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**Elizabeth’s Ghosts: The Afterlife of the Queen in the Stuart Era**

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This is a talk about Queen Elizabeth I’s ghost, particularly in the Stuart Age – and I am using that term both as what ghost usually means, but also as a way of discussing Elizabeth’s afterlife.

One of the most striking examples of the ghost of Elizabeth comes from a Spanish monk, who claimed that after her death Elizabeth walked by the Thames shrieking, “The sovereignty of the kingdom was for forty years, but hell is forever.” Either as a ghost Elizabeth forgot how long her reign was – or the monk did not have that information.

The depiction of Elizabeth as ghost in the conventional sense occurred throughout the Stuart Age as the Queen returned to earth as a Protestant nationalist heroine or sat in heaven and observed what went on in the world. Politically, this veneration of Elizabeth was an indirect method of condemning the policies of her Stuart successors or praising a Stuart queen by comparison. Though I am discussing Elizabeth’s ghost I would like to begin in 1588 when the queen was very much alive and facing one of the most serious crises of her reign: the threatened Spanish invasion.

At Tilbury Elizabeth showed her most martial and patriotic self. She gave a famous speech to encourage the troops.

I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general.

In the century that followed, this speech became the touchstone for perceptions of Elizabeth as the great English Protestant queen, standing firm against the foreign Catholic aggressor. In his seventeenth-century biography of Elizabeth, William Camden described how

the Queen with a masculine Spirit came and took a View of her Army and Camp at Tilbury, and riding about through the Ranks of Armed men drawn up on both sides her, with a Leader’s Truncheon in her Hand, sometimes with a martial Pace, another while gently like a Woman, incredible it is how much she encouraged the Hearts of her Captains and Soldiers by her Presence and Speech to them.

There were many soldiers who heard Elizabeth’s speech. One was Henry Lyte, then in his late fifties, who was the captain of group of men from Somerset formed to fight the Spanish. When not serving his country, Lyte was a botanist whose translated herbals and loved to collect old texts.

A few months later, on Sunday November 24 Elizabeth participated in an elaborate ceremony of thanksgiving for the great victory against the Armada. The Queen, dressed in silver and white, departed from Somerset House in a “chariot-throne” drawn by white horses and rode with members of the Privy Council, many ladies of honor, and much of the nobility. They were dressed in their appropriate robes and in strict order and precedence. There were more than four hundred in her retinue. The London Guilds wearing their livery coats with their apprentices in velvet coats with streamers and little flags, greeted the queen as she passed and the crowd continually roared their approval. As she traveled through London Elizabeth did all she could to connect with her people, rather than hold herself aloof. She passed along the Strand to Temple Bar, where city musicians greeted her. At Temple Bar the Lord Mayor gave the queen the sword of the city, which she returned to him that evening. An officer of her Privy Chamber gave the queen a jewel that she graciously accepted, stating it was the first she had received that day. After that present, the Somerset captain Henry Lyte stepped forward.

Lyte offered her a book that he had written and dedicated to her, *The Light of Britayne* that described the island’s legendary beginning. What is perhaps of most interest in the book is its dedication – which actually discusses seeing her on the day it was presented.

Lyte described Elizabeth as the

Phoenix of the worlde: The Angell of Englande:. . . . The chast Diana . . . that keepeth . . . [Britann] from Romish wolves and Foxes. In the dedication Lyte chronicled giving the book to the queen personally:

my deere and dreade Soveraigne: whom this day I doe beholde and see. . . . To you I am come with this small offering . . . my fealtie and bounden duety to your most excellent majestie . . . whom I pray GOD alwaies to blesse in his mercy, & graunt your majestie, alwaies to tryumphe over all your enemies.

Elizabeth then proceeded to St. Paul’s Cathedral where she heard a sermon that thanked God for victory.

This was the Elizabeth most loved and represented in the Stuart age, the Elizabeth who fought to protect the English people and Protestantism.

Yet at the end of her reign many were tired of rule by women after a half-century, especially given the problems England faced in the last decade of the sixteenth century: bad harvests, inflation, worries about further potential Spanish invasions, and deepening conflict in Ireland. Many of the English eagerly looked forward to the rule of a king.

