

# The Queen's queendom: Negotiating the rhetoric of the Elizabeth–Anjou courtship (1572–1584)

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## Abstract

This article juxtaposes the letters written by Elizabeth I to her last suitor, Francis, Duke of Anjou, with John Stubbs' virulent tract *The discoverie of a gaping gulf* (1578) that opposed the match to propose that Elizabeth I challenged her belligerent male subjects in a game of semiotic control. I suggest that Elizabeth I fashioned her own 'queendom' – a discursive realm that complemented her political kingdom – where she attempted to formulate a code of masculinity that would celebrate gynaecocracy and facilitate a consummation of her sexuality. I show how, in her correspondence with Anjou, Elizabeth I sought to create a model husband for herself who would be sympathetic and subordinate to her political authority. I tease out the playful intercourse between the amorous and the political in Elizabeth I's language to argue that she insisted on a unique union of her two bodies (the male body politic and the female body natural) which has largely gone unnoticed in current scholarship. Through a close engagement with Elizabethan rhetorical practices, this article aims to inspire a more nuanced reading of gendered identities in early modern England.

**Keywords:** female body natural, gendered identities, male body politic, queendom, rhetorical practices

## Introduction

Arguably, the most distinctive feature of the Elizabethan period is the anomalous nature of Elizabeth I's sovereignty which was compounded by her unmarried status. Louis Montrose (2006, p. 115) succinctly presents the state of affairs: 'From Elizabeth's accession until her death, the circumstantial fact that the body politic of English kingship was incarnated in the natural body of an unmarried woman ensured that gender and sexuality were foregrounded in representing the Elizabethan state.' The medieval theory of the king's two bodies provided an effortless medium through which Elizabeth's male body politic was privileged over her female body natural, to command her unruly male subjects who were unwilling to surrender to female governance. Critics routinely present Elizabeth as not only supportive of but also as encouraging this strategy. Stephen Cohen (2000, p. 24) claims that 'Elizabeth used the medieval insistence on the priority of the traditionally male body politic to counterbalance the innate inadequacies of her body natural'. Although Mary Beth Rose (2002, p. 37) delineates a complexity in Elizabeth's self-representation, she too regards Elizabeth as valorising the male body politic at the expense of her female body natural: 'One of Elizabeth's major rhetorical strategies is to claim her femaleness in order to discard it, thus disarming her subjects and neutralizing their insecurities about female rule by attaching herself to the greater prestige of male heroism and kingship.' More recently, Alessandra Petrina

and Laura Tosi (2011) have argued that Elizabeth strove to separate her two bodies and fashioned her body politic as superior to her body natural. Departing from this putative understanding, I argue that Elizabeth used an intricate set of rhetorical techniques to manipulate early modern gender discourse in a far more nuanced manner than has been hitherto recognised. While her words did '[disarm] her subjects', they did not uniformly exalt 'the greater prestige of male heroism and kingship' (Rose 2002, p. 37). Instead, in my study of the works centering on the proposed match with Anjou (1572–1584), I argue that Elizabeth I used a complex and variable set of rhetorical strategies that, on occasion, created a unique union rather than a hierarchy between her two bodies. Insofar as 'politic' could also mean something 'skilfully contrived' (*OED*, adj. 2.a), a sense that was in vogue in the early modern period, this article proposes that Elizabeth's shrewd manipulation of her two bodies indicates a 'politic' language that facilitates gynaeocracy. I posit that her politic language battled, even as it revised, a male subject's relationship with his sovereign. Contiguous to the political realm where she ruled, I identify a desire in Elizabeth to create a discursive 'queendom' where she had absolute semiotic control. This desire for both political and discursive control is perhaps most sharply expressed in Elizabeth I's fraught courtship with Francis, Duke of Anjou.

Elizabeth I's proposed match to Anjou is widely regarded as 'the most intense and controversial issue to have visited Elizabethan politics' (Worden 2007, p. 71). The political dimension of the proposal was further complicated by the perplexing issue of representing Elizabeth during 1572–1584: She was not quite the young queen, a nubile bride-to-be, and her apotheosis as the Virgin Queen only transpired in the wake of the Spanish Armada of 1588. The matrimonial alliance between Elizabeth and Anjou was first proposed by Catherine de Medici and Henri III with a view to strengthening the Treaty of Blois signed by England and France in April 1572. The Treaty of Blois was a crucial political alliance between the two countries which responded to a delicate international climate that was witnessing a formidable growth of Spanish power. Although it was in the best interests of both countries to preserve and honour the terms of the treaty, it is clear that France viewed the durability of this newly forged friendship with its historic rival with a degree of scepticism. For France, political alliance had little value unless validated by a dynastic alliance. It is worthwhile to observe the note of surprise in Elizabeth's letter to Walsingham, her ambassador in France, dated July 23, 1572, on first receiving this proposal where she comments on the 'matter [as] somewhat strange' (2002, p. 205).<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth was struck by the difference in age between her and Anjou (then Duke of Alençon), for at the time of the letter she was 38 and he 17. Previous negotiations to wed her and Henri III of France had proved futile. Yet notwithstanding Elizabeth's initial dislike of the match, the marriage negotiations lasted for 12 years and concluded only with Anjou's death in 1584. The protracted negotiations were punctuated by Elizabeth's 'politic' language that was frequently marshalled for diplomatic leverage and a shrewd expression of her sovereignty.

