

Queen Elizabeth and the “Judgement of Paris”

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Abstract: The antique story of the Judgement of Paris was adapted to the language of courtly praise of royal women in sixteenth-century England. Absorbing the early modern interpretation of the tale as the praise of a balanced life (triplex vita), the motif lent itself well to the flattery of Queen Elizabeth appearing in the genres of poetry, pageantry, drama, and painting. However, within the Elizabethan context, the elements of the myth were slightly transformed in order to fit the cultural and political needs of the court. From the mid-1560s onwards, the elaboration of the theme became part of a broadening classical discourse within the praise of Queen Elizabeth, and the introduction of a fourth goddess, Diana, from the early 1580s foregrounded the emergence of her Virgin Queen cult. Furthermore, the tale of the Judgement of Paris represented a synthesis of the flattery of female excellence and the growing popularity of the pastoral tradition in English literature which highlighted the conceit of praising Elizabethan England as the land of a new Golden Age.

At Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Oxford in 1566, Magdalen College welcomed the sovereign with an oration by Master Henry Bust, who also wrote two verse compositions for the occasion that are preserved among the manuscripts containing the poems of scholars presented to the Queen. In his second piece of tribute, Bust celebrates Elizabeth as the paragon of beauty, might and wisdom:

Juno jactat opes: quid ni prudentior illa
Est Pallas prudens: non opulenta tamen.
Sic Venus (Alma Venus) regni virtutis egena est.
Omnia sunt tua, tu Juno, Minerva, Venus.¹

1 “Juno boasts wealth: yet why is she not wiser? / Pallas is wise, but not wealthy. / Likewise, Venus (kindly Venus) lacks royal virtue. / All these qualities belong to you: you are Juno, Minerva, and Venus” (Goldring et al. 1:567, 602).

37 years later, upon the death of Queen Elizabeth, the same Bust, now a Doctor of Medicine, had his poem published among the eulogies for the Queen. The work invokes the same classical motif for praise that he had used for the young Queen at Oxford:

Te vivam & Iuvenem, Regno, virtute, decore,
 Tres cecini Phrigias exuperasse Deas.
 Te nunc defunctam dijs omnibus, atque deabus
 Præfero, quos, vel quas prodiga Roma parit.²

The words of Bust span the period in which the Queen was flattered by the device of placing her into the classical myth of the Judgement of Paris. Its expansion from simple poetic flourish to full-blown drama and its constant recurrence marks the age, which preferred elaborate and witty devices, the conscious abandonment of disbelief, and drawn-out lengthy conceits in royal flattery to the more straightforward and realistic representation of monarchs.

While Queen Elizabeth's qualities were often complimented in her earlier reign, her first figures of praise centred on religious images of true kingship, Biblical typology, and Christian Virtues. For instance, the very first public display of the 25-year-old monarch—her Entry into London preceding her Coronation in 1559—aligned her with the medieval and early modern concepts of godly kingship. The second pageant at Cornhill applauded her as representing Pure Religion, Love of Subjects, Wisdom and Justice, while later on a device used the metaphor of the *veritas temporis filia* to propagate a Protestant religious stance and the Old Testament figure of Deborah to establish a feminine royal image (*The Passage* B2v, C2v, D3v). Her public speeches throughout her reign included Biblical allusions, and her name was associated with several editions of prayers and prayer books (Stróbl, "Prayers" 284).

It was not until the mid-1560s that the language of classical myth started to appear in her discourse of praise. Parallel with the development of the pastoral tradition in poetry and drama, the Queen's flattery immersed the elements of pagan mythology. Helen Hackett points out that the conscious switch from Christian to classical tropes in these years had a significant role in setting the country's religious affiliation apart from the continental Catholic hagiographic examples (235–236).

2 "I sang, when you were alive and young, that you surpassed / The three goddesses of Phrygia in your realm, virtue, and glory. / Now you are dead, I hold you superior to all the gods and goddesses / Which Rome, so prodigal, brings forth" (Goldring et al. 4:532, 721–722).

