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Depictions of Catholic and Protestant Bodies in Elizabeth (dir. Kapur, 1998)

Abstract

This article uses the film *Elizabeth* (dir. Kapur, 1998) as a portal for understanding the interstices between modern and early modern conceptions of religion as it is read on the body. *Elizabeth* examines the period of religious and political unrest immediately before and after the coronation of Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603), compressing the late 1550s through the early 1570s into a comprehensive statement on the relationship between the body, heresy, and corruption. This article investigates how lower body activities and functions, like dancing, sex, and defecation, were linked in both the film and early modern minds to immorality, corruption, and heresy. This was especially true during the sixteenth century as the English Protestant Reformation's dialogic battle against Catholic clergy progressed and conspiracies against the queen mounted. By contrast, both Elizabethan contemporaries and director Shekhar Kapur establish upper body activities, like reading and intellectual work, as wholesome and virtuous. As the film follows the queen's transformation from youthful sensuality to physically detached wisdom, Kapur employs ideas proposed by Elizabeth's contemporaries to frame religion and corruption through bodily characterization.

Keywords

the body, Catholicism, Protestantism, England, Queen Elizabeth I, Shekhar Kapur

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In a column in *History Today* magazine, editor Paul Lay lamented that British television writers and filmmakers seemed preoccupied with the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603) and two World Wars (1914-18 and 1939-45), to the exclusion of centuries of important and fascinating events and ideas.¹ Indeed, the last two decades have seen an explosion of interest in early modern Europe across television, film, and computer games. Lavish multi-season series sponsored by international cooperation between production companies, like *The Tudors* (2007-10), *The Borgias* (2011-13), and *Reign* (2013-), prepare audiences for more personal interactions with the past. While there have been efforts to expand the national and chronological focus with *Marco Polo* (Netflix, 2014-), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*The Magnificent Century*, Tims Productions, 2011-14), and *Victoria* (ITV, 2016-), Western European, and particularly British, history still draws the largest audiences in North America and Europe.

Scholars of early modern Britain have long watched and commented on the challenge of transforming their footnote-rich, evidence-based work into a riveting visual experience that is accessible to the general public.² As Andrew Higson reminds us, in many films and television programs the “Renaissance also figures more as a particular dramatic space” in which the audience has come to expect two layers of conflict: in the foreground “personal conflicts, the obstacles thrown in the way of romantic fulfillment or the fulfillment of individual desire” and in the background “the public conflicts of ‘History proper’.”³ Frequently the

historical setting or conflict acts as an architecture and catalyst, within and around which the audience watches interpersonal relationships and exchanges develop. These relationships between characters – variously king and queen, husband and wife, man and woman – act as emotional anchors preventing viewers from drifting or being alienated by an environment, values, or manners different from their own. However, relationships that attract the audience’s empathy can also establish a deceptive sense of modernity that detracts from the historical veracity, while seeming ‘true’ to viewers.⁴ Michael Hirst, the writer of *The Tudors*, affirmed the importance of viewers relating to the central characters and their personal dilemmas, over historical understanding of the past. As he noted, *The Tudors* “is about the [English] Reformation. How do you sell that to a U.S. audience without getting them hooked on the characters first?”⁵ Indeed, in a period when few viewers read works of religious history written by professional historians, or polemics from the time period depicted, these emotion-first productions serve as the public’s chief representations of the leaders and beliefs that spurred important religious controversies.

The many films made about the English Reformation and the Tudor dynasty that witnessed it, suggest that there is still something of mystery in the lives of the period’s monarchs, ministers, and martyrs. This article will investigate how Shekhar Kapur and Michael Hirst, as director and screenwriter of *Elizabeth* (1998) respectively, present the struggle between Protestants and Catholics in a

compressed vision of Queen Elizabeth I's early reign. Although their film was a box-office success and won many awards, its ability to present an authentic vision of early modern religious conflict is mixed. Instead the film presents an emotionally-charged coming of age narrative that uses body imagery and culture to build political and religious characterization. Kapur and Hirst's construction of bodies strives to identify religious factions (Catholic or Protestant) while implicitly mirroring sixteenth-century concerns about gender, virtue, and heresy. Modern viewers associate the body-based values of the early modern period with traditionalism, chauvinism, and conservative values, which in turn appear appropriate to a film set in a period characterized by patriarchy. Thus, the film's commentary on Elizabethan religious tensions is viewed through bodily acts and changes, suggesting that the human body continues to be a popular and accessible site for both story-telling and conflict.

***Elizabeth* (dir. Kapur, 1998)**

Maddalena Pennacchia has argued convincingly that Kapur's *Elizabeth* falls into the category of "bio(e)pic": films that offer an intimate approach to history through the life of some notable and often princely character, while also adopting elements of the epic genre.⁶ An important characteristic of bio(e)pics is that the protagonist experience a hard-won transformation over the course of the

film, which mirrors the journey of the communities that they lead.⁷ Few monarchs have become more crucial to Britain's Protestant national identity than Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603).⁸ The film *Elizabeth* portrays a condensed version of the first fifteen years of Elizabeth's reign – in which the queen sought political stability and a Protestant religious settlement.⁹ Amid these challenges the film's principal narrative follows Queen Elizabeth's evolution from a naïve young ruler to a wise Virgin Queen, whose dramatic transformation comes at the cost of her personal agency to love anything besides her country.

Kapur's film is a strikingly modern and creative version of Elizabethan history. As an Indian director, he “prided himself on not being steeped in, or committed patriotically to, British history.”¹⁰ The film's writer, Michael Hirst, has shown a similar willingness to play with the historical record.¹¹ Only partly due to this, reactions to *Elizabeth* varied across both academic and popular venues. Almost inevitably scholars disputed Kapur and Hirst's use of artistic license to craft an exciting narrative that depended on a minimum of necessary knowledge, especially regarding religion.¹² Carole Levin, the noted Elizabethan historian, lamented the inaccuracy, weakness, and dependence on men in the young queen's portrayal.¹³ Both Sarah Knowles and Rosemary Sweet cited the simplification of religious issues as an example of taking “liberties with historical accuracy” that moved the film away from a genuine attempt at a balanced historical narrative.¹⁴ Even popular reviewers picked up on the theme of artistic license. Janet Maslin of

the *New York Times* compared the final montage of violent arrests and executions to *The Godfather* (1972, dir. Coppola), noting that Kapur and Hirst made “spectacle their priority, often at the expense of fact.”¹⁵ Although Richard Williams of *The Guardian* agreed with Maslin in her comparison, he praised the film as the “very model of a successful historical drama – imposingly beautiful, persuasively resonant, unfailingly entertaining.”¹⁶ As a director Shekhar Kapur affirmed his preference for creating a world that resonated with viewers over recapitulating the accepted past, commenting: “I had to make a choice whether I wanted the details of history or the emotions and essence of history to prevail.”¹⁷ Certainly this decision contributed to the film’s popularity, as most characters appear as easily digestible emblems of abstractions.

