SUSAN DORAN

Elizabeth I & Her Circle

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For Hugo when he is older

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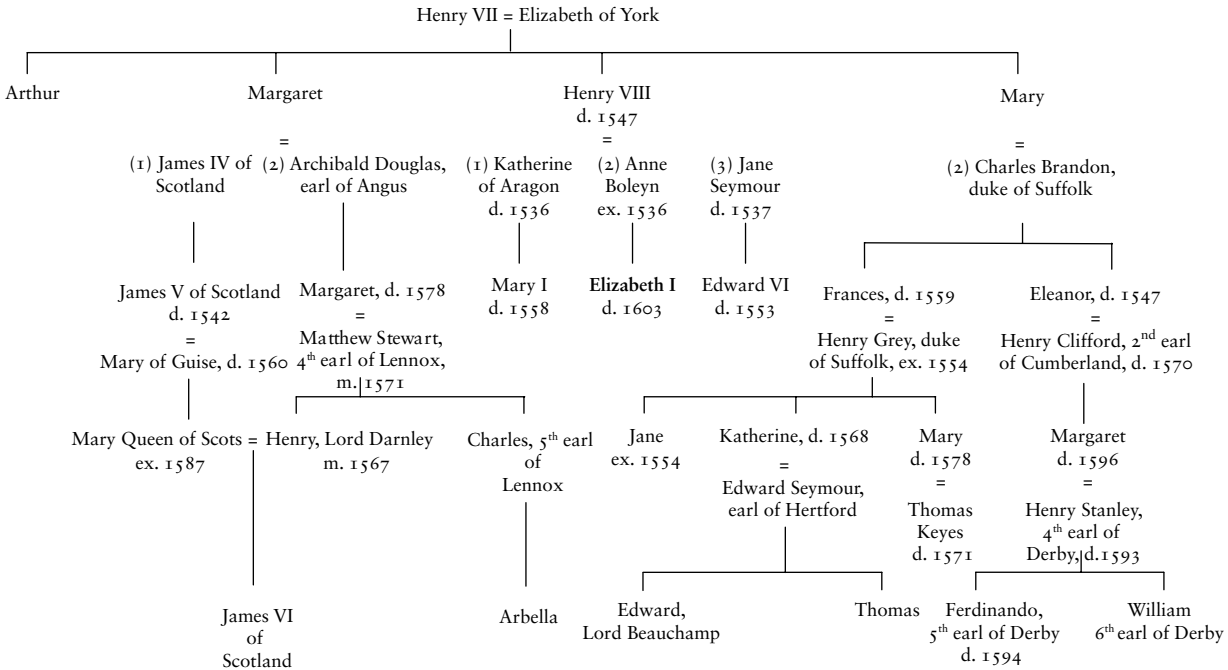
GENEALOGICAL CHART

Genealogical Chart

d.= died
ex. = executed
m = murdered
Only characters relevant to the book are shown.



CHRONOLOGY

1558 (17 Nov.) Accession of Elizabeth I.

1559 (Jan.) Coronation of queen. (Apr.) Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis ending war with France. Re-establishment of Protestant Church in England. (May) Protestant rebellion in Scotland. (July) Accession of Francis II to French throne.

1560 (Feb.) Treaty of Berwick. (July) Treaty of Edinburgh ending war in Scotland. (Aug.) Protestantism established in Scotland. (Dec.) Death of Francis II of France.

1561 (Aug.) Mary Queen of Scots' return to Scotland.

1562 (July) Massacre of Vassy. First French civil war. (Sept.) Treaty of Hampton Court with French protestants. (Oct.) Elizabeth ill with smallpox. English occupation of Le Havre.

1563 (Jan.–Apr.) Succession debates in parliament. (July) Surrender of Le Havre.

1564 (Apr.) Treaty of Troyes with France. Resumption of archduke marriage negotiations.

1565 (July) Mary's marriage to Lord Darnley.

1566 (Summer) Unrest in the Netherlands. (Oct.–Dec.) Succession debates in parliament.

1567 (Feb.) Darnley's murder. (July) Mary's imprisonment and deposition. (Aug.) Alva's arrival in the Netherlands. (Sept.) Outbreak of second war of religion in France.

1568 (May) Mary's flight to England. (Dec.) Breach with Spain.

1569 (Jan.) Suspension of Anglo-Spanish trade. (July) Outbreak of first Desmond rebellion. (Oct.) Rising of the northern earls.

1570 (Jan.) Assassination of Regent Moray. (Feb.) Papal bull of excommunication. (May) Restart of negotiations for Mary's restoration. (Aug.) Peace of St-Germain between Charles IX and Huguenots.

1571 Marriage negotiations with Henry, duke of Anjou. Ridolfi plot.

1572 (Apr.) Anglo-French treaty of Blois. Reopening of revolt against Spain in Holland and Zeeland. (Aug.) St Bartholomew massacre of protestants in France. (Nov.) Election of Morton as Scottish regent.

1573 (Apr.) Capture of Edinburgh Castle for regent.

1574 (May) Accession of Henry III of France. (Aug.) Treaty of Bristol ending trade dispute with Spain. (During year) Arrival of first Catholic priests from Douai.

1575 (July) Edmund Grindal's translation to see of Canterbury.

1576 (Feb.) Offer of sovereignty of Holland and Zeeland to Elizabeth. (May) Establishment of Catholic League in France. (June) Queen's ban on prophesyings. (Nov.) Sack of Antwerp by Spanish troops. Pacification of Ghent.

1577 (Feb.) Perpetual edict. (May) Suspension of Grindal. (July) Truce broken in the Netherlands. (Dec.) Drake's departure on voyage resulting in circumnavigation of the globe.

1578 (Jan.) Don John's victory at Gembloux. (Mar.) End of Morton's regency. (July) Suggestion of Anjou match.

1579 (Jan.) Arrival of Jean de Simier to negotiate Anjou marriage. Division of Netherlands into two unions (Arras and Utrecht). (July) Rebellion in Ireland. (Oct.) Death of Don John.

