Introduction.

Queen Elizabeth I of England is one of the most readily recognizable figures in history. Portraits exhibiting her ghostly pale visage and flaming red hair, coupled with the larger than life gowns dripping in jewels, have become iconic images of the so-called Golden Age of the English Renaissance. Her image, as enduring as it is today, was the foundation upon which Elizabeth built her royal power, each and every move carefully calculated to mold her into the living legend that she was during her reign. Upon coming to power at the age of twenty-five, Elizabeth I ascended the throne of a kingdom riddled with debt, and torn apart by religious factionalism and turmoil. Over the course of her forty-four year reign, she shaped England into a global power, bringing about an economic prosperity not enjoyed since the reign of Elizabeth’s grandfather, Henry VII. The calming of social and religious tensions, coupled with economic stability, allowed the arts to flourish during the Elizabethan Age. Perhaps best known as ‘the Virgin Queen’, the Elizabeth I recognized by history is a product of the combined resources of the various art media available during the Early Modern period. The image of Queen Elizabeth I was carefully and meticulously crafted to present an authoritative and strong feminine figure in a world dominated by men. Literature, portraits, plays, speeches, and prayers alike fashioned Elizabeth Tudor into a Goddess on earth, most frequently the virginal Diana, the Greco-Roman goddess of the moon and the hunt. Through the myriad artistic forms employed to represent and emulate Queen Elizabeth I, a profile of the multifaceted woman behind the legend can be assembled, each exposing a different facet of the Queen, and each being another example of a manufactured image or persona of the monarch.
To best understand how Elizabeth came to dominate the hearts and minds of her subjects, inspiring substantial volumes of literary works dedicated in her name, we need to understand her crucial but also precarious position as a female monarch. As a Queen Regnant in Renaissance Europe, Elizabeth faced a longstanding gender bias, living in a society that privileged male rulers and the maintenance of the line of succession through the male heirs. Elizabeth’s own father, the infamous Henry VIII, had married six times and broke from the Catholic Church, causing an upheaval in English society which would last into Elizabeth’s own reign, all to secure the Tudor line of succession through a male heir. In England, a woman who inherited the throne was expected to marry and turn over rule of the nation to her husband, whereas France followed Salic law, which forbade succession through the female line.

Elizabeth’s succession to the throne was something that, given her early life, might have been thought impossible. The only surviving child of the doomed union of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, the young Princess Elizabeth fell from the top of the line of succession when her mother was executed for treason, joining her elder sister Mary in being proclaimed royal bastard.1 With the birth of the future King Edward VI in 1537, Elizabeth was relegated to third in line for the throne during the moments when her father saw fit to include she and her sister into the line of succession. Once Henry VIII finally had his long desired son, it was common belief that Mary, let alone Elizabeth, would never rise to power in England.2 Even after Edward’s untimely demise in 1553 at the age of sixteen, Elizabeth’s path to the throne became even more complicated and treacherous. Not wanting the throne to pass into the Catholic hands

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1 Lisa Hilton. *Elizabeth I: Renaissance Prince: A Biography*, 19. When Henry VIII ended his marriage to Katherine of Aragon, Mary was bastardized and removed from the line of succession. Elizabeth was placed at the top of the line of succession as Henry’s only ‘legitimate’ child.
2 Ibid, 43. There were many periods in the later years of Henry’s reign where he would legitimize Mary and Elizabeth, and declare them bastards on a whim.
of the eldest Tudor child, Mary, Edward, at the urging of his advisors and regents eliminated his sisters from the line of succession, passing his crown onto their cousin Lady Jane Grey, who reigned for a mere nine days before being displaced, and ultimately executed, by Mary I.\(^3\) The longstanding animosity between Catholics and Protestants came to a head during Mary’s reign, Elizabeth getting caught in the middle, who spent the majority of Mary’s tenure as a prisoner. With Mary’s marriage to the Spanish King, Philip II, and her subsequent apparent pregnancy, it looked as if the youngest daughter of Henry VIII would ever ascend to the throne of England. After facing the better part of twenty-five years as an unlikely figure to rise to power, Elizabeth Tudor was crowned Queen of England in 1558.\(^4\)

Although powerful female figures were present in the political environment of the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods, figures such as Catherine di’ Medici, Mary, Queen of Scots, and Mary I of England followed more conventional paths. Mary I, the first Queen Regnant of England, ascended to the throne in 1553 and immediately began marriage negotiations, marrying the future King Philip II of Spain the following year in July of 1554.\(^5\) Catherine di’ Medici, Queen Consort of France when Elizabeth came to the throne, gained political power as the Queen Regent of France, ruling alongside two of her underage sons. Mary, Queen of Scots, ruled Scotland from France in her youth with her husband François II, and then, following his death, in Scotland. During her tenure in her home nation, she took two more husbands. All of these women followed the convention of marrying, not only to secure their lines of succession, but also at the urging of societal convention that a woman required a man to aid in her rule. Elizabeth broke with these conventions during her reign; she never married, ruling her Kingdom

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\(^3\) Hilton, *Renaissance Prince*, 80-89.  
\(^4\) Ibid, 118-127.  
without a King.

There was resistance to the power of all of these women; a vivid example is John Knox’s *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women*, in which the author discusses at length the dangers of the rule of women. First published in 1558, the same year that Elizabeth ascended to the English throne, Knox attacked the three Marys, Marie de Guise, mother of Mary, Queen of Scots and former Queen Regent of Scotland, the aforementioned Queen of Scots, and Mary I of England. Originally meant as an attack on the Catholic Queens, Knox extended his argument to include all female monarchs. Knox’s work is full of general arguments against female rule: “And first, where I affirm the empire of a woman to be a thing repugnant to nature.” and “First, I say that woman is her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man, not to rule and command him […].” Once Elizabeth became Queen of England, Knox attempted to mollify her by claiming that she was a figure like Deborah, a biblical Queen, raised to her position by God.⁶

Given the strong opposition to female rule by Knox and others, the meticulous shaping of Elizabeth’s image was imperative. From the moment the throne passed to Elizabeth, her parliament was pushing for her to marry, an event that was considered to be an essential part of womanhood and likewise essential to the political health of her country. To be considered a suitable bride, women were expected to come to marriage pure and chaste. Thus, what would become the most iconic part of Elizabeth I, the foundation of her virginal image, began to be forged in the earliest years of her reign. In 1559, the new Queen in her first speech to Parliament responded to their call for her to marry. The language of the speech is strong and carries great weight, expressing in clear, concise language her position on marriage:

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Your petition, I perceive consisteth of three parts, and mine answer to
the same shall depend of two. And to the first part, I may say that from my
years of understanding, sith I first had consideration of myself to be born a
servitor of Almighty God, I happily choose this kind of life in which I yet
live, which I assure you for mine own part hath hitherto best contented
myself and I trust hath been most acceptable to God. From which if either
ambition of high estate offered to me in marriage by the pleasure and
appointment of my prince[...]7

In a masterful manner, the young Queen Elizabeth both acknowledges and rejects the petition
from Parliament for her near immediate marriage, citing God as the origin of her desire for
celibacy. Her claim is that she will remain unmarried until the will of God dictates otherwise,
and that she will only consider the prospect of marriage if and when she feels His call to do so.

[...] I must needs have misliked it very much and thought it in you a very
great presumption, being unfitting and altogether unmeet for you to
require them that may command, of those to appoint whose parts are to
desire, or such to bind and limit whose duties are to obey, or to take upon
you to draw my love to your liking or frame my will to your fantasies.8

This passage highlights the intensity with which Elizabeth approached her role as Queen
Regnant. Here, the young Queen, in the process of addressing a demand for her to marry, sets the
standard for how she is to be approached as the monarch of England. From this passage it can be
gleaned that from the earliest part of her reign, Elizabeth I ensured that the men who served as
the members of her parliament and her counselors understood that she was the monarch in her
own right, and she would not suffer them to make demands upon her. She boldly stands her
ground, in opposition of her Parliament and councilors, in the same manner a King would have.9

[...] And in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone
shall declare that a queen having reigned such a time, lived and died a
virgin.10

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7 Queen Elizabeth I. "First Speech before Parliament from Part Two: Coronation and the Problems of
Legitimacy, Religion, and Succession (1559-1566)." In Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts,
Commentary and Criticism, by Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch, 125-27.
8 Queen Elizabeth I. "First Speech", 125-27.
9 Ilona Bell. Elizabeth I: The Voice of a Monarch, 7-8.
10 Ibid.
Perhaps the most powerful excerpt from her first parliamentary address is Elizabeth I’s passionate declaration that she will go to her grave an unmarried, and ever-chaste, Queen Regnant. Elizabeth utilized her first speech to parliament to address their primary concern, and make clear the role she held in their society. She is the monarch, raised to her throne by God, and she will be the one to decide her marital status. From this early speech to parliament until her death, Elizabeth was determined never to marry despite her appearances of entertaining the idea, and as she succinctly put in the above speech, to die a virgin Queen. Virginity, as it pertains to Elizabeth Tudor, served many different functions; to be an eligible bride in the period, virginity was a very important factor. Even though Elizabeth claimed from an early period in her reign that she never intended to marry, the Queen understood that marriage negotiations were a valuable political tool that she could use to her advantage.

