2006

All the world's a stage: pageantry as propaganda at the court of Elizabeth I, 1558-1569

Kimberly Kay Reynolds
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses
Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation
Reynolds, Kimberly Kay, "All the world's a stage: pageantry as propaganda at the court of Elizabeth I, 1558-1569" (2006). LSU Master's Theses. 2958.
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2958

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE:
PAGEANTRY AS PROPAGANDA AT THE COURT OF ELIZABETH I,
1558-1569

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
The Department of History

by
Kimberly Kay Reynolds
B.S., Oklahoma City University, 2001
December 2006
Dedicated in memory of my grandparents, who are watching over me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am blessed to have many people in my life who have provided invaluable support and showed infinite patience while this former dancer pursued her other passion. First and foremost, I must thank my mother for pushing me, listening to me, and for not ever letting me quit. Thank you for proofreading my work, for reminding me why I am here, and for always making time for me. Your strength is a constant source of inspiration. You gave me the courage to pursue this dream and I dedicate this thesis to you. My brothers, Ronnie, Randy, and Jeff, have given me unconditional support and confidence. My aunt and uncle, Jim and Charlyne Wyche, have helped stave off homesickness and made my move to Baton Rouge much easier. Aunt Charlyne’s guidance on this thesis has proved invaluable. My best friend, Amanda Strickland, the eternal optimist, has offered support and kept me centered. My fellow TA’s on the third floor have willingly given their friendship and moral support. My girls (and boy) have gotten me through the good times and bad: Sam Cavell, Jessica Dehart, Carron Fillingim, Julia Grenier, Maria Kohls, and Josh Marr. Marc Patenaude, as a fellow Razorback, provided a link to home. Whoo pig sosie! Wayne Edmondson has provided invaluable support, guidance, and motivation. I only hope that I have helped them half as much as they have helped me. Dr. Benjamin Price offered invaluable advice and guidance throughout this entire process. My advisor, Dr. Victor Stater, and committee members, Dr. Christine Kooi and Dr. Suzanne Marchand have provided exemplary support and guidance throughout this whole process and my entire graduate career.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iii

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................... v

INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER
   I. “THIS IS THE LORD’S DOING”: ELIZABETH’S CORONATION PROCESSION ................................................................. 5

   II. “THE LAND OF GOOD ADVICE”: PLAYS AND MASQUES AT COURT ........................................................................... 28

   III. “A SPUR TO ACTION”: THE MARRIAGE AND SUCCESSION ISSUE .............................................................................. 51

   IV. “EVERY NOBLEMAN’S HOUSE IS HER PALACE”: ELIZABETH’S PROGRESSES ................................................................ 71

CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................. 95

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................................... 100

APPENDIX
   A. CORONATION ROUTE ........................................................................................................ 106

   B. PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED ONE TIME ......................................................................................... 107

   C. PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED TWO TIMES ............................................................................. 108

   D. PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED THREE TIMES ........................................................................ 109

   E. PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED FOUR OR MORE TIMES ........................................................................ 110

VITA ............................................................................................................................................... 111
ABSTRACT

Elizabeth I of England was one of the most celebrated monarchs in history. Authors, playwrights, and artists venerated her in their art. At her accession, however, her subjects were unsure about their new queen. She was an illegitimate female ruling a religiously divided kingdom. In response to this, Elizabeth and her council initiated a propaganda campaign that created an image of Elizabeth as a wise, just, and well-beloved ruler. This thesis will examine Elizabeth’s coronation procession, the performance of plays and masques at court, and the queen’s annual progresses to show how Elizabeth and her subjects used drama, pageantry, and spectacle to communicate with each other, laying the foundation for the Cult of Gloriana.
INTRODUCTION

The Cult of Gloriana flourished during the second half of Elizabeth I’s reign. Authors, playwrights, and artists venerated the queen in their art. This cult had its beginnings in the first years after her ascension because of the propaganda used by Elizabeth and her council. “The monarchy of Elizabeth I,” according to Christopher Haigh, “was founded upon illusion.”¹ The accession of Elizabeth brought a cautious optimism about the future. Years of upheavals and religious strife left England a divided nation and the new queen faced a difficult situation. She faced more threats to her power than any Tudor monarch since her grandfather, Henry VII. In order to strengthen her position and unite the country during her first decade as queen, Elizabeth and her council launched an organized and effective propaganda campaign and cultivated an image that focused her subjects’ loyalty on her. She accomplished this through the use of spectacle, drama, and pageantry, specifically in her coronation procession, the performance of plays and masques at court, and annual progresses. Printed accounts circulated throughout England and the continent, spreading the image of Elizabeth as a judicious and well-beloved ruler.

Elizabeth sought the affection and approval of her subjects: According to Conyers Read, “No monarch of her time and very few since have been so sensitive to…public opinion.”² She believed that the source of her monarchical power relied on the consent of her people. Her government was ultimately successful because it knew and paid attention to popular will. The relationship between the people and their queen was a common theme in Elizabethan propaganda. The Spanish ambassador, Count de

Feria, wrote, “She is much attached to the people and is very confident that they are all on her side; which is indeed true.”

Theatrical performances also gave Elizabeth’s subjects an opportunity to present their wishes and expectations for the new regime. For her coronation procession, the guilds of London presented pageants that dramatized these hopes. The pageants emphasized Elizabeth’s right to the throne and incorporated common themes in Tudor propaganda, focusing on Protestantism and Elizabeth’s English heritage. Richard Tottel printed an account of the procession that not only described the pageants, but also Elizabeth’s reactions to them. For the first time, a monarch became a part of the performance and Elizabeth gave the perfect response each time. She obviously made an impression on the people of London, establishing the groundwork for later entertainments.

The spoken word was a powerful tool in the sixteenth century and Elizabeth’s reign saw a renaissance of theater. The performance of plays and masques was a perfect medium for Englishmen to offer their opinions on the pressing topics of the day. Dramatic performances entertained, persuaded, and brought attention to the magnificence of the Court. Realizing its influence, the government attempted to manage the licensing of performances. Thus, courtiers who patronized acting companies contributed to the growing cult by presenting plays that perpetuated the image of Elizabeth as a loving monarch. The queen validated the image by attending the performances. Court entertainments also brought the Court together and made the queen the focal point of the

---

evening. Courtiers offered plays based on parables, the nature of kingship, the issue of the queen’s marriage, and the settlement of the succession.

The Queen’s choice of a husband and an heir were the burning questions of the day. There were many candidates for her hand, but marriage to a foreigner was dangerous and marriage to a subject was demeaning. The choice of an heir became a choice between the granddaughters of Henry VIII’s two sisters. Parliament repeatedly asked Elizabeth for her choice and she continued to hesitate. Although this kept Elizabeth as the central point of the people’s loyalty, it made many nervous because of the uncertainty of what would happen after her death. A disputed succession brought the prospect of civil war. Elizabeth’s near fatal bout with smallpox in 1562 made this fear all the more acute. Courtiers presented entertainments that highlighted the advantages of marriage and offered solutions for the settlement of the succession, including a play that was the first succession tract and a landmark in theatrical history.

Annual progresses through the countryside were a distinguishing feature of Elizabeth’s reign. Progresses were not innovative. Previous monarchs and Elizabeth’s contemporaries routinely traveled from palace to palace for sanitary reasons, but Elizabeth used the opportunity to show her person to as many people as possible. For many of her subjects, these yearly progresses were their only contact with her. The destinations reflected her perception of the political and diplomatic scene and validated her authority. For private hosts, the visits offered access to powerful guests. For civic hosts, they promoted local pride. With the exception of scattered anecdotes, there are few specific details of her visits. It was the spectacle of the queen’s visit, rather than the events of her entertainments, that left its mark of the minds of the people.
Pageantry during the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign provided a vehicle for the queen and her subjects to present a united front to the world. For the people of England, Elizabeth’s attendance at performances gave them the chance to convey their desires. For the new queen, her presence, and the subsequent publications of events, allowed her the opportunity to manipulate her image and keep her person as a focal point for the people’s love and loyalty.
CHAPTER I

“THIS IS THE LORD’S DOING”:
ELIZABETH’S CORONATION PROCESSION

At seven o’clock in the morning on May 17, 1558, Queen Mary I of England died after a disastrous five-year reign. Waiting in the wings was her twenty-five year old half sister, Elizabeth, an unknown quantity and the fourth monarch in eleven years.\(^4\) When the Privy Councilors rode to Hatfield House to tell the new queen of Mary’s death and of Elizabeth’s accession, they found Elizabeth sitting under an oak tree at the end of an oak-lined path. Hearing the news, the young monarch fell to her knees, looked up to the heavens, and declared, “A domino factum est et mirabile in oculis nostris!”\(^5\) Although contemporaries were initially skeptical, time would tell how prophetic this remark was, and how she successfully created the illusion of a prophecy.

On May 17\(^{th}\), Parliament proclaimed Elizabeth “by the grace of God Queen of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, etc.” and declared her “the only right heir by blood and lawful succession the crown of the foresaid kingdoms of England, France, and Ireland, with all manner titles and rights thereunto in anywise appertaining.”\(^6\) After the problems of Mary’s reign, the accession of a new queen offered hope to a troubled nation. The English greeted Elizabeth’s accession with enthusiasm, as bonfires were lit and church bells pealed out across the country. These celebrations, however,

---

\(^4\) The preceding monarchs were as follows: Edward VI (1547-1553), Jane Grey (1553), and Mary I (1553-1558).

\(^5\) “This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Translated in Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth the Great* (London: Phoenix Press, 1958), 60. Historians argue as to the veracity of this story. Some state that Elizabeth was standing under the tree or taking a walk. Some claim it is apocryphal, while others believe that Elizabeth knew about her sister’s death before the Privy Councilors arrived and staged the scene. Given its dramatic and theatrical effect, this seems the most likely scenario.

were somewhat muted as even Elizabeth’s staunchest supporters knew that the inexperienced monarch had inherited formidable problems as well as a weak and divided realm. “The first Elizabethans did not know they were Elizabethans.”7 In the sixteenth century, the greatest threat to political stability was the attempted ascendancy of the nobility during the rule of a minor or a female, a disputed line of succession, or religious conflict. The new queen faced all three problems at the beginning of her reign.

Elizabeth had an image problem. There was a precedent for successful female rulers, although most reigning monarchs were male. The preceding ruler in England had been a woman, and women ruled both Scotland and France at the time of Elizabeth’s ascendancy. Mary Stuart was the Scottish queen and her mother, Mary of Guise, was the regent, while Catherine de Medici ruled France for her minor sons. There was, however, still a contradiction between the ideal monarch and the ideal woman. Queen Mary I had done little to change attitudes about the legitimacy of female rule. Elizabeth would first have to overcome that prejudice.

The English generally regarded a female monarch with ambivalence, but government was still a male-dominated world. Those traits that made a great ruler were not traits women possessed, according to commonly held beliefs. Women were thought to be physically, intellectually, and emotionally inferior to men and, therefore, incapable of handling the rigors of public life. The prevailing thought was that “a monarch should rule, a woman should obey.”8 Men expected a female ruler to marry and hand the reins of government over to her husband. At the time of her accession, Elizabeth’s councilors

---

8 Haigh, Elizabeth I, 13.
and subjects eagerly awaited an announcement of her forthcoming marriage; an unmarried female ruler was inconceivable to sixteenth-century Europeans.

Although Elizabeth’s accession was a peaceful one, particularly in comparison to that of her half sister’s, there were two major threats to the peace of her realm. The years since the English Reformation and the subsequent reigns of Edward VI and Mary I had left England a religiously divided country. Elizabeth’s religious preferences were unknown, but both Catholics and Protestants placed their hopes in her. Protestant exiles returning from Geneva and Zurich saw Elizabeth as their savior. As the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth embodied the English Reformation. According to Catholics, Henry bigamously married Anne Boleyn is 1533 while still married to Catherine of Aragon. Catholics did not recognize this marriage and Elizabeth, born shortly after the dubious ceremony, was illegitimate under Roman Canon Law.

Elizabeth’s legitimacy was indeed open to question. Henry’s first Act of Succession in 1534 had declared Mary illegitimate, placing Elizabeth first in the line of succession. Then, after Anne Boleyn’s execution and Henry’s subsequent marriage to Jane Seymour in 1536, Parliament passed a second Act of Succession, which bastardized Elizabeth. A third act in 1544 placed Elizabeth third in line for the throne behind Edward and Mary, but did not legitimize her. As a result, not only was Elizabeth considered illegitimate under Canon Law, she could also be considered illegitimate by English law.⁹

These doubts about Elizabeth’s legitimacy provided the pretext for a rival claim to the English throne by Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots and recently crowned Queen of France. Mary’s claim to the English throne was at least as strong as Elizabeth’s. Mary

made a public statement of this at the wedding of Henry II’s daughter to the Duke of Lorraine, when Mary’s heraldic arms were quartered with those of England on the coats of arms of her servants.\textsuperscript{10} In addition to her Catholicism, there was no doubt about Mary’s legitimacy. In his will, Henry VIII eliminated the Stuart claim and declared that the Suffolk line would follow his children in the succession. English Catholics did not believe that the law could settle the succession, but were willing to accept Elizabeth’s right provided she made some concessions to Catholics and that her new government was a success.

Therefore, in the first days of her reign Elizabeth would have to stress the validity of her claim to the throne. Emphasizing this was essential if Elizabeth were to overcome the doubts that surrounded her accession. She and her image-makers would need to create an image that counteracted the threats to her reign and emphasize three main points: Protestantism, Elizabeth’s English heritage, and her femininity. On November 23, 1558, Elizabeth left Hatfield House for London, where she captured the loyalty of the City of London in the first few weeks of her reign. Elizabeth’s coronation procession was the culmination of this courtship as, through a series of pageants along the procession route, the people of London showed Elizabeth what they expected of her reign.

Elizabeth consulted John Dee, an astrologer, for the most auspicious date for her coronation to ensure a long and successful reign. He chose January 15\textsuperscript{th}. The length of time between accession and coronation varied for each monarch. In comparison to her predecessors, the eight weeks between Elizabeth’s accession and procession was not uncommon. Henry VII’s coronation occurred ten weeks after he was informally crowned

\textsuperscript{10} John Guy, \textit{Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2004), 92.
on the battlefield after the Battle of Bosworth. Henry VIII’s double coronation with Catherine of Aragon took place eight and a half weeks after Henry VII’s death. Edward VI’s coronation was a short three weeks after his accession. Mary’s, however, took place nearly three months after Edward VI died. This was due to the Duke of Northumberland’s attempted coup.

Coronation proceedings consisted of four events over a period of several days. First, the new monarch took possession of the Tower of London. Elizabeth arrived at the Tower on January 12th. Next was the sovereign’s procession. Elizabeth’s coronation procession was on January 14th, the day before her crowning. The route was four miles long and followed the same route as previous monarchs. After leaving the Tower, the procession passed through the city, along the Strand, to Westminster. The coronation itself occurred the next day in Westminster Abbey. Finally, a banquet was held in Westminster Hall after the coronation ceremony.

Coronations were “the most symbolically potent” of all ceremonies of state. The English enjoyed spectacles. They expected the coronation procession to be lavish and Elizabeth’s was evidently worthy. Although an exact figure is unknown, the account books of the Office of Revels present a small portion of the expenses. From January 8 to February 2, 1559, the Office of Revels paid a total of 41 pounds [li] 3 shillings [s] 11 pence [d] in wages to forty tailors, eight painters, an embroiderer, two haberdashers, a basket maker, and three officers. For exemptions such as mercers, the Office paid a total

---

12 For a complete itemized list, see Albert Feuillerat, ed., *Documents Relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (Louvain: A. Uystpruyst, 1908), 85-87.
Finally, the Office paid 17s for a water carriage and 6s 8d for the construction of certain devices.

Pageants were animated shows “devoid of either action or dialogue, or at least only employing their aid by way of supplementing and explaining the living picture.” They were a traditional element in coronation processions, with chroniclers noting the pageants in the processions of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Edward VI, and Mary I. Each pageant symbolized some aspect of the office and power of the ruler. An official pamphleteer wrote that the pageants in Elizabeth’s procession were not just diversions and amusements. “In unmistakable language, verbal, pictorial, and symbolical,” they pronounced a “new, revolutionary England which the citizens confidently expected her to inaugurate.”

The guilds of London performed the pageants that greeted Elizabeth on her procession. They combined the themes of Tudor stability, Protestantism, and Elizabeth’s English heritage, in contrast to Mary’s Spanish heritage. The guilds placed the five pageants at strategic stops on the procession route: at Gracechurch Street, at Cornhill, at Soper’s Lane beyond the Great Conduit in Cheapside, at the Little Conduit in Cheapside, and at the Conduit in Fleet Street. The pageant at Gracechurch Street illustrated Elizabeth’s Tudor ancestors. The second pageant advised Elizabeth of good and bad virtues in a ruler. At Soper’s Lane, the actors portrayed the Eight Beatitudes. In the fourth pageant, the city of London revealed its Protestant ambitions. The guilds compared Elizabeth to the Biblical queen Deborah in the final pageant. Thus, the

---

13 Exemptions were payments for one-time services.
Londoners created a clear picture of the type of monarch they wanted: a good, wise, just, and Protestant ruler.

Three contemporary accounts of Elizabeth’s procession remain: a diary, letters to the Venetian ambassador, and the official account printed by Elizabeth’s government. Henry Machyn, a Catholic living in London, began his diary in August 1550 after the funeral of Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and continued recording the events he witnessed until 1563. Although there is little direct proof of his occupation, given the abundance of descriptions of funerals in his diary, he was most likely a merchant-tailor, or furnisher of funeral trappings.

In 1557, Giovanni Michiel, the Mantuan ambassador to the court of Mary I, left England with Philip of Spain. The Signori of Venice did not replace Michiel with another authorized diplomatic representative until 1602, because of Elizabeth’s Protestant leanings and ill-concealed hostility toward Rome. As a result, the majority of diplomatic dispatches concerning Elizabeth’s reign originated from the Mantuan ambassador at the court of France. From December 17, 1558, to June 27, 1559, the Mantuan ambassador received a series of letters from Il Schifanoya, who was in the service of Sir Thomas Tresham, the Prior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England. He explained to the ambassador that he “took the greatest pains to acquaint himself with the circumstances of the country, and to report faithfully and honestly to his principals all that he heard and saw there.” In his letters, Il Schifanoya described all aspects of Court life, including Elizabeth’s coronation procession and theatrical performances at her court.

16 Rawdon G. Brown and G. Cavendish Bentinck, ed, Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy 1158-1580, vol. 7 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890), viii.
17 Ibid, ix.
Two editions of the official account of Elizabeth’s procession appeared in the form of a pamphlet ten days after the event. The author is unknown but was evidently someone who was close to Elizabeth throughout the procession because the pamphlet records the Queen’s statements. Some historians, such as J.E. Neale, assert that the author must have been a statesman or courtier. On the other hand, John King and David Bergeron attribute authorship to Richard Mulcaster, a London schoolmaster. Schoolmasters were traditionally among those who devised pageants for royal entertainment. Richard Tottel printed both editions of the pamphlet. The two editions are similar in appearance, the only difference being the title of each edition. The first edition was titled *The Quenes Maiesties Passage through the Citie of London to Westminster the Day before her Coronacion*, and the second was *The Passage of our most drad Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth through the citie of London to Westminster the daye before her coronacion*.

