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Virginity, Elizabeth, And The Power Of Persona: Examining the Shift Of Queen Elizabeth's Image In The 1570s-1580s Where She Replaced The Virgin Mary, Defeated The Spanish And Became Immortal

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VIRGINITY, ELIZABETH AND THE POWER OF PERSONA:

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To write this thesis is not just the completion of four years of hard work at Scripps but the cumulation of a desire and interest I've possessed for as long as I've loved history.

I first came up with the bare bones of this concept in the car with my parents on the way to the de Young Museum in San Francisco in the summer of 2017, right before my sophomore year. So, the first people I thank are my mom and my dad, for always believing in me, for talking through my ideas and for supporting me from the moment the words, "Elizabeth I and Propaganda" came out of my mouth that day in August.

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Introduction

Queen Elizabeth I, The Virgin Queen. That is the one enduring perception about Elizabeth that most people have. But why do we remember Elizabeth this way? Was she even a virgin? Does it matter if she was?

Elizabeth is remembered as the Virgin Queen because that is not only the enduring image from her time but also of our own. From Cate Blanchett's stunning turn as Elizabeth in the movie *Elizabeth* in 1998 to Dame Helen's Mirren's masterful portrayal of the Queen in the HBO miniseries in 2005 to Margo Robbie's recent performance as Elizabeth in *Mary Queen of Scots* in 2018, the role of Elizabeth has been the star-making role for many an actress, speaking even now to the power she holds. Questions of Elizabeth's virginity have dominated the conversation and current historical memory. Ultimately to filmmakers and fiction writers, Elizabeth's relationships are made more intriguing if she was not in fact a virgin, if her sexual exploits became something she must carry. Elizabeth's role as the Virgin Queen however, remains untouched in these narratives even if her body does not remain chaste. This is because without being fully aware the creators of these pieces understood something essential about Elizabeth, that her action of being the Virgin Queen is what gave her power. The climatic scene of Blanchett in *Elizabeth* (1998) best demonstrates this idea. In this moment, Elizabeth, face painted white, covered in pearls, sits on the throne and while above everyone else, is removed from them. She is almost stone, like the statue of the Virgin Mary in the scene that causes this climactic image.

Queen Elizabeth I, The Virgin Queen. Did she even wish to be remembered this way? In the following chapters, I will argue that she did. During her forty-three year reign, Elizabeth's masterful diplomatic and religious awareness led her to revitalize her own image, making her gender and her virginity into her best asset instead of, as was suspected, her greatest vulnerability.

The Protestant Reformation, which began in England as Elizabeth was being carried in her mother's womb, serves as the backdrop for the religious turmoil that later defined Elizabeth's actions during her reign. Starting in Wittenberg, Germany when a priest and professor of moral theology named Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to a church door on October 31, 1517, the Protestant Reformation radically transformed the way Europeans viewed and experienced Christianity. Luther was disgusted by the Church's sale and use of indulgences (the remission of the penalties of sin), including the punishment the soul might undergo in purgatory after death.[1] The Reformation succeeded in part because of the technological advantage of the state-of-the-art printing press that enabled the wider readability of Luther's pamphlet across Europe in languages beyond simply German. Though this pamphlet reached England, it was not the cause of the English Protestant Reformation. When King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church to marry Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother, in 1530, he did so out of political reasons, not religious ones. In fact, Henry consistently described himself as a Catholic, demonstrating that he utilized the Reformation for his

[1] Robert Barlett, "The Protestant Reformation." in *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013): 85, accessed May 2, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctt46n3wb.8.

own personal and political reasons.[2] Henry in many ways behaved like a conventional Catholic, upholding mass, clerical celibacy and the role of confession, all attributes that Protestants like Luther believed would turn an individual to an institution like the Catholic Church instead of to God himself.[3] However, Henry's dissolution of the monasteries and his actions stripping the altars, speak to Protestant desires, even if he was doing so for personal gain[4]. Ultimately, while England's break with Rome and the creation of Royal Supremacy, where instead of the Vatican having authority of over the parishes and churches, it was the monarch, represented a semantic shift, the day to day beliefs and actions of the English people remained as they had been for centuries, they still practiced Mass in churches furnished with alters, stained glass and even the statues of the Virgin Mary and other saints.[5]

Elizabeth's siblings who ruled before her were the ones to attempt to change the behavior of the English people. Her brother King Edward VI, who ruled from 1547 to 1553, was zealous about his Protestant reformation, banning religious processions, methodically and violently stripping churches of their stained glass windows, highly decorated altars and statues. Moreover, Edward ordered that mass would be said in English rather than Latin.[6] While Edward left an indelible mark on the English psyche and religious attitude, he did not enable the fundamental shift he had hoped to accomplish because he was only king for six years, not nearly long enough to shift

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[2] Peter Marshall, *Reformation England*, (New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2012) 29
[3] Marshall, *Reformation England*, 49
[4] Marshall, *Reformation England*, 50
[5] Marshall, *Reformation England*, 60
[6] Michael P Winship. *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 2018) 11-12, accessed May 3, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbnm3ss.8.

attitudes and connections that had been in place for centuries. Mary's ascendance to the throne in 1553 was marked by her deliberate transition away from Edward's reforms, turning both religiously back to Catholicism and politically back with Rome. By doing so in a particularly bloody fashion, she undermined Edward and served to create an enduring image of Catholicism in the minds of the English people that was associated with violence.

Elizabeth began her reign in 1558 ruling a people that were searching for balance and meaning. She was able to successfully provide both. Her siblings, Edward and Mary, had shifted the way the English public viewed religion, especially Catholicism. Though Elizabeth had been brought up Protestant, she was still raised under the influence of her father's pseudo-Catholicism, thus still retaining positive associations with the Virgin Mary in particular. In pre-Protestant England, before 1534, the faith and sacredness granted to the Virgin Mary was absolute and she was constantly invoked in every church and parish throughout England.[7] The Virgin Mary had six feast days in England throughout the year and was seen by many as one of the most constant symbols of Catholicism. Her role as the mother of Jesus and the giver of mercy was not to be understated. She was the symbol of womanhood in Catholic countries, possessing the values that women ought to carry and the model for which Queens should aspire. The cult of the Virgin Mary held special significance in England and was second to Christ himself in the use of her image, power, and virtues in churches, masses and ideology[8]. The Joys of Mary, Annunciation, Nativity, the

[7] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping Of The Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992) 16-22
[8] Duffy, *The Stripping of The Altars*, 256

Resurrection, Ascension and her own Coronation in Heaven were familar to every soul in England from their endless reproduction in carving, painting and glass.[9] Additionally, they served as natural themes for carols, prayers, hymns and other verses.[10] Every parish church in England contained one or more images of Mary, mourning the crucified Jesus that is the center of all Catholic literature and the focus of all prayers. Starting in the 15th and 16th centuries, lay people left money in their wills to maintain lights for the image of *Our Lady of Pity*, a widespread representation of Mary, and sought to be buried by their statues and symbols.[11] All over Europe, the “Salve Regina”, an invocation of Mary as the Mother of Mercy, was sung nightly.[12] By transferring the associations of the Virgin Mary to herself, Queen Elizabeth was crafting an image that resulted in adoration, legacy and widespread respect.

The only reason this association was possible, however, was the unstable state of religion when Elizabeth ascended to the throne. During Edward’s brief reign, all images of Mary were removed from the churches, even St. Paul’s in London and the mass that had been sung in her honor was outlawed.[13] Given the high amount of honor and devotion the Virgin Mary inspired, even during Henry’s more moderate reformation, this action prompted outcry. When Queen Mary took the throne and returned England to Catholicism, one of her first actions was to restore the Virgin Mary to her place of worship by reinstituting the Lady Mass and reestablishing her presence with the

[9] Duffy,*The Stripping of The Altars*, 257
[10] Duffy, 257
[11] Duffy, 261
[12] Duffy, 264
[13] Duffy, 454-455

churches and parishes.[14] Though this occurred, the Virgin's presence in these churches was limited, often to one representation instead of multiple, in part due to the financial difficulties faced by churches and parishes after Edward stripped them of their valuables.[15] The larger reason for the minimal representation where there were once overwhelming ones was that the reformations of Henry and Edward had altered the way lay people viewed their role in society.[16] The yearning for the Virgin as a Mother figure was present but the simple act of Elizabeth being a virgin was enough to enable some level of association, even though this would have never been possible a century earlier. The Virgin was an identity and idea that was invoked in all generations, in all ceremonies and in all parts of life in Catholic England, an association that still rang true in the minds of English public when Elizabeth ascended the throne.

However, Elizabeth did not only use the Virgin Queen image she crafted as a way to fill a gap for her people religiously, moreover, she transformed it into a political strategy. Beyond utilizing the Virgin Queen domestically, the fact that she was a virgin, unmarried, and a queen meant she had a unique level of power in international and political affairs throughout her reign. Elizabeth, while trusting her Privy Council, the advisory and administrative board of the crown, was not wholly commanded by them. As we will see, during her final marriage negotiation, it was Elizabeth who pushed forward, against the advice of most of her Council. Elizabeth also made it very clear to her many suitors that she would have the final say on the marriage and most of the negotiations ended because she refused to give into demands of other countries. Her

[14] Duffy,*The Stripping of The Altars*, 534
[15] Duffy, 563
[16] Duffy, 563

unmarried status, stemming from her decision to remain a virgin, meant that even though she did not have children to leverage in international affairs, she could leverage herself, even after a peace treaty had been signed. Through the Virgin Queen she was beloved by her people, something that kings of other nations expressed envy over. She utilized her virgin status as a rhetorical device in her speeches to Parliament even as many within it relentlessly pressed her to marry. She had a personal distaste for the concept of marriage, something she expressed to Parliament when she said, "It is long since I had any joy at the honor of a husband; and this is that I thought, then that I was a private person."[17] Even though she echoed these sentiments during her time on the throne, she made it clear that she would marry for the good of the kingdom. However, throughout her reign, she repeated the position she expressed with a declaration in the same opening speech: "I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you."[18] Even in Parliament she invoked the mother figure she was co-opting through the Virgin Queen persona as she said, "you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any a more mother than I mean to be unto you all." [19] Elizabeth was well aware that her virginity, her unmarried status, afforded her certain privileges and power that were unique to her. Not only was she queen of the realm, a realm that was increasingly prosperous and powerful as the Virgin Queen identity

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[17] *Elizabeth's First Speech to Parliament*, February 10, 1559 from William Camden, *Anneles: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth*, (London, for B. Fisher, 1625) 27-29 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works,* ed.Leah S Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000) 59

[18] *Elizabeth's First Speech to Parliament*, February 10, 1559 from Camden, *Anneles: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth*, 27-29 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 59

[19] *Queen Elizabeth's answer to the Common' Petition That She Marry*, January 28, 1563 from Public Records Office, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth 12/27/37, fols. 153r-154v as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 72

solidified, she was only truly answerable to God and to history. It is clear that in the eyes of both, her actions were met with acclaim.

Though historical scholarship about Elizabeth has generally accepted that the Cult of the Virgin Queen, the Cult of Elizabeth, was influential in the Queen's reign and contributed to her rich legacy, scholars have traditionally argued that it springs up in the mid-1580s in the aftermath of her last marriage negotiation as it was now clear she would never marry and remain childless.[20] However, considering the religious and diplomatic implications of the Virgin Queen image, this interpretation not only seems too simplistic, it deprives Elizabeth of agency.

In one of his many influential texts on Tudor-era portraits, Roy Strong writes that "1579 marked a dramatic shift in the treatment of Elizabeth's in portraits - the first allegorical portrait of the queen was painted."[21] The portrait that Strong is referring to is the *Sieve* Portrait. However, if, as many scholars assert, the cult of the Virgin Queen began after the marriage negotiations with the Duke of Alençon ended, this portrait would have had to have been painted in 1583 at the earliest to make their story plausible. In fact, the *Sieve* Portrait was painted in 1579, the year that the Alençon negotiations began. Additionally, Elizabeth's action in creating Accession Day marks a shift in religious policy and a way that the Queen was actively attempting to fill the void

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[20] Some examples of scholars and works who make this claim, by no means an exhaustive list, are John N. King, "Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen." *Renaissance Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1990): 30-74. accessed May 3, 2020. doi:10.2307/2861792; Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I: Profile in Power*. (New York; Longman, 1988); William MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588*. (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1981); Deanne Williams, "Elizabeth I: Size Matters." in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I*, edited by Connolly Annaliese and Hopkins Lisa, 69-82. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) accessed May 3, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv6p51d.10.

[21] Roy C Strong, *Gloriana: the portraits of Queen Elizabeth*. (London; Pimlico, 2003) 20

of religious holidays that Protestants did away with by creating a day celebrating her reign. This first occurred in 1576, though it did not become widespread until the 1580s. If, as is agreed, the cult of Elizabeth was particularly crafted through public celebrations and portraits, then it actually started in the 1570s with Elizabeth herself playing an essential role in its creation and publicization.

As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, Elizabeth for decades thought strategically about her reputation and its presentation; the timing of the full embracement of what the Virgin Queen image brought her was not only personal but religious and political as well. Examining what occurred during the timing of the first allegorical portrait will highlight the political and religious forces that resulted in Elizabeth deciding that this image, the Virgin Queen, would be the enduring one of her reign. Ultimately the question of whether Elizabeth was a virgin or not matters far less than the importance that Elizabeth herself placed on the representation. The real question here is why did Elizabeth portray herself as the Virgin Queen? *Why were both elements, Virgin and Queen, essential to her longevity and her success? The Virgin Queen image was a result of political and religious strategy that especially manifested in the second half of her reign but had its roots in the entirety of her life experience.* This enduring image and her success at subtly arguing that her virginity was an asset in her power and England's increasing role in international and cultural affairs is unique to Elizabeth. In this way, by co-opting the Virgin Mary symbolism in a now-Protestant England, Elizabeth I was able to utilize her image as the Virgin Queen to become a holy figure in her time.

Chapter One

"My Little Power"

In this chapter, we will discover how Elizabeth's experiences prior to ascending the throne shaped her emotionally and influenced her to strategically create her public image. Elizabeth's interactions with power prior to being queen were linked to treason and imprisonment. Her mother was executed for treason, as was her first crush and the man who nearly seduced her. Additionally, during her elder sister's reign, Elizabeth was consistently considered a threat and imprisoned without just cause. The interactions with powerful individuals during these years led Elizabeth to distrust the concept of marriage, in particular upon becoming queen feeling that it would deprive her of her hard-won power. The fraught and ever-changing religious politics in England allowed Elizabeth to understand that a moderate path was the best one. Before Elizabeth ascended to the throne, Englands' rapid and radical religious swings from Catholicism to Protestantism back to Catholicism meant that she witnessed the gap and yearning in her public's psyche that enabled the success of the Virgin Image she would later create. Ultimately, in order to understand the choices Elizabeth made during her reign, a look at the years where she was powerless is essential.

During the reign of her father, King Henry VIII, Elizabeth was a doted-upon princess for only a few months before spending the vast majority of her childhood in relative levels of destitution. Notably, King Henry's choice to marry Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother, started the English Reformation and ended with Anne's death for

treason and infidelity. This defines Elizabeth's primary inheritance from her parents' relationship, a scandal on two fronts: religious and personal.

Elizabeth was strategic in the way she demonstrated the influence of both her parents, revealing a level of attentiveness to the desires of her public that will be further expounded upon in a later chapter. King Henry, her father, inspired in her mainly fear, awe and love. Henry captivated Elizabeth, and she revered his memory. Although she loved him, Elizabeth never dared to initiate correspondence with the King when not at court and even those visits were infrequent. This lack of personal fatherly attention, however, was a source of commonality between Mary and Elizabeth and thus part of the royal patriarchal etiquette. As noted in 1557 by the Venetian ambassador, "she prides herself on her father and glories in him."[22] The King's distance allowed Elizabeth to revere him from afar, rather than love him, and later, as queen, to continuously refer to him in her speeches at Parliament. She never forgot that she was "her father's daughter."[23] Anne's influence on Elizabeth was much more subtle considering the ignominious way she died. As an adult, Elizabeth owned a ring, made in 1575, which opened to reveal enamel portraits of both her and Anne.[24] She adopted Anne's motto, "*Semper Eadem*" meaning "always the same" as her own. Her badge also references Anne, through a crowned white falcon perched on a tree stump from which Tudor roses spring.[25] However, there are only two occasions on record that could be found of her mentioning her mother after being crowned queen and she made no effect to have the

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[22] Calender of State Papers in archives in Venice, VI, 1058 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 15, footnote 28
[23] Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, (New York, Alfred A Knope Inc, 1991) 15
[24] David Starkley, *Elizabeth I: the Exhibition Catalogue*, (London, Vintage UK, 2003) 36
[25] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 7

verdict against Anne's marriage and treason overturned, unlike her sister Mary, who immediately wrote into law that her mother's marriage was valid[26]. Elizabeth knew that mentioning Anne would revive the controversy and focus unwelcome attention on the underlying fragility of her own claim on the throne.

From Princess to Bastard and Back Again: Henry VIII's Daughter

By 1526, King Henry VIII was already searching for a way out of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and easily became infatuated with a young noble woman named Anne Boleyn. Unlike previous mistresses of King Henry, Anne was stubborn and insisted that he marry her before she would consider sleeping with him. This demand of marriage presented a great many complications, including the fact that Catherine was beloved by the people of England.[27] However, the greatest complication was the nature of Catherine's powerful relations, including her nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who refused to see his aunt cast aside and pressured the pope to refuse to grant Henry the annulment he wanted.[28] Henry was unflinching in his belief that his marriage with Catherine was invalid because she had previously been married to his brother.[29] He believed the lack of a male heir as a result of his marriage was proof that the union was not only a sin, but needed to be undone for the good of the kingdom. Even though Salic Law, the law mandating that the monarch would be the first born son, irrespective of if daughters had been born first, did not apply in England, there had been

[26] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 7
[27] David Starkly, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 30
[28] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 1
[29] Starkly, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 25

no queen reigning solo in England since Matilda in the 12th century and that was brief and very troubled, thus Henry's lack of a male heir purported grave implications for the kingdom's future[30]. Ultimately, Henry forced his way through to divorce Catherine and created the Church of England to officially make Anne his wife in the eyes of the law and God in 1533, five years after their first meeting.[31] Importantly, at this point, Anne was already pregnant.[32] It is under this backdrop of dynastic turmoil and religious revolution that Elizabeth entered the world.

