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Grace Butkowski

Victorian Representations of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I

The rivalry of Mary, Queen of Scots and her English cousin Elizabeth I is a storied one that has consumed both popular and historical imaginations since the two queens reigned in the sixteenth century. It is often portrayed as a tale of contrasts: on one end, Gloriana with her fabled red hair and virginity, the bastion of British culture and Protestant values, valiantly defending England against the schemes of the Spanish and their Armada. On the other side is Mary, Queen of Scots, the enchanting and seductive French-raised Catholic, whose series of tragic, murderous marriages gave birth to both the future James I of England and to schemes surrounding the English throne. Elizabeth gave the order for Mary's execution in 1587 after discovery of her complicity in a plot to assassinate the Virgin Queen. Since that moment, the cousins have been depicted in text, song, story, and image, always haunted by the shadow of the other.

Representations of the rival queens Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I intensified in number in the early Victorian period in Great Britain as another queen, Victoria, took the throne in 1837. These representations, part of the cultural dialogue surrounding women and their place in the world, particularly the idea of women's queenship in the domestic sphere, are both flattering and derogatory towards their subjects. This conflict in representation is itself reflective of Victorian gender and political concerns as Victoria married, had children, and was widowed. Representations of the two 16th-century monarchs serve to either critique or approve the 19th-century Queen Victoria. The contrast between portrayals of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth

I offer a unique insight into Victorian conceptions of gender and women's roles in the political and private life of the British nation in the period from the 1820s to the 1890s.

In my project, I look at popular biographies, stage melodramas, children's histories, paintings, and guidebooks for girls that portray female historical characters, focusing particularly on those that discuss Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. I ask what the agenda of middle-class Victorian moralists was in the portrayal of the two rival queens. I want to know what kind of impact representations of powerful female figures had upon the domestic ideology of the Victorian period, and whether that ideology was reinforced or undermined by these portrayals.

Many scholars have concluded that portrayals of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots served to fit these powerful women into the middle-class domestic ideology of the Victorian period, particularly within the genre of popular biography, in which the queens were either denigrated as unfeminine women or romanticized as tragic victims. While Mary became the tragic heroine, Elizabeth split into separate queen and woman personas, which created acceptable moral heroines for the public. Scholars have discussed how the separation of popular biography from more serious historical analysis aided this moralization, as well as the implications of that agenda on the wider domestic ideology. The separation of the historical genres allowed for the creation of moralized and moralizing heroines that fit within specified Victorian gender roles, while denying agency to the women themselves. However, female biographers opened the way for other women historians to undertake more respected historical analysis in the future. The popularization of women's history in the 1970s saw a shift towards a more serious

historical analysis that acknowledged personal female agency.¹ By creating a space for women to write history, Victorian biographers created the conditions for later investigations into the female side of history.

Historical Background

The Victorian era proper began in 1837 with the ascension of Queen Victoria to the throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland². Although Victoria's ascension gives a name to the cultural mindset of the nineteenth century, this is misleading. Attitudes of "Victorianism," that is to say evangelical morality, prosperity, and a confidence in science and technology, can be traced back to the 1780s and the work of influential Evangelicals such as Hannah More.³ The most enduring aspect of the Victorian mindset was its emphasis on moral responsibility, and this idea was at its height during the mid-Victorian period, particularly among the emerging middle classes who were beginning to express cultural and political dominance.⁴

The political situation in 1837 was markedly different from that of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. The near-absolute power of the Tudors had given way to an emphasis on Parliamentary power, a point expressed most powerfully in the English Civil War in the 1640s. By 1837, political power had shifted entirely to Parliament, creating the basis for a constitutional monarchy. Parliament had

¹ Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam, "Introduction: Rethinking the Victorians" in *The Victorian Studies Reader*, ed. Kelly Boyd and Rowan McWilliam (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 21.

² Sometimes referred to as Great Britain; it contained the politically-unified countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland,

³ Boyd and McWilliam, "Introduction," 3.

⁴ Gertrude Himmelfarb, "In Defence of the Victorians" in *The Victorian Studies Reader*, ed. Kelly Boyd and Rowan McWilliam (London/New York: Routledge, 2007) 210-211.

also become more democratic after the Reform Act of 1832, in which the franchise was extended to a larger proportion of the male population (primarily middle-class) and many of the ‘rotten boroughs’⁵ were disbanded.⁶ This resulted in a loss of power for the Tories, usually associated with the landed gentry and the aristocracy, and an increase of popularity for the classically liberal Whigs, who drew their base from the middle-class and industrial components of British society. The mid-century theory of classical liberalism emphasized personal responsibility and governmental non-interference in political and economic affairs.⁷ While the parties traded power intermittently throughout the 1800s, Whig liberalism would dominate political and economic thought for most of the century, and it played a prominent role in the writings of Victorian historians such as Thomas Babington Macaulay.

The Victorian period also saw the development of a specific set of ideas about the roles of middle-class women and men in society. This was most completely expressed in the ‘separate spheres’ ideology, in which primarily middle-class women were relegated to the private sphere of the home and domesticity, while middle-class men belonged in the public sphere as politicians, captains of industry, military leaders, and manual workers of the burgeoning British Empire. Also called the ‘cult of domesticity’ and ‘the cult of true womanhood,’ women’s roles as wives and mothers took precedence over most other activities, and they were encouraged to remain the “angel[s] of the house’.⁸ Victorian

⁵ Constituencies, usually rural, in which there were no or few voters. They often formed safe seats from which younger sons of the landed aristocracy entered Parliament.

⁶ Boyd and McWilliam, “Introduction,” 27.

⁷ Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam, introduction to “The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain,” by Jonathan Parry, in *The Victorian Studies Reader*, ed. Kelly Boyd and Rowan McWilliam (London/New York: Routledge, 2007) 167-168.

⁸ The phrase takes its name from a poem of the same name. Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996), 266.

Evangelical Christian theology, which became prevalent in the late 18th century along with the abolition movement, asserted that women had a naturally more virtuous nature that made it inappropriate for women to operate outside the household, where they would be exposed to the dangers and immorality of public life. Therefore, women should remain at home, serving to uplift their husbands with higher moral thoughts when they returned and raising their children to uphold high moral standards.⁹ These moral standards included insistence on sexual purity before marriage and sexual disinterest afterwards, religious piety, and submission to a male figure in the form of a father, brother, or husband.¹⁰ Middle-class women's roles in the public were limited to charity work, an extension of their role in the domestic sphere. While this life was idealized in prescriptive literature, it was not a common reality. Few women, even members of the middle-class for whom the ideology was strongest, were able to achieve the ideal frail and passive female stereotype. As Britain contained not only Evangelicals, but also Catholics, Dissenters, and various shades of Anglicans, not every household supported the Evangelical theologies. In addition, the experience of Victorian life demanded a far more active life as women dealt with the struggles of managing a household.¹¹ Working-class women, who constituted the majority of the female population, performed back-breaking labor in both their own homes and the homes of the well-off in order to support their families. Aristocratic women were expected to maintain a demanding schedule of charitable, political, and societal events which demanded a public presence. Many

⁹ Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women*. New York: New York University Press, 1995, 87.

¹⁰ Mitchell, *Daily Life*, 268.

¹¹ Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History." *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1993):. 389. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2639654>.

Victorian women may have aspired to the middle-class domestic ideal, but it was by no means universal.

Although an ideal not borne out perfectly in everyday life across the class structure, the domestic ideal was a pervasive part of Victorian culture. The ideology spread through the rise of popular literary forms such as melodramatic stories and plays. The Victorian period saw the advancement of new publishing technologies that went hand-in-hand with the expansion of the reading audience and development of niche literary markets for those able to purchase reading material; among others, a vibrant market for children's materials evolved from the middle-class Victorian fascination with preserving childish innocence and the moral duty of the mother to teach her children proper behavior.¹² This literary climate popularized media such as periodicals, which would have a profound impact on Victorians' daily lives. Periodicals disseminated ideas about science, religion, medicine, history, politics, and useful everyday knowledge, but were most noted for the popular fictions included in many issues.¹³ In these fictions, women were idealized as virtuous, submissive wives who wished for male protection. Female characters who did not fit the submissive ideal were routinely "tamed"; if they did not submit, they were figures of ridicule. Unless their energies were directed to more acceptable active forms of feminine behavior such as nursing (which developed new maternal overtones after Florence Nightingale popularized it in the Crimean War), prescriptive heroines tended to advocate the more passive roles of the middle-class domestic ideology. Depictions of the most obvious feminine role model, Queen Victoria, both support and undermine these passive roles. Victoria held power as a political public

¹² Kate Flint, introduction to *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, edited by Kate Flint, 1-13. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2012, 7.

¹³ Flint, *Cambridge History*, 8.

figure, but was also the model of the domestic roles appropriated to women. She was “at once the imperial monarch and the domestic angel.”¹⁴

This treatment of women applied to popular histories as well, particularly histories of the Tudor period. The Tudor period was part of the Victorian conception of the “Olden Time,” a period roughly defined as between the Wars of the Roses and the English Civil War, but focusing on the ‘Merrie England of Good Queen Bess.’¹⁵ The period was perceived as a ‘golden age’ where modern Victorian civilization was born, without the increasing contemporary trends towards materialism and class separation that were a consequence of classical liberalism.¹⁶ The idea of the ‘Olden Time’ critiqued the elite-led Whiggish interpretation of history by reframing historical narrative to provide a more inclusive basis for national identity.¹⁷ By creating an idealized historical period, the Victorians could both protect historical memory and impose new values upon it.¹⁸ The popular idea of the period was firmly rooted in Victorian nostalgia and the Whiggish belief that Victorian civilization represented the height of progress, including the stratification of gender roles.¹⁹ In this context, the powerful political presence of Mary

¹⁴ Gail Turley Houston, *Royalties: the Queen and Victorian Writers*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1999), 2.

¹⁵ Peter Mandler, “Revisiting the Olden Time: Popular Tudorism in the Time of Victoria,” in *Tudorism: Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Tatiana C. String and Marcus Bull. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14.

¹⁶ Mandler, “Revisiting the Olden Time,” 27, 14.

¹⁷ Mandler, “Revisiting the Olden Time,” 14.

¹⁸ Mandler, “Revisiting the Olden Time,” 16.

¹⁹ Billie Melman, “The Pleasures of Tudor Horror: Popular Histories, Modernity, and Sensationalism in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *Tudorism: Historical Imagination and the Appropriation of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Tatiana C. String and Marcus Bull. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40.

and Elizabeth presented a problem, for they could not be ignored, but they did not fit the ideals of the domestic heroine.

Historiographical Synthesis

The separation of Victorian British women from the public sphere consequently meant female distance from the academic sphere, including the study of history. During the early part of the nineteenth century, although the number of female writers increased generally, female historians were excluded from serious historical analysis, such as that done by Thomas Babington Macaulay in *The History of England* (1848). Instead, female historians were relegated to writing popular biography, which was deemed a less-demanding subject.

Scholars have discussed the history of this split and have drawn contrasting conclusions about its implications for women, both as historians and as historical subjects. In “Heroines of Domestic Life: Women’s History and Female Biography,” Mary Spongberg argues that the split between serious historical analysis and popular female-led biography reinforced women’s role in history as more attention was given to individual luminaries. This individual attention highlighted women’s historical roles more generally and brought attention to aspects of history otherwise ignored. The method in which women were depicted as moral examples and British patriots made their existence notable and important. The split of the historical discipline assisted female historians as well; by creating a separate academic discipline, female writers had a safe space in which to discuss the female role in history. The increased attention in the area of biography, Spongberg contends, led to a general increase in female biographers and

eventually opened the way for women to write in more serious academic arenas.²⁰

Rohan Maitzen largely agrees with Spongberg's argument that female biographers operated in a separate sphere from male historians. Drawing from the works of Agnes Strickland and other female writers, Maitzen notes that female biographers often cited male writers specifically as "historians," thereby separating themselves from the profession and depreciating their own work. They resented male attempts to write biography, which was deemed an unacceptable intrusion into women's space.²¹ Maitzen examines the women depicted in their works, and adds that they portrayed largely conventional ideas of female power and agency. Women worked through influence, a more conventionally feminine role, instead of personal agency.²² This particular idea of power created a category of historical misfits who reinforced the existing ideology by becoming either exceptions (such as Elizabeth I) or bad examples (such as Katherine Howard).²³

Sally Mitchell expands the argument about female representation in Victorian histories by including William Harrison Ainsworth and writers of school textbooks in her discussion, although she also relies heavily on Agnes Strickland's works. Mitchell argues that the personal lives of female biographers were evident in their inclusion of illustrations (not usually seen in 'serious' histories) that further emphasized the separate

²⁰ Mary Spongberg, "'Heroines of Domestic Life': Women's History and Female Biography." In *Writing Women's History since the Renaissance*, 109-129. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

²¹ Maitzen, Rohan. "'This Feminine Preserve': Historical Biographies by Victorian Women." *Victorian Studies* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 371. *EBSCO MegaFILE*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 30, 2014), 374.

²² Maitzen, "This Feminine Preserve," 381.

²³ Maitzen, "This Feminine Preserve," 384.

academic and domestic spheres of the genders.²⁴ This emphasis on the domesticity of the historical personages studied allowed female writers to make their own judgments outside of male academic opinion, as the home was the study of women.²⁵ By doing so, female writers “attempt[ed] to write women into national history and even to mount a criticism of male historical views and values.”²⁶

Miriam Elizabeth Burstein contests the influence of this separate academic sphere. Burstein argues that the exclusion of female biographers did not reinforce women’s roles, but rather diminished them; Victorian women’s history offers no uniquely feminine voice.²⁷ The separation of women in the academic discipline allowed male historians to denigrate the popular works of biographers and therefore their subjects, which tended to be female notables such as queens, noblewomen, or missionaries. The moralizing aspects of the biographies generalized female experiences, “democratizing virtue” and thus simplifying the individual circumstances and actions of women into general, inconsequential female experience.²⁸ The emphasis on the women’s Christianity and on morally perfect women over famous ones aided this generalization, creating faceless martyrs who could be safely ignored. According to Burstein, Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I fell victim to this generalization as well; they became either a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ woman, with particular attention paid to their opposing religious

²⁴ Mitchell, Rosemary. *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830-1870*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 146.

²⁵ Mitchell, *Picturing the Past*, 165.

²⁶ Mitchell, *Picturing the Past*, 168.

²⁷ Miriam Elizabeth Burstein. “From Good Looks to Good Thoughts: Forgetting Women’s History, c. 1832-1876.” In *Narrating Women’s History in Britain, 1770-1902*, 98-126. (Aldershot, Hampshire, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 100.

²⁸ Burstein, “From Good Looks,” 103.

pieties.²⁹ These scholars look at the same popular biographies and authors, particularly the 1840s and 1850s works of Agnes Strickland and James Froude.³⁰ However, they come to radically different conclusions as to the impact of female biographers on the historical field. The split between “serious” history and popular biography allowed for a place for women to write history but had contradictory effects on the scholarly place of the biographers themselves.

The creation of moralized and moralizing heroines has had a growing scholarly focus by historical scholars in recent years. Much of this scholarship has analyzed Victorian representations of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots in popular literature. Scholars such as Nicola J. Watson and Michael Dobson have identified a particular trend, also identified by Burstein, in representations of the Virgin Queen: that of a dichotomy of womanhood vs. queenhood. Watson and Dobson argue that Victorian writers were unable to reconcile a powerful single female to contemporary ideologies of femininity, so the split of Elizabeth into the private ‘bad woman’ and the public ‘good queen’ allowed for the retaining of a popular imperialist heroine who stayed within pre-assigned gender norms. This split sanctioned both contemporary ideas about the cult of true womanhood and the growing Parliamentary power of the Victorian period, which formed a marked contrast to the more personal power of the Tudors. Queen Victoria was then contrasted favorably with her predecessor. Using paintings as well as popular biographies, Watson and Dobson have shown that the Victorians, particularly during the later half of the century, used images of Elizabeth either at her deathbed or as a child to remove the

²⁹ Burstein, “From Good Looks,” 122.

³⁰ Agnes Strickland published *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest* in 1843; James Froude wrote, edited, and published his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* in various volumes from the 1850s to the 1870s.

sexual element of her legacy entirely, while commenting on and rehabilitating views of Victoria's lengthy withdrawal from public life.