*The Quenes Maiesties* marked the first time a new regime published accounts of the monarch’s coronation procession and was the first piece of Elizabethan printed propaganda “intended to build in the minds of the citizenry the image of Elizabeth as their personal Queen.” It provides a written record of the events of January 14, 1559, not only preserving the events of the day in the minds of the citizenry, but also giving the procession a permanence that lasted after the removal of the stages. With the invention of the printing press and a rise in literacy, those who were not in London during the procession could read about its events. The pamphlet describes the colors, sounds, and

---

sights of the event. The record of the events was more detailed than the descriptions of
the processions of past monarchs. The author presents Elizabeth in a favorable light and
the theme of the pamphlet is the love between the new queen and her subjects. She
acknowledges even the most humble subject and attentively watches the pageants.
Elizabeth is portrayed as involved in the action, as an actor in the theatrical experience.
Readers of the pamphlet see the queen as always regal, but also approachable and
available to her subjects.

The coronation procession became increasingly important throughout the
sixteenth century as the Tudor monarchs began to see its value as a piece of propaganda.
The procession was an opportunity for the new monarch to emphasize royal position and
popularity to foreign ambassadors and domestic subjects. Elizabeth’s coronation
procession was the climax of this transformation.20 There were no formal pageants in the
coronation procession of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. The royal train,
spectacularly decorated, passed through streets hung with tapestry and lined with
spectators. The only diversion involved a group of virgins symbolically dressed in white,
holding branches of white wax. Edward VI’s procession was similar to that of his father.
The only entertainment was a tightrope walker who descended a rope from the steeple of
St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Mary’s procession was the forerunner to Elizabeth’s and was the first to include
pageants performed by the London guilds. Elizabeth had been a part of Mary’s
coronation procession, riding behind her sister in a chariot with Henry VIII’s fourth wife,
Anne of Cleves. Unfortunately, little is known about Mary’s coronation. No verses

20 John Neale offers a brief description of the processions of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I in his
introduction to Osborn’s Quenes Maiesties, 8-10.
survive and the few descriptions that do are inadequate. It is impossible to discern any theme. From the evidence available, the three pageants performed by foreigners living in London eclipsed the pageants performed by the Londoners. In addition, there are no surviving descriptions of Mary’s reactions to the pageants.

Genoese merchants had presented the first pageant for Mary at Fenchurch Street. The pageant had included four giants and a girl who represented either Mary or regality in general. There is no record of a speech or explanation of what occurred.

“Easterlings”, or Hanseatic merchants, presented the second pageant at the corner of Gracechurch Street. The pageant boasted a mountain and a wine fountain. Four children greeted Mary and a man dropped down by some type of mechanism. It is impossible to discern what occurred during the pageant. The most complete descriptions that exist are about the third pageant, presented by the Florentines, at the end of Gracechurch Street, although these descriptions are still inadequate. In the middle of three gates, four pictures were erected beside which an angel stood with a trumpet in his hand. In the other gates were tablets with verses written in Latin and in English. Six people stood beside the pageant and wished Mary good luck. There were also four statues representing Mary and the goddesses of Wisdom, Rectitude, and Virtue.

There are few descriptions of the remaining pageants. At the conduit in Cornhill were three children. The child in the middle represented Grace and carried a crown and a scepter. The child to her right was Virtue, who held a cup. Nature, holding an olive branch, stood on her left. The procession also stopped at pageants erected at the great and little conduits in Cheapside, the schoolhouse and Dean’s house in St. Paul’s
churchyard, and the conduit in Fleet Street. The only other feature fully described was an acrobatic performance at St. Paul’s Cathedral given by a man called Peter.  

There are three main differences between Mary’s procession and Elizabeth’s. Based on the surviving descriptions, the primary purpose of the pageants performed for Mary was to look impressive, rather than communicate messages from the people. In contrast, those for Elizabeth related the hopes and wishes of the people of London for the new reign. Next, foreign guilds constructed many of the diversions in Mary’s procession, while natives constructed the pageants for Elizabeth. Because Elizabeth stressed her “Englishness” by emphasizing her lineage, her subjects did as well. Finally, there are only a few vague descriptions of Mary’s procession. Elizabeth and her advisers, however, saw the propaganda potential of a printed account of the procession showing Elizabeth in a sympathetic light. Therefore, Elizabeth’s coronation procession remained in popular memory and set the precedent for the growing cult of Gloriana.

At two o’clock in the afternoon on January 14th, Elizabeth left the Tower of London to make her way to Westminster for her coronation. The London guilds had erected pageants in many of the same places as they had for Mary’s procession. Henry Machyn notes that she traveled

with all the lorde and ladies [in crimson] velvet, and ther horses trapyd with the sam, and [trumpeters in] red gowynes blohyng, and all the haroldes in ther cottes armur, and all the strettes stroyd with gravell.

---

Il Schifanoya, in his January 23\textsuperscript{rd} letter regarding the procession, noted that the whole Court “so sparkled with jewels and gold collars that they cleared the air, though it snowed a little.”\textsuperscript{24} At the end of a procession of 1,000 horses, Elizabeth, dressed in a robe of cloth of gold, a plain gold crown, and covered with jewels, was ensconced in an open litter trimmed with gold brocade and carried by two mules. The people of London received their new queen warmly and cheered as she began her journey. Spectators noted that Elizabeth acknowledged any person who offered her flowers, heard their suits, and “on eyther syde ther was nothing but gladness, nothing but prayer, nothing but comfort.”\textsuperscript{25} By contrast, chroniclers failed to note the reaction of those who witnessed Mary’s procession.

The first stop on the procession route was at Fenchurch. Here the citizens had erected a scaffold upon which were a group of men with instruments and a young boy who recited a speech in English. All the actors in the pageants were children. The speech was also written in Latin on a board fastened to the scaffold. The boy welcomed Elizabeth to London and stated the two gifts the citizens of London offered her. The first gift was “blessing tonges” which welcomed Elizabeth into the city.\textsuperscript{26} These tongues praised their new queen, prayed for her success, and wished her a long life. The second gift from the people was that of “true hertes” who, the boy stated, loved Elizabeth and “skip for joy, when as they heare thy happy name.”\textsuperscript{27} Tottel’s pamphlet noted Elizabeth’s attentiveness during the speech. After the boy’s speech, the crowd cheered.

\textsuperscript{24} Brown, Calendar, 12.
\textsuperscript{25} Osborn, Quenes Maiesties, 27.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 29.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
The first pageant of the procession was on Gracechurch Street. Elizabeth and her attendants passed under an arch and saw a stage with three tiers. Beside the stage was a wreath with the title of the pageant: *The Uniting of the Two Houses of York and Lancaster*. On the lowest stage were two actors representing Elizabeth’s paternal grandparents, Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV. Henry stood in the red rose of Lancaster and Elizabeth in the white rose of York. The branches of these two roses joined and climbed up to the second tier. On this stage sat actors representing Elizabeth’s parents, Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn with their respective emblems, a red and white rose and a white eagle with a gold crown. Since her execution, Anne’s name had scarcely been mentioned in public, but her image drew attention to Elizabeth’s English heritage. On the highest tier was an actor representing Elizabeth with her coat of armor and device. In addition, sentences about unity and red and white Tudor roses decorated the stage.

A young boy stood in the forefront to explain the meaning of the pageant. The official pamphlet notes that Elizabeth asked the crowd to be silent so that she could hear him. He stated that the pageant showed how the marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York signaled the end of the Wars of the Roses by uniting the houses of Lancaster and York. As the daughter and heir of Henry VIII, Elizabeth was the successor of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York and through this image the citizens of London stated their hope that Elizabeth’s reign would maintain the promise of peace that had resulted in the joining of the houses of Lancaster and York. The pageant portrayed Elizabeth as an important part of the Tudor dynasty, which had brought peace and unity to England. At
the end of the boy’s speech, according to the pamphlet, Elizabeth promised the crowd
that she would do all within her power to preserve the unity of the country.

Beside the water conduit at Cornhill, the guild members had erected a stage “no
less handsome than the first, but not so high” for the second pageant.28 Three open gates
extended from one side of the street to the other. At the top of the center gate, sitting on a
chair covered with the Cloth of State, or the Seat of Government, was a child who
represented Elizabeth, crowned with the imperial crown. Next to the stage hung a wreath
with the title of the pageant, The Seat of Worthy Governance, written on it “with perfite
sight and understanding to the people.”29

This pageant expressed the Protestant bias of the people of London. Four virtues
supported the Seat of Government while stepping on four vices, thus suppressing them:
Pure Religion tread upon Ignorance and Superstition; Love of Subjects upon Rebellion
and Insolence; Wisdom upon Folly and Vainglory; and Justice upon Adulation and
Bribery. Each vice and virtue had her name written on a plaque so that the audience
could identify her. Again, a child interpreted the pageant. True religion, or
Protestantism, would suppress ignorance and superstition, which were, according to the
Protestants, characteristics of Catholicism. Rebellion and insolence would not occur if
the subjects showed love toward their ruler, as was their duty. A ruler with wisdom and a
sense of justice would prevent folly and corruption. The child advised Elizabeth that she
would remain in the Seat of Government as long as she embraced the virtues and
suppressed the vices. He also implored the audience to do likewise. Il Schifanoya

28 Brown, Calendar, 13.
29 Osborn, Queenes Maiesties, 38.
interpreted the pageant differently from the official account. He focused on the Protestant slant of the pageant, stating that it was

purporting that hitherto religion had been misunderstood and misdirected, and that now it will proceed on a better footing, which was exemplified by a queen seated aloft on her throne.  

After the Queen thanked the actors and promised to do her best to maintain the virtues and suppress the vices, the procession continued down the route.

Beside the great conduit in Cheapside at the end of Soper’s Lane were three open gates. In the middle gate, eight children sat on three stages: four on the bottom, three in the middle, and one on top. The name of the pageant was The Eight Beatitudes, Expressed in the Fifth Chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Applied to Our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth. Written above each child’s head was the blessing he represented. In the explanatory speech, the child attributed each of the Beatitudes to Elizabeth, telling her that if she remembered his words, she would receive the promised blessings. At the end of the speech, according to the pamphlet, the people wished that “as the child had spoke, so god woulde strengthen her grace against all her adversaries.”

At the upper end of Cheapside Master Randolph Chomeley, the Recorder of the City, presented Elizabeth with a crimson purse containing one thousand marks in gold. This was a common feature of coronation processions, representing the monarch’s

30 Brown, Calendar, 13.
31 From Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, He says to His disciples: “Blessed are the poore in spirite/for theirs is the kingdom of heavne. Blessed are they that morne/for they shall be coforted. Blessed are the meke/for they shall inhereth the earth. Blessed are they which honger and thrust for rightuousnes for they shal be filled. Blessed are the mercyfull for they shal obteyne mercy. Blessed are the pure in herte/for they shal se God. Blessed are the maytyners of peace for they shall be called the chyldre of God. Blessed are they which suffer persecution for ryghtuousnes sake/for theirs ys the kingdom of heave. Blessed are ye when men shall reuyle you and persecute you/and shall falsly laye all manner of eyll saynges against you for my sake. Reioyce and be glad/ for greate is youre rewarde in heave. For so persecuted they the prophetis which were before your dayes.” Quoted in Matthew 5: 1-12, William Tyndale, The Newe Testament dylygently corrected and compared with the Greke by Willyam Tindale (Antwerp: Marten Emperowr, 1534).
32 Osborn, Quenes maiesties, 43.
reliance on the City of London for revenue. The Recorder of London had given Mary the same amount of gold. While there is no account of Mary’s response, there is one of Elizabeth’s response and the people’s reaction. The queen took the purse and thanked him “so pithily that the standers by, as they embraced entierly her gracious answer.”

The fourth pageant, beside the Little Conduit in Cheapside, was the most elaborate of the entertainments. The pageant consisted of a cave in the middle of two mountains. The mountain on the north side of the pageant was barren and stony. On top of the mountain was an artificial tree, withered and dead. At the foot of a tree sat a boy “dressed in black velvet, melancholy, pale, and wan.” A *Decayed Common Weal* was written in English and Latin on the tree, followed by the causes for a decayed commonwealth: no fear of God, civil disagreement, disobedience, blindness of guides, rebellion of subjects, flattering of princes, bribery of magistrates, and unthankfulness. The second mountain was green and fruitful with a healthy tree. A young boy, who was “well dressed, joyous, and jocund,” stood under the tree. Above his head, *A Flourishing Common Weal* was written in English and Latin, followed by the causes for a healthy state: fear of God, obedient subjects, a wise and learned prince, virtue rewarded, vice punished, and love of the commonwealth. The barren hill, the spectator could infer, represented England under the reign of Mary I; the fertile one represented the citizens’ hopes for Elizabeth’s reign.

In the center of the two mountains was a cave with a door and lock. Elizabeth asked the significance of the pageant “and it was tolde her grace, that there was placed

---

33 Ibid, 45.
34 Brown, *Calendar*, 14.
35 Ibid.
Tyme... ‘Tyme,’ quoth she, ‘and Tyme hath brought me hether.’”

Two people emerged from the cave. The first was dressed as an old man with a scythe in his hand. His name was Time. The second person was a young girl whose name was Truth, the Daughter of Time. The girl carried a book with *The Word of Truth* written on the cover. It was the New Testament written in English.

A boy stood on the left side of the stage and explained the meaning of the pageant. Time and his daughter, Truth, could now emerge from hiding after the oppression of the previous reign because of the promise of the new reign. The first mountain represented the damage and hopelessness of a decayed society, while the second one represented the hope and promise of a flourishing society. Like the previous pageant, the Cheapside entertainment demonstrated the Protestant leanings of Londoners:

> We trust O worthy queen, thou wilt this truth embrace.  
> And since thou understandeth the good estate and nought  
> We trust welth thou wilt plant, and barrenness displace.  

After the boy’s speech, he delivered *The Word of Truth* to the Queen. Elizabeth kissed the book, laid it upon her breast, and told the people of London she would read it often.

Elizabeth’s gesture is interesting. For the second time, the people of London were showcasing their Protestant leanings. It is unknown how Elizabeth actually felt about the pageant’s message. In the past, she had remained ambiguous about her religious leanings. During Mary’s reign, she had attended mass and had given the appearance of being Catholic. In addition, her accession proclamation omitted the title Supreme Head of the Church of England, the title held by both Henry VIII and Edward VI. On the other hand, her coronation ceremony contained both Catholic and Protestant elements. For the

---

36 Osborn, *Quenes Maiesties*, 44.  
37 Ibid, 48.
hopeful Protestants of London, however, this gesture constituted a public announcement of the return of Protestantism to England. Elizabeth had signaled that she would return the Bible to its rightful place as a means of spiritual instruction, one of the foundations of the Protestant religion.

Another important aspect of this pageant is its symbolic censure of the previous queen’s reign. After her accession, Elizabeth was careful to preserve the memory of her sister and even arranged a Catholic funeral for her. Elizabeth was unsympathetic toward those who criticized royalty. Her conviction that she reigned with the will of the people notwithstanding, Elizabeth believed in the divine right of kings. It was not a subject’s place to pass judgment on his ruler. Despite this, she participated in a pageant the described her sister’s reign as the cause of a decayed commonwealth. The reason for this was that Elizabeth was a politike and understood the need for an English monarch to gain and maintain the support of London.

From Cheapside, the Queen’s retinue proceeded toward Fleet Street. As Elizabeth passed the City of London School, a child gave a speech in Latin comparing Elizabeth to Plato’s philosopher king, the ruler of his utopian society in *The Republic*. Philosopher kings were those who search for true knowledge. Thus, Elizabeth, known for her love of learning, was an ideal ruler. After passing a gate at Ludgate, a member of the entourage noted that Londoners had spared no cost for the coronation procession, a gesture that demonstrated the amount of love toward their new queen. Elizabeth replied that she would try to do the same. The author of *The Quenes Maiesties* reacted to Elizabeth’s response: “An honorable answere, worthie a noble prince, which may
comfort all her subjectes, considering there can be no point of gentleness, or obedient love shewed toward her grace, which she doth not most tenderlie accept.”

The conduit at Fleet Street was the site of the fifth and final pageant of the procession. On a stage with four towers was a platform with a throne and an artificial palm tree. Sitting in the chair was a female who held a scepter in her hand and wore an open crown. She represented the Biblical prophetess Deborah, “The Judge and Restorer of Israel.” The title of the pageant was Deborah, With Her Estates, Consulting for the Good Government of Israel.

In the pageant, Deborah consulted the three estates of Israel for the greater good of the Jews. Six people represented the three estates: two nobles, two clergymen, and two commoners. A child described the meaning of the pageant. The Quenes Maiesties author noted that Elizabeth asked for quiet and had her litter moved closer so that she could hear the oration. The child explained that Deborah was an ideal queen for Elizabeth to emulate and, like Deborah, she should consult the estates of England for the good of her citizens. That, according to the pageant, was the key to a successful reign and to earning the love of her subjects.

Although the pageant on Fleet Street was the last formal one of the procession, the people of London presented three more entertainments for their Queen. At St. Dunstan’s Hospital, a child stood with a group of governors. The Quenes Maiesties states that Elizabeth “did cast her eyes to heaven” and was overheard to remark, “I here see this mercifull worke toward the poore whom I must in the middest of my royaltie

---

38 Ibid, 53.
39 Deborah was a prophetess, judge, and military leader for the Israelites. This position was held by only two others: Moses and Samuel. She and Barak, rescued Israel from Jabin, king of the Canaanites, and ruled Israel for forty years. Judges 4:1-23, Good News Bible: Today’s English Version, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992).
The child stepped forward and made a speech in Latin. He stated that the elaborate spectacles presented to Elizabeth by the guilds of London showed the love and loyalty of her subjects, but the Queen should remember that the most important “was the everlasting spectacle of mercy unto the poore members of allmighty God.” The child implored Elizabeth to follow the examples of her grandfather, father, and brother and continue with royal charity to the poor. The child then prayed for the long life of Elizabeth and for the defeat of her enemies.

At Temple Bar were two statues of Gogmagog the Albion and Corineus the Briton, whom Geoffrey of Monmouth mentioned in his history of England, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, written in the twelfth century. Once again, the people of London expressed their hopes for a Protestant nation. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth Brutus conquered ancient Britain. He founded a dynasty that culminated in the reign of Arthur, whose symbol was the red dragon. Before Arthur’s line ended, Merlin prophesized the triumph of the Britons over the Saxons, of the red over the white. The Tudors frequently alluded to this to legitimize their rule because the red rose of Lancaster triumphed over the white rose of York in the Wars of the Roses. Additionally, because he had a British mother, Emperor Constantine had equated British kingship with Roman emperorship, giving Arthur and his line imperial status. “Thus,” according to J.J. Scarisbrick, “early Britain had sired an heroic dynasty upon which the first Christian emperor had bestowed a peculiar halo and from which would one day spring a conqueror who would reclaim the British heritage.” After the English Reformation, Henry VIII declared himself an imperial monarch, connecting him to Arthur. As the daughter of

---

40 Osborn, *Quenes Maiesties*, 56.
41 Ibid.
Henry VIII and an English mother, therefore, Elizabeth was the descendant of the mythical leader.

