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Elizabeth I And The Policy Of Marriage: The Anjou Match, 1572-1582

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ELIZABETH I AND THE POLICY OF MARRIAGE:
THE ANJOU MATCH, 1572-1582

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Gustavus Adolphus College, 2009

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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for the degree of

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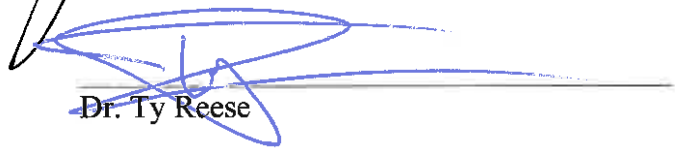
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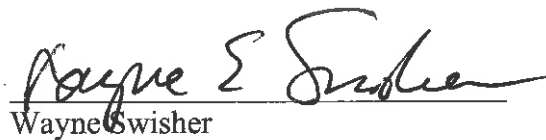


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Aryn Elizabeth Bell

April 23, 2013

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To my mother, Diana Bell.

ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore how Queen Elizabeth I of England's use of interdynastic marriage negotiations as an essential component to the successful implementation of her foreign policy objectives. Many historians continue to debate whether a distinct foreign policy actually existed from the onset of Elizabeth's reign. While some contend that the queen had no policy in place, I suggest, that while it was not an active, aggressive policy, it did, in fact, exist. So the question becomes not whether she had a policy but how it was implemented. Using her unique role as an unwed female monarch, Elizabeth understood the importance of prospective marriage as a means through which she could accomplish her diplomatic goals. Thus, Elizabeth used the prospect of marriage to the Queen of England as an important aspect of international diplomacy for the first half of her reign.

Elizabeth skillfully maneuvered through courtships modifying both her words and actions to achieve the desired result. She personified herself as was necessary to appeal to a specific audience, altering her tone to suit the situation and the intended recipient. Essential to Elizabeth's approach was her understanding and use of gender. As both a female king and unwed queen, Elizabeth deftly varied the outward expression of each of her genders as a means to manipulate others and thus achieve favorable results. Elizabeth was not alone in either her use of marriage as a political tool or in the methodology employed. As the comparative analysis in the second chapter will show, Catherine de Medici, Queen Mother of France, was also a master manipulator of her words and

personifications. Both she and Elizabeth carefully nuanced their words and actions to present themselves in the most favorable light.

This thesis will focus primarily on the extended negotiations between Elizabeth and Francis d'Alencon, later Anjou. Study of this important courtship provides the lens through which to examine Elizabeth's approach towards marriage negotiations leading us to an understanding of her both her methods and motives. The nature of these on again off again talks clearly exemplifies Elizabeth's prudent entwining of interdynastic marriage with international diplomacy.

This study utilizes a combination of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of Elizabeth's correspondences and speeches, while secondary sources are essential to the historiographic discussion of Elizabethan foreign policy. Using secondary sources, this work begins with a historiography of scholarships on Elizabeth and her foreign policy, setting up the debate of whether a policy existed or not and developing my work's place within the ongoing scholarship and debate. Primary sources are used to supplement the historiographic study of Elizabethan foreign policy and are essential to the comparative analysis of Elizabeth and Catherine de Medici and the study of Elizabeth's use of gender in her diplomacy.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

And as I am but one body, naturally considered, though by his [God's] permission a body politic to govern, so I shall desire you all, my lords, to be assistant to me, that I with you and you with your service may make a good account to almighty God and leave some comfort to our posterity in earth. I mean to direct all my actions by good advice and counsel.¹

Queen Elizabeth I's ascension to the throne in 1558 encountered hesitation and uncertainty by both her government and the English people who believed that women, by their nature, lacked the necessary qualities to govern effectively. Elizabeth, nonetheless, considered herself, fully capable of ruling England alone. In addressing her councilors prior to her coronation and by invoking the doctrine of the "king's two bodies," the philosophy that the king has two bodies: a body natural and a body politic, she clearly affirmed her intention to preserve her position as England's sole monarch.² The Lords might only view her body natural, but it was her body politic that granted her authority. Elizabeth asserted her right to rule England, stating that as "God's creature, ordained to obey His appointment...I mean to direct all my actions by good advice and council."³ Her

¹ Elizabeth, Leah S. Marcus, Janel M. Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 52

² Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 7.

³ *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 52.

intentions were clear; she would, with the advice and guidance of her Privy Council, govern on her own.

Despite Elizabeth's desire to rule England as both its king and queen, the Council's focus, in order to ensure the future of the Tudor dynasty and England, was on marriage and the question of succession. Consequently, as an unwed female monarch, Elizabeth was often pressed to alleviate these concerns through a suitable marriage. The first formal pressure to wed came early in her reign. Responding to a 1559 House of Commons' petition that she marry, Elizabeth stated that "I have made choice of this kind of life, which is most free and agreeable for such human affairs as may tend to His service only."⁴ To appease the Commons and more directly answer their request, Elizabeth, according to William Camden's famous version of the speech, colorfully continued:

'To conclude, I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you. And this,' quoth she, 'makes me wonder that you forget, yourselves, the pledge of this alliance which I have made with my kingdom.' And therewithal, stretching out her hand, she showed them the ring with which she was given in marriage and inaugurated to her kingdom in express and solemn terms. 'And reproach me so no more,' quoth she, 'that I have no children: for everyone of you, and as many as are English, are my children and kinsfolk, of whom, so long as I am not deprived and God shall preserve me, you cannot charge me, without offense, to be destitute.'⁵

Elizabeth consistently maintained her desire to rule England as its sole monarch, a position to which, she continually affirmed, God appointed to her. The pressure, however, would not subside and marriage found its way into the policy of the queen for the majority of her reign.

⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵ Ibid.

After thorough analysis of both Elizabeth and her government, scholars' conclusions regarding her success vary from extravagant praise to extreme criticism. Although she defeated the Spanish Armada and maintained peace for the majority of her reign, she also maintained an isolationist policy and failed to preserve the Tudor dynasty. While the conclusions may differ, the focus of both past and present debate centers on the influence of Elizabeth's gender and the role her potential marriage had on English diplomacy. According to John Watkins, by declining Philip II of Spain's proposal at the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth rejected "her sister's vision of England locked in a tight Hapsburg embrace," and, "established the diplomatic basis for three decades of peace, prosperity, and the cultural and intellectual flowering that we now hail as the Elizabethan age."⁶ Did an Elizabethan policy exist or was it Elizabeth's serendipitous reactions and avoidance of difficult circumstances and situations that brought peace for England? What was Elizabeth's view of marriage and what role, if any, did it play in her diplomacy? This study argues that the queen consciously pursued a policy of interdynastic marriage negotiations to achieve her political goals.

Scholars have long debated whether an Elizabethan foreign policy, properly speaking, existed at all. Early-twentieth century British national historians wrote of the empire's glorious past. Through their writings, these scholars promoted the traditional view of a cult of Elizabeth and the idea of an Elizabethan golden age. By the mid-twentieth century, however, new schools of historical thought, which had a profound effect on Elizabethan scholarship, developed. Revisionist historians began to contest and revise the accepted, traditional views of historical events. As a result, conventional

⁶ John Watkins, "Marriage a la Mode, 1559: Elisabeth de Valois, Elizabeth I, and the Changing Practice of Dynastic Marriage" in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 86.

Elizabethan scholarship became divided, and historians found themselves within one of two categories: the “reactionists,” who believed that Elizabeth had no policy as she simply reacted to the events around her, and the “pro-activists,” who believed that Elizabeth's policies were, in fact, fixed.⁷ Despite their differences, these twentieth century historians tended to agree that the queen’s councilors influenced her decisions regarding foreign affairs and that Elizabeth made use of courtships as a diplomatic tool. That, however, is where agreement ended.

Though it is important for scholars to see the benefit of both the “reactionist” and “pro-activist” schools of thought, this study will continue with the conviction that Elizabeth did, in fact have an established foreign policy. In its most simplistic aims, Elizabethan diplomacy, like that of every monarch, focused on protecting her people, her borders, and her country’s overall well being. It is important to keep in mind that, while the queen reacted to the events around her making her policies seem incoherent and ever changing, her primary aim of maintaining sovereignty remained consistent throughout her reign.

Early twentieth century Elizabethan scholars wrote during a period of increasingly nationalistic ideals. In response to world conflicts, they romanticized Elizabeth as a figure of resistance to foreign threat, and in so doing scholars reclaimed seventeenth century admiration for the queen. Historian J. E. Neale, one of the most influential and widely read Elizabethan scholars, interprets her reign as a golden age of progress. He asserts that when Elizabeth took the throne, “no gift of prophecy was needed to forecast the broad

⁷ The terms “reactionists” and “proactivists” were created for the purpose of this study to loosely categorize scholars based on their stances regarding the existence of and implementation of foreign policy.

lines of Elizabeth's future policy."⁸ Her experiences and education to this point left little room for doubt. The queen was a master linguist and a great communicator who could beat even the subtlest diplomat at his game of deception. "She had a real genius for this work, and no sovereign of her day maintained so close a monopoly of it."⁹ Even when the queen acted against her allies, such as aiding the Protestant rebels in Scotland against French influences, Neale contends that Elizabeth maintained the appearance of correct behavior, making it difficult for any foreign powers to take actions against England.¹⁰

British historian J. B. Black's 1936 work, *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1602*, studied Elizabethan England through a decidedly British lens. Like many other scholars, he characterized Elizabeth's reign as the golden age in English history, and viewed the events in other nations as, "problems to be solved rather than as beings entitled to a separate and sympathetic consideration."¹¹ Black's Elizabeth was a brilliant and determined monarch who was, in her foreign policy, Machiavellian. The queen's objective, from which she never consciously wavered, "was to establish her throne and kingdom in a position of unassailable security and power."¹² Black believed that Elizabeth was a master politician. She was an expert of "prevarication and deceit," prepared to use every instrument that she believed to be advantageous, including her hand in marriage. Elizabeth's "watchfulness and flexibility were the very essence of her

⁸ J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), 53.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹ J. B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), viii.

¹² *Ibid.*, 333.

system; for each situation, as it arose, had to be examined afresh in the light of England's vital needs and policy modified or redirected accordingly."¹³

British historian and novelist Elizabeth Jenkins, in *Elizabeth the Great* (1958), followed the stance of Neale and Black and reinforced the glorified version of a powerful queen. She describes Elizabeth as an extremely intelligent and regal monarch. "From the first hours of the reign she had shown herself to have the memory and penetration that goes with a mind of uncommon ability, and an inexhaustible interest in the theory and practice of government."¹⁴ Jenkins, in agreement with Black, depicts the queen's ability to govern in Machiavellian terms. Quoting Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Jenkins states, "it is an unerring rule and one of universal application, that a Prince who is not wise himself cannot be well advised by others."¹⁵ Elizabeth surrounded herself with able advisors who counseled her in all matters.

The middle of the twentieth century saw a drastic shift in historical ideology towards a more critical "reactionist" evaluation of Elizabeth and her foreign policy. "Reactionist" historians believed that instead of establishing and maintaining a proactive approach, Elizabeth simply reacted to the events around her. The foreshadowing of this change can be seen in Elizabeth Jenkins' work. In depicting Elizabeth as a great queen, Jenkins skims over her foreign policy, possibly suggesting that the queen's policies did not fall in line with the glorified image she sought to depict. Other historians of this new era, such as Patrick Collinson, found conversely that the cult of Elizabeth perpetuated by

¹³ Ibid., 334.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1958), 68.

¹⁵ Ibid., 62.

early twentieth century scholars could be attributed to nostalgia.¹⁶ Many historians welcomed this new critical scrutiny, despite the damage done to Elizabeth's historic stature.

Under the growing influence of historical revisionism and believing that previous interpretations had been overly idealistic, these mid-twentieth century scholars sought a more critical reconstruction of Elizabethan high politics. Due to their belief that Elizabeth, in her policies and political abilities, was indecisive and merely reacted to the problems surrounding her, for analytical purposes, this study will refer to these scholars as "reactionist." Historians who adhered to this model separated themselves from the popular idolatry and lack of critical analysis that had become the trend in historical studies of the queen. Prominent historian Wallace MacCaffrey's *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, published in 1968, marked the newly critical belief that Elizabeth, along with her councilors, had no set foreign policy. He explained that the Queen merely waited on events to play out and ran as few risks as possible.¹⁷

MacCaffrey describes Elizabeth as cautious and conservative, constantly hindered by the aspirations of her advisors, many of whom wished to pursue a more Protestant policy, a policy to proactively further the Protestant cause both at home and abroad. Elizabeth, on the other hand, in accordance with her motto *semper eadem*, wanted to avoid change and commitment of any kind. She was content to be the Queen of England and nothing more.¹⁸ While keenly alert to shifts around her, Elizabeth sought to divert

¹⁶ Patrick Collinson. "Elizabeth I and the Verdict of History," *Historical Research* 76, no. 194 (Nov., 2003): 487.

¹⁷ Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 472.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 459.

them or, at least, to minimize their pressures upon her and her affairs.¹⁹ Thus, the queen's "policy was usually a reactive one, responding to events as they unfolded."²⁰

Despite MacCaffrey's largely critical view of the queen's foreign policy, events of the early 1570s seemed to demonstrate the wisdom of Elizabeth's approach. According to MacCaffrey, the strength of the rebellion in the Low Countries wavered too much to permit anything other than English neutrality.²¹ In France, however, with religious discontent stirring, Elizabeth gladly kept the fires of discord alive. When a broader coalition of Huguenot leaders formed, MacCaffrey sees the queen being tempted to intervene in French religious affairs for the first time.²² Although the waning power of Spanish influence in the Low Countries transformed the scene for England, Elizabeth ignored the urgings of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Sir Francis Walsingham to overtly support the resistance in the Low Countries. Instead, MacCaffrey argued, that she favored the idea of an alliance with France through marriage with the Duke of Anjou, believing an alliance was necessary to address the problems of the Netherlands.²³

For MacCaffrey, the resurgence of Spanish power in the Low Countries between 1578 and 1582 marked a turning point in Elizabeth's foreign policy, when the queen abandoned her "traditional policy of neutrality – even of isolationism – in order to launch a new policy of active intervention."²⁴ This new approach was first seen in response to the Duke of Anjou's campaign in the Low Countries from 1583-1584. The subsequent

¹⁹ MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 502.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

²² *Ibid.*, 190.

²³ *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 244.

failure of this campaign and the resulting collapse of Elizabeth's attempt at active intervention drove her back to her former passivity and reactivity in foreign affairs.

From this event, MacCaffrey concludes that Elizabeth lacked an understanding of the world in which she lived. He believes that, at least when it came to foreign affairs, the queen was living in the past, clinging to the notion of a historically strong France that could act as a buffer for England against Spain. Her desire in the 1580's for a French alliance exemplified her perception of a France that was not based in reality, for France had been severely weakened by civil war.²⁵ In MacCaffrey's estimation, Elizabeth's misjudgments of international events led England into decades of warfare that continued through the end of her reign.²⁶

Historian Charles Wilson also approaches Elizabeth critically, but takes a more cynical stance than many other "reactionists." Wilson contends that Elizabeth lacked any definitive foreign policy and believes that the many scholars who have credited her with one are:

Rationalizing into policies, *ex post facto*, what was, in reality, a succession of shifts and muddles into which the Queen stumbled because she was so obsessed by understandable but irrational fears – the fear of rebellions, the fear of France especially – or the obverse of those fears – the defense towards Philip II [of Spain], the desire to recover Calais.²⁷

In Wilson's opinion, other historians are not as critical of Elizabeth's handling of foreign policy as they should be.²⁸

Wilson believes that the queen's hesitancy in dealing with policy matters often resulted in her doing too little too late. He argues that, in 1576, for example, during the

²⁵ Ibid., 506.

²⁶ Ibid., 509.

²⁷ Charles Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 6.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

revolt in the Netherlands, Elizabeth missed a vital opportunity to ally with William of Orange and that this failure to aid the revolutionary leadership led to the demise of the fragile unity that existed among the Low Country provinces. Spain, as a result, regained control of the southern provinces, thereby forcing Elizabeth to come to the rescue of the northern regions, condemning England to a long, hard war with Spain.²⁹ Wilson paints the picture of an ill-tempered monarch who avoided making decisions when decisive action might have salvaged Low Country unity. He views Elizabeth's dealings with the Netherlands as being characterized by snobbery, parsimony, and the lack of proper decision-making.³⁰ The queen, in Wilson's opinion, was a small-minded woman incapable of following a specific course.

On the other hand, more recent "pro-activists" contend that Elizabeth did indeed have a consciously determined foreign policy, although they grant that Elizabeth was also flexible enough to alter her policies when circumstances dictated. Thus, R. B. Wernham argued that Elizabeth's foreign policy was very much her own, dictated by her perception of England's strategic interests and the policies of neighboring states and great powers.³¹

In response to Wilson and other "reactionaries," Wernham stated that "any government's foreign policy is bound to consist largely of day-to-day responses, day-to-day reactions to the actions of all other states with whom it has any sort of relationship."³² Generally speaking, it is only a very powerful and aggressive state that starts out with a set policy. A weakened state, such as Elizabethan England, could not avoid feeling the compulsion to react to the actions of a stronger, more powerful one.

²⁹ Ibid., 134.

³⁰ Ibid., 33, 36.

³¹ R. B. Wernham, *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 4.

³² Ibid., 3.

“However rational and consistent its aims, however clear and firm the course it sets, the actual track it follows must turn and twist this way and that, just as an Elizabethan galleon had to tack back and forth in response to winds and tides.”³³

While Wernham acknowledges that Elizabeth was a turner and twister, he contends that she did not just “stumble into a succession of shifts and muddles.”³⁴ He believes that Wilson, and those who share his outlook on Elizabeth, failed to separate the course that Elizabeth set from the track that she was forced to follow.³⁵ Wernham uses the Netherlands as an example of a steady policy that Elizabeth, through varied means, persistently pursued. According to Wernham, her policy had three distinct goals: to get the Spanish troops out of the Netherlands, to prevent the French from entering the Netherlands, and to restore to the Netherlands the liberties and home rule that it had experienced under Charles V.³⁶

Historian Susan Doran discusses the argument that Elizabeth only reacted to problems as fashionable. Supporting Wernham’s belief in the existence of Elizabeth’s foreign policy, Doran finds that the Queen actively pursued general aims and objectives and that she therefore had a foreign policy that was her own. As Doran points out:

It is true that there were periods when Elizabeth seemed overwhelmed by the complexities of the international situation and at a loss as to how to proceed; plenty of examples can indeed be found when she dithered or prevaricated. Nonetheless, she did pursue consistent general aims and objectives and in this sense had a foreign policy.³⁷

Defending her borders, and thus keeping the French out of Scotland and the Spanish out of both Ireland and the Netherlands, was Elizabeth's first priority. Second in importance

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Wilson, 6.