The image of Elizabeth I as illustrated in compositions by writers of the period exhibit many different interpretations of their monarch. The extensive range of views on Elizabeth Tudor is a vital element in understanding what facilitated the creation of the iconic image of the Queen that is known to history. What is not as well known is the extent to which Elizabeth helped to craft her own self-image through her own written works. Countless hours of study have been poured into the texts immortalizing the last Tudor monarch, with a strong focus on the works written by the coterie of Elizabeth’s courtly favorites. Elizabeth’s own written work provides another view of the same figure that dominates the work of her contemporaries. A comparison between these two groups of writings, those of Elizabeth I and those of her courtly coterie, will help to give a better understanding of the complicated and multifaceted figure so often represented in literature of the period.

There exists a large collection of documents written by Elizabeth I throughout her life,
including letters, transcripts of speeches, poems, and prayers, most composed during the latter period of her reign and of her life. In *Elizabeth I, Voice of a Monarch*, she is referred to as the most prominent writer of the period.\textsuperscript{11} Though, perhaps not as skilled in the literary arts as Shakespeare, Donne, or Spenser, Elizabeth I wrote words that, no matter their function, carried great weight politically and symbolically. Letters bearing the signature of the Queen carried a pronounced impact, no matter their subject; it should be noted that letters, even those signed by Elizabeth herself, cannot be certain to have been written by her as the status she possessed as Queen of England allowed for the employ of those whose exclusive job was to compose official correspondence in Elizabeth’s name.\textsuperscript{12} Through her speeches, like her first address to Parliament examined above, Queen Elizabeth disseminated vital information concerning political matters relating to her person as well as the health, and welfare of the nation, while in her written prayers, Elizabeth as the spiritual leader of her people would seek Divine blessings and protection for all of England. Her poems often follow the popular Petrarchan model, widely used in the Early Modern period, and speak of love and duty.\textsuperscript{13} These poems composed by Elizabeth provide readers with a small insight into the inner workings of the mind of the monarch. Through this written form readers are shown different facets of the Queen, yet each is example of a construct, a created persona of the monarch. It is highly unlikely that the true personality of Elizabeth Tudor can be gleaned fully from any of her writings, considering her position in a period where royalty, especially the monarch, was expected to exist as the dual figure of Body Politic and body corporeal.

The poetry of the Tudor Queen is as complex and multi-faceted as the woman responsible for its composition, appearing to display several different aspects and emotions of Elizabeth I.

\textsuperscript{12} Bell. *Voice of a Monarch*, 8.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 19.
Most of the better-known poems were composed in the 1580’s, around the time the final serious marriage negotiations of Elizabeth’s life, the proposed match with the Duc d’Anjou, fell through. Nearing her fiftieth birthday, and possibly feeling the strain of time, the Queen wrote a couple of verses that speak to the immense loneliness and isolation of her life, following conventional methods and practices common to this type of poetic expression. Within these poems there is a suggestion of revealing a sense of the true self of Elizabeth Tudor, illuminating the real, flesh and blood woman who lived within the confines of the meticulously crafted, larger than life image of the Monarch.

One of these poems, composed by Elizabeth sometime in the 1580’s, strikes a blow at the image of Elizabeth as the aloof virgin as presented in Spenser’s Faerie Queen, seen in that particular text as Belphœbe, a woman who exists above the desire for love and companionship. Titled When I Was Fair and Young, the four-stanza piece reflects on the potential lovers turned away by the speaker in her youth, and the regrets that have begun to set in as time and age have caught up. Beginning with a short tale about the many lovers who pined for her, desired that she would fill the role of courtly mistress, and her continued spurning of their advances until such a time as she was met by Cupid, who put an end to the parade of would-be lovers:

[...]
Then spake fair Venus’ son, that brave, victorious boy,
Saying, “You dainity dame, for that you be so coy,
I will so pull your plumes as you shall say no more,
“Go, go go, seek some otherwhere; importune me no more.”

As soon as he had said, such change grew in my breast
That neither night nor day I could take any rest.
Wherefore I did repent that I had said before,
“Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere; importune me no more.”¹⁴

There appears to be a marked discontent with the passage of time, and regret for the actions of the past, the pushing away of love and lamenting the words of Cupid, now fully aware there will be no more new lovers for her to push away. This poem, though short, gives the appearance of providing an insight into the innermost thoughts of the woman who was also the Queen, the sorrows and regrets of the individual seeping through the carefully constructed façade of royal impassiveness. The speaker does not appear to be the same woman who inspired the many literary Doppelgangers of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, nor the woman who rallied the troops at Tilbury in 1588. There seems to be vulnerability present in the words, an openness not usually present in speeches, or letters. *When I was Fair and Young* can be interpreted as a rare glimpse into the most private part of the Queen, her thoughts, which were not to be shared with the outside world while she maintained the guise of Monarch. The last line of all four stanzas is the same; the refrain of “Go, go go, seek some otherwhere; importune me no more” might be interpreted as a literary representation of Elizabeth’s repeated pushing away of those men who were her favorites at court, men such as Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (whose legacy is as the man whom Elizabeth nearly married)\(^{15}\) and Sir Walter Raleigh, whose rise and fall in Elizabeth’s esteem will be examined shortly through his own poetic works.

In book three of *Faerie Queene*, Spenser presents the character of Belphœbe, a likeness of Elizabeth who as a virginal figure rejects erotic love. It has been posited that Belphœbe is meant to represent the innermost private thoughts of the Queen, which is particularly troubling when the character in question has a rather cold and distant emotional state. The personal writing of Elizabeth helps to dispel that image, as seen in *When I Was Fair and Young*. This is but one

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poem which serves to shatter that cold, unfeeling image. The lamentation of the final stanza of *Fair and Young* has a profound impact on readers, which haunts my readings of other poems written by Elizabeth.

*On Monsieur’s Departure*, written sometime in 1582 at the end of the negotiations for the French Match, provides another strong counter-point to the cold figure of Belphœbe:

I grieve and dare not show my discontent;  
I love, and yet am forced to seem to hate;  
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant;  
I seem stark mute, but inwardly do prate.  
I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned,  
Since from myself another self I turned.\(^\text{16}\)

The speaker here is as a woman conflicted, trapped between desire and duty. The repeated refrain of *Fair and Young* is given new life within this poem. For a time, it appeared that Elizabeth was going to go through with the proposed marriage, indeed the Queen even went so far as to present him with a ring and make public displays of affection with him during his second visit in 1581. It appears that Elizabeth did possess true affection for the French duke, whether or not she ever had any true intention to make him her consort.\(^\text{17}\) The poem not only seems to confirm this argument, *On Monsieur’s Departure* also suggests that the repeated pushing away of suitors in her lifetime, the “Go, go, go […]” of *Fair and Young*, was not because the speaker did not desire affection, but rather because she did not allow herself to have it for the sake of duty. While this may seem to support the reading of Belphœbe mentioned above, there is also a sense of internal struggle, and a clear statement of love, or the desire for affection, that allows for the differentiation of the real and the imagined versions of the Queen.

Thought it is not clear which of the two poems was composed first, there is a connection between

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\(^\text{17}\) Hilton, *Renaissance Prince*, 238.
the two in both tone and subject. Sorrow and love are the primary focus of each of the poems.

The preoccupation with these subjects is a decidedly human quality, something that does not fit into the carefully constructed image of Elizabeth as a monarch, or as the Goddess-like figure so often presented in other literary works. But the sorrow of the poems is also conventional, imitating some of the chief characteristics of Petrarchan love lyric.

This obviously human figure is not present in all of the poetic works of the Queen. For example, an analysis of a verse exchange between Sir Walter Raleigh and Elizabeth I, dated around 1587, shows yet another side of the Queen. Raleigh’s poem is believed to be an artistic plea for the approval of his Queen, expressing his fear of being pushed aside as favorite in favor of the earl of Essex. The poem is heartfelt and sorrowful, a pleading cry from a lover desperate for attention, which hearkens to the repeated refrain of “Go, go, go […]” from *Fair and Young*. The speaker of Elizabeth’s response is playful, mildly chiding, and aloof. The depth that appears to be laid bare in the previously examined poems does not appear to be present here. There is a sense of construct, an intentionally modeled conventionality that only hints at the potential of deeper feelings. Poetically, there is a clear difference between the speakers of each of the above works. One appears to be a private self, or at least the construction of a private self, that innermost part of the Queen who is the woman hidden away behind the mask and artifice of Monarchy; the other matches the façade of the courtly lover responding to Raleigh’s knight errant. Their verse exchange aided in solving a private matter, while representing that interaction within the confines of recognizable literary conventions.¹⁸

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II.

Elizabeth and her Privy Council held almost complete control of her physical image, principally through portraiture but also through royal progresses and other theatrical spectacles. Though her early portraits had been somber, almost dour in appearance, as her image grew more grand and complicated, so too did the portraits. These late portraits are the artifacts of the period which have the most resonance today, as almost everyone in the Western world has seen an image of Queen Elizabeth surrounded by elaborate scenes rife with symbolism. Within the body of Elizabeth’s portraits, there are a few standard elements of iconography that repeat over the course of her reign: such elements are present in the allegorical pictures, in portraits following the Darnley portrait model of the mid 1570’s, the ‘Sieve’ portraits composed between 1579-1583, and in Nicholas Hilliard’s mask of youth from the last years of Elizabeth’s reign. Each of these different styles of portraiture tells a story, while highlighting the changes in the iconography of the Queen, which can be traced through each successive style.

