Elizabeth the Rhetor: The Makings of a Female King

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In the year of our Lord 1558, not all was well in England. Mary I was Queen of England and had been since 1553. She was second in line for the throne after her Protestant brother, Edward VI. England had functioned as a Protestant nation in all but name since the rule of her father Henry VIII. However, Mary I was a Catholic, and had been raised as such by her staunchly Catholic mother, Katherine of Aragon. Under Mary I’s rule, Protestants were no longer allowed to practice their faith, and in fact were fined, jailed, or burnt because of it. Many notable Protestants fled the country rather than hide in England, forced to outwardly practice Catholicism. Geneva, Switzerland was a safe haven for European Protestants. The scene was equally unnerving to Protestants in Scotland. Mary, Queen of Scots, was a Catholic, and basically French, in a Protestant and nationalistic Scotland. These two Catholic Queens were the fuel for the sixteenth century gynecocracy debate which was only made more complicated in 1558 when Mary I died and left her half-sister Elizabeth I to be Queen of England.¹ There where many who still thought of Elizabeth as a bastard and contested her claim to throne on several grounds. Also, there were those who had suffered under gynecocracy for so long that they had begun to speak out against it. John Knox, for example, published his The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women against Mary I of England, Mary Guise of Scotland, and her daughter Mary, Queen of Scots. However, the argument in his pamphlet expanded to cover all female rulers and thereby hurt the legitimacy of Elizabeth I early on, since it was published only a few months before she

¹ Sharon L. Jansen, Debating Women, Politics, and Power in Early Modern Europe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3. I have used Jansen’s spelling of gynecocracy, which is the sixteenth century version of the term.
became Queen. Luckily, Elizabeth had learned rhetoric through many different venues including her early humanist education, her privileged experiences as the bastard daughter of Henry VIII, and the precedent set by her sister Mary I; it was through Elizabeth’s knowledge and use of rhetoric, and that of those close to her, that she was able to establish herself as Queen and legitimize her rule.

Elizabeth, whether she was aware of it or not, had been learning about rhetoric since she was young. When she was eleven she translated Marguerite Navarre’s *Le Miroir de l’Âme Pecheresse* as a gift for Catherine Parr, her stepmother. Many different types of analysis have been done on her translation, but the one most interesting for this study is Daniel Ellis’ rhetorical analysis of her translation and how it reflected on her use of rhetoric later in life. Ellis believes that the intention of her translation was not to learn about rhetoric, but rather it had a subconscious influence on the rhetor that she would grow up to be. The style of rhetoric that she gleaned from her translation was the rhetoric of indeterminacy, which is “troubling the intersection of meaning, understanding, and action” in order to make something that is complex with unattainable meaning more clear. Elizabeth’s translation, *The Glass of the Sinful Soul*, mirrors the mystery and ambiguity of the original piece. However, there are a few things that Ellis points to where Elizabeth is either floundering in her translation skill, which is not terribly likely since she had a gift for language, or else using rhetoric. The text is about “a soul directly appealing to God for forgiveness” and also deals with topics such as the Holy Trinity.

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3 Ellis, “Childhood Reflections.”
4 Ibid., 34.
5 Ibid., 36.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 34.
There are many speakers, including both the speaker and the speaker’s soul. One use of rhetoric that plays out in the translation is the choice of pronouns when shifting from French to English, using gendered pronouns to both clarify and muddle who the speaker is, since gendered articles are lost when translating from between French and English.\(^8\) The uncertainty of who the speaker is at any one time in the text was an early example of indeterminacy for Elizabeth, and, whether she learned it from this translation or not, it is a tool that was apparent later in life when she became Queen of England. Ellis examines its use in the debate about her getting married and producing heirs. As Queen Regnant, she was a master at trailing Parliament along and giving them answers without answering them. Parliament’s main reason for nagging at her was that she was still not married and therefore had produced no heir.\(^9\) Elizabeth was not about to give up any of her power, so she used indeterminacy and alluded them, while making them feel as though they had gotten an answer for the time being. She told them not to worry because England was her husband and that her subjects were her heirs: a prime example of indeterminacy.\(^10\)