King Henry had spent five years trying to marry Anne because she promised him a male heir; he had created a new religion, set aside a popular queen and created enduring enemies in the attempt to marry Elizabeth's mother. As a result of his fervent belief, validated by physicians and astrologers, that Elizabeth would be male, there was an undercurrent of disappointment when she was born.[33] Though the preparations for her birth were incredibly elaborate, with new horses being sent from Flanders and a grand tournament being arranged, these celebrations did not actually end up occurring.[34] Elizabeth was born on September 7, 1533 and was named after her paternal grandmother, Elizabeth of York. In the first few months of Elizabeth's life, she was very much treated as the princess of England. At the time, Mary, Henry's 17-year-old daughter with Catherine of Aragon, was made to wait on Elizabeth. Mary declared on arrival that "she knew of no Princess in England but herself" and refused to acknowledge Elizabeth's title. Additionally, Mary stated that she would never "pay court

[30] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 2
[31] Starkly, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 40
[32] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 2
[33] Somerset, 4
[34] Somerset, 3

to her unless compelled by sheer force."[35] This foreshadowed the rivalry that would grow to extremes during Mary's reign.

However, Elizabeth, like all princesses during this time, had her worth measured by her father in her ability to be an asset to further English diplomacy than simply as a daughter.[36] As early as February 1535, there were negotiations to betroth Elizabeth, then merely two years old, to the King of France's younger son. However, these talks broke down, King Henry both making demands of the French and thinking they demanded too much. This type of negotiation, making demands the other party would never accept, is a type of negotiation that Elizabeth herself would engage in during her time as Queen.[37] Although Elizabeth was a pawn on the diplomatic stage for her father, her gender eliminated her from the possibility of ruling. Until Anne gave birth to a son, Anne's position was in danger as Henry now had set a precedent that he would discard wives if they did not give him what he wanted. This danger came to fruition as on January 29, 1536, Anne miscarried her son. The combination of her failure to bear Henry a male heir and Henry's newfound lust for Jane Seymour, Anne's lady-in-waiting, led to her downfall, with Henry sentencing her to death, claiming Anne had committed adultery. She was beheaded on May 19, 1536.[38] The very next day Henry was betrothed to Jane Seymour. Elizabeth's childhood of a princess was thus over in less than three years.

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[35] Frank A Mumby, *The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth: a narrative in contemporary letters*, (Boston, Houghton, 1909), 6
[36] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 5
[37] Somerset, 5
[38] Somerset, 6-7

Elizabeth's new bastard status, a result of Anne's death and Henry's new marriage, was formalized with the Act of July 1536, which stated that she was "illegitimate...and utterly foreclosed, excluded, and banned to claim, challenge or demand any inheritance as lawful heir...to the king by lineal descent."[39] This dramatically altered her life and shaped her upbringing. On a more mundane level, Elizabeth's household was impacted, leading to a hierarchy in disarray. Functionally, Elizabeth was incredibly short of clothes at this point, wearing dresses meant for a young toddler when she was in fact a child.[40] The first time her father saw her since her mother's execution was at the christening of Edward, where Elizabeth carried the train of the gown, relegating her as seemingly forever bound to a supporting role with no power.[41] While before her father had been invested in Elizabeth, primarily for her role in achieving foreign alliances, she now held no such duty. Elizabeth's role as a bastard meant that her chances of marrying a foreign prince, normal for a princess in the 1500s, were undermined. These were all tangible ways in which Elizabeth was denied control over her life.

Although not invested in Elizabeth's welfare, King Henry did care about her education. Because of the pride that Henry took in the intelligence of Catherine, Mary, and Anne, Elizabeth's education was extensive as she was still representing the king in actuality even if illegitimate in declaration. Born in a post-Reformation England, she was brought up Protestant and her teachers were Protestant-leaning, even though like her

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[39] S*tatutes at Large*, Cambridge 1763 Edition IV, 422 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 8n13
[40] Mumby, *The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth*, 16-18
[41] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 9

elder sister, Mary, she learned languages, music and dance.[42] She learned the Bible and other devotional works but was also taught more modern authors, as customary for a Protestant education. Elizabeth read, wrote and spoke Latin fluently, though was less confident in Spanish.[43] This is not surprising considering the attitude that the Protestants who were her teachers had towards Catholic Spain. She learned philosophy, oratory and ancient history, subtly gaining understanding of psyche, mythmaking and public speaking, all essential elements for crafting her later image as the Virgin Queen. Her mastery of many languages was crucial to conducting diplomacy as queen. At age six, at a visit to court a noble commented that, "if she be no worse educated than she now appeareth to me, she will prove of no less honour to womanhood than shall beseem her father's daughter."[44] At a very young age, Elizabeth developed a love of learning that continued throughout her life, including as Queen where she worked on translation to destress.[45] Her love of learning allowed her to foster a sense of closeness with her stepbrother and King Henry VIII's rightful heir, Prince Edward. Edward, while four years younger, quickly became a source of friendly competition for greater academic achievement.[46] This connection proved to be important once Edward took the throne.

Henry's hectic love life would play a strong role in Elizabeth's upbringing. Edward's mother, Jane Seymour, had died in childbirth in 1537; Henry had mourned her but had remarried the German Anne of Cleaves in 1540, whom he quickly set aside in favor of the vivacious Katherine Howard the same year. However, that marriage ended

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[42] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 10
[43] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 11
[44] Mumby, *The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth*, 58
[45] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 12
[46] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 12

less than two years later in 1542 when Katherine Howard was executed for adultery, like her cousin Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother. King Henry married his sixth and final wife, Katherine Parr in 1543; Katherine proved to be a role model for Elizabeth in that she was intelligent, Protestant and navigated the court wisely. This admiration is shown as for the new year in 1544, Elizabeth gave Katherine and Henry their own manuscript books: to Henry a translation of Katherine's personal prayers; to Katherine she gave the potentially controversial choice of a translation of John Calvin's text, *How We ought to Know God*.[47] This demonstrates Elizabeth's understanding and acceptance of Katherine's reformist tendencies and Elizabeth's own security in her Protestant faith, foreshadowing the relationship that would extend beyond court.

In 1546, Elizabeth returned to court as her more public status coincided with an Act of Parliament in June 1546 that declared that Henry's daughters were reinstated in the line of succession.[48] In addition to becoming a princess again, Elizabeth's connection with Katherine was affirmed when she was added to Katherine's ladies in waiting.[49] Elizabeth's return to court and her role as a future English heir to the throne was confirmed by Henry's will after his death in December 1546. However, there were provisions for Elizabeth: if she married without Council approval, she was to be struck out of the succession. After Henry died, people at court remarked that if Elizabeth were to marry without the approval of the Council, the consequences would be "as though the said Lady Elizabeth was then dead."[50] These provisions were far from generous.[51] As a

[47] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 13
[48] Somerset, 14
[49] Somerset, 14
[50] Rymer, Thomas, *Foedera*, The Hague, 1739-45 XV, 114 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 15n26
[51] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 15

result, Elizabeth was still being controlled by her father from beyond the grave and considering that she never made an attempt to marry during either Edward or Mary's reigns, it is clear that these provisions remained influential. Elizabeth's experience during her father's reign taught her how fast power and influence could fade and shaped her views about marriage, how controlling they can be.

Romance, Treason, and Seduction: The Seymour Affair

Elizabeth's first real taste of the mix of romance, power and sex that would define all of her future relationships as well as her choice to remain unmarried came shortly after her brother, Edward, took the throne in 1547. The alleged romance with the powerful and handsome Thomas Seymour and the aftermath shaped her. Thomas Seymour was the younger of King Edward's powerful uncles, a member of the Privy Council and Admiral of the Fleet[52]. Seymour's sister was the late queen, Jane Seymour and his elder brother, the Duke of Somerset, was the regent for King Edward, powerful in a way that Seymour resented. Viewing Elizabeth as youthful and naive, Seymour sought to enhance his own power by being involved with and taking advantage of the young princess. The consequences of the rumors help to explain why Elizabeth was so resistant to her Privy Council and Parliament's attempts to force her into marriage as Queen. Kat Ashley, Elizabeth's governess and closest confidante, believed that Seymour was about to have been betrothed to Elizabeth at the time of King Henry's death, giving the Protestant Elizabeth even greater legitimacy over her elder sister, the

[52] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 16

Catholic Mary.[53] After King Henry's death in 1547, Elizabeth was sent to live with Katherine Parr at her manor in Chelsea. It is there that Elizabeth and Seymour crossed paths, as Seymour quickly turned his attention to the dowager queen, Katherine, who had desired him in her youth.[54] Katherine and Seymour's secret marriage in 1547, less than a year after King Henry died broke the period of mourning expected of her.[55] Seymour, after the young king acknowledged the validity of the marriage, moved into Katherine Parr's house and Elizabeth, captivated with him, had a crush on him, as members of her household remarked that she blushed upon hearing his name.[56] Seymour took advantage of this crush and visited her bedchambers. During these interactions, too tinged with sexuality to be dismissed as simply playful, Seymour is described by William Cecil, a future member of Elizabeth's Privy Council and her most trusted confident once she took the throne, as "striking her upon the back or on the buttocks familiarity" and if she was already in bed, "open the curtains and...make as though he would come at her."[57] Aware of this dynamic, Elizabeth took actions to outwit him, including rising early to dress demurely when Seymour made his arrival at her bedchamber and was therefore not altogether willing.[58] Elizabeth's first encounter with sex and romance was this quasi-relationship with Seymour, an experience where

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[53] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 16
[54] Somerset, 17
[55] Somerset, 17
[56] Somerset, 18
[57] *A collection of State Papers relating to affairs from the years 1542-1570 left by William Cecil Lord Burghley* ed. Samuel Haynes (London, William Bowyer, 1740-1759), 102 as cited in Somerset, Elizabeth I, 18n4
[58] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 18

Elizabeth held no power considering Seymour's position as husband to her current guardian and uncle to the king.

Once pregnant with Seymour's child, Katherine Parr, the influential dowager queen, no longer tolerated Elizabeth and Seymour's familiarity and sent her away to stay with another family, though before she left, Katherine had a frank lecture about the vulnerability and reputational damage that scandal could cause Elizabeth. As the former queen, Katherine knew very well the nature of court and gossip from her time in Henry VIII's court. She thus understood how word of Seymour and Elizabeth's interactions could be misconstrued to destroy Elizabeth's reputation. The letter that Elizabeth sends to Katherine after this conversation before she leaves the dowager queen's household offers insight in the ways at which Elizabeth was already being strategic.

Elizabeth writes that she is "thanks for the manifold kindness [I] receive at your highness' hand at my departure."[59] Here Elizabeth is referencing the talk that Katherine had with her stepdaughter and it leads into the following line, "albeit I answered little, I weighed it more deeper."[60] In this phrase, Elizabeth establishes her thoughtfulness and critical thinking. She also demonstrates that Katherine's talk left a profound impact on the young princess. Elizabeth then writes that Katherine "said you would warn me of all evils that you should hear of me."[61] Elizabeth understands and is putting to writing the importance of reputation. It is then established that Katherine continues to have "a good

[59] *Princess Elizabeth to Dowager Queen Katherine*, circa June 1548, from Public Records Office, State Papers Domestic, Edward VI 10/2, fol. 84c as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, edited by Leah S Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 18-19
[60] *Princess Elizabeth to Dowager Queen Katherine*
[61] *Princess Elizabeth to Dowager Queen Katherine*

opinion of me, you would not have offered friendship to me."[62] Elizabeth is acknowledging that friendships and mentorships are key in protecting people and offers insight into the way that Elizabeth treated her ladies in waiting as queen.[63] This letter is key in understanding that Elizabeth was already thinking about reputation and image, though Katherine's lecture was necessary to make it click. This encounter, lecture and banishment from Katherine's household are influential in the Virgin image Elizabeth will later craft.

In 1548 the rumor of a relationship between Elizabeth and Seymour became a concern for Elizabeth's reputation after Katherine Parr died in childbirth. Even though Elizabeth was not in favor of a match between Seymour and herself as with time and distance her crush on Seymour had faded, Kat Ashley, her governess and closest companion, did not give up her quest to see Elizabeth married off to Seymour after the dowager queen's death.[64] However, Seymour had reached too far politically by abusing his position and planning a rebellion against his brother, the regent to King Edward, by cultivating individual nobles through bribes gained in unsavory manors, including offering graft to pirates.[65] When this was discovered in January 1549, the Council viewed his actions in the gravest light possible as the charges against him mounted, including that he intended to secretly marry Elizabeth to gain control of the king and the Council.[66] Later that month, Kat Ashley, Ashley's husband, and Thomas Parry, another

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[62] *Princess Elizabeth to Dowager Queen Katherine*
[63] For more about Elizabeth's ladies in waiting, see Tracey Borman's *Elizabeth's Women: Friends, Rivals and Foes who Shaped the Virgin Queen* (New York, Bantam Books, 2009)
[64] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 22
[65] Somerset, *Elizabeth I,* 24
[66] British Museum Harleian, Mss 523 fo.80 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 24n20

member of Elizabeth's household who managed Elizabeth's finances, were thrown in the Tower of London, a prison mainly for crimes against the monarchy, for conspiring with Seymour and Elizabeth was interrogated by the Council's agent, Sir Robert Tyrwhit.[67] Elizabeth, at the time only 15 years old, was relentlessly questioned as to if she had sexual encounters. If found to be true, these rumors could ruin her. The potential loss of Elizabeth's sexual purity would have been devastating: that was the source of a woman's honor in the 16th and 17th centuries.[68] Additionally, she was aware that the answers she gave determined if members of her pseudo-family lived or died. It is here that her hours spent studying politics and languages under her tutors served her well. Elizabeth seemed to have known how to manipulate the situation, refusing to be intimidated into giving a false confession. Elizabeth complained of her treatment and professed her innocence by writing directly to the second most powerful person in the realm, Edward, the Duke of Somerset who was King Edward's uncle, Seymour's brother and, the current Lord Protector, indignant that "Master Tyrwhit and others have told me that there goeth rumors abroad which be greatly both against mine honor and honesty, which above all other things I esteem, which be these: that I am in the Tower and with child by my lord admiral, My lord, these are shameful slanders, for the which… I shall most heartily desire your lordship that I may come to the court after your first determination, that I may show myself there as I am...your assured friend to my little power."[69] Even at age 15, Elizabeth understood power and how men could and

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[67] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 24
[68] Woolbridge, *Women in the English Renaissance*, 53
[69] *Princess Elizabeth to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector*, September 1548, from Public Records Office, State Papers Domestic, Edward IV 10/5/4 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller and Rose, 24

would control her if given the chance. Elizabeth remained steadfast in her story and the Council could not find evidence of Elizabeth's assistance in Seymour's schemes or sexual encounters, forcing the Council to look elsewhere for the culprits. The Council then concentrated on the imprisoned Kat Ashley and as a result of this focus and her closeness with Kat Ashley, Elizabeth was thus forced to relive her shameful past even though the Council accepted she told the truth.[70] Kat Ashley was removed as Elizabeth's governess, deemed too imprudent, though Elizabeth's intervention saved her from the tower.[71] Seymour was beheaded in March 1549 for treason, and this greatly impacted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth was sentenced to the Tower five years after this incident by her sister Mary, she wrote to the Queen in reference to Seymour's execution.[72] The nature of the rumored dalliance with Thomas Seymour enabled Elizabeth understanding of how much a woman's legitimacy depended on her reputation.

She was anxious to rehabilitate her image as a modest and dutiful subject, including dressing soberly to the point of boredom, shifting her dress from radiant gold silk to dour black, and keeping the Council appraised of even her most insignificant of activities.[73] She was already aware of the way that reputation and public presentation mattered. However, her attempted rehabilitation did not prevent King Edward from attempting to remove both Elizabeth and Mary from the line of succession in June 1553 by appointing Lady Jane Grey, a first cousin once removed of Elizabeth's, as his

[70] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 26
[71] Somerset, 26
[72] Somerset, 28
[73] Somerset, 28

successor, stating that both Mary and Elizabeth were “illegitimate and not lawfully begotten.”[74] This was mainly due to the threat that Mary, a Catholic, would undo all of Edward’s radical Protestant reforms.[75] Elizabeth’s place in the succession was an unintended consequence of this plan. Even though she and King Edward shared religious leanings and high levels of intelligence, Elizabeth had still been under threat for much of his reign, short as it was. During this encounter with Seymour, its aftermath and Edward’s delegitimization of her, Elizabeth gleaned increased awareness of the ways that reputation and sexuality defined a woman’s power and how quickly power granted by others could be removed.