While Watson and Dobson focus their discussion on Elizabeth and have limited discussion of Mary Queen of Scots's representation, further comparative work between the two queens is done by Rohan Maitzen. Maitzen argues that despite the Victorian assertion that representations of the two queens focused on the legacy of their reigns, biographers Strickland and Froude were more concerned with reconciling the women with Victorian gender norms. Due to the melodramatic nature of her history, her marital status, and the contemporary vogue for all things Scottish, Mary fit far better into Victorian ideals than Elizabeth, whose single status, political power, and personality made her representations uncomfortable. Mary therefore became a beautiful tragic victim, while Elizabeth's actions were attributed to her ministers, denying her a place in history as Burstein discussed.³¹

Mitchell largely agrees with this argument in *Picturing the Past*, but adds that, "Already perceived as essentially feminine, Mary was an excellent paradigm for a defence of women which exploited their womanliness – the qualities men instructed women to cultivate – as the irrefutable core of the argument."³² Mary becomes a useful tool for women to discuss the strength in the feminine ideals of compassion and emotion, therefore de-emphasizing the masculine virtues of fortitude and power favored by male historians. Mary was of particular interest to female writers as she perfectly fit the

³¹ Rohan Maitzen, "Plotting Woman: Froude and Strickland on Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots." In *Clio's Daughters: British Women Making History, 1790-1899*, by Lynette Felber, 123-150. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007, 140.

³² Mitchell, "*Picturing the Past*," 165.

archetype of the Romantic heroine betrayed by men.³³

Within the scholarly field, Jayne Elizabeth Lewis explores the Victorian fascination with Mary most fully. Lewis maintains in an argument similar to Maitzen that Mary's rank as a mother made her a more appealing figure for Victorian biographers, who were either often mothers themselves or, in the case of Froude, had psychological problems surrounding their own mothers.³⁴ Likewise, Mary "certainly owed something to Sir Walter Scott"³⁵ and the popularity of Scotland in Victorian culture, a popularity bolstered by Queen Victoria's own love of Scotland. Lewis traces a psychological appeal of Mary in her methodology, claiming that Mary held a quality of 'fascination' that made her appeal to Victorian desires for self-understanding. She formed a more complex example of queenship than the Victorians' eponymous ruler Queen Victoria, herself a mothering figure.³⁶

This 'fascination' ascribed to Mary can be seen in the private writings of young girls as well as adult biographers such as the work Lynne Vallone has done concerning representations of Mary in the private writings of Queen Victoria, Jane Austen, and Marjory Fleming. Using a literary approach not seen in other scholarship on the subject, Vallone explores the appeal of Mary for these young girls who wrote about her in works not intended for public consumption. By using these sources, Vallone traces the private psychological impact of Mary's story, which the girls learned through schoolroom

³³ Mitchell, "Picturing the Past," 164.

³⁴ Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, *Mary Queen of Scots Romance and Nation*. London; New York: Routledge, 1998. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10100621>, 206-208.

³⁵ Lewis, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 172.

³⁶ Lewis, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 176.

histories.³⁷ Mary's appeal was rooted in her ability to both defy and suit gender norms; she therefore provided an ideal heroine for young girls seeking to define their own place in the social structure, including young Princess Victoria. According to Vallone, Mary "functions as a 'floating signifier' with multiple points of access that can be attached and reattached to different ideologies."³⁸ Girls identified with Mary as a powerful female, but one who still maintained certain gendered qualities. Vallone gives a brief mention to the woman vs. queen dichotomy of Elizabeth as well, noting, "The problem of the female monarch, for both public and private historians, is always her gender."³⁹ Lewis and Vallone agree on the greater appeal of Mary for the public, particularly the psychological aspects of her story, but treat the subject from historical and literary disciplinary approaches while using distinctly different sources.

The scholarly discussion of representations of the two queens has focused most heavily on the woman vs. queen dichotomy of Elizabeth, which receives at least a passing mention in all the examined scholarship on the subject, including those that focus mainly on Mary. There is a general scholarly consensus on Mary's greater ability to fit into Victorian gender roles as compared to Elizabeth, whose agency must be denied or diluted. Comparisons with Queen Victoria, especially between Elizabeth and Victoria, are a common topic of the authors, although mostly as a tangential subject. Most scholars use the same limited range of sources; only Watson and Dobson, who use paintings, and Vallone, who examines private children's writings, use sources outside

³⁷ Lynne Vallone, "History Girls: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Historiography and the Case of Mary, Queen of Scots." *Children's Literature* 36 (1): 2008, 3.

³⁸ Vallone, "History Girls," 2.

³⁹ Vallone, "History Girls," 13.

popular biographies of women. In addition, Vallone is the only scholar to utilize a literary rather than historical approach to the subject.

Evaluations and Contributions

Scholars address the issues of female authorship and representation in Victorian histories in a fairly consistent manner. There has been limited general conversation on the topic, and even less analysis specifically pertaining to representations of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. Watson and Dobson, Maitzen, Mitchell, Lewis, and Vallone provide the only specific discussions of this topic that I have been able to find. Because of this limited discussion, the scholars mentioned above must source from each other. Lewis' treatise on Mary Queen of Scots, for example, is cited in almost all of the works. This restricted scholarship has resulted in a lack of true debate on the subject; the scholars agree on all their main points. The disciplinary approach is limited almost entirely to a historical approach, with Vallone's literary analysis and the psychological component of Lewis' argument being the exception.

The primary sources used by these scholars to discuss the representation of women are also limited. The main sources most scholars use are popular biographies and histories produced for a middle-class British audience with the means to buy multi-volume works and who would be most receptive to ideas about the respective separated spheres of men and women. This creates a narrow source base that lacks the perspectives of the working and upper classes of British society, who would have had different viewpoints on the status of women due to their different socioeconomic positions. Mitchell and Vallone have broadened the field somewhat with the use of private

adolescent writings and textbooks, but their sources are also middle to upper class. The paintings used by Watson and Dobson fall into this category as well, as the middle classes were the most likely to see these works of art in public galleries.

Like Watson and Dobson, I find that the separation of Elizabeth into woman vs. queen figures holds true throughout the literature in the period. Multiple sources clearly denigrate Elizabeth for her marital status and personality flaws, but acknowledge her influence on the period. This separation betrays societal anxieties about the role of powerful females in government that is connected to the events of Queen Victoria's reign. I also feel that the continuous comparisons between Elizabeth and Mary must be investigated further, as comparisons between figures, especially women, usually indicate societal ambivalence about historical events and their outcomes. In this, I will follow Maitzen's analysis of the Victorians' efforts to reconcile the two figures to gender norms while expanding the queen/woman dichotomy laid out by Dobson and Watson to both Mary and Elizabeth.

Although I find the analyses done by previous scholars valid, I expand the historical discourse by including new sources previously untapped. This will broaden the discussion of female historical representation to include adolescent perspectives. Like Watson and Dobson, I use paintings from the period to discuss how portrayals of the queens focus on their womanliness and sexual qualities or lack thereof. In addition, I include a play, which could attract a more socioeconomically diverse audience. I also analyze children's prescriptive literature and periodicals, particularly works aimed at girls, as what is taught to the next generation reveals anxieties and ideas held by the older one. I hope that this expansion of the source material will broaden the conversation

surrounding female roles in history, both as writers of history and as its subjects.

Argument

Elizabeth the Queen

As discussed above, portrayals of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I tend to focus either on their suitability as women or as queens. One part may inform the other, but a single aspect of their personalities must take precedence. For the Victorians, Elizabeth's femininity was prejudiced by her regnal role, whereas Mary's womanliness enlightened her queenship. James Anthony Froude, writing in the 1870s, states this most clearly: "Elizabeth forgot the woman in the queen, and after her first mortification about Leicester preserved little of her sex but her caprices. Mary Stuart when under the spell of an absorbing inclination could fling her crown into the dust and be woman all."⁴⁰ Elizabeth was thus accorded a great queen and a bad woman, while Mary was a good woman, but a faulty monarch. By focusing on these two aspects of representation, Victorian historians and authors asserted that there was an inevitable conflict between the public and private lives of women, therefore implicitly commenting on Queen Victoria as well as the Tudor and Stuart monarchs. Domesticity and its associated femininity were preferred to the assertion of public power and its connotations of masculinity. By praising Mary, Queen of Scots and disparaging Elizabeth, Victorian authors reinforced notions of femininity and power.

Multiple biographies and histories from the early-to-mid part of the 19th century note this conflict between femininity and queenship, particularly as it concerns Elizabeth. Although ostensibly focusing on an accurate retelling of British (specifically English)

⁴⁰ James Anthony Froude, *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, Volume VII: Elizabeth*. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1879), 411.

history, these biographies operate more as commentaries on the personalities of their characters than balanced historical accounts. These portrayals judge the actions of historical personages according to the middle-class morals and social views of the Victorian period, alternately condemning and condoning. Readership of these biographies was largely middle-class in nature, particularly middle-class women, the intended audience. Working-class women did not have the time to read, and elite women experienced a different set of societal expectations than the other two main classes. Therefore, historical biographies portray a middle-class Victorian's view of the role of queenship.

Depictions of Queen Elizabeth fall under the same societal judgment as other rulers, but with a certain amount of authorial conflict in her portrayal. Most mid-century historical narratives give only brief accounts or skip entirely the story of Elizabeth's early life, instead focusing on her time as queen over her time as a princess, a decision perhaps related to the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, which occurred concurrently. Descriptions of Elizabeth's personality tend to occur at three main points in the narrative: first, when Elizabeth takes the throne in 1558; second, during the events surrounding Mary, Queen of Scots' death; and finally, at Elizabeth's deathbed in 1603. The descriptions surrounding her coronation generally portray a victorious, wise, lovely, and popular queen heralded as a savior by her people; she becomes a "maiden queen [who] dazzled all eyes."⁴¹ Accounts of her treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots vary widely between authors; Lucy Aiken, for instance, believes that Elizabeth's imprisonment of Mary was benevolent, while Agnes Strickland, Anna Jameson, and most other authors

⁴¹ Lucy Aiken, *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), Kindle Edition 2769.

believe it was motivated by Elizabeth's jealousy and the advice of her councilors.⁴²

Elizabeth's deathbed accounts show her as dying from either grief (indicated by the tale of Essex's ring and the Countess of Southampton) or from old age aggravated by spite and stubbornness. Throughout these chronicles, Elizabeth shifts from a welcomed young monarch to a vindictive politician to a vain old woman. The narrative surrounding Elizabeth changes significantly from the first instance to the last, but constantly includes comparisons between her feminine nature and regnal role. These comparisons are in fact common enough that at least two authors, Lucy Aiken and Anna Jameson, cite the same saying concerning Elizabeth: "[She] never forgot the woman in the sovereign."⁴³ In the case of Elizabeth, this is not a compliment, but rather a condemnation for what Victorian authors perceived as an unacceptable weakness to traditional feminine vices such as jealousy and vanity and a lack of suitable grace and gentleness. The rest of Jameson's paragraph as cited above reads:

It has been said that Elizabeth never forgot the woman in the sovereign; it might be said with much more truth that she never forgot the sovereign in the woman, and surely this is no praise. – One more destitute of what is called *heart*, that is, of the capacity of all the gentle, generous, and kindly affections proper to her sex, cannot be imagined in the female form. (242)

Elizabeth's lack of feminine virtues condemns her as a sovereign first and woman second. Jameson, who has a notable bias towards Mary, Queen of Scots and is the harshest of Elizabeth's critics, is not the only author who makes this particular condemnation. Author Samuel G. Goodrich notes that 'although little to be esteemed as a woman, [Elizabeth] did as much credit to her sex as her father did to his... she is entitled

⁴² Anna Jameson, *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns, Vol. I.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888), 190. Jameson's work originally appeared in 1832.

⁴³ Lucy Aiken, *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, Kindle Edition 8498; Anna Jameson, *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns*, 242.

to the credit of having been not only his superior as a sovereign, but one of the greatest sovereigns that ever occupied a throne.”⁴⁴ For Goodrich, her poor fulfillment of idealized Victorian femininity does not impede her ability as a queen, but rather strengthens it. By being unwomanly, Elizabeth becomes a better monarch. It is implied, therefore, that being unfeminine, and therefore masculine, is required in order to be a great ruler. Contrasting this is the perception of Queen Victoria, whose position both as ‘queenly woman’ and actual monarch reinforced her reign.⁴⁵ Elizabeth’s suitability as a monarch is directly tied to how unfeminine she is, even though she is condemned for it. By becoming a bad woman, Elizabeth fulfills the masculine nature of the regal role and is therefore a good monarch.

Elizabeth’s personal agency also affects her fulfillment of the good monarch and bad woman dichotomy. The amount of personal agency she takes in various accounts, particularly in regards to the imprisonment of Mary, Queen of Scots, reflects on the masculinity of her role and personality. She is generally accorded as having chosen wise councilors, William Cecil in particular gaining the most praise. Even Jameson, whose work is biased against Elizabeth, remarks that she was wise in this regard.⁴⁶ William Robertson says, “Elizabeth’s wisdom and penetration were remarkable in the choice of her ministers; in distinguishing her favorites, those great qualities were less conspicuous.”⁴⁷ However, the amount to which Elizabeth is attributed as listening to her

⁴⁴ Samuel Griswold Goodrich, *Lives of Celebrated Women*. (Boston: Bradbury, Soden & Co., 1844), 24-26.

⁴⁵ Houston, *Royalties*, 6.

⁴⁶ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 222.

⁴⁷ William Robertson, *The History of Scotland, Eleventh Edition*. (1825), 94. Robertson, a Presbyterian minister and Principal of the College of Edinburgh, originally published this work in 1759. However, it continued to be revised and published over 20 years after his death in 1793.

councilors remarks on her suitability as a woman and monarch. Both roles are praised for listening to counsel, but only when the ruler is a woman listening to men does the act take on added significance. Elizabeth is not only listening to her councilors, but she is listening to male councilors in particular. Elizabeth's obedience to or deviance from this advice, as well as the treatment of those councilors, is where she is condemned. When Elizabeth decides to pursue her own course, as in the case of her refusal to marry, she is considered willful and vain; Aiken describes her as having a love of power and flattery that forbids her from ever taking a consort.⁴⁸

When Elizabeth does follow the advice of her councilors, as with the case of Mary, Queen of Scots' execution, she is still criticized for lacking womanly feeling (in this particular case) and allowing her councilors to sway her. Agnes Strickland questions the strength of her womanly feelings: "...Elizabeth's relentings were overruled, and her female heart steeled against the natural impulses of mercy by the ruthless men whose counsels influenced her resolves? Had Elizabeth exercised her own unbiased judgment...her annals would have remained unsullied by a crime which can neither be justified on moral or political grounds."⁴⁹ Elizabeth's failure to act with womanly mercy in the case of Mary's execution condemns her; the one occasion in which she does listen to her councilors is the one in which her own feminine feelings (which Strickland does not usually credit her as having) should have prevailed. Indeed, this act is usually denounced as a stain on Elizabeth's character, not on her councilors, even if the act has its origins with them. Her treatment of these councilors is also criticized; her court is

The sentiments expressed in the book are in line with later historians, so I have deemed it acceptable for this study despite its early date.

⁴⁸ Aiken, *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, Kindle Edition 8498.

⁴⁹ Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest; with Anecdotes of their Courts, Volume Third*. (New York: Thomas R. Knox & Co., 1843), 392.

accounted as “servile” and “Oriental” in nature, entirely dedicated to flattery.⁵⁰ She is rebuked for not giving the men around her as much credit as was due (which by some accounts seems to be all of it) or for making them slaves to her temper.⁵¹ Elizabeth’s choice of councilors is wise, but how she follows their advice and treats them condemns her as a vain woman.

Despite her unsuitability as a woman, Elizabeth is still remarked upon as the greatest female sovereign of her age, with Goodrich claiming that “though a tyrannical and selfish monarch, she must be ranked as among the best sovereigns of her time;” this opinion reflects the wider Victorian conceptions of the Tudor period as a ‘golden age.’⁵² Her flaws as a woman do not supersede her queenship, as seen with Mary, Queen of Scots, but rather inform it in ways both beneficial and detrimental. Therefore, Jameson notes that “To separate the personal from the political history of Elizabeth would not be difficult, but it would give a very unjust and imperfect idea of her character.”⁵³

Elizabeth’s femininity shapes her queenship, but not vice versa because the role of the single queen is not supposed to exist in the first place, and therefore cannot influence Elizabeth’s femininity negatively. Elizabeth’s femininity thus creates her queenship, and does so in a negative manner. The two roles, unlike that of man and king, cannot be separated.

This reveals an important fact surrounding the nature of queenship: its essential illegitimacy. The role of a monarch is a traditionally male one; for instance, the common

⁵⁰ Aiken, *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, Kindle Edition 11532; Jameson, *Memoirs*, 216-217, 237.

⁵¹ Froude alone notes this as not deriving from personal failings: “She neither distrusted his [Sir Phillip Sidney’s] loyalty nor questioned his talents; she chose merely to find fault with him while she made use of his services. It was her habit towards those among her subjects whom she particularly valued.” Froude, *History of England*, 553.

