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# KINGS AND QUEENS AND HISTORICAL SCENES

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The Portrayal of Monarchs in Late-Sixteenth- and  
Early-Seventeenth-Century Historical Narratives  
Written by Women



The Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I, English school, c. 1590



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**Declaration of authenticity**

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## Summary

Historiography in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries was not as clearly defined as it is today. It crossed genre boundaries, and because objectivity was not its main aim there was no condemnation of involving political agendas, religious views, and personal opinions either. This resulted in a blurring of the line between history and cultural memory even more extensive than it is today. Although the majority of historical narratives were written by men, a number of higher class, well-educated women in Britain also took up their pens to write history, particularly when it involved historical monarchs. While these women were not allowed to fulfil public offices in their government, they often still held other positions at court. This meant that although these women were on the outside of political power dynamics, they often still had an insider's perspective on the monarchy.

This research looks at three such works: Anne Dowriche's *The French Historie* (1589); Elizabeth Southwell's *A True Relation of what succeeded at the sickness and death of Queen Elizabeth* (1607); and Elizabeth Cary's *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* (1626-1627). These texts are analysed in the context of the author's biography, early modern debates on rulership and monarchy, and similar works by male contemporaries. The use of these three frameworks shows that: (a) these women were influenced by their religious views and personal relationships at court in their depictions of certain monarchs; (b) they gave their female characters more agency compared to male authors, making them active participants in history even when it led to a more condemning portrayal; (c) they positioned themselves in contemporary political discourse by engaging with and reflecting on theories on rulership such as Machiavellianism, the separation of the body natural and body politic, and the image of a good monarch as presented in James I's *Basilikon Dōron*; and (d) they used the flexibility in historiographical genres and styles to find forms best-suited to convey their message.

**Keywords:** Early modern literature; women writers; monarchy; historiography; Anne Dowriche; Elizabeth Southwell; Elizabeth Cary

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## Introduction

Popular expression holds it that history is written by the victors. In reality, however, this is only part of the truth. As J. Paul Hunter writes in his contribution to *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500-1800*, there have been times when “nearly everyone constructed history and many wrote it, and when a vast variety of perspectives was available in churches and chapels, court and country, London and villages – and in the many pamphlets and more formal histories that poured from the press.”<sup>1</sup> While he discusses the Restoration period in this specific chapter, I would argue his observation applies to the entire early modern period, if not all of human history.

Nevertheless, while “nearly everyone” constructed history, there were relatively rarely any women among the “many” who wrote it.<sup>2</sup> While writing and publishing was not encouraged among early modern women in Britain in the first place,<sup>3</sup> topics such as history and politics were thought especially unsuitable for the female pen.<sup>4</sup> For a small group of well-educated, mostly higher-class women, however, this was not a deterrent to actually write on these subjects.

This thesis will examine three historical narratives written by British women in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. The focus will mainly be on how they represent the monarchs included in these texts, and how these depictions relate to contemporary thoughts on monarchy and the authors’ own social position. While all of the women included in this study were tied to the court in some way, because of their gender they would traditionally have been pushed to the margins of history and power, even when of higher class, in favour of their male relatives and counterparts. In a time where history and monarchy were much-discussed subjects in writing by male authors, looking at works written by women might thus deliver new, more ‘outside’ perspectives on these issues.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Paul Hunter, ‘Protesting Fiction, Constructing History’, in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks, Woodrow Wilson Center Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 316, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511721052>.

<sup>2</sup> Here it seems appropriate to acknowledge that this thesis refers to ‘writing history’ in its literal sense. Aside from written historical narratives, there was of course also a rich oral tradition which, unfortunately, can no longer be excavated.

<sup>3</sup> Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 6, <http://archive.org/details/oppositionalvoic0000kron>.

<sup>4</sup> Krontiris, 17.

## Theoretical framework

When this thesis speaks of ‘histories’ and ‘historiography’, this seems to suggest a stable category or genre of literary works. Nothing could be farther from the truth, however.

Historiography could take different forms during this period. In fact, the ‘history genre’, and genres in general, were not as clear-cut as they may seem today. As Rosalie L. Colie noted in her ‘Una’s Lectures in the Humanities’ series, “it was not entirely obvious in the Renaissance what the genres of literature surely were, nor yet how to identify them.”<sup>5</sup> Among what is already a confusion of genres, she states, historiography presents a particular problem to Renaissance scholars since “there were so many competing and overlapping notions of what “history” was or ought to be.”<sup>6</sup> Due to the various models and attitudes adopted, and experimenting with these, texts could be a history, romance, and political pamphlet in one. Gary A. Schmidt attributes these forms of ‘hybridity’ to the social transformations taking place in Tudor and Stuart England: “the absorption of classical mores and discursive forms into the humanist education program; the renegotiation of a ‘mixed’ national identity (and nascent imperial aspirations) prompted by shifting relationship with Spain, Ireland, and Scotland; the emergence of anti-authoritarian, ‘Puritan’ challenges to the established order; and finally, the great compromise between ‘absolutist’ and ‘parliamentary’ forms of government in the reign of James I.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite this instability in meaning, history as a subject of writing enjoyed an enormous popularity in early modern Britain. While the practice of keeping chronicles and annals, which originated in the medieval period, was continued for some time, history was also used as the topic of treatises, plays, poems, and more. Think, for example, of Shakespearean history plays like *Richard II* and *King John*. These historical narratives were part of the British literary and popular culture. As Aleida Assmann writes, “[n]ation-states produce narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography.”<sup>8</sup> The numerous early modern publications on history could be seen in this light as the British nation-state attempting to form and disseminate one particular narrative about its past. This ignores one important issue, however: at this time, there was no

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<sup>5</sup> Rosalie L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 8–9.

<sup>6</sup> Colie, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Gary A. Schmidt, *Renaissance Hybrids: Culture and Genre in Early Modern England* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2016), 1, <https://www.book2look.com/book/JPP0oh7I2t>.

<sup>8</sup> Aleida Assmann, ‘Canon and Archive’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 101, <http://www.degruyter.com/view/title/18330>.

clear definition of what the British nation-state was. Consequently, there was no one clear-cut idea of British national identity either. This was a problem, Andrew Hadfield argues, not faced by Britain alone: “the problem of national identity required urgent attention in the sixteenth century, principally owing to the Reformation and the consequent stress placed on the need to establish vernacular languages and cultures in each respective European country.”<sup>9</sup> Due to the Reformation the late-medieval Latinate culture was broken up, meaning nations had to re-evaluate and reform their own cultural identity now that the former religious, cultural, and vernacular unity could no longer be completely relied on.

Because there was so much uncertainty about what the British<sup>10</sup> national identity was, people produced texts presenting one particular version in hopes of endorsing it. These texts were not simply reproductions/(re)interpretations of the past, but, to speak in the words of Harald Welzer, these “media products [...] also determine[d] the perception of the present.”<sup>11</sup> To speak about past events or people in a certain way, was also a reflection of values and ideas that were relevant at the time of writing. It is a process similar to that described by Martina Mittag considering foreign cultures: “to define the ‘un-English,’ furthered a unified idea of ‘England’ through its binary opposition of Self and Other, and thus ensured the reader’s identification with his own national and cultural identity.”<sup>12</sup> By writing positive or negative portrayals of historical events, authors put forward views on what parts and values from the past were to be upheld or rejected while also emphasising the contemporary nation’s “inward greatness.”<sup>13</sup> Effectively, historiography became part of what H. Grabes refers to as “writing the nation”: by actively (re)interpreting and representing Britain’s past, historiography contributed to the collective creation of a national identity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>10</sup> The Kingdom of Great Britain was not established until the Act of Union between Scotland and England in 1707, but since the two nations were in personal union after James VI of Scotland’s coronation as King of England and thus for the majority of the period studied here, ‘British’ and ‘Britain’ will be used as the unifying terms.

<sup>11</sup> Harald Welzer, ‘Communicative Memory’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 287, <http://www.degruyter.com/view/title/18330>.

<sup>12</sup> Martina Mittag, ‘National Identity and the Sovereign in Anti-Spanish Pamphlets 1558-1625’, in *Writing the Early Modern English Nation: The Transformation of National Identity in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Herbert Grabes (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 110.

<sup>13</sup> William Shakespeare, ‘King Henry the Fifth’, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New York: Race Point Publishing, 2014), 489 Act II, Chorus, l. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Herbert Grabes, ed., *Writing the Early Modern English Nation: The Transformation of National Identity in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), xi.



Most modern accounts of history focus on “separating what really happened from what was fabricated.”<sup>15</sup> While Kavita Mudan Finn, in her book from which this quotation was taken, looks specifically at fifteenth-century queens, this can be argued about modern accounts on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century monarchs, or even any part of history as well. The focus is on collecting facts, or, in other words, on the truth. This stress on truth is one that has found itself on the foreground in another discussion as well: that of history vs cultural memory. The distinction between these two is at times also made on the basis of truth. History is the actual past, and cultural or collective memory is presented, Ross Poole writes, as the process of constructing a certain past.<sup>16</sup> The former is reality, the latter the active modifying of it. This is what Jeffrey K. Olick calls the “Presentist” viewpoint. These presentist models “assimilate collective memory to manipulation and deception, a mere tool in the arsenal of power. They ask how contemporary interests shape what images of the past are deployed in contemporary contexts and see memory as highly variable.”<sup>17</sup> History, on the other and, certainly as an academic discipline, wants to be and present itself as objective scholarship, written, unlike cultural memory, in a neutral “third person.”<sup>18</sup> However, as Poole identifies, history also lives outside of academia, and in its public existence “it is at the service of various projects to transform or preserve the nation’s understanding of itself: it speaks to and for our country.”<sup>19</sup> This seems similar to the explanation of cultural memory provided earlier, and this actually highlights the strain cultural memory studies has placed on the field of history. It has, as Vita Fortunati and Elena Lamberti describe, brought to attention “the difficulty of giving an ultimate meaning to the concepts of ‘document,’ ‘source,’ ‘truth.’”<sup>20</sup> In other words, it questions to what extent objective history exists, and how it can be separated from all other subjective narratives on history.

The question is how productive it is to make this separation of fact versus fiction when looking at early modern history. Early modern authors did not have the same kinds and numbers of sources and techniques available to them that modern historians do. Additionally,

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<sup>15</sup> Kavita Mudan Finn, *The Last Plantagenet Consorts: Gender, Genre, and Historiography 1440-1627* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2012), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230392991>.

<sup>16</sup> Ross Poole, ‘Memory, History and the Claims of the Past’, *Memory Studies* 1, no. 2 (1 May 2008): 157, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007088383>.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, ‘From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 159.

<sup>18</sup> Poole, ‘Memory, History and the Claims of the Past’, 161.

<sup>19</sup> Poole, 161.

<sup>20</sup> Vita Fortunati and Elena Lamberti, ‘Cultural Memory: A European Perspective’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 129.

modern methodologies and, as mentioned before, conceptions of history are essentially different from those in the early modern period. The French lawyer Jean Bodin, for instance, argued against the excessive use of rhetoric in history in his *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (1566), but also believed that the reliability of historical accounts could be checked on the basis of certain constant national characteristics.<sup>21</sup> Another example is Thomas Blundeville's *True Order and Methode of Wryting and Reading Histories* (1574), in which he stressed the exemplary and moralistic applications of history-writing.<sup>22</sup> Rather than focusing on whether a given account is truthful, the attention should be on how the given narrative is a reflection, "not of [sixteenth- and seventeenth-century] reality, but of the questions and anxieties that haunted their writers."<sup>23</sup> By doing this, as Erik Meyer words it, "the question is not if the image of history communicated is scientifically truthful. Instead, the crucial factor is how and by whom, as well as through which means, with which intention, and which effect past experiences are brought up and become politically relevant."<sup>24</sup>

### Research question & case studies

Based on the issues with history and historiography outlined above, studying early modern historical narratives would be an interesting undertaking in and of itself. This thesis, however, will add another factor to the equation: gender. Women, because of their position on the margins of power, are likely to provide a different perspective on history than the men placed at the centre of it. At the same time, because they could hold positions at court, a number of women still had close interactions with the reigning monarch and his or her political circles. While being outsiders on power dynamics, they still had insider perspectives on rulership. Similarly, to speak in Elaine Beilin's words, while "a woman's exclusion from public office may imply that she was on the political margins, [...] she was not [necessarily] on the margins of political discourse."<sup>25</sup> Through the numerous pamphlets and other political publications and, at times, male relatives with positions in Parliament, some women still had access to the political debates circulating in their society. Although they were barred from actively

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<sup>21</sup> Claus Uhlig, 'National Historiography and Cultural Identity: The Example of the English Renaissance', in *Writing the Early Modern English Nation: The Transformation of National Identity in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Herbert Grabes (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 91.

<sup>22</sup> Uhlig, 93.

<sup>23</sup> Finn, *The Last Plantagenet Consorts: Gender, Genre, and Historiography 1440-1627*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Erik Meyer, 'Memory and Politics', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 176.

<sup>25</sup> Elaine Beilin, "'Some Freely Spake Their Minde': Resistance in Anne Dowriche's *French Historie*", in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. Mary E. Burke et al. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 120.

participating in politics, through writing publications of their own some women even found a way to participate in these debates to some extent. Because of this position—close to power and politics, but not actively involved in it—texts written by women on monarchs provide an interesting angle that historical narratives on, for example, wars and battles would lack. The intersection of gender, history and monarchy should therefore provide new and innovative insights. On the basis of these observations, this thesis will endeavour to answer the following research question: how do the depictions of specific monarchs in British early modern historical narratives written by women relate to the texts' social, religious, and/or political messages, and the authors' social position?

To answer the research question posed above, this thesis will examine three texts from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which deal with historical events/and or people: Anne Dowriche's polemical verse *The French Historie* (1589); Elizabeth Southwell's personal account *A True Relation of what succeeded at the sickness and death of Queen Elizabeth* (1607); and Elizabeth Cary's literary narrative *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* (1626-1627). These texts refer to numerous historical figures of royal descent, including and not limited to, Edward II, Elizabeth I, Catherine de Medici, and Charles IX of France.

This corpus has partly been selected for its temporal scope. The included texts were first published or written over a period of almost forty years. During this time, Britain saw itself ruled by Elizabeth I, a female monarch and last of the Tudor rulers (1558-1603); the first Stuart King James I (1603-1625), who brought together the kingdoms of England and Scotland under personal union; and his successor Charles I (1625-1649), who was executed during the English Civil War. Each of these monarchs brought challenges of their own: Elizabeth was a woman, and therefore automatically problematic; James's succession was questionable to some degree, and he was often seen as giving too much power to his royal favourites; and Charles's rule led to disputes surrounding royal absolutism, which eventually resulted in his execution and the Interregnum period. Concurrent with the changes in rulers, there were also shifts in attitudes towards rulership. Different models of ideal monarchs were suggested, discussed, and rejected. It saw remains of (late) medieval thoughts on rulership, such as Niccolò Machiavelli's suggestions in *The Prince* that a ruler's ends can justify immoral means,<sup>26</sup> and the separation of the monarch's "body natural" and "body politic" as

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<sup>26</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Works of the Famous Nicholas Machiavel, Citizen and Secretary of Florence*. (London: Printed for John Starkey, Charles Harper and John Amery, 1680), 199–235, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2248567727/citation/7F515649B39F4F0BPQ/2>.

described by, amongst others, Edmund Plowden<sup>27</sup> and Edward Forset.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the early modern period also saw its own developments in political thinking. Examples are the image of the ruler as simultaneously the political leader and the spiritual ‘shepherd’ of the nation,<sup>29</sup> which came with the establishment of the Church of England, and James I’s *Basilikon Dōron* (1599), which was intended as a guide to good rulership for his son Henry.<sup>30</sup> The shifting opinions in these debates on rulership are reflected by the authors studied here as they describe the monarchs in their narratives, and thus illustrate the contemporary developments in political theory and philosophy.

Additionally, these case studies have been chosen for the diversity of perspectives they provide. As indicated above, these women all wrote in different periods of time. They also came from different backgrounds. While all three of them were members of the higher class, Dowriche was not a member of the nobility like Cary, and Southwell gave up her position at the English court when she went into exile. There is also a representation of different religious backgrounds: Cary and Southwell were Catholic, but Dowriche moved in Puritan circles. These women even bring a transnational level to this study, for although Dowriche did not travel out of England, Cary lived in Ireland for some time, and Southwell spent the majority of her life in exile, first in France and then in Italy. Despite, or perhaps because of these different backgrounds, all of the included authors were connected to court life in some way and to varying degrees. Cary was a Viscountess who was placed under house arrest for her public conversion to Catholicism; Southwell was a maid-of-honour to Elizabeth I and Queen Anne who fled to the Continent to convert to Catholicism and marry her cousin, whose legitimacy was in dispute; and Dowriche had relatives who served in multiple Parliaments. In other words, these women all had varying levels of ‘access’ to their monarch(s), something which David Starkey argues “constituted an essential component of both the acquisition and

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<sup>27</sup> Edmund Plowden, 1571. *Les Comentaries, Ou Les Reportes de Edmund Plowden vn Apprentice de Le Comen Ley, de Dyuers Cases Esteantes Matters En Ley, & de Les Argumentes Sur Yceux, En Les Temps Des Raygnes Le Roye Edwarde Le Size, Le Roigne Mary, Le Roy & Roigne Phillipp & Mary, & Le Roigne Elizabeth* (London: Richardi Tottelli, 1571),

<http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240894842/citation/EF97534C12884113PQ/1>.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Forset, *A Comparatiue Discourse of the Bodies Natural and Politique, VVherein out of the Principles of Nature, Is Set Forth the True Forme of a Commonweale, with the Dutie of Subiects, and Right of Soueraigne: Together with Many Good Points of Politicall Learning, Mentioned in a Brieve after the Preface*. (London: Printed for Iohn Bill, 1606),

<http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240880500/citation/B273DB1F98C841ACPQ/1>.

<sup>29</sup> Alan G. R. Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England 1529-1660* (Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1984), 88.

<sup>30</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Dōron. Or His Majesties Instructions to His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince* (Edinburgh: Printed by Robert VValde-graue, 1603), <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240881783/citation/83EDBB4260594A3DPQ/7>.

the exercise of power.”<sup>31</sup> This access could be acquired through multiple means. In Southwell’s case, for example, it was passed on between generations, making her belong to one of the families for whom this “exclusive privilege” was reserved.<sup>32</sup> Access was at times also a question of proximity. The amount of influence and contact one could have on and with a ruler was determined by how easily one could communicate with them, or, as Raeymakers and Derks word it: “[m]ore than *finding the prince*, access was a question of *finding the prince’s ear*.”<sup>33</sup> With her position at court Southwell would thus have had the most or easiest access, while Cary mostly had to make due with written correspondence, and Dowriche had no direct contact with court herself at all. As a result, all these authors had different relationships to and opinions of the court and monarch. They each bring their own perspective on their monarch(s) and rulership in general. Accordingly, the three texts in question will have been written for different purposes and the light in which the included monarchs have been depicted will have been tied into this.

Another factor involved in the selection of this corpus was the diversity of the texts themselves. They vary greatly in length and form, but most importantly, in genre. While all of these texts have history as their overlapping topic, they all display a different approach to presenting it. Each of these genres brings its own conventions, expectations and audience, and all three of the authors will have made a conscious choice for one or the other. Consequently, the choice of genre will have affected the representation of the included monarch(s), or, perhaps, the other way around: the intended depiction will have influenced the choice of genre. Either way, the genre of a text is tied in closely with how historical events and persons are portrayed. The variety of genres included here show a number of different approaches that could be adopted in writing on history.

Lastly, the case studies in this thesis have been chosen because they are relatively underresearched. Elizabeth Cary’s *Edward II* is by far the most researched of the included texts. Karen Nelson examines Cary’s work in the context of the mother’s advice manual, identifying Queen Isabella as a model for Henrietta Maria.<sup>34</sup> Tina Krontiris focuses on how Cary rewrites earlier negative representations of Queen Isabella’s sexuality and adultery in

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<sup>31</sup> Dries Raeymaekers and Sebastiaan Derks, eds., *The Key to Power?: The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400-1750*, vol. 8, Rulers & Elites (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Raeymaekers and Derks, 8:13.

<sup>33</sup> Raeymaekers and Derks, 8:12.

<sup>34</sup> Karen Nelson, ‘Elizabeth Cary’s *Edward II*’, in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. Mary E. Burke et al. (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 157–73.

works by men.<sup>35</sup> In her publication, Karen Raber uses *Edward II* to address questions of attribution and intellectual property.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Meredith Skura discusses the attribution of *Edward II* to Cary in light of gender conventions in early modern literary culture when it comes to historiography.<sup>37</sup> In their article, Janet Starner-Wright and Susan M. Fitzmaurice look at the conventions of history writing and dramaturgy in connection to Cary's work.<sup>38</sup> Rachel M. Roberts discusses how Cary frames the favourites Gaveston and Spenser as "political sirens" to present a cautionary tale on kings and favouritism.<sup>39</sup> Dowriche's text has also received some academic attention. Beilin proposes a reading of *The French Historie* as a Puritan critique of English religious policy, as well as the traditional relationship between monarchs and their subjects.<sup>40</sup> Micheline White looks at the text and its author in the context of a Puritan network of literary active women in Devon.<sup>41</sup>

When it comes to comparative research, some of these texts have been studied alongside ones on the same subject written by male authors. Randall Martin wrote on the incorporation of Machiavellian characters in Dowriche's *The French Historie* and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*,<sup>42</sup> and the differences between Dowriche's text and her source text, Thomas Tymme's *The French Commentaries*, are discussed by Megan Matchinske.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Kate Chedgzoy reads it along Shakespeare's *Richard II*, examining the representation of Britain as an island separated from Europe. Virginia Brackett draws a comparison between fragments of Cary's *Edward II* and *Queene Isabel to Mortimer* and *The Barrons-Warres*, to suggest Drayton as a source of inspiration for

<sup>35</sup> Tina Krontiris, 'Style and Gender in Elizabeth Cary's *Edward II*', in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M Haselkorn and Betty Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 137–53.

<sup>36</sup> Karen Raber, 'Gender and Property: Elizabeth Cary and *The History of Edward II*', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 26, no. 2 (2000): 199–227, <https://doi.org/10.1163/23526963-90000221>.

<sup>37</sup> Meredith Skura, 'Elizabeth Cary and *Edward II*: What Do Women Want to Write?', *Renaissance Drama* 27 (1996): 79–104, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41917328>.

<sup>38</sup> Janet Starner-Wright and Susan M. Fitzmaurice, 'Shaping a Drama out of a History: Elizabeth Cary and the Story of *Edward II*', *Critical Survey* 14, no. 1 (2002): 79–92, <http://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?T=P&P=AN&K=6738911&S=R&D=aph&EbscoContent=dGJyMNLr40SeqLE4yOvsOLCmsEieprVSs6a4SLGWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGot1CzrrZLuePfgeyx44Dt6fIA>.

<sup>39</sup> Rachel M. Roberts, 'Political Sirens in Elizabeth Cary's *History of Edward II*', *Notes and Queries* 63, no. 1 (March 2016): 35–37, <https://doi.org/10.1093/notesj/gjv249>.

<sup>40</sup> Beilin, "'Some Freely Spake Their Minde': Resistance in Anne Dowriche's *French Historie*'.

<sup>41</sup> Micheline White, 'Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country: Anne Dowriche, Anne Lock Prowse, Anne Lock Moyle, Ursula Fulford, and Elizabeth Rous', *Modern Philology* 103, no. 2 (November 2005): 187–214, <https://doi.org/10.1086/506535>.

