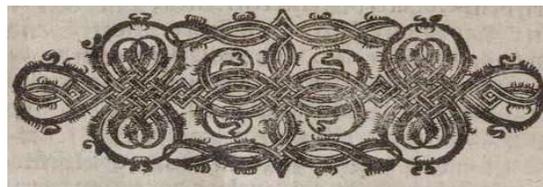


Authorized Discourse at the Kenilworth Entertainments

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Abstract: Much has been written on Queen Elizabeth I as the Virgin Queen, the scorner of courtiers, the wife (or husband) of England. Her favorite courtier was unarguably Robert Dudley, with whom she had a lifelong relationship. Her visit to Kenilworth in the summer of 1575 was the most extravagant and most famous of her reign. This paper argues that the Kenilworth entertainments are more than an example of her approach to ruling that insisted on being among her people. Nor are they just a vignette of royal indulgence. The greatest significance of her visit is her interaction with Dudley, with this visit being the culmination of a failing courtship that spanned almost twenty years. The crux of this argument is based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "authorized discourse."



Much has been written on Queen Elizabeth I as the Virgin Queen, the scorner of courtiers, the wife (or husband) of England.¹ Her attraction lay not only in the power she held inherently as monarch but the power she held in the hearts of her people, as well. Even with the high level of admiration she enjoyed from both commoners and courtiers, there was always conflict in the balance of her power, particularly within the court. This power struggle between Elizabeth I and her court was multi-faceted: princely right clashed unremittingly with patriarchal order; the cultivation of domestic peace contradicted the effort toward Protestant advancement, and the desire for love was overshadowed by the need for political alliance and succession. Allison Heisch defines the issue when she notes:

Truly she was an exceptionally gifted woman, but the reality of her political situation—especially in the first seven years of her reign—was substantially less magnificent and glorious than its public representations suggested. For even though the propaganda which produced the public image of Gloriana began at her Coronation, perhaps even before, she spent the first years of her reign very nearly in combat with councilors and with three successive Parliaments over the issue of her marriage and the naming of a

successor. The history of those Parliaments and Elizabeth's interaction with them is extremely complex ... two themes or patterns which emerge from that time are significant to this discussion: one is the gradual emergence and ultimate dominance of Elizabeth's regal self-conception; the other is the rapid evolution of power within the House of Commons.²

Members of Parliament, foreign kings, and courtiers needed to have the ability to effectuate authority to realize their agendas, but establishing authority was complicated; they had to tread carefully while attempting to secure favor or elevate their stations without stretching their bounds so far as to incur the Queen's wrath. As Elizabeth was notoriously fickle in her moods and short with her patience, it was often not clear when her disposition was about to change. For those without ambition, simply avoiding the monarch was not an option because those who were within her immediate influence had to show enough visible loyalty to keep her pacified. Those desiring a boon had to draw her attention away from matters of state, and others had to compete for her consideration without angering the Queen by impudently assuming their stations were secure and while still attempting to gain greater influence in the court or abroad. The penalty of such impudence was often being publicly humiliated or banished from court. Knowing one's authoritative limits was vital for political survival.

The exchanges between Elizabeth and her courtiers were akin to a battle of words, the expertise in handling such weapons necessary to win. Pierre Bourdieu believes it is through the symbolism inherent in language that authority is derived. Language itself holds no power, but the proper wielding of words can have a powerful effect. He further posits that "authority comes to language from outside, a fact concretely exemplified by the *skeptron* that, in Homer, is passed to the orator who is about to speak. Language at most *represents* this authority, manifests and symbolizes it."³ No one in Elizabeth's court attempted to extend the limits of his authority more consistently than Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, who endeavored to take advantage of his unique relationship with Elizabeth, which began when they spent time together as small children in the courts of her father Henry VIII and grew during their simultaneous imprisonment in the Tower of London for two months during her sister Mary's reign. Henry VIII had beheaded Robert's grandfather for crimes against the people, which he committed under the direction of Henry VII. After having spent decades redeeming the Dudley name, partially by creating the "devise" that took Elizabeth and Mary out of the line of succession for Henry VIII, Robert's father John was first sent to the Tower with Robert for treason against Queen Mary and ultimately hanged for his part in the plot for her overthrow.⁴