While Kapur’s depiction of the sixteenth century strayed somewhat from the historical record, his vision of Elizabeth maintained the traditional focus on gender-centric politics, with the body acting as a dualistic cipher. Filmic characterizations of the queen oscillate between “the image of royal authority in the tradition of kings, splendidly and powerfully arrayed [...and] romantic and sexual narratives that attempt to explain Elizabeth’s identity as an unmarried woman.”¹⁸ As Thomas Betteridge argued, Elizabeth I continues to be an irresistible “reason to reflect upon the relationship between gender, in particular femininity, and power.”¹⁹ Through the twentieth century films depicting Elizabeth’s reign have often shown her personal and political ideals to be in conflict, implying “the

personal as irredeemably political.”²⁰ Since *Les Amours de la Reine Élisabeth* (1912, dir. Mercanton and Desfontaines), films have portrayed Elizabeth more frequently in her relationships with men than as a powerful ruler in her own right. *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939, dir. Curtiz) defined the queen based on her feminine need for a heterosexual relationship, both in its plot and the film’s very title, setting the stage for future representations and conflicts. Glenda Jackson’s depiction of the queen in the television series *Elizabeth R* (1971) also “subordinate[s] her political prowess and strength as a ruler to the fantasy of her emotional and sexual life as a woman.”²¹ Even in films that depict Elizabeth triumphing in moments of political crisis, directors seem drawn to depict tension between the stoic body of the leader and the emotional body of the potential lover. *Fire Over England* (1937, dir. Howard), a film that followed King Edward VIII’s abdication (1936) and presaged Britain’s entry into World War II (1939), framed Elizabeth as Gloriana, England incarnate, who privileged duty above love and ruled steadily in a time of crisis.²²

Indeed, in recent films about Queen Elizabeth the monarch’s body is a continual preoccupation, either as a space for display, as Adrienne Eastwood has noted, or as a battleground for her identity as a lover or a virgin. As in previous twentieth-century depictions, Kapur’s film demands that Elizabeth “either be sexually active or powerful, but not both.”²³ No depiction of Elizabeth in film has been able to overcome the conflict between stereotypical female emotionality and

monarchical agency. However, it is not only Elizabeth's body that Kapur uses for deep characterization. The bodies of other characters, men and women, English, French, and Spanish, as well as Protestants and Catholics, all stand as emblems of their characters' virtue. Such bodily signage is not unusual, and functions as a useful shorthand to convey messages to the audience. Yet, in *Elizabeth* the bodies of Catholics and Protestants take on new meaning amid a plot that uncovers Catholic heresy and treason against a Protestant monarch, who seeks domestic stability through a foreign alliance with a Catholic husband. As the *New York Times* reviewer succinctly judged, this is "a resolutely anti-Catholic drama," in which bodily behavior signals strength or weakness of virtue, which is reinforced by religious and political affiliation.²⁴

Thus, religion and characterization are inextricably intertwined, with the body functioning as a stage on which to act out the faith and virtue that advances the plot.²⁵ Early modern Christians understood clearly that their doctrinal beliefs and practices – their faith – identified them as members of specific religious groups. However, at the Marian and Elizabethan courts depicted by Kapur, each character's faith is elided with their membership in an institutional religion, either Catholic or Protestant, and that religious group's political faction.²⁶ Considering that the mid-Tudor period was characterized by frequent religious change and political upset, the film's elision of faith and institutional adherence with political factions that are defined chiefly by religion simplifies the narrative with little loss.

José Igor Prieto-Arranz has argued that part of the film's success is due to the use of historical verisimilitude, through which historical details could change, but the film might still maintain an 'early modern world' that the audience expected.²⁷ Part of this strategy involved the presentation of well-known Elizabethan portraits recreated on the screen, both during the opening sequence and throughout the film. Sitting on a throne bearing an orb and scepter, Cate Blanchett looks strikingly similar to the anonymously painted *Coronation Portrait* (c.1600), now in the National Portrait Gallery in London. In the voice-over commentary, the director acknowledged the appropriation of the queen's portrait.²⁸ In the film's final scene the queen emerged through a curtain, out of white light, to present herself to the court. Her stiff ruff, white makeup, elaborate wig, and large court dress are reminiscent of an amalgamation of George Gower's *Armada Portrait* (1588) and Marcus Geeraerts' *The Ditchley Portrait* (c.1592), both of which present the stylized Mask of Youth. In the same way that sixteenth-century portraits of the queen used her depicted body as a familiar emblem for sovereignty, strength, divine protection, and chastity, Kapur invoked them to assert his presentation of a familiar queen.²⁹ Recreating Elizabeth in the guise of portraits that many audience members would recognize heightens the perception that Kapur has presented the authentic early modern queen.³⁰

In a similar fashion, the film frames the narrative struggle of religious factions in ways that are simultaneously familiar to modern viewers while

positioning Catholic and Protestant characters to act out early modern understandings of the connections between orthodoxy/heresy and morality/immorality through bodily cues.³¹ Although Kapur privileges the audience's understanding of a straightforward bilateral conflict pitting Catholics against Protestants, both male and female characters are defined religiously and held accountable morally for the actions of their bodies according to early modern values that connected heresy with vice and sexual activity outside of marriage or bodily abuse with immorality. While this bilateral conflict is likely to be familiar to Anglo-Western audiences, the goals sought by the film's characters – love, power, and survival – are also in Kapur's words “contemporary.”³² The body-based characterization that helps to structure the pursuit of these goals remains familiar to modern audiences, even if modern society no longer embraces such a conservative model.

The historian Christopher Haigh even went so far as to call Kapur's characters “stereotypes” – “the besotted but weak lover; the wily Spaniard, the lascivious French” – in his explanation of how the film reaches its audience.³³ Undoubtedly, these elements assist viewers in grasping the overall narrative movement, as well as the important factional split between loyalists and conspirators, and Protestants and Catholics. In early modern England conversations about disordered social systems or communities, both religious and lay, often incorporated the vocabulary of illness, which easily gave way to images

of decay and corruption, and slid into representations of vice and sin.³⁴ As Jonathan Gil Harris has argued, the religious and political upheavals, as well as fears about social change and disease (plague and syphilis), experienced by sixteenth-century English men and women reinforced many of these elisions.³⁵ Underlining the continued resonance of these stereotypes and connected abstractions to viewers, José Igor Prieto-Arranz has reminded readers that Kapur's film is based "on the largely mediated myth of Elizabeth" that grew through a period of religious struggle and intolerance, and has become "instrumental in the view that the English have since had of both themselves and, crucially, Other nations."³⁶

Bodily Signs of Religion: Virtue *versus* Corruption

The connection seen in *Elizabeth* between the actions of the visible body and the morality and purity of the invisible soul is characteristic of the early modern worldview. In 1486 the Italian humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola composed a speech that has come to be known as *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. In it Pico described the creation of man and articulated what he thought to be man's appropriate place in the hierarchy of beings – "in the middle of the world" – below angels but above beasts.³⁷ This placement accords with Aristotle's *scala naturae*, which established a hierarchy of animate and inanimate species based

loosely on biological complexity.³⁸ Pico's *Oration* frames man as having both great ability and freedom of choice to make his way, while at the same time receiving divine sanction for his choices. The possible diversity of strong and weak choices is made clear as God the Father indicates: "It will be in your power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Alternatively, you shall have the power, in accordance with the judgement of your soul, to be reborn into the higher orders, those that are divine."³⁹ This division of action recalls Pico's earlier description of the world based on a division between the mind and the body. He described God the Father as creating a world that included "the supercelestial region with intelligences, [where he] enlivened the heavenly globes with eternal souls, and filled the excremental and filthy parts of the lower world with a multitude of forms of animal life."⁴⁰ In this passage there is a clear connection between heavenly behavior and the mind and earthly behavior and excremental and animal instincts. This division and these connections were quite traditional by Pico's day, and they reflected accepted visions of the world and human behavior.⁴¹