1580 (June) Arrival in England of first Jesuits, Robert Persons and Edmund Campion. (Aug.) Spanish conquest of Portugal. (Sept.) Drake's return to Plymouth. (Nov.) Massacre of Spanish and papal troops at Smerwick, Ireland. (Dec.) Morton's arrest.

1581 (Apr.) French embassy to England. (June) Morton's execution. (July) Dutch declaration of independence from Spain. (July–Aug.) Negotiations for French alliance. (Oct.) The 'association' initiative.

1582 (Feb.) Anjou's arrival in the Netherlands as duke of Brabant. (Aug.) Ruthven raid

1583 (June) James's escape from Ruthven raiders. (Aug.) Appointment of John Whitgift as archbishop of Canterbury. Beginning of crackdown on nonconforming clergy. (Oct.) Revelation of Throckmorton plot.

1584 (Apr.) Ruthvenite lords' failed attempt to capture James VI and oust Arran. (June) Death of Anjou. (July) Murder of William of Orange. (Oct.) Bond of association. Presbyterian campaign in parliament. (Dec.) Treaty of Joinville allying Spain to French Catholic League.

1585 (Feb.) William Parry's arrest. (Mar.) Act for the Queen's Surety. (Aug.) Treaties of Nonsuch. (Nov.) Successful coup against Arran. (Dec.) Leicester's arrival in the Netherlands.

1586 (July) Treaty of Berwick. Babington plot. (Sept.) Battle of Zutphen. (Oct.) Mary's trial.

1587 (Feb.) Mary's execution.

1588 (May) Peace talks at Bourbourg. (July) Defeat of the Spanish Armada. (Oct.) Publication of first four 'Marprelate' tracts.

1589 (Apr.) Embarkation of Portugal expedition. (Nov.) Henry III's assassination. Disputed succession of Henry IV.

1590 Fighting in France and Netherlands.

1591 (May) Presbyterian leaders brought before Star Chamber. (Nov.) Start of siege of Rouen. Proclamation against Catholics.

1592 (Apr.) Relief of Rouen.

1593 (Jan.) Investigation of 'Spanish blanks'. (July) Henry IV's conversion to Catholicism.

1594 (Feb.) Henry IV's coronation.

1595 Tyrone's rebellion in Ulster.

1596 (Apr.) Fall of Calais. (June) Attack on Cadiz. (Oct.) Triple Alliance of England, France, and the Dutch.

1597 (Summer) The Islands' voyage.

1598 (May) Treaty of Vervins. Philip II's cession of Netherlands to his daughter Isabella and Archduke Albert. (Aug.) Anglo-Dutch treaty. Rout of English army in battle of Yellow Ford in Ulster. (Sept.) Philip III's accession.

1599 (Mar.) Essex campaign in Ireland. (May) Peace talks at Boulogne. (Aug.) Armada scare.

1601 (Feb.) Essex rising.

1602 (Jan.) Defeat of Spanish troops and Tyrone at Kinsale.

1603 (24 Mar.) Elizabeth's death.

CONVENTIONS

In quotations, I have kept the spellings as they appear in manuscripts and printed sources with only a few changes. For easier reading, I have converted the u to v, j to i, and i to j where appropriate. Double fs are made singular, also where appropriate. Punctuation and capitalization, however, have been modernized, following the conventions of the text. Words abbreviated or compressed in the original texts are given in full.

Foreign names and places are anglicized. The Netherlands refers to the geographical area of present-day Belgium and Holland; the United Provinces is the name used for the northern Netherlands after 1581, when it broke away from Spanish rule. The south continued to be called the Netherlands.

Many sources used here are now online. I have used the 'state papers online' and 'Cecil Papers online', and cite the folio numbers provided there, unless they seem to me a definite error. I have also given the document number and dates of online calendars to facilitate searches.

Old Style dating (following the Julian calendar) is used throughout, but the year is assumed to start on 1 January not 25 March—Lady Day—as was customary in this period.

Introduction

This book is about relationships: the personal and political relationships of Queen Elizabeth I with the men and women in her circle: her 'near' family, some of her most favoured courtiers, and leading privy councillors. Embedded in the interactions between the queen and these individuals lie some riveting stories that have fired the imagination of later novelists, dramatists, and film-makers, and have been largely responsible for the manifold popular images of the queen, whether the frustrated virgin, ruthless politician, brilliant ruler, or vain queen bee. Equally important, Elizabeth's relationships were pivotal to the substance and style of national political life in her reign. Sixteenth-century monarchical government operated through the interplay of individual personalities rather than through bureaucratic institutions and structures.[1] Therefore, only by studying the nature, contexts, and contemporary representations of Elizabeth's relationships can we begin to understand the high politics and culture of her reign; and high politics impacts upon popular politics and, indeed, on everyday life.

Other books purporting to be about Elizabeth's relationships offer a biographical and chronological history of her life and reign.[2] Here, I choose a thematic structure, devoting each chapter to the queen's communications and interactions with an individual or a group of men and women who were key figures within her circle. This approach produces new and multiple perspectives on the reign: we learn not only about how the queen related to her kin, courtiers, and councillors but also how they viewed and dealt with her. Each chapter tells its own story, but to avoid repetition there is cross-referencing in the notes from one story to another. I have also produced a timeline of key political and international events for easy reference.

Elizabeth's kin is the subject of Part I. As will be seen in Chapter I, her parents and siblings were significant in affecting the course of her early life, moulding her character, and influencing her policies and

self-image as queen. Additionally, after Elizabeth's accession to the throne in November 1558, her Boleyn cousins—the many descendants of Anne Boleyn's sister Mary—clustered in the court, serving the queen in a variety of roles. Although Mary Boleyn (later Carey) was the mother of only two, her daughter Katherine—married to Sir Francis Knollys—had thirteen children who survived childhood, while Mary's son Henry and his wife Anne had twelve offspring.[3] The place of all these Boleyn cousins in Elizabeth's affections (with the later exception of Lettice Knollys) is evident from the honours they received and the way the queen addressed them: her 'well-beloved' cousin, Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, for example, she called 'Harry', and his son Robert was affectionately dubbed 'Robin'.[4] The influence of these Boleyn kin will be seen throughout the book.