A Constant Threat: Life Under Queen Mary I

In witnessing her older sister’s, Mary, relationship with Prince Phillip of Spain, Elizabeth solidified her understanding that whatever power she gained, the presence of a man would disavow in the eyes of others. Mary, 17 years older than Elizabeth,not only grew up Catholic but her mother was the daughter of Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. After her mother was discarded in favor of Elizabeth’s mother, Mary only clung harder to her Catholic faith and saw it as her duty to bring England back to what she considered the rightful religion when she took the throne in July 1553. As a Catholic and without an heir of her own, the Queen was predisposed to distrust the younger Protestant Elizabeth. As Mary made everyone in her court publicly convert to Catholicism, Elizabeth’s Protestant faith made her a threat to the Queen’s reign and

[74] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. XI, 38 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 30, footnote 33
[75] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 30

power. Mary's fervency in returning the country to Catholicism, including at court where six to seven masses were sung daily, was a key reason why Elizabeth worried about her safety during her sister's reign.[76] The revival did not proceed as Mary hoped, as a sermon by Mary's chaplain provoked a near-riot in London.[77] Elizabeth was always under watch while at court, a younger heir who practiced a different religion, though she publicly engaged in Catholic faith. However, it was clear that it was solely done to appease the Queen. Elizabeth boycotted the Catholic services whenever possible and when she could not feign illness to miss it, she "complained loudly all the way to church that her stomach ached, wearing a suffering air."[78] The power struggle and fear prompted by Elizabeth's legitimacy and her Protestant beliefs resulted in Mary's frequent and recurring demand she submit to Catholicism.[79] Early on her reign, in the winter of 1553, when discussing potential Catholic marriages for Elizabeth, Mary confided in her advisors that, "it would burden her conscience too heavily to allow Elizabeth to succeed, for she only went to mass out of hypocrisy….she talked every day with heretics and lent an ear to all their evil designs, and it would be a disgrace to the kingdom to allow a bastard to succeed."[80] Elizabeth's religion and her steadfast faith in it was a massive mark against her, especially in the mind of a Queen who was predisposed to distrust a sibling she viewed as "a heretic, too proud, and of too doubtful

[76] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 34
[77] Somerset, 34
[78] Somerset, 34
[79] Somerset, 34-35
[80] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. XI, 393 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 36n8

lineage on her mother's terms."[81] Mary was very easily turned against Elizabeth as the mere rumor of Elizabeth holding secret meetings with the French ambassador, an enemy of Spain and thus of the Catholic Mary, prompted the Queen sent members of her court to tell Elizabeth "that her present unwise conduct was known" and if she continued "she might have reason to regret it."[82] Elizabeth, unwelcome, left court in late 1553 and even after she had left Mary in private stated that Elizabeth will "bring about some great evil unless she is dealt with."[83]

However, that distrust became downright dangerous once Mary began engaging in marriage negotiations with her later husband, Prince Phillip II of Spain, in early 1553. This decision proved disastrous as a foreign prince, like Phillip, was met with suspicion from the English public as it was suspected that he would attempt to subordinate the interests of England to those of his own country.[84]

As a result of the mere potential of Mary and Phillip's marriage, prominent secret Protestant gentry in the House of Commons conspired over several months to rise up against the queen and place Elizabeth on the throne. The planning started in November with the goal of simultaneous uprisings in various parts of England in March 1554.[85] Although Elizabeth was not directly involved, she was on friendly terms with several of the ringleaders, even having a two-hour discussion with one of them in private.[86] When

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[81] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. XI, 454 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 36n9
[82] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. XI, 401,418 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*,, 36-37n10
[83] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. XI, 440 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 37n11
[84] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 35
[85] Somerset, 37
[86] Somerset, 37

their plot was discovered, the ringleaders were arrested; as a result of her association with them, Mary ordered an unwell Elizabeth to be brought to court. While gallows were being erected to hang the corpses of the rebels, Elizabeth was surrounded by mistrust and threatened with the Tower in February 1554.[87] Although lacking concrete evidence to sentence Elizabeth of treason, Mary was convinced of Elizabeth's guilt, saying to an advisor that Elizabeth's character "was just what I had always believed it to be."[88] Elizabeth was sentenced to the Tower in March 1554 on the basis of her association with the conspirators. This was an abuse of power by Mary's advisors considering there was a lack of evidence suggesting probable cause for her help in the rebellion. Upon arriving she engaged in a dramatic scene, proclaiming as recalled by an eyewitness, "here landeth as true a subject, being a prisoner, as ever landed at these stairs", then throwing herself down on the damp flagstones.[89] Even when threatened with serious charges, Elizabeth's strategic mindset was on display, as she worked to create sympathy and the view that she was the victim of injustice. On May 5, 1554, Elizabeth was removed from the Tower. As about to die, the leading member of the rebellion had declared she had no knowledge of their plans in April and thus, there was no ability to justify keeping her there. She was then foisted by Mary on an unwilling member of the Queen's court, as Elizabeth was not allowed to be free yet -- rather, she was sentenced

[87] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 39
[88] Calender of Letters, Despatches and State papers relating to Negotiations between England and Spain preserved in the Archives at Simancas and elsewhere, ed. Pascual de Gayangos et al., (1862-1954 XII), 140 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I,* 40n17
[89] Foxe, John, *Acts and Monuments*, 4th Edition, Revised and Corrected by the Rev. Josiah Pratt, (1877) VIII, 609-10 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 42n20

to stay at a damp and crumbling manor house in Oxfordshire. This is yet another demonstration of Mary's power over her and the Queen's distrust of her sister.

It soon became clear that her popularity had not diminished one bit during her months of isolation in the Tower, as her jailer could not possibly punish all the onlookers who cried "God save your Grace!" from the roadside and was sour at the sight of well-wishers gathered to meet Elizabeth at the gates of her new shelter.[90] During the months that followed, Mary, after marrying the Spaniard Prince Phillip in July 1554 and reuniting England with Rome in November, set in motion the persecution of heretics, to her referring to Protestants. She signed the reauthorization of the law that allowed the Church to extirpate heresy by burning offenders at the stake.[91] In less than four years, spanning 1554 from 1558, nearly three hundred people (including sixty women) were executed.[92] Not only did the persecution inspire intense revulsion by nearly all but the most fervent Catholic, but the mode of death was horrific: the victims were literally roasted over a slow fire until they died.[93] In pursuit of an internal religious crusade, the number of victims was unprecedented.[94] Mary's fervent belief that her crusade was necessary to bring about her own salvation meant that Mary was found ultimately responsible.[95] This charge is seen even now, in the 21st century, with the epithet "Bloody Mary".

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[90] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 44
[91] Somerset, 47
[92] Somerset, 47-48
[93] Somerset, 48
[94] Somerset, 48
[95] Somerset, 48

Phillip's relationship to Elizabeth accentuated this strained sisterly dynamic. In an attempt to prevent Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic claimant for the English throne married to the French king, from taking the throne in the event that his wife did not give birth to their long-awaited heir, Phillip advocated for Elizabeth not to be declared illegitimate.[96] Spain and France were centuries-old enemies who competed for dominance and control of Europe, especially control of Rome. As a Spanish prince, Phillip thought that England being controlled by France was far worse than the thought of the Protestant Elizabeth inheriting the throne. In 1555, Mary announced her pregnancy and there were rumors that she had given birth in April, although she showed no signs of going into labor.[97] However, it was another three months until Mary acknowledged that she had mistaken her condition and she was devastated by this.[98] Further adding to her grief, Phillip departed abroad in August 1555 but not before trying to repair the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth, by inviting Elizabeth to watch him leave and sending his wife letters that urged her to treat Elizabeth well.[99] Phillip understood that as queen-in-waiting Elizabeth still held power. In the near future, it seemed likely that Elizabeth would ascend as Mary's devastation at the false pregnancy created an aura of fragility around her reign.[100] Though Mary would have loved to have anointed Phillip king and given him the ability to rule after her death in the now likely event they remained childless, the mere possibility of Phillip being granted more power not only had raised a rebellion against her but rendered the Parliamentary session of

[96] Somerset, *Elizabeth I,* 50
[97] Somerset, 50
[98] Somerset, 50
[99] Somerset, 50
[100] Somerset, 50

November 1555 unproductive.[101] Phillip desperately wanted to see Elizabeth married to one of his Spanish kinsman so she could be better controlled by Catholic Spain and set about arranging for negotiations in 1557, but Mary refused to give "Lady Elizabeth any hope of succession, obstinately maintaining that she was neither her sister nor the daughter of...King Henry, now would she think of favoring her, as she was born of an infamous women."[102] Eventually Mary was forced to name Elizabeth her successor, as no law books allowed her to alter the rule of kinship without a male heir.[103] Mary resisted naming Elizabeth her successor until November 6, 1558 after being struck with recurring bouts of fever, a little under two weeks before she died on November 17 of that year.[104] When the news came out courtiers eagerly paid their respects to Elizabeth, the long-awaited Queen.

[101] Somerset, 52
[102] Calendar of State Papers in archives of Venice VI, iii, 1538 as cited Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 54n44
[103] Somerset, 53
[104] Somerset, 56-57

Chapter 2

"I will have here but one mistress and no master"

When Elizabeth became Queen in 1558, England existed in such disarray that the mere possibility of her great influential reach in culture, strong economy and vast dominions that became a reality by Elizabeth's death in 1603 seemed impossible. A member of Parliament recalled that in 1558, "certainly the state of England lay now most afflicted, embroiled on one side with the Scottish, on the other side with the French war; overcharged with debt...the treasure exhausted; Calais...lost, to the great dishonour of the English nation; the people distracted with different opinions of religion." [105] Elizabeth's siblings had left her to fix an England that was at war with France due to Mary's insistence of granting her Spanish husband all that he desired, with a depleted treasury due to Edward's youth and naivety where his Council abused their positions, and on the verge religious wars threatening to tear England apart. Like Elizabeth herself, during the reigns of her siblings, England had wildly shifted from one religion and one attitude to the next at such extremes that Elizabeth's policy of moderation and outward obedience was a welcome policy shift. The influence of the dire state of England when Elizabeth took the mantle as monarch was why she was so strategic and careful to take the guidance of others but not at face value. By the end of her reign Elizabeth prompted Pope Sixtus V to begrudgingly admit that despite that "she is only a woman, only mistress of half an island, and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by

[105] William Camden, *The historie of the most renowned and victorious Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of England* (Translated R.N.) (London, 3rd edn, 1635), 14 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 58n1

France, by the Empire, by all."[106] As we will see throughout the following chapters, Elizabeth succeeded in turning her sex into an advantage in the political arena, especially with the creation and publicization of the Virgin Image she utilized during the second half of her reign.

In order to better understand why her appropriation of the Virgin Image was so successful, the ways that Elizabeth navigated the constant question of marriage must be examined. While Elizabeth had a personal distaste for marriage, her flirtatious marriage negotiations and her relationship with Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester meant that Elizabeth had no shortages of potential hurdles in her quest to consolidate and keep the power she'd been desiring since her youth.

Her experiences with Thomas Seymour, being witnesses to her sister's failed marriage, and the shadow of her parents led Elizabeth to be against marriage. However, despite her declaration during her first speech to Parliament in 1558 that "in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin" prompted no reaction from Parliament.[107] This demonstrates the then universal expectation of marriage, as no woman had ever ruled on her own successfully. This expectation was not only confined to the country Elizabeth ruled, as shortly after she ascended to the throne in November 1558, a German diplomat confidently stated, "the Queen is of an age where she should in reason, and as is woman's way, be eager to marry and be provided for...For that she

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[106] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. IV, 470 in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 57n21

[107] *Queen Elizabeth's First Speech Before Parliament,* February 10 1559, from BL, MS Landsdowne 94, art. 14, fol.29 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, edited by Leah S Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 58

should wish to remain a maid and never marry is inconceivable."[108] Elizabeth did not wish to repeat the same mistakes as her family and strove to be judicious about choosing a partner to share not only her bed but her crown. Elizabeth especially did not want to marry a foreigner, even though securing an alliance with a foreign power was essential as England was bereft of allies at the moment.[109]

However, though there was universal assumption that she would marry, Elizabeth had sound objections to being married off. The people of England had just experienced how a Queen could prioritize her foreign husband's needs over her own country's. This is exemplified when Queen Mary had entered England into a war with France, despite the chaos it would cause, at the behest of Phillip and his Spanish desire to see France crushed, resulting in the country's loss of the key port city of Calais, which has been a valuable English possession for centuries[110]. Mary had entered in this war for personal reasons as she wanted her husband to love her; her decision was deemed a miserable failure in everything as it accelerated the continued decline of England's power and relevance in world affairs. Owing to this experience, the English public and court knew well that Elizabeth's marriage would cause a loss in national sovereignty and, like the Queen herself, considered it unwelcome. Given the nature of how beloved Elizabeth was at the time of her coronation, she did not want to do anything to anger her subjects, who had rebelled against the mere thought of Mary giving Phillip power. However, Elizabeth believed that if she married an Englishman,

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[108] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. 409 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 89n57
[109] Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, (New York, Alfred A Knope Inc, 1991) 89
[110] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 55

any fellow noblemen she passed over would resent her hypothetical husband's elevation, as she would have multiple nobles seeking her hand, and subsequently she would be presiding over a jealous and bitter court that would quickly infect the rest of England.[111] Carefully paying attention to the perilous situation in nearby Scotland once Mary, Queen of Scots, married Scottish aristocrat James Bothwell, where Mary's subjects deposed her and set up her fourteen-month-old son as King only demonstrated the validity of Elizabeth's assertions.[112] Elizabeth additionally was insistent that she marry a man with royal blood, which meant that marrying Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, the man she loved, was out of the question.[113] Having spent much of her life powerless and subjected to the whims of those who did not have her intellect, her heritage, or her power, Elizabeth refused to indulge in the reality that whoever she would marry, foreign prince or elite Englishman, would wield considerable power. Seven years into her reign, she asserted to the French ambassador to England that "the only way a husband could be of assistance to her was by providing her with an heir, for she did not intend to relinquish control over her wealth and armed forces."[114]

In any discussion about Elizabeth's "single" status, there must be acknowledgement that she regarded marriage itself as undesirable. She once declared at the closing of Parliament on March 15, 1576, "if I were a milkmaid with a pail on my arm, whereby my private person might be little set by, I would not forsake that poor and

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[111] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 93
[112] T.F Henderson, *Mary, Queen of Scots; her environment and tragedy, a biography*. (New York, Haskell House, 1969), 200-25
[113] Somerset, 93
[114] Somerset, 94

single state to match with the greatest monarch."[115] Additionally, in 1559, two decades before she made her virgin status a matter of public policy, she told a German diplomat that "she had found the celibate life so agreeable, and was so accustomed to it, that she would rather go into a nunnery, or for that matter suffer death."[116] Members of her court who knew her in her youth informed ambassadors that she had always maintained that she would never marry.[117] As discussed in the previous chapter, her experience and awareness of her family's marriage troubles played a role in her lifelong distaste for marriage.

Additionally, Elizabeth was disenchanted with the prospect of having children, knowing that being Queen meant that forming a truly caring maternal relationship was impossible.[118] She stated in 1561 to an ambassador from Scotland that "[princes] cannot like their children, those that should succeed unto them."[119] While she grew to like them as she was older, she did not want them and therefore she would have married out of duty rather than any true desire for anything a husband could provide.

Furthermore, Elizabeth knew that her position as queen meant that she would not lack companionship or flirtation, for men and women in her court would always desire her attention, and though she never married any of her suitors she delighted in the game of courtship, especially as she always had the final say.[120] These flirtations, especially with Robert Dudley, were subject to rumor and scandal. Despite that, given

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[115] John E Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments*, (London, Cape, 1953) I, 366
[116] Victor von Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners*, (London, John Lane,1928), 193
[117] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 95
[118] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 99
[119] J. H Pollen, *Queen Mary's letter to the Duke of Guise*, Scottish History Society, 3rd Series, III (1922), 41 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 99n72
[120] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 100

the realities of the 1500s, there is little doubt she died a virgin, especially understanding the importance that Elizabeth placed on her virginity for power reasons as much as for propaganda reasons. As Queen she was rarely left unattended and perhaps more importantly, contraceptives were inefficient and thus there was no way to ward off an unwanted pregnancy. This made it tantamount to insanity for Elizabeth to risk a sexual relationship, even for Dudley.[121] Furthermore, death in childbirth was frighteningly commonplace in that period in England with twenty-five deaths per every thousand births and the Queen had the examples of her stepmothers, Jane Seymour and Katherine Parr, to know that even being royal may not save her if she did fall pregnant.[122]

However, Elizabeth's distaste for the institution of marriage did not mean that Elizabeth did not entertain marriage negotiations or the possibility, though improbable, of happiness with Dudley. While one of these marriage negotiations, with Francis, heir to the French throne and the Duke of Alençon, will be expanded upon in the following chapter, Elizabeth had several serious suitors for her hand throughout the first few decades of her reign. Marriage negotiations for Elizabeth's hand and kingdom followed a similar pattern each and every time. As was the case with the early marriage negotiations involving Elizabeth by her father, Henry VIII, Elizabeth made demands that no prince could meet, including converting to Protestantism and not being crowned immediately after the marriage, demonstrating that her commitment to being a virgin queen was not simply a byproduct of her not marrying. Elizabeth, with the experiences

[121] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 101
[122] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 311

of her sister and her father vivid in her mind, had in 1559 “taken a vow to marry no man whom she has not seen, and will not trust portrait painters.”[123] This policy is unique to Elizabeth especially because the customs of courtships in the 1500s and 1600s demanded portraits as the primary way to assess attractiveness. Foreign princes refused to subject themselves to the humiliating experience of standing in front of the Queen of England only to be ignominiously rejected as such an action would expose the admirer to universal ridicule and bring dishonor to their country.[124] Thus, many suits ended before they could begin.

One of the first proposals for her hand was by Phillip of Spain, ironically, the very same Phillip who had been previously married to her elder sister, even though their marriage had led the country to revolt, multiple times. In fact, prior to ascending the throne, Elizabeth had informed the Spanish ambassador, Count Feria, that Mary “lost the affection of the people of this realm because she had married a foreigner [Phillip]”[125]. Though Elizabeth entertained his suit for as long as she needed Spanish support for peace talks with France to end the war that Mary had begun on Phillip’s behalf, which were signed in 1559, she did eventually reject him.[126]

Elizabeth continued to have suitors from abroad, though these courtships were complicated by the Queen’s insistence that her future husband convert to Protestantism. One of her earliest suiters in May 1559 was Archduke Charles, the

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[123] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. 70 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 92n60
[124] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 92
[125] McCall, H.B. “The Rising of The North”, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XVIII, 1904-1905, 83 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 107n89
[126] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 108

second son of the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand I, who ruled the confederation of German states known as the Holy Roman Empire. Though the suit had much merit at the time, especially with his unlikeliness to inherit the throne and his alleged lack of serious attachment to his Catholic faith, it did not succeed.[127] Negotiations with the Archduke were revitalized in the mid-1560s in the aftermath of the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to Lord Darnley, a Catholic Englishman with some royal blood. This triggered a renewed need for an alliance between England and another world power as Mary, a potential Catholic claimant to Elizabeth's throne, was now married and quickly became pregnant with an heir. Mary was assumed to be Elizabeth's successor, though Elizabeth never formally gave her the title, having witnessed the threats she was under during her sister's reign. Now the Scottish queen formed an alliance with Elizabeth's own subjects and Elizabeth needed to tilt the lines of power in the foreign theater back to her side. This meant engaging in more negotiations with the Archduke. These lasted until 1568, nearly five years, though the question of religion was too much for Elizabeth to overcome, as the Queen hammered the nail in the coffin by refusing to allow the Archduke the ability to have Catholic Mass in private.[128] The persecution and war that had been brought by Mary and Phillip were constant in Elizabeth's mind when considering Catholic suitors. Moreover, the domination of Catholic Spain on the world stage gave Elizabeth just cause to worry about a husband with split ties due to his religion. Furthermore, it had been a few short years since Elizabeth had stabilized the country religiously, marrying a Catholic would have inflamed tensions, something that

[127] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 109
[128] Carole Levine. *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, (Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 52

will be discussed in depth in a later chapter. However trying these lengthy negotiations were in terms of Elizabeth's balancing act of power and public opinion, they were a boon to her politically as they created the perception to members of her Council and some members of Parliament that she was serious about marrying.[129] As discussed in the following chapters, Elizabeth would later intentionally cultivate an image dependent on her replacing the Virgin Mary in the eyes of the public; marriage to a Catholic early in her reign would have made that image impossible.

