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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

**'DAUGHTER OF ZION': ELIZABETH I AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF
VIRGINITY TO MONARCHICAL POWER**

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

D. SUSAN KENDRICK

Norman, Oklahoma

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VIRGINITY TO MONARCHICAL POWER**

**A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

BY

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I always thought that when I finished my dissertation, it would be the culmination of my interest in Queen Elizabeth I. That is not the case: as with any figure whose biography has been subsumed by mythology, interest can only increase, so I imagine that I will have to continue my research on the Queen in the future -- once my exhaustion from this project wears off. Without the help and guidance of my committee members, this dissertation would not have been possible. I would like to thank Professors Hunter Cadzow and James Hart Jr. for their assistance in the areas of Renaissance literature and Tudor/Stuart history. Professor Susan Havens Caldwell provided extensive suggestions for revision and crucial insights in the areas of medieval Catholicism and the spiritual image of the Queen. Professor George Economou was invaluable in the development of Chapter One, as his direction led me to the medieval works on virginity that lent so much to my reading of Elizabethan and Jacobean texts. I would like to express my gratitude particularly toward my dissertation director, Professor Gwenn Davis, for her exemplary professionalism, scholarship, guidance, and infinite patience. As a student in Professor Davis' sixteenth-century literature courses (Sidney and Spenser; Sixteenth-Century Non-Dramatic Literature), I was introduced to new insights and the extensive historical and literary contexts which eventually led to this dissertation. I am grateful to Professor Davis for the endless numbers of hours that she devoted to meetings, reading drafts, and offering suggestions for

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Abstract

The argument of the dissertation involves the meanings of virginity and the representations of Elizabeth I during her reign and in the century after her death. Elizabeth has long been associated with the term “Virgin Queen,” and her virginity has been the subject of discussion in recent novels and film. The current definition of *virginity* refers only to sexual abstinence and the Queen-as-virgin images focus on deprivation and childlessness. The pattern established during the Restoration lost the original meanings of *virginity* and its association with strength, sanctity, ability, and worth. Chapter One discusses the images of the Queen as a virtuous, marriageable woman and covers the years 1558-1581, when marriage negotiations were part of her foreign policy. Chapter Two analyzes important changes in imagery and representation during the period of 1582-1590, when Elizabeth’s last courtship ended and it became obvious that she would never marry. Chapter Three discusses representations of Elizabeth I during the most problematic period of her reign – 1590-1603, when the Queen’s policies were criticized, Essex rebelled and was executed, and many people looked forward to a male successor. Simultaneously, the most well-known literary representations of her were being created, namely Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, a combination of Greco-Roman mythologies, English legends and history, and Elizabethan political propaganda. Chapter Four discusses the elegies and the revival of her images, the perpetuation of which has lasted throughout the twentieth century.

Introduction

Queen Elizabeth I has long been an object of fascination for historians and literary scholars, and contemporary writers and filmmakers are no exception. Elizabeth I is the subject of many twentieth-century films, including: *Fire Over England* (1937), *The Lion Has Wings* (1939), *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939), *The Sea Hawk* (1940), *The Virgin Queen* (1955), *Elizabeth R* (1971), *Elizabeth* (1998)¹, and a variety of novels, including *Unicorn's Blood*, by British novelist Patricia Finney. Several of these representations, particularly *Elizabeth and Essex*, *The Virgin Queen*, *Elizabeth*, and *Unicorn's Blood* focus primarily on a single aspect of the complexity of Elizabeth's character: her virginity. Whether these representations discuss the Queen as a lovelorn, frigid spinster or a sexually experienced woman who used her 'virginity' as a political construct, the contemporary emphasis has been on the physical aspects of virginity. These representations, however, perceive the Queen's virginity from a highly reductive viewpoint, having either overlooked or ignored what virginity meant to Elizabeth's sixteenth-century subjects. The argument of the dissertation involves the meanings of virginity and the representations of Elizabeth I during her reign and in the century after her death. Elizabeth I has long been associated with the term "Virgin Queen," and her virginity has been the subject of discussion in recent novels and film. The twentieth-century definition of *virginity* refers only

¹*The Internet Movie Database* <<http://www.imdb.com>>

to sexual abstinence and the Queen-as-virgin images focus on deprivation and childlessness, as in the 1998 film *Elizabeth*, which depicted Elizabeth's Virgin Queen image as a (false) role she adopted to gain national approval. Visually arresting in its focus on the Queen as a living icon, the film nevertheless followed a pattern established during the Restoration: the loss of the original meanings of *virginity* and its association with strength, sanctity, ability, and worth.

The purpose of this study is to reintroduce the original meanings of virginity from their pre-Christian origins to the assimilation into early Christian asceticism, and their transformation through Protestantism. Despite a Protestant reduction of meaning, virginity became the most powerful political symbol in Elizabethan iconography. In a hierarchical and patriarchal society, the presence of a woman monarch necessitated a return to earlier meanings of virginity that attributed divine power and spirituality to a queen regnant. The outline follows a roughly chronological order, but not necessarily a linear development. The discussion of the Queen's image is dependent upon the idea of each image of virginity, which depends on who is using it and why. The representation and symbolism of virginity in relation to Elizabeth I was informed by social, political, and cultural factors. Inherent in these representations are traditions from Catholicism which Raymond Williams refers to as "residual" :

The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the

present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation. (122)

Residual images and ideas assisted in the creation of Elizabethan propaganda through representations of the Queen. Refusing to marry and procreate according to Protestant doctrines of female duty, Elizabeth recovered the power of the residual idea of virginity, relying on respect for its spiritual aspects. The dissertation analyzes these images and the politics behind them, emphasizing feminist revisitings of Elizabeth and what aspects of her reign they discuss.

Recent critics have dealt with the question of gender and its relationship to constructions of power. Carole Levin's *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* focuses on how gender construction and contemporary views of women's roles influenced representations of the Queen. Some have analyzed the ways in which some literary works reveal male anxiety over a female ruler, and the writers' response to that anxiety. Susan Frye discusses in *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* how courtiers attempted to construct (and constrict) the Queen by placing her within traditional female roles. Some critics have also discussed how the idea of female independence is restrained through patriarchal culture and literature, despite an able female monarch as an example to English women. Pamela Joseph Benson's

The Invention of the Renaissance Woman approaches this issue, focusing on a variety of sixteenth-century works about women, including those about the Queen herself. Still other critics view these representations as potentially empowering for the Queen. Discussions of virginity and chastity, invariably gender-related when the subject is Elizabethan England, focus on the importance of that virtue in figuring a woman monarch's power, as male courtiers fashion themselves as suitors to a virtuous lady. Philippa Berry's *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* discusses the limited empowerment of the chaste queen through the representations created by her male subjects.

Pagan and early Christian views of virginity provide detailed explanation of the "residual" theories of asceticism and virginity that later influenced the iconography and mythology of a Protestant queen. Aline Rouselle's study *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity* discusses the Roman ideas of sexuality and the influence of Christian ideas on pagan traditions in the first four centuries A.D. This time period is discussed also by Peter Brown in *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, which focuses on the origins of asceticism and the transference of the idealization of virginity. The traditional symbol of virginity, the Virgin Mary, figures centrally through the discussion. Elizabeth is viewed by many scholars as having deliberately appropriated the image of the Virgin Mary (within acceptable Protestant limits) and encouraged her courtiers to do the same; others argue that these images were imposed upon the Queen by male courtiers, anxious at being

subservient to a female monarch. Helen Hackett's *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen* argues that Elizabeth was not deliberately attempting to replace the Virgin Mary: rather, the images associated with the Queen were not Marian in origin, but were used for Elizabeth for the purpose of creating a national icon.

The first chapter discusses the meaning of virginity, which involved much more than the commitment to sexual abstinence in the classical age and in the medieval Christian tradition. Originally intended to influence single men, Greco-Roman theories of virginity envisioned it as a way of gaining strength through the denial of the body, and treatises claimed that chaste men were stronger intellectually, spiritually, and physically. By the fourth century, the infusion of Christianity into these theories of virginity extended the transforming power of virginity to women, as more women decided on an ascetic life in the Church. Since the prevailing ideas about women assumed automatic spiritual weakness and susceptibility to sin because of imprisonment in a weak and corrupt female body, virginity became a way for a woman to become spiritually equal to a man because of the control she must exercise over her body. This idea gave women in the medieval age a kind of autonomy they had not previously experienced.

The Reformation and the rise of Protestantism began the change in the representation of female virginity. Emphasizing women's roles as wives and mothers, Protestantism discouraged chastity as unnatural and against God's purpose, denouncing "popish" asceticism and perpetuating tales of pregnant nuns and perverted priests. Women's secondary position in society excluded them

from participating in the church as equals; this position was extended to government as well. When the Protestant king Edward VI died, national loyalty to the Tudors put the Catholic Mary I on the throne. Though Mary soon began the process of courtship and marriage to provide England with her successor, her unpopular marriage to Philip of Spain cast her queenship in doubt. Mary's determination to return the religious affiliation of England to Rome and the execution of Protestants ensured her lasting disgrace. When her half-sister Elizabeth succeeded her, national anxiety must have existed on several levels: though Elizabeth was Protestant and a daughter of Henry VIII, she was an unmarried woman. When the Queen was young, marriage was always a question, and her virginity was emphasized to accentuate her marriageability, and her courtships became a crucial part of international diplomacy.

Chapter Two analyzes important changes in imagery and representation during the period of 1582-1590, when Elizabeth's last courtship ended and it became obvious that she would never marry. In response to the existence of a Queen with no heir, writers and poets of the day created a seemingly immortal paragon of virtue. In works like Thomas Bentley's *A Monument of Matrones; or the Seven Severall Lampes of Virginitie*, a popular combination of biography, prayer, and conduct book that has never been fully analyzed, Protestant iconography was directed to a middle-class audience.

The third chapter discusses representations of Elizabeth I created by and for a courtly audience during the most problematic period of her reign: 1590-1603.

During this time the Queen's policies were criticized, Essex rebelled and was executed, rumors of her sexual misconduct and bearing of illegitimate children resurfaced, and many people looked forward to a time when they would no longer be ruled by a woman. Simultaneously, poets were creating the most well-known literary representations of her, namely Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which explored images of the Queen and created new ones by referring to Greco-Roman and Anglo-Saxon mythologies, English legends and history, and political propaganda. The image of Gloriana, established by this epic, praised and elevated the Queen during the most controversial period of her reign. The classical and early Christian meanings of virginity were applied to her at this time, as her image was transformed into many representations, including Britomart, the invincible Knight of Chastity and foremother of the great rulers of England.

The Queen's death in 1603 was met with a great outpouring of sorrow, but also relief and joy for the arrival of her successor King James. Yet after a few years of Stuart rule, her image was revived, polished, and held up as a mirror for James I and Charles I. She became the paragon of virtue, of womanhood, of kingship, as new elegies and tributes were published; as Christopher Haigh notes, "Elizabeth Tudor became a stick with which to beat the Stuarts." During this time, more women writers adopted her as a symbol of women's potential and worth. By the Restoration, however, the original meanings of virginity and the applications of its imagery to the Queen had been reduced to her unmarried and chaste state, and tributes focused instead on her political virtues. The Puritan

influence during the Stuart era eradicated the original metaphorical power of the state of virginity, and its effect on Elizabethan iconography, by focusing instead on her political accomplishments compared to the Stuart rulers. The fourth chapter of the dissertation discusses the elegies and the revival of her image, the perpetuation of which has lasted through the twentieth century.

The epithet “Virgin Queen” has become particularly associated with Elizabeth I from the 1580s onward, yet the mystical and spiritual origins of virginity have been lost; in the twentieth century, Elizabeth’s virgin status refers only to her unmarried and sexually inexperienced state. Since the question of her marriage was solved long ago, the focus of many contemporary representations asks only, “Was she or wasn’t she?” This reductionist view of the term has, in effect, reduced the iconography of Elizabeth and eradicated the complex system of cultural beliefs and mythological themes that contributed to the construction of her image, leaving only the literal meaning. This dissertation attempts to show that earlier Christian perceptions of virginity, once dominant in Catholic England, although suppressed by Protestantism, regained enough influence to transform an unmarried queen with no successor into a divine virgin goddess. The idealized representation of Elizabeth served a variety of purposes: the patronage of the Queen and court, the continuation of Elizabethan propaganda, the perpetuation of the idea of a once and future (eternal) monarch, and the creation and maintenance of an apotheosized queen as symbol of an entire nation. The focal point to Elizabeth’s power as queen regnant was her virginity, and although in Protestant

England women were encouraged to marry, the queen's status as exceptional woman was enhanced further by the traditional perception of virginity as a powerful moral, spiritual, and even political attribute. Though the character, reign, and representations of the Queen have been studied by a variety of scholars, my approach differs in its attempt to rediscover the mythological background of virginity that lent such a mystique to the power of a queen. In this study I have chosen to rediscover the complex background of idealized virginity and analyze its purpose in creating and maintaining the monarchical power of Elizabeth I.

Chapter 1

Precedents: The Idealization of Virginity

Virginity in Antiquity and the Christian Ascetic Movement

The idealization of virginity in Western culture began before Christianity, in Greece and Rome from the first to the fourth centuries A.D. Chastity was perceived as a form of courageous self-control and suppression of unhealthy, natural desires. In antiquity virginity for men was highly praised because it represented the model of fortitude and resistance; in fact, chaste men were reportedly taller, stronger, and healthier than unchaste men because of the pure lives they led by overcoming their bodies. Women's chastity was expected, but not necessarily considered an indication of strength. Female virginity was not emphasized during antiquity, but was a product of third to fifth century Christian asceticism, which stressed the importance of chastity for women as well as men. Aline Roussell comments that in Rome and Greece, "female virginity, which was not always the result of personal choice, can not be considered as a social model It was only because men chose this path that a whole civilization was affected by their action and the philosophical and moral, in other words ideological, arguments behind it" (136-37).

Taking a vow of chastity became popular in the wealthy classes as asceticism began to influence pagan society, especially in the third and fourth centuries. Pagan philosophies on sexual behavior argued that young men should

marry instead of visiting prostitutes or engaging in homosexual relations. In addition, class issues of privilege and power became involved in the debate. After asceticism elevated chastity to a superior state, the choice became marriage or chastity. Once the Emperor Constantine gave single people the same inheritance rights as the married in 320 A.D., living a celibate life did not cost a man his family's wealth (Rouselle 137). Concerns of property inheritance and family unity brought about the changed inheritance laws in order to sway men to choose between legal marriage or noble virginity. Frequenting prostitutes and practicing homosexuality were criticized for primarily economic reasons: neither was perceived to be useful in implementing a successful family. If men in Rome did not wish to marry, living a chaste life became a sign of strength and courage. The emphasis on virginity as a way of life was initially intended for men. John Cassian's six degrees of chastity, written in the fourth century, refers only to chaste males: the third degree, is described as the state wherein a monk is unmoved by the sight of a woman; the fourth is that the monk "no longer has erections while awake" and the sixth states that "the seduction of female fantasies does not delude him while he sleeps" (157).

For women, however, continence and chastity required a shift in gendered identity. Chastity enabled a woman to transcend her sex because the denial of the body elevated her above female inferiority. The pagan philosopher Porphyry (235-305) encouraged his wife's chastity as a means to improve her both intellectually and spiritually: "Do not consider yourself as a woman. I am not

attached to you as to a woman. Flee all that is effeminate in the soul as if you had taken on a man's body. It is when the soul is virginal and when the intellect is still a virgin that they produce the finest offspring." (Rouselle 187). The ideal of chastity creates a kind of homogenous, genderless society: "Virginity, and failing that, continence, allows a woman to arrive at the stage where there are no women and no men" (187). This belief was supported by biblical evidence: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). An individual's denial of sexual drives was a denial of the physical body, which ascetics believed hindered the spirit's quest for divine perfection. Since the female body was perceived as corrupt and vulnerable, women were encouraged to become like men by refusing to succumb to the weaknesses of the woman's body. Virginity was therefore a masculine attribute according to pagan and Christian philosophers; yet, "by means of asceticism, women understood themselves as having become virgins and men, or 'manly virgins', who could therefore live together with male virgins as complete equals." (Elm 134)

However, virginity for women was seldom discussed in these philosophies because it was considered to be an option only for men. According to Peter Brown, in this early period the "notion of perpetual virginity . . . never acquired the unambiguous association with specifically female chastity that it achieved in other ages, both in the pagan world and in later forms of Catholic Christianity" (xv). As men accepted the superiority of chastity and some began to live their

lives unmarried and chaste, Roman wives began to recognize the appeal of a chaste life (and its freedom) and then emphasized the benefits of virginity to their daughters. Aline Rouselle comments that initially virginity was not an option for many Roman women. Unless Roman girls, married off by their fathers as early as age twelve, were able to withstand the social and familial pressure to marry, they usually did not have the option of a chaste life available to them. Only girls orphaned before puberty or consecrated for virginity at birth by their parents could remain unmarried (188). The popular treatises advising virginity were also unavailable to Roman females because such they “were not in a position to understand the discourses on virginity which were written for them” (189). The main proponents of the possibility of lifelong virginity were Roman wives, who encouraged their daughters to remain unmarried virgins and to lead an independent life through continence (189).

According to Peter Brown, there were some female virgins: vestal virgins were a recognized, accepted, and revered aspect of Roman religious life. These virgin priestesses were free to marry later, but not until age 30; “they were the exceptions that reinforced the rule” (9). Their very existence was anomalous in Roman culture, and though they were respected, they were not considered the pinnacle of human existence; “their virginity did not speak to the community as a whole of long-lost perfection” (8). Their duties as priestesses required their virgin state, which was not considered indicative of the triumph of the individual will over the body, but rather as individual dedication to religious duty. The influence

of asceticism, both Jewish and Christian, would emphasize the strength of the individual will in the representation and perception of virginity.

As Christianity became dominant in the Western world, and Christians moved up the socio-economic scale, the Christianized doctrine of asceticism had a more widespread effect. When Christianity sanctified virginity for women in the church, the concept and the appeal of the ascetic life gained momentum among women. Their enthusiasm for asceticism and the idea of equality “made the women of the Empire one of the principal forces in the transformation of the ancient world” (Rouselle 193). The self-sacrifice and control required by a life of continence enabled Christians to transcend the limitations of gender, at least theoretically. Although Christ had said that women’s souls were equal to men’s, patriarchal church doctrine insisted on the inferiority and weakness of the female body. The double standard, however, created a new empowerment for women religious. Women had ‘farther to go’ to control their desires than men, so the vow of celibacy imbued the chaste of both sexes, but especially women, with a special kind of divinity, gained from the denial of the physical body and sexual desire.

Asceticism began as a method for men and women to transcend, as virgins of God, the limitations of humanity in relation to the divine. It slowly changed into a way for men as men and for women as women to symbolize the power of the Church to surpass human weakness. This coincided with the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire, and, not accidentally, with a

decisive shift from God the eternal source of all being, manifest in the incarnate *Logos*, to God the Father, manifest in the Son. (Elm 384)

After the conversion to Christianity of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, the threat of persecution abated and Christians began to embrace asceticism. Since the battles with the Roman Empire had ceased, Christianity needed a power base from which it would draw the people's admiration and respect for the purpose of eventual conversion. The move from collective courage – Christians facing torture, ferocious lions, and public execution – to the individuality of self-control that asceticism required “may be explained by the aim of recapturing the heroism of martyrdom” (Rouselle 131). Release from torture and execution created the necessity for a different kind of martyrdom, which focused on the ascetic's denial of the body – in essence, a denial of one's flawed humanity and a concentration on the divine aspects of the self. Christianity's veneration of the Virgin Mary extended the definition of chaste virtue to include women as well as men. By the fourth century, writings on sexuality by Tertullian and Cyprian were directed at women and discussed female virginity, possibly indicating that the idea of women choosing a life of virginity was commonplace (131). The writings follow a common pattern; they either

deal with the type of upbringing which prepares women for virginity or expose the errors which have led virgins to fall from grace, in other words to practise the sexual act either within or outside

marriage The bishops described to their female audience the harsh realities of conjugal life, the pain of childbirth, the bad temper of husbands, the sorrow of losing a child, compared with the abstract beauty of the ideal of virginity, depicted in platonic terms.

(Rousselle 133)

Treatises on virginity “describe the mediocrity of marriage compared with the ideal and eternal beauty of the virgin” and the view of marriage presented in the works of the Christian Fathers emphasized the negativity of the married state: the Patriarch of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, (c. 346-407) wrote to wives about their husbands: “The Apostle said, “Endure this servitude; only when he dies will you be free” (136). Basil of Ancyra wrote a similar view of marriage before 364 A.D.: “With her dowry a woman buys herself a master” (136). These viewpoints would be repeated in treatises by Christian philosophers, using virtually identical arguments, several centuries later. The necessary control of the female body would be emphasized with increasing frequency as the Church became dominant in the West. In the Christian tradition, there were two reasons for women to be chaste: spirituality and a semblance of independence. In order to live unmarried without arousing suspicion, a woman could enter a convent, claiming a spiritual calling. Her placement in a patriarchal society and its anxiety over her gender necessitated this religious connection, her servitude to Christ; otherwise, an ‘unattached’ woman would be seen as sexually threatening and dangerous. Centuries later, in a Protestant society, Elizabeth Tudor would choose not to

marry in order to keep her independence, drawing on the mystique of the power of virginity in order to enhance her power as Queen.

As Christianity's power and influence increased, so did the cult of the Virgin Mary. Mary is the ideal of traditional Christian womanhood -- virtuous, chaste, and obedient -- yet the references to virginity from antiquity still influenced Christian women. Though obedience was a requirement, particularly for women, the ascetic sense of virginity as the ultimate in self-control acquired a definite military quality. Those who lived chastely were described as 'warriors for Christ' and praised as defeaters of the flesh. Virginity in this tradition represents much more than the control of physical desires; it included the purity of the soul.

To be over-concerned with the physical aspects of virginity is, indeed, to confuse its true beauty with a false image. A virgin might have the perfect virginal body, but without the perfect virginal soul it will avail nothing. . . . Virginity allows humans to resemble God. In this lies its greatness: virginity renders the soul (though not the body) incorruptible. Physical continence and self-control are only tools to achieve the true virginity, that of the soul. A virginal soul, liberated from all desires, reflects God's incorruptible image like a clear mirror, in constant contemplation of the Scriptures.

Unfortunately, many male as well as female ascetics pay mistaken attention to the name of virginity only, that is, to its physical aspects, and by neglecting true virginity, they labour all their lives in vain.

(Elm 115-16)

Women, who were perceived as particularly weak in regard to overcoming their deficiencies, were given a kind of gender transference through virginity. This theory enabled women to claim equality with men through spirituality, and enabled them to live independently and unmarried as nuns and anchoresses. Though supposedly this view of women declined during the Reformation because Protestantism would advocate marriage and childbirth for women, the mystique of virginity remained in the background of the collective conscience. In England, Elizabeth I would draw upon that tradition to remain unmarried in a society that prescribed marriage for all women, and trusted none to rule a country. By claiming the role of physical and spiritual virgin, Elizabeth appeared to transcend contemporary views of women. Relying on a centuries-old mystique built around the fear of women's sexuality, Elizabeth's control of her sexuality qualified her as exceptional. Her self-representation relied on theories of virginity from early Christianity. In the fourth century Basil, Bishop of Ancyra, claimed that female virginity is not a natural state and maintaining it involved conquering nature itself: "A virgin . . . must therefore overcome all those natural instincts in herself which 'force' her to seek male attention; she must suppress and, finally, eradicate all urges towards the other sex" (Elm 114-115). Although Elizabeth Tudor lived twelve centuries after Basil wrote his treatise, the mysticism of virginity was probably as powerful in the sixteenth century because a woman was on the throne and drew on many of the early Christian writers' perceptions of virginity. Able to

withstand the weaknesses of the female body, virginal women have thereby withstood the spiritual weakness as well, essentially becoming like men, or in some cases, better than humanity in general. Basil's work *On the True Integrity of Virginity* praises the practice of virginity as a divine manifestation:

This is the greatest and most magnificent aspect of virginity, that it constitutes a manifestation already here on earth of the pure seed of the resurrection and the incorruptible life. If at the resurrection no one marries and is married but all are like angels and become children of God (Matt. 22:30), then all those who lead the virginal life are already angels during their human life, while still ensconced in their corruptible flesh . . . surrounded by constant temptations. . . . Here, the virgins must be most highly admired. They have a female body, but they repress this appearance of their body through *askēsis*,¹ and become, through their virtue, like men, to whom they are already created equal in their soul. And while men through *askēsis* become angels instead of men, so do women, through exercise . . . of the same virtues, gain the same value as men. So, while in this present life they are equal to men in their soul only, but are hampered in achieving equality because of their female body², they will gain, through virtue, full equality with these men who have already been

¹lit., 'disciplined training' (Elm 56)

² literally, 'they limp towards equality in their female wrapping' - 120n37

made into the angels of the future life. Because if they become angel-like . . . , then those who practise asceticism in this life have already succeeded in being just like angels: they have castrated the female and male desires to cohabit through virtue and live amongst men on earth with naked souls. (Elm 120)

Virgins served as a “constant example of divine grace” and “a living testimony to the resurrection” because of the purity of their souls and well as their bodies: “The essential aim of virginity is the pure, virginal soul, in which all external sexual distinction has been obliterated. Women become ‘male’ through *askēsis*” (Elm 121-22). Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, wrote in the fourth century that virginity represented “the unpolluted body of Christ”, and was therefore “the most powerful bulwark against any weakening of those absolutes and against corruption and sin. And nowhere did the steadfastness of the Church find a clearer symbol than in the sacred, pure body of a ‘virgin of God’” (Elm 381).

As more women began to embrace asceticism as a way a life, a shift in the perception of virginity occurred. The challenge to the patriarchy offered by spiritual equality resulted in an increase in the number of female religious. The image had to be changed in order to keep women in the subservient role, even in the Church. By the fourth century A.D. when the incorporeal idea of virginity had obliterated the idea of gender differences and offered a kind of spiritual equality for women, an image of female domesticity began to appear in the idea of the Bride of Christ. The images of the ‘warrior for Christ’ who attains male status

through chastity began to be replaced by the representation of women as holy brides. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote two letters to ascetic women in which he offers consolation to the virgins who wept when they had to leave the Holy Land in the early fourth century. Their consolation, he advises, will be that “as long as they remain pure, they will carry Christ within themselves and will preserve their own internal Holy Land.” (Elm 333). According to Athanasius,

It is the sanctity of a dove that the virgin ought to imitate in order to be a fitting bride of Christ: domestic, restrained, pure. It is to him that she has been promised; entirely out of her own free will has she ‘written that she will fight the battle’. . . . thus a fall is without excuse, a sin without remission. ‘Indeed, it is better never to profess virginity than, having once made the profession, not to accomplish it perfectly’ (Eccl. 5:4). (Elm 334-35).

The profession of chastity became one of few ways that women could be considered to have equal status to men; Basil commented that once a virgin has achieved the angelic state of mind resulting from a life of chastity, “once she adopts the appearance of a man, has given her voice a masculine firmness, and comports herself like a man . . . , then she may live with the brothers in Christ as if in a family . . . as if both were ‘born from one womb’” (120-121). Virginity became a way for women to transcend the limitations of gender, yet the image had two aspects: the incorporeal genderless warrior for Christ and the Bride of Christ, an extension of the idea of the Church itself as the Bride.

The double image of the virgin remained a constant in Catholicism, and English Catholicism was no different. The emphasis on the spiritual necessity of virginity for nuns and anchoresses appeared in treatises for women, which were published in order to provide examples of Christian female behavior for women in the Middle Ages. One such collection, known as the Katherine Group, contained narratives of the virgin martyrs Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana, a letter on the superiority of virginity called *Hali Meidhad*, (*Holy Virginity*) and *Sawles Warde*, an allegory on the custody of the soul. Written between 1190 and 1230, the Katherine Group presents a model of behavior, “a form of preaching by written instruction . . . directed toward the occupational or ‘estates’ category of its audience. For women this is usually wife, widow, or virgin” (Millet and Wogan-Browne xv). *Hali Meidhad* quotes King David, traditionally viewed as the author of the Psalms, who encourages women to “forget your people and your father’s house.” He speaks to “the bride of God” -- the virgin, explaining that

‘your people’ are . . . the carnal thoughts which crowd into your mind, which incite you and draw you on with their goadings to carnal filthiness, to physical desires, and urge you toward marriage and a husband’s embrace, and make you think what pleasure there would be in them, what comfort in the riches that these ladies have, how much that is good might come from your children. (3)

Such people -- these carnal desires -- are described as “the people of Babylon” and “the army of the Devil” who seek “to lead that daughter of Zion into the world’s

servitude” (3).

‘Zion’ was once the name of the high tower of Jerusalem; and ‘Zion’ corresponds to ‘high vision’ in English. And this tower signifies the high state of virginity, which as if from a height sees all widows below it, and married women too. For these, as slaves of the flesh, are in the servitude of the world, and live low on earth; and the virgin stands through her exalted life in the tower of Jerusalem. Not from low on earth, but from the height in heaven which is signified by this, from that Zion she sees all the world below her; and through the angelic and heavenly life that she leads, although she lives on earth in the body, she ascends in spirit, and is as if in Zion, the high tower of heaven, incomparably free from worldly troubles.(3)

In order to remain her own person, a woman must reject also the world that seeks to enslave her. Carnal desires, the agents of the Devil, constantly lay siege to this tower in order to “bring into servitude the woman who stands so high inside it.”

If the woman remains true to Christ and the virginity that elevates her above all others, she will be incorruptible, and like the tower, impregnable. In the Christian idea of the body’s corruptibility through desire, sexual knowledge was the easiest way for the devil to entice the individual to sin. The virgin occupying this holy tower is indeed in

a high position, of such great dignity, and such honour as it is to be God’s spouse, the bride of Jesus Christ, the lover of the Lord to

whom all things do homage, lady of all the world as he is lord of all; like him in integrity, spotless as he is, and that blessed virgin his beloved mother; like his holy angels and his highest saints; with such freedom for herself that she need not think about anything at all apart from pleasing her beloved with true love . . . (5).

The other side of the image is revealed, as the chaste woman is shown the ideal of the Bride of Christ, chosen for holy marriage by God. Should this unfortunate woman be brought into servitude through sin, she will go from being “God’s bride and his free daughter (for she is both together)” to being the servant and slave of a man, “to do and suffer all that he pleases . . . [you will] be made wretched so often by the worthless man you are subject to, for nothing or for a trifle, that your life will be hateful to you, and make you regret your choice . . . instead of delight you have hell on earth” (7). Though poverty is a concern, even women who marry rich men fare no better; “it is nowhere near gold, all that glitters there; but no one but themselves knows what they often suffer” (7). The author comments that the worldly miseries are nothing compared to the loss of heavenly joys resulting from such a life (5).

Created not by God but by the sins of Adam and Eve, sexual intercourse is described as “that indecent heat of the flesh, that burning itch of physical desire before that disgusting act, that animal union, that shameless coupling, that stinking and wanton deed, full of filthiness” (9). Despite the inherently evil nature of desire and intercourse, however, “it is, nevertheless, to be tolerated to

some extent within marriage” (9). God knew that most people would not be strong enough to withstand their desires, so He made marriage a sacrament so that those people would not be eternally damned for their weakness: Saint Paul wrote: “But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (I Cor. 6:9). Virgins, however, are far superior because they have managed to conquer these desires; “angels and maidens are equal in virtue through the power of virginity” (11). A variety of texts echoed this assertion; Hrotsvit (Hroswitha) of Gandersheim, a German nun, wrote the play *Abraham* in the tenth century. Abraham’s niece Mary is informed that if she lives an uncorrupt life and remains a virgin she will “become the equal of God’s angels” and will journey toward heaven after her death, until she reaches “the Virgin’s Son’s arms’ delight, / and are embraced by Him in the luminous wedding chamber of His mother”(Petroff 126). This idea recalls both sides of the virginity ideal -- she is offered genderless equality, yet also gendered as a bride. As the only virtue that foreshadows on earth the state of bliss in heaven, virginity “marks” the woman as Christ’s chosen bride, whose heavenly song is “above all the melodies in heaven” as she dances in a circle around the Virgin Mary (17). Retaining one’s virginity became synonymous with the victory of Christ over Satan, of the incorruptible over the corrupt.

Virginity is the blossom which, if it is once completely cut off, will never grow again (but though it may wither sometimes through indecent thoughts, it can grow green again nevertheless). Virginity

is the star which, if it has once traveled from the East to sink in the West, will never rise again. Virginity is the one gift granted to you from heaven; if you once dispose of it you will never regain another quite like it. For virginity is the queen of heaven, and the world's redemption through which we are saved, a virtue above all virtues, and most pleasing of all to Christ. (10-11)

Ancrene Wisse (Guide for anchoresses) advises women who were religious recluses, who had themselves sealed into cells to live an ascetic life. Their renunciation of the world, which of course included a vow of chastity, would be formalized by the singing of a mass for the dead as the anchoress was locked into her cell. The locked cell in the *Ancrene Wisse* is comparable to the tower of Zion from *Hali Meidhad*; the struggle of the anchoress with temptation is compared to a castle under siege in the allegory, which describes a destitute lady in a clay castle besieged by enemies. A powerful king, "the most supremely handsome of men" offers to protect her, though it will cost him his life. All happened as he said, but "by a miracle he rose from death to life. Would not this lady have a base nature if she did not love him after this above all things?" (113,115). The lady represents the soul, beloved of Christ, and her clay castle is the body; "this king is Jesus, Son of God, who in just this way wooed our soul, which devils had besieged" (115). By describing the lady in the castle as a metaphor for the soul, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* prescribes the expectations for the anchoress; locked in her cell, she will be constantly besieged by temptation. The noble

knight who will save her is Christ, whose shield is the crucifix. The example of the extent of Christ's mercy for the soul (always gendered female) uses sexual references to indicate his forgiveness. Christ becomes in this allegory of courtly love the husband whose wife has committed adultery. Even if she "fornicates with the Devil for many long years, his mercy is always waiting for her when she is willing to come home and leave the Devil. . . . What is greater mercy than this?" (119)

Here is a more joyful wonder still: no matter how many mortal sins his love has been dishonoured by, as soon as she comes back to him, he makes her a virgin again. For as St. Augustine says, there is so much difference -- that is, between God's advances to a woman and a man's -- that a man's advances make a virgin into a woman, and God makes a woman into a virgin. . . . Good works and true faith -- these two things are virginity in the soul. (119)

The restoration of spiritual virginity was a widely accepted concept; it enabled women with previous sexual experience to claim new identities through the renunciation of the body. A widow, therefore, could join a convent and take holy orders as a nun. This spiritual virginity was more important than the physical state; physical virginity did not in and of itself qualify a person as pure. Without purity of spirit, physical virginity meant nothing.

Women who did not become nuns could live a solitary life of religious contemplation as anchoresses and recluses. They removed themselves willingly

from the world, having decided to live a life of chastity in a secluded cell. When the woman entered the tiny cell, an enclosure ceremony was performed, involving last rights and the prayers usually spoken for the dead. The enclosure was referred to as a “sepulcher” and the woman’s family and friends participated as mourners. After the cell was closed, the anchoress continued to receive the essentials necessary to remain alive, but was considered to be separate from the world (Elkins152). Guides for anchoresses were written by religious men, prescribing the ideals of conduct for women who chose the life of seclusion. Aelred of Rievaulx wrote such a guide for his sister, who became a recluse between 1160 and 1165. Aelred stressed the importance of virginity and emphasized “the need for solitude and on the danger of close relationships, especially friendships with religious men”(152). He also suggested that she

meditate on her virginity as a way to enflame her love for Christ.

‘Bear in mind always what a precious treasure you bear in how fragile a vessel. . . . What could be more precious than the treasure with which heaven is bought, which delights your angel, which Christ himself longs for, which entices him to love and bestow gifts? What is it he gives? I will make bold to say: himself and all that he has.’ (Elkins 155)

Anchoresses, enclosed in cells to be closer to God through contemplation and solitude, did not actively participate in the teaching of Church dogma, as priests and nuns did, but instead were unmoving “anchors,” their cells literally

attached to the walls of the church. Their lives were an odd mixture of dependence and independence, as they remained solitary but depended upon charity for their existence. They avoided the societal obligations of marriage and childbirth by taking a vow of virginity and closing themselves off from the world. Despite her secluded immobility, the anchoress could have visitors, as Julian of Norwich received a visit from Margery Kempe, who later dictated the details of their conversation to the priest who wrote them down in *The Booke of Margery Kempe* (Windeatt 12, 30). Kempe claimed that the Lord instructed her to visit Julian, who might be able to give her some insight on her visions. Julian, who received the sixteen mystical visions described in her work *The Book of Showings*, was also one of the earliest women writers in English, writing her book after several years of contemplating the meaning of her visions (De Jaeger 49). As a woman not entirely dependent on the church, yet separate from the world outside it, the anchoress could be considered a living link between the religious and the secular world, possibly more accessible than a priest or nun. Julian of Norwich was not the only anchoress to be well-known at the time. The existence of several texts referring to the women called “enclosed ones” indicates that the vocation of anchoress was not that unusual for women of the medieval period.

Eve of Wilton was the first postconquest woman known to have become an anchoress (Elm 19-20). Living in an 8-foot cell, and communicating through a small window, she was “literally an enclosed one,” living a life of contemplation but offering advice and consolation to those who sought it (21-22). Eve is known

to modernity through a letter written by a Flemish monk, Goscelin of St. Bertin, who also lived at Wilton. Goscelin, known for his narratives of the lives of Anglo-Saxon saints, wrote Eve a letter that first praises her seclusion and her becoming “an orphan of Christ.” Goscelin considered heaven a place where “community and friendship were central” and praises Eve’s choice of denying herself human companionship to contemplate the joys of heaven (24): “Since Eve had abandoned the safe, the familiar, and the friendly, Goscelin came to see her as another model of heroism Formerly her spiritual mentor, he now besought Eve for aid.” Goscelin’s letter reveals the early Christian and medieval perception of the religious vocation as a martial undertaking: “when Goscelin thought of Eve’s life, battle images came to his mind. Eve was in the army of Christ, prepared to fight the demonic, eager to engage in cosmic battle during her short time on earth” (24). Once the martyrs had fought external enemies, but Eve’s internal struggles against carnal desires, evil thoughts, and temptations were real battles as well, with a greater spiritual significance.

Being a woman did not hinder Eve in this spiritual warfare. In the battle against evil, spiritual equality overruled the inequality of gender, though the explanation of it reveals the patriarchal society’s insistence on female inferiority. In Goscelin’s view, which he shared with many, “God was especially able to confound His enemies when He acted through women, as He had with Deborah, Jael, and Judith” (24-25). Although Christ denied the prize ‘to no sex, no state, and no condition’ of person, in this life God often chose to triumph through those

the world ignored as lowly and contemptible. To emphasize that women were effective warriors in the cosmic battle, Goscelin recounted the victories of saintly women.

