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Title: Queen Elizabeth I and Her Androgynous Public Persona

Queen Elizabeth I of England (c. 1533-1603) has attracted many historians. She was the last Tudor to carry on Henry VIII's bloodline and rule England. She has often been condemned for her actions as queen, such as remaining unmarried and having horrific mood swings. Elizabethan writers Sir Francis Bacon and William Camden portrayed Elizabeth as a successful monarch, despite what had been categorized as her flaws. Some three hundred years later, Elizabethan scholars painted Elizabeth as an unstable monarch, blaming it on the fact that she was a woman. However, more recently, Carole Levin has offered Elizabethan historiography a new view—that Elizabeth was both a king and queen, for she could not deny her biological sex, but needed to act male in order to survive. Therefore, Levin portrays Elizabeth as having two body politics, one female and one male. Elizabeth invents the female body politic, for she did not buy into the patriarchal hierarchy. Instead, she created a body politic that would not make her forget her gender, but allowed her to use her femininity in government affairs.

But what can't be ignored is Elizabeth's acknowledgment of both her femininity and royalty, which had been defined as masculine or primarily a male role. As Levin points out, she did utilize both traits; however, it is the objective of this work to argue that Elizabeth combined them into one and created an androgynous persona. Elizabeth herself made efforts to demonstrate her femininity and royalty through her writings, speeches, and daily actions. Her writings, speeches, and erratic behavior indicate a continual use of her femaleness, or acting how the males around her expected, as well as an emphasis on her royal heritage show her as an androgynous monarch. Thus, the sources for this study will be defined in two categories: first, those that show Elizabeth was acting feminine, or passive and polite, and second those that show Elizabeth employing royal traits—traits commonly defined as active and demanding. Elizabeth's androgynous persona set her apart from all traditional stereotypes of monarchy, and consequently redefined the role of a queen—a queen could now rely on herself to make decisions, instead of having to do as the male councilors ordered.

Abstract Approved: Deborah Welsh
(Thesis Advisor Signature)

(A succinct summary of the thesis not to exceed 300 words.)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

England's Queen Elizabeth I has remained a popular topic among English and early modern historians for centuries. Numerous works have commemorated her reign and her donation to history. Moreover, historians from all fields reference Elizabeth, for she is an historical icon to all. Her endeavors such as exploration, the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and her most frequently mentioned choice not to marry, but to claim that she was married to her country piqued many people's interests. Unfortunately for Elizabeth, historians often overlook her role in redefining royalty and the specific role of a queen. From her birth, she was not an ordinary sixteenth-century woman: she was the daughter of a controversial king. Henry VIII's controversy set the foundation of Elizabeth's forty-five year reign. However, recent historiography has begun to apply gender theory to Elizabeth's monarchy which has resulted in more analyses on Elizabeth being both the queen and king of England.

In this study, I will apply various gender theories and examine Elizabeth's public persona through her writings and interactions with England. I will show that Elizabeth created an androgynous persona in order to succeed and survive. Androgyny has been termed by theorist Rosmarie Tong as the idea that a person can exist exhibiting both feminine and masculine characteristics; it does not emphasize one gender over the other.[1] Elizabeth was not a proto-feminist, putting women's rights above other policies, but she did create a persona that relied on her royal heritage, her father's legacy, and her biological femininity—

[1] Rosmarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 31.

making her neither queen nor king, but ruler.[2] Her persona played a large role in Elizabeth's success as queen for forty-five years--by defying all known sixteenth-century stereotypes.

The primary sources for this study will be primarily Elizabeth's personal writings: letters, poems, speeches, and popular quotes. Her talent as an elegant writer and an extraordinary rhetorician make her writings a very valuable source to this work. The specific pieces that I used exemplify her androgynous persona. I will also use many first-hand descriptions of Elizabeth from her contemporaries, such as ambassadors, courtiers, or other people at her court. The descriptions used in this work demonstrate how the people surrounding her reacted to her persona.

I will also define the excerpts as demonstrating royal and/or feminine characteristics. Since monarchs were usually male, historians have generally placed royalty in a masculine category. In this study, characteristics of the term royalty are usually assumed to be in the possession of a demanding and active nature, and also have a tendency to consider women mentally inapt, especially when it relates to government,[3] whereas femininity will be defined as being passive, polite, and limiting one's self to the predetermined roles of wife and mother—and of course inferior to men.[4] Furthermore, Elizabeth had to deal with the sixteenth century religious ideal that Eve was Adam's helper, which translated into all women not having the ability to be first in the power chain.[5] This religious ideal also placed

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[2] She used the title "Queen" because there was not another acceptable term, but as this study will indicate, she was not merely a queen.

[3] I used the section on politics in the early modern period from Mendelson and Crawford's work to help be narrow my scope of what royalty meant in sixteenth-century England. Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 345-347.

[4] Again, I used Mendelson and Crawford's work to narrow my scope of what the accepted definition of femininity and womanhood were for England during Elizabeth's time. Of course their entire work is dedicated to women, but the chapter on context and women (pages 15-75) explained clearly the differences between women and men. Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 36-37.

[5] Charles T. Wood, "The First Two Queens Elizabeth, 1464-1503," *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. by Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 121.

much emphasis on reproduction.[6] These definitions apply to Elizabeth's androgynous persona because she incorporated both sets of traits into her identity. She was not afraid to be a monarch, while still attaching herself to many of the traits of a woman.

In dissecting Elizabeth's persona, I had to understand what makes a person's image. John Martin, in *Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe*, discusses how images were constructed in the early modern period. He concludes that identity is not equivalent to the self, for the self is an image.[7] He also claims that culture helps determine one's self because an image is subjected to the codes of cultural, political, and social relations.[8] Elizabeth, for example, was a creation of her society. She took both gender roles as they pertained to cultural, political, and social relations, and fashioned an image that reciprocated those ideals. Elizabeth was aware of the surrounding culture and constructed an image that would appease her society.

Unfortunately, Elizabethan historiography has habitually glanced over the importance of that image. Elizabethan historians have been frequently concerned with how she came to the throne of England, instead of how she remained an unmarried ruler in the sixteenth century. There are two main schools of thought: pro-Elizabeth and anti-Elizabeth. Anti-Elizabeth historiography does not use gender theory and is typically biographical; it only examines the material from one angle, and leads to the traditional conclusion that she succeeded only because of the men that surrounded her. Pro-Elizabeth historiography incorporates gender theory and concludes that Elizabeth succeeded because of her monarchial abilities.

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[6] Reproduction also was the epitome of femininity. It was believed that children were the only reason women were created. Wood, "The First Two Queens Elizabeth," 124.
[7] John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe," *The American Historical Review* 102 (1997), 1320.
[8] Martin, "Inventing Sincerity," 1317.

Anti-Elizabeth studies take Elizabeth's words and actions at face value and report them as such. Anti-Elizabeth biographers Christopher Haigh and Wallace MacCaffrey argue that Elizabeth was a show-off and is only remembered because of the men, mainly Burghley and Walsingham who surrounded her. For instance, Haigh writes that Elizabeth's wardrobe was a ploy to distract attention from of her failures and turn the attention back to her. James Anthony Froude, a nineteenth century historian, began as a fan of Elizabeth, but after his research he concluded, "Lord Burghley was the solitary author of Elizabeth's and England's greatness."[9] Until recently, historians did not usually question this argument because it had much merit. Elizabeth was a woman who refused to marry and produced no heirs. To further discredit the queen, anti-Elizabeth authors notoriously use only the stories or quotations that make Elizabeth fit into their ideas of womanhood—defined as stereotypical feminine characteristics such as moodiness and jealousy.

Pro-Elizabethan historiography is attempting to prove that Elizabeth did, in fact, surround herself with a good staff. Pro-Elizabethan historians also argue that her Privy Councilors were not the reason for her strength and they should definitely not be given sole responsibility for her strengths and victories. Her strength was due to her personality—meaning that she acted like a man, or more specifically a king, recognizing society's views of her weaknesses as a woman. Elizabeth continued to force her presence on her people—a presence that combined the success of an unmarried queen and the success of sovereignty.[10]

A pro-Elizabethan author, Carole Levin, makes the above argument in *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power.* Elizabeth knew because

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[9] Joel Hurstfield, "Some Historical Problems," *Elizabeth I, Queen of England*, ed. Richard L. Greaves (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974), 183.
[10] Diana E. Henderson, "Elizabeth's Watchful Eye and George Peele's Gaze: Examining Female Power Beyond the Individual," *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 150.

of her gender she would not be loved and supported without acting like a man. To support this idea, Levin quotes a famous Elizabeth line: "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a King."[11] In this work, Levin evaluates the many struggles Elizabeth endured because of her gender, and that the only way she could succeed was to act masculine. Her work is groundbreaking because she recognizes that Elizabeth did act both manly and womanly.

Levin shows that Elizabeth presented a set of masculine behaviors because she was active in politics. She also uses the common medieval concept of the two body politics, and that Elizabeth was both a queen and a king.[12] She also concedes that Elizabeth had to use typical masculine language to influence Parliament and councilors. But yet, she was still restricted by gender roles, meaning that Elizabeth was still just a woman forced to succumb to the fact that she had to be masculine to succeed.[13]

While I agree that the recent arguments have made huge headway for Elizabethan historians, they still place too much emphasis on male influence. My approach takes this historiography to a new level—the Privy Councilors did not influence her decisions as much as the traditional historians once believed, and Elizabeth did *act* like a king, but she also added another dimension to her persona. Her speeches and letters are both royal and feminine. They consist of straight-to-the-point lines, followed by a whimsical statement demonstrating the classical belief of what she, as a woman, should say. I am refining the current historiography to prove that Elizabeth knew she had to be somewhat masculine, but

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[11] Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 1.
[12] Edward Spenser, author of *The Fairie Queen*, also uses this medieval concept to describe Elizabeth's public persona. Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 121.
[13] Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 126.

she did not want to be forced to exclude her gender—an effect that made herself androgynous.

Gender theory was a huge factor in the research and conclusions of this work because it incorporated gender into history and studying how gender affected society. Since, gender is a socially based philosophy, and one's sex is strictly biological, gender lines have the potential to be smeared, but a person's sex is usually determined at conception. Until the arrival of gender theory, sex and gender could be used interchangeably because there were no historical schools of thought that differentiated between the terms. Also, society usually predetermined that one's sex established his/her gender roles: males would perform the "manly" duties such as participating in government, while the females would perform the "womanly" duties such as giving birth to and raising numerous children.

As a result, early theorists dealt with the question of whether women had a part of history. Gender theorist Denise Riley discusses the difficulty in that question, for women were conditioned by the patriarchal society, and were reproductions of what the male wanted.[14] They concluded that though women were usually restricted to household duties, they still played a vital role in society. Women were responsible for continuing the family line, which in many cultures was more important than governmental activities. Though Elizabeth did not fit into these stereotypical roles, she never deliberately set out to break the gender roles or barriers that she eventually did; she simply wanted to be the monarch and carry on her father's legacy.

Many historians have spent their careers trying to prove that her actions were a result of a problem with her female genitalia; for instance, Alison Weir supports the idea that

[14] Denise Riley, "Does Sex Have a History," *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17-19.

Elizabeth's hymen was too thick for penile penetration.[15] Regardless of gender interpretations, Elizabeth became the monarch and took the title Queen, but she was not an ordinary queen: she was the sole monarch, with no husband or children to influence her decisions. Elizabeth took the title Queen because that was the only title available for women sovereigns during the early modern period.

What specific molds did Queen Elizabeth actually break? I believe that Elizabeth saw her purpose as that of a powerful monarch and the leader that would take England back to prosperity. The sixteenth-century woman was very close to being enslaved to the man, either by her father, brother(s), or husband, in her life. Dedication to religion and to her family was generally her duties in life. Women's lives were restricted in most cases. The patriarchy of the time excluded women from participating in the political scene but it dictated that a woman's responsibility was to tend to the household duties and children.

The belief in the 1500s was that a woman was defined by her relationship to a man. For example, in the sixteenth century, preachers explained from the pulpit that the biblical texts defined the ideal state for a woman as marriage and motherhood, under the governance of her husband.[16] A woman never had the option of being *femme sole*, or independent; she was property from birth, because women needed male assistance in everything due to their physical and intellectual weaknesses.[17] However, a woman who remained unmarried, by choice or other reasons was automatically suspected of homosexuality or heresy (witchcraft). Unmarried women were accused of fighting their natural sex drive and upsetting the divinely

[15] Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth* (Ballantine Publishing Group: New York, 1998), 49.
[16] Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 67.
[17] Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

imposed order, which made woman subject to man.[18] In order to avoid those labels, women would at an early age resolve to the idea of marriage. Conversely, a woman's virginity was a prized possession[19]; women like Elizabeth, who made the conscious decision to remain unmarried, had to deal with these hypocritical ideas. A woman had to decide if she was going to be called a witch or be held in high esteem by the church.