In the light of the historical moment I am exploring, Elizabeth's speech to her parliament at the close of its session in March 1576 offers itself as an apt example of her politic language. Responding to parliament's plea for her marriage, she begins like an apprehensive author who demands control over the meaning of her words.

Do I see God's most sacred, holy Word and text of holy Writ drawn to so divers senses, being never so precisely taught, and shall I hope that my speech can pass forth through so many ears without mistaking, where so many ripe and divers wits do offer bend themselves to conster than attain the perfect understanding? (p. 168)

Elizabeth's authorial anxiety about misinterpretation is bound up with the nature of her audience. 'Ripe and divers' wits of the all-male assembly work towards 'constering' her speech rather than achieving its 'perfect understanding'. As we will soon see, Elizabeth in her speech confounds these 'ripe and divers' wits by simultaneously demanding and refusing access to 'perfect understanding' of her words. Further, while acknowledging her authorial position by drawing parallels between her speech and the 'text of holy Writ' she rejects a conventional authorial stance and remarks that '[i]f any look for eloquence, I shall deceive their hope' (p. 168). In deceiving the hopes of her male audience, Elizabeth baffles them. Concomitantly, despite her wry remark on 'ripe and divers wits' and their exertion towards interpretation rather than 'perfect understanding', Elizabeth acknowledges that her actions have previously been 'favourably interpreted' by the assembly (p. 168). Elizabeth thus simultaneously robs her audience of and offers them the power of interpretation, thereby seeking a monopoly over semiotics. Reminding the audience of her expectations is less a retraction of her earlier fear of misinterpretation, and more a clever narrative device to entrance them and thus facilitate a positive reception for her speech.

Elizabeth proceeds to thank God for the 'good success' of the 17 years of her rule and then makes a remarkable declaration:

Not the finest wit, the judgement that can rake most deeply or take up captious ears with pleasing tales, hath greater care to guide you to the safest state, or would be gladder to establish you where men ought to think themselves most sure and happy, than she that speaks these words. (p. 169)

After disparaging 'rich and diverse wits' in the beginning of her speech, Elizabeth rebukes 'the finest wit' for its interference with her governance and its attempt to channel her authority. She displays her awareness of the subtext of the 'pleasing tales' that effectively question her royal power, and is equally dismissive of 'the judgement' that tends to excoriate her words rather than achieve 'perfect understanding' from them. This 'perfect understanding' would free 'captious ears' of narratives that are hostile to Elizabeth's authority, and yield submission. Read in conjunction with her refusal to play the part of an eloquent speaker, Elizabeth's distrust of 'pleasing tales' – and by extension their authors – indicates a resistance to writings which consolidate early modern gender codes while signalling the development of a new narrative practice. Elizabeth's reproachful manner towards 'finest wit', 'captious ears' and 'pleasing tales' is neatly followed by one of instruction, where men '*ought to think themselves most sure and happy*' in her rule (italics added). For men to achieve 'the safest state' they must place all their faith in the narrative of 'she that speaks these words' and disregard 'pleasing tales'.

This speech exposes a power struggle between the Queen and 'the judgement that can rake most deeply' which demanded her marriage. Interestingly, while the concerns around her marriage were essentially political in nature, Elizabeth I reads them as reflections on her body natural where she

is reduced to early modern gender norms that demand marriage. She reminds her audience that she is ‘not a milkmaid with a pail on [her] arm, whereby [her] private self might be little set by’ (p. 170). The analogy works at two conflicting levels, yet in a bizarre way both reinforce Elizabeth I’s authority. The stark contrast between the Queen and a milkmaid censures parliament for their insolence in instructing a sovereign. At the same time, however, Elizabeth I, in likening herself to a humble female subject, demands an equal right of making a personal choice on the question of marriage. She thus empowers herself by uniting her body natural with her body political. The speech constructs Elizabeth I as an ‘indifferentest judge’ on the subject of her marriage, which stands in contrast to prescriptive ‘pleasing tales’ (p. 170). She may be indifferent but she has not lost the right to exercise judgement; indeed she has deftly and cleverly delivered it. The Queen not only separates herself from the patriarchal economy of marriage, but also artfully demands that the male assembly acquiesce to her decision. This demand is accompanied by a tacit threat where she warns parliament: ‘Let good heed be taken lest in reaching too far after future good, you peril not the present’ (p. 170). Having deemed herself as the only one who can ensure their ‘safest state’, Elizabeth reminds the audience of the ‘peril’ that ensues from royal displeasure.

