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Developing the Image of the Virgin Queen: The Writings and Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Prague, 12/08/2020 Michaela Válková

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Key words: Elizabeth I, English Renaissance, Elizabethan Era, early modern literature, poetry, representation, portraits, the Tudors

Klíčová slova: Alžběta I., anglická renesance, alžbětinská doba, raně novověká literature, poezie, reprezentace, portréty, Tudorovci

## THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the self-representation of Elizabeth I. Elizabeth I ruled England during tumultuous time – her father Henry VIII separated England from the Catholic church and Elizabeth was faced with attempts of invasions and plots. Despite that, the Elizabethan Era is remembered as the Golden Age for the flourishing of art. One of the ways Elizabeth managed to consolidate power was her self-representation. Elizabeth turned herself into the Virgin Queen and created an unparalleled symbol out of herself as a result of clever manipulation of Tudor aesthetics and gender expectations.

This thesis follows the development of Elizabeth's self-representation. The first chapter concentrates on the historical circumstances which formed Elizabeth's mindset. It discusses Elizabeth's complicated family background, the rule of her half-sister Mary during which Elizabeth was faced with treason charges, the ongoing pressure on her to marry, and finally the decision to relinquish her private life in favour of her body politics and transform herself into the Virgin Queen. The first chapter particularly tries to demonstrate how noteworthy events shaped Elizabeth's rhetorical strategies and self-representation techniques. The second chapter traces Elizabeth's representation via her portraits. Opening with the portrait of the young Princess Elizabeth, the chapter demonstrates that becoming the Virgin Queen was not something that Elizabeth always intended but rather an outcome of a particular set of challenges that Elizabeth confronted. During the early days of her reign, Elizabeth was portrayed as a strong monarch but still a human being. Since 1580s, Elizabeth's portraits are full of symbolism and depict the Virgin Queen as the omnipotent gloriana who substituted the Virgin Mary in the new Church of England. The thesis analyses various emblems in her famous Armada Portrait. The last chapter analyses Elizabeth's own writings and explores examples of Elizabeth's self-representation in them. First, it analyses Elizabeth's speech in Tilbury which is a key

text for Elizabeth's gender representation. Elizabeth presents herself as both a king and a queen in front of her troops. Such double gender personification enabled Elizabeth to turn the disadvantage of her gender to her advantage. She embodied a strong English king as well as a protecting mother, or Virgin Mary, of the nation. Using such rhetorical strategies, Elizabeth managed to galvanise her troops which later defeated the Spanish Armada. Subsequently, the thesis concentrates on Elizabeth's correspondence. Elizabeth's self-representation in her letters varied depending on the addressee and the purpose of the letter. This thesis compares these different manifestations of Elizabeth's self-representation and seeks to interpret them. Finally, the thesis explores Elizabeth's poetry. Elizabeth produced poetry for her subjects to read but also she composed some meditative, private poems. Elizabeth's self-representation can be found also in her poetry and its expression is compared to her more public performances and writings.

The thesis aims to demonstrate that Elizabeth's self-representation was a key element to her success as a female monarch and it explains how Elizabeth achieved it. It establishes that Elizabeth's self-representation was created as a mixture of two main factors: Tudor aesthetics and defying the contemporary gender expectations.

## ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na sebe prezentaci Alžběty I. Alžběta I. vládla Anglii během bouřlivé doby – její otec Jindřich VIII. odtrhl Anglii od katolického náboženství a Alžběta musela čelit pokusům o invazi a spiknutím. I přesto je alžbětinská doba pomatována jako zlatý věk Anglii kvůli tomu, jak prosperovalo umění. Alžbětě se povedlo upevnit si svoji moc mimo jiné díky své sebe prezentaci. Alžběta přeměnila sama sebe v panenskou královnu a vytvořila ze sebe jedinečný symbol, a to díky chytré manipulaci tudorské estetiky a genderových očekávání.

Tato bakalářská práce sleduje vývoj Alžbětiny sebe prezentace. První kapitola se věnuje historickým okolnostem, které měly vliv na utváření postoje Alžběty I. Rozebírá Alžbětino složité rodinné pozadí, obvinění z velezrady během vlády její sestry Marie, přetrvávající tlak, aby se vdala a také její rozhodnutí vzdát se jejího těla ve prospěch její politické osobnosti a přeměnit se tak v panenskou královnu. Především se tato kapitola snaží ukázat, jak důležité události utvářely Alžbětiny rétorické strategie a techniky sebe prezentace.

Druhá kapitola postupně přibližuje Alžbětinu sebe prezentaci skrze její portréty. Začíná s portrétem mladé princezny Alžběty a ukazuje, že přeměna na panenskou královnu nebylo něco, co by měla Alžběta vždy v plánu, ale byl to spíše výsledek určitých okolností, se kterými se Alžběta musela vypořádat. Během raných let její vlády byla Alžběta vypořádována jako silný monarcha, ale pořád jako člověk. Od osmdesátých let šestnáctého století jsou Alžbětiny portréty plné symbolů a zobrazují panenskou královnu jako všemocnou glorianu, která nahradila Pannu Marii v anglikánské církvi. Bakalářská práce analyzuje různé interpretace slavného portrétu, na kterém je vyobrazena s válečným loďstvem.

Poslední kapitola analyzuje Alžbětiny vlastní texty a hledá příklady Alžbětiny sebe prezentace. Nejprve analyzuje Alžbětin projev v Tilbury, který je klíčovým textem pro Alžbětinu genderovou sebe prezentaci. Alžběta se před svými vojáky prezentuje zároveň jako král i královna. Tato dvojí genderová sebe prezentace umožnila Alžbětě obrátit nevýhodu jejího pohlaví ve svou výhodu. Ztělesňovala silného anglického krále i

matku ochranitelku národa, Pannu Marii. Použitím takových rétorických strategií se Alžbětě podařilo motivovat její vojsko, které porazilo španělské loďstvo. Následně se práce zaměřuje na Alžbětinu korespondenci. Alžbětina sebe prezentaci se v její korespondenci lišila podle toho, komu psala a za jakým účelem. Tyto různé sebe prezentace jsou porovnány. Závěrem práce zkoumá Alžbětinu poezii. Alžběta psala básně pro její poddané, ale také komponovala meditativní, soukromé básně. Alžbětina sebe prezentace se nachází také v její poezii a její projevy jsou porovnány s jejími veřejnými vystoupeními.

Tato bakalářská práce má za cíl ukázat, že Alžbětina sebe prezentace byla klíčovým prvkem v jejím úspěšném kralování a vysvětluje, jako se to Alžbětě podařilo. Ukazuje, že Alžbětina sebe prezentace byla vytvořena sjednocením dvou faktorů: tudorské estetiky a vzepřením se dobovým genderovým očekáváním.

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## Introduction

One of the most prominent monarchs in the English history, Queen Elizabeth I was a person whose name came to symbolise an era: the Elizabethan Era, which is also known as the Golden Age. She personified something divine. She willingly transformed herself into such a symbol. Since 1580, she purposefully began working on developing her image of the Virgin Queen. She was supposed to be the new symbol of hope for her country after it had lost its former symbols having abandoned the Catholic religion and having accepted the new Protestant one. She took drastic measures to achieve this transition and she succeeded. By the end of her reign, she was viewed as an equal to Virgin Mary during her funeral.<sup>1</sup>

From the very beginning, Elizabeth was faced with an uneasy situation. As a female figure in a predominantly patriarchal society, it seems that she was forced by the circumstances to learn to manipulate this disadvantage of hers to her benefit. Elizabeth ungendered herself; she presented herself as a feeble woman whose empathy and intuition made her sympathetic to the common people. However, she also always made it clear that despite her body being the feeble body of a woman, her mind was the mind of a rational man. Elizabeth introduced a certain mythical, celestial aura around herself and transformed herself into the Virgin Queen.

Elizabeth's transformation concerned all levels of her persona. Physically, she turned into a virgin with a striking white complexion. She became the symbol of glorification. She was described in religious terms and she was seen as the God's ambassador on Earth. She was the symbol of English dignity and personified English

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Strong, *Gloriana* (London: Pimlico, 2003) 43.

nationalism. Since 1580s, Elizabeth became a living symbol. This development can be traced through her own writing and her portraits.

The thesis supposes that it is exactly the above-mentioned gender dichotomy that enabled her to create an unparalleled symbol out of herself as a result of clever manipulation of Tudor aesthetics and gender expectations.

The aim of this project is to trace and analyse the writings and portraits of Elizabeth I in order to understand how Elizabeth chose to represent herself and why she did so. Representation does not focus on the actual person herself. Rather, it is “the function of a sign or symbol of ‘standing for’ that to which it refers”<sup>2</sup> or in other words it is “the act of presenting somebody/something in a particular way.”<sup>3</sup> This thesis focuses specifically on Elizabeth’s self-representation; it examines the function of the symbol that Elizabeth chose to adopt and the subsequent particular way in which Elizabeth used it to consolidate power. Representation matters in everyday life; however, it matters even more in politics. During the Tudor times, representation consisted one of the key elements in politics and in using it, Elizabeth exceeded expectations and overshadowed even her father, Henry VIII, also a clever manipulator of people’s perceptions. How she managed to do so despite the disadvantage of her gender shall be answered in this thesis.

In order to make this analysis, both primary and secondary sources will be analysed. Two types of primary sources are used. Elizabeth’s portraits are analysed in order to understand how Elizabeth wanted to be perceived and what kind of emblematic objects she surrounded herself with. Secondly, Elizabeth’s own writings are analysed ranging from her public speeches, letters, and poetry. Such texts are the only traceable

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<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Reference*, oxfordreference.com, <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20111014165925770>> 7 Jul 2020.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*, oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, <<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/representation?q=representation>> 7 Jul 2020.

sources which were supposedly created by Elizabeth's own hand. The texts are analysed based on the target audience, the year in which they were written, their purpose, the extent of their public nature, the syntax of the verses, and the metaphors relevant to the time. Such an analysis should provide insights and an answer to the key questions of how and why Elizabeth developed her Virgin Queen image.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: the first chapter provides background information of Elizabeth's ancestry, youth and reign and connects key historical events of her life to the development of her self-representation strategies and rhetorical techniques. The second chapter analyses portraits of Elizabeth. In particular, it traces the development and changes of Elizabeth's self-representation from portraits made of her as a princess, a young queen, and the Virgin Queen. The third chapter examines and compares Elizabeth's self-representation in various types of her own writings

# 1. Becoming the (Virgin) Queen

Queen Elizabeth managed to transform an individual into a symbol as a result of clever manipulation of contemporary aesthetics, Tudor ideology, and gender expectations. Elizabeth was a unique figure as she used numerous revolutionary approaches in order to secure her position as a sovereign. However, she also inherited some traditions used already by her father, Henry VIII. In order to understand the mindset of her era, this chapter introduces key elements from Elizabeth's life. It opens with her background and presents her journey which led to her becoming the Queen. It focuses on her position within the royal family, the dangerous period during the reign of her half-sister Mary during which she was charged with treason and finally her ride to London for her coronation. Subsequently, it focuses on the question of Elizabeth's marriage which was omnipresent at the court during the early days of her reign. Finally, it shows how Elizabeth turned herself into the Virgin Queen and how she maintained that symbol beyond her death in 1603.

## 1.1. Becoming the Queen

### 1.1.1. Family History

Elizabeth was born in 1533 to Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Her birth caused a profound disappointment to both Henry and Anne; Henry desperately wanted a male issue and the birth of Elizabeth further alienated him from Anne who was executed for treason three years later. Since then, Elizabeth always found herself in a difficult, ambiguous position. Following her mother's execution, Elizabeth was declared illegitimate in 1536.<sup>1</sup> As her governess, Lady Bryan, wrote: "Yesterday my Lady

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, ed., et al., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005) 687.

Princess, today but my Lady Elizabeth.”<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth was well-aware that the way to address her mattered a lot at the Tudor court, because it was one of the basic practices a person was represented to others. Colin Burrow writes about the sixteenth century that “This was a century in which representations were a crucial tool of government.”<sup>3</sup> It could therefore be argued that from the very beginning of her life, Elizabeth was forced into accepting different roles and personalities. She had to learn to make the best of her everchanging circumstances and become aware from an early age that the way others saw her, be it the court or the common people, could either give her power or take it away from her. She learnt to live as Lady Princess Elizabeth but also simply as Lady Elizabeth. She had to adopt many roles before she would finally become the queen in 1558. Elizabeth’s father, Henry VIII, was aware of the importance of self-representation as well; for example, he brought Elizabeth and her older sister Mary to Windsor Castle so that people would be less reluctant about his marriage to Jane Seymour.<sup>4</sup> If Henry represented himself as a caring father, people might be less judgemental about his suspicious disposal of Elizabeth’s mother and would be more inclined to accept a new queen in such short time. The way he was portrayed in public mattered to Henry, and it was one of the things that Elizabeth inherited from him.