They welcomed a male ruler, even one from Scotland, especially one who was also a husband and father of sons. Part of James’s welcome, was necessarily, an effort to reinforce Elizabeth’s support for James as her lawful successor. One way this was accomplished was with the first depiction of Elizabeth’s ghost by Scotsman Alexander Craig, a notary and a poet, who followed James VI to England when he became James I.

In 1604 Craig published a series of poems including one that was in the voice of the ghost of Queen Elizabeth, welcoming James as king. The ghost assures her people, “Cease loving Subjects, cease my death for to deplore.” Craig’s ghostly Elizabeth expresses delight with her successor. “So now my ghost is glad… My countries have their lawfull King.” James is not only a lawful king. Elizabeth assures her subjects that “a godly *David* ruleth now, a Prophet and a Prince.” Indeed, having her subjects do their homage to their new king leaves her “blessed ghost in boundles joys.”

A ghost was a clever way to show support for the new king. Ghosts were often presented in popular drama of the time. Hamlet’s father is only one of a number ghosts presented on English Renaissance stage, especially in revenge tragedies. According to Eleanor Prosser, in English drama between 1560-1610 there were fifty-one ghosts in twenty-six plays. And many people of the time were convinced that they had actually seen ghosts – or knew someone who had. Medieval Catholics had argued for the existence of ghosts as spirits trapped in purgatory. After the Reformation in England, with its denial of purgatory, some reformers refused to believe in the existence of ghosts at all. If seen, they were apparitions of demons or angels taking the form of a dead person.

Yet the popular belief in ghosts was still strong in Protestant England. Although Ludwig Lavater demonstrated in his work that while “many vainely persuade themselves they have seene wandring spirits,” he argued there are actually “walking spirits, & that other straunge things do sometime happen.”

Throughout the Stuart Age there were pamphlets that used ghosts to critique political issues. As well as Elizabeth, James I himself was a ghost in a pamphlet in 1642 and the ghostly Oliver Cromwell appeared in five pamphlets.

As James’s reign progressed, the joy over a king, and former frustration over a queen, shifted. Within the first decade of James’s reign, many of the English were again celebrating November 17, Elizabeth’s accession, as they had during her reign. The Elizabeth who was a strong and devout Protestant even in her sister’s reign and who fought Catholic Spain and roused the troops at the time of Armada again came to the fore.

Early in James’s reign Londoners could see their dead queen on the stage. Thomas Heywood’s play about Princess Elizabeth in peril, *If I Know Not You, I Know Nobody, Part I* was extremely popular and frequently staged; it appeared in eight editions between 1605-1639. The play showed the queen as a strong Protestant in great danger during her Catholic sister Mary’s reign. Though she herself is frightened, Elizabeth as prisoner tells her servants and gentlewomen,

My Innocence yet makes my hart as light,

As my front’s heavie:

. . . .

. . . weepe not I pray,

Rather you should rejoyce:

If I miscarry in this enterprise, and aske you why,

A Virgine and a Martyr both I dy.

Later in the play, there is a dumb show [scene with no words] showing Elizabeth asleep on stage. On one side enters the Bishop of Winchester with friars and from the other side two angels.

The friars move to Elizabeth, with threatening motions but are driven back by angels, who then place a Bible in Elizabeth’s hands. Heywood’s Elizabeth is a Protestant heroine who at the end of the play becomes queen. The angels can be seen as prefiguring Elizabeth’s later appearance as a benevolent ghost.

As he explained in his introduction, the purpose of Thomas Dekker’s 1607 play, *The Whore of Babylon*, “is to set forth, in tropical and shadowed colors, the greatness, magnanimity, constancy, clemency, and other the incomparable heroical virtues of our late Queen.”

