

Passing Prerogative: The Elizabethan Marriage Negotiations

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### **Abstract**

Queen Elizabeth I is popularly remembered as one of the most powerful monarchs in English history, especially as the Virgin Queen. While she did have some control over her marital fate, Elizabeth's decision to remain unmarried was not solely her own. Rather, the political and religious interests of her counsel paved Elizabeth's path to celibacy. Elizabeth's will was subject to the volatile political and religious climate of her reign, and her gender and contentious legitimacy further empowered male Protestant counselors to assert their duty and right to counsel the monarch. Elizabeth's marriage negotiations between 1558 and 1581 facilitated extension of political counsel from the Privy Council and private favorites, like William Cecil and Robert Dudley, to the public sphere. These negotiations serve as a case study of England's redefinition of kingship and counsel into the beginnings of a monarchical republic.

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### Passing Prerogative: The Elizabethan Marriage Negotiations

In 1545, Elizabeth Tudor (1533-1603) was a bastardized pawn of her father's political machinations, awaiting a political marriage and far from attaining the English throne. On that new year, Elizabeth presented Henry VIII (1491-1547) with Latin, French, and Italian translations of Katherine Parr's *Prayers or Meditations*, an impressive feat for a twelve year old scholar. The epistolary introduction of the little book was her only known letter to her father, in which Elizabeth supposes a great, but unlikely future where she will "by this means, be indebted to you not as an imitator of your virtues but indeed as an inheritor of them."<sup>1</sup> Certainly, Elizabeth is popularly remembered as one of the most powerful monarchs in English history. However, her authority was far from uncontested. While she did have some control over her marital fate, Elizabeth's decision to remain unmarried was not solely her own. Rather, the political and religious interests of her counsel paved Elizabeth's path to celibacy. This essay will show that Elizabeth's will was subject to the volatile political and religious climate of her reign, and her gender and contentious legitimacy empowered her counsel to assert that the "the realm took precedence over the ruler."<sup>2</sup>

Elizabeth's right to rule as was brought into question before she even took the throne. Months before Elizabeth took the throne, John Knox called for revolution against female rule in *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.<sup>3</sup> John Aylmer,

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<sup>1</sup> L.S. Marcus, J Mueller, and M.B. Rose, *Elizabeth I: collected works*, (2000) as cited by Patrick Collinson in "Elizabeth I," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Jan. 2012

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Collinson, "'De republica Anglorum: or history with the politics put back'" in his *Elizabethan essays*, p. 19. as cited by Stephen Alford, *The early Elizabethan polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis, 1558-1569* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 156-157

<sup>3</sup> Roger A. Mason, "Knox, Resistance, and the Royal Supremacy," in Roger A. Mason's (ed.) *John Knox and the British Reformations* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 1998), pp. 154-175

future Bishop of London, responded with *True Haborrowe for Faithfull and Trewе Subjects , against the late blowne Blaste, concerninge the Government of Wemen, wherin be confuted all such reasons as a stranger of late made in that behalfe, with a breife exhortation to obedience*, to defend Elizabeth’s queenship. A.N. McLaren argues that *The First Blast* and *True Haborrowe* acknowledge a collective Protestant ideology against female rule, which was an “important element in the emergence of parliament as a ‘locus of consilium’ in Elizabeth’s reign.”<sup>4</sup>

Knox asserts that a queen, on her own right, is unfit to rule through women’s subjugation to men under nature and grace. Her marriage could only result in further subversion of the commonwealth into a Catholic apocalypse.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth was no doubt offended by Knox’s words, “false, lewd, dangerous, and the mischiefs thereof infinite.”<sup>6</sup> However, Aylmer was convinced “of the man’s honesty and godliness” and recognizes the validity of his spiritual brother’s argument against the nature of female rule, “Sampson’s locks, that make him so strong.”<sup>7</sup> Aylmer, instead, disagrees with Knox on the topic of marriage. He counters that the law and tradition of the commonwealth protects them since “England is not a mere Monarchie... if the parliament use their privileges: the King can ordain nothing without them.”<sup>8</sup> Aylmer offers proof of Henry VIII’s reign, when “good fathers of the country” in parliament “would not grant him, that his proclamations should have the force of a statute.”<sup>9</sup> Aylmer’s final juncture rules that “as counsellors our role is to guide her heart in the choice of her husband - whoe will naturally