<sup>42</sup> Randall Martin, 'Anne Dowriche's "The French History", Christopher Marlowe, and Machiavellian Agency', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39, no. 1 (1999): 69–87, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1556306>.

<sup>43</sup> Megan Matchinske, 'Moral, Method, and History in Anne Dowriche's "The French Historie"', *English Literary Renaissance* 34, no. 2 (2004): 176–200, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24463672>.

Cary.<sup>44</sup> In a similar vein, Karen Britland suggests that Cary drew on Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* for her revisions in the second part of her *Edward II*.<sup>45</sup> The death of Elizabeth I as recounted by Southwell is analysed in the context of other surviving manuscript accounts (all written by men) by Catherine Loomis.<sup>46</sup> Yet, while some of these texts thus have been read alongside ones by male authors, they have not been studied together before. Doing so will generate a better understanding of how women engaged with historical topics, not merely as individual 'deviants' from the models set by male contemporaries, but as a group of authors themselves.

## Methodology

Each chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to one case study, presenting them in chronological order. For every case study the following questions will be examined:

- Which monarch(s) is/are depicted, in what manner, and why?
- How does the depiction of this/these specific monarch(s) relate to contemporary views on the monarchy and rulership?
- How does the depiction of this/these specific monarch(s) relate to contemporary views on history and historiography?
- How does this depiction differ from ones written by contemporary male authors?

To answer these questions, every one of the case studies will be approached in a similar manner. The chapter will start out with a biography of the author in question, using the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and the scholarly editions and anthology entries of the case studies as main sources. Particular attention will be paid to the author's social standing, i.e. how actively she was herself involved in court life, if and how she had any dealings with either her own monarch or the one(s) she wrote about, and any political, social, and/or religious opinions she expressed either in other written works or through her actions. This approach might suggest falling into the trap of the intentional fallacy. Indeed, to attempt and equate the texts' 'true' meaning to the authors' state in life is not the intent of this thesis. These texts, however, should also not be completely separated from the historical, social, and cultural context they were written in. The aim of this research

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<sup>44</sup> Virginia Brackett, 'Elizabeth Cary, Drayton, and Edward II', *Notes and Queries* 41, no. 4 (January 1994): 517–19, <https://doi-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/nq/41-4-517b>.

<sup>45</sup> Karen Britland, "'Kings Are but Men': Elizabeth Cary's Histories of Edward II", *Études Épistémè. Revue de Littérature et de Civilisation (XVIe – XVIIIe Siècles)*, no. 17 (1 April 2010), <https://doi.org/10.4000/episteme.660>.

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]', *English Literary Renaissance* 26, no. 3 (1996): 482–509, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43447531>.

is to place these texts in their wider contemporary literary traditions. An author's social background and relationship with their monarch will to some extent influence the way they think and write about history and monarchy, and thus the personal information available on these authors needs to be taken into consideration.

This socio-biographical context will then be used as a framework for a close reading of the case study in question. While the broader tone and themes of the text in general will naturally be studied, particular attention will be paid to any section where a monarch or ruler is mentioned or discussed. When available and relevant, any prefatory or paratextual material will also be taken into account. Dedications, prefaces, and addresses to the reader were oftentimes the places where authors explained their intent, method and/or the choices that they made regarding content and form. While they may not discuss a particular monarch, these prefatory materials can shed light on why and how a ruler was described.

Following New Historicist practice, the case study will also be read alongside contemporary texts on history, historiography, and monarchy. To understand a historical narrative in its context, you need to understand how people of that period thought about history and the past, and how this expressed itself in conventions for historiography. Furthermore, to depictions of specific monarchs in a historical narrative in its context, it is vital to understand how people of that period thought about the monarchy as an institution, especially in regard to the earlier mentioned changes in ideas on rulership. Reading these texts alongside the case study will thus help understand and contextualise the latter, and demonstrate how the author positioned herself in these debates.

Additionally, the case study will be compared to a number of historical narratives on the same topic. This is to see where the author in question differed from her, mostly male, contemporaries. Particularly when it comes to texts that were used as source material, this comparison will show where the author has added, changed, or opted to exclude certain information. These differences in the account of an event are extra valuable and telling, because they reveal how authors reinterpreted/recreated historical narratives to push a certain image of a monarch onto the audience.

As discussed above, to refer to the complete chosen body of works as 'histories' would be inaccurate, as no such stable category or genre existed at this time. Because these works have never been discussed together before, they have usually been referred to by their



genre: Dowriche's work is referred to as a "polemical verse history",<sup>47</sup> a "poetic account",<sup>48</sup> or simply a "poem";<sup>49</sup> Southwell's text is a "manuscript account",<sup>50</sup> or "eyewitness account";<sup>51</sup> and the text by Cary is named a "literary narrative",<sup>52</sup> "an unfinished play or biography",<sup>53</sup> and a "history".<sup>54,55</sup> Nevertheless, for the purpose of this thesis, these three works need to be unified under one name. While they vary greatly in length, style, and form, their one unifying characteristic is their subject. Throughout this thesis this selection of case studies will therefore be referred to as 'historical narratives', since they are all texts that narrate historical events and people. This also makes it easier to acknowledge and discuss the changes and developments in the way people thought about history and historiography mentioned above, without it affecting the common denominator of this body of works too much.

## Hypothesis

This thesis expects to find that the women's descriptions of the monarch(s) will be, to some degree, dependent on their social standing and social/religious/political opinions. Whether the author agrees or disagrees with the policies and opinions of a monarch may determine in what light they are presented. Texts on past and/or foreign monarchs might function as (in)explicit comparisons to their current monarchs, either highlighting where the two differ, both in a positive and negative sense, or showing in which they are the same. They might function as examples or warnings to the public, the ruling classes, and/or even the head of state themselves.

It is also expected that the women's depictions of the monarchs will differ in some ways from those written by their male contemporaries in texts on the same events. These differences may be partly attributable to social standing, political views, and religious beliefs. No one person will hold the exact same opinions on a ruler or the monarchy in general, even when brought up and living in similar circumstances. Gender may, however, also be a major

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<sup>47</sup> Kate Aughterson, 'Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 6 January 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7987>.

<sup>48</sup> White, 'Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country', 196.

<sup>49</sup> Matchinske, 'Moral, Method, and History in Anne Dowriche's "The French Historie"', 176.

<sup>50</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]'.

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell (Dudley), "A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth"', in *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Elizabeth Sauer, and Melissa Smith (New York: Routledge, 2004), 251–52.

<sup>52</sup> Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary [Née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639), Writer and Translator', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 29 May 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4835>.

<sup>53</sup> Krontiris, 'Style and Gender in Elizabeth Cary's Edward II', 137.

<sup>54</sup> Brackett, 'Elizabeth Cary, Drayton, and Edward II', 157.

<sup>55</sup> Britland, "'Kings Are but Men'".

determining factor in this. This is not because there is some kind of a universal female perspective. These women will differ among each other in views as much as male authors do. Rather, because they were pushed to the margins of power and history due to their womanhood, as mentioned before, these women might make attempts to reclaim history. They will write about it from their positions on the relative outside of the social power dynamic. This could, for example, be visible in the way they describe their female monarchs. While many of these women rulers will traditionally have been pushed to the margins of power in historiography, they may have received more agency from the female authors in consideration here.

### **Relevance & interdisciplinarity**

As discussed earlier in this introduction, the texts examined in this thesis are all underresearched to varying degrees. This is symptomatic for the wider issue at hand when it comes to early modern literature studies: compared to works by male authors, early modern women's works are still underrepresented in both research and education. The field of early modern women's studies has expanded significantly over the past decades, as shown by the growing amount of critical works and modern editions early modern women's writing as well as the incorporation of women's texts into 'canon' anthologies such as the Norton. There are, however still many works and authors that are in need of further investigation, and much more ground needs to be made up before the research on these women even approaches the same level as that of their male contemporaries. This research aims to help contribute to changing this, not just by looking at each text individually, but also by bringing them together.

Furthermore, the relatively small number of publications on these texts shows there is an even more specific lack of attention for women as writers of history. Even among all of the articles that have been published on these works, not every single one focuses on the fact that these are (re)tellings of history. They are studied as representations of their particular genres, rather than as historical narratives or even 'histories'. This is a missed opportunity, since, as argued earlier, women writers may present an innovative perspective on history due to their culturally marginalised position based on gender. By studying these works as early modern representatives of historiography, this thesis hopes to contribute to scholarship on this underresearched part of early modern women's writing.

While this thesis has started out from a literary studies viewpoint, it brings together many disciplines in its execution. Since it concerns historical narratives it requires a basic

knowledge of the historical contexts of these texts. This does not only concern the research into the events and figures depicted in these texts, but also the developments in early modern thinking surrounding historiography and monarchy. Furthermore, it engages with current debates in historical and literary studies about narrativization, as it concerns texts that put a certain framework around history to serve the author's purpose. It also brings in elements from gender research, since it requires a basic knowledge of writing and gender conventions of the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century. Last but not least, two of the main theoretical concepts underlying this study, cultural memory and national identity, come from the field of cultural and social studies.

## Chapter 1: Anne Dowriche's *The French Historie* (1589)

In this chapter *The French Historie* by Anne Dowriche will be examined. The chapter will start out with a biography of Dowriche, detailing her personal life as well as her literary career. This will be followed by a description of her text, providing publication details, a brief summary of the content, a closer look at the included prefatory materials, and information on the source material Dowriche used. Subsequently, the chapter will discuss and analyse the depictions of the monarchs in this text, particularly Henry II of France, Catherine de' Medici, Charles IX of France, and Elizabeth I, and linking these to the early modern concepts of monarchy and history. Lastly, a comparison will be made between Dowriche's work and a number of works by male authors on the same events, namely Thomas Tymme's *The French Commentaries*, François Hotman's *A true and plaine report*, and Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*.

### Biography

Anne Dowriche (née Edgcumbe, alternatively spelled Edgecombe) was born the daughter of Sir Richard Edgcumbe (d. 1562) and Elizabeth Tregian. The actual date of her birth is unknown, but her father's will of 1560 provided for her and her sister's education, suggesting she was still very young at that point of time. Her father is reputed to have been a learned man and poet, and the explicit provision for his daughters' education together with the nature of Dowriche's published work suggests she received a humanist and protestant education.<sup>56</sup> The Edgcumbes were a landed gentry family, residing at Mount Edgcumbe House in Devon, Cornwall.<sup>57</sup> While there is no information that suggests Dowriche herself spent any time at court, her brother, Pearce Edgcumbe, was an MP in six Elizabethan parliaments.<sup>58</sup> In 1580 she married Hugh Dowriche (b. 1552/1553), rector of Lapford (until 1587) and Honiton (from 1587 to 1598), in the neighbourhood of Exeter. They had at least six children: Elkana, Walter, Mary (1587), Elizabeth, Anne (1589), and Hugh (1594).<sup>59</sup>

Members of the Edgcumbe family engaged in Puritan activism and supported local nonconformist activities. Catherine, one of Pearse's children, and Dowriche's brother Richard patronised Puritan ministers, such as the notorious Melancthon Jewell, who was imprisoned

<sup>56</sup> Aughterson, 'Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian'.

<sup>57</sup> White, 'Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country', 193.

<sup>58</sup> Aughterson, 'Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian'.

<sup>59</sup> Aughterson. Since her daughter Anne is not mentioned in Dowriche's father-in-law's will of 1590 she may have died in childhood.

multiple times.<sup>60</sup> Dowriche and her husband both also supported Puritan beliefs, as is visible in the content of their published works and their contacts in Puritan circles. Hugh Dowriche's *The Jaylors Conversion* (1596), for example, is dedicated to Valentine Knightley, who supported the two puritan ministers Eusebius Paget and Edmund Snape, was chastised for supporting a Puritan exercise by the Queen herself, and was penalised for nonconformity.<sup>61</sup> This extended sermon was published in 1596 by John Windet in London. In it Dowriche's husband comments on what he perceived as a lack of progress in purifying the reformed Church of England, drawing on the spiritual conversion of Silas and Paul's jailor.<sup>62</sup> The original sermon was delivered in 1580,<sup>63</sup> but was relevant again in "the estate wherein we stand, which is, that we yet continue in our sinnes, That we despise the voice of the Gospel, & neede a more sharp preacher."<sup>64</sup> In the penultimate part of this sermon he calls on every Englishman to pray: "*Lord saue our Noble Queene Elizabeth from treason at home, and from forraine enemies abroade. Lord forgiue her her sinnes, and vs our wickednes, and graunt, if it be thy will, that she may yet long and long time in peace, and in saftie preserue this her Noble Realme of England. Amen.*"<sup>65</sup> Although it is not directly addressed to her, by explicitly calling on the Queen in his sermon its message still appears to be meant for her ears, or in this case eyes as well. This is a technique used by Dowriche herself too, as will be discussed in further detail below.

Dowriche herself contributed to the work with the 44-line commendatory poem 'Verses written by a Gentle-woman, vpon the Iaylors Conuersion'.<sup>66</sup> In this poem, she draws attention to the Calvinist message of the text.<sup>67</sup> Like her husband she underlines how "any calamitie, warres, plagues, sicknesse, or any other visitation"<sup>68</sup> is merely the Lord's

<sup>60</sup> White, 'Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country', 195.

<sup>61</sup> White, 194.

<sup>62</sup> 'Acts 16:25-40 - English Standard Version', Bible Gateway, accessed 30 March 2021, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2016%3A25-40&version=ESV>.

<sup>63</sup> White, 'Women Writers and Literary-Religious Circles in the Elizabethan West Country', 194.

<sup>64</sup> Hugh Dowriche, *The Iaylors Conuersion* (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1596), sig. E1v, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240942940/citation/7220A93022254C5FPQ/1>.

<sup>65</sup> Dowriche, 24.

<sup>66</sup> Anne Dowriche, 'Verses Written by a Gentle-Woman, upon The Jaylors Conversion.', in *The Iaylors Conuersion Wherein Is Liuely Represented, the True Image of a Soule Rightly Touched, and Conuerted by the Spirit of God. The Waightie Circumstances of Which Supernaturall Worke, for the Sweete Amplifications, and Fit Applications to the Present Time, Are Now Set Downe for the Comfort of the Strong, and Confirmation of the Weake. By Hugh Dowriche Batch. of Diuinitie.* (London: Printed by John Windet, 1596), <https://search-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2240942940/99847206/F8A87DAF4EA4E44PQ/1?accountid=11795>.

<sup>67</sup> Aughterson, 'Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian'.

<sup>68</sup> Dowriche, *The Iaylors Conuersion*, sig. D7v.

“meanes”<sup>69</sup> of leading back those who have strayed from the right religious path. The punishments are, in fact, “a certaine signe, / Of Gods eternall loue.”<sup>70</sup> Dowriche’s only other known literary work, the polemical verse *The French Historie*, will be discussed extensively below.

The exact date of Dowriche’s death is unknown. It is known, however, that she was still alive in 1613, so she will have died in or after this year.<sup>71</sup>

### ***The French Historie***

*The French Historie, That is; A lamentable Discourse of the three of the chiefe, and most famous bloodie broiles that haue happened in France for the Gospell of Iesus Christ.* was published in 1589. It was printed in London by Thomas Orwin for William Russell from Exeter and for Thomas Man in London. There were no further editions of this work. The polemical verse itself counts 2400 lines in alternating iambic heptameters and hexameters.<sup>72</sup> The main text is prefaced by a title page; a prose dedication to her brother Pearse Edgecombe, of Mount Edgecombe; a 24-line acrostic poem also addressed to her brother Pearse; and an address to the reader in prose followed by a 4-line poem also addressed to them. At the end of the volume, the main text is followed by the same emblem from the title page and a 14-line poem on truth.<sup>73</sup>

The 2400-line poem itself contains accounts of three major events from the French Wars of Religion, a period of war and societal unrest between Huguenots and Catholics in France, which lasted from 1562 to 1598. The three events in question are, respectively: an attack on a Protestant prayer meeting in St James Street in Paris in 1557; the 1559 trial and execution of Annas Burgeus, a counsellor in the Parisian Parliament who opposed the death sentence for crimes of heresy; and the murder of the Huguenot leader Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, and the following St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572. Rather than dry, factual accounts of the events, however, Dowriche has included several speeches by both major and minor figures involved. Furthermore, at the end of each episode, she has also added

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<sup>69</sup> Anne Dowriche, ‘Verses Written by a Gentle-Woman, upon The Jaylors Conversion.’, in *The Iaylors Conuersion* (London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1596), sig. A7r, <https://search-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2240942940/99847206/F8A87DAF4EA4E44PQ/1?accountid=11795>.

<sup>70</sup> Dowriche, sig. A6v.

<sup>71</sup> Aughterson, ‘Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian’.

<sup>72</sup> Aughterson.

<sup>73</sup> Anne Dowriche, *The French Historie, That Is; A Lamentable Discourse of the Three of the Chiefe, and Most Famous Bloodie Broiles That Haue Happened in France for the Gospell of Iesus Christ.* (London: By Thomas Orwin for William Russell, 1589), <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240906194/22301091/B08D0421194C4B74PQ/2?accountid=11795>.

descriptions of the accidents and unhappy fates that befell those who acted against the Huguenots, which she frames as Divine punishments for their actions. She even likens these “judgments” to ones experienced by biblical monarchs, so that “euerie proud persecutor may plainly see what punishment remaineth due vnto their wicked tyrannie.”<sup>74</sup> This entire sequence of events is framed by a fictional exchange between an Englishman and a Huguenot who has fled from France, in which the Englishman asks for the Frenchman to narrate what has happened in verse form. At the end of the text, this French narrator calls on Queen Elizabeth to give protection to the Protestants in England and to hunt “the Popish hearts of fained frends before it be too late”.<sup>75</sup>

The fact that the events, in their versified form, are presented by a French male narrator has been a point of discussion. Kim Walker describes how, by using this particular device, the Frenchman is credited with the versification of the narrative while “Dowriche’s poetic skill is given no equivalent representation; her authorship is silently and modestly effaced”.<sup>76</sup> This is a viewpoint Elaine V. Beilin seems to agree with, detailing that by relegating her role as poet and narrator to a male persona “mitigates [...] her presumption and completely disguises the knowledge and ability of a woman to write so public a narrative poem.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, Dowriche might be using a male narrator to deflect part of the criticism for writing history, a traditionally male genre. At the same time, as Randall Martin points out, the frame she uses is “safely conventional” and appears in numerous Elizabethan works.<sup>78</sup> The encounter between the fictional Englishman and French Huguenot help Dowriche to assimilate “French history into English providentialism”.<sup>79</sup>

The work’s title page, aside from including its publication details, contains the Bible phrase “All that will lieue godlie in Iesus Christ, shall suffer persecution. 1. Tim. 3.2.” and an emblem that reads “virescit vulnere veritas” (truth flourishes through a wound<sup>80</sup>). The Bible phrase quite clearly refers to the poem’s content: it shows Calvinists, who lived according to the ‘true religion’ in Puritan views, being persecuted because of their religious views. This quotation, however, also goes beyond the text, as it refers to Protestants and, in particular, Puritans in England as well. During the reign of the previous monarch, Mary I, protestants

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<sup>74</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r.

<sup>75</sup> Dowriche, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Walker, 1996, p. 53 in Martin, ‘Anne Dowriche’s “The French History”, Christopher Marlowe, and Machiavellian Agency’, 85.

<sup>77</sup> Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 103, <https://archive.org/details/redeemingevewome00beil/page/103/mode/1up>.

<sup>78</sup> Martin, ‘Anne Dowriche’s “The French History”, Christopher Marlowe, and Machiavellian Agency’, 74.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, 73.

<sup>80</sup> Matchinske, ‘Moral, Method, and History in Anne Dowriche’s “The French Historie”’, 177.

had been actively prosecuted and many had gone into exile on the continent. While under Elizabeth I Protestantism was once more the norm, Puritan communities did not enjoy the same freedoms and acceptance as Anglican ones did. The use of the phrase here might also refer to the regular conflicts between adherents to Puritanism and the Church of England's authorities and the government, as illustrated by the individuals penalised for nonconformity mentioned in the section above. The Latin motto emphasises truth, something done repeatedly throughout this publication. This is not merely done to highlight the truthfulness of the relation of events given here, but, as Megan Matchinske writes, also to illustrate "the importance of both spiritual and secular certainty in this poem".<sup>81</sup> The truth here refers once more to the 'true religion' Puritans envisioned, a faith that only grew stronger through the suffering described in this text.

In her prefatory dedication to her brother, Dowriche adopts a writing convention used regularly, especially, by early modern women writers:<sup>82</sup> she presents her work with (false) humility, explicitly naming its flaws in an attempt to defuse possible criticism. She states she dedicates the work to her brother because she feels that "the simplicitie of it required a Patron,"<sup>83</sup> and that while its content "is most excellent and well worth the reading,"<sup>84</sup> but the form and execution are "base & scarce worth the seeing."<sup>85</sup> Most of all, she asks her brother that, if he "finde anie thing that fits not [his] liking, remember I pray, that it is a womans doing."<sup>86</sup> In other words, she requests that any of the work's faults be attributed to her gender, a tactic adopted by early modern women authors to deflect at least some of the criticism for deciding to write and publish in the first place.

She follows up this humble dedication with her explanation for writing this poem in her epistle 'To the Reader.' Here she cites one of the Pauline precepts: "Let al things be done unto edifying,"<sup>87</sup> and, indeed, she explicitly states that her "onelie purpose in collecting & framing this worke, was to edifie, comfort and stirre vp the godlie mindes vnto care, watchfulnesse, zeale & feruentnesse in the cause of Gods truth."<sup>88</sup> Her goal is to inform and inspire an English Protestant audience through recounting the resistance of and hardship experienced by French Huguenots. In this epistle she also justifies her decision to present the

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<sup>81</sup> Matchinske, 177.

<sup>82</sup> Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137008015>.

<sup>83</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, sig. A2r.

<sup>84</sup> Dowriche, sig. A2r.

<sup>85</sup> Dowriche, sig. A2r.

<sup>86</sup> Dowriche, sig. A2v.

<sup>87</sup> Dowriche, sig. A3v.

<sup>88</sup> Dowriche, sig. A3v.



story the way she did. At certain points in the narrative she has a number of the historical figures involved make addresses in direct speech. She declares that both the persons making these speeches and matter spoken of are “liuely set downe”, so that these are not merely “examples of virtue and vice, but also the nature and qualities of those vertues or villanies are manifestly depainted to them that will seeke for it.”<sup>89</sup> In other words, these speeches are not only meant to simply reveal whether a character is virtuous or not, but also tell the reader why. Again, the purpose is not just to tell a story, but to present a narrative that the audience can take lessons from.

Dowriche additionally uses the epistle to underscore the veracity of the story she is presenting. Before the actual narrative has begun, Dowriche is already at pains to reassure her audience that “here is no more set downe, than there is signified”<sup>90</sup> in her source texts. The emphasis is very strongly on the truthfulness of the present account. In light of Dowriche’s religious convictions this is hardly surprising, since it fits Puritanism’s “adamant condemnations of the use of fictionality or feigning in any form, even for didactic, edifying, or devotional purposes.”<sup>91</sup> Yet, as Patrick Collinson notes, this was a practice more widely adopted than just in Puritan circles: “all histories published in the sixteenth century claimed to be true.”<sup>92</sup>

In the epistle, Dowriche also clarifies her choice to write in verse form, rather than prose, providing three reasons: for practice, to restore “some credit” to the genre of poetry, and she hopes that the novelty and form of it will speak to a broad(er) audience.<sup>93</sup> As Dowriche herself notes, the events she narrates had already been written down before and even translated into English in Thomas Tymme’s *French Commentaries* (1574). Yet, in her opinion, the speeches and circumstances were “but onely in substance lightly touched,” and she feels that she has remedied this to some extent in her version without writing down more “than there is signified.”<sup>94</sup> While her dedication to her brother was full of humility, towards the end of the address to the reader this seems to have been pushed to the background. Indeed, Dowriche herself thinks “assuredlie, that there is not in this forme anie thing extant which is more forceable to procure comfort to the afflicted, strength to the weake, courage to the faint

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<sup>89</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r.