The early allegorical pictures, including ‘Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses’ (ca. 1569) [fig.1] and ‘An Allegory of Tudor Succession’ (ca. 1572) [fig. 2], display the image of the Queen in fantastical circumstances to promote her specific virtues and attributes, as well as her legacy both actual and imagined. The earliest records of ‘Queen Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses’ come from descriptions given from visiting Germanic nobles. Originally presented in Whitehall Palace, this portrait would have been displayed in a prominent position, where many could view its message.19 As with most portraits of Elizabeth, it is meant to solidify her status as Queen and present a virginal figure; however the early date of the ‘Three Goddesses’ provides a markedly different view of Elizabeth’s virginity than her presentations in later portraits, which

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would become the iconic norm. Elizabeth’s appearance in this portrait is that of a young woman, eligible for marriage, and the three goddesses chosen to grace the canvas with the young Queen further support such a view. The mythological figures presented with Elizabeth are Juno, Queen of the Heavens, Pallas Athena, goddess of war and wisdom, and Venus, goddess of love. Juno’s role is a dual one, as she represents both Queenliness and matrimony, as the goddess of marriage. In addition, Juno is presented as the focal point of the painting, placed directly in the center of the image, and she is the closest to Elizabeth herself. Further, her figure is the only figure in obvious motion, appearing to flee from the arrival of the woman who has rightfully usurped her power. This painting references the mythical story of the judgment of Paris, who was tasked to choose the Goddess he believed the most beautiful. His choice was Venus, the Goddess of love. Elizabeth, the painting suggests, would not choose Venus, but rather Juno, and with her, all that her heavenly powers oversee, namely Queenship but also matrimony. In Juno's defeat, she cedes her royal power to Elizabeth, while her placement close to her conqueror is a visual suggestion of the pressure for the young Queen to marry.

The painting depicts the heroines of the Greco-Roman Pantheon fleeing from Elizabeth as she enters, crowned and bearing the symbols of her rule; Elizabeth’s arrival heralds the end of the goddesses’ prestige and power. The Tudor Queen possesses all of the three goddesses’ individual attributes, their combination within her raising her to a position higher than Juno, Pallas Athena, or Venus. The assertion of the painting is that Elizabeth is wiser than Pallas Athena, more beautiful and virtuous than the lustful Venus, and possesses a higher claim on rule than the Queen of Heaven. Raising Elizabeth to a goddess-like status, or even a status above these goddesses, provides a legitimate argument that a woman might assume a position of power

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20 Strong. Gloriana, 66-68.
over men. Elizabeth’s mastery over Juno, Athena, and Venus also presents her as an ideal bride for any suitor, as she is depicted to possess in greater capacity their best virtues.

The use of mythological figures is not limited to one painting or depiction of Elizabeth I, as their use becomes a common vehicle to assert the power and prestige of the Queen. ‘The Allegory of Tudor Succession’, dated around 1572, utilizes such figures as a commentary on the reigns of the children of Henry VIII: Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. There is a strong religious element to the painting despite the presence of Greco-Roman mythological figures, tackling the religious strife between Protestant and Catholics characteristic of the period. Henry VIII, father of the Church of England, sits in the center, thus mediating among his three children and the two faiths they represent. To the right of Henry are Edward and Elizabeth, his Protestant children, and to his left Mary I and her husband Philip II of Spain, both devout Catholics. Mary and Philip are followed into view by the armed figure of Mars, the god of war, poised to strike, standing immediately behind the Royal couple. His presence represents the turmoil that the joint reign of Mary and Philip caused for the people of England as they fought to force the chains of the Papacy back onto the nation. Elizabeth stands on the opposite side, entering the frame hand in hand with a human representation of Peace, who crushes underfoot weaponry and implements of war. The Queen and Peace are followed by her counterpart, Plenty, who bears a cornucopia overflowing with fruits of harvest. Elizabeth I, having restored England to a state free of religious strife, has allowed for the return of peace and prosperity to all of her subjects following their absence during the reign of Mary I. The sister Queens are presented as adversaries, facing off with one another, while the young King Edward VI kneels at his father’s side, a passive observer to their battle. Moreover, Elizabeth, along with Peace and Plenty, appear closer to the viewer than the triad of Mary, Philip, and Mars, emphasizing their importance and

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superior role within Tudor society. Not only does this painting assert the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism, it also further legitimizes Elizabeth’s claim on her throne by showing her as the harbinger of peace and the plenty, which comes along with it.\textsuperscript{23}

Other portrait styles, outside of these two allegorical portraits, present emblems and symbols that have a foundation in Greco-Roman mythology. The ‘Sieve’ portraits [fig. 3-4], a series of works presenting Elizabeth I grasping a sieve, and painted between 1579 and 1583, have a foundation in the Roman story of the Vestal Virgin, Tuccia, whose symbol was the sieve following her usage of a water-filled sieve, carried from the Tiber River to the Temple, to prove her chastity and innocence against charges calling her virginity into question.\textsuperscript{24} The use of this particular object within portraiture serves to connect the Queen with the mythological story of a virgin whose purity was proved by a sieve, and it is a clever iconographic tool to promote Elizabeth’s virginal image. The frequent use of the sieve motif in a number of portraits in this particular timeframe also coincides with the negotiations with the French Royal family for the potential marriage of their prince, François, Duc d’Anjou and Elizabeth I. The connection with a Vestal Virgin, women who were legally and religiously obligated to remain chaste, can be interpreted as a silent protest against the French Match and the potential alliance with a Catholic power.

Throughout her reign, emblems and symbols of Elizabeth’s virginity remain some of the most prominent features of her portraiture. Those painted in the earlier part of her reign project her virginity as a virtue that would make her an ideal bride, while those dating from later in her reign have adapted the virginal model to a more otherworldly virtue, raising her to a goddess-like figure, and as an imperial power. In addition, these later portraits are presented on a grander

\textsuperscript{23} Sharpe. \textit{Selling the Tudor Monarchy}, 368-370.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 374-375.
scale, moving away from a simple torso image to a wider frame filled with objects rife with symbolism. The ‘Armada’ Portrait [fig. 5], the ‘Ditchley’ Portrait [fig. 6], and the ‘Rainbow’ Portrait [fig. 7] are examples of this later style of portraiture.

The ‘Armada’ Portrait was painted in 1588, the same year of the English victory over Philip II’s armada, and it presents a larger than life Elizabeth, seated triumphantly in front of two scenes from the now-legendary battle. Elizabeth I is surrounded by symbols of imperial power, her hand resting on a globe suggests her rising power on an international scale, following the successful expeditions of Sir Frances Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. To accommodate such a grand image, the canvas itself must match. The atypical shape, wider than it is tall, not only accommodates a wider view of Elizabeth’s overly ornate gown, it allows room for more objects and symbols. In the ‘Armada’ portrait we see the culmination of the virginal iconography into that of the triumphant Virgin Queen. Physically, the portrait characterizes the territorial spread of Elizabeth I’s authority, supported by the presence of a globe and an imperial crown. The scenes depicted behind the Queen are a testament to the English victory over Spain, showing the launching of the fire-ships which aided in the Spanish defeat, and the eventual destruction of the remaining Spanish ships that weren’t lost to the English in battle. The ‘Armada’ portrait depicts Elizabeth as the victor, boldly looking towards her imperial future. The ‘Ditchley’ and ‘Rainbow’ portraits follow the model set by the ‘Armada’ portrait, emphasizing the larger than life figure of Elizabeth, her imposing and inviolable body mirroring the imperial power of England.

The ‘Darnley’ portrait model and Nicholas Hilliard’s ‘Mask of Youth’ are two examples of official face pattern, a standardized image of the Queen’s face, designated for replication and

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26 Sharpe. *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 382.
reuse in portraits of the Queen. The ‘Darnley’ portrait [fig. 8] itself is not the most grand or iconic image, as the Queen is presented in a relatively simple dress with minimal jewels seated in a manner similar to the style popularized by Italian painter, Titian. The face is what became an icon. Following the completion of the original around 1575, the ‘Darnley’ face pattern emerges as the standardized image of Elizabeth I, remaining in use well into the 1590’s. This version of Elizabeth Tudor appeared in numerous portraits, where the same facial pattern was placed into a pre-painted setting [fig. 9]. The ‘Darnley’ face can be seen in portraits of many differing sizes, and on bodies wearing different jewels, and clothing, and seated in different positions, for example this face pattern was featured in the aforementioned ‘Sieve’ portraits. The ‘Darnley’ face pattern is noteworthy in the study of Elizabeth’s image and iconography because it is the best example of the Queen and her government’s control over her image as presented in society.27

In the final years of her reign, between 1594 and 1603, Elizabeth I sought to propagate the illusion of perpetual youth. To combat her advancing age, and perhaps even the specter of death hanging over the Queen, Elizabeth’s court miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard created a softened facial image, which replaced the ‘Darnley’ model. Hilliard’s ‘Mask of Youth’ ignored the reality of the aging Queen, presenting Elizabeth as a radiant and ever-youthful figure, leaving her elaborate wardrobe and jewelry to situate the Queen in time and circumstance. [fig. 10-11]28 Due to Hilliard’s status as a miniaturist, the majority of the usage of this facial model in portraits from the period exists primarily in miniature form, however the ‘Mask of Youth’ can also be seen in larger works including Marcus Gheeraerts ‘Rainbow’ portrait. By creating this softened image of Elizabeth I, Nicholas Hilliard ensured that the physical image of the Queen would remain free

28 Sharpe. Selling the Tudor Monarchy, 387-388.
from the taint of age.\textsuperscript{29}

The miniatures featuring the ‘Mask of Youth’ by Nicholas Hilliard served a vital role in the dissemination of Elizabeth’s image to those closest to her, while serving a political function beginning in the middle of the 1580’s following Elizabeth’s bestowing Sir Francis Drake a ‘jewel’, or brooch, which contained inside her image in miniature. The so-called ‘Drake Jewel’ [fig. 12] began a new fashion in portrait miniatures and in reverence to the Queen, wearing her likeness. Though it eventually became a commonplace occurrence, the custom of exchanging small portraits began with Elizabeth presenting her image to those who were her ‘favorites’ at court. Despite their seemingly public presentation, these portrait miniatures retain their private and intimate function through their design.