Elizabeth's paternal line was less prolific, but, because they were of royal blood, the progeny of her aunts Margaret and Mary (see the 'Genealogical Chart') created political problems that dominated the queen's reign and take up three chapters of Part 1. The Suffolk cousins of Chapter 2 were the grandchildren of Mary, the younger sister of Henry VIII. Mary Queen of Scots and James VI of Scotland—the subjects of the next two chapters—descended from Margaret, Henry's elder sister and her first husband, James IV. Besides these close kin, Elizabeth had more distant cousins that stretched into the many aristocratic and gentry families of England. Although most of them did not share an intimacy with the queen based on their familial relationship, their kinship ties helped create cohesiveness within the ruling elite.[5] Their stories need to be told, but are outside the scope of this book.

The second group in Elizabeth's circle—discussed in Part 2—are courtiers. Historians generally define 'courtiers' as those people in attendance at the royal court. The vast majority of them—perhaps some 2,000 in number—attended court sporadically, either summoned on specific occasions—such as the arrival of visiting foreign dignitaries—or else coming on their own initiative to attend parliament or present a suit (a petition) to a patron or the queen. They had no rooms in the royal palaces and flocked to see the queen in the public space of the ceremonial rooms, especially the presence chamber. A number would be granted her hand to kiss; far fewer would be given an audience. Although part of Elizabeth's circle, no one in this group has a place in Part 2 of my book.

The focus here is on Elizabeth's intimates, the minority of courtiers who were allocated rooms in the palaces and invited to enter the

privy chamber (the queen's private day room) or even royal bedchamber. Contemporaries understood that regular and near access to the queen outside public spaces signified political intimacy. The rise of an individual to a place of influence, therefore, could be gauged by his or her entry into the queen's privy chamber. Likewise, setbacks to an individual's political career were apparent from his or her temporary exclusion from the queen's presence. Permanent exclusion meant political death.

Regular and near access to the queen was highly prized as a mark of royal favour, and many of those with this access were among the elite few who held offices in the royal household. Because of shortage of space, this book has to concentrate on only a selection of them. Nonetheless, readers will, I hope, get a sense of the important roles played in political life by other important intimates—courtiers such as Sir Thomas Heneage and Sir Walter Ralegh—who are referred to, but not discussed fully, in the text.[6]

The male courtiers I have chosen as my subjects are those well known from films, novels, and 'popular histories': Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester; Christopher Hatton; and Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex. Retelling the stories of their relationships with the queen allows me to correct some common misconceptions. To take a few examples, these men's intimacy with Elizabeth was not sexual; indeed, it is highly unlikely that she had a sexual relationship with anyone. Furthermore, although these three courtiers were considered good-looking with a fine physique, their physical attractiveness does not explain their influence with the queen. As will be seen, they all had considerable abilities and important connections; each of them served a political apprenticeship before acquiring political office; and each gave the queen loyal and valuable service. Finally, although some contemporaries and later commentators accused them of being favourites who monopolized the queen's affections and counsels, such allegations were biased and unfounded. Complaints of this kind were voiced at the time either by Catholic propagandists abroad seeking to discredit the Elizabethan regime or by disaffected courtiers at home who were denied the favours, they believed, they deserved.[7] In reality, Leicester, Hatton, and Essex had to share honours, influence, and material rewards with other individuals at court.

The court was the setting and environment in which the queen and these courtiers operated, and it had a variety of functions that influenced their roles and interactions. First and fundamentally, it was Elizabeth's place of residence, where courtiers were obliged to serve

and entertain her. As in all Renaissance courts, both female and male courtiers amused their monarch with dancing, playing cards, and witty conversations, sometimes in the public space of the presence chamber, which was open to anyone allowed at court, more often in the privy chamber, where Elizabeth spent most of her day. Additionally, when she was touring the country on royal progress, her male and female hosts were expected to entertain her and the huge train of courtiers in accompaniment, by staging plays, masques, fireworks, and sports.[8]

Within the privy chamber, Elizabeth's courtiers were required to anticipate and satisfy their mistress's everyday needs and desires. Her women—the subject of Chapter 8—attended to her personal requirements—washing, dressing, toiletries, mending clothes, and serving her meals. All these domestic duties were carried out in a highly ritualized way; so, for example, when the queen dined in private—as was her usual custom—the table in her presence chamber was set with 'as much awe as if the queen had been present' and, 'at the end of all this ceremonial', a number of her unmarried ladies conveyed the dishes to the queen in the privy chamber.[9] The men who entered the privy chamber did so to transact governmental business, offer her counsel, and attend when she met foreign guests or regular ambassadors. In the evenings, they were usually there for play.

The court also functioned as 'a theatre of display', an arena where monarchical power and magnificence were put on show for subjects, ambassadors, and foreign visitors.[10] On those occasions that Elizabeth gave audience at Hampton Court to envoys from abroad, 'excessively rich tapestries', normally kept in the hall, were exhibited on the walls of the presence chamber.[11] Even the queen's private apartments had this function. Foreign envoys and special guests were received there as a special mark of honour, and visitors from abroad were sometimes taken on tours around the rooms when the queen was absent.[12] Everything, therefore, had to be sumptuous: at Whitehall Palace, Elizabeth's bedchamber was decorated with strikingly rich tapestries, while her bed was 'ingeniously composed of woods of different colours with quilts of silk, velvet, gold, silver, and embroidery'; and, as one sixteenth-century 'tourist' noted, in the adjoining bathroom 'the water pours from oyster shells and different kinds of rock'.[13] Also designed to awe and impress visitors were the tournaments, balls, feasts, 'shows', and many ceremonials at the centre of court life.