<sup>90</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r.

<sup>91</sup> Hunter, ‘Protesting Fiction, Constructing History’, 301.

<sup>92</sup> Patrick Collinson, ‘Truth, Lies, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century Protestant Historiography’, in *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks, Woodrow Wilson Center Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 43, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511721052>.

<sup>93</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, sig. A4r.

<sup>94</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r.

hearted, and patience vnto them that are persecuted, than this little worke.”<sup>95</sup> She believes her work to be effective, despite her “want of learned Skill”<sup>96</sup> and the fact that it is “a woman’s doing.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, she calls on other writers and learned people in England, to undertake similar works, and “consecrate their singular giftes to the glorie of God, the edifying of his Church, and the saluation of the soules of Gods chosen.”<sup>98</sup>

As its main source, Dowriche used the earlier mentioned *The three parts of commentaries containing the whole and perfect discourse of the civil wars of France* (1574) by Thomas Tymme, which was a translation of *Commentariorum de statu religionis et Reipublicae in Regno Galliae* (1571-1575) by Jean de Serres,<sup>99</sup> Calvinist pastor and theologian, and appointed ‘Historian of France’ by King Henry IV of France (the former Prince Henry of Navarre discussed below).<sup>100</sup> Other possible source material that has been mentioned are: *A true and plaine report of the Furious outrages of Fraunce* (1573) by François Hotman,<sup>101</sup> French jurist and one of the most learned humanist scholars, who converted to the Reformed Church in 1547 and himself fled France after the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre,<sup>102</sup> (this text was included as ‘The tenth Booke’ in de translation of de Serres);<sup>103</sup> the *Contre-Machiavel* (1577), Simon Patericke’s English translation of Innocent Gentillet’s *Discours, sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un Royaume* (1576);<sup>104</sup> and possible manuscript versions of political speeches.<sup>105</sup>

## Analysis

Throughout *The French Historie* Anne Dowriche refers to a number of monarchs.<sup>106</sup> A selection of these monarchs have actual speaking parts, while others are only mentioned in passing or addressed without appearing as active participants in the narrative itself. The

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<sup>95</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r.

<sup>96</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4v.

<sup>97</sup> Dowriche, sig. A2v.

<sup>98</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r-A4v.

<sup>99</sup> Aughterson, ‘Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian’.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Jean de Serres (1540-1598)’, Institut Olivier de Serres, accessed 5 May 2021, <http://www.olivier-de-serres.org/jean.php>.

<sup>101</sup> Martin, ‘Anne Dowriche’s “The French History”, Christopher Marlowe, and Machiavellian Agency’, 70.

<sup>102</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘François Hotman’, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 8 February 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francois-Hotman>.

<sup>103</sup> For this reason, any future references to the content of Hotman’s text will also refer to the content of ‘The tenth Booke’ from Tymme’s *The French Commentaries*, and vice versa.

<sup>104</sup> Martin, ‘Anne Dowriche’s “The French History”, Christopher Marlowe, and Machiavellian Agency’, 70.

<sup>105</sup> Aughterson, ‘Dowriche [Née Edgcumbe], Anne (d. in or after 1613), Poet and Historian’.

<sup>106</sup> In this part only the historical monarchs will be explicitly discussed. The biblical monarchs included in *The French Historie* will be referred to where relevant, but it goes beyond the scope of this thesis to consider these in-depth here too.

included monarchs, in order of first appearance, are: Henry II of France;<sup>107</sup> Catherine de' Medici (Queen consort and Dowager Queen of France);<sup>108</sup> Philip II of Spain;<sup>109</sup> Prince Henry of Navarre (later Henry III of Navarre and Henry IV of France);<sup>110</sup> Henri I de Bourbon, Prince of Condé;<sup>111</sup> Charles IX of France;<sup>112</sup> Margaret of Valois (Queen consort of Navarre and later France as well);<sup>113</sup> Jeanne III of Navarre;<sup>114</sup> Elizabeth I;<sup>115</sup> William I, Prince of Orange;<sup>116</sup> Mithridates;<sup>117</sup> Peter of Aragon;<sup>118</sup> and Philip of Macedon.<sup>119</sup> Of these thirteen, Henry II, Catherine de' Medici, Charles IX, and Elizabeth I require more detailed consideration. The first three of this group are the main characters of the narrative, who play an active role in the depicted events and have at least one monologue in direct speech. Elizabeth I has a much smaller role in the narrative, but the manner in which she has been included in the frame story suggests that the text is (inexplicitly) addressed to her, and therefore calls for closer study too. The other nine rulers will only be referred to when relevant for the analysis.

The most noticeable feature of Dowriche's overall depiction of the included monarchs is the strong contrast between Catholic and Protestant rulers. The main characters of the narrative, who are Catholics, are, to varying degrees, also the major villains. They are represented as being gullible, malignant, and deceitful. The Protestant figures, on the other hand, are introduced as a "rare and vertuous dame,"<sup>120</sup> (Jeanne III of Navarre) and some "Noble men"<sup>121</sup> (Prince Henry of Navarre and Henri I de Bourbon, Prince of Condé). This is, perhaps, unsurprising in a narrative about Protestant martyrs, but Dowriche has openly picked a side by portraying the events from this specific viewpoint. In fact, she even notes that it is only after Henry II converted to Catholicism that "all things since haue gone a cleane contrarie waie."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, 3r.

<sup>108</sup> Dowriche, 4r.

<sup>109</sup> Dowriche, 4v.

<sup>110</sup> Dowriche, 18v.

<sup>111</sup> Dowriche, 18v.

<sup>112</sup> Dowriche, 18v.

<sup>113</sup> Dowriche, 20r.

<sup>114</sup> Dowriche, 20v.

<sup>115</sup> Dowriche, 26r.

<sup>116</sup> Dowriche, 26r.

<sup>117</sup> Dowriche, 37r. Possibly Mithridates VI Eupator.

<sup>118</sup> Dowriche, 37r. Possibly Peter III of Aragon.

<sup>119</sup> Dowriche, 37r. No definitive identification of one out of five Philip of Macedons could be made.

<sup>120</sup> Dowriche, 20v.

<sup>121</sup> Dowriche, 18r.

<sup>122</sup> Dowriche, 6v.

*King Henry II of France*

Henry II appears in the two first parts of the story, as the reigning King during the St James Street uprising and the trial of Annas Burgues. He is first referred to in the frame story as the King during “whose vnhappie Reigne began this fearfull fierie flame.”<sup>123</sup> It is during his reign that the people of France begin to openly resist Protestantism and “seeke by force, by fire & sword to roote & raze it cleene.”<sup>124</sup> The King himself, at first, is not a conscious and willing participant in this, however. The true, prime architect of these events is Satan himself, who strives to deceive the King into acting against “Gods people.”<sup>125</sup>

To achieve his end, Satan starts a smear campaign against the Huguenots, creating false rumours concerning their religious practices<sup>126</sup> and, more importantly, claiming that they were conspiring to kill the King.<sup>127</sup> As a result of these rumours, a congregation at St James Street is attacked by civilians and imprisoned. They petition the King to disprove these rumours, but a number of people close to Henry II told him that “their writing al were lies.”<sup>128</sup> The Huguenots warn the King “to looke vnto himself, / Not to preferre before his God this wicked worldlie pelfe [...] And he that now hath lent to thee this happie Raigne, / Will for thy sinne most surelie turne thy pleasure into paine.”<sup>129</sup> Henry II, despite these words, signs the bill for the Huguenots’ trial, and they are sentenced, the text explicitly notes, by “the Kings desire”<sup>130</sup> to be burned at the stake. An unknowing pawn in Satan’s plots, he seems to have become heavily invested personally in seeing this group of Huguenots disposed of.

While Henry II’s role in the St James Street uprising and its aftermath was, initially, mostly due to him falling victim to Satan’s plotting, by the second part of the narrative he has already become a much more active agent against the Huguenots. In the first lines of the second part he is described as having formed a “league” with Philip II of Spain, “where both did giue their word / To roote and rase Gods sowen truth, by fagot, fire and sword.”<sup>131</sup> Satan returns and informs the King there are members of his Parliament who are too tolerant of, even favour, Protestants. Consequently, Henry II calls an assembly to address the matter, telling his Parliament he would “haue them all agree in matters touching faith,” including that

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<sup>123</sup> Dowriche, 3r.

<sup>124</sup> Dowriche, 3r.

<sup>125</sup> Dowriche, 9r.

<sup>126</sup> Dowriche, 5v.

<sup>127</sup> Dowriche, 4r.

<sup>128</sup> Dowriche, 6v.

<sup>129</sup> Dowriche, 6v.

<sup>130</sup> Dowriche, 7r.

<sup>131</sup> Dowriche, 9r.

“*Luthers* brood should all be put to death.”<sup>132</sup> Two counsellors, Egidius and Minardus, sent by Satan, come to the King and tell him the lie that there are members of his Parliament who would disregard his “Lawes and Edictes past”<sup>133</sup> concerning heretics (i.e. Protestants). Henry II, enraged, returns to the Parliament, where he declares that he only wishes for his nation to be united in one faith, and encourages his councillors to speak their minds.<sup>134</sup> When Annas Burgues declares, in a long-winded speech, to be against the death penalty for heresy, the King sees this as evidence that “This seede of *Luthers* sect [...] now begins to spring”<sup>135</sup> in his Parliament. He has Burgues arrested and, although he would have preferred to defer the matter to someone else,<sup>136</sup> judges were assigned to the case. Burgues was tried and condemned to the pyre, “for that the King had so decreed.”<sup>137</sup> In his final speech, Burgues calls out against

“That ruddie purpled *Phalaris* [...]

"Who for his cursed gaine hath set about the King,

"Such as wil Prince and Commons all to deadlie ruine bring.

[...]

"You racke & teare Gods knowen truth, not caring what befall.

"To please him, you doo yeeld the godlie to torment”<sup>138</sup>

While Burgues here indicates the King’s involvement, he still seems to attribute the turn of events to the outside forces of Satan.

Henry II would not live to see his sentence completed, however. In the final passage it is described how he suffers an eye and brain injury during a tournament. On his deathbed, in a moment of conscience, he laments the ill he has done “Against *Burgaeus* and the rest, whose blood I sought to spill.”<sup>139</sup> In this section a number of biblical figures is included, who all suffered deathly and terrible fates they were forewarned about by men of God.<sup>140</sup> The final one of these is King Zedekiah, who imprisoned Jeremy and “the word of God he did with fire burne.”<sup>141</sup> Zedekiah was eventually captured by the King of Babel, and “[Zedekiah’s] eies that would not see Gods truth and shining light, / *The King of Babel* put them out as they deserude

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<sup>132</sup> Dowriche, 9v.

<sup>133</sup> Dowriche, 10r.

<sup>134</sup> Dowriche, 10r.

<sup>135</sup> Dowriche, 12v.

<sup>136</sup> Dowriche, 12v.

<sup>137</sup> Dowriche, 13r.

<sup>138</sup> Dowriche, 15v.

<sup>139</sup> Dowriche, 17v.

<sup>140</sup> Dowriche, 17r–17v.

<sup>141</sup> Dowriche, 17r.

of right”,<sup>142</sup> which is a fate eerily similar to what befell Henry II. He is said to often have bragged “thos eies of his should see / *Bugaeus* burnt,” but by the time Burgues is executed, “*Mongomerie*<sup>143</sup> had those eies of his thrust cleane out of his head.”<sup>144</sup> His final fate is framed here as divine punishment, the logical consequence of the King’s prosecution of Protestants, and the reader is asked to take a moral lesson from it: “let vs warning take by this most fearfull fate, / For to returne and loath our sinne, before it be too late.”<sup>145</sup>

*Catherine de’ Medici, Queen Consort and Dowager Queen of France*

Catherine de’ Medici, from the start, is presented as someone who willingly and intentionally gets involved in the prosecution of Huguenots in France, unlike, as shown above, her husband, Henry II. She is introduced as “The Mother Queene” who “cheefe dooth promise to begin, / By treason ioynd with flatterie to trap them in her ginne.”<sup>146</sup> During the first two parts of the story, when she is Queen Consort to Henry II, she does not make another appearance. Once she does return, in the part on the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, however, she immediately takes on a prominent role in the events. Satan, in his next plot to stop the rise of Protestantism, explicitly tells her to “also play her part,”<sup>147</sup> in luring Admiral Gaspard de Coligny and his men into a false sense of security. When her son Charles IX visits the Admiral after the first attempt on the latter’s life, “They went likewise that sought the Admirall to kill, / [...], no dout for great good will”, and de’ Medici “with al her mates” is among them.<sup>148</sup>

With “the Prologue” of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre now ended, the Dowager Queen steps forward, determined “to vse no more delaie” in the execution of their plans.<sup>149</sup> She takes aside the King and some of their trusted courtiers, declares “The great desire she had to quit them all from care,” and she has been “planting long a bloodie plot.”<sup>150</sup> This plot to kill the Admiral and his companions is then outlined by her in a 56-line speech, and, with only one adjustment, accepted by everyone and executed by the Duke of Guise and his men. During the Massacre she is called upon twice. First, by the Admiral, when he recalls the

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<sup>142</sup> Dowriche, 17v.

<sup>143</sup> Captain Montgomery, who was the King’s opponent in the tournament.

<sup>144</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, 18r.

<sup>145</sup> Dowriche, 18r.

<sup>146</sup> Dowriche, 4r.

<sup>147</sup> Dowriche, 19r.

<sup>148</sup> Dowriche, 22r.

<sup>149</sup> Dowriche, 23r.

<sup>150</sup> Dowriche, 23v.

promises made to him by the King, his mother, and their court, moments before he is killed.<sup>151</sup> The second time by a Mounsieur de Pilles, a member of the retinue of either/both the Prince of Condé or the King of Navarre, when he calls out to Charles XI “Is this the trust that is in mother, sonne, and kinn?”<sup>152</sup> in a speech he makes before he too is put to death.

Catherine de’ Medici is notably absent from the last section of the third part. While the final segment of every episode in the narrative is devoted to describing the divine punishment that befell the main figures who acted against the Huguenots, that of part three focuses on Charles IX alone. Given that de’ Medici is presented as one of Satan’s trusted agents, and, indeed, as the one who proposed the plan for the Massacre, it would be expected to find her final, unhappy fate here as well. The fact that it is not, sets de’ Medici, a woman, apart from the other two ‘villains’ here, who are both men. Even more, while Charles IX is definitely deserving of his fate, Henry II is in many ways a less willing and active participant and thus less guilty than de’ Medici is. This apparent discrepancy may have had to do with early modern views of woman as “the weaker vessel; weaker than man, that is.”<sup>153</sup> Because she was the weaker vessel, especially morally, man, as the stronger vessel, was supposed to protect and guide her. As a result of this binary opposition between man and woman, it could, as Antonia Fraser argues, also be said “that for man [...] to sin was a good deal worse than for woman.”<sup>154</sup> De’ Medici, as a woman, might thus be seen as less guilty than Henry and Charles, who were supposed to have led her away from sin, rather than join her. An additional, practical explanation for this could be that de’ Medici was still alive when Dowriche wrote her text. Catherine de’ Medici died on 5 January 1589 of a lung infection.<sup>155</sup> *The French Historie* was registered on 16 June of the same year,<sup>156</sup> and Dowriche’s dedication to her brother and epistle to the reader are dated 25 July,<sup>157</sup> but the actual narrative may have been written earlier than this. Even if it was written after de’ Medici died, Dowriche may not have had any information on the circumstances of her death, since it was not included in her source text. Additionally, de’ Medici died in a much less violent manner than her

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<sup>151</sup> Dowriche, 25v–26r.

<sup>152</sup> Dowriche, 31r.

<sup>153</sup> Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman’s Lot in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 1.

<sup>154</sup> Fraser, 1.

<sup>155</sup> N. M. Sutherland, ‘Catherine de’ Medici’, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9 April 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Catherine-de-Medici>.

<sup>156</sup> ‘Entry: SRO2910’, Stationers’ Register Online, accessed 19 May 2021, <https://stationersregister.online/entry/SRO2910>.

<sup>157</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, sig. A2v, A4v.

husband and son and almost 17 years after the Massacre took place, perhaps making it more difficult for Dowriche to frame it as divine punishment.

In this character the influences of one particular political philosopher are visible: Niccolò Machiavelli. The main message of his influential work *Il Principe* (*The Prince*), which is in essence an instruction manual for new/aspiring rulers, is that to attain one's greater ends, such as glory, the use of immoral means was justified. That Machiavelli's work was still relevant and discussed at this time, is evident by the publications responding to him published in this period, such as Simon Patericke's 1577 translation of Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel*, which Dowriche possibly used as a source. Indeed, in a marginal note Dowriche observes that "The queen mother was a good scholer of that diuel of Florence, Machivel, of whom she learned manie bad lessons."<sup>158</sup> She proceeds to list five lessons in total, which correspond to maxim 12 of the *Contre-Machiavel*.<sup>159</sup> The wounded Admiral speaks to the King of a "strange *Italian* weede,"<sup>160</sup> undermining the nation from within, referring to Machiavellianism. By attributing these Machiavellian characteristics to one of her main 'villains', she implicitly condemns the Machiavellian kind of rulership.

What is particularly striking about this Machiavellian dimension, however, is not the fact that Dowriche included it, but rather who she attributed it to. While de' Medici role in *The French Historie* embodies the main principle outlined in *The Prince*—the greater end, religious unity, achieved through immoral means, deception and bloodshed—Machiavelli and other political theorists like him epitomise, as Martin writes, the "traditional denigration of women's capacities for public leadership."<sup>161</sup> Throughout his *Prince* Machiavelli uses "effeminate" to refer to what he considers weak rulers/rulership, and, as Hanna Fenichel Pitkin notes, while "effeminate" does not necessarily equate to "feminine", what he considers effeminacy is what he regards to be the characteristics of women: "dumb, fearful, weak,

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<sup>158</sup> Anne Dowriche, *The French Historie, That Is; a Lamentable Discourse of Three of the Chiefe, and Most Famous Bloodie Broiles That Haue Happened in France for the Gospell of Iesus Christ. Namelie; 1 The Outrage Called the Winning of S. Iames His Streete, 1557. 2 The Constant Martirdome of Anna Burgæus One of the K. Councell, 1559. 3 The Bloodie Marriage of Margaret Sister to Charles the 9. Anno 1572. Published by A.D.* (London: By Thomas Orwin for Thomas Man, 1589), 23v, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240884381/citation/A403DDB1AF484D6DPQ/6>.

<sup>159</sup> Innocent Gentillet, *A Discourse Vpon the Meanes of Vvel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome, or Other Principalitie Divided into Three Parts, Namely, the Counsell, the Religion, and the Policie, Vvhich a Prince Ought to Hold and Follow. Against Nicholas Machiavell the Florentine. Translated into English by Simon Patericke.*, trans. Simon Patericke (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1602), 222–27, <https://search-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2240860401/3954BA9A1414446EPQ/1?accountid=11795>.

<sup>160</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, 22v.

<sup>161</sup> Martin, 'Anne Dowriche's "The French History", Christopher Marlowe, and Machiavellian Agency', 71.



indecisive, and dependant.”<sup>162</sup> Charles IX can in fact be considered a weak ruler according to Machiavelli’s standards, since he partly allowed “himself to be managed by his Mother”:<sup>163</sup> it was after all de’ Medici who proposed the original plan for the murder of the Admiral and his companions. While Dowriche is thus showing the epitome of a Machiavellian ruler, she simultaneously subverts the tradition by attributing this role to a woman.

### *King Charles IX of France*

Charles IX is only present for the final of the three parts of the narrative. In this part, however, he is immediately given a major role in the prosecution of the Huguenots. Satan outlines the things he must undertake to win the Admiral’s trust:

“By louing letters, words, and cheere at first to bring them in.  
 "And looke what they mislike, the King must rase it out,  
 "And yeeld to all things they request, to put them out of doubt.  
 "The King must shew such face to them aboue the rest,  
 "As though he did vnfeinedlie of all men loue them best.  
 "The worst of all their band the King must intertaine  
 "With such good will, that no mistrust in anie maie remaine.”<sup>164</sup>

This is exactly what Charles IX does. He writes to the Admiral showing only good intentions and eventually invites him to Paris.<sup>165</sup> While his predecessor Henry II was influenced by others who were agents of Satan, this King is himself in league with the devil. Soon he speaks of catching them all “within *his* snare,” (emphasis added) and he acts with the intention “the godlie to delude.”<sup>166</sup>

On hearing about the first attempt on the Admiral’s life, the King “fiercelie threw awaie / His racket in a rage, as though it grieude his heart, / That thus the Admirall was hurt.”<sup>167</sup> Charles IX hastens to the Admiral’s side, and listens to all his qualms, making several promises of his own. He even goes as far as having one of his own guards assigned to the Admiral’s house, and making sure he has his trusted friends about him. This guard, a cousin of the Duke of Anjou, however, is one “that did the Admirall in heart most deadlie

<sup>162</sup> Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 110, <http://archive.org/details/fortuneiswomange0000pitk>.

<sup>163</sup> Machiavelli, *The Works of the Famous Nicholas Machiavel, Citizen and Secretary of Florence.*, 225.

<sup>164</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, 18v–19r.

<sup>165</sup> Dowriche, 20v.

<sup>166</sup> Dowriche, 20r.

<sup>167</sup> Dowriche, 21v.

hate.”<sup>168</sup> As for the presence of the Admiral’s friends, this “came of no good will; / But hoping rather all by this the easier for to kill.”<sup>169</sup> Charles IX’s show of friendship and hospitality is so convincing that even when his killers are knocking at the door, the Admiral initially still believes the King’s promises.<sup>170</sup>

Charles IX’s actual plan is related in gruesome detail by those who will execute it:

“And being here they are not like to see their homes againe.

"Their chambers prisons are, their beds shall be their graue:

[...]

[...], make sharpe the fatall knife;

"For of these Rebels ere the day not one shall scape with life.

"Their leader and their guide lies wounded in his bed,

"And therefore as the chiefest foe, we'll first haue off his head.

"And when we haue dispatcht the Rebels we haue heere,

"We'll likewise ransack all the Land of like that shall appeere.”<sup>171</sup>

Throughout the murders that follow, those that commit them continuously repeat that this is the King’s will.<sup>172</sup> This does not stop at the Admiral and his company. When this is accomplished he sends out letters urging all cities in France to kill all known Protestants.<sup>173</sup>

The last section of this episode shows that, like his father Henry II, Charles IX does not escape “from Gods reuenging hand”<sup>174</sup> either. He eventually dies a gruesome death, bleeding from the ears, mouth, nose, and any other place “wher blood might issue out.”<sup>175</sup> His divine punishment comes “By bloodie death, [which] repaies the blood he shed within his land.”<sup>176</sup>

While Charles IX and Henry II are both shown receiving their just dessert, there is a vital difference between the role father and son played in the depicted events. Throughout the narrative the reader sees corruption, and therefore the blame, gradually move closer to the throne. While it is all masterminded by Satan, his agents have a closer proximity to the court every time. During the events of St James Street, the wheels are set in motion by “the

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<sup>168</sup> Dowriche, 23r.

<sup>169</sup> Dowriche, 23r.

<sup>170</sup> Dowriche, 25v.

<sup>171</sup> Dowriche, 25r.

