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Corso di Laurea magistrale in Lingue e Letterature Europee Americane e Postcoloniali

Tesi di Laurea

Elizabeth I: a Political Allegory in a Midsummer Night's Dream

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Anno Accademico 2012 / 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Queen Elizabeth I is known to have been one of the most important sovereigns in the history of the English Renaissance. Daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, she ascended the throne in 1558 and reigned until her death. She was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty because she died unmarried since she did not want to share her power and her kingdom with a husband, and therefore left no heirs. After the Protestant reign of her half-brother, Edward VI, and that of her half-sister Mary Tudor, who had murdered hundreds of religious dissenters for the restoration of Roman Catholicism, England saw Elizabeth's accession as a bright light after a very dark period.

Elizabeth Tudor had always been an unconventional figure; throughout her reign, she fought for her rights to be an unmarried woman and to rule alone England, in a period in which a woman ruler was seen as unnatural. Despite the requests she had to face from Parliament she was able to remain unmarried until her death. Even after her death in 1603 she was able to stay alive in the hearts of all her subjects in both good and bad ways.

This dissertation aims to point out the importance Elizabeth I, acquired during her reign and, how she was able to become an icon for her Country even though she was a woman. This work aims to deal with her position as a female ruler who remained unmarried and it will focus on the strategies employed by both her and her subjects, in responding to her propaganda. Elizabeth showed herself acutely aware in controlling her iconography. This dissertation aims to analyze her identity in literature, sermons, pamphlets, speeches and portraiture in order to understand the way in which she was identified as a female ruler. In the second part, it will analyze more in depth the figure of the queen from the point of view of the most famous playwright in the history of England, William Shakespeare.

The first chapter, titled "Queen Elizabeth a New Female Ruler in the Renaissance" deals with the historical background of the Tudor family and with the life of Princess Elizabeth, paying particular attention to the dangers that confronted her during her childhood because of her sister Mary Tudor. After her accession to the throne, the celebrations of the her Accession Day and the festivities that would continue throughout her reign are analyzed. In the second part of this first chapter, the figure of Elizabeth is examined more in depth; the chapter: "A Woman on the Throne, the Two bodies" analyzes the difficulties that Elizabeth had to face being a woman ruler. Particular attention will be paid to the difference between the two bodies; the natural body and body politic. Elizabeth had to

fight hard during her reign to level off the chances of a woman on the throne: at that time, a woman ruler was seen as unnatural, so her Parliament, in order not to give her complete power, put pressure on her to choose a husband. Marriage negotiations were crucial throughout her reign: Elizabeth's councillors always asked her to get married, also in order to solve the problem of succession by giving England an heir. Until her death she was able to turn down these requests. In this refusal to marry she took advantage of the Marian symbology of the " bride of Christ". She claimed that her virginity was a form of dedication to God. She also claimed she was the spouse of England and that she would eventually marry when she pleased and with whom she chose. She was able to stay unmarried and childless until her death in 1603. However, according to some scholars, she probably thought of marring twice; with her favourite Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and with the French Duke of Alençon. Elizabeth's choices were not accepted by Parliament because they thought these were not convenient marriages: the first potential bridegroom was not Elizabeth's peer, the second one was picked at the beginning in order to make an alliance with France but in the end was seen just as a foreign threat for England. Particular attention is paid to these arguments and to the symbology that appeared for these issues. When, at the end of the XVI century, it was clear that she would never marry, a new part of her iconography began: she was celebrated as Virgin Queen. In the last part of the section, particular attention is paid to the new iconography that Elizabeth chose for the final years of her reign: Petrarchan discourse. She was able to identify herself with Laura of Petrarch's *Triumphs*, highlighting her chastity and her distance from her suitors. In particular the *Triumphs of Chastity* will be analyzed, that is, the work most connected to the Queen in her final propaganda as Virgin Queen.

As far as portraiture is concerned this work addresses the claims of Roy Strong and Frances Yates, who argued for the existence of a cult of Elizabeth, by analyzing briefly Strong's *The Cult of Elizabeth*. And it refers briefly to some other works connected to the Queen, in particular Spencer's *The Faerie Queene* which was one of the main contemporary works about Elizabeth.

The second chapter of this dissertation highlights the figure of Shakespeare and the role that the Queen had in his works; it briefly outlines the figure of Joan La Pucelle from Henry VI part I with whom Elizabeth might be connected. Chapter II in particular focuses on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and how Shakespeare, with the character of Titania, was able to outline his anxiety about the succession of the unmarried and childless queen. Shakespeare was anything but in love with the queen, probably because he did not agree with her choice to be an unmarried woman who in the end left England without an heir.

Many scholars argue that, using the figure of Dido, Shakespeare wanted to criticise Elizabeth and her iconography of virginity. For this purpose, he also took as a cue a work by Marlowe: *Dido Queen of Carthage*. With Titania too, he wanted to make a sort of critique of the Queen; making her fall in love with an ass. This dissertation is going to analyze in depth all these arguments in order to sketch an outline of the whole play in connection with the figure of Elizabeth.

Marion A. Taylor suggests that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* could be an allegory of Elizabeth's kingdom; she argues that the relationship that Shakespeare made happen between Titania and Oberon could be seen as the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou.[1] As Annaliese Connolly points out: "...the *Dream*'s emphasis on specific fruits, recalling the metaphor of fruit used by Elizabeth's subjects to appeal to her own fruitfulness as they encouraged the queen to marry and have a child." [2]

The Dream, is sharply ironic as the fruits are connected with the portrait of a barren queen, who can only offer fruits but cannot bear any herself. One of the aims of this dissertation is to analyze Shakespeare's work in order to understand what the Bard thought about his queen and her propaganda. To this end, the female characters of the play are analyzed, with particular attention to Hermia; who could be the character, together with Titania, most connectable with the Queen. Then also the figure of Hyppolita, the Amazon Queen will be pointed out, who in the play was conquered by her husband-to-be Theseus.

Secondly the character of Titania is be outlined, and her relationship with the male protagonists of the comedy; Oberon and Bottom with particular attention to the last one who as Marion A. Taylor suggests, can be the allegory for the Duke of Anjou. Then the connection is outlined between Titania and Diana, the moon-goddess with whom Elizabeth was connected in order to highlight her virginity. This dissertation proposes to analyze two of the main themes of the play that could be connected with Elizabeth: marriage and virginity; the issue of marriage that could be connected with the marriage negotiations with Anjou and the marriage that Hermia had to face in order to satisfy her father's will.

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[1] Marion A Taylor, *Bottom thou art translated,* Ridolpi. Amsterdam 1973

[2] Annaliese Frances Connolly, *Evaluating Virginity: A Midsummer Night's Dream and the iconography of Marriage* in: Hopkins, Lisa, Connolly, Annaliese, edd. *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I* , Manchester University Press, 2007 p. 137

Chapter 1

Elizabeth's a New Queen in the Renaissance

PRINCESS ELIZABETH' S DANGEROUS CHILDHOOD AND REIGN

Queen Elizabeth I is known to be one of the most important sovereigns in the history of the English Renaissance. Daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, she ascended the throne in 1558 and reigned until her death in 1603. She was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty since she died unmarried because she did not want to share her power and her reign with a husband, and therefore left no heirs. After the Protestant reign of her half-brother, Edward VI, and that of her half-sister Mary Tudor, who murdered hundreds of religious dissenters for the restoration of Roman Catholicism, England saw Elizabeth's accession as a bright light after a very dark period. Although Elizabeth was a woman, she immediately proved to be as strong as a man, not at all afraid of her new position as Queen.

The Tudor royal line which ended with Elizabeth, had been founded just two generations earlier by Henry VII, Elizabeth's grandfather, who defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485 and married Richard's niece, Elizabeth of York. The marriage brought an end to the War of the Roses between the houses of Lancaster and York. Henry VII and Elizabeth of York with their union were able to reunify England. Their first son was Arthur but he soon died in1502 so his ten-year-old brother Henry managed to ascend the throne in 1509 after Henry VII's death. He married Catherine of Aragon and began to rule as Henry VIII. Henry was a loyal son of the Roman Catholic Church; he opposed the reformation of Martin Luther in 1517 and approved laws that banned the importation of Lutheran books into England. Pope Leo X named him Defender of the Faith in 1521. In 1527 Henry turned his attention to annulling the marriage with his wife. Their union had produced only a single and female heir: Princess Mary. He fell in love with Anne Boleyn. In 1531, having failed to gain from the Pope an annulment of his marriage, Henry declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England, divorced Catherine and married Anne. The divorce of Henry from Catherine, also means the divorce of England from the Roman Catholic Church.[3]

[3] Carole, Levine, *The Reign of Elizabeth*, Palagrave Macmillan, 2002

It was the 7th of September 1533 and King Henry VIII had once again become a father: the child's name was Elizabeth. The bonfires that had been prepared in anticipation of a male heir remained unlit and the jousting tournament was cancelled. The truncated ceremonies reflected Henry VIII's disappointment at the birth of a daughter who would not, he imagined, continue the Tudor dynasty.

Elizabeth's childhood, however, was not peaceful at all. Even before her mother's execution in 1536 she was kept at a variety of country places and she only rarely appeared in London and at Court. After Anne Boleyn was charged with committing adultery with her own brother and four other men at Court she was put to death and Elizabeth was declared a bastard. When Henry married his sixth and final wife, Catherine Parr, Elizabeth was brought back to Court, and through the Act of Succession in 1544 she was again titled princess and placed in line of succession to the throne. All that changed with the death of Edward VI, son of Henry and his third wife. Before his death, he had attempted to bar his sisters Mary and Elizabeth from the succession and to make his cousin Lady Jane Gray "Queen" of the realm, but she managed to reign just for nine days before being deposed and Mary brought to the throne.

John Fox in his "*Acts and Monuments"* deals with the story of Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth's childhood when she was declared a bastard by her father. His book provides one of the best contemporary historical accounts of the divorce of Queen Katherine, the King's remarriage, the birth and baptism of Elizabeth.[4] The Baptism of Elizabeth was performed in the Chapel of The Observant Friars at Greenwich. The pomp of the ceremony was designed only to consolidate the authority of the newly independent English Church. The pageantry and promise of Elizabeth's baptism was many years later incorporated into the play *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth*, written by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher. In act V scene V there are staged the birth and the baptism of the future Queen Elizabeth I and subsequently the meeting with her father Henry VIII. The King had always wanted a male heir and the birth of Elizabeth for him was a failure. After some time he declared his daughter a bastard and he put to death his wife Anne Boleyn and Anne's own brother. On 2 May 1536 Anne was arrested and taken to the Tower of London. She was accused of adultery, incest and high treason. George Boleyn and the other accused men were executed on 17 May 1536. On 19 May 1536, the queen was executed on Tower Green.

[4] Hackett Helen, Virgin Mother Maiden Queen, Palagrave Macmillan, 1996, London

After this mention of the background of the Tudor family, it is important to pay attention to the Tudor sisterhood and of course it is important to highlight the dangerous childhood that Princess Elizabeth had to undergo from her sister before becoming Queen of England.

After her mother's execution, Elizabeth's childhood was difficult, Henry VIII's third wife Jane Seymour gave Henry the son he dreamt of for the rescue of the Tudor dynasty. Elizabeth was confined into the background. The sixth and last wife of her father, Catherine Parr, brought some stability to Elizabeth's life. In the same year, 1543, an Act of Parliament restored both Mary and Elizabeth in the succession line. Henry's will in 1546 confirmed Elizabeth's position: if Edward were to die without heirs, the throne would pass to Mary, then if she would die without heirs to Elizabeth. Even though she was declared a bastard by her father, during her childhood she managed to receive an extensive education; scholars from Cambridge were chosen for her and in 1544 William Grindal became her own tutor, he was an expert in Latin and Greek and he taught both to Elizabeth. She also became fluent in French and Italian. However, she never received the course on the problems of practical politics that her brother Edward received, given him by William Thomas, the Clerk of the Council. As a consequence after she became Queen she told her Parliament that she had studied nothing but Divinity until she became a ruler[5]. As already mentioned, with her father's death at the end of January 1547, Elizabeth was called back at court in Queen Dowager Catherine Parr's household. Here she had a period of tranquillity until Catherine Parr decided, after a short period of widowhood, secretly to marry Thomas Seymour, the youngest of Edward VI's maternal uncles. Seymour was not a person to trust, in fact after having taken his nephew Edward into his confidence, he started some illegal activities such as piracy, counterfeiting money and he also considered kidnapping his nephew Edward. Seymour also had a strange relationship with young Elizabeth so in 1548 Catherine Parr being pregnant, in order to avoid other scandals in addition to their secret marriage, arranged for Elizabeth to leave her household and set up with Sir Anthony Denny and his wife. When Catherine Parr died in childbirth in 1548, the situation became dangerous for young Elizabeth; in fact, Seymour began to think of marrying her, even though this would gravely endanger her succession to the throne. As already mentioned Seymour was a sort of criminal and in 1549 he was arrested for high treason and lodged in the Tower.[6] Even Elizabeth was thought to be involved in all these crimes and Sir Robert Tyrwhitt was sent by the Council to examine her role in Seymour's plots. However she was able to extricate herself from the charges

[5] Carol, Levine *The Reign of Elizabeth* op cit

[6] ibid

and she managed to save herself and her servants. In March 1549 Seymour was executed. After the Seymour scandal, Elizabeth showed herself at court as the ideal modest Protestant young woman. In 1548, her tutor William Grindal died and his successor was Roger Ascham and with him she acquired the elements of a serious classical education.

After Edward's death in 1553, the Duke of Northumberland tried to overturn Henry VIII's will and to have as a successor to the throne Edward's cousin Lady Jane Grey recently married to Northumberland's youngest son. This plot was stopped by Mary Tudor who sent Lady Jane Grey and her husband to the Tower after reigning for nine days.[7]

In 1553 Mary Tudor's reign started, probably the most dangerous period of Elizabeth's life and one of the darkest periods in the history of England. Since she was the first Queen to reign in England, two months after her coronation Parliament passed an " Acte declaring that the Regall Power of this Realme is in the Queen Majestie as fully and absolutely as ever it was in any of her moste noble Progenitours Kinges of this Realme". At the beginning of Mary's reign, Elizabeth was soon welcomed to court and on the 3rd August 1553 Elizabeth took part in the procession when the new Queen entered London. Things soon changed and this cordiality ended soon. Mary's plan was to restore Catholicism and to resume relations with Rome. She was persuaded by Simon Renard to distrust Elizabeth, who in turn, did not want to convert to Catholicism. Elizabeth's attitude angered Mary and so Elizabeth was forced to leave court and move to the country. Mary's plan also consisted in marrying Charles V's son; Philip of Spain but this was disturbing to many English people. In January 1554 after Thomas Wyatt's rebellion against the Queen's marriage, Mary was convinced that Elizabeth knew of and had approved the plot against her so she summoned Elizabeth to court in order to ask her some questions about her involvement in the plot. Mary also ordered the execution of Lady Jane Grey and her husband. Elizabeth was not sent immediately to the Tower but she was kept locked in her rooms for almost a month. The Lord Chancellor Stephen Gardiner, could not convince the Council to put her on trial for high treason and so they sent her to the Tower until some more evidence emerged. Richard Radcliffe, the Earl of Sussex was ordered to take Elizabeth to the Tower by barge. Elizabeth immediately asked to see her sister before being imprisoned but the request was denied. Elizabeth tried, under Sussex's supervision, to write a letter to Mary in which she begged to see her for the last time. Elizabeth probably hoped that if she could talk with her sister, her profession of innocence would save her. The next morning, Palm Sunday, 17 March

[7] ibid

1554, Elizabeth was brought to the Tower. There she found a multitude of servants standing to attention. Here, according to Foxe's records in his book *Acts and Monuments,* Elizabeth took advantage of the audience to proclaim before her entrance to the Tower: "Here lands as true a subject, being prisoner, as ever landed at these stairs; and before thee, O God! I speak it, having no other friends but thee alone".[8] According to Levine, Elizabeth's subjects would have this dramatic moment firmly printed in their minds as Foxe's book was one of the most popular books of its age.[9] However, she never lost Sussex's support, and in addition, her position strengthened in April 1554 when Thomas Wyatt, before dying, told the crowd that Elizabeth had had no knowledge of his rebellion. After this episode it became more and more difficult to keep Elizabeth under arrest so the Council decided to send her to Woodstock. Here, on her journey from London, Elizabeth realized she was still popular; in fact during the trip, many people offered her treats and greetings.

While Elizabeth was in the country, Philip of Spain arrived at court and married Mary, in the same year, Cardinal Reginald Pole, the new papal envoy, absolved England from its repudiation of Rome, opening the way for the restoration of papal authority. However, the restoration with Rome brought with it only suffering and the persecution of "heretics": from February 1555 until her death in November 1558, around 300 people were burned to death. Fortunately Elizabeth managed to survive her sister's reign. Philip of Spain did not trust Elizabeth, but the alternative to the Throne, Mary Stuart, was problematic. Mary was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister Margaret granddaughter, the next heir after Elizabeth. For some Catholics, Mary had a better right to obtain the throne rather than Elizabeth, for them she was just Henry VIII's bastard daughter since the Pope had never annulled the marriage with Catherine of Aragon. According to Philip, Elizabeth may not have been an ideal solution; however she was a better option than the future daughter-in-law of a French King, an enemy. On 6 November 1558, Mary finally listened to the Council's demands and named Elizabeth her heir. On the 17 November Mary died and Elizabeth was proclaimed Queen of England.

Montrose, in his *The Subject of Elizabeth, Authority, Gender and Representation* gives an account showing the difference between the two reigns and the two sisters from the iconographic point of view. He compares two portraits; of Queen Mary, respectively by Hans Eworth, (Fig. 1) and Antonis Mor (Fig. 2) and the Pelican portrait, (Fig. 3) and the Phoenix Portrait, (Fig. 4) of Queen Elizabeth painted by Hillard. What interested Montrose most in all the portraits is the large and

[8] John Foxe cit in Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen*, Palagrave Macmillan, London, 1996

[9] Carole Levin, The Reign of Elizabeth, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002

splendid pendant jewel that in the case of Mary was a Hapsburg wedding gift. In two of the portraits, Mary grasps a red rose, the symbol of the Tudor dynasty probably evocative of her supposed pregnancy. According to Karen Hearn, the iconography of the portraits shows Mary more like a Hapsburg consort rather than an English Queen[10]. According to Montrose, Mor's portrait shows Philip's intent in controlling the royal image. Mary was seen as an Hapsburg possession. Concerning Elizabeth's portraits, Montrose focuses his attention again on the pendant jewel that Elizabeth is wearing which in this case he sees as a strong iconographic contrast with the Hapsburg wedding present in Mary's portraits. These differences show the contrast between the powerful English Queen Elizabeth and the Hapsburg consort Mary, Montrose points out how Mor's portraits show the consequences of a dynastic marriage that Elizabeth avoided all her life. [11]

[10] Karen Hearn, cit in Luis Montrose, The Subject of Elizabeth , *Authority, Gender and Representation*, University of Chicago, 2006

[11] ibid

FIGURE 1

Mary I, by Hans Eworth; 1554. Oil on panel. The society of Antiquaries of London

FIGURE 2

Mary I, by Antonis Mor; 1554. Oil on panel. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

FIGURE 3

Elizabeth I, The Pelican Portrait, attributed to Nicholas Hillard; ca. 1572-76. Oil on panel. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

FIGURE 4

Elizabeth I, The Phoneix Portrait, attribuited to Nicholas Hilliard; ca. 1572-76. Oil on panel. National Portrait Gallery London

After the relief over the death of Mary, in all of England there was also a deep anxiety for the following reign of Elizabeth. Her accession came only a few months after the publication of John Knox's[12] *The first Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* an attack on Mary Tudor and in general on the other female Catholic rulers of Europe. Knox not only formulated his polemic in terms of religion but above all in terms of gender.

> "For who can denie but it is repugneth to nature, that the blind shall be appointed to leade and conduct such as do see? That the wicke, the sicke, and impotent persons shall norishe and keep the hole and strong? And finallie, that the foolishe, madde, and phreneticke shal governe the discrete, and give counsel to such and be sober of mind? And such be all women, compared unto man in bearing of authoritie. For their sight in civile regiment is but blindness, their strength, weakness, their counsel, foolishness, and judgement, phrenesi".[13]

Knox was not alone in his views; he was supported by contemporary texts like Christopher Goodman's *How Superior Powers Be Obey* and Anthony Gilby's *An Admonition to England and Scotland*. Both of these were written in 1558 and were attacks on Mary Tudor. As John Guy argues, "Many contemporaries found the prospect of female rule terrifying".

When Mary died and Elizabeth ascended the throne bringing back with her Protestantism, Knox tried to become reconciled with the Queen by writing letters to Sir William Cecil, her Secretary. Knox's attacks too, albeit unintentionally were a contribution to her iconography of the good female ruler. In fact this prompted a searching for a new iconography for the new Protestant Queen. The images of Debora, of mother of the nation, were all used in the iconography referring to her accession. During her reign, Elizabeth was able to change the discontent brought about by her sister and became an Icon for England, politically and religiously, and an object of cult even for Art and Poetry. John Aylmer instead wrote a defence of the legitimacy of Elizabeth's accession; in 1559 he wrote *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects*. He agreed with Knox's way of describing Mary Tudor and he also agreed with the subordination of married women to their husbands and their exclusion from the political nation except for Elizabeth who "*was called to rule by the hand of the divine providence*". Like others, Aylmer expected Elizabeth to marry and consequently become subject to her husband and a prompt producer of an heir and securer of the male dynasty. However,

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[12] Knox was a Scottish clergyman and a leader of the Protestant Reformation who reformed the church in Scotland

[13] John Knox *The first Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, cit in Hackett p. 49

Aylmer claimed that when she married, her political sovereignty would suffer no diminution. Aylmer expounds the doctrine that God's choice of a weak instrument such as a woman is evidence of his own miraculous strength. Aylmer uses Deborah and Judith here as examples of the divine use of women: Judith has always been known as the symbol of courage against tyrannical rulers, while, Debora was a prophetess of the God of the Israelites, the fourth Judge of pre-monarchic Israel, counsellor, warrior and in Aylmer's pamphlet she is used also as a symbol for braveness. Knox too, in his work, compared female rulers with Deborah of the Old Testament.[14]

In the following part of this chapter, the beginning and the evolution of Elizabeth's reign from the Accession Day to the end will be pointed out briefly, stressing the dangers she had to face even during her reign. After her sister's death, Elizabeth began her reign emphasizing the theme of national unity; in fact she argued that she wanted to be Queen of all the English not just the Protestants. Her reign was a time of incredible importance and of change, not only in England but in Europe, one of the major issues that she had to deal with was religion; England under Elizabeth finally became a Protestant Nation. One of Elizabeth's first Acts when she became Queen was to appoint William Cecil as her Principal Secretary. She had other loyal servants, Walsingham, Hatton, Ratcliffe, the Earl of Sussex, Whitgift and Sir Robert Dudley, eventually Earl of Leicester who had a particular relationship with Elizabeth and tried unsuccessfully to marry her. When Elizabeth became Queen, she dismissed about two-thirds of Mary's Privy Council, her own Council was smaller, about eighteen. She chose men that she could trust, such as Cecil, Nicholas Bacon and Thomas Parry. She kept some of Mary's moderate as well as powerful Catholic councillors in office, in order to obtain consensus; names such as the Earls of Arundel and Shrewsbury. In Elizabethan England, Parliament had extensive authority through the enactment of statutes. Parliament could make and repeal laws, establish forms of religious devotion and set taxes. However, power was still controlled by the monarch, without Elizabeth, no statute could become law. As soon as she became Queen, Elizabeth had many issues to deal with, one of the most important was religion. After her choice for a compromise regarding religion, she had to face the pressure from both Catholics and Puritans. She had problems with many of her bishops in particular with Edmund Grindal who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1577. Her problems became even worse when Mary Stuart arrived in England having fled Scotland after her forced abdication. With her in England Elizabeth had to face another important issue: the succession. From the very

[14] Helen Hackett, op cit

beginning of her reign Elizabeth was pressed to marry in order to have a son and continue the Tudor dynasty. Many of the Parliament members were frustrated by her refusal of marriage, Cecil in particular; Levine in his *The Reign of Elizabeth*, cites some of the letters Cecil wrote to his contemporaries considering the issue of succession:" God send our mistress a husband, and by him a son, that we may hope our posterity shall have a masculine succession"[15], Levine cites the words of Norman Jones who argues that:" Cecil's frustration with unmarried female rulers probably went beyond the politics of the moment, for it was common knowledge that there was something unnatural about a woman ruler. Weaker vessels in need of management, women in positions of command inverted the natural order instituted by God"[16]. However, despite her many suitors, Elizabeth decided not to marry and she also did not name an heir. By primogeniture, Mary Queen of Scots was the next heir. Mary's last marriage to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell led to a rebellion in Scotland as people suspected she was involved with Bothwell in having her previous husband murdered. So in order not to be killed, in May 1568 she escaped from Scotland and fled to England to her cousin's court. Mary was a foreigner and a Catholic and some Catholics claimed that she would be the rightful Queen since Elizabeth was illegitimate. This was seen as a danger by many Protestants in England. Elizabeth decided to keep Mary in confinement for 19 years because she wanted to avoid returning Mary to Scotland as Queen with full power, but neither did she want her to be executed. Allowing her to go back to France or go to Spain might have meant giving her the power to come back to Scotland and form an army that could be turned against England. Her presence in England led to the Northern Rebellion in 1569 headed by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland. The older nobility in the North of England, did perceive themselves more as sovereigns than subjects. When Elizabeth ascended the throne she weakened the power of this nobility. They were united in their distrust of Cecil and in considering Elizabeth's throne usurped. They wanted the succession settled on her and they wanted Elizabeth's reign to be controlled and directed by them. Even Spain was involved; in fact, the Spanish ambassador Despes wanted Elizabeth off the throne and the restoration of the Catholic Church even in England with Mary Stuart's reign. The Duke of Norfolk, one of the conspirators, was interested in marrying Mary. The Catholic lords planned to force Elizabeth to agree to the marriage between Mary and Norfolk and restore them to their original powers. The Spanish ambassador wanted more; he wanted to depose Elizabeth with the help of Spanish and put Mary and Norfolk on the throne of both England and

[15] Carole Levine, op cit.