Another more simple way of explaining her knowledge of the use of rhetoric is her humanist education as a child. Even as a bastard, she was still the King’s bastard, and was therefore given a privileged education for women. Her tutors were mainly humanists and would have given her at least a basic education in rhetoric. Robert Ascham was one such tutor, who made sure that she knew fluently the classical languages. He also gave her lessons in public speaking and diplomacy, thinking that she was a star pupil.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Ibid., 35.
\(^9\) Ibid., 40.
However, the credit for the rhetorical decision of portraying herself as wife and mother of England did not come from her humanist tutors, but rather from the precedent of her half-sister Mary I. In his book, *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History*, Charles Beem chooses to call Queens Regnant, such as Mary I and Elizabeth I, female kings rather than queens.\(^{12}\) There are different sets of connotations that come with each of those terms, and queen is always used in a submissive way. Neither Mary I nor Elizabeth I could be called wholly submissive, though they may have wanted it to appear that way. Both Mary and Elizabeth used the “traditional female roles” of spouse and mother “reclaiming them as images of power.”\(^ {13}\) By claiming those roles, both female kings were able to establish a common ground with their subjects, the idea that women are meant to be mothers and wives, but by using those role metaphorically, the wife of the country and the mother of the subjects, they gave the roles new meaning.

It was Mary who began the idea of female king as spouse and mother in her speech at the Guildhall after the Wyatt Rebellion. She reminded her people of their necessary fealty to her, saying that: “I am your Queen, to whom at my coronation, when I was wedded to the realm and laws of the same (the spousal ring whereof I have on my finger, which never hitherto was, nor hereafter shall be left off), you promised your allegiance and obedience unto me.”\(^ {14}\) Mary insists to her subjects that it does not matter who her body is married to, because, as Queen, she is married to her people. She also


\(^{13}\) Beemer, “The Female Monarchy,” 259.

\(^{14}\) Louis Adrian Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago [u.a.: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006), 44. As quoted from John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*.}
claims them as her children in the same speech: “I cannot tell how naturally the mother loveth the child, for I was never the mother of any; but certainly, if a prince and governor may as naturally and earnestly love her subjects, as the mother doth love the child, then assure yourselves, that I, being your lady and mistress, do as earnestly and tenderly love and favour you…”

She not only sets herself up as a mother to her people, but a mother full of “tender love” for her children. Mary, at once, claims the traditional women’s roles of spouse and mother, while using them to establish her power over the country. Another method that she uses in the same speech is proclaiming herself the daughter of Henry VIII, and therefore the rightful ruler.

Elizabeth’s speech to Parliament when asked to address her lack of spouse or heirs is resoundingly similar to Mary’s at Guildhall. The two speeches are similar enough in rhetorical style and structure, that it seems as though Elizabeth learned these particular strategies from her half-sister and supposed antithesis.

In her first speech before Parliament, it had already been made clear to her that they wanted her to marry and start producing heirs. That was the perfect time to “re-use” Mary’s speech already familiar to her. Elizabeth reassured Parliament that she was “already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom, and that may suffice you.” She put the ball in their court and blames them if they did not find her solution fitting to the problem. She claimed the role of wife, typically a subservient role, but used it to keep her power, because if she had married for real, she could possibly have lost the dominant rulership of her kingdom. Also, by taking on the traditional woman’s role of wife, she is appealing to the common patriarchal view that women are wives, and thus she made her

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 266.
audience more comfortable.\textsuperscript{19} In the same speech, Elizabeth also addressed the issue of an heir. She demanded of Parliament that they “reproach me so no more…that I have no children: for every one of you, and as many as are English, are my children and kinsfolks.”\textsuperscript{20} Here she claims every Englishman as her son or daughter, proving once again that she is indeed a mother, and lays it on them if they are not happy with the children that she has provided. There is one significant difference between Mary’s claim of motherhood and Elizabeth’s: Mary says that she loves her subjects “as the mother doth love the child,” where Elizabeth says that her subjects “are my children and kinsfolks.”\textsuperscript{21} Ever the rhetor, Elizabeth took the rhetorical form of Mary’s speech and changed a loose simile into a very strong metaphor physically claiming England’s people as her children.\textsuperscript{22} One last thing that Elizabeth copied from Mary’s speech was the establishment of Henry VIII as her father. By equivocating their reign with their father’s, Mary and Elizabeth were able to better legitimize and establish their own authority as female kings.\textsuperscript{23}

However, not all subjects believed that female kings were legitimate, and in fact to allow women to govern was “repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to His revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.”\textsuperscript{24} Those were the opening lines of John Knox’s

