



*King's Stomachs and Concrete
Elephants: Gendering Elizabeth I
through the Tilbury Speech*

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Abstract: Elizabeth I's speech to the troops at Tilbury is arguably her most famous. The well-known line—"I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king"—is routinely included in cinematic and televisual depictions of Elizabeth's reign. The speech, however, is seldom depicted in adaptations as it survives. This article argues that the depiction of the Tilbury speech reflects the way that Elizabeth's gender is conceived of in the relevant adaptation, contending that the speech shows how writers have grappled with Elizabeth's incongruous position as a female king. In analysing the depiction of the Tilbury speech in the films *Fire Over England* (1937) and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), and in the television series *Blackadder II* (1986) and *Mapp and Lucia* (2014), this article concludes that while writers seem to have little issue with Elizabeth declaring that she has "the body of a weak and feeble woman," they seem to stumble on her follow up declaration that she has "the heart and stomach of a king."

Keywords: Elizabeth I; gender; adaptation; history; Tilbury speech; Spanish Armada

"Some English Historians believe, That Queen Elizabeth's presence at Tilbury Camp, encouraged both Horse and Infantry more, then all the known Valour of her experienced Leaders."¹
Robert Heath (1659)

The speech Elizabeth I of England delivered to her troops assembled at Tilbury to defend against the invasion of the Spanish Armada on 9 August 1588 is probably the Queen's most famous piece of oratory. As such, it is unsurprising that the speech's most recognisable line—"I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king"—is routinely included in cinematic and televisual depictions of Elizabeth and her reign. The speech, and its relation to the defeat of the invading Armada, is represented as a key moment in Elizabeth's reign, but nearly every production that includes it offers a different version of that moment.² This is in contrast to the (perhaps unspoken) consensus that has emerged amongst adaptors of Elizabeth's life that her

¹ Robert Heath, *Paradoxical Assertions and Philosophical Problems Full of Delight and Recreation for all Ladies and Youthful Fancies* (London, 1659; Wing H1341), 50. An earlier version of this article was presented at the "Elizabeth I: The Armada and Beyond, 1588 to 2018" (April 2018) and the "Kings & Queens VII: Ruling Sexualities" (July 2018) conferences, and I thank the audiences at both for their comments. I also thank Joseph Massey for his helpful feedback on the article, and I gratefully acknowledge the research assistance of Sophie Shorland.

² For a study of Elizabeth's depictions in film and television, see: Bethany Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television: A Study of the Major Portrayals* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2011).

costumes should be elaborate and should correspond to her surviving portraits, and that she should wear a wig and be made up with heavy cosmetics.³ The Tilbury speech, itself historically contentious, remains up for interpretation.

From the outset, it is worth noting that the historicity of the speech is contested, with the debates amongst scholars perhaps partially explaining the speech's varying adaptations. Susan Frye is not convinced of the speech's authenticity, and argues that the speech is more likely a product of the 'Elizabeth Myth' that emerged during the seventeenth century. She writes that Elizabeth "may have addressed the assembly [of troops at Tilbury] ... in words we have wanted to believe she said," noting that "the construction of Elizabeth I as a historical subject owes a great deal to this speech, in spite of doubts about its authenticity."⁴ Conversely, Janet Green demonstrates that "substantial evidence exists for believing the Tilbury oration is genuine," particularly the rhetorical devices and markers that link the speech to others delivered by Elizabeth, and the contemporary evidence that the Queen did deliver a speech at Tilbury.⁵ The recent editors of Elizabeth's works go even further, declaring "Although there has been much speculation about Elizabeth's war-like garb and demeanour on this famous occasion, there can be little doubt that her speech was actually delivered, and in language reasonably close to that reproduced here."⁶ For my purposes here, whether or not Elizabeth actually delivered the speech is immaterial: its inclusion in films and television shows about Elizabeth's reign is the focus of this article.⁷

The speech, however, is seldom reproduced as it survives in the letter from Dr Leonel Sharp to the Duke of Buckingham from around 1623, which was later published in 1654. While there are differing extant versions of the speech, this is the most famous.⁸ Certainly, this version is the most detailed, and is the one that is not only most well-known in popular

³ This trope is discussed in: Kate Maltby, "Why is Elizabeth I, the most powerful woman in our history, always depicted as a grotesque?" *The Guardian*, 25 May 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/25/armada-documentary-ageing-woman-body-queen-elizabeth>.

⁴ Susan Frye, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 98.

⁵ Janet M. Green, "I My Self: Queen Elizabeth I's Oration at Tilbury Camp," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 421. See also: Steven W. May, "Queen Elizabeth to Her Subjects: The Tilbury and Golden Speeches," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 23–39.

⁶ Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 325n1.

⁷ Nevertheless, I think it worth noting that while the recorded speech may not be Elizabeth's exact words, I see no reason to dispute that the speech was delivered broadly as it is preserved.

⁸ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 325n1. There are also several contemporary commemorations of Elizabeth and the defeat of the Armada that state Elizabeth delivered a speech similar to what Sharp describes. Thomas Deloney's ballad, *The Queenes visiting of the campe at Tilsburie with her entertainment there*, includes the lines "my loving friends and countriemen," and "But if our enimies doe assaile you, / never let your stomackes faile you," which suggests an awareness of the speech Elizabeth delivered; James Aske, in *Elizabetha Triumphans*, recounts that Elizabeth declared "But in the midst and very heart of them, / Bellona-like we meane as then to march," that she spoke of her "feruent love to those our Subjects deare," and he maintained her masculine reference, "On Kingly faith we will performe it there"; and in 1595, Sir Lewis Lewkenor referred to a speech Elizabeth delivered at Tilbury in which she "accounted her selfe rich enough, in that shee possessed such [loving] subjects." T[homas] D[eloney], *The Queenes visiting of the campe at Tilsburie with her entertainment there* (London, 1588; *STC* 6565), 1; James Aske, *Elizabetha Triumphans* (London, 1588; *STC* 847), 26; and [Lewis Lewkenor], *The Estate of English Fugitives under the king of Spaine and his Ministers* (London, 1595; *STC* 15564), sig. Q3r. See also: May, "Queen Elizabeth to Her Subjects," 25–27.

culture, but is also the one that the majority of cinematic and televisual adaptations of Elizabeth draw on, or at the very least take inspiration from:

My loving people, we have been persuaded by some, that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our self to armed multitudes for fear of treachery: but I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful, and loving people. Let Tyrants fear, I have always so behaved myself, that under God I have placed my chiefest strength, and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects. And therefore I am come amongst you as you see, at this time, not for my recreation, and disport, but being resolved in the midst, and heat of the battle to live, or die amongst you all, to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my Honour, and my blood even in the dust.

I know I have the body, but 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 dishonour should grow by me, I myself will take up arms.⁹

For the purposes of this article, this will be the version against which I compare the four adaptations discussed.¹⁰

This article argues that the depiction of the Tilbury speech across various cinematic and televisual adaptations of Elizabeth's life and reign is an early-modernism that is demonstrative of the gendered depiction of Elizabeth in the relevant adaptation: that is, the way the speech is depicted or staged can be understood as a commentary on, or an insight into, the way the writer of the adaptation conceives Elizabeth's gender.¹¹ To the best of my

⁹ Anonymous, *Cabala, Mysteries of State, in Letters of the great Ministers of K. James and K. Charles* (London, 1654), 260. I have silently modernised the text. The *Cabala* speech was later reprinted in Edward Clark, *The Protestant School-Master* (London, 1680; Wing C4437), 214–215.

The speech also survives in a copy dating from the late-sixteenth or seventeenth century (which might be in Sharp's hand) in British Library Harley MS 6798, fols. 87r–87v, which is endorsed "Gathered by one that heard it" (Sharp was present at Tilbury, as he was a chaplain to Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester). The main difference between the two versions is that the BL manuscript uses "I" and "my," whereas *Cabala* uses "we" and "our." See Appendix 1 for a transcription of the Harley MS speech.