[16] Norman Jones, cit. in Levine, *The Reign of Elizabeth*, p. 18

Scotland. Italy and Spain were the biggest Catholic powers at that time, and they wanted to get rid of Elizabeth and put Mary on the throne in order to restore Catholicism in England. For the nobility of the North this was rather different, since they just wanted to regain the power that Elizabeth had taken from them. The rebels reached London to free Mary but Elizabeth was able to move her to Coventry. In 1570 the Pope supported the rebels by excommunicating Elizabeth. During Mary's imprisonment many attempts were made to assassinate Elizabeth in order to place Mary on the throne. In 1572 the Duke of Norfolk was executed for plotting to assassinate Elizabeth and Cecil. Mendoza, the new Spanish ambassador convinced King Philip II that it was no longer possible for Spain to coexist peaceably with Protestant England so he did everything in his power to destroy Elizabeth and her reign. Elizabeth eventually signed Mary's death warrant albeit reluctantly, after the Babington Conspiracy of 1586, another attempt to kill her. On 8 February 1587, Mary Queen of Scots was executed. Mary Stuart's execution persuaded Philip of Spain to conquer England and restore Catholicism and in the summer of 1588 he launched the Armada. England was able to beat Spain. Elizabeth on that occasion went to Tilbury to encourage the troops. This episode, and the victory over the Armada, helped Elizabeth in the last years of her reign to retain power and gain consensus. The last fifteen years of her reign were not so simple for Elizabeth since the advisor she trusted most had died. In 1594 Elizabeth's physician Roderigo Lopez was accused of planning to poison the Queen. There was a final plot against her by the Earl of Essex, who had led a campaign in Ireland to subdue rebels, and when he came back he staged a rebellion against the Queen in 1601 but he failed and was executed. After the Essex rebellion, Elizabeth was visibly tired and aged. She died on 24 March 1603. After all the worry about the succession, when the Queen died, there was a calm transition to her cousin James VI of Scotland, Mary Stuart's son who became James I of England. In England there was a clear and general consensus for the new king.[17]

[17] ibid

ACCESSION DAY

> "My lords, the law of nature moves me to sorrow for my sister; the burden that is fallen upon me makes me amazed, and yet, considering I am God's creature, ordained to obey His appointment, I will thereto yield, desiring from the bottom of my heart that I may have assistance of His grace to be the minister of His heavenly will in this office now committed to me. And as I am but one body naturally considered, though by His permission a body politic to govern, so shall I desire you all ... to be assistant to me, that I with my ruling and you with your service may make a good account to Almighty God and leave some comfort to our posterity on earth. I mean to direct all my actions by good advice and counsel"
>
> (Queen Elizabeth's first speech after her sister's death, 17th November 1558)

During the Accession Day, Queen Elizabeth delivered her first speech in which she dealt with the "two bodies": the natural body and the body politic.

It has already been mentioned that Elizabeth I ascended the throne in a period of turmoil caused by her half-sister Mary Tudor. Mary tortured and killed hundreds of Protestants in order to see the flourishing return of the Catholic Church in England. Elizabeth was able to give her subjects a new way to see a female ruler and from the very beginning of her reign she used the term "two bodies" to highlight the fact that she was divided in two, by her real female body and the body politic which was supposed to be that of a male ruler. She immediately was able to unify these two bodies and became one of the most important queens of the Renaissance. With the arrival of Elizabeth the cultural construction of the period had to act to give meanings to words and images of the new Queen. After her sister's reign, Elizabeth and her followers needed an effective iconography which would inspire confidence in the new regime.[18] At the time of the accession of Elizabeth the Protestant position was by no means representative of religious beliefs but just a refusal of the old regime of Mary Tudor. For those who had newly become Elizabethan subjects many remained Catholic by habit and others were indifferent in the matter of religion. On the eve of her coronation, 14th January 1559, Elizabeth made her way from the Tower of London to Westminster Abbey. This procession was commented on by Richard Mulcaster who entitled his pamphlet *The Quenes Maiesties passage through the citie of London to Westminster the day before her coronacion.* From the chronicle of Mulcaster it is immediately clear

[18] Helen, Hackett, *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen*, Palagrave, London, 1996

that there was an attempt to reshape a traditional Protestant iconography and the pageants are notable for their avoidance of Marian iconography. Other female icons were compared to Elizabeth.[19]

The first Pageant shown in Gracechurch Street was entitled *The uniting of the two houses of Lancastre and Yorke:* this pageant represents Elizabeth's genealogy, her Tudor roots. An actor represented Henry VII, enclosed in a red rose of Lancaser and Elizabeth of York enclosed in a white rose. Mulcaster observed that the whole pageant was full of red and white roses but this was not a connection with the symbol of the Virgin Mary but was just a revival of the Tudor family symbols. The second Pageant set near Cornhill showed a child representing the Queen placed in a seat supported by some virtues: true religion, love for subjects, wisdom and justice. If Elizabeth sustains the virtues and suppresses the vices, then the seat of government will stand firm. The third pageant performed in Soper's Lane was based on the New Testament Beatitudes and as Mulcaster observed "*if her grace did continue in her goodness as she had entered, she shoulde hope for the fruit of these promises*", here probably the pageant is referring to Mary Tudor's behaviour towards her sister. The forth pageant whose subject is "Time" attacked Mary Tudor's reign contrasting a "decayed commonwealth" with a "flourishing commonwealth". Time's daughter, Truth, carried an English Bible labelled "The words of Truth". When Elizabeth saw this pageant she asked for the Bible and kissed it. The fifth and last pageant was held in Fleet Street and depicted Elizabeth as the Prophetess Deborah who rescued Israel from Jabin, the king of Canaan. During the first and the second pageants Elizabeth saw direct representation of herself: the first one that represented the Houses of Lancaster and York and in the last three pageants she saw this new way of representing her as Deborah and as Truth; the Truth of her new reign. It is important to highlight as Hackett did in her book *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen* that alongside the pageants there was also a large amount of writing by many pamphleteers who described the audience as a dramatic chorus.[20] In Elizabethan Protestant England, Hackett continues, the pageants demonstrated the Protestant emphasis upon words as repository of Truth. The pageants attempted to forge a new Protestant form of state iconography that would enable people to feel more comfortable with a female ruler after the reign of Bloody Mary. However it is important to highlight that Elizabeth was involved in the decision of the pageants as is shown in a letter from the Queen to Sir Thomas Cawarden, Master of the Revels. In this document there is recorded the loan of costumes by the Crown for the pageants. This implies that the Queen knew about every pageant in advance and had to give her approval for them to be

[19] ibid

[20] ibid

staged.[21] The Queen and her collaborators used the pageants as a way of making a sort of propaganda for the new reign, as Hackett wrote in her book, they had a political function. The searching for this new type of Protestant symbology shows the desire to replace the Virgin Mary and consequently Mary Tudor with Elizabeth and the new Protestant regime. As Montrose wrote in his book: *The subject of Elizabeth Authority, gender and representation*, the promotion of the royal image was a component of a dynamic process[22]. Anyway there was still an "ancient citizen, who wept and turned his head back" in demonstration of a Marian loyalism. A poem written by George Cavendish on the occasion of the succession is an interesting counter voice of this new Protestant regime; in fact he didn't write about Elizabeth but he celebrated the late Queen Mary, focusing on her virtues. At the end of this poem he addresses the new Queen Elizabeth exhorting her to "make for your mirror Mary thye sister", he asked her to emulate her sister; not to repudiate her.

A year after Elizabeth's accession, Sir Thomas Chaloner, an English poet presented to the new Queen a poem he had written in praise of Henry VIII in which, at the end, the subject became Elizabeth herself "whose eyes recall so well the face of her thrice-father". At the end of this poem for Henry VIII, Chaloner appears to embrace his new sovereign's strategies of legitimacy and propaganda. Probably the motivation behind the praise of the new queen can be seen as the subjects' general relief after Mary I's reign. However as Hackett wrote in her book, many celebratory verses suggested that the citizens of London were deeply worried about female rulers, after Mary's I reign.

After the Accession Day, every year on from the seventies, the 17th of November, the date of her succession to the throne; was declared a national festivity and jousting and tournaments were held. Helen Hackett points out that historians speculate that the development of this celebration was probably a Protestant response to the Northern Rebellion of 1569 and to the Papal excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570. Hackett claims also that we can't be sure when the Celebration started and if it was a spontaneous popular festivity. Anyway, national festivities held in order to promote political unity were not new; during Henry VIII' s reign, an annual celebration of the break from the Church of Rome had been proposed in order to reinforce Protestantism.[23] According to Hackett, much of the information about the origins of Accession Day comes from Thomas Holland, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Rector of Exeter College. In his *The Apologie or Defence of the Church*

[21] Helen Hackett, op cit pg. 83

[22] Montrose Luis, *The Subject of Elizabeth, Gender and Representation*, op cit

[23] ibid

and Common-wealth of England for their annual celebration of Queen Elizabeth Coronation Day the 17th of November he writes an encomium about Elizabeth; he wrote that the first public celebration of this festivity was held in Oxford.[24] Roy Strong, in his studies of the cult of Elizabeth, gives a detailed list of the festivities on the accession days. As Roy Strong observes in his book *The Cult of Elizabeth, Elizabeth Portraiture and Pageantry* the day of Elizabeth's succession became a national festival both at court and among the lower classes.[25] All over England, Elizabeth's subjects praised her with prayers, sermons and bonfires. At court, there was a ceremonial tournament in which the Queen received the homage of her Lords and Gentlemen who often rode upon pageant cars with some allegorical characters who with verses and songs paid tribute to her. Strong continues with his explanation of the Queen's Festivals, arguing that, it is impossible to get to the beginning of how it all started, but probably Oxford was the place of origin. According to Thomas Holland, it was Thomas Cooper, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winchester who establish the first public observance of that day, since Accession Day coincided with the Feast of the saint, St Hugh of Lincoln which is within his diocese.[26]

In towns and countries the most essential feature of the annual triumph was bell-ringing. Bells were rung now for the Queen instead of the Saints. Strong in his chapter *November Sacred Seventeenth Day* argues that the ringing of the bells can be traced through churchwardens' accounts and this could help to establish when a parish began to observe Accession Day. Strong argues that what is revealed from these accounts is that the spread of the Accession Day solemnities depended on local interest and sympathies. In *The Cult of Elizabeth, Elizabeth Portraiture and Pageantry,* Strong cites many of these ceremonies for which he found some records; for example in Liverpool the mayor Thomas Bavand, ordered a great bonfire to be lit in the market square and he gave orders that all the citizens should light fires throughout the town. What Strong denotes in his studies of these kinds of festivities is that, in 1588 the defeat of the Armada by the Queen signalled the development of these state festivals in a new, bigger way. That year the Queen postponed her visit to the city until Sunday, 24 November. When she arrived, she rode in a chariot as in the images of the Triumphs. The chariot was made of four pillars and on top of them stood a dragon and a lion supporting the coat of arms of England.

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[24] ibid

[25] Strong Roy, *The Cult of Elizabeth, Elizabeth Portraiture and Pageantry*, Pimlico Edition , 1999 London pg 117-118

[26] ibid

Elizabeth going in Procession to Blackfriars in 1600, attributed to Robert Peake, Private Collection

However, Accession Day festivities were not confined just to England; in his account Strong cites for example that Hawkings and Drake, sailing for the coast of Brazil on the afternoon of 17th November 1582 fired canons in honour of the Queen. The Government action over the Accession Day can be demonstrated with the establishment of special service books for use in churches during that day. Accounts by Strong show that the first of these books was published in 1576. This book was a collection of psalms, prayers and readings which give thanks to God for the reign of the Queen who "restored peace and true religion, with liberty both of bodies and minds". In 1585, Edmund Bunny, a cleric from the North of England, produced *Certaine prayers and other godly exercises for the seventeenth of November* to promote the observance of the 17th of November also in the North of England, Bunny added a commentary to the familiar psalms. At that time the North was the most recalcitrant region towards Elizabeth, and still devoted to Catholicism.

Many of the tributes to the Queen were verses in Latin and Greek, she was sung as *Stella Britannis* and *rarissima Phoenix*, and she was thanked in many of the psalms and prayers for her restoration of religion. As Hackett points out, the psalms used in the services, concerned godly rulers. In Roy Strong's accounts a ballad dated 1577 can be found, which thanks God for the reign of the Queen.

> And grant our Queen Elizabeth
> With us long time to reign,
> This land to keep full long in peace,
> And Gospel to maintain.[27]

Many of the reasons why she was also thanked, was for the temporal and above all spiritual peace that she managed to bring to Britain. In Maurice Kyffin's *The Blessednes of Brytaine*, there are some lines which praise the Queen's many achievements. In many places, as Strong suggested, the enthusiasm for the Queen was so high that the 7th of September, the day of her birthday became an extension of the Queen's Day, the themes, the sermons and the preaching were the same. In Hackett's *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen,* there is an account from Edward Rushton's continuation of Sander's in *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani*[28] which claims the Queen's birthday and Accession Day were widely observed, more than the festivals of the Church.

[27] J. P. Collier, cit in Roy Strong, p. 123

[28] N. Sanders, cit ibid p. 126

> Elizabeth's birthday and the day of her coronation are kept with more solemnity Throughout the kingdom than the festival of Christ and of the Saints…And to show the greater contempt for our Blessed Lady, they keep the birthday of Queen Elizabeth in the most solemn way on the 7th day of September, which is the eve of the feast of the Mother of God, whose nativity they mark in their calendar in small and black letters, while that of Elizabeth is marked in both large and red letters. [29]

Although the Accession Day was an important celebration throughout England, it is important to highlight that many people, like Rushton, were against the worship of the Queen as the Virgin Mary. In this case Rushton's polemical interest was to claim that the English were worshipping Elizabeth while they ought to be venerating Mary and even though a large number of subjects used to celebrate the Queen in the Accession Days festivities there were still some Catholic dissidents who did not fully agree with the festivities. William Rainolds suggested that the festivities "were revivals of the idolatrous festivals of the world of antiquity"[30]. Thomas Holland in 1599 replied to the charges of Rainolds and Sanders; in a sermon written about the Accession Day "A day wherein our Nation received a new light after a fearful and bloody Eclipse. A day wherein God gave a rare Phoenix to rule this land."[31] According to Holland, the celebration of Elizabeth's birthday and the Accession Day were not imposed by Church or State but were spontaneous manifestations by the people. According to Hackett, this theory of universal popular support needs to be observed in the light of the fact that Holland was a Crown appointee and for him it was necessary to preach and write a defence of these holidays. Probably Holland's *Apologie*, fails to show the evidence that Accession Day was primarily a State exploitation of religious authority in order to reinforce centralized power.

Accession Day was celebrated at court as well, with tournaments and jousting. According to Roy Strong, the Accession Day Tilts were begun by Sir Henry Lee at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign[32]. In his book Strong takes into account the testimony of Lupold von Wedel who described at full length an Accession Day tournament. This account records the action pretty accurately.

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[29] E. Rushton, cit ibid, p. 126

[30] W. Rainold, cit ibid, p. 126

[31] Thomas Holland, cit ibid, p. 126

[32] William Segar, cit. Strong Roy, cit ibid, p. 129

> Now approached the day, when on November 17 the tournament was to be held…. About twelve o'clock, the Queen and her Ladies placed themselves at the windows in a long room of Weithol palace, near Westminster, opposite the barrier
> Where the tournament was to be held…..When a gentleman with his servants approached the barrier, on horseback or carriage, he stopped at the foot of the staircase leading to the Queen's room, while one of the servants in pompous attire mounted the steps and addressed the Queen in well-composed verses. When the speech was ended, he in the name of his Lord offered to the Queen a costly present. [33]

The Accession Day Titlts were accounted also in literature. In Hackett's book, there is the account of Sir Philip Sydney who made his appearance at the tiltyard and wrote two songs for the occasion. One in particular, addresses Elizabeth as *royal saint*. Sydney, like others, praised Elizabeth as a symbol rather than a person.

To conclude this overview on the festivities of Accession Day, the point of view of Hackett holds good. According to Hackett, Accession Day was an authorized and promoted festival, which combined celebrations at court and festivities throughout the provinces. Accession Day at the beginning did not seem to have aroused religious anxiety or political resistance. Towards the end defences of it would have been necessary in order to help Elizabeth's propaganda. Hackett made some assumption, the general acceptance of the festival probably can be found in a combination of factors; the official church service avoided charges of idolatry by concentrating on prayers for her, rather than worshiping her. The regime was sanctified and dissent was sinful. However, it was not a spontaneous popular celebration, "a meeting half-way of the interest of government and people. This can be seen as an example of how Elizabeth's State and Church were conjoined. [34]

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[33] *Journey through England and Scotland made by Lupold von Wedel in the years 1584 and 1585* cit. in Roy Strong, op cit. p. 134

[34] Helen, Hackett, op cit

Elizabeth I at Tilbury, unknown artist, private collection

A WOMAN ON THE THRONE, QUEEN ELIZABETH'S TWO BODIES

"I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king"[35]

Elizabeth had always known the difficulties that a woman like her had to face being the ruler of England. Elizabeth began her reign on the defensive, fighting to defend her right to rule her country as God's divine representative, struggling to establish her own fragile authority and to restore English Protestantism[36]. Society had always seen women as weak and incapable of a public role. In fact throughout her reign, Elizabeth was asked to marry by the Parliament in order to solve the problem of being a woman ruler by turning the governance to her husband[37]: her sex was seen by everyone as *unfit* to rule. However she was very skilful in how she represented herself and her authority as a monarch;[38] she was able to overcome the powerful resistance to her rule by turning the apparent weakness of being an unmarried woman into the strength of a ruler. According to Levine, in her *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth and the Politics of Sex and Power*, even though Elizabeth's motto was "Semper Eadem", that is to say; "Always the Same", her success as a Queen came from how multi-faceted were the representations of herself. She created a gallery of *dramatis personae*, male and female, old and young, learned and simple, she chose to wear several masks to show herself both as a woman and as a sovereign; as the body politic and the body natural in order to satisfy the demands of the patriarchal system.[39]

Tudor England had to face female rulers for fifty years after the brief reign of the young Edward VI. As a consequence, Queenship provoked questions about the legitimacy of female rulers, since the monarch, as God's representative, ought to have been a male. As soon as Elizabeth became Queen, in 1559, the Supremacy Act was passed giving her the title of Supreme Governor over the Church of England. Her father and her brother Edward had been Supreme Heads, but for many of the

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[35] Elizabeth's speech to the soldiers at Tilbury, 1558

[36] Carole Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a king, Elizabeth I and the politics of sex and power*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 1994.

[37] Ilona Bell, *Elizabeth I, The Voice of a Monarch*, Palagrave Macmillan, New York, 2010

[38] Ibid.

[39] Donatella Montini 'As many as are English, are my children and kinsfolks'. Elizabeth I and the Rhetoric of the Country in *Queen and Country*, Alessandra Petrina ed., Peter Lang, Pieterlen, 2011

reformers, this wouldn't be an appropriate title for a woman. Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York argued that she shouldn't take the title of Supreme Head because she was a "woman by birthe and nature". However, he also stated that "she is our sovereigne lord and ladie, our kinge and queen" describing her as having two identities, one male and the other female. Even though she was a woman, she was also a king. Heath was, in a sort of way, describing the 1554 Act Concerning Regal Power, a statute made in Mary I's reign which states that a woman as Queen has the same rights as a man; she might be both woman and man in one, king and queen with a male body politic and a female body in practice[40].

The idea of the two bodies was already a concept in the Middle Ages; as Hackett explains in her book *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen* the idea of the Church as a mystical body: the *corpus ecclesiae mysticum* had developed into an idea of the state as a mystical body, the *corpus reipublicae mysticum,* or body politic. From this in turn developed the concept that the King himself possessed both a body politic and a body natural: the body politic was the timeless institutions and the essence of monarchy, while the body natural was the private, mortal human body.[41] Hackett also cites Marie Axton who argued how the concept of the Two Bodies was widely spread in Elizabethan Culture. However it is important to highlight how Elizabeth was able during her reign to use the rhetoric of the King's Two Bodies in order to overcome her female nature which at that time was seen as rendering her unfit to rule. However, the concept of the Two Bodies was given a new meaning in the reign of Elizabeth. Elizabeth herself, from the very beginning of her reign deployed the rhetoric of the King's Two Bodies, despite the femaleness of her body natural, she was aware of possessing a 'masculine' body politic. The Two Bodies, the natural private and feminine, and the public implicitly masculine contain the elements of the well-known proliferation of the androgynous iconography around her. [42]

Levine in her book cites Marie Axton, who argues that, by 1561, the English common Lawyers "endow the Queen with two bodies: a body natural and a body politic…the body politic was supposed to be contained within the natural body of the Queen".[43] The natural body was the one that was subject to time while the body politic was immortal. Elizabeth, with her own presence,

[40] Carole Levine, op cit

[41] Helen Hackett, op cit. p 22

[42] Ibid.

[43] Marie Axton cit. Carole Levine, op cit p122

disrupts the former values, inverting them and blurring them.[44] What is important to bear in mind is that Elizabeth was a female ruler and she was challenging with her conduct, the expectations about a woman: getting married and having children, with great concern not only of Parliament, that wanted stability for the State with an heir, but also for of the subjects who were aware of the anomalous position of their Queen. Elizabeth subverts this ancient vision, she never married and she presents herself as the chaste Virgin Queen, who was the mother of the Nation. However, Elizabeth liked the concept of the two bodies; as long as she could be both a male and female sovereign, she also had the right to rule alone. Elizabeth used to present herself as king and queen of England, and she promoted this by using male analogies as she did from the very beginning of her reign in the procession the day before her coronation. During that day, as the *Holinshed's Chronicle* reports, she stopped to pray at the Tower where she had lately been locked up. In her prayer she did not compare herself to a female Biblical figure, but she compared herself to Daniel from the Old Testament[45]. As Levine argues, Elizabeth often described herself as "prince", however in some versions of her 1593 speech before the Parliament, she called herself " princess", probably because her male and female self-representations where used throughout her reign depending on their usefulness, in particular situations and with particular audiences.[46] On a number of occasions, Elizabeth belittled her female aspect and expressed a desire to be male; as for example in 1565 the Queen told De Silva when she heard of Turks defeating Christians that "she was very sorry, and said she wished she was a man to be there in person".[47] What is important to highlight is that she was a talented Queen in a patriarchal realm, who faced difficulties with her female " natural body" which her male "body politic" wanted to dominate and control, becoming the huge referent in every speech of power and identity of that time. In the late 1580s, with the war with Spain, she tried even more strongly to show herself as a brave king on the battlefield. Elizabeth was constantly aware that she was a woman, however she always suggested that she could do more than a man, in fact she argues that her female self would be much more effective than any man.[48] On the occasion of the Spanish Armada attack, the Queen again explorted of the male-female theme. She went to Tilbury to make a speech to the troops. She is described as wearing armour and mounted on a charger.

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[44] Clara Mucci, *I corpi di Elisabetta. Sessualità, potere e politica al tempo di Shakespeare*, Pacini Editore, Pisa, 2009

[45] Carole Levine, op cit

[46] ibid.