In 1547, Henry died, and Elizabeth’s brother Edward became Edward VI. Later, both Mary and Elizabeth were legitimised.<sup>5</sup> However, Edward died soon afterwards and after the brief rule of Lady Jane Grey, Mary became Queen. Mary was an older half-sister of Elizabeth and as the daughter of Catherine of Aragon, she was a devout Catholic. The Catholic Mary and the Protestant Elizabeth were bound to have their differences which

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<sup>2</sup>Susan Watkins and Mark Fiennes, *In Public and in Private Elizabeth I and her world* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998) 14.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur F. Kinney, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1500 – 1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

<sup>4</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ilona Bell, *Elizabeth I The Voice of a Monarch* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 1.

would demonstrate themselves a mere year later in the forms of arguments, conflicts and suspicions.

### 1.1.2. Treason Charges and Elizabeth's Ambiguous Language

The time of Mary's rule was challenging for Elizabeth to say the least. However, it provided her with a training in word smithery which would prove useful in her later reign. From the beginning, Elizabeth was very aware of the power of her self-representation. When Mary was proclaimed Queen, Elizabeth wrote her a letter in which "she also asked, in her letter, what she should wear – mourning for her half-brother she loved, or something more festive to celebrate her sister's victory? Even then she weighted the mood of the Court and the mood of the country in order to present the best possible public image."<sup>6</sup> By writing such a letter, Elizabeth presented herself as someone willing to do as her sister, now her queen, saw fit and to obey her; however, she also demonstrated willingness to present herself in the way the public would appreciate.

The so-called "Bloody Mary" was a fervent Catholic and when she came to power there was bound to be a conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants. In 1554, Sir Thomas Wyatt organised a plan to "prevent Mary's marriage to King Philip II of Spain and to restore England to Protestantism."<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth was suspected of conspiring with the rebels and accused of treason. It was a trying time for Elizabeth – she was interrogated, then imprisoned in the Tower of London and later transferred and imprisoned in Woodstock Castle. However, it could be argued that the accusation of treason served as a lesson to Elizabeth that she had to use her words with great caution. Ilona Bell argues that "choosing words that were as precise as they were ambiguously noncommittal, Elizabeth developed a verbal style that would stand her in good stead throughout her

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<sup>6</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 32 – 33.

<sup>7</sup> Bell 2.

reign.”<sup>8</sup> Later, whilst imprisoned at Woodstock Castle, Elizabeth wrote a very short epigram of just eight words:

Much suspected by me,  
Nothing proved can be.  
Quod Elizabeth the prisoner<sup>9</sup>

Bell argues that “Elizabeth had learned the value of enigmatic, elusive language during her perilously insecure younger years. [...] Elizabeth’s enemies were waiting to use her words against her, but they could elicit only what she chose to speak. The epigram asserts Elizabeth’s control over her own speech and writing, even as the verbal ambiguity acknowledges that she could not control the meaning that others would place on her words”<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth’s language is plain enough to convey the message, specifically that despite being accused of serious charges, there were no proofs against her, but at the same time the language is ambiguous enough so as not to be used against her. It is not only Bell that argues that the hardships of Elizabeth’s youth were essential for the rhetorical and writing strategies later in her reign. Partamian says that “despite the conflicts that may have arisen in her thoughts, Elizabeth could not voice her indignation openly, and therefore concealed her meanings within writing that accorded with the power she distrusted.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there seems to be a clear correlation between the language Elizabeth used before she became the queen, actually long before she could have known that one day she would become the queen, and the ways of expression she would use during her reign. Elizabeth learnt that her own words were the best weapon to argue her case and that in the world so full of deception and treachery, it was better if she argued for herself as she could never be sure whom she could trust. On the other hand, Elizabeth

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<sup>8</sup> Bell 2.

<sup>9</sup> Bell 51.

<sup>10</sup> Bell 51.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Partamian, *Becoming a Virgin: The Rhetorical Development of Queen Elizabeth I*, University of Michigan, 2013. <[https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/english-assets/migrated/honors\\_files/PARTAMIAN%20Becoming%20a%20VirgiN.pdf](https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/english-assets/migrated/honors_files/PARTAMIAN%20Becoming%20a%20VirgiN.pdf)> 20.

became also well aware of the fact that everything she said or wrote was recorded and kept and could be used against her anytime. Hence, it was probably around this time when she adopted the strategy of oxymoron; she wrote purposefully plainly and yet ambiguously. As in the short Woodstock epigram, she kept her writing concise and to the point and clearly conveying her intended message. Nevertheless, the writing would always be ambiguous enough so that had charges been made against her, her texts could never be used as proofs against her.

It was not only the power of language that Elizabeth learnt during Mary's reign and her own fall from grace. Elizabeth also became very aware of the power of representation and she understood that the way she represented herself could prove to be crucial. When choosing the dress for Mary coronation procession, Elizabeth wanted to impress primarily Mary; that is why she asked for her opinion. However, after the failed coup of Sir Thomas Wyatt of Kent<sup>12</sup>, Elizabeth knew that she had to persuade not only Mary of her innocence. It is true that her sister was indeed the person holding Elizabeth's life in her hands. However, Elizabeth knew that it would be much more difficult to actually go through with her possible execution if the kingdom believed in her innocence. Elizabeth quickly understood that to control the opinion of the masses could be the decisive factor in her ambitions.

When the rebellion was discovered in February 1554, Elizabeth was in Ashridge. She was immediately summoned to court to answer for herself. However, Elizabeth fell ill and requested that she might postpone the journey back to London. Mary thought that Elizabeth's illness was only a deceit and ordered Elizabeth to immediately travel to London anyway. Elizabeth did so and for five days very slowly travelled in a litter. It is probable that Elizabeth was indeed ill, however, it did not really matter in the bigger

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<sup>12</sup> "The Wyatt Rebellion of 1554", *The History Learning Site*, [historylearningsite.co.uk](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk), 25 Apr 2020  
<<https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/tudor-england/the-wyatt-rebellion-of-1554/>> 6 Jul 2020.

picture. What matters is that Mary forced Elizabeth to travel to London despite her weakened state because she was afraid that Elizabeth was using her illness to get sympathy. Mary's plan backfired. When Elizabeth arrived in London, she purposefully pulled back the curtains of her litter so that the people of London could see her weakened state and come to the conclusion that she was the victim rather than the villain of the narrative.<sup>13</sup> It may have been one of the first times when Elizabeth turned around her disadvantage into her advantage. She turned the plans that others had for her into her benefit; if Mary wanted her to travel ill anyway, she would do so but she would make sure to be seen as a feeble, vulnerable girl who could not possibly have anything to do with the plot. Elizabeth would employ a similar tactic later in her reign; she would take the disadvantage of her gender and thanks to her eloquent self-representation, turn it into an asset. Her clever behaviour serves as another argument for the claim that Elizabeth had learnt early that her self-representation was essential for her survival and that it was a direct way for her to be able to influence what both the members of court and the commoners thought of her.

### 1.1.3. Imprisonment in the Tower of London and at Woodstock Castle

Despite her tiresome journey to London, her letter to Queen Mary and the fact that no conspirators identified her as one of them, Elizabeth was still transferred to the Tower of London, the place where her own mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed for treason as well. Charles Wriothesley wrote in his chronicle of the Tudor rule from 1508 until 1562 of the execution of Anne Boleyn. He quotes her last speech in which Anne said, apart from other things, that "I here humblye submitt me to the lawe as the lawe hath judged me..."<sup>14</sup> The last speech of Anne Boleyn is very well known, but it is interesting what

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<sup>13</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 34.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Wriothesley, *A chronicle of England during the reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485 to 1559* (Westminster: Camden Society, 1875 – 1877)  
<<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002003125110&view=1up&seq=101>> 8 Mar 2020 41.

was noted in the footnotes under Anne's speech in Wriothesley's chronicle. The footnotes say that "It is generally believed that her fear of drawing the King's anger on her daughter Elizabeth prevented her from insisting upon her own innocence in public."<sup>15</sup> It is hard to judge whether or to what extent Elizabeth was aware of the specific circumstances of her mother's execution or of the strategies Anne seemingly used to protect her. However, Elizabeth was aware of her mother's fate and hence it is possible that her demise might have affected Elizabeth's own self-representation when entering the Tower of London. Elizabeth chose a completely different strategy. She would demonstrate with every possible way that she was innocent.

Elizabeth arrived at the Tower through the Water Gate sometimes called the Traitors' Gate. Many sources report that it was raining heavily that day. At the entrance to the Tower, Elizabeth made a short speech: "Oh Lord! I never thought to have come here as a prisoner; and I pray you all good friends and fellows, bear me witness that I come in no traitor, but as a true woman to the Queen's Majesty as any is now living, and thereon will take my death."<sup>16</sup> This short speech that Elizabeth made before being taken to the first floor of the Bell Tower discloses both Elizabeth's intent and her thoughts. Clearly, Elizabeth believed that there was a significant chance that she would be executed. She had a lot of reason to believe so; Sir Thomas Wyatt was being tortured and would be executed less than a month after Elizabeth's incarnation in the Tower, her mother, Anne Boleyn was executed there and so were many influential people during her father's reign, including such as Sir Thomas Moore; more recently, Lady Jane Grey was beheaded at the Tower<sup>17</sup> a mere month before Elizabeth was brought there under similar charges. Hence, Elizabeth had all reasons to believe she was brought to the Tower to die and she expressed

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<sup>15</sup> Wriothesley 41.

<sup>16</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 35.

<sup>17</sup> "The Wyatt Rebellion of 1554", *The History Learning Site*, [historylearningsite.co.uk](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk), 25 Apr 2020 <<https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/tudor-england/the-wyatt-rebellion-of-1554/>> 6 Jul 2020.

so in her speech. More importantly, in spite of Elizabeth believing that she would probably be executed at the Tower anyway, she found it important and necessary to assert her innocence. Maybe learning her lesson from her mother's execution or the fact that Elizabeth had nothing other to lose than her own life, Elizabeth decided to use her speech and her self-representation as a weapon to fight the accusations made against her. Mary was ignoring her letters and Elizabeth could never be sure that Sir Thomas Wyatt would not break under torture and say that Elizabeth was part of the rebellion. Hence, the only trump card that Elizabeth was holding was the love that the English people bore for her. Susan Watkins goes as far as to assert that "Elizabeth [...] was very popular with the people. She was young, beautiful, charming and a Protestant, and, with her red-gold hair, she resembled her father."<sup>18</sup> Hence, she made sure that it would be known to anyone that she confessed to nothing and was innocent of the charges. In that way, she hoped that the public would see in her a good, innocent princess and it would be difficult for Mary to execute her without causing riots.

Whether her tactics worked or Mary would not have executed her anyway is debatable; it is certain, however, that Elizabeth spent two months in the Tower and as nothing could be proven against her, she was transferred to Woodstock Castle as Mary did not trust her enough to walk free.<sup>19</sup> There, Elizabeth carved the aforementioned short Woodstock epigram and also wrote a longer Woodstock epigram which will be analysed in chapter four. Later, Elizabeth would be released from her confinement and slowly, her relationship with Mary would improve. However, Elizabeth would remember the lessons she learnt during her incarnation in the Tower and subsequent stay at Woodstock Castle. She understood that self-representation was the key to her survival and the most important way to influence the opinion that others held of her. She learnt that anything she wrote

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<sup>18</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 36.

<sup>19</sup> Bell, 2.

could be stored and later used against her and she resourcefully adapted to the situation by evolving her writing style into a unique mixture of strong statements and such ambiguity that no one could use her words against her. Everyone could know what she meant by her words even though she would never say it plainly. Her self-representation would be played by her own rules ever since.

