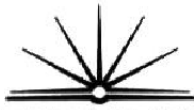


Elizabeth I

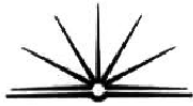
Elizabeth the First's reign has been interpreted from many different viewpoints of historians. This is very much a reflection of the nature of history as an evolving discourse. In many areas of her life, such as her image and in her parliamentary policy, there has been ~~considerable~~ many "accepted interpretations" as Bickerton points out, however, there have in due course been jostled "head-on" due to the emergence of new evidence and the changing nature of contexts.

Elizabeth's image, her identity as a Queen has been



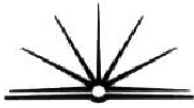
dominated by one historical view throughout the 20th century — the notion of a 'cult of Elizabeth'. Frances Yates is one historian of the view that there was a cult of Elizabeth, in fact she can be attributed to one of the founders of this historical view. In her view the cult of Elizabeth was created in response to a need to fill the "gap in the psyche of the masses who craved a symbolic mother figure" (Hackett), who had lost the cult of the Virgin Mary to the Reformation. Yates bases her interpretation on primary evidence from the Queen's portraits, panegyrics and literature, such as the 'Procession Portrait' where the

"bejewelled and painted image of the Virgin had been cast out of the churches and monasteries, but another bejewelled and painted image was set up at court and went through the land for her worshippers to adore". Yates also quotes evidence from literary evidence such as John Dowland's ~~Book~~ 2nd Book of Aires where 'Hail Mary!' is replaced by 'long live Eliza' purposefully. She also argues that Elizabeth was venerated in George Chapman's Hymns in Cythra as an almost messianic figure where she is called the 'second maid in heaven' to which Yates says 'what more can there be said?' -



that such a cult did exist.²

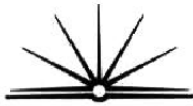
Yates also draws direct parallels between the deification of Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary, saying that the symbols that Elizabeth was associated with "the rose, the star, the moon, the phoenix, the ermine, the pearl - were also symbols of the Virgin Mary". Finally, Yates believed that ~~Spain~~ Elizabeth was connected with goddesses such as Astraea to claim ~~the~~ divine endorsement for the English Naval Victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, citing the example of Spenser's Faerie Queen as evidence of Elizabeth's use of the Astraea symbol to ~~be associated with~~ ^{also was associated with the moon} ~~imperial~~ ^{imperial} power to ~~claim~~ ^{create} her self as a symbol of "spiritual



severity in the face of the break with the rest of Western Christendom". Yates' belief that there was a cult of Elizabeth was invariably a product of her own context wherein she looked back, during 1939 when she wrote her conception of the cult, with a nostalgia for the past, and saw its ^{significance} ~~of~~ severity via the cult, in comparison with her own time and the uncertainty of WW2.

Yates once said "I have tried to strike out a path through a vast subject, but every point, the picture I have drawn, needs to be supplemented by further studies". In this way, Yates, although establishing a

long held historical view, recognised that history is a constant process of revision. Roy Strong is one historian who has built upon the interpretation put forward by Yates, while adding a new argument. As Strong agrees, "the images of the Christ, Virgin and Saints had been cast out of the church as so much rubbish, but in their place was *Diva Elizabetha*" however he asserts "the impetus [to create such a cult] must have come from the government". Strong reinforced this view with the fact that in 1581 restrictions were placed on artists, and the fact that Howard Culliland requested a monopoly on the Queen's portraits, so that by 1580



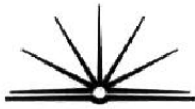
the essential ingredients of the cult had been put together and orchestrated from the start. Strong, like Yates, also writes from the view of artistic evidence, citing the iconic, archaic style of Elizabeth's portraits as similar to the Virgin Mary iconic style, whereas the portraits of Elizabeth purposely lack the life-like form seen in the Renaissance chiaroscuro of Raphael and Leonardo Da Vinci.