³⁵ Wernham, 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 4.

³⁷ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (Routledge: London, 2000), 65.

was the defense of European Protestants, and third was the development of England's economic interests.³⁸

Although Elizabeth's policies between 1568 and 1585 were more reactive than pro-active, Doran contends that this was because she had little other choice.³⁹ Elizabeth's "approach to international affairs has been almost invariably described as cautious and conservative: her commitment to peace and the traditional Hapsburg alliance before 1585 being characteristic of her caution; her advocacy of the rights of monarchs and dislike of rebellion is indicative of her conservatism."⁴⁰ Doran contends that historians need to remember the significant influence that her Privy Council had on Elizabeth, and that it was their, not her, incoherency that made Elizabeth seem at times indecisive.⁴¹ Doran asserts that historians must remember that, "although Elizabeth took counsel over foreign policy, she, of course, held strong opinions of her own."⁴²

In response to those historians who criticize Elizabeth's handling of policy, and specifically to Charles Wilson, Doran asserts that counter-factual history is always problematic.⁴³ While Doran feels that early intervention in the Netherlands would have made England more vulnerable to military failure, as reforms to the navy and army had just begun, there was no guarantee of this defeat. Similarly, there is no guarantee that early intervention, as claimed by Wilson, would have ensured a united Netherlands. Doran acknowledges, though, that Elizabeth did make mistakes in her handling of foreign relations, as evidenced by the Anjou marriage episode.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 63.

⁴¹ Ibid., 49.

⁴² Ibid., 63.

⁴³ Ibid., 66.

While Wernham and Doran believe that their views align with those of Neale and Black, by accepting that Elizabeth's foreign policy was continually changing course, they are actually bridging the gap between early- and mid-twentieth century scholars. Early twentieth century historians viewed flexibility as a redeeming quality of Elizabeth's policies while the "reactionists" saw it as proof of the queen's and Council's lack of policy and indicative of her inability to rule. "Pro-activists" find a middle ground. They contend, I believe correctly, that Elizabeth had an established diplomatic strategy but, due to circumstances beyond her control, often reacted to events and, therefore, adjusted her policies as needed.

The end of the twentieth century experienced a revision of the "pro-activist" historical view. Once again, scholars became less critical in their interpretations of Elizabeth's reign. One such historian, F. Jeffrey Platt, both glorifies Elizabeth and contends that she had a clear foreign policy. In agreement with Doran and Wernham, he finds this established policy evident in Elizabeth's, "unchanging, though seemingly confused, stance towards the Netherlands and toward French and Spanish military interest there."⁴⁴ However, Platt takes his ideas further by praising Elizabeth as a brilliant politician. He asserts that she was the first monarch to successfully institute a policy of continental balance of power; a policy made possible by "the perpetual rivalry between France and Spain, which had been the best guarantor of English safety in the past."⁴⁵

Platt's glorification of Elizabeth continues with his contention that she somehow instinctively knew that England's best policy lay in, "no serious foreign commitments and in the cultivation of enough nuisance values on the continent to keep the greater

⁴⁴ F. Jeffrey Platt, "The Elizabethan 'Foreign Office'." *The Historian* 56, no. 4 (1994): 725-741.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

powers at a respectful distance.” He finds that Elizabeth’s foreign policy was steady and consistent. According to Platt, the fact that she maintained the direction of her foreign policy after 1572 is definitive proof that Elizabeth's foreign policy existed.⁴⁶

The “reactionist” historians believe that Elizabeth had no active, assertive policy in place. It seems irresponsible, however, to argue that Elizabeth had no foreign policy or political goals. As Geoffrey Parker wrote:

Not every Grand Strategy is aggressive. Rather each encompasses the decisions of a given state about its overall security – the threats it perceives, the ways it confronts them, and the steps it takes to match ends and means – and each involves ‘the integration of the state’s overall political, economic and military aims, both in peace and war, to preserve long-term interests, including the management of ends and means, diplomacy and national morale and political culture in both the military and civilian spheres.’⁴⁷

Therefore, while the “reactionists” assert that Elizabeth’s passiveness is indicative of her lack of foreign policy, this, in and of itself, does not as Parker’s contention supports mean that she had no strategy in place. At the same time, however, it is difficult to argue that Elizabeth, as “pro-activists” have asserted, had a definitive foreign policy in place when she ascended to the throne. As R.B. Wernham conceded, “any government’s foreign policy is bound to consist largely of day-to-day responses, day-to-day reactions to the actions of all other states with whom it has any sort of relationship.”⁴⁸

Foreign policy and matrimony were inextricably linked in sixteenth century Europe. With marriage and succession of paramount importance, interdynastic unions became prominent aspects of alliances. The need for a male heir led Henry VIII to jeopardize Anglo-Spanish relations by breaking from the Church in order to divorce his

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

⁴⁸ Wernham, 3.

first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and marry Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's mother. To restore England to the Church and to reestablish the traditional friendship between England and Spain, Elizabeth's sister, Mary, wed Philip II of Spain. Her desire to maintain England in, as she believed, its true and proper existence, contributed to Mary's obsession with producing an heir. In 1559, as part of the Valois-Hapsburg settlement, a marriage was arranged between Philip II and Elisabeth de Valois. According to diplomatic historian John Watkins, "when Philip agreed to marry Elisabeth, and Henri II agreed to let him, they were thinking primarily about the futures of their dynasties, the welfare of future Hapsburgs and Valois."⁴⁹ Conversely, Elizabeth, at some point in her reign, "either renounced the dynastic vision that had so often driven her father to produce a male heir or decided that it did not matter enough to compromise other policy objectives."⁵⁰ Though Watkins is making broad assumptions into Elizabeth's thought process, it is possible that her lack of settling the succession issue was a consequence of her beliefs regarding marriage.

From early on, Elizabeth espoused her aversion to marriage, preferring to be her own master. During her first speech to Parliament in 1559, while addressing the Commons' petition that she marry, the queen stated, "I may say unto you that from my years of understanding, sith [since] I first had consideration of myself to be born a servitor of almighty God, I happily chose this kind of life in which I yet live, which I assure you for mine own part hath hitherto best contented myself and I trust hath been most acceptable to God."⁵¹ Elizabeth made it clear that she alone would decide the life

⁴⁹ Watkins, "Marriage a la Mode," 87.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 56.

she lived and that it was God's place to influence and approve of it, not Parliament's. Still, to appease Parliament and her people, she went on to state that if some circumstance arose where a marriage was pertinent to England's safety and if God saw fit to guide her as such, her views of marriage could be changed. After her sister's death, Elizabeth was offered Philip's hand. Such a match would have continued the traditional Hapsburg alliance with England. Nevertheless, she refused the marriage and in doing so set the stage for the remainder of her reign.

This work will explore the use of courtships as an integral part of Elizabeth's foreign policy. An analysis of speeches and correspondences will show that during her various suits Elizabeth deliberately modified her words and actions to achieve the desired outcomes. A primary focus will be on the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Francis, Duke of Anjou. While all of the queen's marriage negotiations have been analyzed for both her role in policy making and/or her affinity for marriage, none have been more thoroughly examined nor deemed more extensive than her courtship with Francis.⁵² Through an understanding of the means by which the queen used proposed matrimony to navigate diplomatic negotiations and exchanges, scholars can gain insight into how Elizabeth's outlook on and use of gender during marriage negotiations distinguished the queen from her peers.

Chapter Two, "Marriage, a Favored Political Tool," continues the historiographic analysis as to how Elizabeth's foreign policy intertwined with her marriage policy. The queen's matrimonial views, which so strongly influenced her reign, solidified by the time

⁵² At the beginning of the courtship Francis de Valois was the duke of Alençon. In 1576, when his brother Henri became the King of France, he was made duke of Anjou. For the purposes of the study, Francis de Valois will be referred to as duke of Anjou as the wealth of the courtship lies after the revival of the match in 1578.

she took the throne. Although she reiterated her intention to rule England as its sole monarch, Elizabeth skillfully embraced courtships. As a central aspect of foreign policy, potential matrimony provided the means by which to fulfill England's immediate needs. Use of courtships, particularly during the protracted negotiations over the Anjou match, provides evidence for both sides of the foreign policy debate.

Chapter Three, "The Politics of Royal Marriage in Sixteenth Century Europe," explores Elizabeth's implementation of her marriage policy to achieve foreign political aims. Like all early modern monarchs, the queen conducted her various courtships through the use of ambassadors, agents abroad, and personal correspondence. Strategically using both her words and actions, Elizabeth effectively took advantage of her position as an unwed female monarch to prolong negotiations for England's benefit. However, the queen was not alone. This chapter also examines how Elizabeth's use of marriage as a diplomatic tool compared to that of her French counterpart, Catherine de Medici.

The fourth chapter, "Elizabeth I, Gender and the Politics of Marriage: the Anjou Match," examines how Elizabeth employed her gender(s) to her advantage throughout her courtships. Fully embracing the notion of the King's two bodies, she simultaneously assumed both masculinity and femininity, aligning herself with kings while maintaining her womanhood when politically beneficial. Elizabeth espoused masculinity and the traits associated with it, which were viewed as necessary attributes in a good monarch, thus calming the worries of her people associated with an unwed female monarch. Exploiting her femininity during courtship enabled the queen, by assuming the role of a love-struck woman, to successfully implement her marriage policy. Seeing herself as both king and

queen, Elizabeth clearly redefined her gender roles to fit the needs of her position on the English throne.

CHAPTER TWO
MARRIAGE, A FAVORED POLITICAL TOOL

Semper Eadem

Semper eadem, the Latin phrase “always the same,” was the personal motto of Queen Elizabeth I of England. *Eadem* is both a feminine singular and nominative plural pronoun and can refer to either “a woman” or “things.” Elizabeth inherited this expression from her mother, Anne Boleyn, providing a clear understanding for its original, intended meaning. As the feminine singular nominative, *eadem* translates to “the same (woman).” For the young queen, though, the motto had dual meanings. In its feminine form, the expression maintained the original translation used by her mother, signaling her strength as a female monarch. However, in its neuter form, the motto takes on the meaning “always the same things,” suggesting Elizabeth’s desire to maintain a similar course of action for her newly inherited kingdom. It is, therefore, plausible that the queen’s adoption of this motto hinted to her realm how she intended to rule: as the sole female monarch committed to following traditional directions of English policy and progress. Thus, the phrase *semper eadem* provides insight into the queen’s objectives for both her reign and her foreign policy.

As set forth in the Introduction, historians debate both the existence and coherence of a distinct English foreign policy upon Elizabeth’s ascension to the throne.

From the beginning of her reign, the queen, as her motto suggests, sought to maintain the status quo, avoid international conflict, and provide peace and stability for her people and her country. Elizabeth's adoption of *semper eadem* set the tone for her foreign policy and provides the first clue that an actual policy did, in fact, exist. Building upon the discussion set forth in the Introduction, this chapter takes a historiographic look at Elizabethan foreign policy, focusing on matrimony's central role. An analysis of this historiography, concentrating primarily on the formulation of policy and the queen's views of marriage, allows for a better understanding of how courtships became one of the means by which Elizabeth sought to achieve her foreign political goals.

Elizabeth's reactions to international events clearly suggest that she had distinct policy objectives in place upon assuming the throne. In the sixteenth century, marriage was a prominent tool utilized to seal treaties and establish international friendships. As an unwed female monarch, during a time when interdynastic marriage was a common diplomatic practice, Elizabeth found herself to be one of the most desirable brides in Europe. Thus she was able to use herself and the promise of marriage as the means to achieve her diplomatic goals. By using her position as an unmarried queen, Elizabeth effectively formed friendships, forged alliances with her fellow European monarchs, and sustained them for as long as necessary to ensure England's continued safety.

Four of these interdynastic courtships held particular significance to English foreign policy during Elizabeth's reign. While the queen and her Council considered other suitors, the marriage proposal of Philip II of Spain, the courtships with the Hapsburg Prince Archduke Charles of Austria, the Valois princes Henry Duke of Anjou and Francis Duke of Alençon (later Duke of Anjou) stand out as most important.

Individually, each represents a key aspect of Elizabeth's policies during the first half of her reign. Collectively they reveal how Elizabeth manipulated marriage to achieve her foreign policy objectives and are, therefore, meaningful to this study.

The first suggested match came shortly after Elizabeth's ascension to the throne. By proposing marriage, Philip II of Spain, who was previously wed to Elizabeth's sister and predecessor, Mary Tudor, sought to maintain his position of influence within England and to continue rebuilding traditional Anglo-Spanish relations. Ties between the nations deteriorated when, in 1533, Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church and divorced Mary's Mother, Catherine of Aragon, to wed Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn. Catherine, a Spanish princess, was also the aunt of Philip II's father, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Mary, upon assuming the throne, sought to repair strained relations with both Spain and the Hapsburgs and to restore Catholicism within England through a marriage to Philip. Although he found the proposed match personally distasteful, for political reasons Phillip consented. Marriage to the English Queen ensured Spain's continued access to the Low Countries, maintained valuable English commercial relations there, and also assured England's support in Spain's continuous conflict with France. After Mary's death in 1558, Philip, out of a desire to protect Spanish interests and influence through marital bonds, formally proposed to Elizabeth in January of 1559. Seeing the value of continuing the Anglo-Spanish alliance, Elizabeth did not respond quickly, delaying her answer until early summer. Eventually, however, Elizabeth rejected Philip's proposal, claiming that religious scruples prevented her from marrying her sister's widower and that Philip's religion proved an insurmountable barrier to the union.¹

¹ J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I: A Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 71-72; Josephine Ross, *Suitors to the Queen* (New York: Coward, McCann, & Geoghegan, Inc., 1975), 69.

Although Philip's overture was never given serious consideration, his suit is important because it indicates the traditional directions in which Elizabeth and her Council sought to take English foreign policy and provides evidence of the queen's stance against marriage at the beginning of her reign. Elizabeth sought to maintain traditional amity with Spain, protect England's borders and maintain English economic interests in the Netherlands. Philip's ambassador reported that the major reason behind Elizabeth's denial of Philip's hand was the queen's distaste for marriage, indicating that Elizabeth's feelings about marriage were known beyond the English court and possibly beyond Spain.² Despite her rejection of the match, Elizabeth openly expressed her desire to maintain close ties with Spain believing that their friendship could be preserved without the bonds of marriage.³ Consistent with *semper eadem*, the queen's response to Philip's suit is indicative of her desire to maintain the traditional direction of English foreign relations that of strong ties between England and Spain.

Negotiations for a marriage to Philip's cousin, Archduke Charles of Austria, were initiated by Charles' father and Philip's uncle, Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor, in the spring of 1559 and continued on and off until 1567. The match received little interest from the queen. When tensions with France escalated in the fall, Elizabeth showed a brief interest in the proposal out of a desire to maintain England's amicable relations with Spain during a time of confrontation.⁴ The death of Henry II in July 1559 elevated Francis II, husband of Mary Queen of Scots, to the French throne, intensifying English

² John Watkins, "Marriage a la Mode, 1559: Elisabeth de Valois, Elizabeth I, and the Changing Practice of Dynastic Marriage" in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 89.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Susan Doran, "Religion and Politics at the Court of Elizabeth I: The Habsburg Marriage Negotiations of 1559-1567," *The English Historical Review* 104, no. 413 (Oct., 1989): 908-926, 912.

fears that the French would pursue Mary's claim to the English throne. Furthermore, with religious tensions between the Catholics and Protestants rising in Scotland, Elizabeth feared a French invasion through the north.⁵ In June, the Protestants took up arms, and in August and September, French troops arrived to drive them out of Edinburgh. Although these escalating tensions sparked an outward interest in the marriage to Archduke Charles, nothing came of the talks, and negotiations cooled in the winter of 1559. Evidently, political concerns and past experiences rather than Charles' Catholic religion created a lack of enthusiasm for the union within the Privy Council. Elizabeth's stated desire to remain single once again resulted in her objection.⁶

The second phase of the Hapsburg negotiations, initiated by the English in 1563, lasted until 1567. Determined that she marry, Elizabeth's councilors believed that the Archduke was the only available and eligible suitor for their queen.⁷ King Eric of Sweden received consideration but stated that he would not live in England, a deterrent for both the councilors and the queen. The Valois king and princes were thought to be too young. Based on Ferdinand's portrayal of his son's religious views, the Council further believed Charles to be a less ardent Catholic than he actually was. During the 1559 negotiations Ferdinand dispatched his ambassador, Count Helffenstein, to England to ferret out the queen's feelings towards religion and marriage. Elizabeth carefully portrayed herself as a religious conservative. Helffenstein optimistically reported that a form of Catholicism

⁵ R.B. Wernham, *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy* (University of California Press, Ltd.: Los Angeles, 1980), 25; Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (Routledge: London, 2000), 16-17.

⁶ Alison Plowden, *Marriage with my Kingdom: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day/Publishers/Scarborough House, 1977), 93; Doran, "Religion and Politics," 911.