In the 1570s and 1580s, Elizabeth faced increasing pressure to wed. Not only was she in her late-thirties and therefore close to being unable to have children, but England was at risk domestically and internationally, desperately needing an alliance. At home, the English government and public worried that Elizabeth might be a target for assassins. This was especially because without an heir the future of the dynasty rested solely on her.[130] By the end of the 1560s, England's relationship with Spain was strained. Protestants in the Low Countries feared for their lives due to the brutal policies of the Duke of Alva, a Spanish noble.[131] Furthermore, the new ambassador from Spain, Guerau de Spes, held a view of Catholicism that deemed Elizabeth a heretic. This dynamic set up a conflict between the two countries that would last for the reminder of Elizabeth's reign.[132] In 1568, needing an alliance to keep the Spanish at bay, Elizabeth entered negotiations with France for her hand of marriage to the Duke of Anjou, Charles, heir to the French throne.[133] However, between the Duke's devout Catholicism,

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[129] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 54
[130] Levine, 54
[131] The Low Countries are now known as the Netherlands and Holland
[132] Levine, 54-55
[133] Levine, 54

questions surrounding Elizabeth's fertility, the Duke's lack of enthusiasm for the prospect and Elizabeth's well-known distaste for marriage, the negotiations seemed doomed from the start and were unsuccessful.[134]

But throughout the 1570s, the need for an Anglo-Franco alliance had not diminished. Particularly distressing to England, was the Ridolfi Plot in 1571; where the aforementioned Duke of Alva sent a force of six thousand men to rise in revolt and try to rescue Mary, Queen of Scots from captivity and place her on the English throne by force. Though France and England had signed a peace treaty in 1572, it did not prove to be enough to protect against Spanish aggression.[135] Continuing Spanish actions caused a renewed need for an alliance, one which now could only be solidified by marriage[136]. However, Catherine de Medici, the queen regent in France, aided the massacre of French Protestants in Paris in 1572, an action horrifying the English enough to taint negotiations that had begun in earnest in 1579 between Elizabeth and Francis, Duke of Alençon, the future heir to the French throne.[137] This marriage negotiation was the final one of Elizabeth's life and it was taken very seriously both for political and personal reasons. Elizabeth entered this final marriage proposal with hope; however, she herself was reluctant to put pen to paper and sign the marriage contract, demonstrating that her refusal to marry was both about the need to maintain her power over England and her personal distaste for the concept.

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[134] Levine, 57-58
[135] Levine, 59
[136] Levine, 59
[137] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 308; Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 60

Though Elizabeth had multiple suitors and a few serious marriage negotiations, every relationship she had paled in comparison to the one she shared with Robert Dudley. Elizabeth had known him since childhood and although he was English and a Protestant, his prospects and continuing courtship were less out of suitability and more because of her own personal and romantic desire for him.[138] Though they loved each other, the potential loss of Elizabeth's sexual purity, had she and Dudley ever consummated their feelings, would have been devastating as sexual purity was the source of a woman's honor in the 16th and 17th centuries.[139] Furthermore, as queen, Elizabeth's honor directly impacted the foreign impression of England. However, the widespread belief was that the two were lovers. Elizabeth's awareness of the fact that only a generation earlier, rumors and scandals had destroyed Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother, meant that gossip was carefully gathered up by worried government officials.[140] In the first few years of her reign, the two were seen everywhere together, cementing for the court, Dudley's place of honor in Elizabeth's eyes.[141] Within a few months after Elizabeth's coronation, foreign ambassadors' letters made frequent references to their friendship. Furthermore, Dudley's place as Master of the Horse meant that he rode with her official processions and had close access for court reasons as well as ones of friendship.[142]

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[138] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 45
[139] Linda Woolbridge, *Women in the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womenkind, 1540-1620* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1948). 53
[140] Levine, 75
[141] Levine, 73
[142] Levine, 72

However, by the time Elizabeth was crowned queen, Dudley was married to Amy Robsart in what was initially considered a love match, though as Elizabeth's Master of the Horse, Dudley had court lodging and thus spent the vast majority of his time away from his wife.[143] This reality of his marriage did not stop Elizabeth from favoring Dudley above all others, as alleged by the shocked Spanish ambassador that it was "said that her Majesty visits him [Dudley] in his chamber day and night."[144] Rumors of a potential marriage between the two of them persisted throughout much of Elizabeth's reign. However, the brutal death of Dudley's wife in 1560 when she fell down the stairs and broke her neck (rather than, as what had been an explanation at the time, that she had passed in bed from an illness now known to be breast cancer), meant that any marriage between the Queen and Dudley would be greeted with suspicion.[145] It was clear, though, by 1575 that Dudley recognized that Elizabeth would never marry him.[146] Around the time of this realization, Dudley renewed an affair with Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex and Elizabeth's first cousin once removed and two years later in September 1578, he and Lettice married secretly at his house in Essex.[147] The French Ambassador, Simier, was the one to inform the Queen of this betrayal and all accounts suggest that Elizabeth was furious.[148] Though Dudley was not punished in his material well-being, the previous intimacy the two shared was severely diminished throughout

[143] Somerset, *Elizabeth I,* 111
[144] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume. I, 73 as cited Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 111n97
[145] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 46
[146] Levine, 73
[147] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 317
[148] Somerset, 317

the rest of Elizabeth's reign.[149] Ultimately, Dudley's second marriage succeeded in even what the first did not, a public distance between himself and the Queen.

Further complicating matters was that fact that Dudley was the son and grandson of executed traitors and deeply disliked by his peers, making certain that if Elizabeth married him, the political upheaval that she worried about would occur[150]. However, the fact that Dudley was so disliked was ironically a point in his favor in Elizabeth's eyes because his loyalty to her was absolute if he wanted to keep his standing in court.[151] Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, the English Ambassador to France, wrote that if the Queen married Dudley, "God and religion will be out of estimation; the Queen discredited, condemned and neglected; and the country ruined and made prey." [152] Public opinion was not the only reason that Elizabeth and Dudley never married. Elizabeth knew that Dudley, like any husband, would be a threat to her solo sovereignty. In a conversation with Dudley, she scathingly said "I will have here but one mistress and no master"[153].

Elizabeth's choice to remain unwed allowed the success of the Virgin Queen persona that she utilized to cement the love of her subjects during a fraught political area especially at home. However, her empathetic and repeated personal distaste for marriage did not prevent her from seriously engaging in marriage negotiations, often as a result of upheaval in foreign affairs as she strove and eventually was successful in

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[149] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 319
[150] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King* , 45
[151] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 114
[152] Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, 1560-1561 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1865), 377 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King,* 73n16
[153] Feria 324n as cited as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 139n19

bringing England back in the world stage as a force. Although her personal relationships, especially with Dudley, cast doubt on the loyalty she would have to any hypothetical future husband, navigating the needs of court gave Elizabeth a keen understanding of theater and spectacle, an understanding that she put to use as she created the Virgin Queen identity.

Chapter 3

"They Are Like Twins"

For centuries, scholarship on Elizabeth centered around the reality of her virginity, rather than examining *why* she so clearly created an image predicated on it. Before Elizabeth took the crown, England went through a long, tumultuous period of religious upheaval and many of her subjects still had positive associations with the Virgin Mary, especially given the Catholic revival experienced under Queen Mary I. Frances Yates's influential article in 1947 is the first known analysis of Elizabeth's virgin image.[154] Notably, the elevation and celebration of Elizabeth as a symbol, through her co-option of the Virgin Mary, depended partly on the identification of secular power with religious spirituality and sacredness. However, the iconoclastic nature of Protestant culture meant that there was a separation of the secular and the religious. The "Cult of Elizabeth", coming from E.C Wilson, Frances Yates, Roy Strong and Helen Hackett, establish that Elizabeth became a sort of Protestant substitute for the Virgin Mary, filling a post-Reformation gap in the psyche of the masses, who craved a symbolic mother figure that the Virgin had provided prior to 1534, when King Henry began the Protestant Reformation.[155] Elizabeth leaned into this urge with her speeches, her paintings and the quasi-religious ceremonies and celebration.

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[154] Frances A Yates, "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 10 (1947): 27-82, accessed January 28, 2020. doi:10.2307/750395.

[155] Elizabeth's image as the virgin queen and her association with the Virgin Mary have been written about extensively. Helen Hackett's *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (1995), Roy Strong's *Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabeth Portraiture and Pageantry (*1999), Wallace MacCaffrey's *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (1968), Christoper Hibbert's *The Virgin Queen* (1991) and others focus chiefly on what that image was and how it was achieved.

Religious Ceremonies

One of the ways that Elizabeth cultivated her association with the Virgin Mary, therefore creating an association of her and virginity that remains unto today, was through religious ceremonies. This is one of the earliest continual instances of her propagandic statecraft. This continued with a tradition of her father and grandfather using religious festivals as a way to legitimize and augment royal power. The nature of the king as the duel head of state and religion and the lack of a standing army in Tudor England, meant that the monarch's power was "constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory."[156] These ritualized religious ceremonies were a means of securing the people's allegiance. Thus, religious ceremonies were an important facet of Elizabeth's royal power and prestige. The two main ceremonies, the king's touch and the Royal Maundy were of special significance to Elizabeth and were "extended and overlaid by what might be described as a liturgy of state," as Henry VIII and Elizabeth furthered its symbolic significance[157]. The use of spectacle was used throughout her reign, including during her coronation and procession. Elizabeth's use of religion points to her intuitive understanding of the precarious position she was placed in; as a female ruling alone in a world such a state were thought to be impossible, as a moderate Protestant ruling a country scarred by religious turmoil, as a virgin with no heirs.

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[156] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005) 12

[157] Roy C Strong, *Splendour at Court: Renaissance Spectacle and the Theater of Power*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1973) 21-22

One of the most important ways Elizabeth conveyed her authority to the English was through bringing back the King's Touch, a royal practice said to heal people, for the first time in nearly a century. This was a religious ritual that Elizabeth actually returned to extensive practice as it had fallen into disuse. During the War of the Roses, in 1462 – nearly one hundred years before Elizabeth took the throne – Sir John Fortescue wrote that curing the king's evil was only capable of being completed by being a legitimate king, a sign of a divine ruler.[158] As Fortescue wrote, "the kings of England by touch of their anointed hands they cleanse and cure those inflected with a certain disease, that is commonly called the King's Evil, though they be pronounced otherwise incurable."[159] The anointed hands of the monarch were an essential element of the ritual because the success of the cure depended on the divinity of the monarch as God's chosen. Therefore, Elizabeth utilized this forgotten religious ceremony to encourage loyalty and also to establish her legitimacy. With questionable claims to the throne and as a Protestant virgin following a married Catholic queen, Elizabeth was vulnerable to doubts about her legitimacy for much of her reign.

By performing these religious ceremonies, Elizabeth not only established her legitimacy in rule but continued the practices of medieval female saints, women closely associated with purity and virginity. Here Elizabeth was beginning to cultivate the immediate intertwining of her virginity, queenship and power. There was a strong belief in magical healers in England, with the ruler being particularly strong at it. Centuries of

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[158] Carole Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, (Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 16

[159] Raymond Crawfurd, *The King's Evil* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 45 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 16n17

English history credit kings with curing the afflicted in England, seemingly originating following the Norman Conquest in the 11th century. During this war, English kings witnessed the way that the French people were fiercely loyal to their king as a result of their king appearing to cure their illness. This created an English tradition that copied the practice as a way to gain support.[160] In the similar way in which Elizabeth's claim to the throne was weak, so too had been her grandfather's, King Henry VII. As a result, he restored the King's Touch to a full ceremonial service in all its dignity in part to assure his position.[161] Elizabeth's later use of the King's Touch was ever-present throughout her reign, with both her chaplain and surgeon writing books on Elizabeth's remarkable talent for healing.[162] Elizabeth's exemplary healing powers were not confined to what had previously been a "fixed season" for touching, rather she completed it whenever she felt a divine directive.[163] However, she also "touched" while traveling on progress, allowing the rest of England to experience her prestige through the ritual.[164] Notably, the supposed God-given ability to cure by touch helped her maintain the loyalty and love of the English even as the Pope campaigned against her, including excommunicating her in 1570.[165] Elizabeth's use of the healing touch, and other religious rituals, enabled a natural association of the Queen with the divine Virgin Mary, a necessary element of successful religious propaganda.

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[160] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* (London, Penguin, 2003), 193; Crawfurd, *The King's Evil,* 51-52 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 22n35
[161] Thomas Duffus Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Material Relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland, to the end of the Reign of Henry VII* (1862, rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, n.d.), I, Pt. I, 461 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 22n37
[162] Levine,*The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 31
[163] Levine, 31
[164] Levine, 31
[165] Levine, 33

The King's healing touch was not the only ceremony to increase a monarch's prestige. Another ceremony utilized by Elizabeth was the Mandatum, the practice of washing the feet of the poor on the day before Good Friday. In imitation of Christ, the rite has been included in church for many centuries; in 1326, Edward II brought the tradition to the monarchy of England.[166] While the ceremony developed gradually, including a meal. and gifts of food, money, and clothing given to the poor involved, the Tudors helped create such an association that it became known as the Royal Maundy. Elizabeth washed the feet of the poor on what became known as Maundy Thursday throughout her reign, in an elaborate ceremony that included drawing a cross on each foot as she finished.[167] The number of poor corresponded to the monarch's age with Elizabeth performing the Maundy for upwards of thirty women yearly.[168] Similar to the ceremony of touching, with the Maundy Elizabeth exhibited her courage and unorthodoxy as a young, unmarried, Anglican woman taking on a function that was not only priestly but an act in imitation of Christ himself.

The appropriation of Elizabeth as the Virgin Mary was the most successful religious choice made during her long reign. While the majority of Protestant reformers denied the Virgin power and prestige, it did not lessen the appeal of a divine mother figure to the wider English population, a void that Elizabeth filled. This was an immensely worthwhile policy choice. Pictures of Elizabeth were carried to Blackfriars "like the Virgin Mary in a religious procession: a comparison her subjects did not

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[166] Levine,*The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 23
[167] Levine, 31
[168] Levine, 34

hesitate to draw."[169] Additionally, members of Elizabeth's court believed having her visit on progress was akin to having their home blessed as William Cecil wrote that Elizabeth's visit to their home as "consecrating" it.[170]

Further establishing her understanding of the power of spectacle, Elizabeth was the first monarch to mark her accession day, November 17, and her birthday, September 7, as official celebration days. This, like the choice to appropriate the Virgin Mary, was to compensate for the desire that the English still had for ritual, worship and celebration that the Protestants wished to do away with. These days "attracted much of the festive and liturgical energy that had formerly been reserved for saints' days."[171] The celebration of her accession day happened after the Northern Rebellion in 1569 and the Bull of Excommunication in 1570[172] but did not become a formal religious event until 1576.[173] The festivals included a specific service and liturgy as well as a public thanksgiving, sermons, ringing of the bells and more secular elements like tournaments and various signs of rejoicing and triumph.[174] In a happy coincidence for Elizabeth but an insult to English Catholics, Elizabeth's birthday was the eve of the traditional feast of the nativity of the blessed Virgin Mary. Along with ringing of bells, bonfires, and parties, there were also prayers in Elizabeth's honor, one of which stated, "Bless them that

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[169] John Buxton, *Elizabethan Taste* (London, Macmillan, 1963), *50.*
[170] *Queen Elizabeth and Her Times.* ed. Thomas Wright. (London, H. Colburn, 1838), II, 88.
[171] David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989)*,* 53·
[172] In 1570, Pope Pius V passed this Bull that deprived Elizabeth her throne and declared that her subjects were absolved of their loyalty to her
[173] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 28-29
[174] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 28

blesse her. Curse them that curse her . . . Lett her rise. Lett them fall. Lett her flourish.[175] Elizabeth's association with the Virgin Mary intensified even as a result of the date of Elizabeth's death. This was because March 24, her death day was the eve of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. Soon after the Queen died in 1603, one anonymous priest asked, "do you wish to know why it was on the Eve of the Lady that the holy Eliza {Elizabeth} ascended into heaven?" The answer was "Mary bore God in her womb, but Elizabeth bore God in her heart. Although in all other respects they are like twins, it is this latter respect alone that there are not of equal rank."[176] This exchange serves to demonstrate the direct parallels that Elizabeth cultivated and that the English people cherished. Elizabeth's use of spectacle and religion was a constant throughout her reign and allow insight into the deliberate nature at which she cultivated the Virgin identity. Elizabeth used religious ceremonies to influence the public to view her as a near-deity. Her invocation of the Virgin Mary made that aim successful.

Bound to the Kingdom of England: Elizabeth and Parliament

Elizabeth constantly focused on controlling her own destiny and her reputation. Having been powerless for much of her youth, the immediate desire and pressure by Parliament to find her a husband was met with much resistance. In one of her first speeches to the House of Commons, a branch of Parliament that had demanded she marry soon, the Queen responded thusly:

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[175] *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer set forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge, at the University Press, 184-7), ed. William Keatinge Clay, 557 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King,* 29n64

[176] Elkin Calhoun Wilson, *England's Eliza,* (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1966) 382

> *"It is long since I had any joy at the honor of a husband; and this is that I thought, then that I was a private person. 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 an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you."*[177]

Following this response, chroniclers recounted that she stretched "out her hand, she showed them the ring with which she was given in marriage and inaugurated to her kingdom in express and solemn terms."[178] In these two early instances of defending her right to rule before Parliament, Elizabeth structured her argument around the fact that she is married to the kingdom. However, she never explicitly denied the possibility of marriage as she stated in this very speech to the House of Commons, "I will promise you to do nothing to the prejudice of the commonwealth but as far as possible I may, will marry such an husband as shall be no less careful for the common good, than myself." [179] Part of Elizabeth's promise clearly had to do with the need to maintain control, with the specter of her family hovering over her at this moment. She also understood that casting England as her husband and her subjects as her children would only last for so long but for a queen newly crowned in a chaotic religious and international landscape, the rhetorical device was highly successful. Elizabeth knew that she would lose her leverage completely if she denied that she would ever marry, thus despite her clear

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[177] *Elizabeth's First Speech to Parliament*, February 10, 1559 from Camden, *Anneles: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth*, 27-29 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose,, 59
[178] *Elizabeth's First Speech to Parliament*
[179] *Elizabeth's First Speech to Parliament*

distaste for the affair, she laid the groundwork for that possibility in that speech. Starting her co-option of the Virgin Mary image almost immediately, she ended this first speech to Parliament with "... in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin."[180] Elizabeth establishes here that her status as sole ruler of England is tied to her virginity, foreshadowing a choice she will make in the second half of reign that created the conflation of her power, her virginity, and her elevation as more than just a monarch.