⁵² Goodrich, *Lives of Celebrated Women*, Kindle Edition 4034.

⁵³ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 216.

term for a ruler, “prince,” is gendered male. The assumption is that men, who by Victorian standards were naturally authoritarian, were inherently more suited to rule than a woman. According to Victorian gender ideologies, women, unlike men, do not have the strength required to rule the public sphere (though queens of the house), and their weakness destroys their legitimacy.⁵⁴ Therefore, when a woman takes the throne in her own right, she is an unwelcome interruption to the status quo. While there was anxiety about the relationship between individual male personalities and the kingly role, Victorian writers presumed it was much less inherently conflicting than the idea of a woman and a queen.⁵⁵ For men, naturally dominant, the king and the man could coexist. For women, this was an impossible idea; one aspect must override the other. Gail Turley Houston notes, “...the idea of a queen’s two bodies seemed downright unworkable, for her corpus was already considered a failure as well as a fictional replacement of the king’s body. That is, the English queen was allowed to act as a fictional man and to wield man’s power only when it was implicitly understood and acknowledged that she could never *really* be anything more than a counterfeit.”⁵⁶ By that definition, Elizabeth

⁵⁴ Gail Turley Houston, *Royalties*, 1. This idea was complicated by the rhetoric of queenship elaborated on by John Ruskin in his 1864 essay “Of Queen’s Gardens,” in which Ruskin states that women were naturally suited to be rulers; however, Ruskin qualifies this by emphasizing the higher moral duty of women and thus that the proper sphere of queenship was in the domestic, not public spheres, therefore reinforcing the ideology of middle-class morality. John Ruskin, “Sesame and Lilies. Lecture II.-Lilies: Of Queens’ Gardens.” In *Essays: English and American*. Vol. 28. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909-1914. Accessed October 30, 2014. <http://www.bartleby.com/28/7.html>.

⁵⁵ Jameson writes, “...[B]ut if, in a very complicated and artificial system of society, the rule of a woman be tolerated or legalized as a necessary evil, for the purpose of avoiding worse evils arising from a disputed succession and civil commotions, -- then it remains a question how far the feminine character may be so modified by education as to render its inseparable defects as little injurious to society, and its peculiar virtues as little hurtful to herself, as possible.... They substitute for the dominion of that superior strength, mental and physical, which belongs to the other sex, and with which should rest “all lawful rule and right supremacy,” the mere force of *will*, and call that power which is founded in weakness.” Jameson, *Memoirs*, xvi-xvii.

⁵⁶ Gail Turley Houston, *Royalties*, 23.

could be accepted as a great queen only because she was an anomaly, not an example. The qualities for which she is censured are feminine, while the qualities praised are masculine.

This would seem to contradict the popularity of Queen Victoria; however, Victoria had no personal political power during her reign that could conflict with her perceived domestic duties; Elizabeth held a great deal of personal power. Despite this difference in political power, Victoria's reign provoked cultural anxieties about the nature of female rule and its impact on government, of which the increased representations of queens in literature was a part.⁵⁷ As Rohan Maitzen has observed, depictions of Elizabeth in biographies "rather than proving by example that women can, in fact, succeed in these masculine arenas,[...] confirms the general unfitness of women for such work by her exceptional status; she is not like other women."⁵⁸ She becomes an abnormality, not masculine enough to be a legitimate ruler, not feminine enough to be a good woman. The illegitimacy of her rule does not diminish her reputation, however, and therefore there must be appealing characteristics in her personality that overcome her feminine incompatibility with rule.

Primarily, these characteristics are masculine. Both Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots have several labels that appear throughout their histories; for Elizabeth, they include "wise," "sagacious," and "prudent,"⁵⁹ along with the popular epithet of "Good Queen Bess." There are notably fewer positive attributes in the literature than there are

⁵⁷ Houston, *Royalties*, 1.

⁵⁸ Rohan Maitzen, "'This Feminine Preserve': Historical Biographies by Victorian Women." *Victorian Studies* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 371. *EBSCO MegaFILE*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 30, 2014), 384.

⁵⁹ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Locations 3120, 3184; Goodrich, *Lives*, 3990, 3998; Jameson, *Memoirs*, 224.

negative, but the positive attributes almost entirely refer to Elizabeth the Queen, while the more negative terms apply to Elizabeth as a woman. In fact, it is Elizabeth as a Tudor and heir to Henry VIII that merits her the most praise. Her background and her relationship to Henry are mentioned often in her biographies. Aiken says she resented Leicester's marriage "like a queen and a Tudor" and Charles Dickens' *A Child's History of England* states, "On the whole, she had a great deal too much of her father in her."⁶⁰ Jameson says that "[I]ike her father, the big and bluff King Harry, Elizabeth knew how to unite a certain coarse familiarity with the most unfeeling despotism."⁶¹ In historical literature, Walter Scott notes her as having the "spirit of Henry VIII."⁶² By comparing Elizabeth to Henry, Elizabeth becomes part of a continuity of rulers, legitimizing her place on the throne. She is Henry-lite; not the real article, perhaps, but close enough that she is able to overcome her feminine frailty. The particular traits which she and Henry share in common – coarseness, short temperedness, jealousy, and a mercurial personality – are ones that are not part of the Victorian gender ideology. Victorian authors are able to accept Elizabeth's unfeminine traits only by comparing her to a male ruler and making those traits masculine, therefore placing her as a legitimate ruler despite her sex.

Elizabeth's Protestantism also plays into Victorians' evaluation of her as a queen, with varying conclusions. For most authors, her religious convictions were too Catholic. She was "[c]onsiderably attached to ceremonial observances, and superior to none of the superstitions which she might have imbibed in her childhood..."⁶³ Her persecution of the more extreme Protestants is condemned as an act of ignorance based upon Elizabeth's

⁶⁰ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 6540; Charles Dickens, *A Child's History of England*. (Project Gutenberg, (1905) 2006, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/699>).

⁶¹ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 240.

⁶² Walter Scott, *Kenilworth*. (Project Gutenberg, (1821) 2012).

⁶³ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Edition 3788.

desire to increase her power, rather than from any personal religious convictions; the same censure is applied to her treatment of Catholics, although with less zeal. This perceived lack of personal piety is what seems to trouble Victorian authors the most; Jameson states that “assuredly no thought of the gospel, and its pure and humble principle of action, entered into Elizabeth’s mind in regulating the faith of her subjects.”⁶⁴ Elizabeth’s reliance upon more Catholic forms of worship instead of the stricter Puritan observances which influenced Victorian Evangelicalism make it difficult for Evangelical-influenced authors such as Jameson and Aiken to relate with her, as she did not follow the same religious creed. One author that did support Elizabeth’s religious convictions, however, was Charlotte Yonge. Writing in 1881, Yonge considers Elizabeth not as a Protestant in the Calvinist mode, but a quasi-Catholic: “They were called Roman Catholics, while Elizabeth and her friends were the real Catholics, for they held with the Church Universal of old: and it was the Pope who had broken off with them for not accepting his doctrines, not they with the Pope.”⁶⁵ Yonge’s account of Elizabeth’s faith is influenced by the Oxford Movement, a movement within the Church of England towards a more Catholic form of observance which began in the early nineteenth century. Yonge herself was a firm advocate of Anglo-Catholic beliefs.⁶⁶ Yonge’s defense of Elizabeth highlights the biases of differing authors depending on their religious convictions. Another key marker of this authorial predisposition is the inclusion and treatment of the death of Sir Phillip Sidney, a Protestant courtier-poet who died fighting in the Netherlands. Aiken includes his death in her account, mentioning in particular the

⁶⁴ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 219.

⁶⁵ Charlotte Yonge, *Young Folks’ History of England*, 1881.

⁶⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Charlotte M. Yonge,” accessed June 30, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/653621/Charlotte-M-Yonge>.

story of his giving water to a dying soldier: “Thus perished...sir Philip Sidney, the pride and pattern of his time, the theme of song, the favorite of English story. The beautiful anecdote of his resigning to the dying soldier the draught of water with which he was about to quench his thirst as he rode faint and bleeding from the fatal field, is told to every child...”⁶⁷ Aiken’s claim that the story is common enough for children to recognize it holds true, as it appears in children’s histories as well: Dickens’ *A Child’s History of England* in 1853 and *The Children’s Picture-Book of English History* in 1861 both mention the tale.⁶⁸ Strickland notes that this act of generosity was Sidney’s “most glorious deed,” but criticizes Elizabeth for making light of his death.⁶⁹ Charlotte Yonge also includes Sidney’s death, taking much the same line as Aiken and Strickland, though much more briefly, and with no mention of his Protestantism.⁷⁰ Her shorter account reveals the cultural necessity of including the famous story, but also a certain reluctance to idolize the Protestant hero, who was identified with the stricter Protestant faction. By including Sidney’s death and Elizabeth’s treatment of it in their histories, Victorian biographers emphasize their religious biases and how those biases affect their perceptions of Elizabeth’s own religious motivations.⁷¹

The final point of conflict with Elizabeth’s religious statutes was her position as head of the English Church. If Elizabeth was considered an illegitimate ruler by nature of her gender, placing her as a religious leader in a strictly patriarchal system only compounds the problem. Jameson disparages her outright: “She immediately took the

⁶⁷ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Edition 7501-7503.

⁶⁸ Dickens, *A Child’s History*, Kindle Location 4715; *The Children’s Picture-Book of English History*, (New York: D. Appleton & Co, 1861), 188.

⁶⁹ Strickland, *Lives*, 373.

⁷⁰ Yonge, *Young Folks*.

⁷¹ Strangely, Jameson makes no mention of the tale or of Sidney at all.

title of Head of the Church, to the great scandal of the Roman Catholics; and, it may be added, to the great scandal of all religion, considering her sex, her age, and the power she took upon herself at so critical a period.”⁷² Elizabeth’s actual title was “Supreme Governor,” not “Head;” the former was regarded as a more appropriate title for a woman than the latter. Jameson’s insistence on using “Head” reveals an antipathy for Elizabeth’s role as a female Church authority. It also calls into question what Jameson made of Queen Victoria, who held the same title and position as Elizabeth, though with much less influence and a conventional religious viewpoint. Other authors, such as Goodrich, call her a Protestant heroine, but curiously omit any specific discussion of her role in the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, instead focusing on her role in the use of an English Bible and her support for Dutch Protestant rebels in the Netherlands. The censure or tactful omittance of Elizabeth’s religious authority reveals Victorian conflict with the role of women in spiritual affairs, despite the domestic ideology’s insistence on women as morally superior beings. Specifically, Elizabeth’s place in the hierarchy is what creates conflict; Victorian women may have been the moral authorities of the home, but it was an informal and personal position taking place outside the formal structure. Elizabeth’s rank as head of religious practices in England places her in a position of power with which Victorian gender ideology is uncomfortable. While Elizabeth’s queenship can be rationalized, her religious authority cannot. Outright censure or delicate avoidance of the subject are the only two methods in which Victorian authors can discuss the topic.

Victorian authors find Elizabeth’s role in the art and literature of the Elizabethan period either nonexistent or artistically limiting in a manner similar to her difficult religious standing. Victorian authors consistently describe the Elizabethan period as a

⁷² Jameson, *Memoirs*, 218.

time of great achievements in art and literature, particularly the works of Bacon, Spenser, and Shakespeare. However, Elizabeth's role in those achievements is contested. She is described as a muse, although not through any personal charms of her own. Rather, her artistic influence came through the flattering nature of her court and her fortune at having artists born around her that sought to use flattery to gain position.⁷³ Elizabeth's treatment of these men is considered shameful; Goodrich describes her as "much more fond of displaying her own acquirements than encouraging the learned." Goodrich, in agreement with Jameson, also remarks upon Spenser's impoverished ending and credits Shakespeare's success to his influential patrons.⁷⁴ The most vociferous critic of Elizabeth's role as queenly muse is, unsurprisingly, Anna Jameson. While Jameson is hardly flattering to Elizabeth in other matters, it is in the queen's contributions to the arts that she is at her most venomous. She unreservedly calls Elizabeth's own writings "contemptible trash" and notes that she was "excelled as a writer by all the leading personages of her court."⁷⁵ As for Elizabeth's taste in paintings, she says,

The portraits remaining of Elizabeth (and they are numerous) show how vile, how tawdry, and how vulgar was her taste in art; they could hardly be fine enough to please her; they seem all made up of jewels, crowns, and frizzled hair, powdered with diamonds, and "ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales, and things;" and from the midst of these superfluity of ornament, her pinched Roman nose, thin lips, and sharp eyes, peer out with a very disagreeable effect, quite contrary to all our ideas of grace or majesty. (233)

Goodrich concurs in this assessment: "She was so little capable of judging of works of art, that she would not allow a painter to put any shadows upon the face, "because," as

⁷³ Dickens, *A Child's History*.

⁷⁴ Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 3999; Jameson, *Memoirs*, 231.

⁷⁵ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 231; Jameson particularly notes that Mary Stuart's writings far surpassed Elizabeth's.

she said, “shade is an accident, and not in nature.”⁷⁶ Aiken remarks: “The propensity of Elizabeth, . . . to occupy herself with attempts in polite literature, for which she possessed no manner of talent, is not the least remarkable among the features of her extraordinary and complicated character.”⁷⁷ Authors more favorable to Elizabeth, like Yonge, do not mention the arts or her role as muse at all, applying the same reserve to her literary position as to her religious one. Elizabeth’s apparent failure to provide a suitably majestic appearance (at least by Victorian standards) and her treatment of her artists marks her as a failed muse, both in regal and womanly terms. She also lacks the feminine sensitivity and taste in art presumed to be suitable in a woman, even though actual judging of artistic merit was men’s area of expertise. She does not appear either sufficiently queenly or womanly for her to be acceptable as the focus of the literature of which the Victorians are so fond. Elizabeth is an inadequate muse for the culture that the British Empire claimed to proliferate.⁷⁸ Therein lies the conflict: the period of great literature, artistic achievement, and naval power beloved in the cult of the “Olden Time” idolizes a figure whom the Victorians are unable to reconcile with their views of womanhood and queenship. Elizabeth is illegitimate as a ruler, religious leader, and artistic figure, but figures prominently in a period the Victorians held as a “Golden Age.” While Victorian historians and authors cannot approve of her, they also cannot ignore her. Therefore, they rationalize her into two distinct personalities, the queen and the woman, in order to preserve the glory of the Queen from the ignominy of the woman.

⁷⁶ Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 4005.

⁷⁷ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 3951.

⁷⁸ Velma Bourgeois Richmond, “Elizabeth I in Imperial Britain: A Myth for Children.” In *Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present*, edited by Christa Jansohn, 211-231. (Berlin: Lit Verlag Münster, 2004), 216.

Mary Stuart as Queen

The separation of Queen from woman is markedly different in the portrayals of Mary Stuart, who faces the same dichotomy, but is perceived as making a more acceptable choice to middle-class audiences. In comparison with Elizabeth, Mary, Queen of Scots has much less criticism of her personal skills at ruling.

When Mary's abilities are discussed, her actions are attributed to others or to luck instead of any personal agency, a characteristic much more difficult to argue when dealing with Elizabeth. For instance, Mary's claim to the English throne, from which most Victorian histories date her rivalry with Elizabeth, is considered an action of Henry II of France, her father-in-law at the time.⁷⁹ Mary's involvement occurred under duress, a theme that recurs throughout accounts of her rule and imprisonment. Authors flattering to Mary, such as Jameson, Strickland, Rosalie Kaufman, William Russell, Elizabeth Oglivy Benger, and Samuel G. Goodrich repeatedly ascribe Mary's actions to her councilors or her situation; when Mary's particular skills are critiqued, they are often excused as faults springing from her sympathetic femininity.⁸⁰ Benger notes: "...[A]lthough she cherished a high idea of the royal prerogative, [Mary] frankly surrendered her authority to friends or favorites, of whom accident rather than reason determined the choice... in a monarch, kindness sometimes becomes prodigality, and

⁷⁹ Rosalie Kaufman, *The Queens of Scotland: Abridged and Adapted from Strickland's "Queens of Scotland."* (Chicago: E.A. Weeks & Company, 1887), 37; Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 3701.