Robert Dudley shared his forebears' passion for power and position but hoped for a better end both in name and life expectancy. His ambitions included gaining royal status, preferably by marrying Elizabeth (although he was already married at the time he was in the Tower in a less than prestigious match) and thereby expanding his political influence both in England and abroad. He had royal privilege through association with his sovereign, and she demonstrated her favor for him by making him Master of the Horse, the highest honor she could bestow, and later by making him the Earl of Leicester and part of her Privy Council; nevertheless, he lacked autonomy as the relationship stood. Additionally, Leicester had been an unsuccessful suitor to the Queen since the beginning of her reign in 1558, and by 1575, the year of her last visit to Kenilworth (Dudley's estate), there was little hope that Elizabeth would choose to marry at all. She had been in negotiations with the Duke of Alençon for three years at that point and was fond of him but had not committed to marriage. In addition to arranging the grandest entertainment Elizabeth had ever experienced on progress, Leicester had one last chance to prove to her that they should wed. As Elizabeth loved spectacle, the most efficacious (and safest) manner to continue to negotiate with her was by designing allegorical masques to generate his own authorized discourse, which is instituted by monarchical power and gives legitimacy to those within the governmental structure. As Bourdieu posits, "The use of language, the manner as much as the substance of discourse, depends on the social position of the speaker, which governs the access he can have to the language of the institution ... It is access to the legitimate instruments of expression, and therefore the participation in the authority of the institution, which makes *all* the difference."⁵ This official language is expressed through social rites that make discourse both "*valid and effective*."⁶; these social rites are defined and accepted within a community. Accepted language of a community can only gain legitimacy from within.

So, while Dudley could try, without permission from Elizabeth, to use authoritative language as a type of pretense, such an attempt would most likely fail. It was thus necessary for him to gain authority incrementally, each time asserting just a little, having it legitimized by the Queen, then adding upon that until he had built up the authority he desired, all the while attempting not to appear pretentious to Her Majesty. He had slowly been building such authority since the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, but he could not surpass the level of conditional trust she had assigned him. Additionally, a direct confrontation with the Queen concerning his authority would be instantly damning if she took offense, even if the attempt was not meant as confrontational. However, through allegory the sharp edges of meaning could be blurred, protecting him from the consequence of anything he might say. Since the audience must

interpret an allegory, any “misinterpretation” could be easily dismissed as an unintended message, and, if Leicester’s true purpose found favor with the Queen, his desires could be fulfilled. Because of the nature of the progress, Dudley would have more control over the situation than in any other circumstance he could contrive, for the Queen did not abide any brash usurpations of her power; deference and cleverness were more likely to persuade her.

Almost every summer of her reign, Elizabeth and her court went on progress to meet more of her subjects and to observe first-hand many of England’s happenings outside the castle walls. She took close to 400 courtiers with her, stopping at numerous homes for two to three days each. Often hosts would use her visits to seek her favor in any number of matters, to sway her to their view while they had her singular attention and good cheer. The Kenilworth entertainments are well-known for their extravagance at a cost of £1,000 per day, and *nineteen* days were planned, with massive feasts, hunting parties, Italian acrobats, fireworks, and elaborate plays designed specifically for the Queen.⁷ At Kenilworth Dudley attempted to stretch the bounds of his authority by using discourse that was authorized within the royal society into which he had already incorporated himself in order to woo her and, by doing so, to gain autonomy from her. However, as ruler of England *and* their relationship, Elizabeth decided when his discourse was authorized or non-authorized. Even when his appeal was not to *her* authority, as part of his device in using Kenilworth for his setting was to appeal to England in microcosm through those who attended, it was ultimately her decision whether to grant authorization.

In addition to the delivery of multi-faceted meaning through the allegories, the entertainments provided a public forum that made it more likely that Elizabeth would receive his message graciously as hundreds of eyes watched her. Susan Frye describes this exhausting power struggle: “When Robert Dudley and Elizabeth Tudor met at Kenilworth to perform their relationship for themselves and the varying interests they represented, for the court, and indeed, for all of Europe, the earl’s ambition and the queen’s insistence on her authority resulted in the performance of conflicting representations of their personal and political relations.”⁸ Their tenuous relationship was renowned, including Dudley’s numerous failed attempts to court her. England’s anxiety for her to wed was also growing, as she had had a minimum of twenty-six unsuccessful suitors to that point and the current suit of the Duke of Alençon did not sit well with the country because he was Catholic and French. The people did not want a repeat of Mary’s relinquishing of the English throne to a foreign husband; they may not have had a great love for anyone from the Dudley line, but he was, after all, English. Fifteen years previous to the Kenilworth visit, Dudley’s first wife, Amy Robsart, had suffered a

scandalous death; the courts ruled that she fell down the stairs at her home, but even after the verdict, most people believed that he had killed her so that he would be free to marry the Queen. The Council and foreign ministers worked feverishly to convince Her Majesty that she should not marry him under such circumstances. Within a month of Amy's death, however, they had changed their minds. Thomas Radcliffe, the Earl of Sussex, wrote to Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's Secretary of State, on the matter:

If I knew that England had other rightful inheritors I would then advise otherwise...but, seeing that ... no riches, friendship, foreign alliance or other present commodity that can come by a husband can serve her turn without issue of her body—if the Queen will love anybody, let her love where and whom she list, and him ... will I love, serve and honour to the uttermost.⁹

The standards of the ruled lessened as time progressed and the future of England's monarchy became increasingly unsure. The others in the government then followed Radcliffe's suit, looking for the positive attributes in Leicester that would indicate a good ruler instead of the usual harsh evaluations used to suppress support of the would-be-king. Milton Waldham illustrates this tendency:

The court observed...that Robert continued to display the bearing of the king-to-be. He was uncannily familiar with the secret content of the State dispatches; he sent for their bearers to interrogate them in private as by natural right; and he continued to enjoy his privilege of access to the Queen's intimate presence where his entreaties would sound louder in her ears than all the clamour of the world outside. One by one ... the opposition began to come round.¹⁰

As time passed, the Council became less concerned with any personal flaws that would not hinder Dudley from effectively ruling England; his proven abilities in the court gave him authorization in the eyes of the Council. Ironically, though he did not have the authority to act in such a manner, it was his acting in spite of his authorized role that convinced the Council to authorize those very behaviors. The Queen's indecision about balancing her desire for him and his presumed guilt on the part of his wife gave him the window he needed to gain backing from those whom Elizabeth trusted.

However, Elizabeth was not yet prepared to give power to Dudley for fear of losing some of her own strength; although her appointment as monarch sanctioned discourse that otherwise was not open to her, authorized language had a hierarchy of potency. The monarch was at the top of this social structure, but her female status always threatened to pull Elizabeth to a lower stratum: if she were to marry, her husband would always have the right to the higher position in this hierarchy. Waldham

considers the difficulty of her position when he states, "How could she agree to it? Her father might love as he chose without sacrificing power because he was a man and that sort of man ... But for Elizabeth, a female Henry in sexual susceptibility as in autocratic temper, no peaceful adjustment between the two forces was possible."¹¹ Elizabeth, struggling for a way to avoid losing her position, used her iconographic rise as the "Virgin Queen" as a strategy to contravene the patriarchal order. John King illustrates how she turned a traditional feebleness into a strength: "Scholars claim that she was able to convert her unprecedented weakness as a celibate queen into a powerful propagandistic claim that she sacrificed personal interest in the name of public service."¹² In this respect she had control, and her virgin status elevated her even higher than an anointed queen, putting her on level with the priest since she now practiced self-sacrifice in the name of God; her representation mirrored the Virgin Mary, raising her to a demigod.¹³ Traditionally the Virgin Mary was held in higher esteem than anyone except God, so there was no better allusion Elizabeth could make for herself. It gave her certain power in the sight of the people and prevented her from having to address any personal misgivings she may have had against marriage. She repeatedly asserted that she had intended to marry if it were God's will; therefore, her appeal to his will that she *not* marry would also be unquestioned from such a position. Her need to have no challenge to her authority was imperative so that her natural vulnerabilities as a woman would not manifest themselves and undermine her position as monarch.

Another device Elizabeth used to uphold her authority was to insert herself into the patriarchal order by using the language of a king, rather than a queen, which strengthened the authoritative nature of her discourse. Allison Heisch argues that Elizabeth touted herself as an exception to the rule, not as an exemplar for all women; by declaring herself male enough to rule, she strengthened the foundation of her discourse but also revealed her distrust that the public would accept her strictly on her own merits.¹⁴ She knew she was in a unique position because of the crown, and that deference by her subjects and by the court did not always imply respect. According to Elizabeth, her duty lay in ruling England, not in establishing rights for women; the structure in place allowed her authority in her role, but respect would only come if she established herself within the structure already established, meaning representing herself as male, when it came to her authority.