⁷ V. Von Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners* (London, 1928), 174, 230; Doran, "Religion and Politics," 914.

remained in England and that the queen's authority alone settled all religious matters.⁸ For purposes of the negotiations, Elizabeth deliberately represented religious practices within England as well as her own personal views in this conservative light.⁹ When the queen appeared receptive to the marriage talks in the fall of 1559, Ferdinand dispatched Baron Breuner to head the Hapsburg presence in the English court. Understanding Elizabeth's hesitation towards marrying an uncompromising Roman Catholic, Breuner took it upon himself to conceal Charles' commitment to Catholicism, portraying him as moderate in his religious views.¹⁰ Breuner justified his actions to the Emperor, explaining, "had I expressly averred that my gracious master, the Archduke Charles, was still devoted to the Catholic religion and would ever remain so, the whole affair would have been abruptly terminated and all hopes cut off."¹¹

The proposed match with Charles, while important for English trade and commerce, also served as a means to rebuilding good relations with the Hapsburgs.¹² In November of 1563, Philip II's Chief Minister, Cardinal Granvelle, along with his regent in the Netherlands, Margret of Parma, unexpectedly placed an embargo on English trade, blocking British ships from entering Dutch ports. Granvelle, angered by both the English merchants' protection of Calvinist heretics in the Netherlands and their aid in the mounting opposition he faced from the Dutch nobility, seized what he saw as an opportunity to devastate English commerce.¹³ While Granvelle hoped to cripple England by spreading the embargo to Spain, Philip would not allow it, and the queen was able to

⁸ Klarwill, 26-9, 38,45-7, as quoted in Doran, "Religion and Politics," 910.

⁹ Doran, "Religion and Politics," 910.

¹⁰ Ibid., 912.

¹¹ Klarwill, 119 as quoted in Doran, "Religion and Politics," 912.

¹² Ibid., 915.

¹³ Wallace MacCaffrey, "Elizabethan Politics: The First Decade, 1558-1568," *Past and Present* 24 (Aug., 1963): 25-42, 30.

establish additional markets in Emden, Germany. In January 1565, with minimal damage to Anglo-Spanish relations, the embargo was revoked and trade reopened.¹⁴

As in Elizabeth's future courtships, negotiations ultimately faltered on the problem of religion; the emperor demanded that Charles be allowed to openly practice Catholicism, which the queen would not permit.¹⁵ Elizabeth, as a Protestant queen, could not and would not allow him the right to hold public mass. It became apparent, with the duke's insistence of open religious practice, that the English perception of Charles' moderate religious views were greatly exaggerated. Through continued negotiations and multiple representatives, neither the Emperor nor the queen shifted their stance. The last hope for the match came near the end of 1567 when the Earl of Sussex, Elizabeth's final emissary in Vienna, pressed that the Archduke be allowed to visit. Elizabeth's negative response marked the end of the negotiations, for the queen repeatedly stated that there was little point to continue talks when the matter could not be resolved.¹⁶ Nonetheless, in the sphere of international relations, the marriage talks with the Hapsburg Archduke were significant because the prolonged negotiations enabled Elizabeth, and thus England, to maintain an amicable relationship with Spain.

The end of the courtship coincided with a problematic and potentially dangerous event for Elizabeth and her government. With Dutch opposition to Spanish rule mounting in the Netherlands, Spain dispatched the Duke of Alba to stamp out the already faltering

¹⁴ Ibid., 34-5.

¹⁵ The three main areas of contention were: (1) that Charles should be granted open practice of his religion, (2) that Charles should be granted an equal share in the government, a royal title, and the right to succession should the marriage produce no children, and (3) the matter of who should pay the cost of Charles' household expenses in England (Doran, "Religion and Politics," 915).

¹⁶ Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 51; Doran, "Religion and Politics," 921 and *Foreign Policy*, 14.

1566 uprising. Alba marched on Brussels with 10,000 Spanish troops and was soon reinforced by an army of fifty thousand Italian, German, and Walloon men. This massive Spanish escalation transformed the Netherlands from a largely autonomous land with negligible offensive military potential into an area with the largest army in Christendom under direct Spanish rule.¹⁷ This increase of Spanish power and military presence alarmed both England and France. With the revolt successfully suppressed and the French crippled by religious wars, the English feared that the Spanish army's attention would turn towards England.¹⁸

For the first decade of her reign, Elizabeth's traditional alliances with Spain, and by extension the Netherlands, persisted. Continued hostility between Spain and France as well as long standing tensions between England and France, made an interdynastic union with the French improbable. By 1570, however, conflict in the Netherlands had so strained traditional Anglo-Spanish relations that a proposed marriage by Henry, Duke of Anjou, moved England towards an entente with France, and marked a dramatic turning point in Elizabethan foreign policy. The Huguenots, desiring to cement religious peace in France, sought the match after signing a peace treaty with Charles IX in late 1570.¹⁹ Charles IX and Catherine de Medici formally proposed the match in early 1571. In a mirror image of the Anglo-Hapsburg matrimonial discussions of 1563-67, the negotiations stalled in the summer when disagreements over religion could not be resolved. Henry, with no desire to marry a heretic eighteen years his senior, refused to

¹⁷ Wernham, 34-35.

¹⁸ Wernham, 35.

¹⁹ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 99-100 and *Foreign Policy*, 30.

waver in his demand that he be allowed to attend public mass.²⁰ The talks formally ended in early 1572. Despite this failure, these negotiations served their diplomatic purpose by leading to the April 1572 signing of the Treaty of Blois, a defensive alliance between the two nations, stipulating that each would provide aid if the other were attacked by a third party.²¹

The final courtship, between the queen and Francis d'Valois, Duke of Anjou, took place from 1572 to 1582.²² Shortly after the match was first suggested and considerations began, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre halted the talks. On August 21, 1572, Charles IX ordered the assassination of French Huguenot leaders, including Admiral Gaspard II de Coligny. This was followed two days later by the mass murders of Huguenots in Paris as well as other major French cities. The actions by the French government, while not severing ties with England, halted the two nations' growing relationship.²³

Despite these strained relations, renewed Spanish aggression in the Netherlands led to the reopening of the Anjou negotiations. By 1576, Spanish bankruptcy, diplomatic failure, and the atrocities of mutinous Spanish troops provoked unprecedented unity among the restive Dutch. Strong continuous resistance led by William of Orange, had begun in Holland and Zeeland in the early 1570s. They were now joined by newly revolted provinces, which sent representatives to a States General to create a unified

²⁰ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 31.

²¹ Wernham, 42 and Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 31.

²² Francis d'Valois was the duke of Alençon at the start of the courtship; he became the duke of Anjou in 1576. For the purposes of the work he will be referred to as the duke of Anjou due to the wealth of the courtship occurring after the former duke of Anjou, his bother Henri, became king and he was granted the new title.

²³ MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 171-172.

Dutch front against Spanish control. The resulting Pacification of Ghent, signed between the States General and William of Orange, called for the removal of all foreign troops from the Netherlands. Although agreeing to the States' demands, in July of 1577 the Spanish general-governor, Don John, began to organize a new campaign against the rebels. Elizabeth, in support of the provinces, loaned the States £100,000 and agreed to provide troops if they were attacked.²⁴ When, in January 1578, it appeared inevitable that Philip II would be able to use the army to impose an unconditional settlement by the rebels, Elizabeth changed her stance. As William of Orange again offered the queen sovereignty in exchange for military assistance, the Catholic deputies in the States simultaneously sought Anjou's help. Elizabeth, no longer willing to commit English troops, paid for John Casimir, brother of the Calvinist Elector Palatine and administrator of the Rhine, to lead an army into the Netherlands. Her actions failed, and the Dutch States opened negotiations with Anjou for his aid.²⁵

While many of Elizabeth's councilors called for active intervention in the Netherlands, the queen instead turned to Anjou and in 1578 reopened the marriage negotiations as a means to address the crisis in the Netherlands and the threat it posed to England.²⁶ Elizabeth believed that close ties with France would provide protection against possible Spanish aggression, enable her to influence Anjou's actions in the Netherlands, and distract his political ambitions. The negotiations lasted until 1581 when, as with her previous courtships, Anjou's religion proved to be the deathblow for the

²⁴ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*; Wernham, 48, 52-54, and Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 36-37.

²⁵ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 37-38.

²⁶ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 233.

match. Though discussion of marriage had ended, the queen and duke's amicable relationship lasted until his untimely death in 1584.

Historians commonly agree that Elizabeth used marriage proposals for the benefit of England, and that foreign policy often became entangled with the question of marriage.²⁷ Although final decisions regarding policy, including marriage negotiations, rested with Elizabeth, the recommendations received from her advisors were given consideration. Therefore, before this study can explore the means by which Elizabeth used marriage as a political tool, it is important to delve into the factors that surrounded and ultimately influenced the queen.

While there has been considerable debate among scholars regarding the existence of a fixed Elizabethan foreign policy, historians from all schools of thought generally agree that whatever policy did exist emerged as a carefully considered compromise between the queen and her Privy Council.²⁸ As F. Jeffrey Platt states, "although she [Elizabeth] kept the ultimate decisions in her hands, she rarely conceived, initiated or shaped the specific policies to which she gave the force of royal consent."²⁹ As such, it is necessary to analyze the formation of policy before the focus can turn to how the queen and her Council implemented it. Those council members who maintained a strong relationship with the queen, therefore, held significant influence over foreign policy decisions. The most prominent, the Principal Secretary, conducted correspondence with foreign ambassadors, state agents, and soldiers and sailors abroad. Elizabeth had three Principal Secretaries duringt her reign: Sir William Cecil (1558-72 and 1590-96), Sir

²⁷ Wernham, 4.

²⁸ MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 300 and Wernham, 5.

²⁹ F. Jeffrey Platt, "The Elizabethan 'Foreign Office'." *The Historian* 56, no. 4 (1994): 725-741, 736.

Francis Walsingham (1573-1590), and Sir Robert Cecil (1596-1603).³⁰ With the queen's approval, they developed and carried out her foreign policy decisions.³¹ These councilors and advisors, however, had their own agendas. It is therefore important for purposes of this study to gain an understanding of the core beliefs of each.

Though published almost a century ago, early twentieth century historian Conyers Read's works regarding Elizabeth's chief councilors, Sir Francis Walsingham and William Cecil, Lord Burghley, remain important studies. Read, whose views have been much debated by revisionist historians since the mid-twentieth century, argued that "the Queen followed the advice of her council only when it suited her, and was much more often at odds with the ardent Protestants than in accord with them."³² However, he does concede that the views of her Council did indirectly have some impact on Elizabeth's decisions.³³

Read describes Walsingham as radically Protestant, willing to place the success of the greater Protestant cause before the needs of England.³⁴ Religion, according to Read, was the driving force behind Walsingham's diplomacy. He placed little faith in alliances with Catholic princes and strongly urged Elizabeth to support Protestant rebels in both France and the Low Countries.³⁵ Read contends that to Walsingham, "the interests of England and the interests of Protestantism at large were one and the same."³⁶ William Cecil, according to Read, was more of a religious opportunist. While, like Walsingham,

³⁰ Platt, 725.

³¹ Wernham, 5.

³² Conyers Read, "Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council." *The English Historical Review* 28, no. 109 (Jan. 1913): 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

he was a strong Protestant, Cecil's religious beliefs did not shape his policies. He was inclined, according to Read, to discount the force of religion in continental affairs and, thus, desired to follow a policy based upon "the inveterate antagonism of France and Spain."³⁷

New research into the ideologies of Cecil and Walsingham has recently led historians to challenge the more traditional interpretations molded by Read.³⁸ According to historian Malcolm R. Thorp, these studies suggest that William Cecil was, in fact, an adamant believer in the Catholic conspiracy.³⁹ Thorp concludes that Cecil's ability to blend theories of international conspiracy and apocalyptic ideology with more realistic interpretations of events distinguished him from other statesmen. This, however, did not mean that Cecil never allowed religious passions to overrule reason.⁴⁰ Cecil believed that any threat facing England was due to a conspiracy of the Pope, the King of France, and the Spanish and their allies. According to Thorp, Cecil became obsessed with this conspiracy and could find no other explanation for the cruelty and tyranny that the French and Spanish monarchs used against their own subjects, except that it was part of a grand plot to unite Christendom under Catholicism.⁴¹ Thorp argued that the frequency with which rumors of plots were reported in diplomatic correspondence suggests that Cecil was extremely receptive to gossip. Whereas Read argued that Cecil was a "politique"

³⁷ Ibid., 36-37.

³⁸ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 47.

³⁹ Malcolm R. Thorp, "Catholic Conspiracy in Early Elizabethan Foreign Policy." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 431-448, 432.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 433.

⁴¹ Ibid., 446-447.

who placed the nation before religious concerns, Thorp counters that Cecil's "correspondence reveals a consistency of commitment to Protestant ideals."⁴²

Wallace MacCaffrey contends that the views of the Privy Council members frequently differed from those of the queen. Regarding religion, the councilors' opinions ranged between two extremes – some shared Elizabeth's conservative stance and her desire to avoid active intervention, whereas others endorsed the views of those radical Protestants who desired a government with "evangelical zeal at home and vigorous encouragement of Protestant movements abroad."⁴³ Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Sir Francis Walsingham persistently lobbied for English intervention in the Low Countries, while William Cecil, Lord Burghley, tended to be noncommittal on the question.⁴⁴ Although these advisors were more sympathetic to the reformers' cause than was their queen, they were still more cautious of commitments abroad than the radicals. While the councilors maintained influence over the queen, MacCaffrey finds that policy was always ultimately the queen's business.⁴⁵

Yet, divisions within the Privy Council could and did influence marital policy and, as Simon Adams notes, disputes within the Council were in essence "a personal rivalry that over-rode all other considerations."⁴⁶ Conyers Read maintains that beginning in 1578, two distinct groups emerged: those who followed Walsingham and those who followed Cecil.⁴⁷ Revisionist historians Steven Alford and Adams concur, emphasizing the existence of unity and cohesion during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign. They also

⁴² Ibid., 432.

⁴³ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 502.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 457-458.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 346.

⁴⁶ Simon Adams, "Eliza Enthroned?. The Court and its Politics," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, edited by Christopher Haigh, 55-77 (Oxford, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 56.

⁴⁷ Read, 39.

agree that this religious and political cohesion translated into consistent foreign policy goals. Alford contends that the only disagreements were in the interpretation and implementation of policy, not in the need for policy or action itself.⁴⁸ While Alford finds that the split within the Council occurred in the middle of the queen's reign, Adams contends that it did not occur until the late 1580s or early 1590s and onwards.⁴⁹ Differing with this assessment, Susan Doran asserts that during the first part of Elizabeth's reign differences in outlook did, in fact, play a role in policy disagreements. Even though Cecil and Walsingham might have agreed on religious issues, Doran believes that after 1570 they rarely offered similar advice on key foreign policy questions.⁵⁰ Doran further argues that political divisions and tensions were so serious that in the 1560s Elizabeth found personal intervention necessary to maintain the peace.⁵¹

Religious persuasion was the major factor in the tensions among councilors, with the more radically Protestant continually pressing for direct support of continental Protestants, including the use of English force. Read points to 1578 as the definitive year when the divide became apparent, which suggests the significant impact that the hostilities in the Netherlands and Elizabeth's response to them had on the Council. I find it difficult to concur with Read's, Alford's, and Adams' assessment that the division did not become apparent until the late 1570s, since, as previously discussed, the Council was not unanimously in favor of the Hapsburg match in 1563.⁵² While these historians show that some cohesion existed, Doran's evidence of division over the marriage question

⁴⁸ Steven Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 66-67.

⁴⁹ Adams, "Faction, Clientage and Party. English Politics 1550-1603," *History Today* 32, no. 12 (1982), 34.

⁵⁰ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 46.

⁵¹ Doran, "Religion and Politics," 909.

⁵² Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 46.

clearly indicates that there were areas of contention within the early council. Thus, I am inclined to agree with her assessment that clear divisions persisted within the Privy Council from the beginning and throughout Elizabeth's forty-five year reign.

Scholars tend to agree that in general it was the queen's councilors who initiated her many courtships. Historian Elizabeth Jenkins contends that the proposed match with Archduke Charles was William Cecil's doing as a means of getting Elizabeth with child and thus securing an alliance with German Protestants.⁵³ Similarly, scholar G. D. Ramsay finds that both Cecil and Leicester supported the marriage talks with the French and consequently pushed for them within England. According to Ramsay, Elizabeth warmed to these negotiations, realizing that as long as the affair continued she "acquired an influence in French politics that enabled her to interfere to best advantage with men and money in continental conflicts."⁵⁴ Elizabeth may have revived the Anjou talks in 1578, but it was her councilors who brought them into prominence at Court.

Many historians have argued that the councilors pressured Elizabeth to wed because of their desire that she marry a king or other royal who would ultimately rule for her.⁵⁵ According to Christopher Haigh, this is, for the most part, a false assertion. Those councilors who urged Elizabeth to marry had nothing to gain but influence to lose, from the arrival of a king. If they truly believed that the queen was unable to rule, Haigh contends that the Privy Council would have simply governed Elizabeth instead of proposing marriage.⁵⁶ Like historian Peter Johnson, who believes that Elizabeth's ministers probably spent more time pondering the question of who the queen should

⁵³ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1958), 116.

⁵⁴ G. D. Ramsay, "The Foreign Policy of Elizabeth I," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, edited by Christopher Haigh, 147-168 (Oxford, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 159.

⁵⁵ Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Longman, 1988), 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

marry than any other aspect of state policy,⁵⁷ Haigh finds that the councilors pushed for marriage to secure an heir and the future of the Tudor dynasty. A husband for the queen was, therefore, “a means to an end; the end was a secure succession, and the necessary means was a marriage.”⁵⁸ Thus, it was her advisors who initiated marriage negotiations, but Elizabeth, against the wishes of her people and the advice of her councilors, continually stated her preference to remain single.

Historian Anne McLaren, in accordance with Haigh, believes that marriage proposals began with the members of the queen’s Privy Council. The councilors sought to settle the succession issue and to finalize the question of religion with the production of a Protestant male heir.⁵⁹ Elizabeth was able to control her destiny through presumed fertility. This control meant that Elizabeth could, according to McLaren, “use the prospect of marriage to ensure she never married – by finding fault with proposed suitors or by suggesting that she dearly loved and could only marry men deemed unsuitable.”⁶⁰

Historians have long attempted to gain insight into the personal feelings and thought processes of Elizabeth with regards to marriage and her policy of courtship. This raises an important question: how can we, as historians, know our subject's true viewpoint? Many scholars have regarded Elizabeth’s decision to remain single as evidence of her true aversion to marriage and wifely status. David Starkey argues that Elizabeth would not allow herself to be ruled in any capacity by a man.⁶¹ Starkey asserts

⁵⁷ Peter Johnson, *Elizabeth I: A Study in Power and Intellect* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 109.