Curiously, Elizabeth finishes her speech by wishing that the assembly ‘had tasted some drops of Lethe’s flood to deface and cancel these ... speeches out of [its] remembrance’ (p. 171). This self-effacing note does little to diminish the force of the words preceding it that act as a testimony to Elizabeth’s position on marriage. The speech earlier refers to the speaker’s ‘good lesson’ where Elizabeth was ‘required with *reason* to remember’ the absolute desirability of her marriage (p. 170, italics added). Elizabeth’s wish confounds the listeners and acts as a gleeful and subversive antithesis to the faculty of ‘reason’, which she was advised to heed on the subject of her marriage. The non-linear progression of an argument that begins with Elizabeth’s demand for her narrative to have supremacy over ‘pleasing tales’ and concludes with her wish to obliterate it, reinforces her oppositional narratological policy.

It is precisely this circular, confounding sophistry that Elizabeth I rallied to her advantage in responding to Anjou’s suit for marriage. Commenting on the French delegation, Elizabeth remarks,

... yet such was their importunacy in reciting of many reasons and arguments to move us not to mislike thereof, in respect as well of the strength of the amity which this amity should give to the continuance of this last league ... tending to remove the difficulties and to gain our contentation and liking of the said duke. (p. 206)

While the French delegation exalted the ‘worthiness of the said duke of *Alençon*’ and recited his ‘excellent virtues and good conditions’ the political thrust of the suit was evident. Elizabeth was correct in recognising that this instance of ‘very great goodwill’ was designed to ensure ‘the very perfect continuance of the amity lately contracted’ (p. 207). She was clearly attentive to the diplomatic demands of the situation, for although she acknowledged ‘the difficulties in this matter ... [which she] could not digest’, she declined ‘to give any such resolute answer as might miscontent the [French] ambassadors’ (p. 206). Simultaneously, Elizabeth instructs Walsingham in the letter to assure the French that she has ‘as great a desire to have the same amity continued and

strengthened' as them (p. 207). It is difficult to evaluate the exact sentiments of Elizabeth on this match, but it is likely that she did not consider it to be worthy of prolonged deliberation and that 'the inconvenience of the difference of the age' seemed a reasonable and insurmountable objection. Yet she did not consider the matter resolved to her satisfaction and wrote to Walsingham again two days later 'to lay open before the king [her] conceit in the matter' (p. 210). It is in this letter, dated July 25, 1572, that Elizabeth's distinctive 'politic' language is employed to take advantage of the political opportunities that the match presented.

In unfolding her 'conceit' to the king, Elizabeth I uses ambivalent language that effectively erases her rejection of the match. While she compounds the difficulties of the match by identifying religious differences as equally important as the difference in ages, she recognises the courtship as a channel for communication that will facilitate diplomatic negotiations and therefore solicits it. She represents herself in a unique position which enables her to make demands. She insists on a personal interview, remarking that in marriages 'nothing doth so much rule both parties as to have their own opinions satisfied' (p. 210). Anticipating French disapproval of such a request, Elizabeth I commands Walsingham to

dare affirm that you know there can be no example showed us of the like of this: that is, that either the elder son of France or any younger was at any time to be matched in marriage with such a prince having such kingdoms as we have, by whom such an advancement might have grown as may by marriage with us, both to the duke himself and to the king and crown of France. (p. 211)

Her language reveals her expectation that her potential husband will recognise her political authority. Uniquely, her political position empowers her to advance her husband's merit and raise his worth, rather than the other way round. This nonpareil discursive location creates an unprecedented requirement for the Queen to fashion a code of masculinity for her husband that is sympathetic to her sovereign status. This is evident in Elizabeth's demand that Anjou's arrival in England be 'secret and private[ly], without any outward pomp or show' to avoid public resentment (p. 212). Given the gendered paradigm of early modern society, Elizabeth's demand that her future husband be sensitive and adapt to the needs of her 'state and calling' is singular. Elizabeth's authorial manoeuvres subvert contemporary adages which suggested that her body natural debilitated her body politic. She instead works towards creating a unique union between her two bodies that strengthens her authority. However, not all Elizabethans were sympathetic to the favourable view that Elizabeth I took of Anjou and positioned their resistance as semiotic adversaries to the Queen's 'politic' language. The most incendiary of these was John Stubbs' *The discoverie of a gaping gulf*.