Elizabethan historiography agrees that Elizabeth, clearly, did not apply the ideologies of femininity to herself. Therefore, Elizabeth rejected most suitors on the presumption that she would no longer have control of her life. Elizabeth would call herself a self-made *femme sole*. Elizabeth's sexuality was a constant worry for the English people. She was the daughter of Anne Boleyn, who was the reason that England broke with the Catholic Church and Boleyn was accused of being a whore and a witch. These ideals caused the English to worry about Elizabeth following in her mother's footsteps—if she did, that would be unacceptable behavior for a monarch. The people were often faced with the question of whether Elizabeth would she turn out like her mother or her father. Elizabeth was criticized, by her peers as well as later historians, for not conforming to what society's idea was of a sixteenth century woman. Gender theorists and historians ask the question what would happen if a king did not act kingly. The answer they come up with is that the king would definitely not be quizzed countless times at Parliament or at court; his word would stand.

Another predetermined role for a sixteenth-century woman was motherhood and all that implied. She was to meet the daily needs of her children. More often than not, the women actually looked forward to motherhood, for this would give them affirmation of the

[18] Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender and Women*, 28
[19] Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl, *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages* (St. Martin's Press: New York), 8.

covenant of sanctification, mercy (from God), and eternal comfort.[20] Unfortunately, not all women could reproduce and with that came the belief that God was punishing the barren woman for Eve's mistakes, the original sin.[21] It was a customary belief that the pains women endured during childbirth were caused because of Eve's transgressions.[22] Childless women were often ostracized from society and left by their husbands for fully-functioning wives.

For Elizabeth, remaining childless had even more negative repercussions. Since she was the last Tudor, it was her duty to provide England with a legitimate heir. Her marital decision obviously left England without an heir, causing uproar and seditious talk. Traditional women criticized their queen for not being a mother, for Elizabeth was not fulfilling her role. Men criticized Elizabeth because she was questioning their place in society—if she was not a wife or mother, then she was encroaching on their ground.

Religion played a role in every aspect of a woman's life. She was dedicated to helping her family, as well as herself, to get to Heaven. God was very important to the sixteenth century family, especially for the woman. The majority of the familial decisions were based on what their religious beliefs allowed; the woman would transform their environment into a sacred place in which they could be alone with God.[23] For example, women would pass letters about the practice of piety as well as recipes for treating children's teeth pains. Piety became a thing that mothers taught their daughters. [24] Although Elizabeth was a very religious woman, she still evaded her societal obligation to marry and produce children. While Elizabeth never rejected God's power and his ability to give her a husband

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[20] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.
[21] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 17.
[22] Carlson and Wiesl, *Constructions of Widowhood*, 8.
[23] Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 227.
[24] Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 228.

and heir, she never reconciled herself to the idea of England being controlled by a person not of royal, specifically Tudor, blood. Elizabeth's actions show her dedication to ensure that England was governed by a Tudor, and if she married, her husband—most likely not of Tudor or royal blood—would be granted governing rights. While she forced her subjects to be religious, many felt she was not following God's will. But, as the remainder of this work will show, I believe that Elizabeth, through her rhetoric and persona, proved her critics wrong—she was a successful monarch and woman, who just so happened to break the long standing gender barriers.

In Chapter 1, I will deal with what many Elizabethan historians have termed her formative years and focus on what has been termed Wyatt's Rebellion. Through her persona, Elizabeth persuaded Queen Mary I, Elizabeth's half-sister, to not execute her, but to name her as the next monarch. The letters to Mary show that Elizabeth had a grasp of her androgynous persona before she took the throne. Examples will show that Elizabeth's writings during the time of Wyatt's Rebellion portray the first signs that Elizabeth had a strong sense of her femininity and her royalty. She knew how to utilize those characteristics, which would become a tool for survival.

In Chapter 2, I will analyze Elizabeth's decision to not marry and not name an heir. As monarch, Elizabeth faced many issues, but none resonated so long as the question of her marriage and her heir. It was not a secret that England's future rested on her choice of husband. Her speeches and letters indicate her constant struggle with Parliament on this matter. As she did in the time of Wyatt's Rebellion, Elizabeth had to employ her androgynous persona because Parliament was certain that England would suffer if Elizabeth remained single. When she dealt with the marriage question, Elizabeth used various tactics

to subdue her critics, such as claiming to be married to England. This section will examine parliamentary speeches and show Elizabeth as an androgynous monarch.

Chapter 3 will focus on Elizabeth and how her persona indicates a reliance on religious heroines. Referencing religious heroines, Virgin Mary and the prophetess Deborah, was another way Elizabeth utilized her androgynous persona. Her unmarried status gave her a virginal image, one that would potentially solve her dilemmas with Parliament about her marriage. Elizabeth's Protestant beliefs ensured her Protestant support. Virginity to Catholics saw virginity was the highest honor.[25] For Catholic sympathizers, she was both a virgin and mother like the Virgin Mary, which enabled her to pattern her image after the heroine—the feminine part to her androgynous persona. The masculine traits appeared in her self-comparison to the prophetess Deborah, who was sent to Earth by God to restore Israel. Deborah had to use authority, in other words, she had to act royal, to succeed at providing peace for Israel. Elizabeth used Deborah to illustrate that her femininity should not be used against her, for she was not the first woman to have authority in a nation. To further solidify the legitimacy of the religious side to her persona, Elizabeth would incorporate God into her speeches by implying that God approved all of her decisions, including her marital decision. This chapter will show how the references to Virgin Mary and Deborah helped her androgynous persona succeed.

And, finally, chapter 4 will explore Elizabeth's erratic behavior. Just as the anti-Elizabethan historians argued that she had an abnormally thick hymen, some also argued that her temper was a result of severe bouts of pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS). But I will argue that her tantrums were ploys of her androgynous persona, ones that reminded the court that

[25]Carlson and Weisl, *Widowhood and Virginity*, 2.

she was the monarch. Her erratic behavior has often been defined as temperamental, meaning that her mood was unpredictable—she was prone to random angry outbursts. And, this behavior has been blamed on her womanhood, instead of the possibility that it was a part of her androgynous persona. She would be womanly, such as flirting with her courtiers, and suddenly lapse into anger if she was doubted or her authority was questioned, which demonstrates that she demanded complete submission from her advisors, courtiers, and others. This part of the chapter will prove that Elizabeth's behavior was not due to PMS, sexual jealousy, or "womanliness," but that her mannerisms were all a part of her successful androgynous persona.

Henry VIII's Daughter

Elizabeth, even in her childhood, forced others around her to recognize her royalty by utilizing her royal traits. Others were to view her as royal first, then as a female. This attitude differentiated her royal status from her sex; in other words, Elizabeth endorsed the legacy of her father, Henry VIII, above her biological inheritance. With an approach such as this, Elizabeth created an ambiguous persona, for her, gender was not the most important factor of her existence; her relation to Henry was much more significant. Furthermore, her reliance on royal heritage removed her gender from the spotlight—for femininity was viewed as submissive, while royalty (typically gendered masculine) had more of a demanding, controlling nature. In her writings and documented personal conversations, Elizabeth further confirms her intention of placing her royal heritage above her gender. Thus the sources for this chapter will indicate Elizabeth's persistence on this subject, and will provide further evidence that Elizabeth in fact developed an androgynous political face.

An important event in her youth enabled her to demonstrate her pre-regnal androgyny. Wyatt's rebellion, which was a plot to overthrow Queen Mary I and have Elizabeth marry Edward Courtenay, landed Elizabeth in the Tower of London.[1] However, throughout this ordeal, she never failed to remind her sister or the English people of her royal status. The rebellion made Queen Mary question Elizabeth's dedication to England; Elizabeth's responses showed a contradictory attitude. She used her androgynous persona (acting both feminine and masculine) and her intense belief in her father's legacy to shield herself from complete ruin. She achieved this through a public display of her royalty by writing letters to Queen Mary and writing poems while imprisoned in the Tower.

This study must first define how it will view the public and private nature of the sources. The traditional definition of a public nature is one where the person is more vulnerable in an open, unrestricted environment. In terms of sixteenth-century England, public would usually refer to the openness of court or a speech to Parliament. Private nature is traditionally defined as a person having personal secrets, dealing with problems or issues in seclusion. However, this study defines the public nature of sources more broadly, an explanation that will cross the traditional boundaries. It will include letters and poems as public because for royalty in the sixteenth-century privacy was not guaranteed. For instance, it will use letters to demonstrate Elizabeth's behavior, for a letter had the possibility of falling into enemies' hands. It is also a tradition to carve evidence of one's innocence in the walls of the Tower of London. Elizabeth used her rhetorical abilities and carved poems where they could be read by others. The sources used in this chapter will be considered public for two reasons: first is that the letters were not hand delivered by Elizabeth to Mary, and had a high possibility of being intercepted at any point; and secondly, the poems were in plain viewing sight and many were able to read of Elizabeth's declared innocence.

In a public or private sphere, Elizabeth learned from her birth how to deal with the cynical approach to her royalty and place in the English society. Elizabeth Tudor was born in 1533 to Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Unfortunately for both Anne and Elizabeth, Henry and England did not rejoice, for the country had gone to great lengths to finally have security in a male heir. When Elizabeth was a child, Anne was beheaded for incest and witchcraft, leaving Elizabeth the nickname "daughter of the heretical whore," a

[1] Scholars continue to debate the extent of Elizabeth's involvement in Wyatt's Rebellion. Many argue that she was not informed of the plot, while others place her at the center of it.

name she spent the rest of her life trying to eradicate.[2] Elizabeth had to live with the animosity towards her because she was a product of Anne Boleyn and the fact that she was a woman. It can be argued that Elizabeth knew from an early age that she had to highlight her tie to Henry VIII because her sex was not suitable.

As disappointed as Henry might have been, he still insisted on a grandiose education for his daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. Elizabeth had many tutors, but two are more famous than the others: William Grindal and Roger Ascham. Both were surprised at Elizabeth's intellectual abilities. Ascham told her step-mother Catherine Parr that he was impressed with Elizabeth's "prodigious memory and modesty."[3] Grindal and Ascham emphasized Greek, Hebrew and Latin classical writings because without proper training Elizabeth could not read either the works of the Church Fathers or the classics of antiquity.

Although the tutors did not dwell on rhetoric, Elizabeth still was able to pick up the talent. For instance, she translated a book written in French and presented it to Catherine Parr on New Year's Eve of 1544. Elizabeth was aware of the shortcomings of her translation (she was only 11 years old), but Catherine made the point to reassure Elizabeth: "...after it shall have passed through her [Elizabeth's] hands, it would come forth as it were in a new form."[4] These remarks indicate Elizabeth's exceptional talent in rhetoric—even at age 11 she found a way to project her persona. Furthermore, even though she had made numerous mistakes in the translation, she was still praised for her work. Elizabeth's education played a huge role in her persona. The intense training helped shape Elizabeth's talents into a resource she learned to use in later situations.

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[2] Christopher Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1991), 19.
[3] Neville Williams. *The Tudors*, ed. Antonia Fraser (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 80.
[4] Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 381, as cited in Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin Press, 1983), 57.

The conflicts over the line of succession weakened Elizabeth's reliance on her royal heritage. After King Henry VIII and his third wife, Jane Seymour, finally produced a male heir, the king changed the line of succession. The Succession Act of 1536 declared Mary and Elizabeth illegitimate and gave legitimacy to Jane Seymour's children. This particular succession went virtually without any complications, for Mary's mother, Catherine of Aragon, was ousted from England, Anne Boleyn had been killed, both girls were too young to understand the consequences, and most importantly, this act gave Henry the power to name his heir at his will.[5] However, in 1544, Henry once again changed the line of succession. With this change, Mary and Elizabeth were declared legitimate and were again recognized as potential heirs to the English throne.

Regardless of her father's ambivalent attitude towards his second daughter, Elizabeth still wanted the public to remember that his blood was running through her veins. It was also a reminder that she was a potential heir despite her sex, affirming her presence in society—she forced people to view her as royalty, before they viewed her as a woman. This attitude supports the androgynous persona theory, for Elizabeth was taking on the façade of royalty, or a demanding presence, but not denying the fact that she was feminine. Wyatt's Rebellion ultimately supports this androgynous theory because Elizabeth used her royal heritage combined with her femininity to save her life.

Wyatt's Rebellion is legendary in Tudor history because it almost ended Elizabeth's life, practically before it really began. In fact, David Starkey claims that it brought Elizabeth to her nadir.[6] Even Elizabeth was not confident of her own survival at first. She requested

[5] M.D. Palmer, *Henry VIII, 2nd Ed* (London and New York: Longman Press, 1983), 32-33.
[6] David Starkey, *Struggle for the Throne* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 129.

that she die like her mother had, by the sword, rather than the axe.[7] Elizabeth acknowledged how serious this was, for the rebellion was a huge peril to Mary's throne and her life—which can explain why Mary had such contempt for the participants. But Elizabeth through her public persona and reliance on her royal heritage defeated the odds and overcame the ordeal.