#### 1.1.4. Elizabeth Ascending the Throne

Mary died a few years later in 1558. When Elizabeth rode to London, she was wearing purple velvet – the colour of royalty.<sup>20</sup> Many contemporary writers wrote of the ride and called it an extraordinarily joyous event. However, Bell points out that there was the need to keep resistance away from the Queen.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to observe the language that they used. One person called Elizabeth ‘Queen’ and a few lines later ‘Prince.’<sup>22</sup> Long before the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth’s self-representation was clearly extraordinary. Elizabeth wanted to be seen; she chatted with many people and listened to their concerns. The coronation itself was full of symbolism as well. She wore a golden dress and her hair was let loose as maidens wore it. For the anointing itself, Elizabeth was dressed in white, the colour of innocence. Afterwards, she put on purple-velvet clothes.<sup>23</sup> Each of these colours were carefully chosen. Especially important for Elizabeth’s future self-representation during her marriage negotiations and future role as the Virgin Queen was the white colour of her dress and her maiden-styled hair. From the very first moment as the Queen, Elizabeth was seen as an innocent virgin. The symbolism of virgin will accompany Elizabeth for the remainder of her reign.

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<sup>20</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 45.

<sup>21</sup> Bell 2.

<sup>22</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 45.

<sup>23</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 46.

## 1.2. The Question of Marriage

The question of marriage was opened immediately after Elizabeth became Queen. It was one of the most discussed topics at the court and was thought to be one of the most vital questions that needed to be addressed. Elizabeth was a young woman ready to be married and it was thought that a husband would rule over her and so the realm would be safe under a more rational rule of a man. From the first moment, Elizabeth made it very clear that it would not be so; she insisted that she would marry only a man of her own choosing and she would do so only if he pleased both her kingdom and her. At the beginning, she remained ambiguous as to whether she would marry at all. The Spanish Ambassador to England wrote about Elizabeth: “she still abides by her former resolve to marry no one whom she had not previously seen. This is entirely novel and unprecedented, and we cannot approve of it.”<sup>24</sup> Ilona Bell makes a very interesting and valid point about Elizabeth’s attitude to marriage, married life and gender roles in general. Bell points out that all these attitudes of Elizabeth make her attractive to us nowadays; however, they were strongly disapproved during her own time.<sup>25</sup> This is an important point to consider. Even though Elizabeth’s feminist attitudes appeal to us today, the Queen herself was fighting against the misogynist views of her own time with basically everything she was pursuing. When she suggested that she might not marry, she was not fighting only against gender stereotypes; as a monarch, Elizabeth was expected to produce an heir. Without an heir, the security and continuity of the monarchy was at question. Hence, marrying Elizabeth off was one of the most prominent topics until it became obvious that she would not be getting married. By not giving in to her court on the

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<sup>24</sup> Bell xi.

<sup>25</sup> Bell xi.

question of her marriage, Elizabeth was walking on thin ice. If she wanted to silence her critics, she would have to prove to them that she could rule as efficiently as a man would.

The side effect of the ongoing marriage negotiations are the letters that the ambassadors to England wrote to their sovereigns. In these letters, they described their interactions with Elizabeth and quoted her words. They also described what was happening at the London court and tried to deduce Elizabeth's next moves. Most letters were written by two ambassadors: the Spanish ambassador Don Alvaro de la Quadra and the Austrian ambassador Caspar Breuner, Baron von Rabenstein. These offer a rare and abundant source which helps in trying to understand how Elizabeth represented herself in her court. Undeniably, the ambassadors' job was to carry out the will of their monarchs and hence, they were not charged with making their own decisions but rather with reporting back what was happening in London and then carrying out the commands that the monarch would issue based on the ambassador's description of the situation. Bell also points out that even though there were no recording devices at the time, and it would be considered improper to sit around with notebooks, the memory of the people at that time was much better trained than ours. They studied rhetoric and would often have to learn by heart texts in school which they would later recite.<sup>26</sup> Hence, it is safe to assume that when an ambassador writes that he is now quoting the Queen, he is probably accurately transmitting the words of Elizabeth. Therefore, the letters might be considered to be relatively accurate and reliable sources.

The leading negotiator when it comes to Elizabeth's marriage was the experienced ambassador de Quadra. He and the other ambassadors would report home very often, and we can see that their perception of Elizabeth was changing. Nevertheless, generally they described her as infuriating, strong-willed, irresponsible, and educated. Most of the time,

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<sup>26</sup> Bell 69.

they did not understand her. Her behaviour was so unprecedented that they did not believe it possible that she might actually mean it. When she said that she would indeed never marry a man whom she had never seen, they thought she was bluffing. De Quadra admitted: "I am not sure about her for I do not understand her."<sup>27</sup> The more De Quadra did not understand Elizabeth and hence was unable to foresee her next moves, the more defensive he became: "she [Elizabeth] went back again to her nonsense and said she would rather be a nun than marry without knowing with whom and on the faith of portrait painters."<sup>28</sup> It is clear that De Quadra could not comprehend at all what Elizabeth wanted and meant which highlights how unparalleled Elizabeth's opinions were at the time. Elizabeth was too different for them to understand: she was a woman and she was also her father's daughter from whom she seems to have inherited her stubbornness. Elizabeth's strong-will made the ambassadors' job more difficult. They expected the negotiations to be easier as a Queen would be easier to manipulate than a King, but the opposite was true. Hence, their conclusions were the same: Elizabeth seemed to have been ruled by passions and was too strong headed to be persuaded to do something she did not want to do. Indeed, De Quadra would use very strong language; he would call Elizabeth "a passionate, ill-advised woman" and Breuner would agree: "Her Highness is after all a woman, influenced by insidious advice and very susceptible to passions."<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that the ambassadors' view comes partly from their own misogyny, fuelled by the frustrations that they were not able to fulfil their job because of her unwillingness to submit. However, it is clear that they saw Elizabeth as someone who is too passionate to rule. On the other hand, the ambassadors did acknowledge some of Elizabeth's good qualities. Breuner wrote to the emperor: "there is no Princess of her

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<sup>27</sup> Bell 75.

<sup>28</sup> Bell 76.

<sup>29</sup> Bell 85.

compeers that can match her in wisdom, virtue, beauty and splendour of figure.”<sup>30</sup> On the whole, we can conclude from the ambassadors’ letters that Elizabeth was a deeply divisive, controversial and misunderstood figure in the patriarchal world of her time. What they could not understand, they blamed on the fact that she was a woman and hence had to be irrational. They presumed they could control her and when they failed, they blamed it on her rhetorical strategies. Elizabeth was a unique figure and was rightly seen as such by her contemporaries.

### 1.2.1. Parliament Opening

As a monarch, Elizabeth needed to establish her strong position at the first meeting of the parliament. As a woman, she had to defend her right to rule as well. In order to stop Elizabeth from becoming the Head of the Church, even the Protestant and Catholic bishops were willing to work together. They claimed that Elizabeth could not become the Supreme head because “God created women subordinate and inferior to men.”<sup>31</sup> Hence, the title called Supreme Governor was bestowed upon her.<sup>32</sup> This example well demonstrates what environment Elizabeth found herself in and helps to explain the language of Elizabeth’s first parliament speech. Elizabeth knew that she would be attacked solely based on her gender and she knew that if she was to successfully defend herself against these accusations, she had to present herself with the dignity and strength of a man and the humility and good heart of a woman. Elizabeth knew that she had to introduce herself as a strong monarch so she would rule the parliament rather than have the parliament ruling over her. She learnt from her previous life experiences how to do so. The most prominent topic in the parliament was the question of Elizabeth’s marriage. Elizabeth commented on the issue in a particular way:

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<sup>30</sup> Bell 80.

<sup>31</sup> Bell 2.

<sup>32</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 48.

With which trade of life I am so thoroughly acquainted that I trust God, who hath hitherto therein preserved and led me by the hand, will not now of His goodness suffer me to go alone.<sup>33</sup>

There is an amazing ambiguity in this short passage of the speech. Elizabeth says that she trusts God because he has already saved her from many dangers. Elizabeth was well aware that all the members of the parliament knew of her life struggles before she became the queen and hence it is clear to them that she was alluding to the times when she was declared illegitimate, accused of treason and imprisoned. Elizabeth used the circumstances of her early life to suggest that as the God had saved her from so many perils, he will not fail her now and she will mainly turn to His advice. By saying this, she is indirectly suggesting that she will rely primarily on her own judgement rather than on the will of the parliament.

Furthermore, Elizabeth says that God “will not now of His Goodness suffer me to go alone.” This is the supreme example of how Elizabeth’s ambiguous and evasive language expressions worked. In fact, Elizabeth uses an oxymoron here. On the one hand Elizabeth says that she is in no need of a husband because she is not alone and she has never been alone; she has God by her side guiding her and hence even if she remains single, she is not on her own. She does not need anyone else by her side in order to rule. On the other hand, Elizabeth is suggesting her willingness to get married. She is saying that surely, God will help her to find a husband if the need be. Therefore, Elizabeth presents both points as equally valid. No one can accuse her of not wanting to get married but at the same time, no one can say that she said she would get married. Thanks to this ingenious strategy, Elizabeth managed to appease the members of the parliament whilst declaring her independence.

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<sup>33</sup> Bell 58.

Contrary to the simplified belief, Elizabeth did not present herself from the beginning as the Virgin Queen. Ilona Bell makes a fascinating argument about Elizabeth and William Camden. William Camden, an English historian, who wrote the encyclopaedia *Britannia*, a comprehensive history of the reign of Elizabeth I, published first during her reign and later editions were published after her death, wrote also about Elizabeth's first speech in the parliament.<sup>34</sup> Bell argues that a lot of our knowledge of Elizabeth comes from Camden's encyclopaedia which the researchers have been taking as a primary source. Bell makes two essential points in her explanation of why it is generally thought that Elizabeth always intended to transform herself into the Virgin Queen from the very beginning. Firstly, she argues that the researchers never paid enough attention to Elizabeth's own texts, probably because they did not find them as essential as other sources and because they believed that she would have been incapable of writing them on her own. Secondly, she argues that this misconception is partly due to Camden's own interpretation of the events. She argues that Camden's intention was to make it seem as if Elizabeth wanted to be the Virgin Queen from the beginning and hence wrote *Britannia* in a biased manner to support his interpretation of the events.<sup>35</sup> She is not the only researcher to doubt the factuality of Camden's narrative. John King makes a similar conclusion in his essay "Queen Elizabeth I: The Representation of the Virgin Queen."<sup>36</sup> This is why there has not been that much attention paid to Elizabeth's own words and why it is not that known and understood why Elizabeth had to employ such clever linguistic strategies in order to press her points. The focus would usually be put on how others, predominantly male writers and observers saw Elizabeth, not how Elizabeth

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<sup>34</sup> William Camden, *Britannia: Or A Chorographical Description Of Great Britain And Ireland, Together with the Adjacent Islands* (London: Awnsham Churchill, 1722)

<[https://archive.org/details/gri\\_britanniaora02camd/page/n355/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/gri_britanniaora02camd/page/n355/mode/2up)> 12 Mar 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Bell 62–63.

<sup>36</sup> John N. King, "Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43.1 (1990): 35, JSTOR < [www.jstor.org/stable/2861792](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2861792) > 12 Mar 2020.

viewed and represented herself. This may have led to an inaccurate interpretation of Elizabeth's rule. This interpretation would have suppressed her human side and presented her as the Virgin Queen from the beginning of her reign in 1558. As this thesis aims to prove, such a conclusion would be inaccurate.

### 1.2.2. Suitors

As suggested in the previous chapter, Elizabeth's self-representation was not always the one of the Virgin Queen. In fact, John King writes: "During the 1560s and 1570s virtually everyone assumed that Elizabeth would marry, including the queen herself, if her statements are to be accepted at face value. Regardless whether she genuinely desired to wed, her marriageability was an essential element of her youthful image."<sup>37</sup> Hence, King suggests that it was not only that Elizabeth did not represent herself as the Virgin Queen, but it was rather the very opposite. She represented herself as an attractive woman who could marry whom she liked. What she insisted on was that she would be the one to choose her own husband and she would be able to do that only if she saw the candidate in person and found him of her liking. This attitude of hers was making the job of the ambassadors to England very difficult. There were two ambassadors who were predominantly occupied by the negotiations of marriage of Queen Elizabeth: the Spanish ambassador and the Austrian ambassador. For both of these, it was very difficult to convey the message that Elizabeth refused to be betrothed to someone whom she had not seen in person. The words of the Spanish ambassador to England about Elizabeth which are certainly not meant as a compliment show this clearly: "She says the most extraordinary things."<sup>38</sup> The Spanish ambassador spoke thus when the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Archduke Charles of Austria failed. However, all

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<sup>37</sup> King 39.

