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*Princes set on stages : Iconography on the early modern stage.*

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**Princes set on stages: Royal Iconography on the Early Modern Stage**

Annaliese Connolly

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2008

## **Princes set on stages: Royal Iconography on the Early Modern Stage**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD  
Sheffield Hallam University, July 2008

This thesis constitutes a critical investigation into the scholarship into the iconography of Queen Elizabeth I in the light of developments in critical theory and practice over the last thirty years. It provides a survey of the ways in which the term iconography as used to refer to the image of Elizabeth has been deployed, reconceived and adapted in early modern scholarship. The thesis therefore takes account of older historicising approaches to the Queen's image provided by the Cult of Elizabeth, as well as more recent work influenced by poststructuralist criticism.

My methodology is influenced by these two related critical traditions. It does however, situate its discussion of the three chosen figurings of Elizabeth as King David, Queen Dido and the moon goddess Cynthia within a discourse of Elizabethan power. Here my discussion of the politics of representation builds on the work of Louis Montrose and Susan Frye, as I argue that each of these allegorised images of the Queen provides the locus for the struggle to control the meanings assigned to the Queen's person. Since the concept of a discourse of Elizabethan power consists of those instances where the power relations between Elizabeth and her subjects are made manifest, the discussion of each of the three selected personae is not restricted to the visual or literary expression of these images in portraits, poems or plays, but investigates their deployment in the speeches and prayers of the Elizabeth herself, as well as in the sermons, polemics and literature of her subjects. It does so in order to trace the methods by which the royal image was fashioned and then appropriated by subjects who then used it to serve their own ends. The thesis focuses upon the ways in which biblical and classical figures and their mythographies contributed to this process of re-presenting the Queen.

Finally, the organisation of the thesis into three case studies and the choice of both biblical and classical personae emphasise its diachronic approach to Elizabeth's iconography. This methodology provides a corrective to the monological approach to the Queen's image adopted by both historicist and New Historicists alike, who have persisted in using the Queen's virginity as a lens through which to view her entire reign. The thesis argues that Elizabeth's iconography developed in response to specific events and shifts in policy and therefore offers analysis of how the Queen's image was used at specific pressure points during her reign. In this way the thesis makes an important contribution to scholarship in this field.

## Procedures and Abbreviations

This thesis has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines laid out in the MHRA Style Guide (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2002).

Unless otherwise stated early modern printed texts are cited from facsimiles in the database *Early English Books Online*, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. Texts are cited in old-spelling, but in keeping with MHRA guidelines on early printed books I have regularised some of the printing features in relation to the letters: *i*, *j*, *u* and *v* and have silently expanded contractions:

The spelling of quotations is always that of the book or edition referred to. Note, however, that in quotations from early printed books the forms of the letters *i* and *j*, *u* and *v*, the long *s*, the ampersand (&), the Tironian sign (7), the tilde, superior letters in contractions, and other abbreviations are normalized to modern usage unless there are good reasons to the contrary, as, for example, in full bibliographical descriptions.<sup>1</sup>

I have standardised the capitalisation of the titles of early modern printed texts following MHRA guidelines.

In the case of early modern printed plays these are cited from the following modern editions. Lyly and Marlowe are cited from the Revels edition. Shakespeare is cited from the Bevington *Complete Works*, while Jonson is cited from the edition of Herford, Simpson and Simpson. For the sake of clarity speech-prefixes are expanded, standardised and capitalised, and stage directions are consistently italicised. When I have cited material from the introductions to the editions of plays I have made this clear in the notes and have been careful to distinguish between the edition I will be quoting from and those whose introductory material I have included.

References to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and to the *Oxford English Dictionary* are, implicitly, to the online editions as they stood in May 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> *MHRA Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors, Editors, and Writers of Theses* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2002), p. 14.

# Princes set on stages: Royal Iconography on the Early Modern Stage

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## Candidate's Statement

### Princes set on stages: Royal Iconography on the Early Modern Stage

As stated in the abstract this thesis constitutes a critical investigation into the scholarship into the iconography of Queen Elizabeth I in the light of developments in critical theory and practice over the last thirty years. It provides a survey of the ways in which the term iconography as used to refer to the image of Elizabeth has been deployed, reconceived and adapted in early modern scholarship.

The thesis focuses upon allegorical representations of the Queen in order to trace the methods by which the royal image was fashioned and then appropriated by subjects who then used it to serve their own ends. The thesis focuses upon the ways in which biblical and classical figures and their mythographies contributed to this process of representing the Queen.

The organisation of the thesis into three case studies of examples of both biblical and classical personae used for the Queen, including King David, Queen Dido and Cynthia emphasises its diachronic approach to Elizabeth's iconography. This methodology provides a corrective to the monological approach to the Queen's image adopted by both historicist and New Historicists alike, who have persisted in using the Queen's virginity as a lens through which to view her entire reign. The thesis argues that Elizabeth's iconography developed in response to specific events and shifts in policy and therefore offers analysis of how the Queen's image was used at specific pressure points during her reign.

Material in Chapter One has already been published as an essay called 'Peele's David and Bethsabe: Reconsidering Biblical Drama of the Long 1590s', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 13.2 (October 2007): 9.1-20 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/si-16/connpceel.htm>>. Material from Chapter Two on Lyly's *Midas* has been published as an essay called "'O unquenchable thirst of gold": Lyly's *Midas* and the English quest for Empire', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 8.2 (September 2002): 4.1-36 <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/08-2/conngold.html>>. Finally, material on *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from chapter Two has been published as an essay 'Evaluating Virginity: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the iconography of marriage', in *Goddesses and Queens: The iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 136-153.

## List of Illustrations

- Illustration 1. Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones Containing Seven Several Lamps of Virginitie* (1582). Engraving opposite page 862. Image reproduced from the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
- Illustration 2. *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578). Title page. Image reproduced from the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.
- Illustration 3. *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (London: J. Day, 1578), page 45. Image reproduced from the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

## **Princes set on stages: Royal Iconography on the early modern stage**

### **Introduction**

This thesis constitutes a critical investigation into the scholarship on the iconography of Queen Elizabeth I in the light of developments in critical theory and practice over the last thirty years. The influence of poststructuralist criticism, including the work of New Historicist, Cultural Materialist and feminist scholars has resulted in a rethinking of older historicising approaches to the Queen's image provided by the Cult of Elizabeth and has located its discussion of royal iconography within the broader paradigm of the politics of representation. The thesis, therefore, provides a survey of the ways in which the term iconography as used to refer to the image of Elizabeth has been deployed, reconceived and adapted in early modern scholarship.

My methodology is influenced by two related critical traditions. The first is the long critical heritage of the iconographical approach to literature which was influenced by the work of European iconographers such as Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky, as well as the more recent approach of New Historicist and feminist scholars such as Louis Montrose and Susan Frye, who locate different visual and textual manifestations of the Queen within an Elizabethan discourse of power. My discussion of the three chosen figurings of Elizabeth as King David, Queen Dido and Cynthia, the moon goddess is situated within this particular paradigm. Here my discussion of the politics of representation builds on the work of Montrose and Frye, as I argue that each of these allegorised images of the Queen provides the locus for the struggle to control the meanings assigned to the Queen's person. Since the concept of a discourse of Elizabethan power consists of those instances where the power relations between Elizabeth and her subjects are made manifest, the discussion of each of the three

selected personae is not restricted to the visual or literary expression of these images in portraits, poems or plays, but investigates their deployment in the speeches and prayers of Elizabeth herself, as well as in the sermons, polemics and literature of her subjects. It does so in order to trace the methods by which the royal image was fashioned and then appropriated by subjects who used it to serve their own ends. The thesis focuses upon the ways in which biblical and classical figures and their mythographies contributed to this process of re-presenting the Queen.

The organisation of the thesis into three case studies in each of the chapters and the choice of both biblical and classical personae emphasise its diachronic approach to Elizabeth's iconography. Here the thesis makes an important contribution to work in the field since a diachronic approach to each of the figurings of the Queen, both within the discussion in the chapters and in their overall chronology, provides an important corrective to some of the assumptions which persist about the image of the Queen, both in early modern scholarship and more widely in popular culture. One of these long held and persistent assumptions is that Elizabeth's identity was formulated by the Queen from the outset of her reign by her decision to remain unmarried. This teleological approach has resulted in a synchronic methodology which uses Elizabeth's virginity as a lens through which to view her entire reign and therefore omits consideration of important facets of the Queen's identity, particularly the use of biblical analogues for Elizabeth. Although the work of New Historicist scholars, for example, has produced a more complex understanding of the power relations involved in the construction of the royal image, there is a continuing willingness to accept that Elizabeth chose not to marry and instead utilised her virginity to counteract the limitations of her gender. My work on the biblical and classical personae used for the Queen examines their use at a

series of pressure points in Elizabeth's reign. Here the thesis builds on the work of John N. King and Susan Doran whose work has challenged the monological view of the Queen's iconography as a celebration of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen. Both scholars argue that the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Francis, Duke of Anjou (1578-1581) mark a pivotal stage in the development of the Queen's iconography, since it is during and after the discussions with Anjou that classical tropes are employed to celebrate Elizabeth's virginity as a permanent state. This is a direct result of the unpopularity of the Anjou match and also in recognition of the fact that it was now unlikely that the Queen would marry and bear children.

In order to provide a detailed explanation of my understanding and use of the term 'royal iconography' indicated in the title of the thesis it is necessary to provide a brief history of the uses of iconography, particularly in relation to literary studies. In the sections which follow I will outline the different methodologies adopted by critics whose work has contributed to existing scholarship on the image of Elizabeth I and then offer my own discussion of the terms employed in the title of the thesis. The final section of the introduction will be devoted to an outline of the discussion of each of the personae in their respective chapters.

### **Iconography and its Critical Heritage:**

#### **(a)The Warburg Institute and Erwin Panofsky**

In the field of art history the term iconography is used to denote a set of symbols, images or themes associated with a particular subject, such as the iconography of Christianity and the meanings assigned to those symbols or images. The study of iconography is therefore concerned with the discovery or retrieval of the allegorical

meaning in a work of art. An iconographical approach to literature by extension uses an understanding of the allegorical meanings of a particular piece of art or work of an artist or artistic school to help explicate a literary text which may deploy the same theme or symbol.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the principal goal of iconography in the field of art history is to uncover figurative meaning in art, the work of two of the most influential figures in the field of iconography in the early part of the twentieth century, the German art historians Aby Warburg (1866-1929) and Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), extended the boundaries of the discipline. Warburg's work was important for the ways in which it promoted an interdisciplinary approach to art and rejected the widely held view that art transcended the influences of culture and history. Warburg developed the field of iconography so that it was no longer simply an aid to identifying the subjects, symbols or motifs in portraits, for example, but considered art as a cultural and historical artefact. In his congress lecture in 1912, for example, Warburg in his discussion of the painted wall decorations in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara, showed that the

art of a specific period could be connected in numerous ways and in different degrees with the religion, philosophy, literature, science, political and social life of that same period. Moreover, he demonstrated that in some respects an underlying link exists between Classical antiquity, the medieval period and modern times, and, finally that works of both 'free' and applied art could be seen as valuable historical documents.<sup>2</sup>

Warburg encouraged such views amongst his circle at the Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg, the art institute which grew out of Warburg's own personal library. In 1933 after Warburg's death the library was moved from Hamburg to London to escape Hitler's Germany and in 1941 it was incorporated into the University of London with

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<sup>1</sup> *The Dictionary of Art* ed. by Jane Turner, 34 vols (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1996), XV, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dictionary of Art*, XV, p. 90.

Warburg's colleague Fritz Saxl acting as director.<sup>3</sup> The suggestion that art, like literature, for example, had a direct link to other cultural discourses and could be used to expand our understanding of those cultures was an important critical tenet of the institute. Such a position encouraged the Institute's students to interrogate the dominant critical modes such as Formalism, which in the case of literature encouraged the idea that literature was a special kind of writing.

Erwin Panofsky, like Warburg, was also a German émigré, who left Germany in the 1930s to take up the post of visiting professor at New York University in 1931 and in 1935 became professor of art history at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. In *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, first published in 1939, Panofsky described his three-tiered iconographical approach to a work of art. He began firstly by defining iconography as 'that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form'.<sup>4</sup> The first stage of interpretation is referred to as 'pre-iconographical description' and what Panofsky means by this is that the first step in the process is to focus upon the 'primary or natural subject matter' in order to identify forms, including line, colour and shape and by perceiving qualities relating to expression e.g. a particular pose or gesture. The next phase is iconographical analysis of what Panofsky calls the 'secondary or conventional subject matter, constituting the world of images, stories and allegories'.<sup>5</sup> At this point Panofsky advocates deploying knowledge of literary sources

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<sup>3</sup> The Warburg Institute: Description and History  
<[http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/institute/institute\\_introduction.htm](http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/institute/institute_introduction.htm)> [accessed 5 February 2008]

<sup>4</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 15-16. For discussion of the application of Panofsky's methods in relation to Tudor iconography see John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 5-7.

where such themes or concepts may have been used and also consulting the history of types, of how different themes or concepts may have been used or altered over time. The aim of these two stages and indeed of the model overall is to perceive the intrinsic meaning or content of a particular work of art, so that the third and final level is concerned with more detailed iconographical interpretation which cannot rely simply upon literary sources, forcing the art historian to

check what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of the work, or group of works, to which he devotes his attention, against what he thinks is the intrinsic meaning of as many other documents of civilization historically related to that work or group of works as he can master: of documents bearing witness to the political, poetical, religious, philosophical, and social tendencies of the personality, period or country under investigation. Needless to say that, conversely, the historian of political life, poetry, religion, philosophy, and social situations should make an analogous use of works of art. It is in the search for intrinsic meanings or content that the various humanistic disciplines meet on a common plane instead of serving as handmaidens to each other.<sup>6</sup>

Like Warburg, Panofsky's emphasis is upon the relationship between art and other disciplines and his suggestion that the relationship should no longer be one where a discipline such as art serves as the handmaiden to literature is interesting as he seems to advocate eradicating the hierarchy within the arts, where art would traditionally have been regarded as superior to and separate from literature and from its own cultural and historical moment.

The work of Warburg, Panofsky and their students was in many ways a challenge to the dominant critical mode in both Europe and the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, namely Formalism or New Criticism. This type of literary criticism regarded works of literature as a special kind of writing, a self contained and self referential object. Their approach is often described as a scientific approach to literature: 'Rather than basing their interpretations of a text on the reader's response, the

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<sup>6</sup> Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 16.

author's stated intentions, or parallels between the text and historical context [they would] perform a close reading, concentrating on the relationships within the texts to give it its own distinctive character or form'.<sup>7</sup> One of the consequences of the ahistorical nature of formalist criticism was that it regarded 'literature as the bearer of permanent truths about the human condition ... these truths were understood as having no merely local historical relevance but were on the contrary, true for all time'.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to formalist criticism the work of iconographers in their respective disciplines was historicist, a point made clear by Peggy Muñoz Simonds:

It attempts to offer an historically based Renaissance reading of the work, i.e., to explain how a poem or play probably would have been understood by its original audience.<sup>9</sup>

Simonds distinguishes the practitioners of this approach from other literary critics and identifies their shared assumptions:

First, unlike the old "New Critics" or formalists, they believe that the intentions of the makers (poets and artists) in creating their work are important, and that these intentions can be reconstructed to a certain extent today through historical research. They believe that the intended original meanings incorporated by the Renaissance maker into a work of visual or literary art may also be accurately rediscovered through a careful and wide ranging study of all aspects of the historical culture out of which the work emerged.<sup>10</sup>

The work of Roland Mushat Frye provides an example of a Renaissance literary critic who considers Elizabethan portraiture or emblems in his discussion of Elizabethan drama. Two of Frye's articles, published in 1979 and 1980 respectively, provide a useful case study of some of the iconographical approaches to literary texts.

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<sup>7</sup> Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray, 'New Criticism', in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2003), pp. 293-294.

<sup>8</sup> Lee Patterson, 'Literary History', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 254.

<sup>9</sup> Peggy Muñoz Simonds, *Iconographic Research in English Renaissance Literature: A Critical Guide* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), p. xi.

<sup>10</sup> Muñoz Simonds, *Iconographic Research in English Renaissance Literature*, p. xiii.

In the first essay 'Ladies, Gentlemen, and Skulls: *Hamlet* and the Iconographic Tradition', Frye locates the iconic image of Hamlet contemplating Yorick's skull in the graveyard within the broader context of the traditional uses of this motif. Familiarity with this popular tradition will help to explain the shift in Hamlet's personality between the first two acts of the play and its final scenes:

If we are attentive to the careful and systematic allusions that Shakespeare has built into Hamlet's reflections in the graveyard, we, like members of the original audience, are prepared to accept the sanity, composure, and tranquillity Hamlet displays in the final scene of the tragedy. It is largely through the iconographic references of Hamlet's words that a successful structural transition is effected between the earlier and the later protagonist.<sup>11</sup>

Frye provides what he calls the 'iconographic background' to Hamlet's words by offering a survey of a range of portraits, including Frans Hals's 'A Young man with a skull', Holbein's 'The Ambassadors' and 'The Judd Memorial Portrait' to argue that there was an established tradition of a young man contemplating a skull in European portraiture and that the subject is frequently located in a graveyard. An awareness of this tradition provides important insights into contemporary attitudes towards it and why Shakespeare chose to include this visual motif in his play:

If we view the graveyard scene in Elsinore only or even primarily in terms of those typically twentieth century attitudes which seek to ignore or euphemize death, we may regard Hamlet at this point as morbid in soul and sick in mind. But if we re-establish the sixteenth-century context and recall representative examples of the raw materials upon which Shakespeare's imagination worked, we see a Hamlet here thinking through the ultimate realities of death to arrive at what becomes, for him as it had for others, a new sanity and even serenity.<sup>12</sup>

The evidence that such a tradition existed, evidenced by the portraits, is enough for Frye; he is not concerned with establishing that Shakespeare had actually seen these particular portraits.

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<sup>11</sup> Roland Mushat Frye, 'Ladies, Gentlemen, and Skulls: *Hamlet* and the Iconographic Traditions', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30 (1979), 15-28, (p. 16).

<sup>12</sup> Mushat Frye, 'Ladies, Gentlemen, and Skulls', p. 28.

In his next article Frye turns his attention more generally to Shakespearean drama and Elizabethan portraiture and to what he calls an 'aesthetic epistemology' at work in each discipline. Frye explains that this term refers to the correspondences between Elizabethan art and drama because they share 'the same aesthetic *Weltansicht*, the same way of suggesting reality'.<sup>13</sup> The use of the German term '*Weltansicht*', meaning world sight or view, is significant. The article suggests that correspondences between plays such as *Henry V* and the engraving of the Earl of Essex by Thomas Cockson in 1599, for example, provide insights into the way both the Elizabethan visual and verbal arts were not concerned with artistic developments such as perspective or with observing the neoclassical unities. Frye develops the 'iconographic background' to *Hamlet* in his book length study of the play *Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600*, published in 1984. Part of the discussion of Shakespeare's play is devoted to considering parallels between the murder of Henry Lord Darnley and the remarriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, who was implicated in Darnley's murder and the plot of *Hamlet*. Frye considers the Darnley Memorial portrait by Livinus de Vogelaare, commissioned by Darnley's parents the earl and Countess of Lennox in 1567, which presents James with his grandparents and uncle Charles, the father of Arbella Stuart, kneeling before the tomb of Henry.<sup>14</sup> The legend above James's head reads 'Arise, O Lord, and avenge the innocent blood of the King my father and, I beseech thee, defend me with thy right hand.' The painting draws the eye towards the banner, left of centre, which depicts Darnley's naked corpse beneath a tree and the infant James beside him and the phrase 'Judge and avenge my cause O Lord.' The point of the Darnley Memorial painting is that it will serve as a *memento vindicatae*

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<sup>13</sup> Roland Mushat Frye, 'Ways of Seeing in Shakespearean Drama And Elizabethan Painting', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31 (1980), 323-342 (p. 342).

<sup>14</sup> For discussion of the portrait see Roland Mushat Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 31-37.

for James so that when he is old enough it will inspire him to seek vengeance for his father's murder. In *Hamlet* Frye argues that Hamlet, like James, is a royal son who is expected to secure vengeance for his father's murder and that the Ghost's request for revenge and remembrance performs the equivalent function of the Darnley Memorial portrait.<sup>15</sup>

Remember thee?  
Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat  
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?  
Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records.<sup>16</sup>

Historicism and particularly the use of iconography in discussion of literary texts were not without their critics. Two articles published in the journal *Shakespearean Research and Opportunities* (1972-1974) articulate some of the responses by critics who are themselves practitioners in the field of iconographical studies and yet seem to want to emphasise the methodological pitfalls of such an approach in an attempt to police the boundaries of the discipline. These articles, I think, serve as a barometer for developments in literary criticism in the early 1970s as both are responding rather obliquely to aspects of poststructuralist criticism, including ideas posited by critics such as Roland Barthes which challenged the idea of authorial intention as well as Marxism. The first essay is called 'Iconography and Methodology in Renaissance Dramatic Study: Some Caveats' and what is revealing about the article is the way in which its author, John M. Steadman, begins by suggesting that the popularity of iconographical approaches to literature is symptomatic of a wider critical trend in the nineteen seventies:

In a decade when studies of the Renaissance have become increasingly mystical – preoccupied with problems of hermeneutics and epistemology, delighting in

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<sup>15</sup> Mushat Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet*, pp. 31-37.

<sup>16</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), I.5.96-100.

multiple levels of meaning and expression, covert allegories and symbolic forms – it may not be inadmissible to stress the merits of the *via negativa*, or to apply it to the Renaissance philological mysteries themselves.<sup>17</sup>

The article outlines scepticism about the fashion among literary critics to practise an iconographical approach without sufficient training in the field to do so with any real authority. The recurring problem that Steadman identifies with this approach is one of interpretation and authorial intention:

Not infrequently we detect types and emblems, moral or mythic patterns, on the basis of very superficial resemblances, without enquiring whether these are fortuitous or intentional, without asking whether they actually existed for the author and his audience. Like Baconians searching for cryptograms, we are apt to find riddles and enigmas, hieroglyphics and allegories, that were (in all probability) quite alien to the author and his intent.<sup>18</sup>

Steadman introduces a series of negative examples using emblems in Shakespeare's plays to make his point. In the first he recalls watching a performance of *Timon of Athens* and how the stage action in one of the scenes in the final act suggested an emblem that Steadman was familiar with from Whitney's collection of emblems. The problem for Steadman, however, is that while he is sure that Whitney is the source for the emblem in the scene he cannot be sure that Shakespeare actually wrote that particular scene and cannot therefore be sure what meaning was intended as he cannot prove that the author of the scene actually consulted Whitney:

this episode may underline some of the methodological difficulties that the student of the drama may encounter in demonstrating the author's emblematic intent. What appears to be an emblem, may in fact, be little more than a figment of the observer's own imagination – the product of a visual association operative in his own mind but not demonstrably valid for the author and the original audience.<sup>19</sup>

The caveat supplied by Steadman regarding iconographical approaches to literature is that those successful or 'reliable' studies have tended to focus on 'instances where the

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<sup>17</sup> John M. Steadman, 'Iconography and Methodology in Renaissance Dramatic Study: Some Caveats' *Shakespearean Research and Opportunities* 7-8 (1972-74), 39-52 (p. 39).

<sup>18</sup> Steadman, 'Iconography and Methodology', p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Steadman, 'Iconography and Methodology', pp. 43-44.

poet himself has indicated one or more of his sources, or where an ambitious commentator has supplied them'.<sup>20</sup> Anthony J. Lewis's article in the same volume of *Shakespearean Research and Opportunities* is similarly cautious about the uses of an interdisciplinary approach to Shakespeare studies. On the one hand, Lewis acknowledges the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach, and yet the article is made up of a series of negative examples of the kinds of critical practice to be avoided. The author seems to argue from the position of a reluctant formalist critic who accepts some of the benefits of an iconographical approach:

One of the more exciting modern approaches to Shakespeare studies is interdisciplinary, and uses Renaissance art in its myriad forms either to explicate specific passages (diction, imagery) in the plays and poems, or to expand our perception by allowing us to perceive literature from a different perspective.<sup>21</sup>

The targets of Lewis's criticism include the American critic and art historian Wylie Sypher because of the rather lyrical comparisons Sypher makes between the plays of Shakespeare and the works of a series of artists, in this case between a speech from *Hamlet* and paintings by Rubens:

One learns that the response to Horatio's "But look, the morn in russet mantle clad, / Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill," is "analogous to that experienced when looking at Rubens landscapes".<sup>22</sup>

The comparison is certainly rather subjective and does not perhaps provide the kind of insights into the play or paintings that would be of critical value to anyone other than the author himself. Here Sypher seems to have strayed from the interpretative model laid out by Panofsky, for example; on the other hand, it seems a bit unsporting of Lewis to use Sypher as an exemplar of poor critical practice in this way. The other objection which Lewis raises to an interdisciplinary approach seems to be that while a piece of art

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<sup>20</sup> Steadman, 'Iconography and Methodology', p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony J. Lewis, 'Interdisciplinary Approaches to Shakespeare Studies', *Shakespearean Research and Opportunities*, 7-8 (1972-74), 53-60 (p.53).

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, 'Interdisciplinary Approaches to Shakespeare Studies', p. 53.

can be used to explain a Shakespearean text, the art itself should not be considered as an historical artefact which can provide insights into the society in which it was produced:

Careless content orientated studies very often identify artistic/aesthetic concerns with those that are social, e.g. the Ashcan artists and naturalistic writers of the early 1900s are used to illustrate the rise of industry and urban life in America.<sup>23</sup>

Here Lewis seems to betray a mistrust of contemporary critical theories, particularly Marxism, and this is clear when he cites an article from 1950 in which the author argues against the suggestion that there are 'general laws governing the production of the arts as organisms of a culture' and that 'though a milieu is the inescapable condition in which the artist works, there is no established principle universally applicable in determining the coextension and intimate connection of the fine arts with social phenomenon'.<sup>24</sup> Lewis himself concludes with: 'Awareness of the difference between studies in the arts and those which document social phenomena must be made'.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, if we return briefly to the methodological vocabulary used by critics such as John M. Steadman and Mushat Frye their discussion of their approach will provide a useful critical framework for the subsequent sections of this thesis which move on to examine the work specifically on the image of Elizabeth I during the twentieth century. Steadman in an earlier essay outlines the affinities between iconography as a branch of art history and its application in the field of literary criticism. He identifies the shared strategies of students in both disciplines, since the student of Renaissance poetry, like the student of iconography, is

equally concerned with "subject matter or meaning" and the modes whereby this is communicated. He too must identify and decipher those "images, stories and allegories" which ancient theorists of art called *invenzioni*." With the

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<sup>23</sup> Lewis, 'Interdisciplinary Approaches to Shakespeare Studies', p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, 'Interdisciplinary Approaches to Shakespeare Studies', p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, 'Interdisciplinary Approaches to Shakespeare Studies', p. 55.

iconologist, in turn, he must usually broaden his field to include historical conditions and “cultural symptoms,” examining the “function of images in allegory and symbolism and their reference to ... the ‘invisible world of ideas.’” Like the art historian, he must uncover the original meaning of a Renaissance artefact ... by analysing and resynthesising its vocabulary of symbols and motifs, calling attention not only to the language of tradition but also (more significantly) to innovations on tradition. He too must play the challenging game of matching conventions and concepts, images and ideas. He too must unriddle enigmas and decode cryptograms.<sup>26</sup>

The shared methodology as described here suggests that both the types of students identified by Steadman are engaged in the process of recovering the original or intended meaning of their respective texts, deploying skills such as ‘identifying’, ‘deciphering’, ‘unriddling’ and ‘decoding’. Each student can call upon the discipline of the other to help explicate the meaning of their chosen text. In a similar way Frye’s use of the term ‘*Weltansicht*’ also suggests that the text can provide access to a stable meaning and rather like E.M.W. Tillyard’s work *The Elizabethan World Picture* indicates that there was a single dominant world view that is discernible through the art and literature of the period.

### **Iconography and its Critical Heritage: (b) The Cult of Elizabeth**

In order to consider some of the developments in the field of royal iconography it is necessary to pay particular attention to those approaches and texts which have been pivotal to its development. My selection and analysis of three of Elizabeth’s personae is indebted to the work on the iconography of Elizabeth I by the American scholar Elkin Calhoun Wilson and those of the Warburg Institute, including Frances Yates and Roy Strong. The term ‘Cult of Elizabeth’ comes from the title of Strong’s book and has come to identify the views of these scholars who have each argued that Elizabeth I and

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<sup>26</sup> John M. Steadman, ‘Iconography and Renaissance Drama: Ethical and Mythological Themes’, *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 13-14 (1970-71), 73-122 (p. 73).

her government used the Queen's identity to serve their political agenda and that the state had a clear strategy in its deployment of the royal image. Secondly, each has suggested that the Queen used her position as a Virgin Queen to co-opt the position held by the Virgin Mary.

The publication of Erwin Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* in 1939 coincided with the publication of *England's Eliza*, by the American academic Elkin Calhoun Wilson, the first significant study in the twentieth century of the body of work written ostensibly in praise of Queen Elizabeth I. The interest in Elizabeth and her image during the 1930s, which also saw the publication of J.E. Neale's biography of the Queen published in 1934, coincided with the rise of the 'cult of the personality' in political leaders such as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin where the media such as radio and cinema were used to disseminate state propaganda which included the celebration of these political figures.<sup>27</sup>

Wilson's study is arranged according to the range of personae used to celebrate the Queen, beginning with the biblical figures of Judith and Deborah and followed by Eliza, Diana, Laura, Cynthia, Gloriana and Belphebe. The text arranges its material, broadly speaking, according to genre, starting with broadside ballads, the entertainments and speeches for the progresses, then moving more generally to plays for public and private consumption, before finally turning to those figurings of the Queen which appear in the poetry of her reign. The study bears testimony not only to the breadth of so many imaginative incarnations of the Queen, but also to the difficulties of organising a survey of such material, since many were not simply exclusive to one particular literary genre

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<sup>27</sup> Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman, 'Introduction', to *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 3-4.

or medium and so while one chapter may set out to examine the figure of Cynthia, for example, in poetry, the scope of each chapter is of course much broader since this persona was also utilised within the arena of public plays. The sheer volume of material provided by Wilson ensures that subsequent scholars in the field stand in his debt.

Whilst contemporary reviews of Wilson's work were effusive in their praise for the extensive citations the survey provides, there were those who queried his methodology, particularly his willingness to take literally the views expressed of Elizabeth and his failure to adequately address the political context and the political motivations of those patrons who commissioned the poetry and entertainments he discusses.<sup>28</sup> Kerby Neill, for example, notes that Wilson tends to 'oversimplify' the devotion of Elizabethan courtiers, remarking that

There is no adequate indication of the dubious loyalty of men like Leicester and that uncertain number of peers who carried on secret negotiations with Mary Stuart, nor does he show clearly the conflict between religion and nationalism, or ambition, on the part of Catholic writers. Mr Wilson suggests that Elizabeth could distinguish between the true and false notes among her poets, but he seldom makes any attempt to do so himself.<sup>29</sup>

Wilson's attitude towards the material written about Elizabeth represents a straight bat approach, by which I mean the aim of the study is to collate the material and to allow it to speak for itself. There is a commentary accompanying the texts but it is rather cursory and takes the praise offered of the Queen at face value. Wilson's historicism is indicated by the suggestion that the various materials provide a stable and unproblematic view of the Queen and the attitudes of her people towards her.

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<sup>28</sup> See for example Louis B. Wright, 'Review of *England's Eliza*', in *The Journal of Modern History*, 12 (1940), 236-237 and G.D. Willcock, 'Review of *England's Eliza*', in *The Review of English Studies*, 16 (1940), 212-214.

<sup>29</sup> Kerby Neill, 'Review of *England's Eliza*', in *Modern Language Notes*, 56 (1941), 234-236.

Wilson makes two important points in his monograph which were to be taken up by Frances Yates and Roy Strong, to form important strands of critical debate within Renaissance scholarship. The first was that although the celebrations of Elizabeth found in plays, ballads, poetry and portraits suggested a spontaneous and popular response on the part of her people, Wilson also briefly touches upon the ways in which Elizabeth and her ministers could see the political advantages of cultivating such a diverse, mythical identity, particularly at the beginning of her reign:

The clear intelligence of a master politician with a great statesman's goal must quickly have seen that the idealization was a secure buttress to power at home, especially since it sprang, for all the hollow flattery which was easily recognised and discounted, from the deep love of a grateful people.<sup>30</sup>

For cunning Renaissance politicians, of whom Elizabeth was truly queen, the idealization of her was a good device for strengthening the place of the prince who is to rule.<sup>31</sup>

Wilson stops short of suggesting that the Queen's image was used as part of state propaganda, but his work provides a potential paradigm for subsequent scholars.

Wilson's second significant contribution was the suggestion that Elizabeth's idealisation as a Virgin Queen served the important political and religious function in Protestant England of replacing the Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary. Wilson in his discussion of the figurings of Elizabeth as Diana noted the ways in which this had its roots in the medieval tradition of knights who would worship both the Virgin Mary and an earthly mistress. Elizabeth as Diana and a Virgin Queen therefore collapses within her identity both the sacred and the secular, so that Wilson wondered whether Elizabeth's knights 'unconsciously transferred some of the adoration which by right of strict inheritance

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<sup>30</sup>Elkin Calhoun Wilson, *England's Eliza*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 403.

<sup>31</sup> Wilson, *England's Eliza*, p. 409.

was due a far holier virgin?'<sup>32</sup> Wilson supports his idea by juxtaposing evidence of this medieval practice with the poetry of Sir John Davies and one of the songs from John Dowland's *The Second Booke of Songs or Aires* (1600) which suggested the potential of the idea of a Cult of Elizabeth:

When others sing *Venite exultemus!*  
Stand by, and turn to *Noli emulari!*  
For *Quare fremuerunt*, use *Oremus!*  
*Vivat ELIZA!* For an *Ave MARI!*  
And teach those swains that live about thy cell;  
To sing *Amen*, when thou dost pray so well!<sup>33</sup>

Wilson's suggestions about Elizabeth's own cultivation of her image and the ways in which her own virginal persona could stand in for the worship of the Virgin Mary were explored and developed by Frances Yates in an essay first published in 1947 called 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea'.<sup>34</sup> In this essay Yates outlined the different political uses to which this figuring could be put in terms of contemporary attitudes towards the 'imperial' idea. Yates begins by examining the ways in which Astraea is utilised to support the religious aspect of Elizabethan imperialism. Elizabeth as Astraea is used for example in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* to lend support for the English reformed church in the face of opposition from the Pope and the Holy Roman empire. Secondly, Yates suggests that Elizabeth's persona as a 'reformed Virgo representing the pure imperial religion is also the British Virgo aspiring to empire through sea power.'<sup>35</sup> Contemporaries such as John Dee used the Trojan myth of descent for example to argue that Elizabeth Tudor as a descendant of Aeneas could lay claim to the title of imperial virgin, whose reign would signal the beginning of a golden age. In her discussion of a

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<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *England's Eliza*, p. 200.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, *England's Eliza*, p. 206.

<sup>34</sup> Frances Yates, 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 10 (1947), 27-82.

<sup>35</sup> Yates, 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea', p. 48.

series of engravings of Elizabeth, including several by Crispin de Passe, Yates observes the ways in which they signal the defeat of the Armada:

To defeat it required not only a strong navy but a strong symbolism. By claiming for the national church that it was reform executed by the sacred imperial power as represented in the sacred English monarchy, the Elizabeth symbol drew to itself a tradition which also made a total, a universal claim – the tradition of sacred empire .... The arguments for sacred empire – that the world is at its best and most peaceful under one ruler and that then justice is most powerful – are used to buttress her religious rights as an individual monarch .... The lengths to which the cult of Elizabeth went are a measure of the sense of isolation which had at all costs to find a symbol strong enough to provide a feeling of spiritual security in the face of the break with the rest of Christendom.<sup>36</sup>

In 1975 Yates republished her essay on Astraea in a book length study, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth century*. This included several chapters on aspects of Elizabeth's iconography including 'Elizabethan Chivalry: The Romance of the Accession Day Tilts' and '*The Triumph of Chastity*'. In the survey of the Accession Day Tilts Yates develops her suggestion that Elizabeth's identity as Virgin Queen was used to bridge the loss of worship of the Virgin Mary and the celebrations which had punctuated the church's calendar including various feast days and saints' days:

The annual pageant of Protestant chivalry, in honour of the holy day of the Queen's accession, skilfully used the tradition of chivalrous display to build up the Queen's legend as the Virgin of the Reformed Religion .... and to present the spectacle of worship of her by her knights in the ritual of chivalry as a new kind of regularly recurring semi-religious festival.<sup>37</sup>

She continues:

The bejewelled and painted images of the Virgin Mary had been cast out of the churches and monasteries, but another bejewelled and painted image was set up at court, and went on progress through the land for her worshippers to adore.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Yates, 'Queen Elizabeth as Astraea', p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1975), p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 109.

Yates also notes the influence of the Accession Day Tilts upon Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and suggests the entertainments provided on the Queen's progresses as a useful context for Spenser's poem. In the discussion of Petrarch's poems *I Trionfi* Yates notes that one of the famous examples of female chastity cited by Petrarch in *The Triumph of Chastity* is the vestal virgin Tuccia. Yates goes on to discuss the Siena Sieve portrait in which Elizabeth is depicted holding a sieve and relates it to her discussion of the imperial theme. The portrait, Yates argues, depicts the story of Dido and Aeneas and identifies Elizabeth with her Trojan forebear:

The extraordinarily elaborate and ingenious allusion seems to be that, unlike Dido, the chaste descendant of Aeneas has achieved a Triumph of Chastity and wears the imperial crown of pure empire. She is Gloriana, the empress of the pure imperial reform, combined with Belphoebe, the chaste Petrarchan lady.<sup>39</sup>

In the preface to *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* Yates pays tribute to the Warburg Institute where she began her career, noting that her essay on 'Astraea', given first as lecture in 1945 and later published in 1947, was influenced by the scholarship of the institute's founders:

It belongs to a time when inspiring scholars and an inspiring library were newly arrived from Germany. The manuscript of the article was read by Fritz Saxl not long before his death.<sup>40</sup>

Here Yates refers to the arrival in London in 1933 of Aby Warburg's library from Hamburg to avoid the Nazi regime and the fact that in 1941 it was incorporated into the University of London with Warburg's colleague Fritz Saxl acting as director. Many of the reviews of *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth century* identified the value of its interdisciplinary approach, noting for example that it illuminated 'political history

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<sup>39</sup> Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 115.

<sup>40</sup> Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*, p. xiii.

through the use of art, music, literature and even mechanics'<sup>41</sup> while 'Her fruitful preoccupation with Renaissance pageantry and its significance for literary study is evident in this volume as it has been from the beginning'.<sup>42</sup> As with Wilson before her, some critics noted that Yates was perhaps too willing to accept that literature and spectacle were composed simply to celebrate the Queen and the associated ideas of empire. David Norbrook identifies her treatment of the figure of Sir Philip Sidney as one such example:

For Sidney himself both courtly and literary personae were imperfect substitutes for action abroad, so that his persona of the 'Shepherd Knight' carried multiple ironies. The *Arcadia* is ornamented with the trappings of Elizabethan chivalry, but at its centre is an effeminate ruler whose indecisiveness plunges the country into chaos. The spectacular way Renaissance courtiers acted out political myths is liable to obscure their critical detachment from the parts they played.<sup>43</sup>

Susan Frye also queries the extent to which Elizabeth was able to control the ways in which her image was disseminated and received. While Yates describes Elizabeth's virginity as 'a powerful political weapon',<sup>44</sup> Frye counters by observing that 'it was a weapon not always in Elizabeth's hands'.<sup>45</sup>

Yates's work was developed by her student Roy Strong, particularly in *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* published in 1977, in which he described how the cult of the Queen was used to

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<sup>41</sup> Robert G. Clouse, 'Review of *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*', in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 6 (1975), 115.

<sup>42</sup> James E. Phillips, 'Review of *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*', in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 30 (1977), 394-396.

<sup>43</sup> David Norbrook, 'Review of *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*', in *The English Historical Review*, 92 (1977), 192-193.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 16.

buttress public order and, even more, deliberately to replace the pre-Reformation externals of religion, the cult of the Virgin and saints with their attendant images, processions, ceremonies and secular rejoicing.<sup>46</sup>

In his discussion of 'The Rainbow Portrait' and 'Queen Elizabeth going in procession to Blackfriars in 1600', Strong emphasises the ways in which each painting offers a coherent *Weltansicht*:

The Rainbow Portrait expands our vision of Elizabeth in the Procession Picture: queen of beauty, queen of love, the just virgin of the golden age returned, whose mind is an object for contemplation by her votaries. Such is the staggering image of Elizabeth; but the Procession Picture, unlike her other portraits, places her in relation to her worshippers. It is an image of her and her court. In this it becomes a visual statement on the Elizabethan state, on order, the order of the body politic which she animates.<sup>47</sup>

In a review of Strong's *The Cult of Elizabeth* in *Renaissance Quarterly* in 1978, Stephen Greenblatt identified and explained the significance of the Cult:

[it] played an important role in the consolidation and maintenance of that power it celebrates. The gorgeous rituals of praise channelled national and religious sentiments into the worship of a prince, masked over and thus temporarily deflected deep social, political, and theological divisions in late sixteenth century England, transformed Elizabeth's potentially disastrous sexual disadvantage into a supreme virtue and, in the same movement, metamorphosed a pack of dangerous phallic-aggressive fortune seekers into gentle knights kneeling at the foot of the Faerie Queen.<sup>48</sup>

Whilst Greenblatt's review acknowledges Strong's scholarly work in his discussion of Elizabethan portraiture and pageantry, it also identifies some difficulties with its approach to the power relations between Elizabeth and her court. Greenblatt offers his own example of a contemporary account of the Cult of Elizabeth from a letter written by Sir John Harington in which he describes the Queen:

Hir mind was oftime like the gentle air that cometh from the westerly point in the summer's morn; 'twas sweet and refreshing to all around her. Her speech did win all affections, and her subjects did try to show all love to her commands; for she would say, 'her state did require her to command what she knew her

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<sup>46</sup> Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Review of *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*' in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 31 (1978), 642-644 (p. 642).

people would willingly do from their own love to her.' Herein did she show her wisdom fully: for who did choose to lose her confidence; or who would withhold a show of love and obedience, when their Sovereign said it was their choice, and not her compulsion? Surely she did play well her tables to gain obedience thus without constraint: again she could put forth such alterations, when obedience was lacking, as left no doubting whose daughter she was.<sup>49</sup>

For Greenblatt, Strong's study needed to clarify the power relations between the monarch, her cult and her courtiers, and he contended that 'Only when we have a systematic analysis of the blend of seduction and compulsion so delicately sketched by Harington will we begin to have a firm grasp of the cult of Elizabeth'.<sup>50</sup>

### **Iconography and its Critical Heritage: (c) Responses to the Cult of Elizabeth**

The critical responses to the iconographical paradigms provided by Wilson, Yates and Strong, which as we have seen come out of the work of iconographers discussed in section (a), focussed on two interrelated issues. One was the ability of Elizabeth and her government to formulate a coherent ideology which ensured national support for the Queen and the other was the fact that one of the consequences of Elizabeth's decision to remain unmarried was that she could provide her people with an equivalent replacement for the Virgin Mary. Responses to the work on the iconography of Elizabeth by Wilson, Yates and Strong have been undertaken by critics influenced by different branches of poststructuralist criticism, including New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and feminism. In view of these developments in critical theory and the suggestion indicated by the epithet 'New' that these theoretical positions indicate a critical shift from the earlier approaches to iconography, for example, it is necessary to briefly indicate their

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<sup>49</sup> Greenblatt, 'Review of *The Cult of Elizabeth*', p. 644.

<sup>50</sup> Greenblatt, 'Review of *The Cult of Elizabeth*', p. 644.

genesis and outline some of the features of these modes of criticism in order to identify both the continuities and disjunctions between these 'older' and 'newer' critical approaches.

Both New Historicism and Cultural Materialism came to prominence in the 1980s. New Historicism is identified with the work of American scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose while Cultural Materialism is associated with British academics including Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. New Historicism, for example, has been defined by Richard Wilson as the 'name given to the return of history in literary criticism over the last ten years'<sup>51</sup> while Louis Montrose referred to those works which had been identified with the approach as demonstrating 'a new historical orientation in Renaissance literary studies'.<sup>52</sup> Both New Historicism and Cultural Materialism have sought to problematise the binary relationship between literature on the one hand and history on the other and whilst they share this particular critical position they are also distinct from one another in other respects, notably the relationship between the theatre and the state and the subversive potential of the stage. I will pursue further discussion of this particular issue in a subsequent section of the introduction.

The term 'New Historicism' was coined by Stephen Greenblatt in 1982 in an introduction to a collection of essays in the journal *Genre*. Greenblatt later admitted that his use of the phrase had not been to identify or establish a new critical theory or

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Wilson, 'Introduction: Historicising New Historicism', in *New Historicism & Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (Harlow: Longman, 1992), pp. 1-18, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Louis A. Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veenser (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 15-36, p. 18.

practice, but to simply distinguish between earlier historicising approaches to literature and those demonstrated by the essays in the volume of *Genre*. To demonstrate his point Greenblatt juxtaposed J. Dover Wilson's assessment of Shakespeare's *Richard II* with the remarks made by Elizabeth I about what seems to have been a performance of the same play on the eve of the Essex uprising.<sup>53</sup> Greenblatt notes the Queen's anxiety concerning the subversive potential of the play, whereas Wilson reads *Richard II* in the context of the providential narrative of the two tetralogies, with the deposition of Richard ultimately leading to the accession of the Tudors. The comparison between the two responses to the play enables Greenblatt to briefly outline what he regards as one of the important distinctions between the work of earlier critics such as Wilson and those in the collection he has edited. Wilson's essay provides an example of

the characteristic assumptions and methods of the mainstream literary history practiced in the first half of our century ... earlier historicism tends to be monological; that is, it is concerned with discovering a single political vision, usually identical to that said to be held by the entire literate class or indeed the entire population.<sup>54</sup>

The work which Greenblatt labels 'new historicism' is, however,

Less concerned to establish the organic unity of literary works and more open to such works as fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses.<sup>55</sup>

So here Greenblatt indicates a clear shift away from the approaches of Formalism which suggested that literature was a special kind of writing and that the literary text was a self-contained and self-referential object which could give access to essential ahistorical

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<sup>53</sup> Challenges to the view that the play commissioned by Essex and his supporters was Shakespeare's *Richard II* have been put forward by Leeds Barroll, 'A New History for Shakespeare and his Time', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988), 441-64 and in Blair Worden's correspondence in *The London Review of Books* with Frank Kermode on this subject beginning on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2003, p. 23. For a more recent contribution to the critical debate see Chris Fitter, 'Historicising Shakespeare's *Richard II*: Current Events, Dating and the Sabotage of Essex', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 11.2 (2005) <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/11-2/fittric2.htm>> [accessed 15 March 2008]

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Introduction' to 'The Forms of Power and The Power of Forms In the Renaissance', *Genre*, 15 (1982), 3-6 (p. 5).

<sup>55</sup> Greenblatt, 'Introduction', p. 6.

truths. The discussion of *Richard II* is located squarely in the moment of its production, not to simply provide a clear sense of the play's function as an artefact of Elizabethan society, but to point up an example of contemporary uncertainty and anxiety about the diverse influence of plays upon their audiences. The article also makes an important point which echoes his earlier caveat in his review of Strong's *The Cult of Elizabeth*, where he emphasises that the royal image was not a stable entity and could be re-appropriated by those who wished to subvert it.<sup>56</sup>

The first part of the title of my thesis is drawn from a speech delivered in response to a Commons petition urging the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots in November 1586:

we princes, I tell you, are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed. The eyes of many behold our actions; a spot is soon spied in our garments; a blemish quickly noted in our doings. It behooveth us therefore to be careful that our proceedings be just and honourable.<sup>57</sup>

The inclusion of part of Elizabeth's speech to Parliament in the title also serves to situate the thesis in a particular critical context since discussion of this speech appears in a number of seminal texts by Stephen Greenblatt which discuss the relationship between the theatre and the state and the theatrical quality of monarchy. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* Greenblatt suggests that Elizabeth utilises theatrical display to fashion her own identity:

kingship always involves fictions, theatricalism, and the mystification of power. The notion of the 'King's two bodies' may, however, have heightened Elizabeth's conscious sense of her identity as at least in part a *persona ficta* and her world as a theater. She believed deeply to the point of religious conviction - in display, ceremony, and decorum, the whole theatrical apparatus of royal power.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Greenblatt, 'Introduction', p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 194.

<sup>58</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 167.

The second instance of Greenblatt's use of this speech occurs in his essay 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion' which first appeared in 1981. The essay has been revised three times for publication in two edited collections as well as appearing in Greenblatt's own book-length publication *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*.<sup>59</sup> The essay focuses upon Shakespeare's *Henry IV* parts one and two and *Henry V* and reads them against the account by Thomas Hariot of his visit to Virginia between 1585-86. Greenblatt argues that both sets of texts reveal the same strategies at work, namely, that power gives licence to subversive elements in order to reinforce its own position. The subversive forces are however contained and simply function in support of the status quo. The rejection of Falstaff at the end of *Henry IV Part Two* is cited as one such example of this strategy:

The mood at the close remains, to be sure, an unpleasant one – the rejection of Falstaff has been one of the nagging problems of Shakespeare criticism – but the discomfort only serves to verify Hal's claim that he has turned away from his former self. If there is frustration at the harshness of the play's end, the frustration confirms a carefully plotted official strategy whereby subversive perceptions are at once produced and contained.<sup>60</sup>

Greenblatt suggests that in order to understand Shakespeare's account of Henry in the tetralogy 'we need in effect a poetics of Elizabethan power, and this in turn will prove inseparable ... from a poetics of the theater' (p. 64). The Elizabethan state according to Greenblatt draws upon the theatre's use of show and spectacle to reinforce its position:

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<sup>59</sup> The essay appeared in the following edited collections: *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 18-47 and *New Historicism and Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Richard Wilson and Richard Dutton (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 83-108.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Invisible Bullets', in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 21-65, pp. 55-56. All further quotations from the essay will be taken from this version of the essay and reference will be given in the text.

Elizabethan power ... depends upon its privileged visibility. As in a theater, the audience must be powerfully engaged by its visible presence and at the same time held at a respectful distance from it (p. 64).

The theatre, on the other hand, according to Greenblatt serves to reinforce Tudor orthodoxy:

It is precisely because of the English form of absolutist theatricality that Shakespeare's drama, written for a theatre subject to state censorship, can be so relentlessly subversive: the form itself, as a primary expression of Renaissance power, helps to contain the radical doubts it continually provokes (p. 65).

Greenblatt's essay was hugely influential and prompted a number of works by scholars who embraced Greenblatt's model of power. One such example is Leonard Tennenhouse's *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* which considers the dramatic genres employed by Shakespeare in the wider context of cultural, social and political forces. For Tennenhouse Shakespeare's plays reflect and transmit Tudor and Jacobean orthodoxy, in a theatre which served the same function as the pulpit and the scaffold. Once again the theatre is considered as a culturally fixed, homogenous entity, which does not permit scope for alternative perspectives or genuine subversion. The ways in which Shakespeare's plays articulate officially sanctioned views is demonstrated in stark terms in the discussion of Jacobean tragedy:

In *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare takes the signs and symbols of legitimate authority and inverts them. He hands them over to illegitimate authority, but he does this in order to demonstrate that the iconography of the stage cannot possibly be used against the aristocratic body.<sup>61</sup>

In his discussion of *Macbeth* Tennenhouse argues:

Having turned the practices of legitimate power to illegitimate ends, Shakespeare immediately begins to return the iconography of the theater to the monarch. It is as if the language of the play were inherently incapable of speaking against legitimate authority.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 128.

<sup>62</sup> Tennenhouse, *Power on Display*, p. 129.

The assessment of Malcolm's accession at the end of the play eliminates any ambivalence created about the new king's ability to rule and closes down any unease an audience may feel about the future role of Macduff:

In recovering the use of these theatrical practices for legitimate authority, Shakespeare does more than restore the throne to its rightful heir. He mystifies the notion of kingship, reinvigorates the signs and symbols associated with the exercise of legitimate power, and makes the theater speak a more conservative ideology.<sup>63</sup>

The close of the play according to Tennenhouse restores faith in the sacred office of the king. Whilst Greenblatt may have been alert to the ways in which Shakespeare demystified the role of the king by focussing upon Hal's role play with his Boar's Head cronies and this was one source of the play's subversive potential, both critics ultimately argue that such a threat to the sanctity of the role is vanquished or contained.

One of the criticisms levelled at Greenblatt's claim that 'Shakespeare's plays are centrally, repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder' is that such a paradigm has exactly the same totalising effect of the grand narratives of history outlined by critics such as Tillyard (p. 40). The suggestion that the power of the theatre has been appropriated by the state to propagate its orthodoxies eliminates the possibility that the theatre may be the site of genuine subversion and that an audience may be left with more than one response to the figure of Prince Hal, who has been held up to their scrutiny, for example. In his appraisal of 'Invisible Bullets', Tom McAlindon identifies a paradox at the heart of Greenblatt's essay. On the one hand, Greenblatt identifies Shakespeare as a 'relentless demystifier, an interrogator of ideology' and yet he also goes on to argue that there is a 'complicity throughout these

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<sup>63</sup> Tennenhouse, *Power on Display*, p. 130.

plays between the prince and the playwright'. (p.64). McAlindon queries these two apparently irreconcilable positions:

How anyone who is consciously devoted to the relentless demystification of a particular power structure could write plays designed to reinforce it, or how an audience presented with so fiercely negative view of monarchical authority could be persuaded to glory in it, is never acknowledged as a problematic assault on common sense.<sup>64</sup>

The same blind spot is identified in the discussion of *Henry V* when Greenblatt claims that the play 'defly registers every nuance of royal hypocrisy, ruthlessness and bad faith' and yet it simultaneously presents a 'celebration, a collective panegyric' to a 'charismatic leader' (p. 56).

The assumption that the state was able to control the theatre to serve its ends has been challenged from various quarters. In particular Greenblatt's suggestion that the *Henriad* uses the figure of Prince Hal and later King Henry to garner support for the crown has been contested by those critics who argued that the subversive potential of the stage lay in its theatricality and that through its re-presentation of kings and royal spectacle the theatre had the power to demystify the mysteries of the state.

David Scott Kastan, for example, argues that the very act of putting a king on the stage works to dissolve the differences between a king and his subjects.<sup>65</sup> An example which crystallises this idea comes in Act Four of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, when the king is about to be deposed and the Archbishop of Carlisle, a proponent of divine absolute rule

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<sup>64</sup> Tom McAlindon, 'Testing the new historicism: "Invisible Bullets" reconsidered', *Studies in Philology*, 92 (1995), 411-438 (pp. 423-424).