His other motive for the play was to show “the inveterate malice. . .and continual bloody stratagems” of the Catholic Church, and its attempts to take away “our Princes’ lives,” referencing the recent 1605 Gunpowder Plot but also attempted assassinations of Elizabeth. Despite that more recent event, the play centers of Elizabeth and the defeat of the Armada, not on the current king James. The play’s main character Titania, the Fairie Queen, “under whom is figured our late Queen Elizabeth,” even more explicitly suggest a ghostly queen. As the Prologue carefully explains:

So, winged Time that long ago flew hence

You must fetch back, with all those golden years

He stole, and here imagine still he stands,

Thrusting his silver lock into your hands.

There hold it but two hours: it shall from graves

Raise up the dead. . .

Dekker begins his play with a dumb show somewhat reminiscent of Heywood’s. Titania enters attended by her counselors. She is met by Time and Truth, and, like Elizabeth in Heywood’s play, is given a book that is obviously the Bible. Those around her embrace Truth and promise to defend the queen and her book. When Cardinals and Friars enter they are driven off by Truth and Time. The representation of the living Elizabeth on stage after the death of the actual queen creates a ghost, embodied by a boy actor costumed as the queen,

a living version of the effigy that appeared in Elizabeth’s funeral. Dekker’s reanimation of Elizabeth helps to strengthen the view of Elizabeth the Protestant queen, and this recreation of Elizabeth, along with the changing attitudes towards the Stuart king, transformed Craig’s ghostly Elizabeth into the very different figure who appeared at the end of James I’s reign.

In the same year as the Armada victory the early modern English merchant John Reynolds was born; his role as a merchant led him to be based in France from about 1619. As well as being a merchant, he also developed a career as a writer.

Reynolds read the minister Thomas Scott’s political pamphlets, such as *Vox Populi, or Newes from Spayne* (1620). Scott’s pamphlet pretends to be a report by the Spanish Ambassador Gondomar to the Council of State in Madrid but is actually a polemic with a strong anti-Catholic, anti-Spanish perspective that is highly critical James’ foreign policy. Though Scott published the pamphlet anonymously, by early 1621 he was known to be author and had gone into hiding; he eventually emerged in the Netherlands. Reynolds decided he too would turn his attention to writing about politics; he too was strongly opposed to James’s pro-peace, pro-Spanish values.

His pamphlet *Vox Coeli, or News from Heaven*, probably written in 1621 but not published until 1624, praised Elizabeth, which greatly angered King James.

From the beginning of his reign James had been hostile to memory of Elizabeth. In June of 1603 the French ambassador extraordinaire, Maximilian de Bethune, Duke of Sully, wrote to Henry IV of his great regret hearing James, who was drinking wine at the time, speaking with contempt of Elizabeth. “He even went so far as to say, that, in Scotland, long before the death of that princess, he had directed her whole council, and governed all her ministers, by whom he had been better served and obeyed than herself.”

By the 1620s James would certainly not want to know what a pro-Protestant, pro-war ghostly Elizabeth would have to say about him. Reynolds had created a version of Elizabeth that fitted his needs and the political situation and had found a witty, clever way of presenting her.

Reynolds’s Elizabeth discusses Spain and its relations with England with such other ghosts as her father Henry VIII, her siblings Edward and Mary, Anne of Denmark and Prince Henry. James was so angered by the pamphlet that he worked with the French government to extradite Reynolds, who was living in Paris. Back in England Reynolds was imprisoned. He was not freed until 1626, in the reign of James’s son Charles.

The pamphlet clearly struck a responsive chord; it appeared in five editions in 1624. In Reynolds’s pamphlet, it might seem odd that Queen Mary I was in heaven and taking part in this discussion. Reynolds explained of Mary that it was “not her Romane merits, but the prayers of the Protestants had brought to Heaven,” without explaining why Protestants would want to intercede for the Bloody Queen. Perhaps Reynolds wanted to suggest the generosity of spirit of the Protestants. Reynolds’s own reasons for Mary’s presence are much more clear; he needed a foil for the Protestants, and Mary “always loved, and preferred Rome and Spain before England.” Reynolds assures his readers that England was a place for which Mary felt “innate and inveterate malice.”

As Reynolds explained, since heaven was God’s throne, and earth God’s foot stool, everything spoken, acted, or even thought on earth was known in heaven, not only to God but to “his Angels, Saints, and Martyrs.”