[47] ibid.

[48] Clara Mucci, op cit p. 47

> My loving people…I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safe guard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see at this time… being resolved, in the midst and heat of battle, lay down for my God and my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and the stomach of a king, and a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare invade the borders of my realm; to which, rather than any Dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up Arms, I myself will be your General.[49]

In the Tilbury speech, Elizabeth is extremely aware of having the weak body of a woman, but the person who is going to take up arms and be a General for the people, is a king rather than a queen.[50]According to Mucci, the Queen is using the metaphor of the *land-body trope*; the female body associated with the Earth. In order to explain this concept, Mucci quotes Luis Montrose's words: "Elizabeth's speech presents the threat of invasion in the most intimate and violent of metaphors, as an attempted rape of the Queen by a foreign prince". Montrose is suggesting that Elizabeth is using the land-body trope for herself; "she identifies her virginal female body with the clearly bounded body of her island realm, threatened with violation by the Spanish sea and land forces masculinized and personified in King Philip and the Duke of Parma".[51]

Extremely aware of the two bodies of the Queen, were also the artists who praised her; like Spenser who, for instance, in the *Fairie Queene* wrote: "two persons, the one of a most royall Queen or Empress, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady", Spencer used to identify the public person of the Queen with Gloriana, while the private person for him was Belphoebe. It is the body that many writers of the time, deal with in many of their writings. Mucci argues that it would be strange if behind this interest, there was not described the most complex and problematic body of that time: the Queen's body.[52] Both Mucci and Levine highlight the importance of cross-dressing in the plays of Shakespeare as a consequence of Elizabeth's way of presenting herself both as female and male; in Elizabethan England and earlier, women were forbidden to act in plays and so the role of the heroines was played by men dressed as women. They both quote Leah Marcus: "there are remarkable correlations between the sexual multivalence of Shakespeare's heroines and an

[49] Queen Elizabeth's Tilbury Speech 1558

[50] Clara Mucci, op cit p.53

[51] ibid.

[52] ibid.

important strain in the political rhetoric of Queen Elizabeth I"[53]. Dramas were frequently performed at Court, and as Steven Mullaney points out: "the Renaissance Monarch was perceived as an actor on stage, with the theatrical apprehension of sovereign power". Righter argues that: "Moving about this realm in the midst of a continual drama, the ruler bears a superficial resemblance to the actor".[54] As Stephen Orgel suggested "there were, properly speaking, two audiences and two spectacles… at these performances what the rest of the spectators watched was not the play but the Queen at play". Elizabeth herself felt she was on a stage, in 1586 she said: "We princes, I tell you, are set on stages, in sight a view of the entire World".[55] Levine uses the example of *Twelfth Night* in which Olivia is passionately in love with Cesario who is in reality Viola, Levine argues that: Olivia has turned gender expectations for courtship upside down; giving herself as a woman more chance of equalizing the power balance of the potential relationship, in fact it is she who is wooing Cesario: "Here, wear this jewel for me, 't my picture. Refuse it not, it hath no tongue to vex you"[56]. Even though it is Viola who is cross-dressed, Levine argues that it is the powerful Olivia, the woman who is described as one who takes the male role of seeking the partner she desires who echoes Elizabeth more than the cross-dressed Viola.

In one of her last public speeches to Parliament, in 1601, she combined both female and male characteristics to provide a more extended view of the monarchy in terms of gender:

> To be a king and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it, that it is pleasant to them that bear it. For myself, I was never so enticed with the glorious name of King or royal authority of a Queen, as delighted that God hath made me His instrument to maintain His truth and glory and to defend this Kingdom from peril, dishonour, and tyranny and oppression..."[57]

In this speech Elizabeth presented herself as a woman and a loving mother for her people implying that this was the key to her successful reign. Levine concludes arguing that even though throughout her reign she played with this female-male dichotomy, Elizabeth of course was aware of possessing a female body. She might have used both female and male references in her sovereignty but her body was a human and a very female one, sometimes imperfect. During her reign her subjects might

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[53] Leah Marcus, cit ibid.

[54] ibid.

[55] ibid.

[56] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, III.iv.219-20

[57] Queen's speech to Parliament November 1601, cit., Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King* p. 146

have seen her body politic as pure and as the incarnation of the male monarchy, otherwise her body natural was seen as corrupt in its female shape. Elizabeth as king and Queen, as both powerful and female, blurred the definition of gender and role expectation in her position as ruler of Renaissance England.[58]

One of the main concerns that oppressed Parliament during Elizabeth's reign was the possible marriage of the Queen. During the Renaissance, a series of *domestic conduct books* were very popular and taught men and women how to behave and how to share responsibilities:" The man being as he is, most apt for the sovereignty being in government, not only skill and experience to be required, but also capacity to comprehend, wisdom to understand, strength to execute, solicitude to prosecute, patience to suffer, means to sustain, and, above all, a great courage to accomplish, all which are commonly in a man, but in a woman rare".[59] It is clear that authority is the husband's since he is also the one who has to provide money while the wife has to take care of the family.

Renaissance England was a very patriarchal nation, and many of the English were concerned about having a female ruler, they feared that she would undermine the gender hierarchy and threaten the social order.[60] As John Knox stated in his *The First Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of the Women,* published in 1559 at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, the rule of a woman was considered *unnatural*. Knox argued that God not only ordained that women be banned from authority, but also, given their weakness, that they would be incapable of authority if they illegitimately usurped it. Knox's pamphlet was addressed to Mary Tudor, but it was published a few months prior to the reign of Elizabeth. Women at that time had to submit to the power of their husbands; that is why the continuous rejection of a husband by the Queen throughout her reign, extremely frightened her Counsellors. In one of the first speeches on marriage she stated: "I have long since made choice of a husband, the kingdom of England… charge me not with the want of children, forasmuch as everyone of you, and every Englishman besides, are my children and relations"[61]. In this speech she stated again the theory of the Two Bodies, which implied that the monarch him or herself was the spouse of the Kingdom, as the analogous priest's marriage to the mystical body of the Church. As Hackett observes in her *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen* Elizabeth, in

[58] ibid.

[59] Edmund Tinley cit. Clara Mucci, *I corpi di Elisabetta*, op cit

[60] Ilona Bell, op cit. p. 3

[61] ibid

the portrait of her coronation, wore her hair long and flowing which denotes her status of virgin and bride. This implied that the coronation was also Elizabeth's marriage to the nation.

As Donatella Montini wrote in Queen and Country there are two portraits which synthesise the discussion that concerns the relationship between Elizabeth and the English nation; the Ditchley portrait (fig.5) and John Case's *Sphaera Civitatis* (Fig.6). The first one was painted after the defeat of the Armada in 1588; the Queen and England are portrayed as a single entity: the Queen's body stands on and touches the earth beneath: Elizabeth is England. In the Sphaera Civitatis, which appeared in the same year as the Ditchley portrait the Queen is depicted in a woodcut illustration as presiding over the celestial spheres. Her position in the diagram is above the outer sky, embracing a diagram of Ptolemy's Universe; as de Scarpis points out "it is an allegory of the beneficial influence of supreme political power, vested in the sovereign, whenever judiciously applied to the entire body politic in an orderly decreasing hierarchy of ranks". As Roy Strong observed, she is positioned as *regina universi*.[62] As Andrew and Catherine Belsey argue in *Renaissance Bodies. The Human Figures in English Culture* the Queen is shown as ruling over the cosmic world. These two portraits introduce the Queen whose divine identity is founded on and connected to the land over which she reigns; however her body is presented as de-humanised. As Montini continues " the Queen and her body become the symbolical space on which different ideas of nation, government, and authority meet and are represented. [63]

As Bell stated in *Elizabeth I: the voice of a Monarch* Elizabeth was probably the most desired bride in all of Europe. The Austrian Ambassador once reported: "A beautiful, clever, intelligent and sweet-tempered woman".[64] In the early months of her reign and even more as the years passed, Elizabeth faced continual pressure to marry and bear an heir to the throne.[65] Early modern sovereigns were expected to accept arranged marriages that were rigorously negotiated to strengthen the country's dynastic, financial, political, and military position.[66]

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[62] Valerio de Scarpis in *Queen and Country,* op cit. p.130

[63] Donatella Montini in *Queen and Country*, op. cit p. 59-60

[64] Ilona Bell, op cit. p 3

[65] ibid.

[66] ibid.

FIGURE 5

The Ditchley Portrait by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, c.1592, National Portrait Gallery

FIGURE 6

Frontispiece to John Case, S*phaera Civitaits,* Frankfurt am Main, 1588.

Cambridge University Library.

Elizabeth made immediately clear that eventually she would be the one to make the final decision. A year after her investiture, in 1559, Parliament asked the Queen again to take marriage into consideration; and to respect the expectation attached to her female gender; she was able to answer and avoid trouble by stating that it was God who persuaded her to place before the State and to renounce her private life:

> But when the publique charge of governing the Kingdom came upon me, it seemed unto me an inconsiderate folly to draw upon my self the cares which might proceed of marriage. To conclude, I am already bound unto an Husband, which is the Kingdom of England. Nevertheless, if God have ordained me to another course of life, I would promise you to do nothing to the prejudice of the commonwealth, but as far as possible I may, will marry such an husband as shall be no less careful for the common good then myself and if I persist in this which I have proposed unto myself, I assure myself, that God will so direct my counsels and yours that you shall have no cause to doubt of a successor which may be more profitable for the commonwealth than him which may proceed from me, sithence the posterity doth oftentimes degenerate ".[67]

As Hackett stated, although she was careful to leave the door of marriage quite open as a political weapon, she wished the subject would be closed,[68] furthermore Elizabeth was probably aware that she would never marry; she liked to play with her suitors and make them believe that she might marry them. Elizabeth conducted her courtships neither like a conventional, subordinate early modern woman nor like a typical king or Queen.[69]She liked to entertain her suitors but she told Parliament that she would neither be forced to marry against her will, nor told whom to marry.[70]In *Elizabeth I: The Voice of a Monarch* Bell claims that she intended to govern the country herself whether or not she would marry and would not accept an arranged marriage. As she informed her Secretary William Cecil she had no immediate desire to marry. She was extremely busy figuring out how to rule the country. However when the marriage issue came up again over the years, she had to come to term with her female nature: If a King married, his wife would bear his future heirs, but a married Queen regnant would have to face many problems including high maternal mortality.[71]However she had no wish to marry immediately, she was prepared to consider any

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[67] Leah, Marcus, Janel, Mueller, Mary Beth, Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2000

[68] Helen Hackett, op cit. p. 52

[69] Ilona Bell, op cit. p. 3

[70] ibid.

[71] ibid.

politically appropriate suitor who "makes her desire what at present she had no wish for". She voiced an astonishing notion for a monarch at that time; she would marry only if she found a husband who was both politically advisable and personally desirable, someone whom she found physically, emotionally and intellectually appealing.[72]

The range of potential suitors extended from London to Spain, Sweden, and the Holy Roman Empire.[73]There were also a number of English peers to be considered: Arundel, Norfolk, and Westmoreland. However many of her advisors thought she should marry a foreigner in order to forge an alliance with one of the Rival European powers. On the other hand there was also Robert Dudley, Elizabeth's first master of the horse, with whom she had a particular relationship: she openly displayed her attraction to Dudley who probably was the only one that she would ever have married. However this could be an awkward choice after the death of his wife in dubious circumstances in September 1560.[74] According to Aylmer, who became Bishop of London after the reign of Elizabeth, the Queen's role of mother and wife to the Nation included the duty to be a real mother; to produce an heir, in 1559, in his *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects* he wrote:" to guide hir harte in the choise of hir husbande, and to make hir frutefull, and the mother of manye children, that thys Realme maye haue the graftes of so goodly a tree, that oure children and posterite maye see hirs occupying hir throne, with honour, ioye, & quietnes".[75]

Elizabeth was different from her sister who immediately saw her duty in this respect. She had already made clear her aversion to marriage before becoming Queen:"she asked to remain in the estate she was". However, as Hackett claims, the reasons for Elizabeth's reluctance to marry could be many; they could be the result of the childhood trauma of her mother's execution by her father, or another trauma caused by the Thomas Seymour scandal when she was adolescent or she may just have been reluctant to surrender her absolute political autonomy. [76]On the other hand this reluctance went not only against political thinking, but also against Protestant theology. For the Protestant faith, celibacy was impossible, for human beings are naturally sinners.[77] This issue was published in early Elizabethan texts such as Thomas Becon's *Booke of Matrimony* in which he praised marriage

[72] ibid.

[73] ibid.

[74] Helen Hackett, op cit. p. 72

[75] Aylmer quoted in Hackett, op cit. p. 49

[76] ibid.

[77] ibid

over virginity claiming that marriage was necessary as chastity was so difficult; virginity is so special that it can only be attained by a number of sinless aided by God.[78] The Queen in a speech to Parliament takes advantage of this belief; she implies that her virginity was a form of dedication to God. She used the role of the Bride of Christ, familiar from Marian iconography. Protestantism erased the Marian cult but nonetheless sustained the identification of the Bride with the Church. Elizabeth in her propaganda was continuing the Catholic iconography of virginity by adding scriptural texts that for Protestants too used the figure of the virginal bride.[79] The Queen presented herself as the Virgin Queen as a means to replace the Virgin Mary in order also to heal the rupture created by the break with the Catholic Church. This created for her a powerful means of propaganda; she and her Councillors appropriated the symbolism of the Marian Cult in order to create the cult of the Virgin Queen. The identification of Elizabeth with the Virgin Mary was effective in encouraging loyalty to the Queen.[80]

Breuner reported that Elizabeth once compared herself to a nun. This statement might be the consequence of the continuous insistence on seeing her married. She intended to make her own decisions about marriage, based not only upon political considerations but upon her "human emotions and impulses".[81] From Elizabeth's statement: " I'd rather go into a nunnery, or for the matter suffer death, than marry against my will" Bell shows another connection with one of Shakespeare's heroines; Hermia from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* pointing out that Elizabeth anticipates the desire of the heroine when ordered by her father to marry Theseus. Like Elizabeth, Hermia responds that she would rather live and die "in single blessdness" than "yeld her virgin patent up" unto the man her father had chosen for her to marry. For both Hermia and Elizabeth becoming a nun is the best of the choices offered them. [82]According to Bell, another Shakespearean heroine that can be connected to Elizabeth as far as marriage is concerned is Beatrice from *Much Ado About Nothing.* Beatrice is a strong woman, and like Elizabeth, as Bell says, she scoffs at conventional gender roles in which all women were seen. Like the Queen, she refuses "to be fitted with a husband" (2.1.57-8). For all the play she defends her liberty and her freedom that she so evidently enjoys. In Act II, scene I she makes immediately clear that she does not want to marry

[78] ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Levine, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, op cit. p. 27-8

[81] Ilona Bell, op cit. p. 70

[82] ibid.

because: “she does not want to make account of her life to a clod of wayward marl”. Hero is Beatrice’s cousin. She differs from her since from the beginning of the play she seems like a conventional, chaste, silent and obedient young woman[83]. When a false rumour is going around, suggesting that Don Pedro is planning to propose to Hero, her father says “Daughter, remember what I told you. If the Prince do solicit you in that kind, you know your answer” (2.I.66-68). Even though she recognizes that Hero has to do as her father commands, Beatrice objects, advising Hero to do according to her own will: “ Yes, faith, it is my cousin’s duty to make cur’sy and say, ‘ Father as it please you’. But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another cur’sy and say ‘Father as it please me’ ”. When at the masked ball Don Pedro asks her to join his company, Hero responds “I may say so when I please”. This sounds like what Elizabeth used to say to her Parliament in response to the continuous marriage petitions: “As for me, I shall do no otherwise than please me”. [84] However, the protagonist to whom Elizabeth may be compared best is Beatrice who gives evasive excuses like those Elizabeth gives her suitors. The real reason why Beatrice rejects Don Pedro is Benedick, whom she is in love with, like Elizabeth’s enigmatic allusions to Dudley during the marriage negotiations suggests. Like Elizabeth, Beatrice enjoys being free and for all the play, she defends, “if it please me” the freedom of choice, that Elizabeth fought so hard to defend.[85]

Levine cites Susan Doran, who argues that Elizabeth truly wanted to marry on two occasions: after the death of Dudley’s wife’s in 1560 she seriously thought of marring him and in 1579 she demonstrated a strong desire to marry the Duke of Anjou.[86] Doran claims that to fully understand why these marriages failed to take place, historians should focus on the debates and the political strategies that surrounded these courtships. On these two occasions she would probably have married but her Council convinced her that this would be politically dangerous. Besides the relationship with Dudley, brought the subjects to make assumption as to her private life. As Mucci points out in her *I corpi di Elisabetta* these forms of curiosity showed how the subjects would think about the anomalous position of their Queen. Mucci distingushes the two types of the main rumours: the first deals with Elizabeth having many illegitimate children, with her favourite Robert

[83] ibid.

[84] Ilona Bell, op. cit.

[85] ibid.

[86] Doran cit in Carole Levine, *The Reign of Elizabeth*, op cit. p. 41

Dudley; while the second, deals with rumours about her health: she was thought not to be like other women as she could not have children.[87]

As the 1570s progressed, Elizabeth's subjects began to accept that she might never marry. This increased, however, the wish for the Queen's long life.[88] Sir Thomas Smith wrote in 1572: "God preserve her Majesty long to reign over us by some unlooked-for miracle, for I cannot see by natural reason that her Highness goeth about to provide for it".[89] In 1578 even the interminable courtship of the Duke of Anjou took a serious turn: at that time Anjou was 23 years old, while Elizabeth was 44. Anjou's interest in this marriage was to add military force to his ambitions in the Netherlands, the advantage of the English was in preventing France and Spain from uniting against England. There were many pros and cons for this marriage: Elizabeth finally would have had an heir (if she was still capable of it being 44), however there was a general dislike which Englishmen have of being governed by a foreigner.

Walsingham, a man much employed in her foreign marriage negotiation, started to oppose this marriage because "no one thing hath procured her so much hatred abroad as this wooing matters". However in the end Elizabeth appeared to have a firm intent to marry, but this produced a reversal in the attitude of her subjects: they now opposed her marriage, being accustomed to the rule of a woman and still remembering Mary being married to a foreign prince and the terror of her kingdom.

The dislike for the marriage was expressed also by John Stubbs who wrote in September 1579 *The Discovery of a gaping gulf, wherein England it is like to be swallowed by another French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the banns by letting her Majesty see the sin and punish therof.* the Queen did not like Stubbs' tones and commanded the book was banned, and Stubbs and his publisher had the right hand chopped off.[90] In this treatise, Alençon was compared to the snake of the Bible, while Elizabeth was seen as a new Eve. The Queen is seen in this treatise as a sinful woman who might bring again the fall of the human kind. A new danger from abroad after the Armada threatened England.[91] In October the Privy Council discusses the marriage and the majority of councillors oppose it. As Hackett points out, the Anjou courtship is important also from an iconographic point of view since it marks important changes: the realization by Elizabeth's subjects that a Virgin

[87] Mucci, op cit. p. 68-69

[88] Helen Hackett, op cit. p. 74

[89] ibid.

[90] ibid.

[91] Mucci, op cit. pg 65

Queen might be better than a married Queen marked also the end of any expectation of an heir from her. From then on she would be unequivocally celebrated as ever-virgin.[92]

Levine, points out that: "As a public self she was both Virgin and Mother to her people. Icon to the ideal of chastity, Elizabeth had to be womanly and yet rule, a hitherto masculine enterprise. By not marrying, Elizabeth refused the most obvious function of been a Queen, that of bearing a son. To compensate Elizabeth presented herself to her people as a symbol of virginity, a Virgin Queen."[93]

Elizabeth was married to her kingdom and was the mother of her subjects also as a political strategy. [94] She avoided the marriage in order to avoid being perceived as the inferior partner. As Levine points out; certainly there were costs to this choice both personal and political, but it was a choice which was in keeping with her own wishes. What is worth highlight is that Elizabeth the Virgin Queen, was able for the entire length of her reign to reverse the general patriarchal thought that women were unfit to rule, being Queen regnant alone without a husband for fifty years.

As Susan Doran observes, since 1578, when it became obvious that Elizabeth would never marry, her status required a new iconography, celebrating her as the Virgin Queen. This new iconography started influencing representations of her in miniatures and paintings. The image of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen was a product of her propaganda. She commissioned many of the paintings of the 1580s and 1590s and even if she did not commissione them, they were commissioned by her courtiers and they had to be approved by her[95]. An example of the new way of seeing Elizabeth as Virgin Queen, in the last years of her reign is given in 1579 by George Puttenham who presented Elizabeth with the gift of a sequence of poems entitled *Partheniades* or " virgin songs". Throughout his Partheniad, Puttenham waved continuously between praising the Queen's virginity which set her above other women, and made her a goddess-like figure[96]and his desire to see her married in order to see a Tudor offspring on the throne. Puttenham worshipped Elizabeth as a divinity: he stated at various points that she is "a thinge verye admirable in nature".[97]

As Queen Elizabeth turned sixty at the end of the sixteenth century, she remained both physically vigorous and never abandoned her right to make her own decisions. Between 1588 and 1598 her

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[92] ibid.

[93] ibid

[94] Levine, op cit. p 64

[95] Thomas S Freeman and Susan Doran, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003

[96] Helen Hackett, op cit. pg 101

[97] ibid.

most trusted friends and advisors such as Leicester, Walsingham and Burghley grew old and died leaving her alone.[98] However Elizabeth was able even in the last years of her reign to rule her realm without losing her power. In 1593, Elizabeth was sixty in a society which did not see favourably unmarried women; Erasmus wrote in his *Courtship*:" A maiden is something charming, but what's more naturally unnatural than an old maid?".[99]

In the last years of her reign Elizabeth was extremely aware of getting old; however her iconographical response was to claim herself ageless. As Frye suggested in her *Elizabeth I, the Competition for Representation*, the claim was that her virginity and her chastity, protected Elizabeth from the normal aging process, helping preserve her metaphoric fertility. Her denial of old age was a way to transcend her society's tendency to ignore any woman past motherhood age. This way to depict her as young despite her body which was actually ageing, was a gimmick she used to prevent her subjects from thinking about the immediate succession.[100]

Two portraits of the 1590s suggest how Elizabeth preferred to view herself: the "coronation" portrait (fig. 7) shows the Queen as a young woman with long and flowing hair; symbol of virginity, the "rainbow" portrait (fig. 8) portrays a radiantly youthful queen in a fantastical dress. Both portraits represent Elizabeth as young and chaste with the hair down in the style of an English maiden. In the rainbow portrait the Queen is wearing a low-cut bodice, again signifying maidenhood, the masque like headdress is surmounted by the crescent moon in reference to the virgin goddess Diana.

Taken together, the "coronation" portrait and the "rainbow" portrait constitute two different but related strategies of Elizabeth's claim to youth. As Frye points out, viewing these two portraits, it is difficult not to believe for a moment that they are asserting Elizabeth's beauty, chastity and power. They do not seem to contemplate Elizabeth's inevitable death.[101]

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[98] Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I the Competition for Representation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993 pg 99

[99] ibid.

[100] ibid

[101] ibid.

FIGURE 7

The Rainbow Portrait by Isaac Oliver, c.a. 1600 Hatfield House

FIGURE 8

The Coronation Portrait by an unknown artist, c.a. 1600 National Portrait Gallery

The last years of her reign and the new iconography of the virgin queen

In the last years of her reign, in order to preserve her body as inviolable, virginal and chaste, Elizabeth had to gain control of all the encomiastic material which circulated around the court, since her aging body re-fuelled anxiety about the succession to the throne.[102] She decided to employ in her propaganda, complementary language and imagery. As Frye points out in her *Elizabeth I, the Competition for Representation* she increasingly represented herself and was represented as powerful by showing herself remote, self-sufficient and desirable; the typical lady of the courtly love tradition. As Frye suggests, she used several strategies in her final propaganda in order to keep her authority: three of them were Petrarchism, Neoplatonism and medioeval political theology.[103]

In the 1590s the first means by which Elizabeth structured her inviolability was Petrarchism. This new means was created in order to negotiate the relations between her subjects and the Queen. Petrarchism was seen by Elizabeth as creating a distance between herself and others. The Petrarchan tradition; in particular the *Triumphs* marked her propaganda throughout the last years of her reign both in literature and in portraiture. As Campbell points out, many of her last portraits contain symbols connected to Petrarch and his *Triumphs* .