<sup>65</sup> David Scott Kastan, 'Proud Majesty Made a Subject: Shakespeare and the Spectacle of Rule', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), 459-475.

asks Parliament 'What subject can give sentence on his king? / And who sits here that is not Richard's subject?'<sup>66</sup>

Here the question is addressed to both an onstage audience and the theatre audience and in this way all are invited to reflect upon the question and its political implications. The king becomes subject to the approval and judgement of the audience. Kastan argues that history plays and the wider theatrical tradition of engaging with political issues promoted an intellectual culture of debate which by the 1640s contributed to the conditions which finally brought Charles I to trial:

Whatever their overt ideological content, history plays inevitably, if unconsciously, weakened the structure of authority: on the stage the king became a subject – the subject of the author's imaginings and the subject of the attention and judgement of an audience of subjects. If, then, English history plays recollect and rehearse the past, they also prophesy the future, as they place the king on a scaffold before a judging public.<sup>67</sup>

Franco Moretti makes a similar point in his discussion of the subversive potential of tragedy, arguing that the very nature of the genre which scrutinises both the individual and their office serves to expose their weaknesses:

Tragedy performs the degradation of the cultural image of the sovereign, it deprives the monarchy of its central bastion, its ultimate weapon.<sup>68</sup>

Louis Montrose in his discussion of the relationship between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and other plays written specifically to entertain Elizabeth and her court considers some of the differences between entertainments written specifically for performance at court such as Peele's *Arraygnment of Paris* and those plays written with both performances at court and the public theatres in mind. Montrose argues that in the latter

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<sup>66</sup> William Shakespeare, *Richard II* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* ed. David Bevington 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), IV.1.122-123.

<sup>67</sup> Kastan, 'Proud Majesty Made a Subject', pp. 460-461.

<sup>68</sup> Franco Moretti, "'A Huge Eclipse": Tragic Form and the Deconsecration of Sovereignty', *Genre*, 15 (1982), 7-40 (p. 9).

dramatists would not write the Queen into their plays to provide her seal upon the action, since this would restrict their commercial potential after the initial performances at court. Instead dramatists would provide an allegorised character to provide parallels with the Queen. The effect of using such figures was that

they necessarily produce a more mediated – and, thus, a potentially more ambiguous, more unstable- mode of royal reference and encomium than do those plays which open the frame of the fiction to accommodate a direct resolution of the dramatic action by the Queen herself. In this sense, plays performed in the commercial playhouses had a relatively greater degree of both formal and ideological autonomy than did exclusively courtly entertainments.<sup>69</sup>

Whilst those allegorical representations of the Queen in plays written for public performances were by their very nature unstable and subject to reinterpretation by the different audiences who saw them, those courtly entertainments which required the Queen's participation also retained a subversive potential by the very act of dramatising royalty. Stephen Orgel in his discussion of plays written specifically for performance at court, including *Gorboduc* and the *Arraygnment of Paris*, reminds us that such plays were never provided to simply counsel or flatter the Queen:

The relationships I have been describing sound fairly cosy; but in fact they are distinctly uneasy and involve a good deal of tension. Theatrical pageantry, the miming of greatness, is highly charged because it employs precisely the same methods the crown was using to assert and validate its authority. To mime the monarch was a potentially revolutionary act.<sup>70</sup>

Elizabeth's involvement in Peele's play, for example, may not require any acting or role play on Elizabeth's part since she is simply required to be the Queen; nonetheless her contribution foregrounds the disturbing parallels between acting and kingship.

Whilst critics such as David Scott Kastan, Franco Moretti and Stephen Orgel have focussed upon Shakespeare's histories and occasionally some Elizabethan and Jacobean

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<sup>69</sup> Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 162.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Orgel, 'Making Greatness Familiar', *Genre*, 15 (1982), 41-48 (p. 45).

tragedies to indicate the subversive potential of the stage, I will argue that it can apply across the genres in plays where royal figures appear, whether they are historical or fictional, irrespective of whether plays were written exclusively for performance at court or for performance before public and private audiences.

Another area of scholarship which has also complicated the relationship between the theatre and the state provided by the Cult of Elizabeth and the subversion/containment model outlined by Greenblatt is the work on the censorship of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. The work of Janet Clare in this area, for example, has provided an important corrective as she makes several important points concerning the issue of state control of the theatres. Firstly, she argues that it was in fact impossible for the government to legislate for the diverse ways in which the plays were interpreted by their audiences and secondly that dramatists and actors had strategies at their disposal which enabled them to evade restrictions.<sup>71</sup> Dramatists were required to bring their plays before the Master of the Revels and he could request that in addition to reading the play the theatre company also provide a run-through of the script. Despite these safeguards it was still possible to convey specific topical meanings to a theatre audience through the performance:

Techniques such as locution of speech, mimicry, parody, and visual imagery are only fully realised in performance and may easily escape the censor engaged in a cursory reading of the text.<sup>72</sup>

Steven Mullaney's work on the topography of theatres located in the Liberties, inside the walls of the City of London and therefore outside the control of the city authorities

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<sup>71</sup> Janet Clare, *Art made tongue-tied by authority: Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 1-21.

<sup>72</sup> Clare, *Art made tongue-tied by authority*, p. xii. See also Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 112-113.

has also suggested the complexities of the relationship between the theatre and the city which it served. The location of the theatres 'gave the stage an uncanny ability to tease out and represent the contradictions of a culture it both belonged to and was, to a certain extent, alienated from'.<sup>73</sup>

Philippa Berry offers an important re-evaluation of the cult of Elizabeth in her monograph *Of Chastity and Power* where she questions a number of assumptions which underpin this model of the royal image.<sup>74</sup> Berry begins by challenging the idea that the cult of Elizabeth constituted a unified and coherent ideology which was disseminated by the state in support of the Queen and points to the ways in which examples of the Queen's image were often produced not by the government but by disparate social groups with different aims and objectives, while portraits of the Queen were often commissioned by wealthy courtiers who sought to use their paintings to influence Elizabeth herself. One of the consequences of Yates' emphasis upon the figuring of Elizabeth as Astraea is the assumption that Elizabeth chose to remain unmarried from the outset of her reign and that the development of a range of classical personae which depicted the Queen as a goddess and a woman unlike any other countered the possibility that perhaps Elizabeth's gender and her unmarried state were in fact a source of anxiety for her people.

Many critics since Yates have also accepted the corollary between Elizabeth's ability to develop a cult of virginity as a result of a personal decision to abjure married life. This viewpoint has persisted partly as a consequence of the reliance upon particular source

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<sup>73</sup> Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 31.

<sup>74</sup> Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 62-67.

materials, notably William Camden's first biography of Elizabeth and her reign: *Annales*. It is here that Camden provides an account of the Queen's reply to the Commons' petition that she marry in 1559. Camden's version of the speech is highly dramatic as it reports not only the Queen's words but also her actions:

And therefore it is, that I have made choyce of this kinde of life, which is most free, and agreeable for such humane affaires as may tend to his [God's] service ... and this is that I thought, then that I was a private person. But when the publique charge of governing the Kingdome came upon mee, it seemed unto mee an inconsiderate folly, to draw upon my selfe the cares which might proceede of marriage. To conclude, I am already bound unto an Husband, which is the Kingdome of *England*... (*And therewithall, stretching out her hand, shee shewed them the Ring with which shee was given in marriage, and inaugurated to her Kingdome, in expresse and solemne termes.*) And reproch mee so no more, (*quoth shee*) that I have no children: for every one of you, and as many as are *English*, are my Children ... Lastly, this may be sufficient, both for my memorie, and honour of my Name, if when I have expired my last breath, this may be inscribed upon my Tombe:

Here lyes interr'd ELIZABETH,  
A Virgin pure untill her Death.<sup>75</sup>

Many critics have followed Camden using his speech as evidence. In *England's Eliza*, Elkin Calhoun Wilson uses discussion of Camden's speech to argue that 'she was believed by most of her subjects to be blessed by God as a great Virgin Queen, and that this belief was potent enough to build a legend of her in the minds and hearts of her people'.<sup>76</sup> More recent biographers have also relied upon Camden including Susan Bassnett:

She made reassuring noises to the Commons, but stressed the force of her decision ... she concluded her speech with a prophetic statement: As for mee, it shall be sufficient that a marble stone shall declare that a Queene, having lived and reigned soe many yeers, died a Virgine.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> William Camden, *Annales: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empresse Elizabeth Queene of England, France and Ireland* (London: G. Purslowe, 1625) Book 1, p. 27-29.

<sup>76</sup> Wilson, *England's Eliza*, p. 59.

<sup>77</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Elizabeth I: A Feminist Perspective* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997), p. 39.

In *Renaissance Self-fashioning* Greenblatt juxtaposes speeches made by Elizabeth at her coronation and her first address to Parliament taken from Camden to summarise the ways in which the Queen introduced the three themes of mutual love, self-sacrifice and virginity that would characterise her reign and he concludes:

The secular cult of the virgin was born, and it was not long before the young Elizabeth was portraying herself as a Virgin Mother.<sup>78</sup>

Greenblatt argues that the list of cult images of Elizabeth as a virgin goddess ‘transformed Elizabeth’s potentially disastrous sexual disadvantage into a supreme political virtue and imposed a subtle discipline upon aggressive fortune seekers’.<sup>79</sup>

Louis Montrose in his seminal essay “‘Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture’ also uses Camden to support his argument that Elizabeth utilised her virginity as a political weapon:

At the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth formulated the strategy by which she turned the political liability of her gender to advantage for the next half century. She told her first parliaments that she was content to have as her epitaph “that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin”.<sup>80</sup>

Montrose indicates that Elizabeth’s virginity was the quality which defined the Queen’s iconography:

Elizabeth’s self-mastery and mastery of others were enhanced by an elaboration of her maidenhood into a cult of virginity ... the displacement of her wifely duties from a household to a nation; and the sublimation of her temporal and ecclesiastical authority into a nurturing maternity.<sup>81</sup>

Susan Frye also uses the description of Elizabeth’s epitaph to indicate the ways in which Elizabeth’s virginity enabled the Queen to cultivate a unique identity:

This self-representation achieved a great deal. It managed to give her subjects what they had requested – the affirmation of her “virtue” – but by redefining the

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<sup>78</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 168.

<sup>79</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 168.

<sup>80</sup> Louis Adrian Montrose, “‘Shaping Fantasies’: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture’, *Representations*, 2 (1983), 61-94, (p. 78).

<sup>81</sup> Montrose, “‘Shaping Fantasies’”, pp. 79-80.

passive, female virtue in terms that located her outside the associated structures of marriage and male control.<sup>82</sup>

The use of Camden's account of Elizabeth's response to the Commons in 1559 is problematic for a number of reasons, but provides some important insights into the methodology of those critics who have used it. Camden's speech appears in 1625 in his history of Elizabeth's reign *Annales: The True and Royal History of the Famous Empress Elizabeth* and it differs significantly from the official answer delivered to the House of Commons where the Queen is much more circumspect in her comments but promises:

Whensoever it may please God to incline my heart to another kind of life, ye may well assure yourselves my meaning is not to do or determine anything where-with the realm may or shall have cause to be discontented.<sup>83</sup>

The possible lack of veracity of Camden's account of Elizabeth's speech has been discussed by a number of critics, from the indignant condemnation of John N. King who argues that in fact Camden 'falsified the contemporary record of the queen's speech'<sup>84</sup> to the acknowledgement by Marcus, Mueller and Rose that 'This is the form in which the speech has been best known to later ages, but it freely embroiders upon and condenses the speech as we have it from the early sources'.<sup>85</sup> Frances Teague's concerns about Camden's sources and whether Elizabeth did in fact deliver that particular speech are revealing:

What is at stake when one questions the provenance is not simply the text but its potential usefulness as an index to Elizabeth's character and oratorical skills as comparing the texts make clear.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation*, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 57.

<sup>84</sup> John N. King, 'Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43 (1990), 30-74 (p. 35).

<sup>85</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 58.

<sup>86</sup> Frances Teague, 'Queen Elizabeth in Her Speeches', in *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. by S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 63-78, p. 73.

The speeches delivered by Elizabeth to Parliament existed in different forms with the Queen herself redrafting and editing some of them. Whilst they would give some sense of the Queen's oratorical skills it is less clear that they would, as Teague hopes, serve as an 'index to Elizabeth's character'. In many ways the fact that Camden produces this apparently fictional version of an official speech and is involved in the creation of the myth of Elizabeth as Virgin Queen is important for what it tells us about the construction of the Queen's image under the Tudors, as King explains:

This falsification offers one indication that Camden transmits a hagiographical account that may be less accurate as a portrayal of the Tudor queen than it is of Jacobean patronage and politics.<sup>87</sup>

Greenblatt, Montrose and Frye use Camden's speech as a shorthand method of providing evidence that the Queen's virginity was the driving influence in the formation of the royal image. The use of this anecdote rather than providing historical specificity offers the reverse, a synchronic approach to Elizabeth's reign and image. Such a strategy is one which has frequently been criticised as one of the shortcomings of New Historicism, an irony in view of its interest in history and its collective response to the work of earlier historicists. As H. Aram Veeger reminds us in his outline of the methodology:

New Historicists argue that earlier literary historiographers tended to use totalizing or atomizing methods – a Tillyard might read one Shakespearean speech as exemplifying views embraced by every Elizabethan ... New Historicism sets aside the potted history of ideas, the Marxist *grand récit*, the theory of economic stages, the lock-picking analysis *à clef*, and the study of authorial influence. By discarding what they view as monologic and myopic historiography, by demonstrating that social and cultural events commingle messily, by rigorously exposing the innumerable trade-offs, the competing bids and exchanges of culture, New Historicists can make a valid claim to have established new ways of studying history and a new awareness of how history and culture define each other.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> King, 'Queen Elizabeth I', pp. 35-36.

<sup>88</sup> Veeger, H. Aram. 'Introduction', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeger (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. ix-xvi, p. xiii.

Jean E. Howard in her assessment of New Historicism pinpoints one of its weaknesses in that it tends to take for granted some of the issues surrounding the use of a particular context:

My main reservation about much of this work is its failure to reflect on itself. Taking the form of the reading, a good deal of this criticism suppresses any distinction of its own methodology and assumptions. It assumes answers to the very questions that should be open to debate: questions such as why a particular context should have privilege over another in discussing a text, whether a work of art merely reflects or in some fundamental sense reworks, remakes, or even produces the ideologies and social texts it supposedly represents, and whether the social contexts used to approach literary texts have themselves more than the status of fictions.<sup>89</sup>

The example of Elizabeth's epitaph and the totalising approach to her identity as a Virgin Queen is a case in point. Howard's observations are echoed by John Brannigan who notes:

In making every local anecdote and occurrence subordinate to a grand narrative of Elizabethan power, new historicists tend to eliminate or ignore historical differences.<sup>90</sup>

### **Towards a Diachronic Iconography**

This thesis builds on the work of John N. King and Susan Doran who have looked in particular at the ways in which the Queen's image developed and was fashioned in response to specific events during her reign. King argues that

A diachronic review of contemporary manuscripts, printed books, and artistic works indicates that instead of a continuous and timeless phenomenon, Elizabethan iconography was closely tied to the life of the monarch and to political events of her reign.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Jean E. Howard, 'The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies', in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. by Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), pp. 3-33, p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>91</sup> King, 'Queen Elizabeth I', p. 32.

Both King and Doran pinpoint the emergence of images which celebrate the Queen as a perpetual virgin to the period during and after the Anjou courtship. King suggests that

... it was not until after the failure of this last effort at marriage, one third of the way through Elizabeth's reign, that the patriotic cult of an unmarried virgin queen who would remain forever wedded to her nation took hold in the officially-sponsored propaganda, in poetry of praise generated outside of the royal court, and in the popular imagination.<sup>92</sup>

Susan Doran argues that the first appearance of this cult of the Virgin Queen was during the Norwich entertainments for the Queen in 1578 during the Anjou negotiations.<sup>93</sup> The masque performed on the 21<sup>st</sup> August, for example, has Roman deities presenting the Queen with gifts while Diana celebrates the Queen's virginity:

Whoever found on Earth a constant friend,  
That may compare wyth this my Virgin Queene?  
Who ever found a body and a mynde  
So free from staine, so perfect to be seene.<sup>94</sup>

One of the consequences of this diachronic reassessment of Elizabeth's reign is to look more carefully at specific personae used and consider once again the range of figurings for the Queen. Elizabeth's popular reputation as a Virgin Queen has meant that the classical figurings of the Queen, such as Astraea, Diana and Belphoebe have been privileged; the work of King and Doran, for example, has meant that the biblical analogues used for Elizabeth are now also the subject of scholarly investigation. These included the holy men and women of the Old Testament, such as Daniel, David, Judith and Deborah, who were used either to provide biblical precedents for female rule or to emphasise Elizabeth's role as a providential monarch. Part of the entertainment which punctuated the route of Elizabeth's coronation procession was the pageant called

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<sup>92</sup> King, 'Queen Elizabeth I', p. 51.

<sup>93</sup> Susan Doran, 'Juno Versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561-1581', *The Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 257-274.

<sup>94</sup> Bernard Garter, *The Joyfull Receyving of the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie into Her Highnesse Citie of Norwich* (London: H. Bynneman, 1578), sig. Eiiiv.

'Deborah the judge and restorer of the house of Israel' in which Elizabeth was celebrated as Deborah, the female ruler and judge of Israel:

Jaben of Canaan king had long by force of arms  
Oppressed the Israelites, which for God's people went  
But God minding at last for to redress their harms,  
The worthy Deborah as judge among them sent.<sup>95</sup>

Carol Blessing has noted the political significance of Deborah for Elizabeth at the beginning of her reign: 'As she became the champion of Protestantism, Elizabeth's comparison to Deborah was seen as an important religious reinforcement for the Queen's authority'.<sup>96</sup> The pageant makes clear the equivalence between Israel as God's chosen land for His people with England and Elizabeth as God's appointed servant. During her coronation entry Elizabeth offers a prayer of thanksgiving as the procession passes the Tower of London:

O Lord, almighty and everlasting God, I give thee most hearty thanks that thou hast been so merciful unto me as to spare me to behold this joyful day. And I acknowledge that thou has dealt with me as wonderfully and as mercifully with me, as thou didst with thy true and faithful servant Daniel thy prophet, whom thou delivered out of the den from the cruelty of the greedy and raging lions. Even so was I overwhelmed, and only by thee delivered. To thee therefore alone be thanks, honour, and praise for ever. Amen.<sup>97</sup>

In Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones* one of the prayers written from the Queen's point of view aligns her with a host of holy men and women as she gives thanks for both her preservation and role as defender of the faith:

And I yeeld thee now most humble and hartie thanks, for that it hath pleased thee, of thy singular mercie, to give mee this especial honour ... that I might bee the principall member and chiefe instrument in the same to advance thy glorie, and further thy Gospell, for the which I suffered. Yea, to be thy peoples Joseph, their Moses, their Joshua, their David, their Josias, their Samuel, and their Salomon: finalie, to be their Deborah, their Jael, their Hester, their Judith, and

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<sup>95</sup> *The Queen's Majesty's Passage and Related Documents*, ed. with an introduction by Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), p. 92.

<sup>96</sup> Carol Blessing, 'Elizabeth I as Deborah the Judge: Exceptional Women of Power', in *Goddesses and Queens: The iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 30-55, p. 32.

<sup>97</sup> *The Queen's Majesty's Passage*, p. 98.

their Elizabeth; that is, their rest, staie, and staffe of Majestie, their shepherd and ringleader in the waie of vertue, holinesse, zeale, and sincere religion.<sup>98</sup>

Just as the classical images of the Queen as a virgin goddess appear at a specific point in the reign, so the use of Old Testament paradigms also have a discernible history. A survey conducted by Donald Stump of the frequency with which biblical figures were used by or for the Queen identified a clear fall in their deployment between 1583 and 1603.<sup>99</sup> Stump argues that whilst some biblical figures continue to be used until the end of Elizabeth's reign, the biblical tropes become unfashionable around the 1580s and suggests that one of the possible reasons for this is the way in which Old Testament heroines such as Deborah, Esther and Judith, for example, had been used to celebrate Elizabeth as the Queen who had defended England and the Protestant faith from Catholic Europe. Once again it is the Anjou courtship which proves decisive in the development of the Queen's image, since France, which had long been the national enemy, had now moved into the position of an ally against the Spanish. To continue to use biblical precedents which would recall earlier polemics against the French would now in the late 1570s prove unpopular with the Queen and so writers now looked to classical figures to represent the Queen. One of the pageants performed before the Queen on her progress to Norwich in 1578 demonstrates the subversive potential of deploying Old Testament heroines at this point in Elizabeth's reign. The pageant composed by Bernard Garter included speeches by Deborah, Judith, Esther and Martia 'sometime Queene of Englande'.<sup>100</sup> In the speech by Deborah, the biblical ruler establishes a series of comparisons between her life and that of Elizabeth. Deborah

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<sup>98</sup> Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones* (London: H. Denham, 1582), pp. 261-262.

<sup>99</sup> Donald Stump, 'Abandoning the Old Testament: Shifting Paradigms for Elizabeth 1578-82', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 30 (2004), 89-109.

<sup>100</sup> Garter, *The Joyfull Receyving of the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie*, sig. Civ.

emphasises that she was able to defeat her enemies including King Jabin and she exhorts Elizabeth to continue to safeguard her realm:

So mightie prince, that puisaunt Lord, hath plaste thee here to be,  
The rule of this triumphant Realme alone belongeth to thee.  
Continue as thou hast begon, weede out the wicked route,  
Upholde the simple, meeke and good, pull downe the proud and stoute.  
Thus shalt thou live and raigne in rest, and mightie God shalt please.  
Thy state be sure, thy subjectes safe, thy common welth at ease.  
Thy God shal graunt thee length of life, to glorify his name,  
Thy deedes shall be recorded, in the booke of lasting fame.<sup>101</sup>

The same point is reiterated in the speeches made by Judith and Esther who recall their defeat of Holofernes and Haman. The emphasis upon national security and Elizabeth's duty to uphold the Protestant faith suggest that the target of the entertainment is the Queen's consideration of the Anjou suit. The pageant concludes with Martia's speech which uses classical rather than biblical imagery in which Elizabeth is praised for combining the virtues of Pallas, the Muses, Venus, Mecury and Juno. Stump suggests that

By lapsing into pagan myth and puffs of flattery, the poet was, I suspect intent on taking some of the edge off his earlier Protestant polemics.<sup>102</sup>

This thesis, then, offers a diachronic dynamic idea of royal iconography rather than the very static one used by New Historicists. It also re-approaches the question of Marian versus Elizabethan iconography.

One of the other critical objections raised by the Cult of Elizabeth related to the suggestion that Elizabeth and her court deliberately presented the Queen as a Protestant equivalent for the Virgin Mary. As with the assumption that Elizabeth chose to remain a virgin critics have also tended to take the views and evidence provided by Wilson, Yates and Strong on trust, including Lisa Jardine who remarks that 'The Reformation

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<sup>101</sup> Garter, *The Joyfull Receyving of the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie*, sigs. Cir-ciiv.

<sup>102</sup> Stump, 'Abandoning the Old Testament', p. 103.

had terminated the “cult of Mary” in England; to a significant extent the “cult of Elizabeth” replaced it’,<sup>103</sup> while both Greenblatt and Montrose make similar assertions, with Greenblatt suggesting that it was in Elizabeth’s speech in 1559 where ‘[t]he secular cult of the virgin was born, and it was not long before the young Elizabeth was portraying herself as a Virgin Mother’.<sup>104</sup> Montrose also notes that ‘a concerted effort was made to appropriate the symbolism and the affective power of the suppressed Marian cult in order to foster an Elizabethan cult’.<sup>105</sup>

The work of Peter McClure, Robin Headlam Wells and Helen Hackett has been instrumental in reassessing these claims and pointing out that the motives for adopting Marian iconography were political rather than simply celebratory. McClure and Headlam Wells argue that in

the replacement of the Virgin Mary by the Virgin Elizabeth as the hagiological focus of national and religious piety, we have an important reason for the success with which Marian iconography was adapted to the praise of the Queen of England. Since Mariolatry was proscribed as a papist abuse, such deliberate calquing of the worship of the monarch upon that of the Holy Mother may to some degree have been motivated by a desire to steal the opposition’s weapons, and perhaps to set up the Protestant Queen as a victorious rival over the Romish Queen of Heaven.<sup>106</sup>

Helen Hackett in her seminal work on the iconography of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen adopts a diachronic approach to Elizabeth’s reign in order to trace the specific developments within the Queen’s iconography and challenge. Hackett, like McClure and Headlam Wells, makes the point that Marian iconography could be appropriated to the Protestant cause:

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<sup>103</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 177.

<sup>104</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 168.

<sup>105</sup> Montrose, “Shaping Fantasies”, p. 63.

<sup>106</sup> Peter McClure and Robin Headlam Wells, ‘Elizabeth I as a second Virgin Mary’, *Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1990), 38-70, (pp. 64-65).

When overt comparisons between Elizabeth and the Virgin are drawn, they most often take the form of typology; that is, the identification of parallels between the two figures which suggest some kind of mystical pattern and divinely ordered plan underlying the course of Christian history. The identifications operate not to supplant Mary, but to use her and her sanctity as a touchstone by which to claim divine endorsement for Elizabeth's own rule.<sup>107</sup>

Other objections raised by respondents to the Cult of Elizabeth which have been significant for scholarship concerned with the image of Elizabeth relate to the suggestion made by Yates and Strong that in response to Elizabeth's own self-fashioning as a goddess and nonpareil the public responded by celebrating her virginity. The emphasis placed by the Cult of Elizabeth upon Elizabeth as a unique individual played down the possibility that Elizabeth's gender and her unmarried state was in fact a source of anxiety for her subjects. In *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*, published in 1988, Leah Marcus devotes a chapter to the discussion of the ways in which Elizabeth's gender and her apparent failure to marry proved deeply troubling to her subjects. Marcus considers, for example, the play *1 Henry VI* and Shakespeare's cross dressing heroines to argue that the plays function to mediate cultural anxieties about female rule. The role of Joan as a figure associated with witchcraft provided the means of responding to the Queen, particularly as she began to get older:

In *1 Henry VI*, Joan la Pucelle functions in many ways as a distorted image of Queen Elizabeth I ... The figure of Joan brings into the open a set of suppressed cultural anxieties about the Virgin Queen, her identity and her capacity to provide continuing stability for the nation. Elizabeth was loved by subjects, but also feared and sometimes hated.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>108</sup> Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 53.

This strategy is also employed when Elizabeth is celebrated as the classical goddess Cynthia, whose mythography links her to both Diana, the goddess of chastity and the hunt and to Hecate the goddess of witchcraft and the underworld. My discussion of Cynthia in the context of the triplex Diana in chapter three examines the ways in which Elizabeth's virginity is aligned with examples of unnatural motherhood which link the Queen to figures such as Medea and Niobe.

Helen Hackett discusses what she terms 'the literature of disillusionment' produced in the 1590s and identifies the challenges facing the Queen as she got older:

Especially after it became clear that she would never marry, Elizabeth was an unprecedented and potentially disturbing figure. The iconography of panegyric had to do a lot of work of justification and naturalisation. As a woman ruler, Elizabeth needed to be perceived as being no less decisive, martial, just and eloquent than a male ruler. At the same time, she needed to exercise these stereotypically masculine virtues without being regarded as unnaturally mannish or Amazonian.<sup>109</sup>

Subsequent publications such as Carole Levin's "*The Heart and Stomach of a King*": *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* and the edited collection *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, together with more recent publications issued to coincide with the four hundredth anniversary of the death of Elizabeth in 2003, including *The Myth of Elizabeth*, *Elizabeth I: Always her Own Free Woman* as well as *Goddesses and Queens: The iconography of Elizabeth* have all addressed the diverse images of Elizabeth in terms of her position as a female ruler in a patriarchal society and have informed the work of this thesis.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen*, p. 164.

<sup>110</sup> Carole Levin, "*The Heart and Stomach of a King*": *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. by Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, ed. by Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney and Debra Barrett-Graves (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), *Goddesses and Queens: The*

One of the consequences of the objections raised by critics such as Philippa Berry to the 'top down' model concerning the ability of the Queen and her government to disseminate a stable image of the Queen to support state policy has been to intensify the debate concerning the Queen's agency in the formulation of her identity. Feminist critics in particular have queried the extent to which Elizabeth was able to create her own iconography and opinions vary about the queen's agency in this matter. On the one hand, Philippa Berry sees the Queen's ability to shape her identity as qualified or constrained by the personae she had to adopt, so that she occupies a 'curious conjunction of roles which [she] had perforce to play'.<sup>111</sup> On the other side of the debate Leah Marcus presents an argument for the queen as a more active and successful force in the construction of her identity, so that 'gradually, perhaps not consciously, her subjects yielded to the symbolic truths she sought to convey through her precision with vocabulary and modelled their language upon her own'.<sup>112</sup> Lisa Jardine adopts both this passive and active model of royal agency as she describes firstly how 'On all public occasions Elizabeth I herself was metamorphosed into a female personification, an emblem',<sup>113</sup> but later conjectures that Elizabeth may have utilised her status as a Virgin queen: 'It is likely that Elizabeth herself knowingly manipulated the emblems through which her court and counsellors perceived her'.<sup>114</sup> Susan Frye argues for a more composite understanding of the Queen's role in the formulation of her image:

Although Elizabeth was fashioned by her culture's complex expression of gender roles and distinctions, those expressions were unstable enough to be inverted, extended, and contested in the performance of herself as the ruler of England. To a large degree, the extent of her power was determined by her

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*iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Lisa Hopkins and Annaliese Connolly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, p. 57.

<sup>113</sup> Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*, p. 173.

<sup>114</sup> Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*, p. 178.

willingness to engage and restructure the discourses current in her culture that naturalized gender identity.<sup>115</sup>

One area of scholarship which has advanced this particular debate has been the recent work upon the writings of Elizabeth herself, including publications such as *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, an edited collection of virtually all of Elizabeth's writings including speeches, letters, poems and prayers. Whilst Elizabeth certainly demonstrates her awareness of the power of her public image as Queen, as demonstrated by the parallels she draws between kingship and the stage, her ability to control the reactions to her own self-fashioning was limited; she manipulated the cultural constructions of her gender as a series of female roles such as mother and wife and later Virgin Queen to serve her own political ends, but again she was restricted to a degree by the limitations of those roles. Louis Montrose notes:

Elizabeth was more the creature of the Elizabethan image than she was its creator ... She had the capacity to work the available terms to suit her culturally conditioned needs and interests. By the same token, however, her subjects might rework those terms to serve their turns.<sup>116</sup>

This thesis takes account of recent work on the writing of Elizabeth herself as each chapter provides examples from the Queen's prayers, translations and speeches to indicate the ways in which Elizabeth sought to construct her own identity as a female ruler and the strategies both she and her subjects employed in the struggle for control over the meaning of the figure of the Queen.

The use of the term 'royal iconography' therefore serves a Janus-like function in this thesis as it looks simultaneously to two critical traditions concerning the royal image of Elizabeth I and the continuities and disruptions between them. On the one hand, the

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<sup>115</sup> Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation*, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Louis Adrian Montrose, 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text', in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. by Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 303-340, p. 310.

term 'royal iconography' points to the work of those critics such as Frances Yates and Roy Strong who advocated the concept of a cult of Elizabeth in which the iconography of the Queen, particularly in the portraiture, pageantry and literature, was used to promote the policies of the Queen and her government. This work on Elizabethan royal iconography has been influential since it has provided the impetus for subsequent work in the field. My particular understanding and use of the term has been influenced by the work of poststructuralist theorists such as Michel Foucault, implicit in the work of and practice of New Historicist scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose, as well as feminist critics such as Susan Frye and Philippa Berry. These critics have contributed to a greater understanding of the forces at work in the creation, dissemination and reception of the royal image. As Louis Montrose has noted,

[Elizabeth's] power to shape her own strategies was itself shaped – at once enabled and constrained- by the existing repertoire of values, institutions, and practices (including the artistic and literary conventions) specific to Elizabethan society and to Elizabeth's position within it.<sup>117</sup>

The royal image is therefore located by Montrose within the wider parameters of a collective cultural discourse of power with the Queen as its locus and emphasises the ways in which the Queen's image was appropriated and reworked, often by her male subjects and then re-presented Elizabeth to her public and herself. Here the use of the term 'discourse' comes from Foucault's own explanation of the term, referring to it as a complex set of practices made up of statements and utterances as well as the spoken and unspoken rules which govern those statements as they exist in society:

in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Montrose, 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text', p. 310.

<sup>118</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/ Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 78-108, p. 93.

The examination of the power relations between Elizabeth and her subjects therefore involves discussion of a range of different texts which figure the Queen, including sermons, prayers, royal pageantry, portraiture, plays and poems. In this way my use of the term 'royal iconography' modifies its application as an art history term to refer to visual representations of the Queen or as a term that might be applied in an iconographical approach to Elizabethan literature; instead it is used to refer to the combined manifestations of the Queen which make up the figure known as Elizabeth I. Since the Queen's image is presented in allegorised form the thesis will focus upon allegory as a specialised discourse in which the power relations between Elizabeth and those who sought to influence or control the meaning assigned to her person can be readily identified. Once again the term discourse is used advisedly here to describe the uses of allegorical depictions of the Queen, since it points up the ways in which the relations of power between Elizabeth and her subjects could be negotiated and that the royal image, rather than simply imposing its own agenda and views upon a receptive and obedient public served a more complex function:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.<sup>119</sup>

The examples of the allegorical representations of the Queen discussed as three separate case studies in this thesis beginning with King David and then moving on to classical figurings of Elizabeth as Dido and Cynthia, each exemplify the conflicted nature of discourse, as outlined by Foucault above. On the one hand, figurings of the Queen were

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<sup>119</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* 3 vols (London: Penguin, 1998), I, pp. 100-101.

invested with particular meanings to support Elizabeth's position as a female ruler and yet the very act of deploying a metaphorical trope made its meaning available to a public who could then appropriate and redefine that particular figuring.

The very form of allegory also ensures that the control of meaning is problematic, something of which Elizabethan writers were only too well aware. George Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesie* describes a series of examples of figurative language and remarks that 'passe the ordinary limits of common utterance, and be occupied of purpose to deceive the eare and also the mind'.<sup>120</sup> Allegory, according to Puttenham, works by 'a duplicitie of meaning or dissimulation under covert and darke intendments'. Later Puttenham returns to allegory and describes it as 'when we speake one thing and thinke another, and that our wordes and our meanings meete not'.<sup>121</sup> He adds

But properly and in his principall vertue Allegoria is when we do speake in sence translative and wrested from the owne signification, neverthelesse applied to another not altogethr contrary, but having much conveniencie with it as before we said of metaphore: as for example if we should call the common wealthe, a shippe; the prince a pilot, the Councillours mariners, the storms warres, the calm/and [haven] peace, this is spoken all in allegorie.<sup>122</sup>

Edmund Spenser in his letter to Sir Walter Raleigh indicates that he has written this prefatory letter to *The Faerie Queene* to provide his reader with a guide to reading the poem since

knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and this booke of mine, which I have entituled the Faery Queene, being a continued Allegory, or darke conceit, I have thought good as well for avoyding of gealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof ... to discover unto you the general intention and meaning.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 154.

<sup>121</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 154, p. 186.

<sup>122</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>123</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* ed. by A.C. Hamilton (London: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 714-715.

Puttenham's description of allegory of speaking 'in sence translative and wrested from the owne signification' points to problem inherent in the representations of the Queen and attempts to control the meanings attributed to her body.<sup>124</sup>

In their discussion of the allegorised figure of the Queen critics have also drawn upon linguistic models provided by poststructuralist critics, including Ferdinand de Saussure's paradigm of the sign, composed of the signifier and signified, where the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary. Susan Frye explains the significance of Saussure's model of the sign if we consider allegory as a sign system:

This evident gap between signifier and signified is a linguistic phenomenon with profound social consequences because the resulting instability means that no meaning is ever completely fixed or natural, however it may appear. Thus semiotic instability enables the struggle for meaning to take place, and this struggle is especially visible in spectacle performances or in texts that create themselves as performances because they stake so much time, money, and effort in making ideas manifest.<sup>125</sup>

In addition to the work of linguists such as Saussure and the application of their ideas in the discussion of the royal image, the approach to allegory in this thesis has also been influenced by the theoretical shift in literary studies towards an emphasis upon the textuality of culture. H. Aram Veeseer, responding to Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Towards a Poetics of Culture' identified that New Historicism as a critical mode was

forsaking what it sees as an outmoded vocabulary of allusion, symbolization, allegory, and mimesis ... [and] seeks less limiting means to expose the manifold ways culture and society affect each other.<sup>126</sup>

Here Veeseer indicates the ways in which this particular critical approach sought to problematise the relationship between the literary text and its context, between literature and history, challenging in particular the assumptions which underpinned the historicist

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<sup>124</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 186.

<sup>125</sup> Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, p. 18.

<sup>126</sup> H. Aram Veeseer, 'Introduction' to *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. Aram Veeseer (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. ix-xvi, p. xii.

methodology, including the belief that literary texts could provide a clear, stable view of the historical period in which they were written and the sense that particular forms or ways of reading those texts would provide the reader with that access. In this way a play with allegorised figures or indeed an epic romance such as *The Faerie Queene* would be read with the expectation that the text would provide insights into authorial intention or offer one-to-one analogies between fictional characters and historical figures. The plays of John Lyly, often referred to as 'court comedies', are a case in point. Whilst Lyly often provides a fictional character with attributes which serve to flatter the Queen, early twentieth century criticism of the plays was preoccupied with deciphering the identities of other characters in the plays in order to discern more clearly Lyly's meaning. The play *Endymion*, for example, exercised a number of critics as they worked to explain that Tellus could well figure Mary, Queen of Scots and *Endymion* suggests a number of Elizabeth's male courtiers including the Earl of Leicester.<sup>127</sup> While this scholarship is important for the ways in which it has enriched our understanding of the rich complexity of Lyly's dramaturgy, my interest in Lyly's use of allegorised images of the Queen as Sappho in *Sappho and Phao* and Cynthia in *Endymion*, for example, is focussed upon the ways in which these figurings and the plays themselves operate as part of an Elizabethan discourse of power and illuminate the struggle for the control of meaning assigned to the Queen's person. The same is also true of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, partly because the critical history of the play includes suggestions that the play may have been performed in Elizabeth's presence as part of the wedding celebrations for an aristocratic wedding. This has also

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<sup>127</sup> See for example, Josephine Waters Bennett 'Oxford and Endymion', *Publications of the Modern Language Society of America*, 57 (1942), 354-69, Sallie Bond, 'John Lyly's Endymion', *Studies in English Literature*, 14 (1974), 189-99 and more recently J.P. Conlan, 'The Fey Beauty of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Shakespearean Comedy in Its Courtly Context', *Shakespeare Studies*, 32 (2004), 118-172.

prompted discussion concerning the identities of the play's characters, including 'the fair vestal'. Jonathan Crewe in his discussion of the cultural resonances of the name Phoebe in *Dream*, suggests that allegory and allegorical representations should be approached as a more flexible, slippery mode:

This allegorical reference differs from immobilizing identification of the kind which, when attempted critically, merely seems arbitrary, trite, or uncomically philistine (it has been claimed, for example, with no doubt unintentionally obscene humor, that Bottom "is" the putative James I in the political allegory of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Allegory allows not just for the continuous possibility, but for the inescapability, pleasure and profit of unfixed reference; it allows, moreover, for referential schemas to be set up in which those glancingly identified change placed or names as the game continues, or in which exchanges can occur between figures in the work and those outside it.<sup>128</sup>

While this scholarship is important for the ways in which it has enriched our understanding of the rich complexity of Lyly's dramaturgy, my interest in Lyly's use of allegorised images of the Queen as Sappho in *Sappho and Phao* and Cynthia in *Endymion*, for example, is focussed upon the ways in which these figurings and the plays themselves operate as part of an Elizabethan discourse of power and illuminate the struggle for the control of meaning assigned to the Queen's person.

My approach to allegorised images of Elizabeth is situated in Louis Montrose's discussion of the ways in which dramatists such as Shakespeare and poets like Spenser re-appropriated Virgilian and Ovidian sources and their allegorised forms which had been utilised in earlier courtly entertainments and in doing so each made their own contribution to the cult of the Virgin Queen.<sup>129</sup> Elizabethan literature according to Montrose therefore must be read 'in terms of an intertextuality that includes both the

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<sup>128</sup> Jonathan Crewe, *Hidden Designs: The Critical Profession and Renaissance Literature* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 140-141.

<sup>129</sup> Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 159.

discourses of European literary history and the discourse of Elizabethan state power'.<sup>130</sup>

This method of reading the plays forms the template for each of the chapters in the thesis. In chapter one I extend Montrose's focus upon classical sources to also consider how biblical figures like King David, who formed part of the Queen's iconography but tended to appear in printed texts rather than visual pageants or plays, were also refashioned for the stage.

Chapter One begins a discussion of a comparatively under-researched figure used for Elizabeth, the Old Testament patriarch King David. As I have suggested earlier in this introduction this material contributes to recent work on the biblical figures used for Elizabeth which provide an important corrective to the emphasis previously placed almost exclusively upon the classical figurings of the Queen to celebrate her virginity.

Since one of the most determining factors in the development of the Queen's iconography was her gender the thesis begins by considering how the use of a male persona such as David addressed some of the contemporary reactions to female rule. As the head of a patriarchal society Elizabeth was regarded as a political anomaly. In contemporary political tracts including John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* female rule is depicted as something unnatural that should be avoided. For Knox such a situation would be the equivalent of the head following the foot.<sup>131</sup> Elizabeth and her supporters therefore developed a number of strategies to counteract possible suggestions that her gender would make her unfit to rule. The first was to present the Queen using a range of male titles or personae in an attempt to play down concern about her gender. As discussed above Elizabeth

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<sup>130</sup> Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 159.

<sup>131</sup> Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, p. 56.

compares herself to the prophet Daniel in her coronation procession and John Aylmer in *An Harborowe for Faithful and True Subjects* (1559) responds to Knox's argument against female rule by presenting Elizabeth as a divinely appointed Protestant monarch using David as an analogue for the Queen.<sup>132</sup> The political theory of the king's two bodies also provided a legal paradigm which enabled Elizabeth to indicate that as Queen she combined both male and female qualities and that she was in fact both King and Queen. The concept of the body natural is figured as female since it refers to Elizabeth's person, her female body which was subject to illness, emotion and eventual decay, while the body politic referred to the institution of kingship is characterised as male. In a speech at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign this notion of Elizabeth's composite identity is expressed by the Archbishop of York, Nicholas Heath, when he describes Elizabeth's accession as one brought to pass by the 'appointment of God she [is] our soveraigne lord and ladie, our kinge and quene, our emperor and empresse'.<sup>133</sup>

Elizabeth herself also refers to the theory of the king's two bodies in her speeches to Parliament. In her Golden speech to Parliament in 1601 the Queen refers to both her identity as King and Queen:

To be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it than it is pleasant to them that bear it. For myself, I was never so much enticed with the glorious name of a king or the royal authority of a queen as delighted that God made me His instrument to maintain His truth and glory, and to defend this kingdom from dishonour, damage, tyranny, and oppression.<sup>134</sup>

The only instance when Elizabeth is supposed to have literally adopted the habit of a man is at her appearance before her troops at Tilbury before the anticipated Spanish invasion. Elizabeth's reputed speech to her troops also alludes to her combined identity

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<sup>132</sup> John Aylmer, *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjectes Agaynst the Late Blowne Blaste, Concerninge the Governme[n]t of Wemen* (London: J. Day, 1559), sig. I1v.

<sup>133</sup> Levin, "The Heart and Stomach of a King", p. 121.

<sup>134</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 342.

as King and Queen: 'I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too'.<sup>135</sup>

This strategy, however, was not without its risks since the image of a masculine woman, possibly wielding a truncheon, could also suggest more threatening images of feminine misrule. As Leah S. Marcus points out Elizabeth's appearance could also conjure up the disturbing image of Amazonian women, who emasculated their men.<sup>136</sup> Male figurings could also be employed to point up other ways in which Elizabeth's gender was problematic and offer a negative comparison. In the case of King David there are a number of instances when he is employed to indicate the ways in which Elizabeth was failing to emulate her biblical forebear in ways which emphasised Elizabeth's female identity in an attempt to influence royal policy. As the son of Jesse and the founder of the House of David, David is depicted as a great progenitor and this is exemplified in images of the Tree of Jesse where he is presented as the ancestor of Jesus Christ. Elizabeth is associated with these images of David in several collections of prayers attributed to Richard Day: *Christian Prayers and Meditations or 'Queen Elizabeth's Prayer Book'* (1569) and *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578) where the Tree of Jesse is decorated by a border of Tudor roses. In the 1560s, however, David is employed as part of an intense debate concerning the subject of the Queen's marriage and appears in Sir Thomas Smith's tract on the subject in 1562 and the Lords' petition to the Queen in the same year to argue that children are a sign of God's blessing and that David fulfilled his role as king by providing his people with an heir.

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<sup>135</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 326.

<sup>136</sup> Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, pp. 62-64.

In the case of national security relating to the trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, David was used as a negative exemplar in a different way. Here Elizabeth is warned against being too much like David in his handling of the rebellion of his son Absalom where the King refused to punish his son and forgave him. In the late 1580s and early 1590s David was also employed in his role as God's anointed monarch and leader of God's people to argue for a more concerted involvement in the war in the Netherlands. The supporters of a more aggressive foreign policy in support of the Dutch Protestants included Mary Sidney, whose completion of the translation of the Psalms begun by her brother Philip Sidney has been regarded as a political gesture in which Sidney reminds the Queen of her obligation as a Protestant monarch to support her European brethren.

Having surveyed a number of the ways in which David was used to celebrate and exhort the Queen, the second part of the chapter turns to the stage and focuses upon George Peele's play *David and Bethsabe*. My discussion of Peele's play begins by considering the influence of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* upon the work of Peele and his contemporaries and the startling parallels between David and Tamburlaine and how this affects the figure of King David who was used extensively to characterise Elizabeth's reign as a Protestant monarch.

This section begins by locating discussion of the relationship between the two plays in the field of repertory studies to examine a theatrical phenomenon, namely the upsurge in new biblical plays on the Elizabethan stage. This particular focus relates to the earlier discussion of King David as an analogue for Elizabeth in the following ways. Firstly, I will argue that the reasons for the popularity of this type of play relate to the theatrical

success of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and the acting style of Edward Alleyn. In an attempt to provide the theatres with comparable roles and narratives dramatists turned to the Old Testament as a source. An example of such a play is Peele's *David and Bethsabe* which not only replicates specific aspects of stage spectacle found in *Tamburlaine*, but also suggests parallels between the two shepherd kings. This is significant for my argument as I look at the ways in which David and *Tamburlaine* were used in the construction of English national identity during the Armada years and the effect this had upon the uses of David as a figuring for Elizabeth. This pairing, I will argue, offered a portrait of hyper-masculinity, embodying those qualities of the successful warrior king which indicated a shift in emphasis from the uses to which King David had been put in relation to Elizabeth. David, as I have suggested above, was used to lend support for Elizabeth as a providential monarch and a defender of the Protestant faith and the militant images of campaigns against the Gentiles are presented as defensive rather than offensive to provide examples of David's struggle. The apparently unrelated act of utilising David as a figure for the stage permits the aspects of David's story which emphasise aspects of his life which would be considered more problematic in the application of the King in royal iconography to be considered. In the case of Peele's David he is both a soldier and also a king whose private decisions have devastating consequences for his immediate family and kingdom at large. Both of these facets of David's character would have been inimical to Elizabeth since they invite reflection upon her identity as a female ruler. Whilst David might still be used in 1588 to underline Elizabeth's defeat of the Spanish in providential terms, the wider impact of dramatising Old Testament kings to replicate *Tamburlaine* meant that David could be used to suggest everything that Elizabeth was not, thus emphasising the limitations of the Queen's gender. An example of a text which registers the shift in the uses of King

David is Thomas Churchyard's poem written in 1599 to commemorate the Irish campaign led by the Earl of Essex. The poem demonstrates the ways in which allegorical representations of the Queen indicate the struggle for the control of their meaning. On the one hand, the poem celebrates Elizabeth as David waging a just war against the Irish, but this is complicated by depicting Essex as Joab, David's captain, who is described as acting as a surrogate for David on the battlefield. Churchyard's poem, like Lyly's *Midas* and Peele's *David and Bethsabe*, invites its audience to compare two contrasting styles of leadership and as in each of the plays privileges the portrait of the masculine conquering hero.

In chapter two I turn to the classical figure of Queen Dido and the story of her doomed love for the Trojan prince Aeneas as found in Virgil. Here I address two issues. The first relates to the ways in which Dido and Aeneas were deployed at a pivotal point in the Queen's reign, during the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the French Duke of Anjou between 1579 and 1581. This particular courtship and the reaction it prompted demonstrate the ways in which Elizabeth's iconography developed and was fashioned throughout her reign in response to specific events and requirements. It is during and after the Anjou courtship that gradually the concept of Elizabeth as a perpetual virgin was cultivated to accommodate the fact that it was now unlikely that Elizabeth would now marry and bear children.

In the chapter I examine the ways in which two groups of plays renegotiate the image of the Queen during the 1580s. I begin with those plays which deal directly with, or allude to, the myth of Dido and register the shift in the Queen's iconography. The early entertainments provided for the Queen, such as Churchyard's *Shew of Chastitie* (1578)

and Gager's *Dido* (1583), provide two examples. In Churchyard's pageant Cupid is forced to surrender his arrows directly to the Queen and in Gager's play the epilogue makes clear how unlike Dido Elizabeth is in forgoing a union with a foreign prince. These early examples of the myth of Dido and the motif of Cupid's arrows are subsequently reworked by Lyly, Marlowe and Shakespeare and here I am interested in reading the plays in terms of their shared intertextuality as they contribute to and subvert the images of the cult of Elizabeth.

In both *Sappho and Phao* and *Galatea* Lyly's plays allude to the tableau of Queen Dido with Cupid in her lap. Ostensibly its use in *Sappho and Phao* is to suggest how unlike Dido the ruler of Lesbos is, since she has apparent control over Cupid and his arrows and here the play presents Sappho as a flattering parallel for Elizabeth. In *Galatea* the tableau is alluded to scornfully by the goddess Diana once again to recall how Dido was duped by Cupid and Venus whereas she remains immune to love. Marlowe in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* also offers the figure of Dido with Cupid in her lap, but offers no qualifying material to indicate how the play might offer a compliment to Elizabeth; Dido is pierced with the arrow on stage and suffers its effects before the audience.

The chapter then turns to another group of plays which like the dramatised stories of Dido and Aeneas deal with the imperial theme. Here Lyly's *Midas* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* are used to trace the ways in which the portrait of kingship offered in each of the plays engages in the wider cultural debate of what it means to be a successful ruler. Once again the influence of Marlowe's Scythian shepherd upon Lyly's Phrygian king complicates audience responses both to *Midas* and the ruler of Lesbos.

Lyly's *Midas* was written to celebrate the defeat of the Armada in 1588 and presents what appears to be a straightforward political allegory in which Philip of Spain is figured as the foolish Midas and the ruler of Lesbos, the sovereign whose island escapes invasion by Midas, is an analogue for Elizabeth. The play's compliment to Elizabeth is, I will argue, rather muted and the choice between a wise and foolish king is not as clear cut as it seems. Although the ruler of Lesbos is described in flattering terms, he is never named, nor does he appear on stage whereas Midas is flawed yet dynamic and his quest for imperial expansion and the gold attendant upon it are attributes which chime with the English colonial enterprise. Lyly also includes in Midas's speeches phrases which echo some of the outrageous claims to power made by Marlowe's protagonist, so that a contemporary audience would hear the allusions to Tamburlaine. The play therefore presents the audience with two alternative models of kingship, the passive figure of the ruler of Lesbos whose policies seem to be cautious and rely upon chance or divine intervention or the character of Midas, who although he is depicted quite frequently as almost a comic character and suffers defeat and humiliation in the play, remains at the end of the play a charismatic character none the less. By inviting comparison between the ruler of Lesbos and Elizabeth, Lyly emphasises the connection between Elizabeth and the one of the most famous figures to have governed that island, Sappho, whose reputation for learning was as great as that of her sexual promiscuity. So whilst the play celebrates English victory over the Armada, it also exposes the rhetorical strategies employed by the Queen and the state to play down the limitations of her gender, such as the model of the king's two bodies, or the metaphors which emphasise the providential nature of kingship.

In the final section of the chapter I turn to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to trace the ways in which Shakespeare re-synthesised the myth of Queen Dido found in the plays of Lyly and Marlowe to offer his own critique of Elizabeth's personae as Virgin Queen.

In chapter three I move on to consider the classical mythography of Cynthia, the moon goddess, a persona frequently employed in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign to celebrate her virginity. The approach in this chapter has been influenced by Louis Montrose's discussion of *Dream* and the ways in which Shakespeare incorporated different aspects of royal iconography into the play. The image which is usually regarded as a complimentary parallel for the Queen, 'the fair vestal', is in fact the means by which Oberon can resume his control over Titania, the Fairy Queen:

Shakespeare's ostensible royal compliment may be seen as a complex mediation of the charismatic royal presence that pervaded late Elizabethan culture and as an appropriation of the cult of the Virgin Queen. The poetic texts of Spenser often fragment the royal image, refracting aspects of the Queen "in mirrours more than one". In a similar way, Shakespeare's play splits the triune Elizabethan cult image between the fair vestal, who is an unattainable virgin, and the Fairy Queen, who is represented as both an intractable wife and a dominating mother: Oberon uses one against the other in order to assert masculine prerogatives.<sup>137</sup>

In chapter three I consider go on to consider the figure of Cynthia presented in three plays: Lyly's *Endymion*, Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* and Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*. The chapter, however, begins with an examination of an earlier figuring of Elizabeth used in the earlier part of the reign by the Queen herself where she presented herself as mother of the nation. I begin with this as I will argue that later in the reign this maternal image of the Queen is one which is used to comment upon Elizabeth's persona as Virgin Queen. As a Virgin Queen the benign maternal figuring is inverted so that

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<sup>137</sup> Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 176.

Elizabeth's unmarried state is associated with unnatural motherhood and figures associated with witchcraft and infanticide.

Cynthia is one of the identities which make up the triplex Diana and provides a link between Cynthia and Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft and the underworld. Both Lyly and Jonson point up this connection in their plays and this serves to destabilise Elizabeth's image as a goddess on earth and point up her aging mortality. The mythography of Cynthia also associates the goddess with the figure of Niobe, the Theban queen punished by the goddess for her pride and disparagement of Leto. Cynthia's composite identity therefore links her to two unnatural mothers: the figure of the witch, in the form of Hecate and the figure of Niobe, whose pride leads to the murder of all her children by Cynthia and Apollo. I will argue therefore that Elizabeth's persona of Cynthia which celebrates the queen's virginity can in fact be used to critique her childlessness and the formation of a cult which celebrates her as a goddess on earth by emphasising the aspects of Cynthia's identity which associate her with images of unnatural motherhood.

In this introduction I have provided a survey of two related critical traditions which have shaped early modern scholarship on the iconography of Elizabeth I, and described their influence upon my approach to the subject. I have explained the basis of this thesis by arguing that my methodology of using both biblical and classical analogues for the Queen provides a diachronic approach to the iconography of her reign and situates discussion of each of the personae in its historical moment. I have explained the ways in which allegorical representations of the Queen are the site for the struggle for

meaning and how this struggle is played out through the appropriation of biblical and classical mythographies focussing in particular upon the plays of the period.