Queen Elizabeth I was a master of propaganda, imagery, and iconography; her name alone invokes thoughts of the grand portraits of the Virgin Queen standing atop the isle of Britain, and as has been discussed, displayed in opulent regalia surrounded by politically significant symbols.\textsuperscript{30} In addition to the physical softening of Elizabeth’s face within his works, Hilliard’s portrait miniatures show a different, and softer, view of the Queen. She is usually shown from the waist up, eliminating the imposing size of her gowns usually present in her portraits, in addition to the removal of elaborate backdrops and elaborate iconographic symbols. The ‘Drake Jewel’ provides an example of the more private image of Queen Elizabeth I, and retains the intimacy associated with portrait miniatures by being hidden in the interior of a locket and then presented to one of Elizabeth’s trusted favorites.\textsuperscript{31}

Like the portrait contained within the ‘Drake Jewel’, Nicholas Hilliard’s miniatures of Queen Elizabeth I show a gentler, more domestic side of the monarch. A great example is

\textsuperscript{29} Strong. \textit{Gloriana}, 147-148.
\textsuperscript{30} See the ‘Ditchley Portrait’. Circa 1592. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 109.
Hilliard’s 1580 miniature of Elizabeth playing the Lute [fig. 13]. Roy Strong refers to the miniature in question as “The finest miniature he ever painted of the Queen," writing that, “In terms of draughtsmanship and painterly virtuosity no other royal miniature equals it.” The miniature portrait was most likely commissioned to present to her cousin, Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon.\textsuperscript{32} Considering the intended recipient, the presentation of Elizabeth engaged in playing an instrument provides an intimacy not present in other portraits of the Queen. Elizabeth Tudor, like her father King Henry VIII, was reputed to have been a skilled musician, so the presence of the lute in her hands is an indication of individuality, of Elizabeth existing apart from her status as Body Politic. The scene of the portrait shows an intimacy, and a glimpse into the more private side, of the Queen that few would have been privileged to see.

The Renaissance was a period before privacy and intimacy were understood as they are now, and a time when privacy and intimacy, as we know them today, were a luxury people found themselves unable to obtain. The Elizabethan court required a pretense of artifice, and a person’s true self was required to be kept hidden within them. The portrait miniature helped to alleviate the stresses of a life lived in public view, providing their bearers with a secret to keep to themselves, and lovers the chance to create a true intimacy between each other. Furthermore, these miniature pieces of art also allowed for a less rigid presentation of their subjects, offering an opening to the artist to capture an image that closer reflected the sitters’ true selves. The portrait miniature is a material object, which allows modern audiences to gain a more clear understanding of the Renaissance world, and the way in which the people of the period used them in their intimate and private lives.

The collective body of the artistic works representing Elizabeth provides a material image of the iconography so frequently attached to Queen Elizabeth I in literary works. The creation

\textsuperscript{32} Strong, \textit{Gloriana}, 109-110.
and growth of the legendary persona of the Virgin Queen can be traced through the various distinctive styles of portraiture, each of which served a specific political purpose at the time of its individual creation. Combined with the extensive collection of literary works, and political documents, the images of Elizabeth I provide a greater understanding of the complex and ever-changing iconography of the last Tudor monarch.

Having examined two methods, portraiture and word, of disseminating the image and iconography of Elizabeth that bear close ties to the crown itself, there is an understanding of the frame of character that was desired by the political body of the Queen and her advisors. This framework provided writers of the period a foundation upon which to construct their own version of Elizabeth I’s image. Building from what they were presented with, writers such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, and William Shakespeare, among many others, helped to create the now legendary figure of Elizabeth Tudor. By comparing and contrasting a few specific works by these men with each another and with the writings of Elizabeth herself, we can develop a greater understanding of the function of Elizabeth’s image in the period as well as the effect these authors had on the image remembered by history.

Elizabeth’s court in the late 1570’s and 1580’s exuded the ideals of a Petrarchan sonnet; Elizabeth I became the ideal mistress of such poems, and her courtiers the ‘green-sick’ lovers. Sir Walter Raleigh was one of the first courtiers to dramatize this image, addressing Elizabeth as a lover in his poetry, a literary trope that soon became the standard for courtier-poets of the period. Raleigh has also been credited with popularizing the characterization of Elizabeth with the moon, and moon Goddess Figures. These poetic works by Raleigh range from Petrarchan love poetry to the long and lamenting epic poem from The Twenty-First and Last Book of the

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33 Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch. Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary and Criticism. Found in the footnotes under Walter Raleigh’s "From the Twenty-First and Last Book of the Ocean to Cynthia in Part Eight: A Changing Court and Aging Queen (1592-1597).", 446.
*Ocean to Cynthia.* In the body of Sir Walter Raleigh’s work, modern readers can glean a better understanding of the dynamics of courtly love during Elizabeth’s reign while also gaining a better grasp on the effects of being in or out of favor with the last Tudor monarch. Raleigh’s work can be interpreted as reflective of both the era's poetic ideals and of contemporary historical events of the period, the reading conditional on the individual poem by Raleigh.

The dates of Raleigh’s poems are not exact, most are given a composition date in the years between 1582 and 1587, which encompasses the duration of his favor with the Queen. Many of the poetic works from this period follow conventional tropes of amorous lyric, like the purity of the beloved and the lover's unrequited love, and they bear similarities to many longer works composed in the period, for example Sir Philip Sidney’s *Old Arcadia,* and *Partheniads* by George Puttanham, pieces written with the express intention of honoring Elizabeth in the hopes of gaining her trust and favor. As previously stated, a great many of Raleigh’s poems evoke mythological images and figures to describe his Queen. ‘Now We Have Present Made’ is an example of such a poem, in which the first stanza alone compares Elizabeth to five mythological goddesses who exemplify beauty and chastity, and who bear a connection to the moon.

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Now we have present made
To Cynthia, Phoebe, Flora,
Diana, and Aurora,
Beauty that cannot Fade,\textsuperscript{34}
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By connecting Elizabeth with these eternally youthful figures, Raleigh perpetuates the image of her agelessness, a literary analogue to the painted ‘Mask of Youth’ created by Nicholas Hilliard. Her carefully crafted image of possessing an unchangeable nature is one of the most important facets of this poem.

\textsuperscript{34} Walter Raleigh. ‘Now We Have Present Made’ in “Part Ten: Lingering Images of the Queen.” In *Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary and Criticism,* by Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch, 554-555.
The fifth stanza continues this line of thought, alluding to Elizabeth’s personal motto, *Semper eadem* (‘always the same’) and to the medieval and Renaissance philosophical concept of the quintessence or ‘fifth essence’.

So her celestial frame
And quintessential mind,
Which heavens together bind,
Shall ever be the same.\(^{35}\)

The ‘fifth essence’ is evoked in the commentary on her celestial frame, suggesting that her body is composed of the purest and most perfect of all substances in the universe, the matter that scholars of the period believed made up heavenly bodies. Because it is composed of the purest, superlunary, celestial matter, her body is unalterable, and Raleigh reiterates this point by adapting Elizabeth’s motto in the final line of the stanza.

In the sixth stanza, Raleigh challenges those who do not acknowledge his Queen’s status as an otherworldly being. The speaker of the poem even appears to insinuate that those who had vied for her hand in marriage did not see her true celestial worth.

Then to her servants leave her
Love, nature and perfection.
Princes of world’s affection
Or praises but deceive her.\(^{36}\)

Should Elizabeth marry, her celestial nature would be ignored, overlooked by a potential mate in favor of more worldly affections. By asserting that a Prince would attempt to deceive the Queen places Raleigh in a positive light; he understands that Elizabeth is more than a mortal woman, and this stanza asserts that he alone acknowledges and respects her preternatural status. Cleverly, Raleigh can honor his Queen while simultaneously raising himself higher in her esteem by his appearance of complete reverence and understanding of her ‘true’ form.

\(^{35}\) Raleigh. ‘Now We Have Present Made’, 554-555.
\(^{36}\) Ibid.
In another instance of comparison with a mythological figure, Sir Walter Raleigh casts Elizabeth I as Diana in ‘Praised be Diana’s Fair and Harmless Light’, superimposing upon the Queen and her reign imagery of the moon and its virginal goddess. Following the collapse of the negotiations for the French Match in 1582, Elizabeth’s virginal imagery began to be increasingly expressed through the figure of Diana and other Diana-like figures.37 ‘Praised be Diana’s Fair and Harmless Night’ begins with a set of two stanzas (of which I quote the first) praising the goddess and all that surrounds her.

Praised be Diana’s fair and harmless light;  
Praised be the dews wherewith she moists the ground;  
Praised be her beams the glory of the night;  
Praised be her power, by which all powers abound.38

The harmless light, the soft glow of the moon, is the source of Diana’s power, and it is through that light that the world around her benefits. By casting Elizabeth as Diana, Raleigh compares the Queen’s primary duty as monarch with the mythological power of the moon, since both use their power to protect and promote the well being of their people.

As with the previous poem, the primary focus is on the ‘otherworldly’ nature of Elizabeth I. Diana, readers are told, exists in the realm between the mutable and the immutable, between the plane of Earth’s existence, and that of the heavens.