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However, the application of the elements of antiquity also mirrored the spirit of new learning which became part of the royal discourse and the pride of the English in their country. The following study aims to analyse how the theme of the Judgement of Paris changed within the Elizabethan context, and in what forms its elements were absorbed by the queen’s public processions, pageantry, and representations in poetry, drama, music, and painting. Reflecting political and religious challenges, the issues of succession to the throne, and the reality of the ageing Queen, the tale remained a constant source of inspiration for the adulation of the monarch and in its adapted forms became a significant trope to celebrate England’s female sovereign.

THE JUDGEMENT OF PARIS THEME

The Judgement of Paris achieved its importance in Greek mythology as it explained the cause of the Trojan War. By the end of Classical Antiquity, the stock elements of the often reworked and expanded story were in place. With the background setting of the royal marriage of Peleus and Thetis attended by the Olympian gods, it centred on the awarding of an apple as a prize of beauty—in some versions with the label “To the Fairest”—thrown by the uninvited goddess of strife, Eris among the goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite to spark discord. Instead of a decision made by the court of gods, the power to judge was transferred to the Trojan prince Alexander/Paris, who lived disguised as a shepherd on Mount Ida. Led by Hermes to this pastoral setting, the goddesses offered gifts to Paris in return of a favourable judgement: Hera, the kingdom over all men; Athena, strength and military victory; and Aphrodite, the love of Helen, the most beautiful woman. However, Alexander/Paris’s judgement in favour of Aphrodite not only insulted the other two deities but also set the events of the Trojan War in motion.³

This story acquired a moralizing message from very early times onwards. For instance, the Hellenistic author Athenaeus in his *Deipnosophists* associates it with an allegorical content: “And I for one affirm also that the Judgement of Paris, as told in poetry by the writers of an older time, is really a trial of pleasure against virtue. Aphrodite, for example—and she represents pleasure—was given preference, and so everything was thrown into turmoil” (qtd. in Ehrhart 14). In the sixth-century writings of Fulgentius, the three goddesses were already depicted as signifying

3 The theme’s development during Antiquity and the Middle Ages is outlined in the studies of Young, Ehrhart, Stinton, and Damisch.

the three alternative ways of life offered to man. In his *Mythologies*, he set up a hierarchy of the different forms of human life: the contemplative, that is, the search for knowledge and truth, represented by Athena; the active, accumulating worldly riches and possessions, signified by Hera; and the voluptuous, seeking after lust, personified by Aphrodite. The tragedy of Paris was the flawed decision to choose the sensuous way of life instead of the contemplative, representing the most desired mode: “But the shepherd Paris . . . did a dull and stupid thing and, as is the way of wild beasts and cattle, turned his snail’s eyes towards lust rather than selected virtue or riches” (Book 2.1). This allegorical interpretation became the norm for the next thousand years (Ehrhart 26).

Maintaining this interpretation of the myth, twelfth-century adaptations transformed the judgement into a medieval dream vision, in which Paris the knight fell asleep during a hunt—in some versions next to a well—and encountered the three goddesses in a dream.⁴ These accounts often incorporated elements of the fairy-tale tradition, specifying the day of the events as Friday or the first of May, and including a hunt for a stag and featuring witches instead of goddesses, as, for instance, in Robert Mannyng’s *Chronicle* of 1338. By the late Middle Ages, the Aristotelian positive interpretation of the active life challenged the negative view which surrounded the figure of Hera, yet the negative bias against the life form represented by Venus did not change until the fifteenth century.

A drastically new reading of the tale of the Judgement of Paris was offered by the Florentine Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino, who thought that Paris’s fatal mistake was not that he chose Venus but that he selected only one form of life instead of finding the golden mean and mixing all three kinds of life in equal proportion. Adapting the story to the praise of the life of Lorenzo Medici, Ficino cited the myth to adumbrate the desired fusion of all three ways of life represented by the individual goddesses:

No reasonable being doubts, that there are three kinds of life: the contemplative, the active and the pleasurable. And three roads of felicity have been chosen by men: wisdom, power and pleasure. . . . Our Lorenzo, however, instructed by the oracle of Apollo, has neglected none of the Gods. He saw the three, and all three he adored

4 The tradition first appeared in *De Excidio Troiae Historia* by Dares of Phrygia and was popularised by Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Roman de Troie* (ca. 1155–1160) and later found its way into the influential book *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287) by Guido delle Colonne.