⁵⁸ Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 11.

⁵⁹ Anne McLaren, “The Quest for a King: Gender, Marriage, and Succession in Elizabethan England,” *The Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 3(Jul., 2002): 267.

⁶⁰ McLaren, 268.

⁶¹ David Starkey, *Elizabeth I: The Struggle for the Throne* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 310.

that, after witnessing the effects of marriage on her predecessor and sister, Mary, and undergoing her own unhappy experiences with men, Elizabeth was from the beginning predisposed to remain single. Similarly, Alison Plowden suggests that to surrender herself to the passion and love of a marriage would hinder her power both as a woman and as the queen of England.⁶² Starkey, however, like many historians, takes his explanation of the queen's aversion to marriage further. He argues that seeing the impact of an unpopular marriage on her sister's reign strengthened Elizabeth's resolve to remain her own mistress.⁶³ Other scholars have taken this argument even farther, suggesting that her childhood experiences, including examples of marriage, led to Elizabeth's distaste of matrimony. Psychohistorian Larissa Taylor-Smith finds that because of her experiences during critical psychosexual developmental years that "Elizabeth's attitudes on marriage and maternity were fixed by her 15th year."⁶⁴ As early as 1547, Elizabeth openly stated her aversion to marriage and continued through her reign as is evidenced in her speech to Parliament in 1559.⁶⁵ While there is considerable debate as to whether her views developed in her youth or were the result of the marital experiences of her sister and cousins, one thing can most certainly be agreed upon by scholars and is central to this study: Elizabeth's views of marriage were firmly established by the time she ascended to the throne.

Despite her stated intention to marry if it were the proper thing for England, the seriousness with which Elizabeth approached her many courtships remains under scrutiny.

⁶² Plowden, 160.

⁶³ Starkey, 314-15.

⁶⁴ Larissa J. Taylor-Smith, "Elizabeth I: A Psychological Profile," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring, 1984): 47-72, 53.

⁶⁵ Both versions of Elizabeth's 1559 speech to Parliament have been included within the overall work: William Camden's version in the introduction (pg. 1) and the official, documented version of the speech in the opening of Chapter Two (pg. 47).

At the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth clearly affirmed her intention to remain single and rule alone. In 1563 the queen amended her stance on marriage, by stating that she would wed if necessary for England's benefit. Many scholars adhere to this revised outlook on marriage with Susan Doran concluding that on multiple occasions Elizabeth was indeed willing to follow through with a marriage for England's benefit. Plowden, however, maintains that even when English relations with Spain were rapidly deteriorating and England's traditional Dutch allies were rising up in revolt against Spanish rule in the Netherlands, Elizabeth was not prepared to marry.⁶⁶ Though she stated that she would wed for England's benefit, the queen never did. On multiple occasions, Elizabeth repeated her desire to remain single and expressed her distaste for marriage. Thus, both statements need to be kept in mind and considered equally throughout further analysis of her courtships.

While her serious intent to marry remains in question, many historians generally agree that courtships provided Elizabeth with enjoyable entertainment. When negotiations with Francis Duke of Anjou were revisited in 1578, Plowden asserts that Elizabeth had become so adept at manipulating proposals and acting the part of a sincere bride that she convinced everyone, perhaps even herself, that this time she genuinely wanted to marry.⁶⁷ Like Plowden, historian Carole Levin claims that "while Elizabeth claimed virginity as her ideal state...she also loved proposals and courtships."⁶⁸ Marriage negotiations, Levin finds, were not only politically valuable to Elizabeth but also had a

⁶⁶ Plowden, 93.

⁶⁷ Plowden, 174.

⁶⁸ Levine, 39.

deeper, emotional resonance. The wooing of and by her numerous suitors flattered Elizabeth's vanity while also providing her with ample entertainment.⁶⁹

While agreeing that Elizabeth enjoyed the game of courtships, the division between scholars resumes when discussion turns to Elizabeth's sincerity towards them. Some historians find that there was, on the queen's part, a certain degree of genuineness in the negotiations while others find that she only suggested that she would marry, without believing it was an actual possibility. Carole Levin argues that historians should not let the fact that she enjoyed the game of courtship blind them to Elizabeth's sincere intent to marry. Accordingly, Elizabeth was, in fact, willing, for the good of her kingdom, to follow through with a marriage.⁷⁰ Susan Doran agrees, pointing out that on at least two occasions Elizabeth contemplated seeing the negotiations through for the benefit of the state. First, during marital talks with Archduke Charles of Austria, Doran asserts that because it was Elizabeth herself who ended the talks, it would be a mistake to conclude that she had at no point taken them seriously.⁷¹ The second, more plausible instance, occurred during the revival of the Anjou match. However, Wallace MacCaffrey suggests that, while "she [Elizabeth] was probably not entirely insincere when she expressed her willingness to marry for the sake of her realm...in her own mind this eventuality remained a remote-indeed, almost an abstract, possibility."⁷² That Elizabeth revisited the Anjou match by her own initiative and permitted the duke to visit her court, the only suitor awarded this privilege, indicates that the queen entered the match with intentions to follow it through. This has led many historians to conclude that either the queen had

⁶⁹ Levin, 39.

⁷⁰ Levin, 51.

⁷¹ Doran, "Religion and Politics," 922.

⁷² MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, 228.

developed emotions for the duke or that she believed that this was her last chance to wed and produce children.⁷³

There is general consensus among Elizabethan scholars that it was the queen's decision to revisit the Anjou marriage scheme, making it one of the most prominent events in Elizabethan foreign policy. According to MacCaffrey:

This whole action stands in sharp contrast to the Queen's usual stance, which was one of watchful passivity in which she listened to the proposals showered on her by her Councillors, accepting or rejecting them but almost never taking the lead... Now it was clearly the sovereign who pushed boldly forward, dragging her reluctant courtiers in her wake.⁷⁴

Interpretations regarding Elizabeth's motivations differ; some historians believe that she was acting on personal impulse while others find that her actions were purely political.

This division exists in conjunction with previously established beliefs regarding the existence of a foreign policy. When interpreting the correlation between Elizabeth's impetus to revive the match and her foreign policy, the established division and beliefs between "reactionists" and "pro-activists" returns.

British historians J. E. Neale, Neville Williams, and Carolly Erickson are united in the firm belief that, although England would benefit from the match, Elizabeth resumed negotiations with Anjou for her own personal reasons. Neale argues that Elizabeth exploited Anjou and persistently worked towards marriage because he was her last hope for children.⁷⁵ Ironically, this point was the only roadblock obstructing her Council's full support of the marriage, for a great debate ignited around Elizabeth's

⁷³ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 254.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁷⁵ J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), 253.

ability to have children at forty-five years of age.⁷⁶ Neale finds that Elizabeth's urgency for the marriage sheds light on the woman behind the throne.

Williams similarly contends that, because the match held deep personal meaning for her, Elizabeth's courtship with Anjou was different than those with other suitors. The queen had initiated the revival of the match and "Elizabeth initially intended to use the marriage negotiations as a diplomatic exercise, to be protracted for as long as possible and abandoned in due course."⁷⁷ However, according to Williams, where these negotiations stood out from the others is that, in the end, Elizabeth had fallen in love with Anjou. She believed that she could control the duke's action by proposing they wed. Williams argues that had Elizabeth been her own agent in the negotiations she would have accepted the proposal. As it was, instead of giving her heart, Elizabeth turned to her advisors. Their lack of support ended serious consideration of the marriage, and in late November of 1580 Elizabeth decided not to continue negotiations because she believed an alliance with France was no longer necessary.⁷⁸

Combining the views of Neale and Williams, Erickson argues that Elizabeth zealously pursued the Anjou match because she had convinced herself it was for love and, more importantly, that it was her last chance to wed. The queen was so intent on securing the marriage that she was prepared to overlook Anjou's religion and even stalled the start of a Parliamentary session to allow time for the negotiations to mature.⁷⁹ However, Elizabeth's frantic actions to secure the marriage came to a halt when her Council could

⁷⁶ Ibid., 237.

⁷⁷ Neville Williams, *Elizabeth the First: Queen of England* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), 182.

⁷⁸ Williams, 205-207.

⁷⁹ Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth*, 2nd ed (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 295.

not unanimously agree to it, for “no doubt she was struggling within herself, for though she had everyone convinced of her sincerity in encouraging Alençon’s [Anjou’s] suit it cannot have been easy for her to wait for events to unfold.”⁸⁰ This caused Elizabeth to second guess her feelings, and the closer she came to the actual marriage, the more dangerous it began to seem. Unfortunately, according to Erickson, because Elizabeth’s true feelings are unknown, the real reasoning behind the courtship may never be fully understood.⁸¹

Other historians have concluded that Elizabeth’s revisiting of the Anjou marriage negotiations was for political, rather than personal, reasons. According to J. B. Black, Elizabeth, having sent Walsingham to the Netherlands to work towards peace, executed one of her swiftest and most unexpected changes of front in foreign policy; she revived the Anjou marriage project.⁸² Black argues that Elizabeth aimed to distract Anjou from his campaign, and French influence, in the Netherlands. If this was not achievable, her backup plan was to bring him under her influence so that she could control the situation. Although it is impossible to determine if Elizabeth ever intended to follow through with the marriage, Black believed that there was a certain seriousness for the queen in these negotiations that had previously been absent.⁸³

Though they disagree over the existence of an English foreign policy upon the queen’s ascension and the subsequent type of policy that emerged throughout her reign, “reactionist” MacCaffrey and “pro-activists” Doran and Wernham concur that the revival of the Anjou match in 1578 was a matter of policy, a means to ensure England’s safety.

⁸⁰ Erickson, 298.

⁸¹ Erickson, 299.

⁸² J. B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 348.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 349.

MacCaffrey believes that Elizabeth's marriage negotiations with Anjou can be viewed as the most politically important of all the queen's courtships. He argues that it was through this proposed union, and the resulting alliance with France, that the queen took control of foreign policy and changed the direction that England would go.⁸⁴ While many of her councilors advocated resistance in the Netherlands, Elizabeth desired an Anglo-French alliance through marriage to the Duke of Anjou. According to MacCaffrey, Elizabeth believed that she could use Anjou's ambitions to counter Spanish recovery in the Low Countries.⁸⁵ Thus, 1578 marked a change in England's passivity, and Elizabeth took steps to actively control England's position. Despite the failure of these marriage negotiations, Elizabeth maintained positive relations with France and, in 1581, created an offensive and defensive alliance to counter Spain in the Low Countries.⁸⁶

However, the subsequent failure of the queen's actions to bring long-term peace to England is for MacCaffrey proof positive of his criticism of Elizabeth's lack of a foreign policy and her inability to effectively govern England. Previous marriage proposals were initiated by the councilors who properly understood the pros and cons each suitor possessed. The revival of the Anjou project, on the other hand, was the queen's doing.⁸⁷ For MacCaffrey, this proposal's eventual failure provides evidence of Elizabeth's lack of diplomatic awareness and inability to understand the world in which she lived. The desire for an Anglo-French alliance against Spain is proof positive that Elizabeth merely reacted to her surroundings instead of actively controlling policy. If,

⁸⁴ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 252.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 244, 248.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 252.

according to MacCaffrey, a set foreign policy had existed, this troubling decision might not have occurred.

“Pro-activist” Doran contends that, for the queen, the Anjou match was a way out of the crisis in the Netherlands. Elizabeth believed that the marriage would benefit England in three ways: first, the strength of an Anglo-French alliance might scare Philip into creating peace in the Netherlands; second, the marriage might settle Anjou’s ambitions in the Netherlands, as Anjou had taken up an independent campaign to intervene in the Low Countries, without the support of the French crown; and third, the marriage would potentially protect England from invasion or international conspiracy. Elizabeth believed that Henry III, King of France, would not join any cause that might negatively affect his brother and his queen.⁸⁸

However, like MacCaffrey, Doran finds the Anjou marriage scheme a failure and folly on the queen’s part. She describes it as “the most bizarre of all” policy decisions.⁸⁹ Its purpose was not to solve the problem of succession but to enhance English security. However, Elizabeth overestimated her influence on Anjou, who ignored her wishes and took further military actions without her approval.⁹⁰ Because the negotiations further divided the court, only with the abandonment of the matrimonial scheme did the crisis pass and normality return to Elizabeth’s political life.

Like Doran, Wernham asserts that Elizabeth certainly “regarded the courtship as an instrument in her Netherlands policy, as a means of limiting and controlling French

⁸⁸ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 38.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹⁰ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 193.

action there and at the same time stepping up the pressure upon Philip of Spain.”⁹¹ It is clear that Elizabeth had enjoyed the project, suggesting that her personal pleasure played a role. However, it is not hard to see that Elizabeth felt the marriage “would be too high a price to pay for the very limited advantages it could bring.”⁹² As such, many historians have admitted that we may never fully know or understand the queen's motives with regards to the question of why she considered Anjou as a possible match.

While many historians criticize the queen’s handling of courtship, others find that through them Elizabeth was effectively guiding England to safety. F. Jeffrey Platt views Elizabeth’s use of marriage as a diplomatic tool to be the mark of a brilliant monarch and cites the Anjou courtship as an example of Elizabeth’s successful use of the continental balance of power.⁹³ Other historians, however, are not so quick to praise the queen's political aptitude. Doran, for example, remarks that, although Elizabeth believed her intentions were right, “in reality, the Anjou marriage scheme was unlikely to provide any solution to the problem of the Netherlands.”⁹⁴ Thus, according to Doran, the queen correctly decided not to see the marriage through.

The failure of the Anjou match is for “reactionists” such as MacCaffrey proof-positive that Elizabeth had no definitive policy and that she lacked the ability to effectively rule her kingdom alone. “Pro-activist” historians, on the other hand, find the queen’s use of marriage as a tool evidence for the existence of an established Elizabethan foreign policy. They believe that the queen’s desire to obtain an alliance with France, through a marriage to Anjou, offers proof to support their conclusions. For them,

⁹¹ Wernham, 55.

⁹² Ibid., 54.

⁹³ Platt, 735.

⁹⁴ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 38.

Elizabeth's genius as a politician was in her ability to adapt to the changing world around her. According to Wernham, while a marriage to Anjou would not have produced the desired benefits, the project shows Elizabeth's ability to follow a policy and if necessary adapt it to the needs of her realm.⁹⁵

Though I disagree with MacCaffrey's belief that Elizabeth did not have a foreign policy in place when she ascended the throne, his criticism of the Anjou match is somewhat understandable. However, unlike MacCaffrey, I find that this match was neither indicative of a lack of foreign policy nor of the queen's inability to effectively rule England. Elizabeth's revival of the match provides evidence that the queen desired to control policy, although, as Doran concludes, Elizabeth falsely believed that she had greater influence over the duke than she actually did. Nevertheless, as with previous courtships, the Anjou match effectively diverted the dangers England faced, thus keeping the realm safe.

Elizabeth used her courtships to form alliances, avoid conflict, and lessen threats, both real and perceived. Although the queen's councilors proposed matches, Elizabeth alone determined which to accept or reject. As exemplified in the Hapsburg match, her decisions often depended upon the current international climate. Suggested by her councilors and agreed to by the queen, consideration for the Archduke Charles' suit in 1563 served as a means to ease strained merchant relations in Antwerp and enable England to maintain its traditional ties with Spain. By the 1570's the competing interests within the Privy Council began to interfere with policy making. Different factions could not agree, often proposing disparate courses of action to resolve the same conflict. This

⁹⁵ Wernham, 3-5, 55.

became particularly evident with the crisis in the Netherlands. While some advisors called for fiscal support alone, others favored direct military action to aid the Protestant rebels. Realizing the risk of further involvement, Elizabeth turned to marriage negotiations, the vehicle that she had successfully used to secure English safety since her ascension to the throne. With an understanding of the significant role that proposed matrimony played in Elizabethan foreign policy, the focus can now turn to the specifics of how the queen utilized marriage and conducted her courtships. As the following chapters will investigate, Elizabeth carefully altered her words and actions to achieve desired result, whether that be to appease her government and people or, as is the focus of this work, to use courtships as a diplomatic tool.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICS OF ROYAL MARRIAGE IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY EUROPE

I happily chose this kind of life in which I yet live, which I assure you for my own part hath hitherto best contended myself and I trust hath been most acceptable to God...Nevertheless, if any of you be in suspect that, 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 wherewith the realm may or shall have just cause to be discontented...I will never in that matter conclude anything that shall be prejudicial to the realm, for the weal, good, and safety whereof I will never shame to spend my life. And whomsoever my chance shall be to light upon, I trust he shall be as careful for the realm and you.¹

Elizabeth spoke these words to Parliament on February 10, 1559 in response to its petition for a marriage and subsequent settlement of the succession crisis. Although the pressure to wed had been constant since before her accession and increased during her reign, it was clear from this speech that the queen fully believed in her ability to govern alone. Elizabeth proclaimed her desire to remain single but affirmed that she would wed for the benefit of the nation and if it were God's will. The queen, however, made it clear that *she* would chose whom she would marry and that *she* would take care to make certain he was the proper man for the role. According to John Watkins, "regardless of her [Elizabeth's] actual feelings and intentions, she introduced that possibility [of marriage]

¹ Elizabeth, Leah S. Marcus, Janel M. Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 57. I have chosen to use this version of Elizabeth's 1559 speech to Parliament here opposed to William Camden's more widely known version because it fulfills the purpose of the speech without the stylistic and theatrical liberties Camden included in his version, which has already been included in the opening quote of the introduction (pg. 1).

into diplomatic exchanges as early as 1559, to a startling effect.”² The queen’s ability to mask her feelings enabled her to utilize marriage negotiations to achieve her diplomatic goals.

During the mid-sixteenth century four women attained regal power: Catherine de Medici in France, Mary Tudor in England, Mary Stuart in Scotland, and Elizabeth Tudor in England. Queens, who traditionally held the role of consort, began to rule alone. This rise of women to royal power transformed the political use of interdynastic marriage and, along with it, international diplomacy itself. A comparison between Elizabeth’s use of marriage with that of Catherine de Medici reveals how the queen’s outlook differed from that of her contemporaries. Both Elizabeth and Catherine understood the importance of courtships and the advantages that could be derived from them. But, while Elizabeth considered only the negotiation part of the process to be necessary, for it fulfilled her immediate needs, Catherine believed that an actual union should also be achieved.