The discussion about marriage between Elizabeth and Leicester, then, was already strained when the Queen approached Kenilworth; although Dudley was now part of the Privy Council and had access to the language of the court, the strength of any argument he made would always carry less weight than that of the Queen. An appeal to patriarchy was tricky because Queen Elizabeth often expressed her distaste for being

ruled by her Council, as in a response she gave them in 1566 after incessant pressure for her to marry: "I muse how men of wit can so hardly use that gift they hold. I marvel not much that bridleless colts so not know their rider's hand, whom bit of kingly rein did never snaffle yet."¹⁵ Although she often had endured the council's overstepping their authority by attempting to control her choice to marry, here she deftly illustrates that while she is the rider who reigns and allows their freedom of movement in the council, ultimately she alone holds the reins of rule and truly controls them. The entertainments were a way to appeal to a higher authority and soften the threat by not confronting Elizabeth in a direct conversation, from which she could easily turn. As mentioned earlier, Dudley had attempted to appeal to the citizenry of England during a time of political distress at the suit of Alençon, but he also used every corner of his estate, every masque, every opportunity to make an appeal to authorities that were higher than Elizabeth's. Dudley made a great deal of effort so that every adjuration appeared to be in the best interest of someone other than Dudley: her country, her ancestors, her descendents, God, each always in relation to the benefit the Queen would receive for her righteous choice of marrying him.

Dudley's first petition was to Arthurian lineage, as it was a common mythology that the Tudors had a direct link to King Arthur's line. Dudley presented the illusion of Camelot at Kenilworth to separate Elizabeth from her daily world, engulfing her in an appealing fantasy where she could dispense with her usual logic that led her to conservative decisions that considered worst-case scenarios; he appealed to her self-gratifying emotions by giving her the proper justification of keeping the crown within her royal line. Charles Baskervill notes: "The diversions at Kenilworth were arranged to suggest that the lord of the castle was of royal English ancestry and particularly that he was Arthur's heir."¹⁶ Not only was "Camelot" a symbolic return to Elizabeth's heritage, but he implied that it was also his heritage and birthright, something she should consider as foreordaining his place by her side. The authority here comes from their shared genealogy, he implies, assuring that his discourse with her in this place was already authorized and needed no approval from her, merely acceptance if she wanted to stay true to her line. This negotiable approval of place is an important ritual according to Bourdieu: "To speak of rites of institution is to suggest that all rites tend to consecrate or legitimate an *arbitrary boundary*, by fostering a misrecognition of the arbitrary nature of the limit and encouraging recognition of it as legitimate."¹⁷ Dudley needed but to convince Elizabeth to accept his mythology to legitimize the grounds and the power that would come with that elevation of their purpose.

His attempt at this legitimization began when the Queen first arrived at Kenilworth; the Lady of the Lake appeared, offering herself to Elizabeth:

I am the Lady of the pleasant Lake,
 Who, since the time of great King Arthure's reigne,
 That here with royal Court abode did make,
 Have led a lowring life in restless pain,
 Till now, that this your THIRD arrival here,
 Doth cause me come abroad, and boldly thus appeare.¹⁸

The Lady's presence establishes that Kenilworth is indeed Arthur's realm, founding the authority of Arthur and his ancient kingdom that the rest of the visit will be based upon and alluding that any future address during Elizabeth's stay should be treated likewise. The difficulty in this argument is that Dudley is trying to present both Elizabeth and himself as from this line, undermining his own right to the authoritative discourse he is attempting to establish by virtue of Elizabeth laying claim to the same authority.

Another noteworthy appeal is to divine harbingers: the emphasis on "THIRD" could be a reference to the Trinity, implying God's will for his anointed queen, which was a recurring motif for Elizabeth. God's will was foremost on her mind during much of her reign, and she often aligned herself with the most providential course possible, as when she chose her coronation day based on the astrologer John Dee's predictions about the date.¹⁹ Taking into account Dudley's purposeful calculations regarding every element of Elizabeth's visit, an allusion to the Trinity could be viewed as predictive of the divine hand in the course of the visit; as only Elizabeth's *third* visit compelled the Lady of the Lake to come out of hiding, the message following the Lady's appearance may have been viewed as holding more import than usual.

The Lady continues by listing Arthur's descendants, who were all counterparts to the Queen but could not compel the Lady of the Lake to appear as Elizabeth did, appealing to her sense of superiority to which Leicester returns periodically to balance the forcefulness of his argument with enough flattery to guarantee a continued audience to his appeals. The Lady ends with words of welcome:

Wherefore I wil attend while you lodge here,
 (Most peereles Queene) to Court to make resort

...