In heaven, Queen she is among the spheres;  
In ay, she mistress-like makes all things pure;  
Eternity in her oft change she bears;  
She beauty is, by her the fair endure.

Time wears her not, she doth his chariot guide;  
Mortality below her orb is placed;  
By her the virtue of the stars down slide;

37 Stump, Elizabeth I and her Age, 577-578. Commentary on a selection of passages depicting Queen Elizabeth as the Goddess of the Moon.  
38 Walter Raleigh. ‘Praised be Diana’s Fair and Harmless Light’ in "Part Ten: Lingering Images of the Queen." In Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary and Criticism, by Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch, 578-579.
In her is virtue’s perfect image cast.\textsuperscript{39}

Once again, the image of Elizabeth as always the same emerges as Raleigh’s central theme. Diana is not susceptible to the ravages of time; she is instead its master, for while the moon waxes and wanes, it also obeys a predictable, regular monthly course. The last line of the third stanza states that the Queen, like the goddess Diana, is not merely beautiful: she is beauty itself. Once again, Raleigh has placed Elizabeth above and beyond the level of mortal men.

‘Diana’s Fair and Harmless Light’ and ‘Now We Have Present Made’ both follow a conventional pattern of reverence and supplication. These two poems evoke a feeling of being meant for a public audience, considering the intentional emulation of images and iconography popular in other pieces of the period, and those officially produced by the crown itself. In other poems written by Raleigh, especially those addressed directly to the Queen, there is a much more intimate feeling. The poems that most strongly fit into this category come from the period in which Raleigh began to lose the favor of Queen Elizabeth I toward the late 1580’s. Specifically, in 1587, Raleigh believed that his position as the star, and most devoted, favorite of the Queen was in the process of being eclipsed by the young Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex. In a dramatic literary fashion, Raleigh addressed his growing fears to the Queen in a poetic manner; this garnered a response from the Queen, who replied with a verse of her own. The exchange between the courtier and his Queen highlights the constructed Petrarchan nature of Elizabeth’s court, which projected an image of the ideal Petrarchan mistress onto the woman at its center. Raleigh’s lament to Elizabeth begins:

\begin{quote}
Fortune hath taken away my love,
My life’s joy and my soul’s heav’n above.
Fortune hath taken thee away, my princess,
My world’s joy and my true fantasy’s mistress.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} Raleigh. ‘Diana’s Fair and Harmless Light’, 579.
\textsuperscript{40} Walter Raleigh, and Elizabeth Tudor. "Verse Exchange with the Queen 1587?; Part Six: Courtiers,
In the opening stanza, Raleigh addresses that the love he mourns was a fantasy from the beginning. The loss of her favor is such an acute loss that his very life is now devoid of joy.

There is a sense of desperation in his words, but her carefully avoids insinuating that Elizabeth is a fickle mistress, as might be done in a poem not meant for the Queen. The fickle nature at work here is Fortune, whom Raleigh calls blind. His loss of the Queen’s affections is blamed on a Fortune that either does not or cannot see the virtue of their affection.

And only joy that Fortune conquers kings.  
Fortune, that rules the earth and earthly things,  
Hath taken my love in spite of virtue’s might.  
So blind a goddess did never virtue right.

With wisdom’s eyes had but blind fortune seen,  
Then had my love my love forever been.  
But love, farewell. Though Fortune conquer thee,  
No fortune, base nor frail, shall alter me.41

Considering that Raleigh believed the earl of Essex was replacing him in Elizabeth’s affections, it can be posited that ‘wisdom’s eyes’ could have warned him to be wary of Essex at an earlier point, possibly saving him the pain of losing the Queen’s favor. Although Elizabeth assuaged his fears in her poetic response, which has previously been examined, Raleigh did ultimately fall from grace, permanently losing the royal favor he had so desperately hoped to save.

The final poem by Sir Walter Raleigh that I will examine here is the epic-style Twenty-First and Last Book of the Ocean to Cynthia. The piece is a lengthy poetic work that expounds on the relationship between Raleigh and Elizabeth, and the historical and political events that occurred during their association. The fragment of the book that remains, along with the title itself, suggests that there were other books ‘of the ocean’ dedicated to ‘Cynthia’, although no

Assassins, and the Death of Mary Stuart.” In Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary and Criticism, by Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch, 320.

further manuscripts have been found. Cynthia, as we have seen in a previous work by Raleigh, is another name for the goddess of the moon. These two parts of the title are meant to represent both Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh; casting Elizabeth as Cynthia, the Goddess of the title, and Raleigh as the famed seagoing explorer represented by the ocean. The poem presented within the book laments the true and final loss of the Queen’s favor, and the poet’s fallen position in society. Echoing the fears addressed in the exchanges of verse with the Queen, the sense of despair here is deep and impossible to ignore. This poem is thought to have been composed during Raleigh’s imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1592, following his secret and illegal marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton. His words within this text appear to lay bare the nature of his relationship to his Queen.

Within the first few lines, Raleigh openly acknowledges that the love of his Queen is completely lost to him, comparing the undoing of their relationship with death.

Suffice it to you, my joys interred,
In simple words that I my woes complain,
You that then died when first my fancy erred,
Joys under dust that never live again.
If to the living were my muse addressed,
Or did my mind her own spirit still inhold
Some sweeter words, some more becoming verse
Should witness my mishap in higher kind.42

The speaker’s inability to speak, whether directly or indirectly, to the Queen has created the illusion that she is dead to him, beyond his grasp or contact. As the poem continues, Raleigh’s choice of words seem to undo all of the points asserted in his other poems. He addresses the humanity that still exists within the Queen, and unlike in the earlier verse exchange, Raleigh refers to his monarch as fickle and changeable like others of her sex.

42 Walter Raleigh. "From the Twenty-First and Last Book of the Ocean to Cynthia. Part Eight: A Changing Court and Aging Queen (1592-1597)." In Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary and Criticism, by Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch, 439-52.
Yet have these wounders want, which want compassion;
Yet hath her mind some marks of human race;
Yet will she be a woman for a fashion;
So doth she please her virtues to deface.
[...] So hath Perfection, which begat her mind,
Added thereto a change of fantasy
And left her the affections of her kind
Yet free from every evil but cruelty.\(^{43}\)

There is a deep anger within these words, each line working to undo the carefully crafted image of Elizabeth as above the mortal world, and as a kind and benevolent ruler.

Raleigh continues with this pattern of systematically stripping away the many layers of iconography that he had helped to build up around the public image of his Queen. The imagery of the moon, and Elizabeth as its goddess, also has its place within the \textit{Last Book of the Ocean}.

Those streams seem standing puddles which before
We saw our beauties in, so were they clear.
Belphoebe’s course is now observed no more;
That fair resemblance weareth out of date.\(^{44}\)

The streams of which Raleigh speaks can be interpreted in many ways; however, the first line above suggests one particular reading, namely streams as the flow of creative inspiration from which he and his contemporaries could draw from to create characters that would honor the Queen. The muddied stream can also be interpreted as proof of a tarnish on the once pristine image of Elizabeth, brought about by her actions towards him. Belphœbe, another Diana figure who first appears in Sir Edmund Spenser’s \textit{Faerie Queene}, can no longer be found, as the real life inspiration no longer possesses the kind gentleness of the moon. The connection to Spenser’s work is a deliberate bastardization by Raleigh; Spenser specifically designates Belphœbe as the literary representation of Queen Elizabeth I, declaring in his Proem to Book 3 of \textit{The Faerie Queene}:

\(^{44}\) Ibid, 446.
Raleigh appears to suggest that the ‘Fair and Harmless Light’ that he once believed was possessed of Elizabeth, the Diana-like virginal figure Spenser describes, does not exist, his eyes having been opened as a result of her anger and harshness directed toward him. Raleigh spent years in her service, looking to bring honor to her name in more ways than one, and all of those years of service have come to naught. Sir Walter Raleigh’s poetry is very informative in the study of the iconography of Elizabeth I as his works both add to and subtract from the carefully crafted image that the Queen sought to propagate.

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III.

Sir Walter Raleigh’s use of a character from Sir Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* in his *Last Book of the Ocean to Cynthia* taps open another major source of famous Elizabethan iconography. *The Faerie Queene* was composed by Spenser out of a desire to honor and revere Elizabeth I; originally intended to be published in a monstrous twenty-four books, Spenser completed only six books and a fragment of a seventh book. Of the completed volumes, books three and five provide readers with a number of characters who share many similarities with Elizabeth I. Book Three, also known as ‘the Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity’, is openly dedicated to Elizabeth Tudor, praising the chastity of his Queen:

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It falls me here to write of Chastity,
The fayrest vertue, far aboue the rest;
For which what needes me fetch from Faery
Forreine ensamples, to haue exprest?
Sith it is shrined in my Soueraines brest,
And formd so liuely in each perfect part,
That to all Ladies, which haue it profest,
Neede but behold the pourtraict of her hart,
If pourtrayd it might bee by any liuing art.\textsuperscript{46}
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The continuation of the Proem of book three describes in more detail which of the characters who populate the book take inspiration from the Queen, and also elaborates on the function they are meant to serve within the text. Though there are many figures within book three who can be interpreted as being modeled after Elizabeth, the Proem mentions two characters in particular who are meant to emulate the Queen: Gloriana, the Faerie Queene of the title, and Belphœbe. Gloriana, a historical nickname of the Tudor Queen, is meant by Spenser to represent Elizabeth’s rule, a literary reproduction of her power as the leader of her people. Gloriana begins to be associated with Elizabeth in connection with her role within the church of England, representative of the same celestial matter, the fifth essence as introduced in the analysis of Sir

Walter Raleigh’s work. Popularized following the resounding English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, Elizabeth as Gloriana was the epitome of heavenly grace ruling on earth. Gloriana does not, however, feature prominently in Spenser’s poem, appearing only once, and in a dream, although this is possibly due to the incomplete nature of Spenser’s work. Belphœbe is meant to emulate Elizabeth’s adherence to virginity, presented in a non-royal aspect. The complex network of characters presented as allegories of the Queen mirrors Elizabeth’s own complex and multifaceted image.

