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NEGOTIATION THROUGH IDENTIFICATION: ELIZABETH TUDOR'S USE OF
SPREZZATURA IN THREE SPEECHES

by

Alisa Brough

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

Brigham Young University

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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ABSTRACT

NEGOTIATION THROUGH IDENTIFICATION: ELIZABETH TUDOR'S USE OF SPREZZATURA IN THREE SPEECHES

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Master of Arts

Elizabeth Tudor, Queen of England, weaves the courtier's strategy of *sprezzatura* throughout her public orations in order to help her identify with her audience of courtiers, scholars, and politicians. Through her use of *sprezzatura*, Elizabeth woos her audience and transcends the differences of opinion that lead to conflict between the Queen and her audience members.

Using Kenneth Burke's theory of rhetoric as identification, this thesis employs rhetorical analysis in order to discover how Queen Elizabeth's use of *sprezzatura* enables her to portray herself as a humanist scholar, a political servant, and a dedicated defender of her country and thus, identify with her audience. Because these identities also have gender implications, this analysis of Elizabeth's rhetorical choices uses Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance in order to realize the ways in which Elizabeth assumes a masculine identity and also manipulates gender expectations.

As Elizabeth uses *sprezzatura* to delight her audience, smoothing the way for her identification with their characteristics and values, she also reveals her need to transcend division and conflict through the use of her own language. In her 1564 speech at Cambridge, Elizabeth transforms the conflict surrounding her gender by acknowledging it and confronting it in a way that allows her to repudiate specific aspects of negative feminine constructions. When Parliament petitioned her once again to marry in 1576, the Queen moves the focus away from her marital status by turning the discussion into a review of her reign, so that in discussing her success so far, she changes the topic under negotiation to one that she and her audience could more easily agree on. Finally in 1586, after Parliament asked for Mary Stuart's execution, Elizabeth shifts the violence of their differences over what to do with Mary to a third party, emphasizing the dangerous divide between England and Mary's European supporters in order to represent her relationship with Parliament as a united effort to protect the country and its religion. In all three situations, Elizabeth introduces the conflict into her own language and then successfully transforms it, removing the violence.

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Introduction

The first speech I read by Queen Elizabeth I was her famous oration to the troops at Tilbury. The phrase, “I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king” grabbed me (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 326). It was both unflatteringly honest and stunningly bold. I wanted to know more about Elizabeth and her ability to combine words in such a way that they were persuasive and memorable. More than eight years later, after reading a collection of Elizabeth’s speeches, I noticed that the “weak and feeble woman” theme appears throughout Elizabeth’s speeches. For me, part of Elizabeth’s mystique was based on my understanding that England did not want a woman on the throne, and for that reason, Elizabeth had to fight for the right to rule (a sentiment that is not completely foreign since voters in the United States have yet to seriously consider a female candidate for president). Why then would she not only remind her audience of stereotypical critiques of women, but even admit that they described her? When I originally read her speech to the troops at Tilbury, her admission that she was a “weak and feeble woman” was so blunt it was shocking. But as I discovered that she frequently included these admissions of weakness in her speeches, I realized that such statements must have been designed to do more than shock.

Without looking at the big picture, it is hard to see these statements as anything but rhetorical tricks subservient to the larger purpose of an individual speech. This thesis intends to look at that larger picture, focusing on the way the thread of self-deprecation is woven into three of Elizabeth’s speeches: Latin Oration at Cambridge University, August 7, 1564; Speech at the Close of the parliamentary Session, March 15, 1576; and Second Reply to the Petition for the Execution of Mary Queen of Scots, November 24, 1586.

Looking at three speeches spread throughout Elizabeth's reign will allow us to consider how the different political contexts, audiences, and obstacles facing Elizabeth motivated and influenced her use of this trope.

Elizabeth grew up with the question hanging over her whether she was fit to rule England. Long before Elizabeth's turn to rule arrived, her family did nearly everything possible to raise doubts about whether she would be an appropriate and lawful monarch and to prevent her accession to the throne. Because of Henry's voracious consumption of wives in pursuit of a male heir, Elizabeth's and Mary's claims to the throne became a matter of legitimacy that was defined by the King and Parliament. In almost the same manner that Henry disposed of wives, he also disposed of his children's right to the throne so that each new child relegated the previous one to the status of bastard. When Anne Boleyn was executed, Elizabeth, like Mary before her, found herself demoted, declared illegitimate by Parliament, and "excluded from the Succession of the Kingdome" by her father in order to make way for future heirs (Camden sig. *2r¹; Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 55, 61). But then in 1544, near the end of his reign, Henry decided to include all of his children in the royal succession. Parliament officially declared that Mary and then Elizabeth should follow Edward to the throne if he failed to produce his own heir, but significantly neither Mary nor Elizabeth were legitimized during Henry's or Edward's lifetime (Camden sig. *4v; Dunn 62; Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 77; Starkey 31).

¹ The copy of Camden's *History* that I refer to uses a combination of numbers and symbols, like the asterisk, to mark the pages in the section titled *Preparation and Introduction to the History*. All signature references refer to this section, while page numbers refer to quotations taken from Book One of Camden's *History*.

Despite his affection for Elizabeth, Edward also worked to prevent Elizabeth's (and Mary's) accessions by revising the line of succession. Just before he died, Edward wrote "My device for the succession," which established Jane Grey (Henry VIII's niece and Henry VII's granddaughter) and her male heir as Edward's successor in order to prevent Mary from reestablishing Catholicism in England. But Edward's plans also omitted his Protestant sister, Elizabeth, from the line of succession. Certainly others such as Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset, and John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, were heavily involved in the plot, but historians note that Edward himself played a significant role in drafting the new line of succession (Camden sig. A2r; Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 134; and Starkey 110). Why Edward would want to exclude Elizabeth as well as Mary remains unclear. Alison Plowden, presumably relying on William Camden's account, suggests that fear that Elizabeth might be forced to marry a Catholic may have motivated Edward (*Young Elizabeth* 135). David Starkey argues instead that Edward worried about Elizabeth's loyalty to Henry VIII's wishes and her "unshakeable sense of dynastic legitimacy," so that if Edward left the throne to Elizabeth, she might insist that Mary be crowned first despite her devotion to Catholicism (110). At any rate, once again, Elizabeth was excluded from the line of succession, and the fact that she was still legally illegitimate did not help her any.

Regardless of Edward's efforts, Mary successfully claimed the crown and sent her cousin Jane to the Tower. Almost immediately afterwards, Mary took legal action to resolve the question of her own legitimacy, and once again Elizabeth's position in the line of succession was threatened. Following her coronation, Parliament declared Mary's parents' marriage valid (in order to justify his divorce, Henry had his first marriage

declared invalid on the grounds that Catherine of Aragon had been previously married to Henry's brother) and Mary the legitimate daughter of Henry VIII (Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 145; Starkey 11, 121). In doing so, Parliament officially pronounced what Catholic Europe had believed all along: that Catherine had been Henry's only legal wife, reducing Anne Boleyn to royal mistress and reaffirming Elizabeth's status as a bastard (Dunn 22).

Although Elizabeth may have been insulted by this proclamation, it did not necessarily weaken her claim to the throne or, for that matter, strengthen Mary's as long as Parliament continued to enforce Henry's final Act of Succession (Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 145). Without her own heir, Mary could not stop Elizabeth from claiming the throne at her death—Parliament would not support any changes to the succession that would exclude Elizabeth—unless a reason could be found to execute Elizabeth. That reason presented itself when Thomas Wyatt and several men rose up in rebellion against the Queen, at which point Elizabeth risked losing not only the crown but also the head upon which it would rest. In 1554, as Mary negotiated her marriage with Philip II, Wyatt and others formed a conspiracy to remove Mary from the throne thereby preventing her marriage and saving England from a Spanish King. But the rebellion was ill-fated. Within a month Wyatt surrendered, and the uprising was squashed (Dunn 111; Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 153–54; Starkey 129–133). Had the rebellion been successful, it would have benefited Elizabeth by placing her on the throne in Mary's place, but when it failed, the consequences “led to the most dangerous and difficult time of [Elizabeth's] life when she often feared imminent execution or murder” (Starkey 129).

Because of the intended outcome, Elizabeth immediately fell under suspicion. In addition, evidence implicating Elizabeth emerged. For example, Wyatt admitted sending Elizabeth two letters warning her of the uprising, and a copy of one of Elizabeth's letters to Mary had been found among the French ambassador's papers as they were on their way to the French King (Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 156–59; Starkey 138). Elizabeth was sent to the Tower for further interrogation. But no further evidence against Elizabeth could be found, and Wyatt, on the scaffold, declared Elizabeth's innocence, proclaiming, "For I assure you neither they [Elizabeth and her proposed husband Courtenay] nor any other now in yonder hold or durance was privy of my rising or commotion before I began" (qtd. in Starkey 145). Unable to prove Elizabeth's guilt, but still concerned about her influence, Mary had Elizabeth removed from the Tower and placed under house arrest at Woodstock.

Although Elizabeth survived this period, the threat to her life was unmistakable. Soon after the rebellion was defeated, Mary ordered Jane Grey's execution. Jane herself had played no part in the rebellion, but her father's participation in the revolt may have convinced Mary that as long as Jane lived she posed a threat as a source of inspiration for rebellious Protestants (Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 159). Certainly Elizabeth presented the same sort of danger. In fact, Stephen Gardiner, the Lord Chancellor, told the Imperial Ambassador that "as long as Elizabeth lived he had no hope of seeing the kingdom in peace" (qtd. in Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 169). Executing Elizabeth without sufficient evidence of her complicity was politically dangerous, but others continued to push for Elizabeth's execution. According to Camden's account, "the Cardinall, and other Prelates . . . wished her to be taken out of the way. But Philip, Mary's Husband, and other

Spaniards, being more iust on Elizabeths behalfe, would not hear of that” (Camden sig. a2v). There had been dangerous moments for Elizabeth under Edward’s reign, such as the Thomas Seymour affair, but under Mary’s reign the threat to Elizabeth’s right to the throne, as well as to her life, was formidable.

Once Mary died, Elizabeth’s path to the throne still was not completely clear. Mary’s husband, Philip, presented himself as a helpful ally, but Spain and France had plans for the English throne. Mary Stuart, whose legitimacy as royalty had never been questioned, also had a claim to the English throne as the great-granddaughter of Henry VII. Her father-in-law, Henri II, threatened to pursue Mary’s claim. He appealed to the Pope, who had every reason to “declare against Elizabeth in favour of Mary,” since in Mary he had “a possible Catholic candidate for the English throne” (Neale, *Queen* 64). Already at war with France and having just lost Calais to the French, England could not afford a further escalation. Philip proposed marriage to Elizabeth, offering the international support needed to discourage France, but Elizabeth must have recognized the political catastrophe that marriage to Philip had been for her sister Mary. Yet Elizabeth could not reject Philip’s offer too quickly. Unlike the English parliament, who accepted Elizabeth as Queen and felt she “ought to be declared [the] true and legitimate Heire of the Kingdome” (Camden 2), predominantly Catholic Europe did not accept Henry VIII’s Act of Succession, and at Mary’s death Elizabeth was still legally illegitimate under English law as well as under Catholic Canon Law, so that she needed to maintain Philip as an ally until she was firmly established on the throne of England. On every side there was “steadfast enmity, but no steadfast friendship abroad” (Armagil Ward qtd. in Creighton 44–45 and Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 211).

Despite all these challenges, Elizabeth's accession to the throne was surprisingly peaceful. But once there, she still had obstacles to overcome in order to claim the authority of the crown as well as the title. Some members of her Council, motivated by "the withering assumption of masculine superiority," would be only too happy to relieve her of any important decisions (Neale, *Queen* 74). The most notorious assertion of masculine superiority is John Knox's pamphlet entitled *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. Knox's tract records the belief that woman "was made to serue and obey man" so that "a woman promoted . . . to reigne aboue man, is a monstre in nature, contumlie to God, and a thing most repugnant to his will and ordinance" (sig. 13r, 17r). Although Knox's attack was not directed at Elizabeth herself—it was actually written as a critique of the Catholic Queens, Mary I, Mary Stuart, and her regent mother, Mary of Guise—he continued to assert that leadership by a woman was "injust" and "monstrous" even after Elizabeth became Queen (qtd. in Levin, *Heart* 10–11). Yet the fact that Knox felt he had to publish his argument suggests that his beliefs may not have been as widely accepted as he would like.

Perhaps even more damaging to the cause of women was John Aylmer's published defense written in response to Knox. Aylmer concedes that women are weaker and less capable than men, but he also argues that this idea does not mean that women are also inept (Levin, *Heart* 11): "I meane not either to preferre or matche this sexes gouvernement with the mans. . . . Only my meaning is to shew that such kynde of regiment, is not so heinous, and intolerable, or in any wyse euell, as this man [Knox] maketh it" (sig. D2v). Clearly God wanted Elizabeth to rule as Queen, argues Aylmer, since he placed her on the throne, and if God wills it, "if he ioyne to [her] his strengthe:

she can not be weake” (sig. B3r). Yet such “praise” could hardly be helpful to Elizabeth. Instead of criticizing Knox’s ideas, Aylmer criticizes his “zele” (sig. Bv), revealing that although much of England might not have felt as strongly as Knox, Elizabeth still faced a significant prejudice against her sex.

Admittedly, many of those prejudices were further fueled by Mary’s disastrous rule (after all, Knox’s tract was published at the end of Mary’s reign, a few months before she died). In 1553, when Mary entered London and claimed the throne, most of England welcomed her as the rightful heir to the throne regardless of her devotion to Catholicism (Neale, *Queen* 38; Plowden, *Young Elizabeth* 141). But by the time the crown landed on Elizabeth’s head, the kingdom was in sad shape: the country had suffered two bad harvests in addition to the added debt from England’s participation in Spain’s war with France, and on top of England’s defeat at Calais, “its navy was scarcely existent; its military forces were disorganized; [and] its defences were crumbling” (Creighton 44). The longer Mary ruled, the less popular she became. Some of England’s problems were clearly Mary’s fault—she misjudged England’s willingness to accept a Catholic foreigner as King, and it was this very marriage that ultimately involved England in war, leading to debt and humiliation. For anyone who accepted Knox’s view of things, the rest of England’s troubles might also be blamed on Mary, simply because as a woman she was an unnatural ruler and worthy of God’s displeasure. If another woman ascended the throne, the result might be more dearth and defeat and another unwelcome marriage to a foreign prince.

Even though many of Elizabeth’s problems upon ascending the throne and throughout her reign were those any King would have also faced—“all early modern

English sovereigns had problems controlling their nobility and dealing with the demands of Parliament”—Elizabeth’s gender complicates these issues, as well as her strategies for dealing with them (Levin, *Heart* 9). In trying to understand how Elizabeth was able to “transcend her gender and her unmarried, childless state,” many scholars have focused on Elizabeth’s use of her virginity as an active form of sexuality to set herself up as a woman to be worshipped rather than dominated (Levin, *Heart* 4). The work of Frances Yates and her student Roy Strong have focused attention on what they refer to as the cult of Elizabeth. Recently some critics have argued that the cult of Elizabeth was a tool that Elizabeth herself initiated and manipulated. According to Strong, the Crown used pageants, paintings, and ritual to construct the Queen as “the sacred virgin whose reign was ushering in a new golden age of peace and plenty” (Strong 114). Strong’s description suggests a team effort, but scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose argue that with her first speech before Parliament, Elizabeth herself began to transform her virginity into a powerful iconography that would “mollify her male subjects while enhancing her authority over them” (Montrose 80). So effective was this iconography, according to Greenblatt, that it “transformed Elizabeth’s potentially disastrous sexual disadvantage into a supreme political virtue and imposed a subtle discipline upon aggressive fortune seekers” (168).

But not everyone agrees that Elizabeth had complete control over the virgin iconography or whether she even intended to initiate the “cult of virginity” (Montrose 80). John King convincingly demonstrates that assertions that Elizabeth herself initiated the cult of the virgin queen stem from William Camden’s *True and Royall History of the Famous Empresse Elizabeth, Queene of England, France, and Ireland*, which

anachronistically imposes a “Jacobean representation” of Elizabeth’s early speech. Camden’s account portrays Elizabeth as determined to remain unmarried from the beginning of her reign, despite evidence to the contrary (33–36). Although King does not disagree that Elizabeth and others eventually used virgin imagery for political purposes, he does take issue with those who rely on Camden’s account to argue that Elizabeth herself, at the beginning of her rule, initiated the cult of the virgin. Susan Frye also disagrees with those who believe Elizabeth was able to completely control her image. Unlike Strong, Greenblatt, and Montrose, Frye argues that the Queen’s construction was the result of “gendered exchanges” between Elizabeth and other parties interested in influencing her decisions by taking control of her image (25). Both King and Frye raise important questions about Elizabeth’s ability to control her image. Certainly she was adept at manipulating it, but as Frye points out, she frequently had to re-appropriate her image, transforming the negative or restrictive representations presented by others intent on using her image for their own purposes. Although these critics differ concerning the extent of Elizabeth’s control, they all remain focused on Elizabeth’s use of her virginity, and implicitly her gender, to distinguish herself from other women and to assert her rule.

Departing from the virgin iconography, other scholars have explored additional ways that Elizabeth uses her gender in the struggle for independence and authority. As Susan Doran points out, Elizabeth frequently emphasized “her position as the instrument of God’s purpose” by relying on the imagery of Biblical figures like Deborah, Judith, and Queen Esther (“Why Did” 36). Carole Levin also moves beyond the cult of the virgin since she explores the other ways that Elizabeth used her gender to overcome her detractors, “making her evident weaknesses as an unmarried woman ruler into sources of

strength” (*Heart 2*). According to Levin, Elizabeth, though not always successful, used her gender to her advantage in matters of religion, marriage, chastity, and politics in order to confront and overcome bias. Though both scholars expand the discussion, Levin and Doran continue to structure their arguments around the ways in which Elizabeth used her gender to identify with other strong images of femininity.

Maintaining a focus on gender but turning instead to masculinity, Leah Marcus notes that in addition to female images often associated with Elizabeth, the Queen also associated herself with “a set of symbolic male identities” (*Puzzling 53*). Elizabeth created a male identity by relying on a variety of male images, from Daniel of the Old Testament to her own father. She also emphasized her male body politic by referring to herself as a prince, through increasingly masculine titles in the openings to her proclamations, and towards the end of her reign, by referring to herself as “king” (*Puzzling 55–60*). According to Marcus, Elizabeth’s male identities tend to be overlooked because they appear most often in her public declarations and speeches and because “her rhetoric confounds our own preconceived notions about gender” (*Puzzling 53*). Although such a strategy seems at first to depart drastically from the virgin imagery, in many ways it is quite similar, focusing on ways in which Elizabeth represented herself as a strong leader through the use of gender.

But few scholars have paid attention to those moments in Elizabeth’s speeches when she mentions her gender in a way that seems to emphasize its liabilities rather than diminish them. In addition to her defiant declarations such as “I have the heart and stomach of a king” and “this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare that a queen . . . lived and died a virgin” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 58, 326), Elizabeth

also made statements that seemed to espouse contemporary prejudices towards women, statements that acknowledged the weak and feeble woman. Elizabeth describes herself as “uncultivated . . . in letters” or states “I acknowledge my womanhood and weakness.” Perhaps most well known is her description of herself as “wanting both wit and memory” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 70, 326, and 329). Given the biases she already faced, what could have possessed her to use such language in her public speeches?

Those few scholars who have also noted these odd moments focus on the ways these statements allow Elizabeth to subtly emphasize how she differs from other women. Referring to her first speech to Parliament, Frye explains that Elizabeth begins her speech as the members of Parliament might expect, speaking hesitantly as if she depends on them for help, as if she is indeed vulnerable. But these “circumlocutions of powerlessness give way to the self-sufficient image of the virgin queen” (39). In the same vein, Allison Heisch and Leah Marcus discuss why Elizabeth refers to herself as wanting wit and memory. Like Frye, Marcus sees the statement as “self-demeaning” but “disarming” in its intimation of honesty, so that it “disables her audience’s resistance to the invisible truth that follows,” leading them to the conclusion that Elizabeth is extraordinary (*Puzzling* 56). Discussing the same quotation, Heisch explains that the phrase suggests that Elizabeth seems to “hide behind her own skirts,” but ultimately the statement allows her to “state what all men believed and then to declare that God had made an exception in her case” (34–35).

As these scholars point out, these self-deprecating statements did allow her to set herself apart from Parliament and her subjects as a woman to be worshipped, but I argue that, taken as a whole, these statements were also part of a rhetorical strategy to justify

her inclusion in the political world and to help her form alliances with Parliament and the nobility in order to resolve differences of opinion between herself and her aristocratic subjects. After all, self-deprecating statements in and of themselves were not all that unusual and were in fact part of a fashionable code of courtesy designed to distinguish aristocrats from the socially ambitious lower class. In the centuries before the 1500s, rank was determined by birth, and no amount of education, behavior, or individual skill could change a person's original social status. But in the early sixteenth century, a variety of forces converged, making vertical movement among social classes possible (Whigham 7). Humanist philosophy and advancing print technology, as well as Henry VIII's "generous distribution of new titles," played a part in opening up the aristocracy (Whigham 8). The Reformation also contributed to social flexibility. In addition to influencing "a new sense of the personal," the English Reformation also led to the distribution of land previously held by the Catholic Church, benefiting mostly the gentry and the yeomen. Furthermore, the religious upheaval caused by Edward's and Mary's politics also made possible greater social mobility since the different groups fell in and out of favor with the Crown (Whigham 7–8).

Alongside these changing ideas about social status, an increased interest in courtesy texts also emerged, leading to the publication of books like Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (Whigham 32). Scholars today disagree about the purpose of these courtesy texts. Frank Whigham argues that such courtesy books codified aristocratic behavior in an attempt to help the nobility recognize the symbolic behavior that would distinguish them from "their ambitious inferiors," whereas Wayne Rebhorn sees the books as part of a concerted effort to encourage the civilizing process by

documenting the rules of courtesy in order to improve the manners and behavior of the non-noble as well as the rustic nobility (Whigham 18, 33; Rebhorn 12). In the opening pages of *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione himself explains that the purpose of his book is to describe “the trade and maner of Courtyers . . . by the whiche he maye haue the knowelege howe to serue [the prince] perfectlye . . . and obtaine thereby fauour of [the prince] and prayse of other men” (sig. A.i.r). Whether or not Castiglione included the lower class in his intended audience, the publication of his book and others like it helped redefine social status by making it a matter of behavior rather than birth.