¹⁰ The first published version of a Tilbury speech is in William Leigh's *Queene Elizabeth, Paraleld in her princely vertues, with David, Josua, and Hezekia* (1612). The crux of the speech is the same, although Leigh's version is less theatrical, and because of the included rhetorical devices seems more suited to reading than oral delivery. Where Leigh got his version from is unknown; he does not mention being present—in fact, he prefaces the speech by saying the Queen "uttered these, or the like words in her Princely march," which suggests that he has received the account second-hand. See Appendix 2 for a transcription of the speech.

The speech Leigh recounts, however, is similar to one that appears beneath the *Elizabeth at Tilbury* painting, which is in the Parish Church of St Faith, Gaywood, near King's Lynn, Norfolk. The painting is part of a diptych—the other painting depicts the Gunpowder Plot of 1605—and while dated to 1588, the style of the painting suggests that the two images were painted at the same time in the early seventeenth century. The paintings were bequeathed to the church by its rector, Thomas Hares, in 1634 (although it is likely they were already on display before his death). See: Maria José Rodríguez-Salgado, *Armada: 1588-1988* (London: Penguin Books and the National Maritime Museum, 1988), 282–283 (an image of the painting is on page 282); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 263–264; Karen Hearn, "Elizabeth I and the Spanish Armada: A Painting and Its Afterlife," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (2004): 136; and Frye, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury," 102–104. See Appendix 3 for the text of the speech inscribed on the bottom of the painting.

¹¹ Marina Gerzic and Aidan Norrie, "Introduction: Medievalism and Early-Modernism in Adaptations of the

knowledge, no adaptation of the speech completely reproduces the surviving text of Sharp's letter (or any other surviving account, for that matter). The reasons for this deviation are probably varying, but I contend that the changes are largely representative of the way that writers and directors grapple with Elizabeth's incongruous position as a female king.¹²

Elizabeth's gender has always been integral to her televisual and cinematic representations. The duality of Elizabeth as a female king easily creates tension that can be used to move the film's story along without alienating audiences.¹³ Elizabeth's gender—that is, “a social category imposed on a sexed body”—has been the subject of commentaries and debates since the Queen's birth in 1533, and has not abated in the intervening centuries.¹⁴ This interest, however, is partly the result of Elizabeth's own actions. For instance, in the Golden Speech of 1601, Elizabeth referred to herself variously as king, prince, and queen: switching between roles and genders with ease.¹⁵ Indeed, as Carole Levin has observed, Elizabeth presented herself throughout her reign as “both woman and man in one, both king and queen together, a male body politic in concept while a female body natural in practice.”¹⁶ Elizabeth's gender, and its conception by both her contemporaries and modern audiences, is thus a combination of performance—as Judith Butler has observed, “gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence”—and a product of the prevailing heteronormative view of both sixteenth-century England, and the present.¹⁷ Elizabeth, as an unmarried female king, subverts traditional notions of both sex and gender: and while she is never explicitly presented as queer, her actions cause a queering of her gender.¹⁸ As Monique Wittig has argued, “The category of sex is the political category that founds society as heterosexual.”¹⁹ In failing to participate in the most ‘important’ of

English Past,” in *From Medievalism to Early-Modernism: Adapting the English Past*, ed. Marina Gerzic and Aidan Norrie (New York: Routledge, 2019), 3.

¹² This ‘grappling’ with Elizabeth's gender is not solely a modern phenomenon. Leah Marcus, Helen Hackett, and Gabriele Bernhard Jackson have all detected varying levels of Tilbury-like sentiments about female kingship in Shakespeare's plays, including *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Henry V*, and *Henry VI, Part 1*. See: Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Disconnects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 80, 101–105, 183–184; Helen Hackett, *Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 145; and Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, “Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc,” *English Literary Renaissance* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 40–65. See also: Albert H. Tricomi, “Joan la Pucelle and the Inverted Saints Play in 1 *Henry VI*,” *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 25, no. 2 (2001): 5–31; and Susan E. Krantz, “The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* and in London,” *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 19, no. 1 (1995): 5–20.

¹³ Aidan Norrie, “A Man? A Woman? A Lesbian? A Whore?: Queen Elizabeth I and the Cinematic Subversion of Gender,” in *Premodern Rulers and Postmodern Viewers: Gender, Sex, and Power in Popular Culture*, ed. Janice North, Karl C. Alvestad, and Elena Woodacre (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 320.

¹⁴ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1056.

¹⁵ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 335–344.

¹⁶ Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013), 121. See also: Leah S. Marcus, “Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny,” in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 135–153.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 34.

¹⁸ I have, however, argued elsewhere that the depiction of Elizabeth in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* has implicit homosexual undertones. See: Norrie, “A Man? A Woman? A Lesbian? A Whore?,” 329–330.

¹⁹ Monique Wittig, “The Category of Sex,” *Feminist Issues* 2, no. 2 (1982): 66.

heterosexual rites—marriage, and giving birth to children—Elizabeth causes tension that cannot be resolved; by not marrying and not having children, she is automatically placed outside of society's structure, even though, as queen, she was at its centre (or indeed, its apex).²⁰

To demonstrate my argument, this article analyses the depiction of the Tilbury speech in four different adaptations: in the films *Fire Over England* (1937) and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), and in episodes of the television series *Blackadder II* (1986) and *Mapp and Lucia* (2014). These four adaptations all depict the Tilbury speech in different ways: ways that largely reflect the characterisation of Elizabeth and her gender. I have deliberately chosen to discuss two examples of two of the different reasons for adapting Elizabeth. The two films I analyse here are intended to be historical films, concerned with re-telling the events of Elizabeth's reign (albeit with differing understandings of 'accuracy'). On the other hand, the two television series re-purpose Elizabeth, and the Tilbury speech, for reasons that have nothing to do with the invasion of the Spanish Armada. In analysing these four adaptations, I conclude that while writers and directors seem to have little issue with Elizabeth declaring that she has "the body of a weak and feeble woman," they seem to stumble on her follow-up declaration that she has "the heart and stomach of a king."

Fire Over England

Fire Over England (1937) is one of the earliest adaptations of the Tilbury speech. Directed by William K. Howard, and starring Flora Robson as Elizabeth, the film had an overt political purpose. As Thomas Betteridge notes, the film is one of several released in the interwar years that

sought to draw a direct parallel between the sixteenth-century conflict between Spain and England and the struggle against Fascism. ... It creates an absolute distinction between Spain and England over a range of registers. In Spain, Philip II is depicted as ruling alone, while in England the viewer is constantly shown Elizabeth in debate with her ministers.²¹

Given the growing tension between Spain and England—both in the film, and in society at the film's screening—it is almost a foregone conclusion that the movie's climax is the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada.

The well-known story is shown quickly unfolding: the Spanish ships are sighted off the coast of England, the warning beacons are lit, and men from all over the country take up arms to fight off the invading Spanish.²² Elizabeth is informed of the sighting and leaves London,

²⁰ Christopher Haigh has described Elizabeth as a "political hermaphrodite," which is a crude yet effective way of describing the Queen's gender when it came to politics. While this was not what Haigh was intending to do, it is also possible to see how Elizabeth the political hermaphrodite merged with the Elizabeth who did not participate in the heteronormative rites of marriage and childbirth; by not doing so, Elizabeth's alterity was made all the more pronounced, and her place outside of society's structure was reinforced. Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (London: Longman, 2001), 30.

²¹ Thomas Betteridge, "A Queen for All Seasons: Elizabeth I on Film," in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 248.