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according to their merits; whence he received wisdom from Pallas, power from Juno, and from Venus grace and poetry and music. (qtd. in Wind 82)

The interpretation of Ficino not only emphasises the equal importance of the goddesses and the life forms they symbolise but also gives an added justification to the hitherto disdained goddess, Venus, by listing not just one but three of her gifts, which denote not voluptuous pleasure but forms of artistic excellence.

In England, the accounts of the Trojan War appeared in various medieval manuscripts as the belief of the Trojan descent of the British was widespread.⁵ Most of these adaptations followed their continental counterparts in assimilating fairy-tale-like elements and transforming the story into a dream vision. However, in the sixteenth century, the new courtly need to use themes from classical mythology for the praise of princely virtues ushered in a novel use of the tale as a device of Tudor flattery. Furthermore, within the English context it became associated with ways of compliment female royalty, especially Queen Elizabeth I, in whose long reign of 45 years the motif acquired its own insular embellishments.

ADAPTATIONS FOR THE PRAISE OF A ROYAL CONSORT

As the Judgement of Paris motif became widespread in early modern Europe, a number of princely triumphs used its theme in *tableaux vivants* to honour the virtues of female royalty. A unique example of this is the 1496 entry of Joanna of Castile into Brussels. The three goddesses and their gifts were identified with Joanna, who thus appears as the “ideal and universal princess” sharing these with her husband and granting them to her people (Legaré 185). This royal entry is also exceptional as it is recorded in a manuscript illustrated by 63 watercolours; thus, it also offers a visual image of the Judgement of Paris scene which was acted out by real women in the nude (Legaré 183). The illustration shows a late medieval dream vision with Paris lying on the left and the three women in a garden with a fountain on the pageant stage flanked by Mercury on the right (Fig. 1). Although the captions accompanying the picture explicitly claim that Joanna unifies the three gifts of the deities, the illustration places Juno in a central position. While Venus is shown from the back

5 *Seege of Troy* (early fourteenth century), *Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy* (ca. 1375), *The Laud Troy Book* (1343–1400), John Lydgate *Troy Book* (1468–1471), Raoul Lefèvre *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, translated by William Caxton and printed as the first book in England in 1473.

and is about to leave the scene through a half-opened door, Juno, the wife of Jupiter, the overseer of childbearing and marriage, directly faces Paris, as an appropriate allusion to the position of Joanna of Castile. Pallas, the goddess associated with wisdom, is depicted as a future promise, moving towards Paris.

Seven years later, the Edinburgh entry of Margaret Tudor, bride of James IV of Scotland and daughter of Henry VII of England, also included the scene about the competition of three goddesses, thereby introducing the Burgundian tradition into the British context. The connection between the Tudor and the Aragon-Castile houses was tightened in 1501 when Catherine of Aragon, the sister of Joanna, arrived in England as the bride of Prince Arthur, son of Henry VII. It is thus conceivable that the iconography of the Castilian princess's entry served as an example to Margaret Tudor's royal procession into Edinburgh in 1503. In the very brief description of John Leland, the figure of Venus among the three deities is emphasised: Paris is given the "Apyll of Gold, for to gyffe to the most fayre of the Thre, wiche he gave to Venus" (Leland iv.289). As Gordon Kipling points out, the pageant's focus is on the king rather than on the consort. The choice of Paris parallels the right choice of James IV of Margaret as his bride and does not compliment either the king or the queen with the three gifts of the goddesses but singles out Margaret simply as more beautiful than Venus (Kipling 263).