Naturally, if social status depends on behavior, presumably aspiring social climbers need only to demonstrate mastery of certain skills. But Castiglione’s book clarifies that although conversance in courtesy might justify inclusion in the upper classes, something more is required in order to gain the favor of the prince. Castiglione explains that in addition to mastering certain skills, a true gentleman sets his behavior apart from others by performing those skills with *sprezzatura*. Thus, Elizabeth’s use of *sprezzatura* provides a way for her to implicitly reject her bastardization, demonstrating instead her legitimacy as Henry VIII’s daughter. The word *sprezzatura* first appears in Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* as part of the grace (*grazia*) that Count Canossa explains should accompany a courtier’s every action and word. The word itself was created by Castiglione, making an exact translation difficult, but in 1561 Thomas Hoby translated it into English as “Reckelesness” (sig. E.ii.r). The definition that follows this initial use explains that in order to demonstrate *sprezzatura* or recklessness, a courtier will “couer art withall, & seeme whatsoeuer he doth & sayeth to do it wythout pain, & (as it were) not myndyng it” (Castiglione sig. E.ii.r).

In other words, everything the courtier does should appear natural and effortless (Richards 55). And because the point of *sprezzatura* is to elevate the courtier above his peers in order to win the prince's admiration, it should also portray "a seemingly effortless resolution of the difficult" (Javitch 56). Of course, the skilled performance of a complex action usually requires lots of practice regardless of natural ability, but Castiglione warns the courtier to avoid anything that might suggest that the behavior is rehearsed since this diminishes the sense of effortlessness: "To shewe arte and suche bent study taketh away the grace of euery thing" (Castiglione sig. E.ii.v). Then, to "cover art" means hiding anything that might expose the courtier as a student of courtesy. This can be accomplished by performing a specialized skill with nonchalance or "apparent averageness," implying that the courtier is so comfortable with a specific skill that he does not feel a need to perform it perfectly (Javitch 57). Or he might create "a fictional impression of unpreparedness," suggesting that his demonstration of skill is not premeditated, even though it is clearly intended to earn praise from the prince (Whigham 94).

Consequently, *sprezzatura* is more than a nonchalant but skilled performance; it also includes a reconciliation of opposites such as "modesty and pride, fervor and detachment, exhibitionism and reticence," traits that coexist, despite their inherent opposition (Javitch 31). Using *sprezzatura*, the courtier creates a gap between self-representation and ability, between what he implies he can do and what he actually does (Saccone 59). For example, in addition to framing his actions with indifference or spontaneity, a courtier might also understate his abilities through self-deprecation. *Sprezzatura* can also be defined then, as "feigned" or "pretended" ignorance (Richards 8,

31). Because these statements are contradicted by the courtier's actual behavior, when he does outperform his self-representation, the audience is pleasantly surprised at the discrepancy (Rebhorn 38).

This sort of ironic juxtaposition of described ability and actual ability gives the courtier's performance a grace and elegance absent from other methods of seeking praise, like excessive boasting. This strategy provides the courtier with a strategy for inviting the prince's attention without demanding it (Saccone 58). The last thing the courtier wants to do is demand anything; he must avoid asking the prince for anything, lest his requests "either be denied or, what is worse, granted with displeasure" (K. Burke, *Rhetoric* 225). In addition to avoiding overt appeals for attention in the form of bragging or exaggeration, the courtier also needs to make sure his nonchalance or self-deprecation does not appear affected. Although nonchalance falls on the other end of the spectrum, too much apathy also misses the point of *sprezzatura*, passing "certain limites of a meane" (Castiglione sig. E.iii.r). Thus, the successful application of *sprezzatura* ideally helps the courtier gain his prince's confidence by unobtrusively charming him with his gracefully understated behavior (Richards 8). And this ability to charm is the most important aspect of *sprezzatura*. Charming the members of Parliament eases Elizabeth's identification with them because it minimizes the conflict that would normally arise from a woman's attempts to demonstrate masculine traits, allowing her to woo the members of Parliament in order to persuade them.

Although Elizabeth probably applied *sprezzatura* to a variety of skills, I focus on her use of *sprezzatura* in her speeches. Recognizing *sprezzatura* becomes a matter of identifying a combination of factors. First, the speech should follow or include something

that signals a lack of skill or a lack of preparation, an indication that any ability that appears in the speech is primarily natural and effortless. For example, in the three speeches analyzed in this thesis, Elizabeth uses self-deprecation to create an ironic gap that both understates and emphasizes her performance. Queen Elizabeth prefaces two of the speeches (1564 and 1586) with comments and behavior that create the illusion of unpreparedness, suggesting that her speeches are constructed spontaneously or without much planning. But self-deprecation alone does not create the grace of *sprezzatura*. Each speech should also be a recognizably skilled performance that contradicts the self-deprecation and highlights the Queen's abilities. In short, the combination of these different factors is an effective presentation that charms the members of Elizabeth's audience so that she is able to persuade them to accept her primary argument, even if only temporarily.

Popular throughout Europe, in Italy alone, *The Book of the Courtier* went through almost sixty editions before 1600, and there were more than fifty printings in other languages (P. Burke 41, 44). In England, the book was so popular that it became "a second bible for English gentlemen" (Joan Simon qtd. in Whigham 15). As for Queen Elizabeth, it is likely that she owned a copy of the Latin translation since she was a dedicatee of that edition, but she may also have read the original Italian version, especially since Italian culture enjoyed a prestige that made it an important part of a good education (P. Burke 56, 149–50). According to Elizabeth's tutor Roger Ascham, she had "perfit readiness" in Italian (sig. 21r). Ascham was familiar with the book himself, writing about it in his *Scholemaster*—"Conto Baldesar Castiglione in his booke, *Cortegiane*, doth trimlie teache"—and he was also friends with Sir Thomas Hoby, who

published the first English translation of the book, making it likely that Elizabeth had some familiarity with the English version as well (Ascham sig. 20v, P. Burke 56, 72, 77). Thus, when Elizabeth claims that she is uncultivated in letters, rather than admitting her vulnerability, she may in fact be using *sprezzatura* in order to call attention both to her inherent nobility and to the ease and naturalness with which she delivers her speech.

Elizabeth certainly had the training needed to successfully employ rhetorical figures like *sprezzatura* in her speeches. In order to teach effective language, Renaissance instructors relied on the classical method of imitation to teach students the importance of every aspect of a composition. Typically, a teacher would instruct students by reading a model text aloud and then dissecting it, analyzing the text in light of “good or bad choices in wording, in organization, [and] in the use of figures” as well as considering how well the text addresses the context (Murphy 48, 56). Next the students would memorize the model text, paraphrase and/or “transliterate” it (translate into another language or rewrite the text in a different form or with different words), and either recite orally or submit their written transliteration for final correction by the teacher (Murphy 55–63). As the teacher dissected the text and the students transliterated it, both teacher and students would break the piece down, considering “the microcosmic decisions” made by the author (Murphy 57). Through this method the students learned about the importance of careful composition.

Although we do not have day-to-day accounts of Elizabeth’s own education, based on his published educational treatise *The Scholemaster*, we can assume that at least one of her tutors, Roger Ascham, also used a classical curriculum. Like grammar school teachers, Ascham advocates the classical method of reading a text aloud, analyzing it, and

translating it (sig. 30r–35r). And according to Ascham, Elizabeth was quite bright. She was a dedicated student, constantly studying, and Ascham bragged that her scholarship and wit exceeded her male contemporaries: “she hath obteyned that excellencie of learnyng, to understand, speake, & write, both wittely with head, and faire with hand, as scarce one or two rare wittes in both the Universities have in many yeares reached unto” (sig. 21r).

Perhaps Ascham was overzealous in his praise since Elizabeth’s skill also reflects positively on his abilities as a teacher, but even if she was not quite as rhetorically adept as Ascham proclaims, she was at least competent in the skill. Thus, like her male peers, Elizabeth studied the microcosmic decisions made by classical rhetoricians. This analysis implies two judges: the audience and the composer whose judgments are reflected in the choices made in the text (Christiansen, “Double Frame” 84). These judgments or choices made by the author reveal her “motives, attitudes, passions, strategies, and judgment—in short, ‘the character of the speaker’” (Christiansen, “Double Frame” 73). Just as Elizabeth studied these choices, she likely gave the same attention to detail in her own speeches. Hence, analyzing Elizabeth’s speeches in terms of motives and rhetorical choices provides insight into the character she intended to create as well as information about herself that she unconsciously revealed.

But rhetoric is a slippery term. Classically, rhetoric was defined in terms of persuasion. Aristotle defined rhetoric as not only the art of persuasion, but also the ability to “discover the means of persuasion in reference to any given subject,” while Cicero described rhetoric as the ability “to speak in a manner suited to persuasion” (Aristotle 15; Blakesley 7; Cicero 88–89). These definitions limit any analysis of rhetoric to language

that is overtly persuasive and the conclusions drawn from such an analysis to strategies of persuasion. Renaissance rhetoric has been described in dualistic terms as figurative versus plain language, manipulative versus honest, or popular discourse versus scientific discourse. This use of dualisms also confines rhetorical analysis to a single category of language even though Renaissance rhetoricians have used all three terms (figurative, popular, and manipulative) to describe rhetoric (Christiansen, “Rhetorical Decorum” 1–3). Recognizing the limited potential that these different frames offer, Kenneth Burke re-envisioned rhetoric as more than persuasive, manipulative, popular, or figurative language in order to allow for much broader analysis. Instead, Burke defines rhetoric in terms of how communication helps individuals form connections, overcoming differences to create a shared identity (*Rhetoric* 55). Furthermore, this view of rhetoric allows analysis of more than language, taking into account “even such gestures as raising an eyebrow or giving the finger” (Booth 8). According to David Blakesley, thinking of rhetoric as identification allows us to consider the choices made in moments of ambiguity—when an idea can be approached from multiple reasonable perspectives—and how the choices made influence social connections (Blakesley 22).

At first Elizabeth’s use of *sprezzatura* might seem to fall under Stephen Greenblatt’s self-fashioning if we think of *sprezzatura* as a way for her to fashion herself as an authentic member of the upper class through a series of behaviors (Greenblatt 2, 4). But because Elizabeth is the Queen and a member of the aristocracy, when she uses *sprezzatura*, she demonstrates the symbolic behavior that distinguishes the nobility from the aspiring social climber, returning *sprezzatura* to the born aristocracy. *Sprezzatura* also highlights her performance in a way that suggests that her abilities surpass the

abilities of her audience, reinforcing her superiority. On the one hand, Burke's theory of rhetoric as identification allows us to take a closer look at Elizabeth's use of ethos to convince her audience. Whereas an appeal to logic gives the audience the opportunity to reject a monarch's reasoning, providing grounds for challenging the monarch's authority, Elizabeth's use of *sprezzatura* contributes to her authority by demonstrating the symbolic behavior of her social status. On the other hand, Burke's theory also conveys a stronger relationship between Queen Elizabeth and the members of her audience. In addition to creating an ethos of legitimate and aristocratic authority, she is also creating alliances with them in order to justify her inclusion among them and in order to create a sense of unity that will diminish the conflict of their divided opinions.

Using Burke's theory, we can consider how Elizabeth uses *sprezzatura* to create a shared sense of identity with her councillors and other male members of the nobility. By inserting occasional self-deprecating statements as part of *sprezzatura*, Elizabeth stalls and acquiesces, but she also acts like a courtier, emphasizing certain attitudes and interests common among the members of her audience. As Burke points out though, the desire to identify with another is an implicit acknowledgement of those differences that divide (*Rhetoric* 22). In Elizabeth's case, she differs from her audience of scholars, aristocrats, and politicians in her sex and in whether negative perceptions of women should apply to Elizabeth and therefore limit her ability to rule England. Because of Elizabeth's status as a single woman, and because of Renaissance attitudes toward women that excluded them from the public sphere and denigrated their intelligence and ability to reason, Elizabeth needed to identify with these noblemen and politicians in order to convince them that not only should she be allowed to rule England without a

male surrogate, but also that her decisions should be respected and obeyed. By affirming and admitting to stereotypes critical of women, Elizabeth bridges the gap between herself and the members of her audience in two ways. First, she indicates that she shares the audience's opinion of all women, and even applies these negative constructions to herself. Secondly, her self-demeaning statements point out characteristics that she supposedly lacks, but really has. Because the members of her audience possess those characteristics, the obvious contradiction of those statements allows her to suggest that, in fact, she does differ from other women and instead shares these traits with the male members of her audience.

What makes Elizabeth's use of *sprezzatura* even more intriguing is that she was using a device that was typically, although not exclusively, used by men. As Marcus has pointed out, Elizabeth often compared herself to male historical figures and Old Testament prophets, but in using *sprezzatura* she also assumes some masculine characteristics (Marcus, "Shakespeare" 143). Castiglione himself does not overtly restrict *sprezzatura* to the male courtier—in fact, he says that “the verie same rules that are given for the Courtier, serve also for the woman” (Castiglione sig. Bb.ii.r)—but when the conversation turns to the behavior of a gentlewoman in book three, Castiglione's male characters list verbal discretion as one of a gentlewoman's necessary traits. They further clarify that in certain things such as “woordes, gestures and conuersation . . . the woman ought to be mucche vnlike the man” (sig. Bb.iii.r). Like the common early modern perception that equated an overly talkative woman with sexual impropriety (Purkiss viii), Castiglione's Lord Julian counsels the women to avoid “a certein familiaritye withoute measure & bridle” lest men think “that of her, that perhappes is not” (sig. Bb.iii.v–

Bb.iiii.r). Thus, public speaking itself either insinuates sexual looseness or pushes a woman into the masculine world.

Walter Ong further identified oratory with masculinity. Not only was rhetoric taught almost exclusively to boys, but Latin, the language of a rhetorical education, further separated men from women. As Latin became the language of the elite rather than the vernacular, distinctions between the educated and uneducated, as well as differences between the home and the world of learning, became more defined (Ong 119). The curricula and schools that already excluded women became even more exclusively male since women uneducated in Latin were further shut out. According to Ong, by prohibiting the presence of women, schools resembled “male clubhouses” (120). Of course there were a few women such as Elizabeth, Lady Jane Grey, and Sir Thomas More’s daughters, who were educated in Latin and rhetoric, “but in helping to maintain the closed male environment, the psychological role of Latin should not be underestimated. It was the language of those on the ‘inside,’ and thus learning Latin at even an infra-university level was the first step toward initiation into the closed world” (Ong 121).

Since Elizabeth’s sex often marked her as ruled rather than ruler and, in the minds of some, would exclude her from making political decisions, it makes sense that she would assume behaviors that would help her identify with the male world. Thus, in my analysis of how Elizabeth uses *sprezzatura* to identify with predominantly male audiences, it seems fruitful to also look at this use in terms of gender criticism. Admittedly, feminism should be used with care since applying postmodern values to Renaissance texts can lead to a misreading of the text, but Judith Butler’s theory on gender helps elucidate the implications of Elizabeth’s choices when she assumes

behavior considered natural for a man but abnormal and aberrant for a woman. According to Butler, “acts, gestures, and desire” construct gender on the body, which functions as a medium (129, 136). Butler’s discussion focuses on what informs those actions, and builds on ideas that would be completely foreign to Elizabeth and her people, but her argument that actions, behaviors, and gestures “are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” provides a helpful frame for this inquiry (Butler 136, emphasis in original). In other words, when Elizabeth acts like a Renaissance woman, deferring to the knowledge of her male audience and appearing to prefer to remain silent, she performs femininity, but when she speaks in public and employs the courtier’s strategies, she also performs masculinity to some extent. Performing these attributes then, becomes another means of identifying with the members of her audience by connecting with the characteristics ascribed to their gender. This performance also suggests that gender is a point of anxiety for Elizabeth and a place where we can get a glimpse of Elizabeth’s own sense of vulnerability about her gender.

Although most people living during the Renaissance would probably reject the postmodern concept of gender roles and constructions, thinking instead in terms of traditionally acceptable behavior, the idea of performing a role, especially in the context of a speech, was not unfamiliar. In the process of transliteration, part of the reason why a student of rhetoric analyzes the choices and strategies of the speaker is so that when the student transforms the text, his new version will still be consistent with the character of the original speaker despite the change in language, form, or word choice. When the student recited his completed transliteration, he was also expected to perform his work in

the character of the original speaker. Courtesy also emphasizes the need to recognize “the different roles required by different social situations”; the courtier should adapt his performance to the circumstances of his surroundings (Rebhorn 14). This was the age, after all, in which Shakespeare declared “all the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players” (*As You Like It* 2.7.139). Even Elizabeth herself proclaimed that “Princes, as you know, stand upon stages so that their actions are viewed and beheld of all men” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 189).

But even if Queen Elizabeth’s subjects were comfortable with the notion that individuals might adjust their behavior according to the role called for by the situation, the correlative idea that traditional gendered behavior could also be appropriated and performed by the opposite sex was not automatically accepted. Of course, any Elizabethan who frequented the theater had seen a young boy convincingly assume the behavior of a woman, suggesting that the Early Moderns were quite familiar with the performativity of gender. Or, it is also just as likely that these audiences were so accustomed to this convention that they paid little attention to the implications of boys acting like women (Marcus, “Shakespeare” 135, 146).² And the fact that boys acted the parts of women on the stage does not mean that women could just as easily act like men. In plays like *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare drew attention to some of these implications and inconsistencies. By creating heroines who assume male disguises, and in so doing perform behavior that was more consistent with the boy underneath the costume of a woman disguised as a man, Shakespeare points out the sex of the performer and some “socially imposed sexual stereotypes” (Marcus,

² Of course, the obvious exception to this idea is the common fear that cross-dressing might cause a man to turn into a woman (Marcus, *Puzzling* 66).

“Shakespeare” 136–37). Rather than encourage or condone such behavior among women, similarities between Shakespeare’s heroines and the Queen’s own rhetorical manipulation of gender suggest that in fact Shakespeare’s heroines provide commentary on Elizabeth’s strategy of disguising her female body in a male identity, defining acceptable limits for such a strategy (Marcus, *Puzzling* 101; Marcus “Shakespeare” 137). Although Elizabeth’s subjects may have become familiar with her assumption of masculine traits through her speeches and through Shakespeare’s plays, this rhetorical strategy continued to evoke unease in Elizabeth’s subjects throughout her reign,³ further complicating its use (Marcus, *Puzzling* 53, 60). Thus, Butler’s paradigm helps us uncover the many layers of Elizabeth’s manipulation of gender through her use of *sprezzatura* because in addition to noting those conscious acts that contribute to the performance of gender, Butler also points out that unconscious acts and gestures also contribute to gender, providing a helpful perspective for considering the ways in which Elizabeth crosses the boundary between femininity and masculinity.

This thesis proposes, then, to analyze the thread of *sprezzatura* as it weaves its way through three of Elizabeth’s speeches in light of Burke’s theory of rhetoric as identification and Butler’s description of gender as performance transcribed on the body. Although scholars like Marcus, Heisch, Levin, Greenblatt, Frye, and many more have looked at Elizabeth’s strategies for overcoming obstacles to her leadership, no one has considered how Elizabeth’s use of *sprezzatura* helps her identify specifically with the members of her audience as a humanist scholar, a political servant, and a loyal English

³ Drawing on textual evidence in James Aske’s *Elizabetha Triumphans* (1588) and Shakespeare’s *I Henry VI*, Marcus argues that these texts, as well as other popular publications distributed after the Queen’s speech to the troops at Tilbury, “display an upsurge of similar fascination with, and horror of, the Amazonian confusion of gender” in reaction to Elizabeth’s assumption of male attire (Marcus, *Puzzling* 62–66).

subject in order to overcome their differences of opinion. Specifically, chapter one of this thesis will consider how Elizabeth's 1564 speech helps her identify with the members of her audience as ambitious and well-educated men, as well as considering the gendered implications of *sprezzatura*. Early modern critics of courtesy often described *sprezzatura* as effeminate and emasculating, but using Castiglione's text itself, this chapter explores Castiglione's own distinction between the male and female courtier's behavior and the implications that it has for Elizabeth's use of *sprezzatura* (Bryson 201). Chapter two looks at how Elizabeth creates the shared identity of a humble, constant, and charming public servant. In addition, this chapter will look more closely at the role of ironic understatement and how it helps Elizabeth create a sense of *sprezzatura* when circumstances make it difficult for her to also give the impression that her speech is spontaneously delivered. Finally, chapter three discusses Elizabeth's identification with the patriotic, pious, and intelligent members of Parliament, further developing the performative aspect of *sprezzatura*, considering how the issue of sincerity complicates Queen Elizabeth's use of *sprezzatura*. Through her use of *sprezzatura*, Elizabeth emphasizes these specific characteristics in order to help her confront and transform those constructions that would restrict her behavior and limit her authority as Queen. By describing this conflict in her own language, Elizabeth is able to not only overcome the differences that divide her and her audience, but she is also able to limit, define, and revise the conflict, helping her to transcend those differences and purify the conflict.

Chapter One: Anxieties Uncovered

By all accounts, 1564 was a relatively good year for Queen Elizabeth. Despite all the continental whispers about her illegitimacy, she had ascended to the throne without any serious challenges and with much rejoicing (MacCaffrey, *Shaping* 6). By 1564 she had ruled almost as long as her brother Edward and exceeded Mary's reign. At the beginning of her reign, she had faced expectations that she would leave the politics to the men, but less than six years into it she was assuming a larger role in formulating policy and in leading her country (MacCaffrey, *Shaping* 149). In many ways, her reign to this point was the exact opposite of Mary's: Elizabeth had so far avoided the political entanglements of marriage, and aside from continued adventures in Calais, the country enjoyed relative peace and economic prosperity. But the speech Elizabeth delivered at Cambridge University in August 1564 tells another part of the story, hinting at possible points of vulnerability for the young Queen. Although she had enjoyed a successful reign thus far, Elizabeth's effort to create a shared identity with her humanist audience through her use of *sprezzatura* suggests that she still felt vulnerable about her gender. Furthermore, within this speech Elizabeth presents herself as ambitious and well educated, indicating a particular interest in identifying with these traditionally male characteristics of humanism in order to overcome any lingering criticism based on her gender.

Although Queen Consorts and Queen Mothers had enjoyed some influence in England long before Elizabeth came to the throne, constructions of women as they appeared in English pamphlets and courtesy manuals in the sixteenth century were particularly hostile toward women in general, endorsing the classical and medieval ideas

that women were irrational, immoral, and less intelligent than men (Finucci 35; Austern 346). While it may be true that humanist thought seemed to discourage some of these ideas by encouraging the education of women, some humanists also argued that girls should receive a different education from their male peers because they argued, women were “intellectually gullible” and capable of leading others astray unless properly educated (Wayne 20). Whereas humanists pushed for a return to classical rhetoric for educating young boys, advocates for women’s education, such as Vives, argued that a young woman’s education should avoid rhetoric, emphasizing virtue, especially chastity, instead (Abbott 168–69; Wayne 19).¹ During the Renaissance, strict boundaries between public and private and political and domestic spheres restricted women’s participation to the private, domestic world, making chastity synonymous with quiet submission, while a public reputation was synonymous with sexual availability (Krontiris 5; Wiesner 12). In other words, writing for publication or speaking in public arenas was off limits for any woman who valued her reputation. As Niccolo Barbo wrote in the fifteenth century, “an eloquent woman is never chaste” (qtd. in Wiesner 12). In addition, the fear that women might lead others astray because of the intellectual inferiority was also used to limit their participation in the public sphere.