Like Sarah, Eve could conquer evil spirits; like the martyr Perpetua, she could overcome the devil. By being patient under torture, a woman, St. Blandina, had converted many to Christ. . . . To be a warrior in Christ's army, Eve did not need to overcome any limits resulting from her gender; since she was a powerful woman, she better revealed God's rejection of the world's false values. (25)

Goscelin's view of the 'woman warrior' for Christ is not a singular opinion; the belief was widely held in the worthiness of women to further the Christian cause, particularly now that the 'war' had become a spiritual one.

Another anchoress praised in writing was Christina of Markyate, whose *vita* was written by an anonymous monk so intent on presenting an accurate and full portrait that he interviewed Christina at her priory (27). Christina had pledged her virginity to God about 1111, when she was in her early teens: 'Grant me, I beseech Thee, purity and inviolable virginity whereby Thou mayest renew in me the image of Thy Son.' This vow to virginity became pivotal for Christina, as it enabled her to pursue a religious life despite many obstacles. Her family, obsessed with the material and social gains available from marrying her off, "begrudged her a life of virginity" (28). To sway her from her vow of chastity, they tried love potions, alcohol, and even sent a suitor to her bedroom to rape her,

but she escaped: “For women like Christina who sought independence from an arranged marriage, virginity’s fundamental importance was not its spiritual qualities but its guarantee of freedom” (Elm 28-29). Finally escaping her parents and seeking sanctuary in religious house, she relied on religious men for assistance for seven years, until she could live openly as a religious (32). The religious community’s recognition of the individual choice is indicated by “the number of people who intervened on Christina’s behalf simply because they believed she had a right to religious life” (32-33). The vow of virginity and determination to live a religious life were not without difficulty, according to Christina’s legend. The narrative of her life parallels the legends of the virgin martyrs through its presentation of the temptation to break her vow of chastity and her triumph through faith and divine grace.

A vision of Christ prevalent among anchoresses identifies him as a chaste lover or bridegroom, for whom religious women preserve their virginity. Christ’s spiritual presence released women from the carnal desires associated with the mortal body and the material world. When Gregory of Nyssa visited the Greek saint Macrina on her deathbed, he observed her detachment from the world:

. . . she seemed to me to be making clear to those present the divine and pure love of the unseen Bridegroom which she had secretly nourished in the depths of her soul, and she seemed to be communicating the disposition in her heart to go to the One she was longing for, so that, once loosed from the chains of the body, she

might quickly be with Him. Truly, her race was towards the Beloved and nothing of the pleasure of life diverted her attention.

(Petroff 81)

The spiritual marriage to Christ, solemnized with the vow of chastity, transforms the male or female religious into an ideal of Christian existence: the complete human being who combines the genders of male and female into a spiritually superior being. Elm discusses the effect on women of such legends as *The Life of Saint Macrina*, written by Gregory of Nyssa after Macrina's death in 380 A.D..

Texts such as the *Life of Macrina* were certainly intended to provide an exemplar for women aspiring to live as a 'virgin of God'. But the portrayal of Macrina was also Gregory's commentary on ways in which the newly emerging Christian roman élite (and that means in particular the clergy) might understand its public, that is to say its political role: as a composite of and perfect synthesis between the male and the female, the familial and the ascetic, the public and the private. (Elm 382-83)

This concept is particularly important for women because the assumption of spiritual equality meant that women could live a relatively independent life within the confines of the Church. For example,

Macrina, through asceticism, became a *gyn_andreia*, a 'man and a woman', a new kind of human being who combined in herself all that was most female with all that was quintessentially male.

Gregory created in her an *exemplum* for a complete human being through the creation of a new female image: that of the ascetic, the 'virgin of God', in short, that of a true saint, who, on her way to God, has progressed beyond male and female. (Petroff 102)

The early Christian image of genderless purity was extended in the exempla of the female saints. In a society based on patriarchy, emphasizing an absence of gender would lessen the accepted belief in the superiority of male over female.

Employing the device of the woman beset by sexual temptation or threatened with sexual violence, the authors of the saints' lives simultaneously reinforced social codes while presenting examples of spiritually superior women.

Saints' lives and the significance of virginity

Some of the most influential texts on English women were the popular tales of saints' lives, particularly those about virgin martyrs. The English tradition in hagiography stresses the importance of the woman's virginity, her strength under duress, and her exceptional spiritual gifts. In the narratives, virginity provides the saints with extraordinary strength, a reflection of their spiritual purity and power during persecution, torture, and death. The saints' martyrdom associates pure spirit with the purity of the chaste body and serves as a catalyst for the conversion of witnesses to their martyrdom. Generally, the lives of the virgin saints follow the same pattern; they are usually young and beautiful and take vows of virginity. They are desired by someone powerful or ordered by an abusive father to wed

powerful men. The martyrdom of virgin saints results in punishment of their tormentors, conversion of onlookers, and evidence of great strength under torture and death. The female audience of these virgin saints' legends were encouraged to "attend most earnestly to how they should love the living Lord, and live in virginity, the virtue dearest to him, so that they may, through that holy maiden we commemorate today with the honour due to virgins, sing that blessed virgins' song together with this maiden and with the heavenly host eternally in heaven" (*Sainte Margarete* 45).

The Christianization of Europe may have had an effect on the notion of womanhood, not only in the public sector, but also the private. Whereas in the classical period, women could model themselves after female deities like Diana, Aphrodite, and Hera, Christianity shifted the model of women's behavior from a female to a male source – Christ. This notion would lead to the Christian notion of the androgyny of the soul, and later of the body; through emulation of Christ, women could become both male and female. The same-sex identification with goddesses as models for female behavior was replaced by the heterosexual model of "brides of Christ" – by emulating Christ, women could endeavor to be like him, and to be worthy of his love. However, the later gendering of the concept is evident; the earlier promise of women becoming like angels had become feminized into the concept of the pure Christian soul as a virgin bride.

Saints' legends reinforced this gendering of the Christian woman's soul, as the hagiography of heroic young virginal women became prevalent. Some

legends of virgin saints involved the trial of the woman's virtue, her steadfast faith in Christ, and her torture and death. The villain who could not deprive her of her maidenhead in a sexual sense would resort to a literal version: execution by beheading. The legend of Saint Faith, popular in the Middle Ages, described a young woman in third century Agen who refused to worship Diana, claiming that she had "consecrated herself to Christ" (Butler 578). She was burned on a "brazen bed" and beheaded (578). Maxellendis (A.D. 670) was betrothed in marriage against her wishes, though her dream of her resolution of virginity had been confirmed by an angel. She fled her wedding and was murdered by the groom, who was struck blind. When he begged God for forgiveness, his sight was restored (Butler 645). Barbara, from the seventh century, was one of the most popular saints of the medieval era. Refusing to worship idols and marry, Barbara was locked in a tower, tortured, and murdered by her father. She prayed to Christ for grace and forgiveness of her tormentors and remembrance of her passion and was answered: "Come, my spouse Barbara. . . . I grant to thee that thou hast required of me" (561). Her father was immolated by heavenly fire. Cecilia (Cecily) was one of the most venerated martyrs of the early church. She was a patrician girl of Rome whose father married her to a young man, Valerian, despite her wishes "to remain a maiden for the love of God" (511). In their bridal chamber she told her husband, "I have an angel of God watching over me. If you touch me in the way of marriage he will be angry and you will suffer; but if you respect my maidenhood he will love you as you love me" (511). Valerian was

converted and later martyred with his brother Tibertius. Cecilia was condemned to be suffocated in her own bathroom, but she survived, although the furnace's heat was seven times the normal level. After a day and a night, a soldier was sent to behead her, and struck her neck three times. After lingering for three days, she died and was buried next to the papal crypt. The Cecilia legend was particularly well-known in medieval England; "The Second Nun's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales* is the story of Cecilia's martyrdom. Given the extent of Queen Elizabeth's education, it is possible that she may have been familiar with both the legend and Chaucer's version:

She never cessed, as I writen fynde,
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,
Bisekyng hym to keep her maydenhede. (SNT 124-26)

The emphasis on female virginity throughout hagiography reflects the prevailing anxiety over the female body and its perceived vulnerability to temptation. A woman's refusal to marry and her deliberate withdrawal from a traditional social structure represented a declaration of individual will and spiritual faith, symbolized by her chaste body. The metaphor of the tower figures centrally in the Barbara legend, as the saint's purity of body and spirit serve as a fortress against corruption. The focus on female virginity and the promised marriage to Christ in the saints' lives represents a transformation in the perception of virginity for women. In a patriarchal society, the Christian promise of a genderless salvation through spiritual and physical virginity would be a challenge

to the established order. Rather than give religious women equal status to religious men, Christian saints' legends identified female virgins as Brides of Christ. Feminizing the role of women in Christian mythology removed the threat to the gender hierarchy. Yet the celebration of the virgin saint is also evidence of an attempt not only to provide exemplary models of female behavior, but also to inspire women to take holy orders. The saints' lives teach that despite women's lesser physical strength, their spiritual fortitude is equal, if not superior, to that of men.

The saints' lives presented in the collection of medieval works known as the Katherine Group are those of Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana. Like the virgin martyrs discussed above, they are beautiful women who chose to be brides of Christ, and were executed under Roman law: "this shared design and purpose make it possible for a single life to give a good idea of all three" (xxi).

According to Millett and Wogan-Browne, "The Katherine Group legends function as exemplary rather than historical biography" (xxiii). To reveal the strength of the virgin saints, the legends present a highly gendered situation: the tormenter is always the male who threatens to overpower the female saint. The violence in each legend is "highly stylized, presented as "an escalating sequence of tortures [that] leaves the virgin more untouched and the tyrant more unmanned. . . . The contest of wills and faiths between the tyrant and the virgin is of primary interest" (xxiii). The virgin is given a series of threats to her physical safety and temptations to doubt her faith, each more intense; "in its presentation of heroic

virginity *Seine Margarete*, like its sister legends, exemplifies the strength of will required to resist parental and social pressures towards marriages and aligns this with spiritual strength against temptations" (xxv). In legends like these, faith and chastity provide the saint with the strength necessary to withstand and overcome torture and temptation.

Those who die in the name of God, male or female, are perceived as "seasoned fighters" who defeated "their three kinds of foe, the Devil and this frail world and the lusts of the flesh"; their rewards are "martyrs' crowns to Christ, [and] eternal joy and bliss" (Millett and Wogan-Browne 45). The narrator/witness of Margaret's story, Teochimus, emphasizes the martial quality of the saint's spirituality when he writes that Margaret "fought with the Devil and his agents on earth, and defeated and destroyed them" (45).

Margaret of Antioch's father was "a powerful infidel"; her mother died by the time she turned 15. In many of the saints' legends, the absence of female authority figures reinforces the isolation of the female saint. Margaret's legend describes her as not only spiritually pure, but also one whose holiness is evident in her physical appearance: ". . . all those who saw her loved her as one who was loved by God, the heavenly Lord, who had given her the grace of the Holy Ghost, so that she chose him as love and as suitor, and commended to him her virgin honour, her will and her deeds" (47). She is a shepherdess, which is important symbolically in both pagan and Christian mythology, as indicative of an idealized state of innocence and purity. When the corrupt governor Olibrius propositions

her, she refuses him. To the virgin saint the chastity of her body is a physical manifestation of the incorruptibility of her soul. She prays to God to “deliver my body, dedicated to you, from carnal defilement, so my soul may never be soiled with sin through the fleeting pleasures of fleshly lust.” She calls her virginity “a precious jewel” and asks God to “keep it always for yourself” (47).

Margaret’s plea to God is a common one in the legends of the virgin saints, occurring in the legends of both Barbara and Winifred. Margaret addresses God as a protective lover or husband, though his protection is not one of active interference to rescue the tortured saint. Instead, Christ is the inspiration and the source of the saint’s strength under temptation, torture, and death. When Olibrius asks her what god she worships, she replies, “I honour . . . the Father on high, the Lord in Heaven, and his precious Son, who is called Jesus Christ; and have given my virginity inviolate to him, and love him as a lover and believe in Him, as Lord” (49). Margaret refuses to worship Olibrius’ idols, using the rhetoric of the faithful lover/wife to explain her refusal to commit spiritual adultery: “the only man I love and put my faith in is the one who rules and guides with his wisdom winds and tempests, and all that is encircled by sea and sun. Both above and below, everything obeys him and does him homage” (51). She counters the threats of torture with statements of faith, and during her torture by Olibrius, she praises God, and asks him to send a messenger dove “so that I may preserve my virginity undefiled for you; . . . show your power through me . . . So that I may overcome him, so that all virgins ever afterwards may put their trust in you more

through me” (55-56). As her trials increase, her concern is only for the preservation of her virginity, not her life. After being thrown into a dungeon, she prays: “For one thing I beseech you, always and everywhere, that you guard my virginity inviolate for yourself, my soul against sin, my reason and wisdom against senseless idols. In you, my Saviour, is all I desire” (59). When a dragon swallows her, she makes the sign of the cross and the dragon splits in half. This miracle made her a saint who was called on by women in childbirth, as she was a pure soul “birthed” by the wicked dragon. She claims a victory in battle, as a soldier would, but gives thanks to God for the strength to be victorious:

I have cast down the dragon and dashed his courage, and he who thought to devour me is dying himself; I am the victor and he is defeated and vanquished. But it is you that I thank for this, you who are king of kings . . . virgins’ joy and martyrs’ crown . . . (Millett and Wogan-Browne 63)

When a demon appears, she throws him to the ground and puts her foot on his neck. The demon reveals that his purpose is to entice people to desire and fornication because sin gives all demons enjoyment. They delight in watching the damnation of those who succumb to carnal pleasures because of the “sheer pleasure at seeing them fall so low from such a great height, from the highest in heaven to the lowest in hell . . . the pleasure of that physical desire ends almost at once, and the punishment for it lasts for evermore” (65). For giving in to the weakness of sexual desire, sinners “lose both the love of God and honour in the

world” and fulfill the plans of the demons (71). Margaret’s chastity, purity of spirit, and courage, however, have vanquished the forces of Hell.

The demon howls in defeat: “My weapons -- alas! -- have all been overcome. Now if it had been a man -- but it is by a maiden! And this seems worst to me, that all that race you came from and were born into are wholly in our bonds, and you have escaped from them -- the greatest of all marvels, that you on your own have been able to surpass your father and your mother, both kinsmen and kinswomen . . . and have chosen Christ alone as your lover and as lord . . . we are weak now and utterly helpless, when a maiden casts down our immense pride like this. (71)

The choice of virginity and the purity of body and spirit such a vow creates overcomes even the disadvantage of being born a woman, according to this demon. The powers of Hell attempt all the harm they can to humanity, “and especially the righteous and virgins like you. For Jesus Christ, son of God, was born of a virgin, and through the virtue of virginity mankind was saved and all that we owned was taken from us” (73). After Margaret is tortured by burning, she prays. Like Barbara, her prayers are answered, as a dove appears, summoning her to heaven: “You were blessed, maiden, when you chose virginity, which is queen of all virtues; therefore you shall enjoy for ever in endless bliss the brightest of crowns” (77). As she prays before her execution, she asks God to help those who build a chapel in her name, to help any woman in labor who “recalls my

name and my passion” and to prevent any birth deformities or handicaps. She also asks salvation for those who call her name at the last judgement. The dove -- the manifestation of Christ -- tells her that her prayers are granted, calling her his “beloved” and “bride to his bridegroom” (79).

These legends of virgin martyrs and saints, as graphic and violent as they were, held an additional message for their female audiences. The saints endured unspeakable tortures and horrible deaths, and as they are dying, their requests to Christ invoke the virtues of forgiveness and love. In addition, however, the saints also claim some control for themselves; Margaret requests that her name be honored by a church, and that women in labor can call her name to prevent birth defects or stillbirths. Similarly, Barbara asks that her suffering be remembered. Through their suffering, they adopt a position of authority, originating in their devotion to God. In a culture where women had little or no power in any sphere, the reverence in which women religious were held, as well as the fear of the dangers of childbirth, would have been one of several incentives for women to join a religious institution. In addition, women could avoid subjection to a husband and also learn Latin and read learned texts. The lives of the virgin saints, which became extremely popular among women, presented models of behavior that corresponded to the ideal of womanhood as indicated by Christian doctrine. By shifting the model for women from the independence of classical goddesses (Diana the virgin huntress) to the patriarchal model of ‘brides of Christ’, the legends reinforced Pauline doctrines of chaste and obedient womanhood;

however, the strength revealed by these women through their faith, and the tortures they endured, served to provide them with some degree of 'masculine' action and autonomy. In the Middle Ages, however, the genderless warrior for Christ faded as the cult of the Virgin came to the fore. Religious role models for women shifted to a more traditionally passive and pious female identity: Mary, the virgin mother, the handmaid of God. However, as Raymond Williams states, a residual aspect of past culture may still exist within a later culture, and "organized religion is predominantly residual" (122). Though Protestantism would attempt to eradicate the image of the virgin warrior, the Catholic influence was still present in England, and even during a period of major anti-Catholic sentiment, an unmarried queen would rely on those residual images to consolidate her power.

The Perception of Virginity and the Unmarried Queen in the English

Renaissance

In Catholic England, such role models remained prevalent until Henry VIII's break with the Church of Rome in 1534, and the vocations of nuns and anchorites were abolished. The Renaissance perception of women's roles included an emphasis on female chastity that varied only slightly from that of the Middle Ages. Though the Protestant Reformation brought about a more dignified status for marriage, the requirement of chastity for women remained practically the same. Virginity was expected for unmarried women, who would eventually become domesticated as chaste Protestant wives.

Published in 1523, Desiderius Erasmus' *The Comparison of a Virgin and a Martyr* presents a perception of virginity that differ little from those of the Middle Ages. Writing for an audience of Benedictine nuns, Erasmus reiterates the notion that virginity represents, and is a reflection of, a spiritual purity attainable only through steadfast devotion to "the spowse [Christ] that nameth himself a lilie: Lyke as the lylie is amonge thornes, so is my love amonge the doughters. What thyng else is the lily amo[n]ge thornes? But a virgyne amonge wyves" (12-13). Like *Hali Meïðhad*, *The Comparison* elevates virginity over marriage, though Erasmus gives marriage a more dignified status.

Matrymonye is an honeste thyng, but it is besette aboute with briers and thornes. For suche as be married, sythe Paule, shall have trybulacyons of the fleshe. If any man doubte, whether matrimonie have thornes, lette hym enquire of married women, what greate grefes she endureth . . . (12-13)

For example, women must endure drunken, abusive husbands, wicked children, and the problems of kin. While a wife has too many duties to attend to, "a virgyn being free from the cares of this worlde, myndeth those thynges that perteyne to our lorde, how she maye please hym" (14). Though all followers of Christ can be designated as lilies, virgins are special to him, for "amonge them he the marveyulous spouse fedeth and taketh his delyte, whyche is not enterteyned with every body." (14-15). In Erasmus' text, virginity becomes the central tenet of female holiness:

O Jesu the Crowne of vyrgins, whom she thy mother conceyved,
 whiche alone a virgyne dyd beare, accept o moste medest these our
 vowes. O what greatte purytie is in this virgin, he the prince of
 virgins, and spowse and crowne of virgins, was co[n]ceyved of the
 hevenly spirite, and borne of a vyrgin, the glorious beautie of
 vyrgynite not broken. Of wyves the husbonde is the glory, but of
 virgins Chryste is the glorie: The whiche dothe fede among lilyes,
 compassed aboute with crownes of virgyns, hyghtyne and
 adourmynge his spowses with glorie, and yeldynge to them rewardes.
 (17-18)

While wives may be “are stately and proude of the gyftes and dignitie of their
 husbandes,” the brides of Christ receive “doweries of the sowle: for the glorie of
 the fleshe, whiche so soone vanysbeth away, he gyveth them immortall glorie.”
 (19-20). A life of chastity is described as a holy, selfless life: “Our virgins, being
 free from all care and thought of this worlde, do nothyng els, but in spiritual
 quiers, synge swete hymmes to ther spouse. For they ascribe nothyng to them
 selfe, but gyve al the gory of theyr felicitie to him, to whom onely they owe al
 thynges. . . .” (25). The ideal of chaste womanhood is represented in *The*
Comparison, as in many other texts, by the Virgin Mary: “The more chaste that a
 virgin is, the more shamefaste she is. Here the voyce of a very virgin: Beholde the
 handmayde of our lorde. And he hath sene the humilitie of his handmayde.” (25)

Though martyrs and virgins are equal in holiness, virginity is presented as

being especially dear to Christ:

Doubtlesse thus god dothe honour his martyrs, the whiche semed here poore abjected and wretched caytyves. Thus he honoureth his vyrgyns, the whiche beyng as deed to the worlde, sette surely al theyr holle hope in theyr spowse Jesu. And they also aknowlege, that what so ever they have, cometh all of the lyberall gyfte of theyr spouse. But the glorie of martyrs doth not lyghtly glytter and shyne but after the death: where as virginitie even in this lyfe is ful gay and glorious. For who is so barbarous, that wyll not favour a virgin? In the myddes of the ruffelynge warres the fierce and cruell ennemy forbearth virginitie. And if we beleve histories, the dumme beastis, ye the hugest, the wyldest, and most cruell of them all, beare reverence unto vyrgynitie. Howe greatly dydde the Romaines in olde tyme honour the relygious virgyns, called *virgines vestales*? what a naturall worshyppe and glorie of virginitie is that, whiche ydolaters do aknowlege, whiche the barbarous ennemy dothe reverence, which the dumme beastis doo perceyve, and to whiche the wylde beastis obeye? (37-38)

Erasmus' comment on the vestal virgins is indicative of the Renaissance 'revival' of classical ideas. Even the humanists did not develop those ideas further; rather, they imposed Christian (and gendered) contemporary views on the classical ideas. As has been stated earlier, Roman vestal virgins were an accepted part of Roman

religious life, and vestal virgins were free to marry at age thirty. They were not viewed as examples for general female behavior.

If soo great honour be done to the vyrgins of this worlde, howe moche more honorable is the virgin of Christ? O good vyrgyne, take on this holy pride, and repute what so ever pleasures or honours this world braggeth of, to be far under thy dignitie. It is a holye thyng to pride in your spowse, and a devout thyng to glorie in him, to whome you owe all thynges. It is also a sure thyng, trusting faithfully in hym, to rise and rebelled against the worlde, which braggyngly shewethe forthe his delectable pleasures. (39-41)

The same year Erasmus published *The Comparation of a Virgin and a Martyr*, the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives wrote *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* for the Princess Mary at the request of her mother, Catherine of Aragon, the queen of England. Though Vives advocated educating girls in order for them to become ideal Christian women, female virtue, particularly of the body, was the most important in his estimation.

First let her understand that *chastity* is the principal virtue of a woman, and counterpoiseth with all the rest: if she have that, no man will look for any other, and if she lack that no man will regard other. And as the Stoic philosophers reckon that all goodness standeth in wisdom, and all ill in folly, insomuch that they said only the wise man to be rich, free, a king, a citizen, fair, bold, and

blessed; and a fool, poor, a thrall, an outlaw, a stranger, foul, a cowherd, and wretched; likewise it is to be judged of chastity in women, that she that is chaste is fair, well favoured, rich, fruitful, noble, and all best things that can be named: and contrary, she that is unchaste is a see and treasure of all illness. . . . (qtd. in Aughterson 70)

Like Erasmus, Vives has appropriated classical ideas for a specifically Christian and patriarchal view. His next commentary addresses the idea of women in power or the public sphere; her visibility impugns her chastity, and to desire honor is to lose her honor (i.e. chastity).

And as for honours, she will neither think herself worthy, nor desire them, but rather flee them: and if they chance unto her, she will be ashamed of them, as of a thing not deserved, nor be for nothing high-minded, neither for beauty, nor properness, nor kindred, nor riches, being sure that they will soon perish, and that pride shall have everlasting pain. (Aughterson 70-71)

Education's purpose was the furtherance of Christian doctrine for women; rather than extensive study, Vives indicates that "the devotion of holy things most agreeth for women." (71). For men, the primary virtue in the humanist view is reason; for women, however, chastity is foremost. The medieval view of women as inextricably attached to an imperfect, weak body -- and thereby subject to it -- varied little in the Renaissance. The dichotomy of male/reason and female/body

discussed by Aristotle is virtually unchanged in the sixteenth century: “For in wedlock the man resembleth the reason, and the woman the body. Now reason ought to rule, and the body to obey if man will live. Also St. Paul saith: *The head of the woman is the man* [1Cor. 11]” (Aughterson 137).

Samuel Rowlands’ poem *The Bride* exemplifies the debate over Protestant ideals for women. Mistress Susan, a virgin, has a dialogue with the bride over chastity vs. marriage. For Susan, chastity is the better life for women:

Virginity is life of chaste respect,
 No worldly burden thereupon is laid,
 Our single life all peace and quiet brings,
 And we are free from careful earthly thing.

We may do what we please, go where we list,
 Without *pray husband will you give me leave?*
 Our resolutions no man can resist,
 Our own's our own, to give or receive,
 We live not under this same word: *obey*,
Till death depart us our dying day. (85-86)

To Mistress Susan, the bride’s “boasting of honour” sounds more like imprisonment than happiness. The bride replies that those “who intend the honourable life” to be happy must know the eight duties of the wife: keep her house, entertain her husband’s friends, keep from spending all her husband’s

money, “to love her own house best” (i.e. stay at home without friends), obey her husband (if she doesn’t, she should “take breech, and give him petticoat”), “pacify his ire,” conform herself to her husband’s disposition, and above all love and respect him faithfully. (Aughterson 87-88). In the Protestant tradition of chaste marriage, in which the wife’s duties are confined only to the domestic sphere, the freedom of the virgin might have been viewed as dangerous, and too close to the Roman Catholic nun. As long as the ruler of a country was male, this doctrine posed no difficulties; however, in the case of a single woman like Elizabeth Tudor, compromises of imagery and perception of women (at least one woman) had to be made.

Most contemporary conduct books for women advised them to be ‘chaste, silent, and obedient’ in order to be good Christian (Protestant) women. Richard Mulcaster, the headmaster of the Merchant Taylors School, dedicated his 1581 work *Position* to Elizabeth I, though the text contained only one chapter on the education of girls. Mulcaster identifies four reasons for educating girls:

The first is the manner and custom of my country, which allowing them to learn will be loath to be contraried by any of her countrymen. The second is the duty which we owne unto them, whereby we are charged in conscience not to leave them lame in that which is for them. The third is their own towardness, which God by nature would have given them to remain idle or to small purpose. The fourth is the excellent effects in that sex when they have had the

help of good bringing up; which commendeth the cause of such excellency, and wisheth us to cherish that tree whose fruit is both so pleasant in taste and so profitable in trial. (Aughterson 179).

Because men's training is "without restraint for either matter or manner, by cause our employment is so general in all things: [women's] is within limit, and so must their training be" (179). Girls can be trained for marriage, "learning how to live" by a trade, ornamentation and beauty, and – this work was dedicated to the Queen – government.

If for government, not denied them by God and devised them by men, the greatness of their calling doth call for great gifts, and general excellencies for general occurrences. Wherefore having these different ends always in the eye, we may point them their training in different degrees. (179)

Mulcaster, like many writers of the day, was forced by the queen's presence on the throne (rather than any attempt at enlightenment) to add to his discussion the possibility that a woman could be designed for governing, and should be educated accordingly. The reality of Elizabeth's intellectual and political gifts created the necessity in these writings for what is currently called "the exceptional woman".

The view of women as weak and inferior was widely held by humanist scholars and English royal councillors alike, so when Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, her council had her marriage foremost on their minds. Eager to avoid either religious or political controversy in Elizabeth's choice of a husband,

the council searched for a nobleman who would both solidify the Protestant presence on the English throne and provide an English presence in the courts of Europe. Because of these widely held notions of womanhood, the councillors probably never thought that Elizabeth could rule as a queen regnant, but would make a fine English queen for a strong Protestant king, chosen for her by her councillors. An astute politician and accomplished scholar, Elizabeth undoubtedly was aware of the limitations placed upon her by popular notions of her sex. Refusing to marry, however, might give the English people the impression that she was unconcerned with her country and the state of the monarchy. Elizabeth's solution involved her emphasis on virginity as the source of her strength, which recalled the 'virgin warrior' image. That emphasis was promoted as evidence of her ability to rule as queen regnant. In the minds of many Englishmen, Mary I had compromised the English throne when she married, and Elizabeth was not about to make that mistake. Though Queen Mary had a good reputation as a chaste and pious woman, her marriage to Philip II of Spain produced much controversy and no heirs. English national anxiety over the possibility of Spanish control of the English throne damaged her authority even further. Hence Mary was doubly reviled because of her Catholicism and her marital alliance with Spain. The ascension of Elizabeth was met with equal anxiety, since the Queen was an unmarried woman. It was expected that she would marry and create the same sort of anxiety over national security that Mary had. In addition, she was young and probably perceived as easily influenced.

Should Elizabeth not marry, however, the question of her successor would not be solved (and in fact, remained a point of contention and concern for the entirety of her reign). She dodged initial pleas from Parliament to marry, and continued to play the marriage game for decades in order to maneuver politically.

The notion of virginity, both in its classical origins and in its Christianized form, provided Elizabeth with the rhetoric necessary to justify her position as queen regnant. While Mary I, who married a Spanish king, could have been perceived as being too weak to be a proper English monarch, Elizabeth's continence would make her strong enough; after all, if control of the senses and thereby the body rendered a woman masculine in the eyes of the church fathers, such control would indicate the ability to rule. By replicating what the female saints had done for Christianity -- sacrificing themselves for the Church -- Elizabeth claimed to have given herself wholly to the country of England, supposedly even wearing a ring on her wedding ring finger, stating that England was her husband, and her child. Though she claimed the androgyny of power, Elizabeth did not claim masculinity; rather, she insisted on her womanliness, praising God for giving her the strength to overcome her female weakness in order to serve England and rule as its queen.

Chapter Two:
The Canonization of Virtue, 1582-1590

After Elizabeth's accession in 1558, one of the most pressing issues of the reign was the queen's marriage and the question of the succession. Parliament petitioned her several times to marry, and each time she would declare the subject off limits or simply dodge the issue: "in November 1566, [she] had promised Parliament to marry 'as soon as I can conveniently' (Somerset 199). During her first Parliament she replied to a petition to marry that she would prefer that after her death "a marble stone shall declare that a Queene having raigned such a tyme, lived and dyed a virgin" (Levin *Heart* 39)¹. The Spanish ambassador, Guzman de Silva, commented to Philip II that "the hatred that this Queen has of marriage is most strange" and marveled that after the performance of a comedy ending in a marriage, the Queen "expressed her dislike of the woman's part" (38)².

At a masque in July 1564 Elizabeth told the Spanish Ambassador of her predilection for black and white, saying "These are my colours," a profession borne out by the many portraits in which she wears black and white; since black signified constancy and white

¹ Levin cites the following source for the quotation: T. F. Hartley's *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, 1558-1581* (Leicester: University Press, 1981), p. 45.

² Levin cites several sources for this quotation: *CSP, Spain* I, 367-68, 633; Dennis Kay, "'She was a Queen, and Therefore Beautiful': Sidney, His Mother, and Queen Elizabeth," *Review of English Studies* XLIII, 169 (1992); Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth* 71, 74. (Levin 186).

virginity, their combination signified eternal virginity, and Elizabeth was thus giving out a strong signal of her inclination to remain perpetually unmarried. (Hackett 72)

Although Elizabeth “claimed virginity as her ideal state, and eventually resisted all demands on her to marry, she also loved proposals and courtship” (Levin *Heart* 38). Among the Queen’s English suitors were the Earl of Arundel, the Earl of Arran, Sir William Pickering, and Robert Dudley, a longtime friend and favorite whose courtship of her continued until 1575, though any hope of his marrying the Queen ended with the suspicious death of his wife Amy Robsart in 1560 (Levin 72). King Philip II of Spain offered her his hand in marriage in 1558-59, as did King Eric XIV of Sweden, the Dukes of Holstein and Saxony, the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria (Haigh 10). In the 1560s, Elizabeth received marriage offers from King Charles IX of France (she declined because he was fourteen years old), his brother Henry Duke of Anjou, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, and the Archduke Charles of Austria. (Somerset 178-79, 254). Questions of religion, the Netherlands, Scotland, and politics between France and Spain permeated all of the marriage negotiations.

1582 marked a midpoint in the reign of Elizabeth. She was nearing fifty, and had reigned 24 years. The departure of Francis, Duke of Alençon³ in February signaled the end of the Queen’s participation on the international

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Alençon had become Duke of Anjou when his brother Henri was crowned as King of France; however, he is usually referred to as “Alençon” for clarification purposes.

marriage market. The French negotiations were probably the closest Elizabeth ever came to marriage, but eventually her desire for political autonomy prevailed. The prospect of an unmarried Queen with no heir influenced writers and poets to shift emphasis in representations of the monarch. Literary works published in that year indicate the change in Queen Elizabeth's role from marriageable maiden to vestal virgin. The Queen herself is believed to have written the sonnet "On Monsieur's Departure" that is widely assumed to be a farewell to Alençon. In accordance with the standards of the sonnet, the speaker burns and freezes with unrequited love. Though such a device was commonly recognized, it would provide an appropriate reference for a queen who would never wed. Thomas Blenerhasset wrote *A Revelation of the True Minerva* elevates Elizabeth to a deity, and Thomas Bentley names her as one of the "seven Lamps of Virginitie" in *The Monument of Matrones*. These works are part of a transition in literary representations of the Queen that moved toward the "Virgin Queen" image established during the 1590s that continued after 1603.

In 1590, Edmund Spenser published the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*, which would solidify the transformed image. The representation of the Queen combined nostalgia for the golden age of Arthurian England with images of idealized potential, created in part to reassure English subjects concerned over the lack of an heir to the throne. Spenser provides several versions of the Queen, in alternative narratives, in order to represent the complex, multifaceted monarch who in herself is the realization of many versions of monarchical and spiritual

power. An expansive celebration of Elizabeth and English nationalism, *The Faerie Queene* elevated the unmarried queen to the legendary Gloriana, whose virginal purity provides the moral reference for English society and who will marry only after her knights are perfected in their virtues. This perfection, set up as something to strive for, prolongs the trial and testing of courtship. The 'virgin saint' as ruler built on the Christian tradition of human fallibility and the quest for perfection through Christ. Though the belief in the divinity of monarchs may have begun to decline, the queen as icon added a traditional symbol to the Elizabethan political machinery. According to Philippa Berry, the gender of the monarch was directly related to that alliance; both church and state were gendered feminine, "which is clear both in the Latin terminology and in the notion of representation by means of a symbolic marriage" (67).

In other words, the power of male monarch or priest depended on the union of the 'natural' or mortal masculine body with the symbolic female body of the immortal state of church. It was however as the symbolic female head of both church and state that Elizabeth performed a double symbolic marriage with both these feminine domains. . . . Elizabeth as queen had a triple rather than a dual aspect, like the triune God of Christian theology. So, of course, did the moon goddess Diana, to whom she was so often compared in the latter part of her reign In this respect, Elizabeth's rule figured *the feminine in a mystical or symbolic*

relationship with itself . . . (67)

More than any previous monarch, the Queen became closely allied with both church and state because her gender qualified her as a representation of those institutions. That fact was also a great source of anxiety; “acknowledged or not, it must also have made her an extremely disturbing figure”(67). It is no coincidence that the more elevated representations of the Queen were created during the time of political unrest and general dissatisfaction with the Queen. Loyal courtier poets and popular writers were confronted with the necessity of associating Elizabeth with more than beauty and virtue; she must be placed in a “model of courtliness” that “stresses the mysterious coexistence of spiritual power and a specifically feminine eroticism in the figure of Elizabeth as a chaste beloved” (Berry 6). When she is no longer considered to be ‘marriageable’ the images acquire a more mythic and spiritual quality, yet completely associated with symbols of English superiority. By the end of her reign, Elizabeth had become more of a living symbol of English nationalism as the transition from divinely imposed order to a political view of government began.

Elizabeth’s authority came from the recognized tradition of Tudor royal descent, but as a woman some of her power initially came from her potential worth as a royal bride on the international marriage market. Renaissance notions of womanhood, particularly those based in Protestantism, did not include the single, independent woman; rather, marriage and childbearing were viewed as a woman’s duty and obligation. Henry VIII’s break with Rome in 1534 and the

subsequent dissolution of the monasteries and convents deprived many single women of occupation and support. The Protestant church emphasized marriage rather than celibacy, and opposed the Catholic veneration of virginity. Martin Luther declared that marriage was the natural state of humankind and through marriage people fulfilled the first commandment: 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Collinson 66).

Marriage was presented as a universal and nearly inescapable vocation, and a devastating polemic was directed against the religious vows leading to a celibate life as presumptuous and unnatural. (66)

As a Protestant, Elizabeth presented her countrymen with a dilemma: though the rightful heir to the throne, she was a woman, and therefore inadequate to rule a kingdom. To be an effective ruler, her council believed she must have a husband to rule, both her kingdom and herself. As a woman, Elizabeth was aware of this assumption of the necessity of marriage, and performed expertly in 'the marriage game'. For a foreign prince, to wed the Queen would be to wed England, thereby gaining lawful control of both. Elizabeth was well aware of this, as evidenced in her comment to Burleigh:

Here I am between Scylla and Charybdis. Alençon has agreed to all the terms I sent him, and he is asking me to tell him when I wish him to come and marry me. If I do not marry him I know not whether he will remain friendly with me; and if I do I shall not be

able to govern my country with the freedom and security and I
have hitherto enjoyed. (qtd. by Ferris 11)⁴

Elizabeth's potential suitors were probably viewed with more scrutiny as a potential bride for a king would be, as she would provide a king from outside the English royal line. With patriarchal ideals of women's inferiority in general, and Protestantism's anxiety of independent women in particular, the future husband of the English queen would displace her as the active monarch.

Once the Alençon negotiations fell through and the Duke departed and later died, the realization that the queen would never marry was widespread. The lack of a male heir put the monarchy in a dangerous position, and it could have been said that the Queen was acting irresponsibly, setting up her country for political disaster by refusing to marry and provide an heir for the succession. For over two decades, Elizabeth had been celebrated for her beauty and youth, i.e. her marriageability. In a patriarchal society, women lose their worth once they can no longer have children; a marriage then would be pointless since no heir could be produced. This idea would have been especially true when applied to a Queen, whose personal and political purpose in her society was to produce the next monarch. After the end of the Alençon marriage negotiations, the representation of Elizabeth needed some revision, as the image of the marriageable queen was no longer applicable. The question of the succession,

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Ferris quotes Martin Hume, *The Courtships of Queen Elizabeth* (New York: McClure, 1904) – "Hume found this remark quoted in Mendoza's documents." 17n

always a major factor, would have to be addressed through other means. The Queen therefore became, through literary representation, a larger-than-life, quasi-divine figure, the immortal daughter of God/Jesus and a figure from both classical and Christian mythology. As a 'Virgin Queen' who was to remain unmarried, Elizabeth after 1582 began to embody an additional set of virtues, some reaching back into Catholic tradition, which were then infused into Protestant and national imagery.