The next Tudor triumph in which the Judgement of Paris story appeared was the 1533 coronation entry of Anne Boleyn, the second wife of Henry VIII, the mother of Queen Elizabeth. Here the motif already signified the concept of the *triplex vita*, not highlighting one gift but emphasising the even value of all gifts and complimenting the bride as the bearer of all. The text of the shows was written by two humanist scholars, John Leland and Nicholas Udall, and three out of the six pageants had a classical theme instead of the traditional elements of previous triumphs (Anglo 247–260). Tracey Sowerby claims that this "overt classicism" was "intended to display England's cultural credentials," and wanted to impress "with the scale of England's artistic achievement" (387, 389). Certainly, the reception of the bride included the most musical performances among the Tudor entries, and it contained a profusion of both English and Latin poems. The scene of the Judgement of Paris also tapped into the classical vein of the new learning that was gathering momentum in England in the early sixteenth century. In addition to celebrating the Queen,

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the coronation entry also hailed the country as a new Golden Age: “*Aurea nunc tandem sunt saecula reditta nobis.*”⁶

The Judgement of Paris pageant was acted out in English, thus enabling the spectators to easily engage with the story of awarding the Golden Ball. In this account, Paris does not commit the fatal mistake of choosing one goddess. He makes a good decision by noticing the fourth lady, Anne Boleyn, whom he deems to be the “Most worthie to have it of due to congruence, / As pereles in riches, wit and beautee” (Goldring et al. 5:40). Although there is a slight discrepancy in detail between the description of the show and the surviving text of the pageant, both draw attention to the praise of Anne Boleyn as representing all qualities of the goddesses. The general account of the day’s happenings mentions a physical object symbolising these united qualities: a “bale of golde devise devyded in thre/ signifeing iij giftes whiche these iij goddesses gave to her/ that is to saye wysedome riches and felicitie” (Goldring et al. 5:14). In contrast to this, the text of the performance leaves the ball with Venus, and—acknowledging Anne’s excellence—promises her a greater reward, an imperial crown she would be wearing as the wife of King Henry:

The golden ball
of price but small
Have Venus shall
The fair goddesse,
Because it was
To lowe and bace
For your good grace
And worthyenes. (Goldring et al. 5:41–42)

This version makes Anne’s worthiness contingent on her position as the king’s consort. The performances that precede and follow the Paris scene also salute Anne as the bearer of a future heir to the throne and thus lessen the effect of her praise:

Anna ita multa queas per saecula viuere felix,
Henrico gratissima Regi.
Anna ita laeta queas fuluam gestare coronam,
Et patriam mox prole beare.⁷

6 “The Golden Age has returned to us at last” (Goldring et al. 5:39, 57).

7 “Anne, may you live happily for many generations, / Most dear to King Henry, / Anne, may you be happy to wear the golden crown / and soon bless your country with a son.” (Goldring et al. 5:31, 54).

As opposed to this, in the panegyric of Queen Elizabeth, all flattery offered to her had to accommodate the fact that she was not a consort but the sole Monarch of her country.

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S EARLY FLATTERY

The myth of the Judgement of Paris surfaced again in the mid-1560s as part of the courtly discourse urging Queen Elizabeth I to marry. One of the biggest issues after Elizabeth Tudor ascended the throne in 1559 was to settle the question of the succession to the crown with a favourable marriage. The problem became especially acute after Elizabeth's near fatal bout of smallpox in 1562, after which successive parliaments petitioned the Queen to make a decision on the matter. While Elizabeth censured her parliaments not to "direct the head in so weighty a cause" (*Elizabeth I* 96), the indirect advice of her subjects found an outlet in the shows and entertainments presented to her and her court. The ancient story of the choice between the gifts of the goddesses lent itself well to such a discussion of the blessings of marriage. The device also fitted well into the emerging courtly pastoral tradition. The old moralising interpretation that denounced Paris's choice of Venus as symbolising sensuous love and lust, gave way—as in her mother's coronation entry—to the pastoral allegory where love became equated with the aesthetic qualities of poetry, music, and art. However, the Queen had to be addressed as a sovereign of her country, not just as a desirable bride but as a mighty and prudent monarch. The choice of either Venus, the goddess of love, or Juno, the goddess of marriage, had to be compounded with qualities that foregrounded the flattery of Elizabeth as the rightful ruler with virtues fitting a king. Thus, panegyrists of this period used figures to synthesise the various virtues represented by the deities and also foregrounded the aspect pertaining to marriage.