Less than a year after her near-fatal encounter with smallpox, in 1563 Parliament was again pressuring Elizabeth to marry, to which she replied, "and so I assure you all that though after my death, you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any more a mother than I mean to be unto you all."[181] However, despite Elizabeth's multiple speeches to Parliament, assuring its members she would think about marriage, the House of Lords and the House of Commons continued pressuring her. Eventually in response to these incessant demands Elizabeth wrote a letter about the possibility of dissolving Parliament in 1567, less than a decade after she had been crowned Queen of England. The first draft of this letter was drafted by the queen and framed, demonstrating how important this was for her and how strongly she felt.[182] She was frustrated by the attention that Parliament was giving her marriage prospects, believing that they were attempting to exert control over her. This belief was confirmed by the

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[180] *Elizabeth's First Speech before Parliament* February 10, 1559, from BL, MS Lansdowne 94, art. 14, fol. 29 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 58
[181] *Queen Elizabeth's answer to the Common' Petition That She Marry*, January 28, 1563 from Public Records Office, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth 12/27/37, fols. 153r-154v as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 72
[182] *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 106

actions of Parliament in 1567, where in response to not receiving no news on the issues of succession and marriage, not only did Parliament try to force the Queen's hand by attempting wipe laws from the statue book by holding up a bill that would see their renewal at the end of the session, they attempted to infringe on Royal Supremacy by modifying the religious settlement Elizabeth had passed in 1559 and whose principles she adhered to for the rest of her reign.[183] Though drafted letter was watered down in the speech she gave to Parliament, she has rather strong language in response to the demands, stating,

> "*...two faces under one hood and the body rotten, being covered with two visors: succession and liberty. Which they determined much be either presently granted, denied, or referred….and therefore, henceforth, whether I live to see the like assembly or no, or whosoever it be, yet beware however you prove your prince's patience, as you have now done mine. And now, to conclude, the most part may assure you to depart in your prince's grace.*"[184]

Elizabeth did not appreciate the insistent demands by Parliament and moreover came to view these demands as threats to her power. She dissolved Parliament for the next few years and the session had been a nightmare on every front; domestically, religiously, and internationally. Though tempers were frayed, and tensions were high, Elizabeth had averted a fragmentation of government and kept her authority unimpaired. She was crafting an image as the Virgin Mother to England; marrying and having children would disrupt that and disrupt her legacy in turn.

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[183] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 189-190

[184] *Queen Elizabeth's Speech Dissolving Parliament,* January 2, 1567, from BL, MS Cotton Titus F.I, fols.121v-122r as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, 107-109

While speeches and religious ceremonies are key in demonstrating that Elizabeth herself helped to create this virgin identity, it is portraiture where the public's perception of her as a Virgin Queen was solidified. This was not only because portraiture was the combination of allegory and majesty that invoked a certain association but because as Sir Robert Burton, a scholar at Oxford during these years, suggested the very sight of the monarch could "refresh the soul of man."[185] However, other than on progress, where Elizabeth traveled throughout the country, which happened once every few years, the general public never saw the queen in the flesh. Elizabeth also limited her travel to just beyond the center of her kingdom, only as far east as Norwich, as far west as Bristol and as far north as Oxford.[186] As a result of the public's limited exposure to the Queen, magnificent, idealized portraits of Elizabeth also functioned to legitimize her power and gain loyalty by creating an interchangeability between her and the Virgin Mary, a substitution that her subjects embraced.[187]

Elizabeth by the end of her life cast a very particular image in pictures, best described by Horace Walpole's[188] criteria for identifying her in portraiture, "A pale roman nose, a head of hair loaded with crowns and powdered with diamonds, a vast ruff, a vaster fardingale, and a bushel of pears are the features by which everyone knows at once the pictures of Queen Elizabeth."[189] This description speaks of the success that

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[185] Sir Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1938), 445 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of the King*, 28n60
[186] Roy C Strong, *Gloriana: the portraits of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, Pimlico, 2003) 36
[187] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of the King*, 28
[188] Walpole was an aristoristic art historian and collector of Tudor era objects and paintings who lived from 1717-1763
[189] Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, ed. R. M. Wornum, (London, 1862), i. 150 as cited in Strong, *Gloriana*, 10n4

Elizabeth had in creating a certain image, including the continuous use of the pearls that invoked Elizabeth's virginity. In the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, with succession still left unsettled, the government and the Queen decided that the official image of Elizabeth in her final years would be that of a legendary beauty, ageless and unfading.[190] This continued the elevation of Elizabeth as more than just an ordinary monarch.

Though official portraits are the best remembered forms, they were mostly in the possession of foreign princes in the name of alliance or wealthy individuals at English court. Thus, engravings and woodcuts were the most influential forms of expression of the spreading of Virgin Queen image during Elizabeth's reign.[191] One of the best examples of this is the impression of William Rogers' portrait of Elizabeth, painted in 1592, in Exeter where it is surrounded by printer's lace and other decoration similar to the way an engraving of the Virgin would be adorned in a Catholic country.[192]

The primary purpose of a state portrait was to invoke through the person's image the abstract principles of their rule, like Elizabeth's virginity, global dominance, and care for her public.[193] Due to this understanding and the length of Elizabeth's rule, lasting forty-three years, her image was more widely distributed than any monarch before her, including on basic objects like playing cards and coins bearing the image of the stylized Queen[194]. Notably, the style of sacred royal portraiture was revitalized for Elizabeth as it reinforced and extended the monarch's divine right to rule.[195]

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[190] Strong, *Gloriana*, 20
[191] Strong, 31
[192] Strong, 32
[193] M Jenkins, *The State Portrait, its Origin and Evolution*, Monographs on Archaeology and Fine Arts, iii, (1947) as cited in Strong, *Gloriana*, 36n89
[194] Strong, *Gloriana*, 36
[195] Strong, 38

In a Protestant country, which England returned to being when Elizabeth ascended the throne, the sacred images of Christ, Mary and the saints had been cast out of the churches as rubbish and in their place was Queen Elizabeth.[196] In this vein the royal arms erected in churches became 'portraits' of the queen and symbolized the power that she held.[197] An example of this is that Elizabeth's arms were painted over the medieval Doom picture in St Margaret's Church in Norfolk.[198] Though this dynamic of royal symbols replacing religious ones had great success in the kingdom Elizabeth ruled as it filled a void that had been left because of the Protestant Reformation, the action resulted in fury from the foreign Catholic powers. Elizabeth's portrait was considered by Catholics as a symbol of the *civitas diaboli* [Devil's state] of Protestantism and as a result was burned[199]. The burning of Elizabeth's image occurred in France under the rule of the Catholic monarchy, even though France engaged in serious marriage negotiations with Elizabeth.[200]

Prior to 1580, there was little in her portraits that was different from that of Queen Mary I's portraits, meaning that they could be judged by the common principles of Western Renaissance portraiture.[201] Both the early portraits of Elizabeth and the portraits of her sister share similar traits — both are wearing black dresses with few glamorous jewels and standing before a blank background. Renaissance-style portraits, especially for royalty, were meant to give an accurate yet idealized impression of the

[196] Strong, *Gloriana*, 37
[197] Strong, 40
[198] Strong, 39
[199] Strong, 40
[200] Strong, 41
[201] Strong, 41

monarch. However, around 1580, Elizabeth's portraiture became more allegorical. The continuing shift demonstrates the way with which Elizabeth is actively creating the deification of herself as the allegorical paintings are elaborated and expanded. The Elizabeth of the final few years is a magnificent empress leading the country, and the world, to a poetic dream of peace and justice, created as England triumphed over the Spanish Armada, resulting in Elizabeth becoming immortal in the eyes of her people.[202]

Over the course of her reign, Elizabeth transformed the image presented in her official portraits from simply a beautiful Queen to a powerful near-deity. In the first ten years of her rule, her primary portraits exhibit Elizabeth dressed in black and lacking regal attributes later associated with her, even as her contemporary royals looked down on those paintings as rather mediocre and somber in quality.[203] The first tentative use of allegory occurs in the *Three Goddess Portrait* painted by Joris Hoefnagel, a Low Countries refugee, in 1569. The painting shows Elizabeth, stiff, holding her scepter being beckoned by the goddesses Venus, Minerva, and Juno.[204] From 1572 to 1576, Nicolas Hillard painted two oil portraits of Queen Elizabeth, the *Pelican* and *Phoenix* portraits, the earliest to indicate any type of personal iconography on the part of the Queen.[205] The pelican and the phoenix symbols are within the necklaces worn in each respective painting and emphasize the uniqueness and sanctity of her government. Through the phoenix, she became associated with hereditary kingship and royal dignity, and her relationship with her people was symbolized through the pelican, described in

[202] Strong, *Gloriana*, 42
[203] Strong, 59
[204] Strong, 65-66
[205] Strong, 81

the bestiaries as plucking its own breast to save its young.[206] The face pattern that is used in the main allegorical portraits first appears in the Italian's Federigo Zuccaro portrait of Elizabeth in 1575 referred to as the *Darnley* portrait.[207] Reminiscent of the first portraits of Elizabeth's reign, this shows Elizabeth as a beautiful aristocratic lady, with the only symbols of royal power being the crown and sceptre in the darkened background.[208] While the face pattern is remarkably influential, the actual painting of Elizabeth lacks the qualities one normally uses to identify a portrait of the queen; she is not even wearing pearls, common for monarchs. All of these early portraits show a Queen not yet focused on cultivating the particular Virgin Image, content to exhibit control but not immortalized as she would be later in her reign through her full embrace of the Virgin Queen identity.

George Gower's portrait of Elizabeth in 1579 began a series known as the *Sieve* portraits representing the first portraits establishing Queen Elizabeth's allegorical transformation. The sieve that Elizabeth holds in her left hand is known as an attribute of one of the Roman Vestal Virgins.[209] Additionally, Elizabeth is now draped in pearls, a symbol of virginity and a motif that would continue to occur throughout her reign, thereby reinforcing the association of virginity, power and Elizabeth. One of the other objects in these portraits is the globe showing the Queen's kingdom. This is noteworthy, as in Elizabeth's era, the monarch was the representative of their country. When Elizabeth was engaged in marriage negotiations and peace treaties, she was not only

[206] Strong, *Gloriana*, 82-83
[207] Strong, 88
[208] Strong, 85
[209] Strong, 96

there as herself but as England. What this meant was that legally the queen's body and the body politic of the realm were inseparable.[210] In portraiture this resulted in a correlation with the monarch and globe, showcasing the rule of their own country but the kingdom's increasing imperialistic desires. This association, the map of England with the Queen, was also to become recurring in future portraits. This first portrait by Gower would inspire multiple artists throughout the early 1580s, all featuring Elizabeth holding a sieve.[211] These portraits also feature the first example of the 'imperial' column, featured in multiple paintings through the 1580s and 1590s.[212] The 'imperial' column was a single column crowned with an eagle that celebrated Elizabeth's chastity, resolve, and her imperial destiny.[213] In the 1580s, Nicholas Hilliard, the painter of the *Phoenix* and *Pelican* portraits, returned to England from abroad and became the main source for images of Elizabeth in miniature as the designer and executor of the images. Images of Elizabeth exploded in popularity during the final two decades of her reign, thanks to technological advances and Hilliard's expertise being reproduced at a massive scale on objects like woodcuts, seals, and playing cards. These mediums became accessible to all social classes, allowing for the wider dissemination of Elizabeth's image. This action was key for the cultivation of Elizabeth as the new virgin Mary.[214] In 1585, the *Ermine* portrait, belonging to the Queen's First Minister, William Cecil, was painted.[215] In the same framework of the *Sieve* portraits but with different symbols, allusions to the

[210] Strong, *Gloriana*, 99
[211] Strong, 101
[212] Strong, 104
[213] Strong, 104
[214] Strong, 110
[215] Strong, 113

Queen's powers as sovereign as shown through the sword of justice on the table and the olive branch in her hand and allusions to Elizabeth's chastity are shown through the ermine that she's wearing, a symbol of purity.[216] Elizabeth perpetuated the association of her legitimacy and power as monarch with her virginity through these and other portraits during the 1580s that served to establish the identification and symbolization for the remainder of her reign.

For Elizabeth, image and performance combined with portraiture did not simply reflect or enact power but in fact helped construct it.[217] It was only a few years after the monumental victory over the Spanish Armada that Elizabeth's image was widely published to buyers beyond just the aristocrats who had begun building long galleries through books of woodcuts and engravings of Elizabeth, including eventually medals and playing cards bearing her image.[218] In this way Elizabeth participated in the commodification of herself, stimulating a public desire for connection to her. As paintings became a show of loyalty and a spectacle, the allegorical nature of the paintings became the key element. Religious ceremonies, portraits and speeches and other displays of oratory essentially became a vehicle for Elizabeth to propagate her chosen image. In the span of just a few decades, Elizabeth entirely rebrands her image from a queen on the same level as mortals, to almost a deity. She makes herself the object of sacredness.

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[216] Strong, *Gloriana*, 113-114
[217] Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in. Sixteenth-Century England*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 6
[218] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 28

Chapter 4

"Thrown Into The Hatred Of All The World"

The deliberate orchestration of Elizabeth as the Protestant Virgin Mary in the eyes of the general public occurred during the late 1570s and early 1580s through portraits and religious celebrations. During this time Elizabeth was in negotiations for her hand in marriage with Francis, Duke of Alençon, younger brother to the king of France. However, by the 1570s, the English hated the idea of Elizabeth marrying and therefore she was at her weakest politically in her own home. Not only were her own people and her councilors speaking out against her potential marriage, but the Spanish were closing in and England did not yet have the might to fight back. Elizabeth had a Catholic queen with a claim to her throne residing on her soil and Mary, Queen of Scots' very presence made Elizabeth especially vulnerable to the amassing Catholic forces. While Catholic foreigners threatened her, her rule and supremacy as head of the Church of England were being challenged by the rising radical religious faction known as the Puritans. With the love of her people diminished, her enemies emboldened, thus threatened in multiple different ways on multiple fronts, Elizabeth publicly transformed her image to forever be known as the Virgin Queen, demonstrating that she was meant to rule and meant to be remembered. This is especially clear considering centuries later the Virgin Queen moniker immediately conjures up her and only her. Elizabeth's actions in asserting her power by making her Accession Day a public holiday, not only demonstrated to the Puritans that she would not bow to their desires but allowed her

people to focus on what she was actually achieving. Knighting and commissioning the world famous pirate and explorer, Sir Francis Drake helped Elizabeth stare danger in the face and refuse to be cowared by it. Additionally, her reassessment of her own image also resulted in a reassessment of English politics and power towards the threat posed by the Spanish, towards the seas. During this era when Elizabeth's crown, legitimacy and honor were called into question, she not only managed to survive it but find a way to thrive.

At the end of the previous chapter, we discussed how Elizabeth crafted a flourishing government-sponsored public image wherein Elizabeth replaced the Virgin Mary in the eyes of the British public through the use of religious ceremonies, speeches, and portraits. This transformation began in 1579 though its influence and power did not reach its apex until the late-1580s. This choice, while often framed as a personal one, was in fact sound political strategy. Sir John Neale comments that "it must have been a question with Elizabeth whether a woman ruler could ever do otherwise than err in marriage; whether, in fact to be a success as a Queen she might not have to be a Virgin Queen."[219]

The Alençon Negotiations

In 1579, Queen Elizabeth reentered negotiations with the French Prince, Francis, the duke of Alençon and then Anjou. These encounters represent Elizabeth's last great attempt to be married and were the closest to success. That Alençon was the only suitor

[219] John E Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, (New York, Anchor Books, 1957) 155

in Elizabeth's long reign to fulfil her demand that she must see a potential match in person in a whirlwind ten-day visit in December 1579, demonstrated the seriousness with which both sides viewed the match, though she never visited him.[220] While Elizabeth had never had any suitors visit, she had not seemed to desire that as the decade earlier the thought of the Archduke's presence almost caused Elizabeth to faint. However, this time she encouraged Alençon to come in person and fulfill her long-standing condition before a final commitment was made.[221] MacCaffrey suggests that at the beginning of the negotiations the possibility of marriage was simply a useful means to open discussion, but "what had began as a conventional diplomatic exercise in which as often before-discussion of a royal marriage was simply a handy vehicle for arriving at some kind of entente, turned into an intense, almost breathless, wooing of Franois d'Anjou by Elizabeth Tudor."[222] When Alençon's envoy and close friend Jehan de Simier arrived at the English court, Elizabeth did everything she could to show that she was sincere about the marriage. She even agreed to Alençon's private practice of Catholicism, something she had always before refused to grant a potential husband.[223] Elizabeth was so charmed by Simier that he not only received a handkerchief as a love token for Alençon, he also received a nickname, as in a show of royal favor the Queen dubbed him her "monkey."[224] Like most of her royal marriage negotiations, the Alençon suit is best described as a series of starts and stops. Even before Alençon arrived at

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[220] Carole Levine. *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, (Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 61
[221] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 60
[222] Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I: Profile in Power*, (New York, Longman, 1988) 16
[223] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 60
[224] Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, (New York, Alfred A Knope Inc, 1991)308

court, the marriage negotiations encountered difficulty as Simier insisted that Alençon be crowned immediately and be payed a large pension, stipulations that Council would not concede to and the English public would have likely revolted against[225]. It looked as though the talks might be abandoned, however, they continued on for several more years.

In October 1581, Alençon returned to English court, both to persuade Elizabeth to finance an ultimately costly war in the Low Countries and to marry her. While the marriage did not take place, on October 22, the French ambassador entered and told the queen he must write to his master, from whom he had received orders to hear from Elizabeth herself what her intentions were in regard to marrying his brother. "You may write this to the king," Elizabeth startled the ambassador by stating, "that the duke of Alençon shall be my husband."[226] She then turned to the duke and kissed him on the mouth and drew a ring from her own hand to give him as a pledge. While she had refused the Archduke a ring, many years later she did offer one to Alençon. The astonished and jubilant Alençon gave her a ring of his in return. Soon afterward, Elizabeth summoned the ladies and gentlemen from her presence chamber and repeated to them in a loud voice what she had just told Alençon.[227] Though Elizabeth never married, her words to Catherine de Medici, the duke's mother, where she

[225] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 309
[226] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume, III 226 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 328n112
[227] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 328

declares, “no one will ever mourn him so much as me” in 1584, after Alençon’s death, suggests that she would have married him[228].

However, Elizabeth’s gifting of the ring could be seen as a shrewd ploy to buy more time in light of her subjects' disapproval as pressure from France mounted. The reaction of the court to her announcement was pure devastation. Dudley was distraught, and her ladies-in-waiting became so hysterical that when the Queen retired, they “lamented and bewailed” for the entire night, preventing Elizabeth from getting rest.[229] This reaction enabled her to point out to the French that her subjects were still firmly against her marriage to Alençon.