²² Both the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada and the Tilbury speech have long histories of being used in British propaganda. Will Coster has discussed how *Fire Over England* was part of the Black Legend and claims to

riding out to meet her troops. She arrives at Tilbury, and amidst the cheering soldiers, she delivers her speech:

My people, I am come to live or die amongst you all. To lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and valour of a king, and of a king of England too. Not Spain, nor any Prince of Europe shall dare to invade the borders of my realm. Pluck up your hearts, by your peace in camp, and your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory!²³

It is an interesting take on the speech; most of the elements are preserved, although the speech is certainly re-written. That so much of the speech is included is thanks to Robson herself: the original script contained a truncated, four-line version of the speech. Robson was unimpressed by this truncated version, so she found a printed version of the full speech, and learned it by heart. When it came to rehearsing to film the scene, Robson delivered the full speech instead of the truncated version in the script, and Howard and producer Erich Pommer agreed to shoot the scene with Robson's version.²⁴

That Robson consulted the 'original' source is possibly unique for a modern adaptation of the speech, and is certainly significant. Robson made a deliberate choice to portray a less emotional Elizabeth than the historical Elizabeth—she refers to her people, rather than her *loving* people—and she attempts to link her actions to those of her soldiers: as she has the valour of a king, they should display that valour she claims to embody. Likewise, the film plays up the threat of an actual invasion force—after all, “at the time of the queen's speech, the main body of the Spanish Armada had been deflected”²⁵—but Howard shows the defeat *after* the speech is delivered, reinforcing Elizabeth's (literal) role in encouraging her troops to victory. It is of course important to note that the film is a mostly fictional account of the Armada invasion. The film takes the events of the Ridolfi Plot (with aspects of the Babington Plot), and creates a storyline where Elizabeth, after learning that the Spanish were behind the failed plot, enlists Michael Ingolby (Laurence Olivier), whose father was killed by the Inquisition, to go undercover and infiltrate the court of Philip II of Spain. Masquerading as one of the traitors, Ingolby finds the names of English subjects in Spanish pay. He identifies the would-be assassins and discovers their plans to send the Armada against England, and he alerts the English of the impending invasion. The Tilbury speech—arguably the most historically 'accurate' event in the film—is thus included largely because of its ubiquity, which makes its editing at Robson's hands important for understanding Elizabeth's gendering. As Betteridge argues,

English superiority and exceptionalism. See: Will Coster, “The Armada, War and Propaganda in the Cinema,” in *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 150–163. In addition, some scenes from *Fire Over England*—including Robson's Tilbury speech—were re-used in *The Lion Has Wings* (1939), a British World War II propaganda documentary that linked the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada with a possible Nazi invasion, reminding its viewers that Britain had survived such invasions before, and would do so again. Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television*, 73.

²³ *Fire Over England*, dir. William K. Howard (London Film Productions, 1937).

²⁴ Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television*, 70–71.

²⁵ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 325n1.

Fire over England does not ignore the tensions caused by Elizabeth I's gender. However, like the dominant Whig history of the period, it is more concerned with the clash of ideas and political systems personified in Elizabeth and Philip. Robson's Elizabeth is consistently shown having to put her duty and public life before her needs and desires as a woman, the film's insistence that this kind of sacrifice is common in a time of emergency and the way in which it refuses to make this act of denial the meaning of Elizabeth's queenship reflects its political agenda.²⁶

While Betteridge is right, I contend that the depiction of the Tilbury speech shows something more going on. Elizabeth may have the *heart* of a king, but she does not have the *stomach* of one, and while valour is certainly a kingly attribute, it is demonstrably not the same—especially given that Robson has made a deliberate choice to substitute “stomach” with “valour” (the words are not synonyms). Elizabeth is too feminine; she rides sidesaddle on a horse adorned with rich (and impractical) tapestries, and the ridiculous costume she is wearing while delivering the speech (which includes a feathered plume, ruff, puffed sleeves, and a cape) is in stark contrast to the woman who greeted the news of the Essex Rebellion by reaching for Henry VIII's sword. For Howard, Elizabeth as a female king is an enigma. While Betteridge notes that the many male councillors around Elizabeth are intended to make her government seem more consultative and collaborative, their appearance also has the effect of diminishing Elizabeth's own power and agency, and suggests that she needs the help of men to rule. Indeed, Elizabeth is counselled against going to Tilbury, but she goes anyway, which somewhat lessens the impact of the speech. Her going to Tilbury is less the triumphant moment where she delivers a rousing speech to unite her troops because she disregards her counsellors. In some ways, it seems like she is seeking to capitalise on the invasion for her own selfish purposes—the reference to Elizabeth's “honour” is thereby rendered less altruistic. As one of the few historical moments in the film, the depiction of the Tilbury speech shows how Elizabeth's gender is still a complicating factor, despite her and her councillors' attempts to subvert it. As Bethany Latham has noted, in the film, the “‘real’ Elizabeth is often crammed into a simplified mold”—and this mould has limited room to experiment with Elizabeth's gender, especially as far as the typical 1930s viewer was concerned.²⁷ Ultimately, the film's message as broadcast via the depiction of the Tilbury speech is that a *female* king, no matter what kind of stomach she has, is still not as good as a *male* king.

Elizabeth: The Golden Age

Jumping forward several decades, I move to analyse Cate Blanchett's masterful performance of Elizabeth in the second of Shekhar Kapur's two films of Elizabeth, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. *The Golden Age* is a sequel to *Elizabeth* (1998), which depicted Elizabeth's accession to the throne and her reign until the aftermath of the Ridolfi Plot of 1571.²⁸ Between

²⁶ Betteridge, “A Queen for All Seasons,” 250.

²⁷ Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television*, 71.

²⁸ *Elizabeth* has garnered a substantial amount of critical attention. See, for example: Christopher Haigh, “Kapur's *Elizabeth*,” in *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 122–134; Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 194–256; Renee Pigeon, “‘No Man's Elizabeth': The Virgin Queen in Recent Films,” in *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*, ed. Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, and Imelda Whelehan (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 8–24; and Susanne L. Wofford, “‘Is There Any Harm in That?': Foxe,

the release of the two films, the modern viewers' world was rocked by the September 11 attacks, the 2002 Bali Bombings, and the 2005 London Bombings—among other terrorist attacks.²⁹ *Elizabeth*, which was filmed and released against the backdrop of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, used the fighting between Catholics and Protestants to call for religious toleration and for the end of sectarian violence.³⁰ *The Golden Age*, however, responds to the changing post-9/11 world by invoking a message against religious extremism, and to do so, it depicts Protestants as tolerant heroes, and Catholics as violent extremists.³¹ This anachronistic characterisation of Catholics was the source of much criticism upon the film's release. The following three examples are among the most effusive and unrestrained, but they do acknowledge the way that Kapur used the past to comment on the present, and indeed infused the past with presentist concerns. Steven Greydanus, in the *National Catholic Register*, wrote:

The climax, a weakly staged destruction of the Spanish Armada, is a crescendo of church-bashing imagery: rosaries floating amid burning flotsam, inverted crucifixes sinking to the bottom of the ocean, the rows of ominous berobed clerics slinking away in defeat. Pound for pound, minute for minute, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* could possibly contain more sustained church-bashing than any other film I can think of.³²

Stephen Whitty, of the Newark *Star-Ledger*, said: "This movie equates Catholicism with some sort of horror-movie cult, with scary close-ups of chanting monks and glinting crucifixes."³³ And finally, Franco Cardini, a historian at the University of Florence, alleged the film formed part of a "concerted attack on Catholicism, the Holy See and Papism." He asked of the film, "Why put out this perverse anti-Catholic propaganda today, just at the moment when we are trying desperately to revive our Western identity in the face of the Islamic threat, presumed or real?"³⁴ These reviews highlight two important points about historical films being "a barometer that measures our own value and place in the world."³⁵ On the one hand, these three reviews all underscore the place religion still maintains in Western society. Despite the rise of secularism, and the increasingly pluralist nature of religion in Western society, these three men understood the imagery Kapur was using in his film, and seemingly took offence at his less-

Heywood, and Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth*," in *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Katherine Conway (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 261–277.

²⁹ See: Courtney Lehmann, "Where the Maps End: *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* of Simulacra," in *An Age for All Time: The English Renaissance in and Beyond Popular Shakespeare*, ed. Gregory Semenza (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 55–71.