After Henry's teenage heir, King Edward VI, died in 1553, Mary, his oldest daughter, became the queen of England. Since Mary had no tolerance for Elizabeth, Wyatt's Rebellion escalated into a fiasco for Elizabeth, for Mary did not see Elizabeth as royalty. Mary viewed her as many others did: the daughter of the heretical whore. Adding to their differences, Elizabeth was a Protestant, and Queen Mary was a staunch Catholic. Mary was not fully accepted; the Protestants wanted a Protestant sympathizer on the throne. Unfortunately, Mary and Elizabeth had such a tumultuous relationship that Mary had the Chronicles changed to favor her and to exclude Elizabeth. Mary had the chroniclers write in favor of Henry's first marriage to Catherine, making Mary the rightful heir to the throne while making no mention of Elizabeth.[8] Mary refused to view Elizabeth as royal, and it can be argued that Mary saw Elizabeth as only trouble.

Wyatt's Rebellion was allegedly established in January 1554 as a reaction to Mary's upcoming marriage to King Philip II of Spain. The English people, particularly the Protestants, were petrified of this alliance with the Catholic Hapsburgs. The original plot was to raise the whole of southern and midland England in a series of separate but coordinated regional risings led by Sir Thomas Wyatt of Kent, Lady Jane Grey's father, the

[7] Starkey, *Struggle for the Throne*, 129.
[8] Marcia Lee Metzger, "Controversy and 'Correctness': English Chronicles and the Chronicles, 1553-1568," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996), 440.

Duke of Suffolk (who had just recently been released from the Tower), the Carew family and Sir James Croft. The participants also anticipated naval and financial support from France.[9]

Once Mary was dethroned, the rebel expected that Princess Elizabeth would marry Edward Courtenay, who was a Catholic, making them queen and king consort. The hopes of the participants were to merge the two religious factions and to keep foreigners, like Philip II, out of their country. She was placed in the Tower and forced to persuade Mary that she was of royal standing and that killing her would be killing an heir to the throne. [10]

Mary, on the other hand, had a history of rash behavior. It is quite possible that another reason for the revolt was Mary's highly publicized executions of Protestants who refused to worship as a Catholic.[11] Mary's nickname is Bloody Mary because she had approximately 300 Protestants burned and forced 800 more into exile.[12] Obviously, Elizabeth was not Mary's only enemy, but she was one who survived. Mary's reputation combined with her marriage to a strong Catholic monarch made many people unhappy, driving them to plot against her. The participants believed that Mary had forgotten that she was of English royalty by to letting the Spaniards into their land[13]; Elizabeth in imprisonment never forgot her father's legacy, forcing the Marian government to consider her as royalty above being a woman attached to a plot.

The plans of the rebellion were leaked and it collapsed before it ever really got started. In early January, Sir Peter Carew refused to obey a summons to court, alerting the Marian government that there was something suspect going on in the southwest. Queen

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[9] Susan Watkins, *The Public and Private Worlds of Elizabeth I* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 23.
[10] Jasper Ridley, *Bloody Mary's Martyrs: The Story of England's Terror* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2002), 56.
[11] Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen*, 54.
[12] Even though Mary had the nickname of Bloody Mary, Elizabeth also persecuted Catholics. She did not burn them at the stake, but passed a law that forced her people to attend a Protestant service every Sunday or be punished.

Mary had Wyatt and Courtenay arrested on February 7 after they continually marched along the Thames River. They were arrested under the pretense that they had been eating meat in Lent and going about London streets at night shooting at citizens' windows with crossbows.[14] Mary surprised her councilors by remaining poised—she had all the participants, including Courtenay, placed in the Tower.

When Mary learned of the proposed Elizabeth-Courtenay marriage, she summoned Elizabeth to the castle. However, Elizabeth was sick and refused to go; when Mary finally ordered Elizabeth to appear, her entourage set out for London from Ashridge, the house Mary had exiled her to after her incrimination. When entering London, Princess Elizabeth employed her persona through a public display of her royalty and of her feminine weakness. Elizabeth wanted to ensure sympathy from the crowd and she wanted to show that she realized the importance of a royal summons. Traveling on a litter, she pulled back the curtains showing the observers that even though she was ill, she had made the thirty-five-mile journey to answer the queen's summons like a good English subject. Observers were stunned to see Elizabeth looking weak from her illness, propped against pillows, her pale complexion made more so because of her white gown.[15] This public display of her royal heritage shows Elizabeth using her royalty and her gender as a weapon against Mary. Mary believed that in order to be successful, she needed to marry and produce an heir, while Elizabeth felt that her mere presence in London would gather her support against the allegations. Moreover, Elizabeth was respected because she portrayed her English virtue and

[13] H.F.M. Prescott, *Mary Tudor: The Spanish Tudor* (London: Phoenix, 2001), 296-7.
[14] Prescott, *Mary Tudor*, 295-6.
[15] Watkins, *Worlds of Elizabeth*, 34.

English dedication, and this display ultimately showed that Mary had no respect for her sister, Elizabeth, a member of the royal family.[16]

In addition to the problem of the Elizabeth-Courtenay marriage, the Marian government had to decide what to do with the queen's heretical sister. Elizabeth had to know that Mary was waiting for the opportune time to deal with her and the rebellion, and marriage could prove to be her undoing. Mary had been warned as early as January 1553 by Charles V's ambassador that after conversations with Elizabeth, he believed her to be clever, sly, and possessed with a power of enchantment, which could be a danger to Mary if Elizabeth remained free.[17] When Mary learned of the revolt, she had Elizabeth placed in Whitehall with anticipation of imprisonment at the Tower. Unfortunately for Elizabeth, a letter of earlier correspondence between her and Wyatt was intercepted in a package being sent to the French ambassador, only making her look more guilty to Mary and her councilors.[18]

Wyatt and the other conspirators were purposely kept alive with the hope that they would implicate Elizabeth even more. Somehow the Marian government discovered that Wyatt had written Elizabeth letters while he was in the Tower, but she had not replied to any of them. Elizabeth knew better than to write to a prisoner who could destroy her. When questioned about it, Elizabeth answered in her true fashion: "As for the traitor Wyatt, he might peradventure write me a letter, but on my faith, I never received any from him."[19] With one simple answer, Elizabeth was able to produce doubt about her guilt and make Mary's government officials wonder if Elizabeth and Wyatt actually corresponded. Whatever

[16] Watkins, *Worlds of Elizabeth*, 34-35.
[17] Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, Inc., 1993), 15.
[18] Starkey, *Struggle for the Throne*, 136-7.
[19] Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (London: Orion Books, 1991), 49.

questions the Marian government had, Elizabeth employed her public persona to shift the guilt from her.

Mary, frustrated with Elizabeth, ordered Elizabeth to be removed from Whitehall and taken to the Tower. When the guards arrived to take her to the Tower, she resorted to a tactic of delay—she asked to write to the queen, and took so long to write the letter that tide had turned and the barge had to postpone her ride to the Tower.[20] She was convinced that her life depended upon an interview with her sister. In the letter, she pleaded her innocence and begged for a simple conversation with Mary. Elizabeth had an obvious faith in her persona and her royal heritage that she believed she could get Mary on her side. The letter was to no avail. The barge left early on Palm Sunday and arrived at the Tower. Mary refused to see Elizabeth and reprimanded Sussex for allowing her to write the letter. Even if this letter failed, Elizabeth had persuaded Mary's guard to grant her time, thus indicating that Elizabeth's royal persona was convincing.

This letter deserves further analysis, for the letter itself defines Elizabeth's androgynous persona. It shows that even though her future may have been undecided, she was not going to just lie down and die without putting on a show first. In the letter, written in March of 1554, Elizabeth's words were abrasive, given that they were written to the queen. This is an excellent illustration of Elizabeth's persona in action. In the letter she asks Mary to "verify it in me, and to remember your last promise and my last demand: that I be not condemned without answer and due proof."[21] This clearly is quite a demanding sentence. It can be construed as being the royal or masculine part of the letter.

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[20] MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I*, 18.
[21] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 41.

But, Elizabeth follows it up with an apology: "I most humbly beseech your highness to pardon this my boldness, which innocency procures me to do, together with hope of your natural kindness, which I trust will not see me cast away without desert."[22] This apology has more of a feminine quality because women were not usually as demanding. She apologizes for being harsh because that is not the proper way for a woman to act, especially toward her queen.

The gist of the letter is first a demand for proof, followed by an apology for the unorthodox nature of the demand—a superlative example of Elizabeth using her talent as a rhetorician. However, she does not apologize for the demand itself, just for the nature of it, indicating the persona she had built with a combination of royal and feminine traits.

Despite the cleverness of her letter, Elizabeth and six of her ladies-in-waiting were still sent to the Tower and made to enter through the Traitor's Gate. Even though she was unsure of her future, she reportedly exclaimed to anyone in hearing distance that she was innocent. She said: "Oh, Lord! I never thought to have come here as a prisoner; and I pray you all good friends and fellows, bear me witness that I come as no traitor, but as a true woman to the Queen's Majesty."[23] This exclamation also demonstrates Elizabeth's persona. She used her femininity as a ploy to the hearts of those around her. Although she claimed to be only a "true woman" to the queen, that declaration most possibly would remind the observers of her relation to the queen. As proof of her successful persona as she entered the Tower, as two guards turned the key to her cell, Sussex asked them, "What will ye do, My Lords?...She was a king's daughter and is the queen's sister."[24] So though her plea had little

[22] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 41.
[23] Watkins, *Worlds of Elizabeth*, 35.
[24] The guards were frightful of not following Mary's orders, regardless of their doubts of Elizabeth's guilt. Starkey, *Struggle for the Throne*, 143.

effect on the queen, her persona had gained the trust of Mary's guards—she had succeeded in making royalty more important than her gender. Her gender was not the pressing issue; her royalty was.

In another letter written in August of 1556, Elizabeth displays her ability to squash any animosity between herself and her accusers, mainly the government, by turning the tides. She used the same technique as she had with the earlier letter. She uses religion as her defense: "...it vexeth me too much than the devil [owes] me such a hate as to put me in any part of his mischievous instigations...whom, I profess him my foe that is all Christians' enemy, so wish I he had some other way invented to spite me..."[25]

When she expresses thanks to God for preserving Mary's life, Elizabeth is showing her womanly side. Customary beliefs stereotyped women as pacifists and harmless beings—translating into women not being mentally capable of abstract thinking. An example of this technique: "...I most humbly thank Him (God) both that He hath ever thus preserved your majesty through his aid, and also stirs up the hearts of your loving subjects to resist them (evildoers) and deliver you..."[26] Then, she placed the blame of the rebellion on the Devil which inadvertently was an attempt to exculpate the other conspirators. In other words, Elizabeth was acting like a true member of the royal family—it is customary that royalty was most usually innocent or was coaxed into such a predicament as Wyatt's Rebellion.

Her persona is just not visible in letters, but in her poems as well, written in a place that was visible to others. Elizabeth was determined to prove her innocence through her writings. She believed that she can accomplish this by tricking the government with her rhetoric. She uses her elaborate oratory as a foundation for her persona. It is obvious that she

[25] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 43.
[26] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 43

knew that people would read these poems and she hoped that they would be taken seriously and gain her freedom.

She writes of her innocence in a poem inscribed on a window frame at Woodstock (a mansion owned by Mary, where Elizabeth was sent after her release from the tower). She wrote: "...from lands where innocents were enclosed, and caused the guiltless to be reserved, and freed those that death had well deserved."[27] Here, Elizabeth is attacking Mary's tactics and implies that this is not the first time that Mary has abused her royal heritage for personal vendettas. In another poem written at Woodstock in a glass window with the diamond of her ring, she wrote: "Much suspected by me, nothing proved can be."[28] These poems substantiate her belief in her own innocence, plus confirming the strength of the phenomenon of Elizabeth, and her innocence.

Historians who did not incorporate gender theory into their work believed that Elizabeth never found happiness. However, her writings to Mary seem to show a genuine acknowledgment of both genders. Her letters and poems indicate that she understood that being royal was to be like her father, demanding and active, while she never forgot her womanhood.

Mary was not as lucky; she did not understand her royalty. She felt that she had to marry because an unwed, virgin ruler was unthinkable.[29] Mary also believed that there were some governmental issues that were not appropriate for her to handle single-handedly. Furthermore, Mary was more connected to the memory of her mother, than that of her father. There is much discussion about why she did not bask in Henry VIII's glory—maybe because he had broke England's ties to Rome and had disgraced her mother. At any rate, Elizabeth

[27] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 46.
[28] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 46.

rarely failed to recognize both Mary's and her own royalty, for Mary was also Henry's daughter.