Late sixteenth-century England needed a special virtue in its monarch: Machiavellian politics, the Protestant ideology of individualism, and the drama of the Tudor succession created an atmosphere of dynamic change. The English may have needed the clarity and constancy of the monarchy, and the accession of Elizabeth was widely celebrated as the return to right order and 'true religion' – yet the English had to accept a woman in that powerful role. However, the problem of gender perception brought about the necessity of court-produced propaganda that attempt to solve the paradox of the able queen regnant. The English nation had been subjected first to Henry VIII's break with Rome, Northumberland's protectorate during the reign of Edward VI, and Mary I's purges of Protestants. With a female incumbent following Mary's rule of cruelty and incompetence, sexist assumptions regarding a woman's rule would present her with additional difficulties. To justify the presence of a woman on the throne, she had to be a person of superior character, ability, and virtue -- "*virtù* is central to the concept of leadership in this period" (Frye 15). The generally

accepted assumptions about women's inferiority would require even a greater degree of virtue from a queen regnant. Elizabeth's accession, viewed by many of the English as salvation from Mary I's government, had popular support despite the standard misgivings about her sex. By the time Pope Pius V issued the bull excommunicating Elizabeth on 25 February 1570, a strong sense of nationalism had disappointed any Spanish hopes of a Roman Catholic uprising against the Queen. The sense of unity focused on Elizabeth not as a Protestant queen, but an English one; that identification with nationalism would be one of her many accomplishments. When Philip II sent the Armada, he expected English Catholics to revolt against their Protestant queen, but was grievously disappointed. In fact, the display of Elizabeth's portrait was popular in the homes of English Catholics who wished to declare their loyalty to the Queen (and England) despite the difference in religion. Elizabeth as image was employed for the purpose of national unity. The Virgin Queen image began to dominate Elizabethan propaganda after the end of the French marriage negotiations as the courtier poets realized that Elizabeth would never marry. Her virginity and refusal to wed would thereby become a sign of her strength of virtue, self-control, and absolute devotion, both to God and her subjects. Elizabeth's intact body became a symbol of an intact, inviolate nation.

The evolution of the Virgin Queen image came about through religious iconography and doctrine. Many of Elizabeth's subjects would have been old enough to remember their Catholic past, and a change of religion does not

necessarily change ways of thinking; many of the early Christian saints were thinly disguised pagan heroes and religious figures. Although they may have been devout Protestants, the emotional allegiance to that belief system would have been responsive to Catholic imagery and references. Though a devout Protestant, Elizabeth is known to have said to Henry III of France that she was “an old woman, to whom paternosters will suffice in place of nuptials” (Somerset 330). Though the paternoster is not exclusive to the Catholic Church, Elizabeth’s statement recalls the nun’s vows, in which a woman could choose religious devotion over marital subservience. This is not to say that the Queen’s image was a Catholic one, though its references to earlier Christian patterns of thought may have also appealed to Catholics loyal to the queen. Official monarchical propaganda draws upon a common tradition, but without going so far as to make the Queen a religious, and Catholic, icon. In fact, the opposite would be true, as Catholics were still regarded with suspicion: Spenser, responsible for the Gloriana image, created female characters in *The Faerie Queene* who, though dressed as nuns, proved to be wicked and untrustworthy (except for Una in Book One). The Queen’s image was a combination of the receding Catholic traditional reverence of militant female chastity with the Protestant insistence on marriage for all women: she was a virgin and therefore a superior example of control and faith, and she was a ‘bride’ whose only true love was Christ (and England, God’s chosen land). Because the primary focus of the Queen’s image was the Bride of Christ representation, the dominance of

Protestantism is evident in the gendering of the idea of militant chastity, which was usually represented as being hermaphroditic for women.

Elizabeth drew on the cult of the Virgin Mary and the Roman Catholic idea of the superiority of virginity, thought of as the highest degree of chastity. Whether she consciously drew on these traditions is a matter of conjecture, but the Queen's approach to religion may provide some insight. The Elizabethan compromise did not contribute to the progress of English Protestantism, nor did it entirely quash Catholicism: "the conformity of the majority did not mean the end of traditional religion" (Duffy 589). The Queen kept the peace (for the most part) by refusing to reform religion during her reign, despite pressure from her councillors. Though called a radical and a heretic, Elizabeth was a fairly conservative Protestant: she refused to radically alter the vestments of the clergy, and though she did not punish married clerics, she preferred Court clergymen to be unmarried. Remarks from Elizabeth herself in a 1564 letter to the duke of Württemberg regarding marriage and the virgin state indicate her own personal reverence for the state of virginity.

Although shee never yet was wearie of her maiden and single life,
yet in regarde shee was the laste issue her father lefte, and only of
her house, the care of her kingdome, and love of posteritie did
ever counsell her to alter this course of life. [*Somers Tract*, I, p.
175] (Doran 2)

Protestantism in England brought about shifts in the perception of the virgin by

controlling female sexuality through marriage rather than independence within the Church. The desexualization of women in the Roman Catholic concept of militant virginity was replaced by the Protestant image of female domestication and motherhood. Once the queen's withdrawal from the marriage market became apparent, writers combined the Protestant ideology of female domestication with the Catholic ideal of militant chastity. The result was the iconography of The Virgin Queen, a chaste monarch who resisted the weaknesses of the flesh but was also a loyal wife to her nation and a loving mother to her people. The image transformed the iconography of the queen into a hermaphroditic image of male and virginal (thereby unsexed) female. Poetic representation elevated her as more than human; because of her virtue she became a divine goddess.

Thomas Blenerhasset's *A Revelation of the True Minerva* presented that idea in which the gods seek a mortal to replace the lost Minerva, goddess of wisdom. Based on the notion that the gods were formerly mortals elevated to divinity through virtue, the poem seeks to honor the Queen and her realm through various themes of courtly compliment (Bennett vii). These forms of poetic flattery were relatively new in 1582, and Blenerhasset's work, an imitation of Spenser's *Shepherds Calendar*, is one of the first to show the influence of Sidney and Spenser (x). The poem is a pastoral celebration of the Queen's virtue and, by extension, her worthiness to rule. The title page describes "The effect of this booke. Who on earth be gods: and by what means mortall men may be made

immortall”, followed by a quotation from Psalm 82: “God standeth in the congregation of the gods: hee is Iudge amongst the gods.” Discovered as the new Minerva, Elizabeth is visited by the gods, who sing her praises during a tournament and celebration. The poem brings out two themes in the courtly praise: the Queen’s God-given right to rule, and her divine protection from harm.

The classical and Christian elements merge as Blenerhasset draws upon them to present the Queen's image. The goddess Minerva (Pallas Athena) was the chief of the three virgin goddesses (Athena, Vesta, Artemis) and the favorite child of Zeus ; she was entrusted with the care of Zeus' aegis, buckler, and thunderbolt. The embodiment of wisdom, reason, and purity, Minerva/Athena was called Parthenos, the Maiden (Hamilton 29). Blenerhasset's employment of Minerva as the title character to be succeeded by Elizabeth brings about some interesting parallels, even as it reveals the male anxiety over the female ruler. Mercury describes Elizabeth as “a Phoenix rare” who “is of *Saturnes* kinde, / Begot by *Mars*, preserued by *Ioue*” (A3r). The reference to Saturn is at first curious, particularly in relation to a reigning monarch: after all, the Titan Saturn was overthrown by his son, Zeus. However, the compliment to Elizabeth is revealed in the revelation of Saturn's later life: according to Edith Hamilton, the Romans said that “Saturn fled to Italy and brought in the Golden Age, a time of perfect peace and happiness, which lasted as long as he reigned” (22); this is a familiar description often applied to the Elizabethan age. Elizabeth as “begot by

Mars” would have undoubtedly brought her father Henry VIII to mind; a mother figure is conspicuously absent from the poem. Minerva was the child of Zeus alone; she sprang from his head, fully grown and in armor, an image that relates to both the virgin and the warrior. The image of Elizabeth as Minerva in Blenerhasset’s poem was designed to reinforce her right and ability to rule, particularly since it emphasized her relationship to Henry VIII. Her perceived exceptionality is apparent in the image of the phoenix, a mythical creature who was said to live a thousand years, then consume itself in flames and be reborn from the ashes.

The gods vow to dwell with the Queen, and make her immortal, declaring her “the greatest goddesse by degree” (E2v).

And then the Queene with more then mortall grace,
 The life (quote shee) of euery liuing thing
 Must perish quite, for death will it deface:
 But death to death by due desert to bring
 Such death on earth is life euerlasting,
 I knowe right well such immortalitie
 you haue obtainde, and such remaines for me. (F1,)

Her reply places the pastoral within a Christian context, and this notion of eternal life in Christ defeating mortality provides a contradictory perception of the succession question: Elizabeth, so virtuous as to be a goddess, will never vacate the throne, which appears to ‘solve’ the question. Later, Spenser would employ

a similar approach in *The Faerie Queene* by focusing on the potential; the Faerie Queen is both the initiator of the quests and the future bride of King Arthur, and Britomart, the Knight of Chastity, is herself a future bride and the foremother of a great race of English rulers. *The Revelation of the True Minerva* does not indicate that the queen herself is untouchable by death, but instead praises her everlasting fame, as an angel declares that it will never fade. Blenerhasset praises her as the exception to her sex, addressing her as “Goddesse of great accompt/ . . . in so such wayes / did euer woman walke” (F1_v). Elizabeth surpasses Dido, “that courtly Carthage Queene,” Helen, Venus, Juno, Pallas, and Diana: “For shee hath that which all they had, / In much more perfect plight” (F4_r). Helen of Troy was renowned for her beauty; Venus (Aphrodite) was the goddess of love, beauty, and laughter. Juno was the queen of the gods, protector of marriage and married women; Pallas Athena was the goddess of wisdom; and Diana (Artemis, also called Cynthia) was the virgin huntress, the goddess of the moon, and the preserver of youth (Hamilton 26-27, 29, 31). In this plethora of images are parallels to Queen Elizabeth: unmarried, she is the virgin Diana, as she will be as Belphoebe in *The Faerie Queene*. A beautiful woman and the Protestant mother of her country, she is also Juno. As Elizabeth is manifested in a variety of representations, she could also represent Artemis, the goddess with three forms: Selene in the sky, Artemis on the earth, and Hecate in the underworld (or in the darkness on earth). The poem’s reference to Dido is a curiosity; Dido, Queen of Carthage, committed suicide when Aeneas left her.

This apparent contradiction can be explained by the praise of Dido's ability to rule her kingdom, and her eternal faithfulness to Aeneas. Again the anxiety over the female ruler is obvious, but Elizabeth, as a Virgin Queen, would never destroy herself for love. In Blenerhasset's poem, the author praises her divine origin but hints at the queen's actual mortality: "and this to you of heaven we vowe, / whilst you her life do lend" (F2_v). The poem ends praising God: "Amongst the gods there is none like thee O Lorde" (G1_v). In "The Pilgrims post scrip" Blenerhasset addresses the queen, praising

howe vertue like a sea doth flowe
in thee, and how thou doest forsake
the bitter bent of cruell *Cupides* bowe,
free fro the force of fancies flashing fame
.
thy vertuous inclination,
is knowne to euery nation
thy learning and thy gifts most rare
make perfite declaration
nature thy equall never yet did frame. (G2_r)

Her virginity makes her invincible; by avoiding the "flashing fame" of love, she has transcended human desire for the noble vocation of monarch. The poem, however, does not take this opportunity to praise the worth of all women, with such an example as Elizabeth. Instead, patriarchal anxiety is addressed when

Blenerhasset reassures the reader that there is no other like her; therefore, referring to her as an exception addresses those anxieties while praising the Queen.

Elizabeth's status as an exceptional woman increased after 1582. The special qualities required of an unmarried and childless female monarch must render her flawless in the eyes of the court and the literate public. "A famous dittie of the loyful receaving of the Queens most excellent maiestie," written by Richard Harrington, was published in 1584. Echoing the sentiments of Blenerhasset's praise, the song celebrates the queen's visit to St. James on November 7, 1584. Elizabeth, "the Diamond of delight and joy" is praised as "the onely star of light / that doth amaze all Princes sight."

The peerles Pearle of Princes all
 so ful of pittie, peace, and loue:
 Whose mercy is not proued small,
 When foule offenders do her moue.
 A Phenix of most noble minde,
 unto her subjects good and kinde.
 A most renowned Virgin Queen,
 Whose like on earth was neuer seen.

The last two lines serve as a refrain for nearly every stanza in the song, emphasizing the Queen's singularity and suggesting a kind of divinity. The image of the Phoenix symbolically 'solves' the succession issue. Of course, the

Queen could not regenerate herself, but since the fact was obvious that she would not marry and give birth to an heir, poets returned to the classics to address the issue. Using a mythological bird is undoubtedly a dodging tactic, but perhaps the poet is indicating that the Queen will provide an heir, in her own time, and in her own way. Because the queen is “the servant of the mighty God” who preserves her, England is also preserved from the machinations of the Pope. The refrain then changes to “O Lord preserve our noble Queen”, etc. Her special protection is also emphasized in the stanza that declares that all conspirators against her were “confounded by God” and failed. The final stanza is a wish for her long life, and her continuing to perform God’s work: “God’s glory euermore to raise, / true Justice alwaies to maintain.”

The image of Elizabeth as a protected servant of God is not confined to the post-1582 era; prayers for the monarch’s health and long life were printed throughout her reign, as well as her predecessors’. However, after 1582, the image of the Queen’s sexual desirability (and her marriageability) is not as prevalent as that of her virtue and near-divinity, and images of her acquire a more martial quality.

Certain English verses, written for the Queen in 1586, celebrated “the most happie disclosing of the most dangerous conspiracies pretended by the late executed Traitors,” etc. The poems identify the Queen as a divine figure, triumphant through God’s power and her own wisdom and virtue. Presented by a writer identified only as ‘a Courtier,’ the poem compares Elizabeth with the

Biblical judge Deborah and refers to her as 'Our Judith,' triumphant over Holofernes.

If *David* daunst for ioy befor the Arke being a king
 If *Barac* sang when Israels foes were foild,
 Then victors wee that *Deborahs* song may sing
 Our *Judith* stout Holofernes Mates hath spoiled. (A1,)

The comparison, however, is not exact: David and Barak celebrated themselves through music and song, but the female victor does not celebrate her victory, though she is crucial to that victory. Instead, those who sing Elizabeth's praises are the victors through the Queen's triumph over the conspirators. The Biblical hero Barak, called by Deborah to lead an army against Sisera, the general of King Jabin, claims that he cannot fight without Deborah accompanying him:

If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.
 (Judges 4:8-9)

Though *Certain English Verses* was written ostensibly for the purpose of praising the Queen, what comes through more than the praise is the anxiety – of Elizabeth's mortality, of external threats to the reign – and the many comparisons to classical and Biblical figures. The subtext in the poems indicate the authors' determination to reiterate Elizabeth's competence by comparing her to well-known

figures from Greek, Roman, and Biblical mythologies. By comparing Elizabeth to Deborah, and calling upon her potential strength in terms of male heroes and female goddesses from classical mythology, the poet extends the military metaphor in a reference to English Protestantism's supremacy over the Pope. The verses' praise of the Queen changes to advice when the poet places the Queen's potential strength in a category with Greek gods and heroes:

When *Perseus* sword shall snatch off[f] *Medusas* head,

When *Mercuries* whistle lulls *Argos* eies to sleep,

When *Phoebus* faulchon kills monstrous *Python* ded,

then shall *Eliza* make the Romane *Cerberus* creepe: (A4_v)

Perseus, the son of Danäe and Zeus, who killed the Medusa, did so with the help of Athena's shield and Hermes' sword. The hundred-eyed monster Argus was killed by Mercury, who was sent by Zeus to play his pipe to lull Argus to sleep. Phoebus Apollo's falcon killed the monstrous Python. The comparison is particularly interesting when one notices that it is not the heroes or gods who get credit for the victories – it is the weapons they used: Perseus' sword, Mercury's whistle, Phoebus' falcon. In this pro-Protestant poem, the author compares the Pope to Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the entrance to Hades. The Pope will be defeated and Protestantism will triumph, but only if the Queen is willing to use the force necessary to defeat the 'monstrous' Roman church. The poem addresses her directly as it cautions her to temper her reverence of peace with strength:

Though still you beare, the Oliue branch in breast,

Yet some with you Hermes Harpen in your hand,

Though you the Lambe imbrace, the Lion is your beast,

For mercie must with iustice ioine to rule a land. (A4,)

Her natural tendency toward clemency (a virtue expected from female rulers) must be contrasted with her willingness to use instruments of force in order to negotiate the peace.

Though the images of female strength are not those associated with militant chastity, they place the English Queen in the category of 'exceptional woman'. Like those women renowned for virtue, wisdom, piety, and courage, Elizabeth is placed in the ranks of victorious Greek warriors and deities. Her perceived triumphs over the Roman pontiff will be as legendary as the defeat of the Medusa. The Medusa, or monstrous woman, became a symbol for the Roman Catholic Church in Protestant literature. In Greco-Roman legend, Medusa was a beautiful woman who angered the gods and was punished; to look at her would turn anyone to stone. Beauty misshapen into pride and ugliness became the ideal representation of the Roman Catholic Church, which was termed "The Whore of Babylon" by many Protestants who disliked the opulence of the churches and their clergy and drew imagery from the Book of Revelation for what they deemed an appropriate description. This dichotomy of representation of the two religions mirrors the perception of women in the age; women's flawed nature gave them two choices: they could be chaste (when married as well as single) or they could

be whores. Nowhere in English literature is this dichotomy more apparent than in Spenser's representations of Una and Duessa in *The Faerie Queene*. In addition to the symbolic significance of this imagery, *Certain English verses* also refers to contemporary events. With its references to traitors and rebels, the poem probably recalls the Babington Plot, a Catholic plot led by Sir Anthony Babington to assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne. The discovery of the plan eventually led to the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Elizabeth, reluctant to execute a sister queen, yet prudently aware of the danger her presence represented, had kept Mary under house arrest for nineteen years, despite knowing Mary's intention to eventually take Elizabeth's throne. It is significant that the author of the poem remained anonymous; earlier, John Stubbs' open critique of the possibility of the queen's French marriage had cost him and the printer their right hands. Though the queen's clemency and mercy were praised often, she did not accept public criticism or advice readily, particularly from the courtiers who sought her patronage.

When the Queen visited Woodstock during a progress in 1592, "A Handeful of Gladsome Verses" were presented to her. Written by Thomas Churchyard, the verses refer to Woodstock as "the Phoenix Cage" (Cr). The poem declares Elizabeth to be the most honored monarch ever, even more honored than a king.

A speciall warme goodwill
for neuer king was seene

More truly serude, more followed still

More honored then our Queene. (Cv)

Addressing her as “O sacred Sovereign,” the poem prays that God will continue to protect her, and ensure

That nothing may impeach

Her heavenly graces great

For sure it passeth humane reach

To touch her sacred seat. (C2r)

She is also addressed as “our faire red rose and white,” the traditional Tudor symbol, as well as the complexion of a courtly lady. It could be said that the imagery in the poem presents the Queen, a lady who inspires courtly love, as both divinely ordained to rule and protected by heavenly forces. In addition, the poem presents the Queen as Roman emperor – “We fall on knees at Cesars feete / To see our worlds delite” (C2r).

In the same year (1592), speeches were delivered to the Queen on her progresses at Bissam, Sudley, and Ricorte. One of these anonymous speeches presented a dialogue between Pan and ‘two virgins keeping sheep’ Sybil and Isabella. Curious about some samplers the two women have been working on, Pan asks about their meaning. Sybil’s depicts the “follies of the Gods, who become beasts, for their affections” while Isabella’s celebrates the “honour of virgins who became Goddesses, for their chastity” (Aiii.). Pan notices that Sybil’s sampler is curiously decorated; Sybil explains that the decorations represent

“Mens tongues, wrought all with double stitch but not one true (Aiii.). In contrast, Isabella’s sampler presents “Roses, Eglitine, harts-ease, wrought with Queenes stitch, and all right” (Aiii.). Pan comments that he believes both men’s and women’s tongues to be double, until Sybil informs him:

Syb. Thus, weomens tongues are made of the same flesh that their harts are, and speake as they thinke: Mens hearts of the flesh that their tongues, and both dissemble, But prythy Pan be packing, thy words, are as odious as thy sight, and we attend a sight which is more glorious then the sunne rising. (Aiii.)

An incredulous Pan inquires if that sight will be Jupiter, but Sybil replies that the visitor is “one that will make Iupiter blush as quietly of his vnchast iugglings, and Iuno dismaide as wounded at her Maiesty”.

This way commeth the Queene of the Island, the wonder of the world, and natures glory, leading affections in fetters, Virginities slaues: embracing mildness with Iustice, Maiesties twinnes. In whom nature hath imprinted beauty, not art paynted it; in whom wit hath bred learning, but not without labour; labour brought forth wisdom, but not without wonder. . . . This is shee at whom Envie hath shott all her arrowes, and now for anger broke her bow, on whom God hath laid all his blessings, & we for ioy clappe our hands, heedlesse treason goeth hedlesse; and close trechery restelesse: Daunger looketh pale to beholde her Maiesty; and

tyranny blusheth to heare of her mercy.” (Aiii_{v.r})

Upon hearing this announcement, Pan yields all the flocks and fields to the Queen and wishes her happiness and long life. Viewed as the epitome of human achievement and moral grace, the Queen is therefore the only person qualified to rule the pastoral landscape.

Thomas Bentley's 1582 collection *The Monument of Matrones: conteining seuen seuerall Lamps of Virginitie*, uses adaptations from the Bible to contribute to the image of the queen as a bride of Christ (and England). A catalogue of “*Queenes, godlie Ladies, and vertuous women of all ages*,” includes Elizabeth along with Anne Askew, Bundiua, Catherine Parr, Cleopatra, Catherina Senensis virgine, Deborah, Lady Jane Grey, Katherine of Aragon, the Virgin Mary, Queen Mary I, Margaret Queen of Navarre, Sappho, and Zenobia, to name a few (303). Designed for a female audience and Elizabeth's patronage, Bentley's work is a combination of religious devotions, conduct books, and elevated praises of the Queen. Compared to this list of women renowned for their piety, bravery, beauty, fortitude, holiness, and devotion to duty, Elizabeth is the third lamp of virginity, embodying all its virtue and spiritual splendor. Addressing the Queen in his introduction, Bentley identifies his purpose for writing:

to addresse and make readie these seuen lamps of your perpetuall
virginitie, to remaine vnto women as one entire and goodlie
monument of praier, precepts, and examples meet for meditation,
instruction, and imitation to all posteritie.

The “lamps” of the title are representative of the Queen’s role as spiritual guide to her people; according to John King, they “symbolize divine illumination and, possibly, prophetic vision” (*Godly* 72). King traces the origin of Bentley’s seven lamps through a variety of Old and New Testament sources.

His division of the collection into sections entitled the seven “Lamps of Virginitie” conflates imagery of divine wisdom and spiritual illumination drawn from Christ’s parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) and the Book of Revelation. The parable contrasts the five maidens who filled their oil lamps with the other five whose lamps were empty; only the former were prepared to meet Christ, the Bridegroom, and celebrate the apocalyptic marriage feast. Instead of the word used in Matthew, λαμπάς (“oil lamp” or “lantern”), the plural form of the word λυχνία in the original Greek text of Revelation refers literally to the seven-branched lampstand that stood in the outer room of the Temple in Jerusalem. This lampstand or Menorah appears in Hebrew prophetic visions of heaven. But in place of St. John of Patmos’ vision of seven lampstands corresponding to the seven churches of Asia that replaced the Temple for Christians (Rev. 1:11 and 20; 2:1), all Tudor translations of Revelation mentioned “seven golden candlesticks.” (King *Godly* 71)

Declaring that many hearts give thanks for her Majesty, “the praise of God, and

glorie of his deereſt ſonne Ieſus Chriſt your ſweet ſpouſe,” Bentley profeſſes a wiſh that God will continue to bleſs her with proſperity and long life and continue to protect her from “all bodilie and ghoulie perils and enimies, to your euerlaſting comfort, and the reioice of all chriſtian harts”. He praises her for having “the principall & heroicall ſpirit of your holie father good king Dauld, doubled (yeah trebled) in your noble and princelie hart,” calls her “our good Iofias” and “our zealous Hezechias” and hopes that England will remain “a refuge from ſtorms and tempeſts”

. . . ſo ſhall the harts of manie thouſand virgins in England and
 elſe-where, be ioifull and thankfull to God and your Maieſtie; ſo
 ſhall the daughters of Ieruſalem ſing ioifullie the ſweet ſongs of
 Sion in their own land, with great triumph to their ceſtial King,
 reigning on high over all

The firſt lamp is a collection of prayers, hymns, and ſongs by various holy women in the Bible: Hagar, Miriam, Deborah, Naomi, Hannah, Eſther, Judith, and the Virgin Mary. Another of the holy women mentioned is the Church, “the daughter of Zion.” The Church and the ſoul were perceived as being female; the imagery was ideal for the praise of a female monarch. The ſecond lamp, a collection of prayers made by “vertuous Queens” and “other deuout and godlie women in our time,” including Margaret of Navarre, whoſe *Godly Meditation of the Chriſtian Sowle* was translated by Queen Elizabeth as a child. The third lamp is Queen Elizabeth herſelf – a more detailed diſcuſſion follows. The fourth lamp,

an additional collection of prayers and meditations, includes prayers for weather, times of plague, the household, the appearance of monsters, earthquakes, comets, times of war, rebellion, and foreign invaders. The fifth book contains prayers for women only, and the sixth book is a sort of conduct book, including stories of Biblical women “verie necessarie, pleasant, and profitable for all women to read and vse, both for instruction and imitation.” The seventh book presents the histories of women, “good and bad,” from the Scripture and a discussion of their actions.

The most significant book for this study is *The Third Lampe of Virginitie*, which begins with ““The KINGS Heast, or Gods *familiar speech to the QVEENE: Collected out of the holie Psalmes of good King DAVID, as they are learnedly expounded by THEODORE BEZA*” (306). God speaks directly to the Queen, “as he sometimes did vnto David, though not in so mysticall maner,” declaring his protection of her and asking for her piety and her acknowledgement of his sovereignty. King David, associated with kings throughout the middle ages, represents the ideal of monarchy who had a direct connection with God. Therefore, Bentley’s use of the Psalms as God’s speech to Elizabeth directly connects her to God as well. God speaks to Elizabeth and describes the qualities of a “godlie Prince, and wise Gouvernour” and “exhorteth hir Maiestie to the faithfull discharge of hir office and dutie in his feare and seruice, to the increase of vertue, and suppressing of vice” (306). He then promises to be her defender against all enemies and to bless her and her realme, “and to make hir partaker of

all his ancient mercies, promised long since to hir father Daud; namelie, vpon this condition: if finallie she perseuere in the perfect loue and due obedience of hir spirituall spouse Christ Iesus” (306).

Elizabeth, thou Virgin mine, the KINGS Daughter, and fairest among women; most full of beautie and maiestie: attend a little to my Heast, and marke what I shall say. Thou art my Daughter in deede, this daie haue I begotten thee, and espoused thee to thy king CHRIST, my Sonne; crowned thee with my gifts, and appointed thee QVEEN, to reigne vpon my holie mount Zion. (308)

God’s direct address of Elizabeth as his daughter (and daughter-in-law) recalls the Annunciation, but it is Elizabeth that He has begotten. Her virtues have made her daughter “in deede”. As the supreme monarch, God has “elected thee a chosen vessell of high honour and price in my house, “ and has sought to preserve her throughout danger and conspiracy. Her sovereignty over her people is also divinely ordained: God states that He has “brought into thy subiection the people, ouer whome thou hast authoritie”(308). Elizabeth’s virginity is identified as one reason for her worthiness to rule.

Thee I saie, O Daughter ELIZABETH, haue I raised up, and chosen out a pure and perfect virgin from the rest of the whole people, and that because I loued thee most deerelie aboue them all; so that now thou maiest worthilie reioice and glorie of thy dignitie and honour, yet by my singular

power and benefit, and for none other cause, but that it hath
 pleased me thy God to exalt thee aboue others, and to
 embrace and receiue thee into my special grace and fauour
 (308)

The speech continues with a curious mixture of Catholic imagery of the Bride of Christ and a Protestant admonition for an obedient wife. Rather than presenting Elizabeth as a Catholic saint/heroine or an independent woman, the address places her in an acceptable Protestant context while recalling the residual social/religious imagery of a shared Catholic past. Instead of exhorting the Queen's obedience as a wife to be confined to a domestic sphere, her duties as a Protestant spouse involve the successful and virtuous governance of the church and her country.

Now then O deere daughter, consider diligentlie with thy selfe
 awhile, what maner of husband thou art coupled and conioined
 vnto: learne of him alone, (thy spouse christ mine onlie Son I
 meane) to whom as this daie I married thee, what he requireth of
 thee: namelie, that thou shouldest forget thine owne Nation, thy
 fathers house, and all other worldlie things, now that thou art come
 vnder his authoritie, and into the familie and spirituall societie of
 thy heauenlie Bridegroome. (308)

The speech recalls the admonitions of *Hali Meiðhad* for the woman to “forget your father, and your father’s house” and leave all worldly things behind. The advice to “forget thine owne Nation,” would not be a reference to England, but

rather to the Queen's personal life. She has sacrificed being a wife and mother to be the savior of England. For Elizabeth, her duty as a virgin includes keeping the country as chaste and inviolate as she is.

The third book of *The Monument of Matrones* is Elizabeth's; she acknowledges God as the source of her power and her protector and teacher. Bentley avoids Catholic-sounding praises of her virginity, and instead focuses on her purity of spirit, clarity of judgment, and devotion to God. Several references are made to the Virgin Mary indirectly, however. Elizabeth calls herself "thy handmaid" when she makes her vow to God, echoing Mary's response to Gabriel at the Annunciation – "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke 1:38). In *The Monument of Matrones*, the image of Elizabeth's chastity is partially maternal and partially militant. The medieval (and Catholic) view of militant chastity changes the gender of a woman to indicate her spiritual superiority. As a nun's vows made her a spiritual warrior for Christ and the equal of a man, so Elizabeth became the symbol of Protestant nationalism.

In Chapter Two of the Heast, God describes the Queen's duties to her people: she must relieve those tormented by violence, "defend the fatherless," maintain the poor, and deliver the godly and feeble people from extortionists and 'wringing worldlings' (310). God declares that Elizabeth will be the judge and "defence and fortress among my people, and follow me thy God with great cheerfulness . . ." (311). Her faith and devotion to God is the most important duty for the Queen; Bentley represents God's instructions in terms of wifely duty:

O kisse this my sonne Christ thy spouse betimes, least he be angrie,
 and then thou suddenly perish, when his wrath shall flame foorth.
 Worship the Lord I saie with due worship, and trust in him alone,
 as she that wholie dependeth vpon his mercie, fauour, and
 protection: so shalt thou be blessed, and thy throne shall neuer be
 shaken. (309)

If the Queen is faithful to her husband and seeks to please only him, her reign will continue undisturbed. God also advises the Queen on her councilors and courtiers, exhorting her to expel “all the unwoorthie and vngodlie men, flatters, parasites, iueters, atheists, and revengers of blood” and replace them with worthy and godly men.

O make much of them that feare the Lord, and let all thy delight be
 vpon my Saints, which are on earth: be carefull alwaie to preserue
 the vertuous, and exalt the best and most woorthie persons. Call
 such to by thy states of dignitie, Senatours, Counsellors, Judges,
 and Magistrates vnder thee, as are graue, wise, learned, godlie,
 zealous of my truth, and gelous of thy renowme. (312)

Elizabeth herself is described as beyond compare when God summons her as his daughter, calling her “most beautiful of all women, and fairer than the children of men”:

thou, O QVEENE, Virgin, I saie of incomparable eloquence and
 grace of speech; come foorth thus and shew thy beautie, so full of

maiestie and grace, that in this thy gouvernement and pastorship,
 there may want neither integritie and vprightness in taking of
 counsell, neither wisdom in performing of thine interprises: but
 doo all things prudentlie and prosperously, caried vpon the
 triumphant Chariot, euen the word of God, as a wise and vertuous
 Governour directing it: and let truth, mercie, iustice, and equitie
 drawe it round about thy dominion. (312)

The image of the Queen driving the chariot of God's word presents a military icon of a ruler whose faith will make her an invincible ruler. Elizabeth is both Governor and Pastor to her subjects as God's chosen ruler – yet these traditionally masculine roles are also a referent to the compromise of her title, which came about because of her sex. The reference to “Governor” reflects one of the religious compromises of the Queen's reign – the changing of the title “Supreme Head of the Church of England” to “Supreme Governour” – a solution meant to deal with the conflict between the Queen's gender and the patriarchal Church hierarchy. Terminology is fluid in Bentley's presentation – sometimes “Governour” and “Prince” refer to Elizabeth, other times to God. The Lord calls the Queen “a bountifull Daughter of this Prince and worthie Governour,” a description carrying a double meaning – not only does it reinforce the belief in the divine right of the monarch, it also brings forward the image of Henry VIII (312). God encourages her to govern with equity, punish with severity, “as shee, before whom also sitting vpon thy throne of Maiestie, the two pillars, mercie and truth

are seen to stand and support thee” (312).

God promises to protect Elizabeth and bless her. God’s might, and her faith, renders her invincible: “My hand, I saie, shall establish thee, and mine arme strengthen thee: so that no enimie shall ouercome thee by subtiltie, nor anie wicked man oppresse thee by force” (313). Her spiritual warfare will be waged with metaphorical weapons: her faith and the sword of the word “shalt not onlie therewith wound the hearts of thine enemies, cast them downe to the ground, and tread them vnder thy feete; but also bring maruellous things to passe in my name, by this thy mightie power” (313). She will be armed by God, and therefore will be victorious. Bentley describes this victory in active military terms, with God arming the Queen as his general.

Yea, I will arme thee with a double edged sword in thy hand,
wherewith thou maist punish the prophane Gentiles, and auenge
the crueltie of the proud people, and also maist drawe their kings
and nobles bound in chaines and iron fetters, and execute the
iudgement appointed and commanded by me thy Lord God vpon
them. (316)

Elizabeth, God’s “first begotten Daughter,” is deserving of high renown for both her bodily and spiritual purity:

Yea, thou beign a pure Virgin borne of my kindred, (313) shalt be
so highlie exalted of IEHOVA, which hath decreed this from all
eternitie, that thou shalt sit a glorious QVEENE, ouer a mightie

people, and shalt haue rule and dominió ouer all thy subiects
without exception. (313-314)

Because of her majesty and worthiness, and if she keeps God's commandments, God will always support her, providing "dignitie, honour, and renowme," and protect her, even vowing to "make an horrible slaughter of the rebels and traitors euerie-where, that go about to overthrowe the Monarch, which ruleth, and shall rule, both far and neere" (315-16). Bentley transforms England in the New Holy Land. God has called Elizabeth "to this excellent estate of a Prince" so that she will rule wisely over "my people Israel" and they will never fear oppression (316). The Lord will encompass England, and will remain the source of the Queen's invincible power:

All thy fortresses and cities shall stand vnassaulted, and thy
forts, and strong castels and holds shall not be battered, nor laid
open with breaches to the spoile of passengers.

The edge of thy sword shall neuer ware blunt, thy scepter
neuer broken, nor thy crowne cast downe into the dust, nor thy
power stained.

But I will minister continuall power, and cause of ioie vnto
thee, ô QVEENE, and take awaie all courage and force from thine
enimies, so that they shall not be able to arise or stand against thy
mightie power. (317)

The vow begins to resemble the admonitions of a father to a potentially wayward

daughter: “I saie my deere Daughter, if thou carefullie behaue thy self, and walke in the waies that I haue commanded I thy GOD and heauenlie Father will imbrace thee with my speciall fauour, as my deerelie beloued Dooue and obedient child” (317). In the Bible, everyone had to obey God; usually only men were shown as obeying or disobeying. Bentley’s God addressing the Queen as specifically female (“my deere Daughter”) refers to the Catholic Bride of Christ image, yet incorporates more of a Protestant view of women by emphasizing her obedience as a wife.

Yea so shall the KING haue pleasure in thy fairenes, and loue thy goodlie personage: and it shall come to passe, that thou shalt be more and more in the high fauour of thy spirituall spouse Christ my sonne, to whome it is meete that thou shouldst be subiect, as to thy souereigne Lord, king and head, and vnder whose gouernement thou shalt remaine most honourable and admirable, for the singular and vnspeakeable gifts of his grace(317-18)

In God’s house, the Church, the Queen will behold her “children and offspring (who by publishing and promoting my Gospell, thou hast borne after a maner unto thy husband Christ) flourishing, and spred both abroad and at home”: through her faith and pure spirit, Elizabeth will “be fruitful and multiply” in a metaphorical sense (318). Though she has not provided an heir for the English throne, she has contributed to the spiritual development of the Protestant nation. Her reward for this accomplishment will be a type of sainthood, as she will be transformed into a

divine figure; in heaven, she will sit at God's right hand, clothed in "glorious garments" and wearing a crown of gold.

Euen thus roiallie, I saie, shalt thou then, O Virgin, ô QVEENE, O deerlie beloued Daughter, be set before the KING thy husband, with such and so pretious apparell, the Virgins thy companions waiting vpon thee, and going with thee, vnto the most glorious KING of kings, whilst that you (altogether with most great triumph, mirth, ioie, and reioicing) shall enter into the highest mansion of the heauenlie Paradise, and most holie palace, there to enioie a most certaine, vnchangeable, and euerlasting kingddome, glorie, dignitie, blisse and felicitie; and to sing praises vnto the name of the holie Trinitie, together will all kings, Queenes, Saints, Virgins, and elect people of the world, that euer were, are, or shall bee: worlds without end. (318-19)

The Monument of Matrones addresses patriarchal anxiety over the woman ruler; by speaking for God, Bentley seems to place Elizabeth in a traditionally feminine, subservient position. The work identifies the Queen as secondary to a masculine power. Creating that power as God speaking directly to the Queen would therefore propose a solution to the perception of the female monarch; though she is a woman on the throne, she is still submissive to the ultimate representation of the patriarchy: the male deity. The end result of this representation, however, is quite the opposite. Kings were in a similar position, being submissive to God and

Christ. The replacement of Mary by Elizabeth situates the Queen as higher in status than kings, who are emissaries of Christ and the Church militant. Kings, however, were never presented as *replacing* a figure in Heaven, as Queen Elizabeth was⁵.