The Petrarchan tradition and symbolism was very popular and remarkable in England, and made its first appearance in England through the translations of Petrarch's sonnets by Thomas Wyatt. Petrarch was very important for the symbolic representation of the Queen: as Susan Frye points out: "it negotiates the relation between subject and audience as the territory to be travelled between desire and consummation".[104] Prominent in Elizabeth's choice of self-representation was Petrarch's Laura, the unattainable love of the *Canzoniere* and the central figure in the *Triumphs*. The most evident purpose of the *Canzoniere* was to praise Laura, the angelic figure. Introspection was very important, the poet applied self-analysis. Yet questions concerning the virtue of love in relation to the Christian religion and desire were always present. Central themes of the *Canzoniere* were: the changing mind of man and the passing of time, as well as the consideration of the art of poetic creation itself. Some other themes were desire, isolation, unrequited love, and the vanity of youth. The central theme in the *Canzoniere* is the poet's love for Laura. Petrarch was one of the most important among Italian writers. During the late 13th and early 14th centuries he, Dante and

[102] Susan Frye, op cit.

[103] Ibid

[104] ibid

Boccaccio were the main representatives of the "Dolce stil Novo". Petrarch focused most of his writings on his Platonic object of love, Laura, who was depicted as an abstract entity, she was not realistic, she was a supernatural figure: a bright angel.

In both the late pageantry and portraiture it is possible to notice that the Queen is depicted as a supernatural figure; she wears a "mask of youth" and it is with the Laura of the Triumphs that the Queen is identified; in particular with the Laura of the Triumph of Chastity.[105] The evocation of the Laura of the *Triumphs* was designed to appeal to the older generation of courtiers who were just interested in the issues of succession and nation-building and whose support was essential to her. [106]

The "Trionfi" is a quasi-allegorical poem divided into six parts. The first section, the triumph of Love sees the poem as a dream, in which the poet-dreamer sees the vision of Cupid in a Roman imperial triumphal procession. In the Triumph of Chastity, as already mentioned, the protagonist is Laura who rescues from the Love chariot many illustrious women such as Dido, Lucrece and Penelope in order to save them from the passion of love, taking them into the Temple of Chastity in Rome. The *Triumphs* are six: the Triumphs of Love, Chastity, Death, Time, Fame and Eternity, the refuge of men in God.

As Heather Campbell wrote in the chapter "And in their midst a sun: Petrarch's Triumphs and the Elizabethan Icon" of *Goddesses and Queens, the Iconography of Elizabeth I*: "Elizabeth's identification with the powerful victor from the Triumph of Chastity and the evocation of Rome supported her position as monarch, neutralizing her problems inherent in her gender at the same time as the Laura image exploited both the mystical power of virginity and her potential as a chaste object of desire." The popularity of the Triumphs in sixteenth-century England provided a crucial element in the creation of the Elizabethan icon. It offered associations through which Elizabeth could be presented to her own subjects as the Virgin Queen.[107]

The Triumphs were first translated into English by Henry Parker Lord Morley, in 1540.[108] Both the *Triumphs* and the *Canzoniere* circulated widely in manuscript form long before their first printing in 1470 and as Carnicelli points out in his introduction to the *Triumphs*, keeping count of the greater

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[105] ibid

[106] Heather Campbell, " And in their midst a sun: Petrarch's Triumphs and the Elizabeth Icon" in Goddesses and Queens, the Iconography of Elizabeth I, ed. Connolly, Hopkins, p.83 Manchester University Press 2007

[107] ibid

[108] Lord's Morley's Tryumphes of Frances Petrarcke, D.D. Carnicelli ed. Hardvard University Press, Cambridge Massachussetts, 1971 p 3-19

number of manuscripts of the *Triumphs,* fifteenth-century readers distinctly preferred that poem.[109] Probably, as Campbell suggests, Lord Morley decided to translate the Triumphs instead of the Canzoniere because he was older than his contemporaries Wyatt and Surrey who probably would have preferred the collections of courtly verse that was to follow such as *Tottle's Miscellany* (1557) and *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576). Lord Morley was in his early sixties when this new fashion for Petrarch was established. Probably his tastes were more conventional than those of the younger poets. However, in choosing the *Triumphs,* Morley picked the most popular and widely read of all the works in the Petrarchan canon.[110]

Carcinelli, in his analysis of the *Triumphs* offers the contribution of Bernardo da Montalcino who in 1475 analyzed the structure of the work: the six parts of the *Triumphs* represent six consecutive states of the soul. The first Triumph; the one of Love shows the soul dominated by the sensual appetite; the second, of Chastity, shows the triumph of reason over sensuality, the third one, of Death, analyzes the process by which the body and the soul are separated, the forth shows man's remembrance of the soul after the death of the body; the fifth, of Time, shows the defeat of this memory by Time and the Sixth and last one, of Eternity, shows the soul subject to universal divine justice. Elizabeth during the last years of her propaganda made wide use of the Triumphs *of Chastity* and of *Time* in order to overcome her impending succession.[111]

The word Triumph during the Renaissance evokes the meaning of, as John Florio said, " a solemne pompe or showe at the returne of a capitaine for a victory he hath got". In Elizabeth's England this would be linked with court celebrations, civic processions and the allegorical masques presented to Queen Elizabeth during the royal progresses. Triumphs also left their mark on an illustrative tradition; artists found in this work an abundance of subject matter and often provided inspiration for creators of triumphal pageants and procession.[112] It is well known that the illustrations and poems about *Thriumphs* surround the iconography of Elizabeth, in particular, as already mentioned: the *Triumph of Chastity*.

However, the identification of Elizabeth with the Laura of the *Triumphs* had already appeared in the first decade of her reign, becoming stronger in the last decade. Roy Strong in *Portraits of Queen*

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[109] ibid

[110] Campbell, op. cit.

[111] Carnicelli, op. cit.

[112] ibid

Elizabeth I identified two drawings; one dated 1580 and the other between 1560 and 1570 which may belong to the earliest stages of Elizabeth's identification with Laura.

As Campbell points out, between 1579 and 1580 a number of portraits appear showing Elizabeth holding a sieve, known as a symbol of virginity. (Fig. 9, Fig.10). The sieve is held by Tuccia, the Roman Vestal Virgin who, in order to prove her chastity after being accused of impurity, carried some water with a sieve from the River Tiber to the Temple without spilling it. The character of Tuccia appears in the Triumph of Chastity. Elizabeth in the sieve portrait is dressed in black with a white mantel, and a double string of pearls which represent chastity. Behind her shoulders there is a pillar on which there is depicted a globe and the story of Dido and Aeneas. The pillar with the story connects back to the Triumph of Love in which the narrator rejects Virgil's version of the story of Dido's seduction by Aeneas.[113]

> Among the others was the vestal maid.
> Who that she might be free of ill report.
> Sped boldly to the Tiber, and from thence.
> Brought water to her temple in a sieve.[114]
>
> (II. 148-151)

[113] Campbell, op. cit.

[114] ibid

FIGURE 9

Copy of the “Sieve Portrait” c.a. 1583 unknown artist, Collection of the Duke of Hamilton

FIGURE 10

The Sieve Portrait by Quentin Metseys the Younger, c.a. 1580, Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena

As Campbell points out, the presence of Dido, refers to the *Triumph of Chastity* where she appears twice. In both references she appears as an example of constancy in married love.[115] Dido is shown as the great builder of the city of Carthage while Elizabeth could be seen as the monarch who brought England to prosperity and as a model of female chastity, loyalty and constancy.[116]

In Elizabeth's Sieve portrait, there is a clear reference to Petrarch's poem. As Campbell points out, in 1580 the portrait of the sieve underwent some changes; the globe behind the Queen's left shoulder has been lowered to make room for a procession of courtiers, with a maid of honour.

The connection with the Triumphs is highlighted by the quotation of the Triumph of Love located below the pillar and below the Queen's right hand, suggesting that she has the power of love under control: "Stancho riposo e riposato affanno".[117] However, the Sieve portrait also leads to another emblematic depiction, which is that of the interchangeability between the Queen and her people, which stems from the idea that the Queen's body is the body politic of the realm.

Another symbolic representation that makes the connection with Petrarch unquestionable, is the Queen's 'imperial' column, which is made of jewels, used to celebrate Elizabeth's chastity, constancy and imperial destiny. Below the column, a quotation from Petrarch is inscribed: "D'un bel diaspro er'ivi una colonna". As Campbell suggests, the Sieve Portrait, could be seen as an exact visual replication of the *Triumph of Chastity*; the procession at the back and Elizabeth depicted as victorious.[118]

As Frances Yates noted in her *Astrea*, the link between Elizabeth's iconography and the Triumphs is connected also with the Ermine portrait (Fig.11). Such an element adorns the banner in Petrarch's *Triumph of Chastity* and symbolized purity. Despite being a further image of what is implied in the Sieve portrait; the celebration of chastity, the 'Ermine' also represents the image of the Queen as peace; picturing the Queen, bearing an olive branch in her right hand.[119]Another important symbol which describes Queen Elizabeth's virtues and qualities; is the eglantine which associates the Queen herself to this particular kind of rose since she was able to unite the roses of York and Lancaster. Her dress is elaborate and decorated with jewels, pearls the symbol of chastity, and she is

[115] ibid

[116] ibid

[117] ibid

[118] ibid

[119] Frances Yates quoted in Campbell, op. cit.

bearing the sword of justice. The ermine's collar connects the portrait directly with the *Triumphs*; to be more precise with the *Triumph of Death*.

The banner of their victory displayed.
An ermine white upon a field of green,
Wearing a chain of topaz and of gold.
Not human, rather to be called divine,
Were both their bearing and they holy words
Blessed is one born for such destiny!
With violets and roses they were decked;
Bright stars they seemed, and in their midst a sun.
Adorned them all, and made them brighter still.
(Triumph of Death)

The connection between Laura and Elizabeth is indubitable; the ermine, with his collar of topaz and gold, identifies Elizabeth with Laura who is represented by the sun in the poem. At that time there were many images of the Queen connected to the Ptolemaic Cosmos and the music of the spheres. The link between the Queen and the music of the spheres derives from the Pythagoras-Platonic doctrine centred on cosmic harmony, which was very influential for the philosophers of the time. To better understand the metaphor of the music of the spheres, which was seen as the maximum expression of harmony, the image of the Ptolemaic cosmos is worth considering: the earth, composed of four elements, earth, water, air and fire, was at the centre of the universe and was surrounded by ten concentric skies revolving like spheres inside each other, thus producing a celestial sound. The Queen, is above the Ptolemaic universe, and she is able to harmonize all the earth. The Triumph motif is also employed in the well-known "Procession" picture of approximately 1600, and another couple of engravings.[120] The first one is by William Rogers and commemorates the defeat of the Armada. This portrait shows Elizabeth as Peace, bearing an olive branch. Next to the Queen there are Victory and Plenty each offering her a crown. The crown of victory is a laurel wreath providing a connection with Laura. The other engraving is a development of Roger's Triumph but instead of Victory and Plenty there are six of the seven virtues, which are represented by Elizabeth herself.

One of the posthumous portraits of Elizabeth, dated between 1608 and 1610, deals with the passage of Time and consequently with Death. Elizabeth is portrayed in a contemplative pose with two shadowy figures behind her, precisely Time and Death. Two cherubim hover above her holding a

[120] ibid

crown and a sceptre (Fig.12).[121] On the table next to her, beneath the figure of Time, lies a broken hourglass which symbolizes the irreversible passing of time. Beside the figure of Death is another hourglass, but with all the sand collected at the bottom; probably symbolizing the end of time in this life. The face is modelled on the death mask rather than the mask of youth much used in portraits in her later years: no portraits dated between 1596 and 1603 show the aging queen as she truly was. The figures of Time and Death are in deep shadow behind her, symbolizing the passing of Time, aging and consequently Death. The cherubim with the crowns appear to be receding, symbolizing the messengers of God removing the symbol of earthly power. [122]

The last portrait that can be connected with Petrarch and the *Triumphs* is an engraving dated 1617-19 depicting the Queen as receiving a crown consisting of the moon, the sun and stars (Fig. 13). Here Elizabeth after her death, like Laura, has become a part of the vision of the New Jerusalem in The Triumph of Eternity. As Frye suggests, at Elizabeth's court in the 1590s, the lyric of distance was of distinct service to the representation of herself; and Elizabeth, wrote her own Petrarchan lyric, emphasizing this distance from her own point of view[123]: the speaker describes the number of suitors she has rejected as a means of accentuating the isolation created by her virginity.[124]

"When I was fair and young, and favour graced me,
Of many was I sought, their mistress for to be;
But I did scorn them all, and answered them therefore,
" Go, Go, Go seek some otherwhere! Importune me no more!"

[121] ibid

[122] ibid

[123] ibid

[124] ibid

FIGURE 11

The Ermine Portrait, Nicholas Hillard, c . 1585, Hatfield House

FIGURE 12

Elizabeth I with Old Father Time, unknown artist, c.a. 1610

FIGURE 13

Engraving of Elizabeth I by Francis Delaram, c.a. 1617-1619

As Frye points out: " Elizabeth in her poem is able simultaneously to control her distance from her courtiers and to construct herself through their amorous gaze because she occupied the position of both author and female subject."[125] Frye quoted Ann Rosalind Jones who observed that women poets in the sixteenth century found that the Petrarchan code could be " regendered to guarantee the chastity of a woman poet". However Elizabeth's poem can be read as the rectification of the gap between Elizabeth and her court. As Frye points out:" it may be the record of a moment of Elizabeth's self representation in the Petrarchan mode that sent a clear and ironic message to her suitors to leave her alone."[126]

The second discourse that Elizabeth found useful for her propaganda in the 1590s was Neoplatonism. As Susan Frye suggests, Neoplatonism was not created for princes; but for people not possessing direct power.[127] In 1561 when Sir Thomas Hoby first translated Baldassarre Castiglione's *The Book of Courtier* its Neoplatonism of appropriate court behaviour started to appeal to the male courtier or gentleman. As Frye points out:" Castiglione's text proposes the explicit power of the male courtier to fashion both princes and women and to gain their favour."[128] For Elizabeth, "Neoplatonism became the means to conceptualize the universe as a hierarchy of love that individuals might manipulate to suit themselves. As Frye states:" This love is a political conception in Neoplatonism that helps explain how love functions as a metaphor for the give and take of the patronage system and also how love can be considered synonymous with magic. In neoplatonism, the bond of love forms a correspondence among all things, a common relationship that allows the equation of love with magic."[129] To better explain Neoplatonism; Frye makes use of Marsilio Ficino who in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* shared Castiglione's point of view: " the courtier may control the prince through 'love', the representation of their interconnections that he hopes to turn in his advantage." Elizabeth used both Petrarchism and Neoplatonism, especially their definition of "love", to assert both her connection with her people and her supremacy and isolation.[130]

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[125] ibid

[126] ibid

[127] ibid

[128] ibid

[129] ibid

[130] ibid

Elizabeth's adaptation of Neoplatonism as self-representation; and the use she made of the word love, took the association Ficino made with magic. Elizabeth's representation as Chastity contained the magical assertion that " the Queen occupied an intermediary position between God and her subjects as well as between nature and mortals as the means to assert her divine power. On occasion, she was not simply an intermediary, but pictured as God himself."[131]

Neoplatonism led to the third discourse that Elizabeth used for her representation in the 1590s: Medieval Political Theology which stated the relation between the King and God. At the beginning of her reign Elizabeth invoked cautiously the divine right that her father had used widely: "the power of King is the power of God".[132] The invocation of the divine right by Elizabeth disturbed Parliament who at the beginning saw her power as something unpopular. However as her reign developed with the expanding trade and exploration and with the defeat of the Spanish Armada, her claim that God approved her chastity became more acceptable. In her speeches delivered between 1593 and 1601 Elizabeth declared her position as intercessor between God and her subjects.[133] In her last speech of 1601, Elizabeth made it clear that if love formed the connection between herself and her subjects, chastity defined her remote from them.[134]

[131] ibid

[132] ibid

[133] ibid

[134] ibid

The iconography of the 90s: Spenser's Faerie Queene

In the 1590s, Elizabeth used these three discourses as a means of distancing herself from her subjects and as a way of control of the final representations of herself.[135] As Frye points out, the one who challenged her authority by trying to rewrite these discourses was Edmund Spenser who in 1590 wrote the most important of his works on Elizabeth: *The Faerie Queene.*

As Andrew Hadfield points out, scholars have often assumed that Spenser worshipped the Virgin Queen and wrote his epic romance in order to praise his ruler. In the *Faerie Queene,* there is a series of knights who are supposed to reach the court of a mysterious virgin queen; Gloriana rather the allegorical figure of Elizabeth.[136] However, as Hadfield suggests, many of the women in the poem; the woman warrior, Britomart, the chaste Florimell, Belphoebe and the nun, Una, can also be seen as allegorical figures for Elizabeth.

The first things that are known about Spenser's *Faerie Queene* can be found in a letter that the poet wrote to Sir Walter Raleigh which was also appended to the first edition of the work, stressing, according to Hadfield, that the poem should be read as an allegory in praise of the reigning monarch. "In that Fairy Queen I mean glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our Sovereign Queen, and her kingdom in Fairy Land."[137] However Spenser in the second part of the letter sent to Raleigh cited the doctrine of the monarch's two bodies opening in a sort of way a critical comment on his queen:

> And yet in some places else, I do otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful Lady, this latter part in some places I do express in Belphoebe, fashioning her name according to your own excellent conceit of Cynthia.[138]

In this last part of his letter, Spenser quoted the protagonist with whom Raleigh characterized Elizabeth in his work. Both Phoebe and Cynthia stand for Diana.[139] As Hadfield points out,

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[135]Susan, Frye, op cit

[136] Andrew, Hadfield, " Duessa's Trial and Elizabeth's Error: Judging Elizabeth in Spenser's Faerie Queene" from; Susan, Doran, Thomas, Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003

[137] ibid

[138] Ibid

[139] ibid

Spenser's work contains a veiled critique on Elizabeth together with the celebration that he wanted to highlight in his poem.[140]

Spenser's work tells the stories of some knights, each representing a particular virtue, on their quests for the Faerie Queene, Gloriana. Redcrosse is the knight of Holiness, and must defeat both theological error and the dragon of deception to free the parents of Una "truth". Guyon is the knight of Temperance, who must destroy the fleshly temptations of Acrasia's Bower of Bliss. Britomart, a woman disguised as a male knight, represents Chastity; she must find her beloved and win his heart. Artegall, the knight of Justice, must rescue lady Eirene. Cambell and Triamond, the knights of Friendship, must aid one another in defence of the honour of the various ladies. Finally, Calidore, the knight of Courtesy, must stop the Blatant Beast from spreading its venom throughout the realm. Each quest is an allegory, and the knight given the quest represents a person's internal growth in that particular virtue. In Books I and III, the poet follows the journeys of two knights, Redcrosse and Britomart, and in doing so he examines the two virtues he considers most important to Christian life: Holiness and Chastity.

As Hackett observes; Spenser seems to have had fervent Protestant beliefs. In his work, in particular in Books I, II and III, he made use of the iconography of the combat of the preceding years.[141] As Frye states, analyzing more in depth Book III, the one directly addressing her Chastity, Spenser redefines Elizabeth's chastity according to the patriarchal definition of it :" purity from unlawful intercourse" as defined in the codes of English law.[142] Frye suggests that Book III was able to unleash the frustrations that Elizabeth with her speeches and materials had generated in many writers of her generation. Elizabeth in asserting her position as a magical and divinely approved virgin and with the concept of her having both a female and a male body was in contrast with the social beliefs of the female construction.[143] However, Spenser in his work represents his queen with many figures rendering her multifaceted; Gloriana, for example, is invested by Spenser with sun-light brightness. Belphoebe too is represented as bright light with eyes that are sun-like and star-like with a connection with Petrarch's Laura.[144] Una is probably Elizabeth's alter-ego, she is used by the

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[140] ibid

[141] Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen* op cit.

[142] ibid

[143] ibid

[144] ibid

author as a sort of binary opposition with Duessa.[145] As Hackett points out, Una as a Virgin stands for Elizabeth and for Protestantism while her adversary, Duessa, stands for deceit, for Mary Queen of Scots and for the Catholic Church. Hackett suggests that this can be seen as " a binary opposition of virgin and whore that can represent the political and religious opposition between England and its enemies." The personification of the Church is being used by Spenser to highlight the purity, the sanctity of Una/ Elizabeth as Protestant Church in opposition with the immorality of Duessa/ Mary Queen of Scots and the Catholic Church. [146]

In his *Faerie Queene*, Spenser, used the same pattern of Neoplatonism, associating Elizabeth with God himself; in the text for example Belphoebe is described as " Borne of heavenly birthe", while Gloriana too is " heavenly borne".[147] However Hackett uses the words of Sir Guyon to highlight the fact that the celebration he made of Elizabeth as a divine creature seemed to be a bit strong for a Protestant. On the other hand she tries to give an explanation for the choice Spenser made in his allegory.[148] The poet, made a wide use of the word "idol" in his work, Elizabeth is an instrument of God and she is made in his own image, she is a personification of God's will. As Hackett points out, Spenser in his work is claiming that even though the English Protestant nation seems to be the one that has obtained the realization of God's will on earth, " there is still a long way to go to reach the New Jerusalem."[149]Gloriana is the quasi-messiah on earth but for Spenser she has not accomplished her mission of establishing the true faith. Spenser is implying in his work the need for Elizabeth to become like his heroines in particular Gloriana as she symbolises the Church and the nation.[150]

As Frye claims, Spenser with his work was able to participate in the competition to redefine the queen's iconography. Spenser, especially with book III wrote an allegory on chastity, the virtue that featured most frequently in representations of herself in the last years of her reign. Book III of the *Faerie Queene* analyzes the attempt to confine Elizabeth's chastity within male control.[151] However there have been many assumptions that *The Third Booke of the Faerie Queene Contayning, The Legend of Britomartis. Or of Chastitie* was not directly written thinking about Elizabeth since

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[145] ibid

[146] ibid

[147] ibid

[148] ibid

[149] ibid

[150] ibid

[151] Frye, op. cit.

Spenser first denies the queen's correspondence with Britomart.[152]As Frye points out, Britomart could be seen both as the figure of Elizabeth's androgynous power and a female destined to fight for her invulnerability. Elizabeth is the indubitable source for the Faerie virtue: as Frye suggests "Book III stands juxtaposed with the proem's opening stanza about Elizabeth's chastity, implying that Britomart's chastity corresponds to the queen's"[153] As Elizabeth in her life, Britomart appears in the first canto as an admirable, independent woman who had defeated Sir Guyon and six of Malecasta's knights. As Frye points out, Britomart's femininity had to face the social prescriptions of the male patriarchal society by the male threats during her search for a mate. As Elizabeth during her reign, Britomart in her journey faces allegorical dangers that can be connected to the dangers Elizabeth had to face due to her independence and her sexuality.[154] As far as Elizabeth's sexuality is concern, even though Spenser's aim was to praise his queen, there were some aspects of Elizabeth that he did not quite appreciate: when *the Faerie Queene* was first published in 1590 Elizabeth was 47; and although she had many merits as a ruler, by that time it was crystal clear that the legacy of the queen would be uncertain. According to Hadfield the episode concerning Gloriana the Queen of Fairies sleeping with Prince Arthur in his dreams represents an abandoned, alternative sexual history of the queen that Spenser wished would happen. For Spenser the sexuality of his queen and her choice to marry was part of the concern of her subjects.[155] Since his early work Spenser's political position seemed to have developed and changed: the criticism about Elizabeth's behaviour was still present but it seemed that the poet was more resigned because there was nothing that could be done to turn time back. However the later sections of *The Faerie Queene* seemed to be hostile to female rule, suggesting that women are incapable of governing and taking the decisions to administer a realm. As Hadfield points out, a key episode that could bring the reader to notice the subtle critique that Spenser made of his queen is the one that deals with the trial of Duessa at the court of Mercilla.[156] According to Hadfield, this could be seen as an allegorical representation of the trial and subsequent execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587.[157] The episode concerning Queen Mary suggests a critique on Elizabeth's rule: women are unsuited to govern because they are

[152] ibid

[153] ibid

[154] ibid

[155] Hatfield, op cit

[156] ibid

[157] ibid

dominated by emotion rather than reason.[158] According to Hadfield, Elizabeth is guilty of wondering what she has in common with Mary, rather than seeing the differences that surround them, both political and religious. Spencer seemed to agree to the image that had been created of Mary Queen of Scots: she was seen as alien to the English political and religious tradition being Franco-Scottish. However Duessa's trial marks a turning point for Spenser's work showing Elizabeth as a monarch who is not able to govern her realm.[159]

As Hadfield points out, the allegory talks of the fear that England could be invaded by the Catholic Antichrist, and it serves as a structuring principle throughout the narrative of *The Faerie Queene*. The Allegory Duessa/Mary assumes particular importance throughout the poem; that is why the trial of Duessa is the key part, to show that Elizabeth did not deal adequately with her.[160]

However, by the time *The Faerie Queene* was published Mary was already dead and her son James VI of Scotland, as Hadfield points out, felt that Spenser's poem threatened his ambition to be king of England. As a matter of fact, in his poem Spenser seems to argue that Mary's death was not the end of Elizabeth's problems. According to Hadfield: " the good queen who feels too much sympathy for the bad queen is in danger of handing over the kingdom to her rival's son.[161]

The *Two* Cantos *of Mutabilitie*, published in 1609 and posthumous to Elizabeth's death seems to be a fragment of the incomplete seventh book of the legend of Constancy. This deals with the story of how the Titaness Mutability challenges Jove for the right to rule the universe because of the principle of random and endless change. The two protagonists show their case to Nature who awards victory to Jove. In front of Nature, Mutability set herself against Jove and his creature Cynthia, the allegory for Elizabeth, asserting her right to control the universe: " Then is she mortall borne, how-so ye crake, besides her face and countenance every day..." These lines show the unrestrainable passing of time for Elizabeth, who is reaching the end of her reign because she would die soon.[162]

The Faerie Queene, was a demonstration of both the praising and the critique of Elizabeth by Spenser, who reflects the revision of Elizabeth's iconography in Fairyland. In 1595-96 Shakespeare was able to respond with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, showing Elizabeth as Titania the Fairy

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[158] ibid

[159] ibid

[160] ibid

[161] ibid

[162] ibid

Queen in a magic world too. In Shakespeare's masterpiece, Elizabeth is brought to Fairyland and she is connected with many of the female characters of the play, in particular with Hermia, Titania and Hyppolita. The analysis of this play follows in the second part of this dissertation.