Only decades after Pico composed his text, European governors sought to control the chaos they saw in religious pluralism and choice. Christian rulers presented themselves as divinely appointed governors of all their co-religionist citizens, thus religious pluralism would only undermine the monarch's justification to rule.⁴² Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

England experienced social instability as monarchs implemented religious reforms that swung between Catholicism and Calvinism. This unrest sprang from public campaigns to vilify unreformed (or no longer acceptably reformed) Christians in England, which found traction in visions of bodily impurities reflecting spiritual corruption. Indeed, both Catholics and Protestants “looked to the body for signs of a spiritual disposition in ways that shared a fundamental compatibility.”⁴³ This was an easy and logical progression, considering how long organic metaphors had been used to describe the Catholic Church (“in head and members”) and political communities (“the body politic”).

Stephen Greenblatt has argued that early modern Catholics considered lower body impulses to be shameful and disgusting, even if they offered some physical relief.⁴⁴ Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) presents a community that identified “pleasure of the body’s organs,” which included scratching, ejaculating, and defecating, as the lowest sort of pleasure. Although this pleasurable relief was common to all humans, *Utopia*’s citizens agreed that these behaviors needed to be confined within boundaries in order to maintain social value and avoid communal disapproval. In a similar fashion François Rabelais’ tales of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (c.1532-65) presents the “grotesque body” that is common to all humans, as a foundational aspect of the giants’ world.⁴⁵ While this offers great entertainment value in a carnivalesque fashion, in doing so Rabelais underlines the disciplinary culture that was effecting change in sixteenth-century Europe and

progressively cloaking discussion, observation, and acceptance of lower body behaviors.⁴⁶ Over time the Catholic consensus that all humans scratched and defecated gave way to an expectation that all humans would hide their unappealing habits in order to create a more virtuous world.⁴⁷

For early modern Protestant polemicists the body was a stage upon which one's heretical or righteous soul performed. In his collection of letters on theology, the influential Calvinist theologian Theodore Beza (1519-1605) invoked Galen's statement that "the habits of the soul follow the temperament of the body," suggesting an empirical connection between the believer's soul and body.⁴⁸ Beza's expectation that religious vice or virtue would make itself known through the believer's body was not unusual and was reinforced by the belief that the anatomical body was "the theatre of God's creation" and therefore a site for divine revelation.⁴⁹ Martin Luther's broad use of scatological imagery and invective was mobilized frequently against enemies, specifically polemical attackers, Catholics, and Jews. By characterizing these groups with scatology, corruption, and religious heresy, Luther depicted salvation in the reformed Church as utterly separate and untainted by lower body behaviors. By creating these linkages Luther also exploited the vocabulary and imagery that social disciplinarians increasingly tried to obscure.⁵⁰

Luther argued that only God's mercy and guidance of the reformed Church could cleanse righteous Christians and keep them from drowning in lower

body filth. In keeping with this line of thought, the English Protestant martyrologist John Foxe depicted martyrs who resisted feelings of pain and felt only “mild” deaths, because their virtuous reformed spirits had triumphed over bodily pain through faith and piety.⁵¹ In parallel with stories of martyrs’ deaths, Foxe presented their heretic persecutors and executioners, many of whom were Catholic, experiencing “desperate deaths and horrible punishments” that neatly reflected the violence they had wreaked on Protestant bodies.⁵² In Foxe’s text these “shameful lives and desperate ends” culminated in the physically barren and failed religious qualities of Queen Mary’s rule. Applying bodily imagery to all of Catholic England, Foxe asked: “when was the realm of England more barren of all God’s blessings? What prince reigned here for a shorter time or less to his own heart’s ease, than did Queen Mary?”⁵³

As John Foxe, Martin Luther, and John Calvin argued, the body could be used to fulfill divine or selfish desires. In the same way that disease could function as punishment for bodily corruption, both bodily and spiritual depravity combined with Protestant rhetoric to encourage reform, repentance, and godly living.⁵⁴ These desires to submit to vice and temptation were ever present in a world corrupted by sin. In *Table Talk* (pub. 1566) Luther stated that even “evanescent ardour” between spouses, and the sexual preoccupation it inspired, was part of Satan’s strategy to distract humans from prayer.⁵⁵ Early Lutheran attacks on Catholic clergy focused on depravity using sexual, scatological, and

imperialistic images. Woodcuts that accompanied anti-Catholic polemics framed priests and popes as simultaneously the lowest forms of humanity, questing for sexual and bodily relief, while reaching towards the highest rewards.⁵⁶

The popularity of these woodcuts across Europe in the sixteenth century ensured that these stereotypes of Catholic depravity, bodily and political, remained a stalwart of anti-Catholic polemic.⁵⁷ Drawing on these concerns, Phillip Stubbes's conservative Protestant invective, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), was first published during these crisis years, not long after the execution of the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion (1581) and just months before the arrest of Catholic conspirator Francis Throckmorton (1583).⁵⁸ Dedicated to the chief magistrates and Governors of England, the timeliness of his text and its exhortation towards social and religious reform make it useful as a contemporary benchmark exploring the connections between social and bodily practices, political threat, and spiritual salvation. Since Stubbes's comments focus on trends in apparel, dancing and religion, his text articulates the standards defended by Kapur's older and experienced Protestant governor William Cecil. Stubbes argues for the traditional connection between outward appearance and religious virtue and morality. Continence, sobriety and chastity are overthrown by fashion, pride, and wantonness, revealing the individual's deeper corruption.⁵⁹ Notably, the same themes of corrupted Catholic leadership, bodily vice, and lust for power are visible in modern re-creations of English Protestant-Catholic tensions.

Virtue and Corruption in *Elizabeth* (1998)

Kapur's film capitalizes on the modern audience's ability to understand and accept traditional links between bodily practices, religious tropes, and virtue. As John Lyden has explored, modern films often use religion as a mechanism for dealing with chaos. Religious systems provide accessible models for identifying good and evil, which allow protagonists to assert order, facilitate justice, and reward virtue.⁶⁰ Elizabethan England's struggle to entrench a moderate Protestant culture at the expense of a violent or threatening Catholicism, lends itself to narratives of religious contest. In *Elizabeth* treason is associated with foreign plots and assassination, while treasonous characters are depicted engaged in lower body activities. The fact that Catholic characters are overwhelmingly involved in treasonous activities makes the implicit connection between Catholicism, treason, and the body's preoccupations explicit.