Unlike Sidney's *The Lady of May*, in which the poet declines even to write the Queen's spoken word, Bentley's work creates her as a character in the drama. As if speaking traditional wedding vows of obedience and subservience, the Queen replies with a vow in which she acknowledges God's supremacy and his blessings on her, confesses her own unworthiness, encourages all to praise God; "and so lastlie she bindeth her selfe as it were by a solemn oth, vow and promise, to consecrate hir life wholie to the true worship and sincere service of God . . ."(320). Naming David as her spiritual father, Elizabeth refers to herself as "a Queen consecrated to the King of heaven himselfe" who has been protected by God her entire life, even from her conception (321).

Euer since I was borne, I saie, thou my God hast defended me from
dangers, both when I was strong, and in the floure of my youth:
neither hast thou forsaken me now, being in my middle age, nor
wilt (I trust) when I am graie-headed. (324)

She vows her loyalty to God, "who dooest declare thy selfe verie terrible to all the potentates and powers of the world, and cuttest off their courage, strength, and

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I am indebted to Susan Havens Caldwell for pointing this out.

glorie, throwing it in the dust, euen as the Gardener doeth twist and proine his Vine” (323). She depends on God alone, who instructed her with knowledge of him beginning in her childhood; “vpon thee, I saie, O excellent Father, haue I set all my hope, euen from mine infancie, and will doo so still euen vnto mine old age” (325). Bentley places the Queen in an exemplary position as she acknowledges God’s particular favor toward her:

Neither hath thy prouidence and mercie towards me, eased at anie time. For surely, thou hast made me a singular and euerlasting example of thy fauour and mercie to all men, in that thou beholding me alwaies with thy pleasant countenance, and and obseruing continuallie with thine heaunlie eie, what iniurie soeuer was offered me, hast not onelie woonderfullie comforted and preserued me in all my troubles: but also oftentimes most miraculousslie saued and deliuered mee out of most great and minfold miseries, imminent perils, and multitudes of mightie enemies, wherewith I haue beene assaulted, enuironed, vexed, afflicted, persecuted, and turmoiled from my tender age. (325)

God is represented as a “judge of mine innocency” and the Queen’s “valiant Champion” who has rescued and protected her (375). The image presented is not entirely passive, however. The passage uses the medieval Christian images of the faith as armor, and the faithful as an armed knight. The Queen does not try to take responsibility for the victories for herself – the triumph is God’s alone. By

placing God as the Queen's protector (the image of Elizabeth's inviolability), Bentley gives the Queen a divine purpose beyond motherhood. The narrative discreetly avoids any discussion of the future – the focus is the hope for the Queen's long life and the praise of her divinely ordained (and rewarded) virtue.

. . . yet hast thou, my God, by thine owne hand repulsed and driuen out all those mine irreligious foes, which so wickedlie resisted thy purpose; and to their confusion of faces, hast exalted me to the highest degree of dignitie. (326)

She praises God's grace towards her, "whom thou hadst appointed thine elect handmaid, and chose seruant, to gouerne thy people and affaires in this kingdome" (328). God has preserved her and brought her to high standing and "gratiously granted all the petitions of thine handmaid" (327). Her connection to the divine is reiterated in a list of Elizabeth's responsibilities as both a queen and a spiritual example to her people:

Euen thou, O God, I saie, the selfe-same good God it is, I confesse, which hast also consecrated ELIZABETH to thy selfe, to gouerne thy people, ouer whome thou dooest chieflie rule: and who hast vouchsafed in like fauour, and in as great mercie, to call me out of the prison to the palace, and to appoint me to be the Prince and Pastor to feede the posteritie of Jacob, and most deere people of Israel, with the spirituall food of thine eternall word. (328)

Though she modestly claims that, "against the slanders of all men, that I neuer

desired this honour, as though I had deserued it. . . .” (329). Her claim to be only the benefit of God’s grace, with no power and ability of her own, serves instead to reinforce her position both as a divinely ordained monarch and as an exceptional woman.

. . . this daie thou didst as it were beget me a deere Daughter vnto thy selfe; in that as vpon this daie thou didst so gratuslie annoint me thy Minister and Queene, to deliuer thine afflicted Church, and to reigne vpon thy holie mount Zion, there to declare to all nations the wonderfull works that thou hast done for me, and thy people Israel; as I doo at this present. (330)

Again the presentation of obedience and gratitude is also an announcement of power and worth.

The third part of the Queen’s vow accomplishes a feat of propaganda that places her firmly in a feminine position even as it reinforces her legitimacy and power as a Christian monarch. She asks God, “And what I haue I deserued (who of all others haue least deserued, and am thy most vnworthie handmaid,) that thou shouldest thus regard me, and exalt me to so high dignitie before manie others?” (331). Although she refers to herself as “unworthy,” her use of the Virgin Mary’s self-referent “handmaid” reflects her status as a chosen ruler of divine right:

Thou hast crowned me, I saie, with great glorie and honour,
causing my renowme and fame to spread far and neere; yea thou
hast made me nothing inferiour to other Potentates of the world;

but ordeined mee Lord ouer the works of thine hands in souereigne
wise, so that thou causest all to serue me dutifullie.

Thou, my king and my God, hast powred foorth vpon me (I
confesse) all thy bountie and graces, that none is able to be
compared vnto mee. (331)

God has been her “safe refuge, and a most sure tower against all the powers of
Satan,” which explains her invulnerability against all enemies; “Mine hand, I saie,
hath taken mine enimies, O God, through thy power; and thou wilt bring to passe,
(333) that thy right hand shall apprehend them that hate me without cause” (334).
To rebel against Queen Elizabeth, then, comes close to blasphemy, because the
rebels are defying the will of God:

. . . this people, whom thou hast appointed to be gouerned by me,
to consider this thy judgement extended vpon those guiltie rebels,
that so wilfullie resist thine ordinance and authoritie in me: and to
be sufficientlie taught by their example and destruction, to
remember the feare, dread, and reuerence due vnto thee their God,
and their Prince. (334)

An additional purpose to *The Monument of Matrones* is revealed: a warning
against rebellion, and support for the punishment of those who oppose the Queen,
either for religious or political reasons. Mary, Queen of Scots, a presence in
England since 1568, remained the symbolic center of the Catholic initiative to
replace Elizabeth. The 1569 Revolt of the Northern Earls had been unsuccessful

as had the conspiracy against Cecil. Additional dangers and intrigues -- The Irish revolt in 1579, the opposition to the Alençon marriage, and the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in England in 1581 -- provided cause for such a warning (Haigh *Elizabeth I* 184).

The image of England as the New Jerusalem appears throughout the work. The inviolate status of “this little Island” is a testament to God’s protection. Divine protection is not claimed by the Queen for herself; rather, she is the legitimate heir to a throne blessed for her predecessors as well as herself.

Moreover, O Lord, I do greatly reioice, when I bethinke me
what a tower of strength, a safe haven, and unassailable
habitation thou hast euer beene, not onlie vnto me: but also
vnto my predecessours and forefathers, kings and Princes of
this land, succeeding one another in order. (334-35)

The image of the invincible tower recalls the tower of Zion metaphor from *Hali Meidhad*, in which the virgin is compared to an impenetrable fortress. In this reference Elizabeth herself is not the tower, God is – but she is enclosed and protected by that “unassailable habitation”. The Catholic imagery has shifted so that the Queen is not the martial maid, but the protected beloved of God. God is the “mightie Governour” who provides support in times of distress:

Yeah, what alterations or changes of things or times soeuer
haue fallen; yet hast thou, O most mightie Gouvernour
(whose kingdome for euer hath beene, is, and alwaie shall

be most sure, stable, permanent, vnchangable, and
 vnmoouerable) lift vp the head of thine handmaid, as it
 were of an Unicorne, being annointed by thee with fresh
 oile, and laden with new benefits continuallie. (335)

The image of the Queen as a unicorn evokes images of her uniqueness as well as her virginity. Unicorns, symbolic of purity, were said to have been placed among virgin saints to safeguard them. Although ferocious in battle, a unicorn could be tamed by a virgin's touch. The uniqueness of the unicorn and its mythological origins fits into the iconography of Elizabeth. Possibly the unicorn reference also indicates the assumption that she was an exception to the rule. The Queen, pure through physical and spiritual virtue, is a safeguard for her country. God has blessed England and defended its queen against her enemies. She rejoices that God "granted vnto me to ouercome all mine enimies . . . and how mightie soeuer; and to compose and set my kingdome in peaceable order; and to place in Juda the throne of iudgement and iustice" (335). God is her strength and shield, and she is "thine Anointed", but she declares her power comes only from Him. In addition, God's mercy and strength has transformed her:

To conclude, I doo reioice; bicause thou, O Lord, art my louing
 shepheard, and feedest me in the green pastures and sweet
 medowes of thy word with ioie and solace; making me, that was
 sometime as a barren woman, without comfort, now a ioifull and
 glad foster mother of manie spirituall children to thee. (335-336).

Bentley combines the 'martial maid' image from medieval Catholicism with the Protestant ideal of motherhood; though Elizabeth has no heir of her body, she is the foster mother of spiritual children, the people of England/Jerusalem, and therefore a far greater influence. The image serves to reinforce the idea that God, not the Queen, will provide an equally worthy ruler to succeed her, since England is His chosen land. Elizabeth calls her subjects "yee Citizens of Zion" and encourages them to praise God,

who when wee were oppressed with Pharaos tyrannie, was
mindfull of vs; and with a strong force deliuered Israel from the
slauerie of Egypt, and hath giuen this dominion to be possessed by
ELIZABETH his handmaid; for his mercie endureth for euer. (341)

The Queen calls "ye damsels and virgins" to praise God with music and song, "but voide of wantonness" (341). Elizabeth exhorts brides to celebrate as well: "Praise the Lord also, O ye brides in your marriage songs with glorie and maiestie, that ye liue to see my daies, and that the flower of your youth is not consumed in the flame of Gods furie" (342). She calls on all Englishwomen to rejoice over God's preservation of the Elizabethan state, the new Jerusalem:

Come forth yee daughters of Zion, I saie; and breake out into
gladnesse with me, reioice you of the iust judgements of God vpon
our enimies: yeah, compassed you Zion round about, account hir
towers, consider diligentlie hir wals and bulworks, and set forth
the praises of hir peace and palaces; so that yee may spread forth

the memorie thereof, euen to all posteritie. And doo you let all men to understand, that this is God, euen our owne God for euer, which hath not forsaken us, neither will leaue us, no not in the last minute of our life. (342)

In Chapter 5, she continues her praise of God, calling him “my king” and herself “thy handmaid and annoited” (345). In her praise she provides a list of beings who will sing the Lord’s praises; the list is apparently in order from divine entities to corporeal beings, listed according to their place on the hierarchy:

I will, together with all Angels, Spirits, and Soules; and with all kings, Queenes, virgins, and creatures both in heauen and earth, incessantlie magnifie thee in the palace consecrated to thy Maiestie; and will sing of thy mercie and truth, because thou hast gotten vnto thee now at the length most great honour; for that thou hast so maruellouslie, aboue expectation, surelie performed vnto me that which thou didst promise in thy word. (345)

Virgins appear on that list after kings and queens, thus signifying their importance on the basis of virtue and worth. The vow again combines the images of the queen into a portrait of maternal virginity, and obedient marriage:

I, with the residue of the people of my dominion, as a mother with hir daughters, and the virgin with virgins; being for this cause replenished with incredible ioie, and comforted with thy iudgments, O Lord, will reioice in thee, which (seeing nothing in

me that should so moue thee) hast neuerthelesse embraced me with
 so great fauour, and mightilie also defended me: and with all the
 iust I will magnifie the holie remembrance of thee, so great a king
 continuallie, which sitting vpon thy most holie throne, rulest the
 whole earth . . . (345)

She praises God's clemency, which is the virtue most highly praised for queens,
 child monarchs, and saint/kings like Edward the Confessor. Clemency in her
 praise of God becomes the way to understand absolute power, as the 'chosen
 people' of England prosper in a sinful and flawed world.

For is there anie thing, O Lord, void of thy goodnesse? Naie, what
 is there in this whole world anie where, which doth not testifie thy
 clemencie, and euen of it selfe set foorth thy glorie in this point,
 that thou dooest suffer so mani generations and ages to passe and
 succede in this world, that is defiled so manie and sundrie waies:
 and that thou dooest cause thy chosen people to knowe, and declare
 by experience, what thy dominion and power is, that is to saie, to
 be publishers of thy praise and valiant arts, for committing the
 glorie of thy kingdome to their posteritie. (347)

The motif of the Queen as God's handmaid appears throughout the third
 book; her thankfulness of God's bounty to "thine handmaid being appointed
 Queene by thee" becomes a vow of both marriage and filial piety and obedience:
 "I doo vow and bind my selfe before thee this daie, to performe them in the

gouernment of the kingdome; as thou both fatherlie requirest of me, and graciouslie hast commanded” (348). Her vow then apparently changes to the vow of a bride of Christ, yet one with the power to preserve and increase God’s church: “And first I will endeuour my selfe wholie to pietie and godlinesse, and will labour diligentlie to preserue and to amplifie thy Church, that thy pure worship may be continuallie exercised therein, with as great care, deuotion, and holinesse as is possible” (348). God’s church and wisdom will guide her; “I may there learne thy iudgements, and vnderstand thy will reuealed, to doo to the uttermost of my power, whatsoeuer thou requirest and commandest a king to doo” (348-49). She will lead the people into God’s house with songs of praise and joy, as “my father David” did before her (349). The constant references to King David throughout *The Third Lampe* connect Elizabeth to a dynastic identity and further establish her worth to rule. Usually referred to only by kings, David represents the ideal of godly monarchy. Elizabeth’s calling upon David is therefore a statement of monarchical power and divine right. Though her body might be absent from God’s house, she vows that “I will cleaue vnto thee in my hart wholie, and will not cease to thinke of thee, and to meditate of thy manifold benefits powred vpon me” (350).

I am so farre from following the example of the wicked, who lie snorting in sin and securitie; that contrariwise I, beholding the excellent iudgements of thy iustice, in crowning thy gifts in the righteous, seuen times a daie doo I celebrate thy praise: neither doo

the watchmen doubtlesse so carefullie keepe their watch, as I am
diligent in meditation thy Heast and commandments. (351)

These statements contrast her earlier claims of unworthiness. Through her devotion to God, she claims the right of divine representation through monarchy.

The paradox of religious inspiration with physical desire, a standard from hagiography, is represented in her prayer. Asking for complete wisdom and thorough judgment, she prays for God to

inflame me wholie more and more with great desire, both of true
knowledge ioined with iudgement, wherby I may discerne all
things aright; and also keepe thy lawes, as well in properitie as
aduersitie, vnto the end of my life; that I may finish the whole
course of my reigne, by the direction of thy precepts, which are
mine onelie counsellors; thy mercie and thy truth being my two
keepers and assistants, wherevpon I also onlie trust. (352)

Again the prayer reinforces the Queen's communication with the divine. Her wisdom is therefore God-given, and her effectiveness as a ruler is due to her consumption of holy doctrine:

Oh how do I loue thy doctrine! Surelie thou knowst Lord, that I
am woont to consume whole daies and nights in meditating of thy
lawes. And I doo find, by experience, that I haue not done this in
vaine. For I haue proued to be much wiser by thy precepts, than all
mine aduersaries, which labour with all their power to destroie me,

of how great dignitie or authoritie soeuer they be. For I haue
obtained by thy gift, a wisdom that will neuer forsake me. (353)

Her love of God echoes the nun's vows, as she claims to be "wholie consumed, being inflamed with the love of thee; because I see thy words despised of mine adversaries" (354). As she vows obedience to God, her reference to being consumed by flame refers to similar descriptions in saint's lives, both Catholic and Protestant. The "trial by fire" metaphor would be all too familiar to an audience knowledgeable of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which was present in all English churches and related histories of the Protestant martyrs from Mary I's reign. Her obedience and loyalty to God makes her worthy to do God's work in the world. God's laws, as her divine model, will direct her to rule justly and with wisdom and piety:

I doo, and will still affirme, that all thy commandements are the
most certaine and perfect rule of thy iustice and truth, to direct me
to equitie and godlinesse: and therefore I vtterlie abhor, as a thing
appointed to deceiue vs, whatsoeuer leadeth vs from them: neither
will I at anie time forsake thee, nor turne from thy lawes; but rest
vpon thee, my teacher, and ghostlie instructor. (354)

God's Heast is a "Lampe ordeined of thee, for to lighten me in thy perfect paths and waie" (355). God's word is a "pretious treasure" she keeps in her heart. She vows to always remain on the path of goodness and divine truth, which is possible because "I haue appointed thy truth to be the guide and leader of my life" (357).

I will neuer set before me to doo anie wicked thing; but will
 endeuour my selfe to godlines more and more, and keepe my hands
 pure from all iniurie and wrong: that I may so liue the true life; and
 spend the whole course of this my peregrination, in setting forth
 thy glorie. (357)

The Queen declares her loathing for God's enemies, and vows to protect the
 godly. The passage refers to Catholics, as Elizabeth claims to detest those "that
 run after another God" and refuses to offer "their drinke-offrings of bloudie
 sacrifice" -- a reference to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (357).

For I, as thou knowest, loue righteousnesse and holinesse, and hate
 whatsoeuer is against it. And bicause they hate thee, O Lord,
 which art righteousnesse itselfe; therefore doo I againe hate them,
 and doo euen abhor them bicause I perceiue them to rise vp against
 thee. (357-358)

Her declaration places her in a powerful position, as a soldier of God. The vow to
 uphold the true religion is also a vow to uphold the power of the state, represented
 by the Queen: "All those wicked men, whom I see or heare doo abuse their
 authoritie vnder me, against the good and godlie, will I cast downe againe; but I
 will increase the iust with honours" (358). This vow of strength and revenge is
 then tempered with the intent of protecting the weak and godly:

Yea, all my delight, Lord, shall be vpon the Saints that are in the
 earth with me, to comfort thee; and to promote such as excell in

vertue and godlinesse. For otherwise, I am able to doo little or nothing that can profit thee. Neither will I suffer anie violence to bee done vnto them that be godlie, by anie man; but will rebuke euen the mightie Princes for their sakes. None shall touch thine annointed Priests, no man will I suffer to hurt anie of thy Prophets.

(359)

The Third Book concludes with the Queen's vow of her loyalty to God and His chosen people. Though Bentley's Queen Elizabeth does not claim sainthood or divine qualities, her faith in God, His protection of her during Queen Mary's reign (Mary is never mentioned by name; to the English Protestants, she represented the infidel, but she was also the Queen's half-sister) indicates her chosen status as the rightful queen. Her government, then, is an extension of God's law.

To conclude, I will surelie care for nothing so much, now that I am set peaceablie ouer the kingdome, and haue the people by thy goodnesse committed vnto me, as to institute an holie and righteous gouernement. And thou granting me grace, when the case so standeth, that the bonds of the lawes are broken, and the kingdome is in anie thing disordered or confounded; I will carefullie compose, and set the same againe in good order; and establish the pillers and foundations thereof in their places, if they be remoued. And this will I doo by the direction of thy reuealed will, that all things may remaine safe among my people, by the

difference of right and wrong preserved and mainteined; and that they may followe thee, our God, with great cheerfulnessse, whosoeuer delight in righteousnessse, which they see the disordered state of the Realme restored by me at the last, into the ancient most right order of discipline and iustice, prescribed by thy word. (360)

Her vow is not only one of loyalty and piety, but also of strength and ability. She will uphold God's laws, and as his annointed ruler, she must also declare her intention to keep the peace and punish the rebellious.

. . . I should loue Jerusalem with all my hart: and that I should root out all the inhabitants therein, that prophane the land with filthie superstition, and euill life; and cause all diligentlie to obserue thy statutes and lawes, giuen them of thee. And so I make a Vow I will, O Lord, I saie, according to the simplicitie of my hart, both provide faithfullie for thy people; and also guide them by good counsell, and continuallie defend and preserue them by my power; as thou in thy heast hast commanded me.

And that I may the better perfourme these my Vowes vnto thee, and thoroughlie discharge my dutie to the glorie of thine eternall Maiestie; I beseech thee, shew me thy glorie, O God; and let thine honour beautifie and adorne me, O my KING. O gouerne thou our counsels and endeouours from heauen; yea all our enterprises, and our counsels guide and gouerne thou from the

highest heauens; that thy glorie, O Lord, thy glorie may shine
 foorth in me thine humble Handmaid, to all posterities; and the
 fame thereof fill the whole world, and be perpetuallie praised of all
 thy creatures, both in heauen and in earth, uisible and inuisible, for
 euer and euer: So; euen so shall it be, O my GOD: euen so let it be,
 Amen: Amen. (361-362)

Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones* was a kind of guidebook, offering a variety of virtuous role models for women. Bentley's inclusion of "*seuen seuerall Lamps of Virginitie*" created a category of virtuous chastity that relied upon the memory of a Catholic past, yet was firmly Protestant in its presentation of ideal female virtue. As one of the Lamps of Virginitie, Elizabeth I represents the ideal of womanhood and the ideal of queenship. The work serves effectively to remove the iconography of the Queen from the marriage market to the status of near-divinity.

This removal from marriage imagery created a series of motifs that became popular in Elizabethan representation of the monarch: the Queen was a virtuous lady to be defended, a warrior in God's army, a beloved mother to her country. In 1586, *Verses of prayse and ioye, written upon her maiesties preseruatiō*, was published. The complete title of the verses is more specific: *Verses of praise and joy, Written upon her Maiestie, after the apprehension and execution of Babington, Tychborne, Salisburie, & thereft*. The discovery of the Babington Plot in 1586 was celebrated by public music and dancing, as most

official holidays were, “but the safety of the Queen was by then identified with the security of the nation, and the relief was real,” according to Christopher Haigh (158). The verses celebrate Elizabeth’s triumph through God’s protection; one poet admonished Tychborne for his treason: “God that saw thee hath preserude our Queen.” Another verse describes the “reward” of those who sought “Crown, scepter, roiall marraige bed”:

For Chaire of state, a stage of shame
and crowes for crownes they haue:
Their scepter to a halter change,
their bed become their graue.

The last of the verses addresses the Queen directly, first in Latin then in an English translation:

Raigne, liue, and blissful dayes enioy,
thou shining lampe of th' earth:
The only life of countries state,
thy subjects health and mirth.
On thee we ground our hope, through thee
with draw our breath with ioy:
God graunt thee long amongst vs breathe,
God shield thee from annoy.
To die for thee were sweete, to liue
were wretched but for thee.

Without thee, death a second life,
 life double death should be.

The verses repeat similar motifs to those of *The Monument of Matrones*: of Elizabeth as the beloved lady of the chivalric romance, to be protected and defended against all dangers, and of Elizabeth as the lamp of virtue and morality to her subjects. The 1588 poem, *An exhortacion to all English subiects to ioine for the defence of Queene Elziabeth* [sic], written anonymously, adds a more martial quality to the description of the Queen, but the strength of the English warrior is from a divine, not royal, source:

Our Queene hath courage stout, hir subiects to defend,
 her people haue as willing mindes, their goods and life to spend,
 The cause is cheifly Gods, whom euer his elect,
 Haue found most ready from their foes, to shield them & protect,
 Examples mainfold for proffe heereof most strong,
 I might alledge, but some perhaps, would think the work too long
 Let thys therefore suffice, and let vs firmly trust,
 God neuer did, nor neuer will, forget them that be iust.
 Let each repent in hart, and mend that is amisse,
 Then God no doubt our chiefe defence, will take vs to be his.
 Who grant vs all t'agree, our countrie to defend,
 And to vouchsafe into our harts, his holy spirit to send.
 That we may grace obtaine, by his most gracious will,

Let euery well disposed wight, crie out vnto him still.

Looke Lord on Englands state, we humbly pray thee then,

And grant that each true English hart, content to say, Amen.

Though the verse includes a statement of Elizabeth's courage and strength, its primary focus is the defense of the English nation, represented by the Queen. The cause is a holy one; therefore, repentance is necessary for victory. The obtaining of grace through piety will manifest itself in an English victory over the Spanish, and the verse ends with a plea for God's help to the English state.

The Monument of Matrones presents a decidedly Protestant view of the Queen and her loyalty to England. By placing her in a Biblical context and emphasizing her spiritual as well as her physical virginity, Bentley shifts the focus from the Queen's unmarried and heirless state to her near-divinity as a daughter of God. It is unlikely that Bentley was attempting to ignore the fact that the unmarried queen would provide her country with no heir, but rather chose to emphasize her many virtues as a monarch. Through the encyclopedic presentation of the ideal of woman and the ideal ruler, Bentley creates a multiplicity of images with a powerful Protestant focus, infused with residuals from Catholicism.

Politics and patronage intertwine in the use of the scriptural archetype of the Woman of Faith as an argument for universal literacy and the participation of women in devotional life as equals to men prior to the expansion of that image into the embodiment of

imperial majesty and the principle of government by woman. . . .

The cult of Elizabeth in the later sixteenth century is actually a reincarnation of the iconography of late medieval queens as well as a carefully orchestrated manipulation of the doctrine of royal supremacy by the circle of courtiers, writers, artist, and preachers who operated under the aegis of Henry VIII and Edward VI. The biblical style of Reformation kingship dominates the early iconography of the reign of Queen Elizabeth prior to its eclectic infusion into her veneration as a classicized virgin: Astrea, Diana, or even the Roman Vestal. (King *Godly* 84)

The implication may be that since God chose Elizabeth, a woman, to lead England, surely He could also provide the 'chosen people' with another monarch when the time came. James VI had been King of Scotland since 1567, and in 1582 would have been about 15. As the Queen showed no signs of illness or decline, it could be reasonably assumed that the heir was chosen, just unnamed. Shifting the emphasis from Elizabeth's beauty and marriageability to her spiritual superiority and status as God's chosen ruler for England, as Bentley does in *The Monument*, transcended traditional Elizabethan representation by infusing Catholic hagiography with Protestant doctrine. Later representations of the Queen in the 1590s, primarily by Spenser, Raleigh, and the Countess of Pembroke, would elevate Elizabeth even further by adding classical imagery to the Christian iconography employed by Bentley and others.

Chapter Three

“Mirrors More than One”: The Elevation of the Elizabethan Image,

1590-1603

The variety of Elizabethan images converged in the final decade of the Queen's reign, a time which also saw the greatest controversy and criticism of her. The necessity for propaganda to perpetuate Elizabeth's power, as well as the ongoing search for royal patronage, inspired courtier poets to create elaborate images of their monarch: "Elizabeth acquired different aspects as she was required to fulfil various symbolic needs, not only through time, but synchronically, because of her anomalousness as an unmarried and autonomous woman ruler" (Hackett 164). During this period, the "Virgin Queen" image took precedence over all others, as Elizabeth aged with no named heir. As anxiety over the succession grew, so too did the number of images associated with the Queen.

As a woman ruler, Elizabeth needed to be perceived as being no less decisive, martial, just and eloquent than a male ruler. At the same time, she needed to exercise these stereotypically masculine virtues without being regarded as unnaturally mannish or Amazonian. As a prominent woman, she needed to be perceived as a paragon of femininity and beauty. At the same time, she had to negotiate alternative models of feminine perfection: the virtue of her virginity had to be emphasised, but without representing her as

unnaturally sterile, and this gave rise to parallel images of her as mistress or metaphorical mother. (Hackett 164)

The presentation of Elizabethan mythology, already infusing Catholic imagery and Protestant doctrine, added representations from Greek and Roman mythology and the pastoral tradition to create an even more elevated image for the Queen: “As Virgin Queen of England she maintained a unique position among a court of ‘adoring’ courtiers who came to accept their woman ruler by translating her dangerous cultural anomalousness into the positive anomaly of the only virgin ruler of Europe” (Jankowski 71). To assist in upholding the propaganda machine that maintained Elizabeth’s power, the courtier poets Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh contributed *The Lady of May* and *The Ocean to Cynthia*. The culmination of the images was accomplished by Edmund Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*, particularly in Books III and IV. Spenser, who was not a courtier but a national poet, is a middle figure between court and popular understanding: according to Gary Waller, Spenser planned and wrote *The Faerie Queene* at a distance from the court “and part of its intense idealization of the court arises from Spenser’s position as an outsider. . . . Spenser still tries to insist on setting the all too evident corruption of the court in the context of a redeeming ideal” (138). An alternate view of the Queen’s position as object appears in a poem by Lady Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, the only female courtier poet to publish during the Queen’s lifetime.

The Sidneys: Addressing the Queen

The poet idealized as the model courtier and Protestant hero, Sir Philip Sidney, found himself out of favor when he openly objected to the Alençon marriage. Consequently regaining the Queen's favor, particularly to a powerful member of the Sidney family, became paramount. Sidney's representation of Elizabeth in *The Lady of May* is conventional, written twenty years earlier than his sister's verses. Composed in 1578 or 1579 for the Queen's visit to Wanstead Manor, home of Sidney's uncle the Earl of Leicester, *The Lady of May* is a pastoral masque that praises Elizabeth's wisdom and temperance. Sidney's choice of Wanstead for the presentation was itself a politicized move: his uncle the Earl of Leicester was Robert Dudley, the Queen's longtime favorite, and Sidney might have been attempting to appeal to the Queen through his relationship with the earl. In 1578 Sidney was out of favor with Elizabeth for opposing the Alençon match, "against which he argued at length in a widely circulated *Letter*" (Duncan-Jones xxii). Leicester's marriage to Lettice Knollys in September of 1578 had infuriated the Queen, so he too was out of favor (Somerset 317). Sidney's masque, and Leicester's patronage of it, is an attempt to publicly recognize Elizabeth's wisdom as superior. According to Hackett, *The Lady of May* is "an early example of the dominant iconography of the later years of the reign"; the masque presents Elizabeth "as a goddess of love and fertility . . . even though, or perhaps precisely because, her singleness and childlessness had become certain" (Hackett 91). The combined imagery of justice, wisdom, virginity and regeneration drew "ancient

traditions” to the representations of the Queen (91). Yet Sidney also apparently maintains the trope of unworthiness, as he declines to write any of her words. Although she is a character and both the subject and the object of the drama, she does not speak throughout the text. Instead, silence is the best representation of her greatness, and also an effective way to avoid offending the Queen by speaking for her. In the pastoral setting, the queen’s virtue and majesty are so apparent that the other characters, even the Lady of May, recognize her as one to be revered. She is asked to judge which man is preferable: Therion the forester (“many deserts and many faults”) or Espilus the shepherd (“small deserts and no faults”) (Duncan-Jones 8). The Queen chooses Espilus, “but what words, what reasons she used for it, this paper, which carrieth so base names, is not worthy to contain” (12). According to Maureen Quilligan, at the masque’s performance Elizabeth chose “against the advice Sidney offered in the text” and judged in favor of the “sheepish shepherd” (177). Her choice of practicality and moderate temper over rashness and impulse, though not explained by Sidney, could be easily inferred: Elizabeth, the example of temperance and wisdom, would choose the more balanced and peaceful Espilus for the Lady of May. Sidney participates in the standard convention of emphasizing female beauty when he represents the queen; her beauty and virtue, not her power, are central.

Espilus kneeling to the Queen: Judge you, to whom all beauty’s
force is lent.

Therion: Judge you of love, to whom all love is bent. (9)

Elizabeth represents diverse persons/entities in one – beauty, royalty, learning, statecraft. However, the character of the Queen does not announce her judgment, but is represented as silent. According to Quilligan, Sidney's "manuscript not recording Elizabeth's refusal to follow [his] authorial intentions suppresses her reasons, using a significant strategy to do so" (177). Her judgment has to be conveyed by the author: "This being said, it pleased her Majesty to judge that Espilus did the better deserve her; but what words, what reasons she used for it, this paper, which carrieth so base names, is not worthy to contain" (12). Though obviously it would be risky to speak for the Queen, Sidney appropriates the power of the monarch to speak, but uses the language of flattery in claiming his own unworthiness. The masque focuses on the Queen as the ideal of wisdom and justice – the goddess Astrea, fled from the golden world for its lack of justice, and returned once again in the person of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth as Astrea was a favorite image in the Sidney family poetic tradition. The Platonic idea of forms that remain unchanged was paramount to the representation of the Queen, who could be aging mortal and immortal goddess at the same time. Though manifested in human form, Elizabeth is Astrea revisited, the ideal of justice returned once again to the world. The Astrea image appears in Sir Philip's *Old Arcadia* in the double sestina,¹ in which the "gentlemen-shepherds Strephon and Klaius" grieve over their lost mistress, Urania (Duncan-

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The Fourth Eclogues (Duncan-Jones 115-17).

Jones 352*n*). Their idealized mistress, “whose beauties shined more than the blushing morning” has left them bereft of her presence (l. 62). The power of her speech recalls the power of the monarch, she “whose least word brings from the spheres their music”(l.67). The absent Urania (and the absent Queen) are representatives of the departed Astrea, goddess of wisdom, whose return promises a new golden age. The trope of Petrarchan lover suits the gentlemen-shepherds of the double sestina, but issues of both gender and time affect the presentation of the Queen in the poetry of another Sidney. The Countess of Pembroke, accustomed to court flattery and appeals for literary patronage, addressed Elizabeth on a gender-related basis; she acknowledges the Queen’s power as she relates to her as another woman. One of Elizabeth’s attendants since 1575, Mary Sidney would have been aware of the many popular images of the Queen, “but for [her] the queen’s association with the divine virgin, Astraea, and with David – king, poet, and forefather of Christ – were the most significant” (Beilin 139).

Astrea, one of the most constant of all the names used for the Queen from her accession onwards, is the just virgin of Virgil’s *IVth Eclogue*, whose return to earth inaugurates the golden age, bringing not only peace but eternal springtime. (Strong 47)

The Countess’ poem “a Dialogue between two shepherds, *Thenot* and *Piers*, in praise of *Astrea*” and the dedicatory poem to the *Psalms*, referred to as “Even

now that Care²” represent the Queen with those two figures, respectively.

Elizabeth was frequently compared to Astrea, goddess of justice, particularly after 1588, when the Armada was defeated and the Queen perceived as the victorious champion of Protestantism (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 84).

In Elizabethan encomia, the promise that Astrea would bring back the Golden Age was conflated with Astraea as the image of justice and imperial rule, and with the cult of the Virgin Queen which supplanted the cult of the Virgin Mary, to produce an image of Elizabeth as the one who would usher in the Golden Age of reformed England. (83-84)

Written for an intended royal progress to Wilton in 1599, “a Dialogue between two shepherds” indicates a bold departure from convention for Pembroke, who wrote “her own pastoral dialogue, so that Queen Elizabeth would be greeted at Wilton by her host’s own words” (82). According to Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, the Countess was following her brother Sir Philip’s declaration that poets should praise the ideal for the purpose of inspiring others to virtue, and the ideal figure for this poem is the queen. The poem presents a discussion of the Queen between Thenot, whose elaborate praises mirror the rhetoric of the courtier, and Piers, who prefers plain language. Set up as alternating stanzas for each speaker, Pembroke’s dialogue between Thenot and Piers is epideictic, “a classical

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In the Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan edition. This poem has also been entitled “To Queen Elizabeth” (Woudhuysen) and “To the Thrice-Sacred Queen Elizabeth” from the Juel-Jensen MS (Travitsky).

tradition [that] has been closely identified with ethics” (85).

Flattery of the monarch was a subgenre of the epideictic that provided a decorous opportunity for admonition. The poet is not so naive as to believe that the monarch exemplifies all virtues, but rather holds up a mirror to the queen, to show what she should be, as Elizabeth herself recognized. . . . Praising the divine Astrea’s virtue and wisdom was a recognized (and safe) way for Pembroke to remind Elizabeth to rule wisely. (86)

The poem follows the classical tradition, and “adapts the two primary strategies of encomia, the topoi of outdoing and of inexpressibility” (86). Thenot attempts to fashion the Queen through overstated poetic praise:

Astrea may be justly sayd,
A field in flowry Roabe arrayd,
In Season freshly springing. (37-39)

Piers recognizes the failure of rhetoric to convey her greatness, commenting that Thenot’s elaborate declarations are lies, and that only silence is appropriate. The Countess’ use of the name Piers may be a commentary to Queen Elizabeth on the flattery of courtiers, as “the name Piers was usually used for satiric comments on the abuses in the Church” from the Protestant appropriation of *Piers Plowman* (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 84).

That Spring indures but shortest time,
This never leaves *Astreas* clime,

Thou liest, instead of singing. (40-42)

Thenot attempts to use the highest praise of Elizabeth, and questions why “My meaning true, my words should lie” while Piers maintains that no words are adequate to represent her (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 91). Thenot, “a traditional pastoral name,” was familiar because of Spenser’s *Shepherds Calendar*, in which Thenot represented the voice of old age (85). However, Pembroke’s Thenot, himself an idealized figure, attempts to ‘draw’ the queen verbally through idealized rhetoric. The plain-spoken shepherd, more realistic and worldly than his counterpart, serves as the voice of Mary Sidney, providing commentary on the importance of courtier flattery, “pretending that it fails only by not being superlative enough. Pembroke thereby manages simultaneously to separate herself from fawning courtiers and to praise the queen herself” (88)³.

Words from conceit do only rise,

Above conceit her honour flies;

But silence, nought can praise her. (58-60)

This eclogue possesses a quality different from the works by male courtiers; only Pembroke could relate to the Queen as a woman and the object of flattery. As a patron herself, Mary Sidney Herbert was the subject of many dedicatory verses by Abraham Fraunce, Nicholas Breton, Nathaniel Baxter, Thomas Moffett, and Edmund Spenser (Lamb 28). The appeals to her education, virtue, knowledge,

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“The dialogue evidently was never performed at Wilton, but the fact that Davison had a copy indicates that it had some manuscript circulation; it may have reached the queen even before it appeared in print in 1602.” (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 88).

and power flattered her even as they contained her within a specific sphere, itself the creation of male anxieties regarding the powerful, visible, and (most importantly) audible woman; “the countess of Pembroke’s writing, like her reading, was unusually public for a Renaissance woman” (Lamb 29). Thus Mary Ellen Lamb’s assertion about the inscriptions written for the Countess of Pembroke could easily be applied to texts written for Queen Elizabeth.

Their inscriptions represent attempt to hide or to bridge the contradictions posed by the strikingly public figure Mary Sidney cut as a reader and a writer to the prevailing gender ideology designed to contain women’s language – reading, speech, and writing – safely within the private sphere. Revealing more about Renaissance gender ideology than they do about the Countess of Pembroke, these inscriptions, in their bewildering divergences, make visible the symptomatic contradictions created by her power as a reader and writer (28).