## King David 'the lamp of Israel': A Biblical Paradigm for Elizabeth I

In this chapter I want to consider the biblical personae used for the Queen, with specific reference to the comparatively under-explored figure of King David. In the first part of this chapter I will trace the ways in which King David is employed by and for the Queen in a number of official texts presented to her such as sermons, speeches, political tracts and dedications. The biblical precedents employed in these texts serve the function of celebrating Elizabeth as God's elected sovereign, but also provide a benchmark against which Elizabeth can be judged and admonished. These texts dramatise the struggle for control of the meaning assigned to Elizabeth through this biblical analogue since they are frequently employed to reinforce the political orthodoxies which underpin Elizabeth's reign, most crucially her status as a providential monarch, yet they also remind Elizabeth of her duty and challenge her policies when required. In the second part of the chapter I will consider how the early modern theatre provided a medium in which the theories of kingship could be explored and challenged. Beginning with a survey of a theatrical phenomenon in which biblical drama flourished during the period c.1590 - c.1602 and using Peele's *David and Bethsabe* as the focus for this discussion, I will argue that the effect of dramatising stories from the Old Testament contributed to the theatre's capacity to demystify the sacred office of kingship. By re-synthesising those biblical figures which had also been used to support Elizabeth in order to provide theatre companies, such as the Admiral's Men, with material which would allow them to replicate features of their most popular plays such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and provide comparable roles for Edward Alleyn, the Elizabethan theatre necessarily complicated audience responses to those biblical figures as they appeared in official state-sanctioned sermons, prayers and speeches.

The story of David, the shepherd boy, Psalmist and warrior king of Israel, was one which had been utilised to celebrate a number of the Tudor monarchs, including Elizabeth. In 1486, for example, the citizens of York acknowledged their loyalty to their new king Henry VII with a pageant in which King David greeted Henry as the most 'prepotent Prince in Christendom' and presented him with the 'Sworde of victory'.<sup>1</sup> Henry VIII was closely associated with King David, appearing on the title page border of the Coverdale Bible in 1535 with David on his left and Saint Paul on his right. David was used in this context by Protestant reformers to offer a correlation between David as God's chosen king and author of the psalms and Henry as a providential Protestant monarch and supporter of the new English Bible. On the title page of the Great Bible (1539) Henry is now presented as David distributing the Bible and acting as God's chosen servant. According to John N. King the Davidic comparison makes 'a powerful iconographical argument in support of Protestant monarchs' disestablishment of the Roman church, which allowed them to exercise authority over both church and state without the intercession of the pope'.<sup>2</sup>

During Elizabeth's coronation celebrations the Queen was famously compared not just to Deborah, the Hebrew judge and leader but also to David.<sup>3</sup> The first of the pageants

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<sup>1</sup> Germaine Warkentin, 'Introduction', in *The Queen's Majesty's Passage & Related Documents*, ed. by Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), p. 24 and p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Discussion of this particular figuring of Elizabeth falls outside the scope of this particular study, but see Alexandra Walsham, "'A Very Deborah?'" The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 143-68, Carol Blessing, 'Elizabeth I as Deborah the Judge: Exceptional Women of Power', in *Goddesses and Queens: The iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 30-55 and Michele Osherow, "'Give Ear O'Princes": Deborah, Elizabeth, and the Right Word', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 30.1 (2004), 111-119.

records Elizabeth's descent in *The Uniting of the Two Houses of Lancaster and York*, drawing on the biblical genealogical Tree of Jesse. The pageant consists of a series of ascending stages on which sit Henry VII and Elizabeth of York with the entwined red and white roses of the two houses. On the next stage sit Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn and on the final stage sits Elizabeth herself. Helen Hackett notes that

The form of a genealogical tree rising upwards derived from the medieval Marian icon of the tree of Jesse. This was a representation of the stock of David derived from Isaiah 11.1 and showed a line of kings growing from the root of Jesse, culminating in the flower or fruit of either the Virgin Mary or Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The emphasis in the pageant is not, however, upon the Marian associations of the tree, but upon Elizabeth as the descendant of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. The biblical overtones of the Tree of Jesse underline Elizabeth's role as a divinely appointed Protestant queen.<sup>5</sup> The Tudor dynasty promoted a providential reading of their rise to power and the use of David enabled them and their subjects to draw on a powerful range of images of the Old Testament king and his reign.

The figuring of Elizabeth as David began almost as soon as Elizabeth became queen, with John Aylmer's *An Harborowe for Faithful and True Subjects* (1559). Aylmer's text was a direct reply to Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), in which Aylmer makes a limited defence of the concept of female rule. Aylmer uses the story of David and Goliath to support Elizabeth's position as queen, drawing on the young David to suggest that weak and apparently unlikely instruments such as David and Elizabeth could be selected by God to fulfil his purpose. Aylmer takes on the role of God as he answers those critical of female rule:

Murmer ye at myne anointed because she is a woman? who made man or woman, you or I? yf I made hir to lyve: may I not make hir to reigne? If I

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<sup>4</sup> Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> See King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, pp. 112-113.

apoynt hir to the office? Can I not adourne hir, and make hir hable to discharge it?<sup>6</sup>

Aylmer goes on to suggest that these faithless voices of dissent are far worse than Saul who was at least prepared to have faith in David as God's servant:

Saule mystrusted not as you do: murmured not as you doo, sayinge, ah this poore boye is not hable to be our champion, and to defende our libertie: but he prayed for him, and wyshed him well in the name of Jehovah the lorde of hostes (sig. II<sup>v</sup>).

Michele Osherow notes that 'Throughout Aylmer's text, David's history is applied to Elizabeth's predicament to defeat the notion that a woman is unable to rule competently'.<sup>7</sup> Yet in the story of David's defeat of Goliath, the qualities which are emphasised by both the biblical account and the one recounted by Aylmer are David's own physical weakness and his obedience to God. David is 'young of age, and no Gyante in stature' (sig. II<sup>v</sup>). Osherow argues that 'Rather than enabling Elizabeth to escape the enforced limitations of her sex, David's figure potentially reminds us of them'.<sup>8</sup> Whilst David can outgrow his physical immaturity, Elizabeth remains defined by the weaknesses of her sex. As with the classical paradigms discussed in the previous chapter, the biblical figuring of Elizabeth as David is equally unstable, as it offers praise whilst pointing up her potential failings as a woman.

Elizabeth herself draws upon the iconography of David as a model of obedience who offers his thanksgiving for God's grace and mercy in the Psalms. In one of her own prayers Elizabeth compares herself to David as she strives to express her thanks to God for her preservation during the rebellion of the Northern Lords in 1569: 'But now,

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<sup>6</sup> John Aylmer, *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjectes Agaynst the Late Blowne Blaste, Concerninge the Governme[n]t of Wemen* (London: J. Day, 1559), sig. II<sup>v</sup>. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>7</sup> Michele Osherow, "'A poore shepherde and his sling": A Biblical Model for a Renaissance Queen', in *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, ed. by Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney and Debra Barrett-Graves (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 119-130 (p. 122).

<sup>8</sup> Osherow "'A poore shepherde and his sling": A Biblical Model for a Renaissance Queen', p. 127.

according to the word of David, what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?'<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth goes on to quote from Psalm 116:

But O Lord, give me grace as formerly Thou didst to David, a man according to Thy heart, who treating this same subject and reciting the testimonies of Thy goodness, said: "Thus it is, Lord, I am Thy manservant, I am thy manservant, the son of Thy chambermaid; Thou hast broken my bonds. I will offer unto Thee an offering of thanksgiving and entreat the name of the Lord".<sup>10</sup>

Elizabeth's association with David was also reinforced visually in printed texts such as Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones* (1587), which was a collection of Protestant prayers, apparently written by and for women. The text is divided into seven sections, each corresponding with a lamp or exemplar of a holy woman. At the end of the third lamp there is a woodcut in which Elizabeth appears on Christ's right side with David appearing behind her, while Solomon, the author of the Canticles, appears on the left.<sup>11</sup> Susan Doran has suggested that the woodcut underlines Elizabeth's role as one of the Protestant elect.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman. (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 181-183 (p.182).

<sup>12</sup> Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power', pp. 181-183.



Illustration 1. Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones Conteyning Seven Several Lamps of Virginitie* (1582). Engraving opposite page 862. Image reproduced from the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

The Queen is also associated with images of David in several collections of prayers which have been attributed to Elizabeth: *Christian Prayers and Meditations* or 'Queen Elizabeth's Prayer Book' (1569) and *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578). In each of these texts the title page border is made up of the Tree of Jesse, outlining descent from

Jesse and David to Christ. The border combines biblical figures with Tudor iconography of the Tudor rose and Beaufort portcullis.<sup>13</sup>

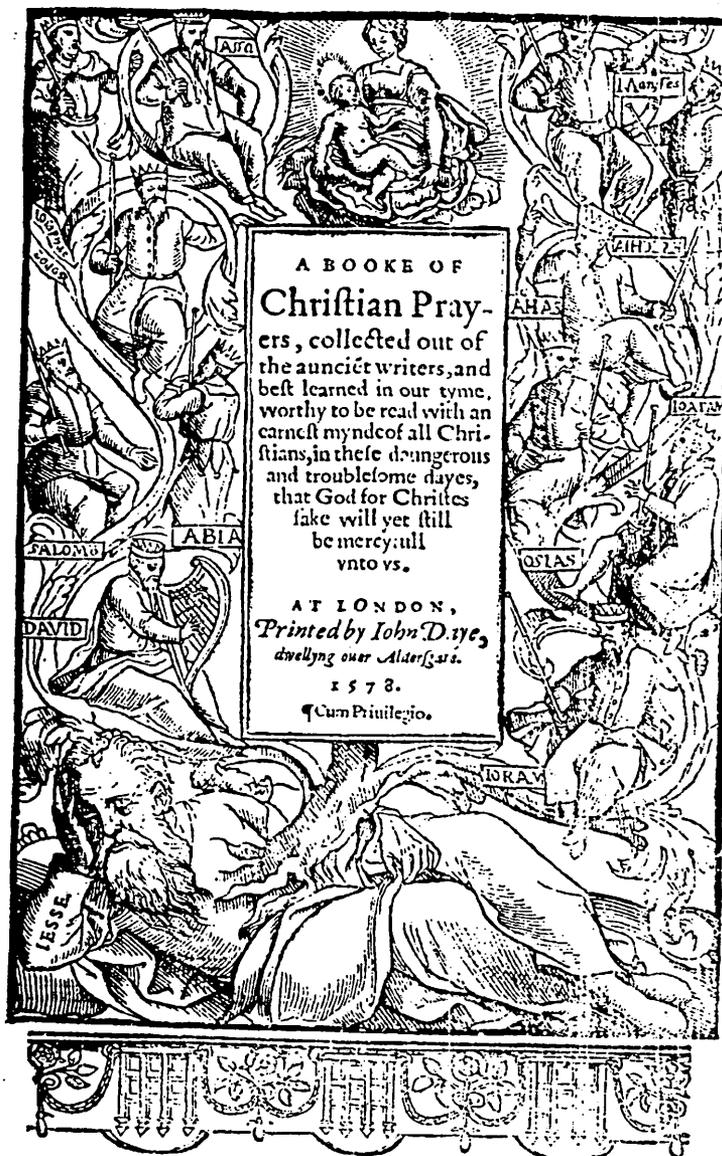


Illustration 2. *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578). Title page. Image reproduced from the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

<sup>13</sup> See King, *Tudor Royal Iconography* pp. 112-115 and Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power', pp. 182-184. For a recent discussion of Elizabeth's authorship of *Christian Prayers and Meditations*, see Jennifer Clement, 'The Queen's Voice: Elizabeth I's *Christian Prayers and Meditations*', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 13.3 (January 2008) <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/13-3/clemquee.htm>> [accessed 2 May 2008]

The comparison between Elizabeth and David could also be used to remind the Queen of ways in which she might be failing to follow the example set by her biblical counterpart. The king is employed at three significant points during her reign and in each case their use relates to two of the most politically sensitive issues of Elizabeth's sovereignty: the question of marriage and the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.

David, as the son of Jesse and founder of a great biblical house, was used to exhort Elizabeth to marry and provide England with an heir and thereby prevent the political unrest generated by a contested succession. John Aylmer in *An Harborowe* encourages his readers to pray for Elizabeth that God will

guide hir harte in the choice of hir husbände and to make hir fruitfull and the mother of manye children that thys Realme maye have the grafted of so goodly a tree (sig. I2<sup>r</sup>).

In 1562, for example, Sir Thomas Smith expands upon this theme in a tract in which he rehearsed the arguments for and against the Queen's marriage and whether a marriage to a foreign prince or English noble man would be most beneficial. In the person of Philoxenus, or Love Alien, he puts forward the argument that the Queen should marry and in a second oration that the Queen should marry a foreign prince. In the first speech Philoxenus draws on examples from the Old Testament to strengthen his case that marriage and the children it produces are a sign of God's favour:

And because you come with what is good to God-ward, and you take your sure Rule, that which pleaseth God is best, I pray you, what is the promise he maketh to David? If thy sons walk before me, saith he in truth with all their hearts, thou shalt not want one, who shall come out of thy loins, to sit upon the throne of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

The failure to produce an heir is therefore a sign of God's displeasure:

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<sup>14</sup> John Strype, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith, Kt., Doctor of the Civil Law Principal Secretary of State to King Edward the Sixth, and Queen Elizabeth* (London: A. Roper, 1698) Appendix Number III, p. 30. For discussion of this publication in the context of Robert Dudley's courtship of Elizabeth see Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 52-53.

What threateneth he to Saul for his Rebellion, other, than that the Kingdom should be translated from him, and his Sons should not Reign after him: To Jeroboam, to Baasa and Achab, for their Idolatry and Wickedness, but that he would not leave of their Posterity one to piss against the Wall?<sup>15</sup>

Philoxenus concludes the first part of his speech with the challenge

And what hath the Queens Majesty deserved at your hands, I pray you, that you had rather she had the Curse which fell upon Saul, Hieroboam, Baaza and Achab, than the Blessing which David had and Abraham?<sup>16</sup>

In 1563 the Lords' Petition to the Queen also uses biblical precedents to encourage Elizabeth to confirm the identity of her successor:

Besides it is plain by the scriptures that godly governors and princes, as fathers of their countries, have always been careful to avoid the great evil that might ensue through want of a certain limitation of succession. And therefore Moses did assign Joshua to be his successor, and David his son Solomon, whereby a great sedition was appeased, begun by Adonias [*sic*].<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth, however, refuses to be swayed by these exhortations and instead reminds parliament of the dangers she faced as heir to the throne during the final years of her sister Mary's reign and she argues that her successor will not be put in the same position: 'I stood in danger of my life, my sister was so incensed against me. I did differ from her in religion and I was sought for divers ways, and so shall never be my successor'.<sup>18</sup>

The story of Absalon's subsequent rebellion against his father was one which had taken on a particular political significance in England during the 1570s and 1580s. In 1572 parliament returned once more to the figuring of Elizabeth as David in another petition to the Queen, but this time David is employed not as a great progenitor but as a king facing revolt by members of the royal family.<sup>19</sup> This aspect of his reign pointed directly

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<sup>15</sup> Strype, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> Strype, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 85.

<sup>18</sup> Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> The story of Absalon is also recounted by John Dryden in his political satire *Absalon and Achitophel* (1681) in which Absalon is used to allegorise the rebellious Duke of Monmouth.

to Elizabeth's own situation, as details of yet another plot to remove Elizabeth from the throne were exposed in the correspondence between Mary, Queen of Scots and an Italian financier and spy, Roberto Ridolfi.<sup>20</sup> The plan consisted of securing Spanish support of an invasion of England, led by the Duke of Alva from the Netherlands. English Catholics it was hoped would join the invading troops to remove Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, who would secure her position as queen by marrying the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>21</sup> When the news of the plot emerged Norfolk was tried and later executed and Elizabeth was urged to proceed in the same manner against Mary. When parliament met in 1572 the bishops petitioned the Queen, urging her to consider that the execution of Mary was also necessary for the safety of her own person and of the realm. The bishops employed a series of biblical examples to support their case against Mary, but the example they return to is that of King David and his sons. One of the arguments put forward in the petition is that the failure to punish crimes appropriately will have a detrimental effect upon the prince who fails to distribute justice and his kingdom. Firstly, the prince is failing to fulfil his role as God's appointed magistrate and servant. Secondly, the failure to prosecute serious crimes will set an unwelcome precedent for those who seek to commit the same crime:

Yt is dangerous for any prince aswell for his owne state as also for that punishment which may come from Gode's hande, by slacknes of justyce in greate offences to give occasyon by hope of impunetie of the encrease of like wickednes.<sup>22</sup>

David's failure to punish his sons appropriately is cited as an example:

Because Amnon was winked at by his father for committing rape and inceste with his owne sister, Absalon under hope of like impunetie / was emboldened to murder his brother Amnon. But looke I praye you how greevously God punished that slacke justyce of David, colored with a tender hearte towarde his naturall children. Did he not suffer, yea and by his juste judgemente raise one of

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<sup>20</sup> L.E. Hunt, 'Ridolfi, Roberto di (1531-1612)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://via.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23634>> [accessed 8 May 2008]

<sup>21</sup> Antonia Fraser, *Mary, Queen of Scots* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), pp. 527-535.

<sup>22</sup> *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I: Volume One 1558-1581*, ed. by T. E. Hartley (London: Leicester University Press, 1981), p. 277.

his owne sons towardes whome he used that excessyve tendernes and pittye, to rebell againste him and drive him out of his owne kingdome?<sup>23</sup>

The petition continues by reminding Elizabeth how David was chastised for his excessive grief at the death of Absalon by Joab, his soldier and counsellor:

David havinge this infirmetye of too much pittie and indulgence towardes offenderes, which is not of any prince to be followed, did forbide that his traytorous sonne Absolon should be slaine; and when he was kylled, effemynatly he bewailed the same to the discouraginge of his people. But he was sharply rebuked by Jobe, his counsellore, sainge 'Thou haste shamed this daye the faces of thy servantes which have saved thie lyfe and the life of thy sonnes'. 'Thou loveste those that hate thee, and thou hateste those that love thee, and thou sheweste this daye that thou passeste not for thy captaynes and for thy servantes. And nowe I perceav yf Absolon had lived and all we had ben slayne it would have pleased thee well.'<sup>24</sup>

The bishops call upon Elizabeth to be mindful of the example provided by David, who was reminded of his kingly duty and put his own private feelings aside in order to fulfil his public office of king:

If David were moved thus to doe to the comferte of his own subjectes only and the abashinge of his own privat rebelles, howe much more have we to desire God to move the Queene's Majestie by the execution of this ladye to gladd the hartes of all true Christyanes in Ewrope.<sup>25</sup>

In this instance Elizabeth refused to be moved by the call for Mary's execution despite her own protestations in her speeches to parliament that she would act in the best interests of her people.

As in 1562 and 1572, so again in 1586 David is employed by parliament and the clergy to influence royal policy. In 1586 the government manipulation and exposure of the Babington plot ensured that Mary would at last face trial for treason. In his speech before parliament which had been summoned to discuss the plot, Sir Christopher Hatton concluded '*Ne periat Israell periat Absalon*', that is 'Absalon must perish lest Israel

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<sup>23</sup> *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I Volume One: 1558-1581*, p. 277.

<sup>24</sup> *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I Volume One: 1558-1581*, p. 278.

<sup>25</sup> *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I Volume One: 1558-1581*, p. 279.

perish'.<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth's grief and rage when she discovered that the warrant that she had finally signed had been delivered to Fotheringhay and its contents fulfilled was such that many of her councillors had been temporarily banished from her sight or imprisoned.<sup>27</sup> Richard Fletcher, the dean of Peterborough cathedral and father of the dramatist John Fletcher, delivered the first sermon before Elizabeth at Greenwich palace after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 1587. Fletcher had been appointed as the official chaplain at the trial and execution of Mary. In his sermon before Elizabeth Fletcher was faced with the delicate decision of whether he should refer to the execution and then how such a subject should be broached.

Fletcher's sermon began with the story taken from Matthew's gospel of the return of the Holy family from their exile in Egypt after the slaughter of the innocents by Herod.

Joseph is advised to return to Israel by an angel in a dream:

The Angell of the Lorde appeared to Joseph in Egipt in a dreame, saying arise, and take upp the childe and his mother and returne into the Lande of Israell for they are deade that sought the child[es] Lyfe.<sup>28</sup>

In the second part of the sermon Fletcher uses the image of the sleeping Joseph to turn his attention to another matter: those rulers who fall asleep and who will be awoken from their complacency by God's prophets. Fletcher selects the biblical narrative of David's grief at the death of his son Absalon, a narrative which had been previously used in the context of advising Elizabeth to listen to the calls of her subjects for the execution of Mary Stuart. Fletcher focussed in particular on the part of the narrative in

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<sup>26</sup> *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I: Volume Two 1584-1589*, ed. by T. E. Hartley (London: Leicester University Press, 1981), p. 217.

<sup>27</sup> J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), pp. 281-282.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Fletcher, 'A Sermon Preached Before the Queene Immediately After the Execution of the Queene of Scott[es] by the Deane of Peterburghe', St. John's College Cambridge MS I.30 sig. 49v. For detailed discussion of the sermon and its political context see Peter E. McCullough, "'Out of Egypt": Richard Fletcher's Sermon before Elizabeth I after the Execution of Mary Queen of Scots', in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. by Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 118-149.

which Joab rebukes the king for his excessive grief and his failure to acknowledge and reward the efforts of his soldiers and counsellors in quelling Absalon's rebellion.

Fletcher reproduces the advice of Joab to David:

Surge: aryse and speake comfortablie to thy serv[a]unt[es] that have done thys thinge, wch if thou doe not, I sweare unto thee by god, there will not one man abyde with thee this nighte. Thou wilte loose the hart[es] and love of all thy faythefull subject[es], and that wilbe worse unto thee then all the evill that ever befell thee from thy youthe hitherto.<sup>29</sup>

Fletcher's sermon responds directly to Elizabeth's own speeches which were prompted by the petitions in 1586 by parliament for the execution of Mary. Elizabeth had famously avoided providing a definitive answer, but instead offered assurances that she did

acknowledge the greatest argument of youre true hartes, and great zeal to my safetie...so shal my bonde be strongar tied to gretar care for all your good.

The Queen continued,

There was never anie Prince more beholding unto her subjectes then I to youe, so was there never prince, more willing to do youe good then I in my mynd, though I may fayle in the means.<sup>30</sup>

Elizabeth's behaviour, however, towards those men, such as William Cecil, who had worked to secure Mary's execution, believing her to be a real threat to the security of the nation and to the personal safety of Elizabeth, certainly seemed at odds with these earlier assurances.<sup>31</sup> Fletcher recalls the speeches in his sermon by employing Elizabeth's own rhetorical strategies in the shape of particular words and phrases when Elizabeth claims to acknowledge her duty as queen and the loyalty of her subjects. Peter E. McCullough notes that Fletcher reuses words from the Queen's speeches in

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<sup>29</sup> Fletcher, 'A Sermon Preached Before the Queene Immediately After the Execution of the Queene of Scott[es] by the Deane of Peterburghe', sig. 60v-61r.

<sup>30</sup> McCullough, "Out of Egypt", p.135 and Marcus et al, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, pp. 186-204.

<sup>31</sup> See Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, pp. 257-282.

Joab's counsel to David such as 'hart[es],' 'love,' and 'faythefull subject[es]' which 'pointed up precisely this disparity between her words and her deeds'.<sup>32</sup>

The political significance of King David as a trope to describe Elizabeth and her reign is further evidenced by Mary Sidney's completion of her brother's translation of the Psalms and the Queen's own response to this work. Mary Sidney began the translation in 1586 after the death of her brother Philip whilst fighting in the Low Countries that year and the psalter was completed in 1593. Margaret Hannay has recently argued that the translation of the Psalms by Mary Sidney was a political gesture and part of a wider attempt by Mary to fashion a posthumous identity for her brother as a poet and a champion of the Protestant cause.<sup>33</sup> Mary Sidney regarded it as her Christian duty to use her poetry in an attempt to influence the Queen. This role was one which had become a tradition within the Sidney / Dudley circle with family members and supporters using their connections at court to promote and defend the Protestant cause at home and abroad. During the late 1580s and 1590s, however, this influence began to wane as a significant number died. The loss of Sir Philip Sidney in 1586 and her uncle the earl of Leicester in 1588, together with her younger brother Thomas in 1595, is one of the reasons that Mary Sidney felt that she must speak for the family and its values and address their concerns to the Queen directly.

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<sup>32</sup> McCullough, "Out of Egypt", pp. 122-123.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, "'Doo What men may Sing': Mary Sidney and the Tradition of Admonitory Dedication", in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. by Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 149-165 and *Phillip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also Beth Wynne Fiske, 'Mary Sidney's Psalms: Education and Wisdom', in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. by Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 166-183.

Sidney's sources for her translation were the Protestant Geneva Bible and the Marot-Bèze Huguenot psalter which indicate the political context and uses that the Psalms served. When the Geneva Bible was published first in 1560 it was dedicated to Elizabeth, thus indicating her importance to the exiled Protestants in Europe. The dedication makes this clear:

To the moste vertuous and noble quene Elisabet, Quene of England, France, and Ireland, your humble subjects of the English Church at Geneva, wish grace and peace from God the Father through Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>34</sup>

The dedication also contains figures from the Old Testament who were used to outline the hopes for Elizabeth's reign whilst reminding her of her obligations:

the marvelous diligence and zeale of Jehoshaphat, Josiah, and Hezekiah are by the singuler providence of God left as an example to al godly rulers to reforme their countreys and to establish the worde of God with all spede, lest the wrath of the Lord fall upon them for the neglecting thereof. For these excellent Kings did not onely imbrace the worde promptly and joyfully, but also procured earnestly and commanded the same to be taught, preached and mainteyned through all their countreys and dominions, byding them and all their subjectes bothe great and smale with solemne protestations and covenantes before God to obey the worde, and to walke after the waies of the Lord (sig. A2<sup>v</sup>).

The translation of the Psalms by the French Huguenots Marot and de Bèze was used to make parallels between the suffering and persecution of David and that of European Protestants. The commentary included by de Bèze in 1580 to accompany the Psalms gave them a specific political application as David's uprising against Saul was justified and described in terms of the aftermath of the Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre in France. The Protestant Henry of Navarre was figured as David and the Catholic Valois faction were his enemies. Mary Sidney in her translation of the Psalms drew therefore on this political heritage of the Psalms in order to articulate the anxieties of English Protestants, addressing them to Elizabeth as their temporal and spiritual leader. The political dimension of Sidney's work can be detected in the psalter's paratexts, the

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<sup>34</sup> *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva: 1561), sig. A2r. All further quotations from the Geneva Bible will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

separate dedications to her brother Philip entitled 'To the Angell Spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney' and to the Queen 'Even now that Care'. The dedicatory poem to the Queen is one which draws on the traditional use of the Psalms to admonish, whilst careful to offer muted compliments as well. Sidney begins by immediately reiterating Elizabeth's importance in European politics when she asks: 'On whom in chiefe dependeth to dispose / what Europe acts in theise most active times?'<sup>35</sup> Sidney emphasises that Elizabeth is an appropriate recipient for this work since both she - and her reign - share analogies with that of David. Elizabeth is an English David - 'wee thought the Psalmist king / Now English denized, though Hebrue born' (ll.29-30) and later this point is reiterated:

And who sees ought, but sees how justly square  
his [*sic*] haughtie Ditties to thy glorious daies?  
How well beseeming thee his Triumphs are?  
His hope, his zeale, his power plaint and praise (ll.57- 60).

The translation then introduces the subject of its joint authorship by both Philip and Mary and here she uses a weaving metaphor to describe the way in which Philip established the shape or warp of the project and Mary completed it by weaving the words of the translation so that it has become the completed cloth of a garment which can now be worn: 'I the Cloth in both our names present, / A liverie robe to bee bestowed by thee' (ll.33-34). Hannay points out that the use of the term 'liverie' is a reminder to Elizabeth that her brother died wearing Elizabeth's colours at Zutphen and that it carried with it an implied criticism of Elizabeth's handling of that campaign. The critical edge is also reinforced by the Countess's own role as one who has created a garment to celebrate Elizabeth, which is designed to also underline the Queen's position

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<sup>35</sup> Mary Sidney, "Even now that Care", in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke*, ed. by Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), I, lines 7-8, p. 102. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

as God's servant and upholder of the Protestant cause.<sup>36</sup> Sidney continues to align Elizabeth with David in the ninth stanza of the poem as she echoes the argument which prefaces the second Book of Samuel in the Geneva Bible in which David's difficulties are outlined along with his triumph:

this seconde boke declareth the noble actes of David, after the death of Saul, when he began to reigne, unto the end of his kingdome: and how the same by him was wonderfully augmented: also his great troubles and dangers, whiche he sustained bothe within his house and without: what horrible and dangerous insurrections, uprores, and treasons were wrought againste him, partelye by false counselors, fained friends and flatterers, and partelye by some of his owne children and people: and how by Goddes assistance he overcame al difficulties, and enjoyed his kingdome in rest and peace (sig. Y4<sup>v</sup>).

Sidney's poem resounds with these words and makes the analogy between Elizabeth and David clear:

For ev'n thy Rule is painted in his Raigne:  
Both cleere in right: both nigh by wrong opprest:  
And each at length (man crossing God in vaine)  
Possess of place, and each in peace possess (ll.65-68).

For Elizabeth her enemies are the 'foes of heaven', Catholic Spain led by Philip II, but with God's providence his Armadas have been thwarted: 'The very windes did on thy partie blowe / and rocks in armes thy foe men eft defie' (ll.77-78). In the final lines of the poem Mary makes another connection not only between Elizabeth and David but also herself as she alludes to Elizabeth's own efforts at composing divine poetry, when she too has sung 'what God doth' (l.96). Sidney refers to Elizabeth's translation of Margaret of Navarre's *Miroir De L'Ame Pécheresse* together with her own translation of Psalm 13, both of which had been published in 1548. The final line seems to suggest that if Elizabeth is willing to listen to God's word and fulfil her role as a David then she will be celebrated and men may 'sing' her praises.

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<sup>36</sup> Hannay, "Doo What men may Sing", p. 152.

Elizabeth did not allow Sidney's challenge to go unanswered and she responded by also employing the medium of translation. In 1593 Elizabeth undertook the translation into English of Boethius's Latin text *Consolation of Philosophy*. The work consists of a series of meditations in verse and prose on the themes of patience and overcoming adversity by exerting faith and reason. It has recently been argued by Lysbeth Benkert that Elizabeth's timing and choice of text was a direct political response to Mary Sidney's Psalm translation and that it offered a rebuttal of those criticisms levelled at the Queen in Sidney's work. In the *Consolation* Benkert notes that 'The foundation of Boethius's argument rests on a strong belief in the centrality of God to the universe' thus allowing to Elizabeth to assert her religious devotion and refute those claims that she was no longer a model of Protestant faith.<sup>37</sup> The translation also presents a counter-argument to those calls for Elizabeth to play a more decisive role in European affairs since its emphasis is upon peace, the preferred strategy of Elizabeth. Benkert concludes that Elizabeth

had a clear agenda which included the desire to reassert her threatened intellectual powers as well as the need to respond to the increasing clamor for increased military action against the Catholics.<sup>38</sup>

At those pressure points in Elizabeth's reign in 1558, 1562, 1572, 1586 and in the Sidney Psalms completed in 1593 we can see the ways in which the figure of King David has been used simultaneously to rebuke and celebrate Elizabeth.

### **Biblical Paradigms on the Elizabethan Stage**

So far in this chapter I have considered the ways in which King David has been employed in sermons, speeches and Psalm translations during Elizabeth's reign to

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<sup>37</sup> Lysbeth Benkert, 'Translation as Image-Making: Elizabeth I's Translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 6.3 (2001)

<URL:<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/06-3/benkboet.htm>> [accessed 19 January 2008]

<sup>38</sup> Benkert, 'Translation as Image-Making', (para. 20 of 20)

exhort the Queen to fulfil her duty, whether this is to marry and produce an heir, execute rebellious subjects or champion the Protestant cause in Europe. I would now like to consider these examples in conjunction with a theatrical phenomenon which saw the rise of biblical plays on the public stage during the last decades of Elizabeth's reign.

Since the holy men and women of the Old Testament had been deployed as a strategy to represent the Queen in other media, I will argue that these theatrical representations of patriarchs, such as King David, are necessarily located within the allegorical discourse of royal compliment and coercion. The plays can therefore be read as part of the textual identity that made up the figure of the Queen and can be located within the Elizabethan discourse of power. My discussion of the re-appropriation of biblical figures by Elizabethan dramatists will focus primarily upon one of only two extant biblical plays: George Peele's *David and Bethsabe*. My approach is located in the context of work in repertory studies, particularly Scott McMillin and Sally Beth MacLean's seminal study *The Queen's Men and their plays* in which they advocate a fresh approach to Elizabethan drama by shifting the focus away from the dramatist and onto the theatre companies and their repertories.<sup>39</sup> I therefore devote some discussion to the place of biblical drama in the repertories of the theatre companies which performed at the Rose and Fortune theatres, so that they are considered in terms of their place within a commercial enterprise and not simply as an isolated, disparate group. Recently Roslyn Knutson, Susan Cerasano and John H. Astington have suggested that later Elizabethan biblical plays formed part of a wider repertorial policy, whereby companies such as the Admiral's Men, for example, could build on the success of existing plays in their repertory such as *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus*, since many of these plays, including *David and Bethsabe*, recycle Marlovian themes and motifs such

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<sup>39</sup>Scott McMillin and Sally Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. xi-xvii.

as exotic locations, charismatic protagonists and stage spectacle. They also provide comparable roles for their leading actor Edward Alleyn, whose celebrity status had been confirmed by his performances in the roles of Tamburlaine, Barabas and Faustus. Building on the work of Knutson and Cerasano, I will argue that Peele's *David and Bethsabe* is one example of this latter strategy and a survey of other biblical plays, including the now lost *Nebuchadnezzar* (1596), *Judas* (1601) and *Joshua* (1601) which were commissioned for the new Fortune Theatre between 1600 and 1602 and coincided with Alleyn's return to the stage, suggest that this continued to be a popular policy. The potential subject matter of these plays indicates that biblical kings and warriors were utilised with the primary function of appealing to Alleyn's paying public.

The first part of this section of the chapter will therefore involve a fairly lengthy excursus into the area of repertory studies and an attendant consideration of *Tamburlaine*, but I suggest that detailed consideration of this material is necessary in order to understand how the iconography of Elizabeth is inflected by that of the powerful, legendary king figure as incarnated on the Elizabethan stage by Edward Alleyn.

In the subsequent section I will argue that Peele's dramatisation of the story of King David provides an important case study of the subversive potential of the stage, where the affinity between kingship and acting is doubly reinforced, not only through the ways in which David is conceived of as a role for Alleyn and is modelled upon the character of Tamburlaine, but also through Alleyn's 'doubling' of the parts of characters such as David and Tamburlaine and the implications this has upon the reception of the official uses of biblical paradigms for Elizabeth. The pairing of David and Tamburlaine on the stage marks an important watershed for the ways in which David had been used in

relation to the Queen since it presents a portrait of hyper-masculinity, emphasising David's role as a successful soldier king. As I have indicated above, David was used to support Elizabeth's identity as a providential monarch, particularly her role as defender of the Protestant faith. By dramatising David's life for the stage Peele's play presented aspects of the King's reign and personality which underlined the problematic nature of this particular figuring for Elizabeth. On the one hand, David is a successful military leader and yet he is also shown to make personal decisions which have serious repercussions for his family and kingdom. In each case these personal qualities would not have been pleasing to the Queen since they encourage comparisons which reflect upon Elizabeth's gender. Whilst David might still be used in 1588 to underline Elizabeth's defeat of the Spanish in providential terms, the wider impact of dramatising Old Testament kings to replicate Tamburlaine meant that David could be used to suggest everything that Elizabeth was not, thus emphasising the limitations of the Queen's gender. The chapter will conclude by examining Thomas Churchyard's poem 'The Fortunate Farewell to the Most Forward and Noble Earl of Essex' a text which provides an example of the ways in which King David as a figuring for the Queen could be re-fashioned to express concerns about female rule.

During the period between c.1590 and c.1602 contemporary records such as Philip Henslowe's *Diary* and the Stationers' register indicate that at least thirteen biblical plays were commissioned, written or performed for the Elizabethan theatre audience. Of these thirteen plays only two remain extant: *A Looking Glass for London and England* by Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge and George Peele's *David and Bethsabe*. Critics have certainly been puzzled by the appearance of these biblical plays between c.1590 and c.1602, particularly since medieval religious drama had been gradually

phased out through the legislation of the Protestant Tudors.<sup>40</sup> The critical responses to Peele's *David and Bethsabe* summarise some of the difficulties critics have had in explaining why a series of plays which focus upon Old Testament patriarchs and warriors should have been written during the 1590s. Peele's biblical drama appears to sit awkwardly amongst his other extant works for the stage which include the *Arraygment of Paris*, a courtly entertainment, the two histories *The Battle of Alcazar* and *Edward I* and the pastoral comedy *The Old Wives Tale*. The play itself points up its resistance to generic classification in its title, *The Love of David and Fair Bethsabe with the Tragedy of Absalon*, since the emphasis upon the king and his lover has tended to wrong-foot critics who expect that the play will focus primarily upon David's relationship with Bethsabe, when in fact it is the king's relationship with his sons, particularly Absalon, with which the play is most concerned. A.H. Bullen describes it as 'a mess of cloying sugar plums'<sup>41</sup> while Murray Roston summarises the confused nature of the critical response when he notes that 'What is really a fine biblical tragedy has thus often been judged as a drama of Renaissance love and been found wanting'.<sup>42</sup>

In the first of several important studies of the play, Inga-Stina Ewbank offers a response to the problem of the play's generic labels by redirecting the focus of criticism away from discussing the biblical sources for the play towards the play's use of Ovidian themes and language, arguing cogently for the influence of Marlowe's *Hero and*

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<sup>40</sup> See for example Michael O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Paul Whitfield White, 'Theater and Religious Culture', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 133-151.

<sup>41</sup> A.H. Bullen, *The Works of George Peele*, 2 Vols (London: Ballantyne Press, 1888), I, p. xli

<sup>42</sup> Murray Roston, *Biblical Drama in England: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 103.

*Leander*, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Chapman's *Ovids Banquet of Sence*.<sup>43</sup>

In the second article Ewbank takes up the point made by Bullen about the play's status as the 'only Elizabethan play on the subject of the House of David'<sup>44</sup> and argues that as such she is forced to consider European texts in her efforts to come to a greater understanding of Peele's play. In this Ewbank concurs with earlier scholarship which has argued that 'the Renaissance desire to turn Bible story into drama was a European, rather than a localized phenomenon'.<sup>45</sup> Elmer Blistein in his edition of *David and Bethsabe* concludes his discussion of the figure of King David in English plays with the remark:

David, then, plays a small part in the English drama before 1600. We should not be surprised, for biblical drama as a whole seemed to interest neither the Elizabethan dramatist nor his audience.<sup>46</sup>

Blistein supports his assertion by considering a small number of plays which were based either wholly or partially on the Bible and were either printed or entered in the Stationers' Register during Elizabeth's reign. There are five plays including *Jacob and Esau* which was entered in 1557/8, but not printed until 1568. The second is *Goodly Queen Hester* which was entered in the Stationers' register in 1560/1 and printed in 1561 and the third is Thomas Garter's *Susanna* which was entered in 1568/9 and printed in 1578. Arthur Golding's translation of Theodore Beza's *Abraham Sacrifiant* is also considered, together with *A Looking Glass for London and England* by Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge which was entered in 1593/4 and printed in 1594.<sup>47</sup> Peele's *David and Bethsabe* also fits this pattern here since it was entered in the Stationers' register in

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<sup>43</sup> Inga-Stina Ekeblad, 'The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe: A Note on George Peele's Biblical Drama', *English Studies*, 39 (1958), 57-62. For the sake of clarity I have referred to the author by her married name of Ewbank during the course of the chapter.

<sup>44</sup> Inga-Stina Ewbank, 'The House of David in Renaissance Drama: A Comparative Study', *Renaissance Drama*, 8 (1965), 3-40.

<sup>45</sup> Ewbank, 'The House of David in Renaissance Drama', p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Elmer M. Blistein, 'Introduction' to George Peele, *David and Bethsabe*, ed. by Elmer M. Blistein, in *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), III, p. 174.

<sup>47</sup> Blistein, 'Introduction to George Peele, *David and Bethsabe*', p. 174-175.

May 1594, with the first quarto printed in 1599. Blistein acknowledges that his criterion for identifying biblical plays of the period is potentially a restrictive one:

Perhaps other plays on biblical subjects were written during the reign of Elizabeth, but they were neither entered in the Stationers' register nor, so far as we are able to discover, printed.<sup>48</sup>

A much clearer sense of the number of biblical plays written or performed during the later part of Elizabeth's reign is provided by the account book of the owner of the Rose Theatre, Philip Henslowe, a source which is not consulted by Blistein. The *Diary* is an invaluable resource since it provides details of plays commissioned and performed which perhaps were not printed and are now lost and had not been entered in the Stationers' register. Louis B. Wright in his early study of Elizabethan biblical drama compiles a survey of biblical plays using a range of source material, including Henslowe's *Diary*, and remarks: 'That the Bible was a storehouse of material which dramatists at times used effectively on the full-grown Elizabethan stage is largely overlooked'.<sup>49</sup> Wright stops short of suggesting a detailed response to the question of why these plays flourished, arguing simply that 'the Bible was more useful in the theatres than we have been accustomed to believe'.<sup>50</sup> Oppositional texts in which puritanical writers condemn the use of biblical narratives on the stage also indicate the prevalence of biblical drama. In 1580 the author of *A second and a third blast of retrait from plaies and Theatres* indicates that Scriptural plays were readily available to a theatre audience:

The reverend word of God, and histories of the Bible set forth on the stage by these blasphemous plaiers, are so corrupted with their gestures of scurrilitie, and so interlaced with unclean, and whorish speeches, that it is not possible to draw anie profite out of the doctrine of their spiritual moralities.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Blistein, 'Introduction to George Peele, *David and Bethsabe*', p. 175.

<sup>49</sup> Louis B. Wright, 'The Scriptures and the Elizabethan Stage', *Modern Philology*, 26 (1928), 47-56 (p. 47). See also Ruth H. Blackburn, *Biblical Drama under the Tudors* (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1971), pp. 155-182.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, 'The Scriptures and the Elizabethan Stage', p. 47.

<sup>51</sup> *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theatres* (London: H. Denham, 1580), p. 103.

Similarly Phillip Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) reminds his readers that the Word of God had not been intended to

be derided, and jested at as they be in these filthie playes and enterluds on stages and scaffolds, or to be mixt and interlaced with bawdry, wanton shewes and uncomely gestures, as is used (every Man knoweth) in these playes and enterludes.<sup>52</sup>

Further evidence that Elizabethan dramatists were utilising biblical figures is Henry Crosse's *Vertues Commonwealth: Or The High-way to Honour* (1603) in which he complains

must the holy Prophets and Patriarkes be set upon a Stage, to be derided, hist, and laught at? or is it fit that the infirmities of holy men should be acted on a Stage, whereby others may be inharted to rush carelesly forward into unbrideled libertie? doubtlesse the judgement of God is not farre off from such abusers of divine mysteries.<sup>53</sup>

The list of thirteen biblical plays compiled in Table 1 of the appendix gives an overview of the plays and provides a date for when they are first recorded either in Henslowe's *Diary* or in the Stationers' Register and the company with which they are associated. The information in the second table comes from the playlists provided in the *Diary* with details relating to the performances of biblical plays between March 1592 and March 1597. The second table outlines the other plays performed in that particular weekly run, as well as the receipts received for individual plays, including the highest grossing play. The aim of using the information from the playlists demonstrates the way in which a fuller sense of the company's repertory facilitates the reassessment of these particular plays and indicates factors which contributed to their genesis. The earliest performance of a biblical play recorded by Henslowe was *A Looking Glass for London and England* which was performed twice at the Rose in March 1591, again in April that year and later

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<sup>52</sup> Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London: R. Johnes, 1583), sig. L5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Crosse, *Vertues Common-wealth: or The High-way to Honour* (London: T. Creede, 1603), sig. P3<sup>r</sup>.

in June 1592 by Lord Strange's Men.<sup>54</sup> The play proved popular in print as it was published first in 1594 and again in 1598, 1602 and 1617, with five passages from the play appearing in *England's Parnassus* in 1600. Greene's other play on a biblical subject matter was *The History or Tragedy of Job* which was entered in the Stationer's register in 1594, although it was never printed and has not survived.<sup>55</sup>

Henslowe's *Diary* refers to three lost biblical plays which were also performed at the Rose between 1591-1597, with the entries detailing the receipts for each performance. The first of these is *Abraham and Lot* which was performed three times at The Rose in January 1593 by Sussex's Men.<sup>56</sup> The second biblical play, *Esther and Ahasuerus*, was performed twice in June 1594 at Newington Butts by the Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men,<sup>57</sup> while *Nebuchadnezzar* was performed eight times at The Rose between December 1596 and March 1597 by the Lord Admiral's Men.<sup>58</sup> The play appears to have been successful as the second and third performances brought in the highest returns of all the plays performed in those particular weeks.

Later payments made by Henslowe for biblical plays which have not survived include a payment in May 1600 to William Haughton for a play called *Judas*<sup>59</sup> and in the December of the following year the accounts indicate money was given to Samuel Rowley for the completion of what appears to be Haughton's play.<sup>60</sup> In January 1601 there was a payment to Thomas Dekker for writing the prologue and epilogue to

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<sup>54</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. by R.A. Foakes 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 16-17, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Wright, 'The Scriptures and the Elizabethan Stage', p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>57</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 55-57.

<sup>59</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 135.

<sup>60</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 185-186.

*Pontius Pilate*.<sup>61</sup> In addition to the completed *Judas*, 1602 saw at least six more plays written based on figures from the Old Testament. In May, June and July a series of payments were made for a play involving Antony Munday and Thomas Dekker called *Jephthah*.<sup>62</sup> In May 1602 Henry Chettle received the first of four payments for his play *Tobias*,<sup>63</sup> while in June Samuel Rowley and Edward Jewby were paid for their play *Samson*.<sup>64</sup> In September 1602 Rowley was also paid by Henslowe for his play entitled *Joshua*.<sup>65</sup>

Table 1 indicates that of those biblical plays listed the records point to their inclusion, firstly, in the repertories of those companies at the Rose such as the Lord Strange's Men, the Queen's Men and the combined companies of the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men. Together with the lost play *Job*, Peele's *David and Bethsabe* is the only biblical play not assigned to a specific company.<sup>66</sup> The title page of the first quarto published in 1599 indicates only its popularity 'As it hath been divers times plaied on the stage'.<sup>67</sup> There is a tantalising entry for stage properties by Henslowe in October 1602 for Worcester's Men in which fourteen pence was paid to workmen for 'poleyes & worckmanshipp for to hang absolome',<sup>68</sup> which has led to speculation that it relates to a performance of Peele's *David and Bethsabe*, but unfortunately there is no further evidence which indicates that the entry refers specifically to Peele's play or to a performance of that play.<sup>69</sup> The play was entered in the Stationers' register in May

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<sup>61</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, p. 187.

<sup>62</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, pp. 200-203.

<sup>63</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, p. 200, pp. 202-203, p. 296.

<sup>64</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, p. 204.

<sup>65</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, p. 205.

<sup>66</sup> Roston, *Biblical Drama in England*, p. 100.

<sup>67</sup> Blistein, 'Introduction', pp. 185-189.

<sup>68</sup> Henslowe's *Diary*, p. 217. The entry for these stage properties in Henslowe's *Diary* in 1602 indicate that even if the play is not Peele's *David and Bethsabe* that the story of Absalon's rebellion continued to be popular on stage, particularly in the wake of the Essex rebellion.

<sup>69</sup> See Roston, *Biblical Drama in England*, p. 100.

1594 and apart from the suggestive reference to the stage properties in Henslowe's *Diary* and the appearance of three passages from the play in the anthology *England's Parnassus* in 1600 there are no further contemporary references to *David and Bethsabe*. Despite this apparent absence of material relating to the play in contemporary records, I will argue that there is evidence available which makes it possible to suggest that *David and Bethsabe* was written for the Admiral's Men, and that like the biblical plays of his contemporaries, Peele's play was destined for performance at the Rose, with Alleyn in the leading role.

One piece of evidence which links *David and Bethsabe* to the Admiral's Men is that Peele already had strong connections with the Rose and the companies which performed there, as both his histories, *The Battle of Alcazar* and *Edward I*, belonged to the repertory of plays staged between 1592 and 1596. The title page of the first quarto of *The Battle of Alcazar*, which was published in 1594, indicates that the play was performed by the Admiral's Men: 'As it was sundrie times plaied by the Lord high Admirall his seruants'.<sup>70</sup> Henslowe's *Diary* details entries for fourteen performances of a play called *Muly Mollocco* by Lord Strange's Men between February 1592 and January 1593. There has been some debate, however, as to whether *Muly Mollocco* is in fact Peele's play, referred to by Henslowe using the name of its villainous character, or whether it refers to a separate play, now lost.<sup>71</sup> Whether *Muly Mullocco* is in fact Peele's play by another name or a lost play, it is still possible to make a number of points about the play's role in the repertory which provide important contextual information relevant to the biblical plays under discussion. Firstly, the play appears to

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Edelman, 'Introduction' to George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, in *The Stukeley Plays*, ed. by Charles Edelman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>71</sup> For discussion of whether *Muly Mullocco* and *Alcazar* are the same play see Charles Edelman, 'Introduction', pp. 23-24 and also Roslyn L. Knutson, 'Marlowe Reruns: Repertorial Commerce and Marlowe's Plays in Revival', in *Marlowe's Empery: Expanding His Critical Contexts*, ed. by Sara Munson Deats and Robert A. Logan (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), pp. 25-42 (pp. 28-29).

have been popular as on three occasions it was the highest grossing play during the weekly run of plays performed. Secondly, Roslyn L. Knutson has argued that one of the strategies employed by the companies which owned Marlowe's plays was to build 'a complementary repertory that duplicated, exploited, or exaggerated certain of their features'.<sup>72</sup> One example of this strategy at work can be seen in relation to performances of *Muly Mullocco* and *The Jew of Malta* by Lord Strange's Men at the Rose between 1592 and 1593, when the company sought to capitalise on the success of Marlowe's play by pairing it with other plays in the repertory that would complement it. One such play is *Muly Mullocco* with its Mediterranean locale and a Machiavellian protagonist. Table three indicates that *The Jew of Malta* and *Muly Mullocco* were frequently performed during the same weekly run during this period, and Knutson notes that the scheduling of these plays indicates a deliberate strategy at work since on at least four occasions *The Jew of Malta* and *Muly Mullocco* are performed on consecutive days, thereby reinforcing the connections between the plays.<sup>73</sup> Although Henslowe's play lists cannot furnish us with details of the performance history of *David and Bethsabe*, it is still possible to argue that the play is a product of the reportorial strategy suggested by Knutson. Peele deliberately replicates aspects of stage spectacle from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, including scenes of siege warfare with vaunting between characters upon city walls, together with the hanging of characters either from walls or in the case of Absalon from a tree.

Whilst the influence of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* on those plays termed the 'Sons of Tamburlaine'<sup>74</sup> has been discussed at length, including Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, it

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<sup>72</sup> Knutson, 'Marlowe Reruns', pp. 25-42.

<sup>73</sup> Knutson, 'Marlowe Reruns', pp. 28-29.

<sup>74</sup> G.K. Hunter, 'The Emergence of the University Wits: Early Tragedy', in *English Drama 1586-1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 22-92 (p. 49). See

seems that the influence of this theatrical smash hit was more pervasive and wide ranging than has been previously supposed. If we begin by examining some of the strategies employed by Peele in *The Battle of Alcazar* to allude to *Tamburlaine* it allows us to recognise that this same strategy is also at work in *David and Bethsabe*. When Muly Mahamet first appears on stage in Act I, scene 2, he enters the stage in his chariot. This stage spectacle echoes those famous scenes from *Tamburlaine Part Two* when Tamburlaine appears on stage in his chariot drawn by the kings of Trebizon and Sonia and then by Orcanes, King of Natolia and the King of Jerusalem. It is this scene which is later parodied by Shakespeare in *Henry IV part 2* when Pistol demands

Shall pack-horses  
And hollow pampered jades of Asia,  
Which cannot go but thirty miles a day,  
Compare with Caesars, and with Cannibals  
And Troiant Greeks?<sup>75</sup>

Here Peele begins by making a visual homage to Tamburlaine, employing the iconic image of Tamburlaine in his chariot. To reinforce this visual connection with Marlowe's play Muly Mahamet's speech echoes Tamburlaine's dying words when he dismisses the power of the Turkish king to challenge his right to the throne:

Convey Tamburlaine into our Afric here,  
To chastise and to menace lawful kings.  
Tamburlaine triumph not, for thou must die.  
As Philip did, Caesar, and Caesar's peers.<sup>76</sup>

In *David and Bethsabe* Peele once again alludes to Marlowe's play with a visual homage in a scene which recalls several iconic moments from *Tamburlaine Part Two*.

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also Peter Berek, 'Tamburlaine's Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation Before 1593', *Renaissance Drama*, 13 (1982), 55-82.

<sup>75</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), II.4.163-167. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>76</sup> George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, in *The Stukeley Plays*, ed. by Charles Edelman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), I.2.35-38. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

After the play's opening exchanges between David and Bethsabe the scene shifts to preparations for war against the Ammonites, as David's army, led by his captain Joab lays siege to the city of Rabbah. As in *The Battle of Alcazar*, the parallel is made in the stage direction as the inhabitants appear on the city walls: '*Hanon with King Machaas, and others, upon the wals*'.<sup>77</sup> The scene in which the leader of an attacking army addresses a besieged city is reminiscent firstly of *Tamburlaine Part Two* in Act III, scene 3, when Theridamas and Techelles arrive at the walls of Balsera and speak to the Captain and his wife Olympia, and the stage directions note '*Summon the battle. [Enter above] Captain with his wife [Olympia] and son*'.<sup>78</sup> They refuse to surrender and the town is taken. The second and perhaps most famous example of this scenario is in Act 5, scene 1: '*Enter the Governor of Babylon upon the walls with [Maximus and] others*'. The governor refuses to agree to a truce and the town is taken; Tamburlaine then orders 'Hang him in chains upon the city walls / And let my soldiers shoot the slave to death' (V.1.108-109). The scene's dramatic impact is recorded in a letter from Philip Gaudy, a law student, to his father concerning a performance of a play in November 1587:

My L. Admyrall his men and players having a devyse in ther playe to tye one of their fellows to a poste and so to shoote him to deathe, having borrowed their callyvers one of the players handes swerved his peece being charged with bullet missed the fellowe he aymed at and killed a child, and a woman great with child forthwith, and hurt an other man in the head very soore.<sup>79</sup>

It is not clear from the records which play was being performed, but the company was the Lord Admiral's Men and it is generally accepted that the play was *Tamburlaine Part Two*.<sup>80</sup> The violent fate of the Babylonian governor is recalled in Peele's play by the

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<sup>77</sup> George Peele, *David and Bethsabe*, ed. by Elmer M. Blistein, in *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), II.186. sd. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>78</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great Parts One & Two*, ed. by J. S. Cunningham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), III.3. sd. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>79</sup> Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 232.

<sup>80</sup> Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, p. 232.

staging of the death of Absalon.<sup>81</sup> During Absalon's rebellion against his father he becomes caught by the hair in a tree and is an easy target for David's soldiers. The stage directions indicate his predicament: '*The battell, and Absalon hangs by the haire*'(ll.1469 sd). Joab, David's captain, discovers the prince and stabs him for his treachery:

But preach I to thee, while I should revenge  
Thy cursed sinne that staineth Israel,  
And makes her fields blush with her childrens blood?  
Take that as part of thy deserved plague,  
Which worthily, no torment can inflict (ll.1524-1528).