These restrictions on public participation were based on social status too. Unlike middle-class women, whose silence maintained the family honor and prevented the wife from competing with her husband in the public arena, noblewomen were encouraged and expected to participate in public conversations at court, according to courtesy manuals written in the sixteenth century (Krontiris 6; Jones 43). Yet neither Castiglione, nor his

¹ According to Ruth Kelso, boys were also taught virtue, but with less of an emphasis on chastity as part of virtue (25).

contemporary Stephen Guazzo, was able to completely reconcile anxiety about female chastity with the courtly code, making public speech “a minefield for [upper-class] women” (Jones 43–44). As Joan Kelly-Gadol points out, in addition to sections of *The Book of the Courtier* that encourage women to participate at court, Book Three includes “an excess of hortatory tales about female chastity,” revealing Castiglione’s own anxiety about feminine virtue (156). Although Castiglione’s character Gonzaga argues that a Courtier cannot be “gratious, pleasant or hardye . . . onlesse he be stirred wyth the conuersacion and wyth the loue & contentacion of women” (sig. Bb.ii.v), his companion Magnifico also reminds the audience that a woman who speaks too freely risks her reputation—“Neither ought she . . . speake wordes of dishonesty, nor vse a certein familiaritye withoute measure & bridle, and facions to make men beleaue that of her, that perhappes is not” (sig. Bb.iii.v–Bb.iii.r)—reflecting the delicate balancing act required of the courtly lady. Despite courtesy’s encouragement of female conversation, a noblewoman still had to be careful, since her reputation, upon which everything else depended, could still be damaged by assertions that she was too loose with her tongue (Levin, *Heart* 68; Kelso 24).

But some critics argue that early modern gender constructions do not reflect actual circumstances and behavior. Pearl Hogrefe contends that the actual behavior of individual women suggests that gender constructions that equate feminine loquacity with sexuality and denigrate female intellectual ability were not as widely accepted as they were disseminated (3). Susan Doran argues that although gender influenced Elizabeth’s situation, her biggest problems were the same ones that challenged other monarchs in her day: religion, succession, and international affairs (“Elizabeth I” 35). And Elizabeth was

by no means the only Queen with significant power in the sixteenth century. Women were outright heirs to the throne in Castile, Scotland, and England, and in Spain, Scotland, the Netherlands, and France women acted as regents (Doran, “Elizabeth I” 30; Levin, *Heart 2*). When Elizabeth ascended to the throne, “barely a murmur was heard querying the legitimacy of female rule” since most of England was less concerned with their monarch’s gender and more interested in a smooth succession (“Elizabeth I” 30). Additionally Doran cites John Calvin, who unlike John Knox, wrote that female rule had a precedent in the Bible with the Judge Deborah and Huldah the prophetess (“Elizabeth I” 31).

Looking back on Elizabeth’s reign, gender may look like a moot point now, but the first few years of Elizabeth’s reign were rocky enough that even if her gender was not much of an issue at her accession, we should not be too surprised if there is evidence that it was on her mind as late as 1564. Less than six years earlier, there was no significant objection to Elizabeth claiming the crown, but many men assumed Elizabeth would be Queen in name only, and that she would leave the governing to her Council and to Parliament until she could marry (Doran, “Elizabeth I” 31). Elizabeth confronted the expectation that she would subordinate herself to male superiority as early as her coronation entry into London. Because civic groups such as the Court of Aldermen and Merchant Adventurers sponsored the spectacle created to welcome Elizabeth, they put forth some of the first constructions of Elizabeth as Queen (Frye 53–54). According to Susan Frye, many of the entertainments “constructed the new queen as compliant, malleable, and grateful—in short, as [the London merchants’] metaphoric wife.” Just as a wife traditionally subjects her own wishes to those of her husband, this construction

implies that Elizabeth should also concede her voice and autonomy to male experience and direction (Frye 25). In addition, Elizabeth's principal secretary, William Cecil, initially assumed that Elizabeth would respect the "inherent masculinity" of diplomacy and international affairs, leaving such matters to her Council (Doran, "Elizabeth I" 31). As late as two years into Elizabeth's reign, Cecil continued to hold onto certain constructions of femininity, telling an ambassador's messenger that certain matters "of such weight" were "too much for a woman's knowledge" and the Queen should not be bothered with them (qtd. in Neale, *Queen* 74).

Despite such challenges to Elizabeth's authority, she demonstrated her intention to claim the authority of the crown from the beginning and did so with some success, but reaction to Amy Robsart's mysterious death and Elizabeth's bout with smallpox exposed continued anxiety among her subjects about having a woman on the throne (Doran, "Elizabeth I" 31). When Robert Dudley's wife, Amy, was found dead at the bottom of a staircase, many assumed she had been murdered to facilitate Dudley's marriage to Elizabeth (Dunn 163; Weir 100). The Spanish Ambassador Alvaro de Quadra's correspondence (admittedly a questionable source) reports that English subjects declared "that they do not want any more women rulers, and this woman [Elizabeth] may find herself and her favourite in prison any morning," with the Earl of Huntington on the throne in her place (qtd. in Dunn 163; Read 201). De Quadra's account of turmoil may have been embellished, but the account of Thomas Lever, Archdeacon of Coventry, suggests that de Quadra was not too far off the mark: Lever writes that if Amy's death is not investigated, "the displeasure of God, the dishonor of the Quene, and the Danger of the whole Realme is to be feared" (qtd. in Dunn 163). Although the link between

Elizabeth's problems and her gender is stronger in de Quadra's account, both accounts reveal not only higher standards for a female monarch—few kings faced the threat of rebellion because of supposed sexual impropriety with a member of the court—but also deep concerns about the impact of Elizabeth's gender on her ability to rule, despite any notion of a masculine political identity.

The issue of Elizabeth's gender appeared again in the fall of 1562 when Elizabeth became seriously ill with smallpox (Weir 134). In addition to threatening Elizabeth's life, this episode also emphasized the role of gender in a ruler's legitimacy by casting light on those who might pose a challenge to the living Queen. As Elizabeth lay on her deathbed, the potential problems associated with the lack of an official heir suddenly became apparent. When her council met in anticipation of her death, it became clear that there was no consensus on who should succeed Elizabeth, with some favoring Lady Katherine Grey and others favoring the Earl of Huntingdon (Dunn 201). Then when Elizabeth regained her health, she faced renewed efforts to get her to marry and produce an heir (Weir 136).

Although Mary Stuart's name had not been mentioned as a possible successor to Elizabeth, her claim to the English throne could not be ignored (Weir 135). As long as she had been Queen of France, Mary had claimed the English throne, but her claim had lacked any real military support. After her husband Francois II died and Mary returned to Scotland, her claim to the English throne became more pressing with her proximity (MacCaffrey, *Shaping* 118). In hindsight, it is clear that Mary had little support within England and never would have succeeded in challenging Elizabeth, but in the moment, Mary continued to represent the threat of Catholic rebellion and civil war. Mary's claim

also served as a reminder that Elizabeth's sex weakened her legitimacy, for had she been born a healthy boy, her father most likely would not have executed Elizabeth's mother, and Elizabeth would have been first in the line of succession rather than last, with fewer aspersions cast on her legitimacy. And with the issue of legitimacy minimized, Mary's claim also would have posed less of a threat.

By herself, Lady Katherine Grey did not possess much of a claim to the throne as Henry VII's great-granddaughter. But when Katherine married secretly, she finally gave birth to a male Tudor heir. Because the details of Katherine's marriage were disputed, Katherine's two sons were declared illegitimate, but the simple fact of their sex created the possibility that some English subjects might use the boys as leverage to depose Queen Elizabeth, relying on the traditional preferment for a male monarch as a rallying point. The threat was strong enough that when Elizabeth caught wind of a secret conspiracy to legitimize the two boys, Elizabeth imprisoned their mother (Dunn 188; Doran, *Queen Elizabeth* 81; Weir 140). Clearly these events kept the issue of legitimacy as it related to her sex in the forefront of Elizabeth's mind.

One way around the problem of Elizabeth's gender was the medieval principle of the King's two bodies. Prior to the reigns of Mary I and Elizabeth I, the theory of the King's two bodies, the idea that the monarch is composed of the immortal and political authority of the King as well as the physical body, which is subject to infirmity, illness, and death, was proposed and gained general acceptance (Marcus, "Shakespeare" 138). At the beginning of Mary Tudor's reign, Parliament passed the Act Concerning Regal Power, which drew from this theory to validate Mary's authority, declaring that "the regality and dignity of the king or of the Crown, the same [was] the Queen" (qtd. in

Levin, *Heart* 121). Upon their coronation then, Mary's and Elizabeth's mortal female bodies became endowed with the male body politic of the King (Marcus, "Shakespeare" 138; Levin, *Heart* 121). This notion that as the monarch, Elizabeth possessed the same rights and ability as a man despite her physical shape provides a means and justification for her participation in politics and gives her access to that world.

Yet the theory of the King's two bodies was not accepted by everyone, so Elizabeth also had to be careful about assuming what in the Renaissance was considered masculine behavior. In a society that placed masculine and feminine constructions in the separate spheres of public and private, the traits of a successful King—education, proficiency at arms, ability to command, and provision of justice—were decidedly masculine and thus "unwomanly" (Levin, "John Foxe" 115, 129). Demonstrating knowledge of classical rhetoric (in other words, a masculine education), threatened a woman's femininity; sixteenth-century women who chose education "ceased, in becoming learned, to be women" (Margaret L. King qtd. in Hannay 1). And to become unwomanly carries the possibility of becoming abnormal, freakish, and monstrous (Levin, *Heart* 1; Krontiris 18). In order to follow constructions of femininity, Elizabeth would need to conceal her education and hold her tongue, risking ineffectual rule and patronizing domination by her councillors and Parliament, but if she exceeded the limits of femininity, she could also be discredited as unnatural.

With the implications of her gender swirling around her, Elizabeth traveled to Cambridge in 1564. Based on personal accounts describing the context of Elizabeth's speech and her own opening remarks, Elizabeth was not scheduled to deliver a speech; instead she was there to make sure that its Protestant scholars and clergy were complying

with all aspects of the religious settlement of 1559—some Protestants were actively opposing those aspects of the settlement that they felt were too similar to the Catholic Church, such as the wearing of vestments (Cole 69). During her visit, she was entertained by the University, as was customary, listening to a speech delivered by the Master of the King’s College. Following this speech, Thomas Howard, the Duke of Norfolk, and Robert Dudley invited Elizabeth to address the University in Latin. At first Elizabeth made a great show of resisting their invitation. She agreed to speak only if she could address the University in English. Then when William Cecil, her Secretary of State and the chancellor of Cambridge, reminded her that all orations made at the University must be delivered in Latin, Elizabeth asked Cecil to speak in her place, but he refused (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 87–88 n. 1).

Finally, after Richard Cox, the Bishop of Ely, told the Queen that “three words of her mouth were enough” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88 n. 1), Elizabeth agreed to address the University in Latin:

Although feminine modesty, most faithful subjects and most celebrated university, prohibits the delivery of a rude and uncultivated speech in such a gathering of most learned men, yet the intercession of my nobles and my own goodwill toward the university incite me to produce one. Two stimuli prompt me to this, of which the first is the propagation of good letters, which I much desire and most ardently hope for; second, your expectation of all these things. Regarding what pertains to propagation, the words of superiors, as Demosthenes said, are as the books of their inferiors, and the example of a prince has the force of law. If this was true

in those city-states, how much more so in a kingdom? No path is more direct, either to gain good fortune or to procure my grace, than diligently, in your studies which you have begun, to stick to your work; and that you do this, I pray and beseech you all.

I come now to the second stimulus. This forenoon I have seen your sumptuous edifices erected by most noble kings who have perished before me, and in seeing them I breathed forth a sigh, not otherwise than did Alexander, who when he had read of the many monuments erected by princes, turned to his intimate, or rather to his counselor, and said, "I have done no such thing." So do I no less. But if my grief is not removed, it can certainly be lessened by that saying of the people: Rome was not built in a day. For my age is not yet senile, nor have I reigned for such a long time; so may I, before I pay my debt to nature (if Atropos does not sever the thread of life more quickly than I hope), do some famous and noteworthy work. Nor, for as long as the impulse guides my mind, will anything deflect me from the purpose. And if it should come to pass (which clearly I do not know how soon it might) that I have to die before I am able to complete that which I promise, yet will I leave an exceptional work after my death, by which not only may my memory be renowned in the future, but others may be inspired by my example, and I may make you all more eager for your studies. But now you see how much separates choice learning from instruction retained by the mind: of the former, there are here more than sufficient witnesses; of the latter, I myself, too

inconsiderately indeed, have today made you witnesses because I have detained your most learned ears so long with my barbarousness. (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 87–89)

Beginning her speech with the words “feminine modesty,” Elizabeth immediately invokes the complexities of public speech and chastity for women and simultaneously implies submissiveness (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 58, 59, 72, and 87). In Renaissance England, the phrase “feminine modesty” could easily indicate humility, or it might also mean “behavior, carriage of the body, use of the eyes, gestures, and the choice and wearing of clothes, in such a manner as to reveal a pure mind and not to incite, though unwittingly, unchaste thoughts in others” (Kelso 25). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, both definitions of the word modesty were in use in the mid-sixteenth century. Both definitions reflect Renaissance constructions of femininity, and both indicate restrictions on feminine speech and feminine behavior in general. The phrase also implies that even for Elizabeth, speaking publicly before educated men posed certain risks to her reputation.

She continues to create a sense of submission and humility, by following this phrase with statements that define her motivation for speaking as a sense of duty. She cites “the intercession of my nobles” and her “goodwill toward the university” as reasons why she has agreed to speak, in addition to her desire to promote education and to fulfill her audience’s expectation (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 87). According to Quintilian, the purpose of the exordium (the first part of a classical oration), is to win the good will of the audience members “by making [them] well-disposed, attentive and ready to receive instruction,” and an easy way to do so is to emphasize the idea that the speaker is not

motivated by self-interest but “out of a sense of duty to a friend or relative” (Lanham 75; Quintilian 4.1.5–7). Indicating that her speech is motivated by her desire to satisfy the nobles and the University audience, as well as mentioning how her speech might benefit the university community, minimizes any sense that this speech might also be self-serving.

Ambition

But as the speech continues, it becomes clear that this initial self-deprecation combined with her initial reticence to speak and the excellent quality of her speech create a sense of *sprezzatura*, revealing that instead of “feminine modesty,” this speech demonstrates masculine ambition. When Elizabeth initially resists the invitation to address the university in Latin, asking if she might speak in English or if Cecil, her secretary and the chancellor of Cambridge might speak for her, she suggests that she is unprepared and that she is afraid that she might make a fool of herself, even though her speech must have been prepared previously given its tight construction (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 87 n. 1; Shenk 80). When she finally does begin to speak, her initial reticence and her lack of notes gives the impression that she spoke “off the cuff” (Shenk 80). Then she goes to great lengths to suggest that her speech is not even worth listening to, openly declaring that she is likely to say something uneducated and uncouth. Despite these negative comments about her speaking ability, Elizabeth goes on to give an excellent speech: more than twenty years later, Raphael Holinshed published the speech in his *Chronicles* as evidence that Elizabeth was well educated (Shenk 80). Clearly these self-deprecating statements and Elizabeth’s pretended hesitance were part of a strategy to

widen the ironic gap between Elizabeth's self-representation and her actual abilities, giving her speech a sense of *sprezzatura* that underscores her eloquence and shows off her rhetorical skills.

Inasmuch as feminine loquacity was linked with sexual impropriety during the Renaissance, this speech could be seen as an inappropriately bold attempt by Elizabeth to identify with her male audience. According to Kenneth Burke's theory of rhetoric as identification, a speaker identifies with the members of her audience by speaking their language in "speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, [and] idea" (*Rhetoric* 55). Obviously since Elizabeth was invited and encouraged to address the university, we can assume that she was treated as the exception to expectations regulating feminine speech, but *sprezzatura* also helps Elizabeth bridge the gap between masculine and feminine behavior by narrowing the space between the two genders.

As mentioned earlier, much of the courtier's behavior as described in *The Book of the Courtier* was often denounced as effeminate by Castiglione's critics (Bryson 201). According to Daniel Javitch and Jennifer Richards, the courtier's behavior can be explained by the fact that Castiglione's prince was an autocratic tyrant (Javitch 46; Richards 45–50). With a despot for a prince, the courtier suffers "a loss of free expression, of sincerity and fervor, and the loss of direct political participation," requiring him to adapt his behavior to this hostile environment (Javitch 46). Such limitations on the courtier's voice closely resemble constructed limitations on the early modern woman's voice. Instead of speaking openly and persuasively, the courtier must assume "woman's ways" (Kelly-Gadol 159). Relying on more passive means to "seduce" the prince, the courtier seeks primarily to please him in order to influence him by resorting to

dissimulation and personal charm (Bryson 200–01). Although textual evidence suggests that Castiglione’s courtier is modeled after Cicero’s orator, these restrictions on free speech and Castiglione’s suggested coping mechanism result in an emasculated version of Cicero’s bold orator, according to Anna Bryson. In addition, courtesy’s emphasis on charming the prince in order to influence him places the courtier in a position of dependency similar to the position of the ideal wife who is subordinate to and dependent upon her husband.

Given the “womanly” nature of courtesy and *sprezzatura*, perhaps when Elizabeth uses *sprezzatura* she is merely assuming the role of the court lady rather than the more masculine behavior of the courtier. After all, Castiglione’s Lord Gaspar argues that “the verie same rules that are giuen for the Courtier, serue also for the woman” (sig. Bb.ii.r). But Castiglione was well aware of those critiques of courtesy as effeminate, acknowledging them with Ottaviano’s comment that “those precise facions” tend to “wommanish the mindes” of aspiring courtiers (sig. Mm.iiii.v). In response to Gaspar’s comment, Magnifico argues that in fact, “the woman ought to be muche vnlike the man,” and the fact that Castiglione dedicates all of Book Three to the construction of the perfect court lady indicates that Magnifico better represents Castiglione’s own opinion in this matter (sig. Bb.iii.r). In addition to specifying that “exercises of the body” such as “feates of armes, ridinge, playinge at tenise, [and] wrestling” are inappropriate for women, the men also distinguish the ideal lady from the courtier “in her facions, maners, woordes, gestures and conuersation” (sig. Bb.iii.r, Cc.i.r).

Specifically in conversation, the court lady differs from the courtier in the roles that each plays. Through the Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga and her friend Lady Emilia Pia,

Castiglione demonstrates the court lady's role as the facilitator of conversation. The Duchess makes the conversation possible by presiding over the discussion and by providing a location (her rooms) for the conversation; this act adds to her influence as facilitator, since without a physical location, the conversation might not otherwise take place given that the Duke usually went to bed early because of his "infirmitye" (Castiglione sig. A.iii.v). Lady Emilia encourages the conversation by choosing the topic, as well as each evening's participants (Finucci 31, 33). According to the actions of these two women, the court lady "produces discourse" by facilitating, directing, and even judging the quality of the conversation (Finucci 33, 41). Throughout *The Book of the Courtier* the men do most of the talking while the women listen, demonstrating Castiglione's construction of the courtier as the one responsible for providing the content of the conversation. Dividing up conversation's roles along gender lines sets the court lady up as a foil for the courtier, providing another way to distinguish his behavior from "woman's ways" (Finucci 43; Kelly-Gadol 159). Like Castiglione's lady of the court, Elizabeth's initial reticence to address the university suggests a preference for listening over participation, but when she answers Cox's request for even "three words" with more than six hundred, she decisively steps away from Castiglione's model of the court lady and assumes the more active behavior of the courtier (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88 n.1; Shenk 81). Furthermore, this distinction in roles, although narrow, lets Elizabeth indicate that in this speech she is literally talking like the members of her audience would, and not like a woman, who needs an invitation to excuse her very public speech. That is, she speaks like, in order to identify with, an early modern man, who does not wonder if his speech will negatively impact his reputation as a virtuous person.

In addition, Elizabeth's reference to modesty also raises class issues. Like Elizabeth, male authors often introduced their own publications with self-deprecation. Although courtiers commonly composed literary works, publishing took their writing beyond the intimate gathering of friends and associates to a larger audience, which might suggest some presumption on the part of the author. In publishing his work, the author assumes that a larger audience will be interested in it and willing to pay for it. Moreover, a published text generally included an appeal to patronage. Such appeals could also be construed as presumptuous in the sense that the author who belongs to a lower social class presents his work as worthy of a patron's attention and financial support. Modesty allows the author to demonstrate his awareness that his lower social status discourages the upper classes from giving much attention to his work and to imply that he isn't trying to draw attention to himself, even as he offers his work to the public so that they can make their own decision about its quality. And modesty minimizes his appeal for support even as it also invites the potential patron to read the author's work and judge for himself whether it merits the patron's support. Thus, Elizabeth's reference to modesty also invokes class issues, suggesting that she also identifies with the members of her audience as potential authors seeking an aristocratic patron.

Allusions and other references also help Elizabeth identify with her audience's masculinity. Using the words of Demosthenes to speak for her and quoting the aphorism that "Rome was not built in a day" allows her to speak with a male voice, while equating herself with Alexander (and implicitly Julius Caesar) reminds her audience of her male body politic (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88). Together, these rhetorical figures allow her to temporarily assume a "symbolic male identity" (Marcus, "Shakespeare" 137). And

because she precedes ambitious statements with her paraphrase of Demosthenes, she assumes this symbolic male identity before admitting her ambition, locating this masculine trait in her male body politic and distancing it from her physical, female body.

Her ambition appears most strongly in the middle of the speech when she compares herself to Alexander the Great. Like Alexander, Elizabeth claims that she too felt disheartened when she viewed the “sumptuous edifices erected by most noble kings” and realized that she has yet to leave behind any sort of monument (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88). By comparing herself to Alexander, Elizabeth clarifies that she intends to “do some famous and noteworthy work” that will not only compare to the monuments left behind by her predecessors, but will exceed theirs in the same way that Alexander’s own accomplishments set him apart from other rulers (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88). The fact that Elizabeth names Alexander, but groups her predecessors together in an anonymous group of “noble kings,” also emphasizes her intent to distinguish herself from her predecessors.