Wyatt's rebellion taught Elizabeth that she always had to be one step ahead because she had no idea what political stunts were around the corner. This was another traditional monarchial trait that she learned from her father. Henry's personal commitment to royal supremacy explains the expedient.[30] For example, Jane Seymour, on her hands and knees, begged her husband, Henry VIII, to reverse his policies concerning shutting down monasteries. He pulled her to her feet and warned her to not meddle in things that were not her (womanly) concern, reminding her about the fate of her predecessor.[31] This was Henry's idea of royalty and power—it was only for those chosen ones who could be strong and forceful when necessary. Elizabeth showed such a demeanor in her dealings with Mary. She refused to cry and beg for forgiveness; instead, she simply remained calm and talked her way out of the ordeal. The idea of royalty, according to Elizabeth, was not reserved for males only, but for anyone of royal blood.

Elizabeth had made the royal heritage androgynous and ambiguous in gender: she could be significant royally even though she was a biologically a woman. This had a vital effect on Elizabeth for she had to prove to Mary, throughout the confusion of Wyatt's Rebellion, that she was innocent and that she would never smear the queen's name or legitimacy. Elizabeth was of the same royal heritage as Mary. She praised God for saving Mary from the rebellion. Once again, Elizabeth displayed the traditional monarchial traits needed in the sixteenth century to be a successful leader.

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[29] J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), 31.
[30] Richard Rex, *The Tudors* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2003), 80.
[31] Rex, *The Tudors*, 87.

Early Elizabethan historiography argued that Wyatt's rebellion had detrimental effects on Elizabeth; however, pro-Elizabethan historiography contends that Elizabeth battled through it as a woman with enormous victories and also got a sense of what her actual capabilities were when it came to delicate personal or state matters. This contention can be taken one step further by claiming that she did survive these events, and she did familiarize herself with her abilities. These opportunities showed Elizabeth how to use her rhetorical talents efficiently.

As a whole, the rebellion taught Elizabeth first of all that politics was a man's game and it could be dangerous for a woman to get involved. The "man story of power"[32] assures the women's subservience to the male authority, either in the home or in public. Also, it has been argued that men will only concede to those women who have exercised power in male-dominated institutions, such as warriors or queens.[33] Elizabeth is a great example of this particular theory. She exercised distinguished power during male-dominated incidents and ultimately proved that she was capable of being their leader. She did not crumble in extremely dangerous situations. Wyatt's Rebellion resulted in her imprisonment, but she never failed to protest her innocence. Elizabeth used the power lessons from her father, or more likely stories about his legacy, to stay on top of the situations, she never faltered under these circumstances.

Another trait she learned that there are certain avenues a woman can take to be a significant part of the power chain, which Elizabeth did through her public persona. She used her writings as a political tool to ensure she had a place in the male-dominated power chain

[32] In history, men are always tied to the power part of the story, while women are tied to the weak side. Wiesner-Hanks terms this idea as the man story of power. Merry Wiesner Hanks, *Gender in History: A New Perspective on the Past* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 2.
[33] Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 145.

of the sixteenth century. Most women found their place in the power chain through marriages with influential families,[34] but Elizabeth achieved this through her writings. Elizabeth's role in the power chain can be seen as a pro-active role for the good of the state.[35] In most scenarios, masculinity was seen as dominating, while femininity was seen as obedient.

However, in Elizabeth's case, the conventional scenario does not apply. She used whatever gender traits were necessary to overcome the situation. Elizabeth did not allow herself to be forced into the predetermined roles of a woman and she did not become overly masculine;[36] she used the perfect amount of each gender as prescribed in the sixteenth century to advance her agenda. Elizabeth's writings during Wyatt's Rebellion demonstrate her place in the power chain. She appealed to Mary's feminine side by drawing attention to her own gender, while still employing the royal strength and power she had grown to rely on.

As will be shown in later chapters, Elizabeth's formative years gave way to her androgynous and gender ambivalent public persona as queen. These impressionable years and their trials provided Elizabeth with the confidence and practice she needed to be a great woman ruler. This persona would be perfected as her reign went on: by dodging marriage, creating the image of the Virgin Queen, and finally using her persona as a tool of persuasion at court.

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[34] Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 146.
[35] Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 147.
[36] Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998) 32.

Wife and Mother

Four years after Wyatt's Rebellion, Elizabeth took the throne of England and utilized her growing persona throughout her reign. English people were still to view her as royalty, and not as a woman—for she was their monarch. In fact, her royal heritage was more important to her as queen than it was as a princess. In times when she was doubted, she would remind her councilors that she was Henry VIII's daughter. As his daughter, she was able to advance her androgynous persona. She was of royalty and she was biologically a woman; she still mandated that her sex not be first priority, but that her job as queen is more significant. Therefore, her persona is an important determinant in Elizabeth's deferment of marriage and naming an heir.

The problem of marriage and succession plagued Elizabeth from the moment she was crowned queen. Parliament, ambassadors, and her closest advisors were obsessed with Elizabeth's potential marriage. However, she responded to the issue of marriage by employing her persona, proving that she was capable of maintaining a strong government without a husband. This was not an acceptable practice in sixteenth-century England because she was avoiding the womanly duties of marriage and childbearing. Yet she refused to be considered only a woman—she was queen of England. Her persona and her intense belief in her father's legacy once again kept her from falling victim to destruction. Through her letters and speeches to Parliament, she tried to prove to all of England that her actions were for the good of England, and that she thus a monarch who happened to be female.

It can be assumed that at the beginning of her reign the English people as well as her advisors figured on Elizabeth acting as her gender and sex required—in other words, act as a stereotypical woman. Female maturity in the sixteenth-century was defined in terms of being

married, with a household to run, and possibly with children to raise and servants to oversee.[1] The definition of a good wife described her as soft, submissive and emotionally controlled, especially in expressing anger—in other words, the woman was at the total mercy of either her father or husband.[2] This definition does not adequately describe the whole of what Elizabeth and her persona had become. Marriage would inevitably have jeopardized Elizabeth's authority, since sixteenth-century patriarchal society believed that a wife should always defer to her husband when making decisions.[3]

As I have argued in my earlier chapter, Queen Elizabeth failed to fit into the predetermined gender roles of the sixteenth century. As a matter of fact, she undoubtedly redefined the responsibilities of a queen—they no longer had to take a backseat to their husbands, but they could have a prominent role or even run a country without the assistance of a man. Queen Elizabeth repudiated the limitations that came with her biological sex, as well as the limitations of her social gender.

Males and females have often been placed into separate spheres. The woman's proper sphere was the home, while the man's proper sphere was either involvement in politics or in the workforce.[4] Yet again, Elizabeth and her persona did not follow the world of the spheres. Her royal position and her sex obliged her to marry, but she did not, thereby changing what royal identity meant for women or queens. She crossed the spheres when she, the single monarch, made the ultimate decisions for England. Through her speeches to

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[1] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 124.
[2] Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 139.
[3] Susan Doran, "Why did Elizabeth not Marry?," *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998), 33.
[4] Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Females Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988), 11-12.

Parliament, Queen Elizabeth developed a persona that defied many typical hopes and desires for a monarch and ultimately broke with her society's construction of the female gender.

Gender theorists provide an excellent insight to the obstacles that were endured by women. Elizabeth did not intentionally break those gender barriers; it was just her way of ruling England, which happened to be revolutionary for the sixteenth century. For example, even though Elizabeth's half-sister Mary had married, she still did not receive total respect from the English people because she did not marry an Englishman and did not give birth to an heir. Mary, Elizabeth's half-sister, married because she believed that an unwed virgin ruler was unthinkable for a monarch, however Elizabeth saw being an unwed, virgin ruler as positive characteristics to her realm—an obvious character difference. Elizabeth combined her unmarried status with her inherited Henrician traits to form her androgynous public persona.

Elizabeth's letters and speech are indicative of her androgynous persona. Her speeches create a persona who was equipped to rule a nation alone, without assistance from a husband who would be given power through their union. The English understood that she had a royal identity, but they still assumed that she would marry because previously royal identity had always been associated with men. Consequently, Elizabeth's gender was a colossal factor throughout her time as queen because of her refusal to marry and provide England with an heir. These actions resulted in criticism from England and from the mainland of Europe, because there was widespread doubt that a woman could be a successful monarch.[5]

The differences between Mary and Elizabeth had split the country; Mary had brought a foreigner in, while Elizabeth had been wrapped up in a treasonous scandal. But, when

Queen Mary died on November 17, 1558, she left the throne to her half-sister, Elizabeth I and many in England rejoiced. First, Elizabeth rejoiced after being told of Mary's death. She fell to her knees and praised the Lord: "A domino factum est et mirabile in oculis nostris."[6] By sunset on the day of her coronation, London was a huge open-air banquet hall, lit by bonfire; every street corner was furnished with meat and drink. As she made her way to the coronation ceremony, the large crowd of people assembled shouted "God save your grace!"[7] She replied back: "God save you all...I thank you with all my heart!"[8] She had the gift, as her father had in his time, of making everyone within the sound of her voice believe that she was talking to them individually.[9] Again, Elizabeth was utilizing her royalty to sway support and to attempt to turn the attention away from her gender.

However, there were those who did not want Elizabeth as their queen. A documented account of a housewife shows contempt for her. She was heard yelling as Elizabeth passed her house: "Oh, Lord, the Queen is a woman!"[10] It was the overall opinion of the time that a woman could not do the job, and Mary's turbulent reign certainly did nothing to reverse these beliefs. Under Mary, England had seen a rapid decline in finances, leaving the country in debt, while Mary's husband, Philip II, and Spain grew wealthier.[11] People questioned Mary's abilities, for if Philip was profiting, why was England not seeing financial gain as well? Of course, as discussed in the last chapter, Mary's violence towards Protestants left the

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[5] Doran, "Why did Elizabeth not marry?," 34-35.
[6] "This has been done by the Lord and it is miraculous in our eyes."
[7] In Gulliver's Travels, the narrator explains to the horse king "we are ruled by a female man, whom we call a Queen." He was referring to Anne Boleyn, but it can also refer to Elizabeth I. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. by Edward Bloom (New York: Chelsea Publishers, 1996).
[8] Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 177.
[9] Erickson, *The First Elizabeth*, 177.
[10] Christopher Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1991), 61.

English citizens in fear. The English people were eager for a strong and able ruler, someone who could unite the nation, re-establish the authority of the crown, and restore peace and stability—a task Elizabeth was able to undertake.[12]

Elizabeth wanted to make England more stable, as it had been in Henry VIII's later years. As a result, Elizabeth did not show signs of trepidation regarding marriage, childbirth, and motherhood.[13] She redefined these roles, repeatedly calling the Kingdom of England her husband. For example, she exclaimed: "And, behold the pledge of this my wedlock and Marriage with my kingdom...for everyone of you, and as many as are English-men, are Children and Kinsmen to me..."[14] What is important here is the fact that this remark summarized Elizabeth's dedication to England. She wanted the English to understand that England was closer to her heart than any possible suitor. This dedication explained her refusal to marry.

As she was questioned about marriage, Elizabeth used her rhetorical abilities to subdue her critics. Biographers notoriously negate the meaning of Elizabeth's own sayings or phrases by attempting to show that she believed women were weak. Examples of this are the frequently quoted Elizabethan phrases such as her description that she was a "mere woman" or that it is "no marvel to teach a woman to talk, rather harder to teach her to hold her tongue,"[15] which was a reply to a courtier when he gave her a gift. However, it can be easily argued that Elizabeth was successfully using her persona, more specifically her

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[11] Of course information such as this was not privy to all English, however, councilors and advisors were privy to this sensitive information. Peter Brimacombie, *All the Queen's Men: The World of Elizabeth I* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 15-17.
[12] Alison Plowden, *Marriage With My Kingdom* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 77.
[13] Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History: A New Perspective on the Past* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers), 209.
[14] William Camden, *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, Late Queen,* ed. Wallace T. MacCaffrey (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1970): 29-30.
[15] J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934), 6.

rhetoric, to achieve what she wanted. Her words appear to demean women, including her, but these remarks demonstrate her androgynous persona, for they are things that men say about women. They also reinforced her royalty because as a royal family member, Elizabeth had the power to criticize anyone and everyone in England. This behavior proves that she did not fall into the typical gender molds.

Biographers tend to look at the small picture when analyzing Elizabeth's words; many fail to see Elizabeth's loyalty to England and her extreme consciousness of her actions as a ruler. I would argue that these phrases are prime examples of Elizabeth's public persona; she used her rhetorical power to exhibit her supremacy over England. With phrases like "mere woman" and "mere English,"[16] she used her persona to her advantage by subduing the backlash that was mounting against her unmarried status.