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<sup>4</sup> A. N. McLaren, “Delineating the Elizabethan Body Politic: Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel 1558-1588,” *History of Political Thought* 17:2, (Imprint 1996): pp. 224-252, p.237

<sup>5</sup> McLaren, “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel,” p.229

<sup>6</sup> McLaren, “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel,” p. 234

<sup>7</sup> John Aylmer, *True Haborrowe for Faithfull and Trewе Subjects, against the late blowne Blaste, concerninge the Government of Wemen, wherin be confuted all such reasons as a stranger of late made in that behalfe, with a breife exhortation to obedience* (Strasbourg, 1559), STC 1004, fols. M-M<sup>1</sup>, fol. C<sup>1</sup>, G3<sup>3</sup> as cited by McLaren, “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel” p. 238

<sup>8</sup> Aylmer, *True Harborrowe* fols. H2<sup>1</sup>-H3 as cited by McLaren, “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel,” p. 242

<sup>9</sup> Aylmer, *True Harborrowe* fol. H3 as cited by McLaren, “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel,” p.243

be her ‘head’ - and to pray God to maker her fruitful, and the mother of many children.”<sup>10</sup> These tracts suggest that political action of godly counsel, rather than history or law, will legitimize the queen’s monarchy, “open[ing] the door to a rhetoric of counsel which is godly and prophetic.”<sup>11</sup>

Secretary of State, William Cecil, future Lord Burghley (1520-1598) subscribed to Knox and Aylmer’s ideology. Burghley personally managed all channels of business of the crown and the Privy Council, making him the most eminent of the Queen’s councilor.<sup>12</sup> He faced a major challenge as Mary Queen of Scots, backed by French claimed the English throne over Elizabeth with valid claims to the throne, as well as a male heir. Burghley confronted the simmering crisis with allies in Knox and Sir James Croft, hoping to match Elizabeth with a protestant Scotsman with ties to kingship, either the earl of Arran or James Stewart, “to ‘transfer’ rule of Scotland from Mary to a godly successor king.”<sup>13</sup> However, Mary’s return to Scotland threatened Protestantism in the whole isle, and in the eyes of staunch Protestants, the counsel “required a ‘mere English’ Protestant warrior king.”<sup>14</sup>

The House of Commons and the Privy Council were in part united by the necessity for action on the succession crisis. Drawing up to the 1563 opening of Parliament, Queen Elizabeth’s brush with death in small pox in 1562 scared her counsel, the nobility, and parliament. Sir Thomas Smith composed *De republica anglorum* which described parliament as the “whole universall and generall consent and authoritie aswell af the prince as of the nobilitie

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<sup>10</sup> Aylmer, *True Harbrowe* fol. I2 as cited by McLaren in “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel,” p. 244

<sup>11</sup> McLaren, “Knox, Aylmer, and the Definition of Counsel,” p. 234

<sup>12</sup> W. MacCaffrey (2004-09-23). Cecil, William, first Baron Burghley (1520/21–1598), royal minister. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

<sup>13</sup> A.N. McLaren, “The Quest for a King: Gender, Marriage, and Succession in Elizabethan England”, *Journal of British Studies*, 41:3 (2002):pp. 259-290, p. 274

<sup>14</sup> McLaren, “The Quest for a King” p. 275

and commons.”<sup>15</sup> *Gorboduc* was especially powerful in making sense of king and counsel in the context of the succession, performed for the Queen in January 1562.<sup>16</sup> Both works ingrained a message that parliament “could help to settle fairly Britain’s future.”<sup>17</sup>