Marriage was commonly used in the sixteenth century to solidify treaties and alliances. As diplomatic historian John Watkins states:

Almost every major late medieval and early modern treaty involved intermarriages between belligerent parties. We cannot assume that women involved were merely pawns caught in negotiations between men. Some of the most important treaties of the Renaissance were conceived and brokered by women, including the 1529 Treaty of Cambrai, the so-called “Paix Treaty of Cateau-Cambresis,” the culmination of a peace process directed by Christina of Denmark, Dowager Duchess of Lorraine.³

Interdynastic unions united opposing states, either creating peace or serving to strengthen existing friendships. Marriage was believed to be a necessity for every monarch; no

² John Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode, 1559: Elisabeth de Valois, Elizabeth I, and the Changing Practice of Dynastic Marriage” in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 88.

³ Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1-14, 6.

marriage meant no legitimate heir, and no legitimate heir meant no dynasty. While the role of queen consort was universally accepted, that of a king consort was extremely rare. In the sixteenth century, when a queen married it often meant giving up her independence and sharing her regal authority. As scholar Anka Muhlstein observes, in most cases “the queen’s husband was king; he became, by force of circumstance, the couple’s dominant partner.”⁴ As Historian Judith M. Richards succinctly explains, brides “had been customarily chosen for their birth, the political alliances they facilitated, [and] the potential for territorial expansion they brought with them.”⁵

With the accessions of Elizabeth Tudor and Catherine de Medici, women who had been traditionally deployed as marital bargaining chips, quiet intercessors, or consorts, became more actively involved in international diplomacy.⁶ Along with women’s increasing influence on foreign affairs came a new understanding of the use of marriage as a political tool. No other queen brought such dramatic change as did Elizabeth I of England. Historians have long debated her views and understanding of marriage, concluding that she was unique in her utilization and implementation of marital negotiations as a diplomatic tool.⁷ However, despite the frequent repetition of this scholarly opinion, the singularity of Elizabeth’s position remains open to question.

⁴ Anka Muhlstein, *Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart: The Perils of Marriage*, trans. John Brownjohn (London: Haus Publishing, 2007), 1.

⁵ Judith M. Richards, “Mary Tudor as ‘Sole Quene’?: Gendering Tudor Monarchy,” *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (Dec., 1997): 895-924, 896.

⁶ Carole Levin and R. O. Bucholz, eds., *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xv and John Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 78.

⁷ See Susan Doran *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996) and “Religion and Politics at the Court of Elizabeth I: The Hapsburg Marriage Negotiations of 1559-1567,” *The English Historical Review* 104 (October 1989): 908-926; Elaine Kruse “The Virgin and the Widow: The Political Finesse of Elizabeth I and Catherine de’ Medici” in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*; Wallace MacCaffrey “Elizabethan Politics: The First Decade, 1558-1568,” *Past and Present* 24 (Aug., 1963): 25-42 and *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968); and Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode.”

A comparative analysis of the methods employed by Elizabeth Tudor with those of her French counterpart, Catherine de Medici, leads to the conclusion that, while Elizabeth's views of marriage may have been unique, how she conducted her courtships was less so. Both Elizabeth and Catherine used similar lines of communication and capably managed diplomatic correspondence. Each efficiently maneuvered through and prolonged the negotiations to achieve their respective goals. But before this comparison can be undertaken, it is important, because of their impact on her reign, to first determine Elizabeth's own personal views of marriage and examine her handling of international diplomacy, specifically interdynastic marriage negotiations.

Long before taking the throne Elizabeth made her stance on marriage clear. In the fall of 1547, responding to Thomas Seymour's recurring attentions towards her, the young princess wrote:

I have been forced to perceive by the frequent visits which you have made that you have other intentions...I have refused you because I was thinking of someone else. I therefore entreat you, my lord, to set your mind at rest on this subject, and to be persuaded by this declaration that up to this time I have not the slightest intention of being married and that if ever I should think of it (which I do not believe is possible) you would be the first to whom I should make known my resolution.⁸

This letter is one of the first known examples of Elizabeth declining marriage to a suitor while still maintaining a flirtatious tone in order to preserve his interest in her. What is markedly different between this letter and later ones, those in which she rejects the suitor's proposal but keeps the possibility of a future marriage alive, is that here Elizabeth bluntly states that due to her distaste for marriage she believes she will never wed.

According to Larissa Taylor-Smith, this is the first documented evidence exposing both

⁸ Princess Elizabeth to the Lord Admiral [Thomas] Seymour, 1548 as quoted in Frank A. Mumby, *The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth: A Narrative in Contemporary Letters* (London: Constable, 1909), 38-39.

Elizabeth's strong stance against marriage and her true feelings on the subject. Taylor-Smithers contends that in 1547 Elizabeth had not yet begun to conceal her emotions.⁹ Since her distaste for marriage continued to remain overtly evident, certainly through the beginning of her reign, it seems more plausible that the young Elizabeth had not yet begun to adopt the more neutral stance she proclaimed in 1563.

Though it remains difficult for historians to determine the queen's true feelings, her outward expressions were clear. Elizabeth affirmed that, although she desired to remain single, she was willing to entertain the idea of marriage. As she stated in her first speech to Parliament, though she was content with remaining unwed, if it were God's will, her heart might change course and find it necessary to marry. However, in concluding the speech, Elizabeth contended that it was also possible God might never find a necessity for her to wed:

And albeit it might please almighty God to continue me still in this mind to live out of the state of marriage, yet it is not to be feared but He will so work in my heart and in your wisdoms as good provision by His help may be made in convenient time, whereby the realm shall not remain destitute of an heir that may be a fit governor, and peradventure more beneficial to the realm than such offspring as may come of me.¹⁰

Taken as a whole, this speech suggests that Elizabeth believed she was appointed to her position by God and, as such, ruled in the best interest of England. Thus, if there were no suitor worthy to be her husband, it might please God that she may rule alone and reign as a virgin queen.

Despite her strong personal feelings, the possibility of marriage was, nevertheless, introduced into diplomatic exchanges early on in her reign. Such talks enabled her to

⁹ Larissa J. Taylor-Smithers, "Elizabeth I: A Psychological Profile," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring, 1984) 47-72, 58.

¹⁰ Queen Elizabeth's First Speech Before Parliament, February 10, 1559 in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 58.

navigate more readily through the threatening international landscape that was continental Europe. Elizabeth saw courtship as a diplomatic exercise to be entered into, protracted for as long as possible, then abandoned when its purpose had been fulfilled.¹¹ Through her numerous marriage talks, by pitting the major foreign powers against each other, she was able to enter temporary alliances that would protect England for the immediate future.

Scholars agree that Elizabeth did not share contemporary views of marriage and its necessity in order to strengthen alliances. As John Watkins recently claimed, from the beginning of her reign Elizabeth asserted her belief that good, diplomatic relationships could be achieved without an interdynastic marriage.¹² Still, the queen, whether out of conformity or necessity, engaged in the popular sixteenth century diplomatic tool of courtships. It was not, as some historians have argued, her use of marriage proposals but rather her intended outcome for those courtships that was unique.

Courtship between royal families followed prescribed conventions and protocols. To appreciate how adeptly Elizabeth learned to manipulate them, we need an understanding of these formalities, along with the personnel and the procedures of marital diplomacy in the sixteenth century. Ambassadors, as representatives in foreign courts, provided the contact between their respective monarchs. It became the emissary's duty to maintain good relations between the courts. According to Susan Doran, in the absence of personal meetings between monarchs "[they] became entirely dependent on the skill and goodwill of their resident ambassadors for building up trust and resolving disputes

¹¹ Neville Williams, *Elizabeth the First: Queen of England* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), 182.

¹² Watkins, "Marriage a la Mode," 89.

between them.”¹³ Scholar F. Jeffrey Platt explains that, in nations where there was no resident ambassador, “a cadre of experienced ambassadors-at-large were ready at a moment’s notice to rush off to Europe to defuse threatening international situations.”¹⁴ If an ambassador was unable to fulfill his duties, it could be detrimental to international relations, as in the case of England and Spain. The English ambassador, John Man, offended Philip II and was consequently expelled from the Spanish court in 1568. No replacement was ever sent, and, as such, Elizabeth’s interests were not represented for the remainder of her reign, nor was she able to get any reliable information about Spanish policy and action.¹⁵ Only one of Philip II’s ambassadors, Guzman de Silva (1564-1568) was able to develop good relations between Spain and England. The others, according to Doran, “ended their period of office in disgrace because of their involvement in Catholic intrigues,” thus causing considerable damage to Anglo-Spanish relations.¹⁶

As their monarchs’ eyes and ears, foreign ambassadors provided them with gossip from the English court. Early during Elizabeth’s reign, the Spanish ambassador, Don Gomes Suarez de Figuero, Count of Feria, detailed information to Philip II regarding the topic of marriage. While the king actively pursued a union with Elizabeth, Feria reported that she had considered remaining a virgin from the first months of her reign.¹⁷ In a memorandum to Philip enumerating Elizabeth’s reasons for rejecting his proposal, Feria placed her general distaste for marriage at the head of the list, noting “that she had no

¹³ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

¹⁴ F. Jeffrey Platt, “The Elizabethan ‘Foreign Office’,” *The Historian* 56, no 4 (1994): 725-741, 737.

¹⁵ Doran, *Foreign Policy*, 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 88.

desire to marry, as she had intimated from the first day.”¹⁸ While factors such as distance and mutual suspicion hindered Anglo-Spanish diplomacy, English relations with France were logistically much simpler.

Due to their sensitive nature, marital negotiations were conducted by monarchs and regularly initiated by their informal agents.¹⁹ According to historian Simon Adams, “the relative ease of communications between London and Paris meant that the ambassador was rarely left to employ his own initiative and it was effectively up to the monarch whether to negotiate through his own ambassador or the resident at his court. All too frequently the resident ambassadors were reduced to intelligence gatherers.”²⁰ As such, the queen sent experienced diplomat Thomas Randolph on a specific mission to France to urge Elizabeth’s “meditatorial services” on the King and Queen Mother and also “to deal secretly with Monsieur d’Alencon [d’Anjou].”²¹ Anjou himself sent his master of wardrobe, Jehan Simier, to England in 1579 in order to play out the courtship exercises. According to Wallace McCaffrey, the game of matchmaking began upon Simier’s arrival, and all stops were pulled out to convince Simier of the queen’s desire to wed his master.²² After a month of wooing the duke’s personal envoy, Elizabeth dispatched Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a favorite at court, to seek out the resident French ambassador, Michael de Castelnau, Seigneur de Mauvissiere, to persuade the

¹⁸ *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, ed. M. A. S. Hume (London, 1892), 1:35 as quoted in Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 89.

¹⁹ Simon Adams, ‘Tudor England’s relations with France’, *State Papers Online, 1509-1714*, Cengage Learning, Reading, 2009.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 187.

²² *Ibid.*, 250.

Frenchman of her sincere desire for marriage.²³ The queen's actions and the subsequent seriousness with which both parties viewed the Anjou match led to the duke's visit to London. He was the only suitor ever allowed to visit the queen, leading to the belief within the court that she did seriously consider seeing the marriage through.

This overview of the means by which courtships were conducted, allows us to understand how Elizabeth, through her various correspondences, entwined courtship with diplomacy. Depending upon the intended recipient, Elizabeth presented herself differently while addressing similar topics in order to get her point across. In letters to her ambassadors and agents, she wrote with a specific purpose: sternly when in regards to them and to the point when instructing a message for a foreign crown or suitor. Conversely, when writing to a suitor, Elizabeth humbly stated her grievances and issues while also portraying herself in need of his love. A comparison of Elizabeth's correspondence to her ambassadors with those to Anjou shows how the queen artfully chose her words to elicit the desired responses.

When, in 1578, negotiations for the Anjou match resumed, Simier, Anjou's representative to the English court, presented Elizabeth with the French crown's conditions for the marriage: that the duke be allowed to openly practice Catholicism, that he be crowned King, and that he be granted equal power. In a letter to Sir Amyas Paulet, the English ambassador to France from 1576 to 1579, Elizabeth responded to these terms with extreme displeasure. Simier, Elizabeth wrote, was instructed by the French crown "to insist very peremptorily upon certain articles that have always heretofore been denied

²³ Ibid.

to such princes as in former time have sought us in way of marriage.”²⁴ The queen goes on to state that:

Whereupon we, finding that by no persuasion that would be used either by us or by our council he could be induced to allow of our answers, both we and certain of our council did plainly let him know that such a kind of insisting upon such articles as had been denied to other princes did minister unto us just cause of suspicion either to think that they had no mind of further proceedings...or else that they sought this match to some other end than hitherto hath by them pretended.²⁵

Elizabeth repeatedly referred to “been denied to other princes,” which suggests her displeasure that the King of France and Anjou both believed special considerations should be made for the duke because he was a more worthy and valuable match for the queen than previous suitors. Elizabeth’s words further suggest that she was greatly offended that the French were possibly pursuing the match for reasons other than herself, while, at the same time, she sought the match for reasons beyond her expressed love for the duke. The queen’s letter suggests that Elizabeth felt slighted because the duke’s expressed love might not be real and because another crown seemed to be looking for the same sort of diplomatic advantage through marriage as was she herself.

In correspondence with Anjou regarding the matter of religion, Elizabeth stated, as she had done repeatedly, that for the happiness of her people she could not and would not allow the open practice of Catholicism. As such, she articulated that she could not advise Anjou to come to the English court unless this issue was resolved. Nevertheless, playing to Anjou’s vanity, Elizabeth also wrote, “I confess that there is no prince in the world to whom I would more willingly yield to be his, than yourself.”²⁶ These words suggest a different message than that which Elizabeth sent to Paulet, implying that she

²⁴ *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 233.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 235.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

believed Anjou more worthy than any previous suitor and that, if it were possible, she would change her and her Council's stance on the religious matter to please him. The queen played the role of an adoring lover before stating, "I cannot deny that I do not want this negotiation to trouble you thus anymore, that we remain faithful friends and assured in all our actions, unless it pleases you to make other resolution than the open exercise of religion and it seems good to you to write me about it or send some good answer."²⁷

Elizabeth clearly indicated that there was no point in continuing with the current negotiations unless Anjou changed his terms on religion. This statement, along with her written and verbal assertions of love for the duke, suggests that Elizabeth believed the French had other motives for the match than simply a love for her person. In leaving the future of the match in Anjou's hands, Elizabeth expressed to him that he had the power in this union while she, at the same time, knew that the duke and his ambitions would not allow the courtship to end as quickly as it had been revived.

Although her letters to Paulet and Anjou have substantially similar content, the queen's delivery of her message to each was markedly different. In addressing Paulet, who was instructed to deliver her message to the king and duke, Elizabeth's tone was stern and to the point. The queen made it clear that she was offended and displeased with both the terms brought forth by the French during the negotiations and with her belief that they were implying she was not the primary reason for the match. In her letter to Anjou, Elizabeth clearly stated that the negotiations could not continue unless he was willing to drop the matter of the open practice of religion, but at the same time she continued to assert her love for him, humbling herself to him in the process. Through her

²⁷ Ibid., 244.

personal correspondence with Anjou, she was able to state her case, maintain the courtship and in the end get the issue of open religious practice placed on the back burner by the duke himself. Elizabeth, by altering her tone, was able to get her point across and to ensure continued negotiations.

Shortly after Elizabeth became queen, another strong female, Catherine de Medici, came to power in France. Catherine and her husband, Henri de Valois, were wed in 1533 and ascended to the throne in 1549. Prior to the sudden deaths of her husband in 1559 and that of her eldest son, Francis, a year later, Catherine had limited power. Although, as the queen consort and queen mother, she held influence, Catherine did not gain a prominent role in the government until she became the queen regent after the accession of her son Charles to the throne at age ten.²⁸

Like Elizabeth, Catherine recognized the political advantage of marriage and used it as a central diplomatic tool. However, unlike Elizabeth, Catherine followed the traditional belief that an interdynastic marriage was necessary to solidify treaties. She persistently sought a union for one of her sons with Elizabeth, suggesting at some point three different potential suitors – Charles, Henri, and Francis. In addition to the resulting alliance that would be created through a marriage, Catherine also saw the importance of obtaining strong, influential positions for future Valois. Elizabeth, however, was more focused on the present needs of England and less concerned about maintaining the Tudor dynasty.²⁹ While nothing came of the courtships, the resulting marriage negotiations and subsequent Anglo-French alliance, served both Elizabeth and Catherine well, enabling

²⁸ Leonie Frieda, *Catherine de Medici: Renaissance Queen of France* (New York: Fourth Estate, 2003), 144.

²⁹ Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 87.

them to maintain peaceful relations despite numerous potential conflicts. The two effectively played the marriage game for nearly two decades.

Few great historical figures have, as historian N. M. Sutherland suggests, come down to us so loaded with malediction as Catherine de Medici.³⁰ Many scholars, influenced by the legend of Catherine de Medici as a ‘wicked Italian queen,’ view her more negatively than any other political figure of the sixteenth century.³¹ The tale of her viciousness, according to Sutherland, “depicted her, among other things, as cold, cruel, calculating, treacherous, and evil. She was a monster of self ambition, who sacrificed her children, her adopted country, her principles – if she ever had any –, and all who stood in her way to the satisfaction of her all-consuming desire for power.”³²

Even those historians who have rejected the legend and sought to write objective works about Catherine seem to succumb to aspects of the myth, with many asserting that her ruthless ambitions completely overshadowed any concern for the welfare of France. Recent historians, however, seem to approach their subject with less cynicism. Summing up recent scholarship, Leonie Frieda remarks that Catherine de Medici has been given various negative titles, largely undeserved, which are nonetheless “not far removed from the overall verdict of history.”³³ While many scholars attribute the tumultuous period of religious civil wars in French history to Catherine, Frieda insists that the events that occurred were beyond Catherine’s influence and that she worked within her means to navigate her adopted country through the turmoil.