By the time Spenser published the first three books of Faerie Queene in 1590, it was an absolute certainty that the middle-aged Queen Elizabeth, fifty-seven years of age at that time, would never marry and produce an heir. The last marriage discussed at length was the French Match, with François, Duc d’Anjou, which ended in 1581. Elizabeth Tudor exemplifies the canny use of political propaganda to legitimize and empower. Elizabeth was already the master of controlling her public image, which had become the subject of many a literary tribute. Faerie Queene is no exception: it is dedicated to Elizabeth, and it features many a character fashioned after the enigmatic monarch. Though meant to bring honor to the Queen, the characters of what would become Spenser’s defining work appear peculiar, as if he were trying too hard to gain the favor of his Queen by forcing various representations of her into his narrative, even if some of these representations either do not fit or do not flatter the Queen. In attempting to fashion the perfect figure to represent his Queen, Sir Edmund Spenser at times seems to undermine the extensive work put in by Elizabeth Tudor and her advisors to present a figure worthy of her status as Queen and Defender of the Faith.

Belphœbe is a character as complex as Elizabeth herself; though Spenser claims she is

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meant to represent and honor a single aspect of the monarch, the passages in which readers encounter Belphœbe are heavily infused with the political uncertainty of the period.

Representing the immutable chastity of Elizabeth in Belphœbe forced attention onto the fact that the Queen had not married, and therefore will never produce an heir. The firm control Elizabeth held over the matter of her body, and her refusal to marry, defines the Queen with a sexual identity that Spenser, either inadvertently or quite intentionally, treats as a threat. His high praise of this particular character is at odds with Belphœbe’s presentation within the text, as many of the instances in which she appears in the text portray her as a stone-hearted person, cold and unfeeling, as reflected at *FQ* 3.5.30, in which Belphœbe discovers Prince Arthur’s squire Timias and begins to feel unwelcome emotions as a result.

\[\text{Saw neuer liuing eie more heauy sight,} \]
\[\text{That could haue made a rocke of stone to rew,} \]
\[\text{Or riue in twaine: which when that Lady bright} \]
\[\text{Besides all hope with melting eies did vew,} \]
\[\text{All suddenly abasht shee chaunged hew,} \]
\[\text{And with sterne horror backward gan to start:} \]
\[\text{But when shee better him beheld, shee grew} \]
\[\text{Full soft of passion and vnwonted smart:} \]
\[\text{The point of pitty perced through her tender hart.}^{48}\]

Spenser describes Belphœbe as possessing a heart of stone, and when she comes across the injured Timias in the woods, Spenser writes that her growing ‘full soft of passion’ was an unwanted smart. This heavily implies a hard-heartedness, and coldness of person, a reading supported by Mary Villeponteaux in “Semper Eadem: Belphœbe’s Denial of Desire”, who says: “[…]the pain she feels is ‘unwonted’ is both unusual and unwanted […]”^{49} Belphœbe’s surprise at being moved to feel emotion for Timias causes a physical pain, making the stirrings of feeling

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^{48}Spencer, *Faerie Queene*, ‘book III, canto v, stanza 30.’, 336

an undesirable experience.

Another description of Belphœbe that might be interpreted in a more negative light is her apparent Amazonian emasculating force. Though never directly referred to as an Amazon, in Book Two, when Belphœbe is first introduced, Spenser takes great pains to describe her, including her huntress’ garb, which is described by Spenser as ‘camus and buskins’, as well as being armed with a spear and bow and arrows. Further, she is shown actively hunting, and in the process menacing one of the male characters with her spear.50 As with the work of Sir Walter Raleigh, Elizabeth is being represented by a Diana figure, and when Spenser expands upon that iconography, he makes clear that Belphœbe's prey, like that of Diana, includes the men who covet her. Though Belphœbe is not directly described as the goddess of the moon, Spenser, within her backstory, informs the reader that she was raised as the daughter of Diana, whom she is named after:

Vp they them tooke, eachone a babe vptooke,
And with them carried, to be fostered;
Dame Phœbe to a Nymph her babe betooke,
To be vpbrught in perfect Maydenhead,
And of her selfe her name Belphœbe red; […]51

The nature of Belphœbe’s chastity is not limited to a vow of celibacy; it also stops her from engaging in romantic interactions of any kind. This can be seen in her interactions with Timias, the young squire who moves her unwilling heart to feel, and who falls in love with her after she nurses him back to health:

She gracious Lady, yet no paines did spare,
To doe him ease, or doe him remedy:
And costly Cordialles she did apply,
To mitigate his stubborne malady:
But that sweet Cordiall, which can restore
A loue-sick hart, she did him enuy;

To him, and to all th’vnworthy world forlore
She did enuy that souraune saule, in secret store.  

His love is neither recognized nor reciprocated. By this point in the text, the initial wound borne by Timias upon their meeting is healed, but his unrequited love for his rescuer has caused him to be sick, and the only cure Belphœbe could offer to him is her love, which she withholds.

That daintie Rose, the daughter of her Morne,
More deare then life she tendered, whose flowre
The girordon of her honour did adorne:
Ne suffred she the Middayes scorching powre,
Ne the sharp Northerne wind thereon to showre,
But lapped vp her silken leaues most chayre,
When so the froward skyebegan to lowre;
Bute soone as calmed was the christall ayre,
She did it fayre dispred, and let to florish fayre.  

Her virginity, represented above by the rose, is the most important thing she possesses, and she will not stand to share it with anyone. The denial of this healing ‘souraune saule’ draws strong correlations not only with Elizabeth’s refusal to marry, but also with her refusal to answer the question of the line of succession; in this scene, Timias can be seen as sickly England, languishing while the chaste and prudish Belphœbe refuses to give him the tonic, a named heir, needed to ease their suffering, in order to preserve and protect that which she holds most dear.

Moreover, the rose is a common representation of feminine virginity, and appears in many carpe diem poems, in which women are frequently compared to a rose and its life cycle of blooming, dying and ultimately rotting away. The conventional idea is that the rose should be plucked and enjoyed when it is still fresh and youthful. Belphœbe, however, protects her chastity, her rose as it were, and refuses for it to plucked by anyone. The seemingly frigid nature of Belphœbe, and her refusal to budge from her vow of chastity, might seem uneasy given that this figure is supposed to be the embodiment of the Queen, as it is possible to interpret Belphœbe's coldness

53 Ibid. Stanza 51, 340.
and stubbornness as a direct criticism of the choices made by Elizabeth.

It is instructive to consider that Elizabeth Tudor’s favorite courtiers often played the role of Petrarchan lover, directing their affections at the Queen. The Petrarchan dynamics in her court allowed for the spread of rumors that Elizabeth had many lovers in her lifetime, despite her status as the Virgin Queen. The list of potential lovers includes her favorites Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Sir Walter Raleigh, among others. Despite the rumors of a potential marriage with Dudley early in her reign, Elizabeth’s refusal to marry anyone, foreign princes and English lords alike, allowing both Raleigh and Dudley to marry. If one removes the national characterization of Timias, it can also be argued that the lovesick Squire is based upon Sir Walter Raleigh. Studying Belphœbe’s negative reaction to observing Timias showing affection to her twin sister Amoret, the incident draws parallels with Elizabeth’s reaction to the unapproved marriage of Raleigh and Elizabeth Throckmorton. Though Spenser claims Belphœbe as the model of virginal chastity, his characterization of her reads as a cold and unfeeling person, which is confusing when considering the statement by Spenser in the Proem of Book Three, in which he invites his readers, especially the Queen, to see in Belphœbe a representation of Elizabeth I, and the best of her virtues:

But let that same delitious Poet lend
A little leaue vnto a rusticke Muse
To sing his mistresse prayse, and let him mend,
If ought amis her liking may abuse:
Ne let his fayrest Cynthia refuse,

54 This scene comes from ‘book IV, canto vii, stanzas 35-47’. The Longman edition of the text discusses the link between this scene and the events of 1592, when Queen Elizabeth had Sir Walter Raleigh imprisoned as a result of his unsanctioned marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the Queen’s Maids of Honor, who was also pregnant at the time. This is also a source of argument in an article by Alan H. Gilbert, Belphœbe’s Misdeeming of Timias, in which he discusses the historical circumstances of the Raleigh marriage, and how that might be interpreted in the text. Book Four, published in 1596, would have allowed for Spenser to write this specific incident.