<sup>172</sup> Dowriche, 25v, 28r, 29r, 30r, 34v.

<sup>173</sup> Dowriche, 31v–32r.

<sup>174</sup> Dowriche, 36v.

<sup>175</sup> Dowriche, 36v.

<sup>176</sup> Dowriche, 36v.

common sort”<sup>177</sup> attacking the Huguenot congregation, and they are sentenced due to the false statements of corrupted judges. The execution of Annas Burgues is brought about by the lies of the two councillors Egidius and Minardus. The corruption has now reached government circles, whereas before it only had a grip on civilians and the legal system. In both these cases Henry II is led to condemning Protestants to die, but he is not the main culprit. Once the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre takes place, however, it is the King, Queen Dowager, and their inner circle themselves who cooperate with Satan. Corruption and blame can now be placed at the very centre of power. As Megan Matchinske argues, “blame possesses an inexorable trajectory in *The French Historie* that ends in royal condemnation. Where Satan actively beguiles a naïve Henrie II in the opening recitation of *The French Historie*, by the time of the Massacre, sin belongs to the King alone.”<sup>178</sup>

### *Queen Elizabeth I*

Elizabeth I does herself not play a vital role in the events from the French Wars of Religion depicted in the text. In fact, she is only mentioned there once, as a witness to the promises made by the French court to the Admiral.<sup>179</sup>

She is, however, a central figure in the frame story. Once the French narrator has finished his retelling of the events, he directly addresses the Queen as the “chiefe Pastor of thy sheepe”.<sup>180</sup> He wishes long life and good health to her, and “that she maie finde out, and hunt with perfect hate / The Popish hearts of fained frends before it be too late.”<sup>181</sup> By speaking to the Queen so explicitly in the final part, it almost seems like a dedication of the work to her. This text is meant to be read by her, and as a result so are its lessons. The narrative is thus not merely a warning to the audience, but to Queen Elizabeth I herself as well. It is not necessarily a commentary on what she is doing now, but rather an exhortation to what she *should* be doing.

The line “chiefe Pastor of thy sheepe”<sup>182</sup> suggests an additional idea of rulership: the monarch as a shepherd/shepherdess. The idea of all Christians as a “flock”, with “Christ as the ‘Chief Shepherd’”, is one that has been in issue since at least the fourteenth century.<sup>183</sup> It is

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<sup>177</sup> Dowriche, 4v.

<sup>178</sup> Matchinske, ‘Moral, Method, and History in Anne Dowriche’s “The French Historie”’, 186.

<sup>179</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, 26r.

<sup>180</sup> Dowriche, 37v.

<sup>181</sup> Dowriche, 37v.

<sup>182</sup> Dowriche, 37v.

<sup>183</sup> ‘Flock, n.1’, in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, December 2020), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/71776>.

also used on a smaller scale, such as in *A Remonstrance* (1590) by the Puritan writer John Udall: “The Minister is a Shepherd and his charge a flocke”.<sup>184</sup> Part of the establishment of the Church of England involved the monarch becoming not just the head of state, but of the church as well. This made Elizabeth I quite literally the “chief Pastor” of the Anglican church, in other words, the main shepherdess of the British flock. She was, as Alan G. R. Smith writes, now responsible “not only for the welfare of [her] subjects’ bodies, as [monarchs] had always been, but also for the theoretically even more important welfare of their souls.”<sup>185</sup> While the royal headship of the Church, introduced in the 1530s, initially brought new prestige and power to the Crown, it was also largely responsible for the religious difficulties in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was a headship “regarded by many religious dissidents as particularly shocking during the reign of Elizabeth when [...] it was held by a woman.”<sup>186</sup>

This discomfort, or, in some cases outright displeasure and disapproval, was strengthened by having a woman on the throne in the first place. One of the most vocal and memorable voices of this viewpoint was the Scottish minister and theologian John Knox. In his 1558 *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* he argues that being ruled by a woman “is repugnāt to nature, cōtumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reueled will and approued ordināce, and finallie it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and iustice.”<sup>187</sup> Because the monarch holds the power “to teache, to iudge or to reigne aboue man,”<sup>188</sup> Knox likens the throne to “the seate of God”.<sup>189</sup> To have a woman, ‘the weaker vessel’, naturally inferior to man and a descendant of Eve, the original sinner responsible for the fall of mankind, occupy the royal seat, “which [God] by his worde hath appointed to man”<sup>190</sup> makes of her “a monster.”<sup>191</sup> Although Knox directed *The First*

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<sup>184</sup> John Udall, *A Remonstrance: Or Plaine Detection of Some of the Faults and Hideous Sores of Such Sillie Syllogismes and Impertinent Allegations, as out of Sundrie Factious Pamphlets and Rhapsodies, Are Cobled vp Together in a Booke, Entitled, A Demonstration of Discipline: Wherein Also, The True State of the Controuersie of Most of the Points in Variance, Is (by the Way) Declared.* (London: Imprinted by George Bishop and Rafe Newberie, 1590), 62,

<http://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240850215/citation/6C47F69FBFE240C2PQ/1>.

<sup>185</sup> Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England 1529-1660*, 88.

<sup>186</sup> Smith, 88.

<sup>187</sup> John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (Geneva: J. Poullain and A. Rebul, 1558), 9r,

<http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240899496/citation/312A337AA974BD4PQ/1>.

<sup>188</sup> Knox, 17r.

<sup>189</sup> Knox, 17r.

<sup>190</sup> Knox, 33v.

<sup>191</sup> Knox, 17r.

*Blast* at “that cruell monstre”<sup>192</sup> Mary I, “Cursed Iesabel of Englād,”<sup>193</sup> the fact that he still chose to publish it during the reign of Elizabeth I (as well as Mary, Queen of Scots) strongly suggests he had not altered his views on women’s right to rule. Although *The French historie* does not explicitly engage with Knox’s text, by calling for Elizabeth I to make certain actions in her position as Queen and head of the Church Dowriche implicitly opposes *The First Blast*’s claims.

The final address of *The French Historie* raises another point of interest about the text’s intention. While in the final part the narrator asks the Protestant Elizabeth I to prosecute the Catholics in her nation, Dowriche uses obvious condemning language when the same thing is done to the Huguenots by French Catholics. What this shows is that it is, in essence, not about a monarch’s principles of behaviour, but about them acting in the name of the right religion, in this case Protestantism. This idea of there only being one ‘right’ option was one that not only prevailed for monarchs, but for their entire nations as well. As Herbert Graves notes, in the Renaissance there was a persistent view that “state unity was impossible without religious unity, and that conformity must therefore be enforced, not only in the area of civic responsibility but also in the domain of religious convictions.”<sup>194</sup> This enforcing of religious unity is something that Henry II also refers to when he assembles his Parliament in the second part: “Yet one thing there remaines to perfect this my State; / That in Religion one consent might banish all debate.”<sup>195</sup> The persecution of the Huguenots depicted in this narrative can be seen as a very bloody and violent fulfilment of this wish. However, because they are acting out of Catholic interests, Henry II’s and Charles IX’s actions are condemned, while similar behaviour is encouraged in Elizabeth I.

### Comparison to male authors

The French Wars of Religion were a subject written on by numerous early modern authors across different nationalities. Three of these texts are Dowriche’s (possible) sources Thomas Tymme’s translation *The French Commentaries* (1574) and François Hotman’s *A true and plaine report* (1573), and Christopher Marlowe’s play *The Massacre at Paris* (1594).<sup>196</sup> That this part of French history was a subject of a number of written works, however, does not

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<sup>192</sup> Knox, 48r.

<sup>193</sup> Knox, 55r–55v.

<sup>194</sup> Graves, *Writing the Early Modern English Nation: The Transformation of National Identity in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, 83.

<sup>195</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, 10r.

<sup>196</sup> Given its publication date, it is a real possibility that Marlowe’s play was in its turn influenced by Dowriche’s work.

mean the content and style of these works were all similar too. Of course the most obvious of these is the different forms the authors in consideration here have adopted, but there are a few other features of interest.

Despite Dowriche's reassurances that she did not expand on *The French Commentaries* by adding any topics or events that were not already suggested in it, she does deviate from Tymme's text in a few ways. The most apparent of these, and the one she admits to in her epistle, is that she has further developed the speeches which were by Tymme "but onely in substance lightly touched."<sup>197</sup> Dowriche uses these speeches to flesh out her characters, and thereby not only show the division between "vertue and vice"<sup>198</sup> but also what it is that makes characters villainous or virtuous. While Tymme may have included these speeches, he did add transcriptions of letters, declarations, etc., reputedly written by Charles, Henry, and other parties involved,<sup>199</sup> as did Hotman.<sup>200</sup> Particularly when it comes to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, these show the immorality of Charles and his accomplices in a similar, though perhaps less pronounced, way as Dowriche's speeches do.

Dowriche is also particular in the events she has chosen and the order in which she depicts them. While the uprising of St James Street and the execution of Annas Burgues do take place one after another in the first part of Tymme, the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre appears at the very end of his *Commentaries*, making up the 'tenth Booke'. Furthermore, Dowriche ends the section on Annas Burgues with the death of Henry II, after she has already described Burgues's trial and execution. Historically, Henry II had already died before Burgues received his final sentence, and this is the way Tymme presents it. Of course Dowriche acknowledges this fact in her work, but she does still make the conscious decision to deviate from the chronological order of her source text. This is likely to better drive home her moral lesson: in her text Henry II's divine punishment is only described after the completion of the event he is being punished for.

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<sup>197</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, sig. A4r.

<sup>198</sup> Dowriche, sig. A4r.

<sup>199</sup> Jean de Serres, 'The Booke of Commentaries Concerning Religion, Vnder the Reignes of Henrie the Seconde, Fraunces the Seconde, and Charles the Ninth.', in *The Three Partes of Commentaries, Containing the Whole and Perfect Discourse of the Ciuill Warres of Fraunce, Vnder the Raignes of Henry the Second, Frances the Second, and of Charles the Ninth. With an Addition of the Cruell Murther of the Admirall Chastilion, and Diuers Other Nobles, Committed the 24 Daye of August. Anno. 1572.*, trans. Thomas Tymme (London: By Frances Coldocke, 1574), 9–10, 10–11, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240948879/citation/5BF8F38E9EC6419CPQ/2>.

<sup>200</sup> François Hotman, *A True and Plaine Report of the Furious Outrages of Fraunce & the Horrible and Shameful Slaughter of Chastillon the Admirall, and Diuers Other Noble and Excellent Men, and of the Wicked and Straunge Murder of Godlie Persons, Committed in Many Cities of Fraunce, without Any Respect of Sorte, Kinde, Age, or Degree.* (London: Printed by Henry Bynneman, 1573), LXXXIX–CXLIII, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240876542/citation/F1AF24FE95714947PQ/8>.

This also touches upon the third point where Dowriche has chosen to deviate from Tymme: she has “diligentlie collected the great plagues and iust iudgements of God shewed against the persecutors” so as to place “more terror vnto the wicked.”<sup>201</sup> She frames the deaths that befall Henry II and Charles IX as consequences of their actions, placing particular symbolism on the manners of their death. Even more, she compares their fates to those of biblical monarchs, such as Ahab<sup>202</sup> and Triphon,<sup>203</sup> echoing divine justice as it is meted out in scripture. While this might be interpreted as Dowriche merely wanting to teach a moral lesson to the audience, and this was certainly part of it, the concept of divine punishment will have been part of her actual religious convictions. To her Protestantism *was* God’s truth, and it is therefore only reasonable to believe that the Lord would bestow justice on those who prosecuted his followers. While Tymme does name Ezechias and Iosias,<sup>204</sup> these are only two biblical figures, as opposed to the plethora Dowriche presents. Tymme, as well as Hotman, do also mention the kings Mithridates, Peter of Aragon<sup>205</sup> and Philip of Macedon,<sup>206</sup> and provide even more other examples of historical rulers.<sup>207</sup> This seems to fit Tymme’s stronger focus on the political consequence, such as the Pope’s growing influence,<sup>208</sup> rather than the demise of the Protestant religion, which is Dowriche’s main focus.

Another significant difference, particularly when compared to Marlowe, is the way Dowriche represents one of her female protagonists: Catherine de’ Medici. Compared to her male contemporaries, Dowriche’s Queen Mother holds more agency, specifically in the St Bartholomew’s Day plot. Marlowe portrays de’ Medici mostly as the Duke of Guise’s lover, who provides him access to power and funds,<sup>209</sup> and makes Guise the architect of the St

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<sup>201</sup> Dowriche, *The French Historie*, sig. A4r.

<sup>202</sup> Dowriche, 17r. He is warned against going to war by a prophet from the Lord, but he imprisons the prophet and dies in the war.

<sup>203</sup> Dowriche, 35v. An usurper king, who tricked Jonathan into assisting him through false promises, and captured and killed him through treachery when he became too successful. Simon, Jonathan’s brother, then joins forces with Tryphon’s enemies, and he is eventually driven to suicide. .

<sup>204</sup> Serres, ‘The Booke of Commentaries Concerning Religion, Vnder the Reignes of Henrie the Seconde, Fraunces the Seconde, and Charles the Ninth.’, 10.

<sup>205</sup> Jean de Serres, ‘The Tenth Booke Treating of the Furious Outrages of Fraunce, Vvith the Slaughter of the Admirall, and Diuers Other Noble and Excellent Men, Committed the. 24. August. ANNO. 1572.’, in *The Three Partes of Commentaries, Containing the Whole and Perfect Discourse of the Ciuill Warres of Fraunce, Vnder the Raignes of Henry the Second, Frances the Second, and of Charles the Ninth. With an Addition of the Cruell Murther of the Admirall Chastilion, and Diuers Other Nobles, Committed the 24 Daye of August. Anno. 1572.*, trans. Thomas Tymme (London: By Frances Coldocke, 1574), 17v, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240948879/citation/5BF8F38E9EC6419CPQ/2>.

<sup>206</sup> Serres, 18r.

<sup>207</sup> Serres, 17v–18r.

<sup>208</sup> Serres, ‘The Booke of Commentaries Concerning Religion, Vnder the Reignes of Henrie the Seconde, Fraunces the Seconde, and Charles the Ninth.’, 15.

<sup>209</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris with the Death of the Duke of Guise. As It Was Plaide by the Right Honourable the Lord High Admirall His Seruants*. (London: Printed by E. A. for Edward White, 1594),

Bartholomew's Day Massacre instead.<sup>210</sup> Rather than given a woman Machiavellian characteristics, he upholds Machiavelli's traditional gender divide. Tymme and Hotman show a somewhat more complicated depiction of de' Medici. They portray a Queen Mother equally, or perhaps even more, morally corrupted as Dowriche: she is partly held responsible for the debauchery, immorality and frivolity of the French court, by bringing Italians to Paris and into the administration;<sup>211</sup> and she is shown to "feede hir eyes" upon the mutilated, hanged body of the Admiral, together with her sons.<sup>212</sup> Their de' Medici, and her inner circle, is also claimed to be the ringleader in the Massacre.<sup>213</sup> By, however, not having her make a speech explaining her plot like Dowriche does, on the one hand, and by including letters by Charles directing the Massacre, on the other, emphasis on her actions is shifted from her in favour of her son. While Tymme and Hotman thus do give de' Medici more agency than Marlowe does, it is not to the same extent as in Dowriche's text.

## Conclusion

Anne Dowriche's *The French Historie* shows a clear divide between its depicted rulers: those who are Protestant are virtuous and noble, while those who are Catholic are violent and susceptible for Satan's influences. Throughout the three depicted events she shows the growing corruption of the French court, until it reaches the monarch and his inner circle himself. Yet, it is not necessarily the actions of Henry II, Charles IX, and Catherine de' Medici that she condemns, but rather that they are directed at the Huguenots. After all, Dowriche encourages similar behaviour in Elizabeth I against the Catholics in her own nation. In this Dowriche's own Puritan sentiments are clearly visible: she denounces Catholicism and calls for an even stricter endorsing of Protestant religious unity.

Dowriche's polemical verse is remarkable in a few ways, especially when compared to works by male writers and contemporary views on rulership. While she assures she does not deviate significantly from her sources, the speeches she has added, her slight reordering of events, and the suggestions of divine judgement she has included, give her work a stronger moral undertone and, once again, bring her own religious convictions to the forefront. Most significant are, however, her depictions of the two main female characters. Unlike

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sig. A5v, <https://search-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2240863155/2739D6215BD24F60PQ/1?accountid=11795>.

<sup>210</sup> Marlowe, sig. A7v-A8r.

<sup>211</sup> Hotman, *A True and Plaine Report of the Furious Outrages of Fraunce*, XXXVIII–XXXIX.

<sup>212</sup> Hotman, LXXVII.

<sup>213</sup> Hotman, XLIX.



contemporaries such as John Knox, Dowriche seems to take no issue with her monarch and head of church being a woman. She calls on Elizabeth I for action as the religious leader of her country, regardless of her gender. As for de' Medici, while she is one of the main villains of Dowriche's narrative, she does receive more agency in *The French Historie* than she does in texts by male authors. While making her actively involved the events is, on the one hand, more damning to de' Medici, it also depicts as a strong woman and capable ruler in her own right. Dowriche even attributes traditional Machiavellian characteristics to her, breaking with the clear gender divide of Machiavelli's work. While Dowriche was, as her prefatory material shows, very much aware of the limitations placed on herself because she was a woman, her approach to gender in the depictions of her female monarchs shows no such restrictions and can be considered innovative.

## **Chapter 2: Elizabeth Southwell's *A True Relation of what succeeded at the sickness and death of Queen Elizabeth (1607)***

This chapter will consider *A True Relation of what succeeded at the sickness and death of Queen Elizabeth* by Elizabeth Southwell. The chapter will start out with a biography of Southwell, examining her private life and life at court. Subsequently, a description of the case study will be given, detailing the circumstances of its production, a description of its content, and a discussion of its literary legacy. This will be followed by an analysis of the depiction of Elizabeth I in this text, linking it to the early modern concepts of monarchy and history. Finally, Southwell's account will be compared to narratives of the Queen's illness and death written by Robert Parsons, William Camden, John Chamberlain, Godfrey Goodman, Robert Carey, and anonymous manuscript often attributed to Robert Cecil's secretary.

### **Biography**

Elizabeth Southwell (married name Dudley) was baptised in 1584,<sup>214</sup> the daughter of Sir Robert Southwell (1563-1598), of Woodrising, Norfolk, and Elizabeth Howard. Southwell was born into a powerful family, which had close ties to the court and multiple monarchs. Her father had been raised in William Cecil's household as a ward of the court, and he distinguished himself in naval service to England before his death. Her mother was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth, and, after the latter's death, became a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Anne. In October 1604, she even married James Stewart, later Earl of Carrick, one of James I's favourites. Southwell's grandparents were Lord Admiral Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham (1536-1624), and Katherine Carey (1545x50-1603), Countess of Nottingham, cousin of and close friend to the Queen. Her grandfather maintained his powerful position in the Jacobean court, and later even managed to strengthen it by marrying James I's cousin Margaret Stewart as his second wife. As a result of this marriage he was granted a substantial pension, governorship of Prince Henry, the patent to license wine sellers, and a place of honour among the English ambassadors negotiating with Spain for peace in 1605. Her paternal aunt, Elizabeth, was also a maid of honour until her marriage in 1599,<sup>215</sup> and her

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<sup>214</sup> Catherine Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', in *The Death of Elizabeth I: Remembering and Reconstructing the Virgin Queen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 83.

<sup>215</sup> Loomis, 84.

great-aunt, Philadelphia Scrope (née Carey), was a Lady of the Bedchamber.<sup>216</sup> Southwell herself was one of Queen Elizabeth's goddaughters.<sup>217</sup>

After the death of Margaret Ratcliffe, one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, in 1599, Southwell was brought to court to fill the newly vacant position.<sup>218</sup> There are only bits of information available about her life before 1605: she participated in the masque for Anne Russell's marriage in June 1600;<sup>219</sup> she may have been present during Baron Waldstein's visit to the court in July 1600;<sup>220</sup> in 1601 Christopher Sutton dedicated *Godly Meditations upon the Most Holy Sacrament of the Lordes Supper* to her; she was mentioned in financial accounts of Elizabeth I's funeral in 1603, and, unless circumstances prevented her, would have participated in the funeral procession; and following Elizabeth's death she became a maid of honour to Queen Anne.<sup>221</sup>

When it came to marriage, at least three men expressed an interest in courtship before 1605. Sir Clement Heigham consulted astrologer Simon Forman on the subject,<sup>222</sup> and Henry Wotton wrote to Edward Barrett on February 24, 1606 that "it pleased her"<sup>223</sup> to call him her master sometimes. The most concrete possible match was reported by Philip Gawdy, courtier, on 24 October, 1604, who wrote that Southwell was to marry Richard Gargrave.<sup>224</sup> Especially in the aftermath of the Queen's death, Southwell was expected to advance her family's wealth and power through an arranged marriage,<sup>225</sup> but she chose otherwise. Sometime before 1605 she had started a relationship with Robert Dudley (1574-1649), who was not only her first cousin once removed,<sup>226</sup> but who was, at the time, still married to his second wife, Alice Leigh, with whom he had five living daughters. Additionally, Dudley was involved in a legal battle to prove that his father, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, had concluded a legal marriage to his mother, Douglas Howard Sheffield Stanford, in 1573, thus making him the Earl's legitimate son.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]', 489.

<sup>217</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 84.

<sup>218</sup> Loomis, 84.

<sup>219</sup> Loomis, 85.

<sup>220</sup> Loomis, 84.

<sup>221</sup> Loomis, 85.

<sup>222</sup> Loomis, 85.

<sup>223</sup> Logan Pearsall Smith, 1966, p. 379 in Loomis, 85.

<sup>224</sup> Loomis, 85.

<sup>225</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell (Dudley), "A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth"', 251.

<sup>226</sup> Elizabeth Southwell's maternal great-grandfather, William Howard, First Baron Howard of Effingham, was also Sir Robert Dudley's maternal grandfather.

<sup>227</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 85.

After Dudley's case was settled in May 1605, and his attempts to appeal the decision proved fruitless, he received a three-year license to travel abroad on June 25. When he left for France on July 2, Southwell, who had disguised herself as his page, travelled with him.<sup>228</sup> Once in Lyon they converted to Catholicism and applied for a papal dispensation to marry on grounds of consanguinity. Additionally, to invalidate his marriage to Leigh, he claimed the existence of a contract between him and Frances Vavasour, a maid of honour, in 1591.<sup>229</sup> Queen Anne herself was, reportedly, angry about the elopement.<sup>230</sup>

After this point in time, not much personal information is available about Southwell herself, but part of her movements can be traced through her husband. Following the marriage and after Dudley's traveling license was revoked in February 1607<sup>231</sup> but he refused to return, Dudley's estates in England were seized under the Statute of Fugitives and redistributed through sale.<sup>232</sup> This, together with their marriage now being illegal due to bigamy becoming a felony under James I in 1604,<sup>233</sup> prevented the couple from returning to England, despite negotiation attempts by both. They settled in Florence, Italy where they sought to establish themselves at the court of Ferdinand I, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Here Dudley served as grand chamberlain to three Tuscan duchesses, and Southwell was described as "an especial favourite"<sup>234</sup> at the Florentine court. In Florence the couple also joined a group of English exiles which was led by the Jesuit Robert Persons.<sup>235</sup> Despite the loss of his estates, Dudley still styled himself early of Warwick and Leicester.<sup>236</sup> The Grand Duke attempted to intervene on Dudley's behalf through the Earl of Northampton, but, he too, was unsuccessful. In 1620, Dudley and Southwell were granted the titles of Duke and Duchess of Northumberland by the Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>237</sup> While Southwell and her husband started out with very strong and close courtly relations, they thus became increasingly removed from the British court through their religious conversion, and legal and political disagreements.