Passe on, Madame, you need no longer stand

The Lake, The Lodge, the Lord, are yours for you to command.²⁰

The implication that Leicester was rightful heir to the castle through the same lineage as Elizabeth served to legitimize his discourse, the giving of the grounds to establish his humility; however, what was said with authorized grace, was not taken as such. The Queen implied that Leicester

overshot his mark in glorifying himself; each *genius loci* surrendered to Elizabeth and flattered her with the usual fulsome extravagance, but she seemed to have resented the transfiguration of her subject Leicester. Possibly she recalled the tradition that Arthur was to rule England again when she responded in pointed foreshadowing of her stay, "We had thought indeed the Lake had been ours, and doo you call it yourz noow? Well, we will herein common more with yoo hereafter."²¹ Reminding him that Kenilworth belonged to the crown and was only leant to Leicester, she flatly discounted his claims to lineage, crippling his attempt to reinforce his assertions. Her usurpation of the tone of her visit would make future discussions difficult for him since he lost the foundation to his authorized language for the rest of the entertainments.

Leicester borrowed language to create his authority because he knew that, as posited by Bourdieu, "authority comes to language from outside."²² Leicester, then, had to be already accepted to use the language successfully or he could access it through legitimizing agents. Bourdieu also notes that through rites, one can cross the arbitrary line that separates accepted usage from non-accepted.²³ Dudley's poignant, consistent message to the Queen was that he had the backing of those who were already part of the mode of his initiation and legitimization; for Leicester, the rites of having the Queen stay at Kenilworth could allow him to cross that line.

Even with the initial rejection of the Lady of the Lake as a justifying agent for Elizabeth's position of authority, the Lady reappeared nine days later in an attempt to redeem Leicester's position and reaffirm his Arthurian lineage. The lighthearted praise from the first encounter transformed into dire need for the Queen's assistance in liberating the Lady from Sir Bruce Sauns Pitee.²⁴ As she crossed the bridge on her way back to the castle after a day of hunting on the grounds, Triton arrived to entreat Elizabeth to prevent Sir Bruce, who had imprisoned the Lady of the Lake, from taking "by force [the Lady's] virgin's state full fowlie to deface," a deferential acknowledgement of Elizabeth's power as the Virgin Queen. Such a plea to "soveraigne maiden might" would compel her to acquiesce to Triton's request, hence Dudley's, if only to uphold her own proclamation of the sacred nature of a woman's virginity.²⁵ To refuse would take away part of the power she created for herself as the iconic Virgin Queen. Secondly, according to "Merlynes prophecie," only one could release the Lady of the Lake from her prison:

... neither can she come nor scape

...

Except a worthier maid than she her cause do take in hand.

Loe, here therefore a worthy worke, most fit for you alone.²⁶

Here Elizabeth faces another dilemma: to consent would give authority to the discourse; however, to refuse would not only require her to admit that

she was not a “worthier maid,” but also that there one greater than she yet to come who would succeed where the Queen appeared impotent. Put in this position, she had no choice but to approach the Lake and free the Lady. Frye explicates Elizabeth’s reinterpretation of the masque:

At Kenilworth, Elizabeth presented herself as a force allied with God and nature against the male threat to chastity – in Elizabeth’s iconography, as it was developing at Kenilworth, the virtue that empowers its possessor to mediate between heaven and earth. The skirmish would have required the Queen to validate the terms of Leicester’s self-display, to be shaped in ways that would allow him to fulfill his desires. The Deliverance of the Lady of the Lake, as it was apparently performed, asserts the central argument of the royal mythology, that Elizabeth’s virginal authority, as the expression of God and nature, is complete unto itself ... through rescue from male threat of a virtuous virgin ... This staging of Elizabeth as Triumphant Virtue had the double advantage of developing and extending the centrality of the monarch while reducing Dudley’s role to that of an observer of her power, the role that his original skirmish had assigned to her.²⁷

Dudley’s intention was for himself to be the rescuer of the virginal Lady of the Lake, who clearly represented a helpless, passive Elizabeth; but, as before, Elizabeth turned his intention to her advantage by inserting herself into the role he had devised in order to reverse the originally intended outcome. The Queen had read the script beforehand and disliked the role of feeble female in need of rescue by Dudley, choosing instead to step forward at what was supposed to be Dudley’s moment of triumph and rescue the Lady herself, leaving Dudley to take on the role of the helpless spectator. Because he could only challenge her authority indirectly, he had to allow her to change the direction of the masque; however, as Frye accounts, he later had George Gascoigne print the censored masques with his chosen commentary, changing the actual order of the performances to put himself in a more powerful light:

What was performed at Kenilworth was subject to the queen’s revision, but the published text reveals that she did not exercise the same control over printed material. Elizabeth’s presence inevitably limited what might be performed for her at the court audience, but what was printed and read by a wider audience – if it were carefully worded – was difficult for her to control.²⁸

Leicester’s ineffective plans at Kenilworth were passively actualized after the event, reclaiming his rightful position as sanctioned speaker, but even permanently reestablishing the final word in print would not accomplish his original goal of becoming Elizabeth’s husband and ruler of England and Elizabeth both.

Though much of the discourse was verbalized in prose and verse, some was designed strictly as an extension of the metaphor of Camelot; the grounds set the tone as the Arthurian-statured trumpeters met the Queen at the gate;²⁹ not only did they serve to create the proper setting but their larger-than life proportions also represented a desire greater than even the Queen's. Each section of the Kenilworth proceedings was a microcosm of a different environment that depended on Elizabeth's wisdom to discern its full meaning: the castle and grounds represented civilized England or the court itself; the lake represented the sea or lands abroad; the woods represented the rest of England or the natural man. These elements combine as all of God's dominion; the stewards of each section of the grounds work together to unite Leicester and Elizabeth for the good of England and even the world. Each must be dealt with prudently to keep the harmony of all, implying that Elizabeth could only keep the proper balance by approving Robert's discourse in the setting where his potency was proven by the natural order of the land over which he had control.

In addition to citing Arthurian legend, the entertainments referred to mythological gods and goddesses; Leicester appealed to any authority he could that might sway Elizabeth's heart and mind to his purposes. The appearance of ancient gods and goddesses, each with his/her unique dominion, was designed to lend credence to different elements of his argument for rightful discourse, as the ancient gods only allowed men and women to follow paths of which they approved. Therefore, the presence of so many gods on Leicester's grounds indicated that they not only sanctioned his authoritative discourse but also were comfortable to live there, as if the grounds were more than part of the earthly realm. While hunting on the third day of her visit, Elizabeth encountered a wild man who appealed to Jupiter for understanding of the hunting party before him; his appearance, as did the appearances of each god or goddess during her stay, served as a reminder to Elizabeth of a providence beyond her own authority. While some of the gods had a specific purpose in forwarding Leicester's cause, others, such as those who left presents for Elizabeth at the front gate, simply added to the sense of verisimilitude. The wild man, Sylvester, whose oration was sanctioned through Silvanus, god of the woods, arduously recounted Elizabeth's arrival, her unmatched graces, and the "devin[ing] of things to come."³⁰ Each reiteration of what had transpired served to strengthen the cause of what should come, as if adding strands to the girth of a rope, which then becomes impossible to pull apart in its strength as a whole. In this case, Sylvester's history led to the question of the source of the illustrious gifts for the Queen:

... But what meant all these shifts,

Of sundry things upon a bridge? were those rewards of gifts?

Eccho.

Gifts.

Gifts? what? sent from the Gods, as presents from above?
Or pleasures of provision, as tokens of true love?

Eccho. True love.

And who gave all these gifts? I pray thee (*Eccho*) say;
Was it not he who (but of late) this building here did lay?

Eccho. Dudley.

O, Dudley, so methought: he gave himselfe and all,
A worthy gift to be received, and so I trust it shall.³¹

As in other masques during the Queen's time at Kenilworth, Silvanus sought to appeal to the proper authority to legitimize his discourse to prognosticate the appropriate end, recompensing Dudley with her hand in marriage. He served as Elizabeth's subconscious mind, asking the questions she might ask in her evaluation of her experience at Kenilworth. He coaxed her to wonder from whom were all these "godly gifts" and in whom all this power resided, the answer being "Dudley." He hoped to portray a true love consecrated by the gods specifically for her, indicating that they were meant to be married.