One of the earliest occasions in which the Queen was complimented with the device of deserving the golden apple of the classical myth was a marriage oration acted out at Lincoln's Inn in 1566. The Inns of Court together with the two universities were the institutions where students received a fully humanistic education by the 1560s, and which contributed the most to the literary output—especially of drama—of its generation (Winston 41). The topical issue of the succession question also infiltrated the themes of the revels staged at the Inns, and the topic of the competition of Juno and Diana became a frequently used allegory, featuring,

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for instance, in a masque staged at Gray’s Inn in 1565 (Winston 196–198). A year later, the Lincoln’s Inn performance of a marriage oration by Thomas Proud at the wedding of Frances Radcliffe, the sister of the Earl of Sussex, was inspired by the Judgement of Paris myth, yet it harked back to a medieval tradition in its frame story of being a dream vision and in its “recitative” form of a lengthy speech that served as an embellished explanation to the maskers’ costumes, gift giving, and an excuse for the following dance (Pincombe 351). Its old-fashioned form of a dream in which goddesses send presents to the bride interestingly mixes with the new attitude towards the praise of Venus and her beauty with nearly a hundred lines devoted to her blazon within a poem of 593 lines. Venus is the first to send her gift to the bride: the golden apple she once received from Paris. However, while the commission is being carried out faithfully by the orator, he excuses himself, as a more beautiful woman—the Queen whose presence was not expected at the wedding—should have really deserved the prize. Thus, Elizabeth is the rightful claimant of the golden apple solely on the basis of beauty and is directly associated with Venus and love. Yet, for the first time in the Elizabethan context of the story, a fourth goddess, Diana appears, whose beauty is described as more active than that of Venus: it is “full of blude,” as “huntyng kept here coloure good,” and “exercise preservethe healthe” (Pincombe 337). Her inclusion—although some aspects of the panegyric allude to the royal guest—is not likely to be a direct reference to the Queen, as she sends a surprising present: a naked picture of herself.

A few months later, the Queen visited Oxford, another centre of learning, where her reception included shows, dramatic performances, academic lectures, and disputations, as well as poems written to her in Latin and Greek. Her progress to the university was part of an important task to secure the religious allegiance and political loyalty of her scholars, but her entertainment was also used by her hosts to offer counsel on the issues of marriage and succession (Keenan 98). However, the Latin poem written by Henry Bust, who welcomed the Queen at Magdalen College on the fourth day of her visit, makes no allusion to this question. The verse flatters the Queen as a monarch of exceeding virtues, possessing royal dignity, wisdom, and beauty and calls her a fourth goddess as well as the only goddess (*dea sola*), applying a truly classical trope of praise. The use of such superlatives based on Roman mythology was neither problematic nor sacrilegious within the boundaries of academia. Yet, when it became more widespread in the 1580s, it aroused anxieties both in the Reformed and Catholic religious circles. For instance, the printer of *A Revelation of the True Minerva* (1582)

—the play of Thomas Blenerhasset for the Inner Temple—took specific pains to soothe the sensibilities of his readers about any reference to the Queen as a goddess. In the play’s introduction to the “gentle reader,” he set out to clear up certain points that “may induce thy doubtfull minde into divers iudgementes” and explained to the godly Protestant readers: “when any one whom the heathen for his worthinesse woorshipped as a god is rehearsed, not the man, but the virtue which made him of so great estimation is to be regarded” (Blenerhasset). On the part of Roman Catholic critics in 1588, Cardinal William Allen attacked the Queen for her “excessive praises that her favourers and flatteres now give unto her” and for “too much delytinge in the peoples praises & acclamations, and for not giving glorie to God” (Allen B5r). The Oxford scholars, though, had no reservations about applying the language of pagan myth to their sovereign.