Queen Elizabeth put her public persona into action almost immediately after taking the throne in 1558(9).[17] Since government was a masculine business, with the masculine world a court constructed for a king,[18] she knew that the first issue at hand was to stamp out any doubt that she was similar to the weak and at times extremist Queen Mary. To do away with these uncertainties, she wrote a speech that accentuated her power and her legitimacy. The speech, given at Hatfield House, before her coronation in 1558, showed Elizabeth defending her ruling capabilities. The queen made it abundantly clear to all her lords and Privy Councilors that they were to be loyal to her at all times because her actions were for England: "...you shall be of my Privy Council and content yourself to take pains for me and my realm...you will be faithful to the state, and without respect of my private will, you will

[16] David Loades, *Elizabeth I: The Golden Reign of Gloriana* (Richmond, Surrey: National Archives, 2003), 84-89.
[17] The year differs in the English and Roman calendars.
[18] Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 63.

give me that counsel that you think best..."[19] With these remarks, she demanded loyalty to her, the monarch, and to England. Her first words as queen of England demonstrated her androgynous public persona by ignoring the fact that men were being made to pledge allegiance to a woman, and replacing it with the usual coronation routine where subjects pledged allegiance to their monarch. She demanded that they take pains for her on behalf of the realm, meaning that their allegiance was to the monarch, not the woman, and to England.

Elizabeth also used her persona to show royal legitimacy through birth and divine approval. In a speech made on November 1566, Elizabeth asked Parliament: "...Was I not born in the realm? Were my parents born in any foreign country? Is there any cause I should alienate myself from being careful over this country?"[20] Here Elizabeth reminded the English people that she is her father's daughter, giving her direct inheritance of the crown. She also asks if she should put herself above the England, a ploy that demonstrates royal identity as that of an androgynous nature. A monarch could be of either gender and still have substantial royal identity. And to verify her religious legitimacy, she used her staunch religious beliefs. She told Parliament that she was "God's creature, ordained to obey His appointment, [to whom] I will thereto yield, desiring from the bottom of my heart that I may have assistance of His grace to be the minister of His..."[21] Now, not only was she making the advisors support her, but they had to also recognize that God had chosen her to rule England, and to disobey Elizabeth was to disobey God.

These examples are indicative of Queen Elizabeth's public persona. First she secured support from her closest advisors while displaying very influential monarchial powers, which

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[19] Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 51.
[20] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 95.
[21] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 52.

she knew was important. Her father had to execute or exile some of his advisors due to their disloyalty to the Tudor realm. For example, Thomas Wolsey was stripped of his assets and exiled to his country home while Thomas More was beheaded—both for not succumbing to all of Henry VIII's plans.[22] By using this mentality, Elizabeth had leverage to govern the way she wanted to, another traditional monarchial characteristic. Queen Elizabeth did not want to rule in the same manner as her sibling predecessors had; Elizabeth wanted to rule effectively. Edward VI and Mary I both had crises that made their governments appear weak. Edward's reign was viewed as weak because he was so young and unable to run England himself.[23] The regents manipulated Edward to the extreme that he became a pawn in their game of Protestantism versus Catholicism. Mary, as we have seen, had many obstacles that tainted her reign. Elizabeth's writings point to a monarch who is attempting to rule effectively, and also trying to escape the negative reputation of the Tudor children.

Due to Elizabeth's siblings' disorderly and unproductive realms, Elizabeth had to establish validity. In order to achieve this validity, she brought God into the equation, making her legitimate both by her royal identity as a Tudor and by sacrality. Being considered the rightful heir was very significant to Elizabeth. Significantly, Elizabeth made royal status genderless. It did not matter that she was a woman; England had to honor her as their rightful monarch. Furthermore, once she had assured commitment from her advisors, and confirmed her legitimacy, Elizabeth was ready to deal with the main issues for Parliament and Europe: her marriage and the production of an heir.

Marriage, as noted above, was the most pressing problem for rulers, especially for Queen Elizabeth. Her persona was her saving grace while her courtiers, Privy Councilors,

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[22] John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988): 115, 139-141.
[23] Guy, *Tudor England*, 196-199.

and members of Parliament (MPs) besieged her. For example, in her speech to Parliament on February 10, 1559, less than a month after her coronation, the MPs began to beg for Elizabeth to name a potential husband. In typical Elizabethan form, she did not give a straight answer. She began by explaining that celibacy is her decision: "...As concerning your instant persuasion of me to marry...it is that I have made choice of this kind of life [unmarried and childless]..."[24] Here Elizabeth admits to thinking of marriage, however, it is her choice to remain unmarried until the perfect suitor comes along. Following that remark, she justifies the choice by reminding Parliament that there had been "danger of attempts made against my life..."[25] It can be argued that this explanation showed a reason to get married and have an heir—to ensure England a Tudor heir. However, it can be also argued that Elizabeth did not want to put her spouse or children in harm's way because of her place in the English government. Here, Elizabeth is using her rhetoric to try and stop the harassment over her marriage. She admits that she has considered marriage, but has decided that it would not be in England's favor for her to marry. She did not tell Parliament if she was ever going to get married; instead, she ordered that they not discuss it any further at that time.

In the same speech, once Elizabeth had dealt with the issue of marriage, she displayed the androgynous nature of her character. She left the passive, ordinary attitude of a woman behind and began to act more aggressively, typical attitude of kings. Although she appreciates the fact that the MPs denied the impulse to make final conclusions about Elizabeth's marriage, she comments on the drastic consequences if they had decided her future without Elizabeth's input: she would have not entertained the petition. "...if it had

[24] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 56-7.
[25] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 59.

been otherwise, I must needs have misliked it very much... (the petition) being unfitting and altogether unmeet for you to require [suitors] that may command...or to take upon you to draw my love to your liking or frame my will to your fantasies."[26] It is quite evident that this passage is not a feminine response, but a royal one. It implies that the men of Parliament have no control over her decisions, once again making her monarchy androgynous and dominating. It also a possibility that this demonstrates Elizabeth's monarchial traits she needed to run a successful kingdom—despite the fact that she was a "mere woman."

Finally, she ends this particular speech by reminding the MPs that she will not marry anyone who could be a potential threat to her realm. Elizabeth had witnessed these sorts of problems in her half-sister's marriage to Philip II of Spain. Mary's marriage had not united England but divided it. Many opposed the idea of a foreign marriage, while others opposed an English nobleman as king. Elizabeth assured Parliament that if and when she married, her husband would "never in that matter conclude anything that shall be prejudicial to the realm, for the wealth, good...he shall be...as careful for the preservation of the realm, you, and myself."[27] Although she did not rule out marriage altogether, Elizabeth warned the MPs that she would only marry if it was for the good of her country. Her attitude about marriage indicates that her public persona was genderless in nature. As a woman, Elizabeth had a certain responsibility to marry, but as monarch she had a responsibility to protect her country. Thus, her royal identity and her writings were a perfect combination of both feminine and masculine tendencies.

Parliament did not waste any time trying to persuade Elizabeth to find a suitor. The petition originated less than a month after her coronation and Elizabeth handled the pressure

[26] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 57.
[27] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 58.

in a manner that she would continue to develop. She displayed androgynous monarchial traits throughout this speech, beginning with the justification of not marrying, to the harsh reality that all her decisions were made for the good of England. Queen Mary had not waited long to marry, nor did she ever have the abilities of her half-sister. Elizabeth illustrated her public persona and its capabilities with this speech. Parliament did not have control of her decisions, but vice versa. Elizabeth, via her persona, controlled the fate of England because of her determination to have the ultimate say in policy.

Five years later, Elizabeth was handed another Commons' Petition pertaining to her marrying. By 1563, Elizabeth seemed more comfortable using her public character, resulting in a more direct overall answer. The petition differed from the first one, in that it was more concerned with her lack of an heir. It read: "...your said subjects see nothing in this whole estate of so great importance to your majesty and the whole realm, nor so necessary at this time...as the sure continuance of the governance and the imperial crown thereof in your majesty's persona and the most honorable issue of your body..."[28] This did not sit well with Elizabeth because they had doubted her judgment. In her reply, she insinuates that they are only concerned about this because of her sex: "...the weight and greatness of this matter might cause in me, being a woman wanting both wit and memory, some fear to speak and bashfulness besides, a thing appropriate to my sex..."[29] Elizabeth used her public persona to dissuade further efforts by MPs and her lords to question her authority. Elizabeth turned the English crown into an androgynous concept. In her view, when dealing with the monarchy, the English people had to recognize and accept that gender was irrelevant, meaning that the ruler had the last word—no matter the biological sex.

[28] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 73.
[29] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 70.

As well as Elizabeth dealt with the marriage issue she could never evade pressure to name an heir. England in the sixteenth century had endured several conflicts about the succession. For instance, Henry VIII created the Anglican Church to divorce and remarry until he had a male heir. Later, Mary I and her Privy Council quarreled over whether to name Elizabeth as Mary's heir. Since Elizabeth had no other immediate family to choose from, naming an heir was more difficult a task for her. By 1563, Elizabeth had been in power for five years and had yet to find a suitable suitor, therefore England feared that Elizabeth was going to have to revert to desperate measures, such as changing the line of succession multiple times. Elizabeth, as well as the rest of England, knew that marriage and procreation applied more rigorously to rulers because of their urgent need to name heirs,[30] yet she seemed to not be in any rush to name an heir, for this could be reason enough to eliminate her.

Critics, aware of her fading beauty, fertility, and age, used the excuse that it was her womanly duty to have children in the hopes that Elizabeth would finally settle this issue once and for all. Instead, Elizabeth responded in 1567 that "...my age is not yet senile, nor have I reigned for such a long time..."[31] She did not feel that Parliament was accurate when declaring her age as a valid reason that she had not named an heir. Simply, she had not decided on her successor. Elizabeth also said that ultimately God could give her children as he had done for many others.[32] Again, Elizabeth was not acting like a stereotypical sixteenth-century woman—she understood that an heir was important politically, but not because of her desire to be a mother.

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[30] Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996): 197.
[31] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 87.
[32] Neale, *Queen Elizabeth,* 120.

She did not want to relinquish her power as monarch, and marriage would pass the power to her husband. Philip II and other ambassadors believed, and were not shy in telling Elizabeth, that she needed to marry, for she needed to be "relieved of those labors which are only fit for men."[33] Elizabeth saw herself as the rightful and competent ruler of England, and she did not need the assistance of a man to run her country. Her father was Henry VIII, which gave her undisputed royal authority. And as has been stated earlier, England's future was very valuable to her, and she would not make an alliance with any man who would try to override her ambitions. As a result, I believe that Elizabeth saw the marriage card as a leverage tool; no one knew when and if she was going to use it. By declaring herself a genderless queen, Elizabeth broke numerous gender barriers. In dealing with the marriage matter, she created a new definition of a female English monarch: a ruler with complete authority, regardless of her marital status. In avoiding naming an heir, Elizabeth continued to break gender barriers because she was not fulfilling her womanly duties. In summary, she was able to use her persona as a potent weapon in a male-driven society.

Elizabeth's strict policy of forcing her subjects to agree with her views reinforced her persona as a great ruler; therefore, the people clearly understood that she was part of the royal line. Early in her reign, she was adored, beloved, and badgered just as her father had been at his crowning. She took the idea of royal identity to heart; when people were of royal blood, they had to live up to expectations regardless of gender. Elizabeth vowed to Lord Burghley that she would never admit to making mistakes, and therefore, England would love her to the end, because her father had never admitted any of his mistakes, and he was still loved.[34] In Elizabeth's eyes, Henry VIII was a great king, and because she was of his blood,

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[33] Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 67.
[34] Elswyth Thane, *Tudor Wench* (New York: Hardcore, Brace, and Company, 1932), 335.

she would be great also. Her behavior helped her to achieve this ideal: the more power, the more love from the people.

Elizabeth defied the traditional duties of her gender while creating new ones. Elizabeth refused to marry a man, but admitted to being married to England to ensure English prosperity. Her public persona helped to derail criticisms of her decisions. She never faltered in answering Parliament; however, the answers were vacillating. As her reign progressed, Elizabeth grew to be a master of rhetoric. Elizabeth's sex and gender might have invited skepticism at first, but as the years passed, neither were nearly as important. What was important was that Elizabeth was queen and a powerful one.

Elizabethan Compromise: Mary, Deborah, and God

To ensure continued success, Elizabeth needed to appeal to the two major religious factions in England. And to achieve this, Elizabeth adjusted her persona to include two legendary religious heroines—the prophetess Deborah and the revered Virgin Mary. Referencing the two women soon became a vital part to her success, for they indicated that God played a large role in her actions. Elizabeth's persona could only have benefited from these heroines because they, like Elizabeth, may not have been doing the usual womanly duties, but God had still given them power and authority. Deborah and the Virgin Mary were women who crossed the gender barriers far earlier than Elizabeth. Thus they were perfect referents for a powerful, androgynous monarch. Both Deborah and Mary had immense power, and were not questioned about their legitimacy or authority, a goal of Elizabeth.