The heavenly Elizabeth, “that immortall Mayden Queene *. . .* whose heart ever loved *England,* as her soule did Heaven,” supported a strong and militaristic England and was critical of the current king and spoke to others about this.

The group contains some who died in the mid-sixteenth century – Henry VIII and his son Edward VI and older daughter Mary. Elizabeth has been in Heaven only two decades, and James I’s wife Anne of Denmark and his eldest son Prince Henry are even newer residents. Only a dozen years before Reynolds published his pamphlet, Prince Henry, known as a strong Protestant with great promise, had died. His mother Queen Anne was devastated by the loss of her eldest son, and her own health deteriorated. She died in 1619. There are theological differences among the Protestant monarchs. Seventeenth-century English subjects were well aware that during his lifetime the chivalric Prince Henry was an unabashed Protestant who was enthusiastic about military endeavors. But as Richard Rex carefully points out, the historical Henry VIII refused “to advance down the path of Protestantism.” Rather, it was the “many Protestant voices” that sought to legitimize the Reformation who reframed Henry as a Protestant. Reynolds makes the ghostly Henry VIII, however, a confirmed and committed Protestant. While Anne and Prince Henry are especially concerned about current events in England, Elizabeth’s martial and militant Protestant rule is promoted as the perfect example that James does not follow. Elizabeth is proud of England’s fighting record. She praises not only Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Norris, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy,

but “my *Essex,*” suggesting the heavenly ghostly Elizabeth had forgotten much of her life while on earth – or that Reynolds hoped his audience had. After Essex’s death, there were many ballads and broadsides that “ionized the earl’s memory as heroic,” and his staunch Protestantism trumps any hint of rebellion.

While the heavenly Elizabeth loves her Protestant God, she is skeptical about the Spanish king, and his most Catholic Majesty’s faith: “Religion was onely the pretext, but wealth and Empire the sole object of *Spaines* ambition,” she asserts, adding “No Kings of the world know better how to dissemble then the Catholique Kings.” While Mary assures the others that “There is no Kingdome in the world, that Spaine loves better then England,” Elizabeth counters that “Nor no people under the Sunne that it hates more then Englishmen.” Through the rest of the conversation there is much said about Philip II’s and Spain’s love for England, though that “love” is defined in various ways.

Mary is convinced that Philip II had married her because of his love for her, for England, and for the English people. Elizabeth allows that Philip loved Mary but that more important were his ambitions for returning England to Catholicism. Henry, however tells Elizabeth, “To speake truth Daughter, he neither loved you, nor *Mary* his wife and Queene, but only England.” The others discuss Mary’s marriage to Philip as well. Prince Henry avers that if Mary had not married Philip, England would not have lost Calais. Though Edward VI agrees that the marriage was unfortunate, at least “Philip and Mary had no Children.” This makes Mary feel sad, since “If we had had any Males, England had beene long since a Province to Spain.” Elizabeth states that God, to save England, made Mary sterile, a comment that makes Mary exclaim: “The Kings of Spaine are the greatest and most potent Kings of the World.” Elizabeth is quick to respond that this is not true in terms of power, “for I proved it not so, I found it not so, I left it not so.”

Commentary about the events of 1588 is central to the discussion. Prince Henry ironically suggests that the way Philip, a man of greed and ambition, “discovered his love to England,” was his plan to conquer it with his Armada. Perhaps Reynolds was thinking of Shakespeare’s Henry V courting Princess Katharine of France after defeating the French divisively at Agincourt. After Henry tells her that he loves her and asks if she can love him, she questions “Is it possible dat I sould love de enemy of France?” Henry’s love of France may well be the prototype of Philip’s love of England.

No; it is not possible you should love the enemy of  
France, Kate: but, in loving me, you should love  
the friend of France; for I love France so well that  
I will not part with a village of it.