The statues of Corineus and Gogmagog thus represented the Protestants’ hope that Britain would once again claim its imperial status and no longer be subservient to the Papacy. Corineus, for whom the county of Cornwall was named, was the leader of the Trojans. Brutus, the alleged first king of the Britons, first encountered him at the Pillars of Hercules, the outlying areas around the Strait of Gibraltar. Monmouth described Corineus as “a sober-minded man, wise in counsel, yet of great courage and audacity.” Corineus defeated Gogmagog, who stood twelve feet tall and was the greatest and most repulsive of the giants.

The statues of Corineus and Gogmagog held a table in their hands, which explained the messages of the pageants in Elizabeth’s coronation procession in both Latin and English. The pageants had built their messages upon each other. The first pageant, at Gracechurch Street, had shown that “as true heyre unto thy father dere,” Elizabeth was a part of the so-called Tudor ‘House of Unity,’ and thus the rightful queen of England. The Cornhill pageant had placed Elizabeth in the Seat of Governance and advised her to uphold virtues and stifle resistance. By applying the eight Beatitudes to Elizabeth in the third entertainment, Londoners had implied that Elizabeth would receive God’s blessings. At the Little Conduit, Time and Truth had revealed the causes of a prosperous and a decaying commonwealth and presented Elizabeth with The Book of Truth to guide her. Finally, the people of London had advised Elizabeth to use Deborah as a guide and

---

surround herself with good advisers. Now, in conclusion, the plaque reminded Elizabeth of her obligations to her subjects:

Therefore goe on O Queene, on whome our hope is bent,  
And take with thee this wishe of thy towne as finall,  
Live long, and as long raigne, adourning thy countrie,  
With virtues, and maintain thy peoples hope of thee.\(^{44}\)

On the south side of the procession was a group of children singing songs. One child, dressed as a poet, gave Elizabeth London’s farewell, stating that the City sent the Queen their hopes and prayers. He continued with the hope of all men that Elizabeth would allow virtue to rule, that she would not support errors, and that she would restore Truth; all men prayed that she lived a long life. Elizabeth promised that she would remember their words, but she remained vague about how she would accomplish what the people were asking. Next she passed on to Westminster to prepare for her coronation. Tottel’s pamphlet noted that the City “received her grace at all places…with most tender obedience and love, due to so gracious a queen and soveraigne ladie” and that throughout the procession Elizabeth “shewed herselfe generallye an ymage of a woorthie Ladie and Governour.”\(^{45}\)

At the end of the official pamphlet is a chapter called “Certain notes of the queens maiesties great mercie, clemencie, and wisdom” observed during the coronation procession.\(^{46}\) The pamphlet cites three examples of this. At the far end of Cornhill, near Cheapside, a knight saw an elderly gentleman who wept and turned his back when the Queen passed. The knight suggested that the man wept out of joy and Elizabeth agreed. In Cheapside, the queen smiled as someone in the crowd said, “Remember old king

\(^{44}\) Osborn, *Quenes Maiesties*, 58-59.  
\(^{45}\) Ibid, 60.  
\(^{46}\) Ibid, 61.
Finally, the author noted that Elizabeth stopped her chariot when anyone wished to speak to her or offer her gifts. In addition to the Bible given to her at the Little Conduit, witnesses saw a branch of rosemary in her litter given to Elizabeth by a woman at Fleet Street when the procession arrived at Westminster.

The people of London gave an impressive performance. The coronation procession was designed to be a test of a sovereign’s popularity. During Anne Boleyn’s coronation, the crowd had remained silent. Twenty-six years later, her daughter passed the test spectacularly, leaving an indelible mark on the minds of the people of London. Elizabeth had tried to establish an intimate relationship, not just with foreign dignitaries and noblemen, but with the common people as well, which the official account stressed.

Elizabeth was at her best when she was before a large audience. She was a superb actress and could always be relied on to play the appropriate part. In the past, pageants had been one-sided, in which the subjects addressed their prince, but Elizabeth turned the process into a two-sided conversation. Her replies were as important as the message of the pageants: “She knew by instinct when to speak and when to listen attentively, when to smile and when to be solemn.” Elizabeth’s goal for her coronation procession was to win the hearts of the people of London. Throughout her reign, she would state that she owed her throne to her subjects. By all appearances, Elizabeth succeeded. The Cult of Gloriana had begun.

---

47 Ibid.
CHAPTER II

“THE LAND OF GOOD ADVICE”:
PLAYS AND MASQUES AT COURT

Tudor England was an oral culture. Because very few in the sixteenth-century could read or write, the use of the spoken word in theatrical performances had a greater impact on the public than written texts. The sixteenth-century mind, Norman Sanders states, was “thoroughly trained in the ‘interpretation’ of theatrical productions.” The performances of plays and masques were opportunities for patrons and writers to give advice on matters such as religion, ideals of kingship, and the marriage and succession issue in front of a royal audience. Elizabeth encouraged the use of plays and masques as propaganda by both attending these performances and patronizing playwrights.

The extent to which Elizabeth and her council attempted to control publications and performances of plays confirms their perception of the importance of drama. On May 16, 1559, for example, Elizabeth issued a proclamation titled Prohibiting Unlicensed Interludes and Plays, Especially on Religion or Policy. The proclamation detailed the administration of the licensing procedure:

The Queen’s majesty [doth] straightly forbid all manner interludes to be played either openly or privately, except that same be notified beforehand and licensed within any city or town corporate by the mayor or other chief officers of the same, and within any shire by such as shall be lieutenants for the Queen’s majesty in the same shire, or by two of the justices of peace inhabiting within that part of the shire where any shall be played.

49 Norman Sanders et al., eds. The Revels History of Drama in English vol. 2 (New York: Methuen, 1980), 12.
50 Plays and masques regarding the marriage and succession issue will be discussed in the next chapter.
52 Ibid.
It placed control of the acting profession into the hands of legal officers and noblemen accountable to the queen. Elizabeth instructed officials to deny licensing to plays that dealt with matters of religion or the governance of England. Those involved in the performance of unlicensed plays faced arrest and imprisonment for fourteen days “or more, as cause shall need, and further also until good assurance may be found and given that they shall be of good behavior and no more to offend in the like.” Consequently, it became necessary for playwrights and patrons to ascertain those subjects that pleased Elizabeth, setting the precedent for the deferential works of Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare.

There were two types of dramatic entertainment at Elizabeth’s court: plays and masques. Like modern plays, Elizabethan plays were fictional narratives “in which the characters speak and move, performed in our presence by people who assume their roles.” The masque had come to England from Italy. The first mention of a court masque occurred during the reign of Henry VII. It occupied a middle place between a pageant and a play. In most masques, there was very little speech. A group of masked or otherwise disguised players entered, usually dressed in exotic costumes, accompanied by torchbearers and music. The performers then danced choreographed numbers alone and with members of the audience. This intimacy between the performers and spectators separates the masque from a play.

The plot of the masque was less important than the magnificence of the spectacle. Performers needed only to have a noble appearance, be richly dressed, and move with dignity. Because performances implied a large expenditure on costly costumes, jewels,

53 Ibid.
candles, music, and craftsmen, they became a popular form of entertainment for wealthy and ambitious courtiers. Elizabeth’s courtiers sponsored the great spectacles that were a trademark of her reign. Elizabeth was too economical to spend the large amount of money required for a lavish spectacle, so most of the masques that she sponsored were dances, not pageants. She preferred stage plays, which were even less expensive.

The texts of only a few of the plays performed before Elizabeth in the early part of her reign survive, a fact that makes them even more valuable. Information about performances comes from the account books of the Office of the Revels and scattered sources. Two departments were responsible for theatrical performances at court: the Office of the Works and the Office of the Revels. Both offices were under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain. Building and maintenance, including the construction of stages for performances was the responsibility of the Office of the Works: “The office of Revelles, comprisinge all Maskes, tryvmphes, Plaies, and other showes of Dispourte, with Bamquettinge howses and like devises, to be vsed for the Anornemente of the Queenes Maiesties moste roiall Courte and her highness recreacioun, pleasure and pastyme.”

The Revels Office oversaw all dramatic performances at court, including expenditures relating to rehearsals, staging, and costuming, such as amounts of fabric used, and workers’ wages, and was primarily responsible for the decoration of the stage and costuming.

The officer who oversaw the Revels Office was the Master of the Revels, an office of Tudor origin, created by Henry VII in 1494. Although the responsibilities of the position changed over time, he remained a deputy of and accountable to the Lord

Chamberlain, who supervised all Court functions. The Master of the Revels was a courtier, a learned and experienced man who was “neither gallant, prodigall, nedye, nor greedy.”\footnote{Feuillerat, *Documents*, 17.} In the Court hierarchy, he was not a significant figure. At the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, the Master of the Revels was Sir Thomas Cawarden, appointed by Henry VIII in 1545. Cawarden served for only two years. Then, in 1560, Elizabeth appointed Sir Thomas Benger, an auditor in her household at Hatfield House before her accession. She appointed Benger for his ability as a financial manager. He served as Master of the Revels until 1572.

The Office of the Revels oversaw court performances at all of the queen’s palaces. Court theaters and audiences varied in capacity. The smallest performance space was in St. James Palace in London, which had room for only one hundred spectators. The largest space was in Whitehall Banqueting House in London. This was the most commonly used performance hall, not only because of its size, but also because of its proximity to London, the historic center of England’s monarchical power. The other places frequently used for dramatic entertainment were Greenwich Palace, Richmond Palace, Hampton Court, and Windsor Castle. The size of the audience depended on both the size of the performance hall and those present at court. During Elizabeth’s reign, court performances occurred only during the Christmas and Shrovetide holidays, when members of the great noble families gathered at court and the Court was on a break from its regular business.

Small groups of professional and semi-professional players performed the plays at court. These actors were in the service of a nobleman. Unlike previous monarchs, Elizabeth did not have a royal playing company for the first half of her reign. Although
records show a court performance by the Queen’s Players during Christmas of 1558, these were probably under the patronage of Mary. There were no more recorded performances. Not patronizing a royal company obscured Elizabeth’s image as a patron of the arts, however, and in 1583, she created a new company of players. This fact did not diminish her influence as courtiers competed to entertain her.

The Accounts of the Revels Office record performances by three men’s companies and four children’s companies. The first recorded court performance of the Earl of Leicester’s Men, under the patronage of Lord Robert Dudley, was at Christmas 1560. The actors in the service of Lord Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, first performed at court in 1564. The first Court appearance of Lord Rich’s Men, under the patronage of Robert Rich, was in 1567. The Children of St. Paul’s Choir were evidently favorites of Elizabeth’s, performing before the queen every year from 1559 until 1581. The Children of the Chapel Royal most likely performed at court in 1559, but did not appear again until Christmas 1563. The first performance of the Children of Windsor Chapel was in 1568 and the Children of Westminster School presented a play before Elizabeth during Christmas 1563.

By Elizabeth’s reign, the calendar of court playing was set. Court years began July 1st and ended June 30th. Elizabeth’s revels began during the Christmas season, with performances on St. Stephen’s Day (December 26), St. John the Evangelist Day (December 27), Innocents Day (December 28), New Year’s Day (January 1), and Twelfth Night (January 6). After Twelfth Night, there were no scheduled performances until Candlemas and Shrovetide in February. Additional performances took place “all other

---

57 Sanders, Revels History, 36.
tymes accustomed for preparacion of anye thinge to be done with in the office, or for accomplishment of anye appointment by speciall warraunte ordre, or the Queenes majesties pleasure,” except during the season of Lent.\(^5^8\) During the greater part of Elizabeth’s reign, the number of plays performed in a year ranged from six to ten.

The Revels Accounts record all expenditures related to dramatic entertainment at court for only the first two years of Elizabeth’s reign, including workers’ wages and the cost of supplies. Staff hired for the performance season worked “for their dayes wages tenne howres and for their night wages siete hours.”\(^5^9\) There were four masques performed in January and February 1559: two masques as part of Elizabeth’s coronation and two during Shrovetide. Expenses for the first two masques performed during “Christmas, Neweyeres tyde & Twelf tyde that yeare and ageanste the Coronacion foloinge after Twelftyde” include 64li 8d for workers’ wages, 135li 14s 6d for one-time services by haberdashers, and 201li 16s 16d for a water carriage rental.\(^6^0\) The workers hired included tailors, painters, haymakers, basket makers, and officers. The sum total of wages for the masques performed during Shrovetide totaled 150li 9d.

There were four masques given during the summer of 1559, the first season of Elizabeth’s reign. The sum of the workers’ wages including those for tailors, painters, and basket makers was 27li 26s 1d and exemption expenditures total 69li 3s 11d. From May 31 to June 9, 1559, the Revels Accounts record a total of 9li 9s 5d spent for performances. From July 28\(^{th}\) to September 30\(^{th}\), the Office of the Revels recorded 23li 18s for wages, in addition to expenditures for rent and carriages.\(^6^1\) From Christmas 1559

\(^{5^8}\) Quoted in Chambers, *Notes*, 43.
\(^{5^9}\) Ibid, 38.
\(^{6^0}\) Feuillerat, *Documents*, 79.
\(^{6^1}\) For a detailed listing of expenditures during this period see Feuillerat, *Documents*, 79-108.
to April 1567, the Revels Accounts record only partial expenditures. There were five masques performed during the 1559/1560 winter season. The absence of the Revels Accounts make it difficult to construct a full catalog of masques performed between Shrovetide 1560 to Christmas 1571, but other sources suggest that the yearly performance of masques continued.

**RELIGION**

Religious concerns dominated Elizabeth’s reign with the religious settlement the main issue in 1558 and 1559. Elizabeth was a politique and a moderate reformer, and her settlement reflected this attitude.62 Elizabeth’s first Christmas revels related to her coronation entry. On January 6, 1559, Elizabeth sponsored the performance of a masque titled *Papists*, one of two performed by the Queen’s Company at Whitehall. The masque included more performers than was customary: in addition to four cardinals and six priests, performers played popes, monks, friars, and vergers. Il Schifanoya described the masque in a January 23rd letter to the Castellan of Mantua:

> As I suppose your Lordship will have heard of the farce performed in the presence of her Majesty on the day of the Epiphany, and I not having sufficient intellect to interpret it, nor yet the mummery performed after supper on the same day, of crows in the habits of Cardinals, of asses habited as Bishops, and of wolves representing Abbots, I will consign it to silence.63

For many, this masque confirmed Elizabeth’s Protestant leanings. *Papists* marked the third time in twenty-five years, according to W.R. Streitberger, that “revels were used in the service of religious propaganda.”64 Elizabeth’s reaction to the masque is unknown,

---


63 Brown, *Calendar*, 11.
but given the date of its performance, it is certain she approved of the message. As in her coronation procession, Elizabeth had once again betrayed her religious views despite the ambiguity of her coronation service.

*Papists* was the last time Elizabeth allowed performances regarding her religious settlement. Elizabeth’s 1559 proclamation about the licensing of plays had forbade any discussion of religious issues in performances. As a result, playwrights looked to the parables of the Bible for inspiration and non-controversial topics. The two play texts that survive from this period are based on the parable of the prodigal son: *Misogonus*, performed on December 31, 1559, and *Heautontimoroumenos*, performed in January 1565.

The Children of the Chapel performed *Misogonus* before the Queen at Whitehall. The author of the play is unknown, but one or more of the three men whose names appear on the manuscript - Anthony Rudd, Laurentius Bariona, and Thomas Richards - probably wrote it. The play required a large cast by contemporary standards. There were eighteen speaking parts assigned to ten actors. Most of the characters are youths, servants, or old men, roles that boys excelled in playing.

*Misogonus* was written to be performed by schoolboys and is a typical of the Renaissance dramas written for this purpose. It tells the story of the prodigal son in the style of a Latin comedy. Philogonus, a wealthy landowner, laments to his friend Eupelas about the exploits of his only son, Misogonus. Misogonus’ mother died a week after his birth. Philogonus recognizes too late the consequences of the indulgence and idleness in which he has raised Misogonus and the unhappy father appeals to God after interrupting Misogonus’ night of dancing, gambling, and drinking. In the next act, two of
Philogonus’ tenants reveal to him that his wife has given birth to twins. On the advice of a learned man, his wife sent the elder twin away. Overjoyed, Philogonus sends for his eldest son, but Misogonus overhears the conversation and plots to deter the courier. He fails and Philogonus acknowledges his eldest son, Eugonus, delighted finally to have a worthy heir. Misogonus’ servants and friends desert him and he is finally convinced of his weakness and begs his father’s forgiveness.

The play instructed its audience about inheritance, the upbringing of children, choice of companions, the problems of drinking and sexual misconduct, and the evils of the Catholic clergy. One of the characters, Sir John, is a member of the clergy and joins Misogonus’ party during their night of debauchery. The performance displeased Elizabeth, according to Henry Machyn, who wrote:

The sam day at nyght at the quen(‘s) court ther was a play a-for her grace, they wyche the plaers plad shuche matter that they wher commondyd to leyff off, and continent the maske cam in dansyng.\(^{65}\)

The reason for Elizabeth’s unhappiness with the performance is unknown, but was perhaps due to the portrayal of the Catholic clergy.

The next known performance of the prodigal son story was more successful. In January 1565, the Children of Westminster School performed another version it, Heautontimoroumenos, or The Self-Tormentor, before the Queen at either Hampton Court or Whitehall. The play has eleven speaking parts and dramatizes the relationship between parents and children. Terence, a Roman comic playwright, wrote the play during the time of the Roman Republic. Although not Biblically based, the story offers the same moral as Misogonus. The story takes place in the country near Athens and extends over two days. Chremes commands his pregnant wife, Sostrata, if she gives birth

\(^{65}\) Machyn, Diary, 221.
to a girl, to kill the child. Having delivered a daughter, Sostrata gives the child to her maidservant, Philtera. Instead, Philtera takes the child, calls her Antiphila, and raises her as her own. Clinia, the son of Chremes’ neighbor, Menedemus, falls in love with Antiphila. This angers Menedemus, who eventually drives his son away. In order to punish himself for his son’s disappearance, Menedemus exhausts himself each day by working from morning until night. When the play commences, Clinia has returned to Attica, but stays with the son of Chremes because he is afraid to enter his father’s house. On the same day, Menedemus tells Chremes that he is anxious for his son’s return. In the end, father and son are reunited and Menedemus consents to the marriage of Clinia and Antiphila.