*The discoverie of a gaping gulf*, published in 1579, is a charged piece of writing vehemently opposing the proposed marriage between Elizabeth and François, Duke of Anjou. The polemical tract goes to extraordinary lengths to convince the reader that Stubbs' fears are justly founded. The argument, particularly in the light of the St Bartholomew Day's massacre, is persuasive and stirring. The political and religious danger that England faces because of this alliance is made imminent through Stubbs' provocative prose. Stubbs warns Elizabeth not to fall prey to the council of her advisers who are canvassing this alliance. His concern is that a Catholic consort would

inevitably result in England's descent into Catholicism. He depicts the French – particularly the ruling dynasty – as scheming, duplicitous and a treacherous race, venomous to the political health of the country. Historical evidence of unhappy Anglo-French royal marriages is amply referenced in his work, inviting the reader to conclude that the match between Elizabeth and Anjou will have disastrous consequences for the English nation (1968, pp. 86–87).<sup>2</sup>

The *Gaping gulf* plays on fears that England will be reduced to a colony furthering French political ambitions. Stubbs presents a variety of scenarios where the Queen may have to leave the country in the hands of a governor to take up residence in France with her husband. Likewise, he showers the reader with every conceivable permutation of the possible offspring the couple may have, relentlessly denying that any of them would solve the vexed issue of Elizabeth's succession (pp. 51–56). The text oscillates between being scathing in its scrutiny of the repercussions of this alliance and pleading in its direct addresses to Elizabeth. Stubbs' militant Protestantism is veiled by an ostensible devotion to the Queen and his over-riding concern for her wellbeing. However, the Queen was far from being flattered by the fervent exclamations of loyalty and devotion that litter the *Gaping gulf*. The proclamation that banned the tract interprets these as 'flattering glosses towards her majesty to cover the rest of the manifest depraving of her majesty and her actions to her people' (*Tudor* 1968, p. 447). This not only demonstrates the Queen's keen grasp of hermeneutics, but also alerts us to the terms on which Stubbs' 'flattering glosses' were offered. A close examination of the work reveals that the root of Stubbs' 'manifest depraving of her majesty' lay in his inability to come to terms with female authority and a masculinity that felt imperilled under it.

The *Gaping gulf* negates the possibility of successfully achieving a unique union between the Queen's two bodies and is irreverent towards Elizabeth's discursive attempts to realise it. Stubbs typically rehearses aphorisms which identify the Queen's body natural as debilitating to her authority, thereby urging readers to share his hostility towards the French match. He argues that the French have

not [sent] Satan in body of a serpent, but the old serpent in shape of a man, whose sting is in his mouth, and who doth his endeavour to seduce our Eve, that she and we may lose this English paradise. Who because she is also our Adam and sovereign lord or lordly lady of this land, it is so much the more dangerous, and therefore he so much the more busily bestirs him. (1968, pp. 3–4)

The comparison of Elizabeth to both Adam and Eve represents the conflict that her two bodies posed and the confounding effect it had on her male subjects. Stubbs is unable to wholly accept her female body natural as a monarch. Her body politic is his 'sovereign lord' and her body natural needs to be accounted for by subjugating it to her body politic: She is a 'lordly lady'. 'Lordly' not only syntactically takes precedence over the 'lady', it also offers a vigilant male presence lording over the female. However, in alluding to the biblical tale of the Fall, the text reveals a moment where the strategy of privileging Elizabeth's body politic over her body natural no longer serves the purpose of prompting abiding subservience from her male subjects. Though Stubbs' tone is that of conjecture and speculation – 'we *may* lose this English paradise' – the surety of the metaphor conceals within it Stubbs' personal verdict on the situation: Adam *was* beguiled by Eve and they *did*

lose their paradise. Later in his argument, his allusion to the narrative of the Fall in his discussion of the Queen's body natural compounds this sense of tragic inevitability. Dismissing claims of Monsieur going through a religious conversion under Elizabeth's influence, Stubbs insists that the reverse is more likely to happen. He argues that if the 'weaker vessel, be strong enough to draw man' – Eve successfully convinced Adam to transgress – one can readily determine 'how much more forcibly shall the stronger vessel pull weak woman' (p. 11).