Though Henry is “courting” Katharine, in fact she really does not have a choice as to whether she wishes to marry Henry V or not. Philip would not have given the new subjects he loved any choice if the Spanish Armada had been successful. The Protestants in the discussion show their pleasure that God looked “on that great and mightie Navall Army with contempt and detestation.” Elizabeth herself is even more convinced of heavenly intervention: “Yea God was so gracious to England, and so mercifull to mee . . . the Windes and Waves fought for my defence . . . against the pride and malice of Spaine, who grew mad with anger . . . to see this his great and warlike Armado beaten, foyled, and confounded.”

Prince Henry salutes Elizabeth, stating “You Madame found Warre with Spaine surer and safer then Peace,” an ironic statement as the actual Elizabeth for a range of reasons was very uncomfortable with war. This ghostly Elizabeth agrees that war is “farre more safe, and farre more profitable too for England,” a sentiment more in keeping with the political situation in the 1620s than in 1588. Finally the conversation turns to more current events, with Queen Anne wondering since that is the case, why her husband “so delights and drownes himselfe in his peace with Spaine.”

The conversation moves on the proposed match between Henry’s younger brother Charles, now heir to the throne, and the Spanish Infanta. Edward VI asks the others “how doth King James relish this Match?” Though his sister Mary tells the others how much she supports the match, she is well aware of James I’s motivations: “His Exchequer is poore, and King *Philips* Indies rich, and therfore his Majestie likes it so well, as he will hearken to no other.” That this ugly objection is given to the most objectionable participant in this conversation is not accidental.

For the heavenly Elizabeth, what is the worst about the proposed match is her conviction that the plots against her that had been instituted by Philip II were matched by Philip III’s plot, blaming him and the pope for

“that horrible Gunpowder Treason . . . that England should have beene blowne up, overthrowne, and ruined in a moment.” Although Mary refuses to believe that Spain had a role in the Gunpowder Plot, she gloats that if the marriage happens, “Those Protesting Heretikes of *England,* will sing another tune, when they see the King of *Spaine* hath made their Countrey his Province.” By acknowledging what must have a wide-spread fear, Reynolds permits a powerful counter-argument to be made.

Those in heaven are deeply concerned that because James values peace, not war, the king had not adequately supported the English navy. Even Queen Mary noted that the navy that had once been so strong “time and negligence hath almost made all these ships unserviceable, who lye rotting.”

This is devastating to Elizabeth: “O my Ships, my Ships.” Elizabeth offers a grim prediction of what will happen to an England invaded or ruled by Spain.

“And then shall Englands strong men fall upon the edge of the Sword; her Virgins bee defloured and murthered, her Wives defiled and slaine in sight of dying Husbands; and their Children and young Babes shall have their braines dashed out against the walles in sight of their dead Parents,” vividly recalling the memory of the 1572 St. Bartholomew’s day massacre and images from John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*.

Elizabeth is convinced that the negotiations for the match between Prince Charles and the Infanta must not go forward, because “to trust to *Spaine,* is to . . . harbour a serpent in our owne bosomes.” The group votes five to one against the match –not surprisingly, Mary alone supports it. Henry VIII plans to inform “our sacred God both of Heaven and Earth,” hoping that he will now stop the match. Whether this conversation had anything to do with what is going on earth or not, the Spanish match fell apart, and Charles instead married the French princess Henrietta-Maria. Reynolds was clearly far more interested in the religious and political perspective he was presenting to the people at the end of James I’s reign, than in any historically accurate depicture of the last Tudor queen.

Just as Reynolds had ghostly Elizabeth in heaven praise Essex, Thomas Scott, in his pamphlet published the same year, depicts Essex in heaven expressing his support for his queen. As Alexandra Gajda points out, Scott’s Essex in *Robert earle of Essex his ghost* is a “Protestant warrior, terror of Spain, whose heroic exploits shamed the Jacobean peace.” In 1598 the Earl of Essex wrote a letter ostensibly privately to Anthony Bacon, but circulated in manuscript in an attempt to justify his opposition to peace negotiations with Spain. This *Apologie* was first published about 1600, and again in 1603. This was clearly Scott’s source. The actual Essex publicly extensively praised the queen, though his sincerity was highly doubtful. Scott’s ghostly Essex, though he describes how his enemies tricked her into executing him, praises Elizabeth, referring to her as “that glorious Queene, my now fellow Saint.”