⁸⁰ Rosalie Kaufman's 1887 *The Queens of Scotland* is an abridged American children's form of Strickland's work of the same name; therefore, "the most favorable of Mary's traits have been made prominent." Because it draws exclusively from a British work, I find it useful for this study despite its place of publication.

gratitude injustice...”⁸¹ The one personal fault of rule Mary apparently committed in the favorable accounts was the transfer of her English claim to Phillip II, king of Spain: “Mary had not the right to make the transfer; and such an act of injustice and bigotry leaves an indelible blemish on her memory.”⁸² Only J.A. Froude had much confidence in her abilities, calling her the “keenest-witted woman living” in comparison to Elizabeth, though noting that she was only a political actress rather than a politician herself.⁸³ The unfavorable account of Mary penned by Aiken is the only one to attribute her with equal, unmoderated political connivance; all others focus on the scheming of her councilors, particularly Maitland and Bothwell.⁸⁴ Mary’s personal agency is largely ignored or justified in the service of middle-class Victorian gender ideology, in which women were passive reactors to situations instead of proactive actors.

By ascribing Mary with feminine passiveness, she becomes a more palatable figure to Victorian middle-class audiences. Mary functions as an agent of men (Henry II, Maitland, Bothwell), instead of an autonomous monarch. This lack of personal agency also illuminates a contradiction already discussed with Elizabeth: the essential illegitimacy of female rule. Mary’s gender declares her illegitimate, but she obeys the dictates of the men surrounding her. This obedience renders her subservient to men, as proper for a woman, and strengthens her legitimacy by making her submissive. Mary’s compliance with male authority fortifies her own position. Mary fulfills another aspect of gender ideology as well: she provides a male heir. By continuing the male line of her

⁸¹Elizabeth Oglivly Benger *The Life of Mary Queen of Scots, with Anecdotes of the Court of Henry II during her residence in France, Vol II*. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1823), 81-82.

⁸² Kaufman, *The Queens of Scotland*, 464.

⁸³ James Anthony Froude, *History of England*, 350, 369.

⁸⁴ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 3977.

father, Mary's acceptability strengthens. She is a temporary placeholder for two legitimate male monarchs, her father and her son. This applies to Henry II as well, as his insistence on her claim to the English throne makes him a stand-in father figure.⁸⁵ The combination of Mary and her male relatives presents a domestic image that reflects the events of her reign. As Jameson remarks: "It is observable that all the events of Mary's reign were of a domestic nature; she carried on no foreign wars, nor did she interfere with the affairs of other countries. Her personal and her political history are the same, and cannot be considered separately, as in the case of many other princes."⁸⁶ Mary's reign focused entirely on domestic struggles; she did not carry out any major foreign negotiations or wars.⁸⁷ If the affairs of the kingdom are a domestic matter, and foreign policy a part of the public sphere, then Mary's reign fits neatly into the ideology which placed women properly within the home. Scotland, Mary's kingdom and "house," had the full attention of its matriarchal leader. Elizabeth, whose reign had a much greater international aspect, although largely glossed over, is therefore the masculine ruler outside the home. Mary's domestic reign fits the dominant ideology, promulgated by Queen Victoria, much better than Elizabeth's reign.

Mary's domesticity is not the only notable feature Victorian authors highlighted; her Catholicism features heavily in her narratives. Mary was a Catholic leader at a time

⁸⁵ I have omitted discussion of Mary of Guise and Mary's mother's family, who ruled Scotland during her minority. Mary of Guise operates under somewhat the same principle as Mary, holding Mary's place so she can take the throne and provide a legitimate male heir. In this argument, Mary of Guise is a placeholder for a placeholder; the influence of the de Guise brothers on their sister reinforces this assessment.

⁸⁶ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 181.

⁸⁷ For my purposes, I am not defining negotiations between England and Scotland as foreign, as they have a distinct familial aspect. In addition, Elizabeth and Mary's correspondence was relatively informal, instead of the elaborate formal diplomatic process required for treaties and allies. "Foreign" in this context implies continental European.

when Scotland was becoming Protestant. Specifically, Scottish nobles were influenced by the religious views of John Knox, whose beliefs were particularly strict. Knox's interactions with Mary feature often in Victorian accounts of her reign with varied intentions. Benger is favorable towards Knox, describing him as "an admirable judge of character," and characterizing his interactions with Mary as fearful on her side and strident on his.⁸⁸ Jameson and Goodrich criticize Knox for his harshness with regards to Mary's dancing, but Jameson equally condemns her for her Catholicism, while Goodrich considers her religion "more kind and genial."⁸⁹

As for Mary's feelings towards Protestants herself, most accounts agree with William Russell's conclusion in his girlhood histories of women: "'Mary, though inextricably identified with the Papal pretensions, does not appear to have been influenced by any feeling of bigotry or religious zeal...'"⁹⁰ Although Mary was Catholic, her religion is treated gently by Victorian Protestant authors. The blame and agency instead shifts to her subjects and what Dickens calls "the Romish party"; Mary herself has little part in specifically religious matters.⁹² Her part in the Ridolfi and Babington plots (which were motivated by religion reasons, among others) is undecided among authors.

As for reasons why Mary's Catholicism is a relative non-issue, the ostensible answer is the influence of the Oxford Movement on Victorian religious sympathies.

⁸⁸ Benger, *Life of Mary Queen of Scots*, 42, 59.

⁸⁹ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 184; Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 3733.

⁹⁰ Russell, William, *Extraordinary Women: Their Girlhood and Early Life*. (London: Routledge & Co., 1857),140.

⁹¹ Jameson mentions a contemporary debate about Mary's intentions towards what she calls "the truth and excellence" of Protestant doctrines, but comes down in favor of Mary's tolerance, describing a "natural kindliness of her disposition." Jameson, *Memoirs*, 184.

⁹² Dickens, *A Child's History of England*.

However, the author most influenced by the movement, Charlotte Yonge, is also one of the harsher of Mary's critics. Yonge writes, "She was one of the most beautiful and charming women who ever lived, and if she had been as true and good as she was lovely, nobody could have done more good; but the court of France at that time was a wicked place, and she had learnt much of the wickedness."⁹³ This critic of Mary does not specifically include Mary's religion among the wickedness she learned in France, but it can be inferred from Yonge's earlier comment describing the Anglican church as the real Catholic church. Yonge does give Mary credit for her devotion, noting that she died with piety, but not excluding her from complicity in the assassination plots.⁹⁴ The endorsement of Mary's Catholicism is missing, revealing that despite her Anglo-Catholic leanings, Yonge still saw herself as a Protestant, and could not completely sanction Mary's religious sympathies.

The appeal of Mary's religion instead seems to come from her status as an outsider in her court, and specifically from its relation to her dancing, a charming feminine activity. Several authors mention the dancing specifically in connection with Mary and Knox, placing her religion and her femininity in the same sphere.⁹⁵ Paintings of the pair also focus on Mary's femininity, portraying Mary's Catholicism as a gentle feminine trait beleaguered by the harsh Knox.⁹⁶ The 1874 painting *Mary, Queen of Scots and John Knox* portrays the two arguing, with Mary gesturing in an imploring manner

⁹³ Yonge, *Young Folks*.

⁹⁴ Yonge, *Young Folks*.

⁹⁵ Benger, *Life of Mary Queen of Scots*, 81; Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 3732; Jameson, *Memoirs*, 184.

⁹⁶ Due to the restrictions of the Royal Academy at this period, all paintings are assumed to be the work of middle-class Anglican painters unless otherwise noted. The constraints on painting style and subject also indicate that the paintings accepted would portray conventional attitudes towards their subjects; the author therefore assumes that paintings used in this argument fit standard views on the two queens.

and Knox lecturing over a book.⁹⁷ In the background, two ladies-in-waiting huddle together, intimidated, while Mary's illegitimate, powerful brother James Stewart, Earl of Moray, looks impatient. The painting gives the impression that Mary's religion is a gentler one, while Knox's Presbyterianism is frightening. The feminization of Mary's Catholicism is clearly evident. An even more explicit version of this idea is William Powell Frith's *John Knox Reproving Mary, Queen of Scots*, in which Mary, clad in virginal white, lies on a couch dramatically, looking up to the heavens and being ministered to by a male courtier.⁹⁸ Knox forebodingly stands across from Mary in the shadows. Frith, whose paintings became increasingly moralistic as his career progressed, conveys Mary as a beleaguered beautiful martyr.⁹⁹ The contrast between the two figures reinforces Mary's femininity and her status as a romantic heroine, therefore strengthening sympathies towards her. If Mary's religion is based in her femininity rather than her queenship, it becomes sympathetic instead of threatening when contrasted with the bullying masculine Protestantism of John Knox.

The femininity of Mary's religion is also based in its structure. As a Roman Catholic, Mary was spiritually subservient to the Popes in Rome; during her lifetime, the most influential were Pope Pius IV (who excommunicated Elizabeth) and Gregory XIII.

Although a queen regnant, Mary still had a male authority figure in the papacy. Through

⁹⁷ Samuel Sidley, *Mary, Queen of Scots and John Knox*, oil on canvas, 1874 (Townley Hall Art Gallery & Museum, Lancashire). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/mary-queen-of-scots-and-john-knox>

⁹⁸ William Powell Frith, *John Knox Reproving Mary, Queen of Scots*, oil on canvas, 1844 (Museums Sheffield). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/john-knox-reproving-mary-queen-of-scots-71794>. The man wears the same green outfit as in the later Sidley painting, so he is likely the Earl of Moray; however, not enough of his face is visible to confirm this.

⁹⁹ "Frith, William Powell (1819 - 1909)". In *The Bloomsbury Guide to Art*, edited by Shearer West. London: Bloomsbury, 1996.

http://ezproxy.csbsju.edu/login?url=http%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fbga%2Ffrith_william_powell_1819_1909%2F0 (accessed October 16, 2014.)

her Catholicism, Mary fulfilled the Victorian domestic ideal that a woman, although supposedly more moral than a man, was deferential to a male clergy. While Mary had regal power, she ultimately came under a proper male authority. In contrast, Elizabeth was both the legal and religious ruler of her kingdom; she had no higher authority to limit her power (save the ultimate authority.)¹⁰⁰ Mary's queenship is legitimized by her spiritual obedience to a man, even a Catholic man. Catholic hierarchies were a common part of Gothic fiction; Mary fits into the mold of the Gothic heroine in both her imprisonment and her religion. Nuns, often described in Gothic fiction as oppressed yet finding spiritual meaning in their oppression, here share a similarity with Mary and her romanticized religion.¹⁰¹ She is a romantic victim who is persecuted by the Protestant Knox, yet willingly submits herself to the Catholic pope. Her Catholicism, instead of hindering her in the views of Victorian biographers, instead strengthened her claim to rule and places her in the guise of a popular heroine.

The fact that Mary's conformity with middle-class Victorian gender ideology strengthened her place as a ruler would seem to contradict that very ideology, which preferred domestic to political women. However, she is seen as a good woman because she was also considered a poor ruler. She is given the benefit of the doubt because for Victorian authors, femininity and queenship were essentially incompatible; to be good at one was to be bad at the other. Mary's femininity and its place in her rule then confirm that belief. A woman who fulfilled all the proper roles could not rule, and therefore "proper" women were illegitimate candidates for the crown. As Rosemary Mitchell notes, "Already perceived as essentially feminine, Mary was an excellent paradigm for a

¹⁰⁰ God.

¹⁰¹ Maria Purves, *The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 149.

defence of women which exploited their womanliness – the qualities men instructed women to cultivate – as the irrefutable core of the argument.”¹⁰² This rules out women such as Elizabeth, who was not deemed a “proper” woman, as well as Queen Victoria, who, although the epitome of the “proper” Victorian woman, lacked the political power to rule instead of reign. Mary is allowed to be a legitimate ruler as long as she confirms the negative stereotypes surrounding femininity and rule.

Mary Stuart the Woman

If Mary is a legitimate ruler because she conforms to feminine stereotypes, it becomes necessary to define those ideas. The components of a good middle-class Victorian woman form a laundry list of complex virtues. The idealized woman was angel of the house, but also a heroine in the romantic sense with an incorruptible virtue that enlightened the men around her.

Characteristics of a good woman are prevalent throughout various types of Victorian literature. While historical biographies sympathetic to Mary emphasize these characteristics, it is in periodicals, children’s literature, and paintings that the idea of a good woman is most fully rendered. In contrast with historical biographies, which have a charge to accurately describe historical events, more populist forms of media can and do take artistic liberties with their subjects. While Victorian histories are by no means free from bias, they focus more on how events affect people, while other media portray how people affect events. The attention shifts from the political to the personal, making alternate media more valuable in judging the personal qualities the middle-class

¹⁰² Mitchell, *Picturing the Past*, 165.

Victorians prized. As the middle-class was both the intended audience and the creators of these works, they portray the ‘good woman’ of the middle-class ideology, who could only be emulated by her own class, despite her perceived universality.

Although generally accorded a model of middle-class Victorian womanhood, Mary was not universally beloved. Notably, Aiken and Dickens disapproved of the queen; both authors set themselves against the common agreement on her character.

Aiken states:

A spirit of self-justification so haughty and so unprincipled, a perseverance in deliberate falsehood so resolute and so shameless, ought under no circumstances and in no personage, not even in a captive beauty and an injured queen, to be confounded, by any writer studious of the moral tendencies of history and capable of sound discrimination, with genuine religion, true fortitude, or the dignity which renders misfortune respectable. (7802)

Dickens concurs, stating that Mary’s emotional nature gives her greater sympathy than deserved.¹⁰³ Aiken’s condemnation of most other writers highlights the general feeling surrounding Mary in 1818, well before Jameson and Strickland wrote their more complimentary accounts. Aiken and Dickens, however, are the exceptions to the rule. The majority of Victorian authors and painters portrayed Mary in a flattering light. As Rosemary Mitchell writes, “Mary, Queen of Scots was the archetype of femininity, the classic Romantic heroine victimized by men.”¹⁰⁴ In these narratives, she was a feminine victim within the masculine surroundings of her court.

The contrast of masculinity and femininity in Mary’s court appears most often in depictions of Mary at council. Victorian authors are careful to note her propensity for bringing her embroidery to these meetings. Jameson writes, “She was accustomed to

¹⁰³ Dickens, *A Child’s History*.

¹⁰⁴ Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past*, 164.

have her embroidery-frame placed in the room where her privy council met, and while she plied her needle she listened to the discussions of her ministers, displaying[...] a vigor of mind and a quickness of perception which astonished the statesmen around her.¹⁰⁵ Kaufman suggests that Mary's feminine modesty prompted this behavior: "...but as she was the only woman present, she relieved herself of embarrassment by sewing or embroidering, her little sandalwood work-table being always placed by her chair of state, with all the necessary articles."¹⁰⁶ By bringing her embroidery, a feminine task, to the council chamber, Mary becomes emblematic of female power at the heart of government, and of the submissiveness of that power to male authority. She does not guide her councilors, but they guide her. Benger also notes the power of embroidery, emphasizing its consolatory power when Mary was in distress.¹⁰⁷ Placing Mary's embroidery specifically in situations when she lacked agency reflects back to its earlier place at the council chamber, where her compliance with her privy council weakened her own regal agency. Mary's embroidery signifies feminine power, but also feminine submission.¹⁰⁸

Continuing the theme of feminine submissiveness is the inclusion of tales of Mary's piety, particularly her childhood at an abbey in France, where she apparently considered the religious life. Goodrich writes, "...her enthusiastic disposition was so strongly impressed with religious feelings, and she evinced such a fondness for a cloistered life, that it was thought proper to remove her to the gayer scenes of the court—

¹⁰⁵ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 189. An almost identical phrase appears in Goodrich, suggesting that he took more than inspiration from Jameson's work. Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 3739-3741.

¹⁰⁶ Kaufman, *Lives*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Benger, *Life*, 226, 291; Kaufman has a similar mention. Kaufman, *Lives*, 410.

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth was also a skilled embroiderer; however, Strickland makes a note of this in a single throwaway line, while an article in *The Girl's Own Paper* dismisses Elizabeth's work (which was extant) in a single paragraph, while devoting several to Mary. *The Girl's Own Paper*, Emma Brewer, "Queens as Needlewomen", 92-93.

a change which cost her torrents of tears.”¹⁰⁹ This tale of early religious fervor from a young child fits with newly developed Victorian ideas surrounding childhood, in which perfect children displayed an astonishing amount of religious devotion, learned from their pious mothers.

The commentary on Mary’s religious piety continues in narratives of her death. Mary’s death has strong connotations of martyrdom, both in written and pictorial accounts. Jameson directly names her as such, and Bengier notes that “...her countenance was lighted up by a smile of devout exultation” at her death.¹¹⁰ Russell is the most effusive, describing “...the interpretive radiance of her death, -- so contrastive in its calm sublimity of resignation with the gloomy despondency that darkened the last hours of her royal cousin...the saintly serenity of its close.”¹¹¹ In pictorial accounts, the same theme dominates. Robert Inerarity Herdman’s 1867 *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* portrays her as a dignified matriarch in widow’s weeds walking towards her executioners; the red robe of a martyr peeks out under her skirt.¹¹² A ray of light highlights her face, while underneath her feet a path of shadow leads to the block, which is surrounded by men. On the steps behind her, two ladies in black weep. Mary’s execution was a popular subject for painters, as at least three others portray her in the same light as Herdman.¹¹³ Alfred Elmore’s *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* places Mary in the center of a group of men, with two of her ladies indistinct behind her. One arm is outstretched as though to prevent

¹⁰⁹ Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Location 3689; Again, a suspiciously similar phrase appears in Jameson’s account, although the following paragraphs differ. Russell notes the same story in his account, although he does not give it much credit. Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 137.