Courtiers, as well as their sovereign, were on display. The court was a magnet for ambitious men and women seeking individual

advancement, the satisfaction of personal suits, and the promotion of a particular political cause. As contemporaries noted, it was 'the only mart of preferment and honour' and 'full of those who shall have this and that office'.[14] The court, therefore, could become the focal point of rivalries and intense competition among elite men and women seeking patronage. Virtually no important honour, benefit, or privilege could be granted without the queen's acquiescence, but relatively few suitors directly petitioned her. To procure the patronage she dispensed, they required a good court connection who could speak in favour of their suit to the queen. Even when someone did petition her in person or by letter, he or she relied upon one or more leading courtier to reinforce the suit. The number of suits a courtier was petitioned to raise was, therefore, a mark of his or her perceived intimacy with the queen.

Bombarded as Elizabeth was with both important and trivial requests for favour, she had to be constantly prodded about individual demands. As shown in Chapter 8, it was in this context that the women of the privy chamber, with their constant access to the queen and knowledge of her moods, could make the difference between success and failure. Elizabeth tried to distribute patronage broadly to prevent disaffection, eliminate factionalism, and ensure that no member of the court became too powerful or could be considered a 'favourite'. On the whole—at least until towards the end of the reign—she used patronage wisely; nonetheless, accusations that favourites dominated her ear to the exclusion of able men remained common.

Elizabeth's court is sometimes portrayed as a den of flatterers and sycophants. This is understandable. After all, male courtiers wore cameos or miniature portraits of the queen to signify adoration, or possibly loyalty; masques and pageants at court celebrated the queen as a goddess or Gloriana; and numerous gentlemen wrote verses, poems, or letters to Elizabeth, expressing adulation in an amorous language, which to the modern reader seems at best extraordinary and at worst nauseating. Yet, these outpourings of love, loyalty, and devotion should not be viewed as the obsequious language of ambitious men simply pandering to a queen thirsty for compliments and praise. Nor should the avowals of adoration be understood as the spontaneous and sincere outbursts of deep emotions or sexual desire. Rather, they were integral to the language and code of behaviour called 'courtly love' that was a central feature of the chivalric values permeating Elizabethan court culture. Highly stylized and artificial,

'courtly love' went back to twelfth-century romance literature that narrated the adventures that young knights carried out on behalf of noble women whom they loved and served. In these stories, the knight wooed his lady by offering her songs, poems, tokens, favours, and ceremonial gestures of devotion. She, meanwhile, maintained a disdainful distance from her socially inferior admirer, thereby causing him acute torment, but she nonetheless inspired him to perform great deeds and undergo heroic journeys. These medieval romances were widely read in Elizabethan England, and courtiers adapted the genre for their own purposes. Its attractiveness to a court presided over by a female ruler is obvious. Some who used the language of courtly love were aspiring intimates suing for favour; others were already close to the queen but seeking greater rewards or hoping to see off rivals. Whichever case applied, by following the conventions of the genre, aristocratic men could serve beneath a female monarch, accept her commands, and sue for her favour without impugning their masculinity or subverting gender norms.[15] Who initiated this practice at Elizabeth's court, we cannot tell, but queen and courtiers exploited it in equal measure.

While enjoying the benefits of 'courtly love', Elizabeth preferred to exploit the language and coded behaviour associated with intimacy rather than disdainful distance in order to create and strengthen bonds of loyalty. She and close members of her courtly circle would exchange personal gifts and share private jokes; she would allow them, or their representatives, easy access to her person and sometimes address them affectionately, often by particular nicknames. It was only when courtiers had incurred her anger that Elizabeth employed distance as a political tool. She would then withdraw all signs of intimacy, often temporarily but on some notable occasions permanently.

Elizabeth's courtiers were not just decorative ornaments or amusing companions. The most important of them held some form of office and carried out vital tasks of governance. Between a dozen and twenty were promoted to sit on the privy council, which was the main permanent institution of government. Part 3 of the book focuses on three privy councillors who also spent part of their careers as the queen's principal secretary: William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, Francis Walsingham, and Robert Cecil. The secretary was, actually, not one of the great officers of state: at court functions he would sit with the controller of the queen's household, away from the lord treasurer, lord admiral, and lord chamberlain.[16] But, under Elizabeth, he could be one of the most powerful and influential figures in

government: the office was very much what its holder made of it, and all three secretaries discussed here utilized the open-ended responsibilities to the full.[17] Until December 1573, the queen relied upon only one principal secretary, but, after the work proved too onerous for Sir Thomas Smith, Walsingham was brought in as his junior.

As a body, the privy council discussed matters of state and had the function of advising the monarch.[18] The queen very rarely attended its meetings, but learned of the proceedings through her principal secretary, who met her daily. She also regularly consulted the privy council's inner core—some half a dozen of her most trusted men—on important matters in more informal settings, sometimes even allowing one of its members' personal secretaries rather than a clerk of the council to take notes.

Privy councillors also had collective responsibility for administering the realm. As Thomas Norton (one of the Elizabethan agents used by the council) declared, they were 'the wheels that hold the chariot of England upright'.[19] English monarchs had not the time—nor probably the inclination—to deal with the various routine, or relatively trivial, matters that came within the privy council's compass on a day-to-day basis. On one day alone, for example, its registers record that the council dealt with prisoners in the Tower and Fleet, the jurisdiction of the Welsh council, 'lewd wordes' uttered in Chichester, reinforcements for Ireland, a wreck in Devon, maritime insurance, reprisals against Spain, and the examination of various people concerning 'a religion's case'.[20] So, like her father and siblings before her, Elizabeth delegated her royal authority to the council when it came to managing the realm.