Each entertainment served this same purpose of convincing Elizabeth to concede to Dudley's stance; of particular symbolic meaning is the discourse of Diana, representing chastity and her search for Zabeta (Elizabeth), because this lengthy oration appears to accede to her monarchical will through most of the proceeding before refocusing back to Dudley's purpose. Diana sanctions the idea of "the wayward ways of wedded state" and praises the virtue of chastity. This discourse lends credence to Elizabeth's strength and even warns her to avoid Cupid to keep her purity. The myth of Zabeta eternalizes Elizabeth and classifies her as a goddess, as Diana lists how Zabeta outshines every other god and goddess:

My sister Venus fear'd Zabetas fame,
Whose gleames of grace hyr beutie's blase did stayne;
Apollo dread to touch an instrument,
Where my Zabeta chaunst to come in place:
Yea, Mercurie was not so eloquent,
Nor in his words had halfe so good a grace.
My stepdame Juno, in hyr glittering guyse,
Was nothing like so heavenlie to behold."³²

Although the advantage of allegory is that it provides a subtle stage for deeper meanings that lay beneath the plot, it is also its weakness, as often mixed messages in the allegory appear to serve no specific purpose and different lines can support various points-of-view. While praising Elizabeth above all the gods and goddesses to flatter and soften her heart toward Leicester, Diana inadvertently undermines her own position, and consequently Dudley's, and also the position of all the gods and goddesses to whom he has appealed for legitimacy—for if Elizabeth is

above them all, then her discourse precludes theirs. Diana's argument also changes over time, further weakening her position. This construct is not even a new one for Dudley, since in 1565 he gave a party and presented a masque of Juno and Diana for Elizabeth. An attendee describes it:

We went to the Queen's room and descended to where all was prepared for the representation of a comedy... the plot was founded on the question of marriage, discussed between Juno and Diana, Juno advocating marriage and Diana chastity. Jupiter gave a verdict in favour of matrimony after many things had passed on both sides in defence of the respective arguments. The Queen turned to me and said, "This is all against me."³³

Elizabeth likely recognized the old ploy when she previewed the masque at Kenilworth and became weary as Diana's steadfast defense of chastity waned and eventually acceded to Juno's promise of blessings if Zabella chose to marry. By the end of the play, the goddess Iris proclaims the real thesis of the play, "How necesserie were for worthy Queenes to wed."³⁴ This blatant course change from a representation of Elizabeth's inclination to Dudley's did not suit the Queen, and she punctuated her disapproval of this discourse by leaving Kenilworth before it was even performed. As Baskervill notes, "Futile attempts were made for several days to present Gascoigne's masque urging Elizabeth's marriage to Leicester"; but he did have it published and, by so doing, exerted his authority indirectly, even if it did not achieve his ultimate goal of marrying Elizabeth.³⁵

Robert Dudley appealed to every legitimizing authority he could conceive by his precise placement of authorizing agents on his own behalf, as Bourdieu posits that "for ritual to function and operate it must first of all present itself and be perceived as legitimate, with stereotyped symbols serving precisely to show that the agent does not act in his own name and on his own authority."³⁶ Even so, his plans failed, although according to this axiom, Dudley's plans for Kenilworth should have succeeded. However, based on the Queen's reactions, it can be assumed that no matter how logical the argument or elaborate the performance, Elizabeth would not have been persuaded. As King states,

Her acknowledgment that she "can not so certenlie determyne" the actions of any potential husband may be grounded on the precedent of the marriage of her sister, Mary, to Phillip of Spain, which demonstrated that even though a treaty and parliamentary act might preserve a married queen's political authority, they had no necessary effect on her husband's actions.³⁷

Elizabeth's fear of losing control would ultimately rule any decision she made, no matter how well-evidenced Robert's assertions were.

However, in a last effort to control the affairs of the visit, Leicester directed Gascoigne to improvise a speech to prevent Elizabeth from leaving Kenilworth early. Gascoigne dressed as Silvanus and met her on

her last day of hunting to plead as if he were Leicester himself, "... For my great good-will towards your Majestie, no way inferior to the proudest God of them all ... began to beate my braines for some device of some present, which might both bewray the depth of mine affections, and also be worthy for so excellent a Princesse to receive."³⁸ Leicester's petition, now weakened by repeated rejections by Elizabeth, was devoid of any hint of pride. He confessed, through Silvanus, that this same "Camelot," a Heaven on earth, was now "a very Hell [with] weeping and wayling, crying and howling ... for sudden change [he] plainly perceived to be, for that they understood above, that your Majestie would shortly (and too speedily) depart out of this countrey, wherein the heavens have happily placed you, and the whole earth earnestly desired to keep you."³⁹ The authorized discourse, which was so important to Leicester's argument, gave way to desperation for the Queen to remain; by leaving, she would be disappointing the whole world and going against the natural order, and even the "alteration in the skyes ... was nothing els but the very flowing teares of the Gods, who melted into moane for [her] hastie departure."⁴⁰ The Queen, who was by then tired of the attempts at manipulating her emotions and actions, particularly by means of publicly pressuring her to yield, left Kenilworth early, avoiding Gascoigne's masque entirely. Her abrupt departure ended any illusion as to where Dudley's authority really originated; only she could approve his discourse, and she rejected it by her stark removal of that approval.