While Strong's view may seem to be cemented in complete certainty, Helen Hackett, a revisionist historian has as Bickerton say taken these interpretations by Yates and Strong "head-on". Hackett



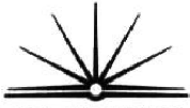
points out that Strong wrote from a remarkably 'aling' interpretation of history and that this caused him to view the ~~emergence~~^{emergence} of a 'cult of Elizabeth' to be a natural step in the evolution of British religion. Hackett also sees Strong's work as heavily influenced by his role as Director of the National Portrait Gallery, and argues this to have influenced his interpretation - ~~instead~~^{instead} Hackett advocates a non-mono-causal perspective of history, of 'complexities and diversities' - namely a post-modern approach. This is evident in her appraisal of Yates' and Strong's work, such as the use of John Dowland's 2nd Book of Aires which she says was a courtly song, and has been taken out

of context by Yates. Hackett also cites the research of a fellow newscaster, Christopher Bagge into the religious nature of England which shows that during Elizabeth it remained largely Catholic, negating the possibility of any such "popular" cult. Hackett also points out that when Elizabeth is associated with Astraea, it can be seen as an attack on her female authority, because Astraea was associated with the moon, which was inferior to the Sun, saying this could have been an "effective vehicle for challenging her authority as icon". In addition to this, Strong also points out certain examples where Elizabeth was venerated as



divine after her death, but Hackett sees these as mere attempts to attack James I, the new monarch. Hackett importantly advocates for continuity rather than the change of Strong and Yates, in that the images of Elizabeth were similar to those before her and those after, such as Anne Boleyn and James I. Thus through the new's criticism of Hackett we can see the ability for historians the challenge established notions of history.

Like wise, J. E. Neale ⁽¹⁹³⁴⁾ established a long accepted view of Elizabethan parliamentary policy being dominated by the House of Commons and Puritan opposition. Neale based

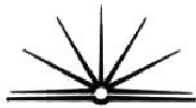


his view on a 1566 pamphlet which named 43 MPs as a 'Puritan Choir'. Neale believed that such a 'Puritan Choir' pressured Elizabeth into accepting Protestant reforms, such as the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy in 1559; along with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1572. Neale saw it as particularly significant that in 1566 Elizabeth's money bill was blocked by parliament until she satisfied their grievances. Moreover, the aggressive actions of 2 MPs, the Westmorester Brothers from 1576-93 represented, to Neale, the height of Puritan opposition to Elizabeth in the Commons.

However, as G.R. Elton's



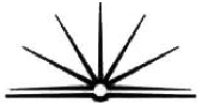
work in the 1980s proved, old, accepted versions of history can be overridden. As G. R. Elton said: "Newell had a markedly evolutionary scheme for the study of Tudor Parliament" in that he saw the rise of the Commons as a forerunner to the political conflict under James I and Charles I, a product invariably of his "Whiggish" view of history. Instead G. R. Elton through his empiricist research saw the rise of the Commons under Henry the 8th and his advisor - Thomas Cromwell (1529-36). ~~For~~ Elsewhere, Elton viewed parliament under Elizabeth as weak compared to the late-medieval



assemblies of Aragon, Sicily and the Netherlands, because without the monarch the parliament had no purpose.

As Elton also points out, Charles's 'puritan choir' was actually made up of "men of business" - (those who were of the Privy Council or associated with it) - exactly 12 of the 43 MPs. Although Elton admits there was a "hard-core" of members who attended regularly in Parliament compared to every other MP; he asserts that there were "men of business" who tried to pressure the Queen on policies she remained ambivalent over. As Elton summarizes, "the call for the executions of Norfolk and Mary Queen of Scots exhibits not the opposition of religious

extremists, but a rift within the government itself, wherein some courtiers and councillors having failed at court, tried to use parliament to press their policies on the Queen! To reinforce this claim, Elton cites the MP William Fleetwood who was a direct client of the Privy Council assistant Cecil Thomas Norton. Further to this, while Neale may have believed Elizabeth only asserted her independence negatively, through the use of the veto power, Elton believes it was for good reason, citing a letter from Norton to Christopher Hatton in 1572 which spoke of the excessive introduction of private bills. In this way, Elton believes



Elizabeth used her veto to actually make parliament more efficient.

From both the perspectives on Elizabeth's image via the "cult of Elizabeth" and her attitude and dealings with parliament, it becomes evident that it is most pertinent and necessary that historians challenge the conceptions of their predecessors. Moreover, it shall conclude, for history is as Pieper Geyl said "an argument without end".