Court members presented three plays with religious themes during the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign. The first Court masque performed during Elizabeth’s reign gave an insight into her religious leanings. By ridiculing the Catholic hierarchy in a masque performed by the royal performers that she sponsored, Elizabeth announced her affinity for the Protestant religion. The two plays were less confrontational and offered moral guidance for their ruler. They told the story of the prodigal son and discussed the unconditional love of a parent and a child. As queen, Elizabeth portrayed herself as a loving mother to her subjects. In presenting Misogonus and Heautontimoroumenos, the actors asked their queen have the same patient and indulgent love for her subjects.

THE NATURE OF KINGSHIP

De Regimine Principum, a book written in the 1440s, listed six qualities of royal virtue: a good conscience, prudence, judgment, justice, mercy, and counsel.\(^66\) It prostrayed the monarch as responsible to God for the well-being of his or her subjects.

Because of the growth of royal power after the English Reformation, there was an increased interest in the moral responsibilities of kings. With the fortunes of a nation so dependent on the office of kingship, abuse by a tyrant was a closely examined possibility. Elizabeth’s father, Henry VIII, was often condemned as a tyrant. Not surprisingly, the 1560s and 1570s saw a number of plays exploring the nature of tyranny and the proper attitudes of subjects. One of the principal doctrines of Elizabethan tyranny plays was the idea that God would punish bad rulers. In *Damon and Pithias*, Eubulus, the wise councilor, articulated this view: “Upon what fickle ground all tyrants do stand.”

These works were a way for subjects to urge their ruler to live up to the highest ideals of the office. Playwrights offered tyrant plays as “mirrors for magistrates” and as a warning for subjects. Subjects must submit to their ruler regardless of how evil the ruler may be because the power of vengeance belongs only to God. In churches throughout England, priests delivered sermons about the obedience due to kings and tragedies confirmed what the people heard in church. The plays portray a cruel tyrant who either reforms or providentially dies, “apparently confirming a conservative ideology of proper sovereignty and nonresistance.” Therefore, the purpose of these tragedies, like that of public executions, was to demonstrate the consequences of tyranny or rebellion. The texts of four plays regarding the nature of kingship performed during the first years of Elizabeth’s rule still exist. Two, *Cambises* and *Damon and Pithias*, discuss the nature of tyranny and two, *Sapientia Solomonis* and *Miles Gloriosus*, offer rules of behavior for princes.

---

During Christmas 1560, Lord Robert Dudley’s company and the Children of St. Paul’s performed plays before Elizabeth at Whitehall. Records list the name of one of the plays as *Huff, Snuff, and Ruff*; and scholars surmise that this title is a substitute for a tragedy called *Cambises* by Thomas Preston because Huff, Snuff, and Ruff are the names of three of the play’s comic characters. Given the rowdy humor and violence on stage, historians believe that Leicester’s men performed *Cambises*. In addition, the play requires heavy doubling of parts with thirty-eight speaking parts for only six men and two boys.

The Prologue begins the play by warning rulers not to abuse their power or they will suffer the consequences:

> By good advice unto a prince three things he hath commended:  
> First, is that he hath government and ruleth over men,  
> Secondly, to rule with lawes, eke Justice (saith he) then,  
> Thirdly, that he must wel conceive he may not always raigne.\(^6^9\)

The Prologue then introduces Cambises, the ruler of Persia. Before leaving to attack the Egyptians, he installs Sisamnes, a wise judge, as regent on the advice of counsel. As soon as the king leaves, however, Sisamnes declares his intention to enrich himself through corruption. Ambidexter, the antagonist in the play, encourages Sisamnes to continue his evil ways until Cambises returns and orders Sisamnes’ execution. This was Cambises’ one good deed. The scene encourages rulers to punish corrupt officials for the sake of the kingdom.

As Cambises returns to his rule, Praxaspes, one of his counselors, warns Cambises about his excessive drinking. In response, Cambises orders his soldiers to bring Praxaspes’ young son to him so that Cambises can prove Praxaspes wrong by

---

shooting the heart of the child with an arrow. To the horror of the boy’s parents, Cambises does this and kills the boy, “Is this the gain now from the king for giving councel good/before my face with such despight to spil my sons hart blood?” Cambises then orders the murder of his brother, Smerdis, after Ambidexter tells Cambises his brother was plotting the king’s death. This causes great distress at court.

Cambises next forces his cousin to marry him against her will. At the wedding banquet, Cambises tells his queen a story of two lion whelps that fight and kill each other. The Queen draws a parallel to Cambises’ murder of his own brother; Cambises, enraged, orders her death. After the Queen’s execution, Cambises dies in a hunting accident. He observes that death is his reward for his evil deeds. The epilogue craves the patience of the audience and prays for the queen and the council:

As duty bindes us for our noble Queene let us pray, 
And for her honorable councel the truth that they may use
To practice justice and defend her Grace eche day.
To maintain Gods word they may not refuse
To correct all those that would her Grace and graces lawes abuse,
Beseeching god over us she may reign long
To be guided by trueth and defended from wrong.  

Preston uses history to teach a political lesson. As with the corrupt judge, Sisamnes, the taking of bribes was a constant source of trouble in Tudor England. The story of Cambises was from The History, by the Greek historian Herodotus and was widely recounted in the Middle Ages. The audience of the play would have been familiar with it. The main difference between Preston’s Cambises and Herodotus’ Cambises is the source of his evil deeds. Preston assumes that Cambises’ deeds are the result of

---

70 Ibid, 474.
71 Ibid, 503.
heavy drinking and an evil nature. According to Herodotus, Cambises was insane. To the men of the Renaissance, however, he was not insane, but cruel. He is a tyrant who is guilty of murder, fratricide, and incest. He is thus responsible for his actions and deserving of his death.

Cambises portrays two contradictory aspects of the king, both of which Herodotus discusses in books three and five of his history. He performs one virtuous act, which was the punishment of Sismanes, but then begins his steady downfall with the shooting of Praxaspes’ son to prove the steadiness of his hand after drinking, the murder of his brother, and the execution of his wife and kinswoman. Immediately after the Queen’s death, Cambises kills himself after falling on the point of his sword as he attempts to mount his horse for a hunting expedition. In drama, tyrants seldom reign for long and generally die violent and unnatural deaths.

From a contemporary point of view, Cambises’ death is the ideal solution to the problem of his tyrannical reign. He died by divine intervention and not by the hand of his subjects. The word “tyrant” had several distinct definitions for Elizabethans. They still used it in the classical sense to describe an absolute ruler, but it was frequently employed with the connotation of an unjust or cruel reign. Contemporary theorists made a distinction between tyrants who usurped their thrones and those who inherited their position. Despite the fact that he was a tyrant, Cambises was an anointed king. Cambises’ subjects, the play implies, tolerate the evil rule of their king with passive

---

72 While in Egypt during festival celebrations, Cambises killed Apis, the Egyptian sacred calf, ordered the whipping of the priests, and the slaughter of Egyptians celebrating. “It was directly as a result of this, say the Egyptians – this deed of wrong – that Cambyses went mad, though indeed he was not in true possession of his wits before.” Herodotus, The History, trans. David Grene. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 223-224.
obedience. This reinforces the idea that God will punish evil rulers. This message had a contemporary significance in an age torn by religious strife.

In 1564 performers presented a masque and four plays during the Christmas revels at Whitehall. The Earl of Warwick’s company performed two plays and the Children of St. Paul’s performed one play, the names of which are unknown. The Children of the Chapel performed *Damon and Pithias* by Richard Edwards, who was the Master of the Chapel at Merton College in Oxford. The play marked Edwards’s debut as a dramatic poet. Like many of his fellow Renaissance dramatists, Edwards drew his inspiration from various classical sources, combining them with his own originality. It has twelve speaking parts and nine Muses who sing, but do not speak.

*Damon and Pithias* takes place in ancient Syracuse during the rule of the tyrant, Dionisius. In a monologue by Stephano, the mutual servant of Damon and Pithias, Edwards describes Dionisius:

Every day he show some token of cruelty,
With blood he hath filled all the streets in the city:
I tremble to hear the people’s murmuring,
I lament to see his most cruel dealing:
I think there is no such tyrant under the sun.73

The play opens with a court philosopher, Aristippus, and corrupt courtier, Carisophus, discussing philosophy and court life. They eventually swear a friendship that turns out to be false. Damon, Pithias, and Stephano are young Greeks visiting the city. Stephano warns his masters that Dionisius is a tyrant who condemned a man to death that morning for dreaming about the king’s death. Damon later meets Carisophus, who, after failing to trick Damon into uttering a treacherous remark against Dionisius, accuses Damon of being a spy and has him arrested. Stephano reports to Pithias that Dionisius has

---

sentenced Damon to death. Damon appears before the king and asks leave to return home to put his affairs in order. Dionisius grants his request after Pithias agrees to stand in Damon’s place.

On the scheduled day of the execution, Damon has not returned to Syracuse and preparations continue for the execution of Pithias. Pithias declares himself happy to die for his friend. Just before the blow is dealt, Damon enters and the two friends argue for the right to die for each other. Overcome by the scene, Dionisius pardons Damon and reforms his tyrannical ways. He invites Damon and Pithias to remain in Syracuse and share Dionisius’ wealth. Eubulus delivers the final speech:

A gift so strange and of such price, I wish all kings to have;  
But chiefly yet, as duty bindeth, I humbly crave,  
True friendship and true friends, full fraught with constant faith,  
The giver of all friends, the Lord, grant her, most noble Queen Elizabeth.  

_Damon and Pithias_ examines kingship and tyranny, the nature of friendship, and court life. It is one of the most important expressions of attitudes toward friendship expressed by sixteenth-century humanists. Edwards contrasts the true friendship between Damon and Pithias with the false friendship among courtiers: “a rare ensample of friendship true, it is no legend-lie”. Damon and Pithias’s friendship also convinces Dionisius to change. According to Elizabethan moralists, while a tyrant reigned he was unhappy because his conscience tormented him. When he saw his own image, he was shamed and repented as Dionisius did.

In January 1565 the Children of Westminster presented _Miles Gloriosus or The Braggart Warrior_ by Plautus, a major comic author in the Roman Republic. The play is an attack on human vanity and arrogance. It has twelve speaking parts in addition to

---

74 Ibid, 104.  
75 Ibid, 12.
minor roles as attendant slaves. The main character, Pyrgopolynices, is a soldier who has made fantasy a way of life. Peter Smith states that “He occupies the ultimate comic position where absolute lack of self-knowledge creates a black-and-white contrast between appearance and reality.”

The play is set in the Greek city of Ephesus. Pyrgopolynices enters with a series of dependents and boasts of his exploits. After he exits, a slave named Palaestrio explains how he became the soldier’s slave. Palaestrio served a young Athenian, Pleusicles. Pyrgopolynices kidnapped his girlfriend Philocomasium. When Palaestrio tried to reach his master to give him the bad news, pirates kidnapped the slave and sold him to the soldier. After Palaestrio smuggles a letter to Pleusicles, the Athenian travels to Ephesus and stays with the soldier’s neighbor. With the slave’s aid, Philocomasium and Pleusicles meet secretly. Palaestrio eventually enlists the help of the soldier’s neighbor and the group tricks the soldier into releasing Philocomasium and Palaestrio. Pyrgopolynices learns the error of his vainglorious ways, thus providing a moral for those in the audience if they listen: “No one alone can know it all. I’ve seen a lot of people sail right past the land of good advice and never set foot on the shore.”

The next play that discussed kingship, Sapientia Solomonis, or The Wisdom of Solomon, presented Elizabeth with the model of a ruler worth emulation. The Children of Westminster performed the play in January 1566, at Whitehall before the Queen and her guest, Princess Cecilia, the sister of the King of Sweden and wife of the Margrave of Baden. The performance was part of the festivities celebrating the seventh anniversary of Elizabeth’s coronation. The play relates the biblical parable of Solomon and compares

---

77 Ibid, 71.
Elizabeth’s virtues with those of the biblical king. Sixt Birck, a German schoolmaster and dramatist, wrote the original text, but an anonymous writer adapted the tragic-comedy drama for performance in England.

*Sapientia Solomonis* has twenty-two speaking parts. It is a play about a good ruler, Solomon, the son of King David. The play describes him as “pious, brave, rich, and powerful.” After God offers to grant him any wish, Solomon asks for the gift of the wisdom suitable to his authority. God grants his wish and he rules justly and righteously.

As an example of his wisdom, *Sapientia Solomonis* presents the story of two women who ask King Solomon to resolve a quarrel concerning their sons, one of whom is living and one of whom is dead. Solomon cleverly discovers the identity of the mother of the living child. Finally, two monarchs who hear about his reputation - Hiram, King of Tyre, and the Queen of Sheba - visit Solomon. Hiram brings cedar wood as a gift and Solomon begins the construction of his temple. The Epilogue compares Elizabeth to the wise and righteous King Solomon:

Solomon was just; our Queen is unjust to no man. Solomon was merciful; our Queen is mercy itself. The King, exceedingly skillful, gave the living offspring to the true parent and assigned the dead child to the wicked mother. Our Queen restored her sons to the true Church, but she gave back to the adulterous mother the false progeny, of a heavy maternal yoke. Solomon built a holy temple to God; our Queen held nothing more important than to renew quickly the ritual of holy worship which had been overthrown.

79 Solomon orders that the living child be cut in half and given to each mother. One mother agrees with the plan, but the other begs Solomon to give the child, in full, to the other woman. Solomon declares this is the mother of the child. “This is the true mother; she shows it by the love which flows from a mother’s heart.” Quoted in Payne, *Sapientia*, 91.
80 Ibid.
Finally, the Epilogue compares the visit of Princess Cecilia to Elizabeth’s court to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of Solomon, noting Cecilia’s long voyage to look “upon her who is the rival of pious Solomon.”

In the preceding plays, Elizabeth’s subjects presented the two sides of kingship. Cambises was a tyrant who did not listen to his councilors and whose actions against his subjects eventually led to his death. This was a lesson to all rulers: rule wisely or face punishment from God. In *Damon and Pithias*, Dionisius was a tyrant who, faced with the unconditional love and friendship of Damon and Pithias, renounced his autocratic nature, and became an example to all rulers. In *Miles Glorious*, the slave of Pyrgopolynices, the Braggart Warrior, easily cuckolds his master because of Pyrgopolynices’ narcissistic nature. The moral was clear to the audience, dramatizing what can happen when rulers believe the flattery of courtiers. Finally, *Sapientia Solomonis* offers the model of an ideal ruler, mirroring the presentation of Deborah during the coronation procession. King Solomon was wise, devout, and just. His successful rule was a testament to his nature. For the sake of their subjects and their sovereignty, rulers should strive to emulate Solomon and resist imitating Cambises, Dionisius, and Pyrgopolynices.

SOMETIMES A PLAY IS JUST A PLAY

Not all plays and masques portrayed a greater message or acted as propaganda. Some purely displayed the wealth and magnificence of Elizabeth’s court. The utility of princely magnificence was a sign of intrinsic power meant to impress foreign visitors. Admission to court entertainments was a sign of favor and privilege. In addition, attendance by courtiers was an appropriate sign of favor and respect to foreign dignitaries. Important visitors on arranged visits would have entertainments mounted

---

81 Ibid.
especially for them, a fact noticed by those at court, emphasizing the guest’s significance. Those who arrived at Christmas or Shrovetide attended the scheduled revels, as Princess Cecilia did when she watched the performance of *Sapientia Solomonis*. The Revels Accounts and other sources note four occurrences when visiting dignitaries were present at masque performances. Unfortunately, little is known about these masques except their occurrence.

On May 24, 1559, Henry Machyn noted the arrival of the embassy of the Duc de Montmorency, Constable of France: “The xxiiij day of May the imbassadurs the Frenche [were] browth from the byshope[‘s] pallas by land throught Flet-street [unto] the quen’s pales to soper, by the most nobull men ther was abowt the cowrt.”82 The reason for their visit is unclear; however, that night, Elizabeth gave the ambassadors a banquet “as goodly as has been seen,” and performers presented *A Masque of Astronomers*.83 On January 1, 1560, Elizabeth sponsored a masque for the visit of the Duke of Finland. The title of the masque was *A Maske of Barbarians* and featured six Barbarians and six Venetians. On June 9, 1564, there were three masques presented for the French ambassador, Artus de Cosse, Seigneur de Gonnor, who arrived at the English court to confirm the Treaty of Troyes.84 The performances highlighted the importance of the guests and their visit because of the expense involved in mounting a performance.

For the visit of the Grand Prior Francis of Lorraine and his entourage, Elizabeth presented *A Masque of Wise and Foolish Virgins* performed by her maids of honor,

82 Machyn, *Diary*, 198.
83 Ibid.
84 In an attempt to regain Calais, Elizabeth was persuaded to send English troops to fight on the side of the French Huguenots. The English withdrew after the French granted the Huguenots some religious tolerance. The treaty of Troyes was signed in 1562. Part of its terms required that the English give up their claims to Calais. See Guy, *Tudor England*, 268.
between October 25 and October 28, 1561, at Whitehall. The Grand Prior, who was returning to the French Court, was the French escort of Mary, Queen of Scots when she returned to Scotland in August. Machyn marked their arrival in his diary:

The xxv day of October cam rydyng from skotland serten Frenche-men throught London, my lord of Bedford and my lord Monge and my lord Strange was ther gyd with a M. horse throught Fletstreet, and so to my lord of Bedford(‘s). 85

A notice of the masque appears in the memoirs of Pierre de Bourdeilles, Abbe et Seigneur de Brantome, a member of the French party. Although one could infer a hidden message to the Scottish queen in the title of the masque, given the animosity between Elizabeth and her cousin, Mary Stuart, there is no evidence of this.

The primary function of all Court entertainment was social. These entertainments served as a gathering point for the people of the court, to put aside their differences and show a common allegiance to their queen. Because of this, the only information about some performances comes from scattered sources and little is known about the content or context of the performance. There are three such notices: one from the Il Schifanoya and two from Henry Machyn.

In a letter to Ottaviano Vivaldino, the Mantuan Ambassador with King Philip at Brussels, dated February 6, 1559, Il Schifanoya notes that on the previous evening “double mummery was played: one set of mummers rifled the Queen’s ladies, and the other set, with wooden swords and bucklers, recovered the spoil.” 86 The Shrove Sunday performance was performed at Whitehall, possibly by the Queen’s Company. The title of the masque was ‘A Masque of Swart Rutters.”

85 Ibid, 270.
86 Brown, Calendar, 27.
On July 11, 1559, Henry Machyn wrote about a masque performed in the banqueting house at Greenwich Palace following a joust given by the queen’s pensioners: “After the Quen(‘s) grace cam down in-to the parke [and] toke her horse, and rod up to the bankett howse, [with] the inbassadurs and the lوردes and lades, and so to soper [and] a maske.” 87 Nothing else is known about this performance. Machyn discusses another masque given on February 1, 1562, at Whitehall by the Queen:

The furst day of Feybruary at nyght was the goodlyest maske cam owt of London that ever was seen, of a C. and d’g gorgyously be-sene, and a C. cheynes of gold, and as for trumpettes and drums, and as for torche-lyght a ij hundered, and so to the cowrt, and dyvers goodly men of armes in gyilt harness. 88

The only evidence for some performances comes from the Account of the Office of the Revels. The accounts list five masques performed between 1559 and 1565 in which only the name of the masque and location of the performance are known. On Shrovetide Tuesday, February 7, 1559, A Masque of Fishermen, Fisherwives, and Marketwives was performed before the Court at Whitehall. Elizabeth also commissioned two masques, A Masque of Italian Women and A Masque of Patriarchs at Whitehall on January 6, 1560. Then on February 27, 1560, there was a performance of A Masque of Diana and her Six Nymphs Huntresses at Whitehall. Finally, the queen sponsored a performance of A Masque of Hunters and Nine Muses at Whitehall on February 18, 1565. The Revels Accounts also show expenses for plays and masques whose titles and content have been lost to history. In some cases, the performance date is unknown as well.