The film's narrative begins with the arrest and imprisonment of Elizabeth by her sister Queen Mary during Wyatt's rebellion (1554). Following Mary's death in 1558, the film depicts Elizabeth's transformation from a young and naïve ruler into a jaded and experienced politician, during which time she launches a failed attack on Scotland, is excommunicated by the pope, and nearly assassinated by Catholic partisans. This long chronology allows the film to establish

behavioral tropes that are applied to and separate Protestant and Catholic characters and cut across genders. As the protagonist, Elizabeth's body is under greatest scrutiny. In her first scene she appears engaged in a bodily activity, dancing with her ladies in a field, while a musician plays. Soon she retreats with Robert Dudley inside where they continue dancing, and laughing with clasped hands. Elizabethan moralizing authors like Phillip Stubbes argued that dancing was a dangerous distraction in which lack of social and physical restraint could lead to loss of spiritual faculties and madness.⁶¹ Reflecting this weakness, Mary, along with many other characters, characterize Elizabeth in bodily ways, usually linked to her mother's sexuality or her own sexual liaison with Dudley. While this is consistent with the way that early moderns evaluated female honor, it underlines the film's fixation on the human body and charts Elizabeth's progress away from being defined by her female form.⁶² Gazing at Elizabeth, Mary cries: "When I look at you I see nothing of the King. Only that whore – your mother." To Walsingham, Bishop Gardiner calls Elizabeth "your bastard Queen." As Pope Pius V signed the bull declaring Elizabeth excommunicated, he asked if the English "still support the sovereignty of that illegitimate whore?" To these people, Elizabeth's birth, religion, and legitimacy as ruler are all connected and framed by sexual suspicion, establishing her as a public product of sex, a lower body activity.

As the film continues, Catholic characters reveal a distinct preoccupation with sex. In contrast to the Protestant queen's movement away from being defined by her body and lower body activities, the Catholic queen cleaves to her bodily responsibilities. This elision of Mary's identity and her role as the producer of a royal heir is in keeping with the early modern expectation for queens. However, the audience is reminded frequently of Mary's inability to achieve that goal. The duke of Norfolk collects information about the queen's phantom pregnancy and then congratulates the royal couple stating that the queen's pregnancy "is nothing short of a miracle." This comment on miraculous childbirth is echoed by the placement of a large stone statue of the Virgin and Child before the barren royal couple, which acts as a totem for the queen's goal and her Catholic identity. Later in the film, as Elizabeth enters the queen's chambers she passes through a tapestry cut to allow passage, which depicts the infant Jesus suckling at this mother's exposed breast.⁶³ As all of Mary's scenes take place in her chambers, the audience is encouraged to compare the dimness of her rooms with the brightness of both indoor and outdoor scenes involving Elizabeth.⁶⁴ The cloistered, aging, and anxious Catholic queen is set against her active, youthful and initially carefree Protestant sister. Perhaps coincidentally the queen's chamber, darkened by heavy draperies emitting little natural light, reflects the instructions given to pregnant women in the early modern period for creating lying-in and birthing chambers. The closed room was meant to protect the mother, much as the womb protected

the foetus.⁶⁵ Indeed, Mary is never seen outside her womb-like chamber, and finally lies dead within it, like a stillborn child.⁶⁶

Only one Protestant character, William Cecil, is able to cross successfully from political to sexual advisor. As her chief councilor, Cecil encourages Elizabeth to adopt the heteronormative roles of wife and mother as soon as possible, by choosing a husband.⁶⁷ This accords with sixteenth-century wisdom that marriage and procreation was the proper course for adults, and especially women.⁶⁸ Much of the film is preoccupied with the tensions between finding a foreign royal husband for Elizabeth so that she can bear an heir to stabilize the succession, and the covert sexual relationship that she pursues with Robert Dudley.⁶⁹ As Cecil reminds the queen's ladies-in-waiting: "Her Majesty's body and person are no longer her own property. They belong to the State."⁷⁰ Thus, Elizabeth is bound by the state's expectation of sex only within the bounds of a public royal marriage that is accepted by Parliament. Her night of passion with Dudley must be repudiated, as she indicates at the film's end: "[Dudley] shall be kept alive to always remind me of how close I came to danger." Here is a clear connection between the sexuality of men, like Dudley and Norfolk, and the political threat they posed as conspirators. In *The Anatomie of Abuses*, conservative author Phillip Stubbes reminds his sixteenth-century readers of chastity's high value, for whoever "committeth fornication sinneth against his owne body. [...] knowe you not, that your Bodyes are the temples of the holy

ghost, which dwelleth within you? And who so destroyeth the Temple of God, him shall God destroy.”⁷¹ Although both Dudley and Norfolk are noble, neither one is constrained by the same marital expectations as the queen. Rather, both Dudley and Norfolk appear free to pursue sexual liaisons for fun and personal fulfillment. Yet, in both cases their female partners are more dangerous than each man imagined.

These liaisons emphasize the film’s message that lower body, or carnal instead of intellectual, preoccupations detract from spiritual purity. Kapur uses sex as a cipher to reflect the political corruption of both Dudley and Norfolk. When Norfolk first appears on his way to meet Queen Mary he speaks with a nameless woman about the queen’s health and sexual history. She laments that Norfolk has avoided her bed recently, much as the disinterested Spanish King Philip has with Queen Mary. Their meeting in the hall outside the queen’s rooms suggests a covert quality to this consultation and their coupling. In the credits this woman is listed as Lettice Howard, indicating that likely she was meant to be the wife of Thomas Howard, the Duke of Norfolk. Nonetheless, their sexual relationship is entwined with Norfolk’s plot to overthrow Elizabeth. Lettice is wife to Norfolk and spy to Walsingham. In the early modern mind these two roles were intrinsically at odds with one another, and underlined the susceptibility to sin seen in women, and the danger to men of sexual attraction.⁷² Before attending Parliament to vote on the Elizabethan religious settlement, Norfolk dresses before

a mirror, attended by Lettice.⁷³ With long flowing hair and an entirely transparent gown, she asks him why he must leave. Her question insinuates that that he is leaving her bed and that power means more to Norfolk than love or sex. He responds that, “I would not miss this for the world. Today I shall watch the fall of that heretic girl.” Quite neatly he connects his own power with gender and religious corruption, suggesting to the audience that the female body is weak, but the Catholic body even weaker.

Later the connection between Norfolk’s power and the body appears again. After signing a letter that purports to be from the pope, but instead is a trap set by Walsingham, the duke proclaims this act to be the start of England’s return to safety and the Catholic faith. Seemingly preoccupied by visions of his future grandeur Norfolk instructs Lettice to deliver the letter carefully, which she does to Walsingham, thus initiating the arrest of the conspirators. The scenes that follow are a montage of the conspirators engaged in bodily activities before and during their arrest or assassination by English guards. Norfolk and Lettice are shown in the throes of lovemaking, once again linking Norfolk’s sexual activity with his lust for power and conspiracy. Not surprisingly, *The Anatomie of Abuses* compares ambitious and “couetous” men like Norfolk with the bottomless pit of damnation: “A couetouse man may wel be compared to Hell, which euer gapeth and pawneth for more, and is neuer content with inough. For right as Hell euer hunteth after more, so a couetous ma[n] drowned in the quagmire, or plath of

avarice and ambition.”⁷⁴ Indeed, Norfolk’s double-crossing partner, Lettice, is the key to his downfall, for he relies upon her to facilitate his conspiracy. Through Norfolk’s characterization, the audience comes to realize that the religious body – the body that tends towards Catholicism, even for political power backed by Spain – is the weakest of all. Norfolk’s naked body, arrested in bed with Lettice, is evidence of that truth.