Absalon continues to hang in the tree and lament, he is then stabbed again, this time by more of Joab's men, who finally kill him:

Our captaine Joab hath begun to us,  
And heres an end to thee, and all thy sinnes.  
Come let us take the beauteous rebel downe,  
And in some ditch amidst this darksome wood,  
Burie his bulke beneath a heape of stones (ll.1556-1560).

The parallels between David and Tamburlaine are developed further in Peele's play when David visits the city of Rabbah in person. Hanon once again appears on the city walls indicated by Joab's line: 'see where Hannon showes him on the wals' (l.777), thus recalling their encounter earlier in the play. The vaunting between David and Hanon underlines the parallels between David and Tamburlaine as Peele's king is described as the scourge of God by Joab, indicating that it is his destiny is to defeat the Gentiles in God's name: 'Israel may, as it is promised, / Subdue the daughters of the Gentils Tribes' (ll. 779-780). Joab warns Hanon that

the God of Israel hath said,  
David the King shall weare that crowne of thine,  
That weighs a Talent of the finest gold,  
And triumph in the spoile of Hannon's towne (ll.802-805).

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<sup>81</sup> There is also a hanging scene in John Pickering's play *Horestes* (1567) when Egistus is executed and Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1582-1592) also stages the hanging of Pedringano.



importance of the Old Testament as a source of inspiration for Elizabethan dramatists keen to cash in on the popularity of *Tamburlaine* and these are crucial for understanding the ways in which biblical analogues which formed part of the discourse of royal power could be appropriated and refashioned by the stage.

Firstly, both men begin their careers as shepherds. As a youth David is chosen by God to fight the giant Goliath with only the weapons of a shepherd, a sling and five stones, and yet he goes on to defeat the Philistine and become the great leader of the Israelites. *Tamburlaine* as a Scythian appears in shepherd's clothing in the opening scenes of Part One of the play and his transformation from shepherd to warrior is enacted on stage as he removes his shepherd's garb and replaces it with armour: 'Lie here, ye weeds that I disdain to wear! / This complete armour and this curtle-axe / Are adjuncts more beseeeming *Tamburlaine*' (1.I.2.41-43).

The enemies of David and *Tamburlaine* use their lowly origins to insult both men. In the first book of Samuel, Goliath scorns David's youthful appearance and his weapons as he is armed with only a shepherd's bag, a sling and a staff:

And when the Philistine looked about and saw David he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?<sup>84</sup>

The kings and rulers whom *Tamburlaine* challenges curse him as 'A Scythian shepherd' (1.I.2.154), a 'devilish shepherd' (1.II.6.1) and a shepherd turned fox: 'a fox in midst of harvest-time / Doth prey upon my flocks of passengers' (1.I.1.31-32) and 'shepherd's issue, base-born *Tamburlaine*' (2.III.5.77) In *David and Bethsabe* David's

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<sup>84</sup> *The Bible: Authorised King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1 Samuel 17. 42-43, p. 353.

enemies, like those of Tamburlaine, insult the Israelites by referring to the humble origins of their leader. Hanon, the King of Ammon, sneers,

What would the shepherds dogs of Israel  
Snatch from the mighty issue of King Ammon,  
The valiant Amonites, and haughty Syrians? (ll.187-189)

King Machaas also insults Joab and David in this vein, emphasising David's role as a shepherd:

Hence thou that bearest poor Israel's shepherds hook,  
The proud lieutenant of that base borne King,  
And keep within the compass of his fold,  
For if ye seek to feed on Ammon's fruits,  
And stray into the Syrians' fruitful Medes,  
The mastives of our land shall weary ye  
And pull the weasels from your greedy throats (ll.202-208).

Both Tamburlaine and David also share the quality of being unscrupulous when it comes to gaining power. Tamburlaine, for example, double crosses Cosroe, having helped him to defeat his foolish brother the king Mycetes. Cosroe misjudges Tamburlaine's ambition when he thinks that he will be satisfied with the role of regent and commander of the Persian armies, but Tamburlaine simply defeats Cosroe and as he dies Tamburlaine's triumph is marked by his acquisition of the crown: '*He [TAMBURLAINE] takes the crown and puts it on*' (1.I.2.7.sd). Usumcasane, Techelles and Theridamus then pledge their allegiance to Tamburlaine and he remarks

So, now it is more surer on my head,  
Than if the gods had held a parliament,  
And all pronounced me king of Persia (1.II.7.65-67).

In Books one and two of Samuel David urges a war against the House of Saul, despite promising Saul himself that he would not. In 1 Samuel 24:22 Saul urges: 'Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not destroy my seed after me' (sig. Y2r). The editors of the Oxford World's Classics edition of the King James Bible, Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, note that David is

a most pleasing personality, very attractive to women and men alike – a great leader of men and follower of women – a brilliant military strategist, a first rate poet and singer of songs, and a ruthless thug, or Mafioso godfather when occasion demands.<sup>85</sup>

Like King David, Tamburlaine was celebrated as a great warrior in contemporary translated accounts of his career. In several of the sources available to Marlowe, including Sir Thomas Fortescue's *The Forest or Collection of Histories* (1571) and George Whetstone's *The English Mirror* (1586), Tamburlaine's military achievements are applauded. Fortescue, for example, offers a favourable comparison with Alexander the Great, an accolade all the more impressive since Tamburlaine began as 'a poor labourer or husbandman':

In the end he became lord of such great kingdoms and seigniories, that he was in no point inferior to that prince of the world Alexander; or if he were, he yet came next him of any other that ever lived.<sup>86</sup>

Whetstone continues in a similar vein

Among the illustrious captains Romans and Grecians none of all their martial arts deserve to be proclaimed with more renown than the conquest and military disciplines of Tamburlaine.<sup>87</sup>

Despite his humble origins it is Tamburlaine's skill on the battlefield and his political cunning which confirm his reputation and contemporary reactions to Marlowe's protagonist emphasise his power and success. Richard Levin argues that the play's handling of Tamburlaine's career was intended to prompt admiration in the audience rather than put forward a moral judgement and this is reflected in the ways in which many of the contemporary allusions to Tamburlaine make use of the epithet 'mighty'.<sup>88</sup>

The address to the reader by the printer Richard Jones is a case in point:

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<sup>85</sup> *The Bible: Authorised King James Version*, p. 342.

<sup>86</sup> Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman, eds, *Christopher Marlowe: The Plays and their sources* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 83.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas and Tydeman, eds, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 93.

<sup>88</sup> Richard Levin, 'The Contemporary Perception of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 1 (1984), 51-70 (p. 56).

Gentlemen and courteous readers whosoever: I have here published in print for your sakes the two tragical discourses of the Scythian shepherd Tamburlaine, that became so great a conqueror and so mighty a monarch.

The figure of Tamburlaine, therefore, had a particular resonance during the years of the Armada threat. James Shapiro has noted that despite being written a year before the first attempted invasion the play's 'exploration of conquest, honour, social mobility and the representation of power made it in retrospect a paradigmatic Armada play'.<sup>89</sup> The suggestion that Elizabethans regarded Tamburlaine as a figure to be admired and even emulated is further evidenced in Peele's poem 'Farewell to Norris and Drake' which was written on the occasion of England's counter-Armada to Portugal under Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Norris in 1589. Peele suggests that while the men may bid goodbye to life at home they should remember to emulate those figures who have graced the stage in their endeavours against the Spanish:

Bid Theaters and proude Tragedians,  
Bid Mahomets Poo, and mightie Tamburlaine,  
King Charlemaine, Tom Stukeley and the rest  
Adiewe.<sup>90</sup>

The play itself invites its audience into a relationship of identification with Tamburlaine when it challenges them to 'View but his picture in this tragic glass / And then applaud his fortunes as you please' (1.0.7-8). The motif of reflection which begins in this first prologue suggests that in fact what we see is a mirror image of ourselves. This process of identification with Marlowe's protagonist, however, problematises the very issue of English national identity, since Tamburlaine is not simply an ambitious shepherd but a Scythian and this had a specific set of negative associations for the Elizabethans since, as Thomas Cartelli has noted, the Scythians were regarded as a barbarous nation and the antithesis of civilised society. The Irish were frequently described as being descended

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<sup>89</sup> James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 352.

<sup>90</sup> George Peele, 'A Farewell Entituled to the Famous and Fortunate Generalls of our English Forces: Sir John Norris and Sir Frauncis Drake' (London: J. Charlewood, 1589), sig. A3<sup>v</sup>.

from the Scythians in order to justify the brutal programme of repression against the Irish during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Tamburlaine's acts of conquest have also been identified with Spanish colonialism and Marlowe may have been alluding to the career of the conquistador Lope de Aguirre when he depicts events from Tamburlaine's career.<sup>91</sup> Like Tamburlaine, the Spanish conquistadors were used as models for English adventurers such as Sir Walter Raleigh in their undertakings in Ireland and the New World. In this way the desire for success aligns the English coloniser with the practices of the very enemy they have previously condemned. David, like Tamburlaine, is a charismatic leader; both exemplify military valour and both are prepared to perform acts of extreme violence to secure their aims. David also has the added advantage of being God's anointed servant and the potency of this quality can be seen in the responses to the Armada of 1588. Just as Tamburlaine provides a model of the ways in which issues such as nationalism were mediated during the period c.1588, David also provides another powerful example of the ways in which contemporary perceptions of English national identity were formulated. The defeat of the first Armada by apparently providential winds was celebrated in a number of publications such as Edmund Bunny's *The Coronation of David* and John Prime's sermon 'The Consolations of David, briefly applied to Queen Elizabeth'. Each of these texts drew an analogy between the trials faced by England at the hands of the Spanish and their allies with the persecution of David and the Israelites at the hands of the Philistines. In Bunny's tract England is presented as the defender of the Protestant faith and like the young David before Goliath triumphs over a more powerful adversary

But now we also (God be prayed) have our David in the power of the Gospell, that Jesus Christ (the sonne of David) hath now in these days sent unto us. When our brethren disdained to heare us talke of any such matter; when the wiser sort thought it impossible; without Sauls armour without any earthly helpe

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<sup>91</sup> Thomas Cartelli, 'Marlowe and the New World', in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 110-118.

whatsoever: upon assurance of such like matters before achieved with a sling and a stone is Goliath with great courage incountered, and with as good success, in a manner cleane overthrowne.<sup>92</sup>

Prime's sermon makes explicit the parallels between the Queen and King David when he describes Elizabeth as 'a daughter of David [who] had as great deliuerances as ever David had'(B2<sup>r</sup>).<sup>93</sup> England's position as a nation favoured by God is emphasised by the defeat of the mighty Spanish fleet:

not an angel but God himself had a favourable eye toward us, an holy hand over us and that he was as much with us as ever any nation, when not withstanding all their crakes and famous Dons and duotie aduentures and painted hauntes, we lost by them who are now sent home a wrong way, neither man, nor ship nor boat, nor mast of ship (B7<sup>v</sup>).

Here Prime stresses the equivalence between David and Elizabeth as God's anointed servants to underline England's position as a providential nation and to celebrate their role as the underdogs in the war with Spain. The discussion of *Tamburlaine* in this section of the chapter demonstrates the way in which Marlowe's protagonist is part of the story of how King David is constructed in the late 1580s and 1590s, and is therefore part of the story about how Elizabeth is constructed in terms of David.

In the context of the Armada and the affinities shared by *Tamburlaine* and King David it is possible to look briefly at an example of a subsequent biblical play and conjecture that it was the qualities shared by both the Scythian and the Old Testament king which which partly motivated the dramatists responsible for these plays.

The lost play *Nebuchadnezzar* is a case in point. Table 2 in the appendix indicates that *Nebuchadnezzar* appears to have been a successful play for the Admiral's Men, with entries for a series of eight performances between December 1597 and March 1598,

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<sup>92</sup> Edmund Bunny, *The Coronation of David* (London: T. Orwin, 1588), p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> John Prime, 'The Consolations of David, Breefly applied to Queen Elizabeth' (Oxford: J. Barnes, 1588), sig. B7<sup>v</sup>.

with several performances bringing in the highest receipts for that week. The play poses a number of difficulties, however, as there are no existing documents which record either the date when it was composed or first performed. Despite the absence of an extant playtext or dates relating to its composition or first performance it is still possible to suggest reasons why the figure of Nebuchadnezzar may have been the subject of an Elizabethan play. The king appears in the Old Testament books of Daniel, Jeremiah and Judith in the Apocrypha. In the Book of Daniel Nebuchadnezzar is depicted as a proud king who is punished by God for bragging of his own power and capability. In Daniel 4.30 the king is cast out to live as a beast for seven years:

And he was driven from men, and did eat grasse as the oxen, and his bodie was wet with dewe of heauen, til his heeres were growen as egles (feathers) and his nailes like birds (clawes) (sig. 3L5<sup>v</sup>).

Nebuchadnezzar is frequently used in homiletic literature as an exemplar of pride, but it seems that the aspects of Nebuchadnezzar's story which would have had greater appeal for an Elizabethan dramatist are that like King David, Nebuchadnezzar was also famous as a warrior king and is remembered for his military campaigns against Egypt and the kingdom of Judah. Historical accounts of the king also record his siege and capture of the city of Jerusalem in 597 BC.<sup>94</sup> In the Book of Jeremiah he is described as God's instrument that will be used to punish the sinful city of Jerusalem. The prophet describes the coming of the Babylonian king in ways that would no doubt have appealed to a dramatist aiming to write a play which would recall Tamburlaine:

Beholde, he shal come up as the cloudes, and his charets (shalbe) as a tempest: his horses are lighter then egles (sig. 3C3<sup>r</sup>).

From the biblical sources it seems that the play about Nebuchadnezzar could easily reproduce those popular motifs of war, particularly siege warfare, as well as instances of physical violence. Jeremiah 52.0-11 provides one such example when he describes

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<sup>94</sup> 'Nebuchadnezzar II', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article~9055140>> [Accessed 1 August 1 2007]

Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of Zedekiah, the king of Jerusalem, who is captured and tortured by his enemy:

the king of Babel slewe the sonnes of Zedekiah, before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. The he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and the King of Babel bounde him in chaines, and carried him to Babel, and put him in prison til the day of his death. (sig. 3G1').

Although discussion of the content of the play can only ever be based on speculation, if we look at the plays performed during the weeks that *Nebuchadnezzar* featured in the Admiral's repertory, we can see that it appears on four occasions with the play called *Stukeley*, an abbreviation for the play *The Famous History of the Death and Life of Captain Thomas Stukeley*. *Stukeley* had itself been written partly in response to Peele's *Alcazar* and is also concerned with war and battles of conquest in North Africa and the Mediterranean and would no doubt have served as a useful pairing with *Nebuchadnezzar*. Whilst the Babylonian king provided another example of kingship which emphasised an aggressive and successful foreign policy, *Nebuchadnezzar* had also been the subject of homiletic literature, such as Anthony Munday's *The Mirror of Mutabilitie* (1579) which offers examples of the seven deadly sins exemplified by figures from scripture and history. Each famous character is presented in dialogue with the author, offering commentary on their actions. In Book One for example, *Nebuchadnezzar* is presented as an exemplar of pride and monarchical tyranny and he recounts his abuses of power:

I am that king which did the Image frame,  
Wherto all men should treble homage give:  
Those that rebeld should taste the scorching flame,  
This in my Pride I use while I did live.  
Blood, blood, was all I dayly did desire:  
Such was the rule wherto I did aspire.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Anthony Munday, *The Mirroure of Mutabilitie, or Principall Part of the Mirroure for Magistrates* (London: J. Allde, 1579), sig. A2<sup>v</sup>. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

Nebuchadnezzar concludes his story with a warning to those kings who might also think to rule with absolute impunity:

You Potentates that rule in high degree,  
Remember how your state is heere unsure:  
And though on Earth a while your bidings be,  
It is but lent, it dooth not aye indure.  
Think as to day your life you doo sustayne:  
To morrowe dead, the prooffe heerof is playne.

Think not to live as Gods upon the land,  
Remember still that Pride will have a fall:  
Consider you are Subject to Gods hand,  
And in a moment passe away you shall.  
Live stil to dye, that you may redy be:  
When God shall call eche one in his degree (sig. A3<sup>v</sup>).

The lost play *Nebuchadnezzar* provides yet another example of the story of a biblical king dramatised for the stage. In view of the examples provided in the first section of this chapter and in the introduction which compare Elizabeth to Old Testament kings, such as David and Solomon and which serve both a celebratory and admonitory role, one cannot help but think that there is a clear comparison suggested with the Queen in connection with this rich range of stage representations of how to be a monarch.

The repertory of the Admiral's Men was shaped not only by the popularity of Marlowe's plays, but also by the acting of Edward Alleyn, the company's leading man during the 1590s, who played the roles of Tamburlaine, Barabas and Doctor Faustus and had contributed to their success. Alleyn's physical presence and his acting style suggest that he was right for these large central roles. Susan Cerasano has argued that based on the sizing of Alleyn's signet ring the actor was likely to be an imposing figure, probably above average Elizabethan height.<sup>96</sup> The part of Tamburlaine would require that the actor was both physically impressive with vocal talents to match. Alleyn's depiction of Tamburlaine and the other Marlovian protagonists he played clearly made an

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<sup>96</sup> S. P. Cerasano, 'Tamburlaine and Edward Alleyn's Ring', *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 171-79.

impression upon his audience. In an important essay on the influence of Alleyn's celebrity status upon the repertory of the Admiral's men, Susan Cerasano has argued that based upon the roles Alleyn is known to have performed with the company it is possible to conjecture that he may well have performed the central role in other plays in the repertory. Cerasano identifies the two biblical plays Greene's *The Tragedy of Job* and Peele's *David and Bethsabe* which she argues would have provided 'iconic Alleyn-style roles'.<sup>97</sup> Cerasano goes on to note that

The biblical history, while not prominent in the company's repertory in 1587, soon became so, and it remained popular with the company's audience well into the early seventeenth century.<sup>98</sup>

Further evidence that biblical plays like Peele's *David and Bethsabe* were written with Alleyn in mind can be traced if we return to the list of biblical plays listed in Table 1. Although it is difficult to date individual plays precisely it is possible to see from the table that they can be divided into two groups. The first contains those biblical plays written or performed between c. 1590 and 1597: *A Looking Glass for London and England*, *Abraham and Lot*, *Esther and Ahasuerus*, *The History or Tragedy of Job*, *David and Bethsabe* and *Nebuchadnezzar*. The second group belong to the period c. 1600-1602 including *Judas* (1600/1601), *Pontius Pilate*, *Jephthah*, *Tobias*, *Samson* and *Joshua*. In the autumn of 1597 Alleyn stepped down temporarily from his position as the leading actor for the Admiral's Men and 'retired' from the stage. Henslowe alludes to his son-in-law's departure in an entry in his diary when summarising the expenditure for costumes which he records as a 'not of all suche goods as I have Bowght for playnge sence my sonne Edward allen leafte lange [sic]'.<sup>99</sup> Alleyn's retirement from the stage in 1597 is now thought to have been a calculated decision by Alleyn and his father-in-law

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<sup>97</sup> S. P. Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn, the New Model Actor, and the Rise of the Celebrity in the 1590s', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 18 (2005), 47-58 (p. 49).

<sup>98</sup> Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn, the New Model Actor', p. 49.

<sup>99</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 83-84.

Philip Henslowe as both were involved in a number of business ventures. Alleyn in particular was involved in attempts to secure the Mastership of the Bears and in negotiations for securing the lease for the site on which the new Fortune theatre would be constructed.<sup>100</sup> In 1600 the Admiral's Men relocated from the Rose on the South Bank to the Fortune theatre in the parish of Cripplegate, which stood outside the jurisdiction of the City authorities with the older theatres such as the Theatre and the Curtain. When the new theatre opened Alleyn returned to the stage no doubt to help draw the crowds away from the Chamberlain's Men at the Globe. The payments for the second group of biblical plays beginning in 1600 coincide with the opening of the Fortune and the need for new plays to satisfy audience demand. The Old Testament figures around whom the plays were organised indicate that dramatists were writing plays which would offer a platform for Alleyn's talents and his association with those earlier Marlovian roles he had made his own. Again, a brief examination of the biblical figures selected indicate that this was the most likely strategy at work. It has been suggested by Michael O'Connell that the play called *Judas* which is begun by Haughton in 1600 and is completed in 1601 by Rowley is more likely to be concerned with the figure of Judas Maccabeus from the Apocrypha, rather than that of Judas Iscariot, since the latter's story would require the representation of Christ on stage, something which had been prohibited.<sup>101</sup> Judas Maccabeus is a more likely choice since his story is one which would be more in keeping with the kinds of plays the Admiral's men favoured as he is a great warrior who is chosen by the Israelites to rise up against King Antiochus:

So he gave his people great honour: he put on a breastplate as a gyant, and armed him selfe, and set the battle in array, and defended the campe with the sworde. In his acts he was like a lyon, and as a lyons whelp roaring after the pray (sig. 3C1<sup>v</sup>).

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<sup>100</sup> S. P. Cerasano, 'Edward Alleyn's "Retirement" 1597-1600', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 10 (1998), 98-112.

<sup>101</sup> O'Connell, *The Idolatrous Eye*, p. 111.

John H. Astington in his discussion of Alleyn's final season at the Fortune theatre also notes that new biblical plays such as *Samson*, *Joshua* and *Jephthah* were written for Alleyn with an eye to reprising earlier roles:

There seems to be little doubt that Alleyn would have played the title role in all these, and they may have been written with him in mind, in that Samson is a kind of Hercules, and Joshua a kind of Tamburlaine.<sup>102</sup>

Joshua, as Moses' captain who leads the Israelites across the Jordan to establish by conquest the Promised Land, is another appropriate choice, as Astington points out, since the Book of Joshua provides the story of the siege and destruction of the city of Jericho, together with an alarming succession of wars and battles, indeed chapter 12 consists simply of a list of the thirty one kings defeated by Joshua. Both Judas and Joshua may have been suggested to Haughton and Rowley as potentially suitable figures from the Old Testament to dramatise from scrutinising the plays which existed in the repertory of the Admiral's Men. Judas and Joshua, like King David, belonged to the group known as the Nine Worthies, a list of men who exemplified martial valour and were drawn from Pagan, Old Testament and Christian sources.<sup>103</sup> The classical examples were Hector, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar and the Christian examples were King Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon. Henslowe's *Diary* indicates that the Admiral's Men had performed the no longer extant play *Godfrey of Boulogne* between July 1594 and September 1595, which seems to have been a play in two parts as the entries refer to receipts for '2pte of godfrey of bullen'.<sup>104</sup> Godfrey was the Duke of Lorraine and descendant of Charlemagne, who was famous for leading the

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<sup>102</sup> John H. Astington, 'Playing the Man: Acting at the Red Bull and Fortune', *Early Theatre*, 9.2 (2006), 130-143 (p.133).

<sup>103</sup> *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 621-622. For another example of the use of 'The Nine Worthies' in Elizabethan literature see Peele's poem 'The Honour of the Garter', written in 1593 to commemorate the investiture of Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland as a Knight of the Garter.

<sup>104</sup> *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 22-25, p. 28, p. 31.

first crusade in 1095 and ruled Jerusalem after the defeat of the Muslim forces.<sup>105</sup> There is some indication from the performance lists that *Godfrey of Boulogne*, like *Muly Mullocco* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, had been deliberately paired with the lost play *Mahomet*, so that they might complement one another. There were three occasions during August and September 1594 when a performance of *Godfrey* was followed by a performance of *Mahomet*, suggesting that the plays were grouped thematically to capitalise on their shared subject matter of foreign conquest and battles against the Turks.

As I have indicated in my introductory chapter the power of the theatre lay in its performative energies. The effect of representing a monarch on stage was one of demystification, so that tragedies, histories and biblical drama were involved in making the sacred seem commonplace. This point was made by Sir Henry Wotton in his assessment of a performance of *Henry VIII*:

The King's players had a new play, called *All is true*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the Knights of the order with their Georges and garters, the Guards with their embroidered coats, and the like: sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous.<sup>106</sup>

An actor like Edward Alleyn, who had a considerable repertoire which consisted of parts which would allow him to showcase his own particular acting style illustrates an important way in which the theatre could signal the affinity between the stage and the office of kingship. Alleyn's repertoire foregrounds the way in which the skills required to play King David are also the same skills needed to play Tamburlaine and vice versa. The relationship between Alleyn and the roles written for him is one of the ways in

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<sup>105</sup> 'Godfrey of Bouillon', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

<<http://search.eb.com/eb/article~9037164>> [Accessed August 1, 2007]

<sup>106</sup> See Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 84.

which the theatre serves to complicate the orthodox views of kingship found in official sermons and other texts.

In many respects Peele's portrait of the mechanisms of kingship in *David and Bethsabe* illustrates the potency of biblical analogues for the Elizabethan state. The play's dramatisation of David's reign offers support for many of the political and religious orthodoxies expressed in the cycle of Elizabethan homilies. In 'An Homily Against Disobedience and Willful Rebellion' (1570) for example, the argument for kings and queens as God's deputies on earth is clearly sounded, whilst flatly denying the possibility of kingship secured by the exercise of free will or ambition:

It is most evident that Kinges, queens and other princes (for he speaketh of authoritie and power be it in men or women) are ordained of God, are to be obeyed and honoured of their subjectes; that such subjectes as are disobedient or rebellious against their princes disobey God and procure their owne damnation: that the government of princes is a great blessing of God geven for the common wealth, especially of the good and godly: for the comfort and cherishing of whom God setteth up princes and on the contrary part to the feare and for the punishment of the evyll and wicked. Finally that if servauntes ought to obey their maisters not only beyng gentle, but such as be forward: as well and much more ought subjectes to be obedient not only to their good and curteous but also to their sharpe and rigorous princes. It commeth therefore neither of chance or fortune (as they terme it) not of th'ambition of mortall men and women clyming up of theyr owne accorde to dominion that there be kinges, Queenes, princes and other governours over men being their subjectes; but all Kynges, Queenes and other governours are speciallye appointed by the ordinaunce of God.<sup>107</sup>

In Peele's play David is depicted as God's chosen servant and his divine right to rule permeates the play. Even in the instance of David's sinfulness God addresses David through the prophet Nathan:

I thee anointed King in Israel,  
And sav'd thee from the tyranny of Saul.  
Thy maisters house I gave thee to possesse,  
His Wives into thy bosome did I give,  
And Juda and Jerusalem withall  
And might (thy knowest) if this had ben too small,

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<sup>107</sup> *An Homelie Against Disobedience and Wylfull Rebellion* (London: R. Jugge, 1570), sigs. A3<sup>v</sup> – A4<sup>r</sup>.

Have given thee more.  
Wherefore then hast thou gone so far astray,  
And hast done evill, and sinned in my sight? (ll.636-644)

In the opening scenes of the play it is also clear that David has God's authorisation to pursue the war against the Ammonites and Joab's speech describes His involvement:

He casts his sacred eyesight from on high,  
And sees your foes run seeking for their deaths,  
Laughing their labours and their hopes to scorn (ll.168-170).

Finally, after the rebellion of Absalon, David with God's approval confirms that Solomon will be his successor:

Nathan, thou Prophet, sprung from Jesses root,  
I promise thee, and lovely Bethsabe,  
My Salomon shall governe after me (ll. 1776-1778).

Alleyn's role as Tamburlaine, however, offers a direct challenge to the theory of divinely sanctioned kings which Peele's play ostensibly presents, as the Scythian has little regard for the concept of kingship as a sacred office. As a contemporary audience watched Alleyn play David rehearsing the more conservative ideology their experience of his Tamburlaine (and, we may surmise of him doing those other biblical monarchs) made it possible for the audience to hold the two conflicting perspectives in their minds at once.

As we have seen in his dealings with Mycetes, for Tamburlaine kingship is something which can be seized by those individuals with the power to assert their own will. This point is driven home by the metatheatrical nature of the play, in which the performative qualities of kingship are underlined by Tamburlaine who utilises an array of props and costumes to display his power. Playing the part of the king has the effect of demystifying the sources of authority, so that just as the trappings of office can be appropriated by a Scythian shepherd, so the play suggests that anyone can play the king.

This debunking of royal authority is further reinforced when Tamburlaine challenges the concept of primogeniture as he tells his youngest son Celebinus

If thou exceed thy elder brothers' worth  
And shine in complete virtue more than they,  
Thou shalt be king before them (2.I.3.50-52).

For Tamburlaine personal aptitude counts for more than established codes concerning succession. From the outset the play signals its rejection of the didactic function of drama, inviting the audience in the prologue to make up their own minds and 'applaud his fortunes as you please' (0.8). Greenblatt suggests that the play 'repeatedly teases its audience with the form of the cautionary tale, only to violate the convention'.<sup>108</sup> The repeated use of the epithet 'The Scourge of God' throughout the play by Tamburlaine and his enemies is a case in point. Marlowe is quite clearly invoking the Christian framework of his sources in which Tamburlaine, like the Assyrian king described in the book of Isaiah, will wage a war against God's people and then be cut down.<sup>109</sup> Whilst Battenhouse suggests that Tamburlaine's death is evidence that 'God is casting his scourge into the fire' and that the plays 'offer one of the most grandly moral spectacles in the whole realm of English drama'<sup>110</sup>, the play itself is deeply ambivalent about who or what is responsible for Tamburlaine's demise. The repeated allusion to a concept associated with an Old Testament God who is actively involved in the affairs of men has the effect, however, of emphasising the lack of divine intervention in the world of the play. It seems that Marlowe deliberately reuses Tamburlaine's title as the 'scourge of God' to invoke a Christian God, only then to make Him notable by His absence. On the other hand, his death has been linked to his burning of the Qu'ran and his boast

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<sup>108</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 202.

<sup>109</sup> See Stevie Simkin, *A Preface to Marlowe* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 90-98.

<sup>110</sup> Roy Battenhouse, *Marlowe's Tamburlaine: A Study in Renaissance Moral Philosophy* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941), p. 257. For a more recent assessment of this epithet see Mark Hutchings, 'Marlowe's "Scourge of God"', *Notes and Queries*, 51 (2004), 244-247.

My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,  
Slew all his priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,  
And yet I live untouched by Mahomet (2.5.1.179-181).

Yet this suggests that divine retribution comes via Mohamed and thus ultimately Allah,  
rather than the Christian God, whose instrument Tamburlaine claims to be:

There is a God full of revenging wrath,  
From whom the thunder and the lightening breaks,  
Whose scourge I am, and him I will obey (2.5.1.182-183).

The other suggested cause of Tamburlaine's death, which also serves to underline the absence of a Christian God at work, is that Tamburlaine is the author of his own demise, with his ambitious nature simply leaving him burnt out.<sup>111</sup> In a survey of contemporary responses to Marlowe's play Richard Levin argues that while some of the writers may have disapproved of Tamburlaine on moral or aesthetic grounds, this is not the effect that the play had on its earliest audiences. On the contrary the evidence suggests that Tamburlaine prompted a favourable response amongst Elizabethan theatre-goers as the texts emphasise his military prowess and success. Levin counters the critical claims made by critics such as Battenhouse that Tamburlaine's story offered a contemporary audience an 'admonitory lesson on the failure or defeat of ambition or pride'.<sup>112</sup>

In *Tamburlaine* Marlowe juxtaposes the Christian theory of a just war with the secular theory propounded by political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli discounted the theory that war was a consequence of sin resulting in divine punishment and argued that war was a political instrument of will used directly by men and not God. Tamburlaine himself calls up the argument for war as the divine scourge of sin by the use of his epithet, whilst his career makes the case for war as the political instrument of

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<sup>111</sup> See for example, Johnstone Parr, 'Tamburlaine's Malady', in *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 113-127.

<sup>112</sup> Levin, 'The Contemporary Perception of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*', p. 55.

individual ambition.<sup>113</sup> This debate also takes place in Part Two of the play between Orcanes the king of Natolia and Gazellus the Viceroy of Byron. When king Frederick of Hungary and the lords of Buda and Bohemia break their oath to uphold a peace treaty with Orcanes and he discovers their treachery he appeals to the Christian God to avenge Himself on His followers:

Thou Christ that art esteem'd omnipotent,  
If thou wilt prove thyself a perfect God  
Worthy the worship of all faithful hearts,  
Be now revenged upon this traitor's soul (2.2.2.55-58).

The Christians are defeated and Orcanes attributes the Moslem victory to both Christ and Mahomet, yet even here Marlowe refuses to simplify the matter as the scene is riddled with doubt about the nature of divine intervention. Even Orcanes says 'Now lie the Christians bathing in their bloods, / And Christ or Mahomet hath been my friend' (2.2.3.10-11). Orcanes cannot be sure which sacred figure assisted in his victory, but he seems sure that one or both of them did. Gazellus is less willing to accept that victory was due to the power of Christ and takes a more pragmatic view ' 'Tis but the fortune of the wars, my lord, / Whose power is often proved a miracle' (2.2.3.31-32). Gazellus attributes victory to the efforts of his men rather than the intervention of any God.

Attributing victory in war to either divine or mortal efforts is a topic examined by Nick de Somogyi, who briefly considers the influence of *Tamburlaine* upon Peele's *David and Bethsabe*. The strategies of siege warfare in Peele's play, de Somogyi argues, echoes the same discussion of siege warfare in *Tamburlaine Part Two*<sup>114</sup> as Joab, like Theridamas and Techelles, also threaten to cut the water supply to the towns of Rabbah and Balsera. More significant for my argument is his discussion of Jacob's staff, the

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<sup>113</sup> Nick de Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 21-22.

<sup>114</sup> de Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War*, pp. 67-70.

evocative term for a piece of surveying equipment employed by Tamburlaine's army.<sup>115</sup>

This instrument was used for measuring heights and distances and consists of a square rod about three feet in length; here Techelles describes its use in preparing to breach the walls of the town:

Both we, Theridamus, will intrench our men,  
And with the Jacob's staff measure the height  
And distance of the castle from the trench,  
That we may know if our artillery  
Will carry full point-blank unto their walls (2.3.3.49-53).

Joab, on the other hand, is confident that he will secure victory, not with 'Jacob's staff'

but with 'Jacobs God' who

guides our weapons to their conquering strokes,  
Orders your footsteps, and directs your thoughts  
To stratagems that harbor victorie:  
He casts his sacred eiesight from on high,  
And sees your foes run seeking for their deaths (ll.165-169).

In Peele's play victory comes from God's ability to survey his enemies with his 'sacred eiesight', while de Somogyi notes the

relish with which Tamburlaine champions the geographic "rudiments of war" signals the extent to which they seem to exist independently of any overtly divine sanction.<sup>116</sup>

Marlowe's interest in the technologies of war enables him to expose the Christian arguments for a just war as simply another supporting arm of the ideology of providential kingship.

In addition to the contaminating effect of Alleyn-as-Tamburlaine, Peele's *David and Bethsabe* also indicates the demystifying effect of staging a king. The sacred person of King David, for example, is shown to be susceptible to the sin of lust which causes him to commit the rape of Bethsabe and sanction the murder of Uriah. The story of David

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<sup>115</sup> de Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>116</sup> de Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War*, p. 68.

and Bathsheba made David a popular subject for homiletic literature and he frequently appears as an exemplar of both lust and penitence. David, like Nebuchadnezzar, appears in Book One of Anthony Munday's *The Mirror of Mutabilitie*. The dramatic qualities of the text are emphasised by David's entry: 'sorrowfully from the bottome of his hart, bemoaning his unbrideled Lust of Lecherye, committed with Bersaba the wife of Urias, and for the procuring of her Husbands death, therby obtayning his purpose'.<sup>117</sup> David calls upon his wife, Uriah and God for forgiveness:

O Bersaba, forgivenes I doo crave,  
For that I wretch thy body did defile:  
Unlawfully desiring thee to have,  
To spot thy name by such an unkinde guile.

And thou Urias through my deed was slayne,  
O where remaind the bounds of Princely sway:  
That for my Lust should so desire thy payne,  
And to thy foes unjustly thee betray (sig. C2<sup>r</sup>).

The figure of David then directly addresses the author who assures him that his story is one which will have a powerful effect upon those who hear it:

O my freend (answered King David) this my fact, was bothe odious in the sight  
of God and man. yet cheefly in disobedience of the Almightyes  
commaundements but hartely I lament the same, and wish that this deed may be  
a mirrour unto all to beware how they fall in to the like (C3<sup>r</sup>).

The Chorus in Peele's *David and Bethsabe* summarises David's sin and invites the audience to consider the possibility that all men have the potential to err:

O prowde revolt of a presumptuous man,  
Laying his bridle in the necke of sin,  
Ready to beare him past his grave to sin,  
Like as the fatall Raven, that in his voice  
Carries the dreadful summons of our deaths,  
Flies by the faire Arabian spiceries,  
Her pleasant gardens, and delightsome parkes,  
Seeming to curse them with his hoarse exclames,  
And yet doth stoope with hungry vilence  
Upon a peece of hatefull carrion:  
So wretched man, displeas'd with those delights,  
Would yeeld a quickening savour to his Soule,

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<sup>117</sup> Munday, *The Mirror of mutabilitie*, sig. C1r.

Pursues with eage and unstanched thirst,  
The greedy longings of his lothsome flesh.  
If holy david so shoke hands with sinne,  
What shall our baser spirits glorie in? (ll.552-567)

Although Peele's protagonist is elevated by the epithet 'holy' the emphasis is placed upon his human qualities, particularly his shared role as a sinner in the eyes of God, a role which puts him on an equal footing with members of the audience. Margot Heinemann has suggested that two of the strategies employed by the theatre to qualify the depiction of the royal figures it presents are the use of colloquial language and the 'humanisation' of kings.<sup>118</sup> One episode in Peele's play which demonstrates Heinemann's point is David's attempt to get Uriah drunk in the hope that he will return home and lie with Bethsabe thus obscuring the fact that Bethsabe is already pregnant by the king. In a scene which anticipates the drinking scene in *Othello*, David pledges many cups with Uriah but the soldier remains steadfast in his decision not to return home and this in turn prompts David to plan the murder of Uriah:

If nought will serve to save his wives renowne,  
Ile send him with a letter unto Joab  
To put him in the forefront of the wars,  
That so my purpose may take effect (ll.543-546).

The use of stage spectacle is also used to indicate that David is frequently at the mercy of his emotions. After David is brought the news of Absalon's rebellion the King engages in a public display of grief which involves prostrating himself upon the ground: '*David barefoot, with some lose covering over his head, and all mourning*' (ll. 972 sd) and shortly afterwards: '*He lies downe, and all the rest after him*' (ll. 991 sd).

Finally, the play also subjects the theory of divine right to subtle scrutiny in the final section of the play in the conferring of the throne upon Solomon. Whilst Solomon is

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<sup>118</sup> Margot Heinemann, 'Political Drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. by A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 161-205, p. 178.

named as David's heir the motivation comes less from a concern with the appropriate mechanisms of state and more from a concern that Solomon like his brother Absalon is ambitious and announcing the succession is in fact a tactical measure to safeguard David's own personal security. Nathan advises:

See David how his haughtie spirit mounts  
Even now of height to wield a diademe,  
Then make him promise, that he may succeed,  
And rest old Israel's bones from broiles of warre (ll. 1772-1775).

Having examined some of the implications of the appropriation of biblical figures, such as King David for the stage, I now want to turn to another example of the ways in which the Queen's image could be contested and refashioned, this time to serve the agenda of one of her male courtiers. Thomas Churchyard's poem 'The Fortunate Farewell to the most forward and Noble earl of Essex' was written to celebrate the anticipated victory of the English campaign in Ireland in 1599. As with the poems and sermons written to commemorate the defeat of the Armada in 1588, King David provides the biblical precedent for Elizabeth's divinely sanctioned war. What is significant about this poem is the potentially subversive effect of Churchyard's use of this figuring as an analogue for the Queen through its emphasis on David's reliance on his own soldiers and advisors. In this way the poem foregrounds the Queen's gender and raises questions about the capabilities of a female ruler, particularly at a time of war.

In December 1598 the Earl of Essex was appointed as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to lead the English forces in Ireland. The preparations for war during the spring of 1599, together with the earl's departure on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, prompted a series of publications. A number of the responses to the war in prayers, sermons and poems utilised biblical

imagery to argue for the legitimacy of the war against rebellious subjects.<sup>119</sup> Lancelot Andrewes's sermon 'Preached before Queene Elizabeth, at Richmond, on the 21<sup>st</sup> February A.D. 1599 being Ash Wednesday: At what time the earl of Essex was going forth, upon the expedition for Ireland' also sought to justify the war using examples of God's support for conflict from the Old Testament. Andrewes begins by seeking Divine aid:

This our Host so going forth, our hearts desire and prayer unto God is, that they may happily goe, and thrise happily come againe; with joy and triumph, to Her Sacred Majestie; honour to themselves; and generall contentment to the whole Land. So shall they goe, and so come, if we can procure the Lord of Hosts, to goe forth with, and to take charge of our Hosts. It is He that giveth victorie to Kings (sayth David:)<sup>120</sup>

Andrewes is particularly at pains to emphasise that war against rebellious subjects is one which 'hath ever been counted most iust and lawfull'.<sup>121</sup> He cites a series of instances from the reign of King David, when the king was faced with rebellion. For example, when Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, renounced his allegiance to David and attempted to encourage the men of Israel to do the same, David sent an army to pursue Sheba and he was killed. The sermon also refers to the uprisings by David's sons Absalon and Adoniah. Adoniah as David's eldest son attempts to usurp Solomon and he too is killed for his treachery.

John Norden's *A Prayer for the Prosperous Proceedings and Good Successes of the Earle of Essex and his Companies*, published in 1599, calls upon God to aid and protect Essex:

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<sup>119</sup> See James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 88-96.

<sup>120</sup> Lancelot Andrewes, *Sermon Preached before Queene Elizabeth, at Richmond, on the 21<sup>st</sup> February A.D. 1599 being Ash Wednesday* (London: D. Smith, 1629), p. 183.

<sup>121</sup> Andrewes, *Sermon Preached before Queene Elizabeth*, p. 185.

So deare father be thou pleased to be a guide, a guard and a buckler unto thy servant, whom thou hast chosen to go against that bloudie enemy Tyrone<sup>122</sup>

The prayer goes on to emphasise that the campaign is divinely sanctioned through the comparison between Essex and Old Testament patriarchs:

And deere Father, be unto thy servant the Earle of Essex, and his associates, as thou wast unto Moyses, Josuah, Gedion, David, and the rest that have fought under thy protection<sup>123</sup>

Here Essex has eclipsed the Queen since he has now assumed the role of biblical leader, indicating his popularity as a military leader. Further evidence of the ways in which Essex sought to capitalise on his masculinity at the expense of the Queen is demonstrated by the furore caused by the equestrian portrait of Essex engraved by Thomas Cockson. The image was circulated in 1599 and was accompanied by the following couplet:

Vertues honour, wisdoms valure, graces servaunt, mercies love,  
Gods elected, Truths beloved, heavens affected doe approve.<sup>124</sup>

To suggest that Essex was 'Gods elected' was a direct challenge to Elizabeth's own position and Paul Hammer suggests that it was this 'decidedly royal phrase' which resulted in the image, together with other pictures of the nobility being banned in 1600.<sup>125</sup>

Further evidence of the conflicted nature of the relationship between Elizabeth and Essex can be discerned in Thomas Churchyard's 'The Fortunate Farewell to the Most Forward and Noble Earl of Essex' published in 1599. The poem also uses biblical precedents to argue for a just war, but it is unusual since it explicitly figures Essex as

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<sup>122</sup> John Norden, *A Prayer for the Prosperous Proceedings and Good Successes of the Earle of Essex and His Companies* (London: E. Alde, 1599), sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> Norden, *A Prayer for the prosperovs proceedings and good successe of the Earle of Essex*, sig. A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Myth-Making: Politics, Propaganda and the capture of Cadiz in 1596', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 621-642, (p. 639).

<sup>125</sup> Hammer, 'Myth-Making', p. 639.

Joab and Elizabeth as David. In the case of the Queen and in these circumstances this analogue was a familiar one, but by the figuring Essex as Joab the poem prises open the potentially explosive relationship between the Queen and her favourite.

The poem belongs to that genre of compositions which were written to celebrate the endeavours of soldiers and adventurers such as Drake and Essex. Previous voyages such as the expedition to Portugal led by Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Norris were recorded by George Peele in 'A Farewell to Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Drake' and the return was also marked with 'An Eclogue Gratulatory' and it is perhaps likely that Churchyard was aware of these poems.<sup>126</sup> The opening stanza of the poem begins by establishing the legitimacy of the war:

On Irish seas, Eliza's ships shall ried,  
A warliek band, of worthy knights I hoep,  
Aer armed for fight, a bloody brunt to bide,  
With rebels shall, boeth might and manhoed coep  
Our countreis right, and quarrell to be tried:  
Right makes wrong blush, and troeth bids falshed fly  
The sword is drawn, Tyroens dispatch draws ny<sup>127</sup>

The poem continues in this vein, asserting 'A traitor must be taught to know his king' (l.11). In the sixth stanza Churchyard describes war as God's scourge, a necessary requirement for the removal of tyrants:

Will God permit, such monsters to beare sway,  
His justice haets the steps of tyrants still,  
Their damnable deeds, craves vengeance every day  
Which God doth scourge, by his own blessed will (sig. A3r).

In the tenth stanza the success of the English campaign is assured since

This Lord doth bring, for strength the fear of God,  
The love of men, and sword of justice boeth,  
Which three is to, Tyroen an iron rod,

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<sup>126</sup> See for example, Hugh Gizzard, "Many a Herdsman More Disposde to Morne": Peele, Campion, and The Portugal Expedition of 1589', *Review of English Studies*, 57 (2006), 16-42.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas Churchyard, *The Fortunate Farewell to the Most Forward and Noble Earl of Essex* (London: E. Bollifant, 1599), sig. A2<sup>r</sup>. All further quotations from the poem will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

A birtchin twig, that draws bloed whear hit goeth (sig. A4r).

Having rehearsed the arguments for war, the poem then turns to Essex, describing him as Joab who 'went to warr in David's right'(sig. A4r) and 'brought hoem peace in spite of enemies beard' (sig. A4r). Churchyard's inclusion of Joab to describe the relationship between Elizabeth and Essex underlines the double-edged nature of this biblical figuring for them both. On the one hand, the comparison between David and Elizabeth signals Elizabeth's role as a Protestant prince who is forced to undertake a war as the defender of her faith and her kingdom. Less appealing for Elizabeth would be Essex as the equivalent of Joab, since this would serve as a reminder of her gender, as she was necessarily reliant upon the military support of men like Essex thus emphasising the fact that her role as a military leader, as demonstrated at Tilbury in 1588, could only ever be symbolic. At a time of national crisis, with a rebellion in Ireland which had received Spanish support, Elizabeth was under increasing pressure to act decisively and finance a military campaign. It was against Elizabeth's inclination to do either of these things and her reticence served to increase the speculation that foreign policy, in particular, was shaped by the Queen's femininity. Churchyard's poem, despite its celebration of a just war, would I think in its figuring of Essex as Joab have been both politically sensitive and indeed prophetic, particularly when considering the relations between the Queen and the Earl, both before and after his campaign in Ireland.

Shakespeare registers an awareness of the competing iconography of Essex and the Queen in *Henry V*. Annabel Patterson locates her discussion of Shakespeare's *Henry V* in the context of the struggle between Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex for popular support in 1599, noting that the Queen was 'locked into a competition for public visibility and popular sympathy with Essex', a struggle which continued until Essex's

death in 1601.<sup>128</sup> *Henry V* is Shakespeare's only play to make explicit reference to a contemporary event in the Chorus at the beginning of Act V. The speech alludes to Essex's campaign in Ireland and his anticipated return is compared to the return of Henry V from Agincourt. The suggestion that the play may be referring to Mountjoy rather than Essex has been discounted by T. W. Craik, who argues that

A complimentary allusion to Blount would hardly have been effective before his victory at Kinsale, and he could never be said to have rivalled Essex as a popular hero.<sup>129</sup>

The reference to 'a beard of the General's cut' by Gower in Act III, scene 6, line 76 also appears to be a topical allusion to Essex's square cut beard which he began to sport after the Cadiz expedition.<sup>130</sup> The reference to Essex and the war in Ireland means that the play can be dated with a degree of accuracy; it is thought that the play was acted between March and September 1599, coinciding with Essex's departure and return and the likely date of composition is early 1599.<sup>131</sup> The figure of Henry V himself is the site where the struggle for visibility takes place, since Elizabeth herself can be closely identified with her Lancastrian forebear, particularly in the context of fighting a foreign war. In the Chorus the similitude between the anticipated return of a victorious Essex from Ireland and Henry's own return to England after Agincourt is both noted and qualified:

The Mayor and all his brethren, in best sort,  
Like to the senators of th'antique Rome  
With the plebeians swarming at their heels,

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<sup>128</sup> Annabel Patterson, 'Back by Popular Demand: The Two Versions of *Henry V*', *Renaissance Drama*, 19 (1988), 29-62, (p. 47).

<sup>129</sup> T. W. Craik, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *Henry V* ed. by T. W. Craik, (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 3. For further discussion of Mountjoy as the 'General' see David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 290 and Christopher Highley, 'Wales, Ireland, and *1 Henry IV*', *Renaissance Drama*, 21 (1990), 91-114 (pp.108-109).

<sup>130</sup> T. W. Craik, 'Introduction', p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Other evidence for the 1599 as the year of composition is that it was early in 1599 that the Chamberlain's Men erected the Globe theatre on Bankside using the wood from The Theatre. The references to the 'wooden O', for example, may have been included to draw attention to the new theatre.

Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in;  
As, by a lower but a loving likelihood,  
Were now the General of our gracious Empress,  
As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,  
Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword.<sup>132</sup>

Essex is compared to both Henry and Caesar, yet the effect of this apparent compliment is ambiguous. Ostensibly it offers a compliment to both Essex as a returning victorious soldier and Elizabeth as his 'gracious Empress'; in this sense Patterson has suggested that the speech may have been intended by Shakespeare as 'a well meant but ill-advised attempt at mediation between Elizabeth and Essex'.<sup>133</sup> The speech seems to me to sound a note of warning as much as one of patriotic anticipation. The figure of Caesar embodies both military success and rebellion. James Shapiro notes that 'the Chorus's comparisons prove disquieting. Caesar had entered Rome harbouring thoughts of returning the Republic to one-man rule'<sup>134</sup> and the parallels between Caesar and Essex as soldiers whose military success gives way to thoughts of seizing power make the portrait of Essex a troubling one. I think that the dual quality of this classical figuring of Essex also recalls the biblical figure of Joab in Churchyard's poem and Peele's play. On the one hand, Joab serves David as a loyal soldier and counsellor leading the siege at Rabbah and fighting against the Ammonites, yet Joab also exceeds his role as a blunt soldier and is prepared to disobey David's orders when he feels the king is not fulfilling his duty.

In Peele's play this behaviour is demonstrated during Absalon's rebellion when David requests that his soldiers spare his son's life when they find him. Joab, however, brands Absalon a 'Rebell' (ll.1511) and a 'Traitor' (ll.1562) and kills him. When Joab returns

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<sup>132</sup>William Shakespeare, *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. (New York: Longman, 2004), V.0.25-32. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>133</sup> Patterson, 'Back by Popular Demand: The Two Versions of *Henry V*', p. 54.

<sup>134</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, p. 102.

to find the court in extended mourning for the rebel he has killed, he chastises the king for his display of emotion and his neglect of the men who fought to defend him:

Why is the King now absent from his men?  
And marcheth not in triumph through the gates?  
David awake, if sleepe have shut thine eies,  
Sleepe of affection, that thou canst not see  
The honour offerd to the victors head.  
Joab brings conquest pierced on his speare,  
And joy from all the Tribes of Israel (ll.1845-1851).

The penultimate line of this speech reverberates with the sentiments expressed in Shakespeare's Chorus in *Henry V* in which Essex is expected to return 'Bringing rebellion broached on his sword' (V.0.31). The figure of Joab highlights the political danger posed by a popular and successful military leader returning from war. In Peele's play, for example, Joab offers the king an ultimatum: either he fulfils his kingly duties and thanks his troops for their efforts against Absalon, or Joab will take the army and serve another king.

Advance thee from thy melancholy denne,  
And decke thy bodie with thy blisful robes,  
Or by the Lord that swaies the heaven, I sweare,  
Ile lead thine armies to another King,  
Shall cheere them for their princely chivalrie,  
And not sit daunted, frowning in the darke (ll.1878-1883).

Joab summarises the stark choice before David: 'Take thou this course and live, refuse, and die' (ll.1892). In only two lines David makes an unconvincing assurance that he will govern; the remainder of his speech is devoted to his hopes for Absalon's salvation.<sup>135</sup> The play concludes with Joab's rhyming couplet

Bravely resolvd and spoken like a King,  
Now may old Israel, and his daughters sing (ll.1919-1920).

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<sup>135</sup> For an alternative view of male mourning see Katherine Goodland's chapter 'Inverting the Pietà in Shakespeare's *King Lear*', in her book length study in *Female Mourning and Tragedy in Medieval and Renaissance English Drama* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 201-219. Goodland argues that Lear's display of grief at the death of Cordelia recalls that of David for the killing of Absalon. Goodland examines responses to bereavement in *King John*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* in the wake of the Reformation and Protestant doctrine which eliminated the consolation of Purgatory for grieving relatives and curtailed mourning practices.

There is the sense that an uneasy truce has been established between the soldier and his king and that David's behaviour has created another potential rebel. For a contemporary audience the uneasiness at the end of the play would concur with their own awareness of the circumstances of Joab's death. In Kings 1: 5-6 we are reminded that Joab was responsible for the murders of Abner and Amasa and before he dies David warns Solomon that he must avenge himself upon Joab:

Thou knowest also what Joab the sonne of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captaines of the hostes of Israel, unto Abner the sonne of Ner, and unto Amasa the sonne of Jether: whome he slewe, and shed blood of battel in peace, and put the blood of warre upon his girdle (sig.2A5<sup>v</sup>).

David warns his son that Joab is not to be trusted and concludes that the House of David must be avenged: 'Do therefore according to thy wisdome, and let thou not his hoare head go downe to the grave in peace' (sig.aa5<sup>v</sup>). In Thomas Beard's *The Theatre of God's Judgements* (1597) Joab is cited in the chapter on murderers, as an example of one who is eventually punished appropriately for his crimes:

For the like cause was Joab (generall of king Davids host) for killing Abner traiterously, (who forsaking Ishbatheth, had yeelded himselfe to the king) cursed of David with all his house, with a most grievous and terrible curse. And yet notwithstanding a while after he came againe to that passe, as to murder Amasa one of Davids chiefe captaines, making shew to salute and imbrace him. For which cruell deed, albeit that in Davids time he received no punishment, yet it overtooke him at last, and the same kind of crueltie which hee had so traiterously and villanously committed towards others, fell upon his owne head, being himselfe also killed as he had killed others; which happened in king Salomons raigne, who executing the charge and commandement of his father, put to death this murderer in the tabernacle of God, and by the altar, whither he was fled as place priviledged for safety.<sup>136</sup>

Essex, like David's captain and counsellor, made a habit of exceeding his remit as a favourite and privy Councillor. During the negotiations between Elizabeth and her ministers concerning the appointment of the next Lord Lieutenant of Ireland Essex and the Queen literally came to blows over a suitable candidate. Essex rejected the Queen's suggestion of Sir Francis Knollys and in a gesture of defiance he turned his back upon

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<sup>136</sup> Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (London: A. Islip, 1642), p. 177.

her. Elizabeth responded by boxing his ears which prompted Essex to reach for his sword. Essex was restrained by members of the council and withdrew from court. Despite being encouraged to sue for the Queen's forgiveness, Essex in a letter to the Lord Keeper interrogates Elizabeth's temporal and spiritual authority when he asks

What, cannot princes err? Cannot subjects receive wrong? Is an earthly power or authority infinite? Pardon me, pardon me, my good Lord, I can never subscribe to these principles ... let them acknowledge an infinite absoluteness on earth, that do not believe in an absolute infiniteness in heaven.<sup>137</sup>

Eventually the breach gave way to an uneasy and partial reconciliation between Essex and the Queen. For Essex, the identification with Joab in Churchyard's poem would have paid him a great compliment as it depicts him as the leader of a divinely sanctioned war. For a contemporary reader Joab's role as a soldier, responsible for waging successful campaigns and quelling rebellious subjects, would have been well known. Yet Joab's success is tempered by his reputation as an ambitious man of blood and his loyalty to David is often a secondary consideration. In the case of Peele's play, which recounts the rebellion of Absalon, Joab disobeys the king's order to spare Absalon and later threatens to rebel against David when he fails to acknowledge the loyalty of his troops as he grieves for his son. In the spring of 1599 the figures of Elizabeth as David and Essex as Joab would perhaps have struck the right note as victory in Ireland was anticipated, but after September 1599 the analogy between Essex and Joab would perhaps have taken on a darker set of associations. In September 1599 Essex returned to England having concluded a truce with O'Neill against the Queen's wishes. This act of disobedience was further compounded by a failed uprising in early 1601, which led to his execution for treason on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1601.