The plays and masques discussed in this chapter were not revolutionary. Their messages about religion, morality, and the ideals of kingship were the same as those

---

87 Machyn, Diary, 204.
88 Ibid, 276.
performed before king and queens before Elizabeth, but the drama performed during
Elizabeth’s reign contributed to the image that Elizabeth perpetuated. Her court became
a work of art in its own right and became the patron of the most lavish forms of dramatic
entertainment of the period. The plays chosen by patrons for the royal audience did so at
the pleasure of the queen. As a result, in an effort to gain favor, patrons only sponsored
those plays that corresponded with the image Elizabeth wished to project to her people.
A performance at court was a sign of favor that the playwrights subsequently publicized
on the title page of published plays, thus alerting readers to the play’s message.
Therefore, Elizabeth was the only audience member whose presence was key for the
purpose of propaganda. The entertainments, however, gave Elizabeth the opportunity to
promulgate her image of a ruler whose magnificence is on display for all at court to see
and a ruler who takes her subjects’ advice to heart.
After the settlement of the religion question in 1559, the most pressing issue in
the 1560s was Elizabeth’s marriage and the settlement of the succession. Despite
Elizabeth’s proclamation forbidding the licensing of plays discussing politics,
Elizabethans performed plays before the queen revealing their opinions on these two
issues. Elizabeth was the greatest matrimonial prize in Europe and she had her choice of
consorts. Everyone assumed she would marry. At the beginning of her reign, the
succession issue was looked upon in terms of her marriage: she was young and most
assumed she was capable of bearing children. When Parliament met in 1559, the House
of Commons urged Elizabeth to marry. Marriage was her duty both as a queen and as a
woman.

Everyone talked about the queen’s possible marriage and the many candidates for
her hand. The country wished to see the succession settled; however, opinions on the
choice of a candidate differed. In October 1559, there were ten foreign ambassadors
competing for Elizabeth’s favor. Among her suitors were two kings, including her
former brother-in-law, Philip of Spain, two archdukes, five dukes, and two earls. The
King of Sweden offered his eldest son, Eric, who remained optimistic about his prospects
in spite of a formal rejection and three subsequent informal rejections.

The Holy Roman Emperor offered his two younger sons, the Archdukes
Ferdinand and Charles, but he soon withdrew the Catholic Ferdinand due to Elizabeth’s
Protestant leanings. Of all the suitors Archduke Charles was the best match

89 Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 75.
for the queen politically, and she used this match as a type of cover against the Privy Council and Parliament’s pressure to marry. There were two main obstacles to Elizabeth’s marriage with Charles. The first was religion. The idea of “one king, one faith” was essential to political stability, but Charles was a Catholic and Elizabeth could not risk the anger of her Protestant subjects by allowing Charles and his entourage to hold Mass. In addition, she could not afford the danger of taking a husband who might become the focus of Catholic intrigue. The second obstacle was more personal. Elizabeth declared that she would not marry anyone she had never met, but the Emperor refused to allow a meeting, because, he declared, “It was undignified; it was not the way princes wooed; it would make a laughing stock of them in the case of failure.”

Therefore, Charles’s suit was abandoned until a compromise could be reached.

Among the English nobility, two names stood out: Henry FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel and Sir William Pickering. Arundel had little but rank and family to recommend him. He was middle-aged, not handsome, ignorant, and ill mannered. He also had two previous marriages and two married daughters. Pickering was a more appealing choice. He was in his early forties, handsome, and considered a “ladies’ man.” It was these qualities, not rank or fortune, which made him attractive. Pickering, a commoner, was the favorite of Londoners, but most considered marriage to a subject too demeaning for a queen. Such a marriage could cause conflicts among the noble families.

Marriage to a foreign prince, however, was dangerous. Mary I’s marriage to Philip of Spain was unpopular and had caused many of the Queen’s problems among her subjects. Marriage to a foreign prince would upset the balance of power in Europe and force a permanent choice of allies and, possibly, enemies. Finally, since many of the

\[90\] Ibid, 77.
eligible suitors were Catholic, Elizabeth might have to make religious concessions that would upset her Protestant subjects. Her marriage would need the consensus of the people if she were to be successful. As a result, Elizabeth hesitated.

Elizabeth’s relationship with Robert Dudley complicated the marriage issue. The Dudleys were a notorious family. Henry VIII executed Robert Dudley’s grandfather Edmund, one of Henry VII’s councilors, for treason. Elizabeth’s sister, Mary, ordered the execution of Robert’s father, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, after his failed attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne after the death of Edward VI. Robert Dudley and Elizabeth had known each other since childhood. Upon her accession, Elizabeth had appointed Dudley her Master of the Horse, a position that kept him close to the queen. The Master of the Horse oversaw the maintenance of the monarch’s stables, coachhouses, and kennels. He was the type of man who Elizabeth wanted for a husband and the only man to tempt her to enter into the state of marriage. The only obstacle was Dudley’s wife who lived away from Court at Cumnor Place, near Oxford.

Members of the Court began to notice the intimacy between Elizabeth and Dudley in April 1559. On April 18th, the Spanish Ambassador, Count de Feria, wrote of the relationship in his letter to King Philip:

During the last few days Lord Robert has come so much into favour that he does whatever he likes with affairs and it is even said that her Majesty visits him in his chamber day and night.91

Dudley was an accomplished courtier, handsome, tall, cultured; and he was an expert jouster. The situation distressed her Privy Council. In September, de Feria reported to

---

Philip that the queen’s Principal Secretary, William Cecil, had told the ambassador that
he was considering retirement:

He said it was a bad sailor who did not enter port if he could when he saw a storm coming on, and he clearly foresaw the ruin of the realm through Robert’s intimacy with the Queen, who surrendered all affairs to him and meant to marry him. 92

On September 8, 1560, the situation changed when servants found the body of Dudley’s wife, Amy Robsart, at the foot of the stairs of Cumnor Place. Free to marry again, Robert Dudley began courting the queen in earnest despite the suspicious circumstances of his wife’s death and the fact that he was officially in mourning. Elizabeth believed completely in Dudley’s innocence, but, although a coroner’s jury brought in a verdict of accidental death, the damage to Dudley’s reputation was too great. The scandal attaching Dudley to his wife’s death, combined with jealousy among Elizabeth’s councilors and the nobility, made a marriage between the Queen and Dudley impossible. Although the relationship continued, the crisis was past by the summer of 1561.

As the queen’s reluctance to marry became clear and after a near-fatal bout with smallpox in December 1562, Parliament pressured Elizabeth to name a successor. Many believed that if the queen died without issue and with unsettled succession arrangements, the country would once again be plunged into civil war. This belief was in part the result of Tudor propaganda, which argued that monarchy was the key to social stability and that civil wars were the consequence of a disputed succession. The Wars of the Roses began because of a disputed succession and ended when Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. After he married Elizabeth of York, Henry VII combined the red

rose of Lancaster with the white rose of York, demonstrating the joining of the two families. Their son, Henry VIII, married six times in an effort to secure the succession. After Edward VI’s death and the Duke of Northumberland’s attempted coup, the people of London supported Mary’s claim to the throne over that of Lady Jane Grey because they believed in the superiority of dynastic claims over religious allegiances. If Elizabeth died without an heir, there would be no clear line of succession and the English did not want another civil war.

There were at least seven individuals whose claim to the throne merited consideration. The four with the strongest claims were Lady Margaret Strange; Henry Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon; Catherine Grey; and Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Lady Margaret Strange was a member of the Suffolk family and the cousin of the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey. Although her claim was weak, in Mary I’s time, some considered it stronger than those of Jane Grey’s sisters because of the taint associated with Jane’s execution. Henry Hastings was the only male of the group. He was Robert Dudley’s brother-in-law and descended from Edward III on his father’s side and Edward IV on his mother’s side.

The struggle to be heir presumptive, however, was ultimately between Mary Stuart and Catherine Grey. The question was whether the claim of the Stuart line or the Suffolk line was stronger. Mary Stuart was the granddaughter of Henry VII’s elder daughter, Margaret, who had married James V of Scotland in 1503. Catherine Grey was the granddaughter of Henry VII’s younger daughter, Mary, Queen of France and Duchess of Suffolk. In his will, Henry VIII had disinherited the Stuarts, but Elizabeth did not share his view.
Mary Stuart had the better hereditary right. Not only was the Stuart line the elder, but the purity of her descent from Henry VII was not in question. She was, in fact, Henry’s only living descendant whose lineage could not be challenged by alleging a doubtful marriage.\textsuperscript{93} Other arguments were more favorable to Catherine Grey. One argument was a common-law rule against a foreigner inheriting property.\textsuperscript{94} The Scottish-born Mary Stuart’s father was Scottish and her mother was French. Catherine Grey was English, like Elizabeth. The lines were drawn, dividing the Court, as each side attempted to persuade Elizabeth to either marry or name a successor. The performance of drama provided an opportunity for each side to state their case to as many influential people as possible.

In 1559, Elizabeth assured Parliament that she wished to remain unmarried, but if “it might please God to incline her heart to marry, her choice would light upon one who would be as careful for the preservation of the realm as she herself.”\textsuperscript{95} If, however, she continued to live unmarried, she would make provisions for the succession to the throne. The Parliament of 1563 met under the shadow of fear resulting from Elizabeth’s near-death from smallpox. Naturally, the succession issue rose to prominence because of this. On January 28\textsuperscript{th}, Thomas Williams, the Speaker of the House of Commons, stated the House’s wish for Elizabeth to name an heir to prevent the “unspeakable miseries of civil wars, the perilous intermeddlings of foreign princes… the waste of noble houses, the slaughter of people, subversion of town.”\textsuperscript{96} Elizabeth declared that she would name a

\textsuperscript{93} In addition to the legitimacy of the marriage of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, there was some doubt that Catherine’s grandfather, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, was divorced before he married Mary Tudor.
\textsuperscript{94} The rule had its origin after the loss of Normandy, “when the English found it expedient to deprive the Frenchmen of their lands in England.” Mortimer Levine, \textit{The Early Elizabethan Succession Question 1558-1568} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 99.
\textsuperscript{95} Neale, \textit{Queen Elizabeth}, 74.
\textsuperscript{96} Quoted in Neale, \textit{Parliaments}, 106.
successor, but would do so later. The House of Lords was more discreet and focused on Elizabeth’s promise to marry. Their message was clear: “Marry where you please, whom you please, and as soon as you please – but marry.”\textsuperscript{97} Because of this, Elizabeth resuscitated the marriage negotiations with Archduke Charles. She would have needed, however, to create strong support for any decision.

Three and a half years passed before parliament met again in 1566 and it faced the same situation as in 1563 – Elizabeth was still unmarried and the succession was still unsettled. The years had not simplified the succession question. On the contrary, printed literature appeared criticizing the queen for failing to name heir. Critics considered Elizabeth’s hesitation irresponsible and careless. In answer to these calls, Elizabeth responded that the time was not convenient to name an heir. About the requests that she choose a husband, she answered, “I will marry as soon as I can conveniently, if God take not him away with whom I mind to marry, or myself, or else some other great let happen…And I hope to have children, otherwise I would never marry.”\textsuperscript{98} Finally, the House of Commons agreed to give Elizabeth more time.

Elizabeth, however, continued to refuse to name an heir. She risked chaos after her death for the sake of stability while she lived. During Mary I’s reign, Elizabeth, as the heir-presumptive, had been the focus of discontent. She did not want the same to occur during her reign. In addition, the succession was not a gift; it was a right. Once given, it could not be withdrawn. By not naming an heir, Elizabeth strengthened her position. The uncertainty made her survival essential and focused her subjects’ loyalty on her alone.

\textsuperscript{97} Neale, Queen Elizabeth, 142.
\textsuperscript{98} Quoted in Neale, Parliaments, 147.
During the first two years of Elizabeth’s reign, no performances touched on the queen’s marriage. The plays performed before Elizabeth after 1561 did not celebrate her virginity. Instead, marriage was the preferable state to chastity. The plays performed that touched on the marriage and succession issue include *Gorboduc*, considered a landmark in English literary history, *Gismond of Salerne*, and three plays whose names are unknown.

Because of Elizabeth’s 1559 proclamation, lawyers developed theatrical conventions to protect both the playwrights and the performers. The performers allowed the most license were the law students at the Inns, many of whom were current or future politicians and administrators who found employment in the service of the crown, government, or in noble households. Although many of the dramas presented by the law students discussed contemporary subjects, unlike in civic pageantry, the actors did not impersonate contemporary politicians. Another protection for the members of the Inns was in Elizabeth’s proclamation, which allowed plays concerning matters of state “written or treated upon but by men of authority, learning, and wisdom, nor to be handled before any audience but of grave and discreet persons.”99 The men of the Inns were able to perform their dramas without anyone questioning their loyalty to the queen.

A final way the lawyers were able to perform their entertainments was an idea called “the Queen’s two bodies.” It was used to describe the balance between the monarch and the state. The Queen’s two bodies were the body politic and the body natural. The body politic was the office of the monarch and was unerring and eternal. The body natural was the person in the office, subject to error and death. The idea of the

---

two bodies was an attempt to explain a paradox: “men died and the land endured; kings
died, the crown survived; individual subjects died but subjects always remained to be
governed.” Using this theory, the lawyers of the Inns could perform their plays
because they were criticizing the person, not the office. They were imploring Elizabeth
to strive for the ideals of her position. The idea of the Queen’s two bodies never became
a law and remained controversial, but it allowed the Elizabethan lawyers to portray
divisive issues such as the queen’s marriage safely.

_Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex_, was the first play to offer advice in the ongoing
debate about Elizabeth’s marriage and the succession. The play, first performed during
Christmas, 1561, at the Inner Temple in London, was part of the Inns of Court seasonal
revels. Under the patronage of Robert Dudley, the students of the Inner Temple
performed the tragedy and a masque a second time before Elizabeth at Whitehall on
January 18, 1562. Machyn recorded the performance in his diary:

_The xviiij day of January was a play in the quen(‘s) hall at Westmynster by
the gentyll-men of the Tempull, and after a grett maske, for ther was a
grett scaffold in the hall, with grett tryhmpe as has bene sene; and the
morrow after the scaffold was taken done._

These were the only two performances of the play.

The five-act play is significant in the history of English drama because it was the
first to use blank verse, the earliest English play to employ the use of dumb-shows before
each act, and the first classical tragedy and history play written in English. The authors
of the play were two students of the Inner Temple, Thomas Norton and Thomas

---

100 Marie Axton, _The Queen’s Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession_ (London: Royal
Historical Society, 1977), 12.
101 Machyn, _Diary_, 275.
Sackville. It requires a large cast, with twenty-one speaking parts, at least nine actors in the dumb shows, and four members of the Chorus. Such lavishness was characteristic of the performances of the Inner Temple.

The story chronicles the consequences of King Gorboduc’s attempt to alter the succession and disregard the rule of primogeniture. Each act, divided into two scenes, begins with an allegorical dumb show that illustrates the moral of the act and foreshadows the ensuing action. The acts end with a chorus that repeats the moral.

_Gorboduc_ begins with a dumb show illustrating, with the use of a cluster of sticks, the strength of a realm in unity and its weakness in disunity. Six men, clothed in leaves, enter, the first wearing the sticks. The men try, unsuccessfully, to break the group of sticks. Then, one man takes a single stick and breaks it, followed by the other men breaking individual sticks. The meaning of the dumbshow and its attempt to persuade is clear: “Hereby was signified that a state knit in unity doth continue strong against all force, but being divided, is easily destroyed, as befell upon King Gorboduc dividing his land to his two sons, which he before held in monarchy, and upon the dissension of the brethren, to whom it was divided.”

The first act commences with Queen Videna telling her eldest son, Ferrex, of his father’s plans to split his kingdom, leaving half to Ferrex’s younger brother, Porrex. In the next scene, King Gorboduc discusses his plan with his three councilors, Arostus, Philander, and Eubulus. Arostus supports Gorboduc’s plan to split the kingdom and advises that the king should abdicate in favor of his sons because the burden of rule is easier when shared. Philander also supports the division of the kingdom but states that

---

Gorboduc should remain on the throne: “When fathers cease to know that they should rule, the children cease to know they should obey.”¹⁰³ Eubulus argues against the plan, warning that civil strife would ensue, stating, “Divided reigns do make divided hearts.”¹⁰⁴ Gorboduc decides to follow the advice of Arostus and abdicates.

The second dumb show dramatizes the effects of good and bad advice by portraying a king who refuses wine in a glass, but accepts poison in a golden goblet and dies. A king enters with members of his nobility. The king refuses a glass of wine offered by an elderly gentleman, but accepts a golden goblet filled with poison offered by a young and lusty man. The message of the dumb show is that, like the clear glass of wine, a good counselor is plain and open. The golden goblet represents flattering advisers who destroy their king with pleasant words. This foreshadows the actions of Ferrex and Porrex who listened to bad advice and, thus, brought about their destruction.

The second act opens with Ferrex complaining to his councilors, Hermon and Dordan, about King Gorboduc’s decision to split the kingdom. Hermon urges Ferrex to attack Porrex’s half of the kingdom, while Dordan opposes this, stressing that Ferrex rules the richer part of the realm. Ferrex decides not to attack his brother but prepares for a possible invasion by Porrex. In the next scene, Porrex discusses Ferrex’s military build-up with his ministers and decides to invade his brother’s land.

In the third dumb show, a group of people in mourning enter, signifying the sorrow at the murder of Ferrex by his younger brother. Then, King Gorboduc appears and asks for vengeance to punish him and not his sons. A messenger arrives to tell the

¹⁰³ Ibid, 19.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 21.
former king of his sons’ preparations for war and another enters to inform the assembly of Ferrex’s death by the hand of his younger brother.

The three Furies appear in the fourth dumb show displaying the names of kings and queens who have murdered their own children, foreshadowing the murder of Porrex by his mother, Videna. The Furies move across the stage three times and exit, illustrating the massacre of King Gorboduc and Queen Videna by their subjects. The play continues with Videna vowing revenge on Porrex for the murder of her favorite son, Ferrex. Gorboduc appears and Porrex, grieving over his actions, goes to him. Once Porrex leaves, Videna kills him. An offstage mob then murders Gorboduc and Videna.