³⁰ Aidan Norrie, "The Queen, the Bishop, the Virgin, and the Cross: Catholicism versus Protestantism in *Elizabeth*," in *From Medievalism to Early-Modernism: Adapting the English Past*, ed. Marina Gerzic and Aidan Norrie (New York: Routledge, 2019), 226–243.

³¹ See: William B. Robison, "Marrying Mary to the Black Legend: Anti-Catholicism and Anti-Marian Messages in Anglo-American Films about Philip II of Spain," in *The Birth of a Queen: Essays on the Quincentenary of Mary I*, ed. Sarah Duncan and Valerie Schutte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 233–254.

³² Steven D. Greydanus, "Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007)," *National Catholic Register*, 15 October 2007, <http://www.decentfilms.com/reviews/elizabeth2>.

³³ Stephen Whitty, "Glittering like fool's gold," *The Star-Ledger*, Newark, 13 October 2007, http://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/index.ssf/2007/10/glittering_like_fools_gold.html.

³⁴ "Elizabeth gets bad review from Catholics," *The Sunday Times*, 18 November 2007.

³⁵ Elizabeth A. Ford and Deborah C. Mitchell, *Royal Portraits in Hollywood: Filming the Lives of Queens* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 294.

than-flattering depiction of the Catholic expansionism that actually happened in sixteenth-century Europe. In addition, Whitty's review, in describing the glinting crucifixes, comments on a constant theme of the film without considering its historical relevance: anti-Catholic rhetoric in the early modern period focused on Catholic idolatry, and it is unsurprising that this idea surfaced in a film that revolves around a Protestant nation dealing with religious turmoil.³⁶ On the other hand, it is interesting, and potentially alarming, that Cardini equated Catholicism with "Western identity." While Kapur certainly does not depict the Catholics in *The Golden Age* in a particularly flattering light, is showing the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and some floating rosaries, really an attack "on Catholicism, the Holy See and Papism?"

Perhaps unsurprisingly, sustained criticism from various publications (mostly Catholic or Catholic-aligned) forced Kapur to defend his films. He gave a detailed and wide-ranging interview that was intended to reject the various criticisms levelled at the films. In attempting to explain his vision for the films, Kapur highlighted the way he re-interpreted the past for his own purposes. According to Kapur, the film

is actually very, very deeply non-anti-Catholic. It is anti extreme forms of religion. At that time the church in Spain, or Philip, had said that they were going to turn the whole world into a very pure form of Catholicism. So it's not anti-Catholic. It's anti an interpretation of the word of God that is singular, as against what Elizabeth's was.³⁷

He asked his audience to think about the fact "that the Pope [had] ordered her execution; he said that anybody who executes or assassinates Elizabeth would find a beautiful place in the kingdom of heaven. That's why I made this film, so this idea of a rift between Catholicism and Protestants does not arise." After muddying the waters about his actual intention, Kapur justified the way he depicted the past, and explained the message he hoped audiences would take from the film:

It's not Catholic against Protestant; it's a very fundamental form of Catholicism. It was the time of the Spanish Inquisition, and against a woman, half of whose population was Protestant, half was Catholic. And there were enough bigots in her Protestant Parliament to say, 'Just kill them all,' and she was constantly saying no. She was constantly on the side of tolerance. So you interpret history to tell the story that is relevant to us now.³⁸

In no uncertain terms, Kapur revealed that he was indeed re-purposing the past to tell a "relevant" story, and that he was perpetuating a highly idealised version of Elizabeth. Kapur's Elizabeth may be a Protestant heroine, but she is not freed from the gender-constraints Kapur has placed on her: the Spanish Inquisition was up "against a woman," not a female king.

³⁶ See, for example: Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); and Richard L. Williams, "The Visual Arts," in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. Susan Doran and Norman Jones (London: Routledge, 2011), 567-586.

³⁷ Girish Rao, "Elizabeth is not anti-Catholic," *Rediff News*, 21 November 2007, <http://specials.rediff.com/movies/2007/nov/20sli2.htm>.

³⁸ Rebecca Murray, "Director Shekhar Kapur Discusses *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*," *Hollywood Movies*, 9 November 2007, <http://movies.about.com/od/elizabeththegoldenage/a/elizabeth92607.htm>.

Kapur, across both of his *Elizabeth* films, has a real issue with his gendering of the Queen.³⁹ His inconsistent, and indeed confused, depiction of Elizabeth's gender is brought to the fore in the scene in *The Golden Age* that sees Elizabeth recite a very truncated version of the Tilbury speech. Elizabeth delivers the speech in the sun; her long, red hair flies behind her in the wind. Her horse is adorned in some kind of battle-garb, and most importantly, she wears a full, medievaesque suit of shining silver armour.⁴⁰ With her armour, and astride a militarized horse, Elizabeth prepares to deliver the famous speech.⁴¹ Except, Kapur decides that the kingly, armour-clad Elizabeth is no longer capable of having the heart and stomach of a king; instead, he de-kings Elizabeth, and at the same time turns her into a commanding general. Of all the adaptations of the Tilbury speech, none is as weak as the version Blanchett's Elizabeth delivers.⁴²

My loving people. We see the sails of the enemy approaching. We hear the Spanish guns over the water. Soon now, we will meet them face to face. I am resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all. While we stand together no invader shall pass. Let them come with the armies of Hell; they will not pass! And when this day of battle is ended, we meet again in heaven or on the field of victory.⁴³

This is the only depiction (to date) of Elizabeth delivering the Tilbury speech that does not include the (in)famous “heart and stomach of a king” line. Its absence means that apart from demonstrating Kapur's discomfort with Elizabeth as a warrior-king, the speech openly plays with Elizabeth's gender—again, she is merely a woman, not a monarch. Despite showing Elizabeth as a conquering king, replete with full armour, Kapur removes the line that audiences would have expected to hear from the speech. To confuse his audience even more, he also implies that the armoured Elizabeth will be joining the fight herself, even potentially leading it. Not only does this fly in the face of all the preparations previously depicted in the film, but it also highlights the way that Kapur struggles with Elizabeth's gender. Is she a queen,

³⁹ Norrie, “A Man? A Woman? A Lesbian? A Whore?,” 320–321.

⁴⁰ It is important to note that there is no contemporary evidence at all that Elizabeth wore armour—of any kind—while addressing her troops. See: Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.

⁴¹ That Elizabeth is riding astride her horse, rather than side-saddle, is potentially not anachronistic. Saddles that allowed a woman to ride side-saddle for longer periods, and to remain in control of the horse, are only dated to the regencies of Catherine de' Medici, and even then, an experienced rider like Elizabeth would probably have switched between the two styles according to the circumstances. Nevertheless, earlier in the film, Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh are riding together, and Elizabeth is shown riding side-saddle, suggesting that delivering the speech while being astride a horse was a deliberate choice to accentuate Elizabeth's kingliness. For the history of the side-saddle, see: Lida Fleitmann Bloodgood, *The Saddle of Queens: The Story of the Side-saddle* (London: J.A. Allen, 1959), 15–17, 21–22. Catherine the Great of Russia famously had herself painted by Vigilius Eriksen c.1762 riding astride a horse, brandishing an unsheathed sword, while wearing the uniform of the elite Preobrazhensky Lifeguard Regiment (the Regiment that had been Catherine's body-guard, and had supported her in the coup against her husband, Peter III). This painting is sometimes called *Equestrian Portrait of Catherine II* or *Portrait of the Empress on Her Horse Brilliant*.

⁴² As Vivienne Westbrook remarks, “There is barely a line of resemblance to the speech that was later recorded as Elizabeth's Tilbury speech.” Vivienne Westbrook, “*Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. A Sign of the Times?” in *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 170.