Although Protestant, Dudley’s sexual character in this film is more mixed. His night in bed with Elizabeth is the culmination of several scenes of flirtatious hand-holding and mildly provocative poetry. Where Elizabeth is embarrassed by talk of the marriage bed, either shared with the king of Spain or Dudley, the latter is not. He shows himself to be far more confident sexually, both with the queen and her ladies-in-waiting. This confidence equates with intemperance, which he shows in politics as well. Where Elizabeth is cautious, Dudley is lustful.⁷⁵ When they first appear dancing what is called “a *volta*” at court, Elizabeth’s ladies are titillated and slightly scandalized. This mimics Phillip Stubbes’ declaration that dancing “in these daies, is an introduction[n] to whoredom, a preparatiue to wantonnes, a prouacatiue to uncleanes, & a introit to al kind of lewdness, rather than a pleasant exercise to [the] mind, or a holsome practice for [the] body.”⁷⁶ Indeed, the film portrays the *volta* as an energetic dance that mimics the flirtatious movements of courtship, and requires Dudley to lift Elizabeth up in the air. Elizabeth orders the musicians to play the music, signaling her command of the

situation, but when Dudley asks when he can see her in private, she laughs and parrots Cecil's warning: "In private? Have you forgot, my Lord? I am Queen now." Nevertheless, the film echoes Stubbes' judgement that dancing encourages intimacy.⁷⁷ That evening Dudley appears at the queen's chambers, immediately after Cecil leaves reminding the ladies of his need to know all of the queen's "proper functions," meaning menstruation, sexual health, and eventually pregnancy.⁷⁸ While the ladies laugh at Cecil's expectation and blush at Dudley's flirtatiousness, this scene underlines the fact that intimacy with Dudley leads the queen away from her bodily responsibilities to the state.

The film establishes Dudley as a corrupting and sexualizing influence on Elizabeth. Although his speech suggests his love for the queen, his willingness to have sex with Elizabeth, knowingly in contravention of the norms stated by Cecil and the value of her virginity to the state, makes him reckless and dangerous. This is visualized by an assassin's arrow that just misses Elizabeth only a minute after he proposes to her. Marriage to Dudley would not lead to stability for England, for it would preclude alliances with France and Spain. Dudley's desire for Elizabeth necessitates her abandonment of an outward-looking balance among the European powers. Dudley fears that as queen, Elizabeth will move beyond his love for her and transcend her personal needs to meet the nation's needs.⁷⁹ Indeed, like Norfolk, Dudley's desires are personal, connected to the lower body, and dangerous. His desire is for power over Elizabeth. Following the coronation she

shows the truth in his prophecy, reacting angrily to his possessive talk. This argument occurs in the midst of dancing another *volta*, after Cecil informs the queen of Dudley's previous marriage. When Dudley insists: "you are still my Elizabeth!" the queen's good mood vanishes and she asserts loudly to both him and the watching court: "I am not your Elizabeth! I am no man's Elizabeth! And if you think to rule here you are mistaken! I will have one mistress here and no master!" These lines note the desire of Dudley and others to colonize Elizabeth as woman and monarch through love, sex, and marriage. The mistress that she describes is not sexualized, but autonomous and powerful.

This scene initiates Dudley's turn towards conspiracy with the Spanish ambassador and underlines the corrupting pressure of love and desire. If the king of Spain married the queen of England, Dudley and Elizabeth could continue their sexual liaison and the personal body could exist alongside the state body. The ambassador praises Dudley's love for Elizabeth and assures him that only an alliance with Catholic Spain will bring Dudley what he wants. Yet, as Dudley states: "Such love is hateful. It tears the soul apart." His love and desire for Elizabeth will lead him far away from her and endanger her own goal of personal freedom and a stable state. A liaison with Isabel, one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, further emphasizes Dudley's corruption. Wearing one of the queen's dresses, Isabel meets Dudley in a darkened corridor. As they have sex leaning against the wall, and Dudley asks her to act as the queen, Isabel appears to climax

but her screams are due to the poisoned dress that she tries to tear off. As a terrified Dudley abandons her, the audience sees a weak man, whose body serves his own desires, and whose sexual activities lead to the downfall of his female partners.⁸⁰ His near contemporary, the surgeon and Protestant author Peter Lowe, would comment that sickness was a punishment for sin that could best be avoided by reigning in one's lust.⁸¹

Privileging the Upper Body and Preserving the Protestant Monarchy

Early in the film Lord Cecil assures the French ambassador that: "The marriage of a Queen, Excellency, is born of politics, not childish passion." This statement foreshadows Elizabeth's drift away from Dudley, her juvenile emotions, and her transformation into a distant, statue-like woman who proclaims herself "married to England."⁸² Throughout the film the audience hears that weakness descends from heightened passion, echoing the concerns of Phillip Stubbes. When Walsingham encounters Marie of Guise, the apparent regent of Scotland and the aunt of Elizabeth's suitor the Duke of Anjou, they have a frank discussion about political strength. Walsingham declares: "I have no illusions. I know it is only a matter of time before my Queen is overthrown. Her Majesty rules with the heart, not with the head." Marie of Guise acknowledges this challenge: "I understand. It is hard for a woman to forget her heart." Yet,

Elizabeth's closest advisors, both Walsingham and Cecil, exhort her to suppress her heart and emotions throughout the film. Becoming a successful Protestant ruler demands that Elizabeth privilege her upper body – her intellect – rather than submit to her lower body needs – physical intimacy.

By contrast, Dudley appears to become less able to avoid his heart and commits treason precisely because he submits to desire. Seeing that Elizabeth is slipping away from him he acts as go-between for Philip of Spain's marriage proposal. The king's need to stay in his own country would leave Elizabeth free to romance Dudley. In response to her refusal, he cries, "For God's sake, I do this for us. I ask you to save some part of us!" Rather she has already chosen autonomy and public honor over love for him, seeing that her sexual honor will be the basis of her personal and political reputation. Dudley's loss and its destructive effects on him are clear by the film's end. Following the arrest of his co-conspirators, Elizabeth confronts him and asks for an account of his actions. Enigmatically Dudley replies: "Why? Madam, is it not plain enough to you? It is no easy thing to be loved by the Queen. It would corrupt the soul of any man." Here early moderns would see an allusion to pride: a vice that raises one's own desires above others' and was thought to invariably lead to sin.⁸³ Dudley's persistent focus on his emotions is his undoing in an environment that Cecil and Walsingham characterize by strategic calm and the suppression of personal desire.