The English had many reasons to fear the possibility of Elizabeth marrying, even more so because Alençon was a Catholic and a Frenchman. Elizabeth’s rationale to marry Alençon was in part because she had grown to want children to continue the Tudor dynasty, knowing that regardless if her heir was Mary or James, Mary’s young Protestant son, they would be called Stuart and not Tudor. This, however, was not enough for the English to support their queen as Sir Francis Walshingham, her secretary of state, remarked grimly that in the case of Elizabeth, “Madonna {my Lady} may prove *morbe deletiorn* {dead on arrival}” or that if Elizabeth became pregnant, she would die.[230] However, while this danger was a fear, the biggest reason that the English people despised the idea of this marriage was the fact that Alençon was the son of Catherine de Medici, the person England blamed for the St. Bartholomew's Massacre in

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[228] *The Letters of Princess Elizabeth*, ed. GB Harrison,162 as cited in Levine,*The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 65n58
[229] William Camden. *Historie of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of England*, trans R.N. (London; 3rd edn, 1635) 268 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 328n113
[230] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 312

1572. The Massacre comes up time and time again in objections to the match and thus is worth some more explanation. One of the bloodiest series of days in French history, the massacre was believed to be sanctioned by the king and queen mother in the days following the engagement of Claude, Princess of France, to Henry of Navarre, a Protestant prince.[231] The young Walsingham, England's future Secretary of State, who was studying in France at the time witnessed the brutal murders, where bodies were stripped, sometimes mutilated, dragged and then thrown into the Seine, and that too had influence for years.[232] Notably, all twelve cities where massacres occurred over the two months following St Bartholomew's had one common feature: all had Catholic majorities but still a substantial, therefore obnoxious, Protestant presence.[233] At the very least, two thousand French Protestants were killed in Paris; three to four thousand in the provinces. The figures are shocking enough but convey little of the overall effect. French Protestantism was decapitated. Of the principal leaders only Henry of Navarre, now the king's brother-in-law, had been spared and he thought it prudent to renounce his faith.[234]

This massacre and the long memory of it poisoned the English against the French. Frank Ardolino's essay examines the English reaction and memory of the Paris Massacre, with a particular focus on Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy", written in the final years of Elizabeth's reign that dramatically shaped a new genre of plays. The famed

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[231] Geoffrey Treasure,"The Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day." *The Huguenots*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013) pp. 167–176. 169, 172, accessed April 7, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vm0ht.22

[232] Treasure, "The Massacre of St Bartholomew's Day." 172

[233] Treasure, 173

[234] Treasure, 174

playwright Christopher Marlow makes reference to the Paris Massacre in his play about the event. People were quick to cast Catherine de Medici, the mother of Alençon, as the mastermind over the horror which befell the French Protestants.[235] However, the contemplated marriage between Alençon and Elizabeth aroused the staunch opposition of English Protestants who remembered the Catholic persecution under Queen Mary and Philip II and the bloodshed resulting from the Catholic-Protestant marriage in Paris in 1572. As A. G. Dickens explains, the two past weddings and the proposed one were joined in the English popular mind as a threat to national identity and independence.[236]

Elizabeth was at her weakest politically during the 1570s as the famously isolationist English public were devastated by the prospect of Elizabeth capitulating to foreign powers. For months, Puritan preachers had been stirring rage and resentment against the proposed union, further stimulating these ill feelings. As early as March 1579, mere months after talks officially commenced, Elizabeth had walked out of a sermon at court after the minster had boldly declared that “marriages with foreigners would only result in ruin to the country.”[237] By autumn feelings were more inflamed as lampoons vilifying Alençon were affixed to the Lord Mayor of London’s door.[238] Additionally, mocking ballads were in circulation like the one that concluded with the following refrain, “there, good Francis, rule at home, resist not our desire, /For here is

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[235] Frank Ardolino. “'In Paris? Mass, and Well Remembered!": Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and the English Reaction to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 21, no. 3, (1990), *404-406,* accessed April 8, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2540276

[236] A. G. Dickens, "The Elizabethans and St. Bartholomew," in *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew: Reappraisals and Documents*, ed. Alfred Soman (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 6

[237] Calender of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S. Hume, II, 658-59 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 312n79

[238] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 312

nothing else for thee, but only sword and fire."[239] However, the most direct and offensive attack against the proposed marriage came from a Norfolk squire and Puritan, John Stubbs, who in September 1579, published the work clumsily titled, "the Discovery of a Gaping Gulf wherinto England is like to be swallowed by another French marriage if the Lord forbid not the banns of letting her Majesty see the sin and punishment thereof" henceforth referred to as *Gaping Gulf*. Though this text was well argued and literate, it was offensive. In addition to stating that it was unthinkable for Alençon to want to bed the Queen and that it was highly likely that the Queen would die in childbirth, Stubbs abused Alençon's character.[240] Stubbs deplored that fact that the Queen could consider marriage to Alençon, describing the proposed bridegroom as "this odd fellow, by birth a Frenchman, by profession a papist, an atheist by conversation, an instrument in France of uncleanness, a fly worker in England for Rome and France in this present, a sorcerer by common voice and fame … who is not fit to look in at her great chamber door."[241] Elizabeth was furious and issued a proclamation on September 27 accusing the author, then unknown, as stirring up sedition in her realm.[242] She further ordered the Bishop of London to instruct his clergy to deliver sermons lambasting the author of the offensive text. However, the Bishop himself, when confronted with the fact that these addresses had not been well received, admitted, "I perceive that any that bend their pen, with, and knowledge or speech against the foreign Prince is of them counted a good patriot."[243]

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[239] John Stubbs, *John Stubb's Gaping Gulf with letters and other relevant documents*, ed, Lloyd E. Berry (Charlottesville, 1968) vi as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 312n79,
[240] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 313
[241] John Stubbs, *John Stubb's Gaping Gulf with letters and other relevant documents*, ed, Lloyd E. Berry (Charlottesville, 1968) 92 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 313n80,
[242] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 313
[243] Somerset, 313

Earlier that year, an act had passed that decreed that prompters of sedition were sentenced to lose their right hand.[244] Elizabeth had to accept that as punishment enough, though a French ambassador heard that she'd ordered a diligent search through the law books to see if Stubbs could be prosecuted for a capital charge.[245] So, in front of the masses at the Palace of Whitehall, Stubbs lost his right hand. The Queen however, committed this punishment in response to sentiments that were generally agreed with by her public as the witnesses were "standing about... deeply silent."[246] According to William Camden, witnesses of Stubb's punishment were "silent, either of horrour of this new and unwonted punishment, or else of pity towards the man being of most honest and unblameable report, or else out of hatred of the marriage, which most men presaged would be the overthrow of Religion."[247]

Not only did the general public hate the idea but so did members of Elizabeth's court, including her councilors. Though Stubbs was a commoner, even a well-educated one, his arguments against the Alençon match reflected the tone, details and tactics of some of Elizabeth's councilors. In fact, Elizabeth had justified grounds to suspect that someone on her Council had been giving Stubbs information, though it was never proved.[248] One of the most famous exclamations of disdain for the French match came from Sir Philip Sidney, Dudley's nephew who was expressing the opinion that would get his uncle in trouble should he present these anti-Alençon views to the queen. Also, his

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[244] Somerset, 313
[245] Public Record Office 31/3/27 fo,410v-411 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 313n82
[246] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 313
[247] Camden, *The historie of the most renowned and victorious Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of England* 239 as cited in Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 62n53
[248] William MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588*. (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1981). 256

own experience in Paris during the massacre made the idea of the French match horrifying.[249] Sidney's letter to the queen was circulated in manuscript only, not printed as Stubbs's *Gaping Gulf* was, but a fairly wide circle saw Sidney's composition.[250] Hubert Languet wrote to Sidney in October 1580 that he was "glad you have told me how your letter about the Duke of Anjou has come to the knowledge of so many persons. . . . no fair judging man can blame you for putting forward freely what you thought good for your country, nor even for exaggerating some circumstances in order to convince them of what you judged expedient."[251] Because Elizabeth was the Queen, she wanted nothing less than a full endorsement of her marriage to Alençon and with every member but two of the Council against the match, that would be something that would never come. She was shaken greatly by the opposition and her failure. This is not to say that everyone on the Council was against the match of England and France, fears of Spanish aggression as a growing Catholic power were present, something that will be expanded on later in this chapter.[252] Elizabeth knew well that it was at her own peril to ignore the legitimate objections of her Council in addition to losing her people's affection.

Threats at Home

The French match and public disapproval for it were not the only challenge to her authority that Elizabeth faced during this time. At home, religious forces were pushing a

[249] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 62
[250] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 62
[251] *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet,* trans. Steuart A. Pears, (London: William Pickering, 1845), 187 as cited in Levine ,*The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 62n54
[252] MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588*. 262

moderate Queen, well aware of her late sister's great failure regarding the violent and fast attempted return to Catholicism, to more extreme actions. They were known as the Puritans. Elizabeth knew well the blemishes of the church, regarded by many as appalling, including that in an attempt to fill the vacancies of ministers in over ten percent of English parishes, unfit men had been hastily ordained.[253] These included men who were ill-educated and unprepared to deliver the long sermons that were a hallmark of Protestantism.[254] During Elizabeth's reign, less than one church out four had a resident preaching minister.[255] However, Elizabeth took steps to improve the situation, and by the end of her reign the quality of clergy was higher and in London at least, the percentage of ministers who were university graduates had risen significantly.[256]

These steps were not enough for the Puritans. While there was no consensus with how to set things right, even though most agreed that the Church needed greater reform, the goals of Puritans, especially those more zealous, would have resulted in a wholesale reorganization of the way churches were performing their duties.[257] The Puritans wanted to discard everything that was related to Catholicism, including the law that kept priests unmarried, the special garb that priests wore, and even desired the reformation of the Book of Prayer.[258] Given that Elizabeth's background and youth were in the time of her father, Henry VIII, her Protestantism retained elements of Catholic

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[253] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 292
[254] Somerset, 293
[255] Somerset, 293
[256] Somerset, 293
[257] Somerset, 294
[258] Michael P Winship, "THE BIRTH PANGS OF PURITAN ENGLAND." in *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America*, (New Haven; Yale University Press, 2018): 28, accessed April 29, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbnm3ss.10.

ritual and given her later use of the Virgin Queen imagery, the Queen was reluctant to take into account the view of Puritans to engage in moderate revisions of the prayer book to eliminate rites and ceremonies in Church services.[259] The Puritans most fundamental complaint, however, was that the Church under Elizabeth exerted insufficient control over the morals of the public.[260] The reason that this understanding represented a challenge to Elizabeth's authority is that as one Puritan put it, monarchs must "be servants unto the Church, and as they rule in Church, so they must remember to subject themselves unto the Church, to submit their sceptres, to throw down their crowns before the church."[261] To the Puritans, Elizabeth's control over the Church was a terrible oversight, even if she was a divine ruler.

The basic concept of Puritanism and its rise presented multiple issues for a moderate queen who was not willing to relinquish control over the church, nor give in to pressure to reform which made no allowance for other views. Elizabeth was determined that her subjects should submit to direction from above, as she said early in her reign that she would not "make windows into men's souls ... there is only one Jesus Christ and all the rest is a dispute over trifles."[262] By 1582, a network of Puritan ministers was meeting to discuss issues of doctrine and practices, including attitudes towards the Church of England.[263] These meetings were subversive in nature and thus were defying the laws Elizabeth had laid down in Parliament. In 1585, a few years after the creation of the government sponsored Virgin identity, Elizabeth explained to Parliament that it

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[259] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 294
[260] Somerset, 295
[261] Somerset, 295
[262] John E Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, (London, Cape, 1953) II, 59
[263] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 491

would be “dangerous to kingly rule to have every man according to his own censure, to make a doom of the validity and privity of his prince’s government, with a common veil and cover of God’s word, whose followers must not be judged.”[264] Elizabeth deemed the ability of ministers to regulate the religious affairs of the whole country an absurd notion. In addition, the Puritan ideal that as Queen, Elizabeth’s authority could be subordinate to theirs was nothing short of revolutionary. The Puritan desires to see her abdicate her leadership of the Church, thus ending the hierarchical structure of society, prompted Elizabeth to say derisively to the French ambassador that ultimately Puritans wished to recognize “neither God nor king.”[265]

In addition to political and religious upheaval, Elizabeth also faced the most serious threat to her life, the Throckmorton Plot in 1583. Like most plots against Elizabeth during her reign, this plot involved a collection of Catholic forces, English and foreigners alike, who wanted to overthrow Elizabeth and place her cousin, the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots on the throne.[266] This constant threat was always tied to Mary, as Catholic forces viewed her as much more easily controlled. Placing Mary on the throne was a way for Spain or the Holy Roman Empire or both to make England into a vassal state to their already vast dominions. The threat was especially dangerous because in 1570 by the bull of *Regnans in Excelsis*, Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth, ‘the pretended Queen of England and the servant of crime’, absolving English Catholics of their allegiance to her.[267] The first attempt to overthrow Elizabeth after the publication of

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[264] Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, 100
[265] Public Records Office 31/3/27 fo. 404 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 296n42
[266] Christopher Andrew. "Elizabeth I, Walsingham and the Rise of English Intelligence." In *Secret World: A History of Intelligence*, 158-90.(New Haven, Yale University Press, 2018). 161
[267] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 245,

the papal bull was the Ridolfi Plot, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, which was uncovered in the spring of 1571. Additionally, the seriousness of the threat and the near-fanatical desire to see the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots restored to her "rightful" place as Queen of England and Scotland was demonstrated by the rebels' successful assassination of James, Earl of Moray, who at the time was Scotland's Regent, a practicing Protestant and Mary's younger half-brother in January 1570, only a month before Elizabeth was excommunicated.[268]

Mary, Queen of Scots was different from Elizabeth in nearly every possible way. While Elizabeth grew up motherless and illegitimate, Mary grew up fatherless and as queen, as she was crowned at nine months. Elizabeth spent her teenage years being questioned over plots and treason, while Mary spent hers as the Queen of both France and Scotland, with her husband, Francis, ascending to the throne when she was sixteen. Elizabeth never married and never had children while Mary was married three separate times and had a son. Outside of the Alençon affair, Elizabeth was beloved by her subjects while Mary's actions regarding her marriages and religion made her so hated in Scotland that she fled to England for refuge. In August 1561, Mary returned to Scotland, a devout Catholic queen in a country with a fiercely Protestant clique now in power. The Queen's disputes with Scotland's Protestant lords led to her abdication in July 1567 and a year later to her flight to England, where she spent the next nineteen years under house arrest in a succession of castles and stately homes.[269] Most importantly, however ignominious the end of her rule over Scotland, the combination of

[268] Andrew, Christopher, "Elizabeth I, Walsingham and the Rise of English Intelligence." 164
[269] Andrew. "Elizabeth I, Walsingham and the Rise of English Intelligence." 163

Mary's Catholicism, her legitimate claim to the English throne and her son made her a constant threat to Elizabeth's power and authority.

Mary's mere presence in England prompted grave danger to Elizabeth's rule, a vulnerability that the Spanish continuously took advantage of. Elizabeth refused to take any action against Mary in the aftermath of the first assassination attempt on her life was discovered right after the excommunication in 1570. Her reluctance to punish her subjects for potential actions was seen in how within the bills in Parliament that expanded the definition of treason, she struck down a provision imposing a heavy fine on her subjects caught attending Catholic mass.[270] Elizabeth refused to give into both anti-Catholic forces and pro-Puritan forces that wanted to pull a moderate and strategetic queen into a decision that could have provoked outright rebellion. At the time of Elizabeth's image rehabilitation, Mary was a well looked after prisoner in England, mostly spending her time begging Elizabeth to see her son, who was being raised by his Protestant uncle, the Earl of Moray, back in Scotland.[271] Mary has not seen her son since she was deposed when James was less than a year old and she believed that motherly affection would allow her to be set free once she saw him. However, the Throckmorton plot demonstrated that the most serious threats to Elizabeth's rule came from Mary's Catholic supporters and foreign allies, not the general English Catholic subjects that the Pope had wished to incite into rebellion with the excommunication.

Though the Throckmorton Plot was uncovered before it could successfully complete its aims of overthrowing Elizabeth, the number of powerful Catholics involved

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[270] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 246-247
[271] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 401

was a cause for concern. Francis Throckmorton, a young English Catholic after whom the plot was named, was arrested early in November 1583, following "secret intelligence given to the Queen's Majesty, that he was a privy conveyor and receiver of letters to and from the Scottish Queen."[272] This was after he had been under surveillance for six months. When government agents burst into his house, Throckmorton immediately went to destroy the letter he was in the middle of writing to Mary but a list of ports and havens that an invading fleet could land in remained as evidence.[273] Throckmorton admitted, without further torture, that he had carried letters to and from the Spanish ambassador, Don Bernindo Mendoza, who insisted that the plot would receive Spanish backing in London.[274] Additionally, he organized a secret correspondence between the French embassy and Mary Stuart, revealing that the Queen had already been aware of the plot to invade England in her favor by the time he wrote to her.[275] He also revealed plans for an invasion of England led by the Duke of Guise, reinforced by troops from the Spanish Netherlands and English Catholic nobles who would support the invasion.[276] Throckmorton was convicted of treason in a trial at the Guildhall in May 1584 and hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn in July.[277]

The government and Elizabeth were well aware however that while Throckmorton was an English Catholic plotting against his Queen, he was primarily an agent of foreign powers. Elizabeth was furious that even while she was trying to arrange

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[272] Andrew, "Elizabeth I, Walsingham and the Rise of English Intelligence"' 173
[273] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 402
[274] Andrew, 'Elizabeth I, Walsingham and the Rise of English Intelligence', 174
[275] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 403
[276] Andrew, 174
[277] Andrew, 174

for Mary's liberation, the Scottish Queen had been seeking "to provoke the Pope and other foreign potentates to attempt somewhat against us and our realm."[278] The Throckmorton Plot further strengthened the long-held conviction of both Walsingham and Cecil that Elizabeth could never be secure on her throne so long as Mary Stuart remained alive, highlighting to Elizabeth the dangers of allowing her sister Queen to remain in England.[279]

The most disturbing aspect of the plot was the way it revealed how determined Elizabeth's enemies, namely the Spanish, were to settle scores. It was no longer possible after 1583 for Elizabeth to maintain diplomatic relations with a foreign power whose Ambassador was plotting her ouster. In January 1584, Mendonza was summoned before the Council and ordered to leave England. However, he was not abashed at all at being caught in this outrageous breach of diplomatic convention.[280] He stated that, "Don Bernardino de Mandoza was born not to disturb kingdoms but to conquer them."[281] It was only two years after this Spanish-sponsored plot that England entered in war with Spain.