Stubbs opines that Elizabeth's body politic does not safeguard her from the social position that her body natural is expected to occupy. By divine decree she 'oweth both awe and obedience [to her husband], howsoever the laws by prerogative or her place by pre-eminence privilege her' (p. 11). The text generously references accepted wisdom on a wife's subordination to her spiritually superior husband. Stubbs is doubtful whether 'it be safe that a stranger and Frenchman should as owner possess our Queen' (p. 37). He is convinced that her husband shall 'rule her'. In referring to the monarch being ruled, the text reflects the compelling influence of early modern gender codes where the Queen's body natural, though 'weaker' than her body politic, mutates the power of her stately being, resulting in the loss of its superior position. If this reversal of hierarchy was not worrying enough, Stubbs' paranoia escalates when he suggests that by not following the designated path for her body natural, Elizabeth risks losing her body politic altogether. He writes that if Elizabeth chooses to honour her body politic and decides to remain in England while Anjou dwells in France she will see 'herself despised or not wifelike esteemed' and will therefore be reduced to an 'eclipsed sun diminished in sovereignty' (p. 49).

While Stubbs' perspective on a woman's place in society seems to be in concordance with established norms of early modern times, his reference to it in discussing the monarch's marriage reveals an astonishing gap in the literature written in defence of Elizabeth's rule in the early part of her reign. Though there was an acknowledgement of her authority by her 'faithful and true subjects', those male writers seem to be assured that, if not in the public at least in the private sphere, Elizabeth would be under some degree of male supervision, namely that of her husband. Both Deborah and Judith, biblical characters who were often used to create a sense of acceptance of Elizabeth's anomalous position, were married women. The absent male figure of the husband could have been a source of comfort for Elizabeth's male subjects who were baffled by the lack of precedence of an unmarried queen on the English throne.

Though Elizabeth's subjects had no certain idea that the Anjou alliance would be the last attempt to manifest the elusive husband figure, in the light of her advancing years, they were perhaps beginning to realise that the Queen had effectively escaped the patriarchal surveillance guaranteed by the institution of matrimony. With the reassuring husband-on-the-horizon figure sinking away, a discursive lacuna began to emerge which necessitated a reconfiguration of the Queen's two bodies. In the progress of his argument, Stubbs deftly deals with the ramifications of the presence of an unmarried woman in the position of supreme authority and the volatile effect it has on the previous understanding of her two bodies. In order to conserve the supremacy of the Queen's body politic, Stubbs' argument capitalises on Elizabeth's age and attempts to desexualise her body natural. Stubbs calculates Anjou's 'youth of years [as] an apparent inequality of this match' (p. 72). Further, he

notes that his passion for Elizabeth ‘is quite contrary to his young appetites, which will otherwise have their desire’ (p. 72). This argument feeds into Stubbs’ depiction of the French as guileful and dissembling; elsewhere he paints Anjou as using a ‘cloak of love’ to conceal his true intentions (p. 79). However, it can also equally be read as Elizabeth’s incapacity to inspire erotic desire. In his observance of Elizabeth’s attitude towards marriage, Stubbs contrasts her erstwhile ‘flower of youth’ with her present age that makes a prudent and cautious approach a matter of necessity. The advantage of youth allowed her a ‘constant dislike and indisposed mind toward marriage’, but ‘at these years’ she must submit to ‘best heed and faithfulest advice’. No longer in ‘the flower of her youth’, Elizabeth is forcefully reminded of her diminishing capital in the marriage industry (p. 69).

Stubbs develops an innocuous alternative to the Queen’s sexual body natural by casting it in maternal garb that also bolsters her body politic. Although Stubbs labours over the ‘expectation of death to mother and child’ if the 46-year-old Elizabeth were to experience childbirth, he readily terms her a ‘natural mother’ when it comes to governing her subjects (p. 51, p. 49). This is a clever strategy. Stubbs’ discussion of Elizabeth’s age helps him create her asexual body natural which wards off the political perils that will ensue if the marriage negotiations are consummated. Simultaneously, it hems in the Queen’s sovereign power in benign maternal terms, making it unlikely to be read as a ‘monstrous regiment’. Moreover, Stubbs elaborates on acceptable maternal behaviour in a subtle manner, which is key to understanding the religious conditions upon which fealty to the Queen were predicated. He refers to the biblical tale of Asa whose behaviour towards his mother contravened filial piety, yet who was rewarded with ‘holy praise’ (p. 18). To preserve faith, Asa deposes his idolatrous mother for practising ‘wicked religion to the dishonour of God’. Stubbs instructs Elizabeth to mark the supreme authority of religion and follow Asa’s precedent in condemning impiety and blasphemous rituals, both of them associated with Catholic France, thus effectively steering her away from the marriage proposal.