In the pamphlet Essex is so concerned with James’s policy of peace and the weakness it conveys, he is sending a letter from Heaven to the commonality of England. “You had a Queene, in my time on earth, who was ever open handed to men of desert, yet never wastfull in her private expences; but maintained Armies and Garrisons,” as a way to criticize her successor James who [has] sold knighthoods and spent his subjects’ money fecklessly.

In 1626, the year of his death, Scott published a similarly themed pamphlet, *Sir Walter Rawleighs Ghost, or Englands Forewarner,* which again contrasts Eliabeth with the problems in England under the Stuarts. Raleigh’s ghost, like Essex’s, praises the former queen. “my most excellent Mistris Elizabeth of blessed and famous memorie, like a strong Rocke against the range of a furious sea,” had protected Protestants throughout Europe.

Scott wrote at least twenty political pamphlets, and, like Reynolds, was not in England when these pamphlets was published. In 1623 Scott left England for the Netherlands, becoming a preacher for the English garrison at Utrecht.

In 1626, only two years after the publication of Scott’s pamphlet, John Lambert assassinated Thomas Scott as he was leaving church. Lambert had heard from spirits encouraging the murder. He was arrested, tried and found guilty. The night before his execution godly men came to visit Lambert, and found him “as full of his fond and imaginarie conceits as before.”

He affirmed a number of sovereigns daily and hourly appeared to him, such as “the spirit of the late Queene *Elizabeth*. Even those in early modern England who believed in ghosts, might have wondered why if Queen Elizabeth’s ghost were to return to earth she would want to haunt Lambert; rather, these were the delusions of a man who had lost his wits.

As the concerns about Stuart rule became more intense, Elizabeth’s image as a strong committed Protestant continued to be important. This became even more true in the reign of Charles I’s son Charles II, when there was more and more concern that his younger brother James, a converted Catholic, was his heir. As Steven May has pointed out, the Elizabeth of Reynold’s *Vox Coeli* became the dominant representation of the queen in the latter seventeenth century as well. Associated with a unified Protestant nation, Elizabeth could serve as both a model monarch and a prophet warning of the dangers of returning to Catholicism.

The glorification of Elizabeth that had begun within a half of dozen years after the beginning of the rule of her successor became ever more intense when it appeared that James I’s younger grandson and namesake would be the next king of England as Charles II had no legitimate children.

Titus Oates and the fictitious Popish Plot -- that Catholics including Charles II’s wife Catherine of Braganza were conspiring to murder Charles – caused deep hysteria. In 1679 and ’80 there were intense efforts in Parliament to exclude James and in this Elizabeth had her role. A 1680 pamphlet by a “Queen Elizabeth Protestant,” warned that “You all very well know, That it hath been of late the great artifice of the Jesuited Party to intrude (if possible) their damnable Plot upon” upon Protestants. The Jesuits, a powerful metaphor for a widespread, secret, and deadly Catholic conspiracy, were invoked to intensify anti-Catholic sentiment.

In this period the celebrations of Elizabeth’s anniversary of her accession on November 17 were particularly popular and carefully devised. Each year there were processions with an elaborate effigy of the pope paraded through the streets of London to Temple Bar and brought before a statue of Elizabeth where the effigy was mocked and burned. This was to celebrate the “Day wherein the Unfortunate Queen Mary Died, and that Glorious Sun, Queen ELIZABETH of Happy Memory, arose in the English Horizon, and thereby dispelled those thick Fogs and Mists of Romish Blindness, and restored to these Kingdoms their just Rights both as Men and Christians.” This public procession, like the Catholic processions it displaced, was an annual reminder that England was a Protestant nation – and needed to be kept that way.

Despite the hostility to James as heir at the beginning of the 1680s, by 1685 when Charles II died, there was a smooth transition. But his strong pro-Catholic policies, his absolutism, and finally, the birth of his son in June 1688 led to deep problems.