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Beemer, “The Female Monarchy,” 267.
\textsuperscript{24} Donald V Stump and Felch, Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary and Criticism (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 77. Copy text: John Knox, The first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women ([Geneva: J. Poullain and A. Rebul], 1558; STC 15070), B1r-7r; E7r-F2r; F7r-F7v; G7r-G8v.
pamphlet *The First Blast Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. In his pamphlet, he laid out an argument using mainly the Old Testament to point out that God has demanded that women be, in all things, submissive to men, and that it is unnatural for a woman to rule in any office. An English Protestant, John Aylmer, published a response to Knox’s pamphlet in 1559. His was entitled *An Harbor for Faithful and True Subjects against the Late Blown Blast Concerning the Government of Women*. His main goal, as he says, was to “defend the cause [Protestantism and Elizabeth’s reign] and not to deface the man [Knox].”

It is interesting that even though Knox had intended his “blast” to hurt Mary I, his argument extended to denounce all female monarchs, including the Protestant Elizabeth I; in response, Aylmer used his publication to repeat Knox’s argument that women, in general, were too weak to rule, but that female monarchs, if ordained by God (as he viewed Elizabeth to be), could rule effectively because their first allegiance is to their marriage with God and not to a husband. Both men published during an incredibly turbulent point for Elizabeth, and if both had been exceeding rhetors then the outcome could have been different; however, Aylmer used rhetoric more to his advantage than Knox did and was able to buy Elizabeth more supporters. Even Knox eventually apologized, saying that Elizabeth was obviously a special case.

Both writings were spread through the public by means of pamphlets. Most political pieces of the period would have been published via pamphlet. The main difference between the two pamphlets was where they began circulation. *The First Blast* originated in Geneva with Knox and was published and circulated its way there before

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25 Ibid., 83. Copy Text: John Aylmer, *An harborovve for faithful and trevve subjectes agaynst the late blowne blaste, concerninge the gouerme[n]t of vremen, wherein be confuted all such reasons as a straunger of late made in that behalfe, with a breife exhortation to obedience* (Strasborowe [London: John Day], 1559; STC 1005), B1r-2r; C3r-4r; G1r-G1v; G2v-G3v; G4r; H3v.
making it to England. Thereby the audience for Knox’s pamphlet would have been almost all Protestant, since Geneva was the seat of Calvinism. A Protestant Geneva would have been very accepting of a propaganda piece against Catholic Queens, since many of them had suffered at the hands of the Catholic Marys, so most of his persuasive mission was already accomplished. Therefore, it would appear that his main goal was to better inform those who already agreed with him rather than persuade those around him, in Geneva. However, his greatest hope may have been for his pamphlet to circulate through England and his home, Scotland. He used the “mischievous Marys” as his examples of ineffective female monarchs;\textsuperscript{26} the Mary’s to whom he is referring were Mary I of England; Mary, Queen of Scots; and Marie of Guise (Mary, Queen of Scots’ mother).\textsuperscript{27} He attacked these women, in particular, because they were all Catholic monarchs in countries that had previously been Protestant, and in the case of Mary, Queen of Scots, technically still were. Mary I was a Catholic Queen who burned countless Protestants during her reign and exiled others. Mary, Queen of Scots, was first and foremost a French woman and was more concerned with her claim to the English throne than ruling her own country. Mary of Guise was Mary, Queen of Scots’ mother and was regent during Mary’s time in France. Marie of Guise tried desperately to work against Scotland’s Lords to keep Scotland Catholic. It was because of Marie of Guise that Knox was living in Geneva rather than his home in Scotland. He would later return during the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, and preach publicly against her rule. The “first blast” was initially meant to be the first of three blasts. Knox’s plan, as he laid out in his preface, was to publish the first two anonymously and then sign his name to the last of

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 77.
the publications. However, he never published the other two. He said that “corporal punishment is neither the only, neither the chief cause” for publishing anonymously, but he ended his preface without ever giving the actual reason.

Aylmer’s *An Arbor for Faithful and True Subjects* would have had a slightly different audience, being published a year later in England. By that time, Elizabeth I had succeeded her half-sister Mary I and had fully established England as a Protestant nation. However, the nation had undergone so many changes in religion that the people were divided between Catholic and Protestant. Therefore, Aylmer’s audience would have been split on the issue of religion. Aylmer may have been aware of this, since he did not use religion as his only standing ground as Knox did. He cited ancient politics, logic, and used rhetoric to prove his point and bring down his opponents’.