The Cult of Elizabeth Roy Strong and Yates

Susan Doran in her article *Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portrait of Elizabeth I* deals with the last scene of Shekhar Kapur's film *Elizabeth* where the Queen makes her first public appearance as an icon of divinity, as the " Virgin Queen."[163]

> In these final shots of this deeply historical drama, Kapur conveys brilliantly the most familiar myth surrounding Elizabeth I, namely that she fashioned her own image and created her own cult of the Virgin Queen as a political device to inspire awe in her subjects, consolidate her political power, and signal her intention never to marry.[164]

As Doran suggests, the image of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen, protector of the English Church and builder of England's greatness, became a myth. The myth of Elizabeth is centuries old; however the analysis of it began in the 1930s. In 1935, John Neale in his biography of Elizabeth explained that the celebration of the Queen in paintings and pageant was a popular tribute to her from her subjects. Like Neale, also Wilkings in 1939 perceived the praise of Elizabeth as a popular and spontaneous celebration from the subjects rather than some political propaganda.[165]

In 1947, Frances Yates did not agree with Wilkings and Neale and she published the first of her several works dealing with " calculated official propaganda as the engine behind the glorification of Elizabeth."[166]According to Yates and later to Strong, it was the queen herself, aided by her courtiers who consciously planned her public image and symbolism, associating herself with classical divinity and even with the Virgin Mary. She smartly appropriated the symbols of divine virginity to defeat cultural patriarchal attitudes towards women and eliminate political problems because of her gender. The establishment of quasi- religious ceremonies and festivals made Elizabeth the object of reverence and adoration. These assumptions were later developed by Yates' student; Roy Strong who suggested there was a "cult" of Elizabeth which was formed around 1570. Strong used the word "cult" in order to highlight the connection between Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary which, according to Strong, "she was able to suppress and sublimate".

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[163] Doran, Susan, Thomas S. Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth* Palgrave Macmillan, 2003

[164] ibid

[165] ibid

[166] ibid

As Strong points out, following the paths of his mentor Yates, the cult of Elizabeth was a meticulous, planned, official strategy created in order to increase royal power. Strong's work, *The cult of Elizabeth, Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* deals with the portraits of Elizabeth and the Accession Day pageant as confirmation of a cult.[167]

> The cult of Gloriana was skilfully created to buttress public order and even more, deliberately to replace the pre-Reformation externals of religion, the cult of the Virgin.

On the other hand, during the 1980s many scholars who did not agree with Yates' and Strong's belief of a cult of the Queen, built on and modified their works. They studied the relationship between power and cultural forms but as their studies developed, they altered the existing knowledge of the "cult" as Elizabeth's creation. Stephen Greenblatt for example, agreed with Yates and Strong in seeing that Elizabeth's image was being imposed by an authoritarian state, highlighting the role of cultural and social forces rather than the decisions of the queen herself. Other, later scholars pointed out that Elizabeth's state was not homogeneous and that the works of art and literature by which the "cult" was articulated were often created not by the Crown but by people who glorified Elizabeth.

However, it is important to highlight that the celebrations for Elizabeth and her myth increased with her death in 1603. During the reign of her successor the idealisation and admiration for her continued to flourish.

As Susan Doran points out, there was no systematic evidence of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen, until the 1580s, after which allusions to her virginity dominated her representation. Susan Doran would rather avoid the word "cult" since there is no authentic cult involved; the Queen definitely tried to control her image imposing some standards, however there was no official censor for that, as there was for drama and printed books.

According to Doran, using the term "cult" implies that the style and iconography of her portraits were in some way unusual and unique.[168] Doran argues that there was considerable continuity in the

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[167] ibid

[168] ibid

iconography of the English monarchy and not only Elizabeth but also James I of England embraced in his paintings the symbology present in the queen's portraits.[169]

Helen Hackett too is against the use of a "cult of the queen" expression; in her book *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen* she argues that the use of the word cult is ambiguous. Elizabeth became a sort of Protestant alternative to the Virgin Mary, " filling a post- Reformation gap in the psyche of the masses, who craved a symbolic virgin-mother figure."[170] Hackett quoted Frances Yates who, commenting on a portrait of Elizabeth, says:

> The bejewelled and painted images of the Virgin Mary had been cast out of churches and Monasteries, but another bejewelled and painted image was set up at court, and went in progress through the land for her worshippers to adore.[171]

According to Hackett, for Yates the existence of a pseudo-Marian Elizabethan cult is perhaps the one most drawn on by later scholars. However most of the texts she cites are from late in Elizabeth's reign. However, Strong, like Yates, comments on the apparently inconsistent nature of the cult they had identified.[172]

> The Anglican position was thus a somewhat peculiar one, for on the one hand the use of religious images was denounced as popish superstition, while on the other, the sacred nature of the royal portrait image was to be maintained.[173]

However, as Hackett points out, new scholars suggest in their work that a cult of Elizabeth might have been produced by collaboration between the ruling power and the desire of the ruled.

Louis Montrose too, in his article *Shaping Fantasies* gives an interpretation about the cult; he interprets three diverse texts regarding Elizabeth and the interaction between the centralized promotion of royal iconography and the national psyche, examining his object of investigation as:

> "a concerted effort was made to appropriate the symbolism and affective power of the suppressed Marian cult in order to foster an Elizabethan cult. Both the internal residues and the

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[169] ibid

[170] Hackett, Helen, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, MacMillan Press, London, 1996

[171] ibid

[172] ibid

[173] ibid

> religious rituals were potential resources for dealing with the political problems of Elizabethan regime. [...] My concern is to emphasize the historical specificity of psychological processes, the politics of the unconscious."[174]

As Hackett points out, when Marian iconography or other sacred iconography was applied to Elizabeth, it was an attempt to increase her potentially precarious authority.[175]

From this brief mention of the cult of Elizabeth, it is clear that many modern scholars do not agree with their precursors Roy Strong and Frances Yates who in their works suggest a cult of Elizabeth. Certainly this new praise of Elizabeth as the virgin Queen and the consequent link with the virgin Mary is something unprecedented and extraordinary, however iconography of the Virgin Queen could also be seen not as continuation of the cult of the Virgin Mary but as a perpetuation of a more ancient veneration of virginity grounded in the superstitions concerning the female body.[176]

However as Doran points out, the tension between Elizabeth's gender and her duties as a queen contributed to some of the negative aspects of the mythical Elizabeth. The creation of the image of a Virgin Queen had as a result the creation of the image of Elizabeth as an unnatural creature with the perception of her as unnaturally masculine.

[174] Montrose op cit p 66

[175] Hackett op cit p 11

[176] ibid

Chapter 2

POLITICAL ALLEGORY IN A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Elizabeth and William Shakespeare

The previous chapter dealt with the figure of Queen Elizabeth I, her life and the way in which she managed to rule in a patriarchal society where her power was seen as unnatural. That chapter focused on her effort to be a woman ruler and on her strength in order to survive in a society in which as an unmarried woman she was seen as a danger. Although the request for a marriage was continuous throughout her reign, she managed to remain unmarried and to rule alone without being subdued by a man. In the last years of her reign, the fear for the succession was high and she had to produce new ideas in order to survive.

This chapter is going to focus on one of the most important of Shakespeare's plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and how the Bard deals with the Queen and England during those years, when the question of succession became more urgent. Many scholars argued for many years that the *Dream* might be a political allegory of the last years of Elizabeth's reign and that it would deal with the problem of the succession which marked all the Elizabethan era but in particular the final part of her reign. In the Dream the Bard portrays Titania, the Fairy Queen, who can be connected with Elizabeth, he also presents the Athenian patriarchal society in which a woman has to be married and has to submit to a husband. To fully understand what Shakespeare thought about the Queen, it is important to highlight that other plays deal with Elizabeth; in particular the post-Armada history play *Henry VI.* Elizabeth was a strong figure of her time and being so she had to deal with many of her public representations. As Basnett points out, the image of the world as a stage and that of the ruler as an actor pervades Shakespeare's plays.[177]

As Kavita Mudan suggests in her article *A queen in jest: Queenship and historical subversion in Shakespeare's three Henry VI and Richard III:* "Although scholars who study Shakespeare are often warned not to assume that any character who is female, royal or both can be mapped onto the figure of Queen Elizabeth I, it is equally important to remember that awareness of the Queen and

[177] Susan Basnett, *Shakespeare, The Elizabethan Plays*. Basingstoke: Palagrave Macmillan 1993 p 105

what she represented pervades all texts produced during her reign."[178] As Montrose stated in *The Subject of Elizabeth*: "the feminine gender of the ruler had a profound impact upon the relations of power and upon their representations. Such representations, however, not merely were consequences of the ruler's gender but were themselves particular construction of it".[179]

Susan Basnett in her article *Sexuality and Power in the Three Parts of King Henry VI* cites Stephen Greenblatt who argued that Shakespeare's plays are "centrally and repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder."[180] He suggested also that "notions of Elizabethan power are inseparably bound up with the figure of Queen Elizabeth, a ruler without a standing army, without a highly developed bureaucracy…a ruler whose power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence visited upon the enemies of that glory[…] Elizabethan power[…] depends upon its privileged visibility." Basnett continues her analysis: "in the centuries following the death of Elizabeth there was an increasing marginalization of the feminine which was accompanied by the steady disappearance of women from positions of public power." It is not strange to trace the beginning of this process back to Shakespeare's works since he focused alongside the issues of subversion and disorder the question of public and private femininity.[181]

What is important to bear in mind is that William Shakespeare was a near contemporary of Elizabeth and as a consequence, he had to deal with many of the rumours and thoughts that were going around. As Harold Bloom stated in his *Shakespeare, the Invention of the Human*, when Shakespeare composed the *Dream* it was the middle of winter 1595-96, and it was probably on commission for a noble marriage, where it was first played.[182] The years in which the play was written, were close to the end of Elizabeth's reign: the first edition of the *Dream* was published in 1600 by Thomas Fisher; three years later the Queen would die.[183]

However the *Dream* is not the only play that Shakespeare wrote thinking about the Queen. Ben Spiller points out in his article *Warlike mates? Queen Elizabeth and Joan La Pucelle in 1 Henry the*

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[178] Kavita Mudan, from Petrina Alessandra, Tosi Laura edd. *Representations of Elizabeth 1 in early modern culture* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 p 244

[179] Louis Montrose, op. cit. p 1

[180] Stephen Greenblatt, quoted in *Shakespeare: the Elizabethan Play*, op. cit.

[181] ibid

[182] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare and the Invention of the Human*, London, 1999

[183] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Harold F. Brooks ed. London, Arden Shakespeare, 2007

VI that there is a resemblance between Elizabeth I as she appeared at Tilbury in 1588, on the occasion of the battle with the later defeated Spanish Armada, and the French Catholic Joan La Pucelle.[184] Spiller continues: "Elizabeth's reputation as an iconic warrior queen in 1588 made sufficient impact on the late Elizabethan imagination to invite the first audiences of *Henry VI* to draw parallels between the theatricalised French witch and a living English heroine"[185]. However, in her *Sexuality and Power in the three parts of King Henry VI*, Susan Basnett suggested this proximity as a negative view of the Queen, her leadership and the condition of her country.[186] In his article, Spiller cites also Michael Dobson, who points out that the similarities between Joan, Richard II and Elizabeth show that Shakespeare was anything but in love with the Queen[187]. In the last years of her reign, England was a nation in recession which was not united and whose treasury was shrinking fast. As Spiller continues in his analysis, "The majority of criticism on *Henry VI part one* that draws parallels between Elizabeth and Joan has perceived the connection as a reflection of the playwright's dissatisfaction with the Queen, there are indeed aspects to Joan's personality, as portrayed in the play, that seem far from flattering to Elizabeth if Joan is perceived as her on stage alter-ego."[188] Joan of Arc was a controversial figure in France. Her warlike representation gave her the status of a heroine; the same can be said about Elizabeth. Shakespeare probably wants to warn Elizabeth: as Basnett states in her *Sexuality and Power in King Henry VI*, he offers examples of what women ought not to be, of an aberrant feminine behaviour. Women in *Henry VI* represent disorder, animal instinct, deceit, disloyalty, with the strongest criticism directed against women who fight. Shakespeare in his plays wanted to portray contemporary issues: the reference to disloyal foreign Queens, to thoughtless marriages, to women at the head of the army; all had their counterparts in contemporary public life.[189]There is a strong anti-feminism in the treatment of maidens, wives and queens. As Basnett continues in her analysis "the crudest picture of the treatment of women in the three parts of *Henry VI* is that women in public life are untrustworthy and should not be given the chance to abuse the power of office."[190]In the disorder of a society

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[184] Ben Spiller, from *Godesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I*, op. cit. p 35

[185] Ibid.

[186] Susan Basnett, from *Shakespeare, The Elizabethan Plays* op cit p 14

[187] Michael Dobson cit in *Goddessess and Queens*, op cit. p 35

[188] Ibid.

[189] Susan Basnett, op. cit.

[190] ibid

women who do not conform to models of proper womanly behaviour are seen as prime sources of increased chaos; Elizabeth during her reign did not behave as a proper woman since she died unmarried in order not to give up her power to a husband. [191]

However there are also some positive aspects that have to be taken into consideration: Carol Blessing discovers some positive connections between the two figures through a comparison with Deborah the Judge. The Dauphin in Henry VI exclaims that "the young maid Joan fights with the sword of Deborah."[192] Blessing brought Joan in close proximity with Elizabeth explaining how the English defeat of the Armada "reinforced Elizabeth as military Deborah leading her people to victory".[193] As Hackett points out in her *Virgin Mother Maiden Queen* from the very beginning of her reign Elizabeth was immediately connected with Deborah of the Old Testament as a symbol of motherhood and strength. Carol Blessing in her article *Elizabeth I as Deborah the Judge: exceptional women of power,* points out that Elizabeth's political position paralleled Deborah's; however, her single status diverge from Deborah's role of mother.[194] Jean Wilson shows that explicit connection between the two women occurred mainly at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign; probably for anticipating a future marriage and children. As she became the champion of Protestantism, Elizabeth's comparison to Deborah was seen as an important religious reinforcement for the Queen's authority. Holinshed records that during the coronation pageants there was the enactment of Elizabeth as Deborah.[195] Philippa Berry, interprets this parallel as emphasising Elizabeth's military role.[196]

However what is important to highlight as far as *Henry VI* is concerned; it is that Shakespeare and Fletcher put on stage a negative approach to war which means that the playwrights did not have a positive opinion of the Queen. As Basnett points out Shakespeare's female characters in the three parts of *Henry VI* typify the changed attitude towards women and public power in an age of diminished ideals.[197] During the Renaissance attitudes to women changed: during Humanism vast

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[191] ibid

[192] Ben Spiller in *Goddesses and Queens,* op. cit.

[193] ibid

[194] Carol Blessing, *Elizabeth I as Deborah the Jugde,* in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I,* Manchester University Press, 2007 p 20

[195] Ibid.

[196] Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power, Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen,* London, Routledge, 1989 pg 85-86

[197] ibid.

numbers of women writers, painters, performers were to be found throughout Europe.[198] As Basnett points out:"The transition from accepting to denigrating femininity was already under the way in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign."[199] The last portraits emphasise chastity and virtue and of course dwell on the eternal beauty of the Queen; however representing femininity and power had begun to cause problems because she was becoming an old Queen who was about to die.

However after Elizabeth's death, in the 1620s and 1630s Elizabeth's Tilbury speech gained importance and the episode of the speech at Tilbury became an icon of national unity.[200]

[198] Susan Basnett, op cit. p 19

[199] ibid

[200] Ibid.

SOURCES AND PLOT

As Annaliese Connolly points out at the beginning of her article Evaluating Virginity: A Midsummer night's Dream and the Iconography of Marriage published in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I, A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play which is pervaded by the iconography of virginity which had been developed by Elizabeth and for Elizabeth in the final phase of her reign. [201] The play includes a number of characters used to celebrate her status as a Virgin Queen since the play also places emphasis upon the influence of Diana who has often been interpreted as praising Elizabeth.[202]In the last part of her reign England started to face reality; the powerful and mythical Virgin Queen is nothing but an aging queen who is refusing to name an heir. In the *Dream* Shakespeare uses several strategies in order to criticize Elizabeth and her virginity. [203]
In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Shakespeare deals again with Elizabeth and her reign in a more comic and unusual way: this chapter is going to analyze, through the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* the figure of Elizabeth, who is mirrored by the character of Titania. This chapter will give an overview of the main characters and it will focus in particular on the female characters, especially Hermia and Hippolyta, who can both be connected with the Queen. Then it will deal with the importance of marriage in the patriarchal Athenian society in which the men are rulers, it will conclude showing in details the character of Titania, and the several strategies adopted by the Bard in order to criticize Elizabeth and her iconography of virginity. The final part of the chapter will give an overview of the political allegory that Shakespeare wanted to highlight in his play which is contemporaneous with the final period of Elizabeth's reign.
A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of the most important of Shakespeare's plays. As Harold Bloom points out in his *Shakespeare the Invention of the Human,* "nothing by Shakespeare before *a Midsummer Night's Dream* is its equal and in some respects nothing by him afterward surpasses it."[204] It is the most lyrical of all Shakespeare's plays. The reflections upon imagination and

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[201] Annaliese Connolly " Evaluating Virginity: *A Midsummer Night's* Dream *and the Iconography of Marriage*" in Lisa Hopkins, Frances, Annaliese, Connolly, *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth I,* Manchester University Press, 2007 p 136

[202] ibid

[203] ibid

[204] Harold Bloom, op cit.

dreaming, the evocation of fairyland, of the moonlit wood, and on the moon as presiding divinity, are often lyrical in feeling.

The play features four interlocking plots, connected by a celebration of the wedding of the Duke Theseus and Hippolyta, the Amazon Queen. The play is set simultaneously in Athens, in FairyLand and in woodland; each group of characters: Theseus and Hyppolita, the quartet of lovers, the artisans and the fairies has its own progressive story and they are not aware of the presence of each other.[205] They are introduced successively. As Brooks stated; "they are manipulated in clearly symmetrical patterns".[206] The four stories are brought together in the fifth and final act and until then each group has its own. However, the lover's story, the artisans' story and the story of the fairies share a common factor: Oberon's and Puck's enchantment. Harold Bloom states in his *Shakespeare, the Invention of the Human*, that the *Dream* as an epithalamium ends with three weddings and the reconciliation of Oberon with Titania.[207]

As Brooks points out in the introduction of the *Dream,* the design of the plot depends upon the counterbalancing of night and day: daylight for opening scene in Athens and moonlight followed by fog and then dawn in the wood. Brooks quoted Enid Welsford who argued that: "the plot is a pattern rather than a series of events occasioned by human character and action".[208] The play is divided into five acts and as the play develops it becomes an intricate story which clouds over and takes the shape of a dream; Bloom argued that probably it is Bottom's dream, because he thinks as many other scholars that it is he who is the protagonist. However Puck's epilogue calls it the audience's dream. Harold Bloom wants to understand; why did Shakespeare choose such a title? He thinks the play neither takes place on May Day, nor on Midsummer Eve as Dr Johnson pointed out in a previous study, but he believes that the title should be read as any night in midsummer and of course this could be anyone's dream or any night at the beak of summer.[209]

In the opening scene Hermia refuses to obey her father's order to marry Demetrius because she wishes to marry another man named Lysander. Egeus invokes an ancient Athenian Law: his daughter has to follow her father's rules or else face death. Theseus offers her another choice: "Either to die the death or to abjure forever the society of men". The second plot features the story

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[205] Harold Brooks, introduction to *A midsummer Night's Dream,* Arden Shakespeare, 2007

[206] ibid

[207] Harold Bloom, Shakespeare the Invention of the Human, op cit

[208] ibid

[209] ibid

of Hermia, Helena, Demetrius, and Lysander. The young lovers Hermia and Lysander; want to rebel against authority by refusing to accept Theseus' laws and are instead, planning to escape from Athenian tyranny in order to get married. At the same time Helena is in love with Demetrius who instead is in love with Hermia. Helena is informed about the plan to elope of the two lovers and so she decides to tell Demetrius of the plot. In the second scene the audience makes the acquaintance of the comic characters of the play: the "mechanicals" who are part of the third plot. Peter Quince and his company have to put on the play "The most lamentable comedy, a most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe" for the wedding of Theseus and Hyppolita. In Act II the audience is brought to a wood near Athens; where the fourth and final plot takes place in Fairyland and deals with Oberon and Titania, the King and the Queen of the fairies who are arguing about the custody of a little boy: the son of Titania's maid who died. In order to teach Titania a lesson, Oberon decides to give her a potion which makes people fall in love at first sight.[210]

In the same scene, Oberon witnesses in the wood Helena's pleas to Demetrius to love her; however the latter is in love with Hermia and he does not listen to her, so Oberon decides to help Helena and asks Puck to use a drop of the potion on Demetrius' eyes. However something goes wrong and Puck following the wrong instructions picks the wrong man and mistaking the identities he poisons the eyes of Lysander instead of Demetrius. In the wood, the first man that Titania sees is Bottom. From now on, all four plots interlace with each other until the final happy ending at Hyppolita's and Theseus' wedding.

The first Quarto edition of the play, printed in 1600, announces that it was "sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants." Indeed, this drama has seen "sundry" performances over the past 400 years. Its spectacle and its emphasis on dance and magic and song have led it to be interpreted and performed in a variety of ways. For example, numerous composers have been inspired by Shakespeare's *Dream*. In 1692, Purcell wrote an operatic version, *The Fairy Queen*, although it contains little of Shakespeare's original story line. In 1826, Mendelsohn composed an overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is still popular. The play has also seen many famous, and often infamous, interpretations. For example, the 1900 Beerbohm Tree production had live rabbits hopping around the stage, while Peter Brook's 1970 production was presented on a bare stage that looked like a big white box.

[210] ibid

Most scholars have agreed that the *Dream* was designed to grace a wedding in a noble household.[211] However there is no proof of this. Many assumptions have been made about this matter. As Brooks states in his introduction to the *Dream* of the Arden Shakespeare collection, "there are three principal indications of the date when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was composed. Taken together, they point to 1595 or 1596. The first one is topicality; the second one is the style. The third is incontrovertible evidence. It is highly probable that when Shakespeare wrote the *Dream* he knew of an episode which occurred at the Scottish Court in 1594". Brooks is referring to the episode of the lion that occurred also in the play-within-the-play *Piramus and Thisbe* [212].

Brooks continues his analysis arguing that the Queen was present when the *Dream* was first acted and it was probably at a wedding: the first hypothesis that Brooks makes is that the marriage might have been the one between Elizabeth Vere and William Earl of Derby on 26 January 1595; the Queen is known to have honoured with her presence the wedding festivities at Burghley House on the Strand; Elizabeth Vere was Lord Burghley's granddaughter and one of the Queen's maids of honour. Another suggestion that Brooks makes is that the marriage was between Elizabeth Carey and Thomas, the son of Henry, Lord Berkley, on 19 February 1596.[213] It took place in the mansion of the bride's father, Sir George Carey in Blackfriars. No other detail is known about this wedding and above all, it cannot be established whether the Queen was there. The Court was at Greenwich but she could have come to Blackfriars by water.