The functions of privy councillors did not stop there. Every Wednesday and Friday they joined with the chief justices of the common law courts (the queen's bench and common pleas) to sit as the court of Star Chamber hearing judicial cases that could range from treason and breaches of the public order to matrimonial disputes and jail deliveries. Its sessions usually took place in the *camera stellata* in Westminster Palace, a room whose ceiling of azure blue was decorated with stars of gold leaf, hence the name of the court. The chamber could also be the venue for privy council meetings, and, to mark the change in its function, the tablecloth was changed; it was red when a court and green when a council.[21]

Privy council meetings could, in fact, take place in any state room at court or even in the private chambers (or houses) of individual members such as Sir William Cecil. At their sessions, members would

give instructions for drafting letters or approve their final form, which would then be signed. These would subsequently be sent to local nobles, gentlemen, or bishops, who would put the orders and directives into operation. Letters went out in the privy council's name, signed by its members, not the queen. Nonetheless, the privy council had no bureaucratic existence outside the monarchy. When a monarch died, the council was immediately dissolved, and the new monarch would then appoint his or her own privy councillors.

On her accession, Elizabeth appointed twenty privy councillors, but the death of Sir Thomas Cheney and resignation of Archbishop Nicholas Heath of York swiftly reduced the total number to eighteen. The queen continued to keep the council small: in 1568 the number declined to fifteen; it rose again to twenty in September 1586 but plummeted to eleven in 1597; at the time of her death in March 1603, fourteen men sat on the council.[22] Meetings, however, never contained the full complement of men, and for most of the reign an inner core carried through the business. Over the whole reign, only three men were dismissed: Essex and Thomas Howard, fourth duke of Norfolk, both executed for treason; and William Davison, who became the scapegoat after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

Elizabeth's privy councillors came from similar backgrounds. Before 1586—when Archbishop John Whitgift of Canterbury took his seat—all of them were lay people. Fewer than half were noblemen until 1578, when the proportion increased to exactly half. Privy councillors were also a cohesive group in terms of kinship ties. Between 1568 and 1582, no fewer than eighteen of them (out of twenty-five) were related to each other and the queen.[23] The most extreme example was Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, who was brother to Ambrose Dudley, earl of Warwick, and brother-in-law to Sir Henry Sidney and Thomas Radcliffe, third earl of Sussex. Leicester also became son-in-law to Sir Francis Knollys in 1578 and had marriage ties to Sir Francis Walsingham, when his nephew Philip Sidney married the secretary's daughter Frances in 1583.

The three parts of my book are far from hermetically sealed compartments. Some of the figures who appear in Part 1 as Elizabeth's kin—for example, Katherine Grey, Margaret Lady Strange, and Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon—were equally courtiers. The distinction between courtiers and councillors is also rather artificial in that they all operated within the court, relied for their power and influence on access to the queen, and participated in the prevailing court culture. All three of the male courtiers discussed in Part 2 came to be privy

councillors. Furthermore, both councillors and courtiers sat in the Elizabethan parliaments, a forum where the governing class of the realm could discuss problems and propose solutions. Nonetheless, I think the divisions within this book remain useful. In Part 1, the key element in the queen's relationships was the tie of kinship, while the courtiers I have placed in Part 2 began their political life in the court and played a central role in entertaining the queen and fulfilling household tasks, functions that were not expected of the men in Part 3. Although, as the years rolled by, most men in Elizabeth's circle employed the language of courtly love, the courtiers in the second section experienced a flirtatious dimension with the queen that was generally lacking in her relationships with the men placed in the final section. Visually too there is a distinction: the portraits of William Cecil, Francis Walsingham, and Robert Cecil depict men in sober black rather than the colourful garb on display in those of Hatton and the earls of Leicester and Essex. This was how these men chose to be portrayed, so they presumably saw a distinction between the style of a courtier and that of the ministerial office-holders—especially the principal secretary—who carried the heaviest administrative responsibilities.[24]

In 1586 Elizabeth declared to her MPs and lords that 'we princes, I tell you, are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed'.[25] Unfortunately for historians, many of those observations went unrecorded or have been lost over time. As a result, our knowledge about the queen's relationships is patchy, based on the survival of sources, many of which are unsubstantiated rumours, ill-informed gossip, or later anecdotes. Elizabeth exchanged few letters with her closest courtiers and councillors, because they were usually accessible to her in person or through messengers. But, even more problematic, the inner feelings of the queen and her intimates were rarely on view at all, and remain a mystery. As a result of these difficulties, the reader will encounter the words 'perhaps', 'possibly', and 'very likely' more often than I would like. However, by presenting a wide range of sources—official records, private correspondence, commissioned masques, poetry, and portraits—I hope the narratives and interpretations offered here will provide a fresh set of insights into the queen's character and policies, the characters of leading figures in the regime, and the politics of the reign.

Part 1

Kin

1

Parents and Siblings

The birth of Elizabeth on 7 September 1533 was a dreadful disappointment to her father King Henry VIII and a catastrophe for her mother, Queen Anne. They had fervently hoped that their first child would be a male; and indeed astrologers, doctors, and midwives had all assured them that Anne was carrying a boy. A son was so important to them because a male child would settle Henry's long-standing anxieties about the succession and, no less important, be a sign of God's approval of their controversial marriage and Henry's recent policy towards the papacy.

In the full expectation of Anne bearing him a son, Henry had severed the ties of the English Church to Rome, so that his marriage to his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, could end without interference from the pope. Katherine's first husband had been Henry's elder brother, Arthur, and the king came to believe that her failure to deliver a male heir was divine punishment for their ignoring the verse in scripture that prohibited a man from taking his sister-in-law to bed. The pope, however, disagreed and, under pressure from Katherine's nephew, Emperor Charles V, refused to grant Henry's request for an annulment. After four years of soul-searching, Henry decided that popes had no authority in England, broke all ties with Rome, divorced Katherine, and wed Anne. Had his new wife delivered a healthy son on 7 September 1533, Henry would have been assured that God blessed his marriage and schism, but it was not to be.