³⁰ N. M. Sutherland, “Catherine de Medici: The Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9, No. 2, “France in the Sixteenth Century” (Jul., 1978): 45-56, 45.

³¹ This term has been borrowed from N. M. Sutherland’s work for its concise description of Catherine’s portrayal throughout history.

³² Sutherland, 45.

³³ Frieda, xix.

Like Elizabeth, Catherine de Medici employed her words and appearance to achieve desired goals. She played upon her position as Queen Mother to gain power and prominence in France at a time when women were traditionally excluded from high-profile political roles. When her son, Charles, took the throne, Catherine was, “in consideration of the great virtues, prudence and wise conduct...and the great affection which she has always demonstrated,” named head of the government while her son was too young to rule.³⁴ Strengthened by her position, Catherine presented herself as mother to the French people in order to avoid conflict and reduce tensions, stressing, for example, during the negotiations with Huguenot leaders at Nérac from 1578 to 1579 that she was the mother to all, Catholic and Huguenot alike. This enabled her, according to Denis Crouzet, to place herself in the desired position as the moderator between Catholics and Protestants, the voice of reason seeking to avoid further war.³⁵

In a series of letters written to her son, King Henri III, Catherine detailed the progress being made during the conference at Nérac. The key to a successful policy was, in her opinion, choosing the road of moderation.³⁶ Throughout her correspondences, Catherine, in what seems to be a tutorial for her son, names several of her rhetorical means used in negotiations: patience, anger, reason and femininity. Patience, the most important as pertains to her correspondence with Elizabeth, was a means for political dissimulation. Through practicing patience, a form of self-control, Catherine sought to remove her emotions from negotiations and take a neutral stance, which would then

³⁴ BN MS Dupuy 128, fol. 9v., as quoted in Katherine Crawford, “Catherine de Medicis and the Performance of Political Motherhood,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 643-673, 660.

³⁵ Denis Crouzet, “‘A strong desire to be a mother to all your subjects’: A Rhetorical Experiment by Catherine de Medici,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 103-118, 113.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

generate an emotional response in an opponent.³⁷ Catherine, according to Crouzet, “links diplomatic practice with feminine identity, which derives not only from the natural ‘honor’ of being the mother of the king of France, but more so from appropriating the role of a motherly figure who protects her son’s subjects.”³⁸ Thus, it was natural for Catherine to take on the maternal role and create a mother-daughter relationship in her correspondence with Elizabeth, referring to themselves as mother and daughter, respectively.³⁹ By keeping the lines of communication open, this intimate relationship enabled the Anjou negotiations to continue for almost a decade, allowing for an extended period of amity between England and France.

While many scholars find fault in Catherine’s ambitions, some have more recently begun to attribute this trait to the Queen Mother’s understanding of her position. Catherine used her power in ways that were consistent with her fulfillment of the gendered social expectations of her role: she was simply doing her maternal duty.⁴⁰ Historian Katherine Crawford contends that it was Catherine’s position as Queen Mother that enabled her political elevation and that she “moved into a position of political prominence largely on her own initiative by presenting herself as a devoted wife, widow, and mother as the basis of her political entitlement.”⁴¹ Similarly to Crawford, John Watkins finds that Catherine was “one of Europe’s most forceful, imaginative, and

³⁷ Ibid., 104, 106.

³⁸ Ibid., 113.

³⁹ Catherine to Elizabeth, 5 June 1572, BL Cotton MS Vespasian F v fol. 86, quoted in Rayne Allinson, *A Monarchy of Letters: Royal Correspondence and English Diplomacy in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 106 and Queen Elizabeth to Catherine de Medici, July 1584: trans; from French. in G. B. Harrison eds., *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Cassell, 1935), 162.

⁴⁰ Crawford, 659.

⁴¹ Ibid., 643.

ultimately hated politicians.”⁴² Watkins’ conclusion that Catherine “epitomized the power-wielding consort and, after her husband’s death, emerged not only as the most powerful woman, but the most powerful person in France,” suggests that her actions and attitudes were as ambitious as her station allowed.⁴³ According to Watkins, women such as Catherine de Medici not only bore royal heirs but also held a considerable influence over royal policy.⁴⁴

Catherine aggressively adhered to the traditional practice of interdynastic marriages, working diligently to match her children with other royal houses: Francis II wed Mary Stuart; Elisabeth married Philip II; Claude married Charles, Duke of Lorraine; Charles IX married Elizabeth of Austria; and Marguerite married Henri of Navarre, later Henry IV.⁴⁵ She sought these marriage alliances for many reasons, and they served multiple purposes simultaneously. These unions, which aided in solidifying Catherine’s position in France, have led some scholars to contend that the queen mother sought prestigious marriages for her children for her own personal gain. Others have argued that she solicited marriages to mend foreign relations and to maintain peace within France.⁴⁶ Perhaps most importantly, though, interdynastic marriages would have expanded the Valois’ influence in the present and, with the production of children, in future generations.

We should not, as historians who have followed the notion of the ‘wicked Italian queen’ have done, separate issues of personal ambition and national interest for women in positions of power, such as Catherine and Elizabeth. As exemplified in Catherine’s ardent

⁴² Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 80.

⁴³ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁵ Kruse, 129.

⁴⁶ Frieda, 221.

quest for a match between one of her sons and Elizabeth, such a union by its very nature would concurrently serve multiple functions. A marriage to the Protestant English queen would cement Catherine's status in the French court, provide France with a strong ally against Spain, and help mend the religious tensions that had crippled her nation. The production of an heir would also place the next generation of Valois on the English throne.⁴⁷

Although, it can be argued that Catherine de Medici sought interdynastic marriages for personal gain, it can also be argued that these matches were almost always proposed to achieve a diplomatic goal. Catherine and her sons each maintained a diplomatic presence in the English court. While her son Francis, Duke of Anjou, sent personal representatives to England to further his case, Catherine, for the most part, worked through the official French ambassador. Early in the Anjou negotiations, gossip surfaced, suggesting that the queen's hesitation towards the match was due to the duke's appearance. Anjou, as a child, had suffered from small pox leaving his face scarred, and deforming his appearance. Catherine, responding to Elizabeth's refusal to commit, wrote to Monseigneur de la Mothe-Fenelon, her ambassador in England, "[the queen] is so prudent, so wise [that she would not marry based on] the beauty of a face, but for the good of her concerns...[the marriage would] unify and restore a perfect friendship."⁴⁸ Although this correspondence expresses Catherine's disapproval of Elizabeth's 'vanity,' it also clearly stresses the diplomatic importance of the marriage, the reason she believed that Elizabeth should agree to it. Elizabeth also disclosed the true purpose of the match in a letter to Sir

⁴⁷ Alison Plowden, *Marriage with my Kingdom: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day/Publishers/Scarborough House, 1977), 163.

⁴⁸ *Lettres de Catherine de' Medicis*, ed. Hectare de la Ferriere (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1880), 4:191-92, March 30, 1573, trans. Susan Doran, as quoted in Kruse, 130.

Francis Walsingham, her ambassador in France. The queen advised him to reassure Catherine that, though the age difference between the two was problematic for the match, “we [England] have as great desire to have the same amity continued and strengthened.”⁴⁹ These letters to their respective ambassadors provide clear evidence that both women utilized these negotiations to maintain good relations and thus avoid conflict.

Catherine and Elizabeth each revived the negotiations for diplomatic reasons, Catherine in 1573 and Elizabeth in 1578. The events of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre on August 24, 1572, greatly strained Anglo-French relations. Wallace MacCaffrey contends that the French were determined to gloss over the massacre by revisiting the marriage talks.⁵⁰ Catherine instructed La Mothe-Fenelon to again approach the subject of an Anjou match with the queen.⁵¹ While many of Elizabeth’s counselors wanted to completely break off relations with France, others only called for stronger Huguenot support abroad, including direct involvement in the French religious wars. By revisiting marriage talks with England, Catherine would not only regain her ally, but would also align herself with a nation with strong Protestant sympathies at home and abroad, thereby appeasing the Huguenot pressure in France⁵²

Similarly, in 1578, Elizabeth revisited marriage talks with France. While historians have debated the nature of the queen’s revival of negotiations, it can be assumed that it was to some extent influenced by the crisis in the Netherlands. The Protestant rebels, amidst increasing Spanish military control, sought the queen’s assistance and in return would grant her sovereignty over the States. Concurrently, the

⁴⁹ Queen Elizabeth I to Sir Francis Walsingham, 23 July 1572, Harrison, 106-7.

⁵⁰ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 174.

⁵¹ Kruse, 133.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Catholic deputies in the States turned to Anjou for support. Elizabeth faced a dilemma: if she took action she would risk failure and alienation of the Spanish; if she did nothing, Spanish control would threaten England; and if Anjou's intervention was successful, the French would gain influence in the territory.⁵³ In reopening the courtship Elizabeth hoped to gain influence over the duke's actions, thus protecting England against possible Spanish aggression. According to historian Elaine Kruse, Catherine, in a show of favor toward the revival of the marriage talks once again began a personal correspondence with Elizabeth.⁵⁴

Catherine's views and use of interdynastic marriage differed from those of Elizabeth in one significant way. While both viewed marriage as a diplomatic practice, the queen mother was seemingly more concerned with future generations and the expansion of Valois influence than Elizabeth. This is evidenced in the case of her daughter's marriage to Philip II. Catherine hoped that her daughter, Elisabeth, would be an active participant in Spanish politics while keeping French interests in mind, a role similar to the one that she herself played in France.⁵⁵ Elizabeth, on the other hand, was less focused on the future of the Tudor dynasty than on the immediate political needs of England.

While Elizabeth saw the importance of interdynastic unions for diplomatic purposes, she had long believed that stable, peaceful relations could be achieved by maintaining a strong friendship without the family ties created through such bonds. During Philip II's pursuit of Elizabeth early in her reign, her feelings regarding the

⁵³ Ibid., 134.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Watkins, "Marriage a la Mode," 83-5.

alternatives to marriage became evident. In a letter to Philip regarding his proposed union, the Spanish ambassador wrote that “she [Elizabeth] quite understood that this marriage would be advantageous to her honour and the preservation of both states, but that these ends could all be attained by the maintenance of good friend with your majesty, above all seeing the obligations she was under to maintain it, as she well knew.”⁵⁶ This letter clarified to Philip that Elizabeth found marriage unnecessary for maintaining good relations. John Watkins asserts that, by not marrying Philip, Elizabeth “moved toward a more abstract foreign policy shielded from the accidents of biology and family psychodynamics.”⁵⁷ Such a policy was potentially more secure than one founded on interdynastic marriage.⁵⁸

Their diplomatic correspondences provide interesting insights into the interactions between Catherine and Elizabeth. The familial relationship that followed from these communications served both women well, prolonging the marital negotiations and developing close and lasting ties between their nations. According to Lena Orlin, Elizabeth created sibling relationships with foreign rulers.⁵⁹ This is evident in her fraternal diplomatic relationship with Philip and in her sororal relationship with Catherine. In a letter to written to Elizabeth in February of 1573 Catherine confirmed their sisterly connection, addressing the queen as a “very high, very excellent and very powerful princess, our very dear and very good sister.”⁶⁰ But as the Anjou match continued, this dynamic changed. Catherine began to embrace a more maternal role, thus creating a

⁵⁶ *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, Preserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, ed. M. A. S. Hume (London, 1892), 1:35 as quoted in Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 89.

⁵⁷ Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁹ L. C. Orlin, “The Fictional Families of Elizabeth I,” in *Political Rhetoric, Power and Renaissance Women*, ed. C. Levin and P. A. Sullivan (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 85-110; see also Kruse, 128.

⁶⁰ Kruse, 128.

mother-daughter relationship with Elizabeth. Early indications of this shift can be found in Catherine's response to Elizabeth's initial hesitation towards the match. In writing to her ambassador, the Queen Mother states that the queen is "so prudent, so wise [that she would not marry based on] the beauty of a face."⁶¹ Catherine's advice to not make decisions based purely on the appearance of a suitor is clearly maternal in nature.

Taking the traditional, cordial diplomatic means of addressing fellow monarchs as brother and sister a step further, Catherine openly assumed the role of pseudo mother during the negotiations. References towards their changing relationship came in the early stages of the match. Catherine wrote to Elizabeth that the marriage would allow her to publicly express the happiness she felt to call herself Elizabeth's mother since, "I love you as a mother loves her daughter."⁶² The two perpetuated this bond when the match was revisited in 1578. If the marriage took place, Catherine would become Elizabeth's mother-in-law. In June 1578, Catherine wrote to the queen of her joy that the courtship was revisited, stating that "the thing in all the world which I most desire to see accomplish...now, my good daughter - I pray you pardon me herein if in place of sister I say what I have so desired."⁶³ The queen, a willing participant in this relationship, sought its continuation even after Anjou's death. In 1584 she wrote to Catherine, "it remains at this present that I vow and swear to you that I will turn a great part of my love for him [Anjou] to the King, my good brother, and you, assuring you that you will find me the faithfulest daughter and sister that ever Princes had."⁶⁴ Elizabeth and Catherine's outward expression of a loving relationship, both sororal and maternal, aided in

⁶¹ Kruse, 130.

⁶² Catherine to Elizabeth, 5 June 1572, BL Cotton MS Vespasian F v fol. 86, quoted in Allinson, 106.

⁶³ Catherine to Elizabeth 8 June 1578, NS SP 78/2 fol. 49; trans. in CSPFor xiii, p. 4, quoted in Allinson, 106.

⁶⁴ Harrison, 162.

prolonging the negotiations and in the preservation of Anglo-French amity after all possibilities of a marriage were exhausted.

In communications and negotiations, both personal and diplomatic, Catherine and Elizabeth both modified their words to assume the roles that they found most advantageous and persuasive. Catherine extended her natural role as Queen Mother to that of surrogate mother to the French people and pseudo-mother to Elizabeth. In correspondence with ambassadors, Elizabeth maintained her authoritative role as their monarch, while at the same time playing the part of a love struck queen torn between her heart and mind during interactions with Anjou's agent and in her personal correspondence with the duke. These differing roles enabled both women to achieve their respective desired goals.

It can be argued that Elizabeth's objectives for marriage negotiations were not, as some historians have proclaimed, entirely unique. Both she and Catherine de Medici viewed the practice of interdynastic marriage as an integral part of diplomacy, Catherine as a way to gain alliances and achieve peace within France, and Elizabeth as a political tool to maintain England's safety. Entering into negotiations provided the temporary alliances that Elizabeth and her councilors believed essential to alleviate the threat to England posed by other nations. Where Elizabeth differed from her contemporaries was in her view of the negotiations. While Catherine believed it requisite for the union to occur, the queen felt that only the courtship was essential. To Elizabeth, the negotiations were the point of the courtships, while to others, such as Catherine de Medici, the negotiations served as the necessary means to an end.

In refusing to marry another head of state or heir to another European throne, John Watkins asserts that Elizabeth “turned her back on diplomatic motives that had dominated international relationships for centuries.”⁶⁵ Although Elizabeth believed strong, diplomatic friendship attainable without an interdynastic marriage, Watkins’ interpretation of the queen’s actions is flawed. Elizabeth did not fully disregard the traditional sixteenth century diplomatic practice. Receiving pressure to wed from every direction, the topic of marriage remained squarely at the forefront of Elizabethan policy for the majority of her reign. It is clear that she saw the advantages the negotiations could bring. Courtships thus became a tool by which she achieved her political goals, appeased her government, and provided herself with a form of flattery and entertainment.

⁶⁵ Watkins, “Marriage a la Mode,” 86.

CHAPTER FOUR

ELIZABETH I, GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF MARRIAGE: THE ANJOU MATCH

I know I have the bodie, but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and Stomach of a King, and of a King of *England* too.¹

Queen Elizabeth I is credited with speaking these words at a moment when, in 1588, her nation faced the imminent threat of Spanish invasion. Although it is not known if these were her exact words, the Tilbury Speech has nevertheless been memorialized as one of Elizabeth's most famous. This utterance, according to historian Carole Levin, has come to represent the "struggles and contradiction for a woman in a position of power."² Although spoken in the middle of her reign, these famous words encompass the self-image and emotions of a Queen whose ascension to the throne, because she was a woman, was met with uncertainty.

In mid-sixteenth century Europe, "consorts and mistresses were still traditionally deployed as marital bargaining chips, quiet intercessors, or consorts."³ Marriages were commonly arranged to create alliances and to gain social and political standing. As Chapter Three explored, Catherine de Medici, queen mother of France, used matrimony

¹ Susan Frye, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no 1 (Spring, 1992): 95-114, 98.

² Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 1.

³ Levin and R. O. Bucholz, eds. *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xv.

as a political tool in much the same way that Elizabeth. However, unlike her French counterpart, Elizabeth exploited her standing as a female monarch, using both the feminine traits of a queen and masculine traits of a king to her advantage. Because of her ability to present herself as more feminine or more masculine in different contexts and the perceived advantages in doing so, an analysis of gender enhances our understanding of Elizabeth's foreign policy and associated courtships.

While marriage was a routinely used political tool by European nobility, her position as a female king enabled Elizabeth to effectively employ marriage prospects for both personal and political gain. Understanding societal prejudice against an unwed female monarch, Elizabeth redefined her gender. By embracing both masculinity and femininity, she aligned herself with male kings while utilizing her womanhood when it worked to her benefit. Thus, Elizabeth deftly manipulated her gender as a political tool when engaging in marriage negotiations with potential suitors.

Elizabeth's expression of her gender(s) has been a popular area of historical analysis, often focused on its representation through public portrayals of the queen and government propaganda. However, the effect of the queen's gender role on further aspects of her monarchy remains to be intensely studied. To fully comprehend Elizabeth's reign it is necessary to understand the influence of her gender(s) on her policy and diplomacy. Historians, such as Susan Doran and Carole Levin, have recently begun to examine how gender impacted dynastic courtships. As diplomatic historian John Watkins stressed, the history of diplomacy is "inseparable from parallel histories of education and literacy, technological innovation, economics, literature and rhetoric,

gender, sexuality, and marriage.”⁴ Therefore, as a central piece of the queen’s diplomatic practice, marriage negotiations, provide the ideal area for study.

