Edward IV. Mother of her country, a nursing-mother to religion and all liberal sciences, skilled in many languages, adorned with excellent endowments both of body and mind, and excellent for princely virtues beyond her sex. James, king of Great Britain, France and Ireland, hath devoutly and justly erected this monument to her whose virtues and kingdoms he inherits.³⁷⁶

All the aspects of her Virgin Queen image, that which she successfully cultivated over her forty-five year reign, are present. The opening lines pertaining to the restoration of religion and the country's wealth harken to the themes of a Golden Age revival. The imperial theme is supported by victory against Spain (or 'the Spaniard' Philip II) alongside England's beneficial support to other countries, whilst the adjectives 'victorious' and 'triumphant' possess an imperial undertone. England was 'enriched', referring not only to economic wealth but the overall benefit of Elizabeth as queen, for its enrichment could be interpreted monetarily, monarchically, imperialistically, and religiously. Being described as a mother and nursing-mother parallels Elizabeth with the Virgin Mary, particularly in recognition of 'nursing' religion, for she had restored the true religion of Christ just as Mary had brought Christ into the world to do. And she is recognised as have achieved beyond her gender's preconceived

³⁷⁶ 'Elizabeth I', Westminster Abbey

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/royals/elizabeth-i>.

Translation provided by Westminster Abbey.

capabilities; her named predecessors are all men, amongst whom she warrants 'princely' recognition. It considers her to have been an exceptional woman, and one who would be eternally remembered.

Fig.16



Unknown. *Queen Elizabeth I* ('The Darnley Portrait'). c.1575.
Oil on panel. 113 x 78.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 2082.

Fig.17



Quentin Metsys the younger. *Sieve Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I*. 1583.
Oil on canvas. 124.5 x 91.5 cm Pinacoteca Nazionale, Sienna, Italy

Fig.18



Marcus Gheeraerts the younger. *Elizabeth I* ('The Ditchley Portrait'). c.1592.
Oil on canvas. 241.3 x 152.4 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG 2561

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