Spanish Aggression

Spain remained a thorn in Elizabeth's side throughout the entirety of her reign and it only after the creation of the Virgin Image that Elizabeth wholeheartedly completed action against the Catholic power, foreshadowing the aggressive actions that

[278] Public Records Office SP 53/13/fo.69v as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 403n41
[279] Andrew. "Elizabeth I, Walsingham and the Rise of English Intelligence." 175
[280] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 403
[281] Calendar of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S Hume. III, 516-517 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 403n 40

ended with the victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588. During the early 1580s, England was still searching for a peaceful accomplishment of their aims rather than arms, even though they took an increasingly anti-Spanish stance as policy and practice. Spain during this time was the dominant power in Europe, already expanding to the Americas and during 1580 made moves to increase its resources and might. By the end of August 1580, Phillip of Spain had absorbed the incredibly wealthy Portuguese empire into his vast dominions by sending his army to occupy Lisbon, the capital of Portugal.[282] When Elizabeth heard of the Spanish expansion she grimly stated, “It will be hard to withstand the King of Spain now.”[283] England as a Protestant country desperately did not want to see Catholic Spain rule the known world unmatched. This fear prompted Elizabeth to begin several diplomatic endeavors in an attempt to create a multinational alliance, including through the marriage negotiations with the French several times over. Ultimately, though, these all failed and by the time England entered war against Spain in 1585, she was truly alone.[284]

Although Spanish might pressed the Queen into continuing negotiations with Alençon and the French, Elizabeth received reassurance that Englishmen did not need foreign support to strike out against the vast Spanish empire. England had spent years resenting the riches and commercial opportunities generated by Spanish voyages of

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[282] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 321
[283] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 321
[284] For more information on the complexities of the Spanish/English relationship please see Wallace MacCaffrey’s "THE COMING OF WAR, 1583-1585." In *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588*, 302-47. See also Magdalena De Pazzis Pi Corrales’s "From Friendship to Confrontation: Philip II, Elizabeth I, and Spanish-English Relations in the Sixteenth Century." in *The Image of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Spain*, ed by Guarrero Eduardo Olid and Fernandez Esther. (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 2019) 51-80

exploration. In the 1560s, Elizabeth attempted to engage in limited trade with the Spanish colonies of the Americas but underestimated Phillip's interest in keeping his monopoly.[285] The Spanish attacked the three English ships at the Mexican harbor of San Juan de Ula where they had docked to repair a leaking ship. Only two of the ships managed to escape and only one of those ships made it back to England with more than 15 survivors, the ship whose captain was the future Sir Francis Drake.[286] Drake exited this encounter with a lifelong grievance against the Spanish and stated that he wished to show the Spanish "how to keep the word of a gentleman".[287] The first example of piracy by the English occurred when Francis Drake arrived in Plymouth harbor in September 1580 on a ship laden with Spanish booty.[288] In 1577, Drake set off through South America's Pacific coast, robbing townships and seizing vessels, helping himself to the cargo that for one ship alone yielded twenty-six tons of silver, eighty pounds of gold and a haul of jewels and precious stones.[289] After making his way just south of Vancouver Island, he doubled back and claimed California for England.[290] Shortly after Drake arrived back in England in 1580, he was summoned to court and granted a six-hour audience with the Queen.[291] In October, the Queen removed a bulk of the treasure to be stored in London for safekeeping. However, Drake was allowed to keep about 10,000 pounds, which he used to gift the Queen elaborately decorated jewelry

[285] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 322
[286] Somerset, 322
[287] Somerset, 322
[288] Somerset, 321
[289] Somerset, 324
[290] Somerset, 324
[291] Somerset, 325

and earn her favor.[292] Spain invaded Ireland, England's dominion at the time, under King Phillip's orders in 1580. Elizabeth had little desire to engage in diplomatic niceties with Spain. As a result, in April 1581, she conferred fresh honors onto Drake.[293] Elizabeth told Drake that she had "a gilded sword to strike off his head", mocking the Spanish desire to see Drake dead, and then in order to symbolize that England and France were standing against Spain, had the French ambassador be the one to dub Drake a knight.[294] Drake quickly became a public hero. His exploits helped boost the nation's morale and promoted a spirit of national self-confidence and pride in the skill and daring of English seaman. This boost and Drake's continued piracy and elevation by the Queen would do much to sustain the country in its coming struggle with Spain.

Sir Francis Walshingman, a key member of the Queen's Privy Council and one of the masterminds of Elizabethan foreign policy as Secretary of State in this era, wrote this letter:

> *"I would to god her Highness would resolve one way or other touching the matter of her marriage, the uncertain course that is now held in that behalf; besides, that it doth offend the prince here, and discredit her servants that deal therin, especially being persuaded as they are, that I have more authority then I have, doth minister unto the Secretaries of foreign Princes matters of discourse, greatly to her Majesties [sic] dishonor, and extreme grief of us here that are acquainted withal, as that when her Majesty is pressed, then she seemeth to affect a League*

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[292] Somerset, 325
[293] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 326
[294] Calendar of State Papers in archives of Simancas, Elizabeth, ed. M.A.S Hume. III, 93 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 326n107

and when a League is yielded unto, then she liketh better of a marriage. And then thereupon she is moved to assent to marriage, then she hath recourse to the League … those things are delivered out here in discourse among the said Secretaries; so tare they all conveyed and distributed into other Courts though Europe, whereof her enemies will make their profit to throw her into the hatred of all the world; it shall be therefore most necessary for your Lordship and the rest of Council, whose advice she doth use in this cause to move her Majesty earnestly to grow to some earnest resolution in that behalf, as a thing that doth import her greatly, both in honor and safety."[295]

Walsingham understood how important the European community's honorable estimation of Elizabeth was. This above letter ties Elizabeth's honor to England's safety. The match with Alençon at this time resulted in the frightening potential for Elizabeth to alienate her loyal Protestant subjects while simultaneously providing reason for Puritans, a dangerous extremist religious faction growing in strength, to unite. This situation would risk the security of the English nation and its people as well as ruin Elizabeth's image and honor as protector of the reformed religion.

During the 1570s and 1580s, Elizabeth was threatened at home and abroad with the ruin of her honor. The threats of the existence of the Scottish queen, Mary, being

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[295] Francis,Walsingham. *The Compleat Ambassador, or, Two Treaties of the Intended Marriage of Qu. Elizabeth of Glorious Memory: Comprised in Letters of Negotiation of Sir Francis Walsingham, Her Resident in France: Together with the Answers of the Lord Burleigh, the Earl of Leicester, Sir Tho. Smith, and Others: Wherein, As in a Clear Mirror, May Be Seen the Faces of the Two Courts of England and France, As They Then Stood, with Many Remarkable Passages of State*. ed. Dudley Digges. (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb for Gabriel Bedell and Thomas Collins, and are to be sold at their shop, 1655) 408, 20 August [1581?] as cited in Debra Barrett-Graves '' 'Highly Touched in Honour': Elizabeth I and the Alençon Controversy" in *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, ed. Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney and Debra Barrett-Graves, (Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003) 46

held captive in England brought the collusion of Spanish and other Catholic forces on Elizabeth's doorsteps at a time when through her negotiations with Alençon, her people's love was being threatened at home. The general public and the Council believed that presence of a Catholic consort would erode Elizabeth's role as the Protestant Queen, standing strong against the Catholic forces. Francis Drake's actions against the Spanish not only demonstrate the way Spain has cemented itself as the dominant world power but also the ways in which England could fight back. Elizabeth at this time was in an increasingly vulnerable position, friendless internationally and challenged domestically. Thus, during this time she developed different types of public spectacles to renew her role as the godly monarch. This is seen especially with the formalization of Accession Day as a public holiday in 1576 and the gradual increase of allegory in portraits that are directly connected to her.

This fear resulted in the image rehabilitation that is seen beginning with the *Sieve* Portrait in 1579, an increased level of association with the Virgin Mother concept. Elizabeth had to reframe the conversation about her in all classes of the country, which at that point were united in opposition to the French match. The sieve that Elizabeth holds in her hand in this portrait ties Elizabeth to virginity as it is the attribute of one of the Roman Vestal Virgins[296]. One of the other objects in this painting is the map of England, which demonstrates that Elizabeth is trying to bring England back as a power in the world stage. Even though the celebration of Elizabeth's Accession Day did not become official government policy until 1576, before Elizabeth's love of her kingdom

[296] Roy C Strong, *Gloriana: the portraits of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, Pimlico, 2003) 96

and her subjects had been called into question, the full-throated embracement of the celebration ramped up in the 1580s. In her mind, this rehabilitation was successful. In a speech in 1586 before Parliament, Elizabeth says, “after twenty-eight years’ reign I do not perceive any diminution of my subjects’ good love and affection towards me. This is the thing I most joy in and wherein I take my greatest comfort.”[297]

[297] *Queen Elizabeth’s First Reply to the Parliamentary Petitions Urging The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, November 12, 1586 from The Syndics of Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.III.34, 304-308 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. by Leah S Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 200) 186

Chapter 5

"She Beareth Two Persons, The One of a Most Royall Queene or Empresse, The Other of a Most Vertuous and Beautiful Lady"[298]

Elizabeth was not the first monarch to utilize portraiture to legitimize and increase her power. There are two types of portraits used by the monarchy throughout the centuries. Type one is where the portrait is only allegorical with vague references to the monarch. The elements that are associated with the individual monarch are minimal and without the title, could easily be mistaken for another royal from the same time period. This type of portraiture is from an old tradition, going all the way back to the early Egyptian pharaohs. While the following description applies to pharaohs, the elements were seen in a variety of kingly images, including the Roman Emperors and early Western European monarchs, "the purpose of most portraits of Egyptian kings was dynastic, in the sense that temples were always decorated in a manner which would show unmistakably the inclusion of the pharaoh in the company of the gods and his kinship with the supreme god of the pantheon. It is not surprising, therefore, that the king is usually represented as a fine figure of a man in the prime of life, differing in no respect from the gods except for the crown he wears."[299] These portraits are marked by symbols of kingly virtues, a bit abstract ones, and references to God, emphasizing the king's divine right to rule. The other type of portraits was popularized during the 15th

[298] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen: Cantos I-III*, (New York; Clark and Maynard Publishing, 1882), 6
[299] Ambrose Lansing. "Two Egyptian Royal Portraits." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 5, no. 7 (1947): 189, accessed April 27, 2020 https://www.jstor.org/stable/3257355

and 16th centuries and marked a diversion from the allegorical portraits. They were an attempt to recreate real flesh. This is something that could only be achieved with great success starting in the 1400s as oil became the medium of choice for Renaissance portrait markers. These portraits were more realistic, seeming to begin from the tradition of sending portraits to other members of royalty to truly initiate marriage negotiations. This is seen especially clearly with the way that Hans Holbein painted King Henry VIII in 1542, towards the end of his life. This portrait is clearly Henry VIII, like earlier Holbein work, the King is holding his dagger, clothes studded with jewels, his doublet and his stance highlighting his athletic figure.[300] However, this portrait from 1542 gives the audience the impression of an aged king, not a feared one, as not only is he holding a walking stick, but the King's complexion has become lusterless and heavy, lacking his ruddy complexion of earlier portraits.[301] This overall has the effect of showing a king in decline. This painting would have never been made in the centuries where dynastic mythmaking was the point of portraits.

[300] Paul Ganz. "Holbein and Henry VIII." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 83, no. 488 (1943): 270, accessed April 27, 2020 www.jstor.org/stable/868771.
[301] Ganz, "Holbein and Henry VIII" 271

Figure I: Princess Elizabeth. Attributed to William Scrots c. 1546-7[302]

The very first portraits of Elizabeth I are in this second vein, very realistic, especially as they occurred prior to her being crowned. The portrait by William Scrots (fig1), Henry VIII's last royal painter, in 1546 offers some of the features that Elizabeth embraced in her more allegorical paintings during the second half of her reign. These include her hands, which she found to be her finest feature. Here they are holding a book with all the elements of her dress drawing the eye downward to adorned fingers. Even in this early portrait, she is wearing pearls, including the cross at her neck with three teardrop pearls. Elizabeth's hair is pulled back and her dark eyes feel intelligent and piercing. Her dress is made of rich fabric, adorned with jewels and designs. Elizabeth, even in her very early portraits as queen, is treated as an aristocratic lady, carrying gloves that highlight her hands and a pale face that draw the audience to her

[302] William Scrots, *Elizabeth I when a princess*, 1546, oil on panel, 108.5 x 81.8 cm, Royal Collection Trust, accessed April 27, 2020 https://www.rct.uk/collection/404444/elizabeth-i-when-a-princess

eyes, though they lack the life demonstrated in the Scrots painting. In this style, Elizabeth is human and approachable, lacking the majesty and sacredness that comes from her later portraits.

Figure 2: Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses. Attributed to Joris Hoefnagel 1569 [303]

However, just because there is the shift to more realistic painting does not mean that the allegorical style of painting disappears. *Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses*

[303] Joris Hoefnagel, *Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses*, 1569, Oil on panel, 62.9 x 84.4 cm, Royal Collection Trust, accessed April 26, 2020 https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/in-fine-style/the-queens-gallery-palace-of-holyroodhouse/elizabeth-i-and-the-three-goddesses

(Figure 2) is an early example of allegory but it does not yet invoke the particular elements that Elizabeth will become known for. The portrait features two triads. To the left, the formal stiff group of Elizabeth and her ladies-in-waiting; to the right, the three goddess, Juno, Queen of the Gods, with her peacock, Minerva, goddess of war and wisdom, in her breastplate and Venus, goddess of love and beauty, seated with Cupid in her arms and her chariot pulled by swans in the background. The painting is dominated by the goddess, especially Juno, who is beckoning Elizabeth to come close with her hand even as her body turns away, in defeat or flight, from the young queen. The picture shows Elizabeth emerging from a building to the left with a tiled step or platform that raises her slightly above the goddesses. Were it not for the inscription which reads in English from the original Latin, “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 to flight/Pallas was silenced; Venus blushed for shame”, the assumption of the painting is that Elizabeth is being called to marriage for it is the wise choice, not that she just defeated them.[304] Additionally, without the inscription this work could be any royal during the mid 1500s, there is nothing to suggest that this is Elizabeth in particular, as her hands are gloved, her dress is of a French design and though she is crowned and holding the orb, the globe that comes to be associated with her is not present. In fact, at first glance, she could be a Medici. The only true defining feature is her red hair. This painting is more to show the virtues that like all queens Elizabeth possesses, as demonstrated by the objects at the Goddesses’

[304] Roy C Strong, *Tudor & Jacobean Portraits*, (London, H.M.S.O, 1969) 212-213

feet — the sceptre, the quiver of arrows, and the roses. This symbolizes that Elizabeth can draw upon her beauty, her wit and her royal power to have success during her reign.

From the 1570s onward, the transformation that occurs in bringing the realistic and the allegorical styles together is not solely confined to Elizabeth, though she makes great use of it. A key element to this transform is the concept of the King's Two Bodies, which states that the monarch has their natural body which ages and dies and their body politic which lives on after them through their laws and influence. During this time, this political thought is made manifest in portraiture by the combination of allegorical and realistic styles, making certain to elevate the monarch beyond simply being endowed with certain virtues or establishing a likeness. Rather, it does both at once. Elizabeth herself was well aware that this action of embracing the Two Bodies attributes meant creating a certain persona that would shape all aspects of her behavior. In 1586, she said, "we princes, I tell you, are set on stages in sight and view of all the world."[305] Statecraft was nothing without stagecraft. This is something that is seen beyond just Elizabeth and it would be a lie to say that portrait image making as a way of affirming policy was unique to the English Queen. During the 1580s, the painting by Antoine Caron, *The Emperor Augustus and the Sibyl of Tibor*, saw Henry III of France cast as the Emperor Augustus as a fete which assimilated the king of France to Roman Emperor. This continues beyond just the second half of the 1500s, as Louis XIV says

[305] *Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Henry Ellis (London, J, Johnson, 1807-1808) VI, 933-935 as cited in Carole Levine,*The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, (Pennsylvania; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) 129n16

“l’etat c’est moi” (I am the state) during his reign from 1643-1715, establishing the correlation and connection between the king’s personal body and their political activities as well as the connection of the king and the state itself.

There are three portraits that demonstrate the gradual growth of this form of realistic allegory. As discussed in the previous chapter, Elizabeth faced challenges to her reign both domestically and internationally during the late-1570s and early-1580s. The shift to the embracement of the King’s Two Bodies could not have come at a better time for the embattled queen who quickly embraced the ability to not only associate herself with the conquest of the world that England was about to engage in but reassert her divine right to rule by making sure that the allegory she would use was the virgin one. The *Sieve* painting in 1579 by George Gower represented the first time that Elizabeth was embracing the allegorical advantages her virgin status afforded her. The *Armada* painting in 1588 by an unknown English artist was the artistic manifestation of Elizabeth's and England’s ascension onto the world’s stage once again with the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The *Ditchley* portrait in 1592 by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger features a white clad Elizabeth standing on a map of England, holding back a storm. The *Ditchley* portrait is the epitome of Elizabeth’s success at cultivating the identity of herself as the physical manifestation of both England and as the new Virgin Mary.

Figure 3: The *Sieve* Portrait. Attributed to George Gower. 1579[306]

The *Sieve* portrait in 1579 by George Gower is the earliest example of the King's Two Bodies appearing in Elizabeth's portrait as the beginning of a needed image rehabilitation after the Alençon negotiations and the Catholic Scottish Queen's presence as a captive in England. Elizabeth occupies much of the painting. Unlike the earlier allegorical painting where she is stiff and off the side, in the *Sieve* portrait, she dominates. In the background to her right is a globe showing South America and the Indies, land that Francis Drake was at that very moment plundering and claiming for England. Above her left shoulder, is the royal coat of arms, further reinforcing that this is Elizabeth. The naming of the portrait derives from the sieve in Elizabeth's left hand,

[306] George Gower, *The Sieve Portrait*, 1579, Oil on Panel, 104.4x76.2 cm, Folgers Shakespeare Library, accessed April 27, 2020, https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/The_Plimpton_%22Sieve%22_portrait_of_Queen_Elizabeth_I

connected to her dress by a cord of gold inlaid with pearls. She is clad in a brilliantly adorned crimson velvet dress, a high white neck ruff, with billowy white sleeves that cinch at her wrists. Her bodice is adorned with strings of pearls and her dress had gold detailing. Her right hand rests on a table. There are two inscriptions that are not simply customary elements of Elizabeth's coat of arms. In Italian, above the globes, there is the phrase *utto vedo & molto mancha* — "I see everything and much is lacking."[307] Additionally, under Elizabeth's coat of arms is the motto "*stancho ripose e riposato affano*" which translates to "weary I rest and, having rested, I am still weary" from the *Trionfo d'amore* of Petrarch.[308] The humanist Petrarch's retelling of a Roman triumph held special popularity in Tudor England and was reprinted into nine different editions during the 16th century.[309] Through the inscriptions, the positioning and the object choice, Elizabeth embodies this portrait with specific images that create associations with herself, the land and her virginity. The *Sieve* portrait is only the beginning of this combination of statecraft with spectacle through portraiture.