In mirrours more then on her selfe to see,
But either Gloriana let her chuse,
Or in Belphœbe fashioned to bee:
In th’one her rule, in th’other her rare chastitee.\textsuperscript{56}

Though not named in the proem of Book Three as a literary portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, Britomart is another figure intended to represent the Queen and the virtues closely associated with her. Considering that Book Three is properly titled \textit{the Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity}, it can be postulated that Britomart is a figure of greater importance in the text than either of the models that are specifically named by Spenser in the proem. Knowing that Spenser meant to imitate specific facets of Elizabeth’s image, Britomart appears to represent the martial side of Elizabeth, the side that serves as the protector of her people. In addition, Britomart and Elizabeth share the position of being the heirs of their respective realms, princesses who will rule an earthly kingdom in a world dominated by males.\textsuperscript{57} Both of these women, real and imagined, are required to walk the boundary between feminine and masculine as seen in this early description of Britomart: “For shee was full of amiable grace,/ And manly terror missed therewithal […]”\textsuperscript{58} Both women share the roles of mother to their people as well as serving as their defender when the time comes. \textsuperscript{59} Spenser’s images of Britomart, clad in her armor, draw parallels to that of Elizabeth at Tilbury, rallying her troops shortly before the history-defining battle with the Spanish Armada. Even the armor worn by Britomart has connections to Elizabeth:

\begin{quote}
At last as through and open plaine the yode,
They spide a knight, that towards pricked fayre,
And beside an aged Squire there rode,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{59} Helen Hackett. \textit{Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen}, 50, 77. There is a direct quote from a speech made by Elizabeth, which expresses her desire to be seen as the mother of her people. There is a metaphorical nature of this motherhood, representing as both mother of her nation and mother of the Church of England.
That seemd to couch vnder his shield three-square,
As if that age badd him that burden spare,
And yield it those, that stouter could it wield:
He them espying, gan him selfe prepare,
And on his arme addressse his goodly shield
That bore a Lion passant in a golden field.  

Britomart, perceived by Sir Guyon and Prince Arthur to be a man, bears a shield with a royal heraldic symbol, fit for a princess of Britain and the descendant of Brutus, a figure from the legendary history of England. The Lion passant was also a symbol used by Elizabeth, and all of the Tudor Monarchs before her.

Of the female characters in *Faerie Queene*, Britomart appears to be the most important figure in the text in connection to the last Tudor monarch. She not only possesses a physical likeness to Elizabeth; Britomart also possesses a destiny, laid out by Spenser, as the progenitor of the Tudor dynasty which in turn leads to the birth and reign of Elizabeth I herself. This detail is made clear to readers at *FQ* 3.3.49, in which Merlin informs Britomart of her historical importance.

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Thenceforth eternall vnion shall be made
Betweene the nations different afore,
And sacred Peace shall louingly persuade
The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,
And ciuile armes to exercise no more:
Then shall a royall Virgin raine, which shall
Stretch her white rod ouer the Belgike shore,
And the great Castle smite so sore with all,
That it shall make him shake, and shortly learn to fall.
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The final four lines of the stanza are a direct reference to Elizabeth and many of the events of her reign, including her assistance in the Netherlandish (or Dutch) revolt against the reign of Philip II of Spain, as well as her triumph over the same King and his Spanish Armada, sent to conquer

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61 Spenser, "Book III, or the Legend of Britiomartis, or of Chastity." *The Faerie Queene*, 319.
England in 1588. Britomart, though meant to represent the virtue of chastity as the Knight of Chastity in *Faerie Queene*, is not meant to be the portrait of Elizabeth Tudor’s chastity or her virginity. Britomart is a historical allegory depicting the events of Elizabeth’s life, events converted within the text to serve Spenser’s purpose in the story. Though she represents a historical aspect of the Queen, she is far from a moral allegory for Elizabeth, as her path of chastity ends in a contrary manner, with a marriage and, eventually, children.

Britomart represents the independence of Elizabeth, or more universally, the independence of a woman, possessed of a female form, yet with all the strength, courage and will of a man. Elizabeth and Britomart both exist outside what was considered acceptable behavior for a woman of the period. Their royal status aids them in their right to the independence they both enjoy. Both figures are equals amongst their male peers, Elizabeth with the Kings of Europe, Britomart with Prince Arthur, the Redcrosse Knight, and Sir Guyon, among others. The embodiment of the virtue of Chastity, as its knight, Britomart is placed in a complicated situation of being the one to rescue a captive maiden, Amoret, in the final two cantos of the book. According to Susan Frye, a popular pastime and spectacle at the court of Queen Elizabeth I was a new form of the damsel in distress story, where Chastity was the rescuer of chastity. Frye asserts that Elizabeth Tudor and Sir Edmund Spenser had two very differing views of chastity and virginity, which come to a head in the text of *Faerie Queene* in the House of Busirane: “Queen Elizabeth’s conceptualization of chastity as virginal, which in the sixteenth century meant self-possessed, powerful, magical-and Spenser's assertion of the more predominant views of women as threatened, and vulnerable, and thus logically protected and possessed by men.”

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idealized image that Spenser presents in his epic.

Britomart’s adventures in the House of Busirane are a literary version of the pageants held in the Tudor court. She is present at the bequest of the knight Scudamore, who cannot enter to save his love Amoret, who has been prisoner of Busirane for seven months. The desolation and sorrow of Scudamore is so apparent to Britomart that she is willing to set aside her own goal of seeking out her destined husband, Artegall, to help:

> With this sad hersall of his heavy stresse,  
> The warlike Damzell was empassiond sore,  
> And sayn, Sir knight, your cause is nothing lesse,  
> Then is your sorrow, certes if not more;  
> For nothing so much pitty doth implore,  
> As gentle Ladyes helplesse misery.  
> But yet, if please ye listen to my lore,  
> I will with profe of last extremity,  
> Deliuer her fro thence, or with her for you dy.

Britomart offers both her sympathy and her battle skills to help free Amoret, and reunite Scudamore with his love. The rescue of Amoret is a very complex part of *Faerie Queene*, as the figure of Elizabeth in Britomart is exposed to violent sexual imagery, challenges to her role as the knight of Chastity, and ultimately the perplexing fusion of Amoret and Britomart into one figure in the final battle with Busirane himself.

In the House of Busirane, Spenser places his Elizabeth figure in peril by casting her as the rescuer, subjecting her to the machinations of Amoret’s captor. Once again, Spenser has confused and adapted Queen Elizabeth’s model of chastity to suit his own purposes. Frye argues that the imprisonment of Amoret and her subsequent rescue by Britomart are tantamount to rape, and being forced to endure watching the rape of one’s self. Once inside the House of Busirane, Britomart is surrounded on all sides by symbols and images of carnal pleasures, and scenes of

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63 Frye. ‘Chastity and Violence’, 56-57.  
65 Frye, ‘Chastity and Violence’, 63.
Yoder 39

rape and the defeat of chastity:

Kings Queenes, Lords Ladies, Knights and Damsels gent  
Were heap’d together with the vulgar sort,  
And mingled with the raskall rabblement,  
Without respect of person or of port,  
To shew Dan Cupids powre and great effort:  
And round about a border was entrayld,  
Of broken bowes and arrowes shiuered short,  
And a long bloody riuer through them rayld,  
So liuely and so like, that liuing sence it fayld.  

This scene depicts an orgy in which all classes of people are participating, none able to resist the power of Cupid. The last few lines underscore the violence of the depicted event and the situation in which Britomart, and especially Amoret, find themselves at the House of Busirane. The arrows and bows, broken and littered about the scene are emblems of forcibly broken chastity, the defeat of Diana and an obvious threat to the women trapped inside by the wicked sorcerer. At every turn, Britomart is accosted by the words “Bee bold”, urging her on towards Amoret, only to be greeted by the words “Be not too bold” blazoned on the door leading to the damsel she is there to rescue. In further support of Susan Frye’s argument, Britomart and Amoret are almost fused into one figure towards the end of canto twelve as a result of Spenser’s usage of the feminine pronoun, without specifying to which figure he is referring, in stanza thirty-six:

And rising vp, gan straight to ouerlooke  
Those cursed leaues, his charmes back to reuerse;  
Full dreadfull thinges out of that balefull booke  
He red, and measur’d many a sad verse,  
That horrour gan the virgins hart to perse,  
And her faire locks vp stared stiffe on end,  
Hearing him those same bloody lynes reherse;  
And all the while he red, she did extend

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Her sword high ouer him, if ought he did offend.\(^6\)

It is not until the final sentence that the reader knows Britomart is the subject of the stanza; it is also revealed that Busirane has begun to subject Britomart to the same ill treatment to which he subjects Amoret. The piercing of her heart in the same manner as Amoret is allegorical of rape. Once again Spenser is undermining the strong independence of Elizabeth’s enduring chastity by dividing it into these two figures, both destined for marriage, and subjecting them to such violent, and abusive acts, placing them in a desperate situation in the House of Busirane. Britomart, the bold female warrior, is made vulnerable in a sexual manner by Spenser in cantos eleven and twelve of book three, which close out the book of Chastity. Britomart, as the knight of Chastity, has been undermined in her power, just as Spenser has undermined the sexual independence of Elizabeth I. The House of Busirane, and the events which occur within it, attack one of the most important iconographic aspects of Queen Elizabeth I, undoing the praise Spenser attempted to shower on his sovereign.\(^6\)

While Britomart helps to represent the multifaceted nature of the Tudor Monarch, Belphœbe presents a seemingly less complicated image of Elizabeth, that of her virginal chastity. Though Britomart is the Knight of Chastity, her virginity is recognized to be temporary, for she will be the mother of a dynasty, and one that leads to Elizabeth herself. It is expected that Belphœbe, much like the monarch Spenser based her on, will remain chaste and virginal until her dying breath. A devotee of Diana, Belphœbe retains a chastity that defines her life. When comparing Spenser’s view of the figures of Belphœbe and Britomart, it is quite possible that he views in higher regard the chastity of the latter over that of the former. For example, Britomart’s prophesied marriage to Artegall, “The man whom heauens haue ordayned to bee/ The spouse of


\(^6\) Frye. ‘Chastity and Violence’, 72-73.
Britomart,\textsuperscript{70} ensures that their royal line will continue on throughout the history of England, resulting in the eventual birth of the future Queen Elizabeth I.

\begin{verbatim}
Thenceforth eternall vnion shall be made
Between the nations different afore,
And sacred Peace shall louingly persuade
The warlike minds, to learne her goodly lore,
And ciuile armes to exercise no more:
Then shall a royall Virgin raine, which shall
Stretch her white rod ouer the Belgicke Shore,
And the great Castle smite so sore with all,
That it shall make him shake, and shortly learn to fall.\textsuperscript{71}
\end{verbatim}

The creation of a dynasty for the stable future of England requires Britomart’s method of Chastity.