The final dumb show uses a company of armed men who illustrate the “tumults, rebellions, arms, and civil wars” which continue for five years after the death of Gorboduc and his sons because of the uncertain succession. The nobility of the country appear and vow vengeance, but Eubulus stresses obedience: “In act nor speech, no, not in secret thought the subject may rebel against his lord….Though kings forget to govern as they ought, yet subjects must obey as they are bound.” The group exits, leaving Fergus, Duke of Albany, who reveals his intention to take advantage of the instability in the realm in an attempt to take the crown for himself. The nobles appear and a messenger informs them that the Duke of Albany wants the crown. The play ends as Eubulus reflects on the dangers caused by the absence of a clear line of succession and expresses his hope for the restoration of the crown to a lawful heir:

Then parliament should have been holden,  
And certain heirs appointed to the crown,  
To stay the title of established right  
And in the people plant obedience

---

105 Ibid, 58.
106 Ibid, 60.
While yet the prince did live whose name and power
By lawful summons and authority
Might make a parliament to be of force
And might have set the state in quiet stay. 107

The authors of Gorboduc, Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, were both law students of the Inner Temple. According to the title page of the play, Norton wrote the first three acts and Sackville wrote the last two. Thomas Norton had been a tutor in the household of Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset before entering the Inner Temple in 1555. He was a member of Mary’s last parliament in 1558 and of Elizabeth’s 1563 and 1566 parliaments. A staunch puritan, he produced the first English translation of John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion. Thomas Sackville, as Elizabeth’s third cousin on her mother’s side, was closer to the center of power. He was also more moderate in his religious sympathies than Norton. He was a member of Mary’s 1558 parliament and joined the Privy Council in 1586.

The story of King Gorboduc is based on Geoffrey of Monmouth’s The History of the Kings of Britain and generally follows his account. 108 In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account, Ferrex and Porrex quarrel after the king becomes senile. Ferrex escapes to Gaul after learning that Porrex intends to ambush him. He returns to fight Porrex, who kills him. Their mother, Judon, murders Porrex in retaliation. As a result, Britain becomes embroiled in a civil war. The stories of Geoffrey of Monmouth would have been familiar to the Elizabethans. The message to rulers is clear: “Rule until you die, and make sure you leave an intact kingdom to a clear successor.” 109

107 Ibid, 73.
108 According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, King Gorboduc is known as Gorbodugo.
Gorboduc’s first audience saw the performance as a direct commentary on contemporary political events, specifically in the context of the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Eric of Sweden. Robert Beale, an administrator and courtier, sat in the audience with Elizabeth and gave an account of it in his working notes for a chronicle detailing matters associated with Robert Dudley. He discussed the messages in the dumb shows:

There was a Tragedie played in the Inner Temple of the two brethren Porrex and Ferrex K[ings] of Brytayne…It was thus used. Firste wilde men cam[e] in and woulde have broken a whole fagott, but could not, the stickes they brake being severed [i.e. the dumb show before Act 1]. Then cam[e] in a king to whome was geven a clere glasse, and a golden cupp of golde covered, full of poison, the glass he caste under his fote and brake hyt, the poysone he drank of [the dumb show before Act 2], after cam[e] in mom[m]ers [the dumb show before Act 4]. The shadowes were declared by the Chor[us] first to signyfie unytie, the 2 howe that men refused the certen and tooke the uncerten, wherby was ment that yt was better for the Quene to marye with the L[ord] R[obert] knowen then with the K[ing] of Sweden…Many things were handled of mariage, and that the matter was to be debated in p[ar]liament, because yt was much banding but th[at] hit ought to be determined by counccell. Ther was also declared howe a straunge duke seying the realme at dyvysion, would have taken upon him the crowne, but the people would none of hytt. And many thinges were saied for the succession to put thinges in certenty.110

There is no reason to doubt that the audience also understood the play’s message.

In addition to the play, the men of the Inner Temple also performed a masque titled The Masque of Beauty and Desire. It was an allegorical statement of the suitability of Robert Dudley as a husband for Elizabeth. In the masque, Prince Pallaphilos represents Dudley. Prince Pallaphilos is the founder of the Order of Pegasus, probably an allusion to Dudley’s position as the Master of the Horse. He is a model political advisor and a defender against the threat of Catholicism. The masque is a narrative of Prince

Pallaphilos’ courtship and marriage. The implication of the performances of *The Masque of Beauty and Desire* and *Gorboduc* is two-fold. The masque advanced the suit of Dudley and the play concentrated on the succession issue.

*Gorboduc* can be interpreted as the first Elizabethan succession tract. The performance reinforced the petition presented to the queen by the House of Commons in 1559. The tragedy, according to Greg Walker, “provided its royal audience at Whitehall with a spur to action in the vision of a realm thrown into chaos by an unresolved succession.”

Norton and Sackville’s purpose in writing the play was to warn Elizabeth of the dangers posed by an unsettled succession and to urge her to choose an heir. If Elizabeth refused to name an heir, according to the authors, then Parliament should choose the successor.

Then parliament should have been holden,  
And certain heirs appointed to the crown,  
To stay the title of established right.

The authors, however, discourage Elizabeth from appointing Mary Stuart as her heir, calling the rule of a foreigner unnatural. The name of the villain in the last act, the Duke of Albany, is suggestive of this, “Ne suffer you, against the rules of kind, your mother land to serve a foreign prince.”

Albany was a Scottish title, traditionally held by a member of the Stuart family.

The final topic discussed in *Gorboduc* is the relationship between rulers and their subjects. The authors frequently stress the necessity for a prince to follow the advice of wise and experienced councilors. The play expresses widely accepted concepts about the

---

112 Sackville, *Gorboduc*, 73.
113 Ibid, 70.
possessor of the crown, including the divine right of kings. The monarch is responsible for the welfare of the nation, but if he or she abuses this power, God will punish both the ruler and the country because the ruler is indivisible from the commonwealth. Because of this, the ruler must listen to the guidance of good advisors. If, however, a ruler abuses the power of the position, the subjects may not question their ruler, a message characteristic of Tudor plays:

If not, those traitorous hearts that dare rebel,
Let them behold the wide and hugy fields
With blood and bodies spread of rebels slain,
The lofty trees clothed with the corpses dead
That, strangled with the cord, do hang thereon.114

Not everyone in the audience shared the opinions of Norton and Sackville. At its first performance, the authors had sought to persuade a skeptical audience of the merits their case. Besides a queen who resisted the idea of marriage and appointing an heir, others opposed the idea put forth by the play of Parliament choosing the next ruler. Some members of the Inner Temple maintained that Henry VIII had no right to alter the succession in his will. God, not man, chose the line of succession. As early as 1537, Robert Aske, a lawyer and the leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, stated that since the Norman Conquest “no King declared his will to the crown of the realm.”115 In the 1560s, another lawyer, Edmund Plowden, repeated Aske’s views and advised against following Henry VIII’s will. William Rastall, a judge on the Queen’s Bench, fled the country the day before the second performance of Gorboduc so he did not have to give his opinion on the succession “declaring as it is suspected, that there is no certain heir….the selection of

114 Ibid, 66.
115 Quoted in Walker, Performance, 215.
a king devolves upon the nation itself.” No records of Elizabeth’s reaction to the performance exist.

After the performance of *Gorboduc*, more plays and masques were performed in an attempt to persuade the Queen to stop the potential succession crisis. On July 5th, 1564, at the house of Sir Richard Sackville, Elizabeth asked the Spanish ambassador, Guzman de Silva, to watch a comedy. In a letter to King Philip, de Silva wrote, “I should not have understood much of it if the Queen had not interpreted, as she told me she would do. They generally deal with marriage in the comedies … The comedy ended, and then there was a masque of certain gentlemen who entered dressed in black and white, which the Queen told me were her colours.”

In some works of heraldry from this period, the use of the colors black and white symbolized perpetual virginity. If de Silva’s version of the event is correct, the play was an important element in Elizabeth’s efforts to create support for her choice of chastity.

During Shrovetide, 1565, the gentlemen of Grey’s Inn gave a performance of a tragedy, sometimes called *A Debate on Marriage*, at Whitehall. The characters in the play are Juno, who advocates marriage, and Diana, who promotes chastity. The characters argue their cases before Jupiter, who gives a verdict in favor of matrimony. At the conclusion, according to de Silva, Elizabeth turned to the Spanish ambassador and said, “They are all against me.” She evidently saw the production in a personal light.

The gentlemen of the Inner Temple performed another play, *Gismond of Salerne*, whose topic was the subject of marriage. The tragedy was performed at Whitehall sometime between February 24 and February 26, 1566. Although this cannot be verified,

---

117 Ibid, 404.
the play is generally believed to have at least four authors: Rodney Stafford (act one), Henry Noel (act two), Christopher Hatton (act four), and Robert Wilmot (act five). The author of act three is unknown. The play has ten speaking parts. It is the first English tragedy based on an Italian novel and “the first with two people in love with each other as hero and heroine.”

Gismond is the only daughter of Tancred, the king of Naples and prince of Salerne. He reluctantly marries her to a foreign prince, who soon dies, and Gismond returns to her father. Tancred declares that Gismond will not marry again because he does not want to be parted from her once more. Gismond, however, wishes to marry again:

But yet abide: I may perhappes deuise
some way to be vnburdened of my life,
and with my ghost approche thee in some wise,
to do therin the dutie of a wife.

She falls in love with and begins an affair with Count Palurine. The lovers agree to meet. Gismond instructs the Count to follow a forgotten vault, whose entrance is under Gismond’s bedroom floor. During one of the lovers’ meetings, Tancred enters his daughter’s chamber and, finding her absent, decides to wait for her. Gismond and Palurine enter the chamber and Tancred, upon discovering his daughter’s secret, waits until the lovers leave before exiting.

Tancred vows revenge on Palurine and orders the count’s arrest and execution by strangulation. The executioner cuts Palurine’s heart out and Tancred sends it to his daughter in a gold cup. Gismond cries into the cup and fills it with poison. She then

---

drinks from it. Tancred rushes to his daughter’s side to comfort her. Before she dies, Gismond requests that her father bury her with Palurine “for perpetuall memorie of their faithfull loue.” Tancred commits suicide out of grief for his cruelty.

The story of Gismond of Salerne is loosely based on the first novel of the fourth day of Bocaccio’s *The Decameron*. Bocaccio describes Tancred as a just and merciful ruler who “would have enjoyed that reputation to this day, had he not stained his hands with the blood of two lovers in his old age.” Like the play, a widowed Gismond returns to her father’s court and searches for the love and happiness she found with her late husband. Bocaccio’s Gismond, however, falls in love with her father’s valet, Guiscardo, but the message of true love conquering its enemies remains the same. Once again, the gentlemen of the Inner Temple were attempting to show Elizabeth the desirability of marriage.

The final known play concerning the marriage issue performed during the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign was performed on April 13, 1567. The performance was for the visit of the Spanish Ambassadors. Although nothing is known about the play, in his letter to King Philip, de Silva wrote this evaluation:

> The hatred that this Queen has of marriage is most strange. They represented a comedy before her last night until nearly one in the morning, which ended in a marriage, and the Queen, as she told me herself, expressed her dislike of the woman’s part.

A woman ruling alone was inconceivable to sixteenth-century men. Most expected a quick announcement of the queen’s forthcoming marriage after her coronation. When that failed to occur, Parliament pressed Elizabeth to do her duty for

---

120 Ibid, 166.  
the sake of the kingdom. After Elizabeth nearly died from smallpox in 1562, the settlement of the succession became a necessity. Through the use of drama, Elizabeth’s subjects interjected their opinions on the two most critical questions of the day and reminded her that their futures lay in her hands: “Englishmen could not fail to realize upon what a slender thread – a woman’s life – depended the tranquility of their land.”123

---

123 Neale, *Queen Elizabeth*, 121.
CHAPTER IV

“EVERY NOBLEMAN’S HOUSE IS HER PALACE”:
ELIZABETH’S PROGRESSES

In his *Description of England*, William Harrison wrote, “When it pleaseth her in the summer season to recreate herself abroad, and view the estate of the country, every nobleman’s house is her palace.”124 Elizabeth’s annual progresses through the countryside were a trademark of her reign. While it was not unusual for a Renaissance monarch to travel between palaces, Elizabeth’s progresses were characterized by the spectacle and pageantry that was emblematic of her reign. A Tudor progress occurred when the monarch and the Court left London, usually during the spring and summer, and journeyed through the countryside staying at royal palaces or the homes of loyal noblemen. It was difficult for Elizabeth to establish a rapport with those who were not members of her court. These progresses provided an opportunity to show herself to as many of her subjects as possible and provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate their loyalty and adoration for their Queen. Mary Hill Cole states that Elizabeth traveled as she ruled – “with fanfare, caution, and care for the preservation of royal authority and royal life.”125 During the major progresses of the decade, Elizabeth visited several corporate towns, including Winchester in 1560 and Coventry in 1565. She also visited both university towns: Cambridge in 1564 and Oxford in 1566.

There were many reasons, both practical and political, for the monarch to go on progress. During the summer months, there was always a danger of the plague and so it

was advantageous to be away from London. In addition, with the lack of sanitation there was always a need to clean the palaces. One also could lower the expenses of the Court by visiting the various noblemen who paid for the chance to entertain the queen, although the visits did not save her much money. William Cecil, Elizabeth’s chief adviser, calculated that these progresses cost Elizabeth one thousand pounds a year.\footnote{Lisa Hopkins, \textit{Elizabeth I and Her Court} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 136.} Although the various hosts provided meals for the Court, Elizabeth had to feed her Court when it was en route to its destination. The fact that Elizabeth, a fiscally conservative monarch, committed her financial resources to maintaining the Court on progress proves the perceived importance of the investment.

The most important motive for these travels, however, was to see and be seen. The citizens of a European town used a monarch’s first entrance into a city for a variety of reasons. In the Duchy of Brabant in the Netherlands, the entry ceremony was a reiteration of the privileges first granted to the area in 1356. During their first visit to the principal cities, sovereign rulers swore to respect and uphold the laws and customs of the city. In return, the citizens pledged their fidelity. If the ruler broke the oath, then the citizens could suspend their obedience. Sovereignty, therefore, “was contractual and invested by the subjects.”\footnote{Margit Thofner, “Marrying the City, Mothering the Country: Gender and Visual Conventions in Johannes Bochius’s Account of the Joyous Entry of the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella into Antwerp,” \textit{Oxford Art Journal} 22 (1999): 27.} In contrast, a French monarch’s entry into Paris exalted the monarch and reinforced the ideals of kingship. From the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries, the entry was one of the principal ceremonial occasions to
dramatize political concepts: “The royal entries had been staged to impress on the public memory the importance of the king’s first visit.”

What distinguished Elizabeth’s progresses from those of other monarchs was their intrinsic role in her monarchy; “they were like an endlessly repeated coronation, the tool without which she could not or would not rule.” Maintaining her popularity was the most important aspect of government to Elizabeth. Locally based rebellions were one of the greatest threats to the survival of the Tudor dynasty. Each of her predecessors had faced at least one major rebellion. A ruler who was just a name to her subjects might find that, in a rebellion, their loyalty went to their local lord, whom they knew personally, rather than to their queen. Lisa Hopkins states that she seems to have felt “that her magnificent appearance, enhanced by the presence of her retinue of handsome, well-dressed courtiers, and her undoubted personal charm would help her win the hearts of as many of her subjects as could see her.”

Elizabeth also used these progresses as a vehicle to propagate the burgeoning Cult. Her subjects displayed their love and loyalty through pageantry and spectacle. Ceremony gave structure to the queen’s visit. At all stops on the journey Elizabeth listened to orations and watched the presentation of pageants and masques. All the performances contained compliments to the queen. This was particularly characteristic of Elizabeth’s visits to private houses. Unlike those not at court, courtiers knew how Elizabeth liked to be portrayed and were anxious to advertise this because it showed their familiarity with the Queen. Unfortunately, there is little surviving evidence of the

130 Hopkins, *Court*, 136.
pageantry shown at private houses visited during her first progresses, but there is no reason to doubt that noblemen attempted to exceed their contemporaries and impress the queen with their entertainments.

Elizabeth’s grandfather, Henry VII, went on his first progress in March 1486, seven months after defeating Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. He traveled to the counties York, Worcester, and Gloucester, before journeying to Bristol. The men of the north had supported Richard III during the Wars of the Roses. Civic officials intended for the pageants that greeted Henry to demonstrate the support of his subjects and to absolve the cities from their recent opposition to the new king. Henry often used progresses for political reasons, especially during times of unrest. By showing himself to the people in his realm, Henry could “thereby impress the populace with the reality of an authority which must, frequently, have seemed very remote.”

His son Henry VIII loved to travel. During progresses in England, Henry, accompanied by his current wife and his court, presided over civic welcomes and entertainments. Until the dissolution of the monasteries, he frequently stayed at monasteries for their convenient lodging and hunting. He used the progresses for both political gain and recreation. He traveled to the north in 1536 after the Pilgrimage of Grace, but his most famous ceremonial expedition was to meet Francis I of France outside Rouen in 1520 on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Civic entertainments continued until the king, “in his old age grew irritable and put an end to the public festivities.”

None of Henry’s children, however, left Britain. Before he became king, Edward VI lived in Wales, but stayed close to London after ascending the throne. Mary also lived

131 Anglo, Spectacle, 21.
132 Cole, Portable, 18.
in Wales as a child and accompanied her father on progress in 1526. Once she became queen, however, she traveled very little. In 1554, she traveled to Winchester for her wedding to Philip of Spain, but, because of ill health and the unpopularity of her marriage, her movements outside London decreased.

With the exception of 1562, Elizabeth took her court on progress every year during the first decade of her reign. These progresses usually began in July, ended in September, and were between forty-eight and fifty-two days in length.133 Her visits to a nobleman’s house lasted an average of two days. The Vice-Chamberlain set the itinerary and made the arrangements with the towns and houses Elizabeth would visit. As time passed, decisions about destinations became political in nature. The Queen used these occasions to communicate her views on the various controversial issues of the time, particularly religious conformity. The primary purpose of these first progresses, however, was to show her person to as many people as possible.

Elizabeth’s progresses were limited in their geographic scope. Her travels often occurred in a forty-mile radius around London. She never traveled outside the areas under her direct royal authority. In the first years, Elizabeth traveled to fifteen of the fifty-three counties she governed: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, Middlesex, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Suffolk, and Warwickshire. The lack of distance traveled was not just due to bad roads and slow transportation; there were political reasons as well. Elizabeth did not travel to areas with rugged terrain, or those known for their Celtic heritage or Catholic sympathies. Instead of attempting to bring stability to troubled areas, she used the progresses to validate royal authority and social stability

133 Ibid, 22.
where it already existed. Tales of her visits, however, traveled around the realm, further fostering the image of Elizabeth as a successful and appealing monarch.

The competition to entertain the Queen was great. For hosts, these royal visits were an opportunity to encourage local pride and provided access to powerful guests. It was an opportunity to entice royal favors. Progresses were state functions. In addition to a great retinue, the Great Officers of the State – the Lord Treasurer, the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Admiral, the Secretary of State, and prominent noblemen – traveled with the Queen. The Privy Council met every few days, as the occasion required. Although individual hosts suffered depleted finances, the financial burden must not have been too prohibitive. Most noblemen willingly hosted their queen and she was expensively entertained. Her ministers, however, opposed the progresses because they generated more work for them.