The queen’s difficult position as a woman who was not silent, and obedient only to God, challenged conventional representations of the powerful monarch, particularly a queen. Though she wielded supreme power, according to patriarchal models she must be addressed as a “vertuous and beautifull Ladie” and appeals to her power should be implied through the language of courtly love. There is an element of inside humor in Pembroke’s poem, as she offers the Queen this commentary regarding the effusive praise heaped on her by ambitious

courtiers.

Another poem by the Countess, 'Even now that Care,' was written for a different purpose: not for Elizabeth's entertainment, but as a dedication to the Sidneys' translation of the *Psalms*. This translation, a gift for the queen, continues an established courtier poet tradition – the equation of the monarch with virtue and piety, "an image that the Tudors had assiduously cultivated" beginning with the saintly reputation and attempted canonization of Henry VI, abandoned by Henry VIII after the break with Rome (92). The perceived connection between the monarch and God was one reason why religious works were presented to kings and queens. Because the monarch was associated with God's word, images of power and divinity were combined in verse as well as pageantry.

When Elizabeth was received into London on 14 January 1558/9, she dramatically identified herself with the effort to disseminate the vernacular scriptures by her reception of the gift of an English Bible. As is recorded in *The Quenes Majesties Passage*, 'she thanked the citie therefore, promysed the reading therof most diligentlie, and incontinent commanded, that it shoulde be broughte.' Taking the Bible in both hands, she kissed it, 'and lay it upon her brest to the great comfort of the lookers on.' (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 97)

The gesture made the image a reality – the young queen vowing to rule according to God's law, in one display setting herself up as the antithesis to her Catholic

predecessor Mary I. The comparison of the monarch to classical and biblical figures, another standard of monarchical praise, acquires an interesting gender commentary in ‘Even now that Care.’ During his reign, Henry VIII had been compared to David, who was traditionally associated with kings. Henry was represented as King David by Holbein’s engraving for the Coverdale Bible title page (Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan 97). The David image was popular with Protestants, who saw Henry as David triumphing over the Pope as Goliath (97). Pembroke’s employment of the David image was appropriate to the Queen on several levels: Elizabeth would have undoubtedly been aware of earlier comparisons of her father to David, which would serve to reinforce the dynastic continuity of the Tudors. Pembroke claims that King David himself would sing Elizabeth’s praises.

Wherein yet well see thought the Psalmist King
 Now English denizend, though Hebrue borne,
 woold to thy musicke undispleased sing,
 Oft having worse, without repining worne . . . (29-32)

Many Protestants saw parallels in Elizabeth’s life and David’s – their trials, triumphs in being crowned, and then “great troubles and dangers” at home and at court (97). Pembroke was not the only writer to invoke David for the purposes of flattery and admonition to Elizabeth; others included Fulke Greville, Edmund Bunny, and Thomas Rogers (98).

As in “a Dialogue between Two Sheapheards,” in which the Countess

reminded Elizabeth of her role as the model for princely virtue, so too in 'Even now that Care' does Pembroke claim the writer's right to speak: she "addresses Elizabeth on public issues, advocating the queen's active involvement on behalf on Continental Protestants, and alluding to such contemporary events as the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the New World explorations" (98). Pembroke emphasizes Elizabeth's connection to God in her presentation of David's psalms.

A King should onely to a Queene bee sent.

Gods loved choise unto his chosen love:

Devotion to Devotions President:

what all applaud, to her whom none reprove. (l.53-56)

Though no specific mention of the Queen's virginity is made, the Countess' referring to her as God's "chosen love" represents her as a Bride of Christ as well as a paragon of virtue, similar to Bentley's *Monument of Matrones*, the image diluted from medieval Catholic asceticism. The comparison to David extends to her governance, as Pembroke comments, "ev'n thy Rule is painted in his Raigne: / both cleere in right: both nigh by wrong opprest" (l.65-66). As King David warred with the "proud Philistines," Elizabeth's enemies were also God's: "The foes of heav'n no lesse have beene thy foes; / Hee with great conquest, thou with greater blest" (l. 70-71). Pembroke focuses not on the Queen's power, but on her virtue as a woman and a monarch: "Men drawne by worth a woman to obey" (l.83). However, though her superior qualities and virtues inspire such worship, she herself is detached from it: "one moving all, herselfe unmov'd the while"

(l.84). This detachment, possible through virtue and self-control, declares her as a goddess of justice. Mary Sidney Herbert, as part of the famous Sidney family, became the manifestation of her dead brother the ideal courtier and Protestant war hero, an image which formed the basis for her fame as a writer. Pembroke's emphasizing to the Queen the difficulties of being the object of flattery looks forward to seventeenth-century women poets, who after the Queen's death appropriated her image as representative of female education, virtue, and ability.

Sir Walter Raleigh: 'the Ocean to Cynthia'

The competition for patronage required that the courtier possess the right balance of individual bravado and absolute devotion to the Queen. Many times during Elizabeth's reign, courtiers were exiled from the court or imprisoned for engaging in activities deemed inappropriate, immoral, and/or treasonous. In 1578, when the Queen's favorite, Robert Dudley, incurred her wrath by secretly marrying Lettice Knollys, the Countess of Essex, Elizabeth threatened to throw Leicester in the Tower, and though she later changed her mind about him, Lettice Knollys was never again permitted to come to court. Maids of honour who became pregnant out of wedlock were similarly banned, and their lovers imprisoned for a short time. When Queen Elizabeth discovered in 1592 that Sir Walter Raleigh had married one of her ladies, Elizabeth Throckmorton, in 1588, she ordered Raleigh and his wife sent to the Tower.

Raleigh's marriage posed no political threat to Elizabeth, but it

angered her nevertheless because it occurred without her permission and against her will; it was an assumption of personal autonomy that she was not prepared to allow her courtiers. More significantly, it violated the code of patronage whereby the courtier sued for the favor of his royal mistress and was rewarded not with sexual 'grace,' but with money and position. (Campbell 243)

Raleigh, successful and powerful from the Queen's patronage, found himself out of favor; he had been in a particularly influential position as Captain of the Queen's Guard, where he had access to the Queen (Campbell 233). As his entire career depended solely on her, regaining her favor was absolutely imperative. Raleigh, born of lower status and raised by the Queen's patronage, had many enemies at court and no one of influence who could intercede for him; therefore, placing himself back in Elizabeth's good graces was entirely dependent on his use of language. The poems he composed, designed to indicate his repentance and placate the Queen, used classical imagery to flatter her. Raleigh attempted to fashion himself as the prodigal knight as he sought to redeem himself in her eyes. After the Queen's discovery of the Raleighs' deception, an anxious Sir Walter wrote to Robert Cecil, obviously hoping that Cecil would show it to the Queen.

My heart was never broken till this day, that I hear the Queen goes away so far off – whom I have followed so many years with so great love and desire, in so many journeys, and am now left behind her, in a dark prison all alone. While she was yet near at hand, that

I might hear of her once in two or three days, my sorrows were the less: but even now my heart is cast into the dept of all misery. I that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks, like a nymph; sometime sitting in the shade like a Goddess; sometime singing like an angel; sometime playing like Orpheus. Behold the sorrow of this world! Once amiss, hath bereaved me of all. (Hammond 273)

The use of the mythological imagery of Diana, Venus and Orpheus as well as the martial icon Alexander, seeks to flatter the aging queen into clemency. The placement of the queen within mythology is indicative of the importance of symbolism for the courtier poet.

It is useful to remember that the Queen was the center of a symbolic order whose existence helped to consolidate and perpetuate the power of the Tudor state. Virgin Queen, heavenly Venus, triumphant Diana, returned Astrea – these are only a few of the roles that Elizabeth played in a national mythology providing aesthetic, religious, and philosophical legitimacy to her sovereignty. (Stillman 36)

Raleigh's appeal addresses Elizabeth on many levels: her immortal chastity, beauty, eloquence, and power. The familiar use of hermaphroditism to convey the image of the Queen's power appears in his connection of Elizabeth with the

conquering emperor Alexander. If Elizabeth saw the letter to Cecil or *The Ocean to Cynthia*, neither assisted Raleigh; she sent him to the Tower anyway.

The representations of Elizabeth during the 1590s became as standardized as the official faces approved for her portraits. The courtier's recognition of those images, and his clever use of them in court poetry, was part of the patronage game. To the accepted representations of Elizabeth as a goddess (Diana, Venus), and a nymph, were added the trope of the disdainful lady and the sorrowing lover of courtly romance. The poetry written by Raleigh after his 1592 disgrace, the 'Cynthia Poems,' presents the sorrowing banished lover pleading for his mistress' forgiveness. For Raleigh, that well-known literary trope had even more importance; the furious lady was one of the most powerful sovereigns in the world. The Cynthia poems use the Petrarchan love convention to represent Raleigh as an erring and penitent lover; his exile from her favor "represents Raleigh's exclusion from a social system which confers identity upon the poet and significance on his poem" (Campbell 237). The poems, numbered 12 –15 in the Hatfield MS, reveal Raleigh's intent of regaining Elizabeth's favor; the poem now known as *The Ocean to Cynthia* is number 16 in the manuscript. The poem first in the manuscript, "If Cynthia Be a Queen" draws upon the image of Elizabeth as the goddess of the moon. Campbell comments that the "mythological conceit of the Queen as Cynthia, chaste goddess of the moon, seems to have been especially associated with Raleigh: in his prefatory letter to *The Faerie Queene* Spenser commends Raleigh on his "excellent conceit of Cynthia," and a contemporary

miniature shows him wearing a costume “encrusted with pearls (the Queen’s sign of virginity), with a crescent moon of pearls in the top left-hand corner” (238-39). As a courtier whose career depended upon the Queen’s favor, Raleigh associated himself with her symbolically.

As Shepherd of the Ocean, Raleigh gives every indication that he believed in his symbolism, that the Queen and the cultic images surrounding her were one. The loss of her love changed all that, however, depriving him of everything that he had formerly valued in those symbols, and more disastrous still, of the capacity to believe in the validity of the symbols themselves and the activity of mind which produced them. (Stillman 36)

He describes the Queen’s supremacy over her courtiers and her detractors in terms of how writing about her “adds to the one disdain, to th’ other but despair”. The last line addresses her directly by being set off from the rest of the verse: “Thy mind of neither needs, in both seeing it exceeds.” Raleigh’s poem seeks to indicate his realization that the Queen surpasses anyone in her realm; needing neither courtiers nor enemies to consolidate her power, she is as a goddess. The next poem in the sequence, “My body in the walls captived” mourns Raleigh’s forced separation from “Love’s fire and beauty’s light.” The poem does not lament Raleigh’s captivity; rather, he has always been her captive – “Such prison erst was so delightful / As it desired no other dwelling place.” Since “That food, that heat, that light I find no more,” the poet is left only with despair; “. . . I alone /

Speak to dead walls, but those hear not my moan.” Intending to convey his suffering to the Queen, Raleigh attempts to convince her that her absence, not his imprisonment, is the true cause of his distress. The most famous (and cryptic) of the Cynthia poems is the one Raleigh entitled *The 21st (and last) Book of the Ocean to Cynthia*.

The title of the poem refers to the nickname Queen Elizabeth gave Raleigh – “Water” – itself a pun on Raleigh’s Devonshire accent. The poem, a pastoral wherein nature reflects the speaker’s melancholy, as the ocean laments his loss of the moon. The final line of the 21st book is also its theme: “Her love hath end: my woe must ever last.” Despite the images engendered by the title, the poem deals very little with them. Rather than representing himself as the Ocean and Elizabeth as the moon, Raleigh is the barren earth and the Queen, the sun (May 48). The apparent discrepancy could be evidence that the missing twenty other books of the poem may have used the ocean / moon imagery. However, Stephen W. May suggests that Raleigh might have numbered the poems to indicate the intensity of his sorrow, and that since they were in a single manuscript, may not have been preceded by twenty other books: his entitling the poems *The 21st Book* “implies the existence of a much longer but quite imaginary work, the better to grace his protestations of eternal love for Elizabeth” (45). Robert Stillman wryly agrees: “Who can believe, while reading, that there could have been twenty previous books like this one? (And who, if the truth be told, is not slightly relieved at having been spared them?)” (44).

Hammond's edition of "The Ocean to Cynthia" uses the stanza form of the manuscript. The first section, fifty-six lines, begins with the imagery of death and introduces several metaphors of loss and waste. The pastoral world reflects his sorrow for his loss of the queen's favor, and the subsequent removal from her patronage: "from fruitful trees I gather withered leaves" (l.21). He has no hopeful news from her, as there are "No pleasing streams fast to the ocean wending / The messengers sometimes of my great woe." She is his inspiration and muse: "O princely form, my fancy's adamant" (l. 42), whose many virtues make her "heaven on earth transparent" (l. 44).

Her regal looks my rigorous sithes suppressed,
 Small drops of joys sweetened great worlds of woes,
 One gladsome day a thousand cares redressed:
 Who love defends, what fortune overthrows?
 When she did well, what did there else amiss?
 When she did ill, what empires could have pleased?
 No other power effecting woe or bliss,
 She gave, she took, she wounded, she appeased. (l. 49-56)

The second section describes "the honour of her love" and her power over him, and his loyalty to her, more powerful than his own ambition. He comments that she called him back from the sea and he willingly went, despite forsaking others (and his own glory) to answer her summons and "leave the purpose I so long had sought / And hold both cares and comforts in contempt" (l. 63-68).

His “forsaken heart” and “withered mind” are compared to a murdered corpse that “Retaineth warmth although the spirit be gone” (l. 73-74). His heart and mind, “Widow of all the joys it once possessed” (l. 86), is represented as wounded and dying, and one who “Writes in the dust” (l. 91). The setting sun and the approach of night reflects his mind’s shroud, “by sorrow woven now to end.” The “ever-shining sun” in the poem is Queen Elizabeth, whose favor has ceased, but “the eyes of my mind held her beams” (l. 108) – his imagination retains her bounty and grace.

Such force her angelic appearance had
 To master distance, time, or cruelty,
 Such art to grieve, and after to make glad,
 Such fear in love, such love in majesty.
 My weary limbs her memory embalmed,
 My darkest ways her eyes make clear as day:
 What storms so great but Cynthia's beams appeased?
 What rage so fierce that love could not allay? (l. 112-19)

The third section opens with a lamentation for the time he has spent in the Queen’s service: “Twelve years entire I wasted in this war, / Twelve years of my most happy younger days” (l. 120-21). Elizabeth’s anger is compared to the sun shining “with unwonted warm”: “So did my joys melt into secret tears, / So did my heart dissolve in wasting drops” (l. 134-35). He is overcome by “floods of sorrow and whole seas of woe” brought about by the sun melting the mountain snow (l. 140),

which represents the lofty position in the court previously occupied by Raleigh.

He perceives himself as cursed in his unhappiness: "My soul the stage of fancy's tragedy, / Then furious madness, where true reason lacked" (l. 143-44).

Comparing his confused and sorrowing mind with a prisoner struggling against his chains, then being forced to rest because of fatigue, he has been "struggling in vain from love's subjection" (l. 160). He is both lifeless and helpless in her disapproval of him, and his sorrow refers also to the denial of preferment: "My joys and hopes lay bleeding on the ground / That not long since highest heaven scaled." (l. 162-163). Raleigh relies upon conventional representations of the suffering lover as he is tortured by his memories, "like flames of hell". Phillipa Berry has commented that the poem reveals "his painful recognition of the concrete political authority wielded by his female object of desire" (147). His woe is not confined only to his love of her, as he readily admits all the benefits he has received through her patronage (represented in the Petrarchan mode as love).

The role of the Petrarchan mistress was particularly amenable to Elizabeth's project of self-fashioning, for it provided those elements of purity, inaccessibility, and desirability that she was so adept at manipulating. She used the codes of Petrarchanism to claim her femininity as a source of power. (Campbell 246)

Raleigh claims to be haunted by the past, and the love he has lost, a love that "outflew the fastest flying time", a sly criticism of the inconstancy of her love (l. 182). His extended complaint is also an extended compliment (or complaint),

in which he declares her power in love, anger, and life:

A beauty that can easily deceive
 Th' arrest of years, and creeping age outclimb,
 A spring of beauties which time ripeth not –
 Time that but works on frail mortality –
 A sweetness which woe's wrongs outwipeth not,
 Whom love hath chose for his divinity;
 A vestal fire that burns but never wasteth,
 That loseth naught by giving light to all,
 That endless shines eachwhere, and endless lasteth,
 Blossoms of pride that can nor vade nor fall. (l. 183-92)

Yet her love is cruel; her perfections are “tyrants that in fetters tie / Their wounded vassals, yet nor kill nor cure, / But glory in their lasting misery” (l. 196-98). This idea is one of the most important in *The Ocean to Cynthia* as it relates to the impulse to immortalize the Queen, a trope central to earlier works like *The Monument of Matrones* and *The Revelation of the True Minerva*, and later works like Spenser’s *Aprill Eclogue* and *The Faerie Queene*. The placement of the aging queen in an eternizing theme attempts to appeal to her infinite power and immortality as well as the example of her virtue through virginity. It is highly unlikely that Elizabeth took any of these compliments at face value; yet she encouraged them since the court conventions of a female monarchy required a different rhetoric when male writers attempted to represent their ruler. The

courtiers began the Platonic love convention as a method of addressing Elizabeth; this well-known type of language was at this time especially familiar to those at court, though it was more widely known through published poetry collections like Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557), *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584) and *The Phoenix Nest* (1593).

The fourth section/poem introduces a change in tone on several levels: the wounded lover's anger, a brief attempt to shame the queen into forgiveness, and the sexism beneath the discourse of courtly love. The codes of Petrarchanism were not designed only to elevate the woman as object.

. . . those codes were double-edged: the male courtier who adopted them was able to take advantage not only of their strategies of praise and protestations of subjection, but also of their covert self-assertion in the structural privileging of the male subject over the female object. (Campbell 247)

Though Raleigh mourns the loss of Elizabeth's favor, his address acquires a more critical and accusing tone. In appealing to her clemency and love for him, he constructs himself as her servant, but at the same time he reminds the queen of her flawed humanity. The presumption is an established aspect of Petrarchan verse. The lady must be virtuous and unattainable for the poet to be inspired, yet she is also held responsible for his suffering.

Yet have these wounders want, which want compassion,
Yet hath her mind some marks of human race,

Yet will she be a woman for a fashion,

So doth she please her virtues to deface. (l. 201-04)

Her cruelty to a lover so devoted, according to the poet, is evidence that although she is a Queen, she is still, after all, 'just' a woman, and her cruelty mars her virtues. Such a comment might have had dire results, yet even a great queen realizes her own mortality. The poet tempers his accusation with more compliment:

. . . perfection, which begat her mind,

Added therto a change of fantasy

And left her the affections of her kind,

Yet free from every evil but cruelty. (l. 209-12)

Again, Raleigh tempers his bitterness, claiming that cruelty is her only flaw. He orders himself to "leave her praise, speak thou of naught but woe"" and "Write on the tale that sorrow bids thee tell"(l. 213-214), and describe her as she is now, not as she was in the past: "In love those things that were no more may be, / For fancy seldom ends where it begun" (l. 219-220). Unlike Spenser, who would locate his figures of the Queen within the historical past and a distant future, Raleigh situates his poem in the political present. He casts himself, as was the fashion, in the role of the Petrarchan lover, suffering from unrequited love. For this poet, however, the loss of love was a metaphor for the loss of power.

Such is of women's love the careful charge

Held and maintained with multitude of woes

Of long erections such the sudden fall . . . (l. 228-30)

The complaint's use of sexual imagery suggests the courtier's anxiety of emasculation by this female power as well as his view of her as the object of desire.

Raleigh's desire for power, frustrated by his fall from the Queen's favor, results also in an inability to reveal his sorrow through language: *The Ocean to Cynthia* is "not so much unfinished as unfinishable, since in Raleigh's view language lacks the resources to allow him adequately to express the greatness of his loss. . . . Words fail to satisfy desire, since mutability rules both love and language"(Stillman 38). His love and loyalty culminate in disappointment: "All is dissolved, our labours come to naught / Nor any mark thereof there doth endure" (l. 235-36). The fields and their flora are "defaced by winter's cold and sleet" (l. 241). In this verse Queen Elizabeth is once again the moon, whose displeasure has cast Raleigh into the darkness:

When she that from the sun reaves power and light,
 Did but decline her beams as discontented,
 Converting sweetest days to saddest night;
 All droops, all dies, all trodden under dust,
 The person, place, and passages forgotten,
 The hardest steel eaten with softest rust,
 The firm and solid tree both rent and rotten. (l. 250-56).

Elizabeth is referred to as "Belphoebe," a stream which "we saw our beauties in,

so were they clear"; however, she has changed her course and is removed from his sight (l. 270). Her absence is equated with mutability and decay. He declares his suffering with the 'trial by fire' image of burning away faults and being renewed; the "foiled and fruitless" is burned by the ploughman, and new seeds are sown (l. 278-79). The ploughman is a metaphor for the penitent courtier's mind: "The sorrow which themselves for us have wrought / Are burnt to cinders by new-kindled fires" (l. 282-83) and are as if they have never existed. He presents a personification of love, who is cruel and merciless: "Where he is not, he laughs at those that mourn, / Whence he is gone, he scorns the mind that dies" (l. 289-90). His angry declaration of disillusionment continues the attempt to place responsibility for his actions on her: "Unlasting passion, soon outworn conceit / Whereon I built, and on so dureless trust" (l. 295-96). He claims that "Sorrow was my revenge, and woe my hate" (l. 299) and describes his intense devotion to her, which he was unable to control:

I powerless was to alter my desire.
 My love is not of time or bound to date:
 My heart's internal heat and living fire
 Would not, nor could be quenched with sudden showers.
 My bound respect was not confined to days,
 My vowed faith not set to ended hours. (l. 300-05)

He claims unending loyalty and faithfulness and mourns "The often and unjust perseverance / In deeds of love, and state, and every action" (l. 315-17). Raleigh

himself openly acknowledges the idea behind the Petrarchan ideal; in a court controlled by a female monarch, deeds of love and state are virtually the same.

Raleigh's plea as the suffering lover is therefore an appeal to the Queen's authority and control, and the power only she can bestow on him. He reiterates the steadfastness of his love for her, despite her rejection of him, which has made him an "unblessed, and ill-born creature" confronted with an unforgiving stranger (319-21). Because his love is gone from him, he wishes himself dead (326). He describes the change in her after his 'error', and the consequences for him, referring to an image that would later be made even more ideological by Spenser:

A Queen she was to me, no more Belphoebe,

A lion then, no more a milk-white dove.

A prisoner in her breast I could not be:

She did untie the gentle chains of love. (327-330)

The Belphoebe image is one that will appear later in Spenser, and one that denotes the separation of Elizabeth's female body natural from her authoritative (i.e. male) political body. Though unattainable, the Belphoebe image is one that the poet may influence.

It is no accident, therefore, that male poets preferred to represent the Queen as "Belphoebe," chaste goddess and Petrarchan mistress, rather than as Gloriana, the sovereign Queen. . . . while Belphoebe is a character inside *The Faerie Queene*, fashioned by Spenser himself, Gloriana remains outside its representative strategies, as

the goal where the powers of Gloriana are transfigured into those of God himself. No other Elizabethan poem rivals Spenser's in attempting to represent the sovereign power of Elizabeth.

(Campbell 247)

Although he has politic access to her as Belphoebe, "as Queen she is literally inaccessible to him. . . . Only as Belphoebe (or her alternative image, Cynthia) does Elizabeth provide an audience for Raleigh's verse" (247). Raleigh's poem, unlike Spenser's, devotes more time to his own representation than Elizabeth's. He does not attempt to fashion her with a plethora of images and characters because she is not the focal point of the poem. Though he is the center of the poem, he claims that "my error never was forethought" but decides to "leave th' excuse, sith judgement had been given" (l. 338, 341). To counteract a possible reaction to that statement, which impugns Elizabeth's image as Astrea the judicious, he describes her with a plethora of images:

This did that Nature's wonder, Virtue's choice,
 The only paragon of Time's begetting,
 Divine in words, angelical in voice,
 That spring of joys, that flower of Love's own setting,
 Th' Idea remaining of those golden ages . . . (l. 344-48)

This elevated praise of her as the pattern of an ideal age is soon followed by another complaint that addresses her failings as the object of his desire. Her refusal to readmit him to her presence (and thereby her power) has brought about

accusations of cruelty and disloyalty; she has a “hard heart” and has forgotten “all [his] past deserving” (l. 369, 372). Yet despite his bitterness and sorrow, he again declares his love and loyalty as he praises her:

The mind and virtue never have begotten
 A firmer love since love on earth had power,
 A love obscured, but cannot be forgotten.
 Too great and strong for Time's jaws to devour;
 Containing such a faith as ages wound not . . . (l. 380-84)

Thinking on all the blessings he has received from her, he expresses his gratitude, claiming that the memory of her favor will last forever (l. 388-90). However, throughout the poem the repentant lover remains the primary focus, and Raleigh further constructs himself as the ideal of loyalty. He offers an extensive description of his own virtues: he identifies himself as one

Whose life once lived in her pearl-like breast,
 Whose joys were drawn but from her happiness,
 Whose heart's high pleasure and whose mind's true rest
 Proceeded from her fortune's blessedness,
 Who was intente, wakeful, and dismayed,
 In fears, in dreams, in feverous jealousy,
 Who long in silence served and obeyed
 With secret heart and hidden loyalty;
 Which never change to sad adversity,

Which never age, or nature's overthrow,
 Which never sickness, or deformity,
 Which never wasting care, or wearing woe –
 If subject unto these she could have been – (l. 392-404)

The emphasis on the Queen's invincibility to Time ends abruptly, as if interrupted by his grief. This unspoken acknowledgment of her eventual demise may be a reminder to her that she should readmit him to her favor, since she cannot last forever and will need her courtiers to continue her image beyond her.

Mutability rules both world and self. . . . History and suffering replace an exhausted mythology, as the poetic argument turns from exalting Cynthia's love above time to acknowledging time's power over her, to identifying, finally and tragically, her love with the power of time itself. (Stillman 46)

Despite his admission of error and his desire for repentance and forgiveness, Raleigh has ego enough to include this implicit criticism of the Queen, whom he sees as having failed in some way because of her perfection. Yet though some love may wear away with the passing of time, his will remain constant, despite her rejection of him.

But in my mind so is her love enclosed,
 And is therefore not only the best part,
 But into it the essence is disposed. (l. 426-28)

His heart has been "cloven" by "the sharp poisoned head of that love's dart"

which cannot be removed (l. 457). Yet he knows the fault for his sorrow is his own: "What I possess is but the same I sought: / My love was false, my labours were deceit" (l. 464-65). It is interesting that Raleigh would explain away his desire for his wife as "false"; because the love of Elizabeth has political rewards, he pleads for readmittance by 'confessing' the superiority of the Queen as the object of desire. Again he uses the metaphor of withered leaves on a tree that reflect his "sorrow-woven face, the pensive mind" and claims that "Cold care hath bitten both the root and rind" (l. 471, 473).

The final section begins with the speaker's attempt to regain control: "But stay, my thought, make end; give fortune way" (l. 474). He realizes that "Complaints cure not" and that it is a waste of time "To seek for moisture in th' Arabian sand" (l. 478). He reminds himself, "Seek not the sun in clouds where it is set" (l. 482), knowing that he will not be able to find his way, like Leander – "Hero left no lamp to guide her love" (l. 488). Deciding to cease his efforts, he protests that his love will always be loyal and as eternal as her beauty: "She is gone, she is lost, she is found, she is ever fair" (l. 493). He returns to the pastoral by instructing his thoughts to release the flocks into the fields. He constructs himself as figuratively injured by her cruelty by describing his heart as decayed and weakened by storms, "All torn and rent, become misfortune's prey" (l. 502-03). His shepherd's staff, false hope, has broken because of age, and he considers also burning the pipe he used to sing her praises. His realization that his plea will not make a difference and wishes only for his life to end: "Thus home I draw as

death's long night draws on," he mourns: "Her love hath end: my woe must ever last" (l. 514-22).

Raleigh's poem, obviously intended to flatter the Queen into forgiveness, relies upon the tradition that was resurrected in order to alleviate male anxieties regarding the female monarch: the courtly love tradition. That image was the only one available to them; they need to see her as Spenser would later portray her, as Belpheobe, inspiring loyalty, love, and desire but unattainable. Presenting himself as a distraught lover, Raleigh claims to have lost his identity and cannot regain it until he regains her favor: the poem "cannot provide the ground for a renewed self-fashioning because it is denied a feminine Other, which it requires for the construction of a masculine self, and because it no longer participates in the social system which would confer meaning upon it" (Campbell 249).

By presenting himself as the unworthy, erring, but loyal and devout lover, Raleigh seeks to remind the Queen that only her forgiveness (i.e. her authority) can rescue him, even as he claims the authority to represent her for the ages: by the end of the poem, "it is no longer Cynthia who survives time, but the poet's adoration of her" (Stillman 48). It is a poem written by a courtier who has realized where his own power originated, and his attempts to regain access to power. Because his political career was based entirely on Elizabeth's favor, Raleigh's appropriation of the role of spurned courtly lover was the ideal approach of addressing the Queen. However, by that time Raleigh, a married man, could no longer rely on the Petrarchan conceit to ingratiate himself with Elizabeth and was

thereby denied “access to the strategies of Petrarchan representation by which alone he can approach his sovereign” (Campbell 247). Having been denied this method of representing the Queen, a conceit required of successful Elizabethan courtiers⁴, Raleigh never fully regained his status at court. His self-indulgence in the poem focuses it entirely on himself; *The Ocean to Cynthia* does not offer the same apotheosis as *The Faerie Queene* because Raleigh does not connect once and future, here and always there. In accomplishing that task, Spenser’s representations of the Queen would correct the errors of Raleigh and further elevate her image to mythological status.

Spenser: Books III and IV of *The Faerie Queene*

Edmund Spenser had already contributed to the images of the Queen in the April Eclogue of his earlier work *Shepheardes Calendar*, in which he had “codified the image of Elizabeth as the self-absorbed inhabitant of a predominantly feminine world,” a pastoral queen surrounded by nymphs (Berry 153). However, his epic poem *The Faerie Queene* accomplished an even more complex representation, in which he “distinguish[ed] between two different spheres of existence, the mythic and the historical, which paralleled the Platonic division between an ideal and a real world” (153). Two female characters represent the two persons of the Queen, identified by Spenser in a letter to Raleigh:

⁴

Sir Christopher Hatton, Elizabeth’s Lord Chancellor, never married, “and the Queen esteemed him the more highly for this” (Somerset 335).

the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphoebe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana). (qtd. by Hamilton 737)

The Faerie Queene herself, the unseen authority in the work, represents Elizabeth as monarch, but the other two characters mirror other identities of the Queen. According to Tonkin, Spenser's letter is indicative of his plan to situate the Queen in the historical past and the distant future, while avoiding the present.

The Letter to Raleigh intimates, and Book III makes clear, that Spenser's presentation of Queen Elizabeth takes place through a kind of historical tmesis – a separating out of her character through the insertion of narrative and history. We catch glimpses of Gloriana in particular events and characters, but time and narrative prevent us from putting these pieces together except through the processes of imagination (113)

The martial, dynastic, British, once and future knight, Britomart, is a female and foundress of an earthly paradise – a dynasty that culminates in the birth of Elizabeth herself. Belphoebe, an immortal, chaste goddess in Nature, who has a mysterious birth reminiscent of Christ's, is not to be courted or married to any mortal. In 1599, the Prologue to Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* presented a

dialogue in which an old man identifies “Eliza” as Pandora, Gloriana, Cynthia, Belphoebe, and Astrea, “all by seuerall names to expresse seuerall loues: Yet all those names make but one celestiall body, as all those loues meete to create but one soule” (qtd. Hackett 164). Spenser as creator of an English mythology situates the Queen’s many images within a timeless world where myth, religion, and reality interconnect.

Book III of *The Faerie Queene* describes the knight of Chastity, Britomart, “the martial Britonesse” (Hamilton 306*n*). Her enchanted spear renders her invincible, and her destiny compels her to go on a quest for her future husband, to “unite the progress of dynastic history with the cycle of generation” (Tonkin 165). Artegall, revealed to her by Merlin, is a noble knight, “the prowtest knight, that euer was” (III.iii.24.7). He and Britomart are destined to create a noble family which culminates in the Tudor dynasty: Britomart’s quest for “the mere shade and semblant of a knight” (III.ii.38), indicates Spenser’s emphasis on “Elizabeth’s betrothal to her country” (Wells 88). The idea of the Queen as being courted by her country was popular “from the very earliest year of her reign” as evidenced in the “Songe betwene the Quene’s Majestie and England,” written to celebrate the new Queen’s accession:

E. Come over the born Bessy,
 Come over the born Bessy,
 Swete Bessey come over to me;
 And I will the[e] take,
 And my dere Lady make
 Before all other that ever I see.

- B. My thinke I hear a voice,
 At whom I do rejoyce,
 And aunswer the[e] now I shall:--
 Tel me, I say,
 What art though that biddes me com away,
 And so earnestly doost me call?
- E. I am thy lover faire,
 Hath chose the to mine heir,
 And my name is mery Englande;
 Therefore, come away,
 And make no more delaye,
 Swete Bessie! give me thy hande.
- B. Here is my hande,
 My dere lover Englande;
 I am thine both with mind and hart,
 For ever to endure,
 Thou maiest be sure,
 Untill death us two do part. (Wells 87)⁵

Answering a petition to marry, Elizabeth is alleged to have said, "I have already joynd my self in marriage to an Husband, namely, the Kingdom of *England*."

The question of her heirs was answered with the comment that "every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are Children and Kinsmen to me" (Camden 27).

Although some scholars have argued that Camden's version of Elizabeth's speech is apocryphal, the popularity of the story reveals that the perception of her as wife and mother to her country echoes the Protestant focus on women in the domestic sphere. The mythology of Elizabeth does not concentrate on her powers as a 'vestal virgin,' so to speak, but on her perceived role as wife and mother.

Appearing to the Knight of Chastity to reveal her destiny, Merlin foretells

5

Wells' note: 'qtd. by Wilson, *England's Eliza* 4-5'

the reign of Elizabeth, which returns “Briton blood” to the throne: “Then shall a royall virgin raigne, which shall / stretch her white rod over the Belgian shore”(III.iii.48.6-7). The “white rod” of Elizabeth’s rule, like the knight’s enchanted spear, are phallic symbols of the patriarchy that validate female authority: “Britomart’s femininity is judged as it fits into a homosocial order as gender is subjected to structures of containment and control” (Silberman 108). Her martial success is due to her chastity, manifested in the enchanted spear. Though her beauty arouses love, her chastity prevents the pursuit of desire. One of the many designations of the Queen in Spenser’s text, the Knight of Chastity represents her power and invulnerability. Like Elizabeth, Britomart is ideally beautiful; also like Elizabeth, the “lady knight” is so chaste as to inspire honorable love, rather than lust. The character of Malecaste was created to provide a contrast for Britomart’s beauty; though Malecaste is also very beautiful, her lack of chastity and love of pleasure make her loveliness “shamelessness” and she is therefore “a loathly sight.” She uses love only to kindle lust; “such love is hate, such desire is shame.” Adhering to Protestant acceptance of sexual desire in honorable love, Spenser indicates that beauty and desirability are not necessarily shameful, as chaste desire is part of ideal love. However, if a woman participates in the expression of lustful desire, she is unchaste. For a noblewoman, this reputation would be damaging; for a Queen, it could cost her the respect of her

subjects, and then the crown, as Mary Queen of Scots discovered in 1567.⁶

However, in the figure of Britomart, Spenser recalls the residual Catholic veneration of virginity in his “celebration of the mystical love of Elizabeth for her ‘spouse’” (Wells 88). In the vision of Artegall presented to Britomart by Merlin, Artegall’s shield has an ermine on a blue field; the ermine is an emblem of chastity associated with royalty, particularly with Elizabeth.⁷ The resulting dual image celebrates the martial power of virginity even as it emphasizes its eventual transformation into marital chastity.

At the conclusion of Book III, Britomart does battle against the fears associated with sexual love, converting the definition of chastity from mere resistance to sex to an awareness of the power of generation. (Tonkin 143)

Britomart’s quest is one of regeneration through her submission to Artegall, as they create a great dynasty. As a Queen whose virginity ended a dynasty, Elizabeth the subject of the poem is implicitly criticized for her refusal to marry and reproduce. A similar commentary is made in Book V, as Britomart rescues an emasculated Artegall from the Amazon Radigund and reinstates male authority;

6

After her husband Lord Darnley was found murdered and Mary married the prime suspect Bothwell, she was imprisoned and forced to sign “an Act of Abdication in favour of her son” James, thirteen months old (Fraser 21). As she was led to Edinburgh for imprisonment, the soldiers shouted, “Burn the whore! Burn her, burn her, she is not worthy to live, kill her, drown her!” (Somerset 196).

7

The Ermine Portrait by Nicholas Hillard (1595); *The Sieve Portraits* (series began 1579)

the episode could be perceived as advocating the necessity of the patriarchy. The indication of Artegall's chastity recalls also the Catholic past, but the emphasis is on married chastity in Book III -- he is destined to be a husband to Britomart and father for a great line of noble Britons. Because Britomart will perpetuate herself through the myth she creates and the children she will have with Artegall, she is not only Chastity Militant from medieval texts. Having seen her future husband in Merlin's mirror, Britomart's experience draws from the Platonic theory of the reflecting power of love, a process of reflecting oneself and recognizing the divine in another and in oneself. By holding up the mirror of Elizabeth in the figures of Gloriana, Britomart, and Belphebe, Spenser reveals to the aristocratic readership of England the true form of virtue in the person of the Queen. In Spenser's text, the Catholic residual imagery is combined with Protestant doctrine to emphasize the importance of chastity in marriage -- chastity meaning continence, not virginity: "her future motherhood is defined by the needs of a male political hierarchy" (Berry 161). Though Britomart is a warrior and a powerful woman, her "heavenly destiny" is to "submit [her] wayes unto his will" when she marries Artegall and has children; therefore, the virgin knight cannot threaten the status quo within the poem, and any anxieties about her are addressed by Merlin's revelation. However, Britomart remains a virgin in *The Faerie Queene*; her betrothal is announced but the marriage does not take place within the confines of the text. She will remain a virgin until the knights are all perfected. Like the Queen herself, Britomart is not a bride of Christ but will find a spouse only in

potential: “her marriage, like her courtship, is a mystical one; its purpose is to fulfil the ‘streight course of heauenly destiny’ (III.iii.24)” (Wells 90). Though Spenser does present the traditional Protestant emphasis on female subjection, he asks when brave warrior women like Deborah will reappear:

Where is the Antique glory now become,
 That whilome wont in women to appeare?
 Where be the braue athieuments doen by some?
 Where be the battels, where the shield and speare,
 And all the conquests, which them high did reare,
 That matter made for famous Poets verse,
 And boastfull men so oft abasht heare?
 Bene they all dead, and laid in dolefull herse?
 Or doen they onely sleepe, and shall againe reurse? (IV.1)

These warrior women cannot be compared with Britomart, whose “pure chastity” and courage are her strongest virtues. These virtues have been passed along to Britomart’s descendant, the “faire blossom” Queen Elizabeth, the exceptional woman: “Spenser never claimed that Elizabeth was more than a woman; his point was that she was very much a woman, but a woman whose character and status freed her from the usual limits of women” (Benson 286). These long-absent warrior women and their disappearance is part of Spenser’s addressing of male anxiety – there were once powerful female knights, but they have disappeared, and may return someday.