The entertainments at Kenilworth were elaborately calculated; Leicester's appeals to mythologized ancestry and classical gods and goddesses were designed to increase his status and appeal as a potential husband in Elizabeth's eyes. However, the moment Elizabeth authorized Dudley's discourse by marrying him, her own discourse as sovereign would lose all legitimacy, for "the symbolic efficacy of words is exercised only in so far as the person subjected to it recognizes the person who exercises it as authorized to do so."⁴¹ As sole monarch, Elizabeth guaranteed that Leicester, the Privy Council, and her subjects recognized her as that person; if she married, she jeopardized losing authority with all of England. While it was possible that their marriage would have meant sharing this power, if it resulted in her discourse losing its authorization she would have no way of regaining it. Dudley knew that his appeal to powers above Elizabeth's were illusory but had hoped to charm his way past her intellect to have her emotions submit to his will, under the auspices of divine will. Once his discourse was officially authorized through their marriage, he could never lose his right again, but Elizabeth did not submit, for she knew that by authorizing Dudley's discourse she would most likely completely and permanently lose her own. She was not willing to sacrifice that much, not for the love of Dudley, nor the future security of England.



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- ¹ Elizabeth vowed that she was already wed: “I am already bound unto an Husband, which is the Kingdome of England ... (And therewithal, stretching out her hand, shee shewed them the Ring with which she was given in marriage ...)” For more of this speech, see Camden’s *The True and Royall History of the Famous Empresse Elizabeth, Queene of England, France, and Ireland, etc. True Faith’s Defendresse of Divine Ronowne and Happy Memory* (1625), Early English Books Online, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>, (accessed April, 2007).
- ² Allison Heisch, “Queen Elizabeth I and the Persistence of Patriarchy,” *Feminist Review* 4 (1980), 47.
- ³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991), 109.
- ⁴ Milton Waldman, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (London: Collins Clear-type Press, 1946), 52-62.
- ⁵ Bourdieu, 109.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.
- ⁷ Waldman, 146.
- ⁸ Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 64.
- ⁹ Waldman, 92.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 95-6.
- ¹² John N. King, “Queen at Killingsworth Castle, 1575,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43, no. 1 (1990): 30.
- ¹³ Heisch, 46.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.
- ¹⁵ Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth I Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, et al, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 93.
- ¹⁶ Charles Read Baskervill, “The Genesis of Spencer’s Queen of Faerie,” *Modern Philology*, 18, no.1 (1920): 50, www.jstor.org (accessed April, 2007).
- ¹⁷ Bourdieu, 118.
- ¹⁸ John Nichols, ed., *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, (New York: B. Franklin, 1966), 491.

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- ¹⁹ Ibid., Dr. John Dee had been a professor of mathematics who taught all over Europe. He was imprisoned on the charge of using sorcery in an attempt to kill Queen Mary, Elizabeth's sister.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 492.
- ²¹ Robert Laneham, "The Queen at Killingsworth Castle, 1575," *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, Ed. John Nichols, (New York: B. Franklin, 1966), 431. A common myth arose during the Dark Ages that Arthur had escaped death and would return to save the Celts from all invaders. For more on the Arthurian implications of the entertainments and Elizabeth's response, see Baskerville, 51.
- ²² Bourdieu, 109.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Sans Pitie was an evil knight who imprisoned the Lady of the Lake and threatened her chastity in the masque at Kenilworth.
- ²⁵ Nichols, 499.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 299.
- ²⁷ Frye, 86.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 92.
- ²⁹ Laneham, 490.
- ³⁰ Baskervill, 50; Nichols, 495.
- ³¹ Ibid., 496.
- ³² Ibid., 506.
- ³³ Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 47.
- ³⁴ Nichols, 513-4.
- ³⁵ Baskervill, 51.
- ³⁶ Bourdieu, 115.
- ³⁷ King, 37.
- ³⁸ Nichols, 516.
- ³⁹ Ibid, 517.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 517.
- ⁴¹ Bourdieu, 116.