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<sup>137</sup> Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen*, p. 181.

This chapter then has outlined in the first section the ways in which King David as an allegorical representation of Elizabeth was used by both Elizabeth and her subjects as each tried to assert their control over the meaning of this particular biblical paradigm. For the Queen David served to support her special role as a providential monarch, whilst her subjects sought to deploy him to influence those policies relating to Elizabeth's marriage, the execution of her cousin, foreign policy and the succession. The second section of the chapter then located these uses of King David in the context of the theatrical phenomenon of the period c.1590 - c.1602 when new biblical plays were commissioned, written and performed. Here the reasons for this development are suggested and Peele's *David and Bethsabe* is discussed as an example of the repertorial strategy employed by the Admiral's Men where dramatists turned to the Old Testament to capitalise upon the success of *Tamburlaine* and the acting style of Edward Alleyn. The effect of utilising Old Testament warriors to emulate *Tamburlaine's* commercial achievement and who were also used simultaneously to celebrate the defeat of the Armada, offers a rather heady combination and provides some important insights into the ways in which English national identity was constructed in the final decades of Elizabeth's reign. The chapter concludes by arguing that biblical drama such as Peele's *David and Bethsabe* contributes to the theatre's subversive potential to appropriate and rework allegorised images of kingship used traditionally to celebrate the monarch. In this way the figure of King David on the early modern stage provides an example of the ways in which royal figuration could work to destabilise meaning and subject it to re-appropriation.

**‘Thou shalt be Dido’s son’: Perspectives on Virgilian Myth in Lyly, Marlowe and Shakespeare.**

In this chapter I want to examine the role of the classical myth of Dido and Aeneas in the iconography of Elizabeth I. In the first part of the chapter I will outline the ways in which the myth was employed in poetry, courtly entertainments and portraiture to serve the bifurcated function of flattery and political counsel. Between 1579 and 1583 the myth was utilised specifically during the unpopular marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the French Duke of Anjou, by those councillors and their supporters who opposed the match. The analogy between Elizabeth and Dido worked to celebrate the Queen as the antithesis of her classical counterpart, whilst suggesting the dangerous parallels between the two queens. The Queen is therefore invited to align herself instead with her imperial forebear Aeneas, forsaking love in order to defend her country’s future. In the second part of the chapter I will look at the ways in which the myth of Dido is reworked in five plays beginning with Lyly’s *Sappho and Phao* and *Galatea* and Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and Lyly’s *Midas*. These plays, I will argue, interrogate the uses of the classical story as part of the *translatio imperii* myth to buttress Tudor royal authority by examining issues such as Elizabeth’s abilities as a female ruler and the English claim to empire. In the final section of the chapter I turn to Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, a play which re-synthesises the myths and motifs utilised by Lyly and Marlowe, so that the Fairy Queen looks back to Marlowe’s Dido and the ‘fair vestal’ recalls Lyly’s portrait of the goddess Diana in *Galatea*. This strategy of retrospection, I will argue, enables Shakespeare to recollect the uses of Dido during the Anjou negotiations as a defining moment in the construction of the Queen’s image, since she moves after this point from a marriageable Queen to one who must cultivate the persona of a perpetual virgin. In this chapter my organisation and discussion of the plays in terms of a strategy of retrospection has been shaped by the

work of Louis Montrose, who argues that later dramatists such as Shakespeare and poets like Spenser re-appropriated Virgilian and Ovidian sources and their allegorised forms which had been utilised in earlier courtly entertainments and pageants and in doing so each made their own contribution to the cult of the Virgin Queen.<sup>1</sup> Elizabethan literature according to Montrose therefore must be read 'in terms of an intertextuality that includes both the discourses of European literary history and the discourse of Elizabethan state power'.<sup>2</sup> This method of reading the plays forms the template for each of the chapters in the thesis, but has been particularly instrumental in the organisation and approach used in this chapter.

One of the first examples of the ways in which the myth of Dido was employed by Elizabeth's courtiers to offer counsel on the subject of the Queen's marriage was in Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*. The Queen is invoked in the April eclogue by the shepherd Colin Clout who sings in praise 'Of fayre Elisa, Queene of Shepheardes all'.<sup>3</sup> Here Spenser suggests the analogy between Elizabeth as the queen of the shepherds and Dido by alluding to Dido's Phoenician name of Elissa. Later, in the Argument to the November eclogue Colin laments for the death of 'some mayden of greate bloud whom he calleth Dido' (p. 187). Critics have noted that Spenser inserts the death of Dido into his poem to suggest to the Queen the consequences of her marriage to Anjou. Donald Stump concurs with Paul McLane who argues that the purpose of the November

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Shakespearean Theatre* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Spenser, 'The Aprill Eclogue' in *The Shepheardes Calender*, in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), line 34, p. 72. All further quotations from the poem will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

eclogue is 'to raise the spectre of death and calamity should Elizabeth marry Anjou'.<sup>4</sup> Here Spenser draws explicitly on Virgil's *Aeneid* in his portrait of Elizabeth as Dido, as a queen who puts personal considerations before the political security of her realm. There were in fact two traditions concerning Dido available during the Renaissance. The first account is thought to be the oldest and describes Dido as an exemplary female ruler, chaste, wise and temperate. Her story begins with her escape from her brother Pygmalion the King of Tyre, who murdered Dido's husband for his wealth. Dido escaped via Cyprus to North Africa and established herself as the ruler of Carthage. The story concludes by recording how Dido took a vow to remain a widow in memory of her dead husband and committed suicide rather than be forced into marriage with a local king.<sup>5</sup> It is in Virgil's *Aeneid*, however, that Dido appears as the Carthaginian queen who succumbs to her passion for the Trojan prince Aeneas. Aeneas' sojourn in North Africa is simply that, a stopover on his way to found Rome. In Virgil and later in Dante Dido becomes an emblem for the excesses of *eros*, a female ruler who is unfit to govern.<sup>6</sup>

It is this double narrative which is alluded to in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in the exchanges between Gonzalo, Antonio and Sebastian. The shipwreck takes place on the return journey from the marriage between Claribel, the daughter of the King of Naples,

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Stump, 'Marlowe's Travesty of Virgil: Dido and Elizabethan Dreams of Empire', *Comparative Drama*, 34 (2000), 1-20, see also Patrick Cheney, 'Spenser's Pastorals: *The Shepherdes Calender* and *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 79-105.

<sup>5</sup> For discussion of the two competing accounts of Dido see Stephen Orgel, 'Shakespeare and the Cannibals', in *Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance*, ed. by Marjorie Garber (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 40-66, Diane Purkiss, 'The Queen on Stage: Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the Representations of Elizabeth I', in *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*, ed. by Michael Burden (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 151-167 and Deanne Williams, 'Dido, Queen of England', *English Literary History*, 73 (2006), 31-59.

<sup>6</sup> Sara Munson Deats, *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), p. 105.

and the king of Tunis. The discussion turns to the bride who is commended: 'Tunis was never graced with such a paragon to their queen'.<sup>7</sup> Gonzalo concurs 'Not since widow Dido's time' (II.1.78). This seemingly innocuous reply produces a snort of disdain from Antonio who responds 'Widow? A pox o'that! / How came that "widow" in? Widow Dido!' (II.1.79 - 80). Gonzalo, is of course referring to the older account of Dido's life in which she is depicted as a model of chaste widowhood, whereas Antonio and Gonzalo refer to Virgil's portrait of the queen, which as Stephen Orgel points out serves to undercut the effect of the compliment contained in the older story.<sup>8</sup>

This double image of Dido is also drawn upon in the Siena Sieve portrait of Elizabeth attributed to Quentin Massys the Younger. This particular portrait is one of a series of Sieve portraits painted during the 1580s which engages in the debate between love and empire.<sup>9</sup> The painting presents Elizabeth holding a sieve, the emblem of chastity since it alludes to the vestal virgin Tuccia who was able to carry water in it from the Tiber to her temple without spilling a drop. Behind the Queen on her right is an imperial column which depicts the story of Dido and Aeneas in a series of nine gold inlays, including Dido's first meeting with Aeneas at the temple of Juno, their idylls in the cave, and finally Dido's suicide by self-immolation. In the background of the portrait are a number of courtiers, one of whom has been identified as Sir Christopher Hatton, one of the opponents of the Anjou match. The portrait has elicited a number of responses from critics. There are those who have discussed the painting in terms of empire. Roy

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<sup>7</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), II.1.76-77. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Orgel, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Stephen Orgel, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> For discussion of the portrait see Susan Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 171-199 (pp. 186-188).

Strong identifies the Queen with her mythical forbear, arguing that the painting posits

‘Elizabeth as this century’s Aeneas’.<sup>10</sup> Stephen Orgel explains that

the epic iconography here ingeniously provided the queen with both her heroic ancestor and the prototype of her chastity. The sieve, emblem of the Roman vestals and thus symbolic of Elizabeth’s virginity declares that this Dido will resist the temptations of any modern Aeneas.<sup>11</sup>

The Sieve portrait also works to point up the similarities rather than the differences between Elizabeth and Dido. Stump suggests that in the portrait the Queen has lowered the sieve to her side ‘where she grasps it lightly, seeming to give it little thought’ and has literally turned her back on the advice proffered by Hatton and others. When read in the context of the French marriage negotiations Stump suggests that

Massys’s work may well represent the Queen at a crossroads and offer a delicately understated warning of tragic consequences to come should she proceed further in the direction she is heading.<sup>12</sup>

The myth of Dido was also one which was popular in courtly entertainments for the Queen. One version of the story which has not survived was written by Edward Halliwell, formerly a fellow of King’s College, Cambridge and was performed in the College chapel for the Queen in August 1564. The use of the myth increased significantly, however, during the period 1579 to 1583 which coincided with the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Francis, Duke of Anjou. Susan Doran has noted that those subjects who opposed the match actively cultivated a range of personae for the Queen which celebrated her virginity rather than her marriageability.<sup>13</sup> The story of Dido forms part of this political impulse, as Elizabeth is invited by her subjects to align herself with her mythical forebear Aeneas and reject what Dido cannot, namely the personal considerations of love.

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<sup>10</sup> Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Elizabeth I* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 99.

<sup>11</sup> Orgel, ‘Shakespeare and the Cannibals’, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Stump, ‘Marlowe’s Travesty of Virgil’, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 10-11. See also Stump, ‘Marlowe’s Travesty of Virgil’, pp. 1-20.

There are a number of entertainments which demonstrate how the myth of Dido was adapted for the purposes of flattery and in response to the developing mythos of Elizabeth as Virgin Queen. The entertainments for Elizabeth on her progress to Norwich in 1578, by Thomas Churchyard and Henry Goldingham, provide examples of the recurring motif of the surrender of Cupid's arrows. Churchyard's device *The Shew of Chastitie* depicts Cupid's disgrace at the hands of Chastity and her women, with his bow and arrows being surrendered to the Queen. The piece not only compliments the Queen by presenting her as immune to the arrows of Cupid, but in giving her the arrows advises her 'to learn to shoot at whom best she pleased', thus leaving the question of marriage up to the Queen.<sup>14</sup> In Goldingham's show Cupid is more submissive and offers his arrows to Elizabeth without resistance.

The entertainment for the state visit of the Polish Count Alasco in 1583 also affords further example of the adaptation of the story of Dido. William Gager dramatised Virgil's account of Dido and Aeneas to entertain the Count and other dignitaries at Christ Church, Oxford. Gager invokes the Eliza-Elissa comparison, but is also keen to suggest both how like and unlike Elizabeth is to Elissa. The epilogue sums this up:

But Dido (*Elisa*), one woman surpasses you by far: our virgin queen (*regina virgo*). In her piety, how many reversals has she endured! What kingdoms has she founded! To what foreigners has she plighted her trust! But she has not condescended to marry any Sychaeus, and may no Aeneas sway her affections!<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Churchyard, *A Discourse of The Queenes Majesties Entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk* (London: H. Bynneman, 1578), sigs. Ciiiiir-E1r. See also Michael Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza: Variations on a Virgilian Icon in plays by Gager, Lyly and Marlowe', in *The Iconography of Power: Ideas and Images of Rulership on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. by György E. Szónyi and Rowland Wymer (Szeged: University of Szeged, 2000), pp. 33-52.

<sup>15</sup> William Gager, *Dido* in *William Gager: The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. by Dana F. Sutton, 4 vols (London: Garland Publishing, 1994), I, Epilogue, 1241-5. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

As Michael Pincombe concludes, Gager's point is that 'Elizabeth is an Elissa who is so much in command of her own affections that she has never even married, far less entered into a disastrous liaison with a foreigner'.<sup>16</sup>

In 1584 the Children of the Chapel and Saint Paul's performed John Lyly's *Sappho and Phao* at court.<sup>17</sup> Lyly's play is significant as it demonstrates another variation on the Dido story. Lyly's source was the classical myth of the unrequited love of Sappho for the ferryman Phao, whom Venus had made beautiful, together with Sappho's suicide. Lyly would have found accounts of Sappho in Ovid's *Heroides* and Aelian's *Varia Historia*.<sup>18</sup> Lyly, however, adapts the story to one more in keeping with the attitudes of Elizabeth's court, transforming Sappho from the historical poetess into a young, beautiful and wise princess, rather than the older and darker figure of the sources. The relationship between Sappho and Phao is altered to stress the difference in rank between the lovers; it is love now between a ruler and her subject. Phao is not simply beloved, but reciprocates Sappho's affections, and it is as a result of this that Sappho, despite falling in love, is able to conquer her emotions and continues to govern, rather than suffering the pangs of rejection and eventually taking her life, as she does in Ovid. Critical assessment of Lyly's dramatic works has tended to categorise the plays as 'court comedies' or 'allegories of praise', reading them primarily as vehicles for flattering Elizabeth. Theodora Jankowski, for example, is not unique when she summarises a Lylian play, which, she explains, revolves around 'a mythological, often divine, often female figure who symbolises or represents Elizabeth I'.<sup>19</sup> *Sappho and*

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<sup>16</sup> Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza', pp. 38-39.

<sup>17</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to John Lyly, *Sappho and Phao*, ed. by David Bevington, in *Campaspe and Sappho and Phao*, ed. by G.K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 152.

<sup>18</sup> Bevington, 'Introduction' to John Lyly, *Sappho and Phao*, pp. 152-159.

<sup>19</sup> Theodora A. Jankowski, 'The Subversion of Flattery: The Queen's Body in John Lyly's *Sappho and Phao*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 5 (1991), 69-86.

*Phao* is no exception and has frequently been read as a straightforward compliment to the Queen. Bernard F. Huppé is in no doubt about the function of the play:

What else is *Sappho and Phao* but an even more direct compliment in picturing a poetic, learned queen's conquest over love for a beautiful commoner?<sup>20</sup>

It is Lyly's invention that Sappho falls in love as a punishment from Venus for successfully resisting love: Sappho, like Elizabeth, appears to have successfully combined both her body natural and her body politic, thus threatening the supremacy of Venus on earth. Cupid himself doubts whether Sappho is susceptible to his arrows:

they say she hath her thoughts in a string, that she conquers affections and sendeth love up and down upon errands. I am afraid she will yerke me if I hit her.<sup>21</sup>

Cupid is successful and Sappho does fall in love with Phao. Venus, however, intervenes again, as she too has become enamoured of the ferryman and cannot brook a rival. She uses her charms to persuade Vulcan to make a set of arrows for Cupid that will make Sappho disdain Phao and another to make Phao dote on Venus. Cupid, however, betrays his mother and instead of making Phao love Venus, he shoots an arrow which makes him hate her. Sappho recovers from her love sickness, having realised that, as Phao is not her equal, she can never truly love him.

The fact that Venus herself succumbs to Phao's beauty makes Sappho's triumph complete; she has shown the goddess to be at the mercy of nothing more than physical attraction. For there to be love there must also be virtue, and so the play becomes an allegory of the triumph of virtue over desire. This reading is reinforced in the final scene of the play as Sappho adopts Cupid for her son so that she can use his arrows to usurp Venus's position on earth:

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<sup>20</sup> Bernard Huppé, 'Allegory of Love in Lyly's Court Comedies', *English Literary History*, 14 (1947), 93-113.

<sup>21</sup> John Lyly, *Sappho and Phao*, in *Campaspe and Sappho and Phao*, ed. by G.K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), I.1.45-47. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

I myself will be the queen of love. I will direct these arrows with a better aim, and conquer mine own affections with greater modesty. (V.2.28-30)

David Bevington explains the significance of Sappho's victory as it provides

Obvious flattery of Elizabeth in this contest between queen and goddess. After a brief sorrowing in love, Sappho is able to contain herself – which Venus cannot do – and to become mistress of a new and better court.<sup>22</sup>

The play concludes with Venus temporarily outwitted, threatening to revenge herself on them both. Sappho's victory over Venus elevates her to the position of earthly deity, which in turn suggests Elizabeth's own mythos of virginal goddess. The surrendering of the arrow signals Sappho's triumph over love. More recently critics such as Theodora Jankowski have examined the ways in which *Sappho and Phao* intervenes in the political debate about female rule and argued that its compliments are tempered by the anxieties attendant upon Elizabeth's position as Queen. Sappho's love for Phao plays out those gender stereotypes of the effects of love on a woman with a startling tableau at the play's centre. The scene opens and the stage directions indicate '*Sappho [discovered] in her bed*' (III.3.sd), suffering from a 'strange disease' (III.3.6). The scene's humour derives from the Princess of Syracuse's portrait of lovesickness:

O, which way shall I lie? What shall I do? Heigh-ho. O Mileta, help to rear me up my bed; my head lies too low. You pester me with too many clothes. Fie, you keep the chamber too hot. Avoid it! (III.3.80-84).

Peter Saccio in his discussion of the play has suggested that the story of Dido from Virgil's *Aeneid* provides a 'mythological analogue' for Lyly's play, since the stories of Sappho and Dido share a number a number of features.<sup>23</sup> Both queens fall for a handsome stranger who is brought by sea with Venus' help. In each story both women are depicted with Cupid in their laps. Saccio argues that Lyly uses these parallels to emphasise the differences between Dido and Sappho:

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<sup>22</sup> David Bevington, 'John Lyly and Queen Elizabeth: Royal Flattery in *Campaspe* and *Sappho and Phao*', *Renaissance Papers*, (1967), 57-67 (p. 66).

<sup>23</sup> Peter Saccio, *The Court Comedies of John Lyly: A Study in Allegorical Dramaturgy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 167.

In Virgil, Dido is completely the victim of Venus, and Cupid is Venus' agent; in Lyly, when Sappho dandles Cupid, she causes him to sever his connections with Venus and is thus able to triumph over the goddess. The wrath of Venus testifies to the solidity of Sappho's new position: the queen as been apotheosized as the new goddess of both love and chastity.<sup>24</sup>

Although Saccio argues that the story of Dido is used to suggest how unlike Dido Sappho is at the end of the play, the play's central scene in which Sappho languishes in bed as a consequence of Cupid's arrow certainly demonstrates the queen's potential to be subject to her emotions.

More recently Michael Pincombe has also detected the influence of Virgil upon Lyly's play and suggests that the play's final tableau in which Cupid climbs into Sappho's lap recalls the Virgilian image from earlier plays in which Cupid pierces Dido with the arrow of love.<sup>25</sup> The effect of recalling Dido at the end of Lyly's play serves to complicate our response to Sappho's victory over love and re-evaluate Lyly's employment of classical figures as the means of flattering the Queen. On the one hand, to recall Dido at this moment could work to reuse Virgil's Dido to underline Sappho's triumph since it invites the audience to consider this particular Elissa's victory over love. Pincombe suggests that Lyly, however, stops short of fully endorsing the compliment to Elizabeth through the use of Virgil's Dido; instead he argues that the effect of the scene is one of bathos, in which Lyly draws on the influence of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Gods* to present Sappho as a goddess on earth with a rather spiteful streak.<sup>26</sup> In her exchanges with Cupid the theme is that of revenge, which is expressed in rather idiomatic terms:

SAPPHO: Fear nothing, for if Venus fret, Sappho can frown; thou shalt be my son. Mileta, give him some sweetmeats. Speak, good Cupid, and I will give thee many pretty things.

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<sup>24</sup> Saccio, *The Court Comedies of John Lyly*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>25</sup> Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza', pp. 33-52.

<sup>26</sup> Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza', pp. 43-44.

- CUPID: My mother is in love with Phao. She willed me to strike you with disdain of him and him with desire of her.
- SAPPHO: O spiteful Venus! Miletta, give him some of that. What else, Cupid?
- CUPID: I could be even with my mother, and so I will if I shall call you mother.
- SAPPHO: Yea, Cupid, call me anything, so I may be even with her.
- CUPID: I have an arrow with which if I strike Phao it will cause him to loathe only Venus.
- SAPPHO: Sweet Cupid, strike Phao with it. Thou shalt sit in my lap; I will rock thee asleep and feed thee with these fine knacks (V.2.8-24).

This rather low-brow conversation therefore undermines Sappho's claim to be elevated to the status of goddess on earth.

Lyly, I will suggest, returns to this Virgilian motif in his next play *Galatea*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register in the spring of 1585.<sup>27</sup> The evidence that *Galatea* follows *Sappho and Phao* in the chronology of Lyly's dramatic works is indicated within the play text itself when Venus asks Cupid: 'Sir boy, where have you been? Always taken, first by Sappho, now by Diana'.<sup>28</sup> Here Venus's lines recall the final tableau offered in *Sappho and Phao* and the related plotlines of each of the plays which feature the rivalry between Venus and Sappho and later in *Galatea* between Venus and Diana and attempts in both to control Cupid. The play is made up of three plot strands: the main story is that of Galatea and Phillida, who disguise themselves as shepherds to avoid becoming candidates in the virgin sacrifice offered to Neptune and upon meeting in the wood fall in love. When each discovers that the other is also a woman Venus

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<sup>27</sup> G.K. Hunter, 'Introduction' to John Lyly, *Galatea*, in *Galatea and Midas*, ed. by G.K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> John Lyly, *Galatea*, in *Galatea and Midas*, ed. by G.K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), V.3.92-93. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

intervenes and offers to transform one of them into a man. The second plot focuses upon Cupid who also disguises himself in the wood in order to play tricks upon Diana's nymphs and causes them to fall in love. The third plot deals with three brothers Robin, Rafe and Dick and the attempts of Rafe in particular to find suitable employment. At the end of the play the three brothers are called upon by Venus to sing at the wedding of Galatea and Phillida.

Cupid's decision to test the vows of Diana and her nymphs signals the first challenge to chastity in the play. Cupid declares:

Let Diana and all her coy nymphs know that there is no heart so chaste but thy bow can wound, nor eyes so modest but thy brands can kindle, nor thoughts so staid but thy shafts can make wavering, weak, and wanton (II.2.2-6).

When Diana discerns the effects of love in her followers she suspects that the group has been intercepted by Cupid and he is brought in his disguise before Diana. In her triumph over Cupid and his arrows, Diana recalls the earlier success of Sappho:

I will break thy bow and burn thine arrows, bind thy hands, clip thy wings, and fetter thy feet. Thou that fattest others with hopes shalt be fed thyself with wishes, and thou that bindest others with golden thoughts shalt be bound thyself with golden fetters. Venus's rods are made of roses, Diana's of briars (III.4.85-90).

Cupid is then humiliated, forced to undertake menial chores, including the untying of lovers' knots. In the final act of the play Neptune is called upon to mediate between Venus and Diana, as Venus complains of the treatment of Cupid at Diana's hands. Diana acknowledges that she has kept Cupid captive and in her explanation of her handling of the love god distinguishes herself from those who have previously encountered Cupid:

I have Cupid, and will keep him, not to dandle him in my lap, whom I abhor in my heart, but to laugh him to scorn, that hath made in my virgins' hearts such deep scars (V.3.46-49).

Here the image of Cupid in a lap recalls the image of Virgil's Dido and Cupid, and perhaps suggests Cupid's speech found in Gager's play when Cupid describes how his disguise as Ascanius has allowed him access to the queen:

It has cost her dearly to dandle little Julus on her knees and lap ... With my mouth I return her kiss with one of my own, which is something other than just a pleasantry. While she plays with me sportively, I have tricked her with my fraud. She drank? I cadged a sip. She gazed at me? I turned my face to her. She called? I appeared. She caressed me? I perched in her lap (III.3.595-600).

In this way the story of Dido, it can be argued, functions in a similar way here as it did in *Sappho and Phao* since the parallels between the stories of Sappho and Dido reinforced Sappho's triumph over love. In the same way the allusion to Dido by Diana suggests she is not Cupid's fool and unlike Dido will not be subject to Cupid's 'fraud'. Critics have suggested that the figure of Diana in *Galatea* was intended to flatter Elizabeth, Anne Begor Lancashire notes that through the play's portrait of the goddess 'Lyly upholds the moral strength of Elizabeth and the desirability of the virgin state'.<sup>29</sup> Lancashire does outline the play's subversive potential, however, through its depiction of Diana and suggests:

There may even be light mockery of Elizabeth in Lyly's presentation of Diana raging against love; her speeches become somewhat shrewish, a bit shrill.<sup>30</sup>

Julia A. Bowen also argues that the play combines panegyric with subversive elements through its use of the symbol of the bow, a weapon employed by both Cupid and Diana. This, according to Bowen, is one of the ways Lyly is able to point up the Queen's dual nature and her reputation as both Virgin Queen and a woman who was susceptible to her emotions.<sup>31</sup> Pincombe offers a more subtle assessment of the figure of Diana in the

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<sup>29</sup> Anne Begor Lancashire, 'Introduction' to John Lyly, *Gallathea*, in *Gallathea and Midas*, ed. by Anne Begor Lancashire (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), p. xxi.

<sup>30</sup> Lancashire, 'Introduction' to John Lyly, *Gallathea*, p. xxii.

<sup>31</sup> Julia A. Bowen, "'Swift hart' and 'soft heart': Elizabeth I and the Iconography of Lyly's *Gallathea* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", *Shakespeare and Renaissance Association of West Virginia Selected Papers*, 20 (1997)

<http://www.marshall.edu/engsr/SR1997.html#Swift%20hart%20and%20soft%20hear>

play as an analogy for Elizabeth.<sup>32</sup> He clarifies that whilst Diana was associated with Elizabeth to celebrate her chastity and that the Queen was often figured as the goddess, in Lyly's play the dramatist stops short of making his character a clear representation or portrait of the Queen. The similarities between Lyly's Diana and Elizabeth remain, but this strategy has the effect of permitting Lyly to make more pointed observations about the goddess and in particular her emphasis on chastity and the degradation of love. Pincombe remarks that 'Diana is plainly odious' and that she is the 'real villain of the piece' which makes it difficult to see Lyly using her as the vehicle for a straightforward compliment to the Queen.<sup>33</sup> These comments are borne out by Diana's tyrannical attitude when she discovers her nymphs have fallen in love and her rather sadistic pleasure in outlining Cupid's punishment:

These ladies here, whom thou hast infected with foolish love, shall both tread on thee and triumph over thee. Thine own arrow shall be shot in thine own bosom, and thou shalt be enamoured not on Psyche but on Circes. I will teach thee what it is to displease Diana, distress her nymphs, or disturb her game (III.4.91-97).

The goddess also takes delight in the apparently thwarted love of Gallathea and Phillida when each discovers the other to be a woman:

Now things falling out as they do, you must leave these fond-found affections. Nature will have it so; necessity must (V.3.132-134).

The correlation in the play between virginity and violence which is also evidenced by the virgin sacrifice required by Neptune leads Pincombe to suggest that here perhaps Lyly is reflecting more generally upon the effect of Elizabeth's personae as Virgin Queen upon her court.<sup>34</sup> Whilst her unmarried state was one which Elizabeth came to cultivate in the later part of her reign, it was not one which she could expect her courtiers to follow. Diana's victory over Cupid is undercut in a number of ways in the

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly: Eros and Eliza* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 135-139.

<sup>33</sup> Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly*, pp. 136-139.

<sup>34</sup> Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly*, p. 139.

play, firstly through the ways in which Diana's nymphs experience, like Sappho, the excesses of love. Telusa, a nymph, soliloquises upon her condition:

How now? What new conceits, what strange contraries breed in thy mind? Is thy Diana become a Venus, thy chaste thoughts turned to wanton looks, thy conquering modesty to captive imagination? (III.1.4-4)

The behaviour of Diana's nymphs serves to weaken the force of the goddess's negative comparison between herself and Dido, since the play indicates the possibility that even her followers may succumb to love. The play's epilogue gives the last word to Galatea and she addresses the audience directly and her message is one which contradicts the views of Diana:

Yield, ladies, yield to love, ladies, which lurketh under your eyelids whilst you sleep and playeth with your heartstrings while you wake; whose sweetness never breedeth satiety, labour-weariness, nor grief-bitterness. Cupid was begotten in a mist, nursed in clouds, and sucking only upon conceits. Confess him a conqueror whom yet ought to regard, sith it is impossible to resist; for this is infallible, that love conquereth all things but itself, and ladies all hearts but their own (Epi. 5-13).

Pincombe has suggested that Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is in part a response to Lyly's *Sappho and Phao* and its appropriation of the Virgilian icon of Cupid on Dido's lap. Marlowe's opening scene of *Dido*, Pincombe argues, parodies the Virgilian icon of Dido and Cupid, which Lyly presents in the penultimate scene when Cupid climbs into Sappho's lap.<sup>35</sup> The tableau in the induction in which a younger boy is held in the arms of an older one is repeated throughout the play, firstly with Jupiter and Ganymede, then with Venus and Ascanius, followed by Cupid with Dido and the Nurse. The repetition of the image is a calculated one, an example of what Cope calls 'reflexive satire' in which Marlowe utilises the reputation of the boy actors as catamites in order to capitalise on the potential for risqué humour.<sup>36</sup> The play, which begins with a

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<sup>35</sup> Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza', pp. 44-48.

<sup>36</sup> Cope, 'Marlowe's *Dido* and the Titillating Boys', *English Literary Renaissance*, 4 (1974), 315-325 (p. 318).

sodomitical framework, draws comparison between the boys who were pressed into service in the child companies and the story of Ganymede, who was kidnapped by Jupiter to be his cupbearer. The suggestion is repeated in Act IV, scene 4, when Dido gives Aeneas her sceptre and crown and says: 'Now looks Aeneas like immortal Jove: / O where is Ganymede, to hold his cup'.<sup>37</sup> By underlining the physicality and sexual reputation of the boys, Marlowe once again reduces the possibility for flattery by heightening the play's capacity for satirical humour.

Pincombe's suggestion that Marlowe was influenced by *Sappho and Phao* could also be extended to include *Galatea*, since although this play points up the failure of Cupid to sit in anyone's lap, what both of Lyly's plays show is precisely what Marlowe seems to be responding to, namely, the potential to rework and thus debunk Virgil's account of Dido and Aeneas and its uses within the discourse of Elizabethan power. I will argue that Marlowe, in using the image of Jupiter with Ganymede on his knee to replicate that of Sappho and Cupid, recalls the image of Dido with Cupid in her lap to undermine the ways in which Virgil's Dido is depicted as the model of dangerous love. Sara Munson Deats explains the significance of Marlowe's opening scene:

the play's first exemplum of excessive passion ruling reason is not the smitten Queen of Carthage or even her enamoured sister, but that classical patriarchal icon, Jupiter, the king of the Gods.<sup>38</sup>

Marlowe also develops the subversive potential of Cupid's arrows which Lyly's tableau points to, but which earlier entertainments were keen to play down. At the end of *Sappho and Phao*, Sappho is only able to recover her composure through the intervention of her step-mother Venus, who has Vulcan forge an arrow of disdain to

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<sup>37</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, in *Dido, Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, ed. by H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1968), IV.4.45-46. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>38</sup> Deats, *Sex, Gender, and Desire*, p. 91.

neutralise the effects of her love for Phao. As Jankowski points out ‘Sappho is relieved of her passion for Phao not through her own agency, but through the intervention [of Venus]’.<sup>39</sup> The final image of the princess wielding Cupid’s arrows and her assertion ‘I will direct thine arrows better’ (V.3.103) is therefore surely ironic. In the context of these earlier depictions of Cupid, Marlowe’s Cupid may well have seemed an alarming prospect as he describes how he will effect his mother’s plan:

Convey this golden arrow in thy sleeve,  
Lest she imagine thou art Venus’ son;  
And when she strokes thee softly on the head,  
Then shall I touch her breast and conquer her (III.1.3-6)

Marlowe shows Cupid actively piercing the Queen on stage, whereas in Lyly this action takes place off stage and is a comic blend of the literal and the figurative. Sappho falls in love at first sight with Phao, apparently without the physical intervention of Cupid’s arrow. Later, although Lyly presents Sappho languishing from the effects of the arrow, their impact is defused by placing emphasis on the creation of a new set of arrows for Cupid as a comic interlude between Vulcan and Venus and finally by their surrender. In Lyly the arrows are presented on stage, and we see their effect on Sappho, but we do not see her being pierced and we are left with the ambivalent image of her controlling their use.<sup>40</sup> It is noteworthy that in Act III, scene 2, following Dido’s encounter with Cupid, Marlowe uses the image of Cupid surrendering his arrows to ironic effect. Venus is alerted by her doves that Ascanius is in danger. He is threatened by Juno, whose dislike of the Trojans means that she is keen to sabotage Venus’s plans for her son to found Rome. In a series of comic exchanges Juno protests that she regrets her attempts to harm Aeneas and as a pledge Venus resolves that

Cupid shall lay his arrows in thy lap,  
And to a sceptre change his golden shafts,

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<sup>39</sup> Jankowski, ‘The Subversion of Flattery’, p. 75.

<sup>40</sup> For the suggestion that Sappho provides a flattering analogy for Elizabeth, see Huppé, ‘Allegory of Love in Lyly’s Court Comedies’, pp. 93-113. For an alternative view see Jankowski, ‘The Subversion of Flattery’, pp. 69-86.

Here Cupid will transform his arrows into a sceptre and serve Juno. This is surely uttered with irony, as Venus knows Juno's position has shifted only because she can see that Dido will serve at least as a mechanism to delay Aeneas from reaching Italy. It is clear that there is little chance of Cupid serving Juno and this self-imposed regulation by Venus is simply politic. The suggestion of Cupid surrendering his arrows to Juno is, I think, very telling in view of its popularity as a motif in court comedies and entertainments. The fact that we see the very opposite and actually witness Dido being pierced on stage suggests that Marlowe's play is his response to this kind of drama and its appropriation of this Virgilian icon.

Both Lyly and Marlowe therefore appear reluctant to endorse Virgil's account of Dido and Aeneas. It has been suggested by Patrick Cheney that this was part of a deliberate choice on Marlowe's part, since he attempted to define his career path in opposition to the explicitly Virgilian model of Edmund Spenser.<sup>41</sup> In the next section of this chapter I want to argue that Lyly also rejects the Virgilian model of conquest in his next play *Midas* and that, like *Tamburlaine*, it too subverts the legitimating potential of the *translatio imperii* myth.

Lyly's *Midas*, written in 1589 to celebrate the defeat of the Armada in the previous year, was first performed as part of the Queen's Christmas revels on Twelfth Night, 1590.<sup>42</sup> The play presents Philip of Spain as the foolish Midas and the ruler of Lesbos, who narrowly escapes an invasion attempt by the Phrygian king, as a flattering equivalent for Elizabeth. David Bevington argues, '*Midas* unambiguously praises

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<sup>41</sup> Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997)

<sup>42</sup> David Bevington, 'Lyly's *Endymion* and *Midas*: The Catholic Question in England', *Comparative Drama*, 32 (1998), 26-46.

England's queen as the archetypal opposite of Midas and Philip'.<sup>43</sup> In this section I would like to argue that the play's representation of Elizabeth as the ruler of Lesbos and its treatment of gold as the marker of imperial success reveal a sceptical view of England's claims to empire. I hope to show that the play, far from offering a simplified vision of the political scene post 1588, in fact offers a complex set of responses to Anglo-Hispanic relations and particularly those legitimating discourses used to advance the ideology of empire.

Lyly's source for *Midas* was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and like Ovid's account, the play is made up of two separate stories about Midas. The first deals with the familiar myth of the king's golden touch. The second details Midas's punishment by Apollo for preferring the music of Pan. Here, the hapless king is given ass's ears and his attempts to keep this a secret are thwarted when his barber, unable to keep the secret, whispers it into a hole in the ground. Reeds immediately spring up from the hole and carry the story to all who pass by.<sup>44</sup>

The myth of Midas has traditionally been used as an allegory of a tyrannical ruler, who, without a proper system of government and advice, makes foolish decisions.<sup>45</sup> Midas also belongs to a group of stories characterized by their use of gold as the means of both reward and punishment. Ovid's account describes how Midas chooses the golden touch as his reward from Bacchus for reuniting the god with his former tutor Silenus. The king is consequently faced with starvation and has to relinquish his reward.

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<sup>43</sup> Bevington, 'Lyly's *Endymion* and *Midas*', p. 37.

<sup>44</sup> *Shakespeare's Ovid: Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses*, ed. by W. H. Rouse (London: Centaur Press, 1961), pp. 220-221.

<sup>45</sup> See Stephen S. Hilliard, 'Lyly's *Midas* as an Allegory of Tyranny', *Studies in English Literature*, 12 (1972), 243-258.

During the early modern period ancient myths, like that of king Midas, began to take on a specifically contemporary resonance as they were used to allegorise the European quest for gold in the Americas. Lyly's play uses the myth to present a political allegory of Philip of Spain, Elizabeth's former brother-in-law and sometime suitor, by giving Midas and his courtiers what was considered by a contemporary English audience to be a specifically Spanish characteristic: the desire for gold. Midas asks his three counsellors, Eristus, Martius and Mellacrites, what he should ask for as his reward from Bacchus. Mellacrites, whose name suggests both sweetness and judgement, recommends the golden touch.<sup>46</sup> He argues that gold can bring Midas the success he needs in the fields of love and war: 'Is it not gold that maketh the chastest to yield to lust.'<sup>47</sup> And more tellingly, 'By gold may you shake the courts of other princes' (I.1.52). In Act II, scene 1, the desire for gold is discussed in terms evocative of the gold mines of the Americas as the 'utmost parts of the west, where all the guts of the earth are gold' (II.2.114-115). The play suggests that gold from the New World not only serves as the marker of Spanish imperial success, but enables Philip to finance wars of conquest in Europe as well. A contemporary audience might well here have thought of Spain's involvement in the Netherlands, a war funded by wealth from the Americas. In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* the link between the gold of the Americas and war in the Netherlands is made clear as Faustus imagines that the spirits he will conjure will enable him to

levy soldiers with the coin they bring  
And chase the prince of Parma from our land  
And reign sole king of all our provinces;  
Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war  
Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp's bridge

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<sup>46</sup> See the dramatis personae in John Lyly, *Midas*, in *Galatea and Midas*, ed. by G. K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 150.

<sup>47</sup> John Lyly, *Midas*, in *Galatea and Midas*, ed. by G.K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), I.1.45-46. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

I'll make my servile spirits to invent.<sup>48</sup>

Midas's speech in Act III, scene 1, is central to the play's political allegory, as he reflects on his career of imperial aggression and greed. The gold granted by Bacchus to Midas in the myth is presented in the play as a cautionary tale about empire and how such benefits can backfire on an overreaching monarch. The speech catalogues a series of charges against Philip of Spain, which a contemporary audience would no doubt have recognised, if not with reference to specific incidents, then as a more general confirmation of their suspicions. When Midas considers where his ambitions have led him, his remark 'why did I covet so many crowns having myself but one head?' (16-17) would remind the audience of Philip's imperial ambitions in Europe as well as the New World. At this time Philip controlled areas of the Americas, Africa and Asia, as well as ruling Spain, Portugal, Naples, Sicily, Milan, the Netherlands and parts of France.<sup>49</sup> Indeed Midas seems most concerned with conquering those 'petty islands near to Phrygia,' (I.1.125-126) alerting the audience to their lucky escape from invasion in 1588.

In this speech Midas also acknowledges the defeat of his designs upon Lesbos: 'Have not I made the sea to groan under the number of my ships, and have they not perished, that there was not two left to make a number' (III.1.35-37). This clearly refers to the defeat of the Armada. England, like Lesbos, is an island 'walled with huge waves' (III.1.63), pointing to the providential weather, which blew the Armada off course. Martius's lament 'I see all his expeditions for wars are laid in water,' (IV.4.11-12) draws attention to Philip's international embarrassment over the collapse of his invasion plan and the absence of a back-up plan. The failure of his plan is complete when, in

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<sup>48</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. by John D. Jump (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), I.1.91-96. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>49</sup> Bevington, 'Lyly's *Endymion* and *Midas*', pp. 38-39.

order to rid himself of the ass's ears, the oracle reveals that 'Unless he shrink his stretching hand from Lesbos, / His ears at length shall reach to Delphos' (V.3.30-31). Midas concedes that the ruler of Lesbos is no 'petty prince' but 'a prince protected by the gods, by nature, by his own virtue, and his subjects' obedience' (III.1.59-61) and is 'through the world a wonder, for wisdom and temperance' (64-65). This description is designed to flatter Elizabeth, as Bevington points out, as even Philip of Spain is forced to acknowledge her qualities as a ruler. Midas's daughter Sophronia provides another female equivalent for Elizabeth, displaying similar virtues and offering another positive image of a female in an influential position, as she alone offers her father proper counsel.

The ruler of Lesbos is never named, but is referred to simply as 'he' or by the title of king or prince. These titles, however, could be used to refer to either a male or female sovereign, with Elizabeth herself making use of them. Indeed these appellations for the ruler of Lesbos may have confirmed the connection with Elizabeth as monarch of England, by her use of them in her famous Tilbury speech:

I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king - and of a king of England too - and think foul scorn that Parma, or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.<sup>50</sup>

Thus the image of a monarch defending their kingdom against invasion is one very much in tune with the Armada celebrations, when Elizabeth deliberately draws upon her self-styled role, which combined both masculine and feminine qualities.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Frances Teague, 'Queen Elizabeth in Her Speeches', in *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. by S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 63-78 (p. 67).

<sup>51</sup> See Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 53-66.

Lyly's choice of Lesbos as an island equivalent for England, however, actually problematises Elizabeth's position as a female ruler. Firstly, Lesbos invites comparison between Elizabeth and Sappho. This appears to compliment Elizabeth, as Sappho was famous not only for her wisdom, but her rejection of eros. Lyly's use of Sappho as a strategy for flattery is certainly ambiguous. In his earlier play *Sappho and Phao*, Lyly has Sappho outwit Venus by entering, rather unusually, into an alliance with Cupid to become 'on earth the goddess of affections' (V.2.70). This vision of Sappho certainly appears to run counter to her traditional image. Lyly, however, like his contemporaries was aware that there were several competing accounts of the historical Sappho. One of Lyly's sources, a translation by Abraham Fleming of Aelian's *Varia Historia*, describes her as one whom Plato 'numbreth among such as were wise lerned and skilful.'<sup>52</sup> Aelian's account also describes Sappho as 'a strong whore and an arrant strumpet.'<sup>53</sup> Sappho then offers the terrifying image of female sexual appetite. In *Midas* the implied analogy between Sappho and Elizabeth raises a double negative, as Sappho underlines not only Elizabeth's own rejection of marriage and the consequent succession crisis, but also the image of a female monarch, governed by her emotions. Whilst the play appears to reinforce those reassuring images of England ruled by a wise and inviolable queen, Lyly's Lesbos in fact suggests an England that is far from stable.

The play as a political allegory presents the triumph of Lesbos over Phrygia in terms of England's defeat of the Armada. The struggle between Lesbos and Phrygia, however, offers a far more subtle exploration of English national identity than might first appear, particularly when considered in terms of the *translatio imperii*.

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<sup>52</sup> See Bevington, 'Introduction' to *Sappho and Phao*, p. 154.

<sup>53</sup> See Bevington, 'Introduction' to *Sappho and Phao*, p. 154.

Midas's kingdom of Phrygia is located in modern-day Turkey, but it had particular cultural significance in Renaissance literature as the site of the ancient city of Troy. In various accounts of the founding of Troy, Troy is described as a Phrygian city. One story describes how Ilus was rewarded for his victory at the games in Phrygia with a dappled cow. The king advised Ilus to build a city wherever the cow first lay down. Ilus did so and called the city Ilium after himself.<sup>54</sup> David Bevington notes in the Arden edition of *Troilus and Cressida* that Phrygia was 'used as a poetic equivalent for Troy in Roman and renaissance poetry.'<sup>55</sup> The prologue of the play also identifies Phrygia with Troy, as the Trojan soldier describes how the Greeks have 'Put forth toward Phrygia, and their vow is made / To ransack Troy.'<sup>56</sup>

The idea of *translatio imperii* became vital in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, as it helped justify English claims to empire, at a time when they were failing to keep up with their imperial rival Spain. Margo Hendricks emphasises the ideological importance of the claim when she remarks that 'sixteenth century England had neither an indigenous imperial history to draw upon (as did for example, the French with Charlemagne or the Italians with the Romans) nor an existing hegemonic history (as Spain did with its control of its extensive territories outside its geographic boundaries to proclaim itself an empire.'<sup>57</sup> Hendricks goes on to argue that the Trojan myth of descent was part of England's attempt at 'reinvention' as it attempted to create an identity worthy of its position on the world stage and of its opponents.<sup>58</sup> To strengthen

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Graves *The Greek Myths* 2 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), II, pp. 259-261.

<sup>55</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. by David Bevington (Walton-on-Thames: Nelson and Sons, 1998), p. 130.

<sup>56</sup> Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), Prologue 0.7-8.

<sup>57</sup> Margo Hendricks, 'Managing the Barbarian: The Tragedy of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*', *Renaissance Drama*, 2 (1992), 165-188.

<sup>58</sup> Hendricks, 'Managing the Barbarian', p. 165.

the claims, London was often referred to as Troynovant, the new Troy, thus following in the footsteps of Brutus and Aeneas.

In view of the significance of Lesbos and Phrygia for Elizabeth and England, I would argue that Lyly's *Midas* offers a critique of Elizabeth's mythos, not only as Virgin Queen, but also as successor to the imperial crown. For example, both Aeneas and the ruler of Lesbos are reliant upon the intervention of the gods to save them from disaster. Aeneas is brought by Venus, his mother, to Carthage and she ensures that Dido will help prepare his men and ships for their subsequent journey to Rome. The prince of Lesbos is similarly reliant upon the gods' decision to restore Midas's ears only if he will give up his invasion plans for Lesbos. On the one hand, the ruler of Lesbos has all the attributes of kingship which Midas lacks, and represents the moral high ground of the play, yet on the other he appears passive in his defence of his island, remaining off stage. Midas, however, despite his humiliating punishment and lack of judgement is an extremely dynamic character and, like Tamburlaine, offers an attractive and successful model for imperial expansion. In spite of having to renounce his plans to conquer Lesbos and his claims in the west, his power in the final scene of the play is not significantly reduced and we are not left with a sense that he has been defeated.

In his examination of the two rulers, Lyly returns to the same issues explored by Marlowe in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, where Marlowe deliberately chooses to emphasise aspects of Aeneas's personality that are not particularly noble or heroic, in order to question England's claims to empire.<sup>59</sup> Marlowe, in his depiction of Aeneas, deliberately chooses to emphasise his selfish streak when describing how he leaves his

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<sup>59</sup> See for example, Clifford Leech, 'Marlowe's Humour', in *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Clifford Leech (Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 167-178.

wife and several sisters behind in Troy. This departure is recalled when he leaves Carthage. I would suggest that the myth of Aeneas as the noble Trojan hero and Elizabeth's ancestor as the foundation stone of imperial ideology is held up to scrutiny by both Marlowe and Lyly and is found wanting. In this way both *Midas* and *Dido* appear to articulate frustration with Elizabeth's cult of virginity and the Tudor myth of Troy, particularly as the Queen began to get older.

*Midas*, then, raises some very interesting ideas about the *translatio imperii*, if Phrygia denotes imperial Spain, whilst simultaneously symbolising the Trojan origins of the English drive for power. The play thus presents the Spanish as offering a more immediate example of how to achieve imperial status, rather than relying upon the myths of the past. In this way Phrygia acts as a two-way mirror for the audience: it presents a reflection of the English self, yet looking back at the audience is the image of the Spanish Other. It is a site of liminality where the ancient myth of Troy, birthplace of England's ancestors, clashes with the modern, as Phrygia in Lyly's play comes to stand for imperial Spain, the apparently true heirs of empire. The kingdom of Phrygia in the play is a place of ungovernable appetites where gold and empire defy measurement. Its significance as a place of excess is contrasted with the double meaning of its other name Troy, which is also a term for a system of weights and measures for precious metals and stones.<sup>60</sup> The word therefore becomes synonymous with both the classical location and its identification with empire as well as the means by which imperial success could be measured. This double meaning suggests that the lust for gold and empire is shared equally by England and Spain.

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<sup>60</sup> *OED*, troy<sup>2</sup> a. My thanks to Ceri Sullivan for this suggestion.

In the second half of this chapter I will suggest that the play places emphasis not upon the conflict between England and Spain as the play's allegory suggests, but the influence of gold upon those conquistadors and privateers who go to the Americas in search of it. In this way the play offers a critique of gold and its corrupting influence, suggesting once again that the thirst for gold is a disease that affects Spanish and English alike.

Midas's choice of the golden touch as his reward is just one of the ways in which the desire for gold and ultimately empire is figured as an unnatural appetite. Gold is presented as both tantalising and grotesque in the way that it physically affects Midas. Celia, one of the ladies of the court, warns Eristus that had he been as successful in his wish for love, as Midas had been with his for gold, it would now be as loathsome to him as 'gold is to his eyes, and make thy heart pinch with melancholy as his guts do with famine' (II.1.6-7). Mellacrites reports that Midas's 'meat turneth to massy gold in his mouth, and his wine slideth down his throat like liquid gold' (II.1.53-54). Midas is faced with starvation, as he cannot eat gold; he tells his counsellors,

My lords, I faint both for lack of food and want of grace. I will to the river, where if I be rid of this intolerable disease of gold, I will shake off that intemperate desire of government, and measure my territories, not by the greatness of my mind, but the right of my succession (III.1.68-72).<sup>61</sup>

*Midas*, whilst clearly alluding to Philip II, is more closely concerned with the story of another Spaniard, the conquistador Baldivia. Baldivia was captured by the Indians of Chile and feasted by them and

the last service of all was a cuppe full of melted gold, which the Indians forced him to drinke, saying, Now glut thy selfe with gold, and so they killed him.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.170 n.36. He refers to the anecdote in which the Aztec king Montezuma asked Cortes why the strangers had such a desire for gold. Cortes told him that the Spaniards had a disease about the heart, for which the only cure was gold'.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation in Twelve Volumes* (Glasgow: MacLehose and Sons, 1904), 276-277. For

The story of this modern day Midas was brought back to England in 1587 by George Clifford, the Earl of Cumberland. In 1586, Cumberland had financed a ship to sail to the Americas. On the river Plate the crew met the Portuguese, Lopez Vaz, chronicler of conquistadors such as Lopez de Aguirre, who told them the story of Baldivia. The ship returned to England in September 1587 with the story and it was printed in Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries* in 1589.<sup>63</sup> Lyly, with his connections at court, was most likely aware of the story. Theodor de Bry, the Flemish engraver, published a series of illustrations during the 1590s, one of which was entitled 'The Spanish thirst for gold quenched' in which a Spanish captive has molten gold poured down his throat.<sup>64</sup>

Baldivia's story not only gives the myth of Midas a modern resonance, it also points to another golden myth that was gaining currency during the 1580s, the myth of El Dorado. There are certain points of comparison between the two myths that are suggestive. Both stories are concerned with a golden man. The myth of El Dorado grew out of stories about the rituals of an Andean tribe, whose chief was anointed with gold dust - hence the name El Dorado, or golden man. The story tells how this Indian chief would then be taken to the centre of a sacred lake to make offerings of gold, which were then deposited in the lake. The legendary city of El Dorado belonged to this chief, so that as the myth developed El Dorado came to stand for the place rather than the person.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Midas becomes a golden man and in Lyly's story, even his beard

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another account of this story, together with its classical origins in the story of the Roman General Crassus, who suffered a similar fate, see Robert Ralston Cawley, *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1938), p. 391.

<sup>63</sup> Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, pp. 276-7.

<sup>64</sup> John H. Lienhard, 'Theodore de Bry', *Engines of Our Ingenuity* No. 893: University of Houston. <<http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi893.htm>> [accessed 8 June 2008]

<sup>65</sup> Charles Nicholl, *The Creature in the Map: Sir Walter Raleigh's Quest for El Dorado* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 12.

turns to gold. To cleanse himself of his golden touch, Midas is forced to bathe in the river Pactolus:

he no sooner bathed his limbs in the river but it turn'd into a golden stream, the sands to fine gold, and all to gold that was cast into the water (III.3.95-97).

By 1589, when Lyly was writing *Midas*, El Dorado would have been big news. English interest in the golden city centred around intelligence recently gathered by Sir Walter Raleigh from Spanish sources. In 1586 several of Raleigh's ships captured a Spanish ship on its return from the Americas to Spain. The ship did not contain gold or treasure but Don Pedro de Sarmiento de Gamboa, a conquistador and governor of a Spanish colony in Patagonia. Sarmiento was brought to England in the hope that he could be ransomed. Sarmiento was an expert on Inca culture and had been involved himself in the search for lake Paititi, the golden lake of El Dorado fame. When he reached England he was met and entertained by Raleigh. It is from his conversations with Sarmiento that Raleigh begins to establish a location for El Dorado in Guiana, where he would travel in 1595.<sup>66</sup>

Lyly probably knew Raleigh through his patron, the Earl of Oxford. During the period 1582-83 Raleigh, at the request of Lord Burghley, Oxford's father-in-law, helped restore Oxford to the Queen's favour after a duel with Thomas Knyvet.<sup>67</sup> Lyly as Oxford's secretary would almost certainly have been aware of Raleigh's involvement with Oxford.

At this time Raleigh's interest in colonialism was well known; the year after his dealings with Oxford he was granted the patent for discovering and planting America. By 1587 Raleigh is encouraged to emulate the Spanish conquistadors. In his 'Epistle Dedicatory

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<sup>66</sup> Nicholl, *Creature*, p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> G. K. Hunter, 'Lyly, John (1554–1606)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://via.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17251>> [accessed 8 May 2008]

to Sir Walter Raleigh' prefacing his republication of Peter Martyr's *Decades of the newe world* in 1584, Hakluyt encourages Raleigh to model himself on the conquistador Ferdinand Cortes.