<sup>38</sup> Bell xi.

these words and negotiations serve as a proof that at the beginning, Elizabeth represented herself as marriageable. She only made sure to point out that she would choose her own husband for herself. Such an intention of Elizabeth's was seen as undesirable and unreasonable for two reasons. First, as a monarch, it was one of Elizabeth's most important tasks to produce an heir. From this point of view, her obsession with her personal feelings was seen as irresponsible. Second, as a woman, Elizabeth was not supposed to have much saying in her own marriage anyway. She was expected to listen to the advice of her advisors who would recommend a suitable candidate who would become her husband. Then, it would be him whom Elizabeth would obey.

There were many suitors to Queen Elizabeth over the years. Bell points out that at the beginning of her reign, "Elizabeth was probably the most coveted bride in all of Europe."<sup>39</sup> Despite her contemporaries not wanting to believe her words or take them seriously, Elizabeth represented her views on marriage very clearly: she did not desire marriage for the sake of marriage but she was willing to marry a man who would please her and who would be a convenient match for England's sake as well. In fact, Elizabeth said that she would marry someone who would make her "desire what at present she had no wish for."<sup>40</sup> Such a someone might have been Sir Robert Dudley who rode in front of her already during her coronation.<sup>41</sup> A lot was written on the relationship between Elizabeth and Robert Dudley. Popular culture such as films usually portray their relationship as full of lust and desire and present it as a fact that Elizabeth and Dudley were lovers. Bell argues against this. She agrees that their relationship was very close and affectionate, but they were not lovers as that would have been too dangerous. Either someone might have discovered their affair or Elizabeth could have got pregnant, die at

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<sup>39</sup> Bell 3.

<sup>40</sup> Bell 4.

<sup>41</sup> Watkins and Fiennes 50.

childbirth of her illegitimate child, and hence leave England in chaos.<sup>42</sup> Whether Elizabeth and Dudley were lovers does not really matter; what matters is that Elizabeth represented herself as chaste and virtuous and hence obviously denied any allegations of having a sexual relationship with Lord Dudley. However, when Dudley's wife died and rumours began circulating that Elizabeth and Dudley might have conspired to kill her, Elizabeth chose her self-representation over her feelings and decided to keep her distance from Dudley.<sup>43</sup> Anyway, Dudley might have satisfied her desire, but he was not a convenient match. Other main suitors included King Philip of Spain, a widower after her sister Mary. The main problem here was that Philip was a Catholic whilst Elizabeth was a protestant. Another important suitor was the Archduke Charles of Austria, but he was also a Catholic.<sup>44</sup>

The last serious suitor was Francis, Duke of Alencon who seemed suitable from all points of view but died before the negotiations could have been completed.<sup>45</sup> King agrees that the death of the Duke of Alencon was the beginning of the cult of the Virgin Queen: "If it was not until after the failure of this last effort at marriage, one third of the way through Elizabeth's reign, that the patriotic cult of an unmarried virgin queen who would remain ever wedded to her nation took hold in officially-sponsored propaganda, in poetry of praise generated outside of the royal court, and in the popular imagination."<sup>46</sup> After the failed negotiations with the Duke of Alencon, Elizabeth wrote "On Monsieur's Departure", one of her most personal poems. Her transition into the Virgin Queen as we know her began.

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<sup>42</sup> Bell 4.

<sup>43</sup> "The early rule of Elizabeth I," *Bitesize*, BBC, [bbc.co.uk <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy3x39q/revision/4>](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy3x39q/revision/4) 11 Mar 2020.

<sup>44</sup> "The early rule of Elizabeth I," *Bitesize*, BBC, [bbc.co.uk <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy3x39q/revision/4>](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy3x39q/revision/4) 11 Mar 2020.

<sup>45</sup> "The early rule of Elizabeth I," *Bitesize*, BBC, [bbc.co.uk <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy3x39q/revision/4>](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zy3x39q/revision/4) 11 Mar 2020.

<sup>46</sup> King 51.

This transition is usually portrayed as a very dramatic one. Perhaps the most famous film made about Elizabeth I called *Elizabeth*, directed by Shekhar Kapur and starring Cate Blanchett in the eponymous role and released in 1998<sup>47</sup>, shows the dramatic transformation of Elizabeth. Elizabeth, portrayed as a beautiful, young princess has all her hair cut; she paints her face white; she puts a wig on and becomes the Virgin Queen married to her country. The film depicts the transition as a personal sacrifice by Elizabeth and one done with a great deal of personal suffering and loss.

The scene opens with the zoomed in extreme close-up on Elizabeth's hair, the key focus of the scene. Her hair symbolises her youth, which in the film translates to a passionate affair with Robert Dudley and the ongoing marriage negotiations. The hair is cut of by her ladies-in-waiting. Throughout the scene, Elizabeth remains impassive, and when the work is done, she only concludes: "I have become a virgin." Kapur, the director of the film, comments on the scene: "She made a declaration of virginity as a political statement. [...] It was important for her to make a statement that she was: to get the respect of her council and parliament. There was also some kind of guilt about having tried to deny the concept of the Virgin Mary: she needed to make up for that."<sup>48</sup> Hence, Elizabeth surrenders her private life and becomes a symbol. This symbol is consolidated in the following scene: Elizabeth emerges from a white, shining, heaven-like background as if she was coming down from heaven. She tells her advisor that finally, she is married, but she is married to England. As she walks down the room, Robert Dudley follows her with his eyes in disbelief, incapable of recognising the woman he used to love. These scenes are very powerful as they make it clear that for Elizabeth, there is no way back. The emotions are underscored by the crying ladies-in-waiting who watched their Queen give

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<sup>47</sup> "Elizabeth (1998), *IMDb*, imdb.com <<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0127536/>> 10 Mar 2020.

<sup>48</sup> Rosanna de Lisle, "Interview Shekhar Kapur – The original Elizabethan," *Culture*, Independent, 27 Sep 1998 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/interview-shekhar-kapur-the-original-elizabethan-1200774.html>> 9 Jul 2020.

up all personal pleasures. Mozart's Requiem, which intensifies as the scene develops, makes the scene unforgettable. The Requiem, which was written for the funeral of a countess,<sup>49</sup> is to be played to honour the death of a person. Symbolically, the sound design commemorates the woman that Elizabeth used to be and it buries her. The Virgin Queen is resurrected to take her place.

Whether the actual transition was this dramatic and sudden is unknown but unlikely. However, since 1580s, it was obvious that Elizabeth would not produce an heir and so the attention shifted from trying to persuade Elizabeth to marry to praising the queen for her virginity, personal sacrifice, dedication and love for her nation, and the advantages of Elizabeth not having to rely on any husband who might be trying to pursue foreign interests in England.

### 1.3. The Virgin Queen

Elizabeth fully embraced her symbolic role as the Virgin Queen since 1580s. She tried to physically resemble the Virgin Mary. She presented herself as completely dedicated to serving her people. E.M.W. Tillyard writes in *The Elizabethan World Picture* that in a sense, things got more abstract and more platonic in the Early Modern England than in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, he writes of the people of the time that “even if they could not tame a new fact by fitting it into a rigid scheme, at least they could help by finding that it was like something already familiar.”<sup>50</sup> From that it can be inferred that it was a good tactics for Elizabeth to present herself as something virtuous and tangible for her people.

In order to create the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth was inspired by Tudor aesthetics. When contemplating the Renaissance art, the influential names from the patronage of

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<sup>49</sup> Jiří Najvar, *W.A. Mozart – Requiem*, Janáčkova Akademie Múzických umění v Brně, <[https://is.jamu.cz/th/sb23j/W.\\_A.\\_Mozart\\_-\\_Requiem\\_-\\_Jiri\\_Najvar.pdf](https://is.jamu.cz/th/sb23j/W._A._Mozart_-_Requiem_-_Jiri_Najvar.pdf)> 9 Jul 2020.

<sup>50</sup> E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Peregrine Books, 1963) 121.

Lorenzo de' Medici come to mind. Those Italian artists<sup>51</sup> produced masterpieces, often inspired by Ancient Rome, which accurately portray the human body and concern themselves with the transmission of divine beauty to the people. Tudor aesthetics was all but the Italian type. The patronage operated differently. Where Medici provided money and resources for artists to realise their vision, the Tudor artists were expected to portraye “as records of social status of character [...] – there was little room for the challenge of invention within perceived traditions of art, as was expected by the very different audience accommodated by the Italian art.”<sup>52</sup> Hence, the Tudor paintings usually served some propagandist purpose and therefore the accuracy of the human body or the beauty of the painting were not relevant. What mattered was the symbolic value of it. Howard and Llewellyn call it artifice: “Artifice is, in fact, a key concept in Tudor art, and more important for ‘image-making’ than our word ‘art.’”<sup>53</sup> It is clear then how Elizabeth used the already-established tradition of Tudor Art in her self-representation. Elizabeth took the tradition of symbolism and emblems and the displays of power and transformed it to fit her narrative. Her portraits as well as writings did not aim to represent anything natural or beautiful. Quite the opposite, they represented a symbol of power inhabited by Elizabeth. It could be argued that what Elizabeth did was taking the tradition of Tudor Art and pushing it into new limits with her gender manipulations and Virgin Mary appropriation.

In addition, her father Henry VIII abolished all Catholics religious representation and so Elizabeth could fill in the hole. Elizabeth was, though, not only compared to the Virgin Mary. She was also seen as the ever-escaping Petrarchan mistress. Colin Burrow

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<sup>51</sup> Such as Michelangelo, Botticelli, Da Vinci and others

<sup>52</sup> Maurice Howard and Nigel Llewellyn, “Painting and Imagery” Boris Ford, ed. *16th Century Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1989) 225.

<sup>53</sup> Howard 223.

writes: “The supremely “literary” posture of the Petrarchan lover, yearning for an ever-elusive mistress, and creating from the void of desire a voice of personal lament, grows in its English form from the Tudor court.”<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth could indeed be seen by some as the ever-escaping object of desire which can never be caught and the desire can never be satisfied. The Petrarchan mistress was chaste and virtuous, and Elizabeth presented herself as such. However, by turning into the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth also turned the gender expectations of the Petrarchan mistress around. What Petrarch wrote can be well characterised as: “love becomes moral power spiritualising the lover’s life. Laura is a painting which lives only in the poet’s consciousness; the verses don’t talk about her but about the poet’s soul which resonates because of it.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the whole concept of Petrarchan poetry is very abstract and more about the idea of love, or platonic love, than concrete acts of love about a “Laura”. This abstract idea could be applied to Elizabeth who, as the Virgin Queen, stylised herself into the poet who had all the ideas about love but could never actually fulfil them. Elizabeth had feelings for a few men, and such poetry as “On Monsieur’s Departure” prove that she was capable of such feelings even after her transition into the Virgin Queen. Elizabeth can be thus seen as both: the Petrarchan mistress and the “Petrarchan poet”.

As can be inferred from the previous examples, Elizabeth became a symbol. She created a symbol out of herself, but she was also symbolically used by others. One of the most prominent works featuring the symbolism of Elizabeth is the *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser. There, Elizabeth is clearly the Gloriana. The whole of *The Faerie Queene* can be read as praise to Elizabeth: “Spenser attempts to incorporate the dichotomous national sentiment toward a monarch of the weaker sex. Powerful women

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<sup>54</sup> Kinney 15.

<sup>55</sup> Jiří Pelán, *Slovník italských spisovatelů* (Praha: Libri 2004) 567. My translation of “...se láska stává mravní silou, zduchovňující milencův život. Laura je obraz, jenž žije pouze v básníkově vědomí; verše nehovoří o ni, ale o tom, čím díky ní rezonuje básníkově nitro.”

emerge from the text and linger, regardless of their ethical stances, in the readers' minds long after finishing *The Faerie Queene*.”<sup>56</sup> By 1590, when Spenser published *The Faerie Queene*, the myth of Elizabeth was clearly spread and widely accepted and used by popular writers of the period. The extension of the representation of Elizabeth as a mythical figure further helped with establishing Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen. By the time of Elizabeth’s death, she was more of a symbol than a person and her death was presented as such. Indeed, Elizabeth’s last moments were presented in almost mythical terms and it was in these that she seemingly appointed James VI of Scotland as her heir.<sup>57</sup>

Elizabeth was not only compared to already existing figures. Her body was also compared to more abstract and intellectual concepts. For example, it was associated with the state and she was pictured in many metaphorical positions. An illustrative example might be Richard Case’s *Sphaera Civitatis* published in Oxford in 1588:

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<sup>56</sup> Eunhye Choi, “The Court, the Rule, and the Queen: *The Faerie Queen* as a representation of Elizabeth I,” <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/76d4/aa1e435a39c39053208ada35488a4e6493a7.pdf>> 10 Jul 2020.