Cecil himself was instrumental to the “process of political definition and redefinition” of parliament’s standing in the mixed polity.<sup>18</sup> As the queen’s willingness to marry and vague promises continued, Cecil began to work on “an act ment for the succession” in 1563, revealing the way he personally “perceived... and felt able to articulate political issues.”<sup>19</sup> Cecil informed the Parliament of the Queen’s official reason for calling Parliament - to pay for the wars with France, on the first day, but an anonymous “burges” directed conversation to the succession as the major issue of 1563.<sup>20</sup> The MPs manipulated Nicholas Bacon’s speech on the duty of this parliament, to “create “pollicie for the common wealth, as well for provision at home as to provide for the foreign enemye abroad” in their petition. The Commons requested that she consider the succession, “nothing... of so great importance... nor so necessary... as the sure continuance of the governance & thimperiall crowne therof in your Maesties person,” and blatantly claimed that Elizabeth ““summoned this parliament, principally for the establishing some certen limitacion of thimperiall crowne.”<sup>21</sup> Days before Bacon’s speech and the petition, Cecil had alluded to his involvement to Smith: “I thynke somewhat will be attempted to acertayne the realme of succor to this Crowne.” Outside of official Lower House records, Cecil also drafted

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<sup>15</sup> Sir Thomas Smith, *De republica Anglorum*, ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge, 1982) Book II, chapter 4, p. 88 as cited by Stephen Alford in *The Early Elizabethan polity: William Cecil and the British succession crisis, 1558-1569* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pg. 37

<sup>16</sup> Public Record Office, London, State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth 1 (abbrev. SP12/28) fols. 68r-69v p. 225 as cited by Alford in *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p.111

<sup>17</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 101

<sup>18</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 40

<sup>19</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 40; Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 98

<sup>20</sup> House of Lords Records Office, London, MS. Journals, House of Commons 1. fo. 217v; *Journals of the House of Commons*, I, p. 62 as cited by Alford in *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 104

<sup>21</sup> SP 12/27, fo 139r. as cited by Alford in *The Early Elizabethan polity*, pp. 106-107

“one of the most significant drafts he completed,” a bill “ffor restrayning of all persons from attemptes or hopes to the Quenes majesities perill,” that prevented any person from being able to “clayme or pretende... to have right or title to have or enjoy the crowne of England” in the chance that Elizabeth died without a successor, but he did not name a successor.<sup>22</sup> Instead, Cecil established the interregnum “council of estate.” With this wording, his proposal gave the Privy Council “prerogative power of the crown.”<sup>23</sup> With Cecil’s leadership, protestant councilors now identified as brothers in Christ, doing the duty to “serve and constrain the queen,” and he initiated the ideology of this Protestant troupe into reality.<sup>24</sup>

Again, in the parliament of 1566, Cecil sought to bring the succession crisis back up and reassert the rights of counsel in Parliament. His draft of the Preamble to the Subsidy Bill of 1566 was significant in that it “forced him to define and explain the relationship between the Queen and the three estates.”<sup>25</sup> He radically diverged from the queen’s belief in her natural, blood right to imperial authority by reminding Elizabeth of her obligation to her estates, after she gave a “manifest and assured declaration to us in princely words that you will not fail... [to] regard thereto for our surety and profit.”<sup>26</sup> His insistence on Elizabeth’s respect for her promises to her councilors reinforces his belief that counsel has the right to establish “the succession to the kingdom, and establish ecclesiastical and religious laws.”<sup>27</sup>

Alongside Cecil, the marriage negotiations brought along another powerful form of counsel in Robert Dudley, Master of the Horse and future Earl of Leicester. In 1560, Elizabeth’s

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<sup>22</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 111; SP 12/28, fos 73v-74r, 75v-76r, 77v-78r as cited by Alford in *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 110