The separation of Catholic and Protestant characters according to their

bodily activities is best revealed in the montage of arrest scenes. As royal guards move to arrest the Duke of Norfolk, Bishop Gardiner, and the Duke of Suffolk for conspiracy, Elizabeth sits at her desk bent over a book. The queen is the picture of intellectual preoccupation and upper-body work, at the very moment that the conspirators are shown in lower body activities. As noted above, Norfolk and Lettice are surprised while having sex, an activity that the duke framed as fit for Catholic royalty at the film's beginning. Guards arrest the Duke of Suffolk as he sits on a toilet. Of the lower body's needs, defecating was the least pure or noble, and characterizes Suffolk in a corresponding fashion. The lone clerical conspirator, Bishop Gardiner, encounters the guards as he stands in his shirt before an icon, whipping himself with cords while reciting prayers, mortifying his flesh in a way that was, and has remained, emblematic of fervent Catholicism.⁸⁴

All three conspirators are arrested while attending to their bodies. Later both Norfolk and Suffolk are executed and their severed heads displayed, as traditional for convicted and executed traitors. Dudley, the sole Protestant conspirator appears melancholy, tearful, and likely drunk. He escapes arrest and execution, which further underlines the separation between the emotional threat that he posed and the physical and political threat posed by the Catholic conspirators. Elizabeth's decision to spare Dudley "to remind me of how close I came to danger," frames her final transition from a loving, flesh and blood monarch into an emotionless performer of the Virgin Queen. As her ladies-in-

waiting sob while shearing her hair and applying white makeup, Elizabeth stands impassively. Although she identifies her transformation as a marriage to England that mimics the Catholic Virgin Mary's pure authority, it is the statue's stony detachment that the queen adopts. Perpetual virginity was a way to abandon dangerous lower body impulses and the state's sexual demands. Her elaborate court dress, emotionless tone, and stiff demeanor in the following scene reinforce Elizabeth's belief that stability for Protestant England is only possible by privileging her upper body faculties, and preventing access to her lower body.

Conclusion

In her study of Elizabethan anti-Catholicism, Carol Weiner argued that English Protestants fixated on characteristics of global Catholicism that reflected their own fears about religious weakness at home. The hegemonic leadership of the papacy, the unity amongst Catholic states, and Catholics' blind willingness to follow Jesuit and papal instructions led English Protestant fears.⁸⁵ Traces of these fears appear in Shekhar Kapur's film too, but they are overshadowed by more broad and traditional anti-Catholic stereotypes that speak to the period's concern about rule by an unwed female monarch in a period of religious instability and political threat. Moral concerns, voiced by Protestant polemicists like Phillip Stubbes and Peter Lowe, that thinly veiled desires for further religious reform,

chiefly targeted women and unreformed Christians. In turn Kapur depicts Catholic characters and their associates participating in precisely these bodily activities – sex, dancing, defecation, and fleshy mortification – and directly link their religious identity with their end.

For Queen Mary this is death from a tumor that appeared as a phantom pregnancy. For the conspirators Norfolk, Suffolk, and Gardiner, their executions and the display of their corpses maintain the theme of religion driving the body to greater corruption. Only Protestant characters, specifically Elizabeth and Dudley, avoid bodily tragedy. Chiefly, this is due to the fact that they are cut off from their bodies' desires. The queen spurns Dudley's love and offer of marriage, thus preventing his sexual desires from undermining her authority at court and removing him as a distraction from the work of ruling. In a similar fashion Elizabeth suppresses her natural body, confining it within the cage of court dress and masking it with makeup and a wig.⁸⁶ Her adoption of the role of the Virgin Queen prevents further threats stemming from sexual desire. This role of enforced virginity also ensures Elizabeth's freedom from marriage proposals and England's liberty from eligible and ambitious Catholic princes.

In sum, Kapur has constructed a film about religion, politics, and bodies that exploits a continued understanding of some lower body behaviors as shameful or weak. Drawing on early modern beliefs about humankind's God-given ability to rise to Heaven or fall to Hell, to intellectually and spiritually

perfect or stagnate, and mingling them with images of Catholic depravity stemming from Protestant woodcuts and polemics, *Elizabeth* sends strong messages about the connection between bodily activity, religion, and political stability. Kapur's film echoes John Foxe, the English Protestant martyrologist's own question: "If Christ bid us know men by their fruits, and especially seeing by the end all things are to be tried, how can the profusion of that doctrine [Catholicism] please God, which endeth so ungodly?"⁸⁷ In the end the film aligns with early modern Protestant beliefs about Catholic depravity and bodily preoccupations. For modern audiences, the bodies of Kapur's clichéd characters perform both their politics and religion, meeting ends based on recognizable conservative values that are visualized compellingly through the prism of Elizabeth I's early reign.

¹ Paul Lay, "Television History and Its Discontents," *History Today* (14 December 2016): <http://www.historytoday.com/paul-lay/television-history-and-its-discontents> Accessed on 4 January 2017. Freeman concurs with this broad preoccupation, noting that King Henry VIII (1509-47), Elizabeth I (1558-1603, and King Charles I (1660-85) have attracted the most coverage; Thomas S. Freeman, "Introduction: It's Only a Movie," *Tudors and Stuarts on film: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 4.

² Suzannah Lipscomb, "On and Off Script," *History Today* (21 November 2016): <http://www.historytoday.com/suzannah-lipscomb/and-script> Accessed on 4 January 2017; *Filming and Performing Renaissance History*, eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Adrian Street (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); *The English Renaissance in Popular Culture: An Age for All Time*, ed. Greg Colón Semenza (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics and Art*, eds. Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and John N. King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³ Andrew Higson, "Private Lives and Public Conflicts: The English Renaissance on Film, 1998-2010," *Filming and Performing Renaissance History*, eds. Mark Thornton Burnett and Adrian Streete (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 189, 190.

⁴ Jeffery D. Nokes and David Ellison, "Historical Films: an essential resource for nurturing Historical Literacy," *Cinematic Social Studies: A Resource for Teaching and Learning Social Studies with Film*, eds. William B. Russell III and Stewart Waters (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2017), 139-141.

⁵ Michael Hirst, "Off with his head?" *Radio Times* (29 September-5 October 2007), 19.

⁶ Maddalena Pennacchia, "Culturally British Bio(e)pics: From *Elizabeth* to *The King's Speech*," *Adaptation, Intermediality and the British Celebrity Biopic*, eds. Márta Minier and Maddalena Pennacchia (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 34-35.

⁷ In the voice-over commentary, the director acknowledged that the majority of the film, between moments of overwhelming white light, should be considered a transition period for Elizabeth during which she seeks an appropriate path to follow as queen.

⁸ The historian Christopher Haigh has argued that the identification of Protestantism with England's interests "is part of a nationalistic interpretation of English history, one that still manifests itself in hostility to Europe and a conviction that Britain is different and better." Christopher Haigh, "Kapur's *Elizabeth*," *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 133.

⁹ Haigh, "Kapur's *Elizabeth*," 125.

¹⁰ Higson, "Private Lives and Public Conflicts," 185.

¹¹ Higson, "Private Lives and Public Conflicts," 184; José Igor Prieto-Arranz, "Whiggish history for contemporary audiences: implicit religion in Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 14 (2015): 57.

¹² The film begins with a prologue caption describing religious division and fear that appears against a backdrop of orange and red shades with black crosses moving through the air. Vocal music using ecclesiastical Latin in fervent and rising tones contributes to an ominous atmosphere.