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<sup>228</sup> Loomis, 86.

<sup>229</sup> Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Sir Robert (1574–1649), Mariner and Landowner', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 3 January 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8161>.

<sup>230</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 87.

<sup>231</sup> Loomis, 88.

<sup>232</sup> Loomis, 86.

<sup>233</sup> Adams, 'Dudley, Sir Robert (1574–1649), Mariner and Landowner'.

<sup>234</sup> J. T. Leader, 1977, p. 109 in Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 87.

<sup>235</sup> Adams, 'Dudley, Sir Robert (1574–1649), Mariner and Landowner'.

<sup>236</sup> Adams.

<sup>237</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 87.

Even from their exile in Italy, Dudley involved himself in English politics. In 1614 he wrote his *Proposition to bridle the impertinence of parliaments*, in which he proposed, amongst other things, that “royal proclamations could be used to make laws without the consent of parliament.”<sup>238</sup> The production and distribution of copies of the text caused a scandal and even led to a Star Chamber case brought against numerous men, including the Earl of Bedford and the Earl of Somerset, in 1630. It may very well have been meant as a piece of satire, but Dudley unintentionally helped to substantiate the popular association of Catholicism with absolutism.<sup>239</sup>

During the first years of their marriage, Southwell had five miscarriages, but by April 1631 she had given birth to thirteen children. This suggests a happy marriage,<sup>240</sup> despite the difficulties they faced and their position as exiles. Elizabeth Southwell died on September 10, 1631 and was buried in San Pancrazio church, Florence.<sup>241</sup>

### ***A True Relation***

*A True Relation of what succeeded at the sickness and death of Queen Elizabeth* is a manuscript text, written or dictated<sup>242</sup> on April 1 1607. It is written in a secretary hand, covering four sides of two sheets. Because ink has bled through in places, two of the sides are difficult to read. Sometime after its composition, the manuscript came into possession of Father Robert Persons, who made redactions to it and used it as a source in diatribes against Queen Elizabeth I (a more thorough comparison of Southwell’s manuscript and Persons’ *A Discussion of the Answer of M. William Barlow to the Judgment of a Catholike Englishman* (1612) will be given below).<sup>243</sup> Persons’ redaction of the original manuscript was copied by an unknown hand and ended up as one of the Cotton manuscripts. This Cotton manuscript was subsequently printed in *Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* by John Nichols. Hugh Tootell’s 1737 *Dodd’s Church History of England* includes an edition of

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<sup>238</sup> Christopher Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 188.

<sup>239</sup> Adams, ‘Dudley, Sir Robert (1574–1649), Mariner and Landowner’.

<sup>240</sup> Loomis, ‘Elizabeth Southwell (Dudley), “A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth”’, 251.

<sup>241</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 87–88.

<sup>242</sup> The use of scribes or secretaries was common practice at this time. It ensured fast, professional transcription of dictated texts. It does, however, also raise questions of a text’s authenticity, since these scribes could change wording or make personal additions. This analysis will work of the assumption that the account is as Southwell gave it, since there is no way to prove the contrary and no other records exist.

<sup>243</sup> Loomis, ‘Elizabeth Southwell (Dudley), “A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth”’, 252.

Southwell's manuscript in modern spelling and interpolated with an anecdote from Persons' redaction. These printed editions both diverge significantly from Southwell's text, and the original manuscript has never been properly printed.<sup>244</sup> The original manuscript itself is preserved at the Jesuit Archives, London, among Persons' papers,<sup>245</sup> and transcriptions of it are provided by Catherine Loomis in two of her critical works.<sup>246,247</sup>

Southwell's manuscript describes the final days of Elizabeth and what proceeded in the days following her death. The narrative starts with the Queen being presented with a gift, about fifteen days before she falls ill. What follows are days of her refusing to eat and sleep, and her having visions. At the same time she also is described speaking to and bickering with her councillors, ladies and clergymen concerning her successor, health, and spirituality. Her main opponent in these discussions seems to have been Robert Cecil, her Secretary of State, Lord High Treasurer, and Lord Privy Seal and son of William Cecil, first Baron Burghley, who was Elizabeth's chief adviser until his death in 1598. In the aftermath of the Queen's death, there is debate about a possible autopsy on her body, and Southwell provides a curious story of the corpse bursting through its coffin during the days-long wake preceding Elizabeth's burial. The main themes throughout this narrative, which will be examined in detail in the analysis provided below, are: the supernatural and superstition, visions and religion, and the succession.

Numerous accounts on Queen Elizabeth's death have been written, but Southwell's manuscript takes up a unique position amongst these. There are only two other accounts of Elizabeth's death by female contemporaries of Southwell, Anne Clifford and Margaret Hoby, who both merely recorded her passing away in their diary but were not themselves present when it took place, nor provide a description of the events leading up to and following it.<sup>248</sup> Southwell's is the only surviving *eye-witness* account written by a woman. Due to her position as Maid of Honour, she would have had personal access to the Queen, and she was in contact with the other Maids and Ladies-in-waiting who were attending to Elizabeth, such as her great-aunt Lady Scrope. Her grandfather, the Lord Admiral, also repeatedly visited the Queen in her final days. This meant her information would come from either personal experience or first-hand sources. Southwell's account is also the only one of the Queen's final

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<sup>244</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]', 483.

<sup>245</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 83.

<sup>246</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]', 484–87.

<sup>247</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 88–91.

<sup>248</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]', 484.

hours that does not contain Elizabeth indicating her successor should be James.<sup>249</sup>

Furthermore, it includes details of the Queen's illness and death, such as the descriptions of hallucinations, remarks made by the Queen, and the exploding corpse, that other surviving accounts lack.

Nevertheless, Southwell's manuscript has been generally disregarded in modern scholarship. While some incidents she narrates have been incorporated into biographies of Elizabeth and histories of her reign, most historiographers reject the manuscript as a reliable source because of the arguments put forward by J. E. Neale in 1925: it was written four years after the events by "a romantic young woman who had turned Catholic";<sup>250</sup> the details it presents cannot be independently verified; the story of the exploding corpse is improbable and therefore the reliability of the rest of the narrative is also in question; and the fact that Robert Persons used it as a source for his diatribes against Elizabeth.<sup>251</sup> While these are all valid points to some degree, it also reveals a double standard based on gender. Southwell's manuscript has, essentially, been ignored because of "her religion, because of her personal history, or because of the uses others have made of the manuscript."<sup>252</sup> Factors, as Loomis notes, which are "rarely noted, although it would be helpful if they were, when the narratives of Carey, Cecil, Chamberlain, Clapham, Manningham, or Wilbraham are used to make history."<sup>253</sup>

## Analysis

As its title suggests, the focus of this manuscript is on Queen Elizabeth I. The text also makes mention of Henry IV of France<sup>254</sup> and James VI of Scotland<sup>255</sup> when the succession is discussed. In the final lines of the manuscript reference is made to a "queene Jane"<sup>256</sup> as well. Nevertheless, Elizabeth I will be the sole topic of the following analysis. The other three monarchs will be referenced where relevant, but, similar to Southwell's manuscript, only in

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<sup>249</sup> Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell (Dudley)', "A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth", 252.

<sup>250</sup> J. E. Neale, 1925, p. 231 in Loomis, 'Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]', 483–84.

<sup>251</sup> Loomis, 483–84.

<sup>252</sup> Loomis, 509.

<sup>253</sup> Loomis, 509.

<sup>254</sup> Elizabeth Southwell, 'A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth', in *The Death of Elizabeth I: Remembering and Reconstructing the Virgin Queen*, ed. Catherine Loomis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1. 74.

<sup>255</sup> Southwell, ll. 74, 78.

<sup>256</sup> Southwell, l. 96.

service to the (discussion of the) depiction of Elizabeth I. The analysis will be divided into the main themes highlighted in the section above.

Southwell starts out her narrative with the word “*Ymprimis*”.<sup>257</sup> This word (alternatively spelled ‘imprimis’) was generally used to introduce a list of items, such as in an inventory or, more importantly, a will.<sup>258</sup> While Southwell’s manuscript is indeed a list of items, or, rather, events, it could be questioned whether there is more behind the choice for this specific word. As with a will or inventory it might suggest a list of a practical, factual nature, and therefore perhaps bolstering the account’s credibility. Similar to a will, which generally bequeaths a physical inheritance, the account can also be read as a less tangible form of legacy. This could be considered the legacy of, on the one hand, Elizabeth Southwell, because it details her account of the events, or, on the other, of Elizabeth I, since it concerns the final days of her life.

### *The supernatural & superstition*

At the beginning of her manuscript, Southwell states that the Queen was “in verie good health”.<sup>259</sup> Nevertheless, when presented with a gold coin which an “old woman in Wales bequeathed / her on her death bed”<sup>260</sup> that is supposed to guarantee a long life, the Queen is not only shown as accepting the gift, but as actually wearing it on her person, “about her neck.”<sup>261</sup> This would suggest, to some degree, a fear of death, despite her then current condition indicating no imminent threat of it. Even more, the “confidence”<sup>262</sup> Elizabeth has in the powers of the coin, makes her, as Loomis notes, guilty of idolatry.<sup>263</sup> Within Christianity, this is a practice generally associated with Catholicism, while it was a controversial and even disapproved of practice among branches of Protestantism, and thus Elizabeth would certainly have been expected to frown upon it. The coin also summons further connotations with witchcraft and superstition. Sir John Stanhope, who presents the coin to the Queen, is introduced as “secretary Cecills / [...] familiar,”<sup>264</sup> which, according to the *OED*, is “a spirit, often taking the form of an animal, which obeys and assists a witch” and particularly

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<sup>257</sup> Southwell, l. 1.

<sup>258</sup> ‘Imprimis, Adv.’, in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, December 2020), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/92769>.

<sup>259</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, l. 1.

<sup>260</sup> Southwell, ll. 5–6.

<sup>261</sup> Southwell, l. 14.

<sup>262</sup> Southwell, l. 13.

<sup>263</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 91.

<sup>264</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 2–3.



associated with European witchcraft.<sup>265</sup> Whether the gift was presented with good or evil intentions also remains ambiguous. Stanhope offers it to her with the words that “as long as the old [Welsh]woman wore yt / upon her bodie she could not die.”<sup>266</sup> This could mean that whoever the wearer was avoided death by wearing it, but also that the Queen was in danger of dying the moment it left the Welshwoman’s body. Southwell seems to favour this second reading, linking the gold piece to Elizabeth’s final illness and death, for she writes it was “within 15 daies” of receiving it that the Queen “fell downe right sick”.<sup>267</sup> Either way, the Queen and her courtiers are guilty of superstitious beliefs and practices, by believing in the coin’s power, malevolent or benign. All of this results in a curious mix of prejudices about Catholicism, gender, and witchcraft. On the one hand the old woman confirms the traditional image of a witch, but on the other her Welsh nationality also suggests Catholicism, since Wales was one of the areas in which the Privy council “found it difficult to control the recusant population”.<sup>268</sup> Simultaneously, while the supposed power of the coin suggests the practice of witchcraft and superstition, it is also reminiscent of Catholic idolatry, as discussed above. Southwell is thus simultaneously condemning Elizabeth for her behaviour, while also describing beliefs she herself adheres to.

This is not the only instance of possible witchcraft that Southwell has included in her manuscript. Further on in the manuscript, once Elizabeth’s illness has already entered a later stage, she describes an incident where “tow Ladies waiting on her in her chamber / discovered in the bottom of her chaire the queene of harts / with a naile of yron knockt through the forehead of yt”.<sup>269</sup> Elizabeth had once been referred to as “the Queen of Hearts, and masterer of Death”.<sup>270</sup> ‘Hart’ is, additionally, another word for ‘stag’,<sup>271</sup> traditionally considered a symbol of Artemis/Diana, goddess of the hunt and chastity. As one of the virgin-goddesses of the Greek/Roman pantheon, she was often evoked in reference to Elizabeth, ‘the virgin queen’, for example in Ben Jonson’s poem ‘Queen and Huntress’.<sup>272</sup> The playing card found

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<sup>265</sup> ‘Familiar, n., Adj., and Adv.’, in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, March 2021), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67957>.

<sup>266</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 11–12.

<sup>267</sup> Southwell, l. 16.

<sup>268</sup> Glanmor Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 367.

<sup>269</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 47–49.

<sup>270</sup> Transcript of Ashmole MS 36, fol. 149, in Morfill, ed., Vol. II, 96–97 in Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 94.

<sup>271</sup> ‘Hart, n.’, in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, March 2021), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84401>.

<sup>272</sup> Poetry Foundation, ‘Cynthia’s Revels: Queen and Huntress, Chaste and Fair by Ben Jonson’, text/html, Poetry Foundation (Poetry Foundation, 14 May 2021), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44451/cynthias-revels-queen-and-huntress-chaste-and-fair>.

here, as Loomis explains, reveals an attempt to kill or impair the mind of the Queen through image magic.<sup>273</sup> In 1578 another assassination attempt employing image magic, this one using wax figures “intended to the distruccion of her Majesties person”, had been thwarted.<sup>274</sup>

Parsons also writes that the Queen feared people “did seeke her death, eyther by poysoning her body, saddle, chayre, seate, or somewhat else belonging vnto her,”<sup>275</sup> but given his views (which will be discussed in further detail below) the veracity of his words cannot be guaranteed.

By far the most disputed part of Southwell’s account regards the events in the days following the Queen’s death. This starts with the Queen having ordered her body “not to be opened”,<sup>276</sup> an order that, Southwell claims, was secretly disregarded by Cecil.<sup>277</sup> Why Elizabeth did not wish to be embowelled remains unclear in the manuscript. It may simply have been due to the unpleasantness of the procedure, but she also may not have wanted her body to be too closely examined: there were persistent rumours that she had had illegitimate children, and according to early modern anatomy the “size and shape of a woman’s uterus proved whether or not she had borne children”.<sup>278</sup> This might also suggest a reason why the subject was handled with secrecy by Cecil: if the rumours were proven true, it would have risked the orderly succession of James. Following this, the Queen’s body was brought to White Hall for a days-long wake preceding her funeral. On one of these nights, the corpse, “which was fast nayled up in a bord coffin with leaves of lead covered / with velvet,” exploded “with such a crack / that spleated the wood lead and cer cloth.”<sup>279</sup> Those present at the event “gave / their verdicts that yf she had not ben opened the breath of her / bodie would a ben much worse. but no man durst speak yt publicklye for displeasing *Secreatire Cecill*”,<sup>280</sup> confirming once more that the Queen’s body was opened against her wishes and at the command of Cecil.

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<sup>273</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 94.

<sup>274</sup> John Roche Dasent, ed., *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Volume 11, 1578-1580*, vol. 11 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1895), 22, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol11>.

<sup>275</sup> Robert Parsons, *A Discussion of the Aansvvere of M. VVilliam Barlovv, D. of Diuinity, to the Booke Intituled: The Iudgment of a Catholike Englishman Liuing in Banishment for His Religion &c. Concerning the Apology of the New Oath of Allegiance*. (Saint-Omer: s.n., 1612), 209, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240927319/citation/432E5A463AFE43CEPQ/9>.

<sup>276</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, l. 80.

<sup>277</sup> Southwell, ll. 80–81.

<sup>278</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 96.

<sup>279</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 86–88.

<sup>280</sup> Southwell, ll. 89–92.

Although seemingly fantastical, the explosion of the corpse is not entirely impossible. If the disembowelling procedure and wrapping-up of the body had not been executed properly, gasses from the decomposition process might have built up in the coffin, and when these came in contact with an open flame, for example from a candle, this could have resulted in an ‘explosion’. If Elizabeth’s orders *had* been obeyed, decomposition would have proceeded at an even faster rate. Natural processes aside, however, such an event would of course be given a major symbolic value. According to theory of the King’s two bodies, the monarch’s person is made up of a ‘body natural’ and a ‘body politic’, together forming “one unit indivisible, each being fully contained in the other.”<sup>281</sup> While they form one inseparable whole they do each take a different role or form: the body natural, is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People”; the body politic “is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.”<sup>282</sup> An explosion of the kind described in Southwell’s account suggests a corruption of Elizabeth’s body natural. As Loomis describes, this particular story “smells of mortality and in one swift crack negates the Queen’s carefully cultivated quasi-divinity”,<sup>283</sup> an image which Southwell, given their religious differences, might have been eager to dispel. It carries a layer of scriptural symbolism as well; Elizabeth had been damned as “the Jezebel of the North” by Catholics in England and on the continent. In scripture Jezebel is “trode her under foot”, and when servants are sent to collect her body and bury her “they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.”<sup>284</sup> Elizabeth thus undergoes a similar fate to her biblical namesake: “physical disintegration.”<sup>285</sup>

Had the explosion been limited to Elizabeth’s body natural, the damage would perhaps have been manageable. Southwell describes how the royal corpse was newly “trimmed up”,<sup>286</sup> and leaves it at that. There is, however, something peculiar about Southwell’s phrasing of the

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<sup>281</sup> Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 9, <https://www-fulcrum-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/concern/monographs/8w32r5773>.

<sup>282</sup> Edmund Plowden, 1816, 212a in Kantorowicz, 7.

<sup>283</sup> Loomis, ‘Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]’, 499–500.

<sup>284</sup> ‘2 Kings 9:33-35 - King James Version’, Bible Gateway, accessed 14 June 2021, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Kings+9%3A33-35&version=KJV>.

<sup>285</sup> Loomis, ‘Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth [with Text]’, 500.

<sup>286</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, l. 89.

event: she explicitly writes how both “her bodie and *head*”<sup>287</sup> ruptured. Another anatomy-related metaphor in politics characterises the nation as a body, with the ruler as, literally, the head of state. By expressly mentioning the head separately from the body, and thus placing emphasis on it, Southwell could be argued to suggest here that the impact of the explosion was not limited to the body natural, but may have had consequences for the body politic as well. Such fears regarding the illness and death of the Queen were already being voiced: in a letter to Robert Cecil, Sir George Carew, president of Munster, wrote on 27 March 1603 that Englishmen “trembled to think of her Majesty’s decease, as if instantly upon it the kingdom would have been torn in sunder.”<sup>288</sup> The account of the explosion becoming public knowledge would only have added to this.

### *Visions & religion*

Southwell included further short scenes of a certain supernatural nature. When the Queen falls ill Southwell’s great aunt, Lady Scrope, requires after the cause. The Queen, commanding her to keep it secret (a command Lady Scrope evidently disobeyed, given that Southwell was able to reproduce it here), reveals she saw a vision of herself one night, “in her bed her bodie exceeding leane / and fearefull in a light of fire”.<sup>289</sup> While such hallucinations may indicate fever dreams, Southwell’s specific description also suggests the torments of hell. In Elizabethan scripture, hell was an “everlasting fire” (Matthew 25:41),<sup>290</sup> and in *The Jesuites Play at Lyons* (1607) Jesuits are shown to imagine and portray Protestant monarchs, including Elizabeth I, as doomed to “lie on beds of fire which shall never quench.”<sup>291</sup> The fiery visions Elizabeth describes are, in Loomis’s words, thus a way for Southwell “to imply that Elizabeth was being given a preview of her eternal resting place.”<sup>292</sup> That the vision disturbed the Queen is certain; when the Lord Admiral tries to persuade her to go to bed she answered him

<sup>287</sup> Emphasis added. Southwell, l. 87.

<sup>288</sup> Salisbury Manuscripts XV, 8 in Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 101.

<sup>289</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 20–21.

<sup>290</sup> Anonymous, *The Bible, That Is, the Holy Scriptures, Contained in the Old and New Testament Translated According to the Hebrew and Greeke, and Conferred with the Best Translations in Diuers Languages*. (London: By the Deputies of Christopher Barker, 1600), 366r, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240908495/citation/DD668D642B364350PQ/3>.

<sup>291</sup> R. S., *The Iesuites Play at Lyons in France as It Was There Presented. Both to the Amazement of the Beholders, and the Destruction of the Actors, in August Last Past. Credibly Informed by a Factors Letter (Who Was an Eye Witnesse) to His Right Worshipful Maister in London*. (London: Printed for Nathaniel Butter, 1607), 20, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240903310/citation/D8E4F95918A14C3FPQ/1>.

<sup>292</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 92.

“that yf he knew what she / had sene in her bed he would not perswade her as he did”.<sup>293</sup> She also privately imparts another ‘vision’ to him later on, saying “I am / tied with a chaine of yron about my neck. / [...] I am tied and the case is / altered with me.”<sup>294</sup> While this may have been Elizabeth’s way of describing her sore throat, it may also have been referring to the piece of gold she was now wearing around her neck. On a more abstract level she may also have used it as a metaphor for her mortality: royal power, the power of her body politic, is unable to save her from the weakness of her body natural. The image of a chain evokes notions of imprisonment; she is locked up in “the prison of her weake body”<sup>295</sup> from which the only escape is through death. That she remarks that “the case is now altered”<sup>296</sup> with her, might indicate that Elizabeth is foreseeing and accepting her own death.

In any case, the visions she saw must have felt real to Elizabeth I, for, after seeing the state of her body in the first vision, she required a “true loking glass”<sup>297</sup> to be brought to her. Southwell states that this had not happened for twenty years, since the Queen had only used a mirror “such a one which of purpos / was made to deceive her sight”,<sup>298</sup> in other words, a mirror which hid the effects of age on her appearance. This story of ‘true’ and ‘false’ looking glasses is one that is repeated by the treasury clerk John Clapham, the playwright Ben Jonson, and bishop Godfrey Goodman.<sup>299</sup> On beholding her true appearance, the Queen “fell presently exclaiming at all those which had so much / commended her and toke yt so offensivelie, that all those / which had before flattered her durst not come in her sight”.<sup>300</sup> By including this event in her narrative, Southwell’s depiction of Elizabeth I here is a double-edged sword; on the one hand, as Loomis notes, “by describing the Queen’s fury with her false commendens she humanizes Elizabeth in a way other deathbed accounts fail to do,” but on the other hand she also shows a Queen “guilty of the deadly sins of pride and anger.”<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 33–34.

<sup>294</sup> Southwell, ll. 44–47.

<sup>295</sup> Anonymous, *The True Narration of the Entertainment of His Royall Maiestie, from the Time of His Departure from Edenbrough; till His Receiuing at London: With All or the Most Speciall Occurrences. Together with the Names of Those Gentlemen Whom His Maiestie Honoured with Knighthood.* (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, for Thomas Millington, 1603), sig. B1r, <http://www.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240855862/citation/A19497CA19424169PQ/1>.

<sup>296</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 46–47.

<sup>297</sup> Southwell, l. 22.

<sup>298</sup> Southwell, ll. 23–24.

<sup>299</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 92–93.

<sup>300</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 25–27.

<sup>301</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 93.