The allusions to religious heroines provided Elizabeth with another means to stop Parliament from questioning her ability. Elizabeth was still dealing with doubts about her competence and legitimacy: For example, John Knox wrote in 1558 that female rule was blasphemous against God, given the nature of a woman.[1] Knox also said that because of their weak nature they should be barred from authority. However, Elizabeth expanded her persona so that it would specifically reverse these ideas. In order to do this, she fashioned her persona to include celebrated religious heroines, proving to her contemporaries that she did not fit into the stereotypical gender roles. This was a new gesture in sixteenth-century England; not even the staunch Catholic Mary I had tried to compare herself to religious heroines. Elizabeth's persona encompassed royal heritage, femininity, and comparisons to religious heroines. In her speeches, she tried to prove that God had sanctioned her choices

regarding marriage and the succession. All together these attributes form Elizabeth's androgynous public persona.

A common argument is that Elizabeth used the Anglican Church as a political weapon, just as her father had. For example, even after Henry VIII had ceased to recognize the pope as head of the English Church, by creating his own church, Henry still declared himself "His Most Catholic Majesty."[2] This title helped Henry maintain the Catholic support, for he had taken a huge risk by alienating England from the pope. Elizabeth used the Anglican Church in a similar manner as Henry VIII because she needed the support. Yet Elizabeth was never at the forefront of the church policies; she forced her archbishops to deal with the public conflicts over a national church.[3] It can be argued that she used the church not only as a political weapon, but also as an instrument in her survival. Elizabeth connected herself with Deborah and Mary to show that she was connected to God and that royal power was not strictly for men.

Elizabeth's comparisons to Deborah and Mary only added to her androgynous persona. In fact, both Deborah and Mary have characterized Elizabeth's reign for centuries. Deborah and Mary were chosen by God to fulfill functions that had been historically filled by men. By associating herself with these heroines, Elizabeth confirmed that God had selected her to be queen of England and directed her in all of her decisions. But Elizabeth did not necessarily attach herself with these heroines because of their religious dedication; she was not a religious fanatic.[4] Deborah, who was chosen by God to restore Israel, and Mary, who

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[1] Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 10

[2] Peter Brimacombie, *All the Queen's Men: The World of Elizabeth I* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 122.

[3] Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 15.

[4] Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 54.

even though unwed gave birth to Jesus Christ, were chosen for their androgynous natures—as women who had masculine (or royal) traits along with feminine ones.

As a result of modeling her persona after these three powerful figures, Elizabeth was able to appeal to the men and women of England. Elizabeth provided both clergy and male laity of England with more evidence of her legitimacy, while also giving the English a spiritual-minded monarchy.[5] Again, Elizabeth did not consciously break the gender barriers that faced her. She demanded respect, as any male monarch would have done, which included that she not be treated differently because she was a woman.

From the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth was determined to avoid the extremes of Edward and Mary's reigns, so that her people could live in unity under her monarchy.[6] And her referencing religious heroines would demonstrate that not only was she not a stereotypical woman, but that she was a monarch who understood the religious issues that had been affecting England's church policies. Virgin Mary offered her the two titles of mother and virgin, while Deborah offered her the model of restoring religious peace. So while Mary and Deborah gave Elizabeth a religious escape out of predicaments, they also broadened the meaning of her androgynous persona.

Elizabeth's speeches and some famous quotations indicate this element of her persona. Her speeches portrayed a ruler who was fully equipped to rule a nation because she had three important traits: royalty, femininity, and God's approval. As her reign developed, her allegiance to England was challenged. However, she responded to those challenges by insisting that she had God's favor, even as an unmarried queen. As a mother, virgin, and a

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[5] Anne McLaren, "Elizabeth I as Deborah: Biblical Typology, Prophecy, and Political Power," *Gender, Power, and Privilege in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jessica Munns and Penny Richards (London: Pearsons Publishing, 2003), 94.

[6] Neville Williams, *The Tudors*, ed. Antonia Fraser (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 83.

restorer of peace, Elizabeth proved that she had more qualities than necessary to be a successful monarch.

Elizabeth had inherited a predominantly Catholic state and wanted to continue the familiarity of that faith.[7] Mary had been a source of inspiration and support for Catholics since the medieval period. And to align oneself with the Virgin Mary was to "court divine knowledge and revelation and grace, therefore to accept this symbol was to vocalize one's relationship with God."[8] Although Elizabeth never spoke of herself and Mary in the same context, her contemporaries made the conclusion for her. They used the idea of cultural memory—the idea of tapping into a already established cultural icon and using it to define one's character. Elizabeth did not use the symbol for a simple gender reference, but as a demonstration that God had dictated all of her decisions.

While both Mary and Deborah were females, it was not their sex that drew the attraction; it was their earthly responsibilities. Mary was a chosen symbol because she was a woman with many qualities that Elizabeth wanted to highlight—such as being God's chosen powerful, potent virgin. This virgin produced a child without the intervention of a man.[9] Furthermore, comparing Elizabeth to someone of that magnitude would only launch positive results. The comparison of Elizabeth to Virgin Mary accentuates the love of a mother to her child or the monarch to her subjects.[10] The Queen readily accepted this comparison to further her persona, for to be as influential as Mary would fit perfectly into her character.

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[7] Peter Brimacombie, *All the Queen's Men: The World of Elizabeth I* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 122.
[8] Phillippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 11.
[9] Fr. William G. Most. "The Blessed Virgin Mary: Her Privileges and Relation to Christ and Her Church," *The Basic Catholic Catechism*, 1996 <www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/marya1.html> (20 September 2004)
[10] Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, 9.

However, Mary did not openly refer to the Virgin Mary because she was a Protestant monarch. Still Mary had qualities Elizabeth needed to complete her androgynous persona.

Elizabeth frequently used the mother aspect of her persona to persuade councilors and Parliament of her femininity. For example, she claimed to be the most excellent mother to her people: "I assure you all that though after my death you may have many step dames, yet shall you never have a more natural mother than I mean to be unto you all."[11] This statement illustrates Elizabeth's assurance in her role as a mother, even if she had no children of her own—it was a natural womanly trait. In the 1560s, Elizabeth had a bout with smallpox. Parliament and the Councilors believed this was the end of hope because Elizabeth was too old to have children, and now she was physically scarred. But Elizabeth retorted that the marks on her face were not "wrinkles, but pits of smallpox," and that God could "send her children as he did to Saint Elizabeth."[12] This remark confirmed that God validated her every move and that she was not too old for God's miracles. These examples show Elizabeth using her persona to escalate her authority as a great mother and God's chosen.

Elizabeth viewed herself as an interpreter of God's word and will, which meant proving this to the godly men of England—a high priority for Queen Elizabeth. God's divine favor would give her psychological strength to beat the patriarchal system.[13] Mary had been given the responsibility to give birth to the divine ruler, which made her an important part of that kingdom. Since nothing was excluded from Mary's dominion[14], it is obvious why all the intrigue with connecting Elizabeth's actions with Mary. Mary was a woman who had been accepted by God and did not have to rely on help from men. Now England had a ruler who

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[11] J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934), 119.
[12] J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth and her Parliaments: 1559-158* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), 110.
[13] Christopher Haigh. *Elizabeth I: Profiles in Power, 2nd ed.* (New York: Longman Press, 1998), 27.

was similar to the famous religious heroine; Elizabeth was a mother to her subjects, as Virgin Mary was a mother to Jesus and Christians.[15] She was proving her critics wrong—she might not have endured childbirth and she might not have been a mother physically, but she was maternal to the people of England.[16] The comparison of Elizabeth to Virgin Mary confirmed that the English queen had the divine favor as well as the qualities of an ordinary woman.

Subsequently, Elizabeth had to claim the reputation of being a virgin. However, the title of "virgin" did not just pertain to the queen's sexuality. Since marriage placed women in a subordinate role, legally and socially, claiming to be a virgin reversed this idea. Virgins were free from the carnality of the world.[17] In other words, because Elizabeth declared herself a virgin, she was moving outside patriarchal control and the gender constraints on women. Bible historians have seen anther aspect of Mary's title "Virgin": an expression of her holiness[18]; again, Elizabeth's persona could only benefit from this comparison. Elizabeth defined the man's world of the sixteenth century by rejecting her womanliness; she was no longer bound to the definition of the feminine body and its functions.[19]

In fact, she used this to sway conversation from her marriage to the more pressing matters of English politics. She said to Parliament that there would be a marble statue of her that says, "A queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin."[20] It also aided in proving her theory that if she married she would have to give up power and give it to her husband, who could hurt England in the long run as it had in her sister's case. John

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[14] Fr. William G. Most. "Mary's Queenship," Theology 523: Our Lady in Doctrine and Devotion, 1994, <www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/marya6.html> (20 September 2004)
[15] Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 111.
[16] Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 111.
[17] Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl, *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 2.
[18] Fr. William G. Most, "The Blessed Virgin Mary," www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/marya1.html.
[19] Carlson and Weisl, *Widowhood and Virginity*, 19.
[20] Weir, *Elizabeth I*, 44.

Clapham, William Cecil's biographer, wrote that Elizabeth denied marriage because she wanted to rule with absolute power, and that God had ordained such a life because the suitors were only interested in the title king of England.[21] Thus by declaring herself a virgin, she was giving herself to England—as an untainted monarch.

The designation "virgin" had less to do with her sex or gender than her public persona. She did not want to forsake her gender because she was the daughter of Henry VIII, but she did not want to show any signs of weakness, either. But by declaring herself a virgin, she drew upon a religious heroine that allowed her to carry her androgynous persona even further. Virginity was held to a higher level than matrimony in the late medieval period because the virgin "hath cared to please God..." and it was more laudable to princes because "it was hard to be kept."[22] It was concluded that she did not allow her ladies-in-waiting to marry because that would show that she condoned marriage and sex, thus counteracting the success of the virgin reference.[23] She was determined to maintain her image of the Virgin Queen because it minimized Parliament's incessant marriage discussions.

As Mary was the feminine side to Elizabeth's androgynous persona, the prophetess Deborah became the masculine model in Elizabeth's public persona. The prophetess was accessible for Elizabeth, for Deborah's duty was to restore peace in Israel, and Elizabeth, as monarch, was trying to restore peace amongst the Catholics and Protestants. Elizabeth was hailed as Deborah when she allowed the Protestant exiles back into England.[24] William Cecil's father-in-law wrote from abroad, "If the Israelites might joy in their Deborah, how

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[21] John Clapham, *Elizabeth of England: Certain Observations Concerning the Life and Reign of Queen Elizabeth* ed. Evelyn Plummer Read and Conyers Read (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 68.
[22] Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Marriage: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 195-196.
[23] Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 100-101.
[24] Williams, *The Tudors*, 83.

much more we English in our Elizabeth!"[25] This is a perfect example that some people saw Elizabeth's character similar to that of Deborah, for she had given Elizabeth an avenue to show her ruling capabilities.

Through the references to Deborah, Elizabeth was proving that God could send women to rule over among men.[26] Deborah was used as a pawn to communicate the divine will to men—she was a spokesman for God.[27] This shows that Deborah was an extraordinary woman because God had chosen her himself to express his will to the Israelites. Elizabeth also used the Deborah reference to demonstrate how she welcomed God's will into her kingdom, and that God was the only person that could dictate orders to her. Deborah taught the Israelites how to believe and pray to God[28] just as Elizabeth taught her people to believe in God, regardless of their denomination. If Elizabeth understood and acted as God wanted, he would continue to bestow his favor on England, as he had given Deborah the power to restore Israel.[29]

The image of the prophetess Deborah proposed a female ruler whose claim to power was validated by a spiritual status; Elizabeth had to develop a relationship between herself and the male clergy of England to repeat the process. Her "just and lawful authority" depended on their recognition of her virtue.[30] She was able to transform the clergy agenda to

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[25] Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 168.
[26] Susan Doran, "Why Did Elizabeth not Marry?" *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 37.
[27] Rev. J.P. Millar, M.A. *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Judges* (New York: Funk and Wagnall's Company, 18--), 187.
[28] *The Complete Biblical Library: The Old Testament. Volume 5: Study Bible, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (Springfield, MO: World Library Press, Inc., 1996), 311-313.
[29] Anne McLaren, "*Elizabeth I as Deborah,*" 93.
[30] Anne McLaren, "*Elizabeth I as Deborah,*" 94.

terms that proposed her unique and commanding place in England.[31] She had transformed English government by the monarch into government under the monarch.[32]

The prophetess's sex does not fully define her character. She had many of the masculine traits discussed in this work. She has been described as an "agitator" with the personality to stir up Israel's concern about its low spiritual condition. Deborah aroused a nation from its despair.[33] It is highly possible that Elizabeth's persona drew inspiration from Deborah's agitating personality, too. She reveled in her ability to corral the English people into church, albeit through government mandating attendance on Sunday. Deborah, a virtually overlooked Biblical figure by scholars, exemplified to not be afraid of her masculine traits, for they had worked successfully for a prophetess in Biblical times.