As the crisis developed a broadside was published called “Queen Elizabeth’s Opinion concerning Transubstantiation, Or the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; with some Prayers and Thanksgivings composed by Her in Imminent Dangers.” The pamphlet prints her Tilbury speech, stating in that “in 1588 the Spanish Armada invaded the kingdom, the Design being no less than the Conquest of England . . ..It is incredible how much [Elizabeth] encouraged the Hearts of her Captains and Souldiers by her presence, but especially by her most generous and undaunted speech.” This powerful, defiant, nationalist speech was certainly relevant on its one hundredth anniversary in 1688, as it showed Elizabeth’s confidence that God supported Protestant England against the Catholic invasion. Though William was a foreigner, his wife Mary, daughter of James II, was not, and the implication was that it was the duty of those who supported the true religion to force out James II and his pro-Catholic regime.

William Camden’s history of Elizabeth, with its emphasis on the Queen’s Protestantism, was also reissued in a new edition.

Once James had fled, Parliament had to deal with the issue of who would be the next ruler. William insisted that he should be king in his own right, and many agreed that England needed a male ruler, but Sir Joseph Tredenham argued, “As for [Mary] being a woman, Queen Elizabeth was so, and reigned gloriously.” Parliament chose to make William and Mary joint rulers; although William did the real ruling while he was in the country, Mary ruled as queen regnant six times when he was abroad. Being joint monarchs turned out to be crucial, because Mary II died in 1694. William ruled alone until his death in 1702. The throne then passed to Mary’s younger sister Anne. With the accession of another queen regnant, the ghostly existence of Elizabeth became far more present.

Anne had seen parallels between herself and Elizabeth as early as 1692 when her sister Mary was fighting with her and eager to remind Anne that she was of lower rank. “I know what is due to me, and expect to have it from you,” also stating, “I am the Queen and I will be obeyed.”

This placed Anne in the same position in which Elizabeth found herself during Mary I’s reign. Dr. Richard Kingston wrote after visiting Anne that “the Princess discoursing her sufferings often made a parallel between her self and Queen Elizabeth.”

Once she became queen, Anne did all she could to “channel” Elizabeth. When she went to speak to Parliament the first time March 11, 1702 she deliberately dressed in a way that resembled Elizabeth’s coronation portrait. Sir Godfrey Kneller’s 1705 portrait also hinted at the connection between the two queens. Anne proudly proclaimed “I know my heart to be entirely English,” as Elizabeth had called herself “mere” – meaning pure – English, and described her heart as that of a king and king of England too. When Anne was crowned on April 23, the feast day of England’s patron saint St. George, many hailed her as a Deborah – just as Elizabeth was described as an English Deborah from the beginning of her reign. Anne was also called a second Elizabeth. Anne, like Elizabeth, was a Protestant queen fighting a Catholic superpower. A clergyman that spring preached that Anne “presides in councils and revives the memory of that heroine Queen Elizabeth, whose armies were as victorious abroad as her wise designs of policy were well laid at home.”

In December Anne announced she had chosen as her motto, Semper Eadem, always the same, the same motto chosen by Elizabeth. Anne ordered “That it was her Majesty’s Pleasure, that whenever there was occasion to Embroider, Depict, Carve, or Paint her Majesty’s Arms, these Words, Semper Eadem, should be us’d for a Motto; it being the same that had been us’d by her Predecessor Queen Elizabeth, of glorious Memory.”

Anne did something else to draw a powerful parallel between her reign and that of Elizabeth. In November 1702 she offered a public thanksgiving for the victory at Vigo Bay, making a procession to the newly built St. Paul’s Cathedral. The procession began with members of Parliament in an array of coaches, followed by members of the court, much of the nobility, and finally Queen Anne, attended by her Ladies and Maids of Honor.

She passed a monument at Ludgate where verses were attached that proclaimed As threatening Spain did to Eliza bow So France and Spain shall do to Anna now.