The increasing popularity of gender history in the late twentieth century led to new theories and methods of research that could be applied to traditional political history. Joan Wallach Scott, with her article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” expanded the scope of historical study. In this seminal work, Scott defines gender as “the social organization of the relationship between sexes.”⁵ Thus, Scott makes gender a primary way to signify relationships of power and the main area within which, or by means of which, they are articulated. In response to traditional political historians who had questioned the need to analyze gender throughout history, Scott asserts, “high politics itself is a gendered concept, for it establishes its crucial importance and public power, the reasons for the fact of its highest authority, precisely in its exclusion of women from its work.”⁶ Kings and queens in early modern Europe were scrutinized in gendered terms of masculinity and femininity. Scott concludes that gender is “one of the recurrent references by which political power has been conceived, legitimated and criticized.”⁷

With the rise of feminist scholarship came new approaches to the examination of both sex and gender’s influence on Elizabeth’s queenship. Feminist historians found the queen’s gender an important, if not the primary, factor that shaped her reign. In applying twentieth century feminists beliefs to Elizabeth’s reign, Susan Bassnett went farther than

⁴ John Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1-14, 6.

⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review*, 91 no. 5 (Dec., 1986)1053-1075, 1053.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1073.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1073.

other scholars, viewing her as an early modern feminist.⁸ She found that Elizabeth's sex played the biggest role in her reign: "not only did her sex never diminish her prestige, it actually enhanced it. And that, in an age when the social value of women was in retreat, is a unique and extraordinary achievement."⁹ The queen, according to Bassnett, actively worked against the anti-feminist perspective of her contemporary society.¹⁰

Carole Levin, one of the most influential scholars of sex and gender in Elizabethan England, argues that Elizabeth manipulated her gender to retain her autonomy and calm fears that a female monarch would be weak. Elizabeth dealt with her subjects' anxieties and the perceived weakness of her position by portraying herself as both king and queen. Through depictions of herself and by rhetorically situating herself as both male and female, she forcefully and frequently emphasized that she was a "powerful woman who ruled."¹¹ Levin believes that the queen reshaped the popular vision of a powerless female monarch by fusing together the strengths of both masculine and feminine traits.

Historian Anne McLaren argues for the combined influence of politics and gender on Elizabeth. McLaren finds that early modern culture viewed "male" and "female" as opposites, associating them with both natural and moral dualities: hot/cold, right/left, male/female, honorable/dishonorable, good/evil. This dual classification system differentiated between male and female, putting men before women.¹² While defined gender hierarchy existed in the sixteenth century, it was not always fixed to biological

⁸ Susan Bassnett, *Elizabeth I: A Feminist Perspective* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1988) 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹¹ Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 127.

¹² Anne McLaren, "Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism: Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots, and the Genesis of English Anti-Catholicism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no 3 (June 2002): 739-767, 742.

categories. Rather, a one-sex model of gender identity prevailed; men and women were ordered according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their maleness.¹³ According to McLaren, “the dominance of the one-sex model of gender identities meant that these ordering dualities were fluid – contestable,” that they had to be constantly rearticulated and reaffirmed.¹⁴ Gender hierarchy was, therefore, contestable and gender identities were ever changing. McLaren further contends that it was the malleability of gender identities and the continual discussion of a woman’s inability to rule that enabled Elizabeth to redefine her queenship.

Cynthia Herrup, in her analysis of gender and kingship in Tudor-Stuart England, combines Joan Wallach Scott’s influential work with Ernst Kantorowicz’s work on medieval political theology, *The King’s Two Bodies*. Kantorowicz found that a king in early modern England was believed to have two bodies, one natural and one politic. As noted in Chapter One, Elizabeth herself referenced this theory at the beginning of her reign, stating to the Lords: “I am but one body, naturally considered, though by his [God’s] permission, a body politic to govern.”¹⁵ In sixteenth century England, “to rule well required traits associated with both the masculine and the feminine: kings had to be both unyielding and tender, both economical and bountiful with words and goods, and both courageous and peace loving.”¹⁶ Herrup argues that, as Scott asserted, during the sixteenth century “discussions about male kings were equally preoccupied with masculinity and femininity,” that the ruler’s functional, artificial body was gendered

¹³ Ibid., 742-3.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ PRO, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth 12/1/7; copy in Elizabeth, Leah S. Marcus, Janel M. Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 52.

¹⁶ Cynthia Herrup, “The King’s Two Genders.” *The Journal of British Studies*, 45 no. 3 (Jul., 2006): 498.

neither male nor female, but both.¹⁷ While Kantorowicz discussed the fictional king's two bodies without making specific reference to gender, Cynthia Herrup argues that it might have been functional for the rulers' artificial body, the body politic, to be gendered both male and female.¹⁸

Kantorowicz, as the basis of his exploration, relied on Edmund Plowden's report of an Elizabethan judicial ruling, which distinguished between the property held by a monarch as an individual and from the property held by a monarch as a monarch. The report states that "the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic."¹⁹ This excerpt goes on to contend that the body natural is mortal, and thus subject to all faults that come by nature or accident, while the body politic, devoid of any defects, contains policy and government. Central to Herrup's argument is Plowden's contention that "what the king does in his body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any disability in his natural body."²⁰ Herrup finds that gender is central to Kantorowicz's work, inferring that it was no coincidence that the two-body fiction became popular in the sixteenth century at a time when the heirs to the English throne were women.²¹ Gendering the body politic, Herrup suggests, negates the inadequacies of a king, such as youth or natural gender.

As Herrup saw it, "if the king's two bodies metaphor allowed Kantorowicz to explore the problem of succession, the king's two genders is a metaphor that may help us

¹⁷ Scott, 1071 and Herrup, 496.

¹⁸ Herrup, 496.

¹⁹ Edmund Plowden, *Commentaries or Reports* (London, 1816), 212a, quoted in Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

²¹ Herrup, 495.

explore the problem of effective governance.”²² However, I find that we must tread carefully when following Cynthia Herrup’s theory of the king’s two genders. To effectively reign in the sixteenth century, a king needed to embody both masculine and feminine characteristics. This does not, as Herrup contends, imply that the body politic was dually gendered for, as Ernst Kantorowicz notes, the abstract body was genderless. Instead, a monarch’s ability to govern was the result of the body politic transcending biological constraints and gender expectations.

Scholarly opinion differs regarding the influences of politics, sex, and gender on Elizabeth’s reign. My interpretation of gender differences in the sixteenth century combines the arguments of Scott and McLaren. Scott defines gender as the social organization of the relationship between the sexes. McLaren argues for the one-sex model of gender identities, stating that, although there was a strict gender hierarchy in the sixteenth century, it was not based exclusively on biological categories. I interpret this argument to mean that individuals were both masculine and feminine. Therefore, both men and women were ordered in the hierarchy of the one-sex model based on their degree of maleness. It was the extent to which each of these gender categories existed within an individual that determined their place in the power relationship between men and women, the social organization between the sexes. Still, in the sixteenth century, there existed defined social gender roles that were attributed to the biological sexes. A woman, regardless of her level of masculinity, could only be placed so high and men only so low. Female kings, however, were the anomaly to this model and to the understood social gender roles. As such, Elizabeth, by expressing varying levels of masculinity and

²² Ibid., 496.

femininity, intentionally portrayed herself in the role most beneficial for a given situation, skillfully manipulating her gender to achieve her desired goals.

Over the course of Elizabeth's reign, specific events and courtships have been scrutinized for evidence of either the queen's role in policy-making or her affinity for marriage, but as we have seen none more so than the courtship with Francis Duke of Alençon, later Anjou. Although the negotiations lasted from 1572 to the early 1580s, historians collectively maintain that from 1572 to 1578 they only served a diplomatic function. When serious talks were renewed, the nature of the negotiations changed. As Chapter Two, "Marriage, A Favored Political Tool," discussed, historians remain divided as to whether the queen's motivation for the revival of the match in 1578 was political or personal. But whatever her reason, it was Elizabeth's manipulation of her gender that enabled the longevity of these negotiations. Many English reacted with uncertainty to the idea of a female ruler, viewing the queen's position of power as a conflict of interest between her rule and her femininity. It was believed that if a queen were to confidently display the attributes of power, she would not be acting in an approved womanly manner, but womanly behavior was, they thought, ill fitted for the rigors of rule.²³ Understanding this, Elizabeth overcame the powerful resistance to her rule by making her apparent weaknesses as an unmarried female ruler into sources of strength, particularly through the use of courtship as a political tool.

When Elizabeth became queen, well defined gendered social norms necessarily influenced the reception of an unmarried woman's accession to the throne. Both kingship and gender were areas of great anxiety for the English people. According to Joan Wallach

²³ Levin. *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 3.

Scott, “hierarchical structures rely on generalized understanding of the so-called natural relationship between male and female.”²⁴ Both kingship and gender encompassed the belief of a natural hierarchy: king over commoner, men over women.²⁵ A well-ordered realm was characterized by a balance of masculine and feminine traits. Tyranny was thought to be the consequence of effeminacy, an unbalanced kingdom plagued by a ruler who was inconsistent, frivolous, and effeminate.²⁶ While these beliefs applied to all monarchs, women were thought to be unable to hold the proper balance necessary to govern. Thus, the very existence of a female ruler challenged traditionally held beliefs that a monarch, as God’s representative, ought to be male.²⁷ Marriage promised a solution to the problem of a female monarch, it would provide a king to both assume authority and, more importantly, secure male succession. The desire for an heir is evident in William Cecil’s 1561 letter to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, in which he wrote: “God send our mistress a husband, and by him a son, that we may hope our posterity shall have a masculine succession”²⁸

From the outset of her reign, Elizabeth was beseeched by her councilors and her Parliaments to marry. Even before her sister’s death Elizabeth asserted her desire to lead a ‘spinster’s life.’ Although she held firm in her wish to remain single, Elizabeth was careful to let it be known that her feelings could change: “what I shall do hereafter I know not, but I assure you, upon my truth and fidelity, and as God be merciful unto me, I

²⁴ Scott, 1073.

²⁵ Herrup, 496.

²⁶ Idib., 499.

²⁷ McLaren, “The Quest for a King: Gender, Marriage, and Succession in Elizabethan England.” *The Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 3 (Jul., 2002) 259-290, 264.

²⁸ William Cecil to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 14 July 1561, British Library, Add. MSS 35830, fol. 159v, as quoted in McLaren “Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism,” 739 and “The Quest for King,” 261.

am not at this time otherwise minded than I have declared unto you; no, though I were offered the greatest prince in all Europe.”²⁹ However, understanding that her marriage was something the nation desired, she was willing to appear ready to do whatever was necessary to appease her people. In a letter written by Baron Breuner to Emperor Ferdinand during the beginning of the Hapsburg match, Elizabeth is reported to have said that “she was but human and not insensible to human emotions and impulses, and when it became a question of the weal of her kingdom, or it might be for other reasons, her heart and mind might change.”³⁰

Elizabeth fully believed that a queen was capable of ruling a kingdom without the influence of a husband. However, it was widely thought that the queen must marry to “give shape and direction to English politics that only a man could provide.”³¹ In February 1559, at the Parliament’s first session under their new queen, Elizabeth was presented with a petition urging her to take a husband. This petition detailed the advantages of a marriage, chiefly the birth of a child, something that Englishmen most desired. There are two accounts of Elizabeth’s response, the one put forth by William Camden, who claims to have gained the information directly from the Speaker of the Commons, and the official response set forth days later by the queen. Both essentially agree that she remained single as a personal choice and that she wanted to continue in that course. If circumstances were to change, Elizabeth said that she would “select a

²⁹ Alison Plowden, *Marriage with my Kingdom: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day/Publishers/Scarborough House, 1977), 74.

³⁰ Report of Baron Breuner to the Emperor Ferdinand, London, 7 July 1559, reprinted in Victor von Klarwill, Lupold von Wedel, Hans Jacob Breuning von Buchenbach, and T. H. Nash. *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners; Being a Series of Hitherto Unpublished Letters from the Archives of the Hapsburg Family*. London: John Lane, 1928): 80-86, 81.

³¹ Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 72.

partner who she could trust to protect the realm and its people.”³² Camden’s account was the more colorful. He wrote that Elizabeth waived her coronation ring in front of the audience, declaring “Behold the Pledge of this my Wedlock and Marriage with my Kingdom...And do not upbraide me with miserable lack of Children: for every one of you, and as many as are English-men, are Children and Kinsmen to me.”³³ In the official account of Elizabeth’s response she reaffirms that marriage is a private matter and that she would not tolerate outside interference. With regards to the succession question, Elizabeth is said to have stated that she preferred to leave the matter up to God for only with his help would “an heir that may be a fit governor” appear, and that she would be content if, in the end, “a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.”³⁴

Nonetheless, marriage and succession were expected duties of a Queen. A glimpse into early modern Europe’s first female monarch, Isabel of Castile, provides a clear example of the importance of these responsibilities to the establishment of a queen’s legitimacy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Just as Elizabeth would later use her position as a female monarch to her political advantage, Isabel’s accepted gender role of wife and mother enabled her to solidify her reign. After ascending to the throne following her brother’s death in 1474, Isabel and her advisors sought to legitimize her rule and to solve the problem of a female on the throne by addressing the issues that had plagued Enrique IV and deemed his reign ineffectual and him effeminate. One of the most serious contentions was his inability to produce children; it was rumored that his only child, a

³² Plowden, 82.

³³ William Camden, 1551-1623. *Annales or, the history of the most renowned and victorious Princesse Elizabeth, late Queen of England*. London: Printed by T. Harper, for B. Fisher, 1635.

³⁴ BL, MS Lansdowne 94, art. 14, fol. 29; copy. As printed and quoted in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 58 and Susan Doran, *Queen Elizabeth I* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 72.

daughter Juana, was the result of his wife's infidelity.³⁵ Although her female nature was believed a liability, Isabel was able to use her sexuality to enhance her political legitimacy when she bore a male heir. According to historian Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, "Isabel had redeemed the ultimate imperfection of her own ascendance to the throne: the lack of a male heir."³⁶

Although Elizabeth desired to maintain her independence, she also understood her Council's wish to settle the succession question. In his 1561 letter to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, William Cecil stressed the importance for a male heir who would ultimately become the strong Protestant successor to the throne.³⁷ Since the council's wish for an heir outweighed their desire for a male to rule her country, Elizabeth's strongest card in her battle to remain an autonomous queen was her presumed fertility. Because her consent was necessary to accept a suitor and his private demands, Elizabeth had greater influence over courtships than experienced by many other women in the late sixteenth century.³⁸ As Anne McLaren states, Elizabeth's "control of her own fertility meant that she could, paradoxically (and within limits), use the prospect of marriage to ensure that she never married – by finding fault with proposed suitors or by suggesting that she dearly loved and could only marry men deemed unsuitable."³⁹ This set the stage for the queen's many negotiations while her fertility placed a deadline on her use of courtship as a political tool.

³⁵ Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, "Ruling Sexuality: The Political Legitimacy of Isabel of Castile," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (Spring, 2000): 31-56, 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

³⁷ William Cecil to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 14 July 1561, British Library, Add. MSS 35830, fol. 159v, as quoted in McLaren "Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism," 739 and "The Quest for King," 261.

³⁸ McLaren, "The Quest for a King," 268.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 268.

The opening months of her reign laid the groundwork for the course that Elizabeth's attitudes, actions, and public portrayal would take. She fully understood the generalized attitude towards a female monarch. Although the terms "king" and "prince" had gendered meanings, their use was not restricted to men, since it was common for monarchs, no matter their sex, to use the titles of king and prince. Elizabeth took this a step further by openly describing herself as both king and queen, both male and female, adjusting her gender role as necessary.

The queen's manipulation of gender carried through into her numerous courtships. Her embodiment of both masculine and feminine characteristics is evident in her letter to Eric, King of Sweden, in 1560. Writing to the ever-persistent suitor to decline his proposed marriage the queen stated:

And that indeed does not happen because we doubt in any way of your love and honour, but, as often we have testified in both words and in writing, that we have never yet conceived a feeling of that kind of affection towards any one. We therefore beg your Serene Highness again and again that you be pleased to set a limit to your love, that it advance not beyond the laws of friendship for the present nor disregard them in the future. And we in our turn shall take care that, whatever can be required for the holy preservation of friendship between Princes, we will always perform towards your Serene Highness.⁴⁰

Elizabeth used her femininity as justification for her refusal of the marriage and to authorize her fraternal relationships with fellow monarchs as a means to keep their friendship alive. She claimed to "have never yet conceived" such feelings for any man, let alone her suitor, as he professed to hold for the queen, therefore, a marriage could not occur. However, as they were both Princes, Elizabeth hoped that their nations might continue their friendship. Acting as both a woman and a monarch, Elizabeth placed as a

⁴⁰ Queen Elizabeth I to Eric, King of Sweden, 25 February 1560; trans. from Latin, in G. B. Harrison eds., *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Cassell, 1935), 31.

condition for England and Sweden's continued friendship that Eric must be careful to maintain only platonic feelings and admiration for the queen.

Elizabeth's view of herself as both the King and Queen of England became even more apparent during the Anjou negotiations. In writing to Sir Amyas Paulet, her ambassador to France, she expressed her annoyance that the French proposed unacceptable conditions for the marriage "whereby her own gifts of body and mind are slighted." The most offensive of these terms was "that the Duke might jointly have authority with us to dispose of all things donative within this our Realm, and other our dominions..." and that "he might be after marriage crowned King."⁴¹ It was clearly unacceptable for a suitor to assume that he, as a male, would gain authority in her realm. Furthermore, Elizabeth found it particularly offensive that he should gain the title of "King" as she was already a king of the realm.

In 1572 after negotiations between Elizabeth and the duke's brother Henry failed, Catherine de Medici proposed Anjou as a replacement suitor. Elizabeth initially gave serious consideration to the match, but following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in August 1572, she no longer viewed it as plausible. Although both she and Charles IX, King of France, knew that marriage was now out of the question, the matrimonial negotiations continued, solely for diplomatic reasons, to keep the lines of communication open.⁴²

Then, in 1578, Elizabeth reopened serious talks of marriage. This was important for both political and personal reasons. Because of the events transpiring in the Netherlands, Elizabeth believed that a revival of the matrimonial project was the best way

⁴¹ Queen Elizabeth to Sir Amyas Paulet, 9 May 1579, in Harrison, 131.