She knew the Berkleys well, too, since Elizabeth Carey was one of her goddaughters, being granddaughters of Henry, Lord Hudson, the Queen's Lord Chamberlain and cousin. Brooks concludes saying that the hypothesis which fits the largest number of facts and probabilities is that the *Dream* was composed in the winter between 1595-6, for Carey's wedding on 19 February and it seems likely that Queen Elizabeth was present when the dream was first acted.[214]

As many scholars point out, the *Dream* is a genial, unique story, an undoubted masterpiece. However Harold Bloom argued that "inventing plots was not a Shakespearean gift; it was the one dramatic talent that nature had denied him"[215]. As far as sources are concerned, there is no known source for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as with *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *The*

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[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid.

[213] Harold F. Brooks, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Arden Shakespeare ed.

[214] ibid

[215] ibid

Tempest, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to have been entirely a product of Shakespeare's own imagination. However many scholars argued that even though there is no specific text upon which Shakespeare relied, threads of earlier narratives can be seen woven throughout the play. As Brooks stated, there is no doubt about a dozen identifiable works, including more than one by Geoffrey Chaucer and several by John Lyly.[216]

In constructing the characters Theseus and Hippolyta, Shakespeare no doubt had in mind a story by the literary genius Geoffrey Chaucer. In Chaucer's masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, or, more specifically, in the *Knight's Tale*, we are introduced to Theseus, the Duke of Athens, and his wife, Hyppolyta, the Queen of the Amazons.

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,
And weddede the queene Ypolita,
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree[217]

In *The Knight's Tale*, Chaucer depicts Theseus as a wise and just ruler of Athens who has conquered the Amazons and married their queen. Like Shakespeare, Chaucer describes Theseus's elaborate welcome home and wedding banquet. As Brooks suggests; there are many connections between Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* and the *Dream,* for example: the jealous conflict between the two lovers who start duelling in the wood can be connected with Lysander and Demetrius who likewise in the wood "seek a place to fight". Shakespeare also could have received some inspiration from Plutarch's *Life of Theseus*, which contains a few similarities to the Bard's play. In addition, the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe can be found in many different versions and for this story-line Shakespeare could have used Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* as a source, although it is more likely that he emulated Ovid in his retelling of the legend of Pyramus and Thisbe. Ovid's Metamorphoses was one of Shakespeare's most important sources, as Brooks observed, Shakespeare probably did not read the original in Latin; his source was the one translated by Golding.[218] The story of Hermia and Lysander probably mirrored one of the most famous of the

[216] Ibid.

[217] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Derek Pearsall, New York : Routledge, 1985

[218] ibid.

Bard's tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet*, the star-crossed lovers. This play also was not an invention of Shakespeare; he took inspiration from Brooks' *Romeus and Juliet*. However the love story between the Athenian lovers, who cannot marry because of Hermia's father's opposition, and plan to marry in secret, is similar to the famous tragedy and it is probably to that which Lysander refers to in his speech to Hermia:" Ay me! For augh that I could ever read, could ever hear by tale or history, the course of true love never did run smooth".[219]

Shakespeare might have taken Oberon from several sources, but he does so from *Houn of Bordeaux*, who is fairy king and finds travellers who lose themselves and encounter his magic power; As Brooks states; "Shakespeare's Oberon too is a spirit who distinguished himself from the evil creatures of the supernatural world and whose assistance is indispensable for the happy ending outcome."[220] The name Oberon was probably taken from the magical fairy king who ruled an enchanted wood and protected the main character in the French romance which was translated into English by Lord Berners in about 1540. Oberon and his fairies control the weather, "all fantasie and enchauntments" and the minds of mortals, whom they can trick into thinking they are in paradise. In Scot's *The Discoverie of witchcraft* dated 1584, Apuleius and an English sailor have their whole bodies changed into the ass-form.[221] From Scot; Shakespeare could also have taken the reference to Puck as Robin Goodfellow who in Scot's book is associated with " hobgoblin".[222]

The *Dream* refers also to *Diana* of Lyly and the one by Montemayor; *Diana* was a source also for *Two Gentleman of Verona* and *Love's Labour's Lost*.

To the Chaucerian sources of the Dream should be added *The Merchant's Tale*. Brooks quoted Tywhitt who suggested that Pluto and Proserpina, king and queen of the fairies, were progenitors of Oberon and Titania while the episode concerning Bottom in love with the Fairy Queen may have been taken from *Tale of Sir Thopas*. Brooks is extremely sure that Shakespeare used as a source also Spencer's *Shepaerdes Calendar* which contributes to Titania's foul-weather speech and Seneca's *Hyppolitus* from which he quoted the resemblance between Phaedra and Helena's self abasement in love, and her desperate resolves.[223]

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[219] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Harold Brooks ed Arden Shakespeare, Routledge London 1991

[220] ibid.

[221] ibid

[222] ibid

[223] ibid

As far as spells are concerned, Shakespeare could have found his cue in Ovid. The potion made with a flower refers to Felicia's spell in Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana*, in particular in Gil Polo's *Diana Enamorada*.[224] She casts a spell on one lover, using some herbs. The only thing that is different from the *Dream* is that her magic liquid requires the cooperation of those on whom it is to work. However this filter does not induce love at first sight; for that Shakespeare might have taken a hint from *Euphues and his England*: "whoever touches the herb Anacamforitis falls in love with the person she next seeth".[225]

Bottom's head, shaped-shifted into an ass's can find its source in Scot's *Discoverie of Supposed Witchcraft*, a man finds an ass's head on his shoulders by magic, or in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* translated by William Adlington, in 1566. The same magical occurrence happens in John Lyly's play *Midas*, Midas's head is turned into an ass's head.[226] Bottom is transformed by Puck, which Shakespeare undoubtedly took from English folklore: Robin Goodfellow; his deeds that the Fairy describes at the beginning of the scene were well known to Elizabethan audiences, who would also have recognized his ability to shape-shift, and the broom he carries in Act V, scene one, usually used to sweep the doorsteps of maids whose milk he stole: "Either I mistake your shape and making quite, or else you are that shrewd and knavish spirit called Robin Goodfellow".[227]In the action of the play it is Robin who has directly to do just as he did as a household spirit. The *Dream* is strongly rooted in festive tradition; the *Dream* focuses on folk-costumes and folk-belief like for example the observance of May Day. As Brooks points out: "there is a correspondence in the *Dream*'s all action with the movement of May-game; from the town to the woods and back, bringing home the summer".[228]

It is possible that Bottom and his associates came entirely from Shakespeare's imagination, inspired by the actors of his own company, including the well-known clown, Will Kempe. In Anthony Munday's play *John a Kent and John a Cumber* dated 1587-1590, terrible actors put on a ridiculous play in front of amused nobles. The play of "Pyramus and Thisbe" is probably a parody of a story found in *Metamorphoses*, though versions of the tale appear in many places. However this is not the only source used by Shakespeare; he mocks also Thomas Preston's *Cambises* dated before 1569, of

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[224] ibid.

[225] John Lyly, *Eupheus and his England*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1902

[226] ibid

[227] ibid

[228] ibid

which the full title seems to be parodied in that of Quince's play. What Shakespeare wants to highlight is the absurdities of the amateur actors and their comic qualities. Shakespeare associates Oberon and Titania with the east and Oberon appears in one section on his way to "Inde". As Brooks suggested: in the *Faerie Queen, Book II* the founder of Oberon's royal line was Elfin: "him all India obayd". Some critics believe this may have inspired Shakespeare to give Titania a child from India.[229] The scene, in which Oberon describes the stars and the mermaid to Puck, derives from Seneca's *Hyppolitus*. The contrast between fairies and evil creatures of the supernatural world is from Spencer's *The Shepaerds Calender.* However the *Dream* was a play written for a wedding so probably Shakespeare decided to omit, as an ill-omen for the couple, what caused fairies to be feared except for the pranks of Puck.[230]In the introduction to the play Brooks continues his analysis of the sources Shakespeare used for the *Dream* speaking of the settings: the wood in the moonlight is the setting in the *Dream* for transformation as in Seneca's *Hippolytus*, Diana is besought to work a transformation and a wood near Athens is the scene in which Teseus is hunting in *The Knight's Tale.*

Even though the *Dream* may not have been a totally unprecedented play, it shows the brilliance of the Bard in fusing together material from antecedent sources and turning them into an original play. R.A. Foakes points out that "the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed."[231]

As has already been mentioned; the genius of Shakespeare, was to create an incomparable masterpiece from his source material: his interlocking plots are parallel and all the characters of each plot are unaware of the other plots; it is only Puck who is the audiences' eyes, being able to move between the scenes and also take the audience through the plot.

Bloom, in his *Shakespeare, The Invention of the Human* gives the reader an overview of the characters with a brief description of their worlds: Theseus and Hippolyta are a Duke and the Amazon Queen; they belong to ancient myth and legend. The lovers, Hermia, Helena, Lysnder and Demetrius are of no definite time or place, it is just known that they live in Athens. The fairies: Titania, Oberon, Puck and the other fairies are taken from literary English folklore and its magic.

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[229] ibid

[230] ibid.

[231] ibid

Finally the "mechanicals" are English rustic artisans; Bottom, Flute, Quince, Snout, Snug and Starveling, probably come from Shakespeare's countryside, where he grew up.[232]

We may now proceed to examine the principal characters of the *Dream*, before drawing some parallels between the reign of Elizabeth I and the Queen herself since the *Dream* is thought to be a political allegory of the reign of Elizabeth.

Theseus, as already mentioned is the Duke of Athens for whom Shakespeare took inspiration from Chaucer. He is immediately present as a noble ruler who is about to marry Hippolyta; the Amazon Queen. Brooks in the introduction to the *Dream*, points out the similarities between him and Elizabeth Tudor, above all when he affirms he is a constitutional ruler, a true statesman and a man, wise-hearted and wise-minded. Brooks continues by saying that "he resembles Elizabeth in his genuine feeling for his people and the high value he sets on their feelings for him"[233].

What immediately comes to mind when reading the beginning of the *Dream* is that women do not have a proper role in the play; it is all run by men in this not well-defined patriarchal society. The beginning of the *Dream* coincides with victorious Theseus who had conquered her wife-to-be Hippolyta, an Amazon warrior. In the first scene the audience makes acquaintance of Egeus who is the symbol of this society ruled by men. He wanted his daughter to marry Demetrius; a man he has chosen for her. Egeus is the typical patriarchal head of the family and he immediately makes clear that Hermia as his daughter is his property and she has to do what her father orders. Egeus is so convinced of his rights that in front of Theseus he appeals to the Athenian law: "I beg the ancient privilege of Athens: as she is mine, I may dispose of her; which shall be either to this gentleman, or to her death, according to our law immediately provided in that case."[234] Theseus' answer follows the path of Egeus:" What say you Hermia? Be advis'd, fair maid. To you your father should be as a god. One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one to whom you are but as a form in wax by him imprinted and within his power to leave the figure or disfigure it."[235]

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[232] Harold Bloom, op cit.

[233] William Shakespeare *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Arden Shakespeare edition, Routledge, London 1991. Henceforth *Dream*.

[234] ibid

[235] ibid

Women in the Dream. Elizabeth I connotations with the female characters of the play

What immediately comes to mind is that women do not have any rights but must follow men's rules. As Montrose points out, the female body is a form of propriety and a place for the claim of authority. [236] The female characters of the *Dream* are mothers-to-be, maidens, who are passing from father to husbands in a world governed by men.[237] As Barry points out in her *Of Chastity and Power* the achievement of control by men over female body had connected with woman as a chaste object of desire and it is linked with the establishment of a masculine control over the natural world. [238]Egeus would rather have killed his daughter than let her oppose him. At the very beginning of the play, the audience is immediately informed that Theseus is about to marry in four days time Hippolyta, the Amazon Queen. She is very silent and although she is apparently resigned, she is a captive bride, a tame Amazon won in battle. [239] However, as lovers, Theseus and Hippolyta are mature, not like the younger lovers who are subject to follies.[240] Hermia too is a girl who is at her father's mercy, she has to marry the man her father chose for her or else face death. However Hermia is a strong woman; hardly afraid of facing her father or the low of Theseus; to the request of choosing between death or chastity she answers:" So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord, ere I will yield my virgin patent up unto his lordship whose unwished yoke my soul consents not to give sovereignty."[241] What comes immediately to mind is the behaviour Elizabeth used to have with the proposal of marriage that came to her so often during her reign. Elizabeth once stated: "I'd rather go into a nunnery, or for the matter suffer death, than marry against my will"[242]. For both Hermia and Elizabeth becoming a nun is the best of the choices offered them. The two lovers decide to run away from Athens and marry in secret. Probably the character who can be least connected with Elizabeth is Helena. She cuts both a pathetic and comic figure in the triangle among Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius. Helena is in love with Demetrius who abandons her in order to be with Hermia. Despite the numerous refusals from Demetrius, she is incapable of not caring for him.

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[236] Margaret W. Ferguson; Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers ed. *Rewriting the Renaissance: the discourses of sexual difference in early modern Europe,* Chicago The University of Chicago Press, 1987 pg 73

[237] Ibid

[238] Philippa Barry, op cit

[239] Harold Bloom, op cit

[240] ibid

[241] *Dream* I,I, 79-82

[242] Ilona Bell, op cit

Helena is made the object of pity as she believes that all her three friends betrayed her. Courtni Crump Wright argues that Helena is the catalyst for the change which unfolds the action of the play. She continues: "Although she might be a weak character, she is a determined character who helps to guide the flow of the action and patiently waits for her man to return."[243] Helena is the direct opposite of her friend Hermia whom wants to defy the teachings of the patriarchal society in which she lives in order to marry the man she has chosen. On the other hand Helena is the symbol of the patient woman who continues to love despite the rejection of Demetrius and who believes in true love.[244] A connection with the Queen can be found in Hermia who fought for her rights and does not give up her desire to marry the man she chose; likewise Elizabeth who during the marriage negotiations always highlighted the same concept; declares: "As for me, I shall do no otherwise than please me".[245]

[243] Courtni Crump Wright, *The Women of Shakespeare' s plays,*: *analysis of the role of the women in selected plays, with plot, synopses and selected act plays*, Lanham University Press of America, 1993.

[244] ibid

[245] Ilona Bell, *Elizabeth I the Voice of a Monarch* op cit

Elizabeth, the Captive Amazon

There is another, albeit irrelevant, character for the plot of the *Dream* who is, on the other hand, important for the characterization of the political allegory of Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Hyppolita, the Amazon Queen. Even though Hyppolita has a supporting role in the comedy, the renaissance audience could have understood the connection between their ruler and the Queen of the Amazons. Kathryn Schwarz in her book, *Tough love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* provides a through analysis of the character of Hippolyta. She suggests that Hyppolita provided a critical voice in a different sense. She appears only at the beginning and at the end.

Hippolyta Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four Nights will quickly dream away the time,
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.[246]

This sentence of Hippolyta provides the singular temporal ground of this play, " shaped by fantasies and enchantments". [247] According to J. R. Rolfe "The heroic magnificence of the princely loves of Theseus and his Amazon bride, mingling classical allusion and fable with the ideas and manners of chivalry, is intertwined with the complicated errors and confusion of the Athenian lovers, due to the magic trickery of Oberon and Puck; and with this are blended the grotesque absurdity of the interlude itself a burlesque of a romantic and tragic classical story — and the Athenian clowns who perform it. "[248] Schwarz quotes again Rolfe and his analysis of the *Dream* with illustrations. Under the description of Hippolyta there is an illustration " The Venus of Milo" who looks like Hippolyta but her truncated body does not represent her martial power, it evokes its loss.[249] Having been captured by Theseus. The first movement toward a female subordination of the male is highlighted in the first scene of the play with the announcement of the prospective marriage

[246] *Dream* I,I, 7- 11

[247] Kathryn Schwarz, *Tough love: Amazon encounters in the English renaissance* Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2000 p 206

[248]William J. Rolfe *Shakespeare's Comedy of A Midsummer-night's Dream*.. New York: American Book Company, 1903. Shakespeare Online. 20 Dec. 2009. Dated view 13. 05. 2013 http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/midsummer/mdsrolfe.html >.

[249] Kathryn Schwarz, op cit 206

of Theseus and Hippolyta.[250] As a consequence the Queen of Amazons betrothed to Theseus gives the audience a wider understanding of the process of domestication. As an Amazon defeated by her husband-to-be, Hippolyta confirms the ordering principle that placed authority in men.[251] This for the audience could be a hint that Shakespeare gave to let them connect Hippolyta with Queen Elizabeth I, as it was well known that Elizabeth in 1588 won against the Spanish Armada and was recorded as coming to Tilbury wearing armour as a soldier. This brought to life an extended iconography of Elizabeth as the Amazon Queen. Hippolyta's subordination to Theseus could be seen by the audience as a strong piece of advice from Shakespeare to the Queen.

As Schwarz points out, the story of unruly women that unfolds in the *Dream* sees their rebellions foreclosed before they have begun.[252] However in act I scene I, even though she is silent, it is clear that, Hippolyta does not agree with the interpretation of the law given by Egeus and Theseus, ordering Hermia to marry Demetrius instead of Lysander or to die, it is clear she does not agree about what she hears. She is trapped in her marriage. " Come my Hippolyta, what cheer my love?"[253].

Schwarz quotes Kavanagh who also gives a reading of the play in terms of a contested but finally triumphant patriarchal hierarchy.[254] As Louis Montrose points out, the festive conclusion of the *Dream* depends upon the success of the male control of lord and husbands on warriors, possessive mothers, unruly wives and wilful daughters.[255] As Schwarz observes, the *Dream* is a play about the social and sexual subordination of women to men.[256] This in Shakespeare's time would be seen as an issue, since the ruler was a woman. Amazons were generally portrayed as aggressive wild women, devotees of hunting and war, fiercely proud in their self- isolation from male communities, and free to exercise their chastity or their desire without men's consent.

During Elizabeth I's reign this prejudice against the unwomanly monstrosity inherent in Amazons had been reduced by the central effect of the female ruler - remembered for her celebrated speech at Tilbury on the eve of the battle against the Spanish Armada, and retrospectively depicted as an

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[250] ibid

[251] ibid

[252]ibid

[253]*Dream* I,I, 122

[254] ibid

[255] Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth, Authority, Gender and Representation*, University of Chicago, 2006

[256] Schwarz op cit p 208

Amazon queen. However, during her reign, probably to avoid any allusive trouble, Elizabeth I was never officially compared to, or associated with, Amazon warriors, either in panegyric works or public entertainments.

These bellicose masculine elements related to Elizabeth's virtues improved her popularity, yet without damaging her identity as woman. In this period diverse entertainments offered as official tributes to Elizabeth featured Amazons in a more favourable light, though their roles were still performed by male actors. Shakespeare in his play, using a captive Amazon, was in a way criticizing her womanly behaviour who in the patriarchal society of those years appeared as an unmarried woman. Montrose denotes that Hippolyta's submission to Theseus performed a common Elizabethan fantasy about making a powerful female ruler submit to male authority, which is exactly what Elizabeth refused to do when she declared her intention to remain unmarried.[257] However, describing Theseus' victory over Hippolyta in the play, Shakespeare highlights the way in which things should be going for his queen.

> Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
> And won thy love doing thee injuries;
> But I will wed thee in another key,
> With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.[258]

Schwarz quoted Freeman who argues that " Patriarchal law rather than reason actually controls perspective in this play and its vision is depicted as necessarily distorted and distorting. Since all power is necessarily a distortion, the problem the play poses is not how to correct distorted perspective but how to legitimize the distorted vision of the patriarchy."[259]

Schwarz quoted Marshall who writes: " Hippolyta speaks only once in the first scene and she does not speak again until the fourth act- yet critics have usually acted as if they knew what was going in her mind."[260] As Schwarz points out quoting Marshall, Hippolyta is complacent, submissive, and above all silent.[261]Her silence turned to benefit of heroes and readers who conclude that she has only got what she implicitly desired.[262]

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[257] Montrose op cit

[258] *Dream* I,I, 16-19

[259] ibid

[260] ibid

[261] ibid

[262] ibid

However, again it is important to highlight that the figure of the Amazon Queen could be connected with the ruler of Shakespeare's time. Since the play is a veiled political allegory of Elizabeth's reign, many female characters of the play could be a metaphor for the queen; also silent, captive Hipploya who is defeated and married by Theseus could be seen as a warning to the queen since in 1595, when the *Dream* was written, the issue of succession was at its culmination since Elizabeth was still unmarried and childless.

There is not much to say about the male lovers, Demetrius and Lysander. As has already been mentioned; Shakespeare chose them from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, however to the characters invented by Chaucer, he added some characteristics of the Pertarchan lover. Petrarchism was in fashion in Shakespeare's time; and many of his characters, above all in tragedies, have these characteristics. One of the most important of Shakespeare's Petrarchan lovers is Romeo.
The peculiarity of the petrarchan love is that he loves a woman who does not return his feeling; like Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* who at the beginning of the play is in love with Rosaline. For his love Romeo is always sad and time never seems to pass, he is out of favour with his love. He is a negative painful statement.[263] In the case of the *Dream* we have Demetrius who is in love with Helena who does not love him back. However Demetrius does not look like a Petrarchan lover because at the beginning of the play he does not demonstrate his love for Hermia, on the contrary he just highlights his right over her:" Relent sweet Hermia; and Lysander, yield thy crazed title to my certain right."[264] Demetrius is, like Theseus and Egeus, part of the Athenian patriarchal society. He thinks that Hermia, as his property has to do as he wants. As Montrose states, the *Dream* depicts the social relationship of the sexes in courtship, marriage and parenthood.[265] On the other hand, it is Lysander who can be connected with the courtly love tradition. With just a difference, he loves and is loved back; the audience is immediately aware that Lysander offers Hermia rhymes and under the moonlight sings her love songs. In Act III scene I, Shakespeare decided to use again the cliché of the petrarchan lover, in this case for Demetrius. The audience had just seen the mistake made by Puck and Oberon who poisoned Lysander's eyes. In this scene also Demetrius is poisoned and the first person he sees when he wakes up is Helena. As soon as he sees Helena he starts uttering a

[263] ibid

[264] Dream; I,I, 91-2

[265] Ibid

Blazon, a typical description of the objects of love, starting with a description of their physical attributes and finishing with their moral virtues:

> Oh Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect divine!
> To what my love shall I compare thine eyne?
> Crystal is muddy. O how ripe in show
> Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
> That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
> Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
> When thou hold'st thy hand. O let me kiss
> This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss![266]

As the play develops, it becomes clearer to the audience that all the parallels regarding virginity and marriage directly refer to Elizabeth. In Act I scene I, Theseus is warning Hermia of the dangers of her decision to marry Lysander against her father's will. In doing so, he refers to chastity quoting Diana the moon-goddess:

> Take time to pause; and by the next new moon,
> The sealing-day betwixt my love and me
> For everlasting bond of fellowship, upon that day either prepare to die
> For disobedience to your father's will,
> Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
> Or on Diana's altar to protest,
> For aye, austerity and single life.[267]

As Helen Hackett points out, one of the most common images of Elizabeth in the last fifteen years of her reign was that of the moon-goddess, Cynthia or Diana.[268]The moon-goddess had been used in many ways as representative of virginity in many masques performed for Elizabeth already in the first part of her reign. Examples of the use of Cynthia for the queen can be found in texts such as Lyly's *Endimion* probably written in 1585 and Ralegh's *Ocean to Cinthia* probably written in 1592.[269] In the *Dream* Titania/Elizabeth is identified as moon-goddess: In Act II scene one, Oberon describes to the audience the first time he saw "the fair vestal from the east":

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[266] Dream; III, II, 137-44

[267] *Dream*, I,I 86-90

[268] Helen Hackett op cit

[269] ibid

That very time I saw,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all armed: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west,
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As he should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.[270]

In his description Oberon identifies Titania twice with the moon: the cold moon and the watery moon, to highligh Titania as a symbol of virginity and female power. The description of Titania as Diana goddess of the moon can be connected also with the association of the moon with power over time and with immutability since as Hackett explains it goes in a cycle of perpetual self-renewal.[271] The connection between the immutability of the moon can be found in the last part of Elizabeth's reign, when it became clear that the queen would never marry and her virginity would be never-ending. Annaliese Connolly argues that one of the strategies used by Shakespeare in order to criticize Elizabeth's virginity was alluding to Marlowe's play *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and giving the audience many parallels both visual and thematic between Dido and Titania. The play tells an intense dramatic tale of Dido and her fanatical love for Aeneas induced by Cupid, Aeneas' betrayal of her and her eventual suicide on his departure for Italy. Connolly quoted Tromly who also points out similarities of plot structure as both plays present two pairs of lovers in a wood.[272] Connolly points out that the myth of Dido was widely used in Elizabethan entertainments in 1564. One version of the story was written by Edward Helliwell, a fellow of King's College and was performed for the queen in August 1564. During the period between 1579 to 1583, which coincided with the marriage negotiation between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou, the myth of Dido increased remarkably. Connolly quoted Susan Doran who argues that there were many subjects who actively opposed this marriage, celebrating with a range of characters her virginity rather than her marriageability.[273] They used the story of Dido and they wanted to be part of this political endeavour: Elizabeth is asked by her subjects to side with Aeneas and reject what Dido could not do.[274] The entertainment for Elizabeth highlights how the myth of Dido was adapted to the purposes of flattery. As Connolly points out, the entertainment for Elizabeth on her progress to Norwich in

[270] *Dream,* II,I 155-60

[271] ibid

[272] ibid

[273] Ibid.