For example, Elizabeth allowed spiritual men to instruct her, but she was still the supreme authority. Deborah also had this characteristic: she was looked upon as a subordinate, yet she was a ruler chosen by God, leaving the men no choice but to follow her commands.[34] Elizabeth gave in only a little to the patriarchal structure, while continuing to function in her role as the monarch. Many religious writers of the sixteenth-century criticized Elizabeth for her womanhood. John Knox answered in the negative to his own question "whether a female can preside over, and rule a kingdom by divine right?"[35] These criticisms likely infuriated Elizabeth, but through her androgynous persona, Elizabeth was able to show that she was not an ordinary female monarch—she was a monarch who had both feminine and monarchial characteristics.

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[31] Anne McLaren, "*Elizabeth I as Deborah*," 99.
[32] Anne McLaren, "*Elizabeth I as Deborah*," 100.
[33] Herbert Lockyer, R.S.L. *All the Women of the Bible: The Life and Times of All the Women in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 41.
[34] Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, 41.
[35] Robert M. Healy and John Knox, *Waiting for Deborah: John Knox and Four Ruling Queens* Sixteenth Century Journal 25 (1994), 371.

In addition to proving to England that she was a monarch with characteristics of religious heroines, Elizabeth began to indicate in her speeches that God had blessed her reign and dictated to her the answers to England's problems. With the inclusion of God, Elizabeth now had her persona perfected. An example of how she used God in her speeches appears in March of 1575(6): "...and for those rare and special benefits which many years have followed and accompanied my happy reign, I attribute to God alone...I seek to...stay in God's most might and grace with full assurance."[36] These statements did not only show that God was responsible for the success in her reign, but regardless of the pressure from the secular world, she had the power to persuade Parliament that she intended to do what God told her to do. She had the perfect mixture of royal traits, feminine traits, and religious traits—a combo that had eluded women monarchs for centuries. Virgin Mary provided Elizabeth with religious and feminine traits; Deborah gave her royal and masculine traits; and God approved of Elizabeth's actions.

Elizabeth rarely gave a speech without mentioning God and how he has directed her. An example of this is in a speech to Parliament in 1585. She told the MPs that "God would never have made us, but for a better place and for more comfort than we find here...for if I were not persuaded that [my actions] were the true way of God's will, God forbid that I should live to prescribe them to you."[37] She, again, indicates to Parliament that she only acts as only God directs her. References to God are helped Elizabeth in many circumstances, for she was able to say He was her inspiration and most would not object.

Elizabeth even used God as a tool in the marriage and heir discussion. In a response to Parliament given by Cecil (as he sometimes did in Elizabeth's absences), Elizabeth said

[36] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 169.
[37] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 182-3.

that "she trusted in God's goodness to have children, for otherwise she protested that she would never marry..."[38] She was placing the responsibility on God. It was his doing that she had not had an heir or had not married, for God was taking care of England. She has often been quoted as saying that God would take care of the succession because God's will is more "beneficial to the realm then such offspring as may come of me."[39] In other words, it was not Parliament's for God would take care of England's succession.

In conclusion, Elizabeth may have developed her androgynous persona before attaining the throne, but as queen, she was able to enhance it with references to the Virgin Mary, the prophetess Deborah, and God's divine approval. By acting motherly and virginal, Elizabeth followed Mary's reputation and presented England with an answer to the marriage and succession dilemmas. By limiting the strife between English Protestants and Catholics, Elizabeth used her royalty and regnal traits. Finally, by indicating that God authorized Elizabeth's actions, she could convince detractors of her legitimacy as a ruler. It is clear that the religious references to all three contributed to her androgynous persona.

[38] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 98-99.
[39] Carole Levin, " 'We Shall Never Have a Merry World While the Queen Liveth': Gender, Monarchy, and the Power of Seditious Words," *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 85.

EXPLAINING ELIZABETH'S TEMPER

One of the most debated issues among historians is Elizabeth's unpredictable behavior. It has been argued that her erratic behavior was a result of severe pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) or just the madness inherent in being a woman. However, what scholars overlook is that her behavior could be tied back to the constant harassment of Parliament, Privy Council, and the people at her court. Under siege, Elizabeth utilized her androgynous persona to insist on total reverence to her as the monarch. Her mannerisms could not be categorized into one gender—while she was acting feminine, she never allowed anyone to forget her royalty. In her writings and examples, Elizabeth further displayed her carefully crafted persona.

Members of Parliament would persistently ask Elizabeth about the same matters, even if Elizabeth had already responded to their requests. To pressure Elizabeth into submission, courtiers would tell tales of Elizabeth's flirtatious behavior with some of the suitors. As an attempt to suppress the relentless nagging, she developed a tool to fight back, her androgynous persona. Many have described her conduct as stereotypical feminine behavior, but gender theory suggests her control over the situation. She developed a harsh rhetoric: "...her tongue had learned the swift, instinctive stab and parry of a rapier, which acts almost before the brain thinks..."[1] Therefore, it was not PMS, but a reaction against the double standard against her, for if she was a man, she would not have been constantly doubted.

This chapter will examine the different levels of Elizabeth's behavior and show that they also indicate a monarch controlling the actions of her state. To achieve this, we will examine her relationships with the MPs and ambassadors, her courtiers, and her ladies-in-

[1] Elswyth Thane. *The Tudor Wench* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1932), 274.

waiting, including how they perceived her. In all her so-called erratic behavior, Elizabeth never failed to remind the people of her royal status and that she was the queen. Her behavior might be interpreted as irrational to many, but the recipients remained at court and succumbed to the demands, demonstrating its effectiveness.

Writers dwell on Elizabeth's physical traits, on the woman, or on her royal heritage when they describe her. For example, Sir Robert Naunton wrote that Elizabeth was a "personage tall, of hair and complexion fair, but high-nosed."[2] He recognized her royalty by stating that she was more "stately and majestic"[3] than her father. Naunton's descriptions indicate her androgynous nature, for she was not just a woman, but a person of royal heritage. However, when evaluating Elizabeth's character, historians often overlook the positive contributions, therefore leading the reader to accept their theory about Elizabeth's crude behavior.

Elizabeth is best known for her harsh characteristics. Her attitude could never be predicted on a daily basis; however, it could be assumed that at some point in the day, she would become frustrated and erupt in anger. Elizabeth I was somewhat hasty but could be quickly appeased; and she was ready to show kindness after being sharp—in other words Elizabeth was both loved and feared.[4] That still did not stop the foreign envoys from commenting on her character: she was as bossy as "a peasant upon whom a barony has been conferred...and since she came to the throne she is puffed up with pride."[5]

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[2] Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia or Observations on Queen Elizabeth: her Times and Favorites,* ed. by John S. Cerovski. (Longong: Folger Books, 1985), 38.
[3] Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia*, 39.
[4] John Clapham, *Elizabeth of England: Certain Observations Concerning the Life and Reign of Queen Elizabeth,* ed by Evelyn Plummers Read and Conyers Read (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 86-89.
[5] Christopher Hibbert, *Elizabeth I: Genius of the Golden Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1991), 115.

Scholars frequently blame her mood swings on her sex, and they do not consider that Elizabeth was simply acting royally. Theories about intense PMS and sexual jealousy overlook that fact that she was only following in her father's footsteps. Like Elizabeth, Henry was also prone to dark moods of anger and suspicion about his legitimacy; and when a dark mood loomed, he would move about court with ruthlessness yet still demanded to be called Master of England.[6] The fact that historians have neglected to make this comparison only demonstrates their insistence on proving that Elizabeth was an erratic woman who needed a man to calm her down.

There are also historians who describe Elizabeth in sexist terms. They degrade her behavior as the actions of an irrational woman. They often write about her behavior in a manner that denigrates her actions and blames her inadequacies on her femininity, instead of just viewing Elizabeth as a monarch following her father's legacy.

An example of such treatment is Christopher Haigh's statement that Elizabeth "was a show-off and dressed to kill"[7] when she met ambassadors or attended Parliament. But what he does not recognize is that her father also enjoyed wearing lavish dress and jewelry around ambassadors and court.[8] Elizabeth's love of fashion was an indication of her royal heritage, for it was typical for monarchs to dress elegantly, and not a sign of her womanliness. This example clearly proves that Haigh was writing about Elizabeth in sexist terms and also in twentieth century terms, and not considering her royal status.

Again, scholars have criticized Elizabeth's attitude towards Parliament, but her attitude towards Parliament exemplifies her persona. She would make the MPs wait

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[6] Roger Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain: 1471-1714* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 16-17.
[7] Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I: Profiles in Power, 2nd ed* (New York: Longman, 1998), 90.
[8] It was recorded that he spent over £10,000 on jewelry between November 1529 and December 1532. Lacy Baldwin Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty* (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1982), 41.

incessantly for her decisions. This would infuriate Parliament because they felt that she was only procrastinating to save herself from risk and expense.[9] However, by procrastinating, she was showing that she was in control of Parliament, including influencing their decisions. Elizabeth often had long conversations with foreign ambassadors that included unplanned outbursts to ensure that she had all of the necessary information.[10] Her behavior is similar to that of any demanding king, but what makes these particular characteristics stand out is that Elizabeth had royalty and was a woman—an unprecedented combination.

Elizabeth acted erratically in Parliament because it was imperative that the MPs realize and continually remember that they were dealing with a reigning queen. An example of Elizabeth's character and persona is in her speech made in September of 1566, where she patronized Parliament. In the speech, Elizabeth asks them if she should "...be silent or speak?...for, if I should speak, I would make it evident to you how uncultivated I am in letters; however, if I remain silent my incapacity may appear to be contempt..."[11] This is an excellent example of her persona: she acted uncomfortable with her intellect because women were not to be more highly educated than the men. At the same time, she would put Parliament in a predicament because they could not discount her royalty and power. Virtually, Elizabeth forced the MPs tell her that she was competent and that she should speak freely because she was Queen of England. Quotations such as these show Elizabeth as the monarch, even if she was a woman. Her "manliness" or crudity forced MPs to submit.

Another way that Elizabeth would upset Parliament was by postponing important decisions. She was reluctant to make up her mind and as ready to change it, in both minor

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[9] David Loades. *Elizabeth I: The Golden Reign of Gloriana* (Richmond, Surrey: National Archives, 2003), 36.
[10] Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I: Second Edition* (New York: Longman Press, 1998), 86-87.
[11] Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). 90.

and important decisions. MPs and councilors felt restrained by this and often asked her to leave significant matters to those more capable instead of "prolonging and mincing"[12] around the matter. And her delay was not just confined to avoiding Parliamentary sessions, but also in her state progresses around England.[13] With these progresses, she was able to dodge decisions, delay commitments, and preserve her royal power.[14]

As much as Elizabeth delayed decisions, she also made impulsive ones. In fact, many decisions she only thought through half-heartedly. Often she misjudged the situation, and made an incoherent decision. But in others, her motives were not clear, which left her councilors to disentangle them.[15] Her hesitation is indicative of her persona because women were categorized as weak-minded; yet Elizabeth showed that she had the royal power to do whatever she wanted.

Foreign ambassadors were not excluded from the wrath of England's queen. The competition for Elizabeth's favor forced ambassadors to approach her in adoration while trying to sell Elizabeth on their foreign policies, thus her behavior was a formidable political weapon.[16] Elizabeth played games with the ambassadors; she would use feminine tactics, such as maidenly coyness or queenly reserve.[17]

This frustrated many of her ambassadors, especially the Spanish ambassador, de Feria. He wrote to Philip II that sometimes Elizabeth would "appear to want to marry [Philip II], and speaks like a woman who will only accept a great prince...and then say that she was

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[12] Hibbert, *Elizabeth I*, 117.
[13] Elizabeth would often journey around England to gain political support at Parliament. Author Mary Hill Cole discusses these progresses in full in her work The Portable Queen. Mary Hill Cole, *The Portable Queen: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Ceremony* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).
[14] Hill Cole, *The Portable Queen*, 62.
[15] Hillaire Belloc, *Elizabethan Commentary* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1967), 148.
[16] Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 97.
[17] Martin Andrew Hume Sharp, *The Courtships of Queen Elizabeth: A History of the Various Negotiations for Her* (London: Eveleigh, Nash, and Grayson, Ltd, 1967), 51.

in love with Lord Robert [Dudley]..."[18] However effective her coyness might have been, the ambassadors would often send unfavorable depictions of Elizabeth. For example, it was noted by an ambassador in the mid-1590s that Elizabeth would "prance around in extravagant attire and low-cut dresses, yet she could barely ride, she wore a wig, her teeth were bad."[19] But when it came down to political matters, Elizabeth was bold, brave, and daring—traits that could not be denied, even by her worst enemies.[20] In conclusion, ambassadors, like MPs, were forced to recognize that Elizabeth was queen, and that she had the ultimate choice, and they were constantly aware of her androgynous persona.

Elizabeth's persona was not used as a political tool, but because she enjoyed making the courtiers grovel at her feet, thus establishing that she was sovereign. From the time of her accession, Elizabeth employed a forceful behavior at court. Elizabeth often humiliated courtiers—she would box their ears, throw objects at them, or dismiss them from her presence, [21] and yet she would demand their love for her.