⁴² Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 130, 138.

to address the dangers arising from Anjou's planned enterprise in Flanders. Susan Doran explains that, "once Elizabeth and Sussex learned that the duke was acting on his own initiative and not as an agent of the King of France they planned to use the offer of an English crown as bait to entice him away from military adventures and satisfy his search for glory."⁴³ Yet, as far as the queen's other councilors were concerned, the courtship continued to represent the same problem it did in 1572, an alternative policy to the war-strategy of direct military intervention in support of the Dutch that they favored.

While many of Elizabeth's advisors advocated England's active support for resistance in the Netherlands, the queen believed that an Anjou match was the way out of the crisis. As Walsingham commented about the queen's decision:

The negotiacion of Monsieur here taketh greater foote then was at first lookid for and receaveth no smaule furtheraunce upper [*sic*] occasion of the decayed state of things in the Low Countryes, for that Her Majesty, forseeing that yf the King of Spayne come once to have his will there he will prove no very goof neytbour to her, thincketh this [the Anjou match] the best meane to provide for her saftey that can be offerid, in which respect yt is to be thought she will in th'end consent to the match, though otherwyes not greatlie to her liking.⁴⁴

Elizabeth coveted the Anglo-French alliance that might be achieved through a marriage with Anjou, because it would benefit England in three ways.⁴⁵ First, the strength of an Anglo-French alliance might scare Philip into making peace in the Netherlands. Second, the marriage might settle Anjou's ambitions in the Netherlands, as Anjou had taken up an independent campaign, without the support of the French crown, to intervene in the Low Countries. Finally, the marriage would potentially protect England from invasion or

⁴³ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁴ Sir Francis Walsingham, 28 February 1579, Letterhove, *Relations Politiques*, xi, 304-5 in Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 155.

⁴⁵ MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572-1588* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 244.

international conspiracy. Elizabeth believed that Henry III, King of France, would not join any cause that might negatively affect his brother and his Queen.⁴⁶

The queen and her government understood that the Anjou match would almost certainly be Elizabeth's final courtship and, thus, her last chance to use prospective marriage as a political tool. At the age of forty-five, she was fast approaching the time when her production of an heir would become impossible. Without a child the lasting ties formed through family bonds could not be solidified, and the diplomatic value of an interdynastic match would be diminished.⁴⁷ While at the beginning of her reign Elizabeth showed little interest in children or a husband, she hinted that her earnest pursuit of Anjou was a direct result of time running out.

Whatever factor(s) motivated the queen to revive the match, her use of gender contributed to Elizabeth's ability to return to the courtship. In response to French doubts regarding her sincerity, the queen stated that she would be open to Anjou visiting her court. Elizabeth wrote of her love for him, sending portraits and gifts as tokens of her affection.⁴⁸ This use of her femininity, claiming her devotion to Anjou, in renewing the courtship led her contemporaries to conclude that she had succumbed to her emotions and fallen for the duke. Whatever her personal feelings, Elizabeth's embodiment of feminine desires enabled her to mislead her advisors and her suitor to believe that she desired to conclude the matter quickly.

The negotiations from 1578-1582 have historically been analyzed as one continuous discussion. However, because talks abated from late 1579 to early 1580, the

⁴⁶ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Foreign Policy, 1558-1603* (London: Routledge, 2000), 38 and MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 248.

⁴⁷ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 254.

⁴⁸ 12 November 1578, PRO 31/3/27 fol 241, 249 in Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 152.

negotiations can be examined in two parts, the first influenced and driven by personal and political motives and the second by strictly political motives. In 1579, Elizabeth exhibited a serious intent to get down to the business of drawing up an acceptable contract.⁴⁹ Thus, outwardly Elizabeth demonstrated her strong desire to wed. In August 1579, the Duke visited her in London, becoming the first foreign suitor to gain an audience with her.

Despite Elizabeth's fervent actions to secure the French marriage, negotiations came to a halt when her Council could not unanimously agree to the match. According to Carolly Erickson, "no doubt she [Elizabeth] was struggling within herself, for though she had everyone convinced of her sincerity in encouraging Alençon's [Anjou's] suit it cannot have been easy for her to wait for events to unfold."⁵⁰ The Council spent a great deal of time, from January 1579 until Anjou's arrival, discussing the French suitor, but was unable to come to a collective opinion regarding the match. Opponents concluded that the marriage "could not be but dangerous to religion, unsure to her Majesty and unprofitable to the realm."⁵¹ Beyond councilor support, Elizabeth also required the support of her people. Unfortunately for her, the public followed the opinion of opponents within the counsel. When the people reacted strongly against the match, Elizabeth began to question the suitability of the marriage for her realm. Following the poor reception of Anjou's visit and the proposed match, marriage talks were set aside until the need to resume communications arose the following year.

⁴⁹ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 11.

⁵⁰ Carolly Erickson, *The First Elizabeth*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 298.

⁵¹ MacCaffrey, *Making of Policy*, 263.

On August 12th, 1580, Anjou was offered sovereignty of the Netherlands by the States General.⁵² Concerned about the implications for England, Elizabeth quickly worked to reopen marital negotiations. “The purpose of this projected marriage, however, was not to resolve the question of the succession, but to deal with the international dangers confronting the realm,” particularly those posed by the potential for greatly expanded French influence and military power next door.⁵³ Thus, at the age of forty-seven, Elizabeth renewed her writing of love letters and also claimed to welcome the return of French commissioners to conclude the business of finalizing a marriage contract.

The queen adjusted her actions to manipulate her suitor so that he might never know the true incentive behind her overwhelming devotion. When Anjou made his second trip to England, in November of 1580, she played the part of an eager bride who desired the marriage to occur. During a walk with Anjou on November 24th, a French diplomat approached the queen and inquired whether the marriage was going to happen. Elizabeth is said to have responded, after kissing Anjou on the lips and taking a ring from her finger and placing it on Anjou’s, “You may tell his Majesty that the Prince will be my husband.”⁵⁴ While Elizabeth successfully maneuvered through Anjou’s visit, it was not without hesitation and encouragement. Elizabeth wrote to William Cecil upon Anjou’s arrival, “Let me know what you wish me to do.”⁵⁵ The queen had played her part and executed their plan perfectly. Hearing of Elizabeth’s actions on November 24th, Lord Burghley exclaimed: “God be thanked! Her Majesty has done her part. Now must

⁵² Harrison, 140.

⁵³ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 11.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1958), 246.

⁵⁵ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), 251.

Parliament do theirs.”⁵⁶ Through the gift of her ring, Elizabeth intended to create a bond with Anjou, the hope being that when Parliament proceeded to demand terms of the French, King Henry would refuse, and an infuriated Anjou would push farther from his brother and closer to Elizabeth.⁵⁷

Throughout their courtship, Elizabeth used both her masculine and feminine gender traits to manipulate the Duke. In February of 1579, when Anjou first expressed a desire to visit, Elizabeth warned against it due to discontent within England regarding the match. After giving this monarchical advice, Elizabeth wrote, “I recognize by lack of wit to instruct you, you may accept it as from one who will never have a thought not dedicated to your honour and will never betray you by her advice, but will give it as if my soul depended thereon.”⁵⁸ Through stating that she “recognize[s] by lack of wit to instruct you,” Elizabeth is seemingly placing herself, a woman, beneath Anjou, a man, in the political hierarchy of their relationship. After taking her strong, definitive stance as a king - something believed uncharacteristic of women - Elizabeth displayed weakness and reliance upon her masculine counterpart. In doing so, Elizabeth was careful to assert her authority as the English monarch while allowing Anjou to feel that he had some measure of power.

Religious belief and practice remained a matter of contention during the Anjou negotiations as it had been throughout Elizabeth’s numerous courtships. With regards to his Catholic faith, Elizabeth explained that the terms of her religion could not and would

⁵⁶ Jenkins, 246.

⁵⁷ Erickson 246-47.

⁵⁸ Queen Elizabeth I to Francis, Duke of Anjou, Westminster, 14 February 1579; trans. from French. in Harrison, 129.

not change because it was a matter of great importance for Englishmen. However, she wrote:

For my part, I confess that there is no Prince in the world to whom I would more willingly give myself than to yourself, nor to whom I think myself more bound, nor with whom I would pass the years of my life, both for your rare virtues and sweet nature, accompanied with such honorable parts as I cannot recount for number, nor would be so bold to mention for the time that it would needs take.⁵⁹

Thus, Elizabeth insinuated that as a true and able monarch, she was willing to put the wants and needs of her people before her own desire. Once Elizabeth made it clear that she was acting as a monarch and not as a woman, she overtly asserted her fondness for the duke, suggesting that if the religious climate were different the marriage would prove to be an attractive one. As it stood, Elizabeth explained that she saw no point in continuing this negotiation, “unless it please you to make some resolution other than the open exercise of the Religion, and it seems good to you to write to me on that point, or to send some good answer, for I desire nothing but what contents you.”⁶⁰ In true Elizabethan fashion, she left her true feelings unknown.

The queen responded defensively to Anjou’s stated displeasure and to his belief that she was using religious differences as the sole pretext to break off talks. She proceeded to inform him of her own displeasure at being notified of a French commission being sent to England without detailing who the representatives were. As such, Elizabeth surmised that these men must be of no political importance. “I did not think,” she wrote to Anjou, “that France was so ill-furnished of Princes and persons of great rank that they

⁵⁹ Queen Elizabeth I to Francis, Duke of Anjou, December-January 1579-80; trans. from French. in Harrison, 136.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

would be constrained to send me a child or man of low birth.”⁶¹ Deeply offended, Elizabeth informed the King that she “would not suffer a matter of so great a weight to take any disgrace from the hate which is borne me.”⁶² Beyond this blow to her masculine ego, the queen wrote of her feminine weakness influencing the end of the match. She wrote, begging him “with hands clasped,” that many people are influencing them and to forgive her foolishness, “see where the love that I bear you carries me to make me act contrary to my nature (quite awry from those who fish in troubled waters) to thrust myself in another man’s actions.”⁶³

Anjou’s death on June 10th, 1584, ended the security of the Anglo-French friendship that came with the decade-long courtships. At fifty years of age and clearly beyond her childbearing years, Elizabeth was no longer able to utilize marriage negotiations as a political tool. Thus, she worked quickly to maintain her peaceful relations with the Valois by appealing to the queen mother. Upon the duke’s death, Elizabeth wrote to Catherine de Medici:

Madam,
If the extremity of my misfortune had not equaled my grief for his sake, and had not rendered me unequal to touch with a pen the wound that my heart suffered, it would not be possible that I had so greatly forgotten to visit you with the fellowship of regret that I afford you, which I assure myself cannot exceed mine; for although you were his mother, yet there remains to you several other children. But for myself, I find no consolation if it be not death, which I hope will make us soon to meet. Madam, if you could see the image of my heart you would there see the picture of a body without a soul; but I will not trouble you more with my paints, having too many of your own. It remains at this present that I vow and swear to you that I will turn a great part of my love for him to the King, my good

⁶¹ Queen Elizabeth I to Francis, Duke of Anjou, 17 January 1580; trans. from French. in Harrison, 138.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 139.

brother, and you, assuring you that you will find me the faithfulest daughter and sister that ever Princes had.⁶⁴

Elizabeth wrote of furthering England's relationship with France through the connection of a pseudo-mother-daughter relationship between Catherine and herself. With the death of Anjou, both women lost their tool to maintain Anglo-French peace. While this letter provides clear evidence that Elizabeth used marriage negotiations as a form of diplomacy, it also provides evidence that her manipulation of gender for political advancement was not limited to men.

Elizabeth continuously manipulated the outward expressions of her gender for the benefit of both herself and her realm. Through study of her handling of the Anjou courtship, it is clear that the queen was careful to display her genders differently to fit the given situation. By writing that while she loved Anjou, she could not marry him for religious and political reasons, the queen distinguished her feminine desires from masculine reason. Elizabeth was skillfully able to vary her degree of masculinity and femininity in order to both assert her authority as England's king and play the role of a lovestruck woman while, at the same time, not overtly overpowering her suitors. This tactic also effectively ensured that the queen would never marry since she only expressed serious interest in those she knew the council would not approve.

The theory of two bodies was widely known in sixteenth century England. It provided the queen's councilors with a way to justify their monarch to foreign courts and also proved useful in their own dealings with the often defiant queen.⁶⁵ The concept was valuable to Elizabeth as well, for "if a kingly body politic could be incorporated into an

⁶⁴ Queen Elizabeth I to Catherine de Medici, Queen Mother of France, July 1584: trans; from French. in Harrison, 162-3.

⁶⁵ Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 122.

actual natural female body – her natural self – how much more natural right Elizabeth had to rule, and to rule alone.”⁶⁶ Sir Francis Walsingham, one of the queen’s chief advisors, explained Elizabeth’s indecisiveness in marriage to Anjou by saying that her body natural cared deeply for the duke but that her metaphorical body politic saw the dangers of losing her subject’s love through an unpopular marriage. Interestingly, Walsingham’s reference to the queen’s metaphorical two bodies, while contrasting her masculine body politic and feminine natural body, maintains clear feminine characteristics throughout. This seems to indicate that while her natural body was female, her body politic was both male and female or perhaps an effeminate male body. To the contrary, Elizabeth perceived that, while her physical form was that of a woman, her body politic was that of a male. It is intriguing that the queen’s chief advisor perceived her two bodies so differently than the queen herself. While it was commonly thought that a monarch’s two bodies were distinctly separate, Elizabeth believed both were embodied within her natural state. She fully believed that as a monarch she was both king and queen, masculine and feminine.

Elizabeth was not, as Susan Bassnett argued, actively pursuing a course against sexism during her life. Nor did she completely ignore the social constructs of her age. Instead, Elizabeth worked within the confinements of the time, embracing both masculinity and femininity. Her application of the concept of both a body natural and a body politic allowed the queen to manipulate her outward expression of gendered traits as needed. Thus, Elizabeth’s use of gender was, as Judith Butler described, “performative,”

⁶⁶ Ibid., 123.

allowing her to maneuver through courtships and form alliances to protect her nation without ever relinquishing her power as the King of England.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Elizabeth, from the beginning of her reign, sought to maintain the traditional direction of English foreign policy: protecting England's borders, maintaining a commercial relationship in the Low Countries, and upholding England's ties with Spain and the Hapsburgs. But in 1571, the increasing presence and tightening of Spanish control in the Netherlands prompted her to change course and open the lines of communication with France. Although her foreign political objectives shifted, the vehicle through which Elizabeth sought to achieve her goals, the use of interdynastic marriage negotiations, remained consistent.

For the first half of her reign, Elizabeth skillfully integrated courtships and foreign policy. Her effective application of this tool created temporary alliances with powerful nations and paved the way to fulfilling England's short-term goals by alleviating potential threats and thus keeping England safe. Employing this strategy early within her reign, Elizabeth entered into negotiations for a marriage to Archduke Charles of Austria. An alliance with the Hapsburgs would have secured Anglo-Spanish relations and addressed England's commercial interests in Antwerp. But in response to the increasing strength of the Spanish presence in the Low Countries in the late 1560s, Elizabeth shifted course and turned to marriage talks with the Valois princes, Henri and Francis. Such an alliance would assure both England's and France's protection against potential Spanish

aggression. Elizabeth was well aware of the value of courtship as a means to achieve her goals.

During these courtships, Elizabeth did not hesitate to present herself in the most favorable light possible. This tact enabled her to make her views on areas of contention, particularly religion and her seriousness towards marriage, appear more flexible and appealing to potential suitors and foreign courts. Elizabeth skillfully altered the tone of her correspondences to get the same message across in differing ways; blunt and stern when writing to her own agents and subtly passive aggressive when writing to foreign courts. By varying the strength of her chosen words, she was often able to entice a suitor to amend his stance on a point of contention to one more acceptable to her. This tactic effectively allowed the queen to prolong negotiations for as long as necessary to fulfill her own needs as well as England's. This strategy, though, was not exclusive to Elizabeth. Catherine de Medici was also a master manipulator. Both she and Elizabeth carefully nuanced their words and actions to present themselves in the most favorable light.

Essential to the effectiveness with which Elizabeth manipulated her words was the queen's understanding and use of gender. In the application of her gender, Elizabeth moved beyond the traditional male and female roles. During negotiations she was able to balance her persona as the female king of England with her role as the unmarried queen. Her use of gender was essential to the revival of the Anjou courtship in 1578. Throughout the negotiations she acted kingly when necessary then switched gears acting the part of the adoring queen when more beneficial. Elizabeth deftly used her masculine and feminine roles, acting the part needed for the given situation. Effectively employing her

gender(s) throughout her many courtships enabled her to form successful temporary alliances against immediate foreign threats.

Some have suggested that Elizabeth's use of marriage as a political tool was unique, I, however, contend that it was not. In the sixteenth century, nobility commonly used interdynastic marriage as a means to solidify treaties and secure beneficial alliances. But, while many monarchs were also concerned with long-term needs that could be addressed and accomplished through such marriages, Elizabeth was only concerned with the immediate needs of England. Thus, the queen embarked in her numerous courtships to address those needs and showed little, if any concern, for the creation of a male heir or the securing of a Tudor dynasty. To Elizabeth the negotiations were the point of her many courtships. It was through them that she was able to secure necessary treaties and alliances without the long-term commitment of marriage. Elizabeth's uniqueness, therefore, was not in her application of interdynastic marriage as a facet of foreign policy, but rather in her views of the purpose of marriage negotiations. While many, including Catherine de Medici, viewed negotiations as a means to an end, Elizabeth viewed these talks as the end in themselves.

In the first years of her reign Elizabeth clearly expressed her desire to remain single and rule England as both its King and Queen. Despite this, marriage negotiations were entertained. Although, Elizabeth publicly amended her stance in 1563, stating that she would wed if it were God's will and the proper course of action for England, the queen never married. Elizabeth entwined courtship with diplomacy as a way to achieve her short-term goals without the need for long-term commitment. Through the skillful manipulation of her words, actions, and gender, Elizabeth effectively used interdynastic

marriage as a political tool to protect England and its interests throughout the first half of her reign.

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