Despite his dismay at Elizabeth's sex, Henry was determined that she and not Mary (his older daughter by Katherine), would be recognized as heir until a son was born to him. Consequently, for the first two and a half years of her life, Elizabeth was Henry's favoured child. At her baptism she was declared 'the high and mightie princes of England', and the following year parliament formally bastardized Mary.[1] To spread the message, preachers were ordered to name the Princess Elizabeth (but not Mary) alongside her parents in prayers.[2] Elizabeth's

household was spared no expense. Until March 1535 it was costing the king at least £2,000 per annum, a sum roughly twice the outlay of Mary's household before she had been demoted.[3] Anne also ensured that her young daughter was expensively dressed, and the queen's final set of accounts included sums paid out for several satin caps embroidered in gold for the child, velvet and satin ruffs, and kirtles (a sleeveless gown) of yellow satin, green satin, and orange velvet.[4]

As was customary for royal children, Elizabeth did not live at court and saw her parents only intermittently. Once she was three months old, the princess had a peripatetic existence, residing in several country houses and palaces. Visits from her mother, or father, or both, were relatively infrequent and short, although there were times when Elizabeth stayed with the court at the royal palaces. On these special occasions she would often be displayed to foreign ambassadors as a good marriage prospect.

Elizabeth was with her parents at Eltham on Friday 7 January 1536 when the news of Queen Katherine's death came through. The following Sunday, the 2-year-old was conducted to mass 'with trumpets and other great triumphs'; and after dinner Henry sent for his daughter and, 'carrying her in his arms, he showed her first to one and then to another'.[5] On a far less cheerful occasion, Elizabeth was also with the court at Greenwich Palace when her mother was arrested; according to a later—supposedly eye-witness—account, the queen took her daughter in her arms and unsuccessfully pleaded with the king 'from the open window of which he was looking into the courtyard'.[6]

Historians disagree strongly about the reasons for Anne's arrest on Mayday 1536 on charges of adultery and incest. For some, the queen was the victim of faction; for at least one, she was guilty as charged; while yet another sees Anne as playing a dangerous game of flirting with her courtiers and gossiping about the king's impotency, a foolhardiness that her many enemies could exploit ruthlessly. But, whatever the immediate reasons for her downfall, it was the birth of a daughter and miscarriage of a son in early 1536 that turned Henry irrevocably against Anne and made her vulnerable to her enemies.[7]

Anne's trial and execution transformed her daughter's legal status. On 17 May 1536, Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, pronounced his sentence that Henry's marriage to Anne was invalid, though on what grounds he left unsaid. The same day, a hastily summoned parliament passed a new Act of Succession confirming Elizabeth's bastardy and consequent ineligibility to inherit the throne.

Elizabeth's title was no longer 'princess'; she was now simply the Lady Elizabeth, and her elder sister Mary enjoyed precedence over her. With this diminution in status, there came a reduction in the size of her household, although a substantial sum was still directed towards its maintenance. Otherwise, little changed in the child's circumstances. She continued to live in one of the minor royal palaces, and her main servants remained the same. It was only with the birth of her half-brother Edward in October 1537 that she lost the care of her governess, Lady Margaret Bryan, and indeed this may have proved a greater emotional upheaval than the loss of a semi-absent mother. If so, the void was soon filled by Katherine Champernowne (better known by her nickname 'Kat' and married name 'Astley' or 'Ashley'). On Lady Bryan's departure, Kat took over the responsibilities for the child's care, training, and education.[8]

Anne's condemnation on charges of adultery gave opportunity for her enemies to deny that Elizabeth was the king's daughter: some named Sir Henry Norris as her father; others the musician Mark Smeaton.[9] Henry, though, never doubted that Elizabeth was his child, and insisted that she be treated as such. In court, both she and her sister Mary were given precedence over his nieces, and at particular times of celebration they were accorded places of honour. At Prince Edward's baptism, the 4-year-old Elizabeth held the chrism cloth, wrapped around the baby's head, and on the return to the royal apartments she and Mary carried his train. Two years later, Elizabeth was a member of the royal party that received the king's new bride, Anne of Cleves. In July 1543, Elizabeth was also one of the few witnesses at the more private wedding of her father to his last wife, Katherine Parr, at Hampton Court. Both daughters were regularly the recipients of presents from the king and his many queens. From surviving accounts, it appears that over Christmas, on Palm Sunday, and at other times when they were at court, Henry would provide rich materials or fine apparel for 'his dearest children the prince, Lady Mary, and Lady Elizabeth'.[10] Henry's queens tended to give the girls jewellery, although not always items of great value, for it was noted in one set of accounts that Queen Katherine Howard's gift to Elizabeth was a brooch of 'little thing worth' and a pair of beads.[11]

Legitimate or not, as a king's daughter Elizabeth could be useful diplomatic bait. Consequently, discussions about her marriage to a foreign prince did not cease after Anne's execution. When Henry was seeking an alliance with Charles V in February 1538, Elizabeth's name was raised as a possible bride for a Habsburg prince or ally.

When seeking a French alliance in March 1542, Henry promoted a marriage between Elizabeth and the duke of Orléans. Then in April 1543, as part of his diplomacy in Scotland, Henry offered her hand to the son of Scotland's governor James Hamilton, second earl of Arran: 'The king has a daughter called the Lady Elizabeth, endowed with virtues and qualities agreeable with her estate,' the English ambassador was instructed to tell Arran.[12] The matrimonial negotiations, however, came to nothing after the governor refused to meet the king's political conditions. Over the next four years Henry solicited other marriage proposals, but few foreign princes manifested interest in a marriage to either of his bastard daughters.

In 1544, Elizabeth's fortunes again turned when she and her half-sister were restored to the line of succession by act of parliament. Henry initiated the measure because he wanted to leave his dynasty secure before setting off with his army to fight in France, and he commemorated the event in a magnificent painting depicting him with all three of his children (Plate 2). However, as the wording of the statute confirmed Elizabeth's (and Mary's) status as bastards, Henry was running roughshod over an established principle of English common law—namely, that a bastard was *nullius filius* and hence could not be heir to a father's property, in this case the throne. Henry's refusal to legitimize his daughters at this opportune time did them ill service, for in later years opponents of their accessions used this legal point to challenge their right to sit on the throne.[13] In his will, dated just before his death in January 1547, Henry confirmed his daughters' places in the succession and bequeathed them each an income of £3,000 a year until they married, at which point they would receive a dowry of £10,000. By the standards of the day, the yearly sum was not that great. Consequently, in the 1550s, Elizabeth had to learn the pattern of parsimony that was to mark her running of the royal household when queen.