<sup>23</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 112

<sup>24</sup> McLaren, “The Quest for a King,” pp. 259-290

<sup>25</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 154

<sup>26</sup> SP 12/41, fo. 88v as cited by Alford in *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 155

<sup>27</sup> Alford, *The Early Elizabethan polity*, p. 26

suitors, while helping her gain legitimacy as a queen, did not bring anything special to the table in terms of wealth, prestige, or foreign alliance, except a potential heir. At the same time, Elizabeth showed a deep favor for Dudley, though he was tainted by his close relation to the Grey conspiracy. Dudley worked as a “self-publicist” to gain favor with councilors, since Cecil and other nobility opposed his suit, finding “Nothing... increased by Marriadg of hym either in Riches, Estimation, Power.”<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth was forced to surrender hopes of Dudley’s suit after Dudley’s wife mysteriously passed away, with the scandal having potential to increase her perceived illegitimacy.<sup>29</sup> However, Dudley remained close enough to the queen, that, upon her near-death experience with small-pox, she put him forward as a potential protector upon her death, though she denied any inappropriate action with him.<sup>30</sup>

Elizabeth’s suggestion and Dudley’s rising status signaled to councilors that Dudley was a potential asset for the Privy Council, if not as a suitor. After Dudley was elevated to Earl of Leicester in October 1562, Leicester reached “something like a balance” with other councilors, even Cecil, who was already considering the consiliar regency in lieu of a suitable heir.<sup>31</sup> Initially, Leicester’s leverage served her in being able to maneuver towards unchallenged rule. By keeping him in the space of “almost” as her own suitor, Elizabeth could exploit her own fertility as an excuse to remain unmarried until counsel acquiesced to her power. Then, Elizabeth offered him as a suitor to Mary, which kept Mary at her own level of uncertain legitimacy, sans a husband or valid heir, and legitimating Leicester’s noble status.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Susan Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony: The courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 211-212; “De Matrimonio Regina Angliae cum extero principe” April 1566 in Samuel Haynes’ *William Cecil’s State Papers* (London, 1740), p. 444 as cited by Doran in *Monarchy and matrimony*, pg. 211

<sup>29</sup> Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony*, pp. 51-52

<sup>30</sup> McLaren, “The Quest for a King,” p. 282

<sup>31</sup> McLaren, “The Quest for a King,” p. 282-283

<sup>32</sup> McLaren, “The Quest for a King,” p. 285



Unfortunately for Elizabeth, the Privy Council also exploited her relationship with Leicester to promote their own agenda. She could not deny the counsel of her “approved lover and second self” because of her own positioning of him. Elizabeth’s struggle for prerogative over counsel empowered them further. She effectively bound herself to a proxy king, who had significant input on her virginity, even in derailing other suits in the future, namely the Anjou suit.<sup>33</sup>

In the late 1570s, counsel perceived the succession as an imminent crisis. Fear of impending Catholic invasions spread through England after Henry III revoked tolerance of Huguenots and reignited Civil war in France, with the Duke of Anjou leading the successful force. However, the Spanish gained back ground in the low countries, and Henry III, plagued by factional divisions of Catherine De Medici, personal illness, and financial weakness, could not overtly support the Dutch against the Spanish.<sup>34</sup> To the Queen’s counselors, this was particularly alarming. Sir Nicholas Bacon conceived that both Henry III and Phillip II would “execute their wylls, full of emnytie & revenge” on Elizabeth, while Knollys asserted that “contemptuous growing of the [conspiracies of] disobedient papists” would encourage Catholic interference in England.<sup>35</sup> Coinciding with Spanish invasion for the Low Countries, the collapse of the Morton regency in Scotland opened Scotland as an invasion point, perpetuating the issue of Mary Queen of Scots as primary heir.<sup>36</sup> Mary QS legitimacy threatened Elizabeth’s political legitimacy: French backing of Mary QS during the negotiations of the Treaty of Cateau-Cabrasis and