Go on, I say, follow the path on which you have already set foot, seize Fortune's lucky jowl, spurn not the immortal fame which is here offered you, but let the doughty deeds of Ferdinand Cortes, the Castilian, the stout conqueror of New Spain, here beautifully described, resound ever in your ears<sup>68</sup>

The parallels between the story of Midas and Baldivia are used not only to highlight Spanish cruelty, but also serve as a warning to those adventurers such as Raleigh that, in using the Spanish conquistadors as role models, they reveal that their motivations are in fact identical. In this way the differences between the English self and the Spanish Other begin to evaporate.

In *Midas* Lyly continues his critique of English imperialism through his inclusion of references to Marlowe's conquering machine Tamburlaine. There are a number of reasons why Lyly may have chosen to allude to Tamburlaine. Michael Pincombe suggests that Lyly's return to the theatre in 1587 was prompted by financial considerations.<sup>69</sup> This certainly may have been an added pressure for a successful play and allusions to Marlowe's smash hit, together with a Tamburlaine-style protagonist, may have been economically motivated. Lyly and Marlowe in *Midas* and *Tamburlaine* both focus upon the themes of empire and national identity, particularly the way in which the boundaries of difference can be blurred, with specific reference to the relationship between English privateers and Spanish conquistadors.

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas Cartelli, 'Marlowe and the New World', in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 110-118 (pp. 112-113).

<sup>69</sup> Pincombe, *The plays of John Lyly*, pp. xiii-xiv.

Tamburlaine is referred to frequently as ‘the scourge of the earth,’ a title which, Thomas Cartelli notes, Marlowe may well have taken from Hakluyt’s *Discourse of Western Planting* written in 1584, in which Hakluyt describes imperial Spain as ‘the scourge of the worlde.’<sup>70</sup> Midas uses Tamburlainian imagery to describe how he will wish for gold and thus be ‘monarch of the world, the darer of fortune’ (I.1.131-132). This imagery is repeated by Martius, who reveals that he

would wish to be monarch of the world, conquering kingdoms like villages, and, being greatest on earth, be commander of the whole earth ... wringing out of every country tribute’ (I.1.32-37).

Later, when Midas regrets his attempts to take over the world, he admits that ‘Conquests are great thefts’ (III.1.87), to which Martius retorts, ‘fain would I see him that durst call a conqueror a thief’ (III.1.89-90). These images are suggestive of the description of Tamburlaine by Meander, a Persian lord in the opening scene of the play, who labels him a ‘sturdy Scythian thief’ who ‘commits incivil outrages, / Hoping ... / To reign in Asia, and with barbarous arms / To make himself the monarch of the East.’<sup>71</sup>

Lyly continues to allude to Tamburlaine as he figures Midas’s drive for world domination as an unnatural appetite. In Act III, scene 1, Midas compares his pursuit of power with the appetites of the horses of King Diomedes, who were fed on human flesh. In this instance pamper suggests the figurative meaning of the verb, to feed luxuriously, as Midas has over-indulged or ‘fed’ his appetite for conquest:<sup>72</sup>

Thou hast pampered up thyself with slaughter, as Diomedes did his horse with blood; so insatiable thy thirst, so heavy thy sword (III.1.21-23).

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<sup>70</sup> Cartelli, ‘Marlowe and the New World’, p. 113.

<sup>71</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* ed. by J. S. Cunningham, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), I.1.36, 40-43. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>72</sup> *OED*, Pamper, 1 a & b.

His lines here deliberately echo Tamburlaine's famous line 'Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia!' from *Tamburlaine Part Two* in which Tamburlaine enters the stage in a chariot drawn by the kings of Trebizond and Soria (2.IV.3.1). In the speech that follows, Tamburlaine draws on the myth of Diomedes and his horses, which were eventually tamed by Hercules to describe his victory over the two hapless kings who now draw his chariot. Tamburlaine, although he identifies himself with Hercules, also seeks to replicate the role of Diomedes, as he wants to make the tamed horses cruel again and resume their original appetite:

The headstrong jades of Thrace Alcides tamed,  
That King Aegeus fed with human flesh  
And made so wanton that they knew their strengths,  
Were not subdued with valour more divine  
Than you by this unconquer'd arm of mine.  
To make you fierce, and fit my appetite,  
You shall be fed with flesh as raw as blood  
And drink in pails the strongest muscadel (2.IV.3.12-19).

It is as though, having been tamed or defeated, the horses and, in turn, his captives hold no interest for him. To be tame is not to be worthy of Tamburlaine, so they must be made vicious again, undoing the work of Hercules and resorting to the methods of Diomedes. Tamburlaine's treatment of the kings is cyclical, as no sooner have the kings been tamed and their spirits broken than Tamburlaine wants to reignite a desire to rebel so that he can conquer them again. This denial of closure on Tamburlaine's part reflects at once both his consuming need for opponents and countries to conquer and yet the failure to be satisfied by his successes.<sup>73</sup> Midas is also consumed by the need for conquest; he reflects on his numerous territories, but cannot rest until he has invaded the island of Lesbos:

when I call to mind my cruelties in Lycaonia, my usurping in Gaetulia, my oppression in Sola, then do I find neither mercies in my conquests, nor colour for my wars, nor measure in my taxes ... A bridge of gold did I mean to make in

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<sup>73</sup> Fred B. Tromly, *Playing with Desire: Christopher Marlowe and the Art of Tantalization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 74-79.

that island where all my navy could not make a breach. Those islands did I long to touch, that I might turn them to gold (III.1. 28-31, 52-55).

The relationship between Tamburlaine's unnatural diet and vicious temperament would perhaps serve to underline his Scythian origins. Writers such as Edmund Spenser, who claimed that the native Irish were descended from the Scythians, had recorded the bloodthirsty reputation of the Scythians. The Irish had therefore inherited the nomadic practices of the Scythians such as transhumance. This horrified the English, firstly because it encouraged a wandering and therefore lawless lifestyle, and secondly it meant close contact between men and their beasts - it was believed that the Irish lived off the flesh and blood of their animals while they still lived.<sup>74</sup> Marlowe deliberately foregrounds images of flesh eating, particularly those with cannibalistic overtones, not only in this speech, but also throughout the play.<sup>75</sup> In Act IV, scene 4, Tamburlaine taunts the hungry Bajazeth, who replies, 'I could / willingly feed upon thy blood-raw heart' (1.IV.4.11-12), to which Tamburlaine replies, 'Nay, thine own is easier to come by, pluck out that, and 'twill serve thee and thy wife' (1.IV.4.13-14); Zabina then curses Tamburlaine and his guests, wishing them the same as the adulterous Tereus, the king of Thrace, who was tricked by his wife Procne into eating their child Itys:

And may this banquet prove as ominous  
As Procne's to th'adulterous Thracian king  
That fed upon the substance of his child! (1.IV.4.23-25)

In the Diomedes speech in particular, Marlowe uses imagery of eating flesh and drinking wine evocative of the Catholic belief in transubstantiation, which sees the bread and wine as transformed during the mass into the body and blood of Christ, which is then consumed by the congregation. The cannibalistic aspect of this sacrificial ritual is brought sharply into focus at this time when considered alongside stories of the rituals of the Aztecs, for example, who carried out the same sacrifice albeit literally.

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<sup>74</sup> Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 55-56.

<sup>75</sup> Tromly, *Playing with Desire*, pp. 78.

Cannibalism was regarded as a sign of barbarity, the marker of an uncivilised people, but Marlowe is intent here on raising questions about the nature of Catholic ritual in the light of Western horror and condemnation of Aztec practices. Stephen Greenblatt notes that whereas Protestant polemicists were quick to point to the parallels between Catholic and Indian practice, these similarities were blocked or suppressed by the Catholic missionaries and conquistadors who placed the emphasis firmly upon difference and revulsion.<sup>76</sup>

Tamburlaine's origins disrupt traditional values about what it means to be a Scythian, as they were regarded as barbarous and uncivilised, yet Tamburlaine displays numerous qualities that were admired by the Elizabethans. He certainly provides a successful and charismatic role-model. In this way Marlowe interrogates notions of difference and the relationship between Tamburlaine and the theatre audience is analogous to the position of the Spanish and English adventurers like Raleigh. There is a strong case for suggesting that Marlowe may have had Raleigh in mind when creating Tamburlaine. For example, the massacre of Babylon recalls Raleigh's involvement in the massacre at Smerwick in Ireland. One particularly telling parallel between Raleigh and Tamburlaine is the Governor of Babylon's offer:

But Tamburlaine, in Limnasphaltis' lake  
There lies more gold than Babylon is worth,  
Which when the city was besieged I hid-  
Save but my life and I will give it thee (2.V.1.115-118).

Naturally such an offer cannot sway Tamburlaine; as the governor hangs from the city walls and is shot at, he responds,

No, though Asphaltis' lake were liquid gold  
And offered me as ransom for thy life,  
Yet shouldst thou die (2.V.1.154-156).

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<sup>76</sup> Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, pp. 134-140.

The offer of a golden lake is reminiscent of Lake Paititi of El Dorado fame. For Tamburlaine, however, the lake holds little interest; he does not allow it to sway his judgement or distract him from capturing the city of Babylon. In this way he is the supreme model for New World conquest.

In *Midas* there is an insistence on the equivalence between gold and the lower bodily stratum. References to gold as 'the guts of the earth' are repeated during the play. This strategy appears to undermine the Spanish reputation for imperial success and their ability to extract gold from the Americas. The connection between gold and the lower bodily stratum not only renders a national enemy with a reputation for machismo less threatening; it also reduces the desirability of their wealth. In Act III, scene 1, Midas reflects, 'Could not the treasure of Phrygia, nor the tributes of Greece, nor the mountains in the East, whose guts are gold, satisfy thy mind with gold?' (9-12). In the opening scene Eristus mocks the suggestion of the golden touch with 'Gold is but the guts of the earth' to which Mellacrites retorts, 'I had rather have the earth's guts than the moon's brains' (I.1.100-102).

The play draws on contemporary alchemical ideas that base metals such as lead could be transformed into gold, but in an interesting reversal of this process it is now the gold itself which is described as a base material. In Act II, scene 2, the servant Licio describes it as 'the earth's garbage, a weed bred by the sun, the very rubbish of barren ground' (II.2.5-6). Later in the play, when Midas has been relieved of his golden touch but given ass's ears, Martius speculates as to why he has been given them: 'It may be that his wishing for gold, being but dross of the world, is by all the gods accounted foolish' (IV.4.74-75). The relationship between gold and alchemy allows Lyly to

suggest that the pursuit of gold is liable to make people behave foolishly and once again presents gold as a suspect substance.

Lyly also uses the play's subplot as a means of undermining the desirability not only of gold, but also of another golden myth, which was used as part of the legitimating discourse of empire. In the play's comic subplot Motto, Midas's barber, has been given his master's golden beard. The beard is stolen from Motto by Petulus, Mellacrites's servant, who subsequently suffers from toothache. In this way the subplot mirrors the action of the main play: just as Midas cannot eat when he achieves his wish, so Motto when he steals the golden beard cannot eat as he suffers from toothache. The subplot then follows Motto's quest to regain his golden beard. This comic story of the golden prosthetic beard is thus used not only to continue the association between gold and objects of ridicule but, I will argue, serves also as a parody of the myth of the Golden Fleece. The quest is no longer for a golden fleece but a golden beard. Motto the barber, having regained the golden beard, is forced to give it back to Petulus when he blackmails him, as he has revealed the secret of Midas's ass's ears.

During the Renaissance the story of Jason's voyage to Colchis to win the fleece gained renewed significance, when it was used not only as a trope to describe voyages to the New World, but more potently as the insignia of the Spanish Habsburgs.<sup>77</sup> In 1429 Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, established the Order of the Golden Fleece primarily to promote chivalry and reinforce his political position. The Order was then passed down to the emperor Maximilian and then onto his grandson Charles V and in turn to his son Philip II of Spain. In this sense the fleece in Lyly's play would have

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<sup>77</sup> Yves Peyré, 'Marlowe's Argonauts', in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michèle Willems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 106-123.

specific associations with the Habsburgs. There is a portrait of Maximilian and his family by Bernhard Striegel, painted c.1515 in which the dynastic claims of the Habsburgs are clearly displayed, as Maximilian and his grandsons Charles and Ferdinand are all shown wearing the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece with the golden ram clearly visible.<sup>78</sup> By the sixteenth century the significance of this iconography could not fail to encourage the resemblance between the Argonauts and the Spanish and the fleece with gold from the New World.<sup>79</sup>

The story gradually developed to offer a more sinister interpretation of Jason's seizure of the fleece. In 1555 Georg Schuler in his commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describes how the story highlighted a greed for gold:

Which is why it is obvious that Jason obtained the treasure as a result of war ... or brought war to Colchos because of his greed for gold; thus in our time the Spaniards who travelled to India for the same reason, that is, to bring gold from hence.<sup>80</sup>

So the myth of the fleece becomes associated not just with overseas conquest, but also more specifically with travel for the purposes of plundering. Marlowe in his handling of the myth in *Tamburlaine* uses it for precisely this purpose. In Part One, when Tamburlaine is about to seize the city of Damascus he reassures his men that the plunder it will offer will be as magnificent 'As was to Jason Colchos' golden fleece' (1.IV.4.9).<sup>81</sup> The comparison between the seizure of Damascus and the Golden Fleece highlights the way in which the fleece as the object of desire cannot satisfy the appetite it arouses. After Damascus, Tamburlaine moves on.

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<sup>78</sup> Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Habsburgs: Embodying Empire* (London: BCA Viking, 1995), pp. 91-92.

<sup>79</sup> Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. < <http://www.khm.at/homeE3.html> > [accessed 3 May 2008]

<sup>80</sup> Peyré, 'Marlowe's Argonauts', p. 113.

<sup>81</sup> Peyré, 'Marlowe's Argonauts', p. 113.

In *Midas*, Lyly seeks to undermine the force of this myth by parodying both the quest and its object, thus effectively ridiculing the Spanish and their gold. Motto, having been blackmailed by Petulus into giving up the beard, is forced to promise that he can

have the beard ... Not only the golden beard and every hair (though it be not hair), but a dozen of beards, to stuff two dozen of cushions. (V.2.180-183).

The comedy of this scene is further emphasized when the barber offers not only a golden beard, but also numerous other beards in order to secure the confidence of Petulus. Motto suggests that the beards should be used to stuff cushions. This advice is reminiscent of Valdes' lines in *Doctor Faustus* when he makes explicit use of the myth of the Golden Fleece to describe the gold that will be brought by spirits from the Americas:

From Venice shall they drag huge argosies,  
And from America the golden fleece  
That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury (I.1.129-131).

In this instance the use of the verb 'stuffs' emphasises the blasé attitude towards gold. Because of its availability there is casualness about obtaining it, suggesting that it is not as exclusive as 'old Philip' might like to think. Lyly takes the deflation, not only of the value of gold but also of the myth itself, one stage further in his comic subplot by deliberately alluding to the image used in *Doctor Faustus*. In *Midas* it is a golden beard that is used to stuff a cushion, rather than a golden fleece that is used to stuff a treasury. This allusion reduces both the value of gold, by presenting it as a comic prosthesis, and the significance of the myth itself, which has been used symbolically to underpin Spanish imperial success.

Whilst *Midas* may have been written as part of the Armada celebrations in 1589, the play's primary concern is an interrogation of the basis for the festivities, namely England's triumph over imperial Spain. On the surface the allegory of king Midas as

Philip of Spain appears to reinforce reassuring stereotypes, re-enacting the English victory over Spain. On closer examination the territories, which represent England and Spain, in the shape of Lesbos and Phrygia, actually begin to unravel English notions of self and empire, as Lyly seeks to expose the reality of the myth.

In this final section of the chapter I turn to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the strategies of retrospection that it employs in order to critique Elizabeth and her iconography of virginity. Shakespeare, I will argue, looks back to the plays of Lyly and Marlowe, specifically *Galatea* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage* to establish a number of visual and thematic parallels between the 'fair vestal' and Lyly's goddess Diana on the one hand, and Dido and Titania on the other. Shakespeare reworks the Dido and Cupid tableau found in the plays of his predecessors thus aligning himself with the responses of Lyly and Marlowe to earlier entertainments in which myths of queens and cupids were adapted to present allegories of praise for the Queen. In the second part of this section I will devote some time to further discussion of Shakespeare's use of the figure of Titania to reassess Elizabeth's status in the 1590s as perpetual virgin. One of the consequences of Titania's childlessness is her attachment to the Indian boy, which in turn has an apocalyptic effect on the natural world as a result of her quarrel with Oberon. The images of the long-term impact of this dispute on the fairy world echo the sentiments of those speeches delivered to Elizabeth in the 1560s which exhorted the Queen to marry and emphasised the consequences of her failure to provide England with an heir of her body. Indeed the play's emphasis upon specific fruits recalls the metaphor of fruit used by Elizabeth's subjects to appeal to her own fruitfulness as they encouraged the Queen to marry, but the effect in *Dream* is sharply ironic as the fruits are juxtaposed with the portrait of a barren queen, who can now only offer fruit but

cannot bear any herself. The play therefore offers a rather bleak assessment of Elizabeth's reign.

The influence of Lyly's dramatic work upon Shakespeare's comedies and in particular *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been frequently noted.<sup>82</sup> G.K. Hunter in his assessment of the relationship between the two dramatists outlines the influence of a number of Lyly's comedies upon Shakespeare's plot structure in *Dream*:

[it] constructs its plot in the manner of Lyly, by balancing a number of self-contained groups, one against the other. As in *Sapho and Phao* we have court ladies, gods, pages and the Sybil, who never talk together; as in *Midas* we have shepherds, nymphs, counsellors, pages and gods maintained in separation from one another; so in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we have fairies, mechanicals, royal lovers ... and young lovers seeking to outwit their fathers.<sup>83</sup>

It is usually Lyly's *Endymion* which is traditionally discussed in conjunction with *Dream* as a potential source for the play, since Shakespeare also makes the moon the play's presiding deity and includes fairies who oversee the events in the wood.<sup>84</sup> More

recently, however, Leah Scragg has made the case for *Galatea* as a source for Shakespeare's play, since they share a number of themes, structural features and verbal echoes.<sup>85</sup> The action of both plays takes place in a wood as pairs of lovers overcome obstacles to their love. They are both also concerned with the power of the imagination and transformation. As G.K. Hunter has noted above both *Dream* and *Galatea* are organised into four groups of characters: the lovers, the fairies, the artisans and the figures of authority Theseus and Egeus which correspond with the lovers, the mythical

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<sup>82</sup> For a comparative study of Lyly and Shakespeare see Marco Mincoff, 'Shakespeare and Lyly', *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1961), 15-24 and G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962)

<sup>83</sup> Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier*, pp. 318-319.

<sup>84</sup> See for instance Harold F. Brooks, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Harold F. Brooks (London: Routledge, 1993), p. lxxvi, pp. lxxx-lxxxii and Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, pp. 162-169.

<sup>85</sup> See both the article and book-length accounts of this argument: Leah Scragg, 'Shakespeare, Lyly and Ovid: The Influence of 'Gallathea' on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', *Shakespeare Survey*, 30 (1977), 125-134 and *The Metamorphosis of Gallathea: A Study in Creative Adaptation* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982).

deities, the brothers and the parents in *Galatea*. Scragg notes that *Dream* makes use of a number of names from *Galatea*, Titania accuses Oberon of ‘versing love / To amorous Phillida’(II.1.67-68). Both Oberon and Titania refer to Neptune with Titania recalling how she and her ‘vot’ress’ sat together on ‘Neptune’s yellow sands’ (II.1.126), while Oberon reminds Puck that his magic is not simply characterised by darker associations of witchcraft and the night:

But we are spirits of another sort.  
I with the Morning’s love have oft made sport,  
And, like a forester, the groves may tread  
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,  
Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams,  
Turning into yellow gold his salt green streams (III.2.388-393).

More pertinent for my argument is Scragg’s suggestion that Shakespeare in his depiction of Cupid and the ‘fair vestal’ in Oberon’s speech recalls Lyly’s *Galatea*. The ‘fair vestal’ is like Lyly’s Diana in *Galatea*, ‘whose heart abateth the point of Cupid’s arrows’ (III.4.34-35), while the effect of Cupid’s arrow upon the little western flower is to create a love potion so that the lovers, like Diana’s nymphs, suffer the effects of love: ‘Cupid is a knavish lad / Thus to make poor females mad!’ (3.2.440-441). Scragg locates the speech in the context, not simply of Lyly’s influence upon Shakespeare, but of Shakespeare’s own reworking of the motif in Lyly:

The passage has been taken as complimentary to Elizabeth and is in part conventional but its occurrence in this context may well derive from Shakespeare’s recollections of the relationship between Cupid and Diana at the heart of Lyly’s play and the earlier dramatists’ presentation of the imperious virgin huntress.<sup>86</sup>

As Scragg suggests, Shakespeare, like Lyly and Marlowe, offers his own variation on the traditional story of love caused by Cupid’s arrow in *Dream* to offer his own appraisal of the Queen. It has been customary for critics to suggest that the play’s references to the ‘fair vestal thronèd by the west’ (II.1.158) and the ‘imperial vot’ress’

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<sup>86</sup> Scragg, ‘Shakespeare, Lyly and Ovid: The Influence of ‘Gallathea’ on ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’, p. 132.

(II.1.163) are flattering analogies for the Queen, particularly in view of the fact that Cupid's arrow is successfully deflected.<sup>87</sup> The play's insistence upon the influence of Diana reinforces the suggestion that Shakespeare's aim is to compliment the Queen as he incorporates the iconography of the Queen's mythos, which served to underpin it. More recently, however, it has been suggested by Louis Montrose that this complimentary framework is in fact a smokescreen, as virtuous impenetrability is quickly undermined. Although the arrow misses its target, it hits a flower, whose juice goes on to have the same effect as the arrow. Oberon describes the flower's transformation:

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took  
At a fair vestal, thronèd by the west,  
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;  
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,  
And the imperial vot'ress passed on,  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:  
It fell upon a little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.  
The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees (II.1.155-172).

Shakespeare refers to 'love-in-idleness' in *The Taming of the Shrew*, when Lucentio compares the reputed effect of the flower with his experience of falling in love at first sight with Bianca:

But see, while idly I stood looking on,  
I found the effect of love in idleness,  
And now in plainness I do confess to thee,

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<sup>87</sup> See for instance Brooks, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. lv. For an alternative view see Lisa Hopkins, *Writing Renaissance Queens: Texts by and about Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), p. 105.

That art to me as secret and as dear  
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was,  
Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,  
If I achieve not this young modest girl.<sup>88</sup>

Shakespeare then seems to have made the connection between this particular flower, the effect it produces and its link with Dido and her sister. The effect of Cupid's arrow on both Dido and Titania is to make them dote. Titania exclaims to Bottom 'Oh, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!' (IV.1.44), while Venus instructs Cupid to visit Dido and 'touch her white breast with this arrowhead, / That she may dote upon Aeneas's love' (II.1.326-327). In Titania's case the effect of the flower cannot be countered by an arrow of disdain, but by 'Dian's bud' (IV.1.72). These are in fact the means by which Oberon can reassert his patriarchal control over the Fairy Queen. Montrose concludes:

The vestal's invulnerability to fancy is doubly instrumental to Oberon in his reaffirmation of romance, marital and parental norms that have been inverted during the course of the play. Thus, Shakespeare's royal compliment remythologises the cult of the Virgin Queen in such a way as to sanction a relationship of gender and power that is personally and politically inimical to Elizabeth.<sup>89</sup>

If we turn now to consider Marlowe's play, the case has often been made for the influence of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* on a range of Shakespeare's plays, including *Hamlet*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*.<sup>90</sup> In instances where critics have identified allusions to Marlowe's play in Shakespeare's work it has been suggested that these echoes are primarily for the purposes of parody, with Shakespeare recalling

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<sup>88</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), I.1.151-157.

<sup>89</sup> Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture', *Representations*, 2 (1983), 61-94 (pp. 81-82).

<sup>90</sup> See for instance Maurice Charney, 'Marlowe and Shakespeare's African Queens', in *Shakespearean Illuminations: Essays in Honour of Marvin Rosenberg*, ed. by Jay L. Halio & Hugh Richmond (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), pp. 242-252 and Michael Hattaway, 'Christopher Marlowe: Ideology and Subversion', in *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture*, ed. by Darryll Grantley and Peter Roberts (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), pp. 198-223.

Marlowe's *Dido* in order to send it up.<sup>91</sup> One play rich in allusions to Marlowe's *Dido*, which has been comparatively overlooked, is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here Shakespeare invokes *Dido* not for parody, but to establish links between the experiences of the two queens.

The first critic to identify similarities between the two plays was J.B. Steane, in his critical study of Marlowe, who makes passing reference to the similarity in the lyrical tone of the scene in which Venus sings Ascanius asleep in the wood. Steane remarks that 'The whole passage is akin to the fairy world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*',<sup>92</sup> but limits his enquiry to this remark, as he is concerned with simply outlining the shifts of tone and mood within Marlowe's *Dido*. Later Jackson Cope developed the argument for the influence of *Dido* on *Dream* by noting the thematic links between the two plays, outlining the parallels between the two queens, Dido and Titania, each of whom is caused to dote as a result of the work of Cupid's arrow.<sup>93</sup> Cope also comments on the 'stylistic juxtapositions of the lyric and the laughable' in both plays, in Dido's wooing of Aeneas in the cave and Titania's courting of Bottom. He concludes that 'the mixed farce and romance of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is Marlowe's most significant gift to Shakespeare, progenitor of that strange crossbreeding of Puck and Oberon and Theseus and Bottom's players, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'.<sup>94</sup> Once again, however, Cope's remarks on the thematic links between the two plays are made but not fully developed.

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<sup>91</sup> H.J. Oliver describes Shakespeare's treatment of the murder of Priam in the Pyrrhus speech as a 'good-natured parody' of the same account in Marlowe's *Dido*. See H. J. Oliver, 'Introduction' to Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, in *Dido, Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, ed. by H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1968), p. xxxii. See also Dorothea Kehler, 'Shakespeare's Recollections of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*: Two Notes', *American Notes and Queries*, 14 (2001), 5-10, and Nicholas Brooke, 'Marlowe as Provocative Agent in Shakespeare's Early Plays', *Shakespeare Survey*, 14 (1961), 34-44.

<sup>92</sup> J.B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 46.

<sup>93</sup> Cope, 'Marlowe's *Dido* and the Titillating Boys', pp. 315-325.

<sup>94</sup> Cope, 'Marlowe's *Dido* and the Titillating Boys', p. 325.

More recently Fred B. Tromly has also observed the influence of *Dido's* mix of tragedy and farce on *Dream*.<sup>95</sup> Shakespeare's blend of comedy and tragedy, however, is not as dark as Marlowe's, with Titania's punishment culminating in her humiliation rather than her death. Tromly also points out similarities of plot structure as both plays present two pairs of lovers whose behaviour in the wood is characterised by flight and pursuit.<sup>96</sup> In *Dido*, Iarbas, one of Dido's suitors, pursues her on the hunt, despite being spurned in favour of Aeneas; he, in turn, is then chased by Dido's love-lorn sister, Anna. Similarly Helena follows Demetrius into the wood as he chases Hermia and Lysander.

Shakespeare signals his interest in the story of Queen Dido in the opening scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when Hermia makes her avowal to Lysander:

I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,  
By his best arrow with the golden head,  
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,  
And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen  
When the false Trojan under sail was seen<sup>97</sup>

It is noteworthy that Hermia, in swearing by the bow and arrow and Venus's girdle, is pledging her love by those very things that prompt dotage. This unusual choice of objects to swear her constancy and fidelity by is underlined by her invocation of the story of Dido and Aeneas. This series of items offers a condensed account of Dido's story as they are the items which both facilitated and symbolise her love for Aeneas. Whilst the pair may well be famous as lovers, Dido's story is also one of the more disturbing issues of fickleness and abandonment. Shakespeare thus combines the two

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<sup>95</sup> Tromly, *Playing with Desire*, p. 58.

<sup>96</sup> Tromly, *Playing with Desire*, p. 58.

<sup>97</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), I.1.169-174. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

images of Dido as queen transformed by Love's arrow and as abandoned lover to prefigure the behaviour of the lovers and Titania in the wood.<sup>98</sup>

The introduction of the fairy world in *Dream* establishes a series of thematic links with Marlowe's story of Dido. In Marlowe's opening scene between Jupiter and Ganymede, it is Jupiter's infatuation with this young boy that has caused him to neglect his care of Aeneas, as Venus is quick to remind him: 'Ay, this is it: you can sit toying there, / And playing with that female wanton boy, / Whiles my Aeneas wanders on the seas, / And rests a prey to every billow's pride' (I.1.50-53). Similarly, strife in the fairy world is caused by Titania's love for the Indian boy as she abandons her role as Oberon's wife and the Fairy Queen with dire consequences for the natural world.

Shakespeare builds a series of connections between the two plays and the stylistic similarities noted by Jackson Cope between the two plays is, I will argue, deliberately done in order to underline the thematic links. Cope's identification of parallels between Dido's wooing of Aeneas in the cave and Titania's infatuation with Bottom in the fairy bower suggests that we are invited to draw a comparison between the two queens. Both women, as a result of Cupid's arrow, are forced to woo a beloved who appears oblivious to their affections. Aeneas, for example, fails to pick up on a series of hints from Dido about her love for him until finally she suggests that he cannot love her, which prompts the desired response. In *Dream*, however, Bottom remains unaware of Titania's love for him, concentrating instead on the treats offered him by the fairies. Shakespeare, like Marlowe, uses Titania's treatment of Bottom in the fairy bower to offer his own satirical

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<sup>98</sup> Shakespeare employs the same strategy in *The Merchant of Venice* in the final scene of the play, when Jessica and Lorenzo exchange vows of love. They too select a series of classical lovers, including Dido and Aeneas, all notable for their unhappy endings. See *The Merchant of Venice*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), V.1.1-14.

tableau. This culminates in Act IV, scene 1, when Titania holds Bottom in her arms and they fall asleep together: 'Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms-' (IV.1.39). *Dream* re-enacts the carnival inversion of *Dido* when queens, commoners, and gods are manipulated by the children in their arms, so Titania's love for the changeling boy causes her to dote upon an artisan turned ass. Shakespeare's version of the Virgilian icon not only serves as a device to critique the Queen, but also recreates the humour of Marlowe's play by entering into the spirit of the risqué comedy of the boys' companies. The image of a boy actor playing Titania holding the adult who played Bottom offers a silhouette, which immediately returns us to those self reflexive visual jokes of the boys' companies and their reputation as catamites. This humour is doubly invoked by the comic potential of the wordplay on ass/arse. There has been cautious speculation as to the significance of Bottom's name, particularly the currency of the pun on ass/arse. Annabel Patterson, in discussing the visual pun of Bottom's transformation into an ass, remarks of this trend that:

It is typical of the *Oxford English Dictionary's* conservatism that it does not sanction this meaning of the word in Shakespeare's day, with the result that generations of editors have been satisfied with 'bottom' as a technical term for the bobbin in weaving.<sup>99</sup>

Shakespeare uses both the pun on Bottom's name, together with the suggestion of his seduction by Titania, to purposefully recreate the tongue-in-cheek satire of the boys' companies. Titania's speeches to Bottom are riddled with puns on intercourse and male and female genitalia. Titania's metaphor certainly suggests her desire for coitus:

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm (IV.1.41-43).

Shakespeare's choice of 'enrings' is significant as it not only suggests intercourse, but also 'ring', punning on the anus. This series of meanings suggests not only copulation

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<sup>99</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 66.

between Titania and Bottom, punning on his name, but also between the boy playing Titania and the man playing Bottom, replicating the reflexive humour of Marlowe's play.<sup>100</sup>

Marlowe similarly exploits the names of Dido and Aeneas for comic purpose as they both offer a sexual pun. Dido's name, for example, puns on Die-do, with 'die' referring to orgasm. It seems unlikely that Marlowe would have overlooked this opportunity for further comedy. There are several instances when Marlowe seems to have his queen deliberately punning upon her own name during the play. In Act III, scene 4, Dido tries to hint of her love for Aeneas: 'The thing that I will die before I ask, / And yet desire to have before I die' (III.4.8-9). These lines appear to be Dido's attempt to employ another device from her rhetorical armoury. The repetition of 'die' in each line suggests an example of imperfect chiasmus that Dido, in her desperation to suggest her real meaning to Aeneas, is unable to pull off.<sup>101</sup> The effect instead is one of comic frustration. The argument for punning is further strengthened by the fact that in this scene Dido tries to preserve her modesty and fails. She wrestles with seeming immodest, but is faced by a rather dull-witted Aeneas who fails to pick up on her hints. Her modesty is, therefore, compromised not only by Aeneas, but also by her own name as it becomes synonymous with sexual passion. Later in the scene, when she reveals her love for Aeneas, Dido attempts to ensure a positive response by suggesting that he cannot love her, as he prefers the pursuit of fame and would rather appear 'fair to sirens' eyes / Than to the Carthage Queen that dies for him' (III.4.38-39). This attempt at female manipulation and the note of desperation suggests the comedy to be gained from

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<sup>100</sup> Frankie Rubenstein, *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sexual Puns and their Significance* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989), pp. xv-xvi.

<sup>101</sup> *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. by J.A. Cuddon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 39.

the older boy playing Dido attempting to bully into submission a smaller one playing the Trojan hero Aeneas.<sup>102</sup>

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* I suggest that Shakespeare deliberately employs so many of the images associated with Elizabeth's personae as Virgin Queen in order to signal a re-evaluation of them. In those plays which dramatise the story of Dido and Aeneas or offer a variation on that story the choice which is repeatedly played out for Elizabeth and her dramatic female personae is the choice between the brothers Cupid and Aeneas, the pursuit of love or the establishment of an empire. Elizabeth is repeatedly shown in the act of rejecting Cupid's arrow and choosing a life given over to chastity and service. The use of this story as a political tool served its short term aim of foiling the proposed marriage between Elizabeth and Anjou, but in *Dream*, specifically through the figure of Titania, Shakespeare considers the cost of the Queen's decision to choose Aeneas over Cupid and remain unmarried.

The obvious consequence of this decision was that the identity of her successor was a matter of speculation, with candidates including James VI of Scotland, Arbella Stuart and the Infanta Isabella. It appeared likely that James would succeed to the throne, but Elizabeth continued to refuse to name an heir. During the first decade of Elizabeth's reign there were repeated appeals by her subjects that the Queen marry and the reasons given included the desire to avoid a contested succession. For a providential monarch and defender of the Protestant faith the failure to marry is repeatedly described in apocalyptic terms. An example from c.1560 is indicated in a letter from Matthew

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<sup>102</sup> Cope, 'Marlowe's Dido and the Titillating Boys', pp. 322-323. The boy playing Dido would have to be older from a practical perspective than the one playing Aeneas as Dido has more lines to learn.

Parker, the archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal the bishop of London, and Richard Cox of Ely, who considered it their pastoral duty to

[b]e solicitous in that cause which all your loving subjects so daily sigh for and morningly in their prayers desire to appear to their eyes. Marriage we all wish to see your godly affection inclined to, whereby your noble blood might be continued to reign over us to our great joy and comfort, whereby the great fears of ruin of this your ancient empire might be prevented, the destruction of your natural-born subjects avoided. We cannot but fear this continued sterility in your Highness' person to be a great token of God's displeasure toward us.<sup>103</sup>

At the opening of Parliament in 1563 Alexander Nowell, the Dean of Saint Paul's, preached a sermon before the Queen in which he concluded by encouraging the Queen to consider matrimony and the continuance of the Tudor dynasty:

And whereas the Queen's majesty most noble ancestors have commonly had some issue to succeed them, but her majesty yet none; which want is for our sins to be a plague unto us. For as the marriage of Queen Mary was a terrible plague to all England, and like in continuance to have proved greater; so now for the want of your marriage and issue is like to prove as great a plague.<sup>104</sup>

These images of a childless queen whose status is described in terms of natural disasters such as plague and famine are brought sharply back into focus in the 1590s through the figure of Titania. The appearance of the fairies is framed by the discussion of the marital discord between Oberon and Titania. The royal marriage has yet to produce children and Titania's attachment to the Indian boy can be seen partly as a consequence of her own childlessness. Titania acknowledges that their quarrel has had far-reaching effects upon the natural world:

the winds, piping to us in vain,  
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea  
Contagious fogs which, falling in the land,  
Hath every pelting river made so proud  
That they have overborne their continents.  
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,  
The plowman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard;  
The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,

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<sup>103</sup> *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury*, Parker Society, ed. by J. Bruce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853), pp. 129-132 (p. 131).

<sup>104</sup> *A Catechism by Alexander Nowell*, Parker Society, ed. by G.E. Corrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853), pp. 224-229 (p. 228).

And crows are fatted with the murrain flock (II.1.88-97).

The forces of nature have combined to create a world of pestilence and dearth:

the moon, the governess of floods,  
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That rheumatic diseases do abound (II.1.103-105).

Whilst the description of the countryside in the play may offer an accurate account of England in the 1590s when there were a number of failed harvests due to bad weather,<sup>105</sup> this portrait of the natural world echoes the apocalyptic images of a monarch who has failed to provide England with an heir.

The less than flattering portrait of a barren Elizabeth offered by Titania is reinforced in the play as Shakespeare recalls Marlowe's play to identify Titania with the character of the Nurse. In Act III, scene 1, Titania's inducements for Bottom are suggestive of those used by the Nurse to entice Cupid as Ascanius away from the court. Titania instructs her fairies to

Feed him with apricots and dewberries,  
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;  
The honey bags steal from the humble-bees (III.1.161 -163).

This list directly echoes Marlowe's Nurse:

I have an orchard that hath store of plums,  
Brown almonds, services, ripe figs, and dates,  
Dewberries, apples, yellow oranges;  
A garden where are bee-hives full of honey (IV.5.4-7).

Clifford Leech suggested that Marlowe included the scene between Cupid and the widowed Nurse as it offered a parallel with her mistress as 'Dido's infection is mirrored and exaggerated in the Nurse's'.<sup>106</sup> The Nurse, like her mistress, is a widow who quickly becomes infatuated with Cupid disguised as Ascanius. The discrepancy

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<sup>105</sup> See Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, pp. 96-105.

<sup>106</sup> Leech, 'Marlowe's Humour', pp. 167-178.

between the age of the Nurse and the youthfulness of Cupid is made explicit to underline the ridiculous nature of her passion:

That I might live to see this boy a man!  
How prettily he laughs! Go, you wag!  
You'll be a twigger when you come to age.  
Say Dido what she will, I am not old;  
I'll be no more a widow; I am young;  
I'll have a husband, I, or else a lover (IV.5.18-23).

To which Cupid spitefully responds 'A husband and no teeth!'(IV.5.24). The Nurse alternates between reason and fancy:

O what mean I to have such foolish thoughts?  
Foolish is love, a toy. – O sacred love!  
If there be any heaven in earth, 'tis love,  
Especially in a woman of your years. –  
Blush, blush for shame! Why shouldst thou think of love?  
A grave and not a lover, fits thy age (IV.5. 25-30).

The Nurse's role as an intermediary between Dido and the audience is significant; although the audience will laugh at her dotage as grotesque, her character, whilst serving as a reflection of Dido, generates a balanced response, as she is not allowed to undermine entirely our sympathy for Dido. Titania's allusion to Marlowe's Nurse reveals the absence of an equivalent Nurse figure in *Dream*. Shakespeare uses Titania's list of enticements to underline that the Fairy Queen is in fact a conflated version of both Dido and the Nurse and is therefore doubly ridiculous. By deliberately suggesting that Titania collapses within herself the identities of Dido and the Nurse, Shakespeare presents an extreme vision of female rule in which the queen is not only subject to Cupid's arrow, but is also notably childless.

Critics such as A.L. Rowse and Steane have also remarked upon the scene between Cupid and the Nurse primarily in the service of a comparison with Shakespeare. Rowse praises the exoticism of the Nurse's fruit garden only then to dismiss it because it seems to lack the realism of an English Shakespearean garden. 'Unlike Shakespeare's, it is not

a real English garden; it is a Renaissance garden out of a book'.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Steane describes the Nurse's speech as presenting 'an Elizabethan version of the modern birthday-card rustic garden idyll'. In each case the speech is compared to Shakespeare and found wanting.<sup>108</sup>

The similarities between these two speeches, however, indicate that there is a deliberate strategy at work on Shakespeare's part and that this is not a chance echo. This is clinched by the way in which the speeches of both the Nurse and Titania refer to dewberries. References to dewberries are not readily found in the literature of the period outside botanical writing. The Chadwyck-Healey electronic database confirms that only Marlowe and then Shakespeare in *Dream* use this word in their plays. The word then only appears in later eighteenth and nineteenth century adaptations of Shakespeare's play.<sup>109</sup> The Early English Books Online database, however, suggests that the word 'dewberrie' also features in Robert Chester's *The Annuals [sic] of Great Brittain* (1611). This is the title given to the republished *Love's Martyr* first published in 1601, which contained Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' and contributions from Jonson, Marston and Chapman. The reference appears in a section of the poem in which a conversation takes place between Nature and the Phoenix about the properties of the plants and flowers that surround them. The dewberry is mentioned but its properties are passed over without comment. The Revels edition of *Dido* notes that Marlowe only ever used the word 'dewberries' in this play, although H.J. Oliver does

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<sup>107</sup> A.L. Rowse, *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 47.

<sup>108</sup> See also Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966)

<sup>109</sup> The Chadwyck-Healey Literature Online Database details the following versions of Shakespeare's *Dream*. The first is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by George Colman and David Garrick (1763), the second is called *A Fairy Tale in Two Acts* by George Colman (1763) and the third version by Frederick Reynolds is called *A Midsummer Night's Dream, written by Shakspeare [sic]: With Alterations, Additions, and New Songs* (1816).

identify its use by Shakespeare in *Dream*, but without further comment.<sup>110</sup> As has been noted, editors of Shakespeare have made more of his references to flora and fauna than those of Marlowe. Harold Brooks in the Arden *Dream* cites Henry Lyte's *A Niewe Herball, or Historie of Plantes*, of 1578, a translation of Dodoen's *Cruydeboeck*, as Shakespeare's source for the fruit; in this the dewberry is described as a blackberry.<sup>111</sup> In the Revels edition of *Dido* the note for dewberry echoes the OED definition as 'a species of blackberry or bramble berry' rather than suggesting a particular source.<sup>112</sup> The definition of the dewberry in the OED notes that

In some earlier English writers, and mod. dialects, the name is applied to the gooseberry (dayberry). Shakespeare's dewberry, which is mentioned among delicate cultivated fruits, is supposed by some to have meant the gooseberry.<sup>113</sup>

What is significant, however, are the medicinal properties associated with the dewberry and the gooseberry in early modern herbals. Both the dewberry and the gooseberry are associated with female fertility as they are offered as remedies for either cravings in pregnancy or heavy periods. For example, in Lyte's *Niewe Herball* the fruit of the blackberry or bramble berry is described as the dewberry. Lyte suggests a decoction of the unripe fruit as a remedy to stop 'womens flowers and all other issue of blood'.<sup>114</sup> Nicholas Culpeper in *The English Physitian* suggested a decoction of the leaves, brambles and dried branches of the bramble or blackberry bush 'are good for the too much flowing of womens courses'.<sup>115</sup> If the dewberry is another name for the gooseberry the properties of this plant and particularly its fruit are suggestive. John Gerard for example, claims in *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* that the fruit

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<sup>110</sup> H. J. Oliver's note at IV.4.6 : Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in *Dido, Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, ed. by H.J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1968)

<sup>111</sup> Harold F. Brooks's note at III.1.159: William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Harold F. Brooks (London: Routledge, 1993)

<sup>112</sup> H.J. Oliver's note at IV.4.6 : Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in *Dido, Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, ed. by H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1968)

<sup>113</sup> OED, dewberry n. a & b.

<sup>114</sup> Henry Lyte, *A Niewe Herball, or Historie of Plantes* (London: H. Loë, 1578), pp. 660-662.

<sup>115</sup> Nicholas Culpeper, *The English Physitian* (London: P. Cole, 1653), sig. F3<sup>r</sup>.

stops 'the menses or monthly sickness'.<sup>116</sup> Culpeper advises that the fruit 'are excellently good to stay longings of women with child'.<sup>117</sup> John Parkinson also suggests that the gooseberries 'are a fit dish for women with child to stay their longings, and to procure an appetite unto meat'.<sup>118</sup> The identities of Titania's Fairy attendants Peaseblossom and Mustardseed have also been remarked upon in the context of their medicinal properties.<sup>119</sup> Both plants were associated with fertility or the promotion of conception. In folklore the pea and its pod for example, were thought to contain a powerful love potion. The word peasecod was also associated with male genitalia, as a cod meant a bag of seeds and the word could also be inverted to produce codpiece.<sup>120</sup> The mustard seed was also noted for its heat and according to Gerard its benefits for women in particular, were that it 'provoketh appetite', and 'provoketh the tearmes'.<sup>121</sup>

Both plays' emphasis on those fruits and plants which promote conception and assist with the side effects of pregnancy serve to underline the sterility of Titania and the Nurse. Titania, from her celebration of the Indian votaress' pregnancy and love for her child, would seem to desire pregnancy herself, while the Nurse who is clearly past child-bearing age, briefly deludes herself that she is young and amorous again. The use of fruit as a metaphor for fertility and children also recalls the earlier biblical iconography employed by Elizabeth's parliament as they attempted to persuade her of her obligation to marry. In February 1563 the Lords' petition to the Queen urged:

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<sup>116</sup> John Gerard, *The Herbal or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: E. Bollifant, 1597), pp.1143-1144.

<sup>117</sup> Culpeper, *The English Physitian*, sig. F3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris, or, A Choise Garden of All Sorts of Rarest Flowers* [sic] (London: R. N., 1656), pp. 560-561.

<sup>119</sup> See Helen Hackett, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Comedies*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, 4 vols (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), III, pp. 338-357, and Lou Agnes Reynolds and Paul Sawyer, 'Folk Medicine and the Four Fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 10 (1959), 513-521.

<sup>120</sup> Reynolds and Sawyer, 'Folk Medicine', p. 518.

<sup>121</sup> Gerard, *The Herbal or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London: A. Islip, 1633), p. 245.

God (your highness knoweth) by the course of the Scriptures hath declared succession and the having of children to be one of His principal benedictions in this life; and of the contrary He hath pronounced otherwise. And therefore Abraham prayed to God for issue, fearing that Eleazar his steward should have been his heir, and had the promise that kings should proceed of his body. Anna, the mother of Samuel, prayed to God with tears for issue; and Elizabeth (whose name your majesty beareth), mother to John the Baptist, was joyful when God had blessed her with fruit, accounting herself delivered thereby of a reproach.<sup>122</sup>

The Queen answered their request that she marry and name a successor with the following sharp retort:

The two petitions that you presented me, expressed in many words, contained in sum as of your cares the greatest: my marriage and my successor, of which two I think best the last be touched, and of the other a silent thought may serve. For I had thought it had been so desired as none other tree's blossoms should have been minded or ever hoped if my fruit had been denied you.<sup>123</sup>

At the end of the Commons' petition to the Queen in the same year and on the same subject, the speaker delivered a speech in the House of Lords in which he hoped that the question of the Queen's marriage would soon be settled and he entreated:

God to encline your Majestie's hart to marriage, and that he will so blesse, and send such good successe thereunto that we may see the fruit and children, that may come thereof.<sup>124</sup>

When Shakespeare comes to write *A Midsummer Night's Dream* nearly thirty years later, the final decade of Elizabeth's reign is characterised by critical assessment of her achievements as Queen. Shakespeare's comedy contributes to this political and cultural Zeitgeist by employing a series of retrospective strategies. The first is that *Dream's* allusions to Marlowe's play and the parallels established between Dido and Titania provide a referent to a pivotal moment in the manipulation of the Queen's image. The use of Dido in the iconography of Elizabeth coincided with the marriage negotiations with Anjou, signalling the rejection of those images which supported the marriageability of the Queen, in favour of her perpetual virginity. *Dream* then goes on

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<sup>122</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 84-85.

<sup>123</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 79.

<sup>124</sup> Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, p. 62.

to examine the political consequences of this ideological shift, by juxtaposing Titania with the Nurse, whose fruitlessness offers a stinging commentary upon Elizabeth's iconicity as a Virgin Queen.

The retelling of the story of Dido and Aeneas on the early modern stage, in plays by Lyly, Marlowe and Shakespeare, reveal the ways in which this particular classical myth could be deployed in the construction of a cohesive, imperial identity for Queen and nation. What these plays also work to expose are the shortcomings of this mythmaking, to point up the gap between ideology and reality.

**‘Cleare pearle of heaven, and, not to bee farther ambitious in titles, Cynthia’:**

**Elizabeth I and the Mythography of the Moon Goddess.**

Chapter two of the thesis has outlined the uses of the figure of Dido during and after the Anjou marriage negotiations and argued that the period 1578-81 was pivotal in the development of the Queen’s iconography since the Queen’s image underwent a significant change from marriageable virgin to perpetual virgin. This period signalled the beginning of Elizabeth’s apotheosis which was recorded by the use of a series of classical goddesses including Astraea, Belphoebe, Diana and Cynthia. This chapter will concern itself with one of those avatars for Elizabeth: the moon goddess Cynthia, who was used to celebrate both Elizabeth’s virginity and longevity. Whilst this particular figuring of Elizabeth will be the chapter’s primary focus it will argue that one of the strategies employed to critique the Queen and her status as a virgin goddess was to refashion a motif used by the Queen earlier in her reign as mother of the nation. Although Elizabeth subsequently desisted from using this trope in speeches and other examples of public self-representation, it continued to be deployed by her subjects. The first section of the chapter will therefore devote some time to the discussion of the history of this particular figuring of the Queen as it provides an important framework for the remainder of the chapter. The mythography of Cynthia, I will argue links the unmarried and ageing Elizabeth to two figures who exemplify unruly female behaviour: the witch and the widow. I will also argue that each of these figures is used to mediate concerns about female rule. The texts which will form the basis for this argument are three plays: John Lyly’s *Endymion*, Ben Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels* and George Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears*. Each of these plays, for example, evokes the figure of the witch through the composite figure of the triplex Diana, where the goddess unites

with both Cynthia and Hecate the goddess of the underworld to offer a complex, multivalent response to the image of the Virgin Queen. In *Cynthia's Revels* and *The Widow's Tears*, I explore the pairing of Cynthia and Niobe in these plays to argue that rather than operating simply in binary opposition to one another, Niobe is used by both dramatists to explore the consequences of the Queen's apotheosis.

From the outset of her reign Elizabeth was presented as mother to the nation. In *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects* (1559) John Aylmer naturalises the political anomaly of female rule by depicting the relationship between Queen and subjects as that of a mother and child, with Elizabeth as a merciful and benign parent: 'She commeth in lyke a lambe, and not lyke a Lyon, lyke a mother and not lyke a stepdam'.<sup>1</sup> Aylmer outlines the paradigm of mutual obligation that such a relationship establishes when he reminds his readers of their duty to serve and obey their new Queen:

If we do not: we fyrst provoke Gods wrath agaynst us, to poure downe his vengeance uppon us either by sicknes and plagues, or by openinge the mouthe of the earth, and hell to swallows us, to the dongeon of damnation ... instead of a loving Quene and mother to raigne over us: or by turning the hart of the prince through our unkindness, churlishnes, and rebellion, from us (sig. Q3v).

In Elizabeth's first speech to Parliament in 1559, the Queen responds to the Commons' petition that she marry by reassuring them that she will

Never in that matter conclude anything that shall be prejudicial to the realm, for the weal and safety whereof, as a good mother of my country, will never shun to spend my life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Aylmer, *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subiectes Agaynst the Late Blowne Blaste, Concerninge the Gouvernme[n]t of Wemen* (London: J. Day, 1559), sig. O1<sup>v</sup>. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>2</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 58 n.9.

In 1563 the Commons' petition to the Queen calling upon her to marry and provide an heir of the body utilised her own maternal trope to remind Elizabeth of her obligations to them. The petition explains the reasons why Parliament has been called:

And confess your majesty, of your gracious and motherly care for them and their posterity, have summoned this Parliament principally for stablishing some certain limitation of th'imperial crown of your realm.<sup>3</sup>

The petition insists that Elizabeth provide some indication of her intentions in order to provide

Most gracious remedy in this great necessity which by your most honourable and motherly carefulness for them has occasioned this assembly.<sup>4</sup>

Elizabeth responds by swiftly asserting her role as a providential monarch whose accession delivered England from Catholicism:

I am neither careless nor unmindful of your safety in this case, as I trust you likewise do not forget that by me you were delivered whilst you were hanging on the bough ready to fall into the mud – yea to be drowned in the dung.<sup>5</sup>

The reply concludes:

Though after my death you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any a more mother than I mean to be to you.<sup>6</sup>

Critics have tended to assume based on these early speeches, that Elizabeth continued to identify herself with the role of a mother. Allison Heisch, for example, argues that 'Throughout her reign, in a metaphor her sex made plausible ... she pictures and presents herself as a loving and yet virginal mother'.<sup>7</sup> Susan Frye also remarks that 'her metaphoric motherhood was eventually turned more to her advantage by recasting her subjects as her dependents'.<sup>8</sup> Mary Beth Rose has challenged the assumptions

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<sup>3</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> Allison Heisch, 'Queen Elizabeth I: Parliamentary Rhetoric and the Exercise of Power', *Signs*, 1 (1975), 31-55 (p. 32).

<sup>8</sup> Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 54.

concerning the Queen's ability to fashion a coherent identity which actively cultivated the dual roles of virgin and mother and that she continued to do so throughout her reign.<sup>9</sup> The evidence from the Queen's speeches at least undermines such an argument. Rose argues that motherhood in particular was not a role which would necessarily serve to alleviate the anxieties of her male subjects since 'all ideological agendas about the family agreed more or less ambivalently that maternity was incompatible with the public domain.'<sup>10</sup> After 1563 Elizabeth's explicit use of the role of mother to the nation disappears from her own public examples of self representation. Christine Coch has suggested several reasons why the Queen chose to discontinue her use of this particular metaphor, arguing that it would mean that others 'would not be able to co-opt it and so manipulate her political identity' and secondly that such an image lost some of its usefulness, particularly as the Queen began to get older and utilised other classical figurings 'a maturing maternal identity may have begun to overshadow other aspects of her complex royal self-representation'.<sup>11</sup> Whilst both Rose and Coch argue that Elizabeth was aware of the shortcomings of this particular trope as part of her strategy of self-representation and avoided its use in public, the metaphor itself persisted in Elizabethan culture and the image of Elizabeth as mother to the nation underwent a radical refashioning by her subjects, particularly in the final decades of her reign. For the remainder of this chapter I will briefly examine some of the ways in which the maternal metaphor was employed for the Queen and then move on to focus upon how anxieties about the Queen's gender and virginity were expressed through the mythography of the goddess Cynthia. I will argue that this particular figuring of Elizabeth aligned the Queen with troubling figures from classical myth, exemplars of

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Beth Rose, 'The Gendering of Authority in the Public Speeches of Elizabeth I', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America*, 115 (2000), 1077-1082.

<sup>10</sup> Rose, 'The Gendering of Authority in the Public Speeches of Elizabeth I', p.1079.

<sup>11</sup> Christine Coch, "'Mother of my Contreye": Elizabeth I and Tudor Constructions of Motherhood', *English Literary Renaissance*, 26 (1996), 423-450.

unnatural motherhood, namely Hecate, the goddess of the underworld, Medea, and Niobe, the hubristic Theban queen.