Elizabeth I appears to not have been the only one to have witnessed visions or apparitions. Southwell describes how Elizabeth Guilford, one of the ladies attending the Queen, left Elizabeth asleep in her room, but then encountered her a few rooms away. Out of fear of having displeased the Queen, Guilford returned to the privy chamber, where she found her still asleep in her bed.<sup>302</sup> This would imply that the person Guilford encountered was not actually the Queen, and, even more, might not have been a person at all. The suggestion that one of her ladies saw an apparition, spectre, or even (premature) ghost days before her actual passing might be taken as an ill omen for Elizabeth's fate. This is recognised by Loomis, who interprets its appearance as an indication of "the futility of praying for the dying Queen."<sup>303</sup>

All in all, these visions and remarks show a Queen heavily preoccupied with her own mortality and salvation. Nevertheless, when her council sends the Bishop of Canterbury "and other of her prelates"<sup>304</sup> to her, she reacts not merely displeased, but outright insulted. She calls them "hedge priests"<sup>305</sup> and sends them "packing",<sup>306</sup> taking the fact that they dare speak to her "for an yndignitie".<sup>307</sup> While she refuses the administrations of her clergy, Elizabeth does insist that "she was no atheist",<sup>308</sup> suggesting that she, despite refusing spiritual guidance, did not fear for her soul. Again, Southwell humanises the Queen by showing her irritation at the commotion around her and her indignation at the presumption that she is in spiritual danger. At the same time, however, Southwell may also have included it to show that the Queen was beyond salvation. Elizabeth's refusal of her prelates' assistance becomes another "sign of her spiritual corruption."<sup>309</sup>

### *The succession*

The succession of the English throne had already been a point of contention for a number of years before Elizabeth's death, and Southwell reveals it was only questionably settled at the very last moment. By the time the council urges her once more to indicate her heir, the Queen is no longer able to speak due to her sore throat. While she desires to "wash yt" so she may "answer more freeleie",<sup>310</sup> her council decides she should merely hold up her finger when they

<sup>302</sup> Southwell, 'A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth', ll. 53–59.

<sup>303</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 95.

<sup>304</sup> Southwell, 'A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth', ll. 62–63.

<sup>305</sup> Southwell, l. 65.

<sup>306</sup> Southwell, l. 64.

<sup>307</sup> Southwell, l. 66.

<sup>308</sup> Southwell, ll. 64–65.

<sup>309</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 95.

<sup>310</sup> Southwell, 'A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth', l. 70.

name her preferred candidate. She shows no sign of approval when Henry IV of France or James VI of Scotland are suggested, but when Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp,<sup>311</sup> is mentioned, she declares she “will have no raskalls son in my seat”.<sup>312</sup> Following this declaration she immediately died, in effect not naming her successor. Nevertheless “the / Councell went forth and reported she meant the K of Scots /” and “went to London to proclame him.”<sup>313</sup> Although the question was initially put to her, it is actually the council which decides that James will rule after her. By describing the Queen as unable to speak, Southwell literally has her have no say in the matter of the succession. Southwell had a number of reasons to undermine the new monarch and his administration through questioning the succession’s legitimacy. Although, at the start of his reign, even “papists” had promised “themselves great part in his favour”,<sup>314</sup> by the time Southwell wrote her text, James had instituted the Oath of Allegiance.<sup>315</sup> Southwell, furthermore, had a personal stake in discrediting Cecil specifically, since he was partly responsible for the dismissal of the witnesses in her husband’s legal battles.<sup>316</sup>

This is not the first, or last, instance of her closest attendants disobeying or undermining her. A repeat offender throughout the manuscript is Secretary Cecil; not only does he countermand her order regarding the autopsy, and, together with the council, acts on his own wishes when it comes to the succession, he also attempts to weaken the Queen’s power in her final days. Southwell describes how he “had given forth to the / people that she was madd”<sup>317</sup> by spreading reports of her being “distracted”.<sup>318</sup> Elizabeth herself seems to have been aware of his attempts to undercut her authority, and repeatedly argues with him. When, earlier in her illness, Cecil tells her to go to bed, she answers “the little man”<sup>319</sup> that

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<sup>311</sup> Edward Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp was the son of Edward Seymour, first Early of Hertford, and Lady Katherine Grey, sister to Lady Jane Grey, and cousin to Elizabeth I. He had a claim to the throne since his mother was named heir to Henry VIII in his will. Susan Doran, ‘Seymour, Edward, First Earl of Hertford (1539?–1621), Courtier’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 27 May 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25161>.

<sup>312</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 75–76.

<sup>313</sup> Southwell, ll. 77–79.

<sup>314</sup> John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1979), 192.

<sup>315</sup> The 1606 Oath of Allegiance required English Catholics to swear allegiance to King James I, and acknowledge him to be above the Pope. ‘The English Parliament under James I: Oath of Allegiance (An Act for the Better Discovering and Repressing of Popish Recusants) on Rejecting Papal Authority to Depose the King’, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, accessed 14 June 2021, <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/the-english-parliament-under-james-i-oath-of-allegiance-an-act-for-the-better-discovering-and-repressing-of-popish-recusants-on-rejecting-papal-authority-to-depose-the-king>.

<sup>316</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 113.

<sup>317</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, ll. 93–94.

<sup>318</sup> Southwell, l. 97.

<sup>319</sup> Southwell, l. 40.

“the word must was not to be used to princes”,<sup>320</sup> and accusing him of only daring to be so presumptuous because he knew her to be dying.<sup>321</sup> When it comes to the specific topic of her sanity, she repeatedly tells him “Cecill know I am not madd.”<sup>322</sup> More specifically she states that he “must not think to make queene Jane of me”,<sup>323</sup> which most likely refers to either of two women: Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Days’ Queen; or Queen Joanna I of Castile and Aragon, known as Juana la Loca (the Mad). Joanna I, who, being the third child, was never intended or trained to rule, was the victim of the power struggles of her father, husband, and son, who each coveted her throne. All used her purported mental instability to attempt to rule in her stead. While her husband, Philip of Flanders, predeceased her, her father, Ferdinand II of Aragon, imprisoned her in the fortress of Tordesillas and ruled as her regent, a policy that was continued by her son, Charles, after Ferdinand’s death.<sup>324</sup> Lady Jane Grey, another pawn in the plots of power-hungry men around her, was appointed heir by Edward VI in his will and crowned Queen after his death. Support for Mary (later Mary I) grew quickly however, and she was deposed nine days later and eventually executed for treason.<sup>325</sup> The phrase “make a Queen Jane of”<sup>326</sup> appears literally in an anonymous intercepted letter, dated around November 1600, where it plainly refers to Lady Grey. It is used in the context of a discussion regarding Arabella Stuart’s chances in the English succession. Either Queen Jane represents a suitable image to express Elizabeth’s anger at Cecil spreading lies about her to try and effectively dethrone her.

Despite his efforts, however, Cecil does not succeed, at least not with everyone. Southwell ends her account with how she “nor anie that were about her could ever perceive / her speeches so well applied proceeded from a distracted mind.”<sup>327</sup> Southwell’s support of Elizabeth’s insistence on her sanity might seem surprising. Throughout a number of the events described above she (inexplicitly) frames the Queen in a way that might undermine her image. She portrays her as guilty of superstition and spiritually corrupted. Southwell,

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<sup>320</sup> Southwell, I. 39.

<sup>321</sup> Southwell, II. 41–42.

<sup>322</sup> Southwell, I. 95.

<sup>323</sup> Southwell, I. 96.

<sup>324</sup> Claudia Gold, *Queen, Empress, Concubine: Fifty Women Rulers from the Queen of Sheba to Catherine the Great* (London: Quercus, 2008), 108–11, <http://archive.org/details/queenempressconc0000gold>.

<sup>325</sup> Alison Plowden, ‘Grey [Married Name Dudley], Lady Jane (1537–1554), Noblewoman and Claimant to the English Throne’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 9 January 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8154>.

<sup>326</sup> Mary Anne Everett Green, ed., ‘Addenda, Queen Elizabeth - Volume 34: November 1600’, in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Elizabeth, Addenda 1580-1625* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1872), 406–9, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/edw-eliz/addenda/1580-1625/pp406-409>.

<sup>327</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, II. 98–99.



nevertheless, opposes Cecil's argument that the Queen has gone mad, choosing not to discredit Elizabeth I any further.

### Comparison to male authors

Elizabeth I's death was a topic addressed in many contemporary accounts and correspondences. At times the authors were themselves present during the events, but others had to obtain their information from other sources. These often agree with a number of Southwell's claims, occasionally expanding on them. When describing the Queen's illness, the courtiers John Chamberlain and Robert Carey, and the historian William Camden all agree that she refused to eat or sleep. They, together with Godfrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester, expand the description by adding "a settled and unremovable melancholie",<sup>328</sup> some proclaiming this the cause of her poor health. Both Goodman and Camden also repeat a variation of Elizabeth's lament about being bound by the neck: Camden writes "They haue yoaked my necke; I haue none now to trust: my estate is turned topside turuey",<sup>329</sup> while Goodman reports her saying "They have yoked my neck,—I can do nothing,—I have not one man in whom I can repose trust: I am a miserable forlorn woman."<sup>330</sup> Goodman also confirms the story of the false mirrors.<sup>331</sup>

While these accounts often accord with Southwell's narrative, there are also some significant differences when it comes to two vital points: the Queen's spiritual state, and the succession. Camden, Chamberlain, Carey, and an anonymous manuscript often attributed to Robert Cecil's secretary all describe the Queen piously praying with "The archbishop of Caunterburie, the bishop of London, the Almoner and other her chaplains and Divines".<sup>332</sup> Carey even has her calling for the presence of her prelates herself, and repeatedly urging the Archbishop to continue when he intends to leave,<sup>333</sup> presenting a narrative entirely opposite to Southwell's. Southwell is also alone in her claim that Elizabeth never appointed James as her

<sup>328</sup> Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 1:188.

<sup>329</sup> William Camden, *The Historie of the Life and Reigne of That Famous Princesse Elizabeth Containing a Briefe Memoriall of the Chieftest Affaires of State That Haue Passed in These Kingdomes of England, Scotland, France or Ireland since the Yeare of the Fataill Spanish Invasion to That of Her Sad and Ever to Be Deplored Dissolution. Wherevnto Also Is Annexed an Appendix, of Animadversions Vpon Severall Passages, Corrections of Sundry Errours, and Additions of Some Remarkable Matters of This History Never before Imprinted.*, trans. Thomas Browne (London: Printed for William Webbe, 1634), 382, <https://search-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2240900571/24299224/4A0C3FE5C27E40C5PQ/1?accountid=11795>.

<sup>330</sup> Godfrey Goodman, *The Court of King James the First*, ed. John S. Brewer, vol. I (London: Richard Bentley, 1839), 97–98, <https://archive.org/details/courtofkingjames01gooduoft/page/n9/mode/2up>.

<sup>331</sup> Goodman, I:164.

<sup>332</sup> Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 1:189.

<sup>333</sup> John Nichols, ed., *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth.*, vol. 3 (London: Printed by and for John Nichols and Son, 1823), 605, <http://archive.org/details/progressespublic03nichuoft>.

successor. Camden and Cecil's secretary describe the Queen doing so verbally,<sup>334,335</sup> and Carey "by putting her hand to her head, when the King of Scottes was named to succeed her".<sup>336</sup> Goodman merely indicates she designed James to be her heir on her death-bed.<sup>337</sup> Even the Jesuit Robert Parsons, who will be discussed in more detail below, does not include the Council ultimately making the decision, rather than the Queen. While courtiers like Carey and Cecil (and his secretary) had nothing to gain from undermining James's legitimacy, this was not the case for Southwell and Parsons: Parsons, like Southwell, was not pleased by James's institution of the Oath of Allegiance, and Southwell had further personal reasons, as outlined above.

Parsons's *A Discussion of the Aansvere of M. VWilliam Barlovv* (1612) requires special attention, since he used Southwell's original manuscript as his source. In his treatise he assures the reader that he presents the account "without any addition of matter from my selfe",<sup>338</sup> but this is untrue. Throughout, he has left out information, added details, and changed phrasing to achieve different rhetorical ends. He leaves out Southwell's specific description of Elizabeth's final illness, and alters or negates the manuscript's precise chronology, thus eliminating "the details that add to Southwell's sense of authenticity and urgency."<sup>339</sup> When describing the visions the Queen had, he adds a second Lady, "of whom the Queene demaunded whether she was not wont to see sightes in the night, telling her of the bright flame she had seene,"<sup>340</sup> and who acts as a second witness. While he repeats Southwell's account of Elizabeth sending away her prelates, he reorders the specific events and makes her address the Lord Admiral when she speaks of "those hedge-priests".<sup>341</sup> This, as Loomis notes, simultaneously gives Parsons the authority of an aristocratic, male voice, and "transforms Southwell's compact report into a theological argument that damns the Queen."<sup>342</sup> Parsons is the only one of the male authors examined who includes the story of the exploding corpse, but here too he differs from Southwell's account. He adds a dramatic layer by describing the explosion happening "to the terror and astonishmēt of all that were

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<sup>334</sup> Camden, *The Historie of the Life and Reigne of That Famous Princesse Elizabeth*, 383.

<sup>335</sup> Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, 3:608.

<sup>336</sup> Nichols, 3:604.

<sup>337</sup> Goodman, *The Court of King James the First*, I:6.

<sup>338</sup> Parsons, *A Discussion of the Aansvere of M. VWilliam Barlovv, D. of Diuinity*, 216.

<sup>339</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 111.

<sup>340</sup> Parsons, *A Discussion of the Aansvere of M. VWilliam Barlovv, D. of Diuinity*, 218.

<sup>341</sup> Parsons, 219.

<sup>342</sup> Loomis, 'Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth', 112.

present”,<sup>343</sup> and, as pointed out by Loomis, by omitting Southwell’s claim that the event was hushed up by Cecil, he contributed to the manuscript being dismissed as “Jesuit propaganda.”<sup>344</sup> His *Discussion*, furthermore, omits the manuscript’s separate mention of Elizabeth’s “head”<sup>345</sup>, making the relation between the destruction of the Queen’s body natural and the possible damaging of the body politic, and thus the monarch’s position as both head of state and church less prominent. Parsons, last of all, also excluded Southwell’s insistence that the Queen remained sane until her death, an assertion echoed by Chamberlain<sup>346</sup> and most other contemporary witnesses.<sup>347</sup> With the alterations he made to Elizabeth’s words—concerning the visions, her response to her prelates, etc.—he paints a picture of a Queen who was mentally unstable and therefore incapable of ruling, undermining her posthumous image to a far stronger degree than Southwell did.

## Conclusion

Elizabeth Southwell’s *A True Relation* presents an intriguing image of the final days of Queen Elizabeth I. She shows a flawed, but therefore human Queen, and the political manoeuvrings of a court preparing for a transfer of power. While some of the included details and events, such as the exploding corpse, the visions, and the suggestion of witchcraft, make the text seem unreliable, they also reveal an author heavily preoccupied with ideas of salvation and damnation, and show her implicitly interacting with the theory of the monarch’s ‘body politic’ and ‘body natural’.

*A True Relation* also provides a refreshing perspective compared to many of the other accounts of Elizabeth’s death, written by men who generally had nothing to gain and everything to lose from presenting a negative representation of the previous Queen, the new King, and their Council. Southwell had no such qualms, and in her narrative particularly questions Elizabeth’s spiritual safety and the legitimacy of James’s succession to the throne, at the same time condemning a Queen she thought morally and religiously degenerate, and undermining a new administration which had personally slighted her and her husband and forced them to go into exile. Yet, Southwell’s account is not as damning as it could have been, and as Robert Parsons’s revision of her manuscript indeed was. She does not use

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<sup>343</sup> Parsons, *A Discussion of the Aansvvere of M. VVilliam Barlovv, D. of Diuinity*, 219.

<sup>344</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 114.

<sup>345</sup> Southwell, ‘A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth’, l. 87.

<sup>346</sup> Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, 1:189.

<sup>347</sup> Loomis, ‘Some Strange Eruption to Our State: Elizabeth Southwell’s Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth’, 106.

dramatic language, and the meticulous reporting of time and chronology suggest, to at least some extent, an objective recording of events. Most importantly, while it presents a morally flawed Queen, it does depict Elizabeth as a commanding ruler in possession of her sanity until the end. In other words, while Southwell refuses to turn the late Queen into a saintlike figure, likely due to her personal feelings and beliefs, she does not deface Elizabeth's memory to a degree those sentiments might have led to be expected either.

### Chapter 3 – Elizabeth Cary's *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* (1626-1627)

The work studied in this chapter will be *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* by Elizabeth Cary. To start with, a biography of Cary will be provided, looking at her personal life, court relations, and literary career. This will be followed by a description of the text in question, specifying its publication details and summarising its content. After this will follow an analysis of the monarchs depicted in this case study, paying particular attention to Edward I, Edward II, and Isabella of France, and connecting these to the early modern concepts of monarchy and history. Last of all, a comparison will be made between Cary's text and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*, and Robert Brady's *A Continuation of the Complete History of England*.

#### Biography

Most of what is known about Elizabeth Cary (née Tanfield) comes from a manuscript life dated 1650, written by one of her daughters, Lucy, a nun at Cambrai by the time of writing. Cary was born in 1585 at Burford Priory, Oxfordshire, as the only child of Sir Lawrence Tanfield (c. 1551-1625), lawyer, and his wife, Elizabeth Symonds (d. 1629).<sup>348</sup> Her father was returned to Parliament as an MP for New Woodstock, Oxfordshire, on 26 October 1584, and held the position throughout the remainder of Elizabeth I's reign. During his journey from Scotland to be crowned, King James I visited Burford Priory, the Tanfield house, on 9 September 1603, staying for three nights. Under James I, Tanfield saw his standing rise further: he sat in the King's first Parliament for the county of Oxford from 7 March 1604; he was knighted on 14 March of the same year; he was appointed a puisne judge of the king's bench on 13 January 1606; and on 25 June 1607 he was advanced to the office of chief baron of the exchequer, a position he held for the rest of his life. Her mother was the niece of Sir Henry Lee, high steward of New Woodstock,<sup>349</sup> and champion of Elizabeth I.<sup>350</sup>

Cary was educated at home, and proved particularly adept at foreign languages, including at least French and Italian. She was possibly taught by Michael Drayton and John

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<sup>348</sup> Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary [Née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639), Writer and Translator'.

<sup>349</sup> E. I. Carlyle, 'Tanfield, Sir Lawrence (c. 1551–1625), Lawyer', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 3 January 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26959>.

<sup>350</sup> Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary [Née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639), Writer and Translator'.

Davies, who both dedicated works to her.<sup>351</sup> Drayton praised her fluency in French and Italian in his dedication of two of his *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597) to his “honoured Mistres, Mistres Elizabeth Tanfelde”,<sup>352</sup> and Davies speaks with pride of his “Pupill”<sup>353</sup> in his dedicatory verse of his *The Muses Sacrifice* (1612). This talent for languages is visible in her earliest extant work, ‘The mirror of the worlde’, a translation of Abraham Ortelius’s *Le miroir du monde* (1598), the first modern atlas (originally published as *Theatrum orbis terrarum* in 1570),<sup>354</sup> which she dedicated to her great-uncle Sir Henry Lee. Further wide recognition of her literary and linguistic skills is evident from the number of others’ works that were dedicated to her, such as *Englands Helicon, or, The Muses Harmony* (1614), *A Sixthe Booke to the Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1624), and *The Workes of Mr John Marston* (1633).<sup>355</sup>

In October 1602 she married Sir Henry Cary (c. 1575-1633), son of Sir Edward Cary (d. 1618) of Berkhamsted and Aldenham, Hertfordshire, master of the jewel house, and his wife, Catherine Knyvett (d. 1622). Together they had five sons and six daughters. Suggestions are the marriage was mostly financially motivated on Cary’s side: he would receive a total of £4000 within the first two years of marriage, and either another £3000—if no further children were born to Sir Tanfield in the meantime—or the entire estate as heir on Tanfield’s death. The first few years after their marriage her husband continued to pursue his career at court and as a soldier in the Low Countries, meaning they did not establish a household together until 1606.

Throughout her married life Cary kept up her literary activities, earning herself the titles of the first female author to write original drama in English, and the first woman to write a literary narrative of events in English history, in the process. The latter was for her historical narrative on Edward II, which will be considered in detail below. Her first play was written around 1604, but no manuscript has survived. Her second play, and first surviving one, was

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<sup>351</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>352</sup> Michael Drayton, ‘To My Honoured Mistres, Mistres Elizabeth Tanfelde, the Sole Daughtre and Heire, of That Famous and Learned Lawyer, Lawrence T Anfelde Esquire.’, in *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (London: Printed by I. R. for N. Ling, 1597), 43v, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2248550410/citation/4C682625EC0D487DPQ/1>.

<sup>353</sup> John Davies, ‘To the Most Noble, and No Lesse Deservedly-Renowned Ladyes, as Well Darlings, as Patronesses, of the Muses; Lvcy, Countesse of Bedford; Mary, Countesse-Dowager of Pembroke; and, Elizabeth, Lady Cary, (Wife of Sr. Henry Cary:) Glories of Women.’, in *The Muses Sacrifice* (London: Printed by T.S. for George Norton, 1612), sig. 3v, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240919174/citation/A0B516CD371A43F4PQ/1>.

<sup>354</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Abraham Ortelius’, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 10 April 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abraham-Ortelius>.

<sup>355</sup> Hodgson-Wright, ‘Cary [Née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639), Writer and Translator’.

*The Tragedy of Mariam*. It was probably composed between 1604 and 1608, and published in 1613, possibly following very public encouragement to do so by John Davies. Despite its publication it was not offered for performance in the public playhouses. This may be due to a combination of factors: it was written as a closet play and thus not meant to be staged, and it would have caused a social scandal because of Cary's status as a noblewoman. According to her biography she wrote a variety of manuscript works, including a verse life of Tamburlaine, verses to the Virgin Mary, the lives of St Agnes, St Elizabeth of Portugal, and St Mary Magdalene, and translations of Seneca and Blossius, but as of yet these are still uncovered.<sup>356</sup>

On 14 November 1620 Cary was created Viscountess Falkland in the Scottish peerage. Following her husband's appointment of lord deputy in 1622, the family moved to Ireland. To cover expenses incurred in taking up this deputyship, part of her jointure was mortgaged. Severely displeased by this, her father disinherited her in favour of her eldest son, Lucius, and from this moment the family was permanently in financial difficulties. Her attempts to find financial security in Ireland failed, and in 1625 she returned to England to try and settle her husband's financial affairs.<sup>357</sup> Her stay in Ireland may have influenced Cary's later religious and political views. As a suppressed Catholic colony, Ireland's situation echoes Cary's, who was abandoned, ostracised, and to some degree prosecuted for her actions and religious beliefs in the later part of her life.

In 1626 Cary incurred the displeasure of Charles I by publicly converting to Catholicism, and was placed under house arrest. While the King seems soon to have forgiven her, as she was released after a period of six weeks, this was not the case with her husband. He wrote to the King demanding a separation *a mensa et thoro*,<sup>358</sup> refused to give her any financial support, and demanded she return to the household of her mother, Lady Tanfield, who was also unwilling to receive her. As a result Lady Falkland lived alone and in poverty for some time. After petitioning the king, the privy council ordered her husband to provide her with an annual income for her own maintenance on 4 October 1627. Despite further orders in 1628 and 1630 he failed to do so. Relations between them may have become more cordial after her husband's return from Ireland in 1629, but they were never reconciled as husband and wife.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>357</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>358</sup> 'a form of partial divorce or legal separation whereby a couple, while remaining technically married, are allowed or ordered to live apart.' 'A Mensa et Thoro, Adv.', in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, September 2020), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6319>.

<sup>359</sup> Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary [Née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639), Writer and Translator'.

Due to her poverty and marital problems, Cary was largely excluded from court society. There are, for example, no records of her participating in any court masques, despite her interest for them.<sup>360</sup> Nevertheless, she was able to form ties with some of the most influential women of her age. Among them were fellow Roman Catholic converts Mary, Countess of Buckingham; Susan, Countess of Denbigh; and Katherine, Duchess of Buckingham: the mother, sister, and wife, respectively, of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the King's favourite. Queen Henrietta Maria herself even lent her support to Cary's efforts to find a position for her daughter Anne at the Spanish court, although this plan never succeeded.<sup>361</sup> Cary also dedicated her most controversial work, *The Reply of the most Illustrious Cardinal of Perron* (1630), both publicly through print,<sup>362</sup> as well as privately by means of presentation volumes including an autograph verse, to Queen Henrietta Maria. The text is considered an overt piece of Catholic propaganda, and by dedicating it to the Queen Cary identifies Henrietta Maria as an ambassador of Catholicism in England. It was printed in Douai and reputedly burnt upon arrival in England, but several copies have survived, including three of the presentation volumes.<sup>363</sup> This relationship with the Queen is exceptional: Henrietta Maria appears to support Cary, despite the fact that she was a *persona non grata* at the British court.