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<sup>33</sup> McLaren, “The Quest for a King,” p. 286-287

<sup>34</sup> Natalie Mears, “Love-making and Diplomacy: Elizabeth I and the Anjou Marriage Negotiations, c.1578–1582”, *History*, 86 (2001): pp. 442–466, pp. 446-447

<sup>35</sup> Mears, “Love-making and Diplomacy,” pp.445-447

<sup>36</sup> Mears, “Love-Making and Diplomacy,” pp. 447- 448

recirculation of text in support of Mary's claim to the English throne confirmed councilors' suspicions that considerate motive for conspiracy and invasion by Catholic nations could occur.<sup>37</sup>

This prompted counsel, especially Burghley, to make succession the central agenda of the court. The probability of Elizabeth producing an heir was slim, so the next best solution as to produce a political settlement modeled after Cecil's 1569 proposal. This involved creating a coalition of similar Protestant countries, resolving succession, and excluding Mary, with the additional threat of her son James, as heir while preserving alliance with Scotland, a crucial invasion point of England, and the nomination of a successor by the counsel. Burghley and other men supported creating an amity with France to make relations with Scotland, and especially Mary, to start resolving the succession crisis.<sup>38</sup>

When the Duke of Anjou pursued the marriage negotiations as a condition of his negotiation with the Dutch in August 1578, Mauvisserie, the French ambassador, "reported to Henry III that she appeared in earnest over the marriage" and Burghley suggested that "Venus is presently ascending in your climat" to Sir Francis Walsingham.<sup>39</sup> Yet, conciliar opinion did not support marriage. Sussex suspected Anjou of taking more control over the Dutch than England was willing to give, but his talks with envoys reassured him that Elizabeth could "direct Anjou's actions: the duke would be her 'servant and defender.'"<sup>40</sup> Burghley and Walsingham disagreed,

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<sup>37</sup> Paulet to Walsingham. 1 Sept. 1577, Copy-book, ed. Ogle, pp. 106-107. Cobham to [Secretaries] 29. Feb. 1580, PRO. SP78/4a/22: Cobham to Elizabeth. 12 July 1580, PRO, SP78/4b/116; Cobham to Burghley and Sussex. 13 April 1580, PRO< SP78/4a/49 as cited by Mears p. 448 Phillip II (allegedly) requested the renewal papal bull *Regnans in excelsis* and *The Treatise of Treasons* and bishop of Ross' *De titulo & iure serenissimae Principis Mariae*.

<sup>38</sup> Mears, "Love-making and Diplomacy," p. 449

<sup>39</sup> Walsingham to Burghley, 28 Aug. 1578, PRO, SP83/8/52 cited by Mears in "Love-Making and Diplomacy" p.456

<sup>40</sup> Constance Jordan, 'Women's rule in sixteenth century British political thought,' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), pp. 421-51 as cited by Natalie Mears in "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubbs's 'The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf', 1579," *The Historical Journal*, 44:3 (2001): 629-650, p. 635

believing the duke could use the marriage to take the Low Countries, which were significant in diverting Phillip II from attacking England and forming a buffer against Spain.<sup>41</sup>

The marriage negotiations came to reflect Elizabeth and her counsel's struggle for prerogative in governance. On one hand, Elizabeth showed various levels of commitment to the match, vacillating over both personal and political issues, such as Anjou's involvement in the Dutch war and his age. Susan Doran argues that "she was all too aware that both -Wyatt's Rebellion in Mary I's reign and Mary Stuart's deposition in 1567 had occurred when a queen regnant insisted upon taking a husband against the wishes of her important subjects."<sup>42</sup>