[274] ibid

1578 by Thomas Churchyard and Henry Goldingham provides examples of the Queen's immunity to the arrows of Cupid. This piece not only compliments her, highlighting her virginity, but in giving her the arrows is giving her the possibility "to shoot at whom best she pleased"[275].

However, Marlowe's play is anything but flattering to Elizabeth; Dido is not used to highlight Elizabeth's quality as a ruler; criticism of the queen is implicit in the text. The absence of the use of any allegory to praise her implies the opposite. However Shakespeare's comedy is not as dark as Marlowe's since Titania's punishment culminates only in her humiliation rather than her death.

The theme of virginity related to the queen led to the other main themes of the play love and marriage. Love aspiring to and consummated in marriage and the harmonious partnership within it.[276] Louis Montrose in his article *The Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture* quoted Paul Olson who suggested that the marital unions of the *Dream* are in harmony with doctrines of Tudor apologists about the patriarchal family: marital union implied wifely obedience to her husband.[277] Brooks argues that in the *Dream* three phases of love are depicted: the marriage between Oberon and Titania, who fight throughout the play. Despite this, in the end, they manage to be reconciled. Then there is the adult love between Thesesus and Hyppolita and finally the youthful love with its conflicts between Hermia, Lysander, Helena and Demetrius.[278] Brooks also points out that the theme of marriage is central to a number of related themes; the female friendship between Hermia and Helena and the one between Titania and her female votaress. Another kind of love is the one between prince and subjects. Brooks continues in his analysis, pointing out that these themes enhance the evaluation of love. However the *Dream* does not only present love and all the obstacles that stand in its way but also the aberrations of love itself. The aberrations are important for the comic part of the play; in fact the love tragedy that the artisans chose to play for Theseus and Hyppolita's wedding might seem unusual for a nuptial ceremony. In a sort of way, the performance of this tragedy exorcized the tragic outcome of such love as Hermia and Lysander feel.[279] In the play, the aberrations of love are prominently displayed: the persecution of Hermia, the breach

[275] ibid

[276] ibid

[277] ibid

[278] ibid

[279] ibid

between Oberon and Titania and the lovers' quarrel; some of them, induced by the spell cast by Oberon.[280]

Brooks points out: " Even those we take as deft parody of the follies to which lovers' imaginations are prone in real life...the magic power of the love juice mirrors the compulsive nature, in real life, of such seizures of the imagination"[281]. The follies of which love is capable in the play is exorcized by not being allowed to persist; Lysander's fidelity to Hermia is restored thanks to Diana's bud; the one that frees Titania from her fixation with the Indian boy. All the follies illustrate the phenomena of irrationality in love; Theseus, at the end of the play, argues about the irrationality of love; comparing lovers to lunatics as Helena argued at the beginning of the play, saying that:

> Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
> And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind;
> Not hath Love's mind of any judgement state:
> Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste[282]

For Theseus, lovers are irrational because they are at the mercy of imagination. This led to the last two themes of the play which are the question about the role of imagination and the questions about illusion, appearance, the actual and the real.[283] As Brooks says, it is in the episode of the play-within-the-play and in Puck's epilogue that Shakespeare gives explicit expression to the themes of imagination, illusion, appearance and reality, ensuring that the audience are made consciously aware of it.[284] Brooks points out that Quince and his actors misinterpret the relationship between dramatic illusion, realism and the imagination of the audience.[285] In the episode of the lion, they are afraid of producing an effect which will be mistaken for reality and so they take measures to destroy the dramatic illusion.[286]

> Bottom: I grant you, friends, if you should fright the ladies
> Out of their wits, they would have no more discretion
> But to hang us. But I will aggravate my voice so, that

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[280] ibid

[281] ibid

[282] *Dream* I, II, 234-37

[283] ibid

[284] ibid

[285] ibid

[286] ibid

I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you
And 'twere any nightingale.[287]

They cannot see how to introduce moonlight if not realistically, and so they decide to bring an actor on stage to impersonate the moon. The same thing happens with a wall. As Brooks states they do not credit the audience with the power either to imagine or to distinguish between the imaginary and the real. Puck's invitation at the very end of the play leaves the question of reality and dream quite open; in fact the jester seems to cast a spell on the audience warning them that the whole play was a dream:

Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While this vision did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
no more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon we will mend.
And as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call.
So, goodnight unto you all.[288]

The conclusion that Brooks gives of his introduction of the play is worth considering:
" We can think of the woodland drama as a dream, but only, in fairness, by embracing Puck's invitation to think that the whole play, in our actual experience of it as an audience, has been a dream likewise. Yet it is only if we have disliked it that we are invited to suppose we dreamed it.
If it be permissible for us to imagine that while we sat wide awake at the play we were dreamers, what of the rest of our waking life? On what plane of reality does that take place?... Shakespeare's story of the night, his *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a work of imagination whose comprehensiveness, balance, and coherence entitle it to be accepted as a vision of truth, far more authentic than fancy images."[289]

[287] ibid

[288] *Dream* V,I 409-422

[289] ibid

TITANIA AND ELIZABETH TWO QUEENS IN COMPARISON:
A Political allegory in A Midsummer Night's Dream

In the first part of this chapter, a brief plot and a description of the themes and the characters of the play have been outlined. The figure of Elizabeth has been highlighted as far as the female characters are concerned and the iconography of virginity. The second part of this chapter is going to analyze the character of Titania and her connection to the Queen and the consequent political allegory that the *Dream* contains. The importance of virginity, marriage, the relationship with Oberon, the relation with the Indian boy and the final mockery of Titania with Bottom will be analyzed.

In 2010 Peter Hall[290] decided to bring to life *A Midsummer Night's Dream* again. He had already directed it in 1962 and in both representations Judi Dench[291] played the role of Titania. What is important to bear in mind is that, as Michael Billington wrote in *The Guardian*, in this new version Hall wants to highlight the connection between Titania and Elizabeth I. Hall's main innovation is to create a parallel between the two queens: "a somewhat tendentious idea since Shakespeare's play is a hymn to marital fecundity and Theseus pointedly suggests the rose distilled is happier than that which withers on the virgin thorn."[292]

Charles Spencer wrote from the lines of *The Telegraph* that in this new edition of the play: "Hall suggests that we are watching a play-within-a-play. In a prologue undreamed of by Shakespeare, we see a group of aristocrats studying their parts for a drama. One of them is clearly Queen Elizabeth I, doubtless on one of the great royal progresses of her later years, and when offered the part of Titania by her host, who is evidently her current favourite, she agrees to play the role. All this is

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[290] Sir Peter Reginald Frederick Hall, (born 22 November 1930) is an English theatre and film director. Hall founded the Royal Shakespeare Company (1960–68) and directed the National Theatre (1973–88). He has also been prominent in defending public subsidy of the arts in Britain.

[291] Judi Dench, (born 9 December 1934) is an English film, stage and television actress. Dench made her professional debut in 1957 with the Old Vic Company. Over the following few years she played in several of Shakespeare's plays in such roles as Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*.

[292] Michael Billington " A Midsummer Night's Dream, Rose Theatre Kingston" *The Guardian* (16 February 2010) viewed 21 April 2013 < http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/feb/16/a-midsummer-nights-dream-review>

conveyed with great simplicity and without words in just a couple of minutes, but it neatly frames a play whose text contains overt references to the Virgin Queen."[293]

Coen Heijes from *Theatre Journal* wrote: "The first minutes were stunning. The actors were all onstage, performing a formal dance dressed in Tudor costume to the accompaniment of Elizabethan music. The last to appear on the relatively bare stage was Dench, in a red wig and jewel-encrusted royal garb. This imperious Dame was worlds away from the half-naked wood nymph of the 1960s, now resembling Queen Elizabeth I, a role that had earned Dench the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in the 1998 movie *Shakespeare in Love*. Indeed, Hall cast Titania in his latest production as an aging Queen Elizabeth, framing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a play within a play. In a pre-performance interview, he argued that Elizabeth, herself an accomplished dancer and musician, would have actually participated in plays, an idea that he explored in this *Midsummer*. Dench entered as Elizabeth in the non-spoken prologue to the play, the center of attention both for the audience and the other actors, who were kneeling in front of their beloved Queen. When the actors then fell asleep, Dench left the stage, re-entering the play later as Titania." [294]

Hall for the role of Titania chose a 75-year-old Judi Dench probably to highlight the fear for the succession that troubled Elizabethan England in the last part of the Queen's reign. When the *Dream* was published, Elizabeth was an old queen who was still unmarried and with no heir. As Leo Benedictus wrote from the lines of *The Guardian*: " The implication, in other words, is that the Dream itself becomes a play within a play, in which the affairs of Shakespeare's own ageing ruler become a developing subtext for those played out on stage."[295] As Annaliese Connolly points out; during the Renaissance the celebration of chastity of the queen, served in many ways to underline her sterility and this is probably the aim that Shakespeare wanted to pursue.[296]

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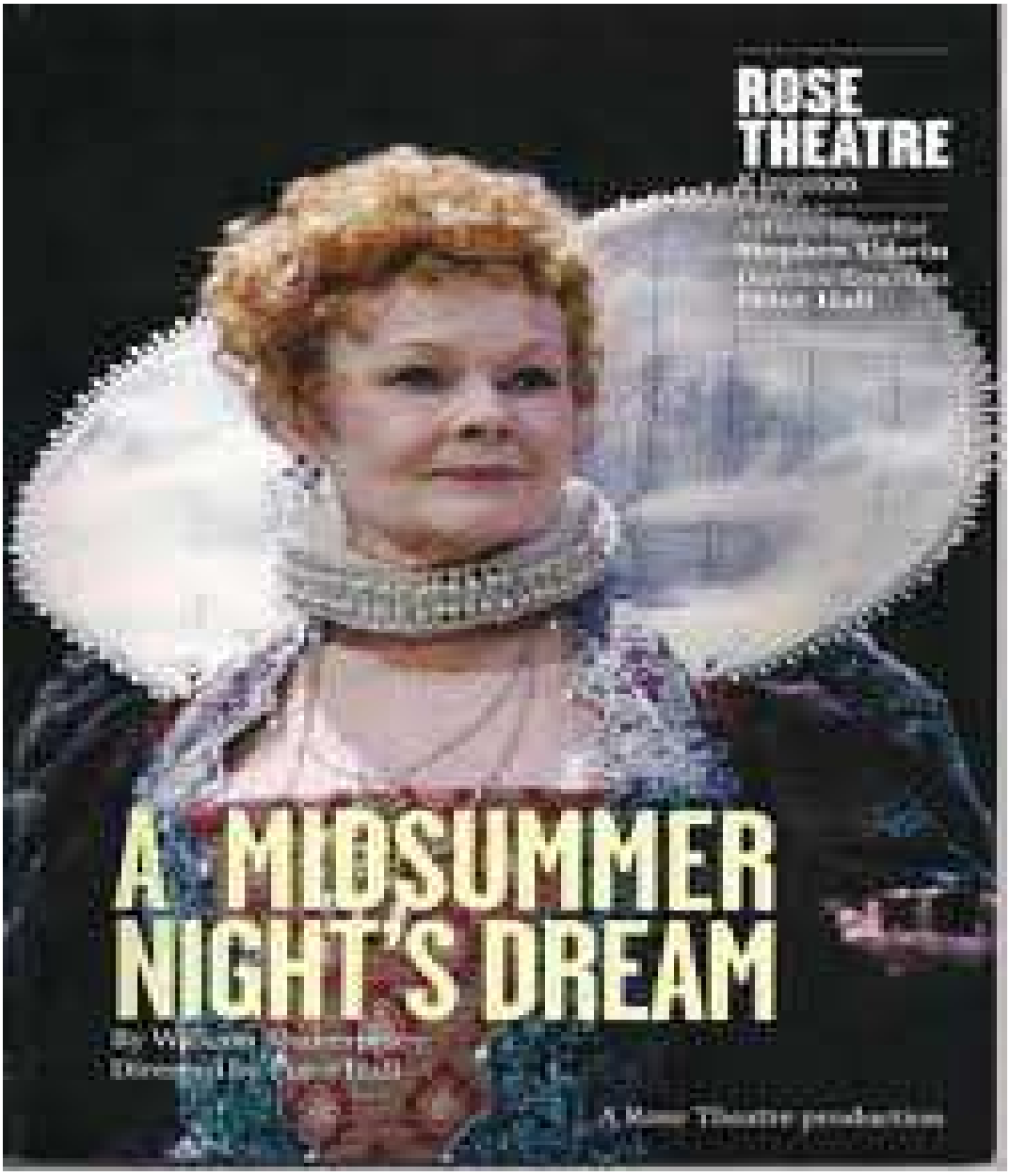
[293] Charles Spencer "A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Rose Theatre review" *The Daily Telegraph* (16 February 2010) viewed 21 April 2013 < http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/7249678/A-Midsummer-Nights-Dream-at-the-Rose-Theatre-review.html>

[294] Coen Heijes " A Midsummer Night's Dream review" Theatre Journal vol 62, number 4 (4 December 2010) viewed 21 April 2013 < http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre_journal/summary/v062/62.4.heijes.html>

[295] Leo Benedictus " What to say about Judi Dench in A Midsummer Night's Dream" The Guardian (17 February 2010) viewed 21 April 2013 < http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/feb/17/a-midsummer-nights-dream>

[296] Annaliese Connolly, op cit pg 136



Judi Dench in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” directed by Peter Hall.

Judi Dench dressed as Queen Elizabeth in a scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Peter Hall

This brief mention of Hall's brand-new edition of the *Dream* is useful to highlight the connection between the two queens that probably in the Renaissance was not so direct. Of course Elizabethan audiences considered the *Dream* descriptive of some current events because the play contains one of the most undisputable allusions to Elizabeth in a play.[297] As Bloom stated in his critique on the *Dream* the "fair vestal, throned by the west" is Elizabeth I and this constitutes Shakespeare's largest and most direct tribute to his monarch during her lifetime.[298] She is able to pass by and the arrow of Cupid does not wound her. Scholars thought that Elizabeth was likely to be present at the first performance of the *Dream*, being the guest of honour at the wedding, so she was extremely aware that the "fair vestal" was herself. As Marion A. Taylor points out, the 1594-95 audience of the *Dream* and probably Elizabeth herself would be ready to see Titania as an allusion to the Queen after the positive identification of Elizabeth in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Taylor quoted Edith Rickert who argued in her article *Political Propaganda and Satire in A Midsummer Night's Dream* that clearly the name Titania, as every educated Elizabethan knew, was an epithet used by Ovid for Diana. [299] Throughout her reign she had been called by various designation of Diana, until in 1590 Spenser used this epithet in the *Faerie Queene*. [300]

However, in the *Dream* Shakespeare is criticising Elizabeth's virginity; as Montrose suggests in his article *Shaping Fantasies,* Shakespeare's comedy symbolically nullifies the royal power to which he seems to pay tribute. For him," Shakespeare re-mythologizes the cult of the Virgin Queen in such a way as to sanction a relationship of gender and power that is personally and politically inimical to the Queen."[301]

The *Dream* begins by presenting Titania as a "governess of imagination" as Philippa Berry points out; she is the Faerie queen and moon goddess. When she first appears on the scene, the audience is brought into a world of imagination which moves so fast: " to dance our ringlets to the whistling wind"[302]. However as Philippa Barry points out, the ruling symbol of the *Dream*, as many scholars

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[297] Marion A. Taylor, *Bottom Thou Art Translated, Political Alegory in A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Ridolpi, Amsterdam 1973

[298] Harold Bloom, op cit pg

[299] ibid

[300] ibid

[301] Ibid pg 83

[302] Dream II, I 86

have suggested is the moon. The play's events occurs in the dark phase of the moon, the phase associated with Diana or Cynthia[303], two goddesses connected to Elizabeth.

At the beginning of the play, Titania is known to be angry with Oberon: she wants to keep the changeling boy of her dead votaress, she does not want Oberon to have him. This first glimpse of Titania shows a proud woman who does not want to be ruled by a man:

> What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence,
> I have forsworn his bed and company.
> Oberon: Tarry, rash wanton, am I not thy Lord?
> Titania: Then I must be thy Lady, but I know
> When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land...[304]

Here, the Renaissance audience could not have missed the connection with their female ruler. However, this loyalty to female friendship in the end of the play is replaced by a submission to masculine or patriarchal authority.[305] Oberon and Titania are fighting for the changeling boy and as Montrose points out Titania's attachment to this boy, embodies her attachment to the memory of his mother.[306] According to Montrose, Oberon, in exchanging the boy with poor, unaware Bottom, wants to make Titania break her vow.[307] Titania probably is deeply connected with her votaress because the latter represents an experience of female fecundity. In her speech, Titania highlights the connection between mother and child in pregnancy and birth; in a sort of way she is highlighting aspects of parenthood just from the point of view of motherhood, and so she displacing the relationship between wife and husband .[308] However Shakespeare's notions are strictly Aristotelian: the mother is just a container for her son, she is not the maker. As Theseus points out at the beginning of the play the man and father have the power, the daughter just has to submit to him and do what he orders.

However Montrose suggested that the *Dream* can also have another interpretation as far as Elizabeth is concerned; he points out that Elizabeth was the woman to whom all Elizabethan men

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[303] ibid

[304] Dream II, I 61- 65

[305] Ibid

[306] ibid

[307] ibid

[308] ibid

were vulnerable, since she was able to decide on their life and death.[309] Even though the Amazon queen could have been suited for praising a woman ruler, it was never popular during Elizabeth's reign. Elizabeth was able to transform this image to suit her purposes dressing as a warrior maiden as in her appearance at Tilbury in 1588. On the other hand, Hippolyta, the Amazon Queen of the *Dream* is a silent woman that has been just conquered by her husband-to-be and in a sort of way as Bloom points out "she seems content to dwindle into Athenian domesticity" so probably Shakespeare here wanted to build a comparison between Elizabeth and the Amazon in order to give her some advice; his old ruler is not going to marry or bear a child so this could probably be a sort of warning for her.

Many renaissance writers often fragment the royal image, reflecting aspects of the Queen; similarly the Bard splits the Elizabethan cult image into the fair vestal, an unattainable virgin, and the faerie Queen who is divided into an intractable wife and a dominating mother.[310]Oberon puts one against the other in order to bring back male authority.[311]

As Lisa Hopkins points out in her article entitled " The dark side of the moon: Semiramis and Titania" it was from the classical world that the majority of the iconography of the queen was taken; it is precisely in that world that many memorable female rulers can be found such as Cleopatra, Dido and Semiramis.[312] In the case of Semiramis, Hopkins found many interesting connections with the Titania of the *Dream*. Semiramis, as Elizabeth was alleged to have presented herself at Tilbury, cross-dressed as a means to emphasize her authority as a ruler. Indeed in the anonymous *Locrine*, written probably before 1586, Semiramis is paralleled with Elizabeth with the phrase:"Semiramis the ruler of the West" which immediately recalls the Shakesperian description in the *Dream* of Elizabeth as " a fair vestal throned by the west"[313] As Hopkins suggests, the reference of Semiramis in *Locrine* is interesting because its version of 1595 contains material which seems close to Shakespeare's play.

The *Dream* is a complex play, also because it contains the ambiguity of the fairy queen tradition. Hopkins cites Woodcock who suggests that "the ambiguities that surrounded the meaning of the fairy queen in the Woodstock entertainment of 1575 establish the foundations for more negative

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[309] ibid

[310] ibid

[311] ibid

[312] Lisa Hopkins, op cit p 117

[313] ibid

representations of the queen". In Woodstock the queen refused to play the part of the fairy queen preferring a narrative that allowed her to show her authority.[314] As Louis Montrose points out, the *Dream* is an attack on Elizabeth rather than a celebration of her values.[315]

As Hopkins points out, the fairy tradition that could be found in the *Dream* could be connected to Catholicism, a detail that probably could have annoyed Elizabeth. Hopkins also quoted Regina Buccola who observes that "court documents from the late sixteenth century make it clear that a connection was made between fairy belief and Catholicism by religious reformers even in Spenser's day."[316] Furthermore, the *Dream* is full of references about flower-magic. [317] Another text that could be connected with the *Dream* with reflections on Catholicism is Derekk's *The Whore of Babylon* 1607 whose characters includes Titania the Fairy Queen " under whom is figured our late Queene Elizabeth" and the Emperesse of Babylon who is figured for Rome.[318] In Derekk's work, the connections with Shakespeare's *Dream* and consequently the connections between Titania and Elizabeth are multiple. There are many episodes concerning the life of Elizabeth; such as the plot of Ropus "a doctor of Physicke" who is discovered to have been paid in order to poisoned the Fairy Queen. Dr. Ropus of course represents Dr. Lopez who was accused of having been paid by Spain to poison Elizabeth.[319] As Marion A. Taylor points out, the allegory of *The Whore of Babylon* refers indubitably to Titania, the Fairy Queen fought the Empress of Babylon and the Spanish Armada.[320] Taylor quoted Edith Rickert who assumes that Dekker wanted to tie his work to the *Dream* highlighting the fact that both plays could be seen as a political allegory of the Queen.

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[314] ibid

[315] Louis Montrose op cit.