Civic hosts also incurred expenses from royal visits. From the preparations involved, it is apparent that the towns regarded these royal visits with enthusiasm. Civic entertainments were more formal than those in private houses. The citizens of the city fixed the facades of the buildings, guilds organized pageants, and the council chose a gift for the Queen, usually a gold cup with gold coins in it. During the visit, town officials wore official gowns of black or scarlet. The city recorder and a schoolmaster or promising scholar of the grammar school presented an oration. In a cathedral town, the Court attended a service. In the university cities, there were speeches, sermons, academic disputations, and plays.

Officials used money from the town’s treasury to extend a proper welcome to the visiting Court; however, the Queen contributed to her own maintenance in the form of
food, supplies, staff, and transportation. Many towns took advantage of the queen’s visit to petition her for special favors. These requests usually centered on economic aid for local improvements, the relocation of courts, and intervention in local disputes. Beyond these motives, royal progresses enabled the cities to construct a corporate identity. When Elizabeth visited a corporate town, the whole town, not just one person, acted as a host. The queen’s visit encouraged citizens to work together and present a face of unity.

For her first progress in 1559, Elizabeth visited Kent and Surrey. On July 17\textsuperscript{th}, she left Greenwich Palace and traveled to Dartford in Kent. She visited Cobham Hall, the home of Lord Henry Cobham, “and there her Grace was welcomed with great cheer.”\textsuperscript{134} Next, she visited Gillingham and Otford in Kent on her way to Eltham Palace. On August 5\textsuperscript{th}, she left Eltham for Nonsuch Palace where the Earl of Arundel was her host. Henry Machyn wrote:

\begin{quote}
ther her grace had as gret cher evere nyght, and bankettes; but the sonday at nyght my lord of Arundell (‘s) howse mad her a grett bankett at ys cost…for soper, bankett, and maske, with drums and flutes, and all the mysyke that cold be, till mydnyght.\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

The next night the children of St. Paul’s, under the direction of Master Sebastian, presented a play. On August 10\textsuperscript{th}, according to Machyn, the Court left Nonsuch for Hampton Court Palace. After a visit to Croyden in Surrey, the home of Mathew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Edward Fiennes de Clinton, the Lord Admiral, entertained the Court at his home in West Horseley, Surrey. Lord Edward presented \textit{A Masque of Shipmen and Maids of the Country} in a banqueting house built specially for the Queen’s visit.

\textsuperscript{134} John Nichols, \textit{The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth Among Which are Interspersed Other Solemnities, Public Expenditures, and Remarkable Events, during the Reign of that Illustrious Princess}, vol. 1 (London: John Nicholas and Sons, 1823), 73.

\textsuperscript{135} Machyn, \textit{Diary}, 206.
In 1560, Elizabeth traveled to Surrey and Hampshire. On July 29th, she left Greenwich for Lambeth, where she visited the Archbishop of Canterbury. She visited the homes of Sir Henry Weston, John White, Bishop of Winchester, and Edmund Clerk. She reached Southampton in Hampshire. She visited also Winchester and Basing, the home of the Marquis of Winchester, Elizabeth’s Lord Treasurer, “with whom she was most splendidly entertained.”

Elizabeth’s 1561 progress took her through Essex, Suffolk, and Hertfordshire. It was a long progress, lasting two months. On July 14th, she left London and her subjects, according to John Nichols lined the streets to see their Queen and her retinue:

all the houses were hung with cloth of arras and rich carpets, and silk; but Cheapside was hung with cloth of gold and silver, and velvets of all colours; all the crafts of London standing in their liveries from St. Michael the Quern to Aldgate.

From London, she entered Essex where she visited twelve private houses. The homes belonged, for the most part, not to the old aristocracy, but to the “new” families – men enriched during the reign of Elizabeth’s father or who were officials in her court. Among those she visited were Lord John Grey, the second son of the Marquis of Dorset and Sir William Petre, a member of Elizabeth’s Privy Council. By visiting these particular families, Elizabeth emphasized the nobility’s reliance on the monarchy.

While on this progress, Elizabeth was entertained by three corporate towns. She visited Colchester on August 1st and Harwich from August 2nd through August 5th. Harwich presented a pageant for Elizabeth, the subject of which is unknown. After the magistrates escorted her out of town, Elizabeth asked if they had any requests. The magistrates replied they wished for nothing but a safe journey for their queen. Elizabeth

136 Nichols, Progresses, 87.
137 Ibid, 91-92.
replied, “A pretty Town, and wants nothing” and continued to Ipswich in Suffolk. In Suffolk, she stayed at the homes of Robert, Lord Rich and the Waldegrave family before returning to Essex. On her way back to London, she visited the home of Sir Ralph Sadler, a member of the Privy Council, and the town of Hertford, although no records remain of the visit. On September 8th, 10,000 people met Elizabeth as she returned to London, “such was their gladness and affection to her.”

There was no progress in 1562. The reason for this is unclear, but was probably due to a smallpox epidemic at court, which nearly killed Elizabeth in October. The only recorded trip was on January 15th, when Elizabeth dined with the Earl of Pembroke at Baynard’s Castle. Machyn wrote, “At nyght there was grett chere and a grett bankett, and after a maske, and here grace tared all nyght.” The next year’s progress was short. She visited the scholars at Eton, near Windsor. In July, the Archbishop of Canterbury entertained her at Lambeth in Surrey and she visited Stanwell in Middlesex.

Elizabeth’s 1564 progress began at William Cecil’s house, Theobalds, in Hertfordshire. This was her first visit to Theobalds, but she became a frequent visitor. Cecil’s home was a short distance from London. Each visit cost him two or three thousand pounds because Elizabeth would sometimes entertain ambassadors at his house. A contemporary wrote, “His Lordship’s extraordinary charge in entertaining of the Queen was greater to him than to any of her subjects. But his love to his Sovereign, and joy to entertain her and her train, was so great, that he thought no trouble, care, or cost, too

---

138 Ibid, 97.
139 Ibid, 104.
140 Machyn, Diary, 275.
much.”141 This was typical of those noblemen who entertained Elizabeth on her progresses. The amount of money spent was worth the prestige of a royal visit.

One of the most successful progresses during Elizabeth’s first decade was her 1564 visit to Cambridge. It is also one of the few with extant contemporary descriptions of the entertainments. Four accounts remain. Matthew Stokys, the University Registrar, wrote the chief account in English and an anonymous author wrote a shorter narrative. Abraham Hartwell of King’s College wrote a description of the festivities, titled Regina Literata, in Latin. Nicholas Robinson, a Fellow of Queens’ College, wrote a final Latin account, Commentarii Hexaemeri Rerum Cantabrigiae actarum. These accounts are not only important for their description of Elizabeth’s visit, but also give some of the earliest descriptions of Elizabethan staging methods.142 The fact that these accounts still exist proves the impression Elizabeth’s visit left on the students.

Elizabeth’s visit to Cambridge was a compliment to Sir William Cecil, whom she had appointed Chancellor in 1558. On July 17th, Cecil sent official notification of the queen’s intentions to his Vice-Chancellor, Edward Hawford, Master of Christ’s College:

> Although youe may here in rumors of the Quene’s Majestie’s intention to repayre thither in her Progresse, and to remayne in that Universitye three days…yet I, considering the place I holde to be your Chauncellor…have thought mete to impart the same unto youe.143

Hawford and the heads of the colleges appointed Richard Kelke, Master of Magdalene College and Archdeacon of Stowe, to “to set fourt and to teache suche ye Playes as

---

141 Quoted in Nichols, Diary, xxvii.
142 Extracts and translations of these descriptions can be found in Frederick S. Boas, University Drama in the Tudor Age (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914); Nichols Progresses; and Mary Susan Steele, Plays and Masques at Court During the Reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926).
143 Nichols, Progresses, 151.
should be exhibited before her Grace.”144 The students of Cambridge performed three plays for Elizabeth: *Aulularia* by Plautus, *Dido and Aeneas* by Edward Haliwell, and *Ezechias* by Nicholas Udall. On July 27\(^{th}\), Robert Dudley wrote a letter to Hawford, reassuring him about his choice of plays, “let this perswade youe, that nothinge can be with better will done by youe, that yt wil be graciously accepted of her.”145 The Office of the Revels helped the university authorities with their preparations, most likely in the form of staging supplies and costumes.

The Cambridge authorities prepared a written account of the order for Elizabeth’s entrance. On August 5\(^{th}\), the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Sussex, the Bishop of Ely, and other important persons escorted the Queen from Haslingfield to Cambridge. She arrived at the university town at two o’clock in the afternoon.146 Robert Lane, the Mayor, the aldermen, the burgesses, and the Recorder met Elizabeth’s retinue and the Recorder gave an oration in English. The mayor then gave the Queen the mace and a gold cup, worth nineteen pounds, containing twenty gold coins and Elizabeth entered the town.147

The students, Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Proctors, and Bedells assembled at King’s College to meet the Queen. Rushes covered the lane between King’s College and Queen’s College and there were flags and verses hung from the walls of the buildings. Elizabeth “was of all the students…honorably and joyfully received.”148 As the Queen passed them, the scholars kneeled and cried ‘Vivat Regina.’ She received orations from the Scholars, the Bachelors of Arts students, and the Masters of Arts students. The

---

144 Boas, *University*, 91.
146 Ibid, 158.
147 Ibid, 159-160.
148 Ibid, 149.
students then departed to their respective colleges. The authorities instructed them to not attend the Court, the Disputations or the plays.

As Elizabeth approached the west door of the chapel at King’s College, Cecil knelt and welcomed his queen to Cambridge, showing her the order of the doctors. Next, the Bedells knelt, kissed their staves, and gave them to Cecil. He kissed the staves and delivered them to Elizabeth. She gave them back to Cecil, “willing him and other Magistrates of the University, to minister justice uprightly, as she trusted they did.”

Next, Mr. William Master of King’s College delivered an oration in which he praised the Queen’s virtues, after which she stated she did not deserve, and gave an account of Cambridge’s history. That night Elizabeth attended a reception at King’s College Chapel. While at Cambridge, “the dais of her abode were passed in scholasticall exercises of philosophie, physicke, and divinity; the nights in comedies and tragedies, set forth partly by the whole University, and partly by the Students of King’s College.”

With the exception of one play, these performances were not political in nature. In his account of the royal visit, Nicholas Robinson writes that the authorities chose the plays in order that she might drink in as it were with a certain pleasure the sweetness of all these things, if she should be willing, amid the weightier affairs of the commonwealth, to adapt herself to these light jests.

Elizabeth’s visit to both university towns highlighted her magnificence, learning, and patronage. The first play, presented the night of August 6th, was the comedy Aulularia, also known as The Pot of Gold, by Plautus. For the performance, builders constructed a stage in King’s College Chapel that stretched the breadth of the chapel. Plautus’ plays

---

149 Ibid, 160.
150 Ibid, 150.
151 Steele, Plays, 17.
were popular at the university and so *Aulularia* was a natural choice for the opening night. Students from several colleges, chosen by Dr. Kelke, performed.

The complete text of the play has not survived, but enough exists to know the plot. Lars Familiaris, a household deity, allows Euclio, an elderly man, to find a pot of gold buried in his house and Euclio maniacally guards his gold from both real and imaginary threats. He has a daughter of marriageable age named Phaedria. Unknown to Euclio, Phaedria had an affair with a young man named Lyconides and was pregnant. Euclio decides to marry Phaedria to his rich and elderly neighbor, Magadorus, who happens to be Lyconides’ uncle. Eventually Lyconides confesses to Euclio that he is father of Phaedria’s child. Meanwhile, Lyconides’ slave steals Euclio’s pot of gold. The rest of the play is lost, except for a few fragments. Lyconides returns the pot of gold to Euclio, who gives his permission for his daughter and Lyconides to marry. Euclio finally gives the pot of gold to his daughter as a wedding present.

The comedy, performed in Latin, apparently appealed to the queen more than others in her retinue. Robinson writes that while some “either sleepy, or ignorant of the Latin dialogue, with difficulty endured the waste of so many hours,” Elizabeth showed no sign of weariness. After the performance, she returned to her lodging for the night.

The next day, Elizabeth listened to disputations in St. Mary’s Church regarding the previous day’s sermon. That night, the students of King’s College performed the tragedy *Dido and Aeneas*, written by Edward Haliwell, formerly a Fellow of the college. This is the only play performed during this visit that was political in nature, touching on the subject of Elizabeth’s marriage. Dido’s sister, in attempting to convince her to marry, says to Dido what Elizabeth’s subjects tried to articulate:

---

152 Ibid.
…Must you go on alone?
And spend all your years of youth in mourning
Without knowing the pleasure of having children
- And that is not all that love has to offer. 153

Haliwell’s tragedy is based on Book Four of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Dido, the Queen of Carthage, falls in love with a Trojan warrior named Aeneas and the two go through a type of marriage ceremony. After Aeneas returns to his homeland, Dido asks her sister to build a pyre so that she can burn all reminders of him. Dido curses him, ascends the pyre, and falls on the sword given to her by Aeneas. Aeneas and his men see the burning pyre and guess what happened.

Although the work is a tragedy, by marrying, Dido was a model for Elizabeth, with whom the House of Commons pleaded to marry in the previous year. Robinson writes that the play was well received, although some were critical of the length. Elizabeth singled out Thomas Preston, who later wrote the play *Cambises*, performed before the queen in 1560, and granted him twenty pounds a year for his performance. 154

The final play, performed on August 8th, was *Ezechias*, written by Nicholas Udall and performed by the students of King’s College in English. The text of the play no longer exists, but is based on the story of King Hezekiah of Judah, found in 2 Kings, chapters eighteen through twenty. Hezekiah introduced religious reform and abolished idolatry in his kingdom, as Elizabeth abolished Catholicism in hers.

From contemporary descriptions, an account of the play can be pieced together. The play begins with Hezekiah’s destruction of idolatrous images. He builds Christian altars, but the heathens rebel and destroy the altars. The prophet Isaiah declares that punishment will come to the heathens as a messenger arrives, announcing the approach of

---

154 Steele, *Plays*, 20.
the invading Assyrians. Hezekiah asks God to save Israel, which he does, convincing the heathens of his existence. The audience member’s account ends with a description of the fate of the Assyrians. Despite appearances, Robinson calls the play a comedy: “How much wit and charm in so grave and sacred a matter, and yet how much truth in a fixed, uninterrupted course!”

Elizabeth then retired for the night.

On August 9th, Elizabeth visited all the colleges of Cambridge University. Master Edward Leeds and his company received the Queen at Clare Hall and gave an oration. Next, she entered King’s College, where Philip Baker, the Provost, gave an oration and presented her with a book covered in red velvet, containing verses his students wrote for the royal visit, in addition to a biography of the founder of King’s College and the names of benefactors and other worthy names. From King’s College, Elizabeth traveled to Trinity Hall, Gonville College, and Cains College, where she heard orations. From there, she heard a Greek oration, given by Master Robert Beaumont at the East Gate of Trinity College. After another oration at St. John’s College, Elizabeth heard a Greek oration at Christ’s College and responded in Greek. Master Edward Hawford presented her with a pair of gloves in remembrance of her great-grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and founder of that college. That afternoon, Elizabeth heard disputations at St. Mary’s Church and gave a speech in Latin to the assembled students.

The next day, Elizabeth left Cambridge and, after dining with the Bishop of Ely at Long Stanton, journeyed to Hinchinbrook Priory in Huntingdonshire, the home of Sir Henry Cromwell. A group of Cambridge students followed the Queen to Hinchinbrook and performed a masque. The only description of it is included in an August 19th letter.

155 Quoted in Ibid.
written by the Spanish ambassador to the Duchess of Parma. Although de Silva was not present at the performance, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his account:

The actors came in dressed as some of the imprisoned Bishops. First came the bishop of London carrying a lamb in his hands as if he were eating it as he walked along, and then other with different devices, one being in the figure of a dog with the Host in his mouth. They write that the Queen was so angry that she at once entered her chamber using strong language, and the men who held the torches, it being night, left them in the dark, and so ended the thoughtless and scandalous representation.\textsuperscript{156}

It is unknown what happened to the actors who performed the play. Elizabeth concluded her progress with visits to homes in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Middlesex.

As time passed, Elizabeth became more secure in her position and aware of the value of the showing her person to her subjects. She began to travel farther from London and the progresses lasted longer. Her 1565 progress was extensive, but, unfortunately, few descriptions survive. Elizabeth journeyed through Berkshire, Surrey, and Warwickshire. The highlight of the progress was her entry into Coventry. On July 16\textsuperscript{th}, she attended a feast at Durham Place given in honor of the marriage of Henry Knollys, the son of Elizabeth’s Vice-Chamberlain, to Margaret, daughter of Sir Ambrose Cave. The Spanish Ambassador, de Silva, was present. In his July 23\textsuperscript{rd} letter to King Philip, de Silva wrote, “After supper there was a ball, a tourney, and two masques, the feast ending at half-past one.”\textsuperscript{157} Unfortunately, there are no descriptions about the plot of the masque. It is unclear where she traveled from here, but she may have stopped at homes in Berkshire.

\textsuperscript{156} Hume, Simancas, 375.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, 452.
On August 17th, Elizabeth entered Coventry. There are records of the visit in the city annals, but they are brief and not descriptive. The sheriffs, Julius Hearing and William Wilkes, dressed in scarlet cloaks, and twenty young men “of honest reputation & well horsed, all in one Livery of fine puke, mett her grace.”158 Each man carried a white rod that he presented to Elizabeth and she returned. The men escorted the Queen into the town where the mayor, Edmond Brownell Draper, and other town officials met the group.

John Throgmorton, the town Recorder, presented an oration in which he praised Elizabeth’s wisdom and virtue: “Of your profound learning and policy, seldom to be found in any man comparable, much less in any woman.”159 He continued by giving a history of the city. At the end of the oration, the mayor gave Elizabeth a gift of one hundred pounds in gold. According to the records in Coventry:

When the Queen Receaued it her guard sayd to the lords it was a good gift she had but few such, for it was one hundred pounds in gold to Whome the Maior answeread very boldy & it like your grace there is a great deale more in it. What is that sayd the Queene…the Maior answeread againe & sayd it is the faithfull hartes of all your true Loving subiectes, I thanke you Master Maior sayd the Queene it is a great deale more indeed.160

Next, the Queen continued through the city, passing four pageants performed by the guilds. Precisely what these pageants were is uncertain; there are no surviving descriptions. The tanners erected a pageant at Saint John’s Church; the drapers stood at the Cross; the blacksmiths at Little Park Street; and the weavers at Much Park Street.