Because he clearly believes that women are capable of military greatness and because he expresses such passionate hope for the reawakening of feminine valor here, the poet sounds like the humanist and Anglican writers for whom such abilities are natural. What would logically follow would be praise of Elizabeth as the sign of beginning of a new great age for womankind, or at least as an isolated equivalent to these great women as she was in canto ii. But this kind of praise is not forthcoming. . . . (Benson 289)

Though praise of Elizabeth as “the sign of beginning of a new great age for womankind” seems to be next, Spenser instead “increases our sense of the distance between ancient women and their feeble modern sisters rather than making us appreciate the possibility for women’s equal achievement” (289). This particular example is one of several that exist in the poem to address seemingly contradictory issues: Britomart is the idealization of Queen Elizabeth’s virginity as the key to her invulnerability; Belphebe, her image as a virgin huntress / Diana figure; Amoret, her beauty and virtue. The culmination of all these images, Gloriana, is absent from the work, as it would be impossible to accurately represent her, let alone speak for her, even as it was equally impossible to represent Queen Elizabeth herself. Susan Frye comments that Elizabeth’s physical and psychological withdrawal in the 1590s, a response to increased threats and unrest, occurred even as she was “representing herself as the youthful figure at the summit of her society’s social, religious, and political hierarchies”

(98). Since the Queen became an idealized model, the resulting division of Elizabethan imagery into multiple characters addresses a plethora of concerns regarding an unmarried “Virgin Queen” and the question of monarchical power.

Beginning with Book II, canto iii, another figure of Elizabeth is introduced -- one that attempts to reconcile the Queen’s multiple images and her location in two worlds. The first vision of Belphoebe is the “most extended portrait in the poem” as Spenser describes her from stanza 21 to 30 (Hamilton 195*n*). Her eyes are illuminated by divine flame, “so wondrous bright” that her purity could blind Cupid:

In them the blinded god his lustfull fire
To kindle oft assayd, but had no might;
For with dredd Maiestie, and awful ire,

She broke his wanton darts, and quenched base desire. (II.iii.23.6-9)

Her divine virginity, invulnerability to lust, and idealized beauty make her the “glorious mirrhour of celestiall grace / And soueraine moniment of mortall vowes” (25.6-7). Belphoebe is an incarnation from a heavenly pattern. Like Elizabeth in popular imagery, she is the ideal made real, which is the theme of Book III: the transformation of the image, myth-making, and transmutation. Like Sidney in *The Lady of May*, Spenser refers to the inexpressibility topos as he wonders, “How shall fraile pen descriue her heauenly face, / For feare through want of skill her beautie to disgrace?” (25.8-9). The extended description of her emphasizes her purity: her white pleated dress signifies virginity and modesty

(26.4-5); the charms she wears that “suggest the magical power that protects her virginity” (Hamilton 196*n*). She has tied her armor with golden straps – “The ends of all their knots, that none might see”-- indicating that “her armour cannot be undone, being a virgin’s knot, in contrast to Venus’ girdle which may be loosened” (196*n*). Her upbringing by the huntress Diana is apparent in her weaponry: a spear and bow with which she has hunted “the flying Libbard” – the leopard, “the emblem of incontinence in Dante’s *Inferno*”(196*n*). This extensive blazon, which describes Belphoebe literally from her head to her feet, places her character (and Elizabeth) within the imagery of Petrarchan discourse: “Supposedly an image of Elizabeth’s ‘body natural’, Belphoebe also bears the marks of sovereignty . . . she is the bodily incarnation of the *corpus mysticum* of the English state” (Berry 159). In Book II, though unnamed, she appears as the ideal of the pure virgin to provide a contrast for what Hamilton refers to as “the assault of Acrasia,” the unchaste woman. This vision of Belphoebe, designed to “sustain the reader to withstand exposure to Acrasia,” mirrors Spenser’s vision of Elizabeth (Hamilton 195*n*). The ideal of the virtuous monarch, Elizabeth is the mirror for her people. By placing her in the world of forms as the model of virtue, Spenser seeks to emphasize the importance of the queen as image.

Spenser’s choice of the name “Belphoebe” for this figure of Elizabeth referred to traditional lunar imagery “to signify her human, feminine aspect” (Hackett 193).

The moon was a dualistic symbol not only in that it was both

changeful and perpetually self-renewing, but also in that it was supposed to stand on the border of the earthly region and the heavens. . . . The moon partakes of both regions, without being wholly part of either; she is both earthly and heavenly, both human and divine, just as Elizabeth was supposed to be. (193)

Canto v of Book III reveals the origins of Belphoebe and her twin sister Amoret, the daughters of Chrysogene, a nymph. Belphoebe, born first, was taken by Diana “to be upbrought in perfect Maydenhed” (vi.28.4), a decision that “situates Belphoebe outside the rules and boundaries of ordinary sexual exchange” (Cavanaugh 131). Amoret was spirited away by Venus, “to be upbrought in goodly womanhed” (vi.28.7). The sisters’ birth represents a “temporary reconciliation of Venus and Diana, traditional adversaries, suggests a coming together of love and virginity in a kind of productive chastity” (Tonkin 119). Their conception and birth is apparently divine; Chrysogene bore them “withouten pain, that she conceived / Withouten pleasure” (27.3-4). The notion of painless birth to goddesses and heroines was assumed also with the Virgin Mary, who was said to have been exempt from Eve’s curse (Hamilton 359*n*). Spenser’s reworking of contemporary history fused with mythology refers to Elizabeth’s birth – her mother impregnated by the sun (an image of divinity usually applied to kings) and her virtuous upbringing. Miller quotes Roche’s assertion that the twins’ birth “is the story of the incarnation of virtues already existent in Spenser’s Platonic heaven . . . the act of embodiment of the Platonic Idea, which had already

existed in Paradise” (236). In the absence of Elizabeth’s actual mother Anne Boleyn (a forbidden subject at the court), he designates a deity as her parent and guardian. His reasons for the virgin birth image were not only to compliment the Queen’s chastity, but also to address criticism of the circumstances of her birth.

... Spenser’s appropriation of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception can be interpreted as a direct response to the recent Catholic polemic which alleged Elizabeth to be the child of an incestuous, monstrous, carnal union, and therefore an insatiable logic of cause and effect. (Hackett 141-42).

Linking the queen’s birth with that of the Virgin Mary as well as Christ further places Elizabeth within a mythological context, and though the Immaculate Conception was not Catholic doctrine until the nineteenth century, it is probable that Mary’s exemption from original sin was assumed in the sixteenth. The presence of the twins indicates “two competing views of love signifying love expressed through the denial of sexuality and love through its affirmation. The intellectual allegiances Spenser upholds necessitates that the former is the superior” (Waller 128). The mythological version of Elizabeth is therefore “a model of sexual purity which in turn symbolises political truth and uprightness” (Hackett 142). Belphoebe, named for Diana (Phoebe), is a virgin huntress, “the Mayd” (v.36.2-3). Yet always behind this commentary is the unseen but always present figure of Gloriana, the impetus behind the poem and the ideal of virtue. Elizabeth’s sovereign presence as Gloriana provides the quest, as her character of

Belpheobe represents her as both human and divine. The subject of Petrarchan discourse, Belpheobe is the central figure of power in the Timias episode, in which Spenser combines contemporary court politics with mythological history.

The squire Timias, wounded while fighting three brothers who pursued the lady Florimell, is saved by Belpheobe's knowledge of herbal remedies. The Timias episode is an allegory of Sir Walter Raleigh's fall from the Queen's favor. The three brothers represent "the luste of the flesh, the luste of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16) (Hamilton 348*n*). Though he is too virtuous, noble, and chaste to be defeated, he is wounded in the thigh, which "suggests the wound of lust" (349*n*). This reference to Raleigh's marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton and his subsequent fall from fortune claims that the ministrations of a "goodly Mayd full of divinities" could cure him. Timias falls in love with Belpheobe, who has saved his life, but his love is unrequited; Belpheobe is immune to desire because of her virginity,

That dainty rose, the daughter of her Morne,

More deare than life she tendered, whose flowre

The girlond of her honour did adorne . . . (v.51.1-3)

Virginity as a fragile flower is an image from medieval Catholic iconography; the twelfth-century treatise *Hali Meidhad* describes virginity as a "blossom which, if it is once completely cut off, will never grow again" (10). Spenser's praise of Elizabeth is his homage to Belpheobe, "this faire virgin"

To whom in perfect love, and spotlesse fame

Of chastitie, none liuing may compaire:
 Ne poysnous Envy iustly can empaire
 The prayse of her fresh flowring Maidenhead;
 For thy she standeth on the highest staire
 Of th'honorable stage of womanhead,
 That Ladies all may follow her ensample dead. (V.54.3-9)

Elizabeth's influence, couched in terms of romantic love, is also mirrored in the Belpheobe / Timias episode, which explores clemency and its limits. Though Belpheobe has cured his wound, she has "hurt his hart, the which before was sound" through his love for her (v.42.4). The political and gender-based commentary employs the Petrarchan rhetoric of blame in an attempt to transfer responsibility to the object of male desire; Belpheobe is sworn to chastity yet receives the responsibility for Timias' broken heart. Similarly, Raleigh, operating in a court culture where the Queen maintained strict rules about her ladies' and courtiers' personal lives, chose to marry Throckmorton without the Queen's knowledge and permission, yet insinuated in *The Ocean to Cynthia* that her anger was unjustified. Deciding it is better to die than "with dishonorable terms her to entreat," the squire despairs. (V.49.9). Spenser's Timias would rather die than to forsake or be disloyal to her, a claim Raleigh himself would make in *The Ocean to Cynthia*.

In Book IV, Canto vii, the Timias / Belpheobe mismatch is based on the situation involving Raleigh's exile from court. The proem of Book IV contains an

address to the Queen and to Cupid; Spenser claims that this song

Which that she may the better deigne to heare,
 Do thou dred infant, Venus dearling doue,
 From her high spirit chase imperious feare,
 And vse of awfull Maiestie remoue:
 In sted thereof with drops of melting loue,
 Deawd with ambrosiall kisses, by thee gotten
 From thy sweete smyling mother from aboue,
 Sprinckle her heart, and haughtie courage soften,
 That she may hearke to loue, and reade this lesson often.

(IV.proem.4)

In this single stanza Spenser addresses several images, or persons, of the Queen – as religious figure, powerful monarch, and beloved lady, “the Queene of loue” (1.9). The next stanza admonishes her by calling on Cupid to chase the fear away from her “high spirit” and replace punishment with reconciliation. Miller suggests that Belpheobe’s courteousness and forgiveness of Timias represents a dual presentation of the Queen as simultaneously mortal and divine:

. . . Belpheobe’s haughtiness relents and she acknowledges her subjection to the common condition of mortality insofar as she is courteous; yet she refuses the common remedy for death and reasserts her superiority to other degrees of womanhood (54.7-8) insofar as she remains a virgin. (234)

The Queen's virginity, for years the subject of controversy because of the succession question, is converted into an idealized representation in the character of Belphebe. Spenser adopts the traditional didactic tone of courtier poetry that praises the monarch while offering commentary and advice, even criticism: Mary Villeponteaux argues that Belphebe is not as central a figure as the "temporarily virginal Britomart," who is actually the idealized representation of the Queen; by contrast, Belphebe "is a literary 'mask of youth' through which the poet implicitly criticizes his queen, portraying her chastity as obdurate and sterile" (208). In support of his patron Raleigh, Spenser asks the Queen to be merciful, though he apparently agrees with her decision to banish him. He appeals to her clemency even as he recognizes its limits, addressing her not as his sovereign, but instead as the haughty idealized lady of courtly romance.

The ill-fated squire Timias and the virgin huntress Belphebe are the contrasting example to the ideally matched (and destined) pair of Britomart and Artegall. Mismatched through class differences and her vow of chastity, Timias' love for Belphebe is not returned; Waller comments that "it is made very clear that such rejection is seen by the poet as too severe" (128). Belphebe's banishment of Timias after he breaks his faith with her -- a retelling of the Raleigh/Elizabeth story -- is a tale of Petrarchan unrequited desire and the lover's suffering. After being kidnapped by "a wilde and saluage man" who represents Lust, Belphebe's sister Amoret flees and is pursued by him until Timias intervenes. Hearing the battle, Belphebe chases the wild man back to his cave,

killing him with her bow. She returns to see the squire lovingly comforting the distressed Amoret, who he had accidentally wounded in the fight. Amoret and Timias are guilty of lust; they both bear the wound that represents sexual desire (Hamilton 478*n*). The stanza describing Belpheobe's reaction refers to Elizabeth's banishment of Raleigh from court.

Which when she saw, with sodaine glauncing eye,
Her noble heart with sight thereof was fild
With deepe disdain, and great indignity,
That in her wrath she thought them both haue thild,
With that selfe arrow, which the Carle had kild:
Yet held her wrathfull hand from vengeance sore,
But drawing nigh, ere he her well beheld;
Is this the faith, she said, and said no more,
But turned her face, and fled away for evermore. (viii.36)

Her judgment of his is "made in the voice of Authority, a voice that embodies the power of society" (Goldberg 158). His pursuit of his own desires represents a treasonous act, as he has looked away from his beloved. Timias, keeping his distance "for dred of his displeasures vtmost prooffe," pleads for her forgiveness but is answered with the threat of her "mortall arrowes" (vii.37.5, 37.8). Distraught, he destroys his weapons and retreats to the wilderness, until "out of all mens knowledge he was worn at last" (vii.41.9). When Arthur appears, even he cannot help the squire.

He left him there in langour to remaine,
 Till time for him should remedy provide,
 And him restore to former grace againe. (Vii.47.5-7)

Though Spenser shows empathy for Timias' (and Raleigh's) plight, he observes that only time can restore him to her graces. Until she authorizes him to be visible, he must remain in exile. Like Raleigh, Timias has found "That the displeasure of the mighty is / Then death itself more dread and desperate" (viii.1.3-4). In Canto viii, the dove of concord reunites Belphoebe and Timas by leading her to him. The dove, also a symbol of divine love, is particularly appropriate to an episode involving Belphoebe as the poetic representation of the Queen. Belphoebe does not recognize him at first, but pities him. As he kisses the ground she has walked on, she urges him to break his silence. He identifies her as one of the reasons for his plight:

Ne any but your selfe, O dearest dred,
 Hath done this wrong, to wreake on worthlesse wight
 Your high displeasure, through misdeeming bred:
 That when your pleasure is to deem aright,
 Ye may redresse, and me restore to light. (Viii.17.6-9)

Her "mighty heart" and "mild regard" combined to dissipate her wrath, and she restores him to favor. The implication is that the woman, as object of male desire, is responsible for the lover's pain. The language of courtly love placed women on pedestals for the purposes of keeping them weak while giving them the illusion

of control. As long as the woman withheld her consent, she was the more powerful in the relationship. This rhetoric was essential for the Elizabethan courtiers, whose political sensibilities had to include the ideological devotion to the Queen as a the unattainable object of desire. Spenser combined the Petrarchan conceit with Platonism to create the idealized perfected form of monarchical virtue, Gloriana, to represent the Queen's sovereign power. As the one becomes many in the world of phenomena, so too Elizabeth the idealized monarch is mirrored in a variety of mythological and historical representations.

Spenser created the perfected apotheosis of Elizabeth at a time when her government was the most unpopular; the enthusiasm over the defeat of the Armada in 1588 had already begun to decline, as had the English economy. The question of the succession, left unanswered, bred anxiety among the court and the populace, and "war, heavy taxation, harvest failure, and trade disruption combined to create economic crisis" (Haigh 160). At a time when Elizabethan politics were beginning to wane, Spenser attempted to return the English aristocracy to the golden age by recreating it through the epic poetry of *The Faerie Queene*. For Spenser, poetry was a vocation, a way to re-view the world through mind, myths, and perceptions, and a female monarch was the ideal muse for his approach through a variety of forms and representations. In a society that viewed power as distinctly male, Elizabeth's sex required a multiplicity of images for her sovereignty. The Platonic statement of the ennobling effects of love transformed the male anxiety of a female monarch's court into a Petrarchan sonnet of courtly

love. The poet's attempt to place her within a historical as well as a mythological context in *The Faerie Queene* earned Elizabeth's approval and she awarded Spenser an annuity of £50 (Frye 145). The apparent fracturing of Elizabethan political consciousness became through Spenser's pen the inferior manifestation of an ideal pattern in which the one becomes many. The idealization of the Queen as a divine figure resulted from the poet's plan for his book to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (Hamilton 737). The resulting work served to hold up an ideal image to the English court even as it celebrated Elizabeth's reign as a golden age. The Queen herself is therefore a pattern – apotheosized but also platonized as she is celebrated as the ideal of monarchy. The Astrea image in the poetry of Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney Herbert affected the Queen's image by transforming her into something beyond humanity. Though Raleigh described her as a goddess figure, his address cannot go beyond the human dimension; he cannot see beyond himself to describe her. In the Sidneyan figure of Astrea is the prefiguring of grief, as the world will be diminished by her loss. Spenser's poem recognizes this, evidenced in his emphasis on mutability in *The Faerie Queene*. As the Gloriana image remains always out of sight, yet always present, so too will Elizabeth be: assumed into heaven, yet always there, like the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Chapter Four

Posthumous Panegyric: The Deceased Monarch and the Re-Creation of Imagery

The revision of the Elizabethan image during the Stuart era would be the greatest accomplishment the contemporary English propaganda machine had ever created. The standard praise of a deceased monarch generated in 1603 would become transformed by necessity because of the contrast with Stuart politics. The elevation of Elizabeth as saint and ideal monarch created an image that would have been impossible for James I and Charles I to ignore. The persistence of the Reformation throughout the Stuart era and the call for Protestant militarist intervention in the international arena became critical issues in the seventeenth century. While she lived, Queen Elizabeth had drawn on well-known religious imagery and virtually fashioned herself as an icon, for which she was praised as the defender of the Protestant faith. After her death, however, she became the secular saint of Protestant reformers, and the Puritan ideal of virtuous and religious monarchy. Her place among other monarchs by contemporary biographers is based on two issues: religion and gender. As a Protestant queen, she is presented as God's chosen defender of the true church; as a woman, her virginity enables her to transcend the stereotypes of women's weakness and vulnerability. The devising of the Elizabethan icon of 'The Virgin Queen' was necessitated by gender and the preconceptions regarding it. In context, the Queen

was the representation of the nation, as well as the nation itself. Her intact body was the physical manifestation of the inviolate nature of England. Though she surpassed the contemporary expectations of women, placed in context she had to maintain a traditional feminine image. The notion of the monarch as Virtue became even more emphasized with a woman on the throne, and Elizabeth's virginity was part of the iconography of her worth as a ruler. The male writers who helped in the creation and maintenance of the image used the text as a medium between the reality of the female ruler and their own anxieties during the Elizabethan age. However, the Stuart era saw the revision of the image, as Elizabeth became the figure of the ideal monarch. For women writers the Queen became a model of female ability; throughout the seventeenth century, Elizabeth acquired a plethora of identities and representations, each one created through political necessity and social criticism.

The high literary praise and court propaganda designed during the 1590-1603 period to counter anti-Elizabethan rhetoric and general unpopularity would be surpassed in 1603. The last years of Elizabeth's reign did not maintain the shining allure of previous years, and the English victory over the Spanish Armada was probably its zenith. The optimism and celebrations of 1588 were rapidly replaced by criticism in the face of a variety of national problems, all of which were attributed to the presence of a woman on the throne.

Rising prices, costly wars, continuing troubles in Ireland, trade depression as well as poor harvest had overcast the glory of what

had once seemed a golden and triumphant time. No longer were eulogistic tracts and ballads and approbatory speeches and sermons attended to with the complacent assent of past decades. (Hibbert 264)

The Queen had reigned forty-five years, outliving nearly all her ministers, courtiers, and friends. As the reign approached its end, popular opinion of the Queen also waned. Christopher Haigh comments that during this time “the political misogyny of the early years of the reign re-emerged. The ills of the times were ascribed to the rule of a woman” (166). Unable to create a new role, Elizabeth remained constant while everything (and everyone) around her changed; problems of the reign were attributed to her sex, “for it held out the expectation that all would be well once the old lady died” (Haigh 166). Her subjects wanted a king, thinking that a male ruler would be inherently able to overcome the weaknesses of “female indecision” attributed to Elizabeth. The political unhappiness based in misogyny manifested itself in various ways.

From all over the country there came reports of dissatisfaction and impatience, of the resurgence of scandalous rumors of the Queen’s sexual escapades in her dotage, of plots and counterplots
(Hibbert 264)

People throughout court and country saw their salvation in James VI of Scotland – male, married, and the father of two sons, Henry and Charles. The French ambassador commented, “Certain it was, that the English people would never

again submit to the rule of a woman” (Hibbert 264). The gender stereotypes so firmly in place supported the assumption that as a man, James would be able to overcome the economic and political ills that the late Queen could not: “for many of the English the return of the rule by a king was a welcome relief” (Levin 168). According to Helen Hackett, there were fewer elegies written for Elizabeth than for Sir Philip Sidney or later for James’ son Prince Henry (219). This relief on the national level is probably the main reason why the transition to Jacobean rule occurred without incident. Yet what survived from the Elizabethan age was imagery and a queen’s reputation, soon to be resurrected after English exposure to Stuart rule.

1603: “Womens Glory, Englands Mother”

The legend that the Queen and her court created and maintained for over four decades grew even more extensive after 1603. In Queen Elizabeth’s time, the many images converged; she became both a mythic and political figure during her lifetime, and after her death was deified. Her passing on March 24 inspired a plethora of epigrams, elegies, lamentations, and dedications designed to celebrate her life and her power, but also to reassure the public and the court that the monarchy, and by extension the nation, was secure: “The king’s panegyrists produced accounts of Elizabethan glory emphasizing the continuity between the queen and her successor, thereby using the appeal of the queen’s memory to ratify James’s policies” (Perry 90). Later tributes, published around 1630, focused on

her many excellent qualities as a ruler, continuing the ‘Gloriana’ legend and elevating her to near-sainthood in order to illuminate the weaknesses of the Stuart court without running the risk of speaking or writing outright against the king. Many of the woman-authored works mentioning the late Queen appeared during this time. The differences between the 1603 tributes and the 1630 tributes are few, but significant: the poetic grief for Elizabeth in 1603 was usually followed by praise for James. Initially, this grief was not intended to discredit James or serve a critical purpose; “it has been assumed both that all reference to Elizabeth during the reign of James is . . . an expression of discontent with the King, and even that James himself realized this and regarded such references as personal criticism” (Woolf 170). That assumption is an oversimplification, according to Curtis Perry; “far from being univocally critical of James, depictions of Elizabeth produced during the first decade of his reign in England stand in a variety of relationships to Jacobean orthodoxies” (90). In 1603, one of the political motives behind the praise of the Queen would undoubtedly be the acceptance and praise of James as her rightful heir and godson, her spiritual child. According to Perry, the later versions of Elizabeth’s life and reign would have a far more critical purpose:

The development of a London version of an Elizabethanism – a version whose emphases were quite unlike those of accounts of the late queen that responded to the king’s agenda – contributed to James’ failure to establish and naturalize an emotionally effective cult of monarchy. Raymond Williams would describe the presence

of the late queen's cult in Jacobean culture as a "residual" element, "effectively formed in the past, but still active in the cultural process, not only . . . as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present." The deployment of this residual material, in Williams' analysis, is part of the process by which a dominant culture reconstitutes itself: "A residual cultural element is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, but some part of it, some version of it – and especially if the residue is from some major area of the past – will in most cases have to be incorporated if the effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas."

(108)

Alternate, and subversive, uses of the Queen's image would appear within the next few years and gain a nearly mythological status during the 1630s and 1640s. This optimism for the Stuart monarchs disappears from the praise of Elizabeth published in that later period, and the writers place even greater emphasis on her virtues as a person as well as a monarch.

The shock of Elizabeth I's death, the anxiety it created, and the reassurance of a new king were subjects of the Elizabethan elegies written in 1603 and shortly thereafter. Thomas Dekker's prose piece *The Wonderful Yeare 1603* describes the "hideous tempest" that gave birth to Sickness. Sickness, dressed as a courtier, served as Death's herald by going "into the Privie Chamber of the English Queene, to sommon her to appeare in the Star-chamber of heaven" (18).

Though amazed at first, the Queen knew that the heavenly kingdom surpassed the earthly one, “and thereupon made ready for the heavenlie Coronation She dyes, resigning her Scepter to posteritie, and her Soule to immortalitie” (18). Dekker declares that her death “tooke away hearts from millions who never understood what that strange out-landish word *Change* signified” (19).

. . . how was it possible, but that her sicknes should throw abroad an vniuersall feare, and her death an astonishment? She was the Courtiers treasure, therefore he had cause to mourne: the Lawyers sword of iustice, he might well faint: the Merchants patronesse, he had reason to looke pale: the Citizens mother, he might best lament: the Shepheards Goddesse, and should not he droope? (19)

The poem praises the preservation of degree throughout the reign. Dekker comments that only the soldier, “who had walkt along time vpon wodden legs, and was not able to giue Armes, though he were a Gentleman,” prepared himself for a war of succession, but “the Tragedie went not forward” (20). Dekker’s comment reflects the general belief that the Queen was reluctant to wage war, which had left professional soldiers with little to do; one of I.G.’s elegies in *Sorrowes Ioy* commemorates the peacefulness of the reign – “Peace she hath left behind” – and calls her “the Queen of peace” (14). However, when the Queen died without an heir, some expected civil war as rival claimants to the throne stepped forward. Fortunately, James VI of Scotland was summoned immediately and ascended the throne without incident, despite the fears that came about when

the Queen died. With Elizabeth's death, the nation is described as being afflicted by an ague that is cured by the proclamation of James I as king, and the peace of the nation is restored. Dekker's work, like many of the published elegies, assumed a popular audience and followed a long-standing moral tradition.

One popular collection of elegies and lamentations was *Sorrows Ioy, or, a Lamentation for our late deceased sovereign*, published in 1603, a collection in which "poets attempted to pose dutiful and decorous expressions of grief for the loss of the Queen against expressions of joy for the arrival of James" (Hackett 219). Referring to Elizabeth as "Heavens gift, worlds glorie, earths ioy, Englands blisse," the first elegy by I.G. describes England as a nation of orphans, "left forsaken" by the death of their "common parent" (2). I.G. assumes a popular audience, referring to the general anxiety regarding the Queen's death and her lack of an heir. However, the poet does not criticize the late monarch: he claims that the earth was "unworthy [of] such rich treasure" and God has called the Queen to "raigne in joyes eternall"(3). Nature, Art, and Fortune can never frame her equal (3). This declaration of the Queen's uniqueness and perfection becomes a motif throughout the elegies; Thomas Goodrich's refers to her as "the mirror of our blisse" whose "like [is] not to be seene" again (4). Elizabeth was a person in "whome all vertues did agree / to give their perfect tincture," who was admired by other nations and feared by her enemies. The Muses should weep for the loss of "The Earths bright Glorie, and the worlds clear light": "Oh wither should the Arts for succour flie?" The last verse of Goodrich's tribute carries a note of

reassurance; after he asks, “how can die a creature so divine?” he answers that her scepter has been passed “To one descend from her royall line . . . Elizas lawful heir in vertuous deedes” (6-7).

The reassurance of the forlorn “orphans” of England becomes a motif through the 1603 elegies. *Sorrows Ioy* presents that reassurance as some of the elegies praise James even as they mourn Elizabeth. Henry Campion’s elegy claims that “Though she, Phebe, is gone, “a Phæbus now doth shine” (15). Thomas Byng also refers to the English as orphaned children praying to God to spare them, and God promises them a shepherd, in the person of King James: “Your mother gone, he shall your father hight” (11). According to R. B., the day of the Queen’s death, like the Annunciation, is also a “good Eve” because it also brought news of the new King. An anonymous elegy entitled “Stay-griefe for English men, with a motion to the Pope, and English papists” calls mourners and those who fear the return of Catholicism to have faith in James, who will “take up the rod” and “possesse and keepe with fervent heate” his “sister’s” throne. The last two lines of the elegy become a pledge of loyalty to the king: “With thee weale live, with thee wee die / In truth, faith, love eternally” (17). The elegists call for loyalty to James as a carryover from their love for Elizabeth. Thomas Milles claims that the new king “loves only those, that her did love, / And him their hearts true passions onely moove” (19).

One motif recurring through some of the elegies is the image of the phoenix. The bird, living one thousand years and immolating itself only to be

reborn in the ashes, became a popular image for the transition between Elizabethan and Jacobean rule.

•
This was already a favourite emblem for Elizabeth . . . because of its independent connotations of singularity, virginity, triumph over adversity, longevity, and asexual reproduction. This reproduction could now be deemed to have taken place, with the ‘birth’ of the new King from the dead Queen’s ashes. (Hackett 220)

Thomas Cecill’s elegy claims that though his heart is broken by the Queen’s death, he is made well by James’ proclamation, as “a Phoenix is followed by a phoenix” (25). Richard Parker’s elegy also ends on a reassuring note:

(Blest God) when we for feare scarce lookt
to have seene peaces moonshine
Thou senst from North past all our hopes,
king James his glorious sunshine (6).

An epitaph by Theophilus Field calls Elizabeth’s grave an “earthen pot” which holds “the white rose and the red”; out of that bed grows “a Phoenix of her ashes bred” (14). I. Bowle refers to her as a phoenix and addresses her: “Sleep dearest Queene, your vertue never sleepeth” (20). An anonymous elegy refers also to that common image of the Queen, claiming, “One Phoenix dead; another doth survive” and that “Elizaes vertues live though shee be gone” (10). Thomas Walkington compares her to a “glorious Sunne set in the South / Which fits not heavens diurnall motion” and bodes ill, but day is brought in from the north,

where another “glorious Sunne” rises (32). The phoenix imagery had symbolized, during the Queen’s reign, her wholeness and completeness. In a sense, the image refers to her motherless state – since the name of Anne Boleyn was no longer acknowledged by Henry VIII, so Elizabeth became, symbolically, Henry’s phoenix. In Elizabeth’s lifetime, the phoenix imagery had the connotation of singularity and longevity.

Her many virtues make her the epitome of political power: “Spaines *Rod*, Romes *Ruine*, Netherlands *Relief*, / *Earths Ioy*, Englands *Iem*, *Worlds Wonder*, *Natures chiefe*” (32). “Vpon the Death of Queene Elizabeth” commends her as a paragon among virtuous and powerful women, with imagery combined from classical and Biblical sources:

A *Deborah*, a *Iudith*, a *Susanna*,
 A Virgin, a *Virago*, a *Diana*,
 Couragious, zealous, learned, wise, and chaste,
 With heavenly, earthly gifts adorn’d and grac’t:
 Victorious, glorious, beauteious, gracious, good,
 And one whose vertues dignifi’d her blood:
 That Muses, Graces, Armes, and liberall Arts,
 Amongst al *Queens*, proclaim’d her *Queen* of hearts. (32)

Richard Parker’s elegy tells “Zenobia, Bundwic, Brittaness Helen” to “give place unto the best,” for Elizabeth’s virtues place her highest (5). She is with the saints and angels, clothed in white and crowned with immortality. “Meane while let

Muses all extoll her name, / And sing to future ages her worthy fame” (10).

Henry Campion’s elegy refers to her as “That maide, that Pellican, Englands sole power” to whom Vesta, Minerva, Pallas, and Venus were captive, a “rare perfection” to be mourned – “O peerlesse prince, Englands sole Paragon” (15).

The image of the pelican was another popular metaphor for Elizabeth, especially after her death, since the legend of the pelican was one of self-sacrifice. Hackett notes that the image of the pelican, a bird that “fed its young with blood from its own breast . . . [and] was therefore primarily associated with Christ” (80). That image of maternity and self-sacrifice could also refer to the Virgin, and could be connected even further to Elizabeth, who was seen as “sacrificing the private happiness of marriage in order to devote her whole care to sustaining the nation from her own person alone” (81).

The Queen was not only “the subject of all Verse,” she was also the paragon of virtue: “*Womens glory, Englands Mother*”. Byng’s poem entitled “Upon the death of our late Queen,” speculates on the superstition of a comet appearing “When Princes baleful destinie is neare”. Though “our starre is fall’n” there has been no comet to announce her death: “For why, a comet meete to haue showne her fall / Would sure haue set on fire heaven, earth, and all” (12).

This linking of Queen Elizabeth to the Virgin Mary continues a pattern established after 1582, as the glorification of the Queen’s virginity gives her a divine quality; yet the Queen is never praised as a Catholic figure, but always as a Protestant heroine. The elegy penned by R.B., “Upon the day of our Queenes

death and our kings proclamation,” refers to the day of Elizabeth’s death as ‘evil’ because it brought “heavie tidings of our Ladies end” though it was also a fast day “Wherein our Lord that saving newes did send” (13). Her death, therefore, becomes part of a divine plan; March 24 was the eve of the Annunciation. Other elegists refer to Elizabeth as the champion of Protestantism who devoted her life to Christ and kept the Catholic church from reclaiming England. An anonymous “Stay-griefe for English men, with a motion to the Pope, and English papists” laments Elizabeth but reminds the mourners that she has “gone from earth to Christ above / To dwell with him her onely love.” The author then celebrates Elizabeth as a Protestant ruler – “While shee did live, Gods word we had” and claims that “bloodie Rome” thought it would reign England once again, and restore the Mass, only to be defeated by James (17). In his elegy “A motive in Hexameters,” L.G. views the Queen’s death as a call to the Church of England, “Hast then ye Papists to repent, and come to the true Church” (18). G.F. calls Elizabeth “the purest mortall, that the world did owe,” lent to the world by the Lord, who has taken away his “gratious Servant” but has not left them vulnerable to their enemies. The bright lights of the sky the night of the Queen’s death indicate that “a starre from earth to heauen ascended” (21).

The blessed morne fore blessed Maries day,
On angels wing our Queene to heauen flieth.
To sing a part of that celestiall lay
Which Alleluiah, Alleluiah crieth.

In heauens chorus so at once are seene

A virgin mother, and a maiden Queene.

The connection between Queen Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary is reinforced throughout the elegies. Since Protestantism was firmly ensconced in English society, comparisons to the Virgin Mary would not have been seen as treasonous to the English church. Rather, the Virgin Mary proved an ideal image for a Virgin Queen who was the mother of her people. As Mary's virginity and motherhood provided a compromise for contradicting patriarchal views of women, so Elizabeth's virginity and her metaphorical parenting of England provided a solution for the problem of the unmarried queen regnant. The result was Elizabeth's elevation to a divine status, but one wholly Protestant;

correspondences between the Virgin and Elizabeth were catalogued, not to make Elizabeth into a replacement for the Virgin, but to endue her life and characteristics with momentous symbolic and spiritual import, as a figure of virtue and the advancement of faith. (Hackett 218)

Though the elegies praise her virtue and her virginity, they also avoid making her another Catholic icon. Thomas Cecill's elegy gives her death a religious connotation: "O deare deare Saint, I could have worshipt thee: / And still I would but for idolatrie." He claims he will build a chapel for her in his heart instead (25). The medieval Catholic image of the Bride of Christ that became infused into Elizabeth's image after 1582 is extended to her posthumous memory.

Phineas Fletcher depicts her as a bride, “married to death, and we giu’n as her dowre.” She is addressed as “blessed spirit,” “the worlds late wonder / Now heavens joy” who is dear to God, and He to her (28). J. Jones’ elegy depicts her as a paragon of princes, and a bride of Christ:

Not that wise king of peace K. Dauids sonne
 In whome great grace and wisdome great did wonne,
 Had greater grace, ne more did vnderstond
 Then did Eliza Queene of Fayry lond.

 Whilst here shee liu’d, shee spent her virgin yeares
 In royall pompe amongst her wiser Peeres:
 Nor mought shee daygne with Earthly Prince to ioyne (33)
 To bring forth issue from her virgin loyne:
 Shee had espoused her selfe to th’ Lord of life,
 So still shee liues a maiden and a wife.
 He bought her deare; and it was reason good
 He should her wedd, who bought her with his blood.
 So now shee’s crown’d with blisse, amongst those spirits
 Which ransomed are, by Christs all-sauing merits. (33-34)

Another anonymous elegy refers to her as “Daughter of Warre, Mother of Peace” who attains a status in heaven second only to the Virgin Mary:

She was, and is, what can there more be said,

On earth the cheife, in heaven the second Maid. (34)

According to E. L., “Her vertues have eternall glorie wonne” and her light illuminates even the night sky (30). On earth that light, and her vertues, “lodge in his brest” (31). Thus the divine virtues of the Queen have left their mark on her mourning subjects; as she was a model of virtue in life, so she becomes a divine symbol after her death.

Interestingly, Elizabeth’s memory was as useful to King James as it was to his detractors. As his reign progressed, James did not attempt to distance himself from Elizabeth’s legacy, but rather attempted to appropriate it for his own policies. According to Woolf, James spent more on Elizabeth’s funeral than for his son Prince Henry (1612) or his wife Queen Anne (1619). He refused to enter London until after Elizabeth’s funeral so as not to disrupt the official state of mourning for the Queen (173). James rewarded poets like Samuel Daniel who praised the Queen but denied the suits of those who, like Michael Drayton, satirized her court or neglected to mention her as James’ predecessor in tributes to him (174). When he ordered a tomb for his mother Mary Queen of Scots, he also ordered one to Elizabeth’s memory, on Robert Cecil’s advice (176). For James, a link to Elizabeth had to be maintained so that he too would join her in the realm of mythology, as her spiritual heir and the Defender of the Faith. By the time Shakespeare wrote *Henry VIII* in 1611, the perfected image of Elizabeth had taken root in English cultural memory. The play includes a “prophecy” about the infant Elizabeth; of course King James would have been the audience for the speech,

which praises him nearly as much as it praises his predecessor. The speech is given by Cranmer, who describes the princess to her father King Henry VIII as a wonder of the world, and a blessing to her country:

This royal infant – heaven still move about her! –
Though in her cradle, yet now promises
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings.
Which time shall bring to ripeness. She shall be
(But few now living can behold that goodness)
A pattern to all princes living with her,
And all that shall succeed. Saba was never
More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue
Than this pure soul shall be. All princely graces
That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
With all the virtues that attend the good,
Shall still be doubled on her. Truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her.
She shall be lov'd and fear'd: her own shall bless her;
Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
And hang their heads with sorrow. Good grows with her;
In her days every man shall eat in safety
Under his own vine what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbors.