Despite her improved status, growing maturity, and a good relationship with her last stepmother, Elizabeth rarely stayed at court during the 1540s. In fact, it is often difficult to track her movements, since she is seldom visible in the public record because of her perceived political insignificance. Nonetheless, it is apparent that her interactions with her father were few and formal. A passing reference made in a letter, dated 16 December 1543, suggests that Henry and his children spent time 'in one howshold' over the Christmas period of that year. A household ordinance tells us that, on 26 June 1544, the children attended a formal dinner and reception (called a 'void')

with the king at Whitehall, an event probably organized to mark the princesses' reinstatement in the succession.[14] However, it is quite likely that these visits to court were short, since, on 31 July 1544, Elizabeth wrote a formal note in Italian to Queen Katherine expressing sadness that a whole year had passed without the two meeting together.[15] While Henry was fighting in France during the summer of 1544, Elizabeth was to join her siblings in the queen's household at Hampton Court, but no sooner did the king return to England than Elizabeth and Edward departed for Ashridge in Hertfordshire.[16] Towards the end of 1545 and again in 1546, Elizabeth spent time at court; but unfortunately surviving documents do not allow us to piece together exactly when or for how long.

It is very difficult to uncover Elizabeth's private feelings towards her father. Certainly, she paraded her filial descent with pride. A decade after Henry's death, the Venetian ambassador noted that she 'prides herself on her father and glories in him'.[17] Later still, during her own coronation procession in January 1559, Elizabeth smiled on hearing one of the spectators refer to King Henry, and she claimed it was because 'she rejoysed at his name whom this realme doth hold of so woorthy memorie: so in all her doinges she will resemble the same'.[18] On the strength of such observations, biographers have commented on Elizabeth's adulation of the king.[19] However, given the allegations that she was not Henry's daughter, Elizabeth had every motive for flaunting her affection and admiration for her royal father. Moreover, in view of Henry's treatment of his wives and daughters, she had every reason to fear—rather than to love—the irascible, volatile, and merciless monarch. And, indeed, her calm reaction to the news of his death suggests that she experienced no great grief at his passing. Furthermore, her New Year's gifts for both him and Queen Katherine in 1544 betray an unsettling ambivalence in her inward feelings towards the king.

On New Year's Eve 1544, Elizabeth probably gave her father a handwritten French translation of Erasmus' *Dialogus fidei*, though we cannot be certain, as the work is no longer extant.[20] A matching gift to her stepmother has survived in the form of a handwritten twenty-seven-page English translation of a volume of meditations that had been composed by Margaret of Navarre, sister of King Francis I of France. Every aspect of this gift to Katherine was carefully thought out and redolent in meaning.[21] Its title, *The glasse of the synnefull soule*, drew attention to Elizabeth's royal lineage, as it alluded to her paternal great-grandmother Margaret Beaufort's

volume of translations entitled *Miroure of golde for the sinful soul*. The pages were bound together within a blue cover on which Elizabeth had embroidered pansies in each corner and a knotwork pattern in silver thread surrounding Katherine's initials in the centre. Pansies both punned with the French word for meditations, *pensées*, and, in the language of flowers, sent out the message 'think of me' to Katherine, from whom she had just parted. The embroidered forget-me-nots on the spine of the book signified the 'love' or 'affection' she held for her stepmother. This was a gift, then, that not only displayed the young girl's intellectual precociousness and feminine skills but also drew attention to her royal ancestry and signalled her devotion to the queen-consort and, by extension, the king. It can be read as a bid to retain their affections and receive in return a more permanent place at court.

Possibly too, although this is necessarily more speculative, Elizabeth's gift reveals a deeper and darker psychological side to her feelings towards her father. Margaret's original poem was a set of meditations on family relationships through which humans may understand God's love. In fact, the work touched on adultery, bastardy, and incest, all sensitive subjects for the 11-year-old daughter of Anne Boleyn to handle. What is more, its presentation of God as a great king and judge who is kind to daughters and merciful to adulterous wives might have touched a raw nerve in Elizabeth. For this reason, some scholars have argued that her mistranslations and departures from the original text stem, not from a young girl's carelessness, but from a deep-rooted, perhaps subconscious, anxiety and anger about her own father's lack of mercy towards his adulterous wife. These scholars also point out that Elizabeth's level of anxiety may have been all the greater if she was working from a copy of the meditations originally owned by her mother.[22]

Elizabeth's gifts to her father and stepmother the following New Year are equally suggestive. Her present to Katherine was an English translation of the first chapter in John Calvin's *Institution de la religion chrestienne*. Though a daring choice given the religious orthodoxy demanded in the 1539 Act of Six Articles, Elizabeth neutralized its impact by selecting (or being given) for translation a chapter that did not touch on the theologian's more controversial doctrines concerning predestination or the eucharist but instead focused on the authority of scriptures and their importance in understanding God's purpose.[23] Elizabeth's epistolary prologue emphasized the primacy of the written Word as the way to bring Christians to knowledge of

God, sentiments that reflected the reformist religious education she was then receiving.[24] Since this reformist position was one she shared with Queen Katherine, her gift was evidently designed to reveal and reinforce the religious bond between them.

For Henry, Elizabeth translated into Latin, French, and Italian a collection of prayers and meditations that Katherine had originally composed in English. The painstaking work of writing out 117 pages in her neatest hand was meant to be seen as a mark of respect towards the king, a compliment to his wife, and of course a testimony to her own industry, accomplishments, and piety. The words of the epistolary prologue were likewise calculated to please her father: they referred to him as 'a God on earth' and claimed his virtues were a model for his subjects. At the same time, the gift again drew attention to Elizabeth's royal lineage: in the short preface she referred six times to their familial relationship; and on the elaborately embroidered cover she included the eglantine rose that had been the symbol of her paternal grandmother and namesake, Elizabeth of York.[25] This constant reference to her royal bloodline is indicative, perhaps, that Elizabeth still did not feel confident of her place in her father's affections and had some anxiety that in the future she might again be ousted from the succession.