Knox’s message in *The First Blast* was clear: female monarchs should not be allowed to rule. Period. He argued that women as rulers are “repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to His revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.” At only one point does he mention, as a sidebar, that there could be some reason, known only to God that a woman might be chosen to rule. However, he never even tried to explain whether or not any of the Marys he attacked could be such cases. He dismissed the idea as soon as he wrote it. Throughout the rest of the pamphlet, he used the Bible to prove that God ordained women to be submissive to men and that it is “unnatural” for women to rule in

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29 Ibid.
30 Stump, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 77.
31 Ibid., 78.
any position. He did admit that those in opposition to him would cite Deborah the judge and Huldah the prophetess as examples of exemplar female leaders from the Bible. He retorted by saying that Deborah and Huldah were different because they were virtuous, and that they did not seek out their position or inherit it, but were given it by God.  

Rather, he compared the “Marys” to Jezebel and Athalia:

But in these of our ages we find cruelty, falsehood, pride, covetousness, deceit, and oppression. In them we also find the spirit of Jezebel and Athalia. Under them we find the simple people oppressed, the true religion extinguished, and the blood of Christ’s members most cruelly shed. And finally, by their practices and deceit, we find ancient realms and nations given and betrayed into the hands of strangers, the titles and liberties of them taken from the just possessors”.  

He said also that Deborah and Huldah were only spiritual leaders and prophets, and did not attempt to rule over anyone or claim any authority, but through God.  

Throughout the argument, Knox also remained aware of his audience’s desire for proof from ancient philosophers and historians. Knox cited Aristotle’s Politics in which Aristotle complains of men who are ruled by their wives. He also used Roman law, written in De Regulis Juris Antiquie, which says that women may not hold any public office or be “speakers of others.” Also, in using the Bible as an argument against female rule, Knox referenced St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, in which he said that women are to be subject to their husbands.  

Aylmer, a true rhetor and applier of strong Ethos, began his argument by simultaneously diminishing the credibility of Knox, as well as setting up his own

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33 Ibid., 20.  
34 Stump, Elizabeth I and Her Age, 81.  
36 Stump, Elizabeth I and Her Age, 78.  
37 Ibid., 79.  
38 Ibid.
argument as intending to “defend the cause, and not to deface the man.” 39 He pointed out that he is a stranger and a foreigner and therefore cannot quite be trusted. To an Englishman, a man from Scotland, living in Geneva, would definitely be considered a foreigner and therefore somehow “other”. He referred to The First Blast as a “little book strangely written by a stranger.” 40 The first portion of Knox’s argument that Aylmer attacked in An Harbor for Faithful and True Subjects is the definition of “natural”. As one of Knox’s two main points, it is interesting that he never truly defined what he meant by “natural”, which Aylmer rightly sees as a weak argument. Therefore, Aylmer took the advantage and describes what is “natural” and applies it to his own point of view on female rulers. He defined nature in many ways, but they all led back to his main definition that “nature is nothing else but a general disposition engraft of God in all creatures for the preservation of the whole and of every kind.” 41 He went on to say that, if it were natural for women to be submissive, then there never would have been successful, powerful, ruling women. Since there are then it cannot possibly be “natural” for woman to be submissive. 42

The second argument that Aylmer made is against Knox’s notion that the Bible prohibits female leaders. He claimed that most of the passages Knox used were taken out of context and, in fact, refuted his own arguments. Aylmer discusses the fall of man, the preaching’s of Isaiah, and the writings of St. Paul to refute Knox at every turn. Aylmer was particularly gifted at refuting his opponents, not by coming up with his own unrelated examples, but by using the exact examples that they used and explaining them in a

39 Ibid., 83.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 84.
42 Ibid., 85.
different way. The first example was the age-old “Eve was responsible for the fall of man” excuse. Aylmer cited the Latin scripture: “Et ad virium erit conversion vel desiderium tuum,” translated to mean “And your desire shall be turned toward your husband.” He postulated that the passage does not mean that women are to defer to men in all things, but rather they are to cleave to them sexually and bear children. Eve’s punishment for deceiving Adam and eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was to have painful childbirth. Therefore, she must not be allowed to turn from her husband and simply not have children. Aylmer even used witty remarks to further jab at his opponents. At the conclusion of his argument about Genesis and the fall of man, he retorted with “This place thus interpreted maketh no more for this matter than ‘Gloria in excelsis’ doth prove that Saint Peter said Mass.” Clearly, Aylmer does not think much of the passages Knox had chosen to interpret for his cause.