In 1704 Edmund Arwaker described how the ghost of Mary II celebrated her sister becoming queen in *An Embassy from Heav’n: or, the Ghost of Queen Mary*. The ghostly Mary talks of earlier monarchs who are in heaven watching the new queen and connecting what will be the glories in the reign of Anne with the great exploits of the past, focusing on military might and Protestantism. Some such excellent precursors of Anne are Edward III and his son the Black Prince. “Great ANNE they both revive again;/ She scourges France.” But the earlier monarch whom Mary praises most is “the Blest ELIZABETH.” As Elizabeth was in her earlier incarnations, this Elizabeth is also a strong Protestant who is celebrated not only for her religion but for successfully battling Catholic powers.

With Drake and Rawleigh , She beheld the Seas,

And Troops of Her Old Worthies wond'ring gaze.

To see a Spanish , and a French Armado blaze.

Mary is a ghostly queen celebrating a new queen and her strongest praise is for this earlier queen, who is far more inspiring than any other monarch, so remarkable that she impresses even the stars in the heavens.

Tho' Edward 's Morning was Eclips'd so soon,

She warm'd World with her enliv'ning Noon.

. . .

Shepherds, you wou'd have thought, had you been there,

The Stars had left their Orbs to follow her.

This strongly Protestant patriot militarist ghost of Elizabeth as a parallel to Anne makes one last final appearance. In 1706 an anonymous broadside was published, “Queen Elizabeth’s Ghost: or a dream.” The author describes how he had spent the day thinking about the Duke of Marlborough’s victories in the wars with Spain, and “our Great Queen” Anne. That night “I fancied Queen *Elizabeth* (to whose Memory I always bore a Profound Respect) Appeared to me, and Talked with me very freely about our present Affairs.” Elizabeth informed the writer that she was mightily pleased that Queen Anne had chosen her motto and she thought of Queen Anne as “Her Daughter of Fame.” Elizabeth added that the success of her reign and Anne’s proved women were superior in government. Later she spoke of “Her Church of *England* (and really without Vanity She might well call it Her’s) She was very sensible of our Queen’s true Christian Piety, and well-govern’d Zeal for the *Established Church*.” After a long conversation he awakened, and found this had been a dream. Now while many in the early modern period believed that it was easier for the spirits of the dead to speak to the living in dreams, it appears in this broadside that the dream is a frame for expressing praise of Queen Anne by comparing her to the popular earlier queen. The conceit of the dream offers assurances that the vision of a ghostly Elizabeth is a benign manifestation.

Queen Elizabeth had a range of perspectives on Protestantism and England’s involvement in continental Europe. There were a number of problems in her reign, especially in the closing decade, and at the time of her death many in England welcomed a new male ruler. But the Elizabeth in her afterlife and ghostly form was a more militant and martial Protestant who was used by some as an example through the Stuart age of how England ought to respond to Catholic threats.

This Elizabeth was more heroic, if less complex, than the original woman but this version of Elizabeth is important in the century after her death. Toward the end of Anne’s reign in January 1713, Anne stated that “We will never lose sight of the example and prudent conduct of our predecessor” Queen Elizabeth. Robert Bucholz argues that “both women seem to have been exactly what the nation required at the end of their royal lines, and both achieved success unparalleled in the reigns of their respective ancestors.” The ghost of Elizabeth helped the reigning Queen Anne reach this success.

Yet with all the ghostly affinities to Elizabeth throughout the Stuart age, the closest we actually come to a ghost of Queen Elizabeth is an event that happened while Queen Elizabeth was still alive, but in her last moments. According to Elizabeth Southwell, writing four years after the Queen’s death, Lady Elizabeth Guilford was staying in the privy chamber with the Queen in those last days when the Queen appeared beyond recovery. Seeing her asleep, Lady Guildford walked into some other rooms and then was greatly surprised to see the Queen walking in the room ahead of her. Afraid Queen Elizabeth had risen from her bed and was angry with her for leaving her alone, Lady Guilford walked toward her to apologize. The Queen suddenly disappeared. Returning to the privy chamber, Lady Guilford found the queen still asleep in the same position she had been. Even as she lay in her bed dying, her significance and power was so strong that she haunted those around her.

And the ghostly Elizabeth in her afterlife played a significant role in religion, politics, and the belief that women could be strong rulers.

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