Another possible clue to Elizabeth's feelings about her father is her treatment of his trusted servant, William Baron Paget, on her accession. To his surprise and chagrin, Paget was excluded from Elizabeth's first privy council in 1558.[26] When pleading for a rethink, he reminded her (through an intermediary) that Henry had seen his worth and appreciated his good service.[27] Elizabeth, however, was unmoved, and the very able and experienced Paget remained in the political cold until his death in 1563.

This sidelining of Paget can be contrasted with the favours and rewards that Elizabeth offered to the kin and close associates of her mother. Anne's uncle, William Baron Howard of Effingham, who like Paget had served—and been Elizabeth's protector—under Mary, was sworn into the new queen's privy council and appointed head of her household as lord chamberlain. A Boleyn cousin, Thomas Radcliffe, third earl of Sussex, who had likewise served under Mary, retained his important office as lord deputy of Ireland in November 1558. Other Boleyn relations were advanced to positions that were well beyond what they might have expected, were it not for their kinship ties to Elizabeth's mother.[28] Anne's first cousin, Sir Richard Sackville, became a privy councillor in 1558, even though previously

he had only held the relatively minor administrative office of undertreasurer of the exchequer. Still more unexpectedly, on 6 January 1567, about a year after Sackville's death, his son Thomas was elevated to the peerage as baron of Buckhurst, a major promotion achieved only because of the Boleyn connection. Henry Carey, the son of Anne's sister Mary, similarly owed his political and social prominence to his Boleyn blood. One of Elizabeth's gentlemen while she was a princess, Carey was created baron of Hunsdon on 13 January 1559, granted Hunsdon House in Hertfordshire, and soon afterwards received lands worth £4,000 per annum. Over the next decade, he held household offices and entered the elite chivalric order of the garter; and, in August 1568, the queen appointed him governor of Berwick, a senior military post that led to his entry into the privy council in 1577. His 'propinquyte in blood doothe somewhat preveyle', murmured another privy councillor disapprovingly, whenever Hunsdon gave advice to the queen.[29] John Astley, a more distant Boleyn relation, was also given trusted positions within the royal household. Admittedly his marriage to Katherine Champernowne helps explain his appointments as master of the jewel house and treasurer of the queen's jewels and plate in December 1558, but he retained his offices after his wife's death and his remarriage. Boleyn women too were honoured with preferment at the hands of Elizabeth.[30] Finally, the choice of Matthew Parker as the queen's first archbishop of Canterbury had much to do with his previous role as one of Anne's chaplains. Parker, moreover, agreed to accept only on account of his close relationship with Anne. As he explained later: 'if I had not been so much bound to the mother, I would not so soon have granted to serve the daughter.'[31]

This promotion of Boleyn relatives indicates that Elizabeth had no wish to distance herself from the memory of her mother. Recognizing this, several men called her attention to their connection with Anne in the hope of securing favour and patronage. In the dedication to a manuscript translation of an Italian book, William Bercher explained that he was a scholar who had benefited from Anne's 'bountyfull benevolence' while studying at Cambridge and now hoped to serve her daughter 'to shewe my selffe myndefull of the renomyd memorye of your hyghnes' mother'. In a blatant request for patronage, Bercher wrote: 'And so deryvynge the course of my days, from a renomyd quene, the mother, to a moste exelent quene the daughter, I maye in the one, honour the memory of the other.'[32] William Latimer was another man on the make who hoped to benefit from his connection

with Elizabeth's mother, but in his case he chose to pen a manuscript life of the late queen that lauded her modesty, piety, and philanthropy.[33] Others showed their loyalty to Elizabeth by hanging Anne's portrait on their walls: whereas no portrait of Anne survives from her lifetime, many of the best known can be dated to the later sixteenth century (Plate 1).[34]

It is impossible to figure out Elizabeth's deepest feelings towards Anne. We do not know when and how she was told of her mother's 'crime', trial, and execution, or how she reacted to the information. We do know that she kept Anne's memory alive by adopting her motto *Semper eadem* ('Always the same') and appropriating her badge of the crowned falcon holding a sceptre and perched on a tree stump from which Tudor roses sprang. However, Elizabeth rarely spoke of her mother and made no attempt to make reparation for past injustices. Unlike her predecessor Mary, she introduced no act of parliament that declared the 'most just and lawfull matrimonie' of her mother's marriage, nor repealed the statutes pronouncing the contrary.[35] Unlike her successor James I, she did not disinter her mother's bones and rebury them in the family chapel in Westminster Abbey; indeed, Anne's grave remained unmarked without any inscription.[36] But this does not mean that Elizabeth was ashamed of Anne or so traumatized by her death that she could not bear to think of her. Quite simply it was not in Elizabeth's interests to open up the question of her legitimacy by making statements or introducing laws that asserted the legality of her parents' marriage. With a Catholic claimant—Mary Queen of Scots—waiting in the wings, it was politically wiser to stay silent and simply assume her own legitimacy. The 'Act of Recognition of the Quene's Highness Title', passed in Elizabeth's first parliament, therefore just accepted implicitly that Elizabeth was born in wedlock in its bald statement that the new queen was 'rightlye lynyallye and lawfully discended and come of this bloodd royal of this realme of Englande'. Furthermore, by declaring that she owed her throne to both the 'lawes of God' and the laws and statutes of the realm, the act implied that her title depended upon not only the 1544 Act of Succession but also hereditary right.[37] Another statute passed in 1559 also revealed Elizabeth's low-key determination to rehabilitate her mother, for it declared that 'every acte, recorde, sentence, matter, or writing whatsoever' that was 'contrary or repugnant' towards Anne would be 'clerely and utterly voyde and of none effecte', words that presumably encompassed her attainder and the annulment of her marriage.[38]