⁴³ *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, dir. Shekhar Kapur (StudioCanal & Working Title Films, 2007).

encouraging her troops?⁴⁴ Is she a woman, playing the part of a queen, who is (unsuccessfully) attempting to play the part of a medieval warrior-king? Or, is she a woman who believes in her kingly authority, and is attempting to wield it at the opportune time? While one might suspect that Kapur was aiming for a mix of these three options, all are problematic in their own way: the effect of the armour-clad Elizabeth is somewhat undercut by Blanchett's long, flowing red hair. The performance of Elizabeth's gender, then, is incoherent, to expand on Butler's observations: armour is generally gendered masculine and male, while long, flowing hair is almost exclusively gendered feminine and female. What this confused depiction of the Tilbury speech does, therefore, is leave the issue of Elizabeth's gender, and indeed her place within the social and political order of England, unresolved, and in doing so perpetuates the gender crisis Elizabeth's legacy continues to suffer from.⁴⁵

Blackadder II

The appearance of Elizabeth in *Blackadder II* as 'Queenie' is one of the Queen's most well-known depictions. The Tilbury speech—or at least, its most famous line—is re-purposed in the fifth episode of the series, "Beer." *Blackadder II* is set during the Elizabethan era. The principal character, Edmund, Lord Blackadder (Rowan Atkinson), is a member of the London aristocracy. The series follows his attempts to win the favour of the childish Queen Elizabeth (Miranda Richardson) while avoiding execution by decapitation; Queenie is rather fond of having people who displease her, for even the most trivial offences, executed by beheading.⁴⁶

Bethany Latham has described how *Blackadder II* is a "comedic farce centering around the popular perception of history, not history itself, and as such it provides valuable insight

⁴⁴ Westbrook, "Elizabeth: The Golden Age," 170. Westbrook also notes that the "substitute speech only demonstrates that English soldiers needed very little by way of verbal exhortation to fight for their queen," further removing Elizabeth from the role of warrior-king and instead moving her closer to the image of the semi-divine Gloriana.

⁴⁵ Several reviewers and scholars have commented on what they see as *The Golden Age's* debt to Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002, 2003), in particular noting the intertextual references between Blanchett's Elizabeth and her character of Galadriel. While there are certainly moments in *The Golden Age* that seem to reference *Lord of the Rings*—in particular, the scene where Elizabeth leaves her tent to see the outcome of the Battle of Gravelines from a hill at the camp, in which she wears a white, flowing dress that billows in the wind—I remain unconvinced that the links between the films are as intentional as has been suggested. The 'ethereal' Elizabeth was already foreshadowed in *Elizabeth* (especially given Elizabeth's 'transformation' into the Virgin Queen), and while Blanchett probably brought some of her characterisation of Galadriel with her, I think that scene I described in *The Golden Age* would have largely been the same had *The Lord of the Rings* not been made. A scene that is often compared to *Lord of the Rings* is the depiction of Philip II ordering forests in Spain to be cut down for timber to make ships for the Armada, which has been compared with the way Saruman orders that the trees from Fangorn Forest be ripped up and used for the war-machine that is Isengard in *The Two Towers*. While I understand why the connection is drawn, it instead seems to me more a case of two very similar circumstances appearing on film that are connected by the closeness of their release, and that there are only so many ways such a scene can be depicted—especially when both films want to emphasise the destruction of nature. See, for instance: Robison, "Marrying Mary to the Black Legend," 245; Julia Kinzler, *Representing Royalty: British Monarchs in Contemporary Cinema, 1994-2010* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 82n148; and Ford and Mitchell, *Royal Portraits in Hollywood*, 289.

⁴⁶ Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television*, 218–219.

into the mythology surrounding Elizabeth.⁴⁷ It is thus unsurprising that many of Elizabeth's actions have a kernel of truth in them—such as the execution of the Earl of Essex, or the Queen's concern over the threat puritanism posed—but they have been exaggerated and twisted for both comic effect and to critique the myth of Gloriana. Michael Dobson and Nicola Watson go further, describing *Blackadder II* as a “travesty of post-war British Elizabethanism”⁴⁸ While this is rather hyperbolic, they do note how the show was filmed against the backdrop of Margaret Thatcher's Britain: a period that saw Elizabeth's legacy invoked to both bolster and denigrate Thatcher. Significantly, however, both Queenie in *Blackadder II* and Thatcher exist outside society's heteronormative conception of femininity. While Thatcher was married and had children, she and Elizabeth seem to both suppress their femininity in order to ‘make it’ in a man's world, which meant that the bodies of both women were “outside the properly sexual.”⁴⁹ This is not to say that Queenie is a ‘version’ of Thatcher, but rather that *Blackadder* was, in a way, re-using the story of Elizabeth in sixteenth-century England to make sense of contemporary Britain.

The reference to the Tilbury speech appears near the end of the episode, which revolves around Blackadder attempting to impress his wealthy, but extremely puritanical relatives—Lord and Lady Whiteadder (Daniel Thorndike and Miriam Margolyes, respectively)—who have announced their desire to meet Edmund to discuss his inheritance. While planning a dinner for them, Blackadder is summoned to court where he accidentally agrees to host a riotous drinking competition at his house on the same night. Queenie decides to sneak into Blackadder's house so she can see “what goes on” at these boys' nights.

Near the end of the episode, Lady Whiteadder walks in on the drunken courtiers as she prepares to leave: her puritan sensibilities offended by the drunken state the men are in. The men think she is there as a stripper; she flees from the room, and she and her husband hide in a cupboard. As they run into the cupboard, a figure stumbles out. The figure is Queenie, but the men in their drunken state do not realise this. Their inability to recognise the Queen is partially explained by the fact that she is wearing a cloak as part of what looks to be some kind of disguise—a disguise with a dramatic reveal that would later be included, and possibly even copied by Judi Dench's performance as Elizabeth, in *Shakespeare in Love* (1998).

Seeing the new figure, Simon Partridge (Hugh Laurie) cries, “Whoa, another stripper!” The men remove Queenie's cloak, and Partridge shouts, “And she's come dressed as the queen!” Elizabeth is rather indignant: “Do you know who I am?” A very drunk Blackadder enters: “Yes, I know who you are. ... You're Merlin, the Happy Pig.” Elizabeth's nostril's flare: “Wrong, I'm afraid. I am the Queen of England.” In what seems to be a mix of a reflex action and drunken panic, the men all kneel. Elizabeth then draws herself up to her full height, and stares down the barrel of the camera: “I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman. But I have the heart and stomach of a concrete elephant!” The effect is somewhat ruined, however, when Partridge yells out “Prove it!” The serious Elizabeth is gone: “Certainly will!” she replies.

⁴⁷ Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television*, 216.

⁴⁸ Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 253.

⁴⁹ Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*, 253–254. Dobson and Watson further note that “The edge of excitement and disgust to these travesties derives from the way in which Elizabeth could not only be identified as a precursor of the blessed Margaret, but might still represent a moribund monarchy and a disgraced but imperfectly renounced imperial project” (254).

She picks up a large mug of beer, stares down the camera again, and declares: “First, I’m going to have a little drinkie, and then I’m going to execute the whole bally lot of you.”⁵⁰

Queenie starts sculling the tankard, and then the scene cuts to black—ironically—with the caption “Dawn the next day.” The men are all still drunk, and they are all lying on the floor with Queenie and singing nonsense songs. Queenie suddenly pipes up: “Wait a minute, I’m sure there was something very important I had to do to all of you this morning.” She is obviously referring to the fact that she was going to execute them, but in her inebriated state, she cannot remember. The men, however, all giggle out a ‘Heyyyyy’—the implication being that Queenie had agreed to perform some kind of sexual act on them. Despite this, the men’s reaction to the sexual innuendo actually amuses Queenie, and she does not appear at all offended. The episode ends shortly after, leaving the Queen of England drunk on the floor of Blackadder’s house, surrounded by a bunch of drunken courtiers. If it were not for her costume, we would not even know it was her. Given that excessive alcohol consumption is more often associated with men than women, this closing scene further complicates her gender identity, while also reinforcing her immaturity—and her unsuitability to be a ruler.⁵¹

While *Blackadder II* can hardly be described as an exercise in history, Queenie’s depiction is certainly noteworthy. The Queen is nothing more than a petulant child who has the power to have someone’s head cut off. She is spoiled, demanding, changeable, and obstinate. In other words, she is the extreme version of the way Elizabeth is generally depicted in popular culture.⁵² The reason the Virgin Queen never married, according to a century’s worth of adaptations, is generally ascribed to Elizabeth not being able to make up her mind; indeed, she is often shown as a middle-aged schoolgirl who gets giddy with excitement when an attractive man shows interest in her.⁵³ Of course, this is an overly reductive and ahistorical view of the reason Elizabeth never married. While her vacillation certainly caused some of her suitors to cease their courting, this was a clever and considered political move: Elizabeth dangled the possibility of marriage like a solid-gold carrot for years after it was no longer practical, or perhaps even possible, for her to marry and have children. The reason she never

⁵⁰ *Blackadder II*, episode 5, “Beer,” dir. Mandie Fletcher, written by Ben Elton and Richard Curtis (BBC Productions, 1986).