The Coventry account book lists the payments to each guild and others in preparation for the royal visit, including payments for rehearsals, supplies, and wages for actors and

159 Nichols, Progresses, 193.
160 Ingram, Coventry, 233.
singers. The book shows payments ranging from four pence to three shillings four pence to the weavers’ guild for members playing Simon, Joseph, Jesus, Mary, Anne, and Simon’s Clerk, in addition to two angels and a child. There was more money for the drapers, including payments for keeping the fire, opening and shutting the door, and fetching the ladder. Characters in their pageant included three souls, four angels, and two demons, paid between two shillings and three shillings four pence. There were also singers and a trumpeter. Other payments include six shillings for bread and ale and six shillings nine pence for walkers. That night Elizabeth retired to White Friars, where she dined with the mayor and the council.

The next day, Elizabeth visited nearby Kenilworth Castle, home of Robert Dudley, the newly created Earl of Leicester. She invited the mayor of Coventry and other officials to Kenilworth, where they were “well-entertained.” While there, Elizabeth knighted Mr. Throgmorton, the Recorder of Coventry. She concluded her progress by passing through Lincolnshire and Huntingdonshire before returning to London.

Elizabeth’s 1566 progress was another successful and extensive journey. On July 1st, Elizabeth attended a masque performed at the marriage of Thomas Mildmay to Frances, sister of Thomas, Earl of Sussex, at Bermondsey in Surrey. De Silva wrote to King Philip on July 6th, “There was a masquerade, and a long ball, after which they entered in new disguises for a foot tournament, in which there were four challengers and 32 adventurers.” Elizabeth visited noblemen in the counties of Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and Northamptonshire. On August 5th,

---

161 For a detailed listing of expenditures for the city, see Ingram, Coventry, 234-243.
162 Nichols, Progresses, 198.
163 Hume, Simancas, 565.
according William Cecil, she stayed with him at Stamford in Lincolnshire. The highlight of this progress, like her visit to Cambridge two years earlier, was a visit to the university town of Oxford.

Elizabeth’s visit to Oxford was a compliment to the Earl of Leicester, whom she made Chancellor of the university in 1564. She intended to visit Oxford sooner, but “her intention being diverted by the dregs of a plague then remained there, deferred her coming till this year.”¹⁶⁴ Elizabeth arrived the evening of August 31st, accompanied by Cecil, de Silva, and other nobles. There are two surviving accounts of the visit. Nicholas Robinson, who was also present at her Cambridge visit, wrote an account in Latin, *Of Actes Done at Oxford When the Queen’s Majesty was there*. The other account, *Commentarii Sive Ephemeræ Actiones Rerum Illustrium Oxonii Gestarum In Adventu Serenissimae Principis Elizabethae*, was written by John Bereblock, a Fellow at Exeter.

The Earl of Leicester, four doctors, and eight Masters of Arts students met the royal retinue at Wolvercot. The three present Esquire Beadles delivered their staves to Leicester, who gave them to Elizabeth. She returned the staves to him and the Provost of Oriel College gave an oration. The group continued toward the town. One half mile from the city, the mayor of Oxford, Thomas Williams, the aldermen, and thirteen burgesses met Elizabeth. Williams gave her a mace, which she returned, delivered an oration in English, and presented a cup of silver worth ten pounds containing forty pounds in gold. This marked the first time the university presented a gift of money to a monarch.¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth entered Oxford in a chariot. The scholars lined the streets of the

---

¹⁶⁵ In the past, according to Nichols, the custom was that the citizens of Oxford gave a visiting monarch “five oxen, as many sheep, veales, lamb, and sugar-loaves.” Sir Francis Knolleys, the City Steward, changed the custom. *Progresses*, 208.
university and Robert Deale, from New College, gave an oration in the name of the students. Mr. Lawrence, a professor of Greek at King’s College, made an oration in Greek at Quartervois and Elizabeth thanked him in Greek, once again emphasizing her education. Mr. Kingsmyll, the Orator of the University, gave a final oration at the door of Christ Church.

Like her visit to Cambridge, Elizabeth spent the days during her stay at Oxford listening to disputation and the nights attending plays. The two plays presented were traditional university performances and not political in nature. On September 2\textsuperscript{nd}, Elizabeth attended disputation in Christ Church Hall. That night the students performed the first half of Richard Edwards’s *Palamon and Arcyte*. Edwards was a former student of Christ Church and author of *Damon and Pithias*, performed at court in 1564. Officials chose this play because it offered opportunities for spectacular effects. Before the performance began, however, a part of the stage collapsed, three audience members died, and five were injured. John Bereblock describes the accident:

> At the approach of night, they came together for the play that has been made ready...Moreover, the presence of the Queen, of which they had been deprived for two days now, had added such a great desire for it in the minds of all that the number was far greater and more infinite on that account...Scarcely had the Queen come in...and taken her seat on the lofty throne, when all the approaches to the theatre...were thronged with so great a crowd, and the steps were already so filled with people, that by their violent pushing they disturbed the common joy by a frightful accident. A certain wall of great square stones had been built there; it was a bulwark propping each side of a pair of steps to bear the rush of people going up; the crowd became too dense, the rush too great, the wall, although quite firm, could not stand the strain; it gives way from the side of the stairs.\textsuperscript{166}

The three men who died were a scholar at St. Mary Hall named Walker, a brewer named Penrice, and John Gilbert, a cook at Corpus Christi College. The five injured men

\textsuperscript{166} Quoted in Steele, *Plays*, 30.
recovered. The accident, however, did not postpone the performance and “could by no means destroy the enjoyment of the occasion.”\textsuperscript{167}

The text of \textit{Palamon and Arcyte} no longer exists. Bereblock’s summary of the performance indicates that the play was a dramatization of The Knight’s Tale from Geoffrey Chaucer’s \textit{Canterbury Tales}. The play tells the story of two knights, Palamon and Arcyte, who are imprisoned by Theseus, Duke of Athens. While in prison, they both fall in love with Emily. The knights are released from prison and compete in a tournament arranged by Theseus. The prize is Emily’s hand in marriage. Arcyte wins the tournament, but dies before he can claim his prize, and Palamon subsequently marries her. The play was “acted with very great applause in Christ Church Hall.”\textsuperscript{168}

The next day, Elizabeth heard disputations in natural and moral philosophy at St. Mary’s Church. Due to the length of the disputations, the second half of \textit{Palamon and Arcyte} was delayed because, according to Bereblock, Elizabeth “could not be present at the play without some risk to her health.”\textsuperscript{169} On September 4\textsuperscript{th}, Elizabeth heard disputations in civil law at St. Mary’s Church. That night, she attended the performance of the second half of \textit{Palamon and Arcyte}. When the play ended, Elizabeth called for the author and gave him thanks. Then, she recited part of the play to Edwards:

\begin{quote}
By Palaemon, I warrnet he dallieth not in love when he was in love indeed; by Arcyte, he was a right martial knight having a swart countenance and a manly face; by Trecatio, God’s pity, what a knave it is; by Perithous throwing St. Edward’s rich cloak into the funeral fire, which a stander-by would have stayed by the arm with an oath, Go fool, he knoweth his part, I warrant.\textsuperscript{170}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} Nichols, \textit{Progresses}, 210.
\textsuperscript{169} Quoted in Steele, \textit{Plays}, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{170} Nichols, \textit{Progresses}, 212.
Unfortunately, the context of this quote is lost. It evidently left an impression on those assembled and contributed to Elizabeth’s growing popularity. Like her coronation procession, Elizabeth once again had the right words for the occasion.

The next day Elizabeth listened to disputations in physics and divinity and attended a performance of Progne, a Latin tragedy written by Dr. James Calfhill, a canon of Christ Church. Calfhill adapted the story from book four of Ovid’s Metamorphoses and from a play of the same name written by Gregorio Corraro. Nicholas Robinson described the performance: “In the silence of this night there is exhibited on the stage how King Tereus devours his son, slain and prepared by his wife Progne on account of her outraged sister.”\textsuperscript{171} The play was well received, but was not as popular as Palamon and Arcyte.

Two days after this performance, Elizabeth left Oxford. The total cost of entertaining her, as recorded in the “Expenses of Christechurche by occasion of the Queenes Maesties cominge thether” was 148 li 2 s 1 ¾ d.\textsuperscript{172} On September 6\textsuperscript{th}, Sir Henry Norris entertained the Queen at his house in Rycot, located eight miles from Oxford. She continued through Buckinghamshire and Surrey before returning to London.

Details of the final three progresses of the 1560s are sketchy; most of the evidence comes from Cecil’s diary. In 1567, Elizabeth visited Berkshire, Surrey, and Hampshire. She visited the Oatlands, Guildford, and Farnham, and was entertained by Francis Carew and the Bishop of Winchester. In 1568, she traveled to Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire, Berkshire, and Northamptonshire. From Greenwich, she traveled to Essex, where she spent a week, and continued to Berkshire, staying with noblemen such as Sir Thomas

\textsuperscript{171} Quoted in Steele, \textit{Plays}, 32.
\textsuperscript{172} Boas, \textit{University}, 106.
Heneage, Sir John Fermor, Sir Henry Norris, and Thomas Perry. While in Berkshire, de
Silva noted how Elizabeth sought the affection of her subjects. He wrote that she ordered
her drivers to take her carriage into the thickest part of the crowds: “She was received
with great acclamations and signs of joy, as is customary in this country; whereat she was
extremely pleased and told me so, giving me to understand how beloved she was by her
subjects.”

Elizabeth’s 1569 progress took her to Surrey and Hampshire. From Richmond,
she traveled to Guildford and Farnham in Surrey. Her visit to Farnham was a political
one. While dining with the Duke of Norfolk, she discussed the issue of his rumored
marriage negotiations with Mary Queen of Scots, who escaped to England the previous
year. Elizabeth advised him, “To be very careful on what pillow he laid his head.”
Next, she visited the Earl of Leicester at Tichfield. The highlight of this progress was her
September 8th visit to Southampton, a town, according to John Nichols, famous for “for
the number and beauty of its buildings, its different inhabitants, and the resort of
numerous merchants.” There are no surviving accounts of her visit. The Queen and
her court traveled through Hampshire and Surrey before returning to Windsor in October.

It was not unusual for a Renaissance monarch to travel among the palaces in his
or her realm. In addition to sanitary reasons, it was to the monarch’s advantage to show
her person to her subjects and gain their loyalty. In this, Elizabeth was no different from
her predecessors or contemporaries. Elizabeth’s travels were different because of the
pageantry and ceremony involved in the progresses. Both noblemen and corporate towns

173 Quoted in Haigh. Elizabeth I, 156.
174 Quoted in Nichols, Progresses, 257. The Duke of Norfolk was executed in 1572 for treason for his part
in conspiracies with Mary Stuart.
175 Ibid, 259.
entertained the Queen. Although the great spectacles that characterized the summer progress occurred in the second decade of Elizabeth’s reign, these first progresses laid the foundation for these later entertainments as each nobleman and town tried to outdo the other to prove their love and loyalty for their monarch. As always, Elizabeth played her part perfectly. In 1568, she told the Spanish ambassador that she attributed her popularity “to God’s miraculous goodness” and her propaganda machine took full advantage of the spectacle.\footnote{Quoted in Haigh, \textit{Elizabeth I}, 156.}
CONCLUSION

Elizabeth I became the most celebrated monarch in English history, ruling during a golden age of theater, literature, and art. At the time of her accession, however, her subjects were unsure about their new queen. The reigns of her brother and sister left England weak, penniless, and divided. Elizabeth was a woman, branded a bastard by her father and sister, with no experience in governing. Despite this, her subjects greeted their new queen with joyous celebrations. Taking advantage of this, Elizabeth employed the spectacle associated with royalty and used it as propaganda which made her the focal point of her subjects’ loyalty. Although other monarchs had many of the same resources available to Elizabeth, she was the most effective at utilizing these resources. David Loades states that she was “one of the greatest image-builders the world has ever seen.”

Elizabeth’s first test for the people’s acceptance was her coronation procession. On January 14, 1559, Elizabeth and her retinue traveled from the Tower of London to Westminster. Seizing the opportunity to open a line of communication, the London guilds developed five pageants that articulated the wishes of the people, in addition to the requisite speeches proclaiming the queen’s many virtues. The pageant at Gracechurch Street established Elizabeth’s English heritage, confirming her place in the Tudor dynasty. According to Tudor propaganda, the Tudors brought peace to England after decades of civil war. At Soper’s Lane, the guilds, in order to prove that Elizabeth was worthy of her position, applied St. Matthew’s Eight Beatitudes to her. Two pageants showed the Protestant bias of the citizens of London. *The Seat of Worthy Governance*,

---

177 Loades, *Tudor Court*, 35.
located at the water conduit at Cornhill, showed four virtues crushing four vices, including pure religion triumphing over ignorance and superstition. The pageant at Cheapside was more obvious. The guild erected two mountains, symbolizing the rules of Mary I and Elizabeth. The first mountain was decaying, the second flourishing. Truth delivers an English Bible, *The Word of Truth*, to Elizabeth, which she kisses, betraying her Protestant sympathies. Finally, the guilds, giving the queen an example of a ruler who listened to the advice of her advisors, portrayed the Biblical queen Deborah.

Elizabeth was an active participant in the procession. A published pamphlet recorded her perfect responses to the pageants and to members of the public. She listened attentively to the speeches, moving closer or silencing the crowd when necessary. The author of the pamphlet noted that she smiled when those in the crowd recalled the image of her father and accepted gifts from all, including a branch of rosemary that she carried with her to the end of the procession. Elizabeth left an indelible impression on those present at the procession and, because of the pamphlet, on others throughout England and Europe.

In an illiterate culture, plays and masques were powerful instruments, as evidenced by Elizabeth’s 1559 proclamation regarding the licensing of plays. The queen’s court provided playwrights and patrons with an audience of ambassadors and court members. Elizabeth’s attendance was another means of sculpting her image. Playwrights highlighted plays performed before a royal audience, bringing the attention of those not in attendance to the play’s subject and message. There were six to ten performances a year discussing the issues of religion, kingship, the queen’s possible marriage, and the settlement of succession. The purpose of some performances, however,
was to merely entertain, display the magnificence of the court, and draw attention to the
visits of foreign dignitaries.

Upon her accession, the religious settlement was the most important issue. During her first Christmas revels, she revealed her Protestant leanings by patronizing the
performance of a masque, *Papists*, which ridiculed the Catholic hierarchy. After she
forbade the licensing of plays concerning religion, playwrights presented parables.
Because Elizabeth propagated the image of herself as a mother to England, the story of
the prodigal son was popular, as dramatized in *Misogonus* and *Heautontimoroumenos*.

As the power of the ruler grew under the Tudors, the nature of kingship and the
relationship between monarch and subject were common subjects. Tudor propagandists
stressed the divine right of kings and the importance of submissive subjects, reminding
them that only God has the right to punish. Plays displayed both good and bad rulers.
*Cambises* was a warning to what will happen to unrepentant tyrants. *Miles Gloriosus*
illustrated the consequences of believing flatterers. Dionisius, the tyrant in *Damon and
Pithias*, however, changes his oppressive nature and becomes an ideal ruler. Finally,
*Sapientia Solomonis* presents the story of King Solomon, a wise and just ruler worth
imitating.

Throughout her reign, the most important issues were the question of the queen’s
marriage and the identity of the next ruler of England. There was no precedent for an
unmarried female ruler. Elizabeth’s subjects pressed her to marry and there were many
candidates. There was, however, no consensus about who should be the queen’s
husband. The unpopularity of Mary I’s marriage to Philip of Spain showed the danger of
a foreign marriage. Marriage to a subject was considered undignified. Despite this,
subjects patronized plays that highlighted the virtues of marriage, including a masque at the house of Sir Richard Sackville and *A Debate on Marriage*. As it became clear that she would not marry, Parliament urged her to name an heir for the sake of the realm because a disputed succession could lead to civil war. Under the protection of the legal principle of the Queen’s Two Bodies, the gentlemen of the Inns presented their opinions on these subjects. In *Gismond of Salerne*, the heroine dies for love, the ultimate sacrifice of courtly love. *Gorboduc* was a statement against the accession of Mary Stuart and pointed out the importance of a settled succession. *The Masque of Beauty and Desire*, performed in conjunction with *Gorboduc*, was a proclamation of Robert Dudley’s suitability as a husband for the queen.

Elizabeth’s annual progresses were another opportunity to shape her image and enabled her to establish a link with her subjects. Although she only visited fifteen of the fifty-three counties in England and Wales, the stories of her visits spread. Noblemen and towns competed to entertain the queen and her retinue. Besides the compliment paid to the hosts, a royal visit gave noblemen access to powerful guests, the opportunity to ask favors and fostered civic pride. In anticipation of a visit, towns were decorated and entertainments planned to please the queen. During her visits to the university towns of Cambridge and Oxford, she listened to disputations and attended plays. There was no political significance to where or whom Elizabeth chose to visit; rather, it was the spectacle of seeing the queen and the ceremonies that left an impression on her people.

Every part of royal ceremonies symbolized the majesty and magnificence of the ruler’s office. These symbols “not only constituted easily comprehended treatises in political theory for the benefit of the illiterate…it could also present a sophisticated world
view, intelligible only to the highly intelligent.” Some historians have questioned the value of such propaganda and whether the public understood the message. Symbolism surrounded people in the sixteenth century, in religious services and dramatic performances. Thus, they were accustomed to thinking in allegorical terms and the language of symbolism was universal. The effectiveness of Elizabeth’s propaganda is evident in the queen’s growing popularity and the ensuing Cult of Gloriana. By making herself the heart of her subjects’ loyalty in order to heal the wounds of years of turmoil, Elizabeth I, benefiting from a renaissance of drama, created a persona that intrigues historians four hundred years after her death.

Loades, Tudor Court, 6.
PRIMARY SOURCES


Brown, Rawdon and G. Cavendish Bentinck, ed. Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy 1158-1580. Vol. 7. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890.


SECONDARY SOURCES


Steele, Mary Susan. *Plays and Masques at Court During the Reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926.


ONLINE SOURCES

APPENDIX A: CORONATION PROCESSION ROUTE

1. Fenchurch, where the Queen received the greeting from the City
2. Gracechurch Street, the site of the first pageant
3. Cornhill, the site of the second pageant
4. Soper’s Lane, the site of the third pageant

5. The Little Conduit in Cheapside, where the City presented 1,000 marks to the Queen and the site of the fourth pageant
6. St. Paul’s School, where a child delivered an oration
7. Ludgate, end of the city proper
8. The Conduit in Fleet Street, the site of the fifth pageant
9. Temple Bar, the site of the giant images of Gogmagog and Corineus
Cambridgeshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire
APPENDIX C:
PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED TWO TIMES

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Lincolnshire
APPENDIX D:
PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED THREE TIMES

Bedfordshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire
APPENDIX E:
PROGRESSES - COUNTIES VISITED FOUR OR MORE TIMES

Huntingdonshire, Middlesex, Surrey
VITA

Kimberly Kay Reynolds was raised in Sardis, Arkansas. She received a Bachelor of Science in dance management from Oklahoma City University in 2001. Her love of all things British led her to pursue a master’s degree in British history at Louisiana State University, which she will receive in December 2006.