In 1569, Hans Eworth also used the theme as his topic for the allegorical portrait of the Queen, which was supplemented on its frame by a Latin poem claiming that Elizabeth exceeded the virtues of the deities: “*Adfuit Elizabeth Iuno percussa refugit / Obsupuit Pallas erubuitq[ue] Venus.*”⁸ The oil painting (Fig. 2)—known as *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*—goes beyond this simple conceit, by focusing attention on the central figure, Juno, who seems to be beckoning towards Venus, who is not blushing for shame, but who is seated calmly with Cupid amid white and red roses, the symbols of the Tudor dynasty. The canvas not only flatters the Queen by placing her on an elevated platform above the plane of the allegorical landscape with the prize, the golden ball/orb in her hand, but at the same time urges her towards the blessings of love and marriage. The composition of the canvas also recalls the setting of early Elizabethan drama in private halls, where not only the theatrical action of the stage aspires for the attention of an audience but also the royal presence of the monarch who is flattered in a language as fictitious and imaginative as the stage performance.

John Lyly gives a new twist to the story in his Latin poem “*Iovis Elizabeth*” published as part of *Euphues and his England* (1580) which introduces a second contest among the three goddesses for the possession of Queen Elizabeth, a nymph of “divine majesty” (Scragg 356). Instead of a human, the decision is given to Jupiter who keeps Elizabeth to himself—“*Elizabetha mea est*”⁹—as she possesses a majesty similar to Jove’s might. While the earlier allegory remained explicitly feminine,

8 “Elizabeth then came, And, overwhelmed, Queen Juno took flight: / Pallas was silenced: Venus blushed for shame” (qtd. in Strong 65).

9 “Elizabeth is mine” (Scragg 357).

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the panegyrist, by introducing Jupiter with whom Queen Elizabeth was identified, created a masculine, kingly identity for her. The conceit managed to unite the feminine attributes signified by the three goddesses with the masculine principle of supreme authority. This slight change of emphasis hints at the shift in the language of flattery of some courtiers who by this time strongly disputed the relevance and appropriateness of the marriage of their 47-year-old sovereign. As marriage negotiations were proceeding with Francis, Duke of Alençon between 1579 and 1581, the voices of opposition to it mounted and discussions about the dangers of any match compared to the possible advantage of the Queen bearing an heir to the throne tilted public opinion towards favouring a single Queen rather than a married one.

In Lyly's *Euphues and his England*, “Iovis Elizabeth” is emphasised by setting it apart from its context by various formal features: the change of language from English to Latin, the change of its genre from prose to poetry, and the change of its typeface from black letter to Roman type (Lyly 125–126). Furthermore, the poem is not a single unit: the first 36 lines relating the events of the contest and the judgement are followed by two lines set apart as the concluding pith. Although there is no illustration added, its structure is very similar to the verse lines that appeared in contemporary emblem books in which a general idea or concept was set out by means of an image, a descriptive verse, and a motto. As the poem is appended to the treaties “Euphues’ Glass for Europe” outlining the excellence of England and her Queen, it may be interpreted as an emblem functioning as a cumulative allegory of the country and her monarch. As Lyly’s eulogy of Elizabeth in the “Euphues’ Glass for Europe” contains the most varied figures of speech current for the praise of the Queen, the placement of the Judgement of Paris tale in such privileged position in the work signifies that in 1580 the motif was still relatively rare. Also, its separation from the descriptive praise of the Queen shows that Lyly realised the theme’s dramatic capabilities which were fitter for an isolated poetic flourish than a straightforward eulogy. George Peele’s choice within a few years to work the tale into a five-act play could have been influenced by similar incentives.