In order to accurately describe and examine the *Armada* portrait, there must first be an explanation of why the victory proved so inspiring and celebratory. The Spanish had been growing in might in the previous few decades and had forced England into financing the Dutch during their war with Spain in the Netherlands in the 1580s. Phillip of Spain was growing in his determination to go to war with England, a choice he cast

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[307] Sara N. James, *Art in England: The Saxons to the Tudors: 600-1600*. (London, Oxbow Books, 2016) 316

[308] Barbara Baet. *About Sieves and Sieving: Motif, Symbol, Technique, Paradigm*. (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2019) 15

[309] Robert Coogan. "Petrarch's "Trionfi" and the English Renaissance." *Studies in Philology* 67, no. 3 (1970): 310, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4173684

as a crusade even though with the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, he stood to gain a kingdom from the attempted invasion.[310] When Elizabeth's spies heard rumors of this plot, she quickly dispatched Sir Francis Drake, the notorious pirate, to do all he could to impede the Spanish forces amassing.[311] Drake not only burnt the cargo of nearly one hundred Spanish ships; his greatest support to preventing the invasion was his destruction of the materials that would have made the casks to hold water and victuals. [312] Drake's presence at the Spanish harbor prompted such fear that Armada was delayed, giving England valuable time to prepare her navy.[313] Elizabeth, dismayed by the prospect of war, wished to enter in negotiations with the Spanish and the Netherlands, though Spanish presence and participation in the talks turned out to be a sham[314]. Phillip was pleased that England and Elizabeth should be so distracted for he said, "all this done...to deceive (the English) and cool them in their preparations for defence...for our part there is…the greatest diligence in our efforts for the invasion of England."[315] Elizabeth did not let up on preparing her defenses, building eleven of her twenty-five warships in just four years, as well as ordering militias and training to occur in each town of England, strengthening both her land and sea defences.[316] Elizabeth did not attack first, the right choice given her nation's comparable lack of ammunition.[317] In July 1588, the Spanish armada sailed for England, and the English ships that met them

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[310] Somerset, Anne. *Elizabeth I*, (New York; Alfred A Knope Inc, 1991), 444-447
[311] Somerset, 447
[312] Somerset, 447
[313] Somerset, 448
[314] Somerset, 450
[315] J.L Motley, *History of the United Netherlands*, (London, n.p. 1860) II, 310 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 450n15
[316] Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 454
[317] Somerset, 457

were faced with the full force of Phillip's ambition, "the ocean groaning under the weight of them."[318] Though the Spanish ships held more men and were imposing, the English fleet had three distinct advantages, the ships were lighter and thus nimbler, the guns were heavier, and, as an essential consequence of Elizabeth continuing to prepare during the peace talks, they even outnumbered the Spanish.[319] The English, with Drake and other seamen at the helm of the tactical ideas, outsmarted the Spanish, forced them into disorganization and from there used their speed and wheeled guns to pick them off one by one.[320] The English had also maneuvered the Spanish armada so far out to sea that the wind would finish the destruction. On August 8, 1588, Elizabeth arrived at Tilbury where she reviewed the troops and gave the famous speech stating, "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a King of England too."[321] Elizabeth and England's triumph over the Spanish Armada was profound.

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[318] William Camden, *The historie of the most renowned and victorious Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of England,* trans. R.N. (London; 3rd edn, 1635) 411 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 458n34
[319] Willard M Wallace, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1959). 61
[320] Wallace, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, 61. Somerset, Elizabeth I, 460-461
[321] *Queen Elizabeth's Armada Speech To The Troops At Tilbury*, August 9, 1588 from BL, MS Harley 6798, art. 18, fol.87 as cited in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 2000) 326

Figure 4: The Armada Portrait. Unknown English Artist. Formerly attributed to George Gower. 1588[322]

The *Armada* portrait (Fig 4) is a celebration of Elizabeth's triumph against the Spanish Armada in 1588. The power that this victory granted is demonstrated by the horizontal shape of the life-size portrait, otherwise unprecedented in both past and future portraiture.[323] In this portrait, Elizabeth, adorned with pearls and pink bows, is standing in the center, her magnificent dress in black and white. She appears to be

[322] Unknown English Artist, *The Armada Portrait*, 1588. Oil on Oak Panel, Woburn Abbey, Wikimedia Commons, accessed April 28, 2020 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elizabeth_I_(Armada_Portrait).jpg
[323] Roy C Strong, *Gloriana: the portraits of Queen Elizabeth* (London; Pimlico, 2003), 131

almost lit from the front. In the background, the right is a painting of ships docked on sand and to the left is a group of battered ships facing a storm. Her hand rests firmly on the globe, representing her conquest. The crown resting on the table is not the Tudor crown, but rather the Imperial one. There is a mermaid on the left which serves to represent the new attribute of Elizabeth as Queen of the Seas. The portrait as whole seems to grab one by the hand and take them to victory, to Elizabeth's triumph.

Figure 5: *Ditchley* Portrait. Attributed to Marcus Geeraerts the Younger. 1592[324]

Finally, there is the *Ditchley* Portrait, painted by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in 1592, where the concept of the King's Two bodies that was first referenced in the

[324] Marcus Geeraets the Younger. *Ditchley Portrait*, 1592, oil on canvas, 95 x 60 in. National Portrait Gallery, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitConservation/mw02079/Queen-Elizabeth-I-The-Ditchley-portrait

Sieve portrait nearly two decades early is made text. Elizabeth is standing on top of the globe, specifically of England, the crown and county interchangeable. The details of this map are incredible as surrounding her feet are ships, both coming and returning from both sea and river. Furthermore, these ships are buoyed by good wind, thus continuing English exploration and conquest. Elizabeth oversees the intercourse between sea and land, on the one hand, and sea and rivers, on the other. This portrait features her as a magnificent vision with her dress and cape taking up most of the physical space. Unlike previous portraits, there are no objects in the background or the foreground, allowing for a dramatic background. To her right, the sun is beaming through the cloud and to her left, lightning flashes against the storm clouds. In this way, Elizabeth is portrayed as a cosmic force, an allusion helped by the lace coming up from the cape to almost frame her face like a halo. Elizabeth is draped in pearls, cascading down in long ropes that draw the eye toward the map. The jewels dotting her dress are especially noticeable on her bodice creating the appearance of a breast plate, its brilliance enhanced by the virgin-knot of pearls draped at the center.[325]

As supreme head of the Church of England, Elizabeth had both religious and secular authority. In her portraits, she is symbolized as both the godly monarch and the physical embodiment of her expanding kingdom. All three of the portraits mentioned in this chapter, the *Sieve*, the *Armada* and the *Ditchley*, are all certainly Elizabeth, all

[325] Albert C Labriola, “Painting and Poetry of the Cult of Elizabeth I: The Ditchley Portrait and Donne's "Elegie: Going to Bed" *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (Winter, 1996): 46, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4174537

make reference to the imperial ambitions and thus the body politic of the country, and all make references to her virginity and thus her deification.

The first known portrait of Princess Elizabeth (Fig. 1) by William Scrots established some key details that remain in the portraits highlighted in the chapter and all other portraits after 1579. Elizabeth was known to be vain about her hands, she considered them her finest feature and was constantly highlighting them in real life with her suitors. They were praised by bards and poets. It thus makes sense that they were a feature marking portraits as those showing Elizabeth. In the *Sieve* portrait (Fig. 3), her hands are highlighted not only by the cinched ruffles at her wrists, but the pale white hand holding the gold Sieve against the crimson dress. The contrast draws the eye to her hands. In the *Armada* portrait (Fig. 4), her hands rests on the globe, noticeably absent jewelry and the simplicity of the element draws the eye, especially when the rest of the painting is adorned and bejeweled, decorated so the portrait feels almost bursting. In the *Ditchley* portrait (Fig. 5), Elizabeth is holding a fan in one hand and a pair of gloves in the other, positioned so they are at the same level as the looping pearls. Another element that confirms to the audience that this portrait is of Elizabeth in particular is her red hair being pulled up with a large white ruff at her neck. These elements additionally serve to accentuate her dark eyes. In the *Sieve* portrait, the black background draws the eye towards her red hair because of the red animal on her royal emblem. Additionally, the way the white ruff frames her face draws the audience to notice her eyes, with dark pupils on an otherwise very pale face. In the *Armada* portrait, the paleness of her face in contrast with the dark green curtains draws the audience

towards her face and thus her eyes. Like her hand on the globe, her face is absent any adornment, though it is surrounded by the large lace ruff that extends around her face like a circle. Her hair is adorned with pearls and a feathered hairpiece, which draws the eye. In the *Ditchley* portrait, Elizabeth's red hair and dark eyes are highlighted by the large jewel at her neck and the lace ruff fanning her neck. In these ways, the later iconic portraits of the queen owe much to the features established in the portrait from when she was a princess because they give specific features that mark her as Elizabeth. There is no mistaking that these portraits are of this Queen in particular.

One key element of the concept of King's Two bodies is the fact that it combines the laws and actions of the monarch with the monarch themselves, commonly known as body politic. In this trio of portraits, Elizabeth is continuously associated with the globe or a map. In the *Sieve* portrait, the map is of South America, a land that Elizabeth had recently sent out Francis Drake to investigate and bother the Spanish. However, it is in the background, visible but not the focus. This is in contrast to the *Armada* portrait, where Elizabeth's hand is resting on the globe, the object closest to the viewer. As this portrait represented the defeat of the Spanish Armada and thus England's re-entrance into the world and imperialistic ambition as a capable and feared power, the fact that it is the focal point makes sense. Additionally, as Elizabeth is commemorating the defeat of her longstanding enemy, much of the symbolization of the objects in the painting relates to the body politic. The paintings on the wall of the sea battle, the imperial crown, even the mermaid are all references to England's great victory. In the *Ditchley* portrait, Elizabeth is standing on a map of England, with ships maneuvering around her

feet. While the ships hint at the larger imperial ambitions occurring and the voyages to the New World, the main focus with the map is the homeland. These are symbolic images that are showing her triumph in the world and her ascension as one of the best princes in the world as her secretary of state, Sir Francis Walsingham, commented, “I would all princes were affected like her Majesty, and then we have as general a peace effected [sic] throughout the world as in Augustus his time.”[326]

As established in chapter three, Elizabeth carefully cultivated the image of herself as the Virgin Queen, a replacement of Mary, the Virgin Mother. The portraits discussed are another extension of that propagated her public image. The *Sieve* portrait is an apt place to begin. Not only is it the earliest but it features the most obvious allegory to virginity, the sieve itself. The sieve is an attribute of the Roman Vestal Virgin, Tuccia, who when accused of impurity, filled the sieve with water from the river and carried it to the temple.[327] Additionally the Latin quote under Elizabeth’s coat of arms comes from Petrarch’s *Triumph of Love* which tells of the story of the chaste female protagonist journeying from the land of the dead back to her longing lover, creating an ideal picture of womanhood dependent on chastity and purity, both traits that are brought to mind when thinking of virginity.[328] These are elements unique to the Sieve portrait, which makes sense given 1579 is also the start of Elizabeth’s image rehabilitation that seeks to elevate her as a near-deity by co-opting the Virgin Mary identity.

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[326] Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Mss. of the Duke of Rutland at Belvoir Castle*, 12th Report, Appendix, Part IV, 1888, I, 141 as cited in Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 573n126
[327] Strong, Gloriana, 96
[328] Coogan, "Petrarch's "Trionfi" and the English Renaissance." 309

However, the other elements that appear in all three of these portraits are Elizabeth wearing pearls, the whiteness of her hands and face usually highlighted by a dark background and the white in her clothes. As a perpetual reminder of her virginity, Elizabeth used pearls as the focal jewelry throughout these portraits, adorning both her body and her hair. Pearls created an air of power and, through their traditional association with the notions of purity and chastity, reminded the world of the queen's unsullied virtue.[329] As discussed above, Elizabeth's face and hands are noticeable features the painters draw attention to. This is not only because they establish the Queen as Elizabeth, but the stark white quality of her features serves as yet another reminder that she is a virgin. In the *Sieve* and *Armada* portraits, the sleeves of her dress are white, and her neck is highlighted by a white ruff. In the Tudor era, a person's dress revealed the person's social class and the traits they wished to highlight.[330] Elizabeth, both in person and especially in portraiture is seen wearing white, as that was a symbol of virginity. The *Ditchley* portrait takes center stage in this analysis as Elizabeth is clad in a glittering white dress, her body adorned with long ropes of pearls and the dark storm of the left side draws the eye to her face. It is in this portrait that Elizabeth is made a cosmic being, raised above simply being queen. The use of white and of pearls stands out and successfully associates Elizabeth with virginity, making her the Virgin Queen. In the *Ditchley* portrait, the deification of Elizabeth is made manifest, especially

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[329] Kristin Joyce and Shellei Addison, *Pearls: Ornament and Obsession* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 98.

[330] Jane Ashelford, Dress in the Age of Elizabeth I (London: B.T. Batsford, 1988) 108 as cited in Catherine L Howey, "Dressing a Virgin Queen: Court Women, Dress, and Fashioning the Image of England's Queen Elizabeth I." *Early Modern Women* 4 (2009): 202, accessed April 27, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/23541582

because, outside of the map, which she is standing on, she is not tied to the earthly realm or the day-to-day actions as Queen.

The gradual increase of allegory and godly imagery in the three paintings focused on in this chapter demonstrate the ways that Elizabeth used her political actions and desires, and the Virgin Queen imagery to create for herself a persona that combines the two styles of royal portrait. Elizabeth is somehow instantly recognizable but also elevated into the realm of the gods rather than her subjects. Around the same time as the *Ditchley* portrait is painted, in 1590 Edmund Spenser is writing his epic poem, *Faerie Queene.* With allusions to Brutus, the Trojan said to have fled to England and founded London after the Trojan War, and Arthur, legendary King of Camelot, Spenser was borrowing from a long tradition dating back to Virgil and *the Aeneid*, where the writer seeks portray their leader as the predestined ruler of a chosen people. In Spenser's dedication of this work, which he gifts to the Queen, he writes, "she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall queene or empresse, the other of a most vertuous [sic] and beautiful Lady."[331] This quote shows how Elizabeth molded her variation of the King's Two bodies into public consciousness. She is at once the virtuous virgin and the royal ruler, combining the identities to become the bringer of peace and prosperity to England. Her achievement in defeating the Spanish Armada and her famed Tilbury Speech not only cemented her as beloved by her people but eternally the symbol of English might. This would not have been possible without the image rebranding. Elizabeth cultivated the image through portraiture, religious ceremonies and her

[331] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen: Cantos I-III*, (New York; Clark and Maynard Publishing, 1882), 6

resiliency over the various trials and tribulations during her reign. As Elizabeth succeeded in creating her long-lasting image as the Virgin Queen, she ushered England into a new age, into a golden age.

Conclusion

In 1599, Thomas Dekker, an English author, introduced his short story, *Old Fortunatus*, with the following statement:

> "Are you traveling to the temple of Eliza? /…/ I am of her country and we adore her by the name Eliza."[332]

The Dekker text comes from a collection of his plays printed in 1873, over two centuries after Elizabeth died. However, this description of England still rings true today. Elizabeth is remembered and invoked by authors, politicians and schoolteachers alike. The myth of the Virgin Queen, of Gloriana, was passed down generation to generation and even today, her impact and memory remain a vivid part of culture.

In her time Elizabeth crafted an eternal image, made possible by her resiliency, her strategic thinking, her victories, and yes, especially her virginity. Through portraits, religious celebrations, and speeches, Elizabeth overcame challenges and threats to her honor in the 1570s and 1580s by domestic and international forces alike. She emerged beloved, powerful, and overwhelmingly in control. Having spent much of her youth powerless, born in the backdrop of scandal and religious strife, raised by rumors and education, taken advantage of and manipulated, by the time Elizabeth became Queen the idea of giving away any of her hard-won power was inconceivable in her mind. That was what was expected of her had she married. If it was to a foreign prince there was no certainty that the foreigner would truly have the best interests of the English people,

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[332] Thomas Dekker, *Works*, (London, n.p, 1873) 87 as cited in Frances A. Yates "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 10 (1947): 27n1, accessed April 30, 2020. https://www.jstor.org/stable/750395

as established by the Phillip-Queen Mary I relationship that had plagued England the prior decade. If Elizabeth married a noble Englishman, there was no reason to believe that vicious battles for power amongst countrymen would not overwhelm the court. As a result, Elizabeth vehemently pushed back against Parliament's demands for her to marry and though she had serious marriage negotiations, they were more as a result of the challenging international climate than any real desire to see herself bound to any entity save for England. The experiences of her parents' and of her sister guided her to the realization that marriage was not enough to create a lasting reputation or any sort of happiness, though it was certainly enough to ruin those. Furthermore, the marriage of the monarch impacted the people and the people's love. Elizabeth's image transformation where she truly embraced the virgin identity and the power it brought her is in part because she needed to win back the love of her people.

Elizabeth's bond with her country and her virginity created the Virgin Queen image as Elizabeth drew on the gap in the psyche of her public, yearning for stability after decades of religious turmoil. Elizabeth fused the religious and the secular, not only within her role as the Supreme Head of the Church of England, but also through the creation of Accession Day, a public holiday celebrating her rather than the saints. This not only acknowledged Elizabeth's role as the protector of the Protestant state and religion but also fulfilled a deep need of her people. Positioning herself as the stabilizing force allowed her to transfer association of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth herself. Not only was this essential for the mythmaking Elizabeth engaged in the second half of her reign, it enabled her to claim England's victory over the Catholic Spanish Armada as her own.

The connection of England and Elizabeth, of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen, was the most successful policy choice she made during her long reign and it still endures today.

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Author's Note

From the moment I decided to become a history major I have had a variation of this thesis in my mind. For my entire life I've loved stories and I was fascinated by the image of Elizabeth that seems to be constant across all media about my favorite Queen. One of the sparks for this thesis was the following question: how is Elizabeth's image in our time shaped by the image she created in hers?

I had always intended to have at least a chapter on this question. Then, Covid-19 happened. And 100 pages on the way that Elizabeth crafted her own image happened.

Elizabeth's image in the modern era is complex and further complicated by our notions of virginity. Thus, this question serves to be a guiding one for future research.

When I was in London during my semester abroad I got the chance to walk in the same places Elizabeth did — the knowledge that she was alive, vibrant and human helped shape my writing of this work.