¹³ Courtney Lehmann has offered a similar lament, noting that Kapur has dispossessed the queen of her own myth-making power by introducing male characters in overbearing roles at historically inaccurate moments; Courtney Lehmann, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Agenda: How Shakespeare and the Renaissance are Taking the Rage out of Feminism," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53 (2002): 263; Carole Levin, "*Elizabeth*: Romantic Film Heroine or Sixteenth-Century Queen?" *Perspectives on History* (April 1999): <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-1999/elizabeth-romantic-film-heroine-or-sixteenth-century-queen> Accessed on April 17, 2017.

¹⁴ Sarah Knowles, "Elizabeth: Polygram Films (1998)," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 33 (2003): 78; Rosemary Sweet, "Review of *Elizabeth* by Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Alison Owen, Shekhar Kapur and Michael Hirst," *The American Historical Review* 104 (1999): 297.

¹⁵ Christopher Haigh also noted this as contributing to the adopted tone of a conspiracy-thriller; Haigh, "Kapur's *Elizabeth*," 129; Janet Maslin, "Amour and High Dudgeon in a Castle of One's Own," review of *Elizabeth*, by Shekhar Kapur, *New York Times*, November 6, 1998, Movies, <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9C0DE7D6173EF935A35752C1A96E958260>.

¹⁶ Richard Williams, "Liz the Lionheart," *The Guardian*, October 2, 1998, Film of the Week, https://www.theguardian.com/film/News/Story/Critic_Review/Guardian/0,,31880.00.html.

¹⁷ One of the film's producers, Alison Owen, affirmed the intent to remake the past in order to achieve accessibility and commercial success: "Although it is a film that is very true to the Tudor times, historical veracity has not been the main point of contact. We have not changed facts but manipulated time-periods. In doing so, we have given our film so many things to attract an audience. At the heart of it is a wonderful love story." Christopher Haigh, "Kapur's *Elizabeth*," *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 124-25; Williams, "Liz the Lionheart."

¹⁸ Adrienne Eastwood, "The Secret Life of Elizabeth I," *The English Renaissance in Popular Culture: An Age for All Time*, ed. Greg Colón Semenza (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 43.

¹⁹ Thomas Betteridge, "A Queen for All Seasons: Elizabeth I on Film," *The Myth of Elizabeth I*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 244.

²⁰ Higson, "Private Lives and Public Conflicts," 189.

²¹ Eastwood, "The Secret Life of Elizabeth I," 45-46.

²² Susan Doran, "From Hatfield to Hollywood: Elizabeth I on Film," *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 91, 94-97.

²³ Eastwood, "The Secret Life of Elizabeth I," 47.

²⁴ Maslin, "Amour and High Dudgeon in a Castle of One's Own."

²⁵ This has already been noted in the hyperbolic style used to depict King Philip II of Spain, the bow-legged and hunch-backed villain of Kapur's sequel, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007); Vivienne Westbrook, "Elizabeth: The Golden Age: A Sign of the Times?" *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: historical perspectives*, eds. Susan Doran and Thomas Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 170-71.

²⁶ This is made clear when courtiers remind the duke of Norfolk that in anticipation of Queen Mary's death and Elizabeth's coronation: "Protestants are returning from abroad." Norfolk responds, revealing the doubling of religious and political identities: "Yes, and [they] have made plans to massacre every Catholic in England."

²⁷ Prieto-Arranz, "Whiggish history for contemporary audiences," 53.

²⁸ In the voice-over commentary, the director stated: "This is the classic portrait. I just went back to a classic portrait. Saying, here's the image and then back into reality to the image again."

²⁹ George Gower's *Armada Portrait* (1588, now at Woburn Abbey) presents Elizabeth as a poised and confident figure in a chair of state, whose white clothed and pearl-encrusted body dominates the scene. With one hand resting on a globe and a crown sitting by her shoulder, Elizabeth indicates the symbols of her divine right to rule. Meanwhile she studiously ignored the chaos of the Spanish ships that crash on rocks, which the viewer sees over one shoulder, and the English fire ships that threaten them over another shoulder. Elizabeth's dress, pose, and environment all contribute to the allegorical message that Gower sends to the viewer about the English triumph over the Spanish Armada and the righteousness of the queen's rule. Andrew Belsey and Catherine Belsey, "Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I," *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, eds. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 11-14.

³⁰ Prieto-Arranz, "Whiggish history for contemporary audiences," 60, 62.

³¹ José Igor Prieto-Arranz has called *Elizabeth* an unequal struggle that takes advantage of traditional, low-grade English-speaking anti-Catholic bias to present a "whiggish" version of Elizabethan history that emphasizes Protestant triumphalism while depicting Catholic tyranny and foreignness; Prieto-Arranz, "Whiggish history for contemporary audiences," 57-59, 66.

³² In "Interviews with Cast and Crew," included on the DVD version of the film, both Shekhar Kapur and Cate Blanchett describe the characters and core plot as "contemporary," which highlights the narrative's accessibility to a general audience.

³³ Haigh, "Kapur's *Elizabeth*," 130.

³⁴ Susanne Scholz, *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1-12; David George Hale, *The Body Politic: a Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

³⁵ Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996); Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in early modern England: bodies, plagues and politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 3, 7, 10, 16, 21.

³⁶ Prieto-Arranz, "Whiggish history for contemporary audiences," 66.

³⁷ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, eds. Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 117.

³⁸ This schematic first appears in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* (c.350 BCE) and was revised in Pliny the Elder's encyclopedic *Historia Naturalis* (c.77 CE); J. David Archibald, *Aristotle's Ladder, Darwin's Tree: The Evolution of Visual Metaphors for Biological Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 1-2.

³⁹ Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 117.

⁴⁰ Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 113.

⁴¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933/36).

⁴² Derek Hirst, "Bodies and Interests: Toleration and the Political Imagination in the Later Seventeenth Century," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70 (2007): 401-426.

⁴³ Charles H. Parker, "Diseased Bodies, Defiled Souls: Corporality and Religious Difference in the Reformation," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67 (2014): 1266.

⁴⁴ Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 71-72.

⁴⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 303-436.

⁴⁶ Many historians have identified this process of enhancing social discipline in order to entrench confessionalization, which resulted in a society of increased regulation and scrutiny of manners and lower body behaviors; R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 122-42; Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 68-70.

⁴⁷ Norbert Elias has dubbed this "the threshold of shame and embarrassment," which he argued moved through the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, so as to displace lower body behaviors beyond respectability; Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners: The Civilizing Process*, vol. 1, trans. Edmond Jephcott (New York: Urizen Books, 1978).

⁴⁸ Theodore Beza, *Epistolarum theologicarum Theodori Bezae Vezelii* (Geneva: Apud Eustathium Vignon, 1573), 185; Nancy G. Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 98-99.

⁴⁹ Roger French, *Dissection and Vivisection in the European Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 1999), 219-21; Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), 106-107.

⁵⁰ Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 72-74; Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 107-9.

⁵¹ John R. Knott, "John Foxe and the Joy of Suffering," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996): 723-724, 725-726, 727, 728.

⁵² John Foxe, *Fox's Book of Martyrs: The Acts and Monuments of the Church*, ed. John Cumming (London: George Virtue, 1844), 3:1109-1114.

⁵³ Foxe, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, 3:1114, 1116.