Many scholars have made much ado about Elizabeth's relationships with the men at court. She flirted with them and she also commanded them to publicly show their love for her. This is an example of why historians have blamed her inconsistent behavior on her menstrual cycle—she appeared to be "moody." As discussed in the last chapter, Elizabeth controlled the personal lives of her ladies-in-waiting. They were not allowed to marry without her consent, and if they did, they were usually physically punished or imprisoned.

Elizabeth's behavior at court also demonstrates her androgynous persona. She would act like a dominant monarch and then show her feminine side as well. It exemplifies her

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[18] Sharp, *The Courtships of Queen Elizabeth*, 33.
[19] John Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.
[20] Frederick George Lee, *The Church under Queen Elizabeth* (Thomas Baker, 1896), 80.

persona on many different levels. Her unpredictable temper, her love of flirtation, and the admiration she insisted upon are all components of her androgynous persona. Elizabeth insisted that the court resemble a family, just as she had played the role of mother to all of her English subjects. Her court can be depicted as a nursery, where she presides lovingly over the courtiers.[22] A favorite courtier, Lord Robert Dudley, the earl of Leicester, claimed that "her rants were not as bad as other princes and that every man must render to her their due."[23] With this statement, he acknowledged that her royalty was more important than her behavior; therefore, it seems that her androgynous nature was a fixture at court. Elizabeth's personal relationships in her court had to accept both her femininity and her monarchial status.

Historians have analyzed Elizabeth's behavior at court as a completely negative, and have minimized the positive characteristics. Courtier Sir John Harington wrote of Elizabeth's encouraging nature: "When she smiled, it was a pure sunshine that everyone did choose to bask in if they could."[24] She loved to participate in the entertainment at court. She welcomed music and plays and would often play cards with her courtiers.[25] In other words, Elizabeth was not always threatening and could be quite ordinary. Clearly, her behavior towards the players at her court indicates the usage of her persona; the courtiers must remember that she was not just a king's daughter, but she was the monarch.

Elizabeth's unpredictable rants and outbursts are of more interest than her to Elizabethan scholars. They try to excuse her erratic behavior by blaming it on her womanhood, but what they fail to analyze is the positive outcomes that derive from her

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[21] Peter Brimacombe, *All the Queen's Men: The World of Elizabeth I* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 20.
[22] Mary Villeponteaux, "Not as Women Wonted Be: Spenser's Amazon Queen," *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed., Julia Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 215-216.
[23] Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 88.

behavior. For instance, leaving the courtiers guessing at whether court was a government function or courtly charade left Elizabeth with the upper hand. She had complete control over the occurrences at court. Elizabeth might never have felt the need for masculine help, but she clearly understood what it meant to be of royalty.[26]

Queen Elizabeth hated to have people at her court to question her authority or capabilities. And to squash these criticisms Elizabeth engaged her persona. It has been documented that she threw a shoe at her councilor Francis Walsingham, slapped the Earl of Essex's face, and ranted at various courtiers. She was also known to curse loudly and vehemently while wearing an elegant, feminine dress. Or she would storm off to her chamber in the midst of a courtier giving her high praise.[27] In fact, the courtiers were expected to give Elizabeth extreme praise, even if they were not telling the truth. As she grew older, she would call herself old and foolish, prompting the courtiers to praise her.[28] These examples demonstrate how she had mastered her androgynous persona. She might appear to be an ordinary woman, but she was also demanding courtesy and respect.

Flirtatious behavior was in her genes. Henry VIII also had the reputation as a flirt. Henry had married six times, had at least one illegitimate child and an obvious lust for women.[29] But Elizabeth's flirtatious demeanor not only sought attention but also provide proof that she knew how to charm the men into thinking that she was beautiful, witty, and vivacious.[30] Elizabeth was very vain and adored flattery, but she was shrewd enough to not

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[24] J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934), 216.
[25] Alison Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 29.
[26] Loades, *Elizabeth I*, 36.
[27] Carrolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 262.
[28] Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 98.
[29] Smith, *Henry VIII*, 12-14.
[30] Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I*, 18.

succumb to it when there were serious issues at hand.[31] Contemporary critics of Elizabeth said that because of her flirtation, she was sexually immoral. However, Elizabeth was rarely alone, she was surrounded by her attendants most of the day and night.[32] Many courtiers figured out that to succeed at court politics, they had to pretend to be in love with Elizabeth, and to realize that Elizabeth would inevitably win at the game of court politics because she could change the rules at any moment.[33] Examples such as these are good illustrations of the control Elizabeth had over her court and how far her persona had incorporated both femininity and royalty.

Elizabeth's ladies-in-waiting were also made to grovel at the queen's feet. At court, they had opportunities to meet courtiers, but Elizabeth did not allow her attendants to marry without her consent, and she did not consent too often. Some scholars claim that this attitude came from sexual jealously. Because she had the image to uphold, Elizabeth could not have sex, and as a result did not want to be surrounded by attendants who were having sex. In all probability, it was not a jealous action, but a desire for control because the ladies were working for the queen and should want to promote her image. It also shows that her persona did not only pertain to the political arena, but also had to show itself in more intimate settings.

As controlling as Elizabeth was, many attendants disobeyed her wishes. Punishments could range from bodily injury to imprisonment. A famous incident that shows Elizabeth's desire for control over her ladies-in-waiting was the marriage of Katherine Grey and Edward Seymour. They wanted to get married, but it was clear that Elizabeth would definitely not approve of such a situation because Edward Seymour was the son of Edward VI's Lord

[31] Brimacombe, *All the Queen's Men*, 23.
[32] Weir, *The Life of Elizabeth I*, 51.

Protector, and Katherine Grey had been canvassed as Elizabeth's successor. And, this meant that Katherine was the queen's rival and there would be no way that Elizabeth would approve of a marriage that united two important families.[34] They married in secrecy, and soon after Katherine became pregnant, which meant that she could not hide her condition from Elizabeth any longer. They were both imprisoned and Edward was convicted of contaminating the virginity of royal blood.[35]

This example shows the extremes to which Elizabeth would go to get obedience from her ladies-in-waiting, as well as to maintain her power. They also illustrate the importance of royal heritage to her persona—both Seymour and Grey defied Queen Elizabeth's orders and had to be punished. Elizabeth would not take disobedience or threats lightly because she was the ruler and had to care for England.

So Elizabeth's erratic behavior was not necessarily due to her menstrual cycle, but to her desire for control. She more than likely enjoyed making the ambassadors, courtiers, ladies-in-waiting, and MPs grovel for her attention and approval, for it humiliated them while elevating her power. Most male monarchs would resort to such behavior to ensure cooperation and support, but because Elizabeth was a woman, she had to employ a persona that would show her royalty and not defy her gender. In summary, her behavior is an excellent example of Elizabeth's androgynous persona.

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[33] John Guy, *Elizabeth I*, 3.
[34] David Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* (New York: Antheneum, 1978), 40-44.
[35] Ironically, they were released from prison due to the outbreak of the plague. Katherine died of the plague in 1568, and Edward was sent to his mother's house. David Durant, *Bess of Hardwick*, 44.

CONCLUSION

The sixteenth century was the age of Elizabeth: the single, female monarch. It seemed that very few in England actually had faith in Elizabeth when she first ascended to the throne, but through her androgynous persona, she was able to stay on top. As true with every leader, Elizabeth did not have the love of all the English people. However, it was their duty to love her because she was their ruler. Her persona may have provided many opportunities for her to operate freely within her government. Elizabeth lived in a society that limited women's roles, but she was able to break those gender barriers. Through her image that first appeared in her dealings with Mary I, Elizabeth was able to emphasize both her royalty and femininity. Her persona also aided in her dealings with Parliament, her courtiers, ambassadors, and the English people.

As we have seen, Elizabeth's persona relied heavily on her father's legacy, which is an element that neither Mary nor Edward picked up on. Elizabeth drew off of Henry VIII's masculine traits. She made it a point to remind her subjects that regardless of her sex, she was Henry VIII's child. Though she relied on Henry's legacy to give her authoritative legitimacy, Elizabeth never forfeited her femininity, for it was a part of her image. Though she would never fulfill the accepted roles of a sixteenth-century woman, Elizabeth was able to demonstrate her understanding of womanly duties. By combining both of these characteristics, Elizabeth created an androgynous persona that first emerged when she was a princess and lasted until her death in 1603.

Elizabeth used her persona after her implications in Wyatt's Rebellion. Mary I had contempt for Elizabeth and saw Elizabeth's participation in the rebellion as an act of treason against the queen, but Elizabeth was able to persuade Mary to release her from the tower, as

well as naming Elizabeth heir to the throne. Elizabeth used her persona as a tool against Mary, for Mary could not deny Elizabeth's royal heritage. Throughout this ordeal, Elizabeth applied her persona and used whatever gender traits were necessary for the situation. She did not allow herself to be overly feminine or masculine, but used her androgynous persona to show her innocence and her monarchial abilities.

This persona also helped Elizabeth deal with Parliament's immediate pressure for her to marry. She regarded herself as a competent ruler, not as a ruler who needed the assistance of a husband. She would constantly remind Parliament of this by employing her public persona. Her letters and speeches to Parliament assured them that her actions were all for the good of England, for she would never want to tarnish England's reputation.

The marriage question plagued Elizabeth from the minute Mary I died. Elizabeth responded by claiming to be married to England and to be a mother to her subjects. This comparison subdued the pressure, but it was always looming in the air. Elizabeth, in fact, never denied that there was always a possibility of her marrying, even if she had no intention of doing so. When the question came up, Elizabeth would usually remind Parliament of her femininity by using phrases like "mere woman," which would appease the MPs because they were sure that she would fulfill her womanly obligations. However, Elizabeth also demonstrated her regnal traits by demanding the total subordination of Parliament—regardless of her marital status, they had to recognize her as monarch. In summary, Elizabeth's androgynous persona helped her deal with the constant pressure to marry and name an heir, for she was not an ordinary queen.

Another aspect to Elizabeth's persona was the modeling of her persona after religious heroines, the Virgin Mary and the prophetess Deborah, and using God to substantiate her

actions. The models gave her a religious background and also helped her gain support from both the Protestants and Catholics. She used Virgin Mary to help her communicate her femininity, Deborah to convey her monarchial abilities, and God provided the seal of approval.

Elizabeth modeled her femininity after the Virgin Mary—she was a virgin and a mother to her subjects. Though historians question Elizabeth's virginity, it still cannot be denied that England recognized her as one. Also Elizabeth was a mother to all her people, as Mary was a mother to Jesus and Christians. The combination of these two traits shows Elizabeth painting herself as a woman. Virginity was very important in the sixteenth century, and motherhood was at the core of a woman's life, which showed that Mary had a vital role in society, for she was both a virgin and a mother.

Deborah became her royal, or masculine, image. Deborah was sent by God to restore Israel, meaning that she was the authoritative source in this endeavor. Deborah was to further Elizabeth's image in healing the gap between the Catholics and Protestants in England. Also, it gave Elizabeth a comparison to a woman who had authority in her society—something Elizabeth wanted too. In the sixteenth century, authority was equivalent with masculinity and because Elizabeth modeled herself after Deborah, she indicated could also be exercised by a woman.

The religious part of Elizabeth's androgynous persona also used God to show the English that her actions were acceptable. Her speeches and letters frequently indicated how God had dictated her actions. She often used God as a scapegoat. For instance, she would say that when God wanted her to have children, he would provide. In other words, she gave

the impression that God was working through her to make England a better nation, and that the English people shouldn't worry about her marriage.

There has been a lot of historiographical discussion on Elizabeth's erratic behavior and many historians blame it on her womanliness; however, her behavior is another level to her androgynous persona. She demanded respect from who surrounded her, and if they refused, then she would get angry, as any monarch would have. The only reason that her behavior has been such an issue is that she was a woman; historians have overlooked the fact that most kings acted in the same manner as Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's unpredictable moods and her flirtatiousness have engaged many scholars. It is true that Elizabeth's moods could not be predicted, but in many cases her angry outbursts were consequences of being questioned. And her anger did not last long, for the advisors and courtiers would continuously please the queen, which indicates the control she had on her them. Elizabeth's flirtation only shows how far she would go to get respect—another trait similar to her father. Her behavior can be directly attributed to the ordinary behavior of a monarch; it is only scrutinized because Elizabeth was not acting lady-like. It is obvious that Elizabeth was a woman and a ruler, not an everyday typical woman.

My argument offers a new direction to Elizabethan historiography. Elizabeth was not a king and queen, but an androgynous monarch. One could further this argument by comparing Mary I's public persona to Elizabeth's. It has been concluded that Mary attempted to place herself in the stereotypical role of a queen by marrying another king and becoming obsessed with having an heir. And, as I have tried to show, Elizabeth attempted to avoid those stereotypes and prove that she did not need a husband to help her run England's government—she formed a public persona that utilized the personalities of both a queen and

a king. Despite the various interpretations of the Elizabeth I, she will remain an unforgettable historical figure for numerous reasons, not just because she was a woman.

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