Aylmer placed his weakest argument in the middle of his three points- the preaching’s of Isaiah. He summed up his second point as follows: “The second reason out of Isaiah maketh as much as for debarring of young princes’ rule…as it doth against women, for they be joined together, but indeed it maketh against neither.” He was referring to Isaiah 3:4-5; 12 where it says: “I will take from you your honorable senators and your wise counselors, and I will give you boys and women, or effeminate persons, to reign over you.” Knox argued that this would mean that being ruled by women is a punishment. However, Aylmer thought that the passage was not referring to “women in

43 Ibid., 86.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 87.
47 Ibid.
sex, but in feebleness of sort.” This argument is the least satisfying of the three attacks he made against Knox’s “blast.” He never gave proof to his interpretation, and he ended up almost coming to the conclusion that women are not as intelligent, which is not the point that he is trying to make.

Aylmer concluded his specific attacks on Knox’s main points with an analysis of St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. The passage in question was 1 Corinthians 14:34, which Aylmer summed up as the argument “whereby women be forbidden to speak in the congregation, for it is an unseemly thing for them to speak.” Aylmer said, though, that Paul’s jurisdiction was only over religious matters and did not extend to civil policy. He said that Paul either never meant for his claim to cover matters of state, or he was overstepping the bounds granted him by God. Aylmer said he does not think it was the latter. Since being Queen is a matter of civil policy, St. Paul’s letter has nothing to do with a woman ruling a country.

Aylmer’s analysis seems well thought out and is calculating rather than ranting. He closed with an appeal to the public, telling them that even if they do not fully believe in the case he has presented, they have nothing to fear from the reign of Elizabeth I. A monarch is always counseled by a Cabinet and checked by Parliament. He said also that some may complain that a woman will not know as much about law, to which he responds by saying that male monarchs do not know enough about law either, and that is why they have a Cabinet of advisors telling him what needs to be done. Like Knox, Aylmer appealed to his audience’s desire for ancient backing. He cited Euripides and his

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 88.
plays Hecuba and Hippolytus, as well as Justinus’ *Epitome of the Phillippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, in which he told the story of Artemisia who warned Xerxes not to go to war with the Greeks; he did not listen and he lost his entire navy.\(^{51}\) Thus Aylmer set up classic examples of successful and powerful women, other than those in the Bible. Also, Aylmer used Aristotle, which is particularly poignant since Knox had also attempted to use Aristotle to assert his position. He quoted from Aristotle saying that men are “more meet to rule”, but according to Aylmer, just because men are “more meet” does not mean that it is “unnatural” for women to do so.\(^{52}\)

In general, Knox’s argument seems more like an educated rant than a well thought-out position. He attacked only those monarchs who had personally done him injustice. However, he did not stop at the Marys that he used as examples, but rather used them to expand his argument to all female rulers.\(^{53}\) He did allow a small stipulation for those women that God personally ordains, but under that umbrella all female monarchs should have been covered on the basis of Divine Right. Elizabeth I came to the throne so suddenly after his pamphlet was published that he unintentionally weakened the reign of a Protestant female monarch, and even though he later apologized, stating that Elizabeth was one of the monarchs chosen by God, the damage had been done. Another issue was that Knox laid the blame for female monarchy, not mainly on the monarchs themselves, but on the blind subjects that continued to allow such women to rule over them. In Knox’s mind, “only by disobeying an illegitimate ruler are [good Catholic men]  

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\(^{51}\) Ibid., 84–85.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., 85.
\(^{53}\) Ibid., 77.
acting in obedience to God.” Knox’s pamphlet could have sparked even more rebellion then Elizabeth faced, if it were not for responses from men like Aylmer.

Aylmer was a much stronger writer and used Ethos to his advantage. By not attacking his opponent outright and stating that he only wished to attack the argument and “further the cause”, Aylmer set himself up to be a reliable source who will not resort to name-calling, slander, libel, or any other negative rhetorical device. However, there was one weak moment of note in Aylmer’s pamphlet: he did not address with any strength, why Elizabeth should be allowed to be the head of the Church if she is a woman, and according to Peter, as I said earlier, women are supposed to be silent in the Church. Aylmer said that Peter’s argument does not apply to civil matters, but conveniently “forgot” that the monarch of England in that period was also the head of the Church.