In addition to advertising her goal to leave behind a monument, Elizabeth’s allusion to Alexander also indicates the type of ruler she intends to be, which receives additional emphasis when we realize that her story about Alexander is also an allusion to Julius Caesar. The details of her story combine two separate but similar stories about Caesar and Alexander, allowing her to invoke both leaders with one story (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88 n. 3; Shenk 81–82). Comparing her reaction to the university’s buildings with Alexander’s and Julius Caesar’s similar emotions, Elizabeth also equates herself with these two leaders known for their “conquering, authoritative power” (Shenk 82). Although she has yet to match their accomplishments, she reminds her audience that

she still has plenty of time to do so, “for my age is not yet senile, nor have I reigned for such a long time” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88).

On the one hand, Elizabeth’s allusions to these powerful leaders distance her from the members of her audience since none of them were monarchs. And she makes this distinction quite clear when she mentions Demosthenes’ teaching that “the words of superiors . . . are as the books of their inferiors, and the example of a prince has the force of law” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88). But on the other hand, many in her audience were well acquainted with the ambition she expresses, even if to a lesser extent, and could easily relate to it. This was a world after all in which social status became increasingly more flexible and education held the possibility of advancement (Whigham 7). Specifically in the audience were at least two men, William Cecil and Robert Dudley, who were in the process of climbing the social ladder. Elizabeth also acknowledges her audience members’ ambition when she explains that “No path is more direct, either to gain good fortune or to procure my grace, than diligently, in your studies which you have begun, to stick to your work” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 88).

Education

In the same way that Elizabeth creates an ambitious male identity to help her connect with her audience members, she also emphasizes her education in order to imply that she shares a similar background and similar political values with them. But as with “feminine modesty,” Elizabeth also gives the opposite impression of her education in order to increase the discrepancy between her represented ability and her actual ability. At the beginning of her speech, Elizabeth describes the forthcoming speech as “rude and

uncultivated” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 87). Combined with the overt reference to her gender in “feminine modesty,” this description of her speech implies acceptance of women’s inferiority and suggests a lack of eloquence based on a lack of education.

In a similar fashion, Elizabeth’s successor, James I, at times spoke negatively about his own rhetorical skills. Describing the warm reception he received when he first entered England, James says, “Not that I am able to expresse by wordes, or utter by eloquence the vive [living or vivid] Image of mine inward thankfulness, but onely that out of mine owne mouth you may rest assured to expect that measure of thankfulness at my hands” (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 293). Like Elizabeth’s self-deprecating comment, this statement at the beginning of his first speech before the English parliament suggests that James’s speaking abilities don’t measure up to those of his audience, whether that is because of a general lack of talent or lack of education and practice. When he references his eloquence again at the end of his speech, he brings out a different aspect. After a lengthy speech James confesses,

My conclusion shall onely now be to excuse my selfe, in case you have not found such Eloquence in my Speech, as peradventure you might have looked for at my hands. . . . It becommeth a King, in my opinion, to use no other Eloquence than plainnesse and sinceritie. By plainness I meane, that his Speeches should be so cleare and voyd of all ambiguitie, that they may not be throwne, nor rent asunder in contrary sences like the old Oracles of the Pagan gods. (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 305)

Like many of his contemporaries, James associated eloquence with beautifully deceptive or even meaningless speech. Although he arrived in England optimistic about his

relationship with Parliament, this conclusion indicates his anxiety about misinterpretation even in this first speech.

Three years later, James's strained relationship with Parliament began to manifest itself in his increasingly negative descriptions of eloquence. When James arrived in England, he anticipated that he would be able to manage the English parliament as easily as he had managed the Scottish parliament, but for three years the English parliament had resisted and procrastinated the first thing James had hoped to accomplish in Parliament: uniting Scotland and England (Bingham 50–51; Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 16). The introduction to his speech in 1607 provides further insight on his views about eloquence. James warns his audience that his speech, after so many eloquent ones, will most likely seem like the “worst Wine” given at the end of a banquet, but he promises, “I am the onely to deliver now unto you matter without curious forme, substance without ceremonie, trewth in all sinceritie” (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 307). Then he contrasts his speech with those given at a University: “Studied Orations and much eloquence upon little mater is fit for the Universities, where not the Subject which is spoken of, but the triall of his wit that speaketh, is most commendable” (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 307). In other words, for James eloquence obscures content and is the antithesis of plain and sincere speech, hinting at James's growing conviction that if only he could make the members of Parliament understand him, then he could convince them (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 17).

James's introduction to his first speech, like Elizabeth's self-deprecating comment, plants in the minds of his listeners, questions about a monarch's rhetorical education and abilities, probably with the intent of disproving his first statement in order

to encourage compliments. The speech that follows this initial statement “revels in his verbal artistry,” using metaphors, analogy, and imagery to convey his message (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 15–16). Whereas James’s comments demonstrate his anxiety over misinterpretation, Elizabeth often embraced ambiguity and used it to her advantage, falling back on it in moments of political difficulty (Heisch 32).

And like Elizabeth, in his 1607 speech, James also adds to his statement the issue of gender by comparing the use of eloquence to women’s apparel. According to James, plain speaking is “like the garment of a chaste woman, who is onely set forth by her naturall beautie” but “other deckings” or verbal embellishments, are “ensignes of a harlot that flies with borrowed feathers” (Rhodes, Richards, and Marshall 307). With this statement James raises issues about gender and public speech similar to those raised by Elizabeth, but there are also significant differences. To some extent, James assumes femininity with this analogy, but whereas Elizabeth’s reference to feminine modesty reminds her audience of restrictions on feminine speech, James’s comment isn’t meant to raise any questions about the propriety or quantity of his speech, only the quality of his speech. Both statements do reiterate the belief that eloquence was inappropriate for respectable women, but Elizabeth’s statement seems to wonder more specifically whether women can speak eloquently and James’s statement is more interested in declaring that they shouldn’t. Moreover, whereas James’s statement reinforces Renaissance constructions of femininity, Elizabeth’s comment followed by her performance challenges assumptions about female behavior. Most significantly, James’s invocation of gender is inconsistent with his physical appearance, but Elizabeth’s statement is transcribed on a matching physical body, adding both to the significance of her statement

and its irony. In accentuating women's accepted weaknesses, James's reveals his own anxiety and weakness in language, whereas Elizabeth's statement emphasizes the ironic gap between expectations and reality, subverting it in order to highlight her actual abilities.

With her closing statement, "I have detained your most learned ears so long with my barbarousness," Elizabeth reiterates her description of her speech as rude and uncultivated, as well as reminding her audience that as a woman, she was a foreigner in the almost exclusively male realm of academia (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 89). Like her use of the word "modesty," her use of "barbarousness" also suggests the possibility of multiple meanings. The word might reiterate the idea that Elizabeth's speech is unpolished and reflects either a lack of education or women's innate inferiority: anything lacking the classical refinement of education could be described as barbarous in the sixteenth century. In addition, the original meaning of the word refers to anyone who is not Greek or Latin, or individuals who exist beyond the boundaries of accepted classical society ("Barbarous," *OED Online*). Just as classical societies marked outsiders as barbaric based on their speech, appearance, and other customs, most early modern educators also marked women as outsiders to scholarship by insisting that rhetoric be taught in Latin, in addition to omitting rhetoric from a typical young woman's education.

This sense of exclusion is another aspect of James's statements about his eloquence. Besides James's fear of misinterpretation, behind his statements and Elizabeth's, is another more general message about eloquence and the monarchy—the idea that monarchs aren't eloquent because their responsibilities preclude an extensive education. As James's statement suggests, the monarchy and the university are two

distinct worlds. This idea that monarchs aren't eloquent also appears in speeches by Charles I and Henry VIII. At the end of his first official speech before Parliament as King, Charles, with some sense of relief turned to the Lord Keeper, explaining, "Now because I am unfit for much speaking, I mean to bring up the fashion of My Predecessors, to have My Lord Keeper speak for Me in most things" (159). Henry VIII doesn't speak negatively about his own eloquence in a speech given to the Commons and Lords in 1545, but he also makes reference to this practice of relying on someone else to speak for him, explaining, "Although my Chauncellor for the time being, hath before this time used very eloquently and substantially to make answer to such Orations as have beene set forth in this Court of Parliament, yet is hee not so able to open and set forth my minde and meaning, and the secrets of my heart in so plain and ample manner as I my selfe am and can doe" (sig. A2r). Both speeches provide evidence of this practice of having another speak for the King and, along with James's statements, reinforce the idea that most Kings lack the education to speak as eloquently as a scholar,² an idea that also comes through in Elizabeth's own ironic understatement.

By referring to her oration as barbarous, Elizabeth implicitly raises the question of whether she merits inclusion among Cambridge's scholars, based on her speech. As a monarch and a woman, Elizabeth might be doubly excluded. Perhaps she had no intention of including the issue of gender in that question, aiming instead to invoke only those attitudes about the monarchy, so that she could demonstrate how she differs from her predecessors. But in suggesting that she might be outside the academic community, she cannot help but also remind her audience that most women stood even farther outside

² In Charles's case, his rhetorical skills were quite limited. According to biographer Derek Wilson, Charles lacked Henry's presence and Elizabeth's eloquence, making public speaking an uncomfortable task (150–51).

the world of education, ultimately calling attention to her gender even though previous portions of her speech demonstrate rhetorical skill arguably equal, if not superior, to the skills of any man in her audience. This statement is also doubly ironic, since this speech was delivered in Latin, meaning that she describes herself as barbaric in the language of the traditional insider. Thus, the ironic juxtaposition of this self-deprecation with her demonstrated ability and the cleverness of the statement itself, subtly imply that she does merit inclusion, adding another component to the identity she shares with her audience. Beginning and ending her speech with these self-deprecating statements also allows Elizabeth to “clothe herself in the ‘disguise’ of male identity” without completely abandoning certain aspects of femininity (Marcus, “Shakespeare” 137).

Elizabeth’s classical allusions also contradict her initial suggestion that she lacked the education necessary to deliver a speech appropriate for such a learned audience, contributing to the sense of *sprezzatura* and developing another aspect of the identity she shares with her audience in the form of a humanist education. A traditional humanist education relied primarily on classical examples to teach rhetoric and also encouraged students to include bits of wisdom (*sententia*) in their compositions (Abbott 158; Shenk 82). When Elizabeth mentions Demosthenes, Alexander (and Julius Caesar), and the third Fate, Atropos, she demonstrates her familiarity with texts that her audience of scholars and students were also probably familiar with. And her inclusion of Demosthenes’ words, along with the aphorism about Rome, also follows the humanist pattern of inserting *sententia* (Shenk 82). Her overt use of these references indicates that she shares a common education with the members of her audience, and through these references she also speaks the language of humanism.

Elizabeth's classical allusions and *sententia* also imply that she shares similar political beliefs with her listeners. Humanists argued for political reform based on education, arguing that all leaders, the prince and his councillors, should be educated. According to this philosophy, a King's power stemmed from his education, increasing the status of the tutor and giving the tutor and educated counselor increased influence over the King throughout his reign (Shenk 78). Since the Queen spoke to a university audience, many of them were probably familiar with and supportive of these humanist ideals. Elizabeth further emphasizes the notion of a learned prince by standing between Cox and Cecil while she delivered her speech. Her ideas would have resonated strongly with both Cox as the royal tutor (he was Edward VI's tutor)³ and Cecil as the chancellor of Cambridge. And their positions next to the Queen during the delivery of her speech would have implied their endorsement of Elizabeth's self-representation as a tutored and counseled prince, as they "represented the system of wisdom that guides and surrounds a learned monarch" (Shenk 81). By relying on her humanist education then, Elizabeth implies that she shares similar political beliefs with Cox, Cecil, and other humanists in her audience, as well as demonstrating her qualifications as a learned prince (Shenk 78).

The fact that many of her specific allusions are connected to Greek scholarship (Alexander, Atropos, and Demosthenes) helps her identify with an even more specific group, the Greek scholar. Well before Protestantism separated into different factions, Greek scholars such as Ascham, Cecil, Grindal, and Cox had agitated for anti-papist reform, making Greek scholarship synonymous with Protestant reform (Shenk 84). Thus, Elizabeth's reliance on Greek *sententia* also associates her with men whose Protestantism

³ Elizabeth's own tutor Roger Ascham had hoped to be at Cambridge during her visit, but because his wife was pregnant and about to give birth, he stayed with her in London (Shenk 94 n.8).

would be considered traditional by Puritans and more conservative reformers alike (Shenk 84). Without relying on overt persuasion, Elizabeth's emphasis on common ground between herself and her audience "establish[es] rapport" and creates a sense of affiliation that is also inherently persuasive because it suggests that in addition to similarities in education and scholarship, the audience and speaker also share religious-political interests (K. Burke, *Rhetoric* 46).

Through her classical allusions and self-deprecation, Elizabeth identifies with her audience by casting herself as an ambitious scholar, but she also demonstrates awareness of the potential problems that might arise from too much emphasis on similarities between the Queen and her audience. Elizabeth was aware that portraying herself as a learned prince might encourage some to think of her as a student willing to be tutored or counseled by an equally learned academic: the humanist model with which she identified herself, "blurred the boundaries" between a prince and his advisors, arguing that their education equally qualified them both to govern (Shenk 78, 79). And her self-deprecation might backfire, reinforcing the problems associated with her gender. Thus, Elizabeth places additional limits on their sense of a common identity. First, she is careful to also establish herself as the one who bestows favors and influences social standing. Her explanation that her "goodwill toward the university" encourages her to speak implies a sense of duty, but it also reminds the members of her audience that she is in a better position to offer rewards than they are. Her instructions on how to gain her good favor through continued study also emphasize her ability to promote these men up the social ladder.

Elizabeth's manipulation of certain references also points out her position of power. Without any warning she combines the two stories about Caesar and Alexander, and according to Linda Shenk, when Elizabeth paraphrases Demosthenes, she actually misquotes him. Demosthenes is best known for his critique of absolutist power, but this paraphrase seems to support absolute power. Shenk argues that the quotation actually comes from the Roman maxim, "what has pleased the prince has the force of law." By attributing the words to an advocate of democracy, Elizabeth minimizes the absolutist intent (83). Thus, Elizabeth's misattribution and her flexibility with details hint at her perception of those around her: since she manipulates these references to meet her own needs, perhaps she would also be willing to treat others in a similar fashion, manipulating them to get the results she wants.

Despite these distinctions in status and power, Elizabeth's emphasis on other traits that she shares with her academic audience suggests that she hoped to blur some of the boundaries distinguishing her from the members of her audience. But as K. Burke points out, "identification is compensatory to division" (*Rhetoric* 22). The need to identify indicates not only disparity between the two parties, but also reveals what was causing Elizabeth the most anxiety at this point in her reign. The emphasis in this speech on masculine characteristics indicates that Elizabeth saw her gender as a source of vulnerability even after five years on the throne: throughout her speeches, Elizabeth frequently "adher[es] to conventions that assert the inferiority of the female gender" in order to alleviate "widespread fears about female rule" "only to supersede those conventions" (Rose, "Gendering" 1079). She describes herself as uneducated (rude and uncultivated) and distinguishes her education from that of her audience members by

referring to hers as “instruction retained by the mind” and theirs as “choice learning” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 89). But then she exceeds those expectations, revealing through her speech that she is in fact well-educated. Furthermore, although she cites Demosthenes in order to assert her superiority, doing so also suggests that she felt anxiety about her presumed inferiority based on her gender, even as her demonstrated rhetorical skill suggests that she well-versed in rhetoric.

According to Leah Marcus, Elizabeth typically compared herself to men in her more difficult political moments and towards the end of her reign, when she wanted to emphasize her androgyny; Elizabeth viewed her sex as a political liability that she preferred to minimize when her authority was weakest (Marcus, “Shakespeare” 137). Because Renaissance constructions marked women as subservient and inferior, Elizabeth’s sex automatically subjected her to her male councillors. And Humanist philosophy emphasized education as “the primary criterion for *all* governors,” princes and councillors alike, but then excluded women from such an education (Shenk 78). In both cases, Elizabeth was an outsider who had to resort to alternative methods, such as the theory of the King’s two bodies, in order to justify her inclusion long enough to demonstrate her qualifications.

Finally, Elizabeth’s identification with Protestant reformers also suggests that Elizabeth was more concerned with the issue of religion than she might appear on the surface, as shown by the fact that, according to Mary Hill Cole, Elizabeth’s progresses to universities were “aimed at drawing the Protestant scholars and clergy into greater conformity” (Cole 69). Moreover, the reigns of Edward and Mary had fostered religious faction and “loosened the habits of obedience and of civic order,” increasing the threat of

internal disunity, thus making it more important for Elizabeth to insist on obedience to her decrees (MacCaffrey, *Shaping* 11, 17). Protestant ideology posed additional challenges for Elizabeth through its focused and united efforts “to influence the Queen on the succession, on her marriage, on the treatment of the Catholics, and on foreign policy” and presented “a standard of belief by which the monarchy could in fact be judged” (MacCaffrey, *Shaping* 14–15). This ideology was particularly threatening to a monarch who already belonged to the subordinated gender, and Elizabeth’s careful identification with Protestant reformers suggests that she did indeed feel vulnerable to such attacks. But it is interesting to note that rather than call the university to task—perhaps because Cecil, who was the Chancellor, had traveled to Cambridge ahead of the Queen in order to bring the university into compliance with the religious decree—Elizabeth avoids the topics of religion and vestments entirely, and instead makes a point to include herself among Protestants (Cole 69).

Admittedly Elizabeth must not have been too overwhelmed by these points of vulnerability. Otherwise she would not have dared to use *sprezzatura*. After all, the self-deprecating statements by themselves reiterated beliefs that may have been widely held by her audience and clearly Elizabeth’s intent was not to reinforce negative gender constructions, especially where her own person was concerned. In addition, had Elizabeth’s feigned unpreparedness fallen flat, the eloquence of her speech would have been devastated by the sense of affectation. Yet in seeking to persuade the members of her audience, not by logic and reason, but by pleasing them with her erudition (as enhanced by *sprezzatura*), and by focusing on her masculine ambition and her humanist education in order to identify with them, this strategy suggests that Elizabeth did feel

some external pressures. Clearly she felt strongly enough about the issue of her gender to address the conflict in her speech where she could manipulate and subvert gender constructions more easily. Introducing gender into her speech allows her to confront the expectations lingering in the back of her listener's minds and bring them out into a more public discussion where she could address specific constructions and transform them by demonstrating their inapplicability in her case. The fact that her speech was reprinted by Holinshed suggests that her speech was successful in qualifying her as an exception to typical gender constructions about the propriety and quality of women's language, because as an example of her education, it also demonstrates general acceptance of her public behavior as Queen. And to the extent that Elizabeth remained on the throne until her natural death and to that point remained in relative control of her country, she appears to have succeeded in negotiating the issues surrounding gender and the monarchy. But throughout her reign, criticisms about her policy occasionally focused on her gender, and even close associates, like Robert Dudley, manipulated gendered representations of the Queen for their own purposes (Frye 65–70). Yet the general popularity that she enjoyed through most of her reign suggests that she was able to resolve the most troubling concerns about her gender.

Chapter Two: The Matter of Marriage

Between 1559 and 1581, Elizabeth's marriage and the succession were frequently hot topics during parliamentary sessions. With regularity, the House of Commons or the House of Lords (and sometimes both) would submit petitions requesting that Elizabeth marry and, until she could produce an heir, name her successor. Perhaps because Elizabeth never did marry despite often intense pressure from Parliament, historians like J. E. Neale, Susan Doran, and Wallace MacCaffrey have written in detail about Elizabeth's courtships and the reasons why they failed. They each propose possible theories for Elizabeth's perpetual status as a single woman, but the reasons why Elizabeth never married are not as relevant to this study as the fact that in each of these three studies, Doran, MacCaffrey, and Neale say little if anything about the 1576 exchange between Parliament and Elizabeth on the matter of marriage and the succession. Because Neale, MacCaffrey, and Doran rely on a historical approach, analyzing Elizabeth's courtships in terms of cause and effect, the importance of this speech is minimized since nothing in the historical account suggests that this should have been a moment of anxiety. Likewise, a purely textual analysis of this speech would bypass potential insights into Elizabeth's anxieties and motivations by looking only at the text itself. Only rhetorical analysis allows us to consider how the choices Elizabeth made in this speech reflect and respond to the historical context, providing clues to her own sense of the situation and circumstances. Even when hindsight suggests Elizabeth had nothing to worry about as far as parliamentary pressure to marry, this speech and its context hint that the discussion of marriage was a vulnerable point for the Queen. In her 1576 speech, Elizabeth identifies with the members of Parliament as courtiers in order to convince them that she shares

their dedication to and concern for the safety of their country, and therefore they can trust her to choose the best path when it comes to marriage and the succession. Specifically she demonstrates the humbleness and constancy of one who serves a prince, along with the charm that the courtier relies on to influence his prince, by comparing her service to God with their service to her.

As members of Parliament, rather than the Privy Council, they might not seem to fit the category of courtiers; however, according to Simon Adams, “there are fundamental difficulties in defining the boundaries of the Court, and a clear distinction between the courtier and the bureaucrat is almost impossible to draw” (56). Although the members of Parliament enjoyed more freedom during Elizabeth’s reign than at the beginning of the sixteenth century, like the courtier, their freedom of speech was still quite limited. Under Henry VIII, the Lords and Commons did not even have the ability to vote against a measure put before them and “questions of policy and the direction of the administration were the Crown’s preserve” (Neale, *Parliaments* 1:16). Presumably they had the right of free speech, but it was commonly said that “the wrath of the Prince is death,” suggesting a political situation quite similar to the courtier’s (Neale, *Parliaments* 1:20). By the end of Mary’s reign, the Lords’ and Commons’ freedom of speech had been extended to “the right to speak and vote against any measure,” but they still lacked the freedom to propose new bills and motions (Neale, *Parliaments* 1:27, 28). Even with some freedom of speech, Wallace MacCaffrey points out that before Elizabeth’s reign, the members of Parliament would not have dared to pressure the monarch through the use of petitions. Only when they felt that the “fate of the dynasty” and “the essential interests of the whole society” were at stake, were they willing to use petitions to try to persuade Elizabeth to marry and

establish a line of succession (MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth* 97–98). But even then, the members of Parliament could not propose their own laws to force Queen Elizabeth to marry or name a successor, making their petitions only requests and without the force of law.