Cary was widowed in September 1633, when her husband died of gangrene after suffering a leg injury at Theobalds. At that point six of their children, Anne, Lucy, Mary, Elizabeth, Henry, and Patrick, had been living with their eldest brother, Lucius, now second Viscount Falkland. This was due both to the state of their mother's financial affairs, as well as out of hopes to limit her religious influence on them. After losing her husband, Cary determined these six children were to be sent to the continent to enter into the Catholic faith. She regained her daughters with relative ease and arranged for them to convert to Catholicism and enter into a convent at Cambrai. Retaking her two youngest sons, however, proved more difficult, and eventually she resorted to having them kidnapped from their brother's house in 1636. After moving them around London to avoid detection, her sons eventually managed to

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<sup>360</sup> Hodgson-Wright suggests this may have been due to her not fulfilling 'the requisite aesthetic criteria', as well as 'nearly twenty years of constant pregnancy and nursing, short stature, and a tendency to obesity, coupled with a possible rheumatic condition.' Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>361</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>362</sup> Elizabeth Cary, 'To the Maiestie of Henrietta Maria of Bo-Urbon Qveene of Great Brittain', in *The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinall of Perron, to the Ansvveare of the Most Excellent King of Great Britaine the First Tome. Translated into English*. (Douai: By Martin Bogart, 1630), sig. a3, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240899531/citation/2CA1D29BE3E44F51PQ/1>.

<sup>363</sup> Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary [Née Tanfield], Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland (1585–1639), Writer and Translator'.



escape to the continent. Lady Falkland underwent examination by Lord Chief Justice Sir John Bramston and in the Star Chamber, but there is no record which shows that the threat of imprisonment in the Tower was ever carried out.<sup>364</sup>

Elizabeth Cary died in London in October 1639. She was buried in Henrietta Maria's chapel in Somerset House.<sup>365</sup>

## ***Edward II***

Elizabeth Cary's historical narrative was originally written as a manuscript text, titled 'Edward the Seconde: his raigne and deathe' (Northants. RO, Finch-Hatton papers FH1), dated 1626.<sup>366</sup> In 1680 it was published as *The History of the Life, Reign and Death of Edward II* and *The History of the most Unfortunate Prince, King Edward II*, printed by a J. C. for Charles Harper, at the Flower-de-luce in Fleet-street, Samuel Crouch, at the Princes Arms in Poper-head-Alley in Cornhil, and Thomas Fox, at the Angel in Westminster-hall. A second, shorter edition was published in the same year, titled *The History Of the most unfortunate Prince King Edward II*. Martin suggests this second edition was "probably meant to comment on the 1676-81 Exclusion Crisis",<sup>367</sup> thus possibly explaining why it was not published until then. The titlepage of the first print states it was written by "E. F." in 1627 (the Preface signed 20 February), and the text presented here was "Printed verbatim from the Original."<sup>368</sup> The second 1680 edition, however, attributes the work to "the Right Honourable Henry Viscount Faulkland, Sometime Lord Deputy of Ireland."<sup>369</sup> This attribution can be explained by the fact that the original manuscript was found amongst the papers of Lord Falkland, and was repeated again by the editors of a eighteenth-century miscellany that included the shorter version. The attribution to Cary's husband was upheld until the twentieth century, when Donald Stauffer proved it to be Elizabeth Cary's in his 'A Deep and Sad Passion' (1935, reprinted in 1967),

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<sup>364</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>365</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>366</sup> Hodgson-Wright.

<sup>367</sup> Randall Martin, 'Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Viscountess Falkland, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* (Written 1627-28; Pub. 1680)', in *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Elizabeth Sauer, and Melissa Smith (New York: Routledge, 2004), 257.

<sup>368</sup> Elizabeth Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers* (London: Printed by J. C. for Charles Harper, Samuel Crouch, and Thomas Fox, 1680), sig. A1r, <https://search-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2240961787>.

<sup>369</sup> Henry Cary, *The History Of the Most Unfortunate Prince King Edward II. With Choice Political Observations on Him and His Unhappy Favourites, Gaveston & Spencer: Containing Several Rare Passages of Those Times, Not Found in Other Historians*. (London: Printed by A. G. and J. P. for John Playford, 1680), sig. A1r, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240960662/citation/B95D59C20D694D6APQ/8>.

based on the facts that Lord Falkland “did not possess the gift for statecraft that the author of Edward II displays;” the author’s omission of a description of Edward’s murder is “incongruent with [his] contempt for pain;” and he was unlikely to write so critically about favouritism when he was himself a favourite of a favourite.<sup>370</sup>

In form, Cary’s narrative seems to take elements from different genres. It is written in, what Randall Martin calls, “strongly rhythmic prose”,<sup>371</sup> at times even (resembling) blank verse. The long narrated sequences are at times interspersed by direct speeches by some of the characters, reading like orations in a play. This relates to closet drama traditions, which Cary was also a writer of, as noted above. By choosing to focus on the life of a king, Cary seems to return to the historiographical tradition of the chronicle. At the same time, by providing the subtitle *With the Rise and Fall of his great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, the title page presents the text as a moral history, “in which Edward’s public and personal behaviour will be judged against traditional values of kingship.”<sup>372</sup>

As its title suggests, the main section of the work, which counts 160 pages, deals with the life, death, and reign of King Edward II of England. It describes him in his youth and the education he received before he succeeded to the throne after his father, Edward I’s death. It shows him embroiled in war with the Scots, and the growing dissension among his barons and Parliament over the position of his favourites, Gaveston and the Despencers. It ends with his deposition, after Queen Isabella invades with a small army, and his murder at the order of Roger Mortimer, third Baron Mortimer and first Earl of March. Rather than merely focusing on Edward II’s point of view, Cary presents the narrative from the viewpoint of other characters as well. For example, the reader is privy to events and conversations Queen Isabella has once she has fled to France, and the text presents the thought processes of Gaveston and Despenser the Younger in their attempts to gain influence in the rulership. This presents the events from different perspectives, enabling the reader to condemn and sympathise with different characters. The main text is supplemented by a title page, an address to the reader by the publisher, the author’s preface to the reader, and an alphabetical table of persons and events.

Aside from providing the usual information—title, author, printer, publisher, date—the title page also contains a Latin motto: “Qui nescit Dissimulare, nequit vivere, perire,

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<sup>370</sup> Krontiris, ‘Style and Gender in Elizabeth Cary’s Edward II’, 137, 150.

<sup>371</sup> Martin, ‘Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Viscountess Falkland, The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II (Written 1627-28; Pub. 1680)’, 257.

<sup>372</sup> Martin, 257.

melius”<sup>373</sup> (He who does not know how to dissimulate cannot live, but must perish).<sup>374</sup> This aligns closely with James I’s motto “Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare”, which translates to “He who does not know how to dissimulate cannot rule.”<sup>375</sup> This motto is also attributed to the French King Louis XI.<sup>376</sup> As Martin points out, this phrase recalls principles from Machiavellianism, “approving expediency in the pursuit of power and disjoining ethical principles from politics.”<sup>377</sup> It also connects *Edward II* to Cary’s earlier work: in her *Tragedy of Mariam*, it is Mariam’s inability to dissimulate that costs her her life.

The address to the reader by the publisher provides a minimal summary of the narrative. It points to “the Falsness of his Queen, and the Flattery of those Court-Parasites, *Gaveston* and the *Spencers*” as contributing to Edward II becoming “one of the most Unfortunate Princes that ever swayed the *English Scepter*”,<sup>378</sup> but leaving ultimate judgement of what made him so to the audience. It then proceeds to heap praise on “the *Gentleman* that wrote this History,” deeming him “every way qualified for an Historian” and one of the very few “who were able to express their Conceptions in so Masculine a Stile.”<sup>379</sup> Whether this is meant tongue-in-cheek, an attempt to cover up the true gender of the author, or merely an incorrect assumption made when the identity of the real author was yet unknown is unclear. In all of these cases, however, it is underlined how much writing, and history in particular, was considered a male occupation.

The author’s preface to reader is brief, yet provides two points of interest, which were also present in Anne Dowriche’s address to the reader. First, Cary illuminates her method: like Dowriche she sought a more engaging way to present the narrative, following not “the dull Character of our Historians,” yet emphasising that she did not amplify “more than they infer, by Circumstance.”<sup>380</sup> Again, there is a strong emphasis on the truthfulness of the account. As Cary herself states, she “strive[s] to please the Truth”.<sup>381</sup> Secondly, similar to Dowrich and other (women) writers of the period, she herself states that her work is flawed,

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<sup>373</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, sig. A1r.

<sup>374</sup> Martin, ‘Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Viscountess Falkland, The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II (Written 1627-28; Pub. 1680)’, 257.

<sup>375</sup> Martin, 257.

<sup>376</sup> Hotman, *A True and Plaine Report of the Furious Outrages of Fraunce*, LXVI.

<sup>377</sup> Martin, ‘Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Viscountess Falkland, The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II (Written 1627-28; Pub. 1680)’, 257.

<sup>378</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, sig. A2r.

<sup>379</sup> Cary, sig. A2r.

<sup>380</sup> Cary, sig. A2v.

<sup>381</sup> Cary, sig. A2v.

and asks the reader “If so you hap to view it, tax not my Errours”.<sup>382</sup> Since it was only a month’s work, meant to keep her occupied, it “cannot promise ought in right Perfection.”<sup>383</sup>

## Analysis

Throughout *Edward II* Elizabeth Cary makes reference to a number of monarchs. Some of these take on major roles in the narrative, while others appear only briefly or are only mentioned by name. The monarch included, in order of first appearance, are: Edward II;<sup>384</sup> Edward I;<sup>385</sup> Eleanor of Castile, Queen consort of England;<sup>386</sup> Alfonso X of Castile;<sup>387</sup> Robert le Bruce, Robert I of Scotland;<sup>388</sup> Edward III;<sup>389</sup> Isabella of France, Queen consort and later regent of England;<sup>390</sup> Philip IV of France;<sup>391</sup> Louis X of France;<sup>392</sup> John I of France;<sup>393</sup> Charles IV of France;<sup>394</sup> Philippa of Hainault, Queen consort and regent of England;<sup>395</sup> Richard II;<sup>396</sup> Henry VI;<sup>397</sup> Henry IV;<sup>398</sup> Margaret of Anjou, Queen consort of England (and nominally Queen consort of France, but she was never crowned);<sup>399</sup> René I of Naples;<sup>400</sup> Edward V;<sup>401</sup> and Richard III.<sup>402</sup> Of these nineteen monarchs, Edward I, Edward II, and Isabella of France require closer study, as they are the three who have active, speaking parts in the narrative. The other sixteen rulers will be discussed when relevant for the analysis.

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<sup>382</sup> Cary, sig. A2v.

<sup>383</sup> Cary, sig. A2v.

<sup>384</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>385</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>386</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>387</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>388</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>389</sup> Cary, 2.

<sup>390</sup> Cary, 18.

<sup>391</sup> Cary, 18.

<sup>392</sup> Cary, 37.

<sup>393</sup> Cary, 85 While John I did indeed succeed Louis X, as Cary describes, he was an infant and lived and reigned only for five days. He was succeeded by his uncle, Philip V.

<sup>394</sup> Cary, 85 Although Cary describes the events in the second half of her narrative taking place during the reign of John I in France, it was Charles IV who was on the French throne at this time and whose help Isabella sought. This may be a mistake by Cary, or an error in one of her sources. In the further description and analysis of the narrative Charles IV will be used.

<sup>395</sup> Cary, 115.

<sup>396</sup> Cary, 136.

<sup>397</sup> Cary, 156.

<sup>398</sup> Cary, 156.

<sup>399</sup> Cary, 157.

<sup>400</sup> Cary, 157.

<sup>401</sup> Cary, 157.

<sup>402</sup> Cary, 157.

### *Edward I*

Although Cary's history concerns Edward II, her narrative starts during the reign of his "noble",<sup>403</sup> "valiant and prudent"<sup>404</sup> father, Edward I. In every way he appears to be an ideal King: victorious in war, suppressing both rebellious Scots and Welshmen,<sup>405</sup> and wise and provident in his government. Once his son does succeed him to the throne, he has left him "the sure foundation of a happy Monarchy".<sup>406</sup> Throughout the narrative, it is this image of his father that Edward II is constantly compared to. When he, for example, suffers a loss against Robert le Bruce and his Scots in war, he remembers "how oft his Royal Father had displaid his victorious Colours, which knew not how to fight unless to conquer", a memory that "doth vex his Spirits, and makes him vow Revenge and utter Ruine."<sup>407</sup>

As both a father and predecessor, Edward I attempts to teach Edward II how to rule well: he takes him along in the Scottish Wars, to teach him the art of warfare and "Rules of Knowledge and Discipline," and he "unlocks the Closet of his heart, and lays before him those same *Arcana Imperii* and secret mysteries of State".<sup>408</sup> This concept of the monarch as a teacher to their heir was one familiar to Cary and her contemporaries; in 1599 James I, then still only James VI of Scotland, wrote a treatise on government in a private letter to his son Henry which was printed as *Basilikon Dōron* in Edinburgh (1599) and London (1603).<sup>409</sup> As James himself writes, [s]ince J the authour thereof as your naturall Father, must be careful for your godly and vertuous education, as my eldest Sonne, [...] and as a King must timouslie provide for your training vp in all the pointes of a Kings office".<sup>410</sup> While Cary thus seems to establish an image of a good king in whose footsteps James is following (or perhaps the other way around, depending on where she took her inspiration for Edward I from), it is not necessarily an endorsement of James. When she depicts Edward I teaching his son the workings of governing, she describes these lessons as "onely proper to the Royal Operations, and lie not in the road of Vulgar knowledge."<sup>411</sup> Although this might be a strategic way to

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<sup>403</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>404</sup> Cary, 2.

<sup>405</sup> Cary, 1.

<sup>406</sup> Cary, 2.

<sup>407</sup> Cary, 41.

<sup>408</sup> Cary, 3.

<sup>409</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Doron* The text referred to here is a translation into English. The original text was written and published in Scots. Although the author is aware early modern conventions did not require a one-on-one translation and translators had/took more creative license than is generally allowed these days, the English translation will still be used for reasons of practicality. .

<sup>410</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, sig. A4v-A5r.

<sup>411</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 3.

avoid having to detail these ‘mysteries of State’, with which Cary was perhaps not familiar, it might also have been a quip at James. He did, after all, make this knowledge available to the public through his *Basilikon Dōron*. Despite expressing he intended the book as an instruction to his son Henry, and indeed acknowledging that its subject matter was “only fit for a King,”<sup>412</sup> he did still allow it to be published.

Regardless of his efforts, however, Edward I sees that the nature of his son’s character suggests unsuitability for the role of monarch. He attempts to intervene, including by exiling Gaveston, his son’s favourite, but time catches up with him before he can complete his task. On his deathbed he gives one final speech to his son on the tasks and duties of a good sovereign, and extracts promises from both him and a number of Lords present to uphold his rulings and the exile of Gaveston. While, after Edward I’s passing, the Lords at first try to keep their oaths and remind Edward II of his, eventually they are swayed and Gaveston is recalled from abroad. Cary shows that no matter how good of a monarch one is, the only truly relevant ruler is the one who is in power now. As she herself writes, “[t]his great King, as wise as fortunate, living, had the Obedience of a Father and a Sovereign; who, scarcely cold in his Mother Earth, was soon lost in the memory both of Son and Subject.”<sup>413</sup>

### *Edward II*

In her preface to the reader Cary introduces Edward II as “one of the most Vnfortunate” Kings.<sup>414</sup> Throughout her narrative Cary seems to attribute that misfortune largely to faults of his own. His father, as discussed above, invested much time and effort into his education, yet Edward I noted that even all these lessons “were too weak to support the burthen of a Crown, if there be not a correspondent worth in him that wears it.”<sup>415</sup> As the narrative unfolds, this does indeed not seem to be the case in Edward II. This, however, cannot be attributed to his birth or upbringing since

“[h]e could not have been so unworthy a Son of so noble a Father, [...] if either Vertue or Vice had been hereditary. [...] Neither was this degenerate Corruption in him transcendent from the womb that bare him, since all Writers agree his

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<sup>412</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Doron*, sig. B2r.

<sup>413</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 7–8.

<sup>414</sup> Cary, sig. A2v.

<sup>415</sup> Cary, 3.

Mother to be one of the most pious and illustrious pieces of Female-goodness that is registred in those memorable Stories of all our Royal Wedlocks.”<sup>416</sup>

What it eventually appears to come down to is his gullibility in combination with his prioritising of self-interest.

From the moment he succeeds to the throne, he expects both his will and power to be obeyed,<sup>417</sup> and begins to wonder why “his private Appetite should subscribe to publick necessity.”<sup>418</sup> In other words, he questions why the duties of his body politic should overrule the desires of his body natural. It takes only one speech of a “Parasitical Minion”<sup>419</sup> which echoes his sentiments before he affirms his intentions of exercising his royal powers. To his Lords he relates “the extremity of his inward trouble, which had so engrost his private thoughts, that he had been thereby enforced to estrange himself from them, and neglected the Rights due to his Crown and Dignity.”<sup>420</sup> Here is thus openly admits to his body natural overruling body politic; the issues in his private life caused him to neglect his responsibilities as head of government. His suggestion that Gaveston’s return should solve this issue is, after some deliberation, accepted and he is welcomed back.

Gaveston’s return, however, does not herald a change in Edward’s behaviour: he “could not shadow or dissemble his Affection, but makes it eminent by the neglects of the State-affairs, and the forgetfulness of the civil and ordinary Respect due to his great Barons.”<sup>421</sup> To makes matters worse, this time Edward does not merely neglect his own duties, he gives his favourite extensive powers of his own, investing him with “all the principal Offices and Dignities of the Kingdom”.<sup>422</sup> When the younger Spencer succeeds Gaveston as Edward’s favourite, he is given similar power, being made Lord Chamberlain.<sup>423</sup> With this behaviour, Edward goes against the guidelines set down in *Basilikon Dōron*, in which James I advises to “[c]hoose then for all these offices, men of knowne wisdom, honestie, and good conscience; well practised in the points of the craft, that ye ordaine them for; and free of all factions and partialities: but speciallie free of that filthy vice of Flattery, the pest of all Princes, and wracke of Republickes.”<sup>424</sup> Rather than assembling a council that will guide him wisely and justly in his reign, Edward decides to give these positions of power

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<sup>416</sup> Cary, 2.

<sup>417</sup> Cary, 8.

<sup>418</sup> Cary, 9.

<sup>419</sup> Cary, 9.

<sup>420</sup> Cary, 15.

<sup>421</sup> Cary, 18.

<sup>422</sup> Cary, 20.

<sup>423</sup> Cary, 51.

<sup>424</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Doron*, 68.

to his favourites to please them and always have them close. What this results in is the favourites keeping Edward occupied with various entertainments, while they make decisions of government to benefit themselves. As Cary writes, Edward is King in name only, it are his minions who rule.<sup>425</sup>

The manner in which Edward, and particularly his favourites, rule are of course displeasing to his Barons. This results in a cycle of exile and return for Gaveston and the Spencers. Whenever his Barons or Parliament present reasons why his favourite should be banished from the realm, Edward acquiesces. The reason he does so is not because he agrees with their arguments, i.e. that the favourite in question is abusing his position and his influence is too far-reaching. Edward complies because he feels the threat of rebellion against his person and position. In all cases he does not hold out for long; sooner or later he recalls his favourites—with varying degrees of permission from his Parliament—thus letting his personal agenda once more overrule his duties as monarch.

Towards the end of her narrative, Cary addresses the topic of royal favourites and their position and power at court. On all accounts she preaches moderation: “[l]et the Favourite taste the King’s Bounty, not devour it; let him enjoy his ear, but not ingross it; let him participate his love, but not enchant it. In the eye of the Commonwealth if he must be a Moat, let him not be a Monster. And lastly, if he must practise on the Subject, let it be with moderation, and not with rapine.”<sup>426</sup> In other words, while she allows for the existence of royal favourites, she argues that their influence should be limited. If it is not, it will beget “not more hatred than multiplicity of error, which draw with them dangerous Convulsions, if not a desperate ruine to that State where it hath his allowance and practice.”<sup>427</sup> While this reflection of course comments on the events she depicts, they carry an extra meaning when considered in the context the narrative was written. Although Charles I was on the throne in 1626/1627, the year the manuscript is dated, until about a year before its composition James I had been on the throne. James had a number of controversial favourites himself, including George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset. Even after Charles I succeeded his father, Buckingham remained a powerful figure at court, and when Parliament attempted to impeach him Charles intervened.<sup>428</sup> As discussed above, Cary herself was in

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<sup>425</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 27.

<sup>426</sup> Cary, 137–38.

<sup>427</sup> Cary, 137–38.

<sup>428</sup> Roger Lockyer, ‘Villiers, George, First Duke of Buckingham (1592–1628), Royal Favourite’, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 19 May 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28293>.



contact with Buckingham and his relatives, and this narrative's focus on favouritism might have been both a reflection on the power of favourites as well as a coping mechanism for having to rely on their influence at court herself.

As Randall Martin points out, Buckingham and Somerset parallel Edward II's favourites in the narrative, Gaveston and Spencer.<sup>429</sup> Martin describes how this fits into the new approach to historiography exemplified by a figure who already appeared in Chapter 1: Machiavelli. Machiavelli's approach was "less concerned with detecting a divine will in human affairs or expounding moral truths than with investigating secular causes of events in rigorous narratives enlivened by vividly drawn characters and first-person speeches."<sup>430</sup> Cary's narrative does indeed contain such characters and speeches, displaying a number of features associated with this "artistically and ideologically revisionist "practical" history, which was also designed to allude to contemporary figures and events."<sup>431</sup> Given the parallels Cary hints at between Edward II and his 'minions' and the late-King and his favourites, and her explicit reflections on rulership and the influence of favourites this latter aspect of Machiavellian historiography can certainly be argued to be present as well.

Despite the major focus on Edward's favourites, the narrative also shows him attempting to fulfil his role as monarch at times, although sparingly. One of the few moments in which he does prioritise his kingly duties, follows Gaveston's death. While at first he vows revenge, he eventually puts it off when war threatens in Scotland: "He lays by his private rancour, and settles himself to suppress this sudden and unlookt-for Commotion, waking from that sensual Dream, which had given him so large a cause of Sorrow."<sup>432</sup> His campaign against Robert le Bruce, however, proves unsuccessful. Cary places the blame for this on the way Edward has governed his nation; because everything in his own kingdom was in disorder, nothing undertook abroad could succeed. In her words, Edward "planted the foundation of his Monarchy on Sycophants and Favorites, whose disorderly Proceedings dried up all that sap that should have fostered up the springing Goodness of the Kingdome, and made him a meer stranger to those Abilities that are proper to Rule and Government."<sup>433</sup> Even when Edward does decide to take up his duties as monarch, his actions are undermined by his past mismanagement.

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<sup>429</sup> Martin, 'Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Viscountess Falkland, The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II (Written 1627-28; Pub. 1680)', 257.

<sup>430</sup> Martin, 257.

<sup>431</sup> Martin, 257.

<sup>432</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 38.

<sup>433</sup> Cary, 39.