¹¹⁰ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 212; Bengier, *Life*, 342.

¹¹¹ Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 132.

¹¹² Robert Inerarity Herdman, *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, oil on canvas, 1867 (Glasgow Museums, Glasgow). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/execution-of-mary-queen-of-scots-84464>.

the women from holding her back; the other refuses a man's arm in order to be led to the block in the foreground of the painting. The overall impression is of a woman going proudly to her death.¹¹⁴ Laslett John Pott's *Mary Queen of Scots Being Led to Her Execution* places Mary on the stone stairs out of her apartment, being led by a man dressed in armor with a bowed head. Mary's attire matches that in Herdman's portrait, with the addition of a prominent cross at her waist. Her gaze lifts out of the painting, presumably towards God. Her face is unwrinkled, but not young. At the head of the steps behind her is a group of shadowy men.¹¹⁵ There are no women present, highlighting Mary's singularity as a woman and martyr. William Luson Thomas' version of the scene places Mary's youthful face at the direct center of the engraving, framed by the distinctive hairstyle and white veil also present in Herdman's portrait. Mary's eyes resolutely look toward heaven.¹¹⁶ At her left her ladies are kneeling to kiss her gown in homage. At the right two men stand with the order for her arrest; the block is nowhere in sight.¹¹⁷ Luson's version highlights the youthfulness and beauty of Mary in comparison

¹¹⁴ Alfred Elmore, *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, oil on paper, 1875 (National Galleries Scotland). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/execution-of-mary-queen-of-scots-210025>

¹¹⁵ Laslett John Pott, *Mary, Queen of Scots Being Led to her Execution*, oil on canvas, 1871 (Nottingham City Council, Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/mary-queen-of-scots-being-led-to-her-execution-46765>

¹¹⁶ Apparently heaven is in the upper-right corner; Mary consistently looks in this direction in her portraits.

¹¹⁷ William Luson Thomas, after Scipione Vannutelli. *Mary, Queen of Scots being led to execution*, wood engraving, late 19th century (National Portrait Gallery, London). <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw62153/Mary-Queen-of-Scots-being-led-to-execution?LinkID=mp02996&search=sas&sText=mary+queen+of+scots&wPage=6&role=sit&No=120>. Thomas was an engraver who founded the *Daily Graphic*, the first daily illustrated paper, in 1890. It is likely, although not certain, that this image appeared in his paper, making it a periodical as well as illustrative source. "Thomas, William Luson (1830 - 1900)". In *The Companion to British History*, Routledge. London: Routledge, 2001. http://ezproxy.csbsju.edu/login?qurl=http%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Froutcbh%2Fthomas_william_luson_1830_1900%2F0 (accessed October 16, 2014.)

with the other images, which present her features as either elderly or indistinct. The titles and staging of the latter two paintings are significant; Mary is being led to her death, rather than going of her own accord. Mary, even at her last moments, relies on the men around her. In contrast, the two former paintings portray Mary as independent, refusing to accept aid from those around her. Her varying age creates contrasting themes of either a pretty romantic martyr or a dignified mother and monarch, referencing Queen Victoria in her widowhood.

The portraits in fact critique Victoria's widowhood as a martyrdom of its own. The black-and-white dress of Mary's martyrdom portraits are reminiscent of Victoria's own mourning apparel, particularly in the portraits which portray the aged Mary. The overt reference to Victoria and the timing of the martyrdom paintings are significant; they occur during the late 1860s to early 1870s, when Victoria's lengthy withdrawal from public life made her deeply unpopular. The martyrdom portraits suggest that Victoria is becoming a martyr to her widowhood; unlike Mary's martyrdom, Victoria's is neither glorious nor productive. By using Mary, Queen of Scots' death as an analogue, contemporary artists were able to express frustrations with their own monarch. Mary's attitudes in the portraits fit both the pious femininity of Victorian womanhood and the dignity of queenship; Mary relies on the men around her, but also acts as an independent monarch. By focusing on Mary's regal femininity at her death and drawing a parallel to Queen Victoria, the artists explored the relationship of religious devotion, ideal womanhood, and queenship; Mary becomes the perfect embodiment of all three.

While Mary's childhood piety and romantic martyrdom are the most widespread depictions of her feminine virtue, it was not universal. Yonge gives Mary's death only

two lines, stating that she dies with much bravery and piety and that some people (by inference not including Yonge) still thought she was innocent.¹¹⁸ Aiken disagrees vigorously with the common assessment, stating, “It is, however, important to remark, that she died rather with the triumphant air of a martyr to her religion, the character which she falsely assumed, than with the meekness of a victim or the penitence of a culprit.”¹¹⁹ Mary’s act of martyrdom is false, therefore excusing Elizabeth’s order (for which most other authors critique her) and justifying Mary’s death. Dickens, the other of Mary’s critics, does not go as far as Aiken, but is careful to note her age of forty-six and the false hair she wore at her death.¹²⁰ Highlighting these particular aspects of her death disputes Mary’s famed beauty and therefore the romantic femininity associated with it.

A key element of romantic femininity was the emotional nature of women, who were believed to feel and express emotions more easily than men. Outward displays of emotion, while not appropriate for every situation, were at least sympathetic when coming from a woman; it was less so for men. The particular type of emotion was important as well: love and affection are the preferred choices. Mary’s own emotional nature is a common part of Victorian descriptions. In these descriptions, she tends to be praised for her correct womanly feelings, which Elizabeth seems to lack. Benger writes, “In this instance [Mary’s supposed rejection of Bothwell] only did Mary discover prudence; in every other she was swayed, as, unhappily, she had ever been, by her sympathies, her prejudices, her prepossessions; weaknesses not inexcusable in a young and lovely woman, but in a sovereign, no less pernicious than culpable.”¹²¹ While Mary

¹¹⁸ Yonge, *Young Folks*.

¹¹⁹ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 3785.

¹²⁰ Dickens, *Child’s History*.

¹²¹ Benger, *Lives*, 215.

was subject to her emotions, it was a natural and somewhat permissible act for a woman; only when that woman was in the masculine role of king were her emotions inappropriate.

This emotionality includes her love of dance, which as previously mentioned was one of the main points of contention with Knox. Skill at dancing was a prized feminine characteristic in both Tudor and Victorian times; the importance was such that Kaufman makes special care to mention Mary's instruction in dance at a very early age.¹²² Goodrich writes that "...[H]er dancing was always admired; and we are assured that in the Spanish minuet she was equalled only by her aunt, the beautiful Anne of Este, and no lady of the court could eclipse her in a galliarde."¹²³ The link between dancing and emotion is an old one; Goodrich specifically refers to Mary's upbringing and dancing as "joyous." Mary's dancing is significant as well because of its relation of another one of her virtues: gracefulness. Victorian accounts of Mary consistently describe her graceful appearance and form of address. Gracefulness in a woman was an essential part of middle-class domestic ideology and was linked to gentleness and piety. By describing Mary's gracefulness in manner and movement, the Victorians elevated her as a model for female personalities. Descriptions of her emotions particularly note her naïveté, which most authors find appealing despite its consequences on her reign.¹²⁴ Naïveté is associated with childhood, and this holds true in Victorian paintings of Mary and her son,

¹²² Kaufman, *Lives*, 22.

¹²³ Goodrich. *Lives*, Kindle Location 3695. This line appears in Jameson as well, but in quotation marks – it may be a quotation from a primary source that was reused by Goodrich without proper citation. Russell mentions Anne of Este as well, so it is likely they all took from the same primary document.

¹²⁴ Froude takes a different approach, writing that she had "a nature like a panther's, merciless and beautiful – and along with it every dexterous art by which women can outwit the coarser intellects of men." Mary's naïveté is then not genuine, but part of her political skills. Froude, *History of England*, 395.

the future James I. At least two images depicting the two can be reliably ascribed to the period. The first is the wood engraving *Queen Mary Quitting Stirling Castle* by William Luson Thomas.¹²⁵ The picture shows Mary standing over the cradle where James lies sleeping; she points to him while looking at a man at the foot of the cradle as though commending James to his care. On the other side of the cradle stand three women. Two are indistinct in the background, while one leans over the sleeping child; her face is not visible. At the edge of the painting is a small chair with a prominent fleur-de-lys.¹²⁶ The painting portrays Mary as an anxious mother worried for the future of her child. The noticeable fleur-de-lys in the painting refers back to Mary's own happy childhood in the court of France, linking her thematically with her son. The second image is a Victorian painting done in the style of the 15th-century, *Mary, Queen of Scots with Son, James*.¹²⁷ The painting is a simple portrait of Mary and James in front of a green curtain; Mary holds James, standing, on top of a table. Mary is young here, with only vague wrinkles under her eyes to refer to her troubled life. James I is dressed in miniature versions of adult robes and holds a thistle in his hand, representing Scotland. He resembles a doll more than a child, giving the portrait an overall effect of Mary playing with her dolls, rather than a queen and her heir. The result of this portrait is to give Mary an air of childishness that reflects on her femininity. The childlike associations of her naïveté, in combination with portrayals of her and her son, link her to both middle-class Victorian

¹²⁵ William Luson Thomas, after Henrietta Mary Ada Ward, *Queen Mary Quitting Stirling Castle*, wood engraving, 1863, (National Portrait Gallery, London.) <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitLarge/mw62154/Queen-Mary-quitting-Stirling-Castle>

¹²⁶ The royal symbol of France.

¹²⁷ Anonymous, *Mary, Queen of Scots with Her Son, James*, oil on slate, 19th century, (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/435780>

femininity and Victorian childhood, which were supposed to remain uncorrupted as long as possible.

Mary's accordance with middle-class Victorian gender ideology can be seen in the types of epithets she is assigned. The most popular include "lovely," "ill-fated," and "unlucky," all titles that have their roots in romantic femininity. The emphasis on Mary's appearance prioritizes her femininity over her queenship. Robertson specifically notes that "With regard to the Queen's countenance, a circumstance not to be omitted in writing the history of a female reign, all contemporary authors agree in ascribing to Mary the utmost beauty of countenance..."¹²⁸ Robertson implies here that the beauty of a female sovereign is of more importance than of a male one; her femininity is a prime part, perhaps the main focus, of her queenship. The other two titles, "ill-fated" and "unlucky," remove Mary's agency by assigning her life and actions to destiny instead of individual ambitions. This then removes personal culpability from Mary's scandals, preserving her as the archetypal romantic heroine crossed by fate. Emphasizing Mary's romantic connections also emphasizes her womanhood, in contrast to the masculine nature of sovereignty. Mary's literary titles emphasize her femininity over her queenship and remove her agency.

This emphasis on her femininity appears in discussions of Mary's marital status, one of the main achievements of womanhood in both the Tudor and Victorian periods. Mary fulfills this basic tenant of domestic ideology well, becoming a wife three times during her lifetime. In comparison with Elizabeth, who as Dickens said, "was 'going' to be married pretty often," and never was, Mary actually went through with the deed.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 202.

¹²⁹ Dickens, *A Child's History*.

Mary's multiple marriages, though not ideal in Victorian terms, put her in a favorable light in comparison to Elizabeth, who never married at all. The intervals between Mary's marriages were relatively short as well; five years between Francis II, to whom she was married only two years, and Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, again a two-year marriage. While the timing between the latter and Mary's third marriage to the Earl of Bothwell was scandalously short (a few months), the circumstances behind that last marriage were complex and are still in dispute up to the present day. The discussion as to whether the third marriage was forced or not alleviates some of Mary's culpability in marrying the man widely considered Darnley's murderer; scholars' inability to decide either way leaves Mary's marriage state open to both favorable and unfavorable interpretations. Mary's three short marriages put her in better favor with the Victorians because despite the controversy of her marriages, she was married –the most important part of Victorian femininity. Her sexuality, as described in the euphemism of her 'passions,' particularly for Darnley, was contained within the proper matrimonial sphere for women.

In addition, Mary's behavior with these husbands was properly feminine. Kaufman's depiction of her marriage to Francis, which is in line with most accounts, shows them as the perfect Victorian couple: "...[S]he presided with her spouse over their own little court, each being so happy in the society of the other as to feel no desire to mingle in the public gayeties of the Louvre, excepting when etiquette required them to do so."¹³⁰ The power of Mary's femininity is strong enough to create a small paradise in the home, prompting Francis to stay with her. In this marriage, Mary is the perfect example of the "angel in the house." Her second marriage to Darnley, which was considerably stormier, is treated relatively sympathetically in most accounts, generally being accorded

¹³⁰ Kaufman, *Queens of Scotland*, 49.

to the foolishness of passion or Elizabeth's interference.¹³¹ Russell even accounts it as fated from the moment of Francis' death, being forced upon the grieving widow by Darnley himself: "Upon the decease of her husband, Mary secluded herself for forty days in a *chambre de deuil* at Orleans, albeit her mourning privacy was broken in upon a visit from Darnley, when, it is alleged, her future union with that poor popinjay was decided upon..."¹³² As Darnley's behavior became increasingly erratic and violent, Mary's conduct in the marriage is generally commended for its restraint and perseverance; his attitudes are portrayed as a betrayal of her faith.¹³³ During his illness during the weeks before his death, Kaufman describes Mary's attendance on Darnley in an extremely flattering light: "In short, there never was a princess whose conduct afforded a more touching example of the tender characteristics of her sex..."¹³⁴ With Francis, Mary was the angel in the house; with Darnley, she becomes the Florence Nightingale-style ministering angel.¹³⁵

Mary's ability to balance dutiful matrimony with the duties of the state, which is not explicitly discussed but implied contextually, comments on Victoria's situation. Victoria, as her family grew larger through the 1850s, shifted her political responsibilities onto her husband Albert, while Mary retained her personal power. By portraying Mary

¹³¹ "...[I]t might seem impossible for the queen of Scots better to consult the views and wishes of her kinswoman than by uniting herself to Darnley;—a subject, and an English subject, a near relation both of her own and Elizabeth's, and a man on whom nature had bestowed not a single quality calculated to render him either formidable or respectable." Aikin, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 4564.

¹³² Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 140-141.

¹³³ "To a woman of feeling, there is, perhaps, no humiliation so painful as to be compelled the expose the errors of the man whom she has passionately loved." (158) Benger, *Life*, 158.

¹³⁴ Kaufman, *Queens of Scotland*, 242.

¹³⁵ This is not the only place where Mary is identified with the heavenly host; Russell identifies Henry II crying "Are you not an angel?" in delight upon beholding the child Mary, while Kaufman attributes it to a peasant woman on Palm Sunday. Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 166; Kaufman, *Queens of Scotland*, 32.

as an idealized woman who could fulfill both domestic and political obligations, even under the duress of a bad husband, middle-class authors critiqued Victoria's own method of rule.

The tone shifts when discussing Mary's third husband, Bothwell, who is the most common suspect for Darnley's murder. Here, opinions of Mary rest on whether or not she knew of the murder plot and if she was abducted or willingly married Bothwell. For authors who believe in her innocence, Mary's third marriage is a tragedy: "The month which Mary passed with Bothwell after the marriage, was the most miserable of her miserable life. He treated her with such indignity, that a day did not pass in which "he did not cause her to shed abundance of salt tears."¹³⁶ Mary's abduction fits with the idea of the romantic victim of popular melodrama, held against her will in a loveless marriage; Gothic fiction often featured threatened sexual violation.¹³⁷ Her marriage, although controversial, is explained by its forced nature, and Mary becomes emblematic of betrayed virtue as she was with Darnley.

This betrayed virtue can be seen not only in written accounts of her life, but in several portraits which focus upon Mary's escape from one palace or another. The first painting is the aforementioned *Queen Mary Quitting Stirling Castle*, in which Mary leaves behind her son.¹³⁸ Shortly after she left Stirling, Mary encountered Bothwell, and either escaped with or was kidnapped by him. The portrait hints at these events; Mary looks unwilling to leave her son and stares bleakly at the man to the left, who resembles Bothwell. Mary appears forced to leave her son by her abductor; her femininity and

¹³⁶ Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Locations 3805-3807.

¹³⁷ "Gothic novels." In *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës*. : Oxford University Press, 2006. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662181.001.0001/acref-9780198662181-e-0447>.