At the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, it began to look like every session of Parliament would produce a petition asking the Queen to marry and name a successor. Within the first week of Elizabeth's first session of Parliament and again during the next session in 1563, both the Commons and the Lords petitioned the Queen (MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth* 89). Regarding marriage, Elizabeth promised them that "if I can bend my liking to your need I will not resist such a mind" but offered only a "silent thought" on the succession (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 79). In 1566 the Commons and Lords felt that Elizabeth was not doing enough and decided to try a new tactic, drafting a preamble to a subsidy bill that made the subsidy conditional on Elizabeth's written commitment that she would "declare the succession" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 102–103). In response, Elizabeth reduced the requested subsidy by a third and confronted Parliament, accusing them of doubting the promises she had already given them. Ultimately Parliament revised the preamble, but even in its final form, it still contained a hint of the original draft (MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth* 97). In the end, Elizabeth accused the Lords and Commons of blackmailing her; evidently they were successful in increasing the pressure on the Queen. And a little more than a month later, rather than allow such an irksome group to review her progress in their next session, Elizabeth dissolved Parliament. But she also began preparing to send an embassy to the Habsburgs in Vienna in order to facilitate marriage

negotiations and to convey the idea that she was doing her part to get married (Doran, *Monarchy* 88; Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 105).

Given sixteenth-century attitudes about wives, it is easy to assume that marriage was a threatening and dangerous prospect for Elizabeth. But Susan Doran argues that Elizabeth's difficulties arising from gender are "overstated" and in general really were not as threatening to Elizabeth as we often believe (Doran, "Elizabeth I" 29). After all, Elizabeth was the exception to the rule in many cases, as shown by the fact that she received the same rhetorical education denied to other women. Even marriage, which traditionally would require that Elizabeth submit to her husband, probably would have been another exception to the rule in Elizabeth's case. As soon as Elizabeth refused to marry one of her own subjects, leaving only foreign princes as potential suitors, her xenophobic councillors recognized the value of Elizabeth's independence and the need to limit the powers of her husband (Doran, "Why Did" 34). Mary Tudor had already established a precedent for female independence within royal marriage in her marriage treaty with Philip II. According to the treaty, Philip's authority as Mary's consort was severely limited: he had to obey English laws and customs, his participation in English politics was heavily restricted, he could not entangle England in any foreign wars without Mary's consent, nor remove the Queen or their children from England, and if Mary died without an heir, her will made it clear that Philip would "have no further government, order and rewle within this Realme" (Loades, *Mary Tudor* 210, 232–33, 382; Doran, *Monarchy* 79; Doran, "Why Did" 34–35). Elizabeth also relied on similar restrictions in her own marriage negotiations. Thus, Doran argues that Elizabeth had no reason to see marriage as a threat to her autonomy or power as Queen.

However, a closer look at Parliament's petitions requesting that Elizabeth marry and the possible reasons why her marriage negotiations failed reveals that gender was always an issue whether or not Elizabeth felt threatened by its implications. At first glance, Parliament's official petitions requesting that Elizabeth marry do not seem to indicate whether or not they thought Elizabeth should follow Mary's precedent and act as England's ruling monarch after marriage. Such silence on this topic would suggest that Parliament did not oppose Elizabeth's right to rule if she married. But it is also worth noting that especially in the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, in addition to men like John Aylmer, who argued that Elizabeth could marry without giving up her royal authority, there was also the opinion that marriage was a convenient solution to the problem of a female monarch (Doran, "Why Did" 34; Levin, "John Foxe" 115; Levin, *Heart* 43–44). Those who expressed this opinion believed that once she married, Elizabeth would concede all power to her husband, and England would be ruled by a King instead of by Elizabeth. And even if Parliament did support Elizabeth's independence, the need for a legitimate heir necessitated marriage so that the petitions on marriage and the succession emphasize the roles of wife and mother in such a way that highlights the difference in gender between Elizabeth and her Parliament.

Focusing on motherhood as an inherent part of femininity, the earlier petitions equate Elizabeth's leadership with motherhood, frequently referring to her "motherly care" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 73, 76). The members of Parliament also combine religion with motherhood as a persuasive technique, reminding Elizabeth that God "by the course of the Scriptures hath declared succession and having of children to be one of His principal benedictions in this life" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 84). Even in 1576

when Elizabeth was more than forty years old and the possibility of motherhood was shrinking every day, the Speaker of the House, Robert Bell, again uses motherhood and the continuation of the Tudor line as a point of persuasion, asking “her Majestie to consider that she was the last which could conveye lineally, and therefore besought her Majestie as shortly as conveniently might be to encline herselfe to mariage” (Hartley, *Proceedings* 494). Elizabeth well understood that the point of marriage was to produce an heir and apparently had no qualms about the prospect: in 1566 she declared, “And I hope to have children; otherwise I would never marry” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 95). After all, being a mother does not include the same restrictions on independence as the role of wife, but for a Queen, motherhood was a different matter as shown by the examples used in the Lords’ 1563 petition to encourage Elizabeth to marry.

As if to ease any concerns Elizabeth might have about abandoning her virginity, the Lords mention two monarchs, Constantia and Peter of Aragon, who forsook their vows of celibacy in order to continue their royal family lines. With Constantia, a nun who married, the petition emphasizes the fact that her marriage produced a son (she “had issue Frederick the Second”), whereas Peter of Aragon’s marriage (a former monk) “establish[ed] and pacif[ied] the kingdom” without any mention of a child (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 83). The different treatment of the two monarchs reinforces the idea that a Queen’s power and influence, and what distinguishes her from the King, traditionally lay in her ability to produce healthy sons, a point exemplified in Elizabeth’s own mother and step-mothers.

On the one hand, this focus on marriage and Elizabeth’s heir has nothing to do with her sex. All monarchs felt intense pressure to produce a male heir to continue the

royal line; specifically Elizabeth's own father worried that his lack of a son would lead to a disputed succession with the potential to erupt into war, repeating the tragedy of the fifteenth-century War of the Roses (Levin, *Heart* 5, 43). But on the other hand criticism about Elizabeth's failure to produce an heir often led to complaints about her gender that do not appear in attacks on her father. According to a study by Carole Levin, when Elizabeth refused to marry, anxiety about the succession led to criticism of her as a woman, and many of her subjects expressed the desire to replace her with a king, whereas criticism of Henry VIII regarding the issue of a royal heir focused on his policy and not on his gender (Levin, "Gender" 80).¹ Furthermore, Henry's own pursuit of a son emphasized the wife's responsibility to produce a male heir, as well as the threat that the Queen could be easily replaced if she failed to do so (Levin, *Heart* 89). Her subjects' desire to replace Elizabeth with a King follows her father's method of dealing with problems securing the succession. Although the succession could trouble Kings and Queens alike, for Elizabeth the succession also highlights the complexities of ruling as a single woman.

Furthermore, although Elizabeth should be able to maintain her independence in theory, in practice it was a problematic concept for many of Elizabeth's suitors. And for at least two of them, questions about their role in such a marriage proved to be a sticking point. Admittedly, the bigger point of contention for both Charles, the Archduke of Austria, and Henry, the Duke of Anjou, during the marriage negotiations was religion, as both insisted on the freedom to worship as Catholics, but both parties also struggled to come to an agreement on the proposed distribution of power. Maximilian, Charles'

¹ According to Levin's study of seditious materials, Henry's subjects were more upset over his break with the Catholic Church than they were with his early inability to have a healthy son ("Gender" 80).

brother, demanded that his brother be crowned King after his marriage to Elizabeth and that Charles should succeed Elizabeth if she were to die before him (Doran, *Monarchy* 81). Anjou also demanded the royal title and the right to participate in policy making (Doran, *Monarchy* 108). When the two parties failed to reach a consensus on the issue of political authority, in both cases the negotiations collapsed.

Perhaps Mary's precedent, which laid the path for such negotiations, also laid the groundwork for their demise. Philip's own experience as Mary's consort did little to recommend the arrangement to other men. Because of the restrictions placed on him, when Mary died, Philip was forced to leave England without anything to show for his investment. Regardless of those who argued for an alternative sort of marriage for the Queen, the actual marriage negotiations revealed that revising the traditional roles of husband and wife was even more difficult among Kings and Queens.

Perhaps Elizabeth's 1576 response was motivated, then, by her previous experience with such petitions. Although Elizabethan scholars continue to disagree as to whether Elizabeth was willing to marry, she was always clear about her refusal to limit the succession. Even if Parliament was not fooled, Elizabeth frequently used marriage negotiations to divert Parliament's attention from the succession, but in 1576, marriage negotiations were becoming more logistically difficult. For one thing, she was running out of potential suitors. Early in Elizabeth's reign, she had passed up several suitors including Eric XIV of Sweden, the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, and various other dukes and earls in favor of Lord Robert Dudley (Doran, *Monarchy* 21). Less than five years later, when Elizabeth determined that she could not marry one of her own subjects, including Dudley, most of these men were no longer available. By 1576 her options were

even bleaker. At that point her most serious suitor was the Duke of Anjou's younger brother, Francois, Duke of Alençon,² a man who was twenty-two years younger than Elizabeth. At first Elizabeth refused to seriously consider Catherine de Medici's suggestion that Elizabeth marry her youngest son primarily because of the age difference. But as the French ambassadors pointed out, as long as Elizabeth insisted on marrying a prince, she could not afford to be too picky about her suitors. There were only a few eligible princes available, making age compatibility difficult if not impossible (Doran, *Monarchy* 133).

Even more difficult for Elizabeth was the matter of religion. In addition to the fact that there were very few princes, they were all Catholic, further complicating the marriage negotiations. To some extent, Elizabeth's refusal to negotiate with the Archduke Charles on the matter of religion may have been part of a strategy to avoid marriage, but Elizabeth also faced serious difficulties with her people if she allowed her husband to attend Mass. In addition to the fact that the worship of Mass was against the law in England, such an allowance might encourage her Catholic subjects to hold mass in their own homes or to rise up against her, and it would also anger her more zealous Protestant subjects (Barrett-Graves 46; Doran, *Monarchy* 88–89, 92). Elizabeth's hands were tied. Because she needed to minimize the differences between the Church of England and the Catholic Church in order to convince the balky Archduke that she was not a heretic, she had to demand strict conformity from her bishops and laity to the "laws on ceremonies and clerical dress." After such a refusal to compromise with her own subjects, she could not turn around and grant an exception to the Archduke without possibly infuriating the

² Although François Hercule of Valois eventually became the Duke of Anjou when his brother became King, in order to differentiate him from his brother, Henry III, I will refer to him as Alençon throughout this paper.

radicals, reluctant bishops, and their powerful political supporters (Doran, *Monarchy* 81–82).

Despite a few feeble attempts at negotiation by both parties, both groups' inability to compromise on religion also contributed to the collapse of the negotiations. Initially Elizabeth showed more flexibility on religious matters with Anjou, but when he insisted that he be able to worship Mass openly in a Catholic church, his demands were so contrary to earlier negotiations on the matter of religion that he was widely regarded as sabotaging the negotiations himself (Doran, *Monarchy* 122, 126). Likewise, negotiations with Alençon were seriously stalled in 1572 after the massacre of French Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Day (Doran, *Monarchy* 139). The Queen Mother tried to reignite the negotiations in 1575 as part of a strategy to "remove the disruptive prince from the factional unrest in France," but the wedge of the massacre was driven too deep, making marriage negotiations meaningless and all was silent on the matter until two years after Elizabeth's 1576 speech (Doran, *Monarchy* 143).

According to J. E. Neale, in 1576 the Alençon courtship had "fallen asleep," but this lull in negotiations did not prevent Parliament from bringing up marriage and the desire for a Tudor heir again in that same year (*Queen* 238). As usual at the end of the parliamentary session, the Speaker, Mr. Bell, addressed Parliament and the Queen, but after his speech, rather than concluding the session, Elizabeth broke with tradition and adjourned the meeting until the next day, presumably to give herself enough time to prepare a response to Mr. Bell's speech (Neale, *Parliaments* 1:361). The next day the Lord Keeper delivered a response on behalf of the Queen. Following the Lord Keeper's speech, which responded to the Speaker's address, everyone rose to leave, but Elizabeth

again surprised everyone by delivering a speech herself (Neale, *Parliaments* 1:363; Hartley, *Proceedings* 495).

Because of the length of Elizabeth's speech, I will not include it here, but I will provide the following summary of her arguments. Elizabeth's central argument is that she is a good leader who has the best interests of her people at heart. According to Elizabeth, the continued affection of her subjects and God's blessings and protection demonstrate the quality of her leadership. And her dedication to truth and to their safety should give them confidence in her decisions. In the beginning of her speech she implies that they can trust her because she does not have the eloquence to deceive them. She explains that this speech will not be a demonstration of eloquence, and it will not match the skill of the speech before hers. And even if she were able to speak eloquently, to do so would draw attention away from God, who is the source of and deserves all the praise for her success.

Despite her inability to delight her audience, Elizabeth goes on to "confess" that she does have something to be proud of: the love of her people. Although most people tend to be inconstant in their love, even among close relationships such as the one between children and parents, her subjects have continued to love her, providing her with "great encouragement." The constancy of her subjects' love for her becomes even more marvelous when she considers the fact that all princes have to disappoint "a number to delight and please a few." Perhaps, she suggests, people generally give their leaders the benefit of the doubt. But no, that is unlikely, and so she must express gratitude for the generous love of her subjects. Thus, the implication is that her people have generally approved of her leadership with their constant love.

In addition, God's protection and blessings demonstrate his approval of her leadership, and she will continue to merit that protection by always seeking to be guided by truth rather than earthly wisdom. She is nothing more than God's handmaid, "rather brought up in a school to bide the *ferula* than traded in a kingdom to support the scepter." She has always based her decisions on truth rather than popular policy, as shown by the fact that at the beginning of her reign, she took the more difficult path. "Worldly wisdom" indicated that the "safest course" would have been to make alliances with other princes, relying on them for strength. But Elizabeth preferred instead to rely on God's strength, and in turn he has "prospered and protected" England and should continue to do so. The troubles in other countries suggest that other princes have not been as protected by God, although these troubles are not necessarily evidence of a prince's faults. Prosperity does not always indicate righteousness, but it does demonstrate God's mercy. Elizabeth declares that she has enough of her own sins to keep her from worrying about anyone else's, and so the best path is to pray to God and seek to do his will. Others might be more intelligent, but no one is as concerned for the safety of her subjects as Elizabeth is.

After explaining why the members of Parliament can rely on her to take care of the country, she addresses the two "dangers" mentioned in the Speaker's speech the previous day: marriage and the succession. Personally, she is not really interested in marriage and would not give up her virginity even to marry the greatest monarch. It is not that marriage itself is a bad thing, and there is nothing so difficult that she would not do if it would benefit her people, even if it affected her private life. Concerning the succession, she knows that she is mortal, as the Speaker pointed out, and will accept death whenever

God calls her. But too much preparation for her death could endanger the present, especially if fighting breaks out over who will be her successor. She is indifferent to the succession; she will not be around when it matters and she declares, “My brains be too thin to carry so tough a matter.” If God continues to prolong her life then perhaps she will be able to find a way to provide for their security. They, the members of Parliament, have given more to her and the country than she can ever thank them for, and she commends them to God, who will protect them. Finally, she wishes that they had “tasted some drops of Lethe’s flood” and would forget her speech (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168–71).

The Servant’s Humbleness

Before Elizabeth presents herself as a servant, she first establishes the relationship between the members of Parliament and her as one between servants and master. Admittedly, most courtiers and parliamentary members probably did not think of themselves as servants, but classifying her own members of Parliament as such and then presenting herself as a servant of a different sort allows her to identify with the social status of the members of Parliament. She labels them as servants by comparing their constant love for her to the inconstancy found in other similar relationships: “whereas variety and love of change is ever so rife in servants to their masters, in children to their parents, and in private friends to one another, . . . yet still I find that assured zeal amongst my faithful subjects” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168). Although she contrasts her relationship with her subjects to these other relationships, because she uses parallel structure to present these first three relationships, she also emphasizes the similarities

between the four relationships, implying that her subjects are also, to differing degrees, her friends, her children, and her servants.

Then, she establishes the ways in which she is a servant. In addition to referring to herself as a milkmaid, she describes herself as God's servant, saying, I "count myself no better than His handmaid, rather brought up in a school to bide the *ferula* than traded in a kingdom to support the scepter" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169). Her use of the phrase "traded in a kingdom" also adds another layer to the servant imagery by refiguring the monarchy as a guild. Because the study of rhetoric (as invoked by the references to school and a *ferula*) is in some senses the study of a craft and because this study generally takes place during adolescence and childhood, the phrase "traded in" also refigures the study of rhetoric and the monarchy (since it is equated with rhetoric as an alternative) as apprenticeships. Because apprenticeships generally included a relationship that is similar to the relationship between a child and parent or servant and master, this image suggests that the monarchy also entails a servant-master relationship. In Elizabeth's case, the servant-master relationship is between her and God since she describes herself as "His handmaid."

The word choice in this sentence also characterizes her not only as a servant, but as a humble servant. This reverence comes out in her statement that she considers herself "no better than His handmaid," especially since she could have recast the sentence to emphasize her chosen position as God's servant. Her use of the word *ferula*, which was a rod used to punish grammar school students, also emphasizes the deferential position of the student as compared to the teacher. Similarly, she attributes any inkling of eloquence—"I cannot attribute this hap and good success to my device without detracting

much from the divine Providence, nor challenge to my own commendation what is only due to His eternal glory”—and the “special benefits” of her “happy reign” to God, rather than to her own abilities. This sense of humility also appears when she advocates “humble prayers,” or when she declares, “I . . . gave myself to seek for truth without respect, reposing my assured stay in God’s most mighty grace with full assurance” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169). Both statements imply a dependence on God, but the second could also be an example for the way Elizabeth hoped her own subjects would view her, trusting her decisions.

The Servant’s Constancy

Within her construction of a humble servant, Elizabeth weaves in the characteristic of constancy too. Referring to her dependence on God as her guide, Elizabeth declares “Thus I began, thus I proceed, and thus I hope to end” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169). The parallel structure of the clauses creates a sense of repetition that emphasizes Elizabeth’s declaration that she will always rely on God for her protection. Repetition appears in additional forms throughout her speech. It appears in her use of alliteration: “prospered and protected you,” “private persons,” “prince’s properties required me with reason to remember,” “peril not the present,” and “your own desert and my desire” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169–171). Twice she repeats the same idea using different words: “God’s most sacred, holy Word and text of holy Writ” and “sweetest tongue or eloquentest speech” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168). She also creates the sense of repetition by using two descriptive words that are closely related: “great offense, much mislike, or common grudge,” “leagues, alliances, and foreign strengths,” “rare and

special benefits,” “harbored and cast anchor,” “bitter storms and troubles,” and “most sure and happy” (Marcus, Mueller and Rose 169–170). Finally, she repeats the idea of safety throughout her speech: “the safest course,” “the safest state,” “your security,” and “preserve you safe” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169, 171). As with the first example, the repetition in most of these cases emphasizes the point, especially in the last example about safety. And it is easy to understand why Elizabeth would want to highlight safety; for most members of Parliament, marriage brought political alliances which could bring added support in times of war (or get them into war as happened with Mary and Philip). And a named successor was incredibly important to them as a way to prevent the violence of a disputed succession. The repetition, especially alliteration, also creates a sense of consistency, subtly indicating that they can depend on Elizabeth to be the same throughout her reign; she will always seek God’s true path, rather than the easy path, and she will always have their best interest at heart.

Describing herself as a humble and constant servant allows Elizabeth to suggest that she shares a position similar to that of the members of Parliament, helping her to momentarily identify with their status as servants to the Crown. But she also talks about her role as God’s servant in terms that distinguish her status as a servant from her audience members’ status. Referring to herself as a handmaid suggests that she is not just any servant since the word alludes to God’s most important handmaid, the Virgin Mary (*KJV*, Luke 1.38). As evidence of her virtue, she goes on to note that “these seventeen years God hath both prospered and protected you with good success under my direction, and I nothing doubt but the same maintaining hand will guide you still” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169). She could have included herself in the group protected by God,

but instead, when she uses the second person pronoun, she is able to suggest not only that God has validated her through his protection, but also that she is part of the “maintaining hand” rather than merely protected by it. In addition, the synecdoche is figuratively parallel to her relationship with God. Just as she uses “maintaining hand” as the part to stand for the whole, as his servant, she is also a lesser part that stands for the whole, and an extension of his power. Thus, there are clear limits to this identity as a servant.

The Courtier’s Charm

Because the members of Parliament had a lower social status than the Queen, in addition to using subsidy bills to increase the pressure on Elizabeth to marry, they also employed strategies within their petitions that resemble the behavior of Castiglione’s courtier. Although members of Parliament might not have used the specific tool *sprezzatura* and some might have been unfamiliar with Castiglione, like Castiglione’s courtier, they also limited their use of direct requests and used flattery to please Elizabeth, hoping to make her more receptive to their ideas. Admittedly documents such as official petitions and the 1566 subsidy bill do not provide a complete picture of the parliamentary members’ behavior; however, these official interactions do give us a glimpse of the Lords’ and Commons’ relationship with Elizabeth and their strategies for influencing her. Looking at these documents makes it easier to recognize how Elizabeth’s strategies in her 1576 speech compare to the parliamentary members’ and help her identify with their methods of persuasion in addition to their status.

Parliament often avoided direct appeals by couching their requests in general terms or delaying the specific request until the end of their petition; however, the Speaker

often could not omit these requests entirely. In the introduction to the Commons' 1563 petition to Elizabeth, the House Speaker, Thomas Williams, resists naming the specific reason for the petition, referring instead to "the greatest matters that nearest touched the estate of our realm" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 73). The Speaker also indicates that the members of Parliament deliver this petition in fulfillment of their duty to the Queen, explaining that "they account as not the least, but rather among the greatest of them all, that your majesty hath at this time assembled your Parliament for supplying and redressing the greatest wants and defaults in this your commonweal" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 72–73). Admittedly, this language does sound somewhat pointed when we consider the fact that by "greatest matters" the Speaker refers to marriage and the succession, but up to this point, the generality of the language also allows him to delay mentioning the specific purpose of the petition, that is, to get the Queen to marry. In other words, he can emphasize the importance of the matter before naming it, and he can foreground the purpose of the petition with the idea that he raises this issue, not for any personal gain, but out of a desire to ensure the wellbeing of the country.

After the introduction, the Speaker gets more specific, explaining that of all the great matters, the most important is "the sure continuance of the governance and th'imperial crown thereof in your majesty's person and the most honorable issue of your body" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 73). Clarifying the petition's purpose, he returns to less forceful language, describing this hoped for heir as a source of comfort and blessing to the people, rather than as part of Elizabeth's duty to her people. Thus, he tempers language that might be construed as a demand or an order from Parliament.