Councilors also raised serious debate over the match, as they had established their right to in 1563 and 1566, fearing potential domestic subversion of English supremacy through Elizabeth's conversion to Catholicism, or uniting the crowns. Leicester worried about the physical safety of the queen and the consequences of trying to conceive a child at her age. Still, Elizabeth asserted herself as the head of policy direction and was daily involved with policy-making at all stages of the negotiations. She challenged the Privy Council's dominance over her negotiation with from "ad hoc, informal, probouleutic" groups of her own design, with councilors that were personally close to her, such as Burghley and Leicester. She separated these small groups to diminish the overall administration of the Privy Council, only allowing the Privy Council to discuss three articles in the marriage treaty on 3 and 4 May 1579.<sup>43</sup> Councilors did recognize that marriage could not be forced onto Elizabeth; only she could consent to the person she would marry.<sup>44</sup>

However, these men, especially Burghley and Leicester, had a keen understanding of the queen. In a statement to Parliament, Cecil clearly defined his take on the marriage "except her

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<sup>41</sup> Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship," p. 635

<sup>42</sup> Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony*, p. 210

<sup>43</sup> Mears, "Love-Making and Diplomacy," p. 454

<sup>44</sup> Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship," p. 639

majesty wod of hir mynd inclyn to this marriadg, he would never advise her therto,”<sup>45</sup> but to Elizabeth, the Privy Council asked that Elizabeth “shew hir own mind,” before advising her, which though ambiguous, showed that the counsel would not approve the marriage outright.<sup>46</sup>

In the winter of 1579 to early 1580, Elizabeth struggled with her next steps to counter her counsel’s stalemate over the marriage. By keeping parts of the marriage treaty in draft form, while also bringing her personal groups together, Elizabeth could stall for more time to understand how she wanted to direct policy to go over her own concerns with the marriage. She struggled with her age difference to Anjou, the potential for direct war with Phillip II over the French and English alliance, and wanted to draw out how serious Anjou was in the marriage.<sup>47</sup> Crisis with the Dutch and Spanish in 1580 furthered the delay of consideration, where Elizabeth recognized “uppermost in [her] mind... the strong Anti-Catholic tenor of the Parliament” who made it their agenda to prevent against Catholic conspiracy.<sup>48</sup> In a letter to Marchamont, Anjou’s negotiator, Elizabeth laments “the schemings that the Jesuits... have prosecuted so vigorously” to turn her subjects against her “by the commandment of the Pope, whom the king and you all obey, believing that this alliance will bring us all to confusion.”<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth was forced to consider the political climate of the time under the pressure of Parliament’s fear of Catholic insurgency.

In the time Elizabeth spent oscillating over her decision, other forms of counsel forbode Elizabeth losing with counsel the battle for control over her marriage, and by symbolic expression, her supreme authority. John Stubbs, an active citizen of the bar and future MP, wrote

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<sup>45</sup> Mears, “Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship,” p. 636

<sup>46</sup> Mears, “Love-Making and Diplomacy,” p. 454

<sup>47</sup> Mears, “Love-Making and Diplomacy,” p. 458

<sup>48</sup> Carlo Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, and Jonathan Gibson (eds). *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric, and Politics* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) p.47

<sup>49</sup> CP 135/10 (*Salisbury*, vol. 2, no.1125) fol.1 in Bajetta, Coatalen, and Gibson (eds). *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence*, p. 47

*The discouerie of a gaping gulf vvhwhereinto England is like to be swallowved by another French mariage, if the Lord forbid not the banes, by letting her Maiestie see the sin and punishment thereof* to counsel the Queen against the marriage. He argued that marriage to a Catholic broke the law of God, and, no matter the lawfulness, it could not benefit Elizabeth or the realm by providing an heir, a resolved succession, or an assured alliance with France, since Anjou was typically at odds with Henry III. Furthermore, he extends the idea that the marriage could cause the absorption of England into France and supplant Protestantism, as Anjou seemed the likely heir to Henry III. The queen believed that the work was influenced by opponents of the marriage in the Privy Council, especially since Stubbs alluded to supposing support in Council from an unnamed councilor with advance knowledge of the work. Also, two other works, Edmund Spenser's *The shepheardes calendar* and Phillip Sidney's letter to Elizabeth, circulated with tinges of Leicester's position against the marriage.<sup>50</sup>