¹³⁸ William Luson Thomas, after Henrietta Mary Ada Ward, *Queen Mary Quitting Stirling Castle*.

motherhood are under threat by the men around her. The second painting is Willem Craig Shirreff's 1805 *Mary, Queen of Scots Escaping from Lochleven Castle*.¹³⁹ Here, the escape attempt is a celebration of chivalry. Mary, a vision of loveliness wearing Regency-era clothes and the heart-shaped Tudor cap associated with her, is helped out of a boat by Lord Seaton and George Douglas and pushed towards a shadowy servant holding a horse out of frame. A cross hangs prominently from Mary's waist and one of the gentlemen is clad in tartan. The overall impression given is of gallant Scottish noblemen assisting a lovely maiden in escaping from persecution. What is not mentioned is that these same noblemen were Mary's jailers as well as her rescuers. The cross at Mary's waist suggests that her maltreatment was religious as well as political; Mary had been forced to abdicate in favor of James a few months before. Mary's femininity and its inherent weakness is the focus of the painting; she is every bit the romantic heroine, passively resisting victimization and relying on masculine power.¹⁴⁰

Not all Victorian authors were favorable towards Mary's second and third marriages. Aiken is the harshest, condemning Mary for complicity in Darnley's murder and her third marriage:

...this criminal and infatuated woman replied by marrying Bothwell three months after the death of her husband. She now attempted by the most artful sophistries to justify her conduct to the courts of France and England: but vain was the endeavour to excuse or explain away facts which the common sense and common feelings of mankind told them could admit of neither explanation nor apology. (Kindle Location 4932)

¹³⁹ William Craig Shirreff, *Mary, Queen of Scots Escaping from Lochleven Castle*, oil on canvas, 1805, (National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh).

<http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/s/artist/william-craig-shirreff/object/mary-queen-of-scots-escaping-from-lochleven-castle-ng-2255>

¹⁴⁰"Gothic novels." In *The Oxford Companion to the Brontës*.

Mary's behavior is not only foolish, but against all natural feelings of mankind. Yonge portrays Mary not as persecuted, but as persecutor: "...[T]here is only too much reason to fear that she knew of the plot, laid by some of her lords, to blow the poor man's house up with gunpowder, while he lay in his bed ill of smallpox. At any rate, she very soon married one of the very worst of the nobles who had committed the murder."¹⁴¹ Dickens agrees with Aiken and Yonge that Mary knew of the murder: "But, I fear that Mary was unquestionably a party to her husband's murder, and that this was the revenge [for Rizzio's death] she had threatened."¹⁴² By knowing of the murder, Mary commits crimes against the marital state and her place in it. Dickens notes that the Scottish women were particularly fierce in their treatment; Mary's crimes are against womanly and wifely feelings above all.¹⁴³ While Dickens dramatized his historical accounts for a child audience, it is interesting that he chose to make Mary a villain instead of the more common heroine narrative. These authors also choose to portray Mary's escape from Loch Leven as not a chivalric act, but as an act of seductive charm.¹⁴⁴

This reveals a deep uncertainty about Mary's possible guilt and how to portray her. Victorian gender ideology preferred its heroines in a dichotomy, either good or bad, not unlike the good woman/bad queen dichotomy. Mary can be either a murderer or a saint, not both. However, most authors portray her within a range of the two ideas because of the complexity of her character. Mary's innocence hangs on whether or not Victorian authors think she had foreknowledge of Darnley's death; if she did, she committed an act considered petty treason by Victorian standards; if she did not, she was

¹⁴¹ Yonge, *Young Folks*.

¹⁴² Dickens, *A Child's History*.

¹⁴³ Dickens, *A Child's History*.

¹⁴⁴ Dickens, *A Child's History*; Yonge, *Young Folks*; Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 5122. Froude goes as far to impugne her sense of honor in the affair. Froude, *History of England*, 509.

an innocent victim. Because there is no conclusive evidence either way, Victorian authors are unable to fit her into the good or evil dichotomy. Mary fulfills the requirements of middle-class Victorian femininity, but also may be culpable in acts that completely oppose that same ideology. As Christable Coleridge and Arthur Innes note in *The Monthly Packet*, “Either she was a murderess, or worse, or she was a cruelly persecuted saint, perhaps a martyr. Most modern historians try to make her out a moderate murderess or a partial saint, not infrequently both.”¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶ Froude’s opinion is similar, as he believes her imprisonment clouded contemporary depictions with unnecessary tenderness.¹⁴⁷ Victorian depictions of Mary praise her femininity while being deeply ambivalent about her guilt in the murder of Darnley and the plots against Elizabeth. However, this ambivalence strengthens the argument that Mary was a bad queen, as the feminine characteristics of foolish anger (in the case of Darnley) and jealousy (in the case of Elizabeth) are what the Victorians usually attribute as her motives. If Mary was a bad queen because of the prevalence of her femininity, she reinforces the illegitimacy of female rule.

Finally, Mary satisfies the final requirement of both Victorian femininity and queenship: she has a male heir to succeed her. Her son, James, would become James VI of Scotland upon Mary’s abdication in 1567 and James I of England in 1603 upon

¹⁴⁵ Coleridge, Christable, and Arthur Innes, “Church History Society: Remarks,” in *The Monthly Packet*. (London: R. Clay, Sons, and Taylor, 1895), 370.

¹⁴⁶ *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church* was a periodical that ran from 1851-1899, aimed at young Anglican girls. It was started, edited, and mostly written by Charlotte Yonge, whose position as a proponent of the Oxford Movement has already been discussed. June Sturrock. “Establishing Identity: Editorial Correspondence from the Early Years of The Monthly Packet.” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 39, no. 3 (2006): 266-279. <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed July 17, 2014).

¹⁴⁷ Froude, *History of England*, 501.

Elizabeth's death. Mary not only has children, the duty of women under Victorian ideologies, but specifically has a male child to carry on the family line, an even greater duty considering her rank. After James' birth, Mary becomes a placeholder on the throne. Elizabeth never married or had issue, so James' ascent to the English throne places Elizabeth in the same position as Mary; the two queens, despite their fame and power, are ultimately marking time before a valid male ruler takes their place. Mary provides that ruler, giving her own queenship and femininity more legitimacy than Elizabeth's.

Mary fulfills many of the roles middle-class Victorian ideologies designated as exclusively feminine in nature: she was pious, domestic, emotional and emotionally vulnerable, married, and had a child. Mary may be an illegitimate ruler, but her adherence to gender roles allows her more leniency in how she fulfills her regal duties. This is especially important when it comes to considering her possible crimes; because she fulfills those roles, Victorian authors cannot quite fully denounce Mary as a bad example of womanhood and queenship, but they cannot ignore those aspects of her personality either. Therefore, portrayals of Mary have an intrinsic conflict that forms a mirror to the conflict over Elizabeth. Mary was a bad queen, but her realization of the "good" feminine traits make her possible crimes difficult for Victorian writers to fit into a narrative that focuses on her virtues; Elizabeth was a good queen, but was able to become so only by becoming an unfeminine woman. Queen Victoria then represents the ideal ruler, as she is both a feminine, domestic woman and a good queen. In fact, it is her adherence to middle-class gender roles that makes her a suitable monarch, an adherence only possible because of the political structure of the 19th century. Queen Victoria is

allowed to be emotional and domestic because she lacks political power and her femininity cannot therefore be a threat to her rule. When genuine political power is combined with femininity, as in the case of Mary and most especially Elizabeth, middle-class Victorian authors have difficulty reconciling the two roles.

Elizabeth the Woman

Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I are consistently portrayed as combative mirror images of each other, rather like the queens of a chess set. Where Mary depicts the errors of queenship, Elizabeth shows its strengths, and where Mary personifies the feminine virtues, Elizabeth must then exemplify the feminine vices. These very vices make Elizabeth's rule commendable, but also create a deep Victorian antipathy towards her.

Elizabeth is not generally accorded the status of a good woman. The majority of Victorian authors dislike her as a person, especially Jameson and Strickland.¹⁴⁸ The sole author who seems to fully approve of Elizabeth is Aiken, who credits Elizabeth with wisdom, sagacity, and, alone among authors, as having “no jealousy of power.”¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth's method of rule and her conduct towards Mary are the main points of contention with Victorian values. Her single status and flirtatiousness are generally considered to have created a servile, flattering court, while Mary's imprisonment and eventual execution break bonds of sisterhood and Christian mercy.¹⁵⁰ The latter is

¹⁴⁸ Goodrich and Kaufman crib directly from these authors, so their biases are largely the same – Kaufman acknowledges as much in her foreword.

¹⁴⁹ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 4123.

¹⁵⁰ Even Aiken agrees with this statement: “Let due censure be passed on the infringement of morality committed by Elizabeth, in detaining as a captive that rival kinswoman, and pretender to her crown...” Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 7991.

attributed not to her political situation, but to her feminine vices. Robertson writes, “In order to account for Elizabeth’s present as well as subsequent conduct towards Mary, we must not always consider her as a Queen, we must sometimes regard her merely as a woman.”¹⁵¹ Robertson implies that Elizabeth’s femininity was beneath her dignity as a queen, and therefore that any actions influenced by it are suspect. If this is the case, then the particular feminine traits Elizabeth exhibited were particularly galling, as Mary’s feminine influence on her politics usually merits a better response. While Elizabeth’s nickname of “Good Queen Bess” is occasionally mentioned, more common epithets ascribed to her usually include “vain,” “haughty,” “jealous,” and “proud.” None of these traits present a flattering portrayal of her femininity.

The most common of the feminine vices attributed to Elizabeth is jealousy, followed closely by vanity. Victorian authors are universally agreed in this regard, even proponents such as Aiken, who attributes her with jealous haughtiness of temper.¹⁵² Goodrich describes her as “vain, jealous, and selfish, in the extreme. She was capable of the deepest hypocrisy, and often practised it. She sacrificed every thing to her despotic love of sway, her pride, and her vanity, except the interests of her kingdom.”¹⁵³ Elizabeth’s care for her kingdom is her only redeeming feature; this inherent baseness is expressed even more explicitly by Jameson: ““On looking nearer, we behold on the throne of England a woman whose avarice and jealousy, whose envious, relentless, and malignant spirit, whose coarse manners and violent temper, render her detestable; whose pedantry and meanness, render her contemptible.”¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth is completely unworthy

¹⁵¹ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 81.

¹⁵² Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 7487.

¹⁵³ Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Locations 4031-4034.

¹⁵⁴ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 216.

of her reputation and her throne; her faults are such as to make her a villain in Jameson's judgement.¹⁵⁵

Jealousy in these cases applies both to Elizabeth's grip on power and her personal jealousy of other women, particularly Mary and Arbella Stuart, the latter having married without her permission. Arbella was also a potential heir to the English throne, so Elizabeth's political and personal jealousy merged in her case as with Mary's. Victorian authors usually omit mention of Arbella's political status, instead attributing Arbella's imprisonment in the Tower to Elizabeth's inability to "bear that others should enjoy any happiness of which she herself was debarred."¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth's jealousy is all-consuming; she prevents other women from enjoying their rightful marriages even as she herself refuses to marry. Since middle-class Victorian gender ideologies preferred to emphasize female sisterhood, such jealousy is particularly malicious. Elizabeth's personal jealousy makes her an unnatural and vindictive woman, while her political jealousy leads to the death of Mary, Queen of Scots.¹⁵⁷ Descriptions of Elizabeth's political jealousy are unflattering. Robertson calls her "ambitious" and writes that she "delighted with the entire and uncontrolled exercise of power."¹⁵⁸ Jameson writes that "the English queen beheld her beautiful rival with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness,"¹⁵⁹ while

¹⁵⁵ Jameson later notes, "She was at once fearless and cautious, firm and artful, frugal and ostentatious; she could trample down pride, repel presumption, retort insult, and defy danger. But when did she comfort or help the weak-hearted? Or raise up the fallen? Or exalt humble merit? Or cherish unobtrusive genius? Or spare the offending? Or pardon the guilty?" Apparently a queen was also required to be a saint; one wonders how Elizabeth was supposed to notice the unobtrusive, as it seems a contradiction in terms. Jameson, *Memoirs*, 224.

¹⁵⁶ Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Locations 3748-3749.

¹⁵⁷ Only Benger considers the contemporary reasons for the act: "...Elizabeth, in this age, is censured for a measure, which in her own was invested in the name of justice, dignity, and even hallowed with the praise of magnanimity." Benger, *Memoirs*, 137.

¹⁵⁸ Robertson, *History*, 76.

¹⁵⁹ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 190.

Aiken applies the same jealousy to Leicester's conduct in the Netherlands.¹⁶⁰ The political necessity of Elizabeth's grip on power is given scant attention; only Robertson attributes it directly to useful policy instead of personal pride and jealousy of power.¹⁶¹ For most authors, Elizabeth's jealousy springs from a personality defect, not from the political situation, and negatively affects her queenship and reputation. Since jealousy is considered a particularly feminine trait, its prominence in depictions of Elizabeth places her femininity, particularly its supposed defects, in the spotlight. Elizabeth's jealousy becomes a defense against not only female rule, but also monarchical rule, as most mentions of Elizabeth's jealousy include descriptions of tyranny. Female jealousy and the power of the monarch are then tied together.

This reflects upon the political situation during the Victorian period, when Parliament held all the power and the female monarch very little. Portraying one of the most notable female monarchs in British history as a jealous tyrant becomes a pretext for not giving Victoria any more power than she already has; if the revered Elizabeth was in fact a jealous and unfeminine autocrat, then Victoria, equally as revered, has the same potential, despite the differing power structures and marital statuses of the two women. A parliamentary form of government is then the most obvious solution to the problem. Elizabeth's jealousy is then politically advantageous: it reinforces stereotypes about powerful women and bolsters arguments against the monarchy. The frequent discussions of Elizabeth's jealousy support Victorian attitudes about feminine leadership and

¹⁶⁰ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Locations 7487-7488. Leicester was offered the position of Governor-General there in 1586, which would effectively have made him a king.

¹⁶¹ "Averse from marriage, as some maintain through choice, but more probably out of policy ..." Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 76.

monarchical power and engage in a contemporary conversation about Victoria's role as head of state.

The next most discussed aspect of Elizabeth's personality is her vanity, particularly as she grew older. By the 19th century, vanity had the negative connotation it still holds today. Elizabeth's attention to her appearance therefore casts a negative light on the Queen, particularly as a "natural" appearance of beauty was the preferred Victorian choice. Artificiality or excessive attention to dress was a prime female vice. Jameson is unsurprisingly the most critical of Elizabeth's preoccupation with her appearance. She writes:

The grandfather of Elizabeth left us one of the most splendid monuments of Gothic architecture in the Kingdom, Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster. Her father founded a college, and built a palace; her brother endowed the finest school and hospital in England, memorials worthy of his amiable character. Elizabeth left behind her no monument of her taste, her munificence, or her benevolence; she left three thousand gowns in her wardrobe. (235)

Elizabeth is not only vain, but she fails to provide the same sort of grand generosity to her people as the male rulers that preceded her.¹⁶² Aiken attributes her vanity to flattery by the court and Dickens to her lineage.¹⁶³ Robertson, although praising her as an exceptional woman, considers her vanity proportionate to her intellect: "Elizabeth, with all those extraordinary qualities by which she equaled or surpassed such of her sex that have merited the greatest renown, discovered an admiration of her own person, to a degree which women of ordinary understandings either do not entertain, or prudently

¹⁶² Jameson does not mention Mary I, who directly preceded Elizabeth and did not leave many benefices either. From the description of Edward VI above, we can assume anti-Catholic sentiment prompted her omission. This draws a direct line from the male Tudors to Elizabeth, reinforcing her 'masculinized' nature. The number of gowns is also debatable; Yonge names only 300 gowns and 30 wigs. Yonge, *Young Folks*.

¹⁶³ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 6951; Dickens, *Child's History*.

endeavour to conceal.”¹⁶⁴ He also critiques her for having this attitude beyond the pardonable age.¹⁶⁵ Yonge links her vanity with her jealousy, noting that she was “more than a man and less than a woman” when she refused to allow her ladies to wear beautiful dresses.¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth’s vanity was so notable that she became an archetypical example of the vice for children. The 1861 *Children’s Picture Book of English History* describes her as having most of the womanly failings: “She was vain of her person, and fond of dress. She was very open to flattery, and allowed her mind in many matters to be swayed by favorites.”¹⁶⁷ The *Monthly Packet* ran an essay competition for perfect descriptions of vices in 1895; Elizabeth was the perfect example of vanity, citing Burleigh’s description of her as “less than a woman,” her “thirty-nine wigs,” and her “delight in the most absurd flattery from suitors and courtiers.”¹⁶⁸ The coupling of Elizabeth’s vanity with descriptions of her as between man and woman reveals the link between that particular vice and Elizabeth’s femininity. Elizabeth is more than a man in that she operates a man’s power, but her possession of a female vice in the extreme makes her an unfit woman – she does not belong to the powerful worldly sex or the fair angelic one. Elizabeth is then caught between two roles, and her inability to properly fulfill either makes her a problematic figure. Scott notes that, “Queen Elizabeth had a character strangely compounded of the strongest masculine sense, with those foibles which are

¹⁶⁴ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 81.