God shall be truly known, and those about her
 From her shall read the perfect [ways] of honor,
 And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.
 Nor shall this peace sleep with her

Such praise for a predecessor may appear to be potentially dangerous, but Woolf argues that James “wished to cultivate, rather than repress, the memory of Elizabeth” (173). Since Elizabeth was presented as the guarantor of James, loyalty to the Queen would thereby extend to her successor, who encouraged her elevation in poetry and drama. Perry comments that though the image of the late queen would eventually become the standard by which the king would be judged, in the early part of James’ reign, “the oppositional energy this version carried remained largely dormant” as James himself encouraged the public elevation of Elizabeth’s memory in relation to himself as her successor. Poets and playwrights, seeking James’ patronage, contributed to Elizabethan mythology. In *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare participated in royal myth-making by adding James to the Elizabethan mystique.

. . . but as when
 The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
 Her ashes new create another heir
 As great in admiration as herself
 So shall she leave her blessedness to one
 (When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness)

Who from the sacred ashes of her honor
 Shall star-like rise as great in fame as she was,
 And so stand fix'd. Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,
 That were the servants to this chosen infant,
 Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him.
 Where ever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,
 His honor and the greatness of his name
 Shall be, and make new nations. He shall flourish,
 and like a mountain cedar reach his branches
 To all the plains about him. Our children's children
 Shall see this, and bless heaven. . . . But she must die,
 She must, the saints must have her; yet a virgin,
 A most unspotted lily shall she pass
 To th' ground, and all the world shall mourn her. (V.iv.17-63)

Shakespeare's speech reiterates the legend that had formed around Elizabeth, a unique conglomeration of Catholic and Protestant imagery; the "unspotted lily" whose virginity gives her the status of the Phoenix, from whose ashes a new self (a male self) is born to succeed her. In order for this magnificent heir of Elizabeth's blessedness to succeed, however, she must die. Shakespeare then reiterates the image of James as Elizabeth's political as well as spiritual heir; all who served her will be loyal to him. Elizabeth's purity is symbolically transferred to James, the "king of peace" who will remain steadfast and virtuous, as she was.

'Her memory much magnified': Elizabeth in the Jacobean Era

A Tudor, a Tudor! wee've had Stuarts enough;

None ever Reign'd like old Besse in the Ruffe.

Andrew Marvell, *State Poems* (1689)¹

The elegies and praise for Elizabeth I occur at different times, for different purposes: those composed around 1603 and a few years after (Shakespeare's being the latest in that grouping); compositions dating circa 1630's and those after 1640. The initial response to James' ascension was overwhelmingly positive, as patriarchy reasserted itself.

The advent of James I cast Elizabethan fashion into eclipse at court. The new regal style reverted to traditional masculine models for praising kings and downplayed the commitment to militant Protestantism which ideologues had attached without warrant to a queen whose own inclinations lay in the direction of pacifism and noncontroversial religion. At the same time, patriarchal theory of royal absolutism underwent enhancement. (King *QE* 65)

According to Curtis Perry, the elegies and praise for Elizabeth, originally written to mourn the Queen and welcome the new King, would eventually become problematic for James' image: "rather than arising in response to James' failures, these idealized memories of the queen's actions and policies in fact contributed to the formation of public perceptions of the new king and his government" (109).

¹

Woolf 167

James I, coming to power amid great rejoicing, soon proved himself to be politically unaware and generally incompetent, and his son Charles I even worse. The reign of the Stuarts did not fulfill expectations. D.R. Woolf comments that toward the end of James' reign and during Charles' reign, the new Elizabethanism increased. What were once "fond memories and vague sentiments" became a considerable wish for the perceived stability of the Elizabethan government (168).

James lacked the personal touch that had endeared Elizabeth to the people and the political savvy with which she dealt with Parliament and foreign ministers, and the reign of Charles saw an increase in "the fear of Catholicism" (Ziegler 35).

Middle-class writers like Thomas Heywood wrote elaborate praises of Elizabeth as Protestant saint and "invoked the conservatism of the past, the glorious reign of Elizabeth when the Church of England came into its own" (35). In addition, religious leaders began to call for a return to the virtue of the Elizabethan era: "Elizabeth herself was viewed as the epitome of English virtues – Protestant, chaste, militarily strong and full of nerve – by a Puritan regime which chose conveniently to forget her treatment of the Puritans of her own day" (Woolf 168).

It was much more politically pragmatic for the Puritans to use the image of the Queen as an ideal figure to contrast the failures of the Stuart regime. The dissatisfaction first with James, then Charles, brought about a second round of elegy and praise for the late Queen.

. . . if nostalgia for the late queen in early Jacobean London at times did no more than contribute to systems of values that eroded

support for the king, the same nostalgia came also to be a means of expressing emergent dissatisfaction. Thus, after helping to create negative perceptions of James, the late queen's famous memory eventually became their vehicle. . . . (Perry 111)

Godfrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester, wrote of the resurgence of nostalgia for Elizabeth, even among those who remembered her last days as somewhat unpleasant:

For the Queen, she was ever hard of access, and grew to be very covetous in her old days: so that whatsoever she undertook, she did it to the halves only, to save charge; that suits were very hardly gotten, and in effect more spent in expectation than the suit could any way countervail; that the court was very much neglected, and in effect the people were very generally weary of an old woman's government. . . . But after a few years, when we had experience of the Scottish government, then in disparagement of the Scots, and in hate and detestation of them, the Queen did seem to revive; then was her memory much magnified, – such ringing of bells, such public joy and sermons in commemoration of her, the picture of her tomb painted in many churches, and in effect more solemnity and joy in memory of her coronation than was for the coming in of King James. (qtd. by Perry 89)

According to Haigh, "Elizabeth Tudor rapidly became a stick to beat the Stuarts,

first James and then Charles” (167). James was not a visible monarch to his people, preferring his court, and resented popular adulation

Unlike Elizabeth I, who mastered the technique of image projection long before the days of the modern public relations industry, James scorned the task of cultivating his regal popularity. . . . On one occasion at least, on being told that the people had come to express their love for him, he cried out (fortunately perhaps in an impenetrable Scottish accent), ‘God’s wounds! I will pull down my breeches and they shall also see my arse.’ (Coward 105)

In addition, James’ court was perceived as decadent; some of his influential subjects commented on the king’s “displays of public affection for his male favourites and his occasional bouts of drunkenness” as well as various financial corruption scandals during his reign (Coward 122). His pacifist politics also angered many through “his pro-Spanish foreign policy, conciliating England’s traditional Catholic enemies” (Hackett 231). The Stuarts were soon being attacked through Elizabethan praise, thinly disguised critiques of James and Charles, as “the glories of her reign were once more attributed to her own genius” (Hibbert 265). On the legacy of the Tudors, G. R. Elton remarks that although the Stuarts inherited some difficulties from Elizabeth’s reign, “much of the Stuart trouble was due to Stuart incompetence” (474). Though James avoided the political partisanship that had caused difficulty for Elizabeth, Charles could not.

Charles also showed that he possessed none of this father's political shrewdness or flexibility. He did not appear to know the meaning of the word compromise and often adopted extreme positions. He seemed unable to understand viewpoints that differed from his own, he interpreted the slightest hint of criticism of him to sedition, and in dealing with opponents he was not above using very dishonest . . . tactics. (Coward 158)

The literary praise of Elizabeth became the way to castigate King James and his successor for their lack of monarchical skill. These literary endeavors combined legend, truth, and revisionist history to create "a mirror reflection of James rather than a portrait of Elizabeth. A new image of Elizabeth was being created, as a weapon of early Stuart politics" (Haigh 167).

Equating the praise of Elizabeth with criticism of James involves a surprising irony; James himself brought about the creation of the image that has become a mirror to hold up to the Stuarts, and has lasted throughout the twentieth century. William Cecil, Lord Burghley, had been the patron of the antiquarian William Camden, and had requested a biography of the Queen. When Burghley died in 1598, Camden stopped working on the project, and only under the request and patronage of King James did he complete the work, entitled *Annales. The True and Royall History of the famous Empresse Elizabeth, late Queen of England*, etc. (Woolf 181). Published in Latin in 1615, the first three books covered 1558-88, and were translated into English by Abraham Darcie in 1624,

after Camden's death. James knew of Camden's intent to add an extension to the work with an additional book covering the period 1588-1603, and ordered the fourth book added, and a complete version published in Latin.

If King James, in his last year on earth, wanted to forget about Elizabeth, he was not trying very hard. It is more plausible that he simply wished her – and himself – to be remembered in the correct light, as the two great princes of England and Defenders of the Faith. Ironically, the enduring image of Elizabeth which still predominates was created by Camden only under pressure from her much-maligned successor. (Woolf 181)

Camden's representation of the queen is both highly idealized and politically motivated. It reveals assumptions about monarchy that applied to Elizabeth but unfortunately not to James. In an era of English history where religious politics were to become more volatile, Camden's celebration of Elizabeth as a martial Protestant heroine contrasted sharply with James, *Rex pacificus*, who advocated compromise with Spain and the Catholics. Writing at least ten years after the Queen's death, Camden used Cecil's papers as his primary source. In the *Annals*, the Queen's vow never to marry presents her as the bride/mother of England, referring to the Catholic image of the Bride of Christ; when Parliament requested that she marry, she answered,

But now that the publike Care of governing the Kingdome is laid upon me, to draw upon me also the Cares of Marriage may seem a

point of inconsiderate Folly. Yea, to satisfie you, I have already joyned my self in marriage to an Husband, namely, the Kingdom of *England*. And behold (said she, which I marvell ye have forgotten,) the Pledge of this my Wedlock and Marriage with my Kingdom. (And therewith she drew the Ring from her Finger, and shewed it, wherewith at her Coronation she had in a set forme of words solemnly given her self in Marriage to her Kingdom.) Here having made a pause, “And doe not (saith she) upbraid me with miserable lack of Children: for every one of you, and as many as are Englishmen, are Children and Kinsmen to me; of whom God deprive me not, (which God forbid) I cannot without iniury be accompted Barren. . . . Neverthelesse if it please God that I enter into another course of life, I promise you I will do nothing which may be prejudicial to the Commonwealth, but will take such a Husband, as near as may be, as will have as great a Care of the Commonwealth as my self. But if I continue in this kind of life I have begun, I doubt not but God will so direct mine own and your Counsels, that ye shall not need to doubt of a Successor, which may be more beneficiall to the Commonwealth than he which may be borne of me, considering that the Issue of the best Princes many times degenerateth. And to me it shall be a full satisfaction, both for the memorial of my Name, and for my glory also, if when I

shall let my last breath, it be ingraven upon my Marble Tomb, Here
lieth ELIZABETH, which Reigned a Virgin, and died a Virgin.
(Camden 27)

Traditionally, this version of Elizabeth's vow never to marry has been accepted as historical fact. The 1971 BBC production of *Elizabeth R* included this scene, virtually word for word, and the symbolical representation of the Queen as taking a vow of celibacy has become part of history as well as mythology. The epithet "The Virgin Queen" is a continuation of the image created by Camden and maintained over the centuries by poets, historians, and literary scholars.

However, recent studies indicate that the episode might be entirely apocryphal, and that the Queen made no such vow because it would not have been politically astute for her to do so. John King argues that, in an actual transcript of the Queen's speech from the Cecil papers, the vow of perpetual virginity was never spoken; therefore, "this falsification offers one indication that Camden transmits a hagiographical account that may be less accurate as a portrayal of the Tudor queen than it is of Jacobean patronage and politics" (*QE* 36). Neither the transcript of the speech from the Cecil papers nor any other contemporary records contain the Queen's vow to remain a virgin, so "one may presume that this promise is a later addition" (37).

indeed, any such vow would have violated the official disapproval of all vows, including that of celibacy, by the Church of England, of which Elizabeth served as Supreme Governor. . . . Elizabeth's

speech testifies that at the outset of her reign she fashioned a public identity not upon a vow of celibacy but upon her well-known preference for an unmarried life. (37)

According to King, the Queen's actual promise was that "if God wills that she marry, her choice of a husband would benefit the public interest" (37). Though she did not vow to remain unmarried and celibate, the Queen created a rhetorical 'loophole' by making a promise that was not without its conditions: "that she *would* be content, *should* she remain unmarried, to have on her tomb the inscription "that a Queen having raigned such a tyme, lyved and dyed a virgin" (38). Rather than writing about this speech as a conditional promise to marry, Camden instead added fictionalized details that created the "hindsight view of this epitaph as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (38). The primary addition to the factual speech, the display of the coronation ring, "suggests that this histrionic gesture is . . . one possibly modeled on the custom that nuns wear rings commemorating their vow of celibacy and wedding to Christ" (King *QE* 36-37). The "residual element" of culture described by Raymond Williams is reflected in Camden's addition of the ring; reaching into a religious past, he added the Bride of Christ image to a new Elizabethan iconography. The influence of the *Annals* on the perception of Elizabethan history and culture is immeasurable; the elevation of the late Queen, sponsored by her successor, would ironically be transformed into anti-Stuart propaganda.

Jacobean politics provided a motive for the anachronistic revival of

the cult of Elizabeth as a model ruler whose perpetual virginity symbolized political integrity, Protestant ideology, and a militantly interventionist policy against Spain. Because these values were increasingly found wanting in the court of England's Scottish king, Protestant militants praised the late queen in order to attack Jacobean pacifism. (67)

Through Camden, Spenser's Britomart is resurrected in the image of the indefatigable, victorious, virginal Protestant heroine. The return to the image of the virginal soldier of God provided a sharp contrast to Jacobean pacifism.

By 1642, some poems written about Elizabeth I were praises designed to reveal the flaws of the Stuart court, either subtly or more overtly, as seen in "The Humble Petition of the Wretched, And most contemptible, the poore Commons of *England*, To the blessed ELIZABETH of famous memory" of 1642, in which the Commons appeal to "the Blessed S^t. *Elizabeth*" to deliver their plea for help to God. She delivers their message, and the Lord's reply, in which she prophesies the woes that will befall them. Because they refused to adhere to the virtues that she exemplified during her reign, they deserve the coming chaos.

You lusted for a King, heavens King relieve you
 And grant you pardon, as I here forgive you.
 You tooke a surfet of my happy raigne,
 And paid my well deserving with disdain;
 But Oh you cast not me away, 'twas not I

You slighted, 'twas the Lord of hosts most high,
 And therefore you shall call and cry in vaine,
 Bootlesse you shall lament, bootlesse complaine;
 From forth the North the Plague is come at last,
 The Lyon is rowz'd from's Den, that shall lay wast
 Your townes and cities, who stands up alas
 To stop the gap, where such his wrath shall passe,
 England's disease is desperate, and 'tis decreed
 That e're shee con recover, she must bleed,
 Harke, harke, heavens trumpet summons me away,
 Now my commission's ended, I must not stay:
 Farewell poore soules, goe pray, repent and fast,
 The deafe and unjust Judge is won at last
 By importunitie, much more is he
 That is inclin'd and prone to clemency.
 I shall attend your prayers every hower,
 And to the utmost will extend my power
 With him, that one, that can and may relieve you,
 Ther's hope of pardon if he doe reprieve you.

 Awake, O watch, O weepe, repent and pray,
 And have in mind the last and dreadful day. (12-13)

Elizabeth's image took on a more and more mythic quality as time passed. One biographical poem written in by an anonymous author in 1639 reveals that change. The complete title of the work indicates the breadth of its scope and the near-divine status that had been attributed to Elizabeth since her death: *The life and death of Queene Elizabeth, from the wombe to the Tombe, from her Birth to her Buriall. The Many and mighty dangers, and miraculous deliuerances of the All-beloved, admired, and renowned - Queen Elizabeth, of England &c.* According to the author, poets could never write well enough

Of Englands Glorious Great *Elizabeth*;
 Her royall parentage, her birth and breeding,
 Her dangers and her troubles still exceeding:
 Her thraldomes freedome, her humility,
 Her patience, piety, and constancy,
 Her happy preservation from the hates
 of home bred treacheries and forraigne states:
 Her mind with heavenly vertues fully stor'd,
 Her life admir'd and lov'd, her death deplored;
 Of her most blessed and triumphant Raigne
 And what a government she did maintaine. (A3_v)

Writers have fallen short when they praise "that Magnificent Illustrious Dame" because her virtues cannot be fully praised in written form. The writer explains that he decided to write about her because he served her, "and her memory I love."

Besides, her goodness partly I relate,
That others may her vertues imitate. (A3_v)

Her father Henry VIII is called “Englands puissant King” and her mother Anne Boleyn “beauties pearle” (A4_r). The events of Elizabeth’s life are given religious significance: her mother was crowned April 12, 1532, “which then was Easter-Eve” (A4_v). The conception and birth of the Princess is described as God’s gift to England:

. . . Gods blest eye
of mercy saw this Kingdomes misery,
and made faire *Anne* so fruitfull to bring forth
A daughter better than the Kingdomes worth.
Elizabeth was born, O happy birth,
Her Sexes Mirror, wonder of the Earth . . . (A4_v)

She was born on a Sunday, “that most sacred day of Rest” and her birth was remarkable because it was “*Maries* birth Eve (Mother of our blisse)”. Elizabeth’s death on March 24, 1603 is also given religious significance: “And sure her death deserves commemoration, / For ‘twas the Eve of the *Annunciation*”(A4_v).

The biography becomes a celebration of the royal children of Henry VIII, even as it has to alter the facts in order for the myth to be credible: Henry’s many marriages are not discussed, nor is his cruelty to his wives. Though Anne Boleyn’s beheading is mentioned, the crimes for which she was convicted are not. Mary Tudor, whose ‘bloody reign’ made her unpopular with English Protestants,

is given sympathetic treatment by the author. Mary is essentially a good woman led astray by the wrong religion, which forces her to turn against her sister Elizabeth. Eventually Mary's gentle heart is destroyed by her loss of Calais, and her death means Elizabeth's succession.

God (in his mercy) heard this Kingdomes mone,
And rais'd his humble hand-maid to her Throne.
Thus was her Meeknesse and Humility
Mounted unto the Seate of Sovereignty. (B1,)

Throughout Mary's reign, Elizabeth is said to have been protected by the hand of God because she would not be swayed from the true religion.

She honour'd God, and God did honour her,
That though her foes about her kept a stir,
He still preserv'd her from the overthrow,
And (in her weaknesse) he his power did show. (B2,)

Even when her enemies tried to dispose of her through a foreign marriage, God foiled their plans: "God ordain'd her for some better end, / And she a Virgin's life, her dayes will spend" (A8,). This image reinforces the iconography of the Queen as a Bride of Christ. Her special protection from God makes her, and therefore her country, invincible. The author summarizes her character and reign:

Thus was she guarded, by th' Almightyes might,
From treasons heere, and from all forraine spight,
By uncontrolled right, she liv'd and raign'd,

Faiths great defēdresse, the Christs faith maintain'd,
 With absolute command Imperiously.
 She was the glorious Star of Sovereignty,
 Of Principality th' Illustrious mirrour,
 Glory of Royall Majesty, and terrour
 To all her foes, joy of the Christian world,
 For through the Universall world was hurld
 (Blowne by the Trumpet of unspotted fame)
 The glorious life of this rare matchlesse Dame,
 The Diamond amongst Princes, and report
 And fame of her due praise was ever short:
 For after she had rightly gained the Crowne,
 She Empresse was, and Impresse of Renowne,
 For state, magnificence, and piety,
 For beauty, wisdom, prudence, policy,
 For constant courage, learning, and true zeale,
 The glory of the whole worlds Common-weale,
 With justice, mercy, temperance, fortitude,
 And with all vertues else she was endu'd.
 She was a Patrone, and a Patterne too,
 To shew all Princes what and how to doe.
 She made the mighty Potent power of *Spaine*,

To feele her force in her triumphant Raigne:

She brought both Armes and Armour in request,

And to th' opprest she was a friend profest. (B7,)

.

She made *Romes* Reliques vanish hence like smoak,

Rebellion she in *Ireland* curb'd and tam'd,

She was, and is, and shall be ever fam'd.

She was a *Pallas*, a *Minerva*, and

Bellona, fourty foure yeers in this land,

A good age she surviv'd, and full of dayes,

Encompast round with universall praise,

Belov'd of God and men she did decease,

And crownd in glory with eternall peace. (B7,)

In 1657, an author known only as "T. H., Gentleman" published *The General History of Women, Containing the Lives of the most Holy and Prophane, the most Famous and Infamous in all ages, exactly described not only from Poeticall Fictions, but from the most Ancient, Modern, and Admired Historians, to our Time*. The author describes his country "thrice blest and divinely happy in her most fortunate reign" when he mentions "the celebrated Princesse, *Elizabeth* of late memory, Queen of England":

She was a *Saba* for her wisdom, an *Harpalice* for her

magnanimity (witness the Camp at Tilbury) a *Cleopatra* from her

bounty, a *Camilla* for her chastity, an *Amalasuntha* for her temperance, a *Zenobia* for her learning and skill in language; of whose omniscience, pantarite, and goodness; all men heretofore have spoken too little, no man hereafter can write too much; sacred be still her memory to us on earth, as her blessed soule lives ever glorified in heaven. (168-69)

Though many works about Elizabeth were written for the purpose of magnifying Stuart excesses and failures, the fact that Elizabeth's court created and cultivated an image that survived her made the writers' task much easier.

Rewriting the Monarchs: Edward VI, Mary I, Charles I

The Stuart redefinition of the Queen's image, in addition to the established sixteenth-century imagery, created a variety of frameworks into which they began to fit representations of Elizabeth. As Protestantism continued to be a critical issue during the Stuart Age, the religious and spiritual aspect of the Queen's image was emphasized. Biographies of other monarchs published during the reigns of Charles I redefine history to critique or justify political policy. These biographies formed part of the context in which Queen Elizabeth's memory would be perceived. As the last rule from the Tudor dynasty, she was seen also as its culmination, the finest monarch of that line. Dynastic biography prompted a comparison and contrast that further enhanced her reputation as an ideal ruler. The issue of gender was the deciding factor in cementing Elizabeth's reputation.

Only women writers extended the praise of the Queen to a validation of the female sex. The Puritan critics of the Stuarts who brought her back as a victorious Amazon would also have insisted on a Protestant angle to the symbol and viewed Elizabeth's chastity as a simple refusal to marry. By the end of the seventeenth century, the image of the virgin as a hermaphroditic and divine warrior for Christ was Protestantized into the Virgin Queen, whose title meant only that she was unmarried and chaste. It is ironic that those who revived the Elizabethan image for Stuart critique would also de-emphasize the most important aspect of her image as Queen. In order to maintain the level of power left to her by dynastic right, but hindered by her gender, Elizabeth was fashioned as having a physical and spiritual connection to the divine protector of the nation.

The connection of the royal to the divine in literary representation and popular imagery was not limited to Elizabeth I. Seventeenth-century representations of other monarchs contributed to the critique of contemporary structures of power, or sought to defend them. When Charles I was executed, he became a martyr king, and many elegies presented him in that light. He was remembered by some as a hero sacrificed for the common good by infidels. The satirically titled "A Flattering Elegy, Vpon the Death of King *Charles*: the clean contrary way" was anonymously printed in 1649, the year of Charles' execution. Though primarily an attack on the rebels, the elegy compares Charles to a crucified Christ (A3.). Elegies for Elizabeth had compared her trials under Marian rule to a saint's suffering, emphasizing God's protection of a chosen

princess. Charles I is the sacrificial son and the ideal of the virtuous monarch, murdered by the sins of his people:

So wise, so just, so mercifull, so good,
 So happy, (had he well been understood)
 That we had all been happy, had we bin
 So blest as not to kill him with our sin. (A3_v)

The elegy is an attack upon the forces who ordered the king's execution and brings accusations of hypocrisy, treason and murder. Not surprising is the absence of the author's and printer's names from the poem. "Religious Villany, An Elegy on the Execrable Murder of King Charles I" was written anonymously and presents Charles, "the best of Princes and the best of Men" as "Vertues Sovereign . . . whose grand offence, / Was Vertue and a settled Conscience."

Hee's still a King, preserves one Soveraintie,
 No Rebel passion durst arise to bring
 Stains on his undeserved suffering,
 With meekness great as Innocence he dyes,
 A Royal and immaculate Sacrifice

The execution itself reveals his "inviolable Constancie" and "unconquerable Patience," as well as his mercy -- his only sorrow is for the "Deceitful, proud, Ambitious, bloody Men" who have ordered his execution. His empathy for his accusers is also Christ-like and reminiscent of the qualities of the martyred saints. The transformation of Charles from king to martyr in popular texts resulted from

the emphasis on the spiritual qualities of the monarch. The criticism of Oliver Cromwell's government was designed to reiterate the necessity of the monarchy by representing the English king as a saint-like figure.

"An Elegy Upon the Most Incomparable King Charls the I" claims that Charles had the judgment of Solomon, the boldness of Jehosaphat, the zeal of Hezekia, and the accomplishment of repairing the "ruin'd Temple." The author urges that "*Sion of Josiah weep*" (18). Reminiscent of the high praise lavished upon Elizabeth's memory in 1603, Carolinian elgies present an idealized model of virtuous monarchy. "Caroli," another 1649 elegy, praises Charles' wisdom, majesty, intelligence, superior understanding, and self-governance: "*Charles rul'd the King, before the King rul'd Us.*" (4). The foundation of his wisdom and judgment was humility, and he was "*Rul'd by Gods Word, not Interest of State.*" He was "Incarnate Justice" tempered with mercy:

He knew that to command, his only way
Was first to teach his Passions to obey.
And his incessant waiting on God's Throne
Gave him such meek reflexions on his owne,
That, being forc't to censure, he exprest
A Judges Office with a Mothers breast. (5)

The focus on spiritual qualities creates a gendered shift in emphasis, as the elgies praise qualities that are usually perceived as feminine, such as modesty and virtue. Though medieval representations praised these for men, by the seventeenth

century modesty and virtue (meaning chastity) were feminized qualities. To one elegist, Charles was so virtuous that his court “implied his Cloyster; and his very Sport / was Self-denial.” (6). The placement of Charles within the framework of hagiography required also a return to Catholic imagery; Charles’ soul, gendered female, “wore sackcloth, and liv’d Nun”(6). The execution of such a virtuous king is viewed as “our second Crosse” (11). The representation of Charles the martyr reflected the necessity of reinforcing the connection between spirituality and the crown.

This connection would be emphasized again when the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism would affect the monarchy directly. In 1688, the year that the Catholic King James II was deposed and replaced by the Protestants William III and Mary II, John Gybbon published *Edovardus Confessor Redivivus. The Piety and Vertues of Holy Edward the Confessor, Reviv’d in the Sacred Majesty of King James the II*. Gybbon’s defense of James II presented the king as the spiritual heir of saint and king, Edward the Confessor, the Anglo-Saxon king who died in 1066 and was canonized in 1161. Gybbon’s reclamation of Edward for James’ image may have been an attempt to negotiate between Protestant fears of a Catholic king and the relationship of the rightful king to God. Edward the Confessor had been praised for his meekness, virtue, amiability, compassion, religious devotion, wisdom in judgment, and holiness. These attributes are virtually the same as those praised in Queen Elizabeth I. In this instance praise of virtues traditionally viewed as feminine become associated with the pious ruler.

According to Gybbon, James II was the ‘new’ Edward in majesty and holiness, an attribute enhanced by James’ wearing of Edward’s crucifix, found in Westminster Abbey. The work discusses James only slightly, directing its energies more toward the praise of Edward, James’ predecessor in devotion and wisdom. John Foxe’s elegy for Edward in *Acts and Monuments* praises him as a “fountain” from whom flowed “much Godliness, Mercy, Pity, and Liberality towards the Poor, Gentleness and Justice towards all Men; and, in all Honest Life, He gave a Vertuous Example to His People” (22).

He was a Man of a Gentle and Soft Spirit, of Nature and Condition so far from all War and Blood-Shed, that being in His Banishment, He wished rather so to continue all His Life-time, in that Private Estate, than by Blood-Shed to aspire to His Kingdom. After He had taken upon Him the Government of the Realm, He guided the same with much Wisdom and Justice Twenty-four Years, save Two Months. . . . (Gybbon 22)

According to Gybbon, Warner’s *Albions England* says that St. Edward was “Religious, Chaste, Wise, Fortunate, Stout, Frank and Mild” (22). Serlo of Paris’ epitaph for Edward praises him as “Powerful in *Goodness*, and Reverend in His *Piety*.” (23). Some writers used biblical references to describe the king:

As Innocent and Harmless as a Dove: or, to the Qualifications of Moses, Numb. 12.3 Who was very Meek above all the Men upon the Face of the Earth. Farther Illustrated, Eccles. 45.1, 2, 3, 4.

concluding thus, That God chose Him for His Faithfulness and Meekness, out of all Men, &c. (23)

Gybbon comments upon Edward's "great Clemency, Mildness, and good Humor," and cites several miraculous cures that the king worked upon some of his subjects: Edward healed a lame man by carrying him to church, and healed a young woman's disfiguring facial disease by washing her face gently; he is also reported to have restored a blind man's sight. Healing the sick was a traditional sign of divine favor and faith; the king was believed to be able to cure scrofula, called "the King's Evil," and only a legitimate heir could heal (Levin 191).

Elizabeth I is said to have continued the tradition of laying on of hands, despite its Catholic origins. According to Carole Levin, William Tooker, the Queen's chaplain, and William Clowes, her surgeon, would later write about her "remarkable talent for healing [the King's Evil] through touch" (199).

Supposedly only the true heir to a throne had the power to heal, and that belief, combined with the Tudor emphasis on spectacle and power, would serve to make Elizabeth's public healing a testament to her legitimacy as the rightful monarch.

If England was God's New Jerusalem, then the monarch was His chosen one.

Gybbon writes that Edward was assured of his crown by the vision of St.

Brightwald, which indicated that "*The Kingdom of England was the Kingdom of God, and He would give it to whom He pleased.* So, this *Regium Cimelium*, this *Royal Rarity*, was ordained for One Elect of God . . ." (27). The saint's message, and Gybbon's retelling of it, is a justification of the divine right of kings, at least

in theory. James II, Catholic or not, had been chosen by God to lead the English people, as had Edward, the saint.

The discovery of Edward's crucifix and its possession by James II, "the Good and Just," is evidence to Gybbon that a divine purpose has been revealed:

No doubt, the having of this Pious Symbole and Badge, so auspiciously come by, is an evident Omen and Presage, our Sovereign (as was its Pristine Owner) will be Blessed with an happy Hand, in the Cure of the King's Evil; Be as sparing of heavy Taxes as may be; A great Conservator of the Laws of the Land; A Pattern of Piety; A Mirrour of Mercy; A Fountain of Pity and Liberality towards the Poor; Gentle and Just towards all Men: In a word, an Exchequer of all Vertue; as was the former Bearer thereof. (27-28)

Such praise suggests a Catholic loyalty; however, Gybbon indicates his Protestant sympathies in a postscript when he complains that person he will not name "exposed me in his Popish Courant as a Red-Letter-Man; and Abused me most horribly in his *Touch of the Times* What will he think of me now?" (36).

James II would have invited the comparison with Edward the Confessor because, as a Catholic and therefore under suspicion, James needed a pious image. Rather than emphasizing Edward as a specifically Catholic saint, the Protestant writer instead concentrated on his Christian piety and virtue. Again the writer of royal praise returns to Catholic iconography and imagery to support the monarch. The

emphasis on the religious virtues that were gendered feminine, as in the elegies for Charles I, attempts to downplay the conflict of religion to focus on the Christian virtues shared by both Catholics and Protestants. The praise of the king's chastity, meekness, faithfulness, and mercy recalled the 'golden age' before the previous Stuarts – in other words, the reign of Elizabeth. Obviously Gybbon's attempt to affect monarchical politics was unsuccessful, as the figure of the previous Catholic on the English throne, Mary I, haunted James II's reign and reputation.

The re-creation of the king as a religious figure was necessary in the Stuart age as a means of addressing the issues of regicide and the later anxiety over a Catholic king. The relationship between the divine and the monarch indicated Providence's hand in the workings of the state. That connection would have to be particularly stressed when the issue of gender arose. Part of the elaborate mythology necessary to justify Elizabeth's presence on the throne involved the emphasis on the dynastic continuity of the Tudors. Throughout Elizabeth's reign and afterward, her connection with her father Henry VIII would be stressed. Stephen Greenblatt cites "the best contemporary description of the effects of romanticizing royal power," written by the Queen's godson, Sir John Harrington: ". . . she could put forth such alterations, when obedience was lacking, as left no doubting whose daughter she was" (169). The Tudor dynastic reputation, particular Henry VIII's, served a dual purpose for the establishment of Elizabeth's authority: one, it praised her as the culmination of the finest aspects of Tudor

power, masculinity, and religious devotion, and two, it provided a contrast in Mary I, which addressed the anxieties about Elizabeth's gender.

The patriarchal assumption of male superiority manifested itself in monarchical praise that placed royal power in a masculine light. The reign of Henry VIII was characterized by the king's strength of will, intense personality, and imposing presence. His heir Edward did not live long enough to reveal his father's qualities, but later biographers constructed the young King as the epitome of unrealized masculine kingship. As late as 1712, one writer describes the great promise of Edward: "He gave us an *Essay of Vertue*, tho' he liv'd not to give a *Pattern of it*" (*Observations* 110). John Hayward was another writer whose work *The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth* praises the king's "noble and high virtues . . . especially Clemencie, Courage, Care, and knowledge in affaires of state" (36-37). Published in 1630, Hayward's account participates in the Tudor mythologizing resurrected by Stuart politics. The Tudor dynasty (with the exception of Mary I) is presented as the ideal of monarchy. The reputation of Henry VIII as the ideal Renaissance prince was, at that time, the most prevalent image of him. Although the dynasty was established by his father, Henry VIII was represented as the manifestation of Tudor power. Seventeenth-century writers attempting to reintroduce what they saw as the Tudor virtues to the Stuart age sought a sense of continuity. The boy king Edward thereby became a pattern of masculine power, as Hayward praised his "noble and high virtues . . . especially Clemencie, Courage, Care and knowledge in affaires of state" (36-37). His future

military prowess was evident, according to Hayward, in “the great delight he tooke in representations of Battailes, Skirmishes, Assaults, and of all kinde of military exercises, his judgment was great either for errors or fine contruances in the field” (36-37). Though unable to participate in any military exercises, Edward is portrayed as having the potential for future excellence in the field through his ability to choose the candidates for his guard who are the most masculine, “of tall and comely stature, such as were either good archers or wrastlers or casters of the barre or leapers or runners or of some other man-like qualitie” (38). Edward’s plans for strengthening fortresses are also praised as evidence of his prowess in the arena of military strategy.

Besides constructing Edward as a “new” Henry VIII, writers also emphasized his spirituality and devotion to the Protestant religion and the Reformation. One Protestant work, *The Historie of the Defendours of the Catholique Faith*, (the term ‘Catholique’ being used in the general sense – in this case referring to the Protestant church), praises Edward as

a Prince composed all of goodnesse, hauing extraordinarie amount of holinesse, so abundant was Gods grace in this Prince, as thereby he was well fitted to finish the work of Reformation, yet wee may not giue the honour of the businesse to the King, but to God, who inspired him with this abundance of grace. (126-27)

The requirement of superior spirituality for a monarch created the necessity of describing Edward as chosen by God. In this aspect of praise for the boy king,

Hayward's description echoes epithets for the medieval monarchs when he emphasizes Edward's natural inclination to virtue:

To Clemencie he was much enclined, especially in matters of blood, and most especially if it were for Religion, a vertue so much the more esteemed, by how much it had beene less vsed before, insomuch that albeit hee was most earnestly affected to that religion wherein hee had beene brought vp (37)

Clemency, a virtue praised in medieval monarchs, is a feminized virtue because it was usually associated with queens, who acted as intermediaries between the king and his subjects. The medieval representation of clemency emphasized it as a Christ-like behavior, so the use of it in reference to a boy-king or a queen regnant would serve to reiterate the strength of the monarch, regardless of age or sex. The praise of clemency is therefore the recognition of the monarch's proximity to God.

Consistently maintaining the theme of sainthood, Hayward also emphasizes the manner in which Edward confronted his last illness, almost comparing his sickness to a kind of patient martyrdom, following a physical battle.

So the King hauing long wrasteld with the lingring and tormenting sicknesse, at the last his spirits yeelded to the malice of his disease, which as with great patience hee did endure, so with no lesse pietie did he end it; many feruent prayers hee made, both for himselfe and for the people of his Realmes, and some when he was

esteemed almost past sense, and so spent his last breath in
committing his sweet soule into the Almightyes hand which had
created it. (178)

When the monarch was a personage whom the ruling classes considered to be potentially weak as a ruler, both for age and health reasons, the rhetoric of England's Catholic and chivalric past served to create an atmosphere of religious mystique and heroic ability. In England's patriarchal society, the members of the society considered weakest – women and children – presented a definite problem when they were the heirs to the throne. By presenting Edward as a boy with great potential – both as a warrior and a king, even a saint – anxieties regarding his ability to rule may have been assuaged, albeit only temporarily. In the absence of physical superiority, intellectual and/or spiritual superiority had to be emphasized for the purpose of strengthening the impact of Tudor mythology. Edward is compared in some texts to the young Christ, disputing in the temple with the older scholars. *The Historie of the Defendours of the Catholique Faith* (1627), described Edward as

a Prince composed all of goodnesse, hauing extraordinarie amount of holinesse, so abundant was Gods grace in this Prince, as thereby he was well fitted to finish the work of Reformation, yet wee may not giue the honour of the businesse to the King, but to God, who inspired him with this abundance of grace. (126-27)

Edward on the throne of England is the author's example that "God decreeth the

good and deuiseth the means.” (126) Perhaps the author, recognizing the probability from those who may have had concerns with the king’s age, refers to religious doctrine to justify the Tudor reign, even if it is represented by a child. The presence of a child on the throne is explained as part of God’s plan for England. *Observations and Remarks* in 1712 calls the King “the true St. Edward” (109). The author further praises him for his “Gravity”, sweetness of temper, bounteous nature; “All Graces were in him . . . he appear’d like a *Miracle* of a Man.” (109). *The Historie of the Defendors of the Catholique Faith* claimed that Edward’s death had a divine purpose: “God took Edward in order for the martyrs to give up their lives in order to save many through the Gospel’s spreading” (180-81). As a religious reformer, Edward is compared to King Josias of Judah: though both intended reformation and were fortunate, Edward has the greater honor. Edward succeeded in reformations in five years, while Josias succeeded in thirty-one years (187-89). In addition, Edward exceeded Josias in “leaving to posterity that most famous Defendresse the Ladie *Elizabeth* his Sister, who afterwards did prove the glory of her sex, and the admiration of all the world” (190).² *The life and death of Queene Elizabeth* (1639) presents Edward as “more good thē great, / With love, faith, zeale, and piety repleat”. The “Faire Elizabeth” and her brother “beyond their ages knew Grace and Religion” and “grew in favour with both God and men.” (A5_v).