While there is nothing exceptional about alluding to biblical figures to urge Elizabeth to strengthen the hold of Protestantism in England, the figure of the ‘bad’ mother complicates Stubbs’ argument. Insinuated in this metaphor is a clear threat, as Stubbs suggests a mode of action to Elizabeth’s subjects as much as he does to her. If she accepts Anjou’s proposal, Elizabeth will turn her back on the preservation of Protestantism – a duty expected from the supreme governor of the Church of England. This would transform Elizabeth from a ‘natural mother’ to an unnatural one, which would compel her sons/subjects to follow Asa’s lead. Stubbs supplements his metaphor by giving another example of an unnatural and reprehensible mother in a political context. He portrays Catherine de Medici as a manipulative woman who uses her maternal power in devious ways to meet her self-interest. He writes:

When we speak ... of France and of the practices there against the Church, of their sometime mitigated nature towards religion, or of dissensions in appearance and bruits of jealousy which the Queen Mother puts as vizard upon her practices, we must cast our eye wholly to her, as the very soul whereby the bodies of the King, of Monsieur, of their sister Margaret, and of all the great ones in France do move as a hundred hands to effect her purposes. (p. 25)



Catherine de Medici's conniving 'practices' to 'effect her purposes' illustrate the danger that Stubbs perceived in casting political power in maternal terms. Maternity infused with political strength, if not guarded by caveats, can be equally potent in its ability to threaten the commonwealth. The Queen Mother's command over 'the great ones in France' disconcerts Stubbs as it suggests that the English constitution notwithstanding, Elizabeth too may be able to override parliament. He thus attempts to neatly polarise 'natural' and 'unnatural' mothers in terms of their religious and political choices to force Elizabeth into following his dictate. It is salutary to bear in mind that 'the opposing images of good mother and bad mother, virgin and whore, were ... well-confirmed as means of representing the opposition between the two churches' (Hackett 1995, p. 133). Stubbs reinforces his point by alerting Elizabeth to the public affection she enjoys as being founded on 'the chief and first benefit' she brought about in 'redeem[ing] [England] ... from a foreign king [Philip II]' (1968, p. 36). However, her marriage to Anjou – 'a more dangerous foreigner' – would spawn 'discontentation' in her subjects.

Juxtaposing the *Gaping gulf* with Elizabeth's letters to Anjou reveals how the Queen tactfully manipulates and appropriates discursive tropes of feminine foibles, associated with her body natural, for political leverage. In a letter dated February 14, 1579, for example, written at a critical time when Anjou's army deserted him in the Netherlands and he solicited her political acumen, Elizabeth I frames her advice around characteristic traits of early modern femininity. She writes:

as for the advice that it has pleased you to ask of me, while protesting that I recognize my lack of wit keen enough to instruct you; nevertheless, you will be pleased to accept it as from such a one who will never have a thought that is not dedicated to your honour, and who will not shortly betray you with her advice, but will give it as if my soul depended on it. (p. 233)

Her admission of 'lack of wit' complements contemporary feminine decorum, as does her apparent reluctance to instruct her suitor, but neither prevents her from sharing her political opinions with Anjou.

Towards the end of 1579, when it seemed that Anjou might withdraw his support from the king of Navarre and his Huguenot forces, Elizabeth describes herself as 'she who has lodged [him] in the first rank of what is dearest to [her]' to tactfully continue an interventionist policy in international politics. Earlier in the decade, the St Bartholomew Day's massacre had brought forward the need for a strong Protestant faction in France to combat Catholic oppression. Notwithstanding Elizabeth's reluctance to administer and encourage an aggressive Protestant politics on the continent, she was perpetually plagued by the demands of those in her council who endorsed militant Protestantism. Anjou's existing alliance with the king of Navarre was exactly what Elizabeth needed – a platform from which she could covertly guide and monitor international politics. At the first sign of slackness on Anjou's part, Elizabeth impressed the need for the continuance of Huguenot forces' 'greatest sureties' upon him. But her political instructions were couched in the language of a well-meaning beloved who wished 'all the honour and glory that can accrue to the perpetual renown of a prince' (p. 238).

Yet again in her letter dated December 1579, the intimate language of lovers is used as a vehicle for Elizabeth's political agenda. Elizabeth declares her commitment to Anjou: 'I confess that there is no prince in this world to whom I would more willingly yield to be his, than to yourself' (p. 243). This steadfast declaration of love is contrived to draw Anjou into a pact that demands reciprocity of affection through meeting the beloved's demands. Religious differences between the two acted as a major deterrent to the consummation of the courtship and all negotiations witnessed Anjou being firm in his desire to continue attending private Mass. Elizabeth articulates her stand on this subject in no uncertain terms and lets him know 'that the public exercise of the Roman religion sticks so much in [English] hearts', and that this would be 'a thing so hard for the English to bear that [he] would not be able to imagine it without knowing it'. Elizabeth's narratological manoeuvre situates political difference in a realm of experiential knowledge beyond Anjou's imaginative reach. However, the narrative and the performance of the role of the beloved recognise Anjou's 'rare virtues and sweet nature'. This enables Elizabeth I to impress on her suitor 'to make other resolution than the open exercise of religion' (pp. 243–244). Further, it furnishes an opportunity for her to voice her resentment on the subject of his allowance.