⁵¹ On the links between (heavy) drinking and masculinity, see: Stephen Tomsen, “A Top Night: Social Protest, Masculinity and the Culture of Drinking Violence,” *The British Journal of Criminology* 37, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 90–102; and Pia Mäkelä, Gerhard Gmel, Ulrike Grittner, Hervé Kuendig, Sandra Kuntsche, Kim Bloomfield, and Robin Room, “Drinking Patterns and their Gender Differences in Europe,” *Alcohol and Alcoholism* 41, supplement 1 (October/November 2006): i8–i18.

⁵² See: Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television*, 220; and Dobson and Watson, *England’s Elizabeth*, 253–254.

⁵³ This trope is potentially parodied in *The Golden Age*, when Elizabeth and Walsingham discuss the suit of Charles, the Archduke of Austria:

Elizabeth: My suitors.

Christopher Hatton: Younger brother to Maximilian II, Holy Roman Emperor.

Walsingham: Cousin of Philip of Spain. Wealthy.

Bess, Elizabeth’s favourite maid: He’s rather handsome.

Elizabeth: How old is he?

Hatton: Young, I believe, Majesty. An Austrian alliance would keep France quiet.

Walsingham: And put Philip on a leash.

Elizabeth: I’ve become almost enthusiastic. Send for him. ... How much longer do you think I can play this game, Francis?

Walsingham: Virginity is an asset that holds its value well.

married, as Susan Doran and others have demonstrated, is that she could never get agreement from her counsellors, and indeed the populace at large, over who she *should* marry.⁵⁴ All of her suitors presented different, and sometimes insurmountable, issues: even Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, and Francis, the Duke of Anjou—the two suitors she was most serious about marrying—had impediments that constituted a red line for some of her counsellors. Elizabeth was wary of marrying without widespread popular and political support: the Wyatt Rebellion against her half-sister Mary was largely the result of popular discontent over Mary planning on marrying the Spanish Philip II.⁵⁵ So while Queenie may have the “heart and stomach of a concrete elephant,” the line is an early-modernism that is deliberately irreverent, and designed to reinforce the Queen’s childishness and immaturity. In short, *Blackadder II* depicts a Queen who is so unstable and immature that she cannot possibly find a husband. While the show makes no claim at historicity, there can be little doubt (drawing on Wittig) that England’s Virgin Queen suffers for not participating in the most fundamental of heterosexual, dynasty-securing actions, even though it was not the Queen’s reluctance that led to her dying unmarried. Elizabeth thus suffers the double indignity of being an unmarried spinster who causes great popular angst over the succession issue, while at the same time being a terrible flirt who strings men along even though she has no intention of marrying them. Elizabeth, the female king who cannot decide on a man, is perhaps best typified in Queenie’s “heart and stomach of a concrete elephant” quip. Like a concrete elephant, Elizabeth is unusual, but rather than being the victim of early modern gender expectations and religio-political disputes, it is her own personality and indecision that is blamed for her eventual death as a childless spinster.

Mapp and Lucia

The final adaptation of the Tilbury speech analysed here comes from the recent television adaptation of the “Mapp and Lucia” books. E.F. Benson wrote six novels about Elizabeth Mapp and Lucia Lucas in the 1920s and 1930s. They have since been adapted in various forms—the most famous being the Channel 4 adaptation in 1985⁵⁶—but here I am interested in the first episode of the 2014 BBC mini-series that featured Anna Chancellor as Lucia, and Miranda Richardson as Mapp. The *Wikipedia* summary of the series is useful here:

It is 1930 and in the quaint Queen Anne village of Tilling [based on Rye in East Sussex] (which is by, but not quite on, the sea) all seems as quiet as a mill pond. But its eccentric inhabitants exist in a world seething with gossip, faddishness and petty one-upmanship. From her centrally located house, Mallards, Miss Elizabeth Mapp reigns supreme over them all. Until, that is, the arrival of

⁵⁴ Susan Doran, “Why Did Elizabeth Not Marry?” in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1998), 40–42.

⁵⁵ Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 210.

⁵⁶ Many commentators compared the two adaptations, with the 2014 adaptation often compared unfavourably against the 1985 version. A representative comment on *The Guardian*’s review of the show claimed “The real wit and barb seemed lost in the modern cleverness.” It is possible that the show’s move away from the more cutting remarks of the original books and the 1985 adaptation to a more passive antagonism with an emphasis on physical comedy is a product of the show’s production against the backdrop of fourth-wave feminism. It is also interesting to note that the adaptation was a BBC project, rather than being a commissioned pitch, meaning there is minimal material available on its development and conception.

Mrs Emmeline 'Lucia' Lucas. With her passion for music, art and high culture of all kinds, Lucia is quite an addition to Tilling's social scene. It's not long before Mapp is indulging in all kinds of foul plots to undermine her accomplished tenant.⁵⁷

Lucia quickly ingratiates herself with the townsfolk: she throws lavish dinner parties for the people of Tilling, and in a stunning (or perhaps shocking) turn of events, puts herself forward to organise the annual charity fete in Mapp's garden.

The annual fete occurs at the end of the first episode. As it is being held in her garden, Mapp had been attempting to take credit for Lucia's party; the townspeople, as usual, know she is being opportunistic and is telling lies, but are too afraid to say anything and meekly play along. Mapp, however, has underestimated Lucia. The party is to feature some kind of performance—the curtained stage alerts audiences to this—but the contents of the performance have not been hinted at. Just as Mapp's credit-taking reaches its most outrageous, a man dressed as a town crier rings his bell, and pronounces: "Please be upstanding for our gracious queen, Elizabeth!"⁵⁸ Mapp is panicked; she tries to push to the front of the crowd, but is too late. The curtains on the stage open to reveal Lucia dressed as Elizabeth. Lucia then breaks into speech:

My loving people. We have been persuaded by some who are careful of our safety to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery. But I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear! For I have come here at this time not for my recreation or disport, but for my resolve in the midst and heat of battle to live and die amongst you all! I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king! We shall have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people!⁵⁹

The speech ends, and the chorus of *Zadok the Priest*, by Handel, rings out. George, Lucia's companion, who appears as some kind of solidier-attendant (likely as Francis Drake, as the novel the episode is based on, "Mapp and Lucia," has George as Drake), is dubbed, and the audience claps and cheers. Lucia has played her part perfectly, and Mapp is utterly defeated.

The Tilbury speech has thus been re-purposed as a proxy social war: in much the same way that *Fire Over England* used the invasion of the Spanish Armada to comment on Spanish fascism, *Mapp and Lucia* recasts the battle as one for social supremacy in Tilling. As Steve Pemberton (who wrote the screenplay) remarked in the introduction of the collected works of "Mapp and Lucia" that was re-issued by the BBC to coincide with the TV show's release, Benson's books are informed by the events of World War I, and he "used war metaphors throughout his books."⁶⁰ While Pemberton decided to emphasise the more social aspects of their disputes, wanting to show what went on behind closed doors that Benson did not

⁵⁷ "Mapp and Lucia," *Wikipedia*, accessed 9 July 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mapp_and_Lucia_\(2014_TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mapp_and_Lucia_(2014_TV_series)).