<sup>57</sup> Kinney 12-13.



Figure 1 -Richard Case, *Sphaera Civitatis* (Oxford, 1588)

In this diagram, Elizabeth’s body is presented to be the same thing as a well-functioning state. We can see Elizabeth on top of the diagram, embracing her personality and qualities as she is embracing the well-ordered state. *The king is dead. Long live the king!* The usual saying deriving from the king’s two bodies gets a whole new level in the Elizabethan interpretation. In the diagram, her body politic and her body natural merge into one united symbol. Clark Hulse describes the diagram in following terms: “Here the familiar concentric circles of heavenly spheres are made analogous to the qualities of a ruler: majesty, prudence, fortitude, religion, mercy, eloquence, productivity or fecundity.

<sup>58</sup> “In her own words: Elizabeth I onstage and online,” *Women Writers Project*, North Eastern, northeastern.edu <<https://www.wwp.northeastern.edu/about/history/archive/rich/QEIindex.html>> 14 Mar 2020.

Elizabeth stands over and behind the state, measuring it as the artist of proportion might judge the canonical measures of the heavens, of the human body, or of the body politic.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Elizabeth is smiling in the picture and is embracing the qualities of a just ruler which are in heavenly spheres. The last sphere contains Elizabeth’s name and her title. It is a powerful representation which places Elizabeth in a divine position of someone with an inherent right to rule who is more of a symbol than an individual. It compares her to a whole world and as Elizabeth embraces her just character, she consequently gets to rule her kingdom.

In order to create the Virgin Queen myth, Elizabeth used all the tools at her disposal. She used the already allegorical nature of Tudor Art and extended it further so that it portrayed her to her liking. As the ungendered figure, she inhabited both – the ever-escaping Petrarchan mistress, the unattainable dream of many men as well as the Petrarchan poet – the Queen who sacrificed her personal life when she married England and so she was destined to never be able to find a lover. The Virgin Queen was so popular that artists such as Edmund Spenser accepted the idea and further helped to institute the character by portraying her in their art. Finally, Elizabeth reached the divine position when her body became the allegory for the state and her transition was completed.

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<sup>59</sup> Kinney 49.

## 2. Elizabeth's Representation in Portraits

As the first chapter introduced the importance of Elizabeth's self-representation for her coronation as the Queen and her reign and highlighted when and how Elizabeth acquired and used it, the second chapter describes how Elizabeth was seen and represented by her painters. It is a topic that was historically given more attention in research than that of Elizabeth's own self-representation. However, it is important to provide such analysis before the analysis of her self-representation in order to successfully compare them. There are clear differences in how Elizabeth was represented by others and how she chose to represent herself. Elizabeth's portraits are very specific sources because there is an ambiguity of the degree of self-determined representation in them. Some portraits were issued by Elizabeth, some by others. The background might have been Elizabeth's or the artist's choice. Therefore, it is not possible to fully determine the extent of Elizabeth's saying on the symbolism and emblems in them.

Three portraits of Queen Elizabeth were chosen for the analysis. The first portrait depicts Princess Elizabeth; the second one the Queen at the beginning of her reign; and the third one portrays the Virgin Queen. These portraits were chosen as representatives from different eras to track the development of the representation of Elizabeth from a princess who was expected to marry a foreign prince, to a Queen looking for a suitable suitor, to a Virgin Queen – a symbol rather than a person. The analysis of the portraits serves to underscore the argument that Elizabeth's self-representation was a journey reflecting the propaganda that Elizabeth needed at different times in her life. The portraits and their purpose differ depending on the message they need to convey. As Roy Strong says, "Any study of the portraits of Queen Elizabeth I must begin by asking why they were needed in the first place."<sup>60</sup> The portraits were particularly interesting considering

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<sup>60</sup> Strong 10.

the fact that, as Strong points out, there are only very few descriptions of Elizabeth's appearance.<sup>61</sup> Most important, though, is their representative value.

## 2.1. Princess Elizabeth

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*Figure 2 - Princess Elizabeth by William Scrots c. 1546-7*

Elizabeth was not expected to succeed to the throne and therefore she was not portrayed often during her youth. In fact, Strong says that there are only three portraits which certainly depict Elizabeth.<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth was fourteen years old in this portrait. Strong describes the portrait as such: “The pallor of her complexion is relieved only by her fair auburn hair and her eyes, which still possess a childlike innocence. Her dress is

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<sup>61</sup> Strong 19.

<sup>62</sup> “Elizabeth I when a Princess c.1546” *Royal Collection Trust*, rct.uk  
<<https://www.rct.uk/collection/404444/elizabeth-i-when-a-princess>> 13 Mar 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Strong 52.

of simple and unostentatious cut, her jewels but a few; it is a picture of Elizabeth as the young and virtuous bluestocking of whom her tutor Roger Ascham was so justly proud.”<sup>64</sup> The portrait was found in the collection of her brother Edward VI and described as “the picture of the Ladye Elizabeth her grace with a booke in her hande her gowne like crymsen clothe.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, the portrait depicts a typical young Lady of her time. She is seen as beautiful due to her white complexion; her auburn hair reminds of her father Henry VIII. She does not wear many jewels in order to highlight her modesty. Her dress is relatively simple showing her chastity. She is holding a book and another book is open behind her to emphasize her predilection for education and spirituality, considering the fact that the books are likely the New and Old Testament. All in all, the painting shows a perfect young Lady. Nothing of the portrait suggests Elizabeth’s later difficult personality or the cult of the Virgin Queen. However, her words might provide some sort of indication of her future as she is reported to have said when her brother Edward VI requested her portrait: “For the face, I graunt, I might well blushe to offer, but the mynde I shall never be ashamed to present.”<sup>66</sup> Hence, her words show the expected modesty when it comes to her appearance but do not correspond to the gender idea of the time which sees woman as silent, obedient and definitely not loudly expressing their minds. Moreover, she was extraordinarily educated for a woman of her time. Apart from English, she spoke Latin, Italian and French. Her erudition is in itself noteworthy; however, the fact that Elizabeth wanted it to be noted and seen is exceptional. Her dress might have been modest in the painting; however, she ensured that the books were a part of the portrait. Elizabeth was an outstanding girl and she was not afraid to present herself as such. Similar pattern can be found in the early portraits of Lady Jane Grey, a very educated young woman as well,

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<sup>64</sup> Strong 9.

<sup>65</sup> “Elizabeth I when a Princess c.1546” *Royal Collection Trust*, rct.uk  
<<https://www.rct.uk/collection/404444/elizabeth-i-when-a-princess>> 13 Mar 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Strong 9.

whose portraits often featured books too.<sup>67</sup> At the time when many women tried to hide their intellect, Elizabeth proudly presented hers. These differences set her apart from others already in her early age. From the very beginning, Elizabeth chose to represent herself as an educated, clever person rather than a beautiful one. She was also careful to ensure that she would not “be ashamed to present” her mind. Elizabeth made it obvious that she is educated enough to form opinions and she does not intend to keep them for herself. If she had such attitude when she was just a princess, it seems logical that this opinion of hers would get even more prominent when she was elevated into a position of power.

## 2.2. Queen Elizabeth



*Figure 3 - Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses by Hans Eworth or Joris Hoefnagel, 1569*

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<sup>67</sup> A portrait of Lady Jane Grey for comparison is available in the Appendices

Having seen Elizabeth as a princess, let us now focus on Elizabeth as a queen but not yet the Virgin Queen. The authorship of the portrait *Elizabeth I and Three Goddesses* is uncertain; The Royal Collection Trust claims the author to be Hans Eworth but Strong argues for Joris Hoefnagel. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that this portrait represents Elizabeth in the early days of her reign; in the days when she was still expected to get married. Strong argues that the portrait might have been painted in the aftermath of the Northern Rebellion and hence would have been certainly painted in 1569.<sup>69</sup> Strong also states with absolute certainty that *Elizabeth I and Three Goddesses* was not commissioned by Elizabeth herself but that it was presented to her.<sup>70</sup> This is important to note as it makes it clear that the portrait was not Elizabeth's self-representation; however, Elizabeth decided to hang the portrait in Whitehall and hence the portrait must have been to her liking and had her approval.

The portrait shows Queen Elizabeth and her two ladies in waiting on one side, and the goddesses Juno, Pallas Athene and Venus on the right side. Venus is portrayed with her son, Cupid. Before we start analysing the portrait itself, I would like to focus on the commentary of Baron Waldstein<sup>71</sup> who visited Whitehall in 1600 and recorded that below *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*, there were a few lines in Latin, which are translated in *Gloriana*:

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;

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<sup>68</sup> "Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses 1569" *Royal Collection Trust*, rct.uk  
<<https://www.rct.uk/collection/403446/elizabeth-i-and-the-three-goddesses>> 20 Jun 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Strong 68 – 69.

<sup>70</sup> Strong 69.

<sup>71</sup> Baron Waldstein, or Adam mladší z Valdštejna, was a member of the House of Waldstein, a Bohemian noble family. His diary, covering his youth travels survived and was published in the twentieth century.

Pallas was silenced; Venus blushed for shame.<sup>72</sup>

The description of the painting is even more incredible than the painting itself. In these few lines, Elizabeth defeats all three goddesses. Just from the few lines, it can be deduced that Pallas was the clever one, June was the powerful one and Venus was the beautiful one. And yet Elizabeth's arrival put them all in shame. The shameless praise of Elizabeth is reaching divine dimensions and it praises Elizabeth both in manly and feminine virtues: she is said to be intelligent, powerful, and beautiful. Hence, she is presented as both a strong, independent ruler and a gorgeous, marriageable queen. Such a presentation must have been to the liking of the Queen Elizabeth as one would suppose that this was exactly how she would have wished to be viewed in the 1560s. In the 1560s, she was still looking for possible, satisfactory candidates, and hence she wished to be presented and described as beautiful. However, she had never relented from her statement that even if she were to marry, she would remain a ruling monarch of her realm, she would not entrust the responsibility to her future husband. Hence, the short description of the portrait conveys the message most accurately: here is a beautiful, young queen whom you might marry, but do not expect her to be an obedient wife, she is going to keep her wit, intelligence, and power and use it as she sees fit.

Strong also suggests that it is a painting not of the Virgin Queen, but an allegorical painting of a queen expected to marry. It is interesting to notice the composition of the painting. Elizabeth is wearing a majestic dress and her crown, and she is holding her orb and sceptre. Therefore, the impression that we get from her is majestic but despite that, she is not in the centre of the painting as we would expect her to be. The central position is taken by Juno who is placed in between Elizabeth and her ladies-in-waiting and Pallas and Venus. Above Juno, we can see Windsor Castle. Juno is clearly looking at Elizabeth

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<sup>72</sup> Strong 65.

and gesticulating for her to follow her. Strong interprets the scene in a fascinating way: “The goddesses instead of being presented as rivals are seen here as united in their defeat. It is perhaps of significance that the true polarity is between the Queen, upon whom pressure to marry was to continue throughout the next decade, and Venus, goddess of Love, who is depicted seated on an embroidered undergarment. They are placed as opposites just as the role of reconciliation is assigned to Juno, goddess of marriage, who dominates the centre of the picture. Her intermediary position is again emphasized in that she bridges the architecture and the landscape, acting as a link between the two opposed worlds of court and country, art and nature.”<sup>73</sup> If Strong’s interpretation is accurate, it is an incredible portrayal of the precarious position that Elizabeth found herself in in the 1560s and early 1570s. By placing Elizabeth in opposition to Venus, the goddess of love, the painting could have two meanings: Elizabeth might be as far away from love and children as possible and the mediator role of Juno, goddess of marriage, is trying to unite these two. It would suggest that Juno is showing Elizabeth that it is through marriage that she can reach love. This seems to be the interpretation that Strong is suggesting and it is probably the correct one.