Elizabeth makes obvious her disapproval of the articles of marriage as demanded by the French. The French demands – that Anjou should have joint authority with Elizabeth and be crowned king, and should have a pension of 60 000 pounds during his life – sought to dilute Elizabeth's strength and effectively reduce England to France's political minion. Elizabeth was clearly aware of the political currency of the match, but it is remarkable that she chose not to respond to Anjou's demands by presenting a comparative tally of French and English political power. Instead she chose to act as an injured beloved whose worth in courtship is questioned and held to be trivial in the light of political advantages. In her letter to Sir Amyas Paulet, her ambassador in France, dated May 1579, she complains that Anjou's 'most earnest speeches and protestations' led her to believe that her 'person was the only thing that was sought'. Aware of the two discourses in operation, namely the political and the amorous, Elizabeth shrewdly privileges the latter in a way that allows her to control negotiations effectively. She wonders whether Anjou's 'affection were so great as is pretended' for the 'mark that is shot at is [her] fortune and not [her] person' (p. 235).

'Mark' is a particularly appropriate word to use in this context and it reveals Elizabeth's competent skill in wielding and switching between available discursive resources to gain advantage. 'Mark' could refer to both the destined spot for Cupid's arrow or to the target of an aggressive martial campaign. As a target of an aggressive martial campaign, Elizabeth's fortune and political authority were much desired by Anjou to fund his imperialist campaign in the Low Countries once his brother, Henri III, had refused to sponsor it. Elizabeth claims that her affection for Anjou prompts her to 'act against [her] nature ... to intermeddle in someone's else's doings' and she capitalises on this premise to monitor and direct Anjou's activities in the Low Countries (p. 246). This admission works along with twisting recognised truths about gendered behaviour to place Anjou in a perplexing position where he must identify her as a confidante. She writes: 'I have never heard any news from you either of France or of the Low Countries or of any other parts ... and believe that you doubt too much of a woman's silence or otherwise I would learn less by

other means and more by you' (p. 244). Amorous banter here is imbued with a tone of accusation which suggests that her ostensible self-representation as a devoted beloved allows Elizabeth to be politically vigilant. However, the tone of accusation is tempered by notes of flattery. Elizabeth has plenty of resources or 'means' to keep herself abreast of developments in international politics. Yet the unique relationship between Elizabeth and Anjou makes him her preferred informant, and, in alluding to their courtship, Elizabeth is making a strong case to be Anjou's political mentor. Her coy admissions of affection bristle with political counsel as 'with clasped hand' she pleads with Anjou 'to remember that [they] who are princes' must be cautious in their conduct, political or otherwise.

In a letter to Sir Edward Stafford, the then ambassador to France, in August 1580, Elizabeth asks him to warn Anjou not to 'procure her harm whose love he seeks to win' and therefore 'to suspend his answer' to the offer of sovereignty of the Low Countries (p. 248). This clever ploy helps Elizabeth deflect France's expectation of her sponsorship of Anjou's military campaign. She confides in Sir Edward that she has no desire that her 'nuptial fest should be savoured with the sauce of [her] subjects' wealth'. As the editors of *Elizabeth I: Collected works* note, 'by marrying a French prince who was sovereign of the Netherlands, Elizabeth would court reprisal in the form of a Spanish attack on England [and] ... she also feared the ruin of English trade with the Continent' (p. 248). Concomitant with her desire for Anjou to visit England incognito, Elizabeth demands the primacy of her political position over Anjou's and expects it to be reflected in his diplomatic negotiations. Elizabeth's letter to Sir Edward reveals a remarkable degree of self-awareness of and commitment to her public office. Addressing herself in the third person she writes, '[s]hall it be ever found true that Queen Elizabeth hath solemnized the perpetual harm of England under the glorious title of marriage with Francis, heir of France?' (p. 248).