⁵⁸ It is important to note that as this episode was set in 1930, there had only been one Queen Elizabeth on the English throne: it took the accession of a *second* Elizabeth for the first to be given a regnal number. Thus, it would have been immediately clear that the crier was referring to Elizabeth I.

⁵⁹ *Mapp and Lucia*, "Episode 1," dir. Diarmuid Lawrence, written by Steve Pemberton (BBC Drama Production, 2014).

⁶⁰ Steve Pemberton, introduction to *Mapp and Lucia Omnibus: Queen Lucia, Miss Mapp and Mapp and Lucia*, by E.F. Benson (London: Penguin, 2014), viii.

explore, he noted that “Mapp and Lucia’s battle for social domination isn’t a cosy comedy of manners, it is a war story.”⁶¹ In this context, it makes sense that the Tilbury speech was employed—after all, the attempted invasion was part of the larger Anglo-Spanish War.

As this scene demonstrates, despite being the ‘invader,’ Lucia has won this round, with Mapp reduced to the invading and tyrannical Spain:⁶² the way that the camera cuts to Mapp’s recoiling face when the word “tyrants” is spoken makes it clear that the line was a direct reference to her. This reading is made overt when Irene, one of the people of Tilling, declares “The Queen is dead, long live the Queen” during the applause at the conclusion of Lucia’s speech: Mapp, the ‘queen’ of Tiling, has been overthrown, and Lucia has been crowned in her place. The accession of Elizabeth I marked the only time in English history that the heralds declared “the Queen is dead, long live the Queen,” which serves to not only emphasise Lucia as a kind of *Elizabetha Triumphans*,⁶³ but to also implicitly equate Mapp with Mary I—known, undeservedly, as ‘Bloody Mary’—a tyrant whose oppressive reign gave way to the Elizabethan ‘Golden Age.’ While certainly anachronistic, this was the widely held, Whiggish, view that pervaded both popular consciousness and the historiography in the early part of the twentieth century.⁶⁴ Finally, it is worth noting the intertextual link evident in the casting of Miranda Richardson as Mapp, given that Lucia’s performance of Elizabeth is given in a costume strikingly similar to the one worn by Queenie in *Blackadder II*.⁶⁵

Mapp and Lucia, then, has used the Tilbury speech to not only put Mapp in her place, but also to demonstrate Elizabeth’s enduring legacy. The audience cheers and claps, ooohs and aahs throughout Lucia’s performance: they are clearly familiar with the speech, and are aware of what Lucia is doing by performing it. Would this scene have been included if the Tilbury speech had originally been delivered by a man? It seems highly unlikely. Elizabeth, the woman, has been re-purposed to help win a social dispute. Despite having the “heart and stomach of a king,” Lucia’s Elizabeth does not mention being a “king of England”—the masculine attributes are thus wholly redeployed for feminine manoeuvres, and Elizabeth the female king is subsumed into Elizabeth the woman, a point made even more overt by the presence of George, her companion, by her side.

Gendering the Tilbury Speech

Of the four adaptations of Elizabeth’s reign discussed here that use or re-purpose the Tilbury speech, two do so as part of an adaptation that is intended to be somewhat historical,

⁶¹ Pemberton, introduction, viii.

⁶² Indeed, Pemberton made clear that he had written the series with this particular outcome in mind (in a departure from the books): “I therefore sketched out a through-line which would see Lucia conquer Tilling in episode one, an uneasy truce break out in episode two and Mapp snatch defeat from the jaws of victory in episode three.” Pemberton, introduction, ix.

⁶³ This icon, especially its links to the defeat of the Armada, is discussed in: Donald Stump and Susan M. Felch, eds., *Elizabeth I and Her Age* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 373–383.

⁶⁴ See: Thomas S. Freeman, “Inventing Bloody Mary: Perceptions of Mary Tudor from the Restoration to the Twentieth Century,” in *Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 78–100.

⁶⁵ While the costumes are not the same, Lucia’s is a fictional recreation that combines aspects of the *Ditchley*, *Wanstead*, *Drewe*, and *Rainbow* portraits of Elizabeth like Queenie’s in *Blackadder II*.

and two do so in order to speak to the Queen's enduring cultural legacy. None of the four depictions analysed here reproduce the speech in its entirety: instead, they rely on either context (as is the case in *The Golden Age*), or play with the ubiquity of the "heart and stomach of a king" line (as is the case in *Blackadder II*). Indeed, in *The Golden Age*, Elizabeth delivers a truncated form of the speech without the famous line—despite being in ridiculous and anachronistic armour—because Kapur decided that his audience could not conceive of the womanly Elizabeth being a king.⁶⁶ Likewise, in *Blackadder*, the "concrete elephant" quip, while amusing, serves to emphasise Elizabeth's perceived immaturity and her exceptional, or indeed unusual, status.

What ties these four depictions of the speech, and indeed Elizabeth, together, is the way that the speech is used to comment on Elizabeth's gender. Thanks to decades of films and television series, we are used to viewing Elizabeth's rule as a female king as an aberration, something that Elizabeth had to confront and deal with on an almost daily basis. This was not the case: despite being routinely invoked as proof of this problem, John Knox was an outlier—a "maverick," to use Susan Doran's term—in his claims that Elizabeth's gender made her unfit to rule.⁶⁷ There were also other writers who disputed Elizabeth's claim, but this was done generally on religious grounds—this includes authors such as Christopher Goodman⁶⁸ and Anthony Gilby.⁶⁹ This means that at Elizabeth's accession, there were no polemicists in England who actively questioned her right to rule based on her gender; yet, we are constantly confronted by this 'questioning.'

⁶⁶ Norrie, "A Man? A Woman? A Lesbian? A Whore?," 322–325.

⁶⁷ Susan Doran, "Did Elizabeth's Gender Really Matter?" in *Queens Matter in Early Modern Studies*, ed. Anna Riehl Bertolet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 33.

⁶⁸ Christopher Goodman's *How superior powers ought to be obeyed of their subjects* appeared to rail against the rule of women, and has been used as an example of the 'issues' a female king had to contend with. He asked his readers to consider: "Yf women be not permitted by Civile policies to rule in inferior offices ... I make your selves judges, whither it be mete for them to governe whole Realmes and nations?" However, writing from Geneva as a Protestant exile in the reign of Mary I, Goodman's attack is far more related to Mary's religion. That Goodman was criticising Mary is made clear on the next page of the pamphlet: "how farre ye have bene led besydes your comun senses and the manifest worde of God in electing, anoynting, and crowninge a woman to be your Quene and Governesse, and she in verie dede a bastarde, and unlawfully begotten. But be it that she were no bastarde, but the kinges daughter as lawfullie begotten as was her sister, that Godlie Lady, and meke Lambe, voyde of all Spanishe pride, and strange bloude." Thus, while criticising Mary, her 'foreignness' and her Catholicism (and their associated 'evils') subsume any gendered implications, and Goodman even speaks of Elizabeth as "that Godlie Lady," and speaks of her legitimacy to rule. Christopher Goodman, *How superior powers ought to be obeyed of their subjects and wherin they may lawfully by Gods Worde be disobeyed and resisted* (Geneva, 1558; *STC* 12020), 52, 53.

