

Donald V. Stump, Linda Shenk, and Carole Levin, eds. *Elizabeth I and the "Sovereign Arts": Essays in Literature, History, and Culture*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 407. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011. xxiii + 339 pp. \$70. ISBN: 978-0-86698-455-3.

Despite the proliferation of studies on Elizabethan England and, in particular, the figure of its virgin queen, it has until recently been difficult to direct undergraduate students to single-volume studies that combine coverage of the topic and cutting-edge scholarly research. *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, a Norton

Critical Edition (2009), edited by Donald Stump and Susan Felch, has been enormously helpful in setting texts of Elizabeth's own literary compositions alongside those of her contemporaries as well as providing examples of classic essays on Elizabethan history and court culture. Co-edited by Stump, *Elizabeth I and the "Sovereign Arts"* can be seen as a companion piece to *Elizabeth and Her Age*, as its eighteen essays offer a representative cross-section of current trends in studies of Elizabethan England while also indicating future directions for scholarship. The essays have their genesis in the annual meetings of the Queen Elizabeth I Society (established in 2000), and they have clearly developed in light of the collaboration and conversations facilitated by those meetings as well as judicious editing and arrangement by Stump, Shenk, and Levin. The range of contributors is also impressive, as the volume brings together articles by some of the most important and influential scholars of Elizabethan history and culture.

Genuinely interdisciplinary as well as multidisciplinary, the essays are arranged in four thematic groupings, within each of which are examples of work in literary and performance studies, the visual arts, and political, religious, and intellectual history. In their introduction, the editors note that the essays "all in one way or another explore Elizabeth's arts of ruling and, more specifically, ruling in circumstances where her authority and her positions had to be hard won" (xvii). The first section presents studies of Elizabeth's position within her Tudor family and in alignment with other queens, most notably Mary Stewart. The emphasis here is on female sexuality and the women in and through whom Elizabeth fashioned her own sovereignty: Mary Hill Cole looks at Elizabeth's memorialization of her mother, Anne Boleyn, and Sarah L. Duncan focuses on Elizabeth's relationship with her half-sister, Mary Tudor; the politics of motherhood and virginity are examined in essays by Carole Levin and by Levin in collaboration with Janel Mueller and Linda Shenk. Although Janel Mueller's "Elizabeth Tudor: Maidenhood in Crisis" focuses on Elizabeth's response to the crisis instigated by Thomas Seymour in 1548 and 1549, I felt that this section would have benefitted from greater attention to the men in Elizabeth's early years, most notably her half-brother, Edward VI, and her male tutors.

The second section, "Queen of Words," attends to Elizabeth's literary output in the form of poetry and speeches. There are just two essays here — Ilona Bell's analysis of the poems and Steven W. May's examination of the Tilbury and Golden Speeches — but both offer excellent introductions to their subject matter and reflect on some of the important theoretical and editorial issues to be considered when reading Elizabeth's works and reconstructing them as performances. The final two sections, "Mistress of Court and State" and "Worldly Monarch and Divine Governor," develop the themes of sexual-domestic politics and rhetoric-discourse, moving from the Queen's relationships with members of her English court (Norman Jones on Burghley and Susan Doran on Raleigh, for example) to her interactions with the regions (Tim Moylan on the progresses to Bristol and Norwich) and international affairs (Vincent P. Carey considers late Tudor policy in Ireland and John Watkins scrutinizes the

correspondence of the Venetian ambassador). Of the essays in the former section, Anna Riehl Bertolet's "Elizabeth I and the Heraldry of the Face" is a particular highlight. The volume concludes with three essays — by Michele Osherow, Linda Shenk, and Donald Stump — that trace Elizabeth's changing role and presentation as a religious leader.

Unfortunately, this review cannot do justice to the subtlety and richness of the research and readings presented in these essays, nor to the ways in which the essays themselves often speak to one another in informative and sometimes surprising ways. Reading *Elizabeth I and the "Sovereign Arts"* is an enriching experience — not something that can always be said of essay collections, and Elizabeth herself is revealed to be an endlessly contradictory, endlessly complex individual, a woman who, as the editors remark, "governed . . . by education, long practice, and sheer determination" (xvii).

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