Aside from his favourites, Edward II has another significant relationship in his life: the one with his wife, Isabella. As James I explains in his *Basilikon Dōron*, “Mariage is the greatest earthly felicitie or miserie, that can come to a man, according as it pleaseth God to blesse or cursse the same”, and he underlines that to procure that blessing of a happy marriage “ye must be carefull both in your praeparation for it, and in the choise and vsage of your wife”.<sup>434</sup> When it comes to his choice of bride, Edward indeed does not marry a woman “of knowne euill conditions, or vicious education”,<sup>435</sup> as will be detailed further in the section below. Regarding his behaviour during their marriage, however, Edward does not heed James’s advice. The *Basilikon Dōron* states that “[w]hen ye are Maried, keepe inviolable your promise made to God in your Mariage; whiche standeth all in doing of one thing, and abstayning from another: to treat her in all thinges as your Wife and the halfe of your selfe; and to make your bodie (whiche then is no more yours, but properly hers) common with none other.”<sup>436</sup> Although it is never stated that Edward and his favourites had any sort of sexual relationship, Cary does affirm Isabella does not merely have to share her husband’s affections with another lover, but that “Gaveston had the sole possession of [Edward’s] Heart, and Power to keep it.”<sup>437</sup> While Cary ends her narrative with the observation that Edward II lost his kingdom “principally by the treacherous Infidelity of his Wife, Servants, and Subjects”,<sup>438</sup> his treatment of his wife was in many ways a catalyst in bringing about his own demise. Had he not neglected and disrespected her in favour of Gaveston and Spencer, she would not have felt the need to become involved with Mortimer and take up arms against her husband. As Cary writes about Isabella just after their marriage, Edward returned to England “seised of a Jewel, which not being rightly valued, wrought his ruine.”<sup>439</sup>

### *Isabella*

While Isabella is introduced to the reader relatively early in the narrative, she does not take an active role until the last part of the text. Although her role in Edward II’s eventual downfall is foreshadowed from the start, she is initially introduced as “the French Kings Daughter, one of the goodliest and fairest Ladies of that time.”<sup>440</sup> Isabella, given this description, thus perfectly

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<sup>434</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Doron*, 73.

<sup>435</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, 77.

<sup>436</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, 80.

<sup>437</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 19.

<sup>438</sup> Cary, 137.

<sup>439</sup> Cary, 19.

<sup>440</sup> Cary, 18.

fits James I's guidelines for a good marriage in his *Basilikon Dōron*: she has all the potential to make "a godly and vertuous wife"<sup>441</sup> and offers the three additional "accessories" of "beautie, riches, and friendship by alliance".<sup>442</sup> Her next appearance is after the death of Gaveston, when she is shown not to mourn him. This, however, is due to the fact that he was a barrier "which stopt the passage betwixt her Husbands Love and her Affections",<sup>443</sup> thus revealing Gaveston was preventing her from fulfilling her duties as a wife.

Isabella's character slowly seems to change when her husband's next favourite appears. She still graciously receives Spencer, but only because she is aware he holds a more powerful position than her at the moment.<sup>444</sup> Not long after this she is also shown to be actively involved in politics for the first time: the deferment of Mortimer's execution is attributed to her intercession.<sup>445</sup> Aside from his preferment of his favourites over his wife, Edward II is thus shown making another mistake according to James I, whose rule reads "suffer her neuer to medle with the politick gouernment of the commonweale".<sup>446</sup> Later on in the narrative, Isabella appears to want to get involved in politics again: when there are strains in the relationship with Charles IV of France, Spencer suggests she is sent over to her brother to smooth things out, a plan that she encourages.<sup>447</sup> She does this with ulterior motives however, since it "prescrib'd the way for her escape, which she herself intended".<sup>448</sup> This time Edward does heed James's advice, and eventually refuses to let her go.

This is also when Isabella is presented as anything other than a good, dutiful woman and wife for the first time. Spencer describes her as "a Woman of a strong Brain, and stout Stomack, apt on all occasions to trip up his heels, if once she found him reeling".<sup>449</sup> He is not the only one to change her characterisation; Cary describes how the "Love and Jealousie, that equally possess the Queen, being intermixed with a stronger desire of Revenge,"<sup>450</sup> spur her to action. With her husband thwarting her escape to France on a diplomatic assignment, she needs to employ this cunning to find another way. Eventually she feigns a journey of devotion, helps Mortimer, with whom she had been having an affair, escape from prison, and

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<sup>441</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Doron*, 72.

<sup>442</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, 77.

<sup>443</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 33.

<sup>444</sup> Cary, 52.

<sup>445</sup> Cary, 75.

<sup>446</sup> King James VI and I of Scotland and England, *Basilikon Doron*, 82.

<sup>447</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 88.

<sup>448</sup> Cary, 88.

<sup>449</sup> Cary, 86–87.

<sup>450</sup> Cary, 89.

takes him and her son to France. In France she first asks her brother for assistance, and when he denies it, seeks it at the court of Hainault. Here she betroths her son to Philippa of Hainault, and takes her newly gained armed forces back to England, where she marched against her husband's forces. Eventually the Spencers and their supporters are captured and executed, Edward II is forced to abdicate and imprisoned, and Edward III is installed as a puppet king while "[t]he Queen and *Mortimer* in this his Minority take upon them the whole Sway and Government of the Kingdome."<sup>451</sup>

At the start of these events it remains somewhat unclear for whom she is doing what she does. When asking for help from her brother she tells him "'tis not I alone unjustly suffer; my tears speak those of a distressed Kingdom, which, long time glorious, now is almost ruin'd,"<sup>452</sup> thus implying she is doing it for the sake of the English nation. Yet, when setting out for France she is driven by revenge, and again by "Vengeance" when she is deserted by her country of birth and is forced to leave for Hainault.<sup>453</sup> Once she, Mortimer, and her forces have taken over power in England "Ambition seis'd her strongly",<sup>454</sup> and "passeth on with a kinde of insulting Tyranny, far short of the belief of her former Vertue and Goodness".<sup>455</sup> Nevertheless, she refuses to approve and be an active participant in her husband's murder.<sup>456</sup> She does, however, also not "deny"<sup>457</sup> Mortimer's plan to murder Edward when he proposes it.

Despite the fact that Cary shows Isabella the possessor of "a Villanous Disposition, and a Devilish Nature"<sup>458</sup> in the final part of her narrative, her characterisation of the Queen is more complicated than an outright condemnation. Although Cary ultimately denounces her motives and behaviour, the text also shows her actions can be justified to some extent. When her husband is "a stranger to her bed, [...] without a glance on her deserving Beauty" her "youthful Affections" need another "fit subject to work on," which she finds in Mortimer.<sup>459</sup> Cary does not approve of Isabella's affair, but she does explain it. Likewise, while she condemns her tyrannical behaviour during and after her coup, the invasion itself is justified by the mismanagement and abuse of power by her husband and, especially, his favourites. It may, in fact, be the reason the Queen was successful in overthrowing her husband at all.

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<sup>451</sup> Cary, 142.

<sup>452</sup> Cary, 96.

<sup>453</sup> Cary, 108.

<sup>454</sup> Cary, 127–28.

<sup>455</sup> Cary, 128.

<sup>456</sup> Cary, 151–54.

<sup>457</sup> Cary, 154.

<sup>458</sup> Cary, 129.

<sup>459</sup> Cary, 89.

Isabella is a victim of mistreatment by the men around her, and rather than giving up when she is abandoned by them, she decides to find another way to do something about it. Cary's narrative can even be said to express a level of sympathy for the Queen's situation. As Krontiris points out, there is, for example, "a noticeable emphasis on the queen's suffering and abandonment in times of affliction."<sup>460</sup> The text spends a considerable amount of space detailing Isabel's search for supporters, and how she is abandoned by everyone, including her brother, who neglects his fraternal duty in favour of political expedience. This situation, to some extent, parallels Cary's following her conversion to Catholicism. As described above, she also became isolated after her husband, family, and many of her friends deserted her. While Cary thus ultimately condemns Isabella's actions, there is certain sympathy for the Queen and an understanding of her reasons.

### Comparison to male authors

The rule of Edward II has been the subject of numerous works by early modern authors. It was of course included in the more traditional historiographies, such as Raphael Holinshed's *The Firste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (1577) and Robert Brady's *A Continuation of the Complete History of England* (1700), as well as in forms of more popular culture like Christopher Marlowe's play *Edward II* (1594). While these texts narrate the more or less the same events as Cary does, there are a number of considerable differences between these narratives.

When it comes to the texts by Holinshed and Brady, these are more extensive and detailed than Cary's in a way. These both mention explicit dates, placing a stronger emphasis on the chronology of events. Cary, on the other hand, does not even cite the year in which the depicted events took place. Brady, additionally, also explicitly names his sources, at times including conflicting accounts and adding personal comments on these texts.<sup>461</sup> This is also not the case in Cary's *Edward II*, who does not hint at which texts she may have used in, for example, her preface to the reader. These differences can be attributed to the different genres these authors were operating in: Holinshed and Brady were recording and reporting historical events, presenting an overview English (political) history; Cary was presenting her reader with a narrative, telling a story that focuses on the characters' actions and developments.

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<sup>460</sup> Krontiris, 'Style and Gender in Elizabeth Cary's *Edward II*', 137.

<sup>461</sup> E.g. Robert Brady, *A Continuation of the Complete History of England: Containing the Lives and Reigns of Edward I, II & III and Richard the Second* (Savoy: Printed by Edward Jones for Sam Lowndes, and Awnsham and John Churchill, 1700), 153, <http://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240899645/citation/B95D59C20D694D6APQ/9>.

This connects to another major difference between these three texts. Holinshed and Brady include (sections from) bills, grants, ordinances, etc., in their texts. In other words, they present what has been written down in official records. While they do build their narratives around these, to some extent interpreting the circumstances that led to these documents, it makes for a more distant version of events which mainly focuses on the political dimension. Cary, contrarily, has opted for the inclusion of speeches and dialogues instead, a strategy seen before in Dowriche's *French Historie*. This enables Cary to more effectively make 'people' out of her characters, rather than mere historical figures. The reader is privy to characters' thoughts and interactions not recorded in chronicles and such. It also fleshes out the relationships between her characters, since Cary is able to suggest emotions and personal feelings. While it means she has taken more creative license than the two men, it has helped her write a more effective story.

Another point of contention between all four of these authors is role of Queen Isabella. Although Holinshed barely mentions her at first and Brady does not include a description of her character, all authors seem to agree she started out as a good, virtuous wife. When it comes to her actions in the final part of the narrative, however, her motives vary. Holinshed describes her leaving for France to broker peace between her brother and husband, and actually succeeding, before she decided to stay because she was "highly displeased, both with the Spencers, and the Kyng hir husbände," and to prepare "to Englande, not to be reconciled, but to stirre the people to some Rebellion, whereby she might reuenge hir manifold iniuries".<sup>462</sup> Brady, on the other hand, describes her as being led to act against her husband and the Spencers through deliberate misinformation by the Bishop of Hereford.<sup>463</sup> Both these men agree that Isabella neither helped Mortimer escape from prison, nor took her son with her to France. Marlowe agrees with them on the former, but takes Cary's part in the latter matter, and has her indeed leave for France to parlay with her brother. In the events that follow Isabella's return to England, she is ascribed with varying levels of agency by the four authors in question here. Holinshed does constantly use 'she' and 'her' in his description of the invasion, but through the more distant, descriptive style she also becomes less of an active

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<sup>462</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *The Firste [Laste] Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande Conteyning the Description and Chronicles of England, from the First Inhabiting Vnto the Conquest: The Description and Chronicles of Scotland, from the First Original of the Scottes Nation till the Yeare of Our Lorde 1571: The Description and Chronicles of Yrelande, Likewise from the First Originall of That Nation Untill the Yeare 1571*, 2nd ed. (London: Imprinted for Iohn Hunne, 1577), 876, <https://www-proquest-com.ru.idm.oclc.org/eebo/docview/2254612484/pageLevelImage?imgSeq=925&imgSeq=925>.

<sup>463</sup> Brady, *A Continuation of the Complete History of England: Containing the Lives and Reigns of Edward I, II & III and Richard the Second*, 148.

participant. A similar argument applies to Brady's text. Both these authors give part of her agency to Mortimer, who was at this time her "most familiar Counsellor"<sup>464</sup> without whom "the Queene in all thefe matters did nothing."<sup>465</sup> Marlowe even goes a step further; throughout his text Isabella takes up a much less active role, and even when she does make a speech to incite her forces upon their arrival in England, she is interrupted by Mortimer for being too emotional.<sup>466</sup> In Marlowe's play the power balance between Isabella and Mortimer is also shifted much more in Mortimer's favour; whatever actions she undertakes are done at his behest. Cary is the only one who describes events taking place because "the incensed Queen would have it so, against which was no disputing",<sup>467</sup> and who has Isabella take full command of her actions through her speeches. She also escapes unpunished in this narrative, unlike in Marlowe's text, where what little agency she had is taken away again by her son, Edward III, taking command and imprisoning her.<sup>468</sup>

There is a final significant aspect in which these three male authors differ from Cary: their treatment of the prelates. In Holinshed's text it is the Bishop of Hereford who communicated to Edward II's captors "that they shoulde dispatch him out of the way".<sup>469</sup> Brady also has Hereford involved in Edward's murder, as well as having the Bishops in Isabella's company making false promises and spreading lies about the Pope's support of her cause during her invasion.<sup>470</sup> Marlowe, too, questions and criticises the influence of the Church and Rome, having his Edward II ask "[w]hy should a king be subject to a priest?"<sup>471</sup> Cary, contrarily, gives a much more favourable description of Catholic figures in her narrative: the Pope, for example, has "a pious and a truely compassionate eye",<sup>472</sup> and the black monks at St. Hammonds's Abbey "had the honour to give their long-lost Mistriss the first Welcome".<sup>473</sup> Given her conversion to Catholicism, Cary would perhaps have been less eager to paint fellow Catholics in a bad light.

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<sup>464</sup> Brady, 159.

<sup>465</sup> Holinshed, *The Firste [Laste] Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande Conteyning the Description and Chronicles of England, from the First Inhabiting Vnto the Conquest*, 881.

<sup>466</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. Martin Wiggins and Robert Lindsey (London: Methuen Drama, 2014), 91–92.

<sup>467</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 130.

<sup>468</sup> Marlowe, *Edward II*, 133–34.

<sup>469</sup> Holinshed, *The Firste [Laste] Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande Conteyning the Description and Chronicles of England, from the First Inhabiting Vnto the Conquest*, 883.

<sup>470</sup> Brady, *A Continuation of the Complete History of England: Containing the Lives and Reigns of Edward I, II & III and Richard the Second*, 155.

<sup>471</sup> Cary, *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II, King of England, and Lord of Ireland: With the Rise and Fall of His Great Favourites, Gaveston and the Spencers*, 25.

<sup>472</sup> Cary, 42.

<sup>473</sup> Cary, 117.

## Conclusion

Elizabeth Cary's *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* presents a view on good rulership through the dichotomy between Edward I and Edward II: the father a good and conscientious King, successful in battle and following James I's example in the education of his heir; the son weak-willed and corruptible, more interested in the desires of his body natural than in the duties of his body politic and breaking every rule set out in James's *Basilikon Dōron*. In her depiction of the Edward II, Gaveston and Spencer, she demonstrates the dangers of royal favouritism, implicitly commenting on similar issues during the reign of the late King James I, and the continuing influence of his favourite George Villiers during the reign of Charles I. By doing this Cary not only adopts an approach similar to Machiavelli's 'practical' history, but may also be reflecting on her personal situation in which she was reliant on the power of said favourite and his relatives.

When compared to works by male contemporaries, Cary's *Edward II* shows a number of significant differences. Through her use of speeches and dialogue, and lack of exact dating and chronology, her narrative becomes less objective than traditional histories like Holinshed's and Brady's, but also more effective as a story. Her most divergent point of view is on the role of Queen Isabella. The male authors vary in their description of her motives and they all limit her active involvement in the events to some extent. Cary, on the other hand, does not mince her words and has her act mainly out of revenge, deferring barely any of her agency to Mortimer, unlike Holinshed, Brady, and Marlowe. This creates a more damning representation of the Queen, but also a more powerful one. At the same time this is also where the influence of Cary's personal situation may be becoming visible. While she condemns Isabella's actions, the way both women were abandoned by their husband, family, and friends creates a level of sympathy and understanding in Cary's depiction of the Queen.



## Conclusion

The aim of this research was to identify how the depictions of specific monarchs in British early modern women's historical narratives relate to the texts' social, religious, and/or political messages, and the authors' social position. Following the analyses of Anne Dowriche's *The French Historie*, Elizabeth Southwell's *A True Relation of what succeeded at the sickness and death of Queen Elizabeth*, and Elizabeth Cary's *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II* given above, it can indeed be concluded that these women were influenced by their own circumstances when depicting their chosen monarchs.

One of the most significant factors in this, are the authors' religious views. Dowriche condemned the Catholic Henry II, Charles IX, and Catherine de' Medici for their prosecution of French Huguenots, while she encourages the Protestant Elizabeth I to hunt down the Catholics in her own nation. This denouncement of Catholicism and endorsing of a an even stricter Protestant religious unity, is in line with Puritan views. Southwell, on the other hand, was a Catholic, who questioned the spiritual safety of her monarch. She describes Elizabeth rejecting any religious guidance in her final days, and receiving previews of her own damnation. While Cary does not seem explicitly occupied with her monarchs' religion, her Catholic views are still visible in her narrative. The Catholic figures appearing briefly in her text do everything with the best intentions, while some of her male contemporaries portray Bishops as actively involved in the invasion and Edward II's murder.

There is also a visible influence of the personal relationships these women had with their monarch(s). Of the three women, Dowriche is the furthest removed from her Queen. Nevertheless, she did have a brother who was a member of Parliament, and might thus have known what was going on in current political discourse. This knowledge may have enabled and motivated her to write her call to action to Elizabeth I. As a maid of honour to both Elizabeth and Queen Anne, Southwell was personally much closer to her monarchs than Dowriche. This closeness, as well as that of a number of her relatives, allowed her to write her account in the first place. It is, however, mostly her description of Secretary Robert Cecil that hints at her personal circumstances. Following Cecil's intervention in her husband's trial, and James I's institution of the Oath of Alliance, Southwell had a personal stake in undermining the new monarch and his government. Perhaps unsurprisingly she thus shows Cecil's political scheming in the Queens final days, placing question marks around the legitimacy of James's succession. Cary also implicitly reflects on James I's rule, but she is concerned with the

power and influence his favourites hold, even after Charles I has succeeded to the throne. She was herself dependent on the connections of one of them, and while this thus meant that she needed them to be powerful, it will also have made her very aware how influential they were in the first place. An additional reflection of her personal circumstances is visible in her depiction of Queen Isabella. Although her ultimate characterisation reveals her to be vengeful and ambitious there is a certain understanding of her motives. Due to Cary being abandoned by her husband, friends, and relatives following her conversion to Catholicism, her narrative shows Isabella in a sympathetic light when something similar happens to her.

There is a final major commonality between these narratives that could be ascribed to the personal situation of their authors: the amount of agency given to the female characters. Dowriche describes Catherine de Medici being actively involved in the planning of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre; Southwell's Elizabeth I remains active and commanding until her final breath; and Isabella prepares and undertakes an invasion of England following her husband's mistreatment of her personally and mismanagement of the country as a whole, in Cary's narrative, even after she does not receive any assistance from her male friends and relatives. Although this agency does not always lead to a positive portrayal of the woman in question, in fact it makes de Medici and Isabella one of the main villains of their story and Elizabeth I partly responsible for her own (spiritual) demise, it does make these women into active participants in history. When compared to works by male contemporaries, these authors give their women a more prominent role in events. While this is not certainly and entirely attributable to the authors gender, odds are they did not sideline these women in their representations of history, being women themselves.

Throughout their narratives, these women engage with contemporary theories and ideas about rulership. At times this is done implicitly, through the depictions of the monarchs that they give, while at other moments they quote or paraphrase from such texts quite literally. Dowriche reflects on Machiavelli's views on rulership, the image of the Queen as a shepherd of the nation's religious flock, and the debates surrounding women monarchs as exemplified by John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet*. Southwell is mainly occupied by the division of the monarchs body natural and body politic, and the influence the former's corruption and destruction has on the latter. In her text Cary also engages with the monarchs two bodies, as well as the guidelines for a good monarch presented by James I himself in his *Basilikon Dōron*. This shows, as Beilin writes, that while these women were not active in public office, this did not mean they could not position themselves within contemporary political discourse

and debates.<sup>474</sup> They often approach these concepts and discourses from the perspectives of religion and personal relationships, which are traditionally considered ‘female’ topics, as illustrated by the gendered writing conventions outlined in the introduction. While they thus write on history and politics, which were regarded as ‘male’ subjects, they engage with these from angles deemed suitable for the female pen.

As discussed in the introduction, there was a relative flexibility in genres and styles that could be used for historiography, and these women used this to their advantage. Rather than sticking to the dry facts and recorded treatises, letters, etc. used in the chronicles and histories of their male contemporaries, Dowriche and Cary used speeches and dialogues to flesh out their characters and bring across their points more effectively. Dowriche relied on verse to articulate her message more poignantly and interest a wider audience. Cary’s narrative gave her the opportunity to adopt Machiavelli’s practical approach to historiography, and reflect on contemporary political developments. Southwell, on the other hand, presented an account in which personal views and private moments can be included exactly because it focuses on an individual’s experience.

Taken together these observations confirm the hypothesis set down at the beginning of this study. There is indeed a visible influence of their social standing and social/religious/political opinions on the manner these women write about history and represent a number of monarchs. They present their audience and, (in)explicitly, their monarch with reflections on good rulership, incentives to undertake certain actions, insights and warnings about current events at court. While their religion, social standing, and personal relationships with their own monarch(s) are equally contributing factors, their womanhood will likely have affected their representation of historical events, especially concerning the role their female characters played.

While this thesis has made a start with studying early modern women writer’s historical narratives as forms of historiography, there is much left to examine for future research. First of all, the case studies in question could be analysed even further, both their representations of the monarchs already discussed here and the ones only lightly touched upon. Additionally, the temporal scope could be expanded to include texts from the Interregnum, Restoration, and the period leading up to and following the Glorious Revolution. Examples of such case studies are Margaret Cavendish’s topical commentaries *The Worlds Olio* (1655), and Aphra Behn’s novel *Agnes de Castro, or, the Force of Generous Love*

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<sup>474</sup> Beilin, “‘Some Freely Spake Their Minde’: Resistance in Anne Dowriche’s *French Historie*”, 120.

(1688). Lastly, this research could be expanded to include texts from outside of Britain, for instance from France or Sweden. This could involve studying them separately, to determine the literary traditions within these nations themselves, as well as on a transnational level, to establish the possible contacts and influences these women had with and on each other. Different nations all had their own literary traditions, discourses on politics, and forms of rulership, leading to different contexts and frameworks women writers had to operate in. Nevertheless many European nations were at this time directly involved in each other's politics, through wars, religious conflicts, and intermarriage. Simultaneously, women also wrote on foreign history, as exemplified by Dowriche's text, and had opportunities to travel abroad, as shown by Southwell and Cary. This means they would have encountered other nations' traditions and discourses. Examining historical narratives by early modern women from different nations might shed light on how they dealt with these different frameworks, both in their own nation's context and in a transnational network of women historiographers.

While there were relatively few women among the "many" who wrote history in the early modern period, the small number who did used it to reflect on rulership and express personal concerns. Their works show a perspective on historical events in which women were both active observers, commentators, and participants. Although women may have been pushed to the margins of the political power dynamic, these women writers show that this did not mean they had no opinions on it.

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