As authors, both Stubbs and Elizabeth not only share similar concerns – the subject of a monarch's marriage, the Queen's two bodies, the relationship between the Queen and her realm, international diplomacy, and the politics of religion – they also employ similar discursive tropes. The stark disparity with which they wield their textual authorities through gendered language makes us aware of the tense undercurrents in early modern discourse. The proclamation that denounced the *Gaping gulf* labels it a 'lewd, seditious book' and thus offers an insight into Elizabeth's reaction to the tract (*Tudor* 1968, p. 446). It appears that she intelligently deconstructed the 'lewd' representation of her body natural by Stubbs as a manifestation of his paranoid masculinity. 'Lewd' also had the connotations of being unlearned, unlettered and ignorant in the period. The Queen is furious both at a 'lewd' (*OED*, adj. 2.a, unlearned, unlettered and ignorant) understanding of her politic language and a 'lewd' (*OED*, adj. 7, lascivious, unchaste) depiction of her body natural. The proclamation recognises Elizabeth as an intelligent and rational woman, and stresses that she 'ought best to understand by the true information of her own faithful ministers and hath had just cause of long time by many good means to try and examine the actions and intentions of the said prince' (*Tudor* 1968, p. 447). Simultaneously, the proclamation reiterates the Queen's personal and political stance on the issue of marriage, where she alone has the right to 'try and examine' potential suitors and decide their worth.

These are traits that do not resonate in Stubbs' text where the Queen is depicted as naïve, gullible and, as Eve's daughter, capable of transgression. Further Stubbs mocks the Queen's notoriously long and inconclusive courtships and her insistence on choosing her consort by referring to him as 'the choice man of choice', contemptuously suggesting that in the delicate matters of politics, a woman who is inclined to surrender to her heart should not be encouraged. Stubbs seems to be mocking the Queen's determination to find a consort who is sympathetic to her authority and answers to her demands. 'The choice man of choice' may satisfy a woman's caprice and vanity, but is likely to enfeeble England's autonomy. This slyly questions Elizabeth's right to rule at all, and though a watered-down version of Knox's infamous tract against the 'monstrous regiment' of female rulers, is equally potent. In condemning the *Gaping gulf* as a 'trump of sedition', the proclamation furthers its association with Knox's misogynist 'first blast of trumpet' (*Tudor* 1968, p. 448). Elizabeth's punishment for Stubbs, who attempted to secure his masculinity under a female monarch through perverse means, was carefully measured. As Stubbs fashioned and maintained his masculinity through his writings, royal fury ensured that his right hand was severed. The Queen sent out a clear message; she was neither going to reward a form of masculinity that triumphed in diminishing her authority, nor allow hermeneutical politics that rivalled hers.

Considering Elizabeth's sentiments on the subject, Anjou's acceptance of the supreme governorship of the Netherlands in 1582 damaged the courtship beyond repair. However, one sees that Elizabeth's decisions continued to take account of the delicacy of England's relationship with France, as she maintains the cover of courtship to mend affairs. Elizabeth's letter to Anjou, dated May 14, 1582, plays on her 'melancholic malady' – caused equally by their 'doleful parting' and the bruised vanity of a beloved whose suitor disregards her injunctions – to disguise her political motives. She entwines her identity as the Queen with that of a beloved who asks her suitor to be aware of her 'honour', inseparable from her 'love of [her] nation', and his responsibility to defend it. Similarly, Elizabeth's protestations and assurances of her 'affection and constancy' to Anjou are persistent calls for him to not 'overturn [their] good designs' and to correct his blunder (pp. 251–253). 'On Monsieur's Departure', the poem ostensibly written by her on the occasion, mirrors precisely this shrewd manipulation of the role of a pining beloved to meet political motives. It is worth noting that Elizabeth's situation at that moment was precarious. Her courtship with Anjou was public knowledge and her desire to maintain France as an ally meant she could not dissolve it. Yet, for the reasons discussed above, Anjou's aggressive actions in the Netherlands posed a grave threat to England. Anjou's death in 1584 obviated the necessity for Elizabeth to do something drastic to resolve the political quandary in which she found herself.

After Anjou's death, Elizabeth seized on the alternative role of a bereaved beloved to preserve the diplomatic alliance with France, and her consolatory letter to Catherine de Medici reflects her keen political acumen. She writes:

It remains to me at this point to avow and swear to you that I will turn a good part of my love for [Anjou] towards the king my good brother and you, assuring you that you will find me the most faithful daughter and sister that ever princes had. And this for the principal reason that he belonged to you so nearly, he to whom I was entirely dedicated. (p. 261)

In an ironic twist, Elizabeth seizes on the very same discourse of intimacy initiated by the French as a political measure to realise her diplomatic goals, even after Anjou's death. Crucially, however, she does so by entwining her body natural and her body politic, blending the identities of 'the most faithful daughter and sister' with that of 'princes', rather than separating and hierarchising them, as has been hitherto believed.

## Notes

- 1 Quotations from Elizabeth's correspondence are from *Elizabeth I: Collected works* (2002).
- 2 Quotations from Stubbs are from *Gaping gulf* (1968).

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