However, it is unlikely that such an interpretation would be approved by Elizabeth. From the previous chapters, it can be inferred that Elizabeth did not believe that love is to be achieved via marriage. Quite the opposite. I would argue that she believed that love comes before marriage and that love is the condition for marriage. That is why she insisted upon first seeing the person whom she would marry; to make acquaintance with him and see if they like each other. She did not believe in the traditional model of marrying a stranger and the love part comes later through carrying out the duty of the wife and giving birth to her husband’s children. This belief of hers might have been

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<sup>73</sup> Strong 66, 68.

strengthened by the example of her own father. When he married Anne of Cleves, a complete stranger for him, the marriage ended in disaster. As there was no love between Henry and Anne of Cleves, no heir followed. Hence, Elizabeth might have believed that such a loveless union might not be of any use anyway as she would be unable to produce an heir with a man who did not attract her at all. If this were the case, a different interpretation of the picture would be possible. Considering the fact that Elizabeth approved of the painting, she may have interpreted it differently. The alternative interpretation could be suggested as such: June is clearly trying to communicate with Elizabeth and make her follow her into marriage. However, if we focus closely on Elizabeth's and Venus' face, neither of them seems to be looking at Juno. Instead, Elizabeth and Venus are looking at each other. A wilder interpretation might be that Elizabeth is staring longingly at Venus, bypassing Juno, as both of them understand that love and marriage do not need to go hand in hand. Elizabeth would have experienced this with Lord Dudley. A more subtle and more likely interpretation would be that Elizabeth is looking at Venus and Venus at Elizabeth for they do understand each other. However, in order to reach Venus (love), Elizabeth is forced to travel through Juno (marriage), and that is something that might not be possible for Elizabeth without losing her intelligence and independence (Pallas). Such an interpretation would portray the difficulty of the situation that Elizabeth found herself in. This interpretation could be supported by Elizabeth's insistence that she might want to get married if the right candidate appears and also by her later poetry, which is analysed in the next chapter. In "On Monsieur's Departure", Elizabeth laments that she cannot love even though she would like to which would explain Elizabeth's longing sight at Venus.

No matter which interpretation is more accurate, it is clear that this portrait shows a strong queen that does not resemble the Virgin Queen that we can see in the next portrait.

Elizabeth is no longer a humble princess, but she has not embodied the impersonal symbol yet. She is a dignified queen with an inner struggle which she is determined to resolve on her own.

### 2.3. The Virgin Queen



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*Figure 4 - Armada Portrait by an unknown artist, possibly 1588*

One of the most if not the most beautiful and famous portraits of Queen Elizabeth is the Armada Portrait which could have been painted in 1588. This is the portrait of the Virgin Queen, Gloriana, full of symbolism, emblems and glory. Her complexion deadly white, her lips red, her dress glorious – this is the Virgin Queen as we know her. The

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<sup>74</sup> “Elizabeth I Armada portrait saved with help of 8,000 donors” *Entertainment & Arts*, BBC, [bbc.com <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-36916720>](https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-36916720) 13 Mar 2020.

portrait's function is not anymore to portray the queen as a woman who may attract the attention of suitors. This is the Virgin Queen, almost a mythical creature who is set to rule the whole world. This is a portrait showing off the Queen's dominance and imperial power. Behind her, there is a painting of the victory of the English Navy over the Spanish Armada in 1588 led by Sir Francis Drake which effectively made the English Navy the most powerful navy on the planet and made Britain a colonial power. The portrait does not intend to represent Elizabeth as a person, rather, it depicts Elizabeth as a divine monarch and uses emblems to remind of her deeds. That's why the victory of the English Armada is behind the queen, represented by the ships on the open sea. "Elizabeth I was especially keen to use such shows to celebrate the various symbolic manifestations of power."<sup>75</sup> The emblems of her victories would accompany her on her famous portrait.

Also, Elizabeth's Tudor crown is symbolically placed above the globe.<sup>76</sup> It may represent the future aspiration of the House of Tudor. Elizabeth's hand is resting on the globe, symbolically showing that it is or it is going to be hers. The details here are noteworthy; it seems that Elizabeth's hand is resting on North America, hence indicating where her conquest plans were heading. Elizabeth herself is placed in the very centre of the portrait and is disproportionally bigger than anything else. This is to represent her central role in the colonisation and battles against the Spanish and also to portray her as powerful, strong, and in control.

Her dress also significantly differs from the dress she was portrayed in as a Princess and shortly after her coronation. Whilst her Princess dress was modest and simple, Elizabeth's dress in this picture is the one of the Virgin Queen. The dress is incredibly ostentatious full of bowknots, pearls and expensive fabric. The shape of the dress is very unusual too and the ruff is most extraordinary. It does not seem to reflect the

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<sup>75</sup> Ford 256.

<sup>76</sup> Strong 132.

proportions of the human body which could suggest that it focuses on the body politic rather than anything else. Howard and Llewellyn write about a different portrait of Elizabeth: “Despite having been paid for by someone who knew her well, Elizabeth’s portrayal is not concerned to replicate the physical reality of her body.”<sup>77</sup> Such assertion can be applied on the Armada Portrait too. It is neither a dress to present the woman as modest, nor a dress to flatter the woman to appear marriable. The dress is to be as eye-catching as possible and its loose sleeves, huge ruff and colourful nature appears to try to portray Elizabeth as bigger than life. Her own physical presence should be vast, threatening, and demanding respect. All in all, this is the symbol that Elizabeth and her government have created out of her: it is the omnipotent gloriana.

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<sup>77</sup> Howard 223.

### 3. Elizabeth's Self-Representation

The last chapter of the thesis consists of a close reading of Elizabeth's own texts and the analysis of how she self-represented herself in them. This analysis is done in light of Elizabeth's life encapsulated in chapter one and her representation by others summarised in chapter two through her portraits. Obviously, Elizabeth would represent herself differently in a public text which was to be read in front of parliament or her army than in a private meditation upon her state of mind. The public nature of the texts must be kept in mind when analysing each of the texts to arrive at the right conclusion about Elizabeth's self-representation. In order to accomplish a comprehensive analysis, various texts were chosen to represent different spheres of Elizabeth's life. First, public speeches are analysed, followed by Elizabeth's correspondence. During Elizabeth's time, letters were not meant to be intimate and therefore their nature is public as well. In the last part, Elizabeth's poetry is considered. Elizabeth wrote political and meditative, romantic poetry hence such poems were chosen so that each genre that Elizabeth wrote was represented.

#### 3.1. Elizabeth's Speech in July 1588, Tilbury

Elizabeth's speech in Tilbury was performed in order to encourage her troops to raise their spirits and morale before the battle against the Spanish. In the speech, Elizabeth presents herself as a benevolent monarch who joyfully comes amongst her subjects. As she is a benevolent queen who is sure of the deserved love of her subjects, she has nothing to fear from them. She would also gladly sacrifice her life for her realm. Then follows the most famous part of the speech in which Elizabeth un genders herself and presents herself as both a female and a male. Finally, Elizabeth concludes that they should surely defeat

the Spanish as they are brave and God is on their side.<sup>78</sup> The speech was delivered by Elizabeth and then repeated by others so that all of her troops could hear it even from far away.

If we focus on the middle part of the speech, we can find a prototypical example of how Elizabeth represented herself in public. Elizabeth says:

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, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.<sup>79</sup>

This is 1588 therefore this speech is delivered by the Virgin Queen. It may be the very best example of Elizabeth's rhetorical qualities. All that she has learnt throughout the complicated period of her youth and her early reign, she is putting to use in this speech. She, a woman, is standing in front of her all-male troops as she delivers this motivational speech. She knows that her speech is being repeated by males to the soldiers at the back. In this part of the speech, she takes the symbol of the Virgin Queen that she has created out of herself and uses it. She un genders herself; she is not standing in front of the troops as Queen Elizabeth, she is standing there as the Virgin Queen, a symbol which encompasses both genders. Elizabeth acknowledges that she is a woman, that her personal body is that of a "weak and feeble woman". She does not try to hide the fact that she is a female monarch and therefore she might be expected to be less involved in her navy. Instead, she emphasises the point; she says and lets all the males redelivering her speech repeat that she is but a woman. Thanks to that, she can embody the figure of the Virgin Mary, which was taken away from her subjects because of her father's religious

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<sup>78</sup> "Speech by Elizabeth I - Spanish Armada July 1588" *British Library*, bl.uk <<http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126630.html>> 15 Jun 2020.

<sup>79</sup> "Speech by Elizabeth I - Spanish Armada July 1588" *British Library*, bl.uk <<http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126630.html>> 15 Jun 2020.

reformation. Such a figure empowers her soldiers, gives them hope, and makes them believe that if they lose their lives during the battle, they shall be rewarded with salvation and resurrection.

At the same time, though, Elizabeth makes it clear, as she had done her all life, that despite her female body, her wit is as sharp as any man's. She specifically points out that she has the heart and stomach of a king. Heart as a symbol tends to be associated with bravery and stomach is associated with the capacity to make difficult decisions and the ability to witness unpleasant scenes. Traditionally, these characteristics would have been associated with men. In this speech, Elizabeth says that despite her feeble, feminine body, her courage and determination are as if she was a king. Furthermore, Elizabeth emphasises that if England seemed to be losing, she would follow the old English kings' example and herself join the battle. She would take arms and become their general, she would be willing to die side by side with her soldier. Elizabeth uses her gender representation as a tool: as all her troops can see she is but a woman and therefore it would shame them if she had to take arms herself and fight for them. Such sentences must have been a very powerful tool in her motivational speech. It resembles the speech made by Henry V in Shakespeare's *Henry V* before the legendary Battle of Agincourt. In the play, Henry is against superior numbers.. In order to motivate his soldiers, he delivers a moving speech which is concluded like this:

But we in it shall be remember'd;  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition:  
And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Henry V* IV, iii, 59 – 67. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Glasgow: Geddes and Grosset, 2016) 308.

The similarities of Henry's to Elizabeth's speech are those of English nationalism. Both Elizabeth and Henry try to appeal to the superiority of the English nature: Elizabeth's "and of a king of England too" and Henry's unwavering belief that the battle is justified. The difference is in the monarch's self-representation. Elizabeth is making use of the period limitations to enlarge on her possibilities. She distinguishes herself from her soldiers on the basis of her gender and motivates them to fight for her; if they do so, they will be shielded by her divine, motherly protection. Henry, meanwhile, presents himself as one of them, "we band of brothers," and says that anyone fighting alongside him will be elevated to become a brother of the King. The speech is similar in its purpose but the rhetorical devices used are different.

*Henry V* was written by Shakespeare around the year 1599 and hence Elizabeth could not have been anyhow inspired by it, but the Battle of Agincourt had been in the English consciousness ever since 1415. It's the Agincourt spirit that Elizabeth tried to encapsulate in her speech. In addition though, Elizabeth had one more ace in her sleeve. As the king, she could follow the example of Henry V and join her soldiers in a battle against an arguably stronger enemy. As the Virgin Queen, a.k.a. the Virgin Mary, she could judge her soldiers' virtues in the field and subsequently reward them for it in this life or after their glorious death. Therefore, it is clear that Elizabeth managed to represent herself to her full advantage. She refused to choose between a woman and a man. She represented herself as both in order to secure her position, power, and respect. She earned her soldiers' respect by her willingness to fight alongside them if the need arose. She consolidated her power by making it clear that she expected that such moment when she, a feeble woman, would have to fight was never going to come as her troops were going

to be victorious. In short, Elizabeth took the best strategies from Henry V and accommodated and improved them for her circumstances.

### 3.2. Correspondence

Correspondence is a semi-public type of writing. It is going to be read by the addressee and it may even be made public by her or him. This was especially true during the early modern times when letters were not as intimate as they are today. Therefore, Elizabeth's self-representation in her correspondence is quite unique. Elizabeth presents herself with her addressee in mind, but she is aware that as a queen, her correspondence might end up being read by others as well. Two very different letters by Elizabeth were chosen to sufficiently demonstrate this genre. The first one is a letter from Princess Elizabeth to Queen Mary from August 2, 1556. The second one is Elizabeth's answer to Sir Walter Raleigh's letter. These two letters offer two distinctly different sides of Elizabeth. In the first one, she must appear humble in front of her half-sister, the queen at the time. The second one portrays a confident monarch who would not be manipulated by her subjects' laments. It's because these two letters present two different sides of Elizabeth that they were chosen to represent Elizabeth's correspondence.