2

The fact that Edward named Lady Jane Grey as his successor is attributed by the author that to the false influence of Northumberland and Suffolk.

Their sister Mary I presented a twofold difficulty for the seventeenth-century writers. Mary was Henry VIII's inheritor as well, but her reign and attempted Counter-Reformation secured animosity against Catholics as well as women monarchs, as the burnings at Smithfield and the Queen's marriage to Philip of Spain threatened the country with civil unrest. In the interests of preserving the idea of the Tudor dynasty, some writers chose to either construct Mary as part of God's plan to test his chosen people, or as a pious and decent woman wrongfully advised by a false religion and corrupt counselors. The representation of Mary I proved to be problematic for the author of *The life and death of Queene Elizabeth* (1639); she was the half-sister of Elizabeth and Edward and the Queen of England and should be praised as such. Yet, she was also a Catholic, and a persecutor of Protestants. The author blames the influence of the Pope and the Catholic faith on Mary:

She was a Princesse of a gentle nature,
But forced teaching her good mind did sway
Quite from *Elizabeths* and *Edwards* way. (A5_v)

Christopher Lever's 1607 version of Elizabeth's life during Mary's reign, *Queen Elizabeth's Teares*, commented on those who influenced Mary: "These Instigators fill her hands with blood, / (In all respects save this a vertuous Queen)"(B3_r) .

Lever presents a scene between the two sisters when Elizabeth vows her innocence, and Mary's natural goodness moves her to believe Elizabeth and free her. Though this representation is highly unlikely (if not impossible), Lever,

writing four years after Elizabeth's death, might have perceived an audience then unwilling to hear negative representations of Mary because of national reverence for Elizabeth and the fact that King James' mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was a Catholic. Lever's representation of Mary creates the queen as more of a victim than a tyrant.

The History of the Life, Bloody Reign, and Death of Queen Mary (1682) announces its purpose of telling the history of the "Popish Queen" Mary I "for the use and benefit of Protestants, to establish them in their Religion against Popery" (A2_r). According to this account, a dire sequence of events for England begins with Mary's birth, which was not celebrated with any great joy; some "learned men of the Age"

attributed it to a Divine Impulse that secret wrought in the minds of men, possessing them with a fear, she was rather given for a Scourage to this Nation, then for a Blessing, which afterwards was sadly verified, as by her Reign will appear: yet was she Baptized with all imaginable Grandure and Ceremony. (2)

Mary's piety and distaste for pomp is remarked upon; rather than enjoying the grandeur of being a princess, "she would often wish herself in a Nunnery amongst the Nuns; saying, that they lived a more contented Life in their poor Cells, then Princes at the height of their Glory" (4). This comment may be double-edged; the author might be admiring Mary's piety but also criticizing her for scorning the role to which she was born. Her desire for a religious life thereby made her unfit

for a political one, to the great detriment of England.

The Historie of the Defendors of the Catholique Faith (1627) comments that Mary “made the most miserable change in the state of *England*, that ever that Nation endured” because her attempt to reclaim the country for Roman Catholicism resulted in her “extinguishing the lights of Truth, whereby men were directed in the way of life, obscuring all knowledge in the mist of *Ignorāce* and blacke error” (191-92). The author writes “in favour of *Q. Marie*” when he describes her as having “extraordinary inducements of nature” because

God hauing giuen her so much Maiesty, and princely spirit, as might serve to rule the greatest command in the world; and if to her other gifts, God had giuen her the knowledge of his *Truth*, she had well deserued to haue bene named most excellēt, and to haue exceeded all the famous Queenes in the world, save her sister the most famous *Elizabeth*, who hath exceeded her and al the world in the honour of true deserving. (192-93).

Mary’s adherence to the Roman Catholic faith kept her in spiritual ignorance, and as a result she is denied the knowledge necessary to prevent the inevitable direction of natural gifts, which are “moved to euill by their own proper motion”(195). The “motion of grace” necessary to counteract the evil tendencies of human nature is not given to Mary, so “therefore was the Queene more dangerous”; her religious zeal, along with “her great spirit and other naturall indicments, spurring her forward in her euill passage, whereby she became enemie

to her own self, moving her self to her own destruction" (195). What made Queen Mary "monstrous" in this particular author's representation is her oversight of corruption; "too much credit she gave to evil counsel" in the form of Gardiner and Bonner, "who her good nature much abused." (196). According to this account, as a queen Mary had two detriments as a ruler: she was a Roman Catholic, and a woman. The author comments, "I pittie the frailty of their Sexe, which having but weak judgement, is the less able to make resistance against strong temptations"(246). The "Romish doctrine" converts women in something less than human, changing

the innocent disposition of gentle Ladies and Princesses into a
Leonine and *Tigerlike* savageness; that *Lupa Romana*, which as
 shee first fostered *Romulus* with the teats of a shee-Wolfe, so
 nurseth now all others with the like milke, and propoundeth the
 highest rewards of heaven to them that will most play the hell-
 hounds upon earth . . . (247)

Even as unnatural in the author's eyes is Mary's persecution of her half-sister Elizabeth. Since Elizabeth was destined by God to inherit the kingdom and defend the true faith, Mary's crime against her is even more heinous. This Protestant tract emphasizes the corruption of the female both mentally and physically; without the true faith, her female nature follows its course, her weaker mental faculties prevent her from true understanding, even as her body becomes bestial in nature.

Even with some expressions of sympathy, Mary Tudor becomes in these writings the wicked antithesis of her Protestant successor Elizabeth, the rightful heir to the crowne who “was chiefe, not onley for the holiness of life, but also for her eminence of place, and dignity . . .” (215).

. . . So we may say, that these two sisters, *Queene Elizabeth* and *Queene Marie*, haue diuided the Renowne of the world, *Queen Elizabeth* (like the day) hauing got the better part of fame, honourable and holy remembrance: and *Queene Marie* her sister (like the night) the worse part a name of blood, which being vttered, reduceth to memorie the stories of blood; and how the Saints of God were slaughtered, whereby shee her selfe is made more blacke than night, in giuing her name so blacke and so bad a remembrance. (250-51)

Mary and Elizabeth are compared to Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob; Elizabeth (‘Mercie’) is called “the blessed protector” while Mary (‘Misery’) is a “bloody persecutor” (251). In the short work *Memoirs of Queen Mary’s Days*, written after Elizabeth’s death, Mary broke her word to the English people when she promised that she would make no alteration in religion. Again, her part in the persecution of Elizabeth by Gardiner is mentioned, and the author laments the “Burnings, the Scorchings, the Tortures and the Flames” that should never be forgotten, particularly in the time of royal succession; Mary’s story is one of “the sad Effects which follow a *POPISH SUCCESSOR* enjoying the *Crown of England*.”

Mary's crimes against England, and her sister Elizabeth, ensure that her only renown will be of intolerance and bloodshed, rebellion and loss.

She lieth buried in *Westminster*, without any Monument or
Remembrance at all, as in her Life She deserved none, so in Her
Death Her Memory is rotten; a just Reward for Her who was so
cruel and bloody

This work eulogizing Mary Tudor has as its purpose the revelation of "the blessings of a Protestant successor" in this case "Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory." *The History of the Life, Bloody Reign and Death of QUEEN MARY* (1682) describes Mary as the tyrant against whom the Christian Martyrs took a stand:

. . . now the Blessed Martyrs come to Act their parts upon the
Tragick Stage, and in a Spiritual warfare, to fight under the
Victorious Banner of their Captain the Lord Jesus, against all his
powerful Enemies *and through him that loved them were more
than conquerous*. . . (109)

In this retelling, Elizabeth was the savior of the country by bringing England back to the 'true faith'. According to John Guy, Mary's death was not greeted with public mourning, but rather "the popular mood switched immediately to optimism, though this was partly the result of a propaganda exercise" (250). In the seventeenth-century version, Mary's death was represented as the heralding of the "English Deborah" Elizabeth. The refashioning of the Tudor image defined

Mary as the foil to Elizabeth, who symbolized a return to order.

Elizabeth was not the only subject of biography and discussion in the seventeenth century, as these examples indicate. However, as an unmarried female she occupied a unique position in the presentation of spiritual and powerful monarchy. As a Tudor, she was perceived as having the best capabilities of Henry VIII; as a woman, her virgin state and connection to God helped her transcend the 'female weaknesses' that were perceived to be part of the cause of Mary's failures. The issue of gender anxiety and the attempts to address apparent conflicts in ideology would result in the breakdown of a complex system of reference. The emphasis of the elaborate Elizabethan propaganda machine had been transformed from divine right and holy virginity to dynastic inheritance. The Queen had been exceptional not because of her virginity, but because she was a Tudor, the daughter of a great king. The Catholic imagery of the virgin warrior was replaced in the Stuart iconography by the 'mother of her people,' or rather a 'spinster aunt' (albeit a very powerful one), unmarried because of her devotion to England. These elaborate systems of mythologizing the Queen, however, did not attempt to raise consciousness about the subjugation of women in English society. Elizabeth was the exception to the rule, not evidence that the rule should be changed. Yet women writers in the seventeenth century called upon the image of the late Queen as proof of women's ability and worth, both spiritually and politically.

'The glory of our Sex': Women Writers Re-presenting the Queen

Women's views on Elizabeth I began to appear more after her death; the only women who published writings on her during the Queen's lifetime were Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and Mary, Queen of Scots. The misogyny of the Stuarts was countered by the appearance of more women writing and publishing, and these writers joined the established tradition of the praise of Queen Elizabeth. The Swetnam pamphlet controversy that began in 1615 contributed further to the making of Elizabethan mythology. When Joseph Swetnam published *The Arraignment of Lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women*, he began a debate that brought women writers into the fray (Henderson and McManus 16). The pamphlet *Esther hath hanged Haman* was published in 1617 by a writer using the pseudonym Ester Sowernam, "neither Maide, Wife, nor Widdowe, yet really all." In addition to several examples of virtuous and able women from both history and the bible, Sowernam draws upon the ideal example of the worthy woman:

And that I may name no more (since in one only were comprised all the qualities and endowments that could make a person eminent), Elizabeth our late Sovereign, not only the glory of our Sex, but a pattern for the best men to imitate, of whom I will say no more but that while she lived, she was the mirror of the world, so then known to be, and so still remembered, and ever will be.
(Henderson and McManus 230-31)

Elizabeth became “a highly visible symbol of women’s potential, a symbol which remained efficacious even after her death” (Henderson and McManus 21).

In 1611, Amelia Bassano Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* opened with a tribute to the late Queen. Lanyer had been in Elizabeth’s court; she mentions in one of the dedicatory poems that “great *Elizaes* favor blest my youth”; and a contemporary source indicates, “She hath been favored much of her mati [majestie, Queen Elizabeth] and of mani noble men & hat had great giftes & bin moch made of” (xviii). Lanyer indicates that she will “write [the] never dying fame of Lady Margaret, the Dowager Countess of Cumberland, since Queen Elizabeth has died:

Sith *Cynthia* is ascended to that rest
 Of endlesse joy and true Eternitie,
 That glorious place that cannot be exprest
 By any wight clad in mortalitie,
 In her almightie love so highly blest,
 And crown’d with everlasting Sov’raintie;
 Where Saints and Angells do attend her Throne,
 And she gives glorie unto God alone. (51)

The praise of Elizabeth would be first and foremost, but since she is deceased, Lanyer has chosen a living subject for praise. Lanyer’s description of Elizabeth places her in the highest levels of heaven, “crown’d with . . . Sov’raintie” like the Virgin Mary. The English Queen has transformed into the Queen of heaven,

attended by saints and angels giving glory to God (51). The verse presents the traditionally accepted image of the late Queen: the virtuous saint, crowned in heaven, who had become a celebrated heroine in the company of “the valiant Boadicea,” Saint Helena (mother of the emperor Constantine), St. Edith, Eleanor of Castile, and Elizabeth of York (McManus 229-230).

The most eloquent and detailed praise of the Queen by a woman writer was published in 1630. Diana Primrose wrote *A Chaine of Pearle, or a memoriall of the peerles Graces, and Heroick Vertues of Queen Elizabeth, of Glorious Memory*, a series of ten short poems, each celebrating a different virtue of Elizabeth. Praising the virtue of the monarch was a standard poetic convention in the Renaissance, but with a woman ruler the necessity of the virtuous image, even for a deceased monarch, was imperative. In the past, civic pageants like Sidney’s *The Lady of May* and earlier morality plays transformed the seven cardinal virtues into the attributes of a prince and “Protestantized” them. According to Primrose, Elizabeth was the paragon of the cardinal virtues: Justice, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Added to the cardinal virtues are Clemency and Science (Knowledge), virtues political and intellectual that complimented the theological virtues. The ten pearls are also a combination of desirable masculine and feminine traits, and represent spiritual, intellectual, and political virtues. Primrose’s dedication to “All Noble Ladies and Gentlewomen” exhorts the female reader to praise the late Queen by emulating her virtues: “You shall erect a Trophie to her Name, / And crowne your selves with never-fading Fame” (A₃).

Primrose herself is praised for writing the chain and evoking the memory of Elizabeth. A second dedicatory poem written by Dorothy Berry addresses “the *Prime-Rose* of the Muses nine”

(In whose sweete Verse ELIZA’S fame Fame doth shine
 Like some resplendent Star in frosty night)
 Hast made thy Natiue Splendor far more bright;
 Since all they PEARLES are peerles-orient,
 And to thy selfe a precious Ornament. (A₃)

Praises for Elizabeth reflect upon the woman writer, but also on noblewomen in general; this extension from the specific to the general differs from the traditional male-authored praise of the Queen. Elizabethan panegyric strengthens the character of the woman writer as well as the (aristocratic) woman reader. The elevation of women’s virtues through a generally recognized icon, Elizabeth I, was necessitated by the misogyny of Jacobean culture.

According to the French ambassador, Beaumont, the king took pride in showing his contempt for women: “They are obliged to kneel before him when they are presented, he exhorts them openly to virtue, and scoffs with great levity at men who pay them honor.” (Hogrefe 142)

James apparently disliked and distrusted women, advising his son that women ‘are no other things else but *irritamenta libidinis*’ (Coward 122). Primrose’s collection indicates that as the Queen was an ornament to England through her

virtue, so her virtues in every woman ornament the female sex in general. The Induction to *A Chaine of Pearle* calls upon the Queen as “Great ELIZA, Englands brightest Sun, / The Worlds Renowne and Everlasting Lampe”(A₄) to accept her verses.

O Thou whose Name still raignes in all our hearts,

To whom are due, our ever-vowd Respects! (A₄)

Following the poetic convention, Primrose claims unworthiness to praise the Queen, but signs the Induction, “Thy Emperiall Majesties eternall Votary, Diana.” Primrose’s use of the word *votary*, a term which once referred to religious vows, signifies her as a poetic devotee of “Thou English Goddess, Empresse of our Sex.”

The pearls are discussed in order of importance, and form an image of Protestant purity. The first pearle described by Primrose is Religion, which could also be the cardinal virtue of Faith.

The goodliest Pearle in faire *Eliza* 's Chaine;

Is true Religion, which did chiefly gaine

A Royall Lustre to the rest and ti'de

The Hearts of ALL to her when *Mary* di'de. (B₁)

She identifies Elizabeth as a defender of the true faith who was tolerant, though the realm was “infected much / With Superstition.” Patient and gentle with the Catholics, Elizabeth “swaid the Scepter with a Ladies hand” until the ‘Romists’ rebelled (B₁). After the Pope’s Bull of excommunication and the rebellion of

Northumberland and Westmoreland, she had to make stricter laws. With a lion's heart she defeated the Pope and "took the Gospells part"(B₁), and neither Spain nor Rome could ever prevail against England. Primrose echoes a standard convention, presenting England as the New Jerusalem under God's protection.

The second pearl was Chastity, "wherein shee had no peere" – it is the second most important of the Queen's virtues.

And though for Beauty SHEE an Angell was,
 And all our Sex did therein farre surpass;
 Yet did her her pure vnspotted *Chastitie*
 Her heavenly Beauty rarely beautifie. (3)

Though Elizabeth has suitors like the duc d'Alençon, and King Philip of Spaine, "Her impregnable Virginitie / Throughout the World Her Fame did dignify" (4). Primrose does not term the pearl *Virginitie*, but *Chastitie* – the subject of her poem is a Protestant queen, and her praise does not emphasize the Catholic virtue of abstinence. Rather, the term *chastity*, which the Protestants applied to married women and widows as well as unmarried virgins, is employed. Yet Primrose's warning against concupiscence has a decidedly medieval tone that recalls the warning against sexual desire from *Hali Meïðhad*:

And this may be a Document to all,
 this Pearle of *Chastitie* not to let fall:
 Into the filthy durt of foule Desires,
 Which Satan kindles with his Hell-bred fires:

For wheter it be termed Virginall
 In Virgins, or in Wiues stil'd Conjugall,
 Or Viduall in Widdowes, God respects
 All equally, and all alike affects. (4)

The adoption of the old language of disgust regarding sexuality, which would later be revived by Puritan misogynists, represents a return to the medieval age. By discussing chastity as a virtue advisable for women single, married, and widowed, Primrose emphasizes the mystique of virginity while simultaneously adhering to Protestant dogma. The worldly representation of the ideal of chastity, Elizabeth had set the example for all Englishwomen to follow.

The third pearl, Prudence, was evident in "her wise counsel." Her choice of councilors exemplified her wisdom; although "her Wit and Spirit were divine; / Counsels (*Shee* knew) were best, where more combine" (5). Their loyalty to and love for the Queen guaranteed their fidelity to her. She ruled prudently and, like Argus, foresaw the dangers from Spain and moved to protect her people from them (5).

This Gift in her was much more emminent,
 In that it is so rarely incident
 To our weake Sex: And as a precious stone,
 Deepe set in Gold, shines fairer, then alone,
 Or set in Lead, so did all Graces shine
 In *Her* more gloriously, because Divine . . . (5)

Mirroring her culture's view of women's inferiority, Primrose comments that because Elizabeth was a woman, her wisdom is that much more impressive and unique. The explanation for the Queen's ability to rise above the weakness of her gender is attributed to her divinity:

For Kings are Gods, and Queenes are Goddesses
 On Earth, whose sacred Vertues best expresses
 Their true Divinitie: wherein, if *WEE*
 Them imitate, tis our Felicity.
 This Pearle of Prudence, then *Wee* all should prize
 Most highly, for it doth indeed comprise
 All Morall Vertues, which are resident
 In that blest soule, where this is president (5).

Like Elizabeth herself, Diana Primrose echoes the idea of the "exceptional woman"; however, considering that the poem's purpose is not only to praise the Queen but to exhort other women to mirror her actions, perhaps Primrose indicates that the virtues that elevated Elizabeth I would also prove her female audience to be as worthy as she through imitation.

The fourth pearl, of Temperance, appeared in her "self-governance"; as a young woman, Elizabeth had been given the nickname "sweet sister Temperance" by her pious brother King Edward VI.

Her Passions still *SHEE* checkt, and still *SHEE* made
 The World astonisht, that so vndismaid

SHEE did with equall Tenor still proceede

In one faire course, not shaken as a reed:

But built vpon the Rocke of Temperance . . . ³

She was not swayed by false hope, rash anger, love, hate, or the charms of the parasites who sought to endanger her by promising their loyalty, “. . . but deeming her best Treasures, / Her subiects Loue, which *SHEE* so well preserv’d / By sweete and milde Deameanor” (7). This praise is specifically gendered; she ruled not through intimidation or fear, but through the decidedly female attributes of sweetness and mildness, which would be used to describe a king only if he were a child, e.g. Edward VI. Because Elizabeth ruled with love and loyalty, her reign is thereby praised as an idyllic time:

O Golden Age! O blest and happie Years!

O Musicke sweeter then that of the Speares!

Which Prince and people mutually agree

In sacred concord, and sweete Symphonie! (7).

In presenting Elizabethan subjects as part of a symphony, Primrose indicates a monarchical harmony in which the people are an integral part. This might serve as a great contrast to Jacobean policy, in which the people had a decidedly lesser role in the representation of the king. James, not as visible to the common people as Elizabeth, lacked the connection with them that she had cultivated.

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beside this verse is Elizabeth’s motto, *Semper eadem* (“Always the same”).

The princely virtue of Clemency is the sixth pearl, and one that recalls the praise of medieval monarchs like Edward the Confessor. In addition, clemency is the virtue that is most godlike in the queen: “The Vertue which in *HER* did most renew / The Image of *Her* Maker . . .” (7). Her clemency was evident in her mercy towards transgressors, even though who “sought to vndermine / The Church and State, and did with Spaine combine” (7).

Yet *Her* Innate and princely *Clemencie*

Mov'd *Her* to pardon their Delinquencie,

Which sought *Her* Gracious Mercy, and repented

Their Misdemeanors, and their Crimes lamented.

So doth the Kingly Lyon with his foe,

Which once prostrate, he scornes to worke his woe. (7)

Two images converge in this verse: the godly virtue of clemency, praised particularly in saints and boy-kings, but also a female attribute: the queen as intercessor between the condemned and the law. Though she makes and represents the law, only she has the power to transcend it, to serve as intermediary and show mercy. Clemency is a particularly monarchical virtue, and probably the one that most closely matched gender expectations for women. However, Primrose contrasts the imagery of mercy with the potential for wrath and great power, using the image of the lion to recall Elizabeth's father Henry VIII and remind the reader of the punishment she could easily have administered to lawbreakers but chose not to.

The sixth pearl, Justice, was “her Kingdoms strongest Fort” (8).

According to Primrose, Justice supported Elizabeth’s crown, because lawlessness leads to chaos. If laws are not upheld, “a very Hell / of all Confusion and disorder would / Among all States ensue” (8). Those who were enemies to the realm, were “putrid members par’d away” before they could spread their blight to others (8).

Primrose claims that to write of such penalties for the Queen’s foes is a task

Unfit for Feminine hands, which rather loue
To write of pleasing subjects; then approue
The most deserved slaughtering of any;
Which justly cannot argue Tyranny. (8)

Undoubtedly knowing of the punishments for those who were convicted as traitors to the Elizabethan state, the author chooses to use gender as her excuse for not discussing the nature of those punishments. In this verse, she again mirrors her culture’s view of women (and women writers) by claiming that she would write entertaining verses; yet in the next two lines, she does indicate her approval of the “deserved slaughtering” of the traitors. The sixth pearl reveals more than the others the strict Protestantism of the document. The Pope has sent illustrated books of “his pretended Martyrs” out to sway people back to the Church of Rome. Primrose calls these books “fables, Chimaera’s, Phantasm’s, Dreams” that no one should heed, “For Cruelty and fond Credulity, / Are the maine Pillers of Romes Hierarchy” (9).

The Queen was endued with the seventh pearl, the virtue of Fortitude,

which revealed itself several times during her reign. Her bravery was apparent during the unsuccessful assassination attempt of Dr. Parry, who conspiring to kill the Queen, gained access to her as she walked in her garden. He approached her with a knife, but upon seeing her calm dignity and her resemblance to her grandfather Henry VII, he instead begged her for mercy: “The Wretch confest, that *Her Great Majestie / With strange amazement did him terrifie*”(9). So much grace had she that some who saw her thought her an angel. The event that did most “Illustrate Her, and in her, this whole Nation” is her courageous speech at Tilbury,

wher Shee did All beseech

Bravely to fight for England, telling them

That what their Fortune was, should Hers be then. (9)

Primrose emphasizes in this section Elizabeth’s masculine attributes: her bravery, her willingness, described in the famous Tilbury speech, to die with her soldiers, “even in the dust.” The account of her appearance and speech at Tilbury, part of Elizabethan legend by 1630, would have reminded readers of Elizabeth’s claim that “I may have the weak and feeble body of a woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too.” This claim of a masculine heart and kingly fortitude transcended gender and inspired the army, revealing

To all the World Her Magnanimity,

Whose haughtie Courage nought could terrify.

Well did *Shee* shew, Great Henry was her Sire,

Whom Europe did for Valor most admire. (9)

The praise of this masculine attribute continues a pattern throughout the work: the even distribution of qualities traditionally gendered.

Her excellent scholarship and intellectual abilities represent the eighth pearl, of Science. “Science” in this case indicates education and eloquence. Elizabeth’s extensive learning and ability with languages were qualities praised by her tutor Roger Ascham as well as others, and her intelligence was widely praised.

Then did the Goddess *Eloquence* inspire
 Her Royall Breast: *Apollo* with his *Lyre*,
 Ne’re made such Musicke; On her sacred lips
 Angells enthron’d, most Heavenly *Manna* sips. (10)
 Her last most Princely speech doth verify,
 How highly *shee* did England dignify. (11)

Not only the representative of England, the Queen was also the ambassador of the English language, and its most successful practitioner. Her intellectual abilities, usually a masculine attribute, indicate her worthiness as a Queen and might also be a commentary on the intellectual abilities of women in general. The Pauline doctrine against women’s speech is subtly addressed in this verse, as the 1601 address to Parliament, termed “the Golden Speech,” is described as dignifying England. In that speech, the Queen claimed that English subjects may have a better ruler, but none who loved them better than she.

According to Primrose, Elizabeth’s Patience – the ninth pearl – paved her way to the Crown. Patience could correspond with the cardinal virtue Hope.

Referring to her trials under Mary I, Primrose, comments that those troubles also taught her the pragmatics of queenship: “*Shee* was with many great Afflictions schoold” (11). Like Thomas Bentley, Primrose emphasizes Elizabeth as a Protestant saint, and her troubles as hagiographical legend. Her enemies sought her blood and plotted against her, and “in Prison the sweete *Saint* was pent” (11). Those enemies were prevented from destroying her by God

Who did *Susanna* from the Elders free,
 And at the last, gaue her, her Liberty.
 Thus by her patient bearing of the Crosse,
Shee reaped greatest Gaine from greatest Loss,
 (For he that looseth his blest liberty,
 Hath found a very Hell of misery:)
 By many Crosses thus *Shee* got the Crowne;
 To Englands Glory, and her great Renowne. (11)

By presenting Elizabeth as a long-suffering saint, Primrose emphasizes the legend of the Princess as chosen by God to rule England, and protected by Him throughout her persecution. The stories of Elizabeth’s persecution by Mary, though considerably mild compared to those who were burned at Smithfield, served to further extend the newly created Protestant saints’ legends, described in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*.

The tenth pearl was her Bounty, through which she blessed the nation.
 Primrose calls her “Englands Rose and Lillie” (both terms that were used to refer

to saints and virgins⁴) whose bounty was without peer. She aided other countries and rulers and thwarted the plans of the Spanish king:

So did *Shee* beate him with her Distaffe, so
 By Sea and Land *Shee* him did ouerthrow,
 Yea, so that Tyrant on his knees *Shee* brought,
 That of brave England Peace he beg'd, and thought
 Himselfe most happie, that by begging so
 Preserv'd all Spaine from Beggary and Woe.

Here al amazed my *Muse* sets up her rest,
 Adoring *HER* was so Divinely blest. (12)

The last image of Elizabeth in *A Chaine of Pearle* indicates the martial Protestantism of the Jacobean era. Describing Elizabeth's triumph over Philip II in terms both masculine and military, Primrose closes her tribute with the image of queenly power.

Many people, perceiving that the Jacobean and Carolinian courts lacked the emphasis on virtue that characterized the Elizabethan court might have seen in Primrose's poem an implied critique of the Stuarts. The Latin epigraph on the frontispiece of *A Chaine of Pearle* supports this hypothesis: "The rose gives honey to the bees who flee Aranea's poison." Perhaps Diana Primrose suggested that England would benefit from a return to Elizabethan virtues. Elizabeth's

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cf. *The Comparacyon of a Virgin and a Martyr*

generosity to others and her love of her people made her famous; she practiced the virtue of Charity. For these women writers, Elizabeth was not only a pattern of virtue, but evidence of the worth of women. According to Henderson and McManus, “The successful reign of Elizabeth I provided a highly visible symbol of women’s potential, a symbol which remained efficacious even after her death” (21).

However, the legend of the Queen did not have a strictly religious focus for everyone. The idea of Elizabeth as a shrewd and able politician, as well as a virtuous woman, also became part of English historiography. Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle, wrote a short essay about the late Queen in *The World’s Olio*, published in 1655.

Queen *Elizabeth* reigned long and happy; and though she cloathed her self in a Sheeps skin, yet she had a Lions paw, and a Foxes head; she strokes the cheekes of her Subjects with Flattery, whilst she picks their Purses; and though she seemed loth, yet she never failed to crush to death those that disturbed her waies.

Cavendish goes on to comment on Elizabeth’s loyalty to her counsellors, and her politicking with her favorites, never allowing them the upper hand, and using them against one another. Cavendish’s tribute does not mention any of the divinity imagery associated with Elizabeth and her virginity, but focuses on her political ability. In the seventeenth century, the Queen becomes a model for women’s capability rather than piety and virtue. Queen Mary I was the perfect

contrast for writers of this century – the initially able female monarch, but a Catholic, and therefore unacceptable, having been corrupted by her faith.

Ruling a country as a single woman and earning the praise of even those who professed to be her enemies, Elizabeth proved herself politically able to deal with misogyny by working within its assumptions.

Pope Sixtus V was especially impressed. “Just see how well she governs!” he declared in 1588; “She is only a woman, only the mistress of half an island, and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the Empire, by all!” Among her contemporaries, Catherine de Medici could not prevent civil wars in France, and Mary Stuart was hounded out of her kingdom after only seven years of personal rule. Francis Bacon drew the lesson: “The government of a woman has been a rare thing at all times; felicity in such government a rarer thing still; felicity and long continuance together the rarest thing of all.” For a female rule, mere survival was a tremendous achievement. (Haigh 173)

She never claimed to be like other women, but fostered the image of herself as exceptional, and that tactic was successful. For a female monarch to rule as queen required her to be an example of ‘masculine virtue’; therefore, as a woman, the queen must control the ‘difficult’ female body (so often perceived as the cause of humankind’s downfall through temptation and sin), a feat that would require the kind of control of the passions with reason indicative of an ideal Renaissance

monarch.

Despite the Protestantism of the court and the queen, the Roman Catholic background of English religion before the Great Schism influenced the public perception, and presentation, of Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth herself asked Mary for instruction in Roman Catholicism (though she did not convert), and no doubt was familiar with Roman Catholic doctrine in the English court of her childhood. After she became Queen, in her role as Supreme Governour of the Church Elizabeth required vestments for the clergy that, according to Patrick Collinson, differed only slightly from Roman Catholic vestments. She was reported to have kept a crucifix in her chamber and had an animosity toward the concept of married clergy, expressly forbidding wives of the clergy from her court. Her adamant refusals to pursue thorough reforms in the Anglican church, and to actively persecute Roman Catholics (at least for the first part of her reign), may be indicative of an early Catholic influence.

Though the Catholic doctrine of the superiority of chastity was no longer central to the religious viewpoint of the nation, the belief in the superiority of reason over passion – the Renaissance social doctrine – resulted in a continual elevation of virginity over marriage, even the concept of chaste marriage taught by the Protestants. The self-control required of those who chose to deny their physical desires for a more spiritual level of existence still inspired great respect and admiration. Even though the Queen governed a non-Catholic country, the perceptions regarding virginity – particularly female virginity – had already been

firmly in place for centuries. The Queen's virginity therefore became the virtue that enabled her to rule successfully without a king in a patriarchal society. By the end of the seventeenth century, the image of the Queen that remained would be the one penned by Camden, emphasizing her secular accomplishments while referring to the mystique of her unmarried status. People retained the notion of her uniqueness, spirituality, and importance as a religious figure. The images of the Queen change according to each particular era's view of women. Although during the Victorian era Elizabeth became something of a jealous spinster figure, while Mary Queen of Scots became a romantic feminine heroine, the Camden image has survived the longest. Representations of the Queen in the twentieth century vary, vacillating between the Victorian representation (*Elizabeth and Essex, the Virgin Queen*), the Camden image (*Elizabeth R*) and the politically constructed version (*Shakespeare in Love, Elizabeth*). After the seventeenth century began emphasizing Elizabeth as a Protestant champion, but more of a political than a spiritual figure, the mystique surrounding the term "virginity" has lost its previous connotations. The elaborate iconography designed for her in the sixteenth century vanished, and what remains refers only to her rejection of sexual activity. The meaning of "The Virgin Queen" in the twentieth century has lost a wealth of meaning from the reduction of the term, but in Elizabeth's time, and quite a while after, it described a woman of such strength and control that she would be considered nearly divine.

Conclusion

Though Queen Elizabeth I has been the subject of many literary and historical studies, few have concentrated on the subject of virginity itself. Contemporary representations focus primarily on the Queen's virginity as indicative of her lack of experience, both marital and sexual, and her status as an exceptional woman. The mystique of virginity, originating in the world of antiquity and appropriated by early Christianity, gave specialized status to the virgin woman, equating her with men on the spiritual plane. The lives of virgin saints attest to the power of virginity and control of the physical body that enabled the soul to withstand temptations. As the fourth-century Christians adopted asceticism as a way of life, the emphasis on chastity became more pronounced, until entire communities of chaste religious became commonplace in the Catholic Church. In addition, the perceived power of virginity enabled single women to live within the Church and profess religious callings. Though Pauline doctrine emphasizes (and re-emphasizes) the inferiority of women because of their sexuality, the denial of that sexuality through virginity transformed single women into virgin warriors for Christ.

Though Protestantism in England soon eradicated the opportunity for women to live as single religious, the view of virginity that dominated the Greco-Roman world and Catholic Christianity remained a residual influence on popular and aristocratic views of virginity. Protestantism advocated marriage and children

for women, dissuading them from lives of virginity and even producing documents indicating the health benefits of childbirth and regular sexual intercourse: Desiderius Erasmus' *The Woman in Childbed* (1519), Henry Bullinger's *The Christian State of Matrimony* (1541), Eucharius Rosselin's *The Birth of Mankind, Otherwise named the Woman's Book* (1540), Thomas Becon's *Book of Matrimony* (1564), Christopher Hooke's *The Childbirth* (1590), and Alexander Niccholes, *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving* (1616) (Aughterson 105-124). Yet in the background of these treatises, the idealization of virginity had been established for centuries, and remained influential when England was ruled by an unmarried queen.

From her accession to the throne in 1558 to the end of her last marriage negotiation in 1582, Elizabeth participated in the game of royal courtship. Her virginity, expected of a young unmarried woman, was part of her desirability as a wife as well as a queen. However, once it became apparent that Elizabeth would not marry, and anxieties over the succession increased, the Queen's image took on a decidedly pre-Protestant influence. Poets and writers of popular texts, like Thomas Bentley's *Monument of Matrones*, viewed Elizabeth as a true "Daughter of Zion," Christ's earthly spouse, born to uphold the 'true religion' in England and so devoted to her people that she gave up her own personal desires in order to be a wife and mother to her country. Courtier poets elevated the Queen as a Petrarchan heroine beloved of her loyal servants; Sir Walter Raleigh would follow this conceit in his attempt to win back Elizabeth's favor, *The Ocean to Cynthia*. Sir Philip

Sidney and his sister Mary, the Countess of Pembroke, proclaimed the Queen's virginity as part of her character as a goddess on earth, as she was transformed from a marriageable queen to a Vestal Virgin and the returned form of Astrea, goddess of justice and wisdom. Elizabeth's idealized and apotheosized image reached even further heights in Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, which addressed all identities of the Queen: beloved and desirable lady, virgin huntress, and the absent yet always present Queen of Faery (a decidedly Marian figure), the model of holiness, temperance, and chastity and the ideal of monarchy.

While Elizabeth lived, the mystery of her virginity was part of her iconography, and continued past her death in elegies and various tributes to her reign. The popular excitement over James I's reign removed Elizabeth from dominant consciousness, and she became part of residual culture herself as patriarchal English society celebrated the new King. Though elegies and tributes to her in 1603 and several years after comment on the mystique of her virginity, by the end of Charles I's reign, the Queen's image had become a model for king/queenship, and her virginity was much less emphasized as anti-Catholic sentiment permeated Protestant-authored texts. As the Stuart era progressed, and the reign of James' son Charles I became more unpopular, Elizabeth was resurrected as anti-Stuart propaganda, and affectionate remembrances of 'Good Queen Bess' as well as reconstructions of her as a divine mediator for England permeated criticisms of Stuart rule. The increase in women writers in the seventeenth century saw the adoption of the Queen as the model of women's

ability. As her image became appropriated by a variety of writers, the mystique of virginity disappeared from these later representations of her; in fact, the emphasis on Elizabeth's virginity as an aspect of her monarchical power did not long survive her. Eventually the epithet "The Virgin Queen" became associated only with Elizabeth I, though the meanings of virginity from antiquity and Catholicism had long since passed out of English cultural consciousness. The epithet now refers to the Queen's unmarried status, and contemporary understanding of the mystique of virginity does not include the images of power and ability long associated with female chastity.

In the twentieth century, the phenomenon of a sixteenth-century woman ruling a country is still perceived as an anomaly; in this at least, Elizabeth continues to be perceived as exceptional. For the sixteenth century, however, the residual mystery of virginity and the traditional respect for it formed part of the Queen's self-representation and her representation by others. Her virginity was an important aspect of her reign: had she not been viewed as virtuous and virginal, she could have lost her throne as Mary Queen of Scots did. Though initially her virginity was an expected attribute for a woman on the international marriage market, as her reign progressed and it became apparent that she would not marry, the iconography of her virginity returned to previous ages, when a virgin woman could be perceived as a warrior for Christ, an earthly angel, or a powerful king.

Recovering the richness of that image and revealing its full power is imperative for a thorough understanding of virginity the way Elizabeth I's subjects

would have perceived it. The full mythological significance of virginity enabled the Queen to transcend, at least ideologically, the limitations placed on her by the patriarchy. As Helen Hackett suggests, Elizabeth was not a replacement for the Virgin Mary in a Protestant culture. It is my contention that through her virginity she was perceived as a model of monarchy: not the Virgin Mary, but a figure who behaves not only as Mary, but also as the legendary King Arthur. Like Arthur, Elizabeth became an apotheosized figure, present now and in the past, an idea to be called upon, as she was during the reigns of James I and Charles I. As the centuries progressed, the views of the “Virgin Queen” became more and more reductive as the mysteries of virginity disappeared, to be replaced by questions regarding her physical virginity. This study seeks to recreate the original force of the image of virginity, how it affected the perception and representation of Queen Elizabeth I, and how it unfortunately became subsumed in politics.

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