¹⁶⁵ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, 81.

¹⁶⁶ Yonge, *Young Folks*. Yonge is referencing an incident in which Elizabeth humiliated one of her ladies for wearing a gown she thought more magnificent than hers; the story appears in several other depictions as well. The “less than a woman, more than a man” comes from Lord Burleigh.

¹⁶⁷ *The Children’s Picture-Book of English History*, 186.

¹⁶⁸ “Chelsea China,” “The China Cupboard.” In *The Monthly Packet*, edited by Christabel R. Coleridge and Arthur Innes (London: A.D. Innes & Co, 1895), 486-487.

chiefly supposed proper to the female sex.”¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth has the best characteristics of men, but the worst of women. Her vanity illuminates the contradiction of roles.

Discussions of her temper continue the theme of Elizabeth’s gender fluidity. Elizabeth’s short temper and moodiness, which were linked to her vanity and jealousy, were far from the calm Victorian ideal. Elizabeth physically reprimanded her courtiers on occasion, actions which completely contradict Victorian notions of femininity, although not unexpected by Tudor standards. Physical violence was a male attribute by the Victorian period; Elizabeth’s use of it further strengthened the assessment of her as neither properly masculine nor feminine. Elizabeth’s temper was also linked to that of her father, emphasizing Elizabeth’s place as the heir to the hyper-masculine Henry VIII. Scott writes, “She was the nursing-mother of her people, but she was also the true daughter of Henry VIII.; and though early sufferings and an excellent education had repressed and modified, they had not altogether destroyed, the hereditary temper of that “hard-ruled king.”¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth’s temper, which was inherent and therefore insuppressible, joins her to Henry, further reinforcing the idea of Elizabeth as Henry reborn. Moreover, Elizabeth’s temper is usually linked to her enjoyment of sports such as bear-baiting. Middle-class Victorians largely condemned this sport and related ones.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Scott, *Kenilworth*, Kindle Locations 4084-4086.

¹⁷⁰ Scott, *Kenilworth*, Kindle Locations 4084-4086. The use of “nursing-mother” to describe Elizabeth is unusual.

¹⁷¹ Violent sports also had associations with the working class, of whom middle-class opinion was mixed at best. Considering some of the sports popular in fairgrounds and public streets in the early-to-mid Victorian period, as well as the cult surrounding stories of murder and gore, the Victorians were perhaps not as distant from their Tudor ancestors as they thought. Rosalind Crone, *Violent Victorians: Popular entertainment in nineteenth-century London*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 42-43.

Elizabeth becomes a symbol of vulgarity: Charlotte Yonge writes in the *Monthly Packet*: “Queen Bess was an exceedingly vulgar woman, love of display, scolding, and coarseness of mind, and often of manner, being characteristic of her, beyond her times, for the contemporary Stuarts were refined.”¹⁷² The gentle hint at Mary (the contemporary Stuart) highlights Elizabeth’s failures in comparison with the more traditionally feminine Scottish Queen. In the same article, Yonge attributes Elizabeth’s temper and vulgarity to a basic lack of morality, which in Victorian terms was irretrievably connected to refinement. Elizabeth’s vulgarity then betrays an essential lack of morality, an assessment only strengthened when considering her execution of Mary. An 1894 *Monthly Packet* article roundly condemns Elizabeth’s conduct: “Several things, often shirked, must be faced... That Elizabeth had two or three honorable courses open to her, and that she took none.”¹⁷³ Elizabeth’s moral dearth betrays itself in her enjoyment of “vulgar” sports, and comes to its height in her treatment of Mary. Her temper and vulgarity display a basic lack of moral worth, which cannot be modified by education; both Scott and Yonge note that while education may help, it cannot hide intrinsic defects of character.¹⁷⁴ Aiken also notes this essential character defect: “The disposition of Elizabeth was originally deficient in benevolence and sympathy, and prone to suspicion, pride and anger.”¹⁷⁵ Elizabeth’s innate lack of morality affects her femininity, making her more than a man and less than a woman.

The final aspect of Elizabeth’s personality unsuited to middle-class Victorian moralists was her flirtatious nature and unmarried state. Elizabeth was a renowned flirt,

¹⁷² Charlotte Yonge, “Debatable Ground,” in *The Monthly Packet*, (London: Walter Smith and Innes, 1890), 99.

¹⁷³ Coleridge and Innes, “Church History Society: Remarks,” 370.

¹⁷⁴ Scott, *Kenilworth*, Kindle Locations 4084-4086; Charlotte Yonge, “Debatable Ground,” 98-99.

¹⁷⁵ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 6951.

continually demanding compliments from her courtiers. It is this pandering to her vanity that accounts for Victorian authors' assessment of her court as a 'servile and Oriental' one.¹⁷⁶ Her policy of entertaining several suitors at once and never marrying any of them went against most tenets of middle-class Victorian womanhood, which stressed humility, chastity, and modesty. Elizabeth's obvious and unfruitful flirtations further stressed the immorality from which her assumed vulgarity sprung. Dickens explicitly links the two:

I must say that for a Queen who made all those fine speeches, of which I have confessed myself to be rather tired, about living and dying a Maiden Queen, Elizabeth was 'going' to be married pretty often. Besides always having some English favourite or other whom she by turns encouraged and swore at and knocked about—for the maiden Queen was very free with her fists—she held this French Duke [Francis, Duke of Anjou] off and on through several years. (*A Child's History*)

Elizabeth's romantic life is connected with violence, a relationship which appears again in discussions of the two most famous of her "English suitors," Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and his stepson, Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex. Both men were long-time favorites of Elizabeth, with Leicester in particular remaining more-or-less in favor throughout his life.¹⁷⁷ Victorian opinion of him was not positive; Aiken calls him "one of the greatest dissemblers of the age."¹⁷⁸ *The Children's Picture Book* describes Leicester as having only looks and flattery to recommend him.¹⁷⁹ Jameson considers him "a most weak and worthless man, condemned and feared by her nobles, odious to her people[...] his influence for nearly thirty years can hardly be reconciled with the general idea of

¹⁷⁶ Aiken, *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, Kindle Edition 11532; Jameson, *Memoirs*, 216-217, 237.

¹⁷⁷ The death of Leicester's first wife Amy Robsart was widely rumored to be murder; with Amy's death, he would be free to marry Elizabeth. Though the suspicion surrounding her death ultimately reduced his matrimonial prospects, he remained a prominent member of the court.

¹⁷⁸ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location

¹⁷⁹ *The Children's Picture Book*, 188.

Elizabeth's wisdom and penetration."¹⁸⁰ Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* offers a more nuanced portrayal; in that work, Leicester loves his wife, but is driven by ambition. Amy's death is attributed to Leicester's fictional steward, Varney. Elizabeth's romantic link with a possible murder casts doubt on her morality, particularly as her own role in the event is undetermined, and further links her romantic life with violence.¹⁸¹

Unlike his stepfather Leicester, the Earl of Essex receives a noticeably kinder reception from Victorian authors. The dramatic relationship between Elizabeth and her second suitor was a favorite among Victorian authors. Aiken describes Essex as gifted with all the talents deficient in Leicester, although lacking the skill to lead a court faction.¹⁸² *The Children's Picture Book* calls him a wayward spirit, and guilty of foolishness.¹⁸³ Yonge considers him brave, but too proud.¹⁸⁴ Although foolishness and sensitivity to insults are not virtues, Victorian authors seem to consider them forgivable in a young man, particularly in comparison to the malevolence associated with Leicester. Essex's downfall is of particular importance in these narratives. His relationship with Elizabeth is characterized as a vain and spiteful old woman's attempt at controlling a proud young man. Jameson writes, "Her partiality for Essex seems to be the dotage of a vain old woman. She could not appreciate his fine qualities; she would not make allowances for his faults, and he was too frank and spirited to cringe at her footstool."¹⁸⁵ After disobeying Elizabeth's orders in Ireland, Essex returned to England hurriedly in

¹⁸⁰ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 243.

¹⁸¹ Mary Stuart's romantic life is linked more explicitly with violence; however, its Gothic connotations and Mary's more traditionally appealing character allow for greater latitude in regards to this than Elizabeth's violent love life.

¹⁸² Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Location 8479.

¹⁸³ *The Children's Picture Book*, 188.

¹⁸⁴ Yonge, *Young Folks*.

¹⁸⁵ Jameson, *Memoirs*, 243-244.

1600, allegedly catching Elizabeth in her underclothes. One Victorian engraving of this scene portrays the scene in a distinctly romantic light: Elizabeth is young and lovely, lifting her hair out of her eyes while Essex kneels chivalrously at her feet. Three equally lovely ladies regard Essex with kind expressions. Even the title, *Interview between Elizabeth and Essex*, suggests that the encounter was a planned rendezvous.¹⁸⁶

David Wilkie Wynfield portrays a contrasting interpretation of this scene in *Incident in the Life of Queen Elizabeth*.¹⁸⁷ His Elizabeth is elderly; a matronly lady-in-waiting next to her holds her wig. Essex and the two other ladies in the corner of the room remain youthful. The feeling is of Essex simply catching a disheveled old woman, rather than a beautiful young queen.¹⁸⁸ Historically, it was not a beneficial meeting for Essex; Elizabeth responded to the encounter by removing his lucrative monopoly on sweet wines. Yonge's depiction of the meeting credits Elizabeth's vanity as the cause of Essex's downfall: "So he came back without leave; and one morning came straight into her dressing chamber, where she was sitting, with her thin grey hair being combed, before she put on one of her thirty wigs, or painted her face. She was very angry, and would not forgive him."¹⁸⁹ Essex, the most masculine of men, is portrayed as having been cheated of political influence by the vanity of an old woman.¹⁹⁰ In February 1601, Essex

¹⁸⁶ Thomas Milton, after Robert Smirke, *Interview between Elizabeth and Essex*, line engraving, 1806 (National Portrait Gallery, London).

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw126419/Interview-between-Queen-Elizabeth--the-Earl-of-Essex?LinkID=mp01452&search=sas&sText=Elizabeth+&wPage=4&role=sit&rNo=96>

¹⁸⁷ David Wilkie Wynfield, *Incident in the Life of Queen Elizabeth*, oil on canvas, 1875, (Wolverhampton Art Gallery). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/an-incident-in-the-life-of-queen-elizabeth-i-18829>

¹⁸⁸ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 160.

¹⁸⁹ Yonge, *Younge Folks*.

¹⁹⁰ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 165.

would mount a rebellion, be captured, and be executed at the Tower.¹⁹¹ Several Victorian accounts mention a tale of a ring, given to Essex by Elizabeth that would guarantee her aid if sent to her. Supposedly, the Countess of Northampton maliciously kept back the ring. She revealed her deed to Elizabeth as she [the Countess] lay dying. Elizabeth's response, "May God forgive you, but I never can," exists in variations across depictions of the event.¹⁹² At least three accounts attribute Elizabeth's death shortly after to her misery.¹⁹³ The link between Essex' and Elizabeth's deaths further reinforce the violence the Victorians associated with Elizabeth's romantic life. The execution of Essex, a romantic favorite, equally condemns Elizabeth to a short life of regret.

Nineteenth-century middle-class attitudes towards Elizabeth's suitors reveal much about how femininity was intimately connected with marital status, age, and sexuality. Elizabeth's romance with Leicester, which was at its height during her twenties and thirties, receives a very different treatment than her romance with Essex, which occurred during her sixties and his thirties. Victorian authors consider both relationships inappropriate, but with differing rationales; despite this, the discomfort with her marital status persists.¹⁹⁴ Attempts to revise the narrative were made: an 1870 play explains Elizabeth's marital state by creating a star-crossed romance between her and Edward Courtenay, who led a revolt during Queen Mary I's reign. According to the play,

¹⁹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Robert Devereux, 2nd earl of Essex," accessed July 28, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/193212/Robert-Devereux-2nd-earl-of-Essex>.

¹⁹² The veracity of this story is highly disputed.

¹⁹³ Yonge, *Young Folks*; *The Children's Picture Book*, 189; Goodrich, *Lives*, Kindle Locations 4016-4030. Interestingly, Dickens does not specifically mention the tale, only that Elizabeth was saddened by the death of the Countess, a close friend. Dickens, *A Child's History*.

¹⁹⁴ Elizabeth's own advisors experienced the same discomfort: no candidates were perfectly suited, but even an ill-fitted partner was better than an unmarried woman. Some attitudes apparently do not change through the centuries; as previously mentioned, the Victorians were not as far from their predecessors as they liked to think.

Courtenay's execution created the Virgin Queen, who could not marry because her love was already lost.¹⁹⁵ By creating a faithful romantic heroine, Victorian authors attempted to fit Elizabeth's marital status into one more in line with contemporary gender ideologies. Elizabeth's flirtations with her courtiers, which continued after she had ceased to be a viable marriage candidate (that is, after menopause, when she could no longer produce an heir) were largely distasteful to middle-class Victorian audiences. Her vanity and flirtations were disgraceful for someone of her age, particularly for a spinster. While spinsterhood was not criminal, it was considered unnatural by the standards of Victorian middle-class morality, which stressed women's natural place as that of wife; these arguments were a prominent part of literature aimed at women. This was particularly true if the spinster in question had willfully refused multiple marriage offers, as Elizabeth had. Aiken depicts Elizabeth's marital status as a willful act of pride: "With all her coquetry, her head was clear, her passions were cool; and men began to perceive that there was little chance of prevailing with her to gratify her heart or her fancy at the expense of that independence on which her lofty temper led her to set so high a value."¹⁹⁶ Elizabeth's insistence on remaining unmarried was another vice, that of pride. Her pride in her marital status underpins Victorian beliefs that the Virgin Queen was morally defective.

The stress placed on women's place in marriage made Elizabeth's behavior suspect; her legendary chastity becomes a miserly trait. Elizabeth's flirtatious chastity stood in such contrast to Victorian values that it was easily converted to an exploitative

¹⁹⁵ Tom Taylor, *Twixt Axe and Crown, or the Lady Elizabeth, a Historical Play*, (London: Samuel French, 1870), 57.

¹⁹⁶ Aiken, *Memoirs*, Kindle Locations 4645-4647.

and frustrated promiscuity.¹⁹⁷ The continuance of her flirtatious attitude as her age advanced was disgraceful and unnatural; elderly women were supposed to be matronly and past sexual desire, as represented by Queen Victoria. After Essex' death, her undesirable traits become particularly galling. Dickens makes particular fun of her conceit:

It is probable that the death of her young and gallant favourite in the prime of his good qualities, was never off her mind afterwards, but she held out, the same vain, obstinate and capricious woman, for another year. Then she danced before her Court on a state occasion—and cut, I should think, a mighty ridiculous figure, doing so in an immense ruff, stomacher and wig, at seventy years old. (*A Child's History*)

Not only does Elizabeth commit the sin of vanity in her older years, but she does so at the expense of a younger man, a candidate who, despite his lack of royal blood, would be considered inherently more suited to rule than the aging Elizabeth. Elizabeth's insistence on maintaining the fiction of her youthful femininity also reminds middle-class Victorian audiences of another feminine duty she failed to fulfill: providing an heir. Elizabeth's age prevented her from having children, but the pretense of youth relies on fertility as an underlying factor. By asserting her youthfulness, Elizabeth emphasizes her failed feminine and royal duty. Her behavior, neither resigned spinster or matronly wife and mother, contradicts the assigned roles of middle-class Victorian women. In contrast, by 1875, when Wilkie's portrait first appeared, Queen Victoria was emerging from her long and often publicly contentious widowhood as the epitome of matronly dignity. Victoria's stately return to public life contrasts vividly with depictions of Elizabeth's old age. One is dignified, formal, and controlled, the height of majestic regal powerlessness; the other, wild, vain, and flirtatious, with none of the majesty, but all of the political power.

¹⁹⁷ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 154.