In contrast, the Lords' 1563 petition is more direct. Within the first paragraph, the Speaker of the House of Lords explains that the purpose of their petition is to convince the Queen to marry and name a successor. Aside from a more explicit declaration of their purpose, the Lords' petition basically follows the same pattern as the Commons' petition, listing reasons why Elizabeth should marry, but in the end "most humbly and earnestly" asking, rather than demanding, that Queen Elizabeth marry and settle the succession (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 86). Even in 1576, Cromwell's notes on Bell's speech record a request for marriage that is only slightly more direct than the Commons' 1563 petition, asking that Elizabeth "encline herself to mariage" (Hartley, *Proceedings* 493, 494). Certainly members of Parliament enjoyed more freedoms than Castiglione's courtier and spoke more openly than the courtier would ever dream of doing, but as mentioned above, the Lords and Commons were emboldened by their concern for the succession. And the intensity of their request generally reflects their sense of crisis, for example, in 1563 when Elizabeth had just recovered from smallpox.

Parliament also softens the petitions with flattery and terms of deference. Throughout petitions delivered in 1563 and 1576, there are deferential and flattering references to the Queen as "Most excellent princess," "most gracious sovereign lady," and "the queen's most excellent majesty" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 76, 86, 171). These obeisant designations are then contrasted with Parliament's humble position, a motif repeated throughout the petitions. In one petition, the Speaker describes the members of Parliament as "upon their knees according to their bounden duties" and "they most *humbly* and earnestly pray your majesty to have good consideration" of their petition (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 86, emphasis mine). To top it all off, the Speaker flatters the

Queen by describing her as “gracious and motherly” and by promising that “nothing may seem to be added to the perfection of your renown” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 73, 173). Another petition says that Elizabeth has blessed the Lords and Commons with benefits “as great as the fruits of peace and common quiet, mercy, and justice can give” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 81). Although flattery is a more obvious technique than *sprezzatura*, it is motivated by the same hope that in pleasing the monarch, the courtier or bureaucrat will gain the monarch’s favor and her ear long enough to influence her.

Responding to the Speaker’s 1576 mention of marriage and the succession, Elizabeth uses a different means to reach the same end, tempering her own request that the members of Parliament trust her with her use of *sprezzatura*. But in this speech she relies entirely on self-deprecation, emphasizing her limited qualifications rather than her lack of specific preparation, to create *sprezzatura*. Inasmuch as *sprezzatura* often includes an ironic discrepancy between the courtier’s self-represented ability and his actual ability, the self-deprecation helps widen this ironic gap, making the discrepancy more profound and the actual abilities of the courtier that much more impressive. As Castiglione explains, a courtier should avoid an obvious solicitation for praise, but instead if he “will touche any thing sounding to his own praise, he shall do it so dissemblinglye” (sig. M.ii.r). Castiglione further develops this idea with the example of the aristocrat dressed as a shepherd. He explains that the audience will expect a certain level of skills based on his appearance, but when he demonstrates even greater skills, he will so far exceed expectations, that he will delight and please the audience (M.iiii.v; K. Burke, *Rhetoric* 225). Self-deprecation acts as a sort of disguise, then, lowering the audience members’ expectations so that the courtier can exceed them and delight his

audience. And by delighting the members of his audience, the courtier hopes to be able to influence them, convincing them to accept him as a legitimate member. Or if his audience is the prince, the courtier hopes the prince will be so delighted by the performance that he will welcome the courtier's companionship and influence. The art of rhetoric also relies on the "principle of courtship," or in other words, like the courtier, the orator also must court her listeners, using persuasive devices in order to influence them (K. Burke, *Rhetoric* 208).

Not everyone would place self-deprecation under the umbrella of *sprezzatura* though. In Frank Whigham's book *Ambition and Privilege*, he distinguishes the two by defining them as distinct tropes. He describes self-deprecation as "closely related to *sprezzatura*," but his description limits the purpose of the modesty disclaimer to self-magnification and calls the technique "explicitly gainful" in the pursuit of praise (102–112). Indeed ironic understatement as part of *sprezzatura* does invite compliments and is intended to earn praise, but when coupled with an obviously skilled performance, it also allows the prince the freedom to judge for himself whether the courtier's ability matches his own self-debasing description. This ironic understatement, then, in connection with an easy and excellent display of skill provides a less intrusive way for the courtier to catch the prince's eye in an effort to influence him.

Given the context of this speech, it is easy to see why Elizabeth focuses on self-deprecation rather than on trying to create the idea that the speech was spontaneous. Although Elizabeth's behavior at Cambridge in 1564 suggests that she was speaking extemporaneously, the quality of her speech indicates that long before she arrived at Cambridge she anticipated the invitation to speak and arrived prepared to do so. But in

1576, after adjourning the proceedings the day before, Elizabeth could hardly pretend to deliver an extemporaneous speech. She could however still create the sense of irony by presenting herself as a less than competent speaker.

Again, Elizabeth uses self-deprecation almost as soon as she begins speaking. After the first sentence, Elizabeth warns the members of her audience: “If any look for eloquence, I shall deceive their hope; if some think I can match their gift which spake before, they hold an open heresy” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168). Continuing on with this same theme, she declares, “I cannot satisfy their longing thirst that watch for these delights, unless I should afford them what myself had never yet in my possession” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168). This statement is ambiguous, but based on the previous sentence she seems to be equating eloquence with “delights” and adds that this speech will not be eloquent because she has never possessed that skill. Just a few lines later she contrasts eloquence with her intended message, explaining that “If I should say the sweetest tongue or eloquentest speech that ever was in man . . . I should wrong mine intent and greatly bate the merit of mine own endeavor” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168). Speaking about eloquence as an obstacle to her message not only suggests modesty, but also helps to mask the self-deprecation, minimizing the sense that she is fishing for compliments, even as it understates her eloquence.

In order for these statements to constitute *sprezzatura*, Elizabeth’s speech must contradict her self-deprecation, her skill outstripping the level of expectation established by her understatement. Her use of a variety of rhetorical figures, as mentioned above, provides some indication of her rhetorical skill. These statements also help her to disarm her audience by implying that in speaking plainly she is also speaking sincerely. And the

fact that her self-deprecating statements serve a double purpose also suggests that Elizabeth exceeded her initial description of her eloquence. Because eloquence was associated with an uncanny ability to persuade listeners against their will, Elizabeth's statements that she lacks eloquence, in addition to contributing to *sprezzatura*, also mimic some classical orators who hid their eloquence in order to appear more trustworthy (Quintilian 4.1.9). Considering the fact that Elizabeth's central argument is that Parliament should trust her, pretending to conceal her eloquence makes sense, even as it also hints at her skill by demonstrating her familiarity with classical strategies and her ability to employ them. Although recorded reactions to Elizabeth's speech are limited,³ there are some that record her as successfully exceeding her self-deprecation. The sons of the Earl of Shrewsbury wrote that Elizabeth gave "a very eloquent and grave oration, which was as well uttered and pronounced as it was possible for any creature" (Neale, *Parliaments* 1:364; Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 167 n.1). Likewise, Sir John Harington described the speech as "these good words," perhaps indicating his own judgment of Elizabeth's eloquence (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 167 n.1).

In the middle of her speech, Elizabeth weaves in self-demeaning descriptions about her intellectual skills. For example, contrasting intelligence with love and good intentions, Elizabeth declares that "not the finest wit, the judgment that can rake most deeply or take up captious ears with pleasing tales, hath greater care to guide you to the safest state, or would be gladder to establish you where men ought to think themselves most sure and happy, than she that speaks these words" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169–

³ Although Thomas Cromwell mentions the delivery of Elizabeth's speech, he also notes that he was unable to hear the speech and therefore did not record it. In Simonds D'Ewes' *Journals of All the Parliaments*, the speech is not even mentioned (235, 265). Marcus, Mueller, and Rose surmise the omission occurred because hardly anyone heard the Queen's speech, which might also explain why there are so few responses to it (167 n. 1).

70). By setting her good will in opposition to intelligence, Elizabeth demeans her own intellectual abilities, implying that even if she is not very bright, at least she is dedicated to the happiness of her subjects. Later on in her speech, she more directly describes her intelligence by proclaiming, “my brains be too thin to carry so tough a matter” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 170–71).

Again she refutes these statements within the context of the speech. Clearly intellectual ability is connected to the ability to successfully employ rhetorical figures since the use of a variety of different figures reveals not only knowledge of them, but also the intelligence to seamlessly weave them together. Elizabeth also demonstrates her intellect when she implies that it exceeds the intelligence of the members of Parliament with her warning, “let good heed be taken lest in reaching too far after future good, you peril not the present or begin to quarrel and fall by dispute together by the ears before it be decided who shall wear my crown” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 170). In other words, Elizabeth argues that their concern for a line of succession is both premature and simplistic, ignoring the dangers and political intrigue inherent in such a decision. Once she names a line of successors, she asks what is to prevent them from fighting amongst each other or from killing Elizabeth, assuming the members of Parliament would agree on Elizabeth’s choice. Finally, the “deliberate obscurity” of this speech also demonstrates Elizabeth’s intelligence (Heisch 32). Throughout this speech, Elizabeth carefully avoids language that might commit her to future obligation. For example, when she addresses the issue of marriage, she neither commits to marry nor refuses to do so, only admitting that she prefers chastity, but would consider marriage if it were necessary for the protection of her country. Even then, her language is so circuitous as to leave the

audience in doubt about that promise: “Yet for your behoof there is no way so difficile that my touch my private, which I could not well content myself to take, and in this case as willingly to spoil myself quite of myself as if I should put off my upper garment when it wearies me, if the present state might not thereby be encumbered” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 170). Presumably, she is telling them that for their sake, she would do anything, no matter how difficult or how much it would impact her private life. But the language is circuitous enough that they could hardly hold her accountable to such a promise.

Through her use of *sprezzatura*, then, Elizabeth acts like her members of Parliament, assuming similar behavior in order to make her point. In the same way that the Speaker uses generalities and delay to frame and soften his request in order to avoid directly appealing to the monarch, *sprezzatura* helps Elizabeth avoid an overt appeal to logic as a method of persuasion, choosing to woo her audience instead. Hoping to convince them that because she shares their hierarchical status and the characteristics of eloquence and intelligence she also shares their dedication to England, Elizabeth uses the ironic gap in *sprezzatura* to implicitly invite the members of her audience to recognize that she shares their intellectual and rhetorical abilities. Although her actual abilities obviously exceed the representation of her abilities, calling attention to the discrepancy between the two, the form of *sprezzatura* leaves them free to make that decision themselves, smoothing the way for Elizabeth’s additional assertion that she shares their interests. And it also expresses confidence in her audience as favorably disposed towards her inasmuch as her self-deprecation leaves Elizabeth at the mercy of the audience members: they are also free to ignore the discrepancy, accepting the understatement as valid rather than ironic, but choosing to recognize the contradiction allows them to

express their goodwill towards Elizabeth and demonstrate their unity. As long as Elizabeth is successful in contradicting her understatement (and it appears that she was in this case), the irony also delights the members of the audience, in the same way that flattery is intended to, in order to sway their opinion. In this manner, Elizabeth adds to this shared identity by talking and acting like her audience (*Rhetoric* 55).

In addition to identifying with Parliament's behavior, at least one self-deprecating statement allows her to identify with her audience members' gender by acknowledging the masculinity implicit in eloquence and intelligence. By using *sprezzatura* in the context of a speech, Elizabeth automatically assumes an aspect of masculine behavior, and she points this masculinity out to Parliament, when she admits "my sex permits it not" near the beginning of her speech (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 168). The statement directly follows her declaration that she cannot take any credit for her "good success" without "detracting . . . from the divine Providence," so that her reference to the limitations of her sex might mean that no decent woman would try to draw attention to herself, but she instead recognizes God as the source of her abilities. Because there is no clear antecedent for "it," the sentence is ambiguous, allowing for a second interpretation: her sex prevents her from speaking eloquently and for that matter, intelligently.

Moreover, Elizabeth's decision to highlight her eloquence and intelligence also helps her identify with the gender of her audience members inasmuch as these skills were often used to distinguish men from women during the Renaissance. At first Elizabeth's modest disclaimers suggest a concession to male attitudes, and to some extent this concession is another way to identify with Parliament, by agreeing that all women, including herself, are intellectually and rhetorically inferior. As Kenneth Burke explains,

the rhetorician's ability to influence her audience is successful "only insofar as [she] yields to that audience's opinion in other respects. Some of their opinions are needed to support the fulcrum by which [she] would move other opinions" (*Rhetoric* 56). But when Elizabeth demonstrates both intelligence and eloquence and subtly emphasizes those two skills through her use of ironic understatement, she also assumes two masculine skills, indicating that the common identity she is creating shares some gendered attributes with the members of her audience.

Elizabeth again blurs the boundaries between genders—at least as they have been constructed to exclude women from the world of rhetoric—with her reference to the ferula. Since the ferula was used in grammar schools, her statement that she could just as easily have been "brought up in a school to bide the *ferula*" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 169) re-genders her as a young boy. Her own rhetorical skill as demonstrated in this speech supports this image, revealing that she received a grammar school education like that of most boys.

Using *sprezzatura* also allows Elizabeth to claim the masculine attributes of intelligence and eloquence without sacrificing her femininity, because rather than openly declaring that she possesses these traits, she asks her audience to judge for themselves whether she possesses them. If she were to openly state that she possesses these two skills, the audacity of her claims might alienate her audience, and she might also be accused of unwomanly behavior. Instead, by expressing traditional expectations of women through her self-deprecation, she lets them draw their own conclusions even as she also implies her confidence in them that they will come to the conclusion that she is both eloquent and intelligent. Leading the members of Parliament to such a conclusion

and ultimately leaving the judgment to them, she continues to project feminine submission, appearing to share their views of natural female behavior. Thus, *sprezzatura* provides a way for her to implicitly challenge her listener's notions of femininity by demonstrating skills that leave little room for them to find her anything but intelligent and eloquent.

Despite Elizabeth's confession in this speech that she dislikes marriage, approximately two years after Elizabeth's speech, marriage negotiations with the Duke of Alençon were renewed, but "from August 1579 onwards pamphlets, popular ballads, and Latin verses vehemently opposed to the marriage poured forth" (Doran, *Monarchy* 164). Public sentiment against the match because of the Duke's religion, nationality, and youth was so strong that Elizabeth was forced to abandon the negotiations in 1581 (Doran, *Monarchy* 180). Although it is simplistic to argue that religion alone prevented all three matches, clearly it was a politically delicate matter. Her people wanted her to marry, but the political ramifications of the different proposed unions disqualified all available suitors.

Such difficulties suggest that if Elizabeth had wanted to marry, the fact that she never did might have more to do with the complexities of any potential match than any sort of personal determination not to marry. Doran convincingly argues that twice Elizabeth showed a personal interest in marriage (in 1560 with Lord Robert Dudley and in 1579 with the Duke of Alençon), and she also showed a willingness to marry two other times (with the Austrian Archduke and then the Duke of Anjou) despite her own personal preferences (Doran, *Monarchy* 11). Whether or not she wanted to marry, Elizabeth faced obstacles to marriage that made it politically difficult. As Elizabeth pointed out, members

of Parliament, despite all their petitions, often voiced much of the opposition to potential suitors: “But they, I think, that moveth the same will be as ready to mislike him with whom I shall marry as they are not to move it” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 95).

Through her use of language in her 1576 speech, Elizabeth is able to suggest a way for the two groups to unite despite their differences, by transforming the discussion about her possible marriage to a review of her reign up to that point. Portraying the members of Parliament and herself as faithful and constant public servants allows her to demonstrate how she has served both God and her country as Queen, and to assert, based on the peace and prosperity that they have enjoyed, that God approves of her reign. Changing the issue under discussion to the quality of her reign also allows her to introduce a subject upon which they are more likely to agree, allowing her to relocate the conflict. In addition, emphasizing the similarities between her and the members of Parliament as servants allows Elizabeth to overcome their differences and through this shared identity argue that at the heart of it all they both have the same goals for England. She too is concerned for the safety and wellbeing of the country, and this commitment, along with God’s implicit approval of her as evidenced by the facts of their current safety and prosperity, should convince them to trust her. The lack of a satisfactory suitor as well as her advancing age might explain the absence of additional appeals to Elizabeth that she marry; however, the fact that most historians treat this period up until 1579 as a relatively unimportant moment in the marriage controversy suggests that Elizabeth was also successful in convincing Parliament to let go of the marriage issue for the time being, because appeals for her to marry all but disappeared and produced little noticeable conflict between Elizabeth and Parliament.

Chapter Three: The Pope's Favorite Daughter

On 24 November 1586, a joint-delegation of parliamentary members went to the Queen with a petition, urging Elizabeth to proceed with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Only a few months earlier, while carefully monitoring all of Mary's correspondence, Sir Frances Walsingham discovered a letter Mary had written to Anthony Babington, giving her approval of his plan to depose Elizabeth, placing Mary on the throne in her place. With the letter as irrefutable evidence of Mary's complicity in an assassination plot, she was found guilty of conspiring to destroy the Queen, and now all that lacked was Elizabeth's signature on the death warrant (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 363–64). For this signature Parliament petitioned Elizabeth. Although they might disagree on the level of Elizabeth's involvement in Mary's execution, scholars as diverse as Jane Dunn, Lowell Gallagher, Alison Plowden, David Loades, and J. E. Neale all agree that this was a moment of crisis for Queen Elizabeth. Mary had shown a calloused disregard for Elizabeth's life—despite the fact that Elizabeth had saved her from the executioner when the Ridolfi plot was exposed—and would continue to threaten Elizabeth as long as she lived in England. But deciding what to do with Mary was not easy for the Queen. On one side of the equation, executing Mary would require Elizabeth to trample on the divine rights of monarchs that she depended on herself. Furthermore, Mary's ties with France and Scotland would cause an international incident if she were executed, inviting threats of war and bringing down a hailstorm of criticism on the Queen (Elton 368). On the other side, the Lords and Commons were unanimously in favor of Mary's execution. They wanted a commitment from Elizabeth and anything less would be dissatisfactory. But she could not commit to Mary's execution in such a public forum and still hope to

minimize the reaction from Mary's supporters. Hoping to placate the Lords and Commons without giving them a firm commitment, Elizabeth uses *sprezzatura* to identify with the members of Parliament, creating a shared identity that will convince them that when the time is right, Elizabeth will respond to Mary's treason with the best solution. Specifically, Elizabeth identifies with her parliamentary members' carefulness for England's safety, their devout Protestantism, and their intelligence in order to demonstrate her ability to choose the best course of action, diffusing any sense of conflict between them and her.

From the very beginning of her reign, Elizabeth had resisted naming a "second person," arguing that under her sister Mary Tudor, "I was sought for divers ways, and so shall never be my successor" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 96). Regardless of Elizabeth's efforts (or lack thereof) regarding the succession, soon after Mary Stuart arrived in England in 1568, she assumed the position of the "second person," becoming "an active centre of conspiracy" against the Queen (Elton 367). Although Mary may have been named in countless other schemes, she was clearly connected with the Ridolfi, Throckmorton, and Babington plots (Loades, *Elizabeth* 220). All three included uprising, assassination, and invasion by the Spanish or the French in order to place Mary on the throne and restore England to the Catholic faith (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 251, 361; Dunn 345, 345–47, 375; Loades, *Elizabeth* 222, 226; Neale, *Queen* 263–64).

Even in death, Mary posed a threat to Elizabeth's reputation if not her throne (Dunn 393). As one diplomat warned, Mary's proposed execution was "an act which would rouse all Christendom in wrath against" Elizabeth and her country (qtd. in Dunn 400). Although the greater concern was with Spain, Elizabeth could not afford to take her

relationships with France and Scotland lightly because she needed their support in order to discourage Philip II from invading (Dunn 404). News of Mary's trial and possible execution had already strained relations with Scotland and France (Dunn 400). According to Neale, in Scotland there was even talk of invading England. Worried about his own claim to the English throne, the Scottish King James VI was not keen on the idea, but his subjects were so outraged by Mary's predicament that he worried he might lose his own throne if he did not adequately represent their anger to Elizabeth (Neale, *Parliaments* 2:135). Due to her involvement in the Netherlands, England was already, in some respects, at war with Spain, but Elizabeth did not want to do anything that might encourage Philip to bring the war to England. While she lived, Mary acted as somewhat of a preventative to war with Spain since her accession to the throne would most likely lead to an Anglo-French alliance against Spain, but in death, Mary would become a Catholic martyr, providing justification for Philip to avenge her death and invade England, saving it from the heretic's grasp and allowing him to assume the throne as God's servant (Dunn 400; Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 364–65). With Parliament clamoring for Mary's death and the international consequences weighing on her mind, Elizabeth "had to decide who it was more dangerous to upset—her neighbors or her subjects" (Loades, *Elizabeth* 233).

In addition to the threat Mary posed personally, her presence in England also exacerbated the religious situation. Many Protestants believed—and with good reason—that England was under attack from Catholics and Mary was at the heart of the papist threat. The first sign of increased Catholic insurgence came in 1570 when Pope Pius V issued a papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth. The bull also absolved English subjects

from obeying their Queen and threatened any who did remain loyal and obedient with excommunication (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 245, 248; Dunn 343–44). The bull had little impact on England, other than to encourage Protestant polemic against Rome, but then Catholic missionary priests also began entering England in the early 1570s (Cole 71; Neale, *Queen* 250). Ten years later, when a second wave of Jesuit priests began crossing the English Channel, they claimed as their purpose “the preservation and augmentation of the Faith of the Catholics of England,” and they also brought with them Pope Gregory’s *Explanatio*. This document temporarily released English Catholics from their duty to Pope Pius’ bull, but also clarified that this grace period was only until Elizabeth could be dethroned (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 289, 292; Neale, *Queen* 250, 251). At the same time, the Papal Secretary of State announced that anyone who assassinated Elizabeth would be exempt from the sin of murder and would gain the Pope’s favor and blessing (Neale, *Queen* 251; Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 335). With such rumors and declarations floating about, the Catholic Priests were accused of seeking to destroy Elizabeth, regardless of their declared intent (Neale, *Queen* 251; Dunn 373).

Although Elizabeth preferred to take a softer stance against the growing Catholic community, her own actions during this time indicate that she also felt an increased threat. In 1581 she signed into law the first significant anti-Catholic legislation since 1559 and permitted the execution of the popular Jesuit priest Edmund Campion (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 313–15; Dunn 373–74; Loades, *Elizabeth* 223). The English Queen also made changes to her own practices. Before Mary’s escape into England in 1568, Elizabeth had traveled throughout the country, using her progresses to encourage religious conformity among both Protestants and Catholics alike. But during the first half

of the 1580s, as more plots to depose Elizabeth in favor of Mary were exposed, Elizabeth began to avoid Catholic hosts and restricted her travels to the Thames River valley (Cole 71).