Even though both writers were Protestant, they had diverse backgrounds that led them to write. They seem on the surface to carry the same agenda; however through their writing they end up accomplishing different goals. Knox set out to attack the Catholic Queens of the period, but ended up weakening the rule of Elizabeth I, a Protestant Queen, in the process, since his argument is against all female rulers. Knox’s inability to think ahead may have done him in with Elizabeth I. If he had thought his argument out more clearly, or better yet, made it very clear that his argument was only against female Catholic Queens, or all Catholic monarchs, or any other type that did not involve Elizabeth I, then he may have remained in her favor. Knox wrote too in the moment and

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54 Jansen, Debating Women, Politics, and Power in Early Modern Europe, 23.
55 Stump, Elizabeth I and Her Age, 83.
was not able to distinguish that his argument could possibly hurt the Protest and cause that he was working towards. Aylmer, also a Protestant, published his work to refute the argument presented by Knox. He was apparently successful in at least appeasing Elizabeth, because she later favored him with titles, land, and positions within her Court. It was his foresight that allowed him to stay in Elizabeth I’s good graces. Luck was also on his side, since the Protestant Elizabeth I had already taken the throne when he published his pamphlet. His skill at attacking his opponent’s argument, rather than the opponent himself, strengthened Aylmer’s position and added to his great Ethos. They both employed biblical allusions and references to ancient philosophers, but it was Aylmer who was able to articulate them the best and even use Knox’s own examples against him. Aylmer was able to clearly organize his pamphlet into main points and give specific definitions for the terms that he was using and therefore was able to make his argument more strong and convincing. Aylmer’s wit and good use of rhetoric gave Elizabeth strong vocal support in a time where she really needed it.

Despite the voices willing and eager to speak out against her, Elizabeth I was made Queen and was proclaimed Queen on November 17th 1558. Her legitimacy was hardly secure in everyone’s minds. Mary had at point accused Elizabeth of having Mark Smeaton as her father. Mark Smeaton was the lowest ranked man accused of having affairs with Queen Anne Boleyn, so he was the lowest insult that Mary could have made. There were rumors even more ugly about her parentage, which did include Henry VIII as her father; however, in those rumors he was her father as well as her grandfather. Some claimed that Anne Boleyn’s mother had had an affair with Henry VIII and given birth to

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57 Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 37.
Anne. \(^{58}\) Also, Elizabeth was still technically a bastard. The Act of Succession in 1536 had labeled both her and Mary as bastards and had never officially been repealed, even after the Act of Succession in 1554 had reinstated both of them. Many questioned which act was official, and thereby questioned whether Elizabeth really was a legitimate heir or not. \(^{59}\) There was no question in John Foxe’s mind over her legitimacy; he wrote in his *Actes and Monuments*: “dread to dignitie, from misery to Majestie, from mournyng rulyng: briefly, of a prisoner made a Princesse, and placed in her throne Royall, proclaimed now Queene”. \(^{60}\) He thought of his Queen as having been presdestined to rule and by the hands of God delivered through a lifetime of turmoil in order to rule justly over her people.

Elizabeth would be proud that to this day her coronation is steeped in indeterminacy. Historians still argue about the actual events that took place during Elizabeth’s coronation ceremony. The question is whether Elizabeth took the host offered to her, turned her face away, walked away and embraced the new religion, or asked that there be no raising of the host. It is hotly debated because there is no actual way of knowing what happened. All of the accounts that have been found seem to contradict on another and give completely different sets of details. \(^{61}\) It is this sort of indeterminacy that Elizabeth thrived in. However, rather than making us feel more comfortable with the information we are being fed, it has inspired us to learn more and find new ways of finding out what could have really happened.

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\(^{58}\) Ibid.


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 148.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 151.
The two main problems facing her authority were the legitimacy of her parentage and her inferiority as a woman; however, through well-thought-out pamphlets such as Aylmer’s *An Arbor for Faithful and True Subjects*, Mary’s precedent of acting the part of mother and wife to the country, and Elizabeth’s own excellent use and knowledge of rhetoric, she was able to situate herself moderately comfortably on the throne, and ruled their without a husband to ever dominate her. Even after everything that Elizabeth accomplished, some modern feminists are still not happy, and wonder why she did not advocate for women. The simple answer is that she could not have, and probably never even thought of it as an option. If she had started fighting for women’s rights, it would have gone against her campaign as wife and mother. It would have undermined the common ground she had established with her subjects, that women’s roles were firm, and that even she was operating within them to the best of her ability. Elizabeth would not have been in authority for long, if she made her subjects feel as though she was making even more radical changes than the ones she was suggesting. Elizabeth the rhetor would not have made such a mistake, for she was a true female King.

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