⁶⁹ Like Goodman, Anthony Gilby's "Admonition to England and Scotland" appears to attack female rulers. While he wrote concerning "the regiment of women, wherewith ye are bothe plaged," what he was actually more focused on England's ties with foreign nations, and Mary's Catholicism. The remedy to this, according to Gilby, was for the English and the Scots to return to the 'true' religion: "if you hope to have any parte with Christ, cherishe his membres and maintaine them against their enemies the papistes, and the bishoppe of Rome the verie Antichriste. ... if you will maintaine Gods trueth in the earthe, he will receave you as his children into the heavens, if you confesse his Christe before this wicked generation, ... But if you persiste stubbornly to banishe goddes worde, and his sonne Christ in his membres furth of your earthlie kyngdomes, how can ye loke for any parte in his heavenlie king dome?" Gilby's tract thus had little to do with Mary's gender: it was her religion that was his concern. Anthony Gilby, "An Admonition to England and Scotland to call them to repentance," in John Knox, *The appellation of John Knoxe from the cruell and most injust sentence pronounced against him by the false bishoppes and clergie of Scotland* (Geneva, 1558; *STC* 15063), 76r–76v.

The Tilbury speech is not the only speech of Elizabeth's that blurred sex and gender. As was mentioned previously, in 1601, Elizabeth's so-called Golden Speech would blur the boundaries between sex and gender even more overtly than her address at Tilbury. Despite the popularity of the Tilbury speech in modern adaptations, it is important to remember that it was *never* printed during Elizabeth's life—its first printing occurred in 1654. This is in stark contrast to the Golden Speech, which was printed shortly after it was delivered to the members of the Commons in the Whitehall Council Chamber on 30 November 1601.⁷⁰ The Golden Speech enjoyed a long afterlife, being reprinted in 1628, 1642, 1657, 1659, and 1679—in fact, for most people in seventeenth-century England, the Golden Speech would be the most familiar of the Queen's. This speech, in which Elizabeth called herself “king,” “queen,” and “prince” was evidently more central to the depiction of Elizabeth's rule that she and her councillors wanted to publicly project.⁷¹ This speech, which blurs the Queen's gender with frankness and on more occasions than the Tilbury speech, reinforces why the emphasis on the incongruity of Elizabeth as a female king is anachronistic. The re-printings of the speech certainly had political motives—for instance, the 1679 re-print was intended to support the ‘Exclusion’ of the Catholic James, Duke of York, from succeeding his childless brother Charles II⁷²—but none questioned or refuted Elizabeth's claim to be both England's king and queen. Why then are contemporary adaptations of a speech that was *less* subversive unable to follow the primary source?

Using these four depictions of the Tilbury speech as a lens through which to analyse the depiction of Elizabeth's gender shows that Elizabeth the female king is a conundrum that writers cannot seem to understand. This conundrum is demonstrative of the power and pervasiveness of the early-modernism that is the Elizabeth Myth. On the one hand, it has ensured that the last Tudor monarch is one of the most, if not *the* most, well known of the English monarchs. On the other, it reduces Elizabeth to a mere character who wore elaborate dresses and flirted with men she had no intention of marrying. This could not be further from the truth, and while we should be wary of works that claim to present the ‘real’ or ‘forgotten’ Elizabeth, the depiction of the Tilbury speech in modern popular culture demonstrates that we have allowed the incongruity of Elizabeth as a female king to completely subsume our understanding of the last Tudor monarch. Writers have no problem with Elizabeth stating that she has “the body of a weak and feeble woman”: the challenge now is to shift the emphasis to the second part of that statement. By doing this, Elizabeth's gender can stop being only a plot

⁷⁰ Elizabeth I, *Her Majesties Most Princelie Answers, delivered by her selfe at the court at White-hall, on the last day of November 1601* (London, 1601; STC 7578). The STC surmises that the speech was printed by Robert Barker, who was the Queen's printer, which offers an even more ‘official’ air to the publication.

⁷¹ There are five different versions of the speech, and while all have minor differences, they all include Elizabeth's claim to be England's “king,” “queen,” and “prince.” See: T.E. Hartley, ed., *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, Volume III: 1593-1601* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 287–297.

⁷² See, for instance: Steven W. May, “Tongue-tied our Queen?: Queen Elizabeth's Voice in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Elizabeth H. Hageman and Katherine Conway (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 63n2; and Patrick Collinson, “Elizabeth I and the Verdicts of History,” *Historical Research* 76, no. 194 (2003): 481–482. On the Exclusion Crisis, see: Christopher Ross Petrakos, “‘A Pattern for Princes to Live By’: Popery and Elizabethan History During England's Exclusion Crisis, 1679-1681,” *American, British and Canadian Studies* 2 (2015): 132–154.

complication, and instead give way to a woman who was able to clearly and publicly declare that she had the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too.

Appendix 1: Tilbury Speech in British Library Harley MS 6798

My lovinge people, we have been perswaded by som, that are carefull of my safty, to take heed how I committed my selfe to armed multitudes for feare of treachery. Butt I tell you, that I would not desyre to live to distrust my faythfull and lovinge people. Lett tyrants feare: ~~butt~~⁷³ I have so behaved my selfe that under god I have placed my chiefest strength and safegard in the Loyall harts and goodwill of my subiects. wherefor I am com amoungst you att this butt [sic] for my recreation and pleasure being resolved in the middst and heate of the battle to live and bye [sic] amoungst you all, to lay down for my god and for my kyngdom and for my people myn honor and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body butt of a weake and feble woman, butt I have the harte and stomack of a kinge, and of a kynge of England too. and take foule scorn that Parma or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to ye which rather then any dishonour shall grow by mee, I myself will ventir my royall blood, I myself will bee your generall, judge, and rewarder of your vertue in ye field. I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewardes and Crownes, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fayle of them. In the mean tym my Lieutenant generall shall bee in my steed; then whom never prince commaunded a more noble or worthy subject. Not doubting butt by your concord in the campe, and ~~your~~⁷⁴ valure in ye field, and your obedience to my selfe and my generall wee shall shortly have a famous victory over thes enimyes of my god, and of my kyngdom.⁷⁵

Appendix 2: William Leigh's account of the Tilbury Speech

Come on now my companions at armes, and fellow Souldiers, in the field, now for the Lord, for your Queene, and for the kingdome, for what are these proud Philistines, that they should revile the Hoast of the living God? I have beene your Prince in peace, so will I be in warre, neither will I bid you goe and fight, but come and let us fight the battell of the Lord, the enimie perhaps may challenge my sexe for that I am a woman, so may I likewise charge their mould for that they are but men, whose breath is in their nostrrels, and if God doe not charge England with the sinnes of England, little doe I feare their force, we commend your prayers, for they will move the heavens, so doe wee your powerfull preaching, for that will shake the earth of our earthly hearts, and call us to repentance, whereby our good God may relieve us, and roote up in mercy his deserved Judgements intended against us, onely be faithfull and feare not. Si deus nobiscum quis contra nos? [If God is with us, who shall be against us?].⁷⁶

⁷³ Word is deleted.

⁷⁴ Word is deleted.

⁷⁵ British Library Harley MS 6798, fols. 87r–87v. Contractions and abbreviations have been silently expanded.

⁷⁶ William Leigh, *Queene Elizabeth, Paraleld in Her Princely Vertues, with David, Joshua, and Hezekia* (London, 1612; STC 15426), 93–94.

Appendix 3: The Tilbury Speech beneath the *Elizabeth at Tilbury* painting, St. Faith's Church, Gaywood

Now for Queene and For the kingdome I have beene your Queene in Peace and in warre, neither will I bid you goe and Fight, but goe and let us Fight the battell of the Lorde. For what ar thes proud Philistines that they should Revile the host of the Living God. It may be they will challenge my sex for that I am a woman so [may] I charge [their mould for] that they ar but men whose breath is in theire nostrells and if God doe not charge England with the sinnes of England we shall not neede to feare what Rome or Spayne can doe against us with whome is but an armie of Flesh where as with us is the Lord our God to Fight our battells and to helpe [—] ⁷⁷ with us the skills not Greatley if all the devills in hell be against us. ⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Damaged and unreadable.

⁷⁸ My transcription is based on the image of the painting in Rodriguez-Salgado, *Armada: 1588-1988*, 282. Frye, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury," 102, also includes a transcription, but I diverge from her in several places.