Victorian authors dealt with this contradiction of roles by portraying Elizabeth in either her childhood or her dotage, avoiding the subject of her fertile years entirely. Discussions of Elizabeth's childhood in particular were part of a growing trend that capitalized on the growing Victorian reverence for children, in particular the exploration of "girlhood" as a special time in female life. The word "girlhood" itself appeared only in 1785, and then disappeared until 1831, as idealized Victorian childhood became a popular topic.¹⁹⁸ Depictions of the childhood of famous women were popular, even fictional ones; Seth Lerer has traced the first work of literature intended for girls as the 1851-1852 *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* by Mary Cowden Clarke.¹⁹⁹ Elizabeth's childhood became a part of this greater trend, starting with William Russell's 1857 *Extraordinary Women: Their Girlhood and Early Life*.²⁰⁰ Russell's Elizabeth is unsympathetic, even in her youth; he credits her with false sorrow at her father's death and with a political prudence that borders on scheming.²⁰¹

Conversely, the picture which accompanies the chapter, *Elizabeth in the house of Lady Bryan*, is contradictory to Russell's theme.²⁰² The engraving shows Elizabeth with her older sister Mary, who has been aged down by several years, reading pleasantly together. Behind them, Elizabeth's governess Lady Bryan turns sorrowfully away, presaging the future conflict between the two sisters. The image shows Mary and Elizabeth as a family unit with their 'mother' as Lady Bryan; the religious conflict between the two has not yet occurred. Portraying a childhood unity between the sisters

¹⁹⁸Seth Lerer, "Theaters of Girlhood: Domesticity, Desire, and Performance in Female Fiction." In *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 232.

¹⁹⁹ Lerer, "Theatres of Girlhood," 232.

²⁰⁰ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 169.

²⁰¹ Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 85-86.

²⁰² Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 83.

neatly avoids the religious question and puts Elizabeth securely in the domestic realm.²⁰³

A conniving princess in the written account, Elizabeth is an exemplary child in the pictorial. Mary Queen of Scot's childhood is also described; it is considerably more flattering.²⁰⁴

Other accounts attempt to trace Elizabeth's faults to her childhood; *The Girl's Own Paper*, which opened its first issue with a full-length portrait of the young Princess Victoria, featured a girlhood account of Elizabeth in one of its first issues.²⁰⁵ Crowned by a portrait of the aged Virgin Queen, it begins by stating that Elizabeth's birth was a cause of disappointment, and that tone echoes throughout the article.²⁰⁶ Her fickleness and vanity are traced to her governess, a common Victorian idea and an interesting one to place in a girls' magazine. The article closes with the Venetian ambassador's 1557 description of Elizabeth, which politely remarks upon her vanity, particularly with regards to her hands.²⁰⁷ By emphasizing Elizabeth's vanity and deceitfulness during her childhood, Victorian authors find explanations for her adult personality. Her childhood defects vindicate negative assessments of her adulthood; she was a rotten apple from the beginning.

²⁰³ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 170.

²⁰⁴ Russell contends that Mary's childhood personality defends her from her later accusations: "...Mary, prisoned and slain by lawless violence, shields the beautiful Queen of Scots far more effectually than her stoutest and most eloquent champions, from the arrows of a demonstrative accusation which would else be irresistible." Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 143.

²⁰⁵ *The Girl's Own Paper* began in 1880 as a religious penny weekly 'for girls of all classes,' although the content was thoroughly middle-class in nature. It attracted many notable writers of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. "Girl's Own Paper, the". In *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English*, edited by Victor Watson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

http://ezproxy.csbsju.edu/login?url=http%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fchildbooks%2Fgirl_s_own_paper_the%2F0 (accessed October 17, 2014.) "The Princess Victoria," after the picture by Hayter, in *The Girl's Own Paper*, Volume 1, 1880.

²⁰⁶ *The Girl's Own Paper*, Volume 1, 'The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth' vol.1—No. 9, February 28, 1880, pp. 135.

²⁰⁷ 'The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth' vol.1—No. 9, February 28, 1880, pp. 135. 229.

Depictions of Elizabeth's childhood contrast vividly with depictions of her old age. As previously discussed, her vanity and flirtatiousness are severely treated by Victorian authors as the folly of an old woman. The most damning depiction of this is Augustus Leopold Egg's *Queen Elizabeth in a Rage*.²⁰⁸ The image depicts the elderly queen sitting stupefied near her bed, presumably having just looked into the mirror her lady-in-waiting is holding. The courtiers surrounding her lean in towards her, gauging her reaction. The painting, which received such acclaim that it earned Egg his Royal Academy associateship, reveals not the glorious queen Elizabeth portrayed herself as being, but rather as an old woman shocked into realizing the truth of her lost youth. Its connections to Essex's death (the incident depicted having allegedly occurred after his execution) further emphasize the folly and grief of the old woman. The painting, lauded for its authenticity, becomes a looking-glass in itself, revealing Victorian antipathy towards Elizabeth.²⁰⁹ Interestingly, Egg's portrait appeared ten years after Victoria's ascension to the throne, during her marriage, instead of later on in the century. The discomfort displayed in the painting then reflects early anxieties over the roles of the domestic and the public in Victoria's own reign, as well as contemporary political arguments over the relevancy of the monarchy and the revolutions of 1848.²¹⁰

Egg's and Wilkie's portrayals are not the only ones in which Elizabeth's age is stressed; the emphasis on her age appeared not only in painting for middle-class adults, but also their daughters. *The Girl's Own Paper* included among its articles a lengthy history of the Virgin Queen in 1892. The depiction of the twenty-five-year-old

²⁰⁸ Augustus Leopold Egg, *Queen Elizabeth in a Rage*, oil on canvas, 1848 (Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/queen-elizabeth-in-a-rage-21346>

²⁰⁹ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 163.

²¹⁰ Watson and Dobbs, *England's Elizabeth*, 164.

Elizabeth's entrance into London upon her accession features a queen who is more akin to a middle-aged woman than a youthful monarch.²¹¹ The three other images featured in the same article follow the same theme; Elizabeth's age is as much on display as her magnificent gowns. Even the girlhood account previously published by *The Girl's Own* features an aged Elizabeth.²¹² By featuring only the elderly Elizabeth in these accounts aimed at young girls, Elizabeth's marital status is reinforced as a sort of 'bogyman' for young girls: Remain single and vain, the article seems to say, and you will end your days like this. One portrait, subtitled *All Is Vanity*, further links Elizabeth's old age to her vanity; the fact that Elizabeth is dancing in front of James I's envoy implicitly comments upon her ultimate failure and the victory of Mary, Queen of Scots over the aging Elizabeth.²¹³ Elizabeth's vanity is not only a personal disgrace, but also the disgrace of a monarchy, as she fails to provide the legitimate heir needed to continue the dynasty. Instead, the English throne will pass to the heir of the more acceptable woman, Mary, Queen of Scots, therefore proving a final victory of femininity over political power, and reinforcing Victorian conceits that the two were incompatible.

Conclusion

The depictions of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots illuminate 19th century British attitudes towards women in power. There was not a universal opinion with a simple answer, but rather a negotiation between what the Victorians saw as the proper

²¹¹ *The Girl's Own Paper*, Vol. 13. 'Elizabeth Tudor' Vol. XIII—No. 640, April 2, 1892, pp. 420.

²¹² *The Girl's Own Paper*, Volume 1, 'The Girlhood of Queen Elizabeth' vol.1—No. 9, February 28, 1880, pp. 135.

²¹³ Sarah Tytler, *Queen Elizabeth: All is Vanity*. From the painting by Leslett J. Pott, In *The Girl's Own Paper*, Vol. 13. Queen Elizabeth' Vol. XIII—No. 654, July 9, 1892, pp. 641.

domestic role of women and the very public power of queens. By emphasizing the divide between the two queens' public regal role and their private personalities, Victorian historical narratives confirm their biases about women's nature and women in power and comment on their own monarch. By denigrating Elizabeth's womanhood while respecting her regal power, Victorian authors and artists commented upon the dire fate of powerful single women while maintaining the popular idea of the golden "Elizabethan Age." Elizabeth is not a good queen because of her femininity, but rather in spite of it; her "masculine" traits and Tudor connections are what earn her praise, not her feminine traits. Elizabeth is the exception that proves the rule, not an example of ideal queenship. Disparaging Elizabeth as a jealous tyrant in particular also reflects Victorian ideas about the nature of political power; instead of being concentrated in a single, potentially unsuitable ruler, Victorian authors suggest that proper political power belongs in the hands of the male Parliament. Queen Victoria, then, should not be given more power than she already has because the inherent problems of monarchical rule would only be emphasized by her femininity. Therefore, Victorian authors reinforce their views of femininity while also spreading ideas about the proper sphere for political power.

It would seem, then, that the acclaim of Mary, Queen of Scots would contradict this mistrust of female rule; however, Mary's idealized womanhood both legitimizes her reign and confirms Victorian stereotypes. Mary exemplifies the ideal feminine traits; she is subservient to men both in political matters and religious ones, as well as fulfilling her womanly duty by marrying three times and providing for the thrones of Scotland and England by producing a male heir. In addition, her piety and dramatic history make her a romantic heroine with which it is easy for 19th middle class audiences to sympathize.

These factors make Mary's reign palatable; although she is not a legitimate male ruler, there is enough masculine power surrounding her that her reign is valid. The fact that it is ultimately unsuccessful is then a confirmation of female political unsuitability, despite her harmony with Victorian gender norms. The conflict between her essential femininity and her political status is simply too great, even with male guidance; Mary's reign then becomes a commentary on the ultimate sphere for a woman, that of the domestic. Mary is a poor ruler, but an excellent woman, and Victorian narratives are careful to stress the superiority of the latter.

Victorian depictions of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots reinforce gendered ideas about the nature of women and the nature of power – namely, that the two are incompatible. Women cannot be rulers without giving up their femininity and becoming masculinized; should they try to rule in a feminine manner, they will ultimately prove unsuccessful. Given that the Victorian period itself owes its name to a queen regnant, these ideas about women in power reflect Victorian uncertainty about the proper role for a queen whose throne was held in her own right, but whose nature was profoundly domestic. Through portrayals of former queens, Victorian authors were able to express anxieties about Victoria's place as head of the masculinized British Empire. For Victorian middle-class writers, Queen Victoria combines the best qualities of Elizabeth and Mary: she is a powerful cultural figure, but with limited power and a thorough reliance upon male political figures. By showcasing the rival queens as the extremes of female power, Victorian authors highlighted the virtues of their own ruler.

Appendix A:



Samuel Sidley, *Mary, Queen of Scots and John Knox*, oil on canvas, 1874 (Townley Hall Art Gallery & Museum, Lancashire).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/mary-queen-of-scots-and-john-knox>



William Powell Frith, *John Knox Reproving Mary, Queen of Scots*, oil on canvas, 1844 (Museums Sheffield). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/john-knox-reproving-mary-queen-of-scots-71794>.



Robert Inerarity Herdman, *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, oil on canvas, 1867 (Glasgow Museums, Glasgow).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/execution-of-mary-queen-of-scots-84464>



Alfred Elmore, *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots*, oil on paper, 1875 (National Galleries Scotland).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/execution-of-mary-queen-of-scots-210025>



Laslett John Pott, *Mary, Queen of Scots Being Led to her Execution*, oil on canvas, 1871 (Nottingham City Council, Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery).
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/mary-queen-of-scots-being-led-to-her-execution-46765>

William Luson Thomas, after Scipione Vannutelli. *Mary, Queen of Scots being led to execution*, wood engraving, late 19th century (National Portrait Gallery, London).

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw62153/Mary-Queen-of-Scots-being-led-to-execution?LinkID=mp02996&search=s&sText=mary+queen+of+scots&wPage=6&role=sit&rNo=120>.





William Luson Thomas, after Henrietta Mary Ada Ward, *Queen Mary Quitting Stirling Castle*, wood engraving, 1863, (National Portrait Gallery, London.)

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portraitLarge/mw62154/Queen-Mary-quitting-Stirling-Castle>



Anonymous, *Mary, Queen of Scots with Her Son, James*, oil on slate, 19th century, (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/435780>



William Craig Shirreff, *Mary, Queen of Scots Escaping from Lochleven Castle*, oil on canvas, 1805, (National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh).

<http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/s/artist/william-craig-shirreff/object/mary-queen-of-scots-escaping-from-lochleven-castle-ng-2255>



Thomas Milton, after Robert Smirke, *Interview between Elizabeth and Essex*, line engraving, 1806 (National Portrait Gallery, London).

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw126419/Interview-between-Queen-Elizabeth--the-Earl-of-Essex?LinkID=mp01452&search=sas&sText=Elizabeth+&wPage=4&role=sit&rNo=96>



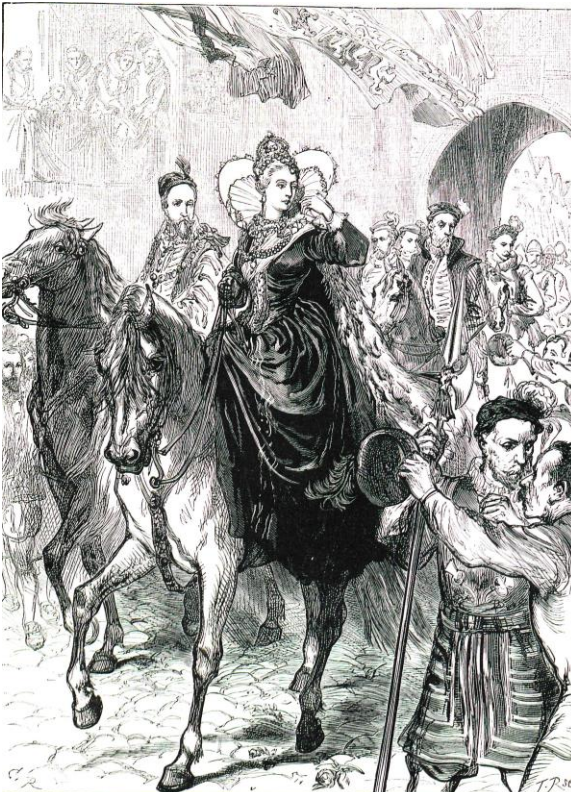
David Wilkie Wynfield, *Incident in the Life of Queen Elizabeth*, oil on canvas, 1875, (Wolverhampton Art Gallery). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/an-incident-in-the-life-of-queen-elizabeth-i-18829>

Russell, *Extraordinary Women*, 83.

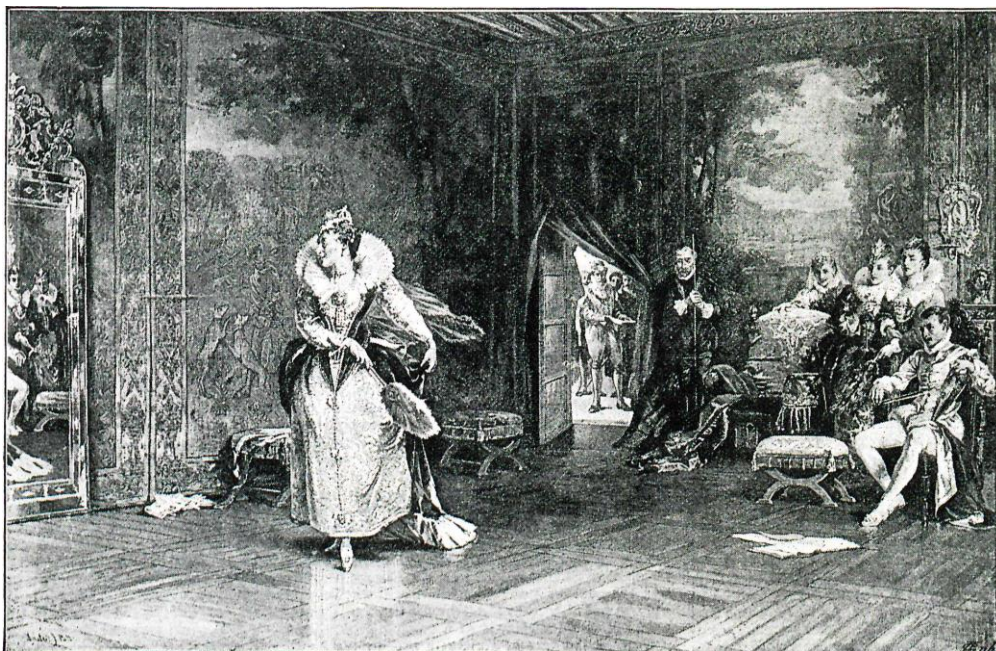




Augustus Leopold Egg, *Queen Elizabeth in a Rage*, oil on canvas, 1848 (Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council),
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/queen-elizabeth-in-a-rage-21346>



The Girl's Own Paper, Vol. 13. 'Elizabeth Tudor' Vol. XIII—No. 640, April 2, 1892, pp. 420.



Sarah Tytler, *Queen Elizabeth: All is Vanity*. From the painting by Leslett J. Pott, In *The Girl's Own Paper*, Vol. 13. Queen Elizabeth' Vol. XIII—No. 654, July 9, 1892, pp. 641.

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