Although Elizabeth discontinued her explicit use of the trope, the image of Elizabeth as mother of her nation continued throughout her reign. In *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578) compiled by Richard Day there is a prayer attributed to John Foxe which describes Elizabeth as ‘a Queene so calme, so patient, so mercifull: more like a naturall mother then a Princes’.<sup>12</sup> One of the prayers is written specifically to give thanks for Elizabeth as England’s Queen, who has been sent by God to heal and nurture England:

Thou hast made her to us a mother, to thine afflicted flock a nurce in that benefite which we have in liberty of true Religion, and common peace. Mervilously protecting her, thou hast kept her to defend us, that we might use and hold this benefite quyety.<sup>13</sup>

Each prayer in the collection is surrounded by a border of woodcuts with tags from Scripture or simply a proverb to reinforce the message on that particular page. In the case of the above prayer the description of Elizabeth as a mother and nurse is accompanied by the figure of a nursing mother with two children at her side. The tag above this image reads: ‘Love nourisheth with joy’ while below the image reads another tag: ‘Herod murthereth infants’. The figure of the mother and children are shown to be standing upon the crowned figure of Herod. To the left of the image is another which shows a group of people, possibly a family group or church congregation reading the Bible. Here Elizabeth is the symbolic mother of the nation and the protector of the Faith.

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Day, *A Booke of Christian prayers* (London: J. Day, 1578), p. 28. For a recent discussion of Elizabeth’s authorship of the earlier volume *Christian Prayers and Meditations*, published in 1569, see Jennifer Clement, ‘The Queen’s Voice: Elizabeth I’s *Christian Prayers and Meditations*’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 13.3 (January 2008) <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/13-3/clemquee.htm>>. [accessed 2 May 2008]

<sup>13</sup> Day, *A Booke of Christian prayers*, p. 45.

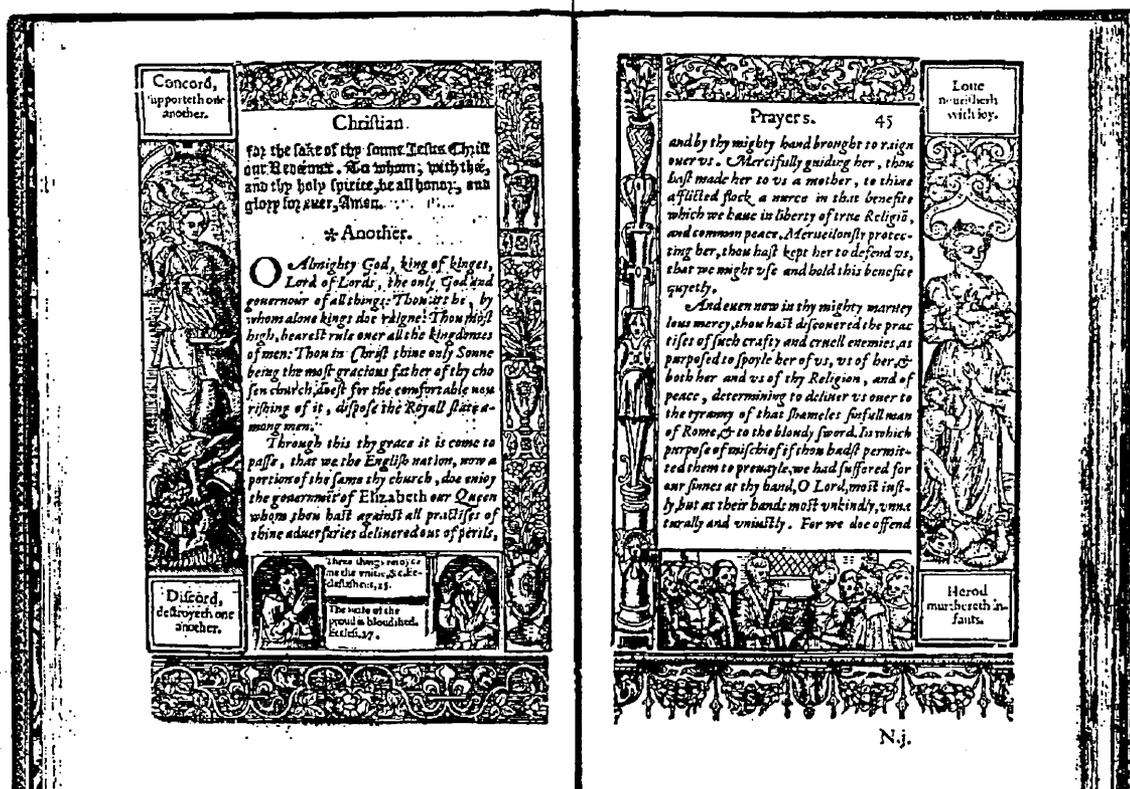


Illustration 3. *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (London: J. Day, 1578), p. 45. Image reproduced from the original in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

This printed image of Elizabeth as mother of the church was also translated into the portraits of the Queen and is symbolised in several of the Pelican portraits by Nicholas Hilliard. The emblem of the pelican was one particularly favoured by Elizabeth and its popularity is demonstrated by the inventories of the Queen's jewels and accounts of New Year gifts for the Queen when she was presented with the bird as a jewel.<sup>14</sup> The first portrait was painted c. 1574-1575 and the second c. 1583-84 and both show the Queen wearing the pelican at her breast to make clear the association between Elizabeth

<sup>14</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd: The Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes prepared in July 1600*, ed. by Janet Arnold (Leeds: Maney & Sons, 1988), pp. 74.

and the bird.<sup>15</sup> The emblem of the pelican had a history of a specifically religious meaning as the bird's fabled ability to revive its young with its own blood meant that it had been used as a symbol of the Eucharist. This particular association is made explicit, for example, in the arms of the Colleges of Corpus Christi at both Oxford and Cambridge. In the case of Elizabeth the pelican is used as an emblem of self-sacrifice to offer a flattering assessment of Elizabeth's role as Queen. John Lyly in *Euphues*, for example, described Elizabeth as 'that good Pelican that to feed her people spareth not to rend her own person'.<sup>16</sup> The pelican also offers an example of the ways in which Elizabeth's iconography intersects with the religious iconography as the pelican was also associated with Virgin Mary and her maternal self-sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> Susan Doran suggests the ways in which the religious associations of the pelican could be adapted within Protestant iconography: 'The pelican in piety well suited a ruler described by Protestants as the nursing mother of the church'.<sup>18</sup> In 1603 many of the elegies and memorials written to commemorate the Queen depicted her as mother of the nation. Richard Mulcaster, for example, described the death of Elizabeth and the accession of James as the transference from one parent to another:

How sore had mournfull death shaked th'english  
soyle,  
If God had not afforded present helpe?  
Who though he tooke our Queene, a King  
he gave  
To play the fathers part in mothers losse.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, pp. 23-25 and Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), pp. 79-83.

<sup>16</sup> Doran, Susan. 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2003), pp. 171-199, p. 178.

<sup>17</sup> Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', p. 178.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *The Translation of Certaine Latine Verses Written Uppon Her Majesties Death, Called A Comforting Complaint* (London: E. Aggas, 1603), sig. A2.

Radford Mavericke's treatise upon the Queen's death described Elizabeth as 'pelicanlike' and that

Such was her Graces care for us, and over us, night and day, that shee did even wither and weare out, not onely her beautie, but her mind and body in continuall study, and caring for her countries good.<sup>20</sup>

Mavericke expands upon the image of Elizabeth as the nursing mother:

Forasmuch as the Scriptures calleth kings nursing fathers, and Queenes nursing mothers of the church and commonwealth: How can it bee that we the people of this land, and the native subjects of such a sovraine, being now lately weaned from any longer sucking the sweete and tender paps of our most dearest beloved Queene, who living loved us as dearely (doubtles) if not more dearly, then ever any nurse or mother loved her beloved babe.<sup>21</sup>

Patricia Philippy notes, however, that while Mavericke's text emphasises Elizabeth's maternal qualities it also 'disturbingly casts her death as the occasion of the nation's weaning, revising the natural process of maturation with the unnatural severance of the mother-child bond'.<sup>22</sup> The now weaned nation turns from the figure of the mother to that of the father King James, underlining the providential nature of his succession.

One of the most famous examples of a text which manipulated Elizabeth's maternal identity was John Stubbs' book *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf*, published in 1579, in which Stubbs listed a series of objections to the Queen's proposed marriage to Francis of Valois, Duke of Anjou. One of the reasons put forward against the match was the Queen's age as Stubbs indicated that Elizabeth's age increased the danger to her own life and to successfully giving birth to an heir of the body. He reminds his reader:

how unlike it is for her to have any [children] how dangerous for her to have but one, and how her years to necessarily deny her many (p. 55).

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<sup>20</sup> Radford Mavericke, *Three Treatises Religiously Handled, and Named According to the Severall Subject of each Treatise: The Mourning Weede. The Mornings Joy. The Kings Rejoicing* (London: J. Windet, 1603), p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Mavericke, *Three Treatises*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Patricia Philippy, 'London's Mourning Garment: Maternity, Mourning and Royal Succession', in *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2000), pp. 319-332, p. 327.

Stubbs couches his criticism of the Queen in terms of her maternal obligation to her people, arguing that such a marriage to Anjou would be an act of abandonment:

we her poor subjects that have been governed hitherto by a natural mother shall be overlooked at home by some cruel and proud governor, or else must she tarry here without comfort of her husband, seeing herself despised or not wifelike esteemed and as an eclipsed sun diminished in sovereignty.<sup>23</sup>

To reinforce his point Stubbs uses a series of biblical precedents to highlight examples of unnatural mothers, such as the figure of Maachah the mother of Asa, king of Judah, who was guilty of idolatry and was punished by her son. The story appears in 1 Kings:15.11-13:

And Asa did right in the eyes of the Lord,  
as (did) David his father.  
And toke away the Sodomites out of  
the land, and put awaye all the idoles that  
his fathers had made.  
And he<sup>d</sup> put downe Maacháh his mother  
Also from her estate, because she had made  
An idole in a grove and Asa destroyed her  
Idoles, and burnt thé by the broke.<sup>24</sup>

Stubbs explains the relevance of this story in the context of the Queen's marriage negotiations:

I pray you observe these two circumstances, King Asa the son, to his own mother, and the manner how he did it, even with despite to idolatry and zeal to God. The Lord send Queen Elizabeth the everlasting commendation of Asa for so many notable acts (p.18).

Jacqueline Vanhouette remarks that

Although Stubbs never specifically charges Elizabeth with being an 'unkind' mother, he repeatedly infers that, if she favours the French marriage she will

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<sup>23</sup> John Stubbs, *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf*, ed. by Lloyd E. Berry (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1968), p. 49. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>24</sup> *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva: 1561), sig. 2C2<sup>r</sup>. All further quotations from the Bible will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

become one and that, were she to become 'unkind', her subjects might, like Asa, punish her.<sup>25</sup>

Stubbs also includes a list of women or 'unnatural' mothers who have endangered England, including Eleanor of Aquitaine, Margaret of Anjou and Catherine de Medici. As the mother of Anjou, Catherine de' Medici is the subject of a series of particularly venomous attacks which suggest how she abuses her role as a mother by arranging a series of dynastic marriages for her children and thereby achieving her own political aims. Stubbs describes Catherine as 'a dangerous practicer in marriages' and argues that she is the prime mover in promoting the marriage between Elizabeth and Anjou:

When we speak therefore of France and of the practices there against the Church, of their sometime mitigated nature towards religion, or of dissensions in appearance and bruits of jealousy which the Queen Mother puts as vizard upon her practices, we must cast our eye wholly to her, as the very soul whereby the bodies of the King, of Monsieur, of their sister Margaret, and of all the great ones in France do move as a hundred hands to effect her purposes (p. 25).

Christine Coch remarks that here Catherine 'appears as both demonic spirit and monstrous maternal body, still attached to the children who have now become her limbs'.<sup>26</sup> Stubbs develops the connection between Catherine and witchcraft as he goes on to suggest that the Queen Mother is in fact a familiar or a kind of Renaissance zombie who is in turn controlled by the Pope:

And when we speak of Queen Mother, we must straightways present before us but a body or trunk wherein the Pope moveth as her soul to devise and have executed whatsoever for the appetite of that see, even as necromancers are said to carry about a dead body by the motion of some unclean spirit (p. 25).

Later Stubbs describes Catherine's anticipated hellish end when she will be destroyed by Satan:

seeing now all her four sons after a sort to be kings, find that Delphic answer of her familiar sprits' subtly fulfilled, so as she may challenge no longer the life of

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<sup>25</sup> Jacqueline Vanhouette, 'Queen and Country?: Female Monarchs and Feminized Nations in Elizabethan Political Pamphlets', in *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, ed. by Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney and Debra Barrett-Graves (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), pp. 7-19, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Coch, "Mother of my Contreie", p. 442.

the Devil, but that he to whom she hath given herself must rid that realm and those churches of her (p. 27).

Once again the implications of these descriptions for Elizabeth are clear, since if Elizabeth, like Catherine, 'chose to bear offspring, as ruler and mother of her children she too would open herself to detractors' charges of appalling maternity'.<sup>27</sup> Diane Purkiss also underlines the link between Elizabeth and Catherine in her discussion of Stubbs' pamphlet:

The image of Catherine as sorceress in the power of the devil stood ready to become an image of Elizabeth if she accepted Alençon.<sup>28</sup>

Stubbs' polemic provides an example of the ways in which the trope of Elizabeth as mother of the nation could be appropriated by her subjects, in this case to exhort the Queen to forgo a marriage to the French duke. Stubbs offers an inverted maternal image which figures the Queen as a witch subject to demonic control. The association between Elizabeth and witchcraft is one which recurs throughout her reign in different guises. This is partly because the witch provides a paradigm of unnatural female behaviour which mapped onto the figure of the Queen, thus providing the means by which contemporary anxieties concerning the anomalous figure of a female ruler could be expressed. As Leah Marcus observes:

So close was the cultural association between witchcraft and other forms of sexual reversal that individual instances of female domination were often considered evidence of witchcraft or demonic possession.<sup>29</sup>

During the last phase of Elizabeth's reign, particularly in the 1580s, the number of witchcraft trials increased, with the trial and execution of eighteen women in Essex in 1582. This particular trial provided the motivation for Reginald Scott to write his

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<sup>27</sup> Coch, "Mother of my Contreye", p. 442.

<sup>28</sup> Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 186.

<sup>29</sup> Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 81.

*Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which was published in 1584.<sup>30</sup> The apparent corollary between increasing concern about witchcraft and the Queen's ageing person (the Queen was fifty in 1583) has prompted Philippa Berry to ask:

Was it merely coincidental that the courtly conception of Elizabeth, which deliberately effaced her aging bodily reality, yet simultaneously attributed to her exceptional (even supernatural) powers as the immortal body politic of the state, coincided with a scale of popular anxiety and legal debate about witchcraft which had never occurred in England before?<sup>31</sup>

One of the ways the figure of the witch continued its association with the Queen was through the deployment of classical goddesses, such as Cynthia, who was used to celebrate the Queen's status as perpetual virgin after the failure of the Anjou match.

Cynthia is another name used for the goddess Diana or Artemis since she was born on Mount Cynthus. As the goddess of the moon and the patron of the hunt and chastity Diana was considered a flattering persona for the Queen.<sup>32</sup> Renaissance mythographers such as Natale Conti also record another manifestation of the goddess in which she is presented in triune form. As Diana the goddess takes on an earthly form as the goddess of chastity and the hunt, Cynthia or Luna represents her heavenly form, while Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft and the underworld, depicts her infernal form. As Conti observes: 'the moon, Hecate, and Diana are the same'.<sup>33</sup> The concept of the 'triple Diana' as part of Cynthia's mythography provides another example of the ways in which avatars for the Queen could be refashioned by her subjects to give voice to their concerns, including the consequences of elevating the Queen to the status of a goddess on earth.

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<sup>30</sup> Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (London: Routledge, 1989), Berry, p. 130.

<sup>31</sup> Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 130.

<sup>32</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to John Lyly, *Endymion*, ed. by David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> See Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 129.

The earliest references to Elizabeth as the moon goddess Cynthia or Diana appear in the works of Giordano Bruno which were published between 1584-5 and which celebrate the Queen as 'quell' *unica Diana*'.<sup>34</sup> The first allusion to this figuring of the Queen in a visual medium appears in the miniature of Elizabeth by Nicholas Hilliard c. 1586-7 which depicts the Queen with a moon jewel and arrows in her hair. Subsequent portraits of the Queen also make use of this motif including the Rainbow portrait by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger ca. 1600-03, which includes a crescent jewel at the very top of the Queen's headdress.<sup>35</sup> In 1587 the lists of New Year gifts to the Queen included a fan from Sir Francis Drake with a 'handle of golde inamuled, with a half moone of mother-of-perles, within that a half moone garnished with sparckes of dyamonds ... having her majesties picture within it'.<sup>36</sup> Subsequent lists of gifts for the same year also record details of a pendant shaped like a half moon and a jewel shaped like a half moon.<sup>37</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh, influenced by Bruno's work, popularised the image of the Queen as the moon goddess, couching his own relationship with Elizabeth in terms of the relationship between the moon and the tides. Raleigh's portrait of 1588 includes a crescent in the top left hand corner of the portrait. In his poetry Raleigh also celebrated Elizabeth as both Diana and Cynthia in individual lyrics such as 'Praised be Dianas faire and harmles light' which was published in the poetic miscellany *The Phoenix Nest* (1593) but was probably written and circulated in manuscript form before this date.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See Strong, *Gloriana*, pp. 125-128.

<sup>35</sup> Strong, *Gloriana*, pp. 156-161.

<sup>36</sup> Strong, *Gloriana*, p. 125.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold ed. *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams, 'Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

This poem has been described as 'straightforward' in that it ostensibly offers clear celebration of the Queen's status as a goddess.<sup>39</sup>

Praisd be Dianas faire and harmles light,  
Praisd be the dewes, wherwith she moistes the ground;  
Praisd be hir beames, the glorie of the night,  
Praisd be hir powre, by which all powres abound.

Praisd be hir Nimphs, with whom she decks the woods,  
Praisd be hir knights, in whom true honour lives,  
Praisd be that force, by which she moves the floods,  
Let that Diana shine, which all these gives.

In heaven Queene she is among the speares  
In ay she Mistres like makes all things pure,  
Eternitie in hir oft chaunge she beares,  
She beautie is, by hir the faire endure.

Time weares hir not, she doth his chariot guide,  
Mortalitie below hir orbe is plaste,  
By hir the vertue of the starrs downe slide,  
In hir is vertues perfect image cast.

A knowledge pure it is hir worth to kno,  
With Circes let them dwell that think not so.<sup>40</sup>

What is significant about this poem, however, is the way in which it demonstrates many of the motifs associated with the Queen as moon goddess, such as her immortality: 'Time weares hir not, she doth his chariot guide'. Here the poem chimes with the Queen's motto '*Semper eadem*', always the same. The poem also alludes to the combined apparently antithetical qualities of immutability and the capacity for change: 'Eternitie in hir oft chaunge she beares'.

In 1591 when Raleigh married Bess Throckmorton in secret both of the newlyweds were immediately imprisoned in the Tower. It is thought that around this time Raleigh wrote

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<sup>39</sup> Mark Nicholls, and Penry Williams, 'Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554–1618)'.

<sup>40</sup> *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 26-27.

'The 21<sup>st</sup> : and last booke of the Ocean to Scinthia' in which Raleigh laments his loss of the Queen's favour:

Thos streames seeme standinge puddells which, before,  
We saw our bewties in, so weare they cleere.  
Bellphoebe's course is now observde no more.<sup>41</sup>

Sir Roy Strong notes that certainly by 1588 the moon cult had been made public and this is supported by Spenser's dedicatory 'Letter to Raleigh' at the beginning of *The Faerie Queene* where Spenser explains that he has based the name of Belphoebe upon Raleigh's Cynthia: 'fashioning her name according to your owne excellent concept of Cynthia, (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana)'.<sup>42</sup>

George Chapman's narrative poem *The Shadow of Night*, published in 1594, offers a complex response to the figuring of Elizabeth as Cynthia which emphasises the darker aspects of her mythography. Philippa Berry observes:

*The Shadow of Night* seems ostensibly to have been intended as an exaggerated compliment to the queen, however embarrassing its implications might have been.<sup>43</sup>

At the end of the first poem 'Hymnus in Noctem', an invocation of the night, Cynthia is called upon to shed her light upon the world. The description of the moon goddess, however, serves as a reminder of her connection with Hecate as her power is depicted in terms of witchcraft:

Enchantresse-like, deckt in disparent lawne,  
Circkled with charmes and incantations,  
That ride huge spirits, and outraiious passions:  
Musicke, and moode, she loves, but love she hates,  
(As curious ladies do their publique cates)  
This traine with meteors, comets, lightnings,  
This dreadfull presence of our Empresse sings.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *A Choice of Sir Walter Raleigh's Verse*, p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* ed. by A.C. Hamilton (London: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 716.

<sup>43</sup> Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 140.

Berry also remarks that Chapman's description of Elizabeth as Cynthia underlines the capacity of the Queen to use her image and the mechanisms of state such as official pageantry to bewitch her subjects:

[when] Chapman introduces his female saviour, he does so in terms which Elizabeth's cult had always studiously avoided. For she is no longer seen as a passive emblem of spiritual power, but as its active manipulator.<sup>45</sup>

In the second poem 'Hymnus in Cynthiam' Chapman continues to foreground Cynthia's membership of the triune which makes up the identity of Diana, beginning with the opening lines of the poem as he describes her appearance and power: 'thy triple forehead dost controule / Earth, seas, and hell'.<sup>46</sup> Despite the poem's apparent purpose of flattering this particular aspect of the Queen's mythos, it sketches a gloomy backdrop for the goddess which perhaps serves to increase the dazzling effect of her appearance, but also maintains her infernal associations. In an unsettling act of transformation in the final section of the poem Cynthia adopts the aspect of Hecate, a development which qualifies the poem's potential for flattery. The description of Hecate echoes the earlier portrait of Elizabeth as Cynthia in 'Hymnus in Noctem':

Then in thy cleare, and Isie Pentacle,  
Now execute a Magicke miracle:  
Slip everie sort of poisoned herbes, and plantes,  
And bring thy rabid mastifs to these hants.  
Looke with thy fierce aspect, be terror-strong;  
Assume thy wondrous shape of half a furlong:  
Put on thy feete of Serpents, viperous hayres,  
And act the fearfulst part of thy affaires:  
Convert the violent-courses of thy floods,  
Remove whole fields of corne, and hugest woods,  
Cast hills into the sea, and make the starrs,  
Drop out of heaven and lose thy mariners.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> George Chapman, 'Hymnus in Noctem', in *The Shadow of Night*, in *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. by Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp.20-30, p. 28. ll. 395-401.

<sup>45</sup> Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, p. 140.

<sup>46</sup> George Chapman, 'Hymnus in Cynthiam', in *The Shadow of Night*, in *The Poems of George Chapman*, pp. 20-30, p. 28. ll. 395-401.

<sup>47</sup> Chapman, 'Hymnus in Cynthiam', p. 42. ll. 515-526.

'Hymnus in Cynthiam' also employs other strategies to critique the figuring of Elizabeth as Cynthia. The poem celebrates the goddess's chastity by calling up the myth of Endymion in order to quash those scurrilous accounts of the story which suggest that Cynthia actually had a series of children by Endymion:

... those Poetes did most highly fault,  
That fainde thee fiftie children by Endimion,  
And they that write thou hadst but three alone,  
Thou never any hadst, but didst affect,  
Endimion for his studious intellect.  
Thy soule-chast kisses were for vertues sake  
And since his eyes were evermore awake,  
To search for knowledge of thy excellence,  
And all Astrologie: no negligence,  
Or female softnesse fed his learned trance,  
Nor was thy vaile toucht with dalliance.<sup>48</sup>

Here Chapman acknowledges the many variations on the myth of Endymion, the mortal with whom the moon goddess falls in love and puts into an enchanted sleep so that she might spend each night with him. This particular account of the myth is found in a range of sources, including Ovid, Apollonius of Rhodes and Lucian. The mythographer Pausanias records the following additional information concerning Endymion: 'The moon they say, fell in love with him this Endymion and bore him fifty daughters'.<sup>49</sup> This particular aspect of the myth is used as one of the many stories which illustrate the susceptibility of the gods to love, even the goddess of chastity. Other accounts of the myth, such as those found in Pliny's *Natural History* reverse the attraction, so that it is Endymion the astronomer who falls in love with the moon.<sup>50</sup> It is this version of the myth which John Lyly uses as the template for his play of the same name and which I shall discuss in the next section of this chapter. Chapman deliberately invokes another

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<sup>48</sup> Chapman, 'Hymnus in Cynthiam', pp. 41-42. ll. 490-500.

<sup>49</sup> Susan D. Thomas, 'Endimion and Its Sources', *Comparative Literature*, 30 (1978), 35-52 (p.37).

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, 'Endimion and Its Sources', p. 37.

variation on the myth of Endymion, one which suggests a more lascivious side to the goddess, apparently to discredit it, but the effect of alluding to the story to affirm Cynthia's chaste intentions only serves to draw attention to this less flattering aspect of the myth in the first place. Chapman's portrait of Cynthia is coloured by her identification with Hecate and the rumours about her chastity and suggests the ways in which this figuring of the Queen could be reconceptualised in order to express concerns about Elizabeth's gender.

Lyly's *Endymion* is one of the earliest examples of the celebration of Elizabeth as Cynthia in a dramatic text. The play was performed at court on the feast of Candlemas in February 1588 by the Children of Saint Paul's.<sup>51</sup> As I have indicated above the legend of Endymion existed in two traditions, the first describes how the goddess of the moon, falls in love with Endymion and causes him to fall into a perpetual sleep so that she can visit him every night.<sup>52</sup> Lyly, however, adopts the account of the myth found in Pliny which reverses the direction of the desire in his retelling of the myth, so that it is Endymion who falls in love and is released from a temporary enchanted sleep by a kiss from Cynthia.

Early critical assessments of the play have tended to regard it as a straightforward compliment to Elizabeth by a dramatist writing to satisfy a Queen and her court. Elkin Calhoun Wilson, for example, discussed Lyly's portrait of the Queen in the play in terms of the historical events of 1588 and argued that to celebrate Elizabeth as Cynthia was a way of celebrating the victory over the Armada:

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<sup>51</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to *Endymion*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>52</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to *Endymion*, pp. 10-14.

In *Endymion* Cynthia is elaborately glorified as an omnipotent goddess of the moon and the sea ... She is so characterized to please the reigning tastes of the court.<sup>53</sup>

Lyly's play has frequently been discussed in connection with other courtly entertainments such as Peele's *Arraygment of Paris* and Lyly's *Campaspe* and *Sappho and Phao* as an example of those plays which celebrate Elizabeth as a wise sovereign who conquers her emotions and triumphs over eros.<sup>54</sup> Peter Saccio notes that 'Cynthia is a compliment to Queen Elizabeth, and the adoration of Endimion betokens the proper worship of the ideal courtier for his monarch'.<sup>55</sup>

Since the 1970s, however, criticism of *Endymion* and Lyly's courtly plays has sought to identify and explore some of the tensions in the relationship between courtier and Queen. Sallie Bond, for example, notes the challenging nature of Lyly's play:

As it stands, *Endimion* presents problems for all concerned; the Queen might resent the comedy's theme of aging, the audience of courtiers might be offended by the jealousies and petty intrigues of the play's court world, and Lyly himself may not have been happy writing about men who must beg favors of ladies.<sup>56</sup>

Marie Axton also argues that Lyly's plays go beyond simplistic flattery:

There is, however, a legacy of resistance and criticism of the virgin ideal which finds expression in the court plays of John Lyly.<sup>57</sup>

In her discussion of Lyly's *Endymion*, Axton argues that 'Lyly accepts the identification of the Queen's majesty as the chaste Cynthia but he reserves the right to criticise the

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<sup>53</sup> Elkin Calhoun Wilson, *England's Eliza*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), pp. 297-298.

<sup>54</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to *Endymion*, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Saccio, *The Court Comedies of John Lyly: A Study in Allegorical Dramaturgy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)

<sup>56</sup> Sallie Bond, 'John Lyly's *Endimion*', *Studies in English Literature*, 14 (1974), 189-199 (p. 189).

<sup>57</sup> Marie Axton, 'The Tudor mask and Elizabethan court drama', in *English Drama: Forms and Development*, ed. by Marie Axton and Raymond Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 24-47, p. 42.

destructive effects of her evident femininity'.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, as Derek Alwes has argued, Lyly goes further than this and uses his plays to fashion himself as one worthy of a post at court as either an advisor or secretary which would elevate him above the role of court dramatist.<sup>59</sup> Alwes suggests for example, that in the epilogue Lyly aligns himself with the figure of Endymion as one dependent upon the favour of the Queen for advancement:

Dread sovereign, the malicious that seek to overthrow us with threats do but stiffen our thoughts and make them sturdier in storms. But if Your Highness vouchsafe with your favourable beams to glance upon us, we shall not only stoop, but with all humility lay both our hands and hearts at Your Majesty's feet.  
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Cynthia's promise of preferment to Endymion in the final act of the play, when she releases him from his sleep: 'Endymion, continue as thou hast begun, and thou shalt find that Cynthia shineth not on thee in vain' (V.4.185-187), may simply express Lyly's hope of advancement or may allude to the Queen's suggestion that Lyly pursue the post of the Master of the Revels.<sup>61</sup> In either case the emphasis in the play seems to be upon carefully reminding the Queen of her capacity to reward her servants.

This resistance to the cult of the Virgin Queen in *Endymion* provides the impetus for my discussion of each of the three plays I will discuss in this chapter. In each case I will argue that Lyly, Jonson and Chapman employ similar strategies to point up the absurdity of a cult which worships an aging queen as a chaste goddess. Each dramatist foregrounds different aspects of Cynthia's mythography, such as her role as part of the

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<sup>58</sup> Axton, 'The Tudor mask and Elizabethan court drama', p. 43.

<sup>59</sup> Derek B. Alwes, "'I fain would serve": John Lyly's Career at Court', *Comparative Drama*, 34 (2000), 399-421.

<sup>60</sup> John Lyly, *Endymion* ed. by David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 1.1.35-45. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>61</sup> See G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 77-80.

identity of the triplex Diana and her relationship with other mythological figures, including Medea and Niobe, in order to signal the darker, more disturbing features of this goddess and the ways in which they permit a subtle yet persistent critique of the Queen.

One of the strategies employed by Lyly to express anxieties about female rule in *Endymion* is through his deployment of classical mythography. The story of Endymion as presented by Lyly has often been discussed in Neoplatonic terms as a struggle between the celestial and sublunary worlds, between divine and earthly love as embodied by Cynthia on the one hand and Tellus and Endymion on the other.<sup>62</sup> Support for such a reading is ably demonstrated by the ways in which the two female characters are presented as the antithesis of the other. Cynthia, for example, is compared directly to the moon and is elevated by Endymion to the status of a goddess:

O fair Cynthia, why do others term thee unconstant whom I have ever found unmovable? Injurious time, corrupt manners, unkind men, who, finding a constancy not to be matched in my sweet mistress, have christened her with the name of wavering, waxing, and waning! Is she inconstant that keepeth a settled course, which since her first creation altereth not one minute in her moving? There is nothing more admirable or commendable in the sea then the ebbing and flowing; and shall the moon, from whom the sea taketh this virtue, be accounted fickle for increasing and decreasing? (I.1.35-45).

Cynthia's mutability is celebrated by Endymion as a form of constancy and he defends her against charges of fickleness. Tellus, on the other hand, is characterised by the more earthy emotions of anger, revenge and spite. The name Tellus identifies her with the earth and she associates herself with her earthly sphere:

Is not my divine beauty, whose body is decked with fair flowers, and veins are vines, yielding sweet liquor to the dullest spirits, whose ears are corn to bring strength, and whose hairs are grass to bring abundance? Doth not frankincense and myrrh breath out of my nostrils, and all the sacrifice of the gods breed in my

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<sup>62</sup> David Bevington, 'Introduction' to *Endymion*, pp. 15-21.

bowels? Infinite are my creatures, without which neither thou nor Endymion nor any could love or live (I.2.20-28).

Cynthia's triumph over the schemes and enchantments of Tellus and the witch Dipsas at the end of the play would certainly seem to confirm the opposition between the earthly and the divine. Recent scholarship, however, has shown that the play's structure of a series of binary opposites is something of a red herring when it comes to understanding *Endymion*. In the prologue to the play, for example, Lyly begins with a request that the audience should not attempt to categorise his play according to conventional generic labels:

We present neither comedy, nor tragedy, nor story, nor anything, but that whosoever heareth may say this: 'Why, here is a tale of the Man in the Moon' (0.9-12).

Lyly uses the image of the mythical beast the chimera to signal a more pervasive interest in the disruption of categories in the play:

Most high and happy princess, we must tell you a tale of the man in the Moon, which, if it seem ridiculous for the method, or superfluous for the matter, or for the means incredible, for three faults we can make but one excuse: it is a tale of the Man in the Moon.

It was forbidden in old time to dispute of chimera, because it was a fiction. We hope in our time none will apply pastimes, because they are fancies; for there liveth none under the sun that knows what to make of the Man in the Moon (0.1-5).

Here Lyly refers to the tripartite Chimera who according to legend had the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a serpent. Its name had the potent quality of being able to call up the beast if its name was uttered, hence the warning against using its real name. The prologue has usually been read as Lyly's warning against attempting a topical reading of his play and the dangers inherent in such a pastime. Christine Neufeld argues that

The true Chimera one must avoid naming or questioning is not the play's genre but the play's subject and object: a powerful queen who blurs traditional

distinctions and whose supernatural iconography euphemises the threat of her unnatural condition as a female head of state.<sup>63</sup>

The motif of this monstrous beast is also used as part of Lyly's strategy to undermine the dualistic structure of the play, particularly in relation to its female characters:

Just as the belly of the lascivious goat links the regal lion's head with the viper's tail of the Chimera, Tellus' earthy desires bind the Virgin Queen with the village witch.<sup>64</sup>

The chimera functions then in a similar way to the triplex Diana as each myth serves to link the figure of Cynthia to witchcraft.<sup>65</sup>

Neufeld suggests that the link between Cynthia and Hecate provides one outlet for Lyly's frustrations concerning the Queen:

A number of scholars working with the play's classical references have begun to address Lyly's anxiety by noting that the relationship between Cynthia as the moon and the figure of the witch disrupts the Neoplatonic antithesis of heavenly and earthly love.<sup>66</sup>

References to Hecate as 'triple Hecate', for example, offer another perspective on the composite identity of Diana and could be found in texts such as Euripides' tragedy *Hippolytus* when Phaedra calls upon Diana to cause her son-in-law to fall in love with her:

O queen of groves ... O great goddess of the woods and groves, bright orb of heaven, glory of the night, by whose changing beams the universe shines clear, O three-formed Hecate...Conquer the unbending soul of stern Hippolytus ...may he learn to love, may he feel answering flames.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Christine M. Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision: Witchcraft in *Endymion*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43 (2007), 351-369 (p. 354).

<sup>64</sup> Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision', p. 354.

<sup>65</sup> See Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, pp. 129-131 and Michael Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly: Eros and Eliza* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 97-98 and Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>66</sup> Christine M. Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision: Witchcraft in *Endymion*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43 (2007), 351-369.

<sup>67</sup> Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly*, p. 92.

The image of the triform goddess can also be found in Shakespeare's *Dream*, for example, when Puck declares:

And we fairies, that do run  
By the triple Hecate's team.  
From the presence of the sun,  
Following darkness like a dream<sup>68</sup> (V.1.378-380).

Whilst Titania's name is also used for the goddess Diana and Circe in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>69</sup> Later in *Cynthia's Revels* Jonson refers to the triple identity of Diana when Mercury in his masque for Cynthia celebrates her greatness 'which in heauen, earth, and hell is formidable'.<sup>70</sup> In *Endymion* Lyly recalls this through the figures of Cynthia, Tellus and Dipsas. Philippa Berry has, for example, noted the irony associated with the figure of Cynthia. On the one hand, it flatters Elizabeth's longevity and her ability to defy time as a goddess on earth, yet it comes precisely at the point in her life when she can be associated with both a waning moon and an old crone.<sup>71</sup> The play opens with Endymion's speech concerning the waxing and the waning of the moon in which he celebrates its powers of rejuvenation:

Tell me, Eumenides, what is he, that having a mistress of ripe years and infinite virtues, great honours and unspeakable beauty, but would wish that she might grow tender again, getting youth by years and never-decaying beauty by time, whose fair face neither the summer's blaze can scorch nor winter's blast chap, nor the numbering of years breed altering of colours? (I.1.59-66)

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<sup>68</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn. (New York: Longman, 2004), V.1.378-380. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text. For further discussion of the influence of Hecate's shifting identity in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Jonathan Crewe, *Hidden Designs: The Critical Profession and Renaissance Literature* (London: Methuen, 1986), p.135.

<sup>69</sup> See Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), pp.165-169.

<sup>70</sup> Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. by C.H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), IV.9.51-52. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

<sup>71</sup> Berry, *Of Chastity and Power*, pp.127-131.

This brings Lyly dangerously close to the subject of the Queen's age and Sallie Bond has noted that in doing so Lyly has developed the scope of the persona of Cynthia and Diana:

The literary association of Cynthia and Elizabeth was based largely on the attribute of chastity, but Lyly introduces the ideas of immutability and immortality, which, while valid mythologically, immediately reflect on Elizabeth's mortality.<sup>72</sup>

The speech continues to glance at the discrepancy between Cynthia as a classical deity and flattering comparison for Elizabeth and the realities of the Queen as a fifty-five year old woman in 1588. Endymion considers with enthusiasm how the gods and other men would conspire to 'ravish' Cynthia and he becomes caught up in visualising her performing a kind of striptease:

ENDYMION: O Cynthia, if thou shouldst always continue at thy fullness, both gods and men would conspire to ravish thee. But thou, to abate the pride of our affections, dost detract from thy perfections, thinking it sufficient if once in a month we enjoy a glimpse of thy majesty; and then, to increase our griefs, thou dost decrease thy gleams, coming out of thy royal robes wherewith thou dazlest our eyes, down into thy swath [sic] clouts, beguiling our eyes. And then –

EUMENIDES: Stay there, Endymion. Thou committest idolatry wilt straight blaspheme if thou be suffered. Sleep would do thee more good than speech (I.1.68-79).

Michael Pincombe has argued that Eumenides's comic interruption as he cuts across Endymion's imaginings signals an acknowledgement that Cynthia is a portrait of Elizabeth and as such Eumenides's check 'acts as a deferential nod towards the dignity and privacy of Elizabeth's person'.<sup>73</sup> Pincombe also points out another comic element in this exchange since we know that Cynthia, far from being the goddess Endymion describes, would have been played by a young boy actor:

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<sup>72</sup> Bond, 'John Lyly's *Endymion*', p. 196.

<sup>73</sup> Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly*, p. 92.

Part of the titillation of Cynthia's imagined strip tease is that, as the audience well knew, the 'swarth clowtes' concealed the body of a young lad.<sup>74</sup>

Here Pincombe's reading of the play differs from that of Bond, in so far as Bond plays down the comic potential of the child actors, arguing that Lyly's use of them was to play down the allegorical nature of the play:

The use of child actors must have been one of the most effective methods of all for minimizing resemblances to the court, serving to hold the audience, and the Queen, back from an involvement with the basic plot of *Endimion*.<sup>75</sup>

Yet Bond also suggests that the use of a child actor to play the part of Cynthia would have offered a flattering compliment to Elizabeth as Cynthia's eternal youth would have been underscored by the age of the child actor. I think, however, that the comedy here has the potential to provide not just the comparison between boy actor and the heavenly part he is performing, but also to point up the discrepancy between the image of the Cynthia described and the reality of the old woman concealed beneath the dress. In this way Lyly's play anticipates those later accounts of Elizabeth's aging physicality provided in the accounts of the French ambassador De Maisse in 1597:

She was strangely attired in a dress of silver cloth, white and crimson ... She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom, and passing low, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot ... Her bosom is somewhat wrinkled...but lower down her flesh is exceeding white and delicate, so far as one could see. As for her face, it is and appears to be very aged. It is long and thin, and her teeth are very yellow and unequal ... Many of them are missing so that one cannot understand her easily when she speaks quickly. Her figure is fair and tall and graceful in whatever she does.<sup>76</sup>

In *Endymion* Lyly's figure of the aged crone in the shape of Dipsas the witch can therefore be seen to map onto the actual person of Elizabeth. This point is underlined by the way in which Dipsas also belongs to the comic subplot of the play in which she

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<sup>74</sup> Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>75</sup> Bond, 'John Lyly's *Endimion*', p. 193.

<sup>76</sup> See Louis Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture', *Representations*, 2 (1983), 61-94 (pp. 63-64).

is beloved by Sir Tophas, the comic *miles gloriosus*. The comic intent of his speech celebrating her beauty is clear from the use of the anti-blazon:

O, what a fine thin hair hath Dipsas! What a pretty low forehead! What a tall and stately nose! What little hollow eyes! What great and goodly lips! How harmless she is, being toothless! Her fingers fat and short, adorned with long nails like a bittern! In how sweet proportion her cheeks hang down to her breasts like dugs, and her paps to her waist like bags! What a low stature she is, and yet what a great foot she carrieth! How thrifty must she be in whom there is no waste! How virtuous is she like to be, over whom no man can be jealous! (III.3.55-64)

Sir Tophas's passion for Dipsas is exaggerated to emphasise the extreme nature of Endymion's dotage, yet the ridiculous pairing of Tophas and Dipsas also provides an opportunity for audience members to identify parallels between Tophas's stylised wooing of Dipsas and the relationship between Elizabeth and her male courtiers. The figures of Dipsas and Tellus, therefore, serve a similar function to the characters of the Nurse and Dido in Marlowe's play, since Tellus, rather like Dido, dotes upon Endymion and is shown to be at the mercy of her emotions, particularly when she considers ways of avenging herself upon him when it is clear that he dotes upon Cynthia:

He shall know the malice of a woman to have neither mean nor end, and of a woman deluded in love to have neither rule nor reason (I.2.57-59).

Lyly also seeks to foreground the presence of the witch or sorceress in his play through the parallels established between the fate of Endymion and the story of Medea. Michael Pincombe has noted that Lyly includes aspects of Medea's story in *Endymion*, particularly those which focus on the early and happier period of her relationship with Jason:

Certainly, one or two conventional details relating to Medea's miraculous rejuvenation of Jason's father Aeson find their way into *Endymion*: Medea casts Aeson into an enchanted sleep and lays him on a bed of herbs, just as Dipsas causes Endymion to slumber on his lunny bank; and Medea brings Aeson back to life forty years younger than he was, just as Cynthia restores the forty years that Endymion has lost while sleeping – in the old myth Endymion was said to have slept for only thirty.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly*, pp. 105-6.

Lyly's account of Medea from Ovid emphasises her passion for Jason and is used to characterise Tellus as the dotting Medea, but she also echoes the vengeance of the sorceress when Endymion proves false:

Tell me, Floscula, if falseness in love can possibly be punished with extremity of hate. As long as sword, fire or poison may be hired, no traitor to my love shall live unrevenged. Were thy oaths without number, thy kisses without measure, thy sighs without end, forged to deceive a poor credulous virgin, whose simplicity had been worth thy fortune?

The connection between Medea and Tellus also applies to Cynthia as she has the power to revive Endymion and break Dipsas' spell.

As I have outlined above the connection made between Cynthia, Hecate and Medea by Lyly, for example, indicates how classical sources were reformulated in order to articulate the perceived shortcomings of Elizabeth's abilities as Queen. A brief survey of another group of texts, namely the criminal cases involving rumours and slander about the Queen, indicate a similar strategy at work. Here political and economic discontent was expressed by attacking the Queen's iconography as both virgin and mother by accusing the Queen of promiscuity and infanticide. Whilst the defendants never apply the term witch to Elizabeth, the accusations of lust and child murder suggest that once again the witch provides a model of female power which is used by ordinary people in attempt to rationalise the Queen's behaviour by depicting her as an unnatural mother, one who has had illegitimate children by a series of lovers and who had arranged for those children either to be murdered or sent into exile. In 1580 Thomas Playfere, an Essex labourer, was pilloried and imprisoned for five years for claiming that the Queen had had two children by Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, and that he, Playfere, had seen the children when they were shipped away at Rye in two

of the Queen's best ships.<sup>78</sup> In the following year Henry Hawkins made similar claims when he also stated that the Queen had had five children by Dudley and that the Queen's progresses were simply a cover for her pregnancies: 'She never goethe in progress but to be delivered'.<sup>79</sup> In 1587 one of these supposed children was arrested in Spain on suspicion of being a spy. When questioned by the Spanish authorities he identified himself as Arthur Dudley, son of Robert Dudley and Elizabeth. Although the claims about his paternity were dismissed the Spanish were shrewd enough to keep Dudley a prisoner to prevent his claim gaining support and thus threatening Catholic contenders for the throne.<sup>80</sup> In 1590 Dionisia Deryck claimed that Elizabeth 'hath already had as many children as I, and that two of them were yet alive, one a man child and the other a maiden child, and the others were burned'.<sup>81</sup> In the same year Robert Garner also made similar assertions; Dudley 'had four children by the Queen's Majesty, whereof three were daughters alive, and the fourth a son that was burnt'.<sup>82</sup> Slander of the Queen also appears in the case of Edward Fraunces who in his attempts to seduce Elizabeth Baylie tried to use the behaviour of the Queen as a precedent for their liaison, claiming that the Queen had three bastards by noblemen at her court.<sup>83</sup> The stories of infanticide continued in 1601 with Hugh Broughton's account of the murder of one of Elizabeth's children by the midwife:

And after [delivering] ... a daughter, [the midwife] was brought to another chamber where there was a very great fire of coals, into which she was commanded to cast the child, and so it was burnt. The midwife was rewarded with handful of gold, and at her departure, one came to her with a cup of wine

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<sup>78</sup> See Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King": Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 83 and Joel Samaha, 'Gleanings from Local Criminal-Court Records: Sedition Amongst the "Inarticulate" in Elizabethan Essex', *Journal of Social History*, 8 (1975), 61-79 (p. 69).

<sup>79</sup> Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King"*, p. 83.

<sup>80</sup> Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King"*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>81</sup> See Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King"*, p. 83 and Samaha, 'Gleanings from Local Criminal-Court Records', p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King"*, p. 83.

<sup>83</sup> Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King"*, pp. 83-84.

and said Thou whore, drink before thou goest from hence, and she drank, and was sent back to her house, where within six days after she died of poison, but revealed this before her death.<sup>84</sup>

Carole Levine explains that

The rumors about her illicit children, often coupled with the suggestion that these children had also been destroyed, reflect on another level the fears over the succession and the antagonism toward a queen who refused to provide for her people's future.<sup>85</sup>

The rumours that Elizabeth had given birth to illegitimate children also found their way into print and could be found in some of the poems in the anthology compiled by Henry Stanford. Stanford was a member of George Carey's household as he was tutor to William Paget of whom George Carey was custodian.<sup>86</sup> The anthology was begun no later than 1582 and was completed by 1616 and consists of both private and public items in verse and prose including works by Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh and even the Queen herself.<sup>87</sup> The collection also contained anonymous works including the following libellous poem which begins by complimenting the wisdom of an anonymous 'she', but goes on to suggest that despite such qualities the woman of the poem is still morally weak:<sup>88</sup>

She y<sup>t</sup> was thought so full w<sup>th</sup> wisdom fraught, yt all ye world might go to her  
to scole  
and he yt at no tyme by her was taught, is taken yet by som but halfe a foole  
She yt taught princes how ther states to weld and yt imbassadours what to doe  
and say  
She yt for sober and devout was held and clerckes & preistes taught how to  
preache and pray  
she yt so many yeares refused to wed, and boasted what virginitie was worthe

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<sup>84</sup> See Levin, "The Heart and Stomach of a King", p. 84 and *The Elizabethan Journals Volume 2: Being a record of those things most talked of during the years 1598-1603*, ed. by G.B. Harrison (New York: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 73-74.

<sup>85</sup> Levin, "The Heart and Stomach of a King", p. 82.

<sup>86</sup> Steven W. May, 'Stanford, Henry (c.1552-1616)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

<sup>87</sup> *Henry Stanford's Anthology: An Edition of Cambridge University Library Manuscript Dd. 5.75*, ed. by Steven W. May (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), pp. vii-viii.

<sup>88</sup> Marcy L. North, 'Queen Elizabeth Compiled: Henry Stanford's Private Anthology and the Question of Accountability', in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. by Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 185-208, p. 186.

Even she I say hath lost her maidenhead & daughters .3. to all ye world  
Brought forthe  
Wch Ile averre on Churche and on Churchesteples are bastardes bred right  
Children of ye peo[ple.]<sup>89</sup>

That the identity of the 'she' is Elizabeth Tudor is alluded to in each of the observations, particularly 'she yt so many yeares refused to wed, and boasted what virginity was worthe' which suggests that the Queen's iconography is nothing more than elaborate sham. The poem presents a rather unsettling assessment of female power as ambassadors, clerks and priests are all dismissed while the Queen herself is depicted enjoying the sexual freedoms that were usually the preserve of men.

In 1600, twelve years after Lyly's *Endymion* was performed at court, it was the turn of Jonson to present his play *Cynthia's Revels* at court, using the reformed children's company the Children of the Chapel.<sup>90</sup> Early critical responses to *Cynthia's Revels*, like those for *Endymion*, have tended to regard Jonson's depiction of Elizabeth as Cynthia as celebratory: A.C. Judson, for example, described *Cynthia's Revels* as 'a play to shed lustre on [Elizabeth's] name',<sup>91</sup> while Elkin Calhoun Wilson suggests that in the play

Jonson clothed a vigorous satire of the court in an elaborate compliment to the virgin Eliza. She is a 'goddess excellently bright' above and beyond the foibles and affectations that infect her court.<sup>92</sup>

Wilson argues that the play would have gained the approval of the Queen since the play concludes with the aim of reporting 'The grace of Cynthia and her court'.<sup>93</sup> Anne Barton also offers this straight bat response to the play. In her discussion of Jonson's treatment of Elizabeth in *Every Man Out of his Humour* she notes that in contrast,

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<sup>89</sup> May, *Henry Stanford's Anthology*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>90</sup> Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 172.

<sup>91</sup> A.C. Judson, 'Introduction' to Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, ed. by A.C. Judson (New York: Henry Holt, 1912), p. xxii.

<sup>92</sup> Wilson, *England's Eliza* p. 112.

<sup>93</sup> Wilson, *England's Eliza* p. 113.

*Cynthia's Revels* contrives to compliment her in a more acceptable and also a more artistically logical fashion than its predecessor.<sup>94</sup>

More recently, however, critics such as Janet Clare have argued that the play is much more 'equivocal' in its celebration of Elizabeth and her court.<sup>95</sup> One of the possibilities for such equivocation lies in the deployment of Cynthia's mythography. Jonson, like Lyly, draws upon classical sources, particularly Ovid, to recall those stories in which the goddess Diana was involved in the punishment of mortals such as Actaeon and Niobe. The play begins with the news that Cynthia proposes to hold courtly entertainments as a public relations exercise to defuse the criticism prompted by her punishment of Actaeon:

The Huntresse, and Queen of these groves, Diana (in regard of some black and envious slanders hourly breath'd against her, for her divine justice on Acteon, as shee pretends) hath here in the vale of Gargaphy, proclaim'd a solemn revells, which (her god-head put off) shee will descend to grace ... as well to intimate how farre shee treads such malicious imputations beneath her, as also to shew how cleere her beauties are from the least wrinkle of austerity, they may be charg'd with (I.1.91-103).

The story of Actaeon serves to point up the merciless and arbitrary way in which justice is dispensed by Cynthia and critics have tended to focus upon the story of Actaeon because of the ways in which it maps onto the final stages of the career of the earl of Essex.<sup>96</sup> Essex, like Actaeon, was guilty of having entered Elizabeth's chamber in September 1599, upon his return from Ireland, before the Queen was ready to receive him. The Earl's disastrous campaign in Ireland and his unscheduled return precipitated his demise. Whilst the political events of 1599-1600 serve as an influential backdrop

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<sup>94</sup> Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 79.

<sup>95</sup> Janet Clare, 'Jonson's "Comical Satires" and the Art of Courtly Compliment', in *Refashioning Ben Jonson: gender, politics, and the Jonsonian canon*, ed. by Julie Sanders, with Kate Chedzoy and Susan Wiseman (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 28 - 47 p. 41.

<sup>96</sup> See Matthew Steggle, 'Cynthia Waning: *Cynthia's Revels* imagines the death of the queen', in *Goddesses and Queens: The iconography of Elizabeth I*, ed. by Lisa Hopkins and Annaliese Connolly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 154 -166 and A.C. Judson, 'Introduction' to Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels* (New York: Henry Holt, 1912), pp. xxiii-xxxii.

for Jonson's play and provide one potential reading of the figure of Actaeon, I would like to concentrate upon the other classical figure paired with Actaeon in the play: Niobe. Herford, Simpson and Simpson in the notes to their edition of the play also suggest a topical analogy between Niobe and an historical figure from Elizabeth's reign. Cynthia's description of her punishment of Niobe in Act V, 'swolne Niobe ... was trophaed into stone' (V.11.16-17), leads the editors to remark that there 'may be a faint allusion to Mary, Queen of Scots, but it is not pressed home like the reference to Actaeon'.<sup>97</sup> Whilst the parallels between the figures of Mary Stuart and Niobe and Elizabeth and Cynthia would seem to allude to Elizabeth's execution of her cousin, this allegorical reading of the characters in terms of specific events and historical figures has its limitations. It is more fruitful to consider the figure of Niobe and Cynthia in the wider context of the play's concern with the abuse of power. Rather than simply being listed among Cynthia's victims, Jonson uses a number of strategies to indicate the ways in which the Theban queen engages in a complex critique of the apotheosis of Elizabeth.

The first of these strategies is the way in which Jonson draws upon images of Niobe from Ovid and from contemporary literature. The story of Niobe is found in Book six of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Theban queen is traditionally used as an exemplar of hubris, since she boasts about her fourteen children and disparages Leto the mother of Apollo and Diana. Niobe also has a tradition of being used as figure of fertility and motherhood. Both of these aspects of the queen were utilised in Tudor literature and pageantry. In the civic pageantry to celebrate the coronation of Anne Boleyn, Anne was figured as Niobe where she appeared pregnant with Elizabeth. The '*Acclamatio, de coronatione*' which summarises the show praises Anne, describing how she

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<sup>97</sup> Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, in *Ben Jonson*, ed. by C.H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), IX, pp. 529-530.

coming of noble family, is the pride of her country: she is most beautiful and virtuous, so that the crown becomes her splendidly: may she be more fruitful than fertile Niobe, and so bear many a child to perpetuate her husband's race: and may she be happy for as long as one might number the days of the Cumaean Sibyl.<sup>98</sup>

The connection is also made between Niobe and Elizabeth in Spenser's April eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calendar*. Elizabeth's parents and indeed her own birth are celebrated in terms which underline her legitimacy through the chaste union of Syrinx and Pan:

Of fayre Elisa be your silver song,  
That blessed wight:  
The flowre of virgins, may shee florish long,  
In princely plight.  
For shee is Syrinx daughter without spotte,  
Which Pan the shepherds god of her begot:  
So sprong her grace  
Of heavenly race,  
No mortall blemishe may her blotte.<sup>99</sup>

Niobe also appears in the April eclogue which was republished in 1600 in the poetry miscellany *England's Helicon* the same year *Cynthia's Revels* was performed and published. Spenser's poem begins the tradition of celebrating Elizabeth as Cynthia the moon goddess alongside the story of Niobe. In the stanzas below Elizabeth is aligned with the moon, suggesting that Elizabeth can be celebrated as a goddess who exceeds Diana and Apollo:

I sawe Phoebus thrust out his golden hedde,  
Upon her to gaze:  
But when he sawe, how broade her beames did spredde,  
It did him amaze.  
He blusht to see another Sunne belowe,  
Ne durst again his fyrye face out showe:

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<sup>98</sup> Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 257.