With the increase in Catholic activity, many parliamentary members began to intensify their campaign for additional reforms in the Church of England, expanding the divide between Elizabeth and Parliament. Although Protestants had initially been pleased with the Religious Settlement of 1559, as the years passed, their hopes for continued reformation were repeatedly disappointed (Neale, *Parliaments* 2:18). Edward Dering's critique of Elizabeth's "less-than-zealous efforts to further reformation in England," originally delivered in 1570, went through sixteen editions during Elizabeth's reign, evidencing the widespread sense of dismay regarding Elizabeth's religious policy (McCullough 119). The Puritans were the most vocal, but moderate Protestants also pushed for some reform, hoping to purge the Church of the more obviously popish practices and root out corruption among the clergy (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 564). But Elizabeth had steadfastly resisted any additional changes to the Church of England. Her choice of John Whitgift as the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583 further exacerbated the disagreement over reform. Whitgift was a stern disciplinarian with even less tolerance for left-wing extremism, and he, with the Queen's approval, became a major obstacle to a Puritan movement to transform the internal structure of the Church from a hierarchical model to the more egalitarian Presbyterian model (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 565; Elton 425). Well aware of Protestant dissatisfaction, Elizabeth reported to a group of Bishops that Protestants were saying she "was of no religion, neither hot [nor] cold, but such a one as one day would give God the vomit" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 179).

Aware that European influence and the issue of regicide had carried the day in the aftermath of the Ridolfi plot, this time Elizabeth's councillors took great pains to discover how to best convince Elizabeth to follow through on Mary's sentence. Lord Burghley, William Cecil, pushed for a session of Parliament to be called so that the political body might focus pressure on the Queen (Graves 151). In a letter to Walsingham, Burghley wrote, "We stick upon Parliament . . . to make the burden better borne" (qtd. in Neale, *Parliaments* 2:104). Parliament began the session discussing the findings of the commission appointed to judge Mary; for once, there was not a dissenting voice in either House. United in their effort to convince Elizabeth to sign the death warrant, they then turned their attention to persuading her (Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 364; Neale, *Parliaments* 2:113).

All too familiar with Elizabeth's enigmatic way of avoiding a direct response to their petitions, they carefully prepared well-reasoned arguments to help them pin her down. But implicit in their preparation is also the idea that if only Elizabeth considered the matter rationally, then of course she would consent to Mary's execution. A decade earlier, when Elizabeth had frustrated Parliament by forgiving Mary's treason and by refusing to name a successor, many came to the conclusion that Elizabeth's actions were the result of ignorance, "that she was simply not aware of the dangers to which her inactivity was exposing her people." Thomas Wilson, Master of the Requests, questioned "whether she so fully seeth her own peril" (Hartley, *Elizabeth's Parliaments* 73). Obviously Elizabeth was not like other women; she was not intellectually gullible, but her tolerance of Mary's behavior probably seemed like a product of feminine irrationality to those men who saw Mary's death as the only viable solution.

Despite their supposedly superior intellect, neither Parliament nor Elizabeth's councillors could force her to sign Mary's death warrant. Elizabeth, learning from her father's experience, had years earlier protected her right to rule by spreading power among the members of her privy council and limiting their ability to restrict her royal authority (Elton 409). Although Parliament could refuse to pass subsidy bills or refuse to act on essential business in order to put pressure on Queen Elizabeth, its members could not execute Mary legally without Elizabeth's signature on the warrant (Hartley, *Elizabeth's Parliaments* 77). With no other bills before Parliament or any subsidy requests that they could use to force Elizabeth's hand as they tried to do in 1566, they had to rely on their petition and their speeches to convince the Queen, especially during this session when their work was restricted to the outcome of Mary's trial (Neale, *Parliaments* 2:106). But they had two things on their side: their unanimity and the Act for the Queen's Safety (Hartley, *Elizabeth's Parliaments* 77).

During their first meeting with the Queen, the Lord Chancellor presented their petition, summarizing the contents, and then unwilling to rely on that document alone, the Speaker spoke next, adding to the petition "very great and weighty reasons" for Mary's execution (Neale, *Parliaments* 2:115). They also tried to exert pressure by drawing attention to her gender. Speaker John Puckering complained, "She is only a cousin to you in a remote degree. But we be sons and children of this land, whereof you be not only the natural mother but also the wedded spouse. And therefore much more is due from you to us all than to her alone" (qtd. in Neale, *Parliaments* 2:116). They were sent away with Elizabeth's promise that she would "be most careful to consider and to do that which

shall be best for the safety of my people and most for the good of the realm” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 189).

After their first visit failed to produce a commitment from the Queen, both the Lords and the Commons set to work again preparing “fresh” arguments. The Commons even reorganized their committee to include a lawyer, perhaps hoping to beef up the legal aspect of their arguments (Neale, *Parliaments* 2:125). Relying on the principle that the monarch herself was bound by the law, in addition to listing all the dangers Elizabeth faced if Mary continued to live, Parliament also appealed to the 1585 Act for the Queen’s Safety (Elton 483). This act gave authority to “her Majesty’s commission under her great seal” to examine anyone who might be involved in “any open invasion or rebellion” or “any act attempted tending to the hurt of her Majesty’s most royal person,” regardless of that person’s political or social status. The Act also declared that if anyone with any claim to the throne (i.e., Mary Stuart) were involved in or aware of any such acts then they would lose their claim to the throne and might “lawfully be pursued to death” (Loades, *Elizabeth* 225). Elizabeth had given her consent to the law, giving it authority and also binding her to obey it (Hartley, *Elizabeth’s Parliaments* 76). With an answer prepared for any objection Elizabeth might raise, Parliament approached Elizabeth, convinced that Mary’s execution was not only wise, but also was the only possible choice.

The summary of her response to Parliament’s second petition follows here. In this speech Elizabeth tries to convince Parliament of the need to proceed carefully, with the promise that she has made and will continue to make every effort to ensure the safety of the country. After wondering whether she should speak to the members of Parliament,

worried that if she does speak she might appear insincere, but if she does not speak that she will disappoint them, Elizabeth begins her speech by outlining the difficulty of her situation. On the one hand, because no solution other than Mary's execution has been found acceptable, only Mary's death will prevent Elizabeth's death. On the other hand, Elizabeth worries that allowing Mary's death will lead others to condemn her for killing a fellow monarch and her own relative, a condemnation that she hardly deserves.

In addition to causing Elizabeth problems, Mary's execution could also lead to problems for the entire country. On the continent, her enemies will closely analyze her actions, looking for every possible sin and blemish, so that they can be included in the pamphlets and books that they will publish against Elizabeth and her government. They will call her a tyrant, even though she feels a natural repugnance for anything that might be classified as tyranny. She wishes the rebels' wicked behavior was a surprise to her, and that she would be exonerated of the name tyrant and they would be exonerated of their wickedness, but that outcome is unlikely. Such is the character of the rebels on the continent, and Elizabeth prays there are not any such rebels in England itself. She goes on to explain why it is unjust to call her a tyrant: she has pardoned and even ignored the treasonous behavior of many rebels. But she has to admit that even though she is not a tyrant, she is a sinner, and she asks God to forgive her for her sins.

Elizabeth continues to establish her true character as pious, wise, just, and patient. She explains that her religious devotion is evidenced by her decision made when she first came to the throne to re-establish the religion of her birth, upbringing, and she hopes, her death. She knew it was dangerous to change the state religion because other kings might use her actions against her, justifying their own evil intentions with them. But she relied

on God for protection. Up to this point in time, he has protected her, and she is confident he will continue to do so. Elizabeth has also dedicated herself to acquiring the qualities of a king, “namely, justice, temper, magnanimity, and judgment.” Like Solomon, she has prayed for wisdom and God has given her enough to help her recognize her own faults and her own ignorance. Regarding justice, she says that she has always looked at individuals with a disinterested eye, determining rewards of office according to actual behavior and abilities. Neither has she ever allowed justice to be perverted by giving her attention to anyone who would encourage her to judge contrary to the law. As for temperance, she has always followed the example of Augustus Caesar, who repeated the alphabet before acting whenever anything caused him offense. Surely her subjects and her own actions can attest to her character in these matters.

As for her subjects, through their “great love and exceeding care,” they have bound her to them. She can never recompense their love, but neither will she forget it or her duty to them. She might not have the ability or the wit to repay them, but she will always have the desire to do so. Concerning their petition, she knows their judgments are just because they are based on God’s word and well-reasoned. And she knows the petition is motivated by their love for her as their Queen. Perhaps they think it is strange that she protects Mary, who has been such a great threat to Elizabeth’s life. She will not commit to doing so, but she knows that there are many who would risk their lives for something less important than the kingdom. She might be willing to risk her own life if it did not mean risking the safety of their lives.

Yet she finds it strange that they are all in such agreement that the only way Elizabeth will find safety is to satisfy their petition. Then she reprimands any who might

say that her last message was sent only as a formality or to portray the Queen as gentle and forgiving or to torture the members of Parliament by drawing out the situation. She only did it because she wanted to be sure she understood the will of every man in Parliament, giving them the opportunity to make their opinion known to her publicly or privately. And if there are any who misconstrue her actions, they do her a great wrong. She is smart enough to know that there are many with more wisdom than she has.

As for an answer to their petition, she cannot give one at this time. If she told them she would not agree to their petition, she might be committing to something that she does not feel herself, and she might choose to act differently. And if she should agree to their petition, this is not the place or the time to make such a promise even if she meant it. Therefore, she asks them to be patient. She knows they are dedicated to her, but they need actions and not promises. Be satisfied for now, she tells them, and she will be careful to do that which is best for England. She also warns them not to be too eager for Mary's death or else they might lose the very thing they hope to accomplish by it—greater safety (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 196–200).

This response to Parliament has become another piece in the puzzle over whether Mary's execution was effected without Elizabeth's full understanding or whether Elizabeth, aware of the political costs involved in the Scottish Queen's death, manipulated the events surrounding Mary's execution in order to minimize her complicity in Mary's death. We do know that Elizabeth cooperated with (or engineered) Robert Cecil's propaganda strategy, revising his copies of her 12 November and 24 November speeches and allowing him to publish them as *The Copie of a Letter to the Right Honourable the Earle of Leycester . . . With a report of certeine petitions and*

declarations made to the Queenes Majestie at two severall times, from all the Lordes and Commons lately assembled in Parliament. And her Majesties answeres thereunto by her selfe delivered, though not expressed by the reporter with such grace and life, as the same were uttered by her Majestie (Neale, *Parliaments* 2:129; Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 190). Viewed by Neale as a piece of propaganda intended to “ease the inexpressible shock to the world at large of a Queen’s execution,” the tract has been used to help make the case either for or against Elizabeth’s involvement in Mary’s execution (*Parliaments* 2:130). Looking closely at different versions of the two speeches, Allison Heisch has considered what revisions Elizabeth made to her speech before it was published and what those changes reveal about Elizabeth’s concerns regarding Europe’s reaction to Mary’s death (46–54). But neither Neale nor Heisch pay any attention to Elizabeth’s use of *sprezzatura* in the reported version of her 24 November 1586 speech.

In order to create this sense of *sprezzatura*, Elizabeth first suggests that her speech is spontaneous by standing up without notes and declaring at the beginning, “that she never had a greater strife within herself than she had that day, whether she should speak or be silent” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 196). Emphasizing her conflicted feelings about whether or not to give Parliament an answer allows her to suggest that she hasn’t given any thought to preparing remarks because, when she begins her speech, she is still deciding whether to give an answer. Prefacing her speech with this statement allows her to imply that she is still in the process of deciding how to respond to Parliament’s petition, and thus has not prepared a specific response. Consistent with this declaration, Elizabeth appears to have spoken extemporaneously. According to the notes to Elizabeth’s 1586 speech in the collection compiled by Leah Marcus, Janel Mueller, and

Mary Beth Rose, there is no version of Elizabeth's speech written completely in her own hand. All manuscript copies of the speech appear to be reports written by others after the fact, so that Marcus, Mueller, and Rose agree with Neale that Elizabeth spoke extemporaneously and without notes (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 186 n. 1, 196 n.1; Neale, *Parliaments* 2:126, 131).¹ She seems to be following Castiglione's advice to "thinke on it beefore hande, showyng notwithstanding, the whole to bee done *ex tempore*, and at the first sight" (sig. Q.iiii.v). Naturally this spontaneity highlights her speaking abilities, but it also gives the pretense that the performances of carefulness, religious piety, and intelligence framed by her speech are effortless too.

Of the three speeches analyzed in this project, this speech especially highlights the role of performance in *sprezzatura*. The specific quality of her performance is hinted at in the title given to the pamphlet in which this speech was published. According to the title, the publication includes the Queen's response to petitions made by the Lords and Commons, "though not expressed by the reporter with such grace and life" as when the Queen delivered them. Because both grace and liveliness are also used by Castiglione to describe *sprezzatura*, this description in the title implies that the recorder of the two speeches recognized and appreciated her use of the trope. Admittedly, it is unclear to what extent Elizabeth collaborated on the title, suggesting that this direct reference might also signal the Queen's intention of displaying *sprezzatura*, even as it also reveals the anxiety that some would not recognize it. This title also implies that there are aspects of

¹ There are manuscript copies of the speech written in another's hand but with revisions written by Elizabeth. The similarities between the revised manuscript and the speech as it appears in the published *Copy of Letter to the Earl of Leicester . . .* have led Neale and Marcus, Mueller, and Rose to believe that these revisions were written after the speech was delivered, making the reported speeches the most accurate copies of the speech as Elizabeth delivered it to Parliament (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 190 n. 1; Neale, *Parliaments* 2:131).

Elizabeth's oral performance that are absent in the printed version. Rhetorical figures provide clues to the oral performance, but the title reveals the anxiety that anyone unfamiliar with the trope of *sprezzatura* wouldn't recognize the signals and would miss that aspect of her performance.

Clearly, an important part of *sprezzatura* is its delivery or performance. Castiglione points out the importance of delivery by describing it as a grace that accompanies "whatsoever [the courtier] doth & sayeth" in order to impress "in the myndes of the lookers on a [favorable] opinion" (sig. E.ii.r, E.iii.v). In other words, *sprezzatura* can be applied to all human behavior, but it is especially effective when used in front of the prince and his court and in conjunction with a performative skill, such as dancing, playing tennis, or delivering a speech (Whigham 93). Castiglione also counsels the courtier to consider all the aspects of a performance, including the audience, the scenery, the character, and the script: "whatever he does or says, the place where he does it, in whose presence, its timing, why he is doing it, his own age, [and] his profession" are all part of the performance (sig. M.i.r). As in the two speeches considered previously, when Elizabeth uses *sprezzatura*, she often uses it to adorn and draw attention to her rhetorical performance, as well as other characteristics. Doing so within the context of a speech, provides a way for her to perform her care for England, her religious devotion, and her intelligence together, creating a composite shared identity. Thus, she implies that her feelings for her country, her piety, and her intelligence resemble similar characteristics in her audience members and for her, are interconnected in a way that will guide her to reach the same conclusion that her listeners have reached about Mary's future.

Elizabeth further develops the sense of *sprezzatura* for the individual performances of these three characteristics by contrasting each performance with its opposite. With the characteristics of religious piety and intelligence, she uses self-deprecation to create an ironic gap between her self-representation and her actual demonstration of those characteristics. She also creates an alternate identity and contrasts it with her own characteristics, implicitly shared with her audience members. For example, she speaks in terms of rebels versus her loyal subjects and the wicked as opposed to the righteous, as will be demonstrated in greater detail below. Creating this alternate set of characteristics helps Elizabeth demonstrate the brilliance of her own performances by setting them against a dark background.

Carefulness for England's Safety

In order to gain the confidence of the members of her audience, Elizabeth portrays herself as invested in England's safety. Although Elizabeth does not use self-deprecation to highlight her careful attitude towards her country, she defines her attitude by setting it in opposition to those who will not take care of the English like she will, namely rebels, enemies, and tyrants. First she establishes the traits of these "traitors and rebels" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). After explaining that Mary's death will lead "some good fellows abroad" to publish libelous tracts against the Queen and against the English government, she says, "such rebels there are beyond the seas; I hope there are no such within the realm" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). Thus, a rebel or traitor is anyone who criticizes the crown with the intent to harm the country, and generally is not English, or at the very least lives outside England.

To the rebel who slanders the Queen, Elizabeth also adds enemies when she explains that in returning the country to the Church of England, she was well aware that this act “was like to be a foundation and a ground for such great kings and princes as were mine enemies to build and work their devices upon, ill intended against me” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). With this statement, she adds to this alternate image European monarchs and anyone who attacks the Church of England. Such a group could easily include the Jesuit Priests and Mary Stuart. The description seems especially apt for Mary, who as a foreigner and a Queen hoped to harm Elizabeth and uproot the Church of England, returning the country to Catholicism. Elizabeth emphasizes the harm Mary might inflict on England by referring to her as “the injurer” and “a sword in mine own realm to shed mine own blood” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 196, 199).

In contrast, Elizabeth’s subjects are full of so much love and “exceeding care” for the Queen that she can never expect to recompense their devotion (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). Describing her subjects, and thus the Lords and Commons, in this manner sets them in opposition to the rebels, traitors, and enemies, not only indicating the attitude with which Elizabeth hopes to identify, but also revealing Elizabeth’s own expectations for their behavior towards her. If they are to be different from rebels and traitors, in addition to loving the Queen, they should also avoid criticizing her or her policies. This idea is further clarified towards the end of her speech when Elizabeth tells them that anyone who questions the intent of her recent message to Parliament is “wicked” and commits a “greater wrong than ever he can be able to recompense” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 199). To misconstrue her intent becomes equated with the harm caused by her enemies.

Likewise Elizabeth also discusses the great love and care she feels for England and her subjects. This idea is implicit in her acknowledgement of the love her subjects have shown her and in her desire, despite her inability, to requite their love. She explains, “though I may want the means and wit, yet surely I shall never want the will to requite it” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). At the end of the speech she also promises Parliament that “I am now and ever will be most careful to do that which shall be best for your preservation” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 200). She demonstrates the strength of her own commitment to both her country and its religion when she describes English Protestantism as “this religion in which I was born, in which I was bred, and in which I trust to die” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). Linking her authority to God through her statement “when I first came to the scepter and crown of this realm I did think more of God who gave it me than of the title” and explaining that the first act of her reign was to establish the “Church of God” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197) allows Elizabeth to suggest that the Church is intimately connected to the country, making the Church of England synonymous with the country itself. Thus, her statement of lifelong devotion to the Church indicates devotion to the country too because establishing the Church at the beginning of her reign makes it a foundational aspect of her rule. The parallel structure between the three phrases also emphasizes her care for England, suggesting that her devotion to the country is consistent and constant in the same way that these three phrases repeat the same form.

Finally Elizabeth also contrasts her leadership style with that of a tyrant. Perhaps because the image of a tyrant is strong enough on its own and because only someone with the power of a monarch can be correctly called a tyrant, Elizabeth does not spend any

time clarifying what she means by a tyrant, other than to say that allowing Mary's death will earn her the name (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). But she does provide several reasons why she is not a tyrant. First of all, she reasons that Mary's death should not represent the quality of her reign because, she declares, "I have pardoned many traitors and rebels, and besides I well remember half a score treasons which have been either covered or slightly examined or let slip and passed over, so that mine actions have not been such as should procure me the name of a tyrant" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). If ten treasons do not seem like very many, she is able to create the sense that she has forgiven many more by mentioning different ways she has let them go: "either covered or slightly examined or let slip and passed over." And the detail that she clearly (well) remembers at least ten suggests that there might be even more that she has forgiven and forgotten. Certainly she is not the sort of monarch who is vengeful and cruel, traits that might normally be attributed to a tyrant.

Then, based on the connotation of a tyrant as a bad king, she explains that she "sought to learn what things were most fit for a king to have, and I found them to be four: namely, justice, temper, magnanimity, and judgment" or in other words, what makes a good king (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). In addition to explaining how she practices justice, she also compares herself to two notable kings, Solomon and Augustus Caesar. Significantly, she is careful to compare herself specifically with the Solomon that prayed for and received wisdom rather than the Solomon with an abundance of wives and concubines. Likewise, Augustus Caesar might easily be considered a tyrant, but Elizabeth clarifies that she is especially like him in temper: "I have had always care to do as Augustus Caesar, who being moved to offense, before he attempted anything was willed

to say over the alphabet” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). This example also helps Elizabeth present herself not only as a good king, rather than a tyrant, but specifically as one, who in addition to being forgiving, just, and wise, is careful and avoids rushing to judgment. Thus, her audience can expect that she will apply this care both to England itself and to Mary’s situation.

Protestant Piety

Because Mary’s Catholicism linked the proposed assassination to attempts to restore England to Catholicism, making her intended crime against Elizabeth a threat to the country’s religion as well, Elizabeth also raises the issue of her own religious devotion. Using ironic understatement, Elizabeth declares “I am a wretched sinner and humbly desire pardon at His hands against whom I have offended for the same” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). She also thanks God that “He hath given me so much judgment and wit as that I perceive mine own imperfections many ways” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). To the uninitiated, Elizabeth appears to concede to her Catholic and Protestant critics, but as with other instances when Elizabeth uses self-deprecation in conjunction with a skilled performance, these statements are meant to draw attention to a specific skill in such a way that ideally the audience will decide that, in fact, the opposite is true. But in this case, the self-deprecation not only highlights the performance, it is the performance. In referring to herself as a sinner, Elizabeth suggests that instead she is humble and devout.

Unlike the other skills that Elizabeth highlights with *sprezzatura*, religious piety is complicated by the performative aspect of *sprezzatura*. The self-deprecating remarks

need to come across as sincere, lest they be interpreted as false modesty, and disingenuous and manipulative. In other words, although Elizabeth has declared herself a sinner, overtly contradicting such a statement will reinforce the literal meaning, making her appear hypocritical and self-serving rather than convincing her audience otherwise. But clearly the statement that she is a “wretched sinner” is meant ironically. After all, she didn’t really want her audience to see her as a sinner. In addition to reflecting negatively on the Queen, it would also contradict her portrayal of herself as representing the Church of England. And implicit in irony, especially as it pertains to *sprezzatura* is dissimulation. According to Eduardo Saccone, “the essential thing” for irony, and thus *sprezzatura*, is dissimulation, or “a discrepancy between being and seeming” (59). Certainly the courtier’s self-deprecation can be interpreted as deceptive rather than modest when he under represents his skills with the hope that his audience members will notice the difference between his statements and his ability, leading them to judge his skills more favorably. As Anna Bryson points out, the theatricality of *sprezzatura* naturally implies dissimulation (199).

