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Georgianna Ziegler, ed. *Elizabeth I: Then and Now*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003. 192 pp. \$40.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-295-98323-3.



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At about 3 o'clock in the morning on March 24, 1603, the sixty-nine-year-old Queen Elizabeth I died, and a little later in the day James VI of Scotland was proclaimed King of England. Four hundred years on, the new king's accession has been all but forgotten in the desire to celebrate the life and reign of his predecessor. During 2003, major exhibitions on Elizabeth have been held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the Newberry Library in Chicago, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. Countless smaller exhibitions have been put on elsewhere.

Elizabeth I: Then and Now has been published in conjunction with the exhibition held at the Folger Library from March until August 2003. It is a sumptuous book, beautifully produced, which reproduces the materials on display and, in a series of essays, places them within their historical context. The fine quality of the paper, the spacious layout, and the colorful photographs make this book a joy to handle, view, and read.

The essays cover a range of subjects, which reflect the strength of the library's rich holdings of books and manuscripts; these include the queen's coronation, wardrobe, progresses, court entertainments, foreign relations, religion and religious settlement, relationship with the earls of Leicester and Essex, death and funeral, as well as her afterlife in works such as the *Annales* of

William Camden as well as Thomas Heywood's plays and verse histories. In addition, Carole Levin has written an accomplished narrative overview of Elizabeth's life and reign; Heidi Brayman Hackel has fascinating things to say about the problems in reconstructing the queen's library and life as a reader; Sheila ffolliott offers a fresh look at Elizabeth's portraits by discussing their different uses and making some comparisons with depictions of Catherine de Medici; and Barbara Hodgson looks at Elizabeth's representation in today's mass culture and comments perceptively on her portrayal in film. Finally, Janel Mueller provides a useful survey of Folger manuscripts by and about the queen, and Heather Wolfe lists the manuscripts in the library that are signed by Elizabeth dating from circa 1550 until her death.

What kind of Elizabeth emerges from the essays? As in most historical accounts, she is presented here as a shrewd political operator, a pious Protestant, a skilled linguist, a lover of books, a fashion icon, a figure of charismatic power, a true "career woman," and something of an enigma. Unsurprisingly then, there are no revelations about the queen's character. But the pictures in the book are a revelation: many of them have not been widely reproduced before, and they certainly deserve publication and comment; my particular favorites are the colored drawings from Thomas Trevelyan's 1608 *Commonplace*

Book and the fine calligraphic manuscript of *A Booke of Certeine Devoute and Godlie Praires* (1564). Of great interest, too, is the visual contrast between letters Elizabeth wrote to Philip II of Spain in 1566 and to Henri IV of France composed about 1590, for their appearance mirrors the relationship between the author and recipient. The letter to Philip is written out neatly in Latin by Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's Latin Secretary, and is formal in appearance and content. The letter to Henri which contains words of personal affection and advice is informally written in the queen's own hand in French. Similarly a letter written to James VI which appears later in the book reveals the intimacy of their relationship, as at the end she apologizes for her bad handwriting.

My only serious criticism of the book is that it tends to buy into the myth of Elizabeth; the writers are rarely critical of the queen themselves and seem unaware of the contemporary criticisms of her that were incorporated into panegyric discourse. Yes, we are told that she lacked political vision, especially when dealing with Ireland and

the frustrations of some of her courtiers are hinted at. But Spenser's sharp critique of her in the *Fairie Queen* and Sidney's in *Arcadia* are not mentioned at all. Nor are we informed that Elizabeth's bust disappeared from the frontispiece of the 1574 and later editions of the *Bishops' Bible* so that it is highly improbable that this portrait was "seen by every subject" (p. 166). The only contemporary criticisms of the queen discussed here relate to the flood of Catholic literature published in Europe after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. In these works Elizabeth was depicted as an English Jezebel for murdering her cousin, while Mary was presented as a Catholic martyr.

Despite this shortcoming, *Elizabeth I: Then and Now* will delight both general readers and scholars. In some strange way, it resembles many of those handwritten and printed books presented as gifts to the queen—full of praise for their patron and to be treasured for the care taken in their production.

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