<sup>99</sup> Edmund Spenser, 'The April Eclogue' in *The Shepheardes Calendar*, in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), line 46-54, pp. 72-73. All further quotations from the poem will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

Let him, if he dare,  
His brightnesse compare  
With hers, to have the overthrowe.  
Shewe thy selfe Cynthia with thy silver rayes,  
and be not abasht:  
When shee the beames of her beauty displayes,  
O how art thou dasht? (ll.73- 85)

Spenser, however, complicates this image by introducing the figure of Niobe:

But I will not match her with Latonaes seede,  
Such follie great sorow to Niobe did breede.  
Now she is a stone,  
And makes dayly mone,  
Warning all other to take heed (ll. 86-90).

The gloss provided at the end of the eclogues explains that Hobbinol will not be foolish enough to compare Elizabeth with Diana and Apollo because he is mindful of the fate of Niobe ‘for feare of like misfortune’ (p. 84), and he is fearful that Elizabeth might incur the curse of childlessness or sterility. Critics such as John N. King and Helen Hackett have discussed Spenser’s poem in the context of the Anjou marriage negotiations and have argued that Spenser is careful to balance his flattery of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen with images which also suggest that she still has the potential to marry and bear children.<sup>100</sup> King remarks of Spenser’s strategy,

Having introduced the possibility of lauding Eliza as a new Cynthia, the singer immediately retreats from that simile in a manner that is inconsistent with an interpretation of Elizabeth’s virginity as a permanent condition.<sup>101</sup>

The poem occupies what King refers to as a ‘liminal moment’ in the history of the Queen’s iconography during the Anjou courtship and Spenser uses the figure of Niobe to acknowledge Elizabeth’s potential fertility whilst also suggesting that she could be lauded as a Virgin Queen.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> See John N. King, ‘Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43 (1990), 30-74 and Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 105-112.

<sup>101</sup> King, ‘Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen’, p. 55.

<sup>102</sup> King, ‘Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen’, p. 55.

Whilst the figure of Niobe in the Aprill eclogue has been discussed in the context of charting the shift in the Queen's iconography at the end of the 1570s and anticipates the move towards celebrating Elizabeth's permanent virginity, Niobe has also been used to scrutinise the implications of the cultural deification of Elizabeth. Syrithe Pugh, for example, has argued that Spenser's *Shepherdes Calender* is influenced by Ovid's *Fasti*, another calendrical work, since both poets satirise the deification of their respective rulers, which in the case of Ovid was the Roman emperor Augustus.<sup>103</sup> The Aprill eclogue in its depiction of Elizabeth, according to Pugh, is 'double-edged and ambiguous, simultaneously participating in and criticizing the glorifying cult of Elisa'.<sup>104</sup> So on the one hand, Hobbinoll declares that 'Shee is my goddesse plaine' and, as discussed above, he also pays her the extravagant compliment of exceeding the magnificence of both Apollo and Diana. Yet the inclusion of Niobe serves as a warning to Elizabeth against committing the same crime as Niobe, which began with the belief that she should be worshipped as a goddess on earth:

What madnesse is it (quoth she) to prefer the heavenly rout  
 Of whome ye doe but heare, to such as daily are in sight?  
 Or why should Laton honored be with Altars? Never wight  
 To my most sacred Majestie did offer incense. Yit  
 My Father was that Tantalus whome only as most fit  
 The Gods among them at their boordes admitted for to sit.  
 A sister of the Pleyades is my mother. Finally ...  
 My Graundsire on the mothers side is that same Atlas hie  
 That on his shoulderes beareth up the heavenly Axeltree.  
 Againe my other Graundfather is Jove, and (as you see)  
 He also is my Fathrinlawe, wherein I glorie may.  
 The Realme of Phrygia here at hand doth unto me obay.  
 In Cadmus pallace I thereof the Ladie doe remaine  
 And joyntly with my husbände I as peerlesse Princesse reigne  
 Both over this same towne whose walles my husbands harpe did frame,  
 And also over all the folke and people in the same.  
 In what soever corner of my house I cast mine eye, ...  
 A worlde of riches and of goods I everywhere espie.

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<sup>103</sup> Syrithe Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 24-25.

<sup>104</sup> Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid*, p. 19.

Moreover for the beautie, shape, and favor growen in me,  
Right well I know I doe deserve a Goddess for to be.<sup>105</sup>

In George Sandys's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, published in 1632, Sandys provides a commentary to accompany each book and interprets Niobe's story as one where her crime is to consider herself a divinity:

Niobe, glories besides in her beauty, her riches, her dependancy, but especially in her children; exalting her selfe above the reach of fortune, or degree of a mortall, affects divine honours ... Niobe is said to be the daughter of Tantalus, and Taygeta one of the Pleiades, or rather of Euryanassa, that is, of Avarice and Riches, which ingender pride in hearts of Mortalls: from whence proceeds the contempt both of God and man, and an insolent forgetfulnesse of humane instability.<sup>106</sup>

Here Niobe's crime is certainly pride, but it is also perhaps more seriously that she affects 'divine honours' and wants to be worshipped as a goddess on earth. In Jonson's play *Cynthia* claims that Niobe's crime exceeds that of Actaeon:

For so ACTAEON, by presuming farre,  
Did (to our griefe) incurre a fatall doome;  
And so, swolne NIOBE (comparing more  
Then he presum'd) was trophaed into stone (V.11.14-17).

As Matthew Steggle indicates 'Niobe's crime in comparing herself to the gods was worse than Actaeon's presumption in surprising one of them'.<sup>107</sup> *Cynthia's* assessment of her victims, however, is surely ironic here since *Cynthia* was used as an avatar for Elizabeth as part of her deification, so that she too is guilty of the same crime as Niobe. This conjunction between the goddess and the Theban queen points up the ways in which Elizabeth's apotheosis reveals that she combines the identities of both *Cynthia* and Niobe and that Niobe emphasises Elizabeth's mortality.

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<sup>105</sup> Arthur Golding, *The XV Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, Entytuled Metamorphoses* (London: W. Seres, 1567), pp. 70-71.

<sup>106</sup> George Sandys, 'Upon the Sixth Booke of Ovids Metamorphosis' in *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures* (Oxford: J. Lichfield, 1632), p. 222.

<sup>107</sup> Matthew Steggle and Eric Rasmussen, 'Commentary to *Cynthia's* Revels, 5.5.106', in *Ben Jonson, The Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson*, gen eds. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2008), p. 243.

The connections between Cynthia and Niobe are also underlined by the use of stage properties in *Cynthia's Revels*. In the second scene of the play Mercury discovers Echo, mourning for Narcissus by a fountain, one of the first in a series of victims of self-love. Echo explains the significance of the grove:

Here yong Acteon fell, pursu'de, and torne  
And here, (ay me, the place is fatall) see  
The weeping Niobe, translated hither  
From Phrygian mountaines: and by Phoebe rear'd  
As the proud trophae of her sharp tongue (I.2.82-87).

Here as in Lyly's *Endymion*, Jonson's play makes use of a fountain, but also includes a prop to represent the petrified Niobe. Steggle has suggested that the proximity of the fountain to Niobe's rock indicated by the description of the stone having been 'rear'd' by Cynthia next to the fountain would perhaps indicate that the stage structure is possibly a structure in the same style as the fountain and rock stage property provided by the Revels Office to Leicester's Men in 1576.<sup>108</sup> It is unclear whether the stage property was removed from the stage at the end of the scene or whether it remains onstage throughout the remaining action of the play. If the combined rock and fountain prop remained visible during the course of the play it would have offered a visual emblem of self-love,<sup>109</sup> but more importantly, it would serve as an ironic commentary upon Cynthia and her behaviour. The final scene of the play reminds the audience of Niobe's presence since the judgement upon Cynthia's courtiers, delivered by Crites, is that each does penance at Niobe's stone:

You (two and two) singing a palinode,  
March to your severall homes by Niobes stone,  
And offer up two tears apiece thereon;  
That it may change the name, as you must change,  
And of a stone be called weeping Crosse:

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<sup>108</sup> Steggle and Rasmussen, 'Commentary to Cynthia's Revels', pp. 48-49. For details of the records referring to the stage property see Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300-1660: Volume Two 1576-1660, Part 1* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 296 and p. 340.

<sup>109</sup> Steggle and Rasmussen, 'Commentary to Cynthia's Revels', pp. 48-49.

Because it standeth crosse of Cynthias way,  
One of whose names is sacred Trivia (V.11.143-149).

The link between Niobe and a fountain indicated in Jonson's play is also suggested in an earlier poem by George Chapman *Ovid's Banquet of Sence*, published in 1595. The poem focuses upon the poet Ovid and an afternoon spent in the garden of his mistress Corinna, as he watches her bathing and later his frustrated attempts to persuade her to consummate their relationship. What is significant about this poem for my argument are the ways in which Corinna is referred to implicitly as the goddess Diana as she bathes in her bower, whilst the peeping Ovid is figured as Actaeon. The backdrop to the poem reinforces the sense that to attempt Corinna's chastity is to challenge the power of the gods, since the garden is populated by the stone remains of the petrified Niobe, brought from Mount Sipylus to decorate the garden, together with ivory statues of each of her fourteen children, the Niobids:

Stone Niobe, whose statue to this Fountaine,  
In great Augustus Cæsars grace was brought  
From Sypilus, the steepe Mygdonian Mountaine:  
That statue tis, still weepes for former thought,  
Into thys spring Corynnas bathing place;  
So cunningly to optick reason wrought,  
That afarre of, it shewd a womans face,  
Heavie, and weeping; but more neerely viewed,  
Nor weeping, heavy, nor a woman shewed.

In Sommer onely wrought her exstasie;  
And that her story might be still observed,  
Octavius caus'd in curious imagrie,  
Her fourteene children should at large be carved,  
Theyr fourteene brests, with fourteene arrowes gored  
And set by her, that for her seede so starved  
To a stone Sepulcher herselfe deplored,  
In Ivory were they cut, and on each brest,  
In golden Elements theyr names imprest.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> George Chapman, *Ovid's Banquet of Sence* in *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. by Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 49-82, p. 54.

The weeping stone feeds the fountain with water, but the purpose of Niobe and the statues of her children seems to serve as a constant reminder to Ovid that surprising his mistress as she bathes may bring down her wrath upon him and that like Niobe and Actaeon he should be mindful of trespassing too far. While Chapman presents Niobe as Diana's victim, Jonson's pairing of Niobe and Cynthia works to suggest the parallels between them, thus presenting a subtle critique of the classical mythos of the Queen.

In the final section of this chapter I would like to turn to last of the plays I will be examining with a character called Cynthia at its centre: George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*. Although the play was written around 1605, two years after the death of Elizabeth, Chapman's play, like *Endymion* and *Cynthia's Revels*, continues to reflect upon the cult of the Virgin Queen and its consequences, including the exaltation of the Queen to the status of goddess and the shift from the Tudor to the Stuart dynasty.

*The Widow's Tears* shares a number of performative and thematic affinities with Lyly's *Endymion* and Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*. Like *Endymion* and *Cynthia's Revels* Chapman's play was performed by a children's company, the Children of the Queen's Revels. This particular company had started performing in 1600 under the name of the Children of Chapel, the same company which performed Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, but in 1603 with the accession of James I was granted a royal patent so it became the Children of the Queen's Revels.<sup>111</sup> The title page of the 1612 quarto of *The Widow's Tears* declares: 'As it was often presented in the blacke and white Friers'.<sup>112</sup> As I have argued above in relation to his poems, Chapman was aware of the ways in which

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<sup>111</sup> Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>112</sup> Akihiro Yamada, 'Introduction' to George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. by Akihiro Yamada (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 2.

Cynthia as an avatar for the Queen could be manipulated to offer an alternative view of the Cult of Elizabeth. In *The Widow's Tears* Chapman, I will argue, continues to draw upon the mythography of Cynthia, but whereas the previous plays used the triplex Diana and the figure of the witch as a way of mediating concern about the Queen, in Chapman's play the dramatist uses the widow as an exemplar of unruly female power to reflect upon Elizabeth's legacy.

On one level Chapman's play is concerned with the contemporary debate about the role of women, in particular widows, and the paradoxical attitudes towards them which is split on the one hand between encouraging them to remarry and on the other upon vows of chastity to remain widowed. Whilst the play is concerned with this specific debate concerning widows and female chastity, I will also argue that the play suggests more generally that vows of chastity are unnatural and problematic, not simply in the case of widows, and here I will argue that the play is reflecting upon the effect of Elizabeth's persona of Virgin Queen.

Chapman's plot is organised into two parts, with the subplot introducing issues which will be developed in the main plot. The first three acts are concerned with the wooing of the widow Eudora by Tharsalio and act three concludes with a wedding masque to celebrate their marriage. The final two acts of the play focus upon Tharsalio's brother, Lysander, and his desire to test the claims of his wife to remain faithful to his memory. Having been taunted by his brother that all women are weak and will succumb to their desires, Lysander embarks upon the extreme plan which involves him faking his own death in order to observe his wife's response. He then goes further and disguises himself as a soldier to woo his own wife as she keeps a vigil by his tomb. After

persuading Cynthia that she should live rather than grieve Lysander is successful in ensuring his wife's capitulation. Tharsalio, realising that events now seem to be spiralling out of control, intervenes and reveals to Cynthia that the soldier is in fact her husband and that he conceived of this grotesque charade in order to test her.

Critical responses to *The Widow's Tears* have attempted to explain the play's misogyny in a number of ways. Lee Bliss summarises the critical reaction:

The play even seems to challenge critics' private moral beliefs: disgust with the play's subject matter and cynicism often turns attempts at critical analysis into either condemnation of the playwright himself or excuses for this isolated lapse from his usually high moral standards.<sup>113</sup>

Hardin Craig, for example, suggests that the play's view of women is simply an instance of art imitating life as Chapman was merely reflecting the views of his society:

Chapman is pessimistic about the majority of women, whom his learning compelled him to believe were inferior to men in their powers of reason and were, by their very constitutions, bound to chance and wilfulness. Therefore, when Chapman develops his sympathy with or admiration for mere strength of passion, women come more and more into consideration. They have, he says, stronger souls than men, meaning that they are more prone to go to extremes in both good and evil.<sup>114</sup>

Samuel Schoenbaum explains why Chapman 'regards his women with something less than reverence' by indicating the tradition and genre in which he was writing:

Chapman is working directly within a time-honored tradition that antedates the humanism of the Renaissance by many centuries: it is the antifeminine tradition of classical satire and medieval fabliau.<sup>115</sup>

Ethel M. Smeak, like Craig, also suggests that Chapman is simply reflecting contemporary attitudes:

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<sup>113</sup> Lee Bliss, 'The Boys from Ephesus: Farce, Freedom, and Limit in *The Widow's Tears*', *Renaissance Drama*, 10 (1979), 161-183 (p. 161).

<sup>114</sup> Hardin Craig, 'Ethics in Jacobean Drama: The Case of George Chapman', in *Essays in Dramatic Literature: The Parrott Presentation Volume*, ed. by Hardin Craig (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1935), pp. 25-46, p. 28.

<sup>115</sup> Samuel Schoenbaum, '*The Widow's Tears* and the Other Chapman', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 23 (1960), 321-338 (p. 329).

The subject of *The Widow's Tears* is the inconstancy of women, especially of widows, who loudly protest their constancy to their husbands even after the latter's deaths. While many critics feel that Chapman's treatment of this theme is more cynical than need be, his tone and treatment are in keeping with the attitude toward women prevalent in the period.<sup>116</sup>

More recently Renu Juneja and Ira Clark have considered more closely the play's engagement with the contemporary debate about the remarriage of widows and women more generally as well as the place of the play within the stage tradition of widow baiting drama.<sup>117</sup> Juneja in particular is keen to challenge earlier critical assumptions that the play's protagonist Tharsalio acted simply as a mouthpiece for Chapman and his misogynist views. The play in fact indicates a keen awareness of the social and economic pressures upon women to remarry despite the expectation that they should also remain faithful to the memory of their dead spouse. One of the strategies which Chapman employs, according to Juneja, is that instead of making female frailty the target of the play's satire, the play in fact discredits those male characters who make anti-feminine remarks and suggests that female frailty is in fact a consequence of the elevation of women and their virtue, so that their divine status ensures that they are either destined to fail or to make unnatural vows of chastity which stifle normal human desire. Tharsalio uses his brash machismo to satirise the attitudes of his brother Lysander, who has deified his wife Cynthia because of her virtuous reputation and as a result can only see women in terms of the stark categories of virgin or whore.

Paradoxically as Chapman shows us, Tharsalio's lack of faith in widows' vows is far fairer to women than Lysander's idolatry because, in insisting that women too are subject to "human frailties," Tharsalio rejects the accepted notions of sex differences. Thus he forces us to accept that women too are creatures of their society, shaped and conditioned by prevalent ideas and institutions.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ethel M. Smeak 'Introduction' to George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. by Ethel M. Smeak (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. xiii.

<sup>117</sup> Renu Juneja, 'Widowhood and Sexuality in Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*', *Philological Quarterly*, 67 (1988), 157-175 and Ira Clark, 'The Widow Hunt on the Tudor-Stuart Stage', *Studies in English Literature*, 41 (2001), 399-416.

<sup>118</sup> Juneja, 'Widowhood and Sexuality', p. 167.

Lysander's folly, his obsession with Cynthia's virtue, is outlined in the play as having its origin in self-conceit, since he has bragged of his wife's devotion to him and her vow to remain faithful to him after his death. Lycus affirms Cynthia's reputation to Lysander:

The world hath written your wife in highest lines of honoured fame; her virtues so admired in this isle as the report thereof sounds in foreign ears; and strangers oft arriving here (as some rare sight) desire to view her presence, thereby to compare the picture with the original.<sup>119</sup>

Later Lycus remarks upon Lysander's fixation:

You know how strange his dotage ever was on his wife, taking special glory to have her love and loyalty to him so renowned abroad; to whom she often-times hath vowed constancy after life, till her own death had brought, forsooth, her widow-troth to bed (II.3.50-54).

In Act IV, scene 2, of the play Lysander, having faked his own death, approaches the tomb where Cynthia grieves for him. The scene opens with a hymn to Cynthia as the epitome of female virtue:

O miracle of Nature! Women's glory;  
Men's shame; and the envy of the deities!  
Yet must these matchless creatures be suspected,  
Accused, condemned! Now by th'immortal gods,  
They rather merit altars, sacrifice,  
Than love and courtship.  
Yet see, the queen of these lies here interred,  
Tearing her hair, and drowned in her tears,  
Which Jove should turn to crystal, and a mirror  
Make of them, wherein men may see and wonder  
At women's virtues (IV.2.1-11).

Cynthia's encounter with the disguised Lysander at the tomb forces her to realise that her identity as a goddess is one which requires extreme displays of grief and threatens her very life. Ero, her maidservant, points up the disparity between Cynthia's divine persona and the impossibility of anyone fulfilling the requirements of that role when she says: 'I will make her turn to flesh and blood, / And learn to live as other mortals do'

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<sup>119</sup> George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. by Akihiro Yamada (London: Methuen, 1975), II.1.62-67. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

(IV.2.176-177). Cynthia also acknowledges her own investment in her reputation when she realises that her liaison with the soldier will force her to forgo it unless she keeps it a secret:

CYNTHIA: If the world should see this -

LYSANDER: The world! Should one so rare as yourself respect the vulgar world?

CYNTHIA: The praise I have had, I would continue (IV.3.77-80).

Tharsalio makes Cynthia's deification the target of his satire when Lycus brings him the first report of Cynthia's grief:

For this does she look to be deified, to have hymns made of her, nay to her; the tomb where she is, to be no more reputed the ancient monument of our family, the Lysandri, but the new-erected altar of Cynthia, to which all the Paphian widows shall after their husbands' funerals offer their wet muckinders for monuments of the dangers they have pass'd, as seamen do their wet garments at Neptune's temple after a shipwreck (IV.1.119-126).

Although the apotheosis of Cynthia in *The Widow's Tears* has been discussed in the context of the debate on widows, I think that there is scope to consider the play and this particular theme in a wider historical context. *The Widow's Tears* I will argue through the deification of Cynthia (and Eudora to a lesser extent) is drawing on and mediating those social anxieties about the death of Elizabeth and the consequences of her deification for the succession. In this way I will argue that Chapman's tragi-comedy bridges the gap between two groups of plays: *Endymion* and *Cynthia's Revels* on the one hand and *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* on the other.

The presence of the dead Queen looms large in Chapman's play not least because he chooses to call the previously unnamed matron of Ephesus from his source Petronius'

*Satyricon*, Cynthia.<sup>120</sup> Chapman appears to have taken care when composing names for his characters so that the meaning of their names provides some insight or commentary upon their personality. Akhiro Yamada notes:

As in his poems, so too in *The Widow's Tears*, Chapman coined various names from Greek. He also exploited the etymological significance of several Greek names taken from classical literature. All this, it seems was for the kind of type-characterization Chapman was using in the play.<sup>121</sup>

Tharsalio's name, for example, comes from the Greek for bold, confident audacious, while the name of his target the widow Eudora means generous, richly endowed.<sup>122</sup> As part of his wooing Tharsalio employs the bawd Arsace whose stories are designed to awaken the widow's passion and her name has several appropriate meanings, namely join, fit together and relief, remedy. The foolish character Argus, a servant described in the *dramatis personae* as a gentleman usher, is given the name of the hundred eyed monster that was set to guard Io from Zeus. In the case of this Argus the name is used ironically as he fails to deflect Tharsalio's attentions from his mistress.<sup>123</sup> Another example of Chapman using a name for ironic effect is the name given to Cynthia's husband Lysander. Yamada indicates that the dramatist selected the name to indicate the disparity between the disguise chosen by Lysander and the career of his namesake:

The name Lysander is frequently associated with the Spartan commander who defeated Athens in 404 B.C., while our Lysander disguises himself as 'A poor eightpenny soldier' (V.i.45). This helps to invert the idea of Lysander as a perfect husband.<sup>124</sup>

The use of the name Lysander to serve as an ironic commentary upon its owner is something which had a small but significant dramatic heritage. The name itself is not used very often in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. A survey of plays performed and published during the period 1580-1623 reveals that a character with the name Lysander,

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<sup>120</sup> Yamada, 'Introduction', pp. xxxiii-xlvi.

<sup>121</sup> Yamada, 'Introduction', pp. liii-liv.

<sup>122</sup> Yamada, 'Introduction', p. liv.

<sup>123</sup> Yamada, 'Introduction', p. liv.

<sup>124</sup> Yamada, 'Introduction', p. lvi.

spelt either Lysander or Lisander, appears in only three plays. The first of these is the quarto of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* published in 1600 and later in the 1623 Folio, followed by *The Isle of Gulls* by John Day published in 1606 and the quarto of *The Widow's Tears* published in 1612.<sup>125</sup> This then leaves *Dream*, *The Isle of Gulls* and *The Widow's Tears* and here the potential date of composition and performance suggests the following chronology starting with *Dream* from around 1594, followed by *The Widow's Tears* from around 1605 and finally *The Isle of Gulls* from the spring of 1606. This indicates that Chapman may well have been familiar with Shakespeare's deployment of the name Lysander in his earlier comedy and made use of the same template. The names of Lysander and Demetrius have a long critical history in Shakespeare scholarship and Lysander's name has very recently produced further comment.<sup>126</sup> Editors of *Dream* have noted that Shakespeare probably came across Lysander in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Harold Brooks is typical in his annotation of Lysander and Demetrius in the *dramatis personae* when he suggests that 'needing classical names, Shakespeare probably recollected these from North's Plutarch'.<sup>127</sup> Critics, including Wolfgang Riehle, have argued that the name Lysander is meant to echo the name of another famous lover, Leander, since the play alludes to both Marlowe's poem 'Hero and Leander' in the opening scene of the play and also to the tragic lovers in the

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<sup>125</sup> The survey of plays on the Chadwyck-Healey Literature Online Database also produced several examples which can be excluded from the findings: the first of these is a reference to the figure of Lysander, rather than a character of that name in *The Alexandrian Tragedie* by William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, published in 1637, but written much earlier, c.1605. The other result which can be excluded is what seems to be a printing error in the text of *Swetnam, the Woman Hater* published in 1620. The play's *dramatis personae* lists a character called Lisandro, but in Act 4 of the play the name of this character appears as Lisander.

<sup>126</sup> See for example, D. Allen Carroll, 'Two Notes on Demetrius and Lysander: A Possible Influence and "that vile name"', *Cahiers Elisabethains*, lxiv (2003), 53-55.

<sup>127</sup> Harold Brooks's note 2 in the *dramatis personae* of William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ed. by Harold F. Brooks (London: Routledge, 1979)

mechanicals' play 'Pyramus and Thisbe'.<sup>128</sup> The vows sworn by Bottom and Flute are characteristically garbled:

PYRAMUS: And like Limander am I trusty still.

THISBE: And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill (V.1.195-196).

Here 'Lemander' is Bottom's mispronunciation of Leander, while critics have similarly been puzzled by Flute's choice of Helen as a name to swear a vow of faithfulness as Helen of Troy is usually considered a figure of infidelity and inconstancy. It has been suggested that the names here are multivalent and suggest a number of allusions. In the first place the name 'Lemander' suggests Leander, a figure of constancy and doomed love, but also suggests the name of the character from within the play Lysander:

To swear constancy by Leander is conventional and appropriate; to swear constancy by Lysander is ironic and only serves to draw attention to the just-completed action and to the unstable emotional life of the two main male figures in that love story.<sup>129</sup>

Flute's reference to Helen has been frequently glossed by editors as a garbled reference to Leander's lover Hero, although the name also offers the ironic choice of Helen of Troy. There also remains the possibility that the choice of Helen is also used to point to the figure of Helena from within the play:

The Limander-Helen reference in the Pyramus and Thisby play-within-a-play scene can be regarded then, in three ways, or preferably, in all three ways at once: first as it has been traditionally seen, as reference to Leander and Hero; secondly as a conscious reference to Leander and for irony's sake to the unfaithful Helen of Troy; and thirdly, without moving outside the context of the play itself, as an unconscious reference to the inconstant Lysander and the faithful Helena.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Wolfgang Riehle, 'What's in Lysander's Name?', *Notes and Queries*, 252 (2007), 274-275.

<sup>129</sup> Douglas H. Parker, "'Limander' and 'Helen' In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 99-101 (p. 100).

<sup>130</sup> Parker, "'Limander' and 'Helen' In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", p. 101.

If we move outside the context of Shakespeare's play to Plutarch's *Lives* it is clear that Lysander, like Theseus, was a renowned oath-breaker:

There is a saying also, recorded by Androclides, which makes him guilty of great indifference to the obligations of an oath. His recommendation, according to this account, was to 'cheat boys with dice, and men with oaths'... to take example, namely from a tyrant; nor in character with Laconian uses, to treat gods as ill as enemies, or, indeed, even more injuriously since he who overreaches by an oath admits that he fears his enemy, while he despises his God.<sup>131</sup>

Shakespeare uses Lysander's reputation from his classical sources as an additional means of characterising the fickleness of young love in the play and to create comic tension at the close of Act 2, scene two, when the lovers make vows of constancy before sleep:

HERMIA:       So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend.  
                  Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

LYSANDER: Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I,  
                  And then end life when I end loyalty! (II.2.66-69)

In classical myth and in the Elizabethan re-telling of those myths in poetry and plays, the name Lysander has a specific set of associations with male inconstancy and in *The Widow's Tears* Chapman demonstrates his awareness of the name's mythography as he uses it to satirise the actions of his character. I now want to turn to Lysander's wife Cynthia and suggest that here Chapman uses a similar method of characterisation.

A number of critics have commented upon Chapman's choice of name for Lysander's wife, suggesting that as with the other names in the play it provides an ironic commentary upon Cynthia and the values of the play world. Lysander makes explicit the associations of his wife's name with the goddess of the moon:

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<sup>131</sup> Plutarch, *Lysander*, trans. by John Dryden in *The Internet Classics Archive*  
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/lysander.html>> [accessed 11 January 2008]

See also D'Orsay W. Pearson, "'Unkinde' Theseus: A Study in Renaissance Mythography", *English Literary Renaissance*, 4 (1974), 276-98.

O Cynthia, heir of her bright purity,  
Whose name thou dost inherit, thou disdain'st  
(Severed from all concretion) to feed  
Upon the base food of gross elements.  
Thou all art soul; all immortality.  
Thou fast'st for nectar and ambrosia,  
Which till thou find'st and eat'st above the stars,  
To all food here thou bidd'st celestial wars (IV.2.181-188).

Lucy Munro refers to the 'resonantly named Cynthia',<sup>132</sup> while Juneja explains:

Chapman has very cleverly exploited the contemporary assumption about a widow's lasciviousness to produce both comedy and commentary. Cynthia's name associates her with the goddess of the moon, with Diana, and with chastity.<sup>133</sup>

Schoenbaum also comments on the significance of the name and makes the connection between Chapman's use of the name in the play and his earlier poetry:

It is of course with deliberate irony that the dramatist calls his widow, who is nameless in the source, Cynthia, and one remembers Chapman's use of the name, with all its traditional associations of purity and chastity, in the "Hymnus in Cynthium," one of the two poems which constitute his brief volume of the previous decade, *The Shadow of Night*.<sup>134</sup>

Whilst Schoenbaum identifies Chapman's ironic use of the name in *The Widow's Tears*, part of the irony also comes from the recollection of Chapman's own handling of Cynthia's reputation for chastity in 'Hymnus in Cynthiam' with his rather sly passing reference to the different accounts of the myth of Endymion.

In the Revels edition of the play a section of the introduction is devoted to the discussion of the characters' names and yet the editor passes over the name of Cynthia without comment. The name is mentioned, however, in connection with the dating of the play. Yamada identifies that the lines from the song sung by Tharsalio in Act 5, scene 1, are taken from the seventh song in John Dowland's *The Third and Last Booke*

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<sup>132</sup> Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, p. 112.

<sup>133</sup> Juneja, 'Widowhood and Sexuality', p. 170.

<sup>134</sup> Schoenbaum, 'The Widow's Tears and the Other Chapman', p. 328.

of *Songs or Aires*. The collection was entered in the Stationers' Register on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1603 and published that year. The song is made up of three verses with a chorus or refrain and the purpose of the song is a celebration of Queen Elizabeth as the moon goddess. The song begins with the refrain:

Say love if ever thou didst find, woman with a constant mind, none but one, and what should that rare mirror be, some Goddess or some Queen is she shee shee shee shee and onlie she she onely Queene of love and beautie.

But could thy firy poysned dart  
At no time touch her spotlesse hart,  
Nor come neare,  
She is not subject to Loves bow,  
Her eye commaunds, her heart saith no,  
No, no, no, and only no,  
One no another still doth follow.

How might I that faire wonder know,  
That mockes desire with endlesse no  
See the Moone  
That ever in one change doth grow,  
Yet still the same, and she is so;  
So, so, so, and onely so,  
From heaven her vertues she doth borrow.

To her then yeeld thy shafts and bowe,  
That can command affections so:  
Love is free,  
So are her thoughts that vanquish thee,  
There is no queene of love but she,  
She, she, she, and only she,  
She onely love and beautie.<sup>135</sup>

Chapman parodies the song in Act V, scene 1, where Tharsalio and Lycus approach the tomb and witness Cynthia with Lysander disguised as a soldier in a passionate embrace. Lycus is amazed and asks: 'Your sister, sir? This she? Can this be she?' Tharsalio responds with a song and the stage directions note that 'He dances and sings':

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<sup>135</sup> John Dowland, *The Third and Last Booke of Songs or Aires* (P. Short: London, 1603), sig. E1r-E2v.

She, she, she, and none but she.  
She only queen of love, and chastity,  
O chastity; this woman be.

Here Chapman has replaced the attribute 'beauty' found in Dowland's song with 'chastity' to emphasise Cynthia's former role as the queen of 'chastity'.

Yamada suggests that

The poem, written perhaps in praise of Elizabeth, seems to have become so well known that Tharsalio could use it in ironic reference to the lecherous Cynthia at the tomb.<sup>136</sup>

Linda V. Troost has identified a possible pun available in Tharsalio's version of the song, indicating that Cynthia is now a 'quean' of love.<sup>137</sup> Troost develops Yamada's initial observations about the song, arguing that the irony of the song does not rely solely upon the connection between Chapman's Cynthia and Queen Elizabeth I. Dowland's song, for example, celebrates the woman's constancy by comparing her to the moon:

See the Moone  
That ever in one change doth grow,  
Yet still the same, and she is so;

The above quotation, for instance, is suggestive of Elizabeth's motto '*Semper eadem*', always the same. The song plays down the moon's mutability and fickleness, yet these are precisely the qualities Cynthia appears to display when Tharsalio discovers her with the soldier. Later, however, when the soldier's true identity is revealed as that of Lysander, Cynthia is at once vindicated and like the subject of Dowland's song has proved she is 'a woman with a constant mind'.<sup>138</sup> Whilst Troost's analysis of the song in relation to *The Widow's Tears* provides a fuller reading of its significance, it is clear

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<sup>136</sup> Yamada, 'Introduction', p. xxxii.

<sup>137</sup> Linda V. Troost, 'The Dowland Reference in Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*', *American Notes and Queries*, (1983), 36-37.

<sup>138</sup> Troost, 'The Dowland Reference in Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*', p. 36.

that Elizabeth looms large in both Dowland's *Book of Songs or Aires* and Chapman's play.

It has been noted that Chapman's play with its focus upon the remarriage of widows also contains a series of allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.<sup>139</sup> Tharsalio's cynicism about the strength of a widow's vows indicates the first of a series of such allusions to Shakespeare's play:

You vow widowhood in their lifetime, and they believe you, when even in the sight of their breathless corse, ere they be fully cold, you join embraces with his groom, or his physician, and perhaps his poisoner (I.1.105-108).

This reference to a widow marrying her husband's poisoner is suggestive of Gertrude's marriage to Claudius, while Lycus' description of Cynthia's grief at the funeral:

[She] wept as she would turn fountain. I would you and her husband had been behind the arras but to have heard her (IV.1.37-41).

For the sympathetic Lycus at least, Cynthia is like a second Niobe in the demonstration of her grief. This comparison recalls Hamlet's comparison between Gertrude and Niobe:

A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she followed my poor father's body,  
Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she -  
Oh, God, a beast, that wants discourse of reason,  
Would have mourned longer – married with my  
uncle.<sup>140</sup>

Hamlet compares Gertrude's tears at the funeral with those of Niobe, an exemplar of female sorrow. This makes Gertrude's subsequent remarriage all the more shocking.

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<sup>139</sup> See Millar MacLure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 105.

<sup>140</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by David Bevington, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: Longman, 2004), 1.2.147-151. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

Hamlet describes how his mother followed her husband's funeral, but this is juxtaposed in his conversation with Horatio with the marriage to Claudius which 'it follow'd hard upon'. Niobe, however, despite being petrified, continues to feel the pain of her loss and weep. Her grief is shown to be infinite whereas Gertrude's is finite and has become horribly blurred resulting in 'dirge in marriage' (I.2.12). Gertrude's behaviour, according to Hamlet, is at odds with the tears she weeps:

Within a month  
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing of her gallèd eyes,  
She married. Oh, most wicked speed (I.2.154-156).

Niobe's grief, its very nature and duration seems, in contrast to Gertrude's, to generate feelings of pity by their intensity and by fulfilling a sense of propriety. The comparison with Niobe is used to show how unlike the Theban and Danish queens are in their behaviour. Both *Hamlet* and *The Widow's Tears* in their examination of the figure of the widow, can, I will argue be seen to be re-presenting the Virgin Queen on the stage and offering their own assessment of her reign. Both Peter Erickson and Steven Mullaney have discussed how Gertrude, the ageing widow who remarries, operates as a portrait of Elizabeth:<sup>141</sup>

Gertrude represents the convergence of three issues – sexuality, aging...and succession – that produced a sense of contradiction, even breakdown, in the cult of Elizabeth in the final years of her reign<sup>142</sup>

Hamlet's disgust focuses not only on the speed with which his mother remarried but more specifically upon her aged sexuality.<sup>143</sup> In the closet scene Hamlet rebukes Gertrude, confronting her with the pictures of his father and Claudius:

You cannot call it love, for at your age

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<sup>141</sup> Steven Mullaney, 'Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45 (1994), 139-162, (p.139).

<sup>142</sup> Peter Erickson, *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 83.

<sup>143</sup> Mullaney, 'Mourning and Misogyny', pp. 151-152.

The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgement, and what judgement  
Would step from this to this? (III.4.69-72)

Hamlet continues to focus upon his mother's age: 'Rebellious hell, / If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones' (III.4.83-84). Erickson notes that 'The latent cultural fantasy in *Hamlet* is that Queen Gertrude functions as a degraded figure of Queen Elizabeth'.<sup>144</sup>

In the case of the 'widow' Cynthia, Chapman uses Niobe in conjunction with Cynthia just as Jonson had done in *Cynthia's Revels* in order to critique Elizabeth's self-deification. In Act Four when Lycus testifies to the genuine nature of Cynthia's grief describing how she 'wept as she would turn fountain', Tharsalio takes up this image and retorts:

My sister may turn Niobe for love; but till Niobe be turn'd to a marble, I'll not despair but she may prove a woman (IV.1.135-137).

Whilst Tharsalio uses Niobe as an exemplar of female grief to express his cynicism about the longevity of a widow's vows, the comparison between Cynthia and Niobe works here to suggest other similarities between them. As I suggested earlier, both Cynthia and Lysander are both guilty of pride and of the deification of Cynthia, the same crimes which Niobe herself was guilty of. The play therefore encourages its audience to reflect upon the consequences of elevating female chastity to a divine status for widows, but it also meditates upon Elizabeth's legacy as Virgin Queen. Once again the pairing of Cynthia and Niobe is pertinent here.

As Spenser's deployment of Niobe in the April eclogue suggests, in 1578 the Theban queen could be used to celebrate Elizabeth's potential fecundity. Niobe had been used in

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<sup>144</sup> Erickson, *Rewriting Shakespeare*, p. 86.

precisely this way for Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, in the civic pageantry used to celebrate Anne's coronation in 1533. The only child that Anne does produce is Elizabeth, whose childlessness results in the Tudors giving way to the claims of their Scottish cousins the Stuarts. Niobe could therefore be used after 1578 as the figure of an unnatural mother, one whose pride results in the decimation of her family and a royal house. Ovid's account of Niobe's story spends a considerable portion of his account describing the slaughter of the Niobids:

But Phedimus, and Tantalus the heier of the name  
Of Tantalus his Graundfather, who customably came  
From other dailie exercise to wrestling, had begun  
To close, and eache at other now with brest to brest to run,  
When Phebus Arrow being sent with force from streyned string  
Did strike through both of them as they did fast togither cling.  
And so they sighed both at once, and both at once for paine  
Fell downe to ground, and both of them at once their eyes did streine  
To see their latest light, and both at once their ghostes did yeelde.<sup>145</sup>

The combination of Niobe's suffering and the decimation of the house of Thebes makes her story one which is recalled at key moments in *The Iliad* and *The Aeneid* which tell the story of the Fall of Troy and its aftermath. In this way Niobe's story recalls that of Hecuba, the Trojan queen, as she loses all of her fifty sons during the Trojan War. In Chapman's translation of Book Twenty four of *The Iliad* when Priam comes to claim the ransomed body of his son Hector, from the Greeks he is overcome with sorrow. Achilles uses the story of Niobe as a means of comparison in an attempt to remind the Trojan king of the proprieties of grief:

The rich hair'd Niobe, found thoughts, that made her take meate;  
Though twelve deare children she saw slaine: sixe daughters, sixe yong sons.

The sonnes, incenst Apollo slue: the maides confusions  
Diana wrought; since Niobe, her merits durst compare  
With great Latonas; arguing, that she did onely beare  
Two children; and herselfe had twelve; For which, those only two

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<sup>145</sup> Arthur Golding, *The XV Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso Entytuled Metamorphoses* (London: W. Seres, 1567), pp. 70-71.

Slue all her twelve; nine days they lay, steept in their blood: her woe  
Found no friend, to afford them fire; Saturnius had turn'd  
Humanes to stones. The tenth day yet; the good celestials burn'd  
The trunkes themselves; and Niobe, when she was tyr'd with teares,  
Fell to her foode; and now with rockes; and wilde hils mixt she beares  
(In Sypilus) the gods wrath still.<sup>146</sup>

In *The Aeneid* when Aeneas reaches Carthage he sees the story of Troy painted on the walls of a Temple and laments for the loss of the city. In Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* Marlowe adapts his source so that it is a statue of Priam, which prompts his sorrowful reflection. Marlowe then has the Trojan prince compare his grief with that of Niobe:

Theban Niobe,  
Who for her sons' death wept out life and breath,  
And, dry with grief, was turn'd into a stone  
Had not such passions in her head as I.<sup>147</sup>

Aeneas recollects, not just the destruction of the city of Troy, but of the Trojan royal family. In this way Aeneas, Hecuba and Niobe share the experience of witnessing the ruin of a royal house. Aeneas is, however, a survivor and goes on to found Rome, and, through his grandson Brutus, Britain. The importance of being able to claim descent from Aeneas can be seen from the way in which Elizabeth utilised the *translatio imperii* myth to legitimate her own claims to empire. Unlike Niobe or Aeneas, however, Elizabeth does not perpetuate her Tudor lineage. The failure of the Queen to secure the succession by providing an heir of the body is the subject of another anonymous poem in Stanford's anthology which begins by recalling her genealogy in order to point up her own failings to further its continuation:

whiles depe conceipt renowned quene presentes vnto my mynd  
thie statly race and birth sprong forth from passing princely kynd  
three titles doe I note in the & twain I see do fail  
the want wherof w<sup>th</sup> me alas doth Brittain land bewail

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<sup>146</sup> George Chapman, *The Illiads of Homer* (London: R. Field, 1611), p. 337.

<sup>147</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, in *Dido, Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris*, ed. by H. J. Oliver. (London: Methuen, 1968), II.1.3-6.

A daughter to a mightie king the heavens do the allow  
a princes sister and a neipce, the world and we advow  
but princes wife nor mother yet thou wilt vouchsafe to be  
thoughe every name of every wight is wished unto the.  
O let such glittering glorie peirce thie pure unspotted brest  
That thie renown may be preferd above the starres to rest  
But yf thie constant virgins mynd such passing prayse forsake  
Yet at the least regard the plaint thie people make.<sup>148</sup>

The figure of Niobe and her association with genealogical destruction can therefore be regarded as one which offers a critique of Elizabeth's childless position, and, I think taps into the concerns of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with the succession. It has been noted that Chapman's play with its focus upon the remarriage of widows contains a series of allusions to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.<sup>149</sup> Tharsalio's cynicism about the strength of a widow's vows indicates the first of a series of such allusions to Shakespeare's play:

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This reference to a widow marrying her husband's poisoner is suggestive of Gertrude's marriage to Claudius, while Lycus' description of Cynthia's grief at the funeral:

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For the sympathetic Lycus at least, Cynthia is like a second Niobe in the demonstration of her grief.

This chapter began by outlining the ways in which the maternal trope of mother to the nation proved problematic for Elizabeth as her role as Queen necessarily placed her in a position antagonistic to the culturally constructed roles of wife and mother. By the 1580s Elizabeth's unmarried position meant that it was the figure of the witch and the

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<sup>148</sup> Henry Stanford's *Anthology*, p. 154.

<sup>149</sup> See MacLure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study*, p. 105.

widow which were identified as part of the mythography of Cynthia and were appropriated to present an alternative view of the Virgin Queen. Lyly's *Endymion* and Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* demonstrate their involvement in this process, since each foregrounds the concept of the triplex Diana to figure the Queen's gender as unnatural femininity by emphasising her links with Hecate. *Cynthia's Revels* and *The Widow's Tears* pair the figures of Cynthia and Niobe to suggest that the goddess, like the Theban Queen is guilty of pride and self-deification. The consequences of these sins include the abuse of power and the failure of a royal line which I have suggested provides a damning assessment of the Queen's own deification. Finally, my discussion of each of these three plays demonstrates the importance of mythography for understanding the ways in which the Queen's allegorised image could be re-imagined and re-presented by her subjects.

## Conclusion

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.<sup>1</sup>

The lyric above comes from a poem composed by Elizabeth I called 'On Monsieur's departure' and was written in 1582 to mark the final departure from England of Francis, Duke of Anjou. This poem serves as a fitting coda to the thesis since it encapsulates many of the issues and questions which this project has addressed.

In terms of the organisation and methodology employed, the poem pinpoints what I have been arguing was a pivotal moment in the development of the Queen's iconography, since Anjou was the last of Elizabeth's suitors and during the course of this final courtship Elizabeth and her subjects set about reconceiving the identity of the unmarried Queen. My choice of just three of the many of allegorical representations of Elizabeth I as individual case studies provides a critical shift away from those studies of the Queen's iconography which attempt to provide an over-arching, totalising narrative. By tracing the history of the figures of King David, Queen Dido and Cynthia the thesis moves towards a diachronic approach to royal iconography. The thesis employs this structure to also challenge the assumption that Elizabeth chose not to marry from the outset of her reign and the corresponding belief that she developed an identity as a Virgin Queen. From the discussion of each of these personae it is possible to discern the dialogic nature of royal iconography since it developed over the course of Elizabeth's reign in response to specific political and cultural events and concerns. In this respect the thesis engages with and develops the work of both historicist and New

Historicist critics in the field having identified a tendency within each critical approach to produce a monological account of Elizabeth's iconography.

Since the portrayal of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen persists in literary criticism and in popular culture, including film and television series about the Tudor monarch, scholarship which engages with this view serves an important function as it encourages reflection upon why in the twenty first century we choose to approach the Queen and her history in this particular way. As I have suggested in the survey of critical responses to Elizabeth's iconography each generation of historians and literary critics read the Queen in terms of their own assumptions and preoccupations, whether as a 'Cult' or as a textual identity within a discourse of Elizabethan power. The more recent depictions of Elizabeth on the big screen in films by Shekar Kapur, for example, suggest the pervasive influence of the Cult of Elizabeth. The continuing popularity of this myth of Elizabeth is important for several reasons. Firstly, such cultural manifestations of the Queen are revealing about what they can tell us about our own assessment of Elizabeth and our own cultural concerns. Secondly, they emphasise the importance of scholarship which seeks not to simplify the identity of the Queen and the social and political processes which were involved in its production and negotiation.

Finally, the poem also exemplifies another of the features and concerns of the thesis since it foregrounds Elizabeth's role as an author and provides an example of one of the many modes adopted by the Queen to respond to a particular event. Throughout the thesis I have provided examples of the ways in which Elizabeth attempted to fashion her own identity as Queen in her speeches, translations and prayers. Whilst the subject of Elizabeth as an author in her own right is not news, it is an area which continues to

produce new work which extends our understanding of the Queen's agency in the fashioning of her own identity and complicates earlier critical responses to the Queen's image. This poem points up the theatrical qualities of Elizabeth's position as Queen since this role identifies the tension between appearance and reality as she negotiates her reaction to Anjou's departure. The thesis has traced the affinities between kingship and the theatre and has indicated the ways in which allegorical representations of the Queen could be appropriated by dramatists, for example, by careful re-presentation of biblical and classical mythographies to fashion their own Queen for the stage.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth I, 'On Monsieur's Departure', in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* ed. by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 302.

**Table 1: Elizabethan Biblical Plays**

Extant plays are indicated in bold type face.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Play</b>	<b>Theatre Company/ Theatre</b>
c. 1590	<i><b>A Looking Glasse for London and England</b></i>	Rose
c. 1593	<i>Abraham and Lot</i>	Rose
c. 1594	<i>Esther and Ahasuerus</i>	Admiral and Chamberlain's Men, Newington Butts
c.1596	<i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>	Admiral's Men The Rose
	<i>Tragedy of Job</i>	Unknown
c. 1594	<i><b>David and Bathsheba</b></i>	Unknown
c. 1600	<i>Judas</i> }	
c. 1601	<i>Judas</i> }	Admiral's Men
c.1601	<i>Pontius Pilate</i>	Admiral's Men
c. 1602	<i>Jephthah</i>	Admiral's Men
c. 1602	<i>Tobias</i>	Admiral's Men
c. 1602	<i>Samson</i>	Admiral's Men
c. 1602	<i>Joshua</i>	Admiral's Men

**Table 2: Playlists for Biblical plays taken from Henslowe's *Diary***

Extant plays are in bold type face

Play	Date of Performance	Takings	Plays in Performance that week	Highest grossing play for that week
<b>Looking Glass for London and England</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> March 1592	7s	<i>Four Plays in One, Henry VI (x2), Zenobia, The Jew of Malta.</i>	<b>Henry VI</b> £3
	27 <sup>th</sup> March	£2 s	<b>Henry VI, Muly Mullocco, Don Horatio, Jeronimo</b>	<b>Henry VI</b> £3 / 8s
	19 <sup>th</sup> April	£1 / 4s	<b>Muly Mullocco, The Jew of Malta, Titus and Vespasian, Henry VI, Don Horatio.</b>	<b>Titus and Vespasian</b> £2 / 16s
	7 <sup>th</sup> June	£1 / 9s	<i>Bendo and Richardo, Titus and Vespasian, 2 Tamar Cham, Jeronimo, Knack to Know a Knave</i>	<b>Knack to Know a Knave</b> £3 / 12s
<b>Abraham and Lot</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> January 1594	£2 / 12s	<i>Friar Francis, George a Green, Buckingham, Huon of Bordeaux, Fair Maid of Italy</i>	<i>Friar Francis</i> £3 / 1s
	17 <sup>th</sup> January	£1 / 10s	<i>Friar Francis, George a Green, Richard the Confessor, King Lud</i>	<i>Friar Francis</i> £1 / 16s
	31 <sup>st</sup> January	12s	<i>Buckingham, Titus Andronicus</i>	<b>Titus Andronicus</b> £2
<b>Hesther and Ahasuerus</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 1594	8s	<b>The Jew of Malta, Titus Andronicus, Cutlack</b>	<b>Titus Andronicus</b> 12s
	12 <sup>th</sup> June 1594	5s	<i>Bellendon, Hamlet, Taming of a Shrew, Titus Andronicus, The Jew of Malta</i>	<i>Bellendon</i> 17s
<b>Nebuchadnezzar</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 1596	£1 / 10s	<b>Stukeley, Vortigern, Dr. Faustus</b>	<b>Stukeley</b> £2
	21 <sup>st</sup> December	£1 / 6s	<i>Vortigern (x2), Blind Beggar of Alexandria.</i>	<i>Nebuchadnezzar</i> £1 / 6s
	27 <sup>th</sup> December	£3 / 8s	<b>Stukeley, Vortigern, That Will Be Shall Be, Seven Days of the Week</b>	<i>Nebuchadnezzar</i> £3 / 8s
	4 <sup>th</sup> January 1597	16s	<b>That Will Be Shall Be (x2), Dr. Faustus, Jeronimo, Vortigern</b>	<b>Jeronimo</b> £3
	12 <sup>th</sup> January	13s	<b>Stukeley, Jeronimo, That Will Be Shall Be, Alexander and Lodowick, Blind Beggar of Alexandria</b>	<i>Alexander and Lodowick</i> £2 / 15s
	19 <sup>th</sup> January	10s	<b>Jeronimo (x2), That Will Be Shall Be, Stukeley, Vortigern</b>	<b>Jeronimo (first perf.)</b> £1
	26 <sup>th</sup> January	9s	<i>That will be Shall Be, Blind Beggar of Alexandria, Woman Hard to Please (x2), Long Meg of Westminster.</i>	<i>Woman Hard to Please</i> £2 / 11s
	22 <sup>nd</sup> March	5s	<i>Alexander and Lodowick, Guido</i>	<i>Guido, £1 / 4s</i>

**Table 3: Performance Details for *Muly Mullocco* taken from Henslowe's *Diary*.**

Extant plays are indicated in bold type face.

Play	Date of performance	Takings	Plays in performance that week	Highest grossing play of the week
<b><i>Muly Mullocco</i></b>	21 <sup>st</sup> February 1592	£1 / 9s	<i>Orlando, Don Horatio, Sir John Mandeville, Henry of Cornwall and <b>The Jew of Malta</b></i>	<b><i>The Jew of Malta</i></b> £2 / 10s
	29 <sup>th</sup> February	£1 / 14s	<i>Clorys and Orgasto</i>	<b><i>Muly Mullocco</i></b> £1 / 14s
	17 <sup>th</sup> March	£1 / 8s and 6d	<i>Don Horatio, <b>Jeronimo (The Spnaish Tragedy), Henry of Cornwall, The Jew of Malta</b></i>	<b><i>Jeronimo</i></b> £4 / 11s
	29 <sup>th</sup> March	£3 / 2s	<i>Looking Glass for London, Henry VI, Don Horatio, <b>Jeronimo</b></i>	<b><i>Henry VI</i></b> £3 / 8s
	8 <sup>th</sup> April	£1 / 3s	<i>Machiavel, <b>The Jew of Malta, Henry VI, Brandimer, Jeronimo</b></i>	<b><i>The Jew of Malta</i></b> £2 / 3s
	17 <sup>th</sup> April	£1 / 10s	<i><b>The Jew of Malta, Looking Glass for London, Titus and Vespasian, Henry VI, Don Horatio</b></i>	<i>Titus and Vespasian</i> £2 / 16s
	27 <sup>th</sup> April	£1 / 6s	<i><b>Jeronimo, Jerusalem, Friar Bacon, 2 Tamar Cham, Henry of Cornwall</b></i>	<i>2 Tamar Cham</i> £3 / 4s
	1 <sup>st</sup> May	£2 / 18s	<i><b>Jeronimo, Titus and Vespasian, Henry VI, The Jew of Malta, Friar Bacon.</b></i>	<b><i>Muly Mullocco</i></b> £2 / 18s
	19 <sup>th</sup> May	£1 / 16 s and 6d	<i><b>Jeronimo, Henry VI, Titus and Vespasian, Sir John Mandeville, Henry of Cornwall</b></i>	<b><i>Jeronimo</i></b> £3 / 4s
	3 <sup>rd</sup> June	£1 / 3s	<i><b>Henry VI, 2 Tamar Cham, Jeronimo, Machiavel, The Jew of Malta</b></i>	<i>2 Tamar Cham</i> £1 / 16s and 6d
	13 <sup>th</sup> June	£1	<i><b>Henry VI, The Jew of Malta, Knack to Know a Knave, Sir John Mandeville</b></i>	<b><i>Knack to Know a Knave</i></b> £2 / 12 s
	29 <sup>th</sup> December	£3 / 10s	<i><b>Jeronimo</b></i>	<b><i>Muly Mullocco</i></b> £3 / 10s
	9 <sup>th</sup> January 1593	£1	<i><b>Jeronimo, Friar Bacon, Cosmo, Sir John Mandeville, Knack to Know a Knave</b></i>	<i>Cosmo</i> £2 / 4s
	20 <sup>th</sup> January	£1	<i>Titus and Vespasia, Henry VI, Friar Bacon, <b>The Jew of Malta, 2 Tamar Cham</b></i>	<b><i>The Jew of Malta</i></b> £3

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