

*Herrscherbilder und politische Normbildung: Die Darstellung Elisabeths I. im England des 17. Jahrhunderts.* Kerstin Weiand.

Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Main 236. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. 372 pp. €69.99.

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Elizabeth I is even today one of the most popular English monarchs. She has become a truly iconic figure celebrated in innumerable movies, popular biographies, and television documentaries. Ever since Roy Strong published his study of the cult of Elizabeth, it is assumed that this image of the queen as a national heroine was to a large extent created in her own time, by her courtiers, clergymen, and writers, but also, quite deliberately, by the queen herself. Kerstin Weiand, however, aims to show that this is at best a half-truth. She demonstrates that the sermons, poems, and other publications celebrating Elizabeth immediately after her death depicted the Virgin Queen by no means as a warlike heroine. Rather, her ability to preserve and maintain peace at home and her love of peace in general were emphasized instead. Moreover, many of the works dedicated to the late queen could not help but betray the widespread feeling among the political nation that Elizabeth as a monarch had rather overstayed her welcome.

Even Camden's *Annales Rerum Anglicarum* presented a skeptical and ambivalent view of her role as a monarch. According to Weiand, Camden wrote his *Annales* much more with the intention of bolstering the credentials of the new king, James I, as Europe's

supreme arbiter and mediator, rather than to praise his predecessor. What is more, his historical work was aimed at a European as much as an English audience. For Weiland this transnational dimension of political culture is particularly important. It becomes visible not least in the attempts to turn Henry, Prince of Wales, into a champion of the Protestant cause in a Europe, which was strongly influenced by the ideal of the heroic warrior king that had found its fullest manifestation in Henry IV of France before 1610. Elizabeth Stuart, Henry's sister, inherited the legacy of warlike heroism that her brother's name had been associated with. However, in Weiland's opinion, all this never amounted to a real indictment of James I's own more peaceful policies before 1618. Only with the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War did Elizabeth I become the idol of all those who called for an anti-Catholic and anti-Habsburg crusade and who detested the appeasement policy the king pursued.

Overall, Weiland emphasizes the limited influence that monarchs had on their own public image; they could lock onto the public discourses that created images of authority and leadership in late Tudor and early Stuart England, and try to give them a spin that was favorable to their own self-promotion, but that was all they could do. In the last resort royal images were constructed by others and not so much shaped by the monarchs themselves. Weiland certainly argues her case, which is based on a close, extensive, and persuasive reading of the existing sources. One wonders, though, whether the legacy Elizabeth left to her successor can really be defined by looking primarily at the writings and sermons published after her death. After all, she was celebrated much earlier as the monarch who had seen off the Armada in 1588, and clergymen did compare her to heroes of the Old Testament such as David, Hezekiah, and Joshua. It may not have been politically expedient to conjure up such images in 1603 when peace with Spain was imminent, but it was not too difficult to revive them when James I's English subjects became disenchanted with their new king; in some cases this happened long before 1618.

Weiland may be right in pointing out that images of monarchs are cultural constructions, but even such constructions need resources and materials, and in the last resort Elizabeth had not only miraculously outlived her popish sister's rule, but also survived numerous plots against her life. Her victories may have been due more to fortunate circumstances than to her own intelligence and willpower, not to mention the fighting power of her navy; but what war had James I ever won, apart from putting the occasional rebellious Scottish nobleman or cantankerous preacher in their places? He may have liked at times to be seen as a Scottish lion, but was his image as a timid antihero lacking the will to fight really only due to the attack on his policies launched by his critics after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War? One wonders, but Weiland's study nevertheless constitutes an important contribution to an ongoing debate about the role that the far-from-consistent myth of Elizabeth I played in early Stuart political culture.

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