The question then becomes how to demonstrate genuine religious devotion since every public act is to some extent a performance whether sincere or insincere. As Stephen Greenblatt points out, early modern audiences were well aware of the problem of discerning sincerity in a religious performance. During the heretic trials in the early part of the sixteenth century, Church officials had to determine how to judge the sincerity of a heretic’s repentance. In a culture that marked devotion according to ceremonial observance and through the “numbers of *Ave Marias* recited or candles burned or fasts undertaken,” a reformed heretic demonstrated his genuineness by kissing the book

containing the articles of abjuration (Greenblatt 81, 110). After the English Reformation, Protestants, who considered these Catholic acts of devotion to be theatrical and hypocritical, had to come up with new ways to demonstrate their faith, such as measuring faith through acts of kindness (Greenblatt 158). But acts of kindness still include a certain element of performance no matter how sincere. And by the 1580s, anti-papists were well aware that Catholics known as “church-papists” might attend Protestant services and conform to other aspects of Protestantism while continuing to remain loyal to the Catholic faith (Gallagher 87). Thus, although Protestants rejected Catholic acts of devotion in favor of charitable acts or church attendance, demonstrations of faith remained problematic. For both religions, an individual’s devotion appears sincere when her actions and behavior are consistent with her underlying motives. Doubt arises about sincerity when actions seem to mask or contradict true motives.

Similarly, an orator’s sincerity is also often suspect because of oratory’s performative nature, according to Quintilian. In order to prevent such suspicions, “nothing must seem fictitious” (4.2.125–127). The concern, as mentioned previously, is connected to eloquence and the fear that orators will use their specialized skills to influence audience members without their knowledge. Thus, Quintilian advises the speaker to avoid “anything suggestive of artful design,” and instead recommends creating the sense that everything “spring[s] from the case itself rather than the art of the orator,” in the same way that Castiglione also encourages the courtier to avoid affectation and to conceal evidence that his skill is practiced (4.2.125–127). Likewise, an orator appears sincere when his motives are explicit and the rhetorical appeals and figures he uses match that motive rather than mask it. I do not think it is any coincidence, then, that in this

speech Elizabeth makes no mention of eloquence—a detail that is made more significant by the fact that she refers to it either implicitly or directly in the two speeches considered in chapters one and two above. Instead before even beginning to speak, Elizabeth acknowledges her audience’s fear about the power of eloquence when she expresses her hesitancy to speak lest “she might seem to dissemble” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 196). And, as discussed above, by enunciating that hesitancy, she not only invokes the effortlessness of *sprezzatura*, but also insinuates that her humble professions of unrighteousness are spontaneous and sincere, rather than premeditated. Whereas Elizabeth’s listeners might not always suspect her sincerity, mentioning her fear that she might appear deceptive suggests that in this case, Elizabeth was worried that her audience had reason to suspect her sincerity.

Consistent with humility, Elizabeth makes very little mention of her own works in order to emphasize her religiosity. Instead she refers to the acts of others and uses those to refute the idea that she is a “wretched sinner” or unbeliever. Given that Elizabeth needs to identify with her Protestant audience, she needs to declare her own affiliation, but rather than link herself with a specific group, and thereby disassociate herself with all others, her decision to describe her affiliation with Protestantism as the religion of her birth and upbringing reminds her audience that her birth was the fruit of the English Reformation. Since she, more than anyone else, owes her own existence to the Reformation, the implication is that she is also more devoted to Protestantism. Finally she refers to God’s acts as evidence of her righteousness. She explains that despite her fears of “how dangerous a thing it was to work in a kingdom a sudden alteration of religion,” she found the courage to sign the 1559 Religious Settlement by putting her faith in “Him

for whose sake I did it, knowing He could defend me, as I must confess He hath done unto this time, and doubt not but He will do unto the end” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197–98). More than professing her own faith, Elizabeth’s reference to God’s protection of her—especially relevant so soon after the discovery of the Babington Plot—suggests that her continued safety, despite so many plots against her and despite the Catholic threat, is in fact evidence of God’s approbation of her faith and her reign. Furthermore, this statement also suggests that the Queen’s lack of concern regarding Catholicism is not born of ignorance, but is instead a manifestation of her faith in God, who is the only one with the ability to protect her from all harm.

By referring to the behavior of the rebels and traitors as “wickedness,” Elizabeth continues to strengthen the identification between her religious beliefs and those of most of the Lords and Commons (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). Because Elizabeth’s description of the rebels includes anyone who lives on the continent and who threatens the Church of England as well as the country, these wicked rebels must also be Catholic. Whereas Elizabeth’s own religious views tended to be more conservative than the parliamentary members’ views, by contrasting her own spirituality against the implied religion of the rebels, Elizabeth emphasizes the differences between the English and their European neighbors, creating a sense of us versus them. This distinction strengthens the connection between her and her Parliament by emphasizing the religious beliefs that they do share. Characterizing their enemies in this way also helps Elizabeth indicate that she too is aware of the religious repercussions involved in keeping Mary alive and that she shares their dedication to that religion that motivates Parliament to call for Mary’s death as part of a defense against the Catholic onslaught.

Intelligence

Elizabeth also raises the issue of her intelligence as another reason why Parliament can have confidence in her decision about Mary's fate. As in her earlier speeches, whenever Elizabeth points out her own intelligence, she uses *sprezzatura* as an alternative to self-aggrandizement, but unlike the two traits mentioned above, with her references to intelligence in this speech, she relies entirely on self-deprecation rather than also contrasting her intelligence with the rebels' ignorance. Ignorance is one trait she avoids attributing to them; nor would she want to, because she describes these rebels as part of her strategy to help Parliament understand the risks involved in Mary's execution. If the rebels are also ignorant, then they would pose less of a threat, undermining her argument.

Her self-depreciative statements about her intelligence first appear after she has demonstrated her piety. First, Queen Elizabeth confesses that God has given her just enough intelligence to recognize "mine ignorance in most things." Her description of herself as wanting "the means and wit" to requite her people's love for her also understates her intelligence (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198–99). Towards the end of her speech she tells Parliament, "I am not so unwise but that I know that although by calling I go before a great many, yet many particular persons for wisdom and other respects are to be preferred before me" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 199). Because this description of her intelligence follows her stated desire to understand the opinion of each parliamentary member regarding what she should do, it implies that some of those who exceed her in wisdom are members of Parliament, attributing this trait to them even as she denies

having it herself. Through these statements she sets up a dichotomy between ignorance and wisdom that allows her to include intelligence under the umbrella of wisdom.

Obviously, her intent was not to convince Parliament that she was dimwitted, especially given the circumstances surrounding this speech, so in addition to her ironic understatement, she also provides evidence that refutes her modest claims. Before her first modest indication of her wisdom or intelligence, she uses the wisdom of Plato and Aristotle to speak for her when she lists the four most important characteristics for a king. From Plato she takes the qualities of justice, temperance, and wisdom (she actually says “judgment,” but the two seem compatible), and from Aristotle she takes magnanimity (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198 n. 5). Combining and appropriating these characteristics indicates her familiarity with the works of these two well-known philosophers, and doing so without naming her sources, also allows her to equate her wisdom with theirs, suggesting that she arrived at a conclusion similar to theirs. Then she goes on to compare herself to the Old Testament’s wisest monarch, explaining, “As Solomon so I above all things have desired wisdom at the hands of God” (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). This time the comparison between herself and Solomon equates her with him and his wisdom.

Not only does Elizabeth use allusions to wise rulers and philosophers to indicate her intelligence and wisdom, but she also demonstrates her own intelligence. Queen Elizabeth skillfully lists the complications that might follow Mary’s execution. Her discussion of regicide and foreign criticism invokes a level of complexity on the issue of Mary’s execution that Parliament appears to have ignored in their rush to execute Mary, contradicting the Queen’s claims of ignorance. Furthermore, her facility in speaking extemporaneously, her use of rhetorical figures like parallelism and allusions, and her

artful negotiation of her “answer-answerless” suggests that Elizabeth is not only able to keep up with the members of Parliament despite her claims to the contrary, but she shares and possibly exceeds their level of intelligence. Moreover, Elizabeth suggests that even as she has already applied her intelligence to the current situation, intelligence and wisdom, rather than emotion, will continue to guide her as she considers both the dangers involved in allowing Mary’s execution and also the dangers involved in allowing Mary to live.

Her allusions to Plato, Aristotle, Solomon, and Augustus Caesar also let her align herself with male figures and temporarily assume a male identity. Even though earlier in the speech she refers to herself as “a maiden queen,” her use of only male examples acknowledges that wisdom was a masculine trait and allows her to clarify that her own wisdom is masculine rather than a feminine approximation. Of course, in this way she adds gender to the list of characteristics she has in common with the members of Parliament.

Her method for demonstrating her carefulness, piety, and wisdom also evokes some aspects of gender. Using *sprezzatura* to present these three characteristics demonstrates a strategy that relies on pleasing or charming her audience members in order to identify with and persuade them. As with her earlier speeches, Elizabeth uses self-deprecation to imply both that she is a sinner and unintelligent. Combining this self-representation with a performance that refutes it creates an ironic gap that pleases rather than assaults her audience, courting them to persuade them, rather than appealing to logic. Elizabeth’s use of charm to appease Parliament resembles the subservient wife, invoked by Speaker Puckering, but it also resembles the social position and strategies of

the Speaker himself and the men he represents. Using *sprezzatura*, the Queen performs the same powerlessness with which they have also approached her. By temporarily assuming the Speaker's social status, Elizabeth suggests that she can relate to his position, promoting a sense of unity rather than hierarchy—whether based on gender or social status—by emphasizing their similarities rather than her superiority. Temporarily blurring this hierarchy reinforces the idea that she is not their enemy, but the rebels on the continent are.

But again Elizabeth also distinguishes herself from the members of Parliament. Her allusions to Solomon and Augustus Caesar also raise the issue of status. Comparing herself to those two men reminds the Lords and Commons that even if the Queen shares their religion and love of country, and demonstrates masculine intelligence, she is still their monarch. In addition, the comparison of her wisdom to Solomon's also distinguishes her intelligence from theirs, suggesting that she possesses the sort of wisdom only given to God's chosen servants.

Elizabeth needed to remove the Lords' and Commons' fears that her approach to Mary's situation conflicted with theirs and to foster unity in order to convince them to give her more time to make her decision regarding Mary—a request that the Lords and Commons would be more willing to grant if they believed that Elizabeth would come to the same conclusion that they had, which was that Mary must die. Through her use of *sprezzatura* Elizabeth points out that they all share a carefulness for England, they have similar religious convictions, intellectual capabilities, and in addition to identifying with the Lords' and Commons' status by mimicking their social status, she also identifies with their gender. Emphasizing the things she has in common with the members of Parliament,

helps her demonstrate that there is more in their interests and motivations that unites rather than divides them (Blakesley 15). Whereas their European enemies are intent on overthrowing Elizabeth and reinstating Catholicism, Elizabeth has the same goals for England as they do, and therefore, Elizabeth and the members of Parliament can resolve their conflict by working together against their enemies. Although not stating it explicitly, Elizabeth's identification with the parliamentary members communicates the promise that because they have so much in common, she will reach the same conclusion they have—that Mary must be executed—and will ultimately sign the warrant for Mary's death.

Throughout her speech Elizabeth also provides another clue that she will sign Mary's death warrant, in addition to identifying with Parliament, by framing many of her arguments in terms of *praemunitio*. According to Richard Lanham, *praemunitio* is a type of preemptive self-defense or a "strengthening beforehand" (117). Near the beginning of her speech, Elizabeth anticipates the possible consequences of Mary's execution, that Elizabeth will become infamous for killing a relative and Queen and that their enemies will viciously attack her for it, calling her a tyrant. As discussed above, she demonstrates why such a judgment is both inaccurate and unfair and with each reason she gives, she provides evidence from her own life as if she were the one on trial, not Mary. For example, to support her claim that she is not a tyrant, she offers the evidence that she has pardoned or ignored several treasonous acts. Or as evidence of her dedication to God she says, "my first care [after becoming Queen] was to set in order those things which did concern the Church of God" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 197). Demonstrating her just nature, she declares, "I protest that I never knew difference of persons—that I never set

one before another but upon just cause, neither have preferred any to office or other place of ruling for the preferrer's sake, but that I knew or was made to believe he was worthy and fit for it" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 198). The course of events surrounding Mary's death raises questions about Elizabeth's own plans for Mary, but in anticipating the possible outcome, Elizabeth warns the Lords and Commons of what is to come as if to prepare and strengthen them, possibly hinting that at the right time, she will concede to Mary's execution, or suggesting that either consciously or subconsciously Elizabeth assumed that she had no other choice but to allow Mary's execution.

After delivering this speech, Elizabeth managed to stall for a few more months, but on 1 February 1587, she finally agreed to sign Mary's death warrant and within a week Mary had been executed (Phillips 117; Loades, *Elizabeth* 233). Soon after Mary's death, Elizabeth's fears concerning international reaction were realized. Angry crowds in Scotland and in France mixed calls for vengeance with their grief over Mary's death. The messenger sent to deliver Elizabeth's explanation to King James VI was warned at the border with Scotland that he faced certain death if he entered the country, and the English ambassador in France, also threatened with violence by Henri III, was unwelcome at the French court for many months (Dunn 412). Nothing much ever came from the French and Scottish threats, but in 1588, Philip II finally launched his attack against England and in July 1588, the Spanish Armada entered the Channel (Dunn 413; Plowden, *Elizabeth I* 527–28). Even Pope Sixtus V reissued the bull of excommunication of Elizabeth just before the Armada left Spain (Dunn 416). Although England successfully repelled the Spanish Armada, their attempted invasion validated Elizabeth's hesitance about proceeding with Mary's execution.

Mary's own actions and Parliament's reaction pushed Elizabeth into a corner, until prevarication and delay were no longer a viable means for keeping everyone happy. Facing difficult consequences if she allowed Mary's execution and if she did not, Elizabeth turned to *sprezzatura* to help her satisfy one source of pressure, and her use of *sprezzatura* to identify with the members of Parliament seems to have been somewhat successful. For the time being they accepted her answer-answerless and did not approach her with anymore petitions. But her ministers continued to push the Queen, worrying that she might lose her resolve and again pardon Mary (Dunn 406). When Elizabeth did finally sign Mary's death warrant, she demonstrated an even closer identification with the members of Parliament, suggesting that when push came to shove, Elizabeth preferred to upset those on the continent rather than her own subjects.

Conclusion

At the beginning of Kenneth Burke's *A Grammar of Motives* is the epigraph, "*Ad bellum purificandum*" or in other words, "Towards the Purification of War" (i, 319). This principle unites Burke's *Grammar of Motives* and his *Rhetoric of Motives*: both works consider how language is used to transform our competitiveness, our differences and divisions, into cooperation, identification, and unity, suggesting that the violence of open confrontation and war can be refined through language into discussion, negotiation, and cooperation (K. Burke, *Grammar* 330; K. Burke, *Rhetoric* 23; Blakesley 18). Similarly, throughout the three speeches analyzed in this project, Elizabeth repeatedly uses *sprezzatura* to address and overcome conflict between her and her audience members, building bridges across the divide that separates them with those ideas, behaviors, and attitudes that both she and her audience can agree on. Through this identification between Elizabeth and the members of her audience, Elizabeth reveals her need to transcend division and conflict, whether that conflict has to do with her gender, marriage and the succession, or the question of Mary Stuart's fate, and ideally confronts it through verbal negotiation. She transcends this conflict by moving it to her own speech where she can address it in her own terms, by transforming the issue to be negotiated, or by shifting the violence to a third party.

In her 1564 speech at Cambridge, Elizabeth addresses and transforms the conflict over her gender simply by announcing it through her self-deprecation. Inasmuch as she was at Cambridge to bring the University into conformity with her religious decrees, there was no reason for her to even raise the issue of her gender. Furthermore, as shown by Knox's and Aylmer's publications, the issue of Elizabeth's gender was on everyone's

mind. By including the issue of her gender in her speech through her reference to feminine modesty, Elizabeth names and confronts the proverbial gorilla in the room, taking the issue of her gender out of the sphere of her listener's unspoken assumptions and expectations into a public discussion that she facilitates and leads. Within her own speech, she defines the specific aspects of her gender that she wants to address and then debunks them. Limiting the discussion to issues surrounding feminine speech allows her to manipulate and stretch this issue even as she initially acknowledges those ideas that would restrict her behavior. Then she rejects and transforms these restrictions when she speaks with a man's voice (Demosthenes) and compares herself to male rulers. Through her own performance, she demonstrates that she is the exception to these gendered expectations. Finally she slips back into a feminine identity with her final self-deprecating reference to her "barbarousness." *Sprezzatura* allows her to connect with her audiences' assumptions about feminine behavior by acknowledging her vulnerabilities in such a way that demonstrates her confidence in her listener's goodwill because they can choose to accept her self-deprecation at face value or think of it as an invitation to determine that in fact the opposite is true. Then, as she exceeds their expectations, she not only demonstrates that such expectations don't apply to her, but the audience's delight when she outperforms their expectations and her initial representation helps her to charm and woo her audience in order to more easily persuade them to accept her transformation of these gendered assumptions. In her speech then, she is able to transcend disagreement over what constitutes appropriate behavior in her role as a female monarch and "forge new identifications" that temporarily expand restrictive gender constructions (K. Burke, *Rhetoric* 22–23; Blakesley 18).

Given that this speech was delivered at Cambridge, whose environment fostered and encouraged Protestantism as early as the 1520s, perhaps Queen Elizabeth's success in transcending her gender in this speech is best illustrated by the state of the Church of England at her death: despite attitudes that discredited her leadership ability because of her sex and pressure for additional religious reform, Elizabeth never had to sacrifice her vision of the Church of England, and when she died, the Church continued just as she wanted it (Hudson, 47; Starkey 323). Certainly there were many bitter struggles over reform, but Elizabeth overcame them, and her ability to do so might stem, in part, from the successful delivery of this speech. Along with other speeches, this speech demonstrated that she did have the skills needed to lead even in matters of religion.

Elizabeth also transforms conflict by changing the issue upon which they disagree—whether she will marry and when—to a discussion about her success as Queen by delivering a speech that functions as a review of her reign, rather than a defense of her continued single status. Negotiating the quality of her reign instead of her marriage prospects allows her to transform the question to one that they are more likely to agree on. As evidence of her leadership skills, she lists those who approve of her reign—her subjects, who consistently love her, and God, who has blessed and prospered her people—and she also emphasizes characteristics that she shares with the members of her audience. Linking these characteristics to members of Parliament, she connects their approval of themselves with their approval of her, encouraging a favorable perspective of her reign. Furthermore, by inviting her listeners to join with the others who have already recognized her reign's success thus far, her marriage and the succession become a minor part of her record, making it easier for her listeners to approve of her reign as a whole.

Whether the members of Parliament accepted Elizabeth's argument that she was a good Queen despite her single status and the lack of an heir remains uncertain. The Lords and Commons gave up encouraging Elizabeth to marry, but they also refused to let her marry the Duke of Alençon, which might suggest she did an excellent job persuading them that she could rule alone. Perhaps they reasoned that if the Queen's only possible suitor was a French Catholic, then they were better off without him even if that meant Elizabeth would continue to rule without the guidance of a husband.

When she cannot shift the negotiation to a different topic, Queen Elizabeth transfers the violence of the disagreement to a party other than herself as she does in her 1586 speech discussing Mary Stuart's fate. Turning her speech into a warning about the possible consequences of Mary's execution, Elizabeth shifts the conflict so that instead of being between her and Parliament, the greater divide is between England and Mary's supporters. Identifying with members of Parliament places Elizabeth squarely on their side, against the European Catholics who threaten England's safety, and together, Elizabeth and Parliament must deal with the threat to their religion and their country. Transferring the violence to their enemies also allows Elizabeth to link the motivation behind her speech with Parliament's motivation for pursuing Mary's execution. Even as Parliament hopes that Mary's death will bring greater safety to England, Elizabeth's warning about the possible consequences is also inspired by a desire to protect their country.

The general response to the Spanish Armada's defeat reveals Elizabeth's success in making Mary's fate an issue of nationalism. When the Armada was crippled by the English navy and then further damaged by a storm at sea, the English saw this as

evidence that God was a Protestant and had protected them from the Catholic invasion, discounting the impact of the English navy (Neale, *Queen* 300). The same sense of unity created by Elizabeth between her and Parliament in order to transform the confrontation over Mary's future also appears in the belief that the Armada's defeat was the result of God's protection and implicit approbation of England. The decision to define this victory in terms of England's status as a Protestant nation rather than the power of their navy includes all English citizens in the effort to defeat Spain, making it a united endeavor.

Elizabeth's strategy of transcending division by relocating it in language also appears, to some extent, in some of her letters. Twice during Elizabeth's adolescence, when she was implicated in a treasonous plot, Elizabeth expressed a desire to describe her own actions, seeking to overcome her involvement in the controversy by locating it in her own words. During the Lord Admiral Thomas Seymour's treason trial, when she fell under the suspicion of trying to marry Seymour, Elizabeth wrote to the Lord Protector, Edward Seymour, to clarify her own actions. Sir Robert Tyrwhit had already interrogated her and recorded her testimony, but Elizabeth felt so strongly about presenting her testimony in her own words, that she also sent an account of her actions to the Lord Protector (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 23 n.1). And again when Elizabeth was linked to the Wyatt Rebellion, she wrote to her sister, Mary, begging, "let me answer afore yourself and not suffer me to trust your councillors" (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 41). Both examples demonstrate her strategies for moving the details of the conflict, such as the facts surrounding her own behavior, to her own language, where she would be better able to control and transcend the conflict. These examples also suggest the roots of her

later philosophy that “monarchs [create] themselves through language and the images that language create[s] in its audience” (Frye 4).

Likewise, in her letters to the Alençon, she also uses self-deprecation (but not in the form of *sprezzatura*) in order to limit confrontation and transform the issue under discussion. Specifically in 1581, when Alençon had angered Elizabeth by accepting sovereignty of the Netherlands, Elizabeth wrote to him, representing herself as a lover offering him advice. She writes, “I have communicated . . . as much as my ignorance can impart to you” and “Monsieur, my dearest, grant pardon to the poor old woman who honors you as much . . . as any young wench,” using self-deprecation to court Alençon rather than speaking to him as a potential political ally or enemy (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 250, 251). Thus, when she warns him to “set at a distance . . . such evil counsels from the favor of your ears,” her motivation appears to be her affection for him rather than concern over the political problems he might cause her (Marcus, Mueller, and Rose 250). Although these are just a few examples, they suggest the possibility of deeper study into Elizabeth’s use of verbal negotiation to overcome differences and divisions through her correspondence.

Relying on language to create an image of herself that would shift the negotiation away from the point of conflict toward a unifying concept, Elizabeth demonstrates Burke’s theory of purifying violence through language. Initially Queen Elizabeth’s use of self-demeaning language and the circumlocutions of courtesy suggest that rather than ruffle any feathers in pursuit of her own agenda, she prefers to avoid confrontation by minimizing any differences between herself and her audience. But as these examples reveal, Elizabeth points out similarities she shares with the members of her audience not

only as a concession to them, but in order to help her gain currency with them. In so doing, she yields to some opinions held by the members of her audience, hoping that they will recognize the connection, and together they will move closer, bridging the divide.

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