The Queen's astonished Stubbs with a surprisingly strict sentence, as he believed he offered his advice in good conscience.<sup>51</sup> However, her fear and anger is understandable considering the milieu of all three political tracts. Not only did she face an increasingly challenging counsel, but now, she perceived a new bulwhark, "the existence of a lively public sphere, interacting with the court but not subject to it."<sup>52</sup> The power of godly counsel was no longer contained in the private bodies of her important subjects: the nobility, parliament, and Privy Council. The duty and responsibility of counsel manifested itself in "articulate, middle-ranking, politically and confessionally conscious circle," yet another challenge to her legitimacy.<sup>53</sup> Moreso, protestant males viewed counsel as "socially inclusive and essential to

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<sup>50</sup> Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship," pp. 631-22

<sup>51</sup> Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship," pp. 629-620

<sup>52</sup> Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship," p. 650

<sup>53</sup> Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship," p. 644

queenship,” through the lens of citizenship, characteristic of a monarchical republic rather than absolute monarchy.<sup>54</sup>

In 1581, the marriage negotiations and power of counsel came to a head. The counsel interpreted the collapse of potential Protestant regency in Scotland as a signal that they needed to revive allegiance with France. Burghley and the rest of counsel reconsidered their plan for alternatives to the resolving the succession crisis, and clearly defined their goal to replace their intention of creating the “network of Protestant alliances with a ‘leag of friendship’ with France.<sup>55</sup> However in building that new alliance, Burghley left the conclusion open between the dynastic alliance of a marriage or amity between the kingdoms. He commented that, if Elizabeth chose the marriage, “she may not delay any more time,” making it clear that the counsel would not give direct approval to the queen on her marriage.<sup>56</sup>

The French sent a delegation to further the marriage negotiations in April 1581, and at the time, the English camp leaned more towards a treaty with France, rather than a marriage.<sup>57</sup> By August 1581, Elizabeth vocalized her fears that any sort of alliance, dynastic or diplomatic, would “should be verie chargeable” to her.<sup>58</sup> In the modern sense, the marriage negotiations did charge her, for coin. Henry III wanted to ensure that Elizabeth would pay for a large majority of Anjou’s costs in the Dutch intervention, while Elizabeth wanted Henry III to pay for all of Anjou’s costs. Though Elizabeth covertly sent Anjou funds for his forces in the Netherlands, Henry III’s financial instability nulled the possibility of an alliance effectively ended Anjou’s prospects for marriage.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mears, “Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship,” p. 648

<sup>55</sup> Hatfield, CP148, fos. 81-2 as cited by Natalie Mears in “Love-Making and Diplomacy,” p. 464

<sup>56</sup> Mears, “Love-Making and Diplomacy,” p. 459

<sup>57</sup> Bajetta, Coatalen, and Gibson (eds). *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence*, p. 48

<sup>58</sup> Mears, “Love-Making and Diplomacy,” p. 465

<sup>59</sup> Bajetta, Coatalen, and Gibson (eds). *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence*, pp. 48-51

Though Elizabeth's feelings to marriage were often ambivalent, her efforts throughout these decades of her reign demonstrate her commitment to preserving her imperial birthright, sole rule of England. Ultimately, the Queen's virginity and the succession crisis ended with her death after a long reign, with James VI succeeding in lieu of Elizabeth naming a succession.<sup>60</sup> Yet, her goals for uncontested rule of England remain unfulfilled. The marriage negotiations present a model of how Protestant counsel's interpretation of female rule determined the extent to which she could rule and challenged the base of royal prerogative in the British Isles.

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<sup>60</sup> Mears, "Love-Making and Diplomacy," p. 467

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