Book five of Spenser’s \textit{Faerie Queene}, or \textit{The Legend of Artega\ll or of I\xspace v\xspace stice}, once again summons the image of Queen Elizabeth I to the page when Britomart, the heroine of Book Three, returns in the Book of Justice to be the savior of Artega\ll, and serve as the counterpart to his role as the Knight of Justice. Scholars have stipulated that book five is the book that mirrors most closely the events of Spenser’s own time, and life, the events relating to and revolving around the colonization of Ireland and the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. \textit{The Spenser Encyclopedia} begins its entry on book Five by calling it “the least liked book of \textit{Faerie Queene}”, as “hard edged and uncompromising”.\textsuperscript{72} The tone of book Five is markedly different from that of book Three, and the tonal shift has a much stronger impact on the readers.

The presence of Britomart within this particular book is limited, as she is only present in cantos six and seven, and thus there is not as large a font from which to draw. Despite that, it is clear that the woman presented in this book is different from the Britomart introduced in book

\textsuperscript{70} Spenser, \textit{Faerie Queene}. ‘book III, canto iii, stanza 26, lines 1-2’, 315.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, stanza 49, 319.
Three. She has moved away from the youthful, somewhat naïve, figure of book of Chastity, to a more adult and worldly woman. The prophecy of meeting and forming a relationship with Artegaill having been fulfilled in book four, Britomart is presented as the betrothed, quietly waiting for the return of her intended. She has cast off her armor, and reclaimed her womanhood. Until Artegaill’s servant Talus returns in his stead, informing Britomart of his capture, she lives the life expected of a noble lady, pining for her lover:

One day, when as she long had sought for ease
In every place, that could her liking place thought best,
Yet found no place, that could her liking please,
She to a window came, that opened West
Towards which coast her love his way addressed.
There looking forth, she in her heart did find
Many vain fancies, working her unrest;
And sent her winged thoughts, more swift then wind,
To bear unto her love the message of her mind.\(^73\)

It is not until she once again dons her armor, and sets out with a vengeance to free Artegaill from his Amazonian captors, that she once again begins to resemble Queen Elizabeth I:

With that he gan at large to her dilate
The whole discourse of his captivity sad,
In sort as ye have heard the same of late.
All which when she with hard endurance had
Heard to the end, she was right sore bestad,
With sudden stounds of wrath and grief attone:
Ne would abide, till she had answered made,
But straight her selfe did dight, and armor don;
And mounting her steede, bad Talus guide her on.\(^74\)

There is a wrath expressed by Britomart in response to the news of Radigund’s capture of Artegaill that mirrors the wrath of Elizabeth I towards Sir Walter Raleigh upon his marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, as well as Robert Dudley and his secret marriage to Lettice Knollys.\(^75\)

\(^75\) Hilton. *Renaissance Prince*, 238, 247, 288, 296, 302-303. See also the above section discussing Raleigh’s poetry.
Such a display is not the only occurrence used by Spenser in his epic, as it was seen in book four of *The Faerie Queene* when Belphœbe expresses rage at Timias for expressing affection towards Amoret. This rage, however, reads with a different tone than in book four. Britomart's expression of anger arises out of love, in that she thinks that Artegall desires another woman. Book Five's Radigund and Britomart, with their battle over Artegall, can be interpreted in terms of another set of literary-historical parallels, with Radigund representing Mary, Queen of Scots and Britomart representing Queen Elizabeth I as they battle over the throne of England: “As when a Tygre and an Lioness /Are met at spoyling of some hungry pray, /Both challenge it with equall greedinesse: [...]” Artegall is not only the human representation of Justice, but also the representation of England. Even if book Five is the least well-received book of *The Faerie Queene*, it references some of the most serious moments of Elizabeth I’s reign, including the execution of longtime rival, Mary, Queen of Scots.

There are many scholars who argue that Duessa, not Radigund, is the more apt literary representation of Mary, Queen of Scots. However, it is my opinion that the image of the two armored women who are equals in many ways, fighting one another for the same prize, bears far too many similarities to the two Renaissance queens in a way that cannot be ignored. Michael O’Connell, the author of the entry on book Five in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, confirms this interpretation, arguing that Radigund and Britomart are presented as being on equal footing, saying that Radigund more accurately resembles the “proud defiance of the artful Queen of

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Scots.”79 Looking at the story itself, the parallels become readily apparent. For example, Radigund’s taking of Ar tegoall as her prisoner, laying claim both to his person and love, and doing so without care or concern for Britomart’s prior claim imitates Mary, Queen of Scots claiming the English throne for herself, ignoring the monarch who already ruled, namely Elizabeth I. This can be seen when Radigund (at FQ 5.7.27) knows that Britomart, though disguised as a man, is a woman come to claim her lover:

[...] (for she ful ill
Could sleepe all night, than in vnquiet brest
Did closely harbour such a iealous guest)
[...] Eftsoons that warrioress with haughty crest
Did forth issue, all ready for the fight: [...]80

Moreover, Artegall, the proud knight, has been reduced and emasculated by Radigund; his diminishing under her captivity can be interpreted as an example of what England would possibly have suffered under the reign of a false Queen, wonderfully expressed in the words of Britomart as she frees Artegall:

Ah my deare Lord, what sight is this (quoth she)
What May-game hath misfortune made of you?
Where is that dreadfull manly looke? Where be
Those mighty palmes, the which ye wont t’embrew
In bloud of Kings, and great hoastes to subdew?
Could ought on earth so wondrous change haue wrought,
As to haue robde you of that manly hew?
Could so great courage stouped haue to ought?
Then farewell fleshly force; I see thy pride is nought.81

If these two characters represent specific elements of Tudor history, then Britomart’s arrival, once again clad in the armor and weaponry of a “warlike Maide” and coupled with the intent to fight for the freedom of her one true love, can be understood as the literary parallel of Elizabeth I

fighting to maintain her claim on England. When Britomart finally faces Radigund in battle, the heroine bests the villain, and ends her tyranny over Artegall by a swift decapitation in a final mirroring of historical events. The battle between Radigund and Britomart for Artegall is an apt portrayal of the two-decade long struggle between the formidable Renaissance Queens.
Conclusion.

Over the course of her forty-four year reign, Queen Elizabeth I of England established and cultivated her royal persona, wrapping herself in layer upon layer of iconographic symbols and images. The protracted length of her tenure as monarch required that her image be adapted to serve new purposes with the passage of time. As a Protestant, unmarried Queen Regnant, Elizabeth needed to maintain an image that was enduring and immaculate in order to sustain her tenuous political standing with her male counterparts on the continent, both Protestant and Catholic. Arguably the most popular image of Elizabeth Tudor known today is that of the triumphant Virgin Queen, which has its foundations in the earliest years of her reign. This particular aspect of the Queen’s persona experienced the most pronounced metamorphosis from the beginning to end of her sovereignty. Though Elizabeth never married, her virginity was a political asset that she used to her advantage in forging relationships with foreign powers through marriage negotiations. The specifics of the last Tudor monarch’s image endure as a result of the sheer amount of source documentation and material evidence that survives from the sixteenth century. The numerous portraits of Elizabeth I, coupled with the literary boom of the Elizabethan ‘Golden age’, provide myriad colorful and expressive accounts of one of history’s most legendary figures. In the poetic works of Sir Walter Raleigh, readers are treated to positive and negative views of the Queen, demonstrating the impact of a personal relationship’s waxing and waning on the perception of Elizabeth’s persona. In the sundry allegorical instantiations of Elizabeth I in Sir Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene, the historical and socio-political effects of the Queen’s actions, including her attitudes towards marriage and towards the trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, are complexly reflected by the words of the text, and in trying to praise his Queen, lays bare his own fears and concerns for the future, inadvertently
warping the intended meaning of his verses. Both of these writers adapt iconographic forms laid out by Elizabeth I in her own writing, as well as through the many portrait models representative of her reign. The ever-evolving image of Queen Elizabeth I provided a constant stream of inspiration for Raleigh, Spenser, Hilliard, and their contemporaries, each individual artist adding their own element to the archive of the Queen’s imagery, something that continues to this day in modern artistic mediums. Elizabeth Tudor’s legend and vivid imagery continues to be a popular subject for artistic representation, taking on new forms and functions through modern artistic methods.
Illustrations

Figure 1: Eworth, Hans. *Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses*. 1569. Windsor, UK: Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle.
Figure 2: Heere, Lucas De. *Allegory of Tudor Succession*. 1572. Cardiff, Wales, UK: Amgueddfa Cymru, National Museum Wales.
Figure 4: Attributed to Quentin Metsys the younger. *The Siena Sieve Portrait*. 1583. Siena, Italy: Pinacoteca Nazionale.
Figure 7: Gheeraerts, Marcus or Isaac Oliver. *The Rainbow Portrait*. 1600-1603. Hatfield, Hertfordshire, UK: Hatfield House.
Figure 12: Hilliard, Nicholas. The Drake Jewel. 1586-7. Private Collection.
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