#### 3.2.1. Letter from Princess Elizabeth to Queen Mary, August 2, 1556

A letter from the then princess Elizabeth to her half-sister, Queen Mary, was written by Elizabeth to pledge her innocence in the plot against Mary. This letter presents Elizabeth very differently than we came to know her from her Virgin Queen texts. In this letter, Elizabeth pleads for her life and presents herself as nothing but a humble and obedient servant. She signs the letter as "Your majesty's obedient subject and humble sister, Elizabeth."<sup>81</sup> It is noteworthy that Elizabeth does not sign as Princess Elizabeth,

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<sup>81</sup> John C. Hunter, ed. *Renaissance literature; an anthology of poetry and prose* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 195.

but just as Elizabeth. She may have done so in order to show her utmost humility and to make it clear that despite her royal birth, she is making no aspiration for the throne which is fully in Mary's hands. Even though Elizabeth tries to appear humble, she still manages to convey her erudition. At the beginning of her letter, she talks of "fear of Romans to their Senate"<sup>82</sup> and she frequently quotes the Bible in Latin. Despite her displays of humility by calling herself demeaning names, Elizabeth does not try to hide her intellect and represents herself as an educated and well-read woman.

The main purpose of this letter is to clear Elizabeth of the allegations made against her in the plot discussed in chapter one. Therefore, Elizabeth describes herself as pious, faithful and loyal. At one point, she writes: "Of this I assure your majesty, though it be my part above the rest to bewail such things though my name had not been in them, yet it vexes me too much than the devil owen me such a hate as to put me in any part of this mischievous instigations."<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth uses a Biblical metaphor to show Mary that the only way for Elizabeth to take part in the conspiracy would be if the devil hated her so much that he would make her do it. Otherwise, there is no way that Elizabeth would have taken part in the plot which she calls mischievous. Later, Elizabeth says: "And like as I have been your faithful subject from the beginning of your reign, so shall no wicked persons cause me to change to the end of my life."<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth emphasises that she has always been faithful to Mary and she would continue to do so until the end of her life. Moreover, even if anyone tried to convince Elizabeth to act against Mary, she would never do so and no one could ever persuade her. Elizabeth tries to appease Mary and makes her believe that she truly had nothing to do with the plot. The letter is of a particular interest because it shows that even if Elizabeth's aim is the exact opposite than what her

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<sup>82</sup> Hunter 194.

<sup>83</sup> Hunter 195.

<sup>84</sup> Hunter 195.

usual self-representation would be – she is trying to belittle herself here rather than extol herself – her style is still sharp and persuasive. She does not mention any details that might be seen as incriminating and later used against her. Instead, she relies on her silver-tongue to carry out the task. Therefore, this letter shows Elizabeth’s self-representation before she became the Queen. It, typically for Elizabeth, uses clever rhetorical strategies but Elizabeth’s self-representation is far from the Virgin Queen.

### 3.2.2. Elizabeth’s Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh

Sir Walter Raleigh was a member of Elizabeth’s court, a writer, and an explorer. As many, he was dependent on staying in Elizabeth’s good graces. When Raleigh felt that Elizabeth’s love towards him was faltering, he wrote her a letter. As he could not accuse Elizabeth of anything (that might cost him his head), he instead accused fortune of taking away Elizabeth’s love from him. Fortune was a common concept in the Renaissance poetry which was used to demonstrate the unpredictability of human life and fate. Walter writes in order to assure Elizabeth of his loyalty and love. The letter exchange between Elizabeth and Raleigh is relevant for Elizabeth’s self-representation because it shows Elizabeth using the contemporary techniques and concepts, such as the wheel of fortune, to suit her discourse. Raleigh’s letter demonstrates how members of the court addressed Elizabeth and how Elizabeth approached them.

Raleigh wrote a self-demeaning letter to Elizabeth begging for her affection. Elizabeth’s reply is as amusing as it is up to point. She assures Raleigh that he is still in his good graces but seems to reprimand him for believing that she could be so easily swayed by fortune. Her self-representation is confident, benevolent, and majestic. Where Raleigh calls her “my princess”<sup>85</sup> and “my true fantasy’s mistress”<sup>86</sup>, Elizabeth addresses

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<sup>85</sup> Hunter 192.

<sup>86</sup> Hunter 192.

him as “silly Pug.”<sup>87</sup> By doing so, Elizabeth clearly establishes the power relationship between them and represents herself as the superior one. Even though Elizabeth admits that “Fortune, I know, sometimes doth conquer kings,/And rules and reigns on earth and earthly things,”<sup>88</sup> she would not be so easily swayed by it: “No, no, my Pug, though Fortune were not blind,/Assure thyself she could not rule my mind.”<sup>89</sup> In these verses, Elizabeth talks about herself not as of a queen but as of a king. She does not say that fortune sways queens; she says that it sways kings. She clearly places herself amongst kings even though her gender is different. Furthermore, she assures Raleigh that she is not easily changeable. Even though it could be expected from a woman to be susceptible to emotions and to easily change her mind, Elizabeth convinces Raleigh that she is not like that. Even though she humbly agrees that any ruler might be swayed by fortune, she is not more likely to be affected by it just because she is a woman. In this letter, Elizabeth presents her pragmatic mind and makes a point of showing that she is capable of rational reasoning, objective judgements and just rule. In doing so, she is continuing the Tudor tradition of her father and establishing her own authority at the same time.

### 3.3. Poetry

The previous texts of political speeches and correspondence clearly consisted of texts which would be read by other people. Elizabeth’s poetry is a bit more ambiguous. Some of it, Elizabeth wrote with the intention of being found and read. Such poems are for example “The Doubt of Future Foes,” and “Written on a Window Frame at Woodstock.” These two poems were chosen because they represent two distinct phases of Elizabeth’s self-representation. “The Doubt of Future Foes” represents Elizabeth as the invincible Virgin Queen. “Written on a Window Frame at Woodstock” shows much more

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<sup>87</sup> Hunter 193.

<sup>88</sup> Hunter 193.

<sup>89</sup> Hunter 193.

vulnerable Elizabeth who is still in the process of developing her self-representation persona. On the other hand, some poems are of much more private nature. Elizabeth wrote them as a private meditation upon her feelings and worries. These were not meant for public to read and therefore, Elizabeth's representation in them differs from the other texts. In all the previous texts, Elizabeth had a role to play; none of the text portrayed Elizabeth's genuine feelings or personality. Those texts were composed in order to create a role for Elizabeth to play. This role was to be a seemingly obedient servant during the reign of her half-sister and a strong, military, ungendered leader during her own rule. The Tudors were well aware of the importance of their public persona and propaganda played a central role in their rule. Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, knew it and Elizabeth learnt it from him. Therefore, all those texts were composed to portray Elizabeth in a propagandistic light: she played the role of the powerful and symbolic Virgin Queen. In today's vocabulary, they were her PR. Her private meditations reveal Elizabeth experimenting with poetic devices and exploring Petrarchan concepts. They provide Elizabeth's ruminations on how her public self-representation affected her. As examples of such poems, "On Monsieur's Departure" and "When I Was Fair and Young" were chosen because they not only demonstrate Elizabeth's poetic qualities but also comment on the key issues which led her to become the Virgin Queen.

### 3.3.1. "Written on a Window Frame at Woodstock"

"Written on a Window Frame at Woodstock" was written during Elizabeth's imprisonment at Woodstock Castle which followed her incarceration at the Tower of London which is described in detail in chapter one. It was not the only epigraph that Elizabeth wrote at Woodstock; the much shorter epigraph was already analysed in chapter 1.1.2. to illustrate how Elizabeth learnt to use the evasiveness of language in order not to incriminate herself.

This epigraph meditates upon Elizabeth's wretched, troubled state in which she found herself as she must wait uncertain whether the charges made against her will be pressed or not. Elizabeth ponders upon guilt and innocence and wishes for her foes to be granted what they intended for her. She signs the poem as "Elisabetha a prisoner."<sup>90</sup> In this poem, Elizabeth clearly presents herself as the victim. She describes herself as being falsely accused; the fortune turned her back on her, and she must suffer through the uncertainty of awaiting her fate. This poem differs from most of Elizabeth's other writings by the fact that Elizabeth presents herself as defenceless. She could not have done anything to avoid the charges. Only the last verse might seem to be not resigned but rather revengeful: "So God grant to my foes as they have thought."<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Elizabeth gives herself into the hands of God and believes that should she be executed, God will serve justice on her behalf. It is one of her very few writings in which Elizabeth assumes a passive role.

Let us also discuss Ilona Bell's interpretation and insights into this epigraph. Bell points out that the second line portrays a "powerful expression of personal distress."<sup>92</sup> The second line is "Hath fraught with cares my troubled wit,"<sup>93</sup> Bell says that Elizabeth included this verse "By providing only a glimpse rather than a full-fledged narrative, the epigram, like the speech, avoids self-pity, asserts righteousness, and claims justice in the hope of garnering support."<sup>94</sup> This interpretation would make a lot of sense; Elizabeth was in a situation in which she desperately needed public support. At the same time, Elizabeth would not be fond of self-pity which would probably not do her any good. Bell also discusses the ambiguity of the second part of the poem in which Elizabeth seems to

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<sup>90</sup> Hunter 190.

<sup>91</sup> Hunter 190.

<sup>92</sup> Bell 56.

<sup>93</sup> Hunter 190.

<sup>94</sup> Bell 56 – 57.

be discussing what should happen to her accusers. Bells writes: “Elizabeth could prophesy her foes’ defeat only by concealing it, as an amphibologous subtext, beneath the poem’s more obvious image of her own destruction.”<sup>95</sup> Such interpretation would suggest of Elizabeth’s shrewdness. It might give Elizabeth a slightly more active role in the poem – even though Elizabeth is passively waiting for her own end in the poem, she might be also suggesting that her enemies will meet such an end as well. Elizabeth’s self-representation in the poem is very passive-aggressive.

### 3.3.3. “The Doubt of Future Foes”

With “The Doubt of Future Foes” we find ourselves far away from the context of the previous poem. Now, Elizabeth is the queen and she is talking to Mary, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth’s cousin who is later to be executed by Elizabeth. The poem consists of eight stanzas and each stanza consists of four lines. The poem is signed by “Vivat Regina.”<sup>96</sup> There are a lot of reference to Mary, Queen of Scots, but this analysis focuses on how Elizabeth presents herself in this poem.

Doubtlessly, the aim of this poem is to instil fear in Elizabeth’s enemies, establish respect, and send a clear message to anyone who might think to oppose her. Elizabeth opens the poem by these lines: “The doubt of future foes/Exiles my present joy”<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth makes it clear that her foes are always on her mind and she knows very well who they are. She shows herself as a responsible ruler whose mind is set on the matters of her kingdom: she cannot enjoy any joy as long as her foes live and plot against her. She is committed to her responsibilities as the queen. The last two stanzas are the most explicit. The penultima stanza goes as follows:

No foreign banished wight  
Shall anchor in this port:  
Our realm brooks no seditious sects –

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<sup>95</sup> Bell 58.

<sup>96</sup> Hunter 191.

<sup>97</sup> Hunter 190.

Let them elsewhere resort.<sup>98</sup>

This stanza presents Elizabeth as a military leader. She alludes to her powerful navy which would not let anyone anchor in the English ports. This whole stanza serves as a threat to Mary, Queen of Scots, and anyone else who might think of invading Elizabeth's realm. Elizabeth sends a clear message that such an attempt would be unsuccessful. These ideas continue in the last stanza of the poem:

My rusty sword through rest  
Shall first his edge employ  
To pull their tops who seek such change  
Or gape for future joy.<sup>99</sup>

The last stanza concludes the threat and brings the poem back to the beginning. At the beginning, Elizabeth was complaining about the absence of joy in her life at the moment because of her scheming enemies. At the end, she alludes to the beginning by assuming that such occasions may rise again. However, she points out that such plots will not be successful. Especially interesting is the military, violent idea of Elizabeth using her own sword to fight the battles. We have already seen in Elizabeth's speech before the battle against the Spanish Armada that Elizabeth was not afraid to present herself as an active warrior with arms despite her gender. In this poem, Elizabeth once again implies that should anyone oppose her, she will personally hunt them down. It will be her sword, not anyone else's who will deal with the conspirators. However, it is also interesting to note that her sword is rusty. If her sword is rusty, it has not been used very often. By pointing out that her sword is rusty, Elizabeth shows her benevolent nature; she is not someone who would actively seek violence or war. That's why the sword is rusty. However, if she was forced to react because of a betrayal by her subjects or invasion by her enemies, Elizabeth would not try to avoid a battle. "The Doubt of Future Foes" is a very explicit

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<sup>98</sup> Hunter 191.

<sup>99</sup> Hunter 191.

poem which presents Elizabeth as a strong ruler and decisive military leader. Elizabeth says that she is a temperate ruler who does not seek conflict. If the conflict should arise, though, she would be ready for it.