⁵⁴ Martin Luther wrote at length about the roles of God and Satan in health and illness. In *Table Talk*, he argued that "Satan produces all the maladies which afflict mankind, for he is the prince of death. [...] I think all grave infirmities are blows and strokes of the devil, which he employs as an assassin uses the sword or other weapon. So God employs natural means to maintain the health and life of man, such as sleep, meat, drink, [...] A physician repairs the work of God when damaged corporally; we, divines, spiritually; we mend the soul that the devil has spoiled. The devil gives poison to kill men; a physician gives theriacum, or some other drug, to save them;" Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, ed. William Hazlitt (London: George Bell & Sons, 1890), 256 (DXCVII); Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 151-52; R. Po-Chia Hsia, "A Time for Monsters: Monstrous Births, Propaganda, and the German Reformation," *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 87, 89.

⁵⁵ Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, 301 (DCCXXXII).

⁵⁶ R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁵⁷ Carol Z. Weiner, "The Beleaguered Isle. A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism," *Past and Present* 51 (1971): 34, 37, 39.

⁵⁸ Ultimately Stubbes's text appeared in print four times between 1583 and 1595, showing its popularity.

⁵⁹ Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses: containing a discouerie, or briefe Summarie of such Notable Vices and Imperfections, as now raigne in many Christian Countreyes of the Worlde...* (London: By Richard Iones, 1583), "Men become Monsters."

⁶⁰ John Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 45-46.

⁶¹ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, "Dauncing a 'corrosive.'" As Mary Pennino-Baskervilles noted, the historical queen was known to enjoy dancing the galliard and volta; Mary Pennino-Baskerville, "Terpsichore Reviled: Antidance Tracts in Elizabethan England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 476.

⁶² Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40-41, 60-63, 66.

⁶³ During that scene Mary entreats her sister to keep England Catholic: "Do not take away from the people the consolations of the Blessed Virgin!" In doing so Mary privileges the model of the

child-bearing mother, but also highlights the value of virginity, setting the stage for her sister's later transformation.

⁶⁴ José Igor Prieto-Arranz has argued convincingly that the use of bright environments surrounding Elizabeth also signals "reason, purity, tolerance and divine protection." Prieto-Arranz, "Whiggish history for contemporary audiences," 60.

⁶⁵ Wiesner, *Women and Gender*, 81-82. Catherine Mann has shown the importance of hangings, carpets and screens for the decoration of an English noblewoman's lying-in and birthing chamber; Catherine Mann, "Clothing Bodies, Dressing Rooms: Fashioning Fecundity in the Lisle Letters," *Parergon* 22 (2005): 154-56.

⁶⁶ In the voice-over commentary director Shekhar Kapur stated that in these scenes in addition to cultivating motifs of the Virgin Mary, he also sought to portray the loneliness of power.

⁶⁷ In the voice-over commentary director Shekhar Kapur described Cecil as a father figure who cannot believe his little girl can grow into a competent monarch without his assistance.

⁶⁸ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, "Gods cure for whordome;" Anna Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 8.

⁶⁹ Notably, for modern audiences, it is Elizabeth's sexual relationship with Dudley that makes the character more accessible, while appearing true, and modern. Once this bond between character and audience is created the rest of the narrative and characters benefit from the protagonist's verisimilitude; Susanne L. Woffard, "'Is there any harme in that?': Foxe, Heywood, and Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth*," *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England*, eds. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Katherine Conway (Madison and Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 265.

⁷⁰ Anna Whitelock has affirmed this premise in *Elizabeth's Bedfellows*, 31.

⁷¹ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, "Proofoes against whordome."

⁷² Martin Luther's *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-6), specifically 2:18, frame the unequal state of women in light of Eve's surrender to the serpent and her temptation of Adam; Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 1:115. This opinion echoes St. John Chrysostom's view as seen in his *Homilies on the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (4th century CE).

⁷³ In the voice-over commentary director Shekhar Kapur compared the duke of Norfolk to a rock, protected by the armor of his ego and the arrogance provided by noble birth. Indeed, until the film's end, Norfolk always appears in full court dress, avoiding all appearances of vulnerability, and projecting intimidating images of wealth, authority, and power.

⁷⁴ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, "Couetousnes in Ailgna."

⁷⁵ In the voice-over commentary director Shekhar Kapur described Dudley as “a wonderful playboy, a great lover, but no more than that.” In the Privy Council Meeting Kapur noted that Dudley “is suddenly lost” and that “[h]e doesn’t comprehend matters of state.”

⁷⁶ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, “The horrible Vice of pestiferous dauncing.”

⁷⁷ Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, “The horrible Vice of pestiferous dauncing.”

⁷⁸ Anna Whitelock has explored the privileged position of these women, see Whitelock, *Elizabeth’s Bedfellows*, especially 18-22.

⁷⁹ In the voice-over commentary director Shekhar Kapur notes that the queen’s rising neckline acts as a barometer of her relationship with Dudley. Kapur states: “She is cutting herself off from Dudley. The neckline is up.” And later he says: “the collars are getting as though she is trying to deny her sexuality.”

⁸⁰ Observing this, Phillip Stubbes would remind viewers that dressing above one’s station and in an unnecessarily elaborate fashion leads to sexual promiscuity; Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, “What makes youth wicked”: “for what maketh them in soone whores, strumpets, and bawds, as that cockering of them doth? What maketh them apt and prone to all kind of naughtynesse, but this? Nothing in the World soe muche.”

⁸¹ Peter Lowe, *An easie, certaine, and perfect method to cure and prevent the Spanish sicknes* (London: James Roberts, 1596), Chapter 2: “For to refraine the filthy lusts of men and women, God hath permitted thys sicknes [pox] to raigne among them, as a punishment for sinne.”

⁸² In the film’s final scene Elizabeth, newly costumed in a wide ruff, red wig, starched white dress, and white make-up, processes through her courtiers, who bow before her. She pauses in front of Cecil and in a flat voice proclaims: “Observe, Lord Burghley. I am married to England.” This statement completes her transformation from being a young, emotional, single woman at the film’s start, to a mature, controlled ruler, committed only and fully to her nation.

⁸³ Stubbes encourages the opposite of Dudley’s drunken and melancholic characterization in this scene: “Godly simplicitie and Christian sobrietie,” for in royal aspirations and rich living “thyre uppe the heart to pride: doth not intice others to sinne? And doth not sin purchase hell the guerdon or pride?” Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, “Hell, the rewarde of Pride.”

⁸⁴ Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93.

⁸⁵ Weiner, “The Beleaguered Isle,” 33-44, 49.

⁸⁶ In contrast to both the mature queen and other male characters, Dudley is displayed flamboyantly with his shirt open, hatless, and in brightly colored doublets and pantaloons. His characterization echoes Phillip Stubbes’ accusation that “most of our novell Inventions and new fangled fashions, rather deforme us then adorne us: [...and so we] resemble sauage Beasts and stearne Monsters, then continent, sober and chaste Christians.” This was a dangerous game, as Stubbes wrote, for rich dress could often obscure the difference between “any noble, honorable, or

worshipful Man” and a man who dresses nobly but behaves unworthily or aspires to higher station; Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, “To The Reader,” “Men become Monsters,” “Sumptuous Attire,” “Rich ornaments.”

⁸⁷ Foxe, *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*, 3:1116.

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