[316] Regina Buccola, quoted in Lisa Hopkins

[317] ibid

[318] ibid

[319] Marion A. Taylor, op cit p 155

[320] ibid

Midsummer Night's Dream; a political allegory on the marriage negotiations with the Duke of Anjou

As Marion A. Taylor points out, the *Dream* is a play that discusses the political and intellectual issues of Shakespeare's time, in particular the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou, who Elizabeth seriously thought of marring. As has already been pointed out, in the political allegory of the *Dream* Titania stands for Elizabeth, but whom do the other characters of the play stand for? According to Taylor, who quoted again Ricket, the changeling boy for whose custody Titania and Oberon fight so hard in act II could be seen as the son of Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. The Earl of Hertford, is remembered for the magnificent celebration at Elvetham in 1591 which queen Elizabeth is known to have attended.[321] To be more precise, he was the son of Elizabeth's stepuncle, the Lord Protector Somerset, and nephew of Queen Jane Seymour, the successor of Anne Boleyn. In 1560 Hertford secretly married Lady Katherine Gray, descendant of Henry VIII's sister Mary. After some time and having borne a child Lady Grey confessed to the marriage. This made Elizabeth furious since according to two acts of Parliament and by the will of Henry VIII any legitimate child of Lady Gray stood next in line of succession.[322] Elizabeth had the couple imprisoned and declared their marriage and their son illegitimate. After Lady Katherine had died in 1568 after the birth of another son, Hertford was released and became wealthy again.[323] From then on he made every possible effort to have his children proclaimed legitimate by Elizabeth.[324] According to Taylor who again quotes Rickert, this episode could provide the historical background for the episode of the changeling boy in the *Dream*: Titania's friendship with the child's dead mother and Titania and Oberon's quarrel in fairyland.[325] As Harold Bloom points out, Bottom could be seen as the true protagonist of the *Dream* and that the dream could be his own.[326] As a consequence, many assumptions on who he could be the allegory of have been made. For instance, Rickert suggests that the allegory that Shakespeare wanted to highlight, making

[321] ibid

[322] ibid

[323]ibid

[324] ibid

[325] ibid

[326] Harold Bloom, op cit

Titania fall in love with Bottom under a temporary enchantment was King James of Scotland.[327] Taylor does not agree with Rickert, since she suggests that Bottom could more easily be an allegory of the Duke of Alençon.[328]

Spenser allegorized Alençon too in his *Faerie Queene* with Braggadochio the knight who unsuccessfully tried to seduce Belphoebe, the allegorical figure for Queen Elizabeth.[329] It is important to bear in mind that a Renaissance audience could easily have identified these allegories present in the play. As Taylor has pointed out, a clue to the identity of the person Bottom allegorized, namely Alençon, could be Bottom's excessive use of the word "Monsieur" during the play. It has been alleged that Alençon's title was Monsieur, since he was the heir to the throne of France. As Taylor points out, Bottom addresses the fairies as "Monsieur" eleven times in twenty lines of the play.[330] What is important to bear in mind is that Bottom in the play is supposed to be an Athenian and not a Frenchman and that he is speaking to Athenians or English fairies. So why did he address the fairies so many time with the word monsieur? Taylor also suggests that Bottom uses the word Monsieur only when he is under the spell of the flower, that is to say while he is dreaming.[331] In Act I scene II Bottom again mentions France while he is discussing with his fellow actors the parts of the play *Pyramus and Thisbe.* This time he mentioned the French gold crown; a gold coin:

> Bottom: What beard were I best to play it in?
> Quince: Why, what you will.
> Bottom: I will discharge it in either your straw- colour beard,
> Your orange- tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your
> French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.
> Quince Some of your French crowns have no hair at all,
> And then you will play barefaced...[332]

Bottom's mention of a French crown seems strange since he could have mentioned English gold coins.[333] This mention of France, for a Renaissance audience, would clearly sound like a mockery

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[327] Rickert, cit in Marion A. Taylor

[328] ibid

[329] ibid

[330] ibid

[331] ibid

[332] *Dream* I, II, 83-91

[333] ibid

of the suitor that Elizabeth almost married in 1579. In fact Quince's quick reply seems to allude to a standard Elizabethan joke about the loss of hair from the French pox: " Some of your French crowns have no hair at all."[334] According to Taylor, if the joke is really about the allegory Bottom/ Alençon it could have taken on several meanings: the French Crown, as has already been pointed out, could be seen as a French crowned head such as Alençon, heir to the throne of France.[335] The second is about a pun on a head bald from the French pox, probably a royal head. The third one is a joke about a future French crowned head to be who was left "barefaced" by the Queen of England.[336]

Another interesting matter that Taylor suggests for the connection Bottom/ Alençon could be found again in Act I scene II; when Quince asks Bottom to play the part of Pyramus, the Weaver responds that he could play both the part of a lover and of a tyrant:

> Bottom: That will ask some tears in the true performing of it:
> If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms,
> I will condole in some measure.
> To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely,
> Or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split....
> This was lofty! Now name the rest of players. This is Ercles' vein;
> a lover is more condoling.[337]

Here Taylor observes that the reference that Bottom makes to Ercles could be linked to the fact that François, Duke of Anjou, was baptized Hercule. However his family found this name a little embarrassing so after the death of his brother, King Frances II, the Duke was given his brother's name and he was re-baptized François. In saying that he can also play the part of the lover, the audience could have caught the subtle allusion of Shakespeare: Alençon played the part of the lover to queen Elizabeth.[338]

When Alençon first arrived in London to woo Elizabeth, he appeared at court heavily disguised to play the role in a great story of love.[339] However notwithstanding the first excitement for the Concillors who were thinking of uniting France with England by this marriage, they then realized

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[334] ibid

[335] ibid

[336] ibid

[337] *Dream* I,II, 21-37

[338] ibid

[339] ibid

that this union with an outsider could be dangerous for England, recollecting Mary Tudor who married Phillip of Spain. In the end, due to this discontent Elizabeth had to reverse her decision to marry him.

As Taylor points out, even though these events happened in the late 70s and early 80s, they would probably still be remembered by the London audience of the early 90s. Therefore she suggests that in the *Dream* nobody better than Bottom who wooed the Fairy Queen could be the allegory for Alençon.[340] Stritmatter suggests, that if all these speculations would be true, the scene in which Titania falls in love with Bottom, the weaver soliloquy could parody Alençon refusal to leave England without Elizabeth's promise of marriage.[341]

> I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me,
> to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this
> place, do what they can; I will walk up and down here,
> and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.[342]

Stritmatter quotes Martin Hume who describes the Alençon's refusal to leave the English court: "Alençon put his back on the wall and plenty told the Queen that not only he would refuse to leave England, but he would not even vacate the rooms in her place until she had gave him a definite answer as to whether she would marry him or not."[343] This circumstance seemed to be reflected in Bottom's line " I will not stir from this place".[344]

In her analysis of the political allegory of the *Dream*, Taylor suggests that Shakespeare gives the audience another hint to identify the presence of Alençon in the play.[345] As Quince wants Bottom to play the part of Pyramus, he describes him for Bottom and for the audience:

> You can play not part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man;
> a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day;
> A most lovely gentleman-like man; therefore, you must play Pyramus....[346]

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[340] ibid

[341] Roger Stritmatter, *The Cronology and Performance Venue of A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Oxfordian Volume IX 2006

[342] *Dream* III, I, 115- 119

[343] ibid

[344] ibid

[345] Taylor op cit p 143

[346] *Dream* I,II 79-82

The Duke of Anjou, unknown artist

These lines could subtly suggest the exaggerated politeness of the French in general and of course of the envoys of Alençon and of the Duke himself who came into England in a kind of pageant to negotiate the marriage with Elizabeth.[347] Bottom's response to Quince is about playing also Thisbe's part; the role of a woman. It is important to bear in mind the importance in the Renaissance of cross-dressing; since women were banned from playing in theatres, the roles of women were played by men or rather young boys. Here Taylor notes that Alençon was twenty years younger than Elizabeth when they started the negotiations and he was practically a young boy. As Taylor points out, Bottom at a certain point of the play, to be more precise, after the enchantment that transforms his head into that of an ass, starts singing a song about a bird. This could be interesting for the connection Bottom/Alençon since the audience would have understood that the bird who tried to settle into their nest and marry their queen was him.[348] They probably felt this danger very sharply since he was the only one who Elizabeth kissed in public and announced him as her intended husband.[349]

When in act III, scene I Titania wakes up from her dream in which she was bewitched by Puck, the first thing she sees and hears is Bottom:

> What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?...
> I prey thee, gentle mortal, sing again: mine ear
> Is much enamoured of thy note;
> So mine eye enthralled with to thy shape;
> And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
> On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee[350]

As it has already been pointed out, Alençon, together with the Earl of Leicester, were the only men Elizabeth thought seriously of marring and it was well known to the audience of Shakespeare's time that when it was time for Elizabeth to leave him, following the advice of the influential people who advised her not to marry the French Duke, she begged him to stay: Titania" Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or not"[351] The important thing to highlight about the political allegory about the

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[347] ibid

[348] ibid

[349] ibid

[350] *Dream* III,I 134, 132-136

[351] ibid

Dream for the Bottom/Titania, Elizabeth/ Alençon relationship is about Titania's dotage after she falls in love with the weaver:

> Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms
> Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.
> So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
> Gently entwist; the female ivy so
> Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
> O, how I love thee! How I dote on thee![352]

Alençon died in 1584, the *Dream* was first performed ten years later, however the Londoners did not forget his wooing to their queen even in the year of Elizabeth's death; as a ballad of that year shows: " The Mounsieur came himselfe from France, on purpose to wooe her..... she dyed a maid"[353]As Harold Bloom and other scholars pointed out, the word Dream in the title stands for Bottom's dream; since for Bloom, Bottom is the real protagonist and the "great glory" of the play: " Bottom is Shakespeare's Everyman, a true original, a clown rather than a fool or a jester. He is a wise clown"[354]. However many scholars suggests that Titania had a dream too, a dream of love to parallel to the one Bottom had, from which she woke up with the certainty she had been in love with an ass.[355]

> Titania My Oberon! What visions have I seen!
> Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.
> Oberon There lies your love
> Titania How came these things to pass?
> O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now![356]

According to Taylor, the connection Bottom/Alençon can be seen in the mention of Bottom's pension as well. Although Elizabeth never married Alençon the time that Elizabeth paid the Duke's bills was well-known to the audience; she supported him in the wars of the Low Countries during 1582 and 1583.[357]

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[352] *Dream* III,I, 39-44

[353] ibid

[354] Bloom, *The invention of the Human*, op cit

[355] ibid

[356] *Dream* IV,I 75-79

[357] ibid

> Flute O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day: and the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.[358]

As Taylor notes, since large pensions to Alençon played a huge part in Elizabeth's life; there would be nothing more satirical for the audience than Bottom's " sixpence a day during life".[359]

Alençon was known from his paintings to be a slender and short man. However Bottom was always played as a big, strongly built man. This tendency to depict Bottom as a strong and big man, comes from his name: " a ball of wool" as also suggests his work; Bottom the Weaver. However, Alençon was not a very good-looking man, as his portraits suggest, he was marked by smallpox at the age of eight so he remained pitted and slightly deformed.[360] Elizabeth herself, when Alençon was first suggested as a husband for her in 1571-72 says about him :" that, however suitable it might be in other respects, there was too great a disproportion in age, as well as stature, between them [...] how tall the Duke of Alençon was?" " About your majesty's own height". However Elizabeth insisted on knowing his date of birth and height.[361]

According to Taylor, the strongest clue that led to the identification of Bottom as the Duke of Anjou is that almost everyone in Bottom's crew could be identified as French servants belonging to Alençon. These gentlemen were French envoys who came to London in the late 70s and early 80s in order to negotiate the marriage between Elizabeth and Alençon. As Taylor points out, their names have such similarities to that of the "mechanicals" that they could not be accidental. The first example that Taylor notes, is the one between Peter Quince, the producer of the rustic's play and its resemblance with the last name of the French envoy of Alençon named Monsieur De Quincé. De Quincé stayed in London for months trying to negotiate the marriage. On the other hand, Peter Quince is a carpenter and although his surname might have come from the fruit of the same name, according to Taylor it seems more likely to be the word "coin" in all the possible ways of spelling this word in the Elizabethan age.[362] This word derives from the Middle English borrow from Middle French which was taken from Latin "cuneus" which means wedge which could be related with a

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[358] *Dream* IV,II, 19-24

[359] ibid

[360] ibid

[361] ibid

[362] ibid

carpenter. Probably, the audience was not aware of all these word derivations however, phonetically in English Quince would sound like coin in French since De Quincé was variously spelled "Quyssye" and "Cussi". In addition even to an Englishman who did not know French, the words would look the same, except for the accent.[363] Of course, the reference to De Quince would have been apparent to the Renaissance audience since he was much in the public eye in London.[364] Taylor identified also a connection between Snout the Tinker as an appellation to another of Alençon envoys. It was well known that Elizabeth was very keen on languages, so she would probably have translated from English to French the word snout as soon as she heard it as a spectator of the *Dream*. The word snout probably would have been translated by Elizabeth in the French word " bec", which would sound like Alençon's envoy Du Bex. Again, the reference would have been understood at once by the Queen and her courtiers, who spoke fluent French.[365]

Francis Flute, Robin Starveling and Snug the Joiner do not suggest a straight connection with any other of Alençon's envoys; however, Francis Flute has a good French name and it is possible that Shakespeare chose it to make a connection with Alençon himself, since his first name was François. As Taylor points out, Robin Starveling does not suggest any connection with any Frenchman however she notes that Robin was the nickname Elizabeth used to give to her favourite Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, and after his death she gave the same name to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. It was probably that in creating Robin Starveling, the tailor, that Shakespeare was adding a satirical portrait of two other of Elizabeth's suitors, in particular Dudley, who she probably was in love with. If all these assumptions were certain, this was a clever idea for the political allegory made by the Bard to put all of Elizabeth's suitors into the play.[366]

As Maurice Hunt notes, Elizabeth liked giving nicknames to trusted servants and others; the Duke of Anjou became for her " frog" while Jean de Simier, Anjou's Master of the Wardrobe who came first to England to court the queen in Anjou's absence, was nicknamed " Ape or Monkey".[367] So if the connection Bottom/Anjou is right, why did Shakespeare decide to transform Bottom into an ass? Hunt suggests that Shakespeare took a cue for this from Spenser's *Mother Hubberd's Tale* which

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[363] ibid

[364] ibid

[365] ibid

[366] ibid

[367] Maurice Hunt, *A Speculative Political Allegory in A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Comparative Drama Vol 34 n° 4 (2000-2001)

was a veiled allegorical protestant criticism about Elizabeth's potential marriage with the Duke of Anjou.[368] In Spenser's tale an ape, Simier and a fox, Lord Burghley, tried to trick a lion, Elizabeth. Taylor suggests that Elizabeth could be seen as the lion in the *Dream* too, which is presented in act V scene I when at Theseus and Hyppolita's marriage the mechanicals are playing *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

> Lysander This lion is a very fox for his valour
> Theseus True; and a goose for his discretion
> Demetrius Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose[369]

The mentioning of the fox in this scene and the consequent connection between the *Dream* and Spenser's *Mother Hubberd's Tale* could be useful, for lets the audience catch the allegory here with Lord Burghley.[370]

Hunt, suggests another connection with Elizabeth's life and the political allegory in the *Dream*. This episode involves the Earl of Leicester and Lettice Knollys. Hunt in his analysis quotes Perry who argues that Leicester's marriage with Lettice Knollys in spring 1578 was kept secret until autumn 1579, when the queen was told by Simier that Leicester's marriage was made to revenge himself on the earl for trying to ruin the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and Anjou.[371] Elizabeth was so angry that she almost had Leicester imprisoned. When he died in 1588 Elizabeth made Knollys pay all the money she owed the Crown. Hunt suggests that according to Perry the realization by Elizabeth that Leicester loved another woman more than her; and was willing to risk the queen's rage by marrying her, intensified Elizabeth's desire to marry Anjou " as a compensation for her hurt ego".[372] Going back to the *Dream*, Oberon rebukes Titania, humiliating her with the relationship with an ass. This constitutes the punishment to her refusal to give him the Indian boy.[373] As far as the allegory is concerned it is important to understand also who Oberon and the Indian Boy are the allegory for.

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[368] ibid

[369] *Dream* V,I, 224-227

[370] Marion A. Taylor, op cit p150

[371] Maurice Hunt op cit p 435

[372] ibid

[373] ibid

According to Hunt, Shakespeare could have taken a cue again from Spenser and his Faerie Queen, in particular from Book II canto 10 in which is allegorized Henry VIII's elder brother Prince Arthur Elferon, whose death permitted Oberon; Henry VIII, to marry Arthur's widow, Katherine of Aragon.[374] Subsequently Oberon nominated as his successor Tanaquill, afterward named Gloriana. According to Hunt, Shakespeare representing Titania and Oberon as married is suggesting that Elizabeth is married to the Tudor legacy. By the time Shakespeare wrote the *Dream* in 1595 Elizabeth was long past childbearing age. Therefore with this allegory Shakespeare wanted to highlight the anxiety about the succession that was present in the 90s. Titania and Oberon are fighting for the child of another woman, their marriage is barren, because the Fairy Queen is barren. As Hunt points out, this could highlight the fact that, with Elizabeth the Tudor dynasty would come to an end. As a consequence, the dream in which Titania features is Oberon's punishment. By making her fall in love with an ass could be seen figuratively as Henry VIII's punishment of his daughter by making her fall in love with Anjou. As has already been pointed out, the *Dream* is a play of succession, partly concerning Elizabeth and the problem of her legacy.[375]

However for a full understanding of the allegory present in the *Dream* it is important to understand who the Indian Boy is actually allegorizing. Hunt suggests that the Indian boy could be the Earl of Southampton.[376] However the Indian Boy never appears on stage. Hunt quoted Calderwood who asserts that by not appearing on stage he is transformed into a signifier.[377] The Indian boy is a signifier between Shakespeare and a select audience and it is with this veiled hint involving succession that the Indian boy gains meaning for the audience. The first thing to notice about the Indian boy is his separation from his mother. By making them Indian rather than Athenian Shakespeare made them as far from the line of succession as James VI of Scotland, son of Mary Queen of Scots could have been seen. Moreover, India could have been linked to Elizabeth's conquests in East India. In his will, Henry VIII proclaimed that if his three children left no heirs, succession should go to the heirs of his younger sister Mary, Duchess of Suffolk and then to the heirs of his elder sister Margaret, Queen of Scots.[378] Henry VIII seemed to prefer the succession of

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[374] ibid

[375] ibid

[376] ibid

[377] ibid

[378] Marion A. Taylor op cit p 32

the Suffolk line to the postponement or rather the exclusion of the Scottish line.[379] However in the 90s when the succession appeared so uncertain there were many claimants to the throne such as Infanta Isabella, daughter of Philip of Spain, Lady Arabella Stuart, descendent of Margaret daughter of King Henry VII, and other descendents of King Edward III among whom were several foreign princes.[380] The illegality of the blood lines of these claimants made subjects think that probably King James VI of Scotland could have been the direct heir to the English throne, since his mother, Mary of Scots was the granddaughter of Margaret, Henry VIII's sister.[381]

According to Hunt, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots could be linked with the scene in the *Dream* in which Titania is arguing with Oberon for the custody of the boy. In the scene the audience makes the acquaintance of the Indian votaress of Titania:

Titania Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child for me.
His mother was a votaress at my order;
And in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;
And sand me on Neptune's yellow sands[...]
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
and for the sake I will not part with him.[382]

According to Hunt, Elizabeth had always refused the legislation by which she might have excluded Mary as a potential successor.[383] In addition, from the 1590s; after the Queen of Scots' death she paid an annual pension of £ 3,000 to James of Scotland. As Hunt points out, in his political allegory, Shakespeare makes Oberon represent King Henry VIII in his claim to James VI as his surrogate son.

Puck [...] and jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forest wild:
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all
Her joy.[384]

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[379] ibid

[380] Hunt, op cit p 440

[381] ibid

[382] *Dream* II,I 122-137

[383] ibid

[384] *Dream* II, I, 24-28

These lines of Puck, could highlight the connection with James of Scotland's addiction to hunting which was probably known in England, even while he was still king of Scotland.[385] Possibly these lines could be linked as well to the desire Oberon/Henry VIII had to have a male heir before the birth of his son Edward VI. For this link Shakespeare probably took his cue from Robert Green's *The Scottish History of James the Fourth* a play dated 1588- 92. In this play Oberon appeared as a kind of chorus together with a fairy Antic named Bohan, they comment on the developing events of the historical romance.[386] As Hunt points out, Green's play is effective for the political allegory present in the *Dream* since it shows the marriage between James IV of Scotland and Margaret, Henry VIII's elder sister. This marriage established Mary Queen of Scots and James VI as heirs to the throne of England. Green's play encourages an agreeable relationship with English and Scottish monarchs. Last but not least the clue that, according to Taylor could help identify a political allegory in the *Dream* of Elizabeth and Alençon's negotiation of marriage is the list of actors who performed the play in 1594-95. The most important of the actors who played Bottom was William Kempe who was one of the most beloved jesters in the Elizabethan theatre. Kempe was known to be a " small agile actor" described as " starved justice" who would probably fit well the role of Alençon. It is important to bear in mind that the majority of allusions to clowns in Shakespeare company in general represented them as small. Taylor quotes Baldwin who points out that: " when humour consists of practical jokes, it is the part of wisdom to have the victims small and Kemp seems to have been no exception to this rule."[387] Probably he was about forty years old when he played the role of Bottom; to be precise ten years older than Alençon when he died at the age of thirty.[388] Shakespeare did indeed choose Kemp in order that his audience would recognize the caricature of a man now dead but whom they could not easily forget; Elizabeth's small suitor, the Duke of Alençon. As Taylor notes: " [...] Shakespeare found the actor he wanted to play Bottom in small, agile William Kemp since Bottom was meant I believe, to represent the undersized Duke of Alençon."[389]

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[385] ibid

[386] ibid

[387] ibid

[388] ibid

[389] ibid

Hunt tries to explain who could have asked Shakespeare to do this political allegory of the *Dream* and why .[390]He gives two possible explanations: he argues that the political allegory of the *Dream* involves Shakespeare and his possible patron, the Earl of Southampton who in 1594 gave a large sum to the Bard to let him perform an interesting idea that he had in mind. It was this share that permitted Shakespeare to become part of the Lord's Chamberlain Company. Hunt's second assumption is that the political allegory present in the *Dream* concerns Southampton and his friendship with Robert Devereux the Earl of Essex. In 1595, both Essex and Southampton fell out of favour with the queen. As Hunt points out, early in those years Essex " openly displays of bad temper and petulance which causes her Majesty a good deal of annoyance." [391] Moreover, in 1595 was published *A Conference on the Next Succession to the Crown of England* that damaged the name of the earl in the eyes of the queen. It was prefaced with an excessively flattering dedication to Essex and the anonymous author suggested that on Elizabeth's death, " no other man, was likely to have a greater part in deciding about this great affair- the succession- rather than the Earl of Essex himself." On the other hand the Earl of Southampton fell out in favour with the Queen because without her permission he became too familiar with one of her maids, Elizabeth Vernon, the Earl of Essex's cousin.[392] As a result, according to Hunt, in 1595, year of the *Dream* composition, both Essex and Southampton were annoyed with Elizabeth. Southampton in particular at that time loved so much Spenser's *Faerie Queen*.[393] The *Dream* is alleged to have been first performed between 1595-96, the same period as the release of the next three books of Spenser's poem.[394] In all probability, Essex and Southampton asked the Bard to include in his comedy the figure of Elizabeth as the well known Fairy Queen in an implied allegory stressing the shame of her affair with the Duke of Anjou. The relationship would be presented in the context of the prohibited subject of the succession, a very delicate subject at the moment. As Hunt points out, James of Scotland was clearly the Earl of Essex's choice for Elizabeth's successor. Furthermore, in 1589 they started a secret correspondence in which the Earl promise the king-to-be, future service and fidelity. According to Hunt all those conspiracies of Essex would have been recognised by the more perceptive members of the audience in the allegory of Titania, Oberon, the Indian boy and

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[390] Hunt op cit p 444

[391] ibid

[392] ibid

[393] ibid

[394] ibid

Bottom.[395] However, as Hunt points out, in writing his *Dream* Shakespeare may have found himself obliged to integrate allusions dictated by the two gentlemen and probably he found himself under pressure because he had to reflect cleverly the intolerance these two men had for their Queen .[396]
According to this analysis, many scholars identified a persistently relevant hint in the play relating to the French marriage negotiations of 1578-81.[397] However, according to Stritmatter, there are some speculations about the correct date of publication of the *Dream*. He divides these speculations between the Oxfordian school, who suppose the *Dream* was written in close proximity of the marriage negotiations; specifically in 1580 and the rest of the scholars who think the *Dream* was written in the mid-90s.[398] Even though in the study of this play there are many controversies about the date of publication, it seems that the greater part of scholars agree with the fact that the *Dream* is a parody about Elizabeth I and the marriage negotiations of 1578-81. As Stitmatter points out: "if topical evidence suggests a final date of the composition in the 1590s, the same evidence also reveals an author whose chronological frame of reference stretches back to 1581 or earlier, and whose topical preoccupations included a closely-veiled comic commentary on one of the more explosive issues of the reign: the intersection of the private life and courtships of Elizabeth I and matters of public policy and authority."[399] As has been often suggested in this analysis, the *Dream* could be defined as a play of succession, since the Queen, her courtship and the matter of succession often appear in the critical literature of this play. It is clear that the *Dream* shows a clever interpretation of sexual politics of Elizabethan era. Titania, the fairy queen, symbolises Elizabeth I, the Queen who has not accomplished her duty to marry and to give England an heir, in a society ruled by men except for her , and who ends the Tudor dynasty.
Concluding this analysis on Elizabeth Tudor, it is possible to state that Elizabeth was a strong woman who did everything in her power to rule alone in the Renaissance, a moment in history when men ruled and a woman on the throne was seen as going against nature. After the reign of her sister Mary she managed to gain her subject's favour by restoring the Protestant religion and defeating of the Spanish Armanda in 1588. She was able also to create her propaganda in literature and in art, in particular with the symbology of chastity in the last part of her reign. However not everyone was

[395] ibid

[396] ibid

[397] Stritmatter op cit p 83

[398] ibid

[399] ibid

glad of her behaviour as a woman, in fact throughout her reign she received a lot of requests for marriage negotiations by her counsellors that she always declined.

She probably desired to marry twice; with the Duke of Anjou and with her favourite, the Earl of Leicester, but both marriages were rejected by Elizabeth's advisers who thought these marriages were not respectable for her.

In the 90s the fear for the succession of Elizabeth was high since she was more than fifty and she was still alone. This general discontent was so strong that Elizabeth risked her life many times. Even in literature many writers started to show their dissatisfaction with her way of ruling her reign, particularly Shakespeare who was known not to be an admirer of Elizabeth and with his play *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* puts on stage a veiled political allegory of his Queen, highlighting with the relationship of Bottom and Titania, the Fairy Queen, the one between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou. With the characters of Hermia and Hippolyta, the first one not at all afraid to stand firm in front of men, the second one the Queen of the Amazons, who being defeated by her future husband, became silent and complacent, could be different portraits of the Queen.

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