#### 3.4.1. “On Monsieur’s Departure”

“On Monsieur’s Departure” was written in response to the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Francis, Duke of Alençon. During these last marriage negotiations, Elizabeth finally got the courting which she had always wanted. Francis came to visit her and they spent some time together and so Elizabeth got to know him personally which had always been her condition for entering marriage. Elizabeth seems to have fallen for the Duke despite their age difference. However, in the end such a union did not seem wise and Elizabeth chose against it. Francis died not long afterwards. In order to better understand the poem, let us consider what Mendoza wrote about Elizabeth and Francis: “The Queen and Alençon were walking together in a gallery. [...] She replied, “You may write this to the King: that the duke of Alençon shall be my husband,” and at the same moment she turned to Alençon and kissed him on the mouth, drawing a ring from her own hand and giving it to him as a pledge. Alençon gave her a ring of his in return.”<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth and Francis probably enjoyed some sweet semi-private moments together and Elizabeth seems to have been genuinely fond of the much younger man. He may not have seemed to her to be a threat to her independence because of their age difference and so she could privately imagine that the union between them might work. When these marriage negotiations were ended, Elizabeth was genuinely sorry and that was the moment when she wrote “On Monsieur’s Departure.” It is a poem of three stanzas and eighteen lines, a structure that Elizabeth followed many times. The poem describes Elizabeth’s inner dilemma – she is in love with Francis, who is never named in the poem,

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<sup>100</sup> Bell 151 – 152.

but because of her position she must pretend in front of everyone that she is not fond of him. Elizabeth wishes for some passion in her life and laments her loveless life.

If one poem were to be named which describes Elizabeth's attitude to her transition into the Virgin Queen, "On Monsieur's Departure" would be selected. It is a private meditation and so Elizabeth is not trying to persuade anyone of her persona, but rather she explains to herself why she is about to become the symbol of the Virgin Queen. The poem confirms that Elizabeth did intend to marry at the beginning of her reign but as none of the candidates proved to be acceptable to both her and England, she was forced to leave her private self behind and get married to England instead. The most telling is the last verse of the first stanza: "Since from myself another self I turned."<sup>101</sup> Elizabeth is aware of her two bodies – body personal and politics – and she knows that by repudiating Francis, the would be last suitor of hers, she has after all lost that part of herself which longed for some personal happiness. This line also firmly places the beginning of the cult of the Virgin Queen at the beginning of 1580s. Therefore, this little piece of private poetry traces Elizabeth's decision to leave her personal desires behind and proves that Elizabeth decided to fully commit to the Virgin Queen cult only after her initial desire to get married to a man she would love failed and there was no chance that these would ever be fulfilled.

The poem may be the most personal confession of feelings that Elizabeth ever wrote. The beginning of the poem goes:

I grieve and dare not show my discontent;  
I love, and yet am forced to seem to hate;  
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant;  
I seem stark mute, but inwardly do prate.  
I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned,<sup>102</sup>

The anaphora underscores the personal aspect of the poem. Elizabeth emphasises that these are all her feelings and even if no one is to ever know them, they are real and as

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<sup>101</sup> Hunter 191.

<sup>102</sup> Hunter 191.

much as part of herself as the cold public persona she usually displays. She admits that she loves Francis and when she told him that they would get married, as was described by Mendoza, she did mean it. However, as the marriage will not happen, she is forced to pretend to never have had feelings for Francis and even more, she must pretend that those promises of marriage were politically motivated manipulations instead of genuine declaration of her feelings. In addition, Elizabeth laments that she is expected to follow the traditionally patriarchal rational attitude to her love life. She cannot show her true emotions which causes her to privately suffer even if she does not let any of this show.

In the second stanza, Elizabeth remembers all the nice moments that she and Francis spent together. She even writes: "His too familiar care doth make me rue it."<sup>103</sup> This line would suggest that Elizabeth and Francis were intimate with each other, probably inappropriately intimate. Elizabeth misses Francis' displays of affection and she will regret the fact that she cannot receive them anymore. At the end of the second stanza, Elizabeth says: "No means I find to rid him from my breast,/Till by the end of things it be suppressed."<sup>104</sup> Unlike the previous declaration, which was erotic, this declaration is romantic. Elizabeth confesses that she will never be able to stop loving Francis and the only way to for her to forget him is her own death. Therefore, the second stanza encapsulates Elizabeth's romantic and erotic desire for Francis in mere six lines. In her typically concise style, Elizabeth declares her love which is never to come into fruition.

In the last stanza, Elizabeth presents herself differently than she usually does in the public texts. Instead of the Virgin Queen or a strong monarch, she presents herself as vulnerable: "For I am soft, and made of melting snow;"<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth begs for some passion and love to fill her once more because no matter how she may seem to others, she

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<sup>103</sup> Hunter 191.

<sup>104</sup> Hunter 191.

<sup>105</sup> Hunter 191.

is but a person who needs some comfort. Elizabeth finished the poem by a couplet: “Or let me live with some more sweet content,/Or die, and so forget what love e’er meant.”<sup>106</sup> In the final couplet, which is usually used for universal conclusion of a poem, Elizabeth asks for some distraction that would let her forget for at least a while her love for Francis. If she could not receive such distraction, she would rather die so that she could forget that she has learnt what real love is but she could never have it. If she died, she would forget all the strong passions that love meant for her and hence, her suffering would be over. She would not have to remember that it was her dedication for her country which forced her to give up her real happiness. It is a very strong final statement which concludes the poem perfectly. “On Monsieur’s Departure” is a poem of suppressed passions and the cost of personal sacrifice. Such behaviour led to Elizabeth’s career success but it came at personal cost. The personal cost is huge for Elizabeth even if no one should ever know how much she suffers because of it.

The poem might also be read through the Petrarchan concepts mentioned in chapter one. Elizabeth does not describe Francis, rather she describes her inner feelings towards a lover. In the poem, Francis is a “Laura.” He is the lover that Elizabeth longs for but who was stolen from her by destiny. Once again, Elizabeth flips her gender around. However, this time she does so differently and for contrasting purposes. In her speeches, Elizabeth chose to inhabit the strong male characteristics. In this poem, she chooses to inhabit the vulnerable part of men. It is the part in which a man traditionally longs for a woman who would stand behind him and support him. Also, it is the desire to have someone to admire and adore. Such someone should have been Francis for Elizabeth. Francis, a younger male, who would stand behind Elizabeth and be her support as she had to navigate her uneasy position. Therefore, it could be argued that even in her private

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<sup>106</sup> Hunter 191.

poetry, Elizabeth represents her gender and herself atypically for the Renaissance England.

### 3.4.2. “When I Was Fair and Young”

“When I Was Fair and Young” was written after “On Monsieur’s Departure.” It is a poem of three stanzas and twelve lines, and it laments Elizabeth’s loneliness. It could be read as a sort of continuation of “Monsieur’s Departure” which picks up a few years after her last suitor was repudiated. In the poem, Elizabeth fondly remembers her youth when she was young and beautiful and many men desired her. However, she sent them all away and now, when she is the Virgin Queen, no one desires her anymore. She regrets to have repudiated all her potential lovers.

Every stanza is concluded by the same line: “Go, go, go seek some otherwhere; importune me no more.”<sup>107</sup> These lines symbolise how all Elizabeth’s courtships ended. She sent them all away and told them to never bother her again. The repetition of “go, go, go” further highlights the amount of men she was forced to refuse. The fact that each of the stanzas is concluded by the same line symbolises that no matter who tried to woo her and in what circumstances, all the attempts ended the same way. After all these years, Elizabeth sees that all these romantic attempts followed the same pattern. Elizabeth assigns herself an active role in her love life, a role that she now came to regret: “For I did sore repent that I had said before,”<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth says that she does regret refusing all the men and staying alone and blames herself for such endgame. The poem seems increasingly tragic in this light: essentially, it is a confession of an old lady who refused all her lovers and ended up all alone. Now she regrets her actions, but it is too late – the days of her youth and the times when she was desired by everyone are gone and they can

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<sup>107</sup> Hunter 191.

<sup>108</sup> Hunter 192.

never return. As “On Monsieur’s Departure” it is a poem of great personal sacrifice in favour of her realm.

In addition, an interesting connection can be observed between “When I was Fair and Young” and the portrait *Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses*. In the poem, Elizabeth writes: “But there fair Venus’ son, that brave, victorious boy,/Said, “What, thou scornful dame, sith that thou art so coy,”<sup>109</sup> These lines seem to directly correspond to the portrait *Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses* in which we could see Elizabeth bypassing Juno, symbolising marriage, and longingly stare at Venus and Cupid. When the portrait was made, Elizabeth might still have believed that she would eventually get married to a man of her choosing. She assumed that she might be able to escape the marriage of convenience and find a suitable candidate for both her personal satisfaction and for the good of England. However, such hopes came to vain and in this later poem, Elizabeth remembers Venus and Cupid whose examples she had hoped to follow but by her constant rejection of all her marriage candidates, she forfeited the chance. This connection would bring Elizabeth’s extraordinary journey into a full circle. Elizabeth was not born the Virgin Queen; she was a woman with aspirations and hopes. She tried to juggle her duties with her personal desires at the beginning of her reign. However, she was a monarch and so her private life was never private. Furthermore, she faced even more pressure than a male monarch would. She knew that if she got married, she might lose her independence and power. This was a scenario she was unwilling to consider. In the end, she understood that satisfying both of her desires was never possible. As she writes in “When I was Fair and Young” “But then I felt straightway a change within my breast:/The day unquiet was; the night I could not rest,”<sup>110</sup> One day she woke up and understood the personal sacrifice she had made. During her busy life, her private life has slipped though her fingers and

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<sup>109</sup> Hunter 192.

<sup>110</sup> Hunter 192.

only when she got old she realised that. However, there was nothing she could have done about this because giving up her position of the ruling queen was never an option.

## Conclusion

Elizabeth I remains a fascinating figure and with her father Henry VIII and perhaps Queen Victoria, one of the most legendary and noteworthy monarchs who ruled on the British Isles. She ruled at the time of political and religious turmoil; she had to deal with the religious discordance in her realm whilst protecting it from foreign, namely Spanish, invasions. As a woman, she was under the constant pressure to marry so that England might get a strong male ruler who would be able to unite the divided country and bring peace and prosperity. In the end, Elizabeth managed to develop a unique persona on her own. She transformed herself into a symbol, she married herself to England and she brought about the Golden Age. She was seen as the symbol of the temperate ruler who embodied a well-functioning state. Her own body was taken away from her and was used as a metaphor for universe. The myth was completed.

The study of Elizabeth's self-representation helps us to understand the complicated situation in which Elizabeth navigated her public and private life. Even though Elizabeth might have been misunderstood in her own lifetime because she was unable to conform to the social and gender roles of her time, it makes her more attractive to us nowadays. No matter whether in her private love life or the decision-making of her government, Elizabeth always refused to be relegated into a passive position. She remained an active participant and leader during the Golden Age in all spheres of life and even though it required a lot of personal sacrifice from her, she was finally rewarded with immortality in the history of England.

This thesis established that Elizabeth's self-representation was created as a mixture of two factors: Tudor aesthetics and defying the contemporary gender

expectations. Elizabeth followed the Tudor concept of propagandistic nature of art and her portraits are therefore valuable for their symbolic value rather than the artistic value. In her writings, Elizabeth continued the tradition of the English nationalism, always relying on the loyalty of her subjects to England and to its Queen. Elizabeth continued Henry VIII's position as the head of the state as well as the church and therefore she established herself as the authority both in the secular and in the spiritual lives of her subjects. However, Elizabeth differs from her predecessors' representations by her gender personification. Elizabeth began her rule with the weakness of being a female and by the end of her rule, it gave her the upper hand. She became both – the strong king that England needed on the battlefield and in the practical matters of the state, and the loving Virgin Mary substitution that England needed in its spiritual awakening and reinvention. Her literary legacy may not be of the greatest value as her busyness did not permit her to fully utilise her erudition for artistic purposes. Despite that, her writings are of great historical value as it is through them that Elizabeth's transition into the Virgin Queen can be traced. Her historical contribution remains impressive and the years of her rule are still remembered for their immense artistic value.

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Picture 1 - Lady Jane Grey by unknown artist

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<sup>111</sup> “Lady Jane Grey,” *National Portrait Gallery*, [npg.org.uk](https://www.npg.org.uk)  
<<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw113910/Lady-Jane-Grey?LinkID=mp01373&wPage=0&role=sit&rNo=1>> 5 Jun 2020.