DIANA AND THE LATER YEARS

During the later reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Judgement of Paris trope was extended with a fourth goddess, Diana, to suit the emerging Virgin Queen cult that aimed to justify Elizabeth’s unmarried status. Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt

and the Moon, was only one classical figure whose feminine attributes praised Elizabeth in early shows. In the 1566 masque of Tomas Proud, Diana was used for generally complimenting the virtue of chastity, but in the mid-1580s, it was specifically associated with Queen Elizabeth. By the last decade of the century, Diana had become a central element of the courtly praise of the Queen, resulting in such extravagances as laying out an artificial pond in crescent form for her visit at Elvetham in 1591. In France, the analogy of flattering a queen by calling her Diana/Phoebe/the Moon as the consort of the king/Phoebus/the Sun was in full swing during most of the sixteenth century, encompassing the reigns of Henry II and his three sons, Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III, and it was even applied to flatter the mistresses of the king (Berry 44). However, in England, the Diana motif emerged as a praise of virginity, a parallel to Elizabeth's female court, emphasising the combination of majesty and femininity. For instance, in the late 1590s, it was this context that inspired the plaster frieze representing Diana and her court in the woods surrounding the royal court-of-arms in the High Great Chamber of Hardwick Hall.

The Arraignment of Paris (1584) by George Peele represents the possibilities of adapting the Judgement of Paris theme to a full-blown play. The mode of transformation of the tale into royal panegyric is well exemplified by Peele's case, as he wrote a lengthy poem about the same subject during his years at Oxford. *A Tale of Troy* (ca. 1579) is markedly inspired by the university context, as Paris's description, both as a simple shepherd and as one who next to piping songs "weth his wits on bookes" (B1r), alludes to the new literary interest in the pastoral. The condemnation of Paris's choice of Venus—while following the medieval moralizing outlook—also hints at the lewd morals of students, the topic of many contemporary works:

led away with ouer vaine conceite,
And surfeiting belike on pleasures baite,
As men are wont to let the better goe
And choose the worse . . . (B1v)

Compared to this, *The Arraignment of Paris* is conceived in a very different vain: neither Paris nor his choice is condemned, the ancient dispute of the goddesses is resolved through the twist in the plot where the pastoral setting of shepherds turns into the Elizabethan world of royal pageantry, and a fourth goddess, Diana appears.

Peele's drama works on many layers: the idyllic pastoral world of shepherds reflecting fashionable forms of courtly entertainment (solo songs and dancing); the mythical

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story of the Judgement compounded with early modern pageant-like devices representing the gifts of the gods (a Tree of Gold, a masque-like military march, and a vision of Helen singing an Italian madrigal); the scholarly defence of Paris of his choice in the mode of a university disputation with the result of the Gods acquitting Paris; and the layer of Queen Elizabeth’s cult language in which the new judgement is handed to Diana, who chooses the Queen. The role of Diana is central throughout the play: the play’s first act is set in the woods of Diana, the quarrel of the goddesses occurs in the bower of Diana, and the role of being the judge in the quarrel of the goddesses is assigned to Diana. It is in the final act that Diana refers to a “peereles nymphē” that governs “an ancient seat of kinges, a seconde *Troie* / Ycompast rounde with a commodious sea: / Her people are ycleeped [called] Angeli” (A3r). The description not only promotes the virtues of Elizabeth but also the excellence of the whole country, which she calls *Elizium*. England appears as a place where the Golden Age of ancients has returned, a country “[u]nder the clymate of the milder heaven,” where “seldome lights *Ioves* angrie thunderbolt,” and “whys-tyling windes make musick ‘mong the trees” (A3r). The praise of the Queen unites the humanistic trope about the equal possession of all the gifts of the three goddesses and the Queen’s virgin/Diana cult:

In state Queene *Iunos* peere, for power in armes,
And vertues of the mind *Minervaes* mate:
As fayre and lovely as the queene of love:
As chaste as *Dian* in her chaste desires. (E3r–v)

The instruction within the text specifies that “a figure of the Queene” should appear as Diana starts her monologue and there is a further reference to “the state being in place” as the Sisters of Fate enter, and then three more times the presence of the Queen is indicated: the Fates lay down their gifts “at the Queenes feete,” Clotho explicitly “speaketh to the Queene,” and at the end of the play Diana “delivereth the ball of golde to the Queenes owne hands” (E3r, E4r–v). As the title page of the published text states, this pastoral was “presented before the Queenes Maiestie” so the instructions could have indicated a shift of attention from the stage towards the Queen’s throne and an active involvement of Elizabeth in the plot of the play. Such interaction of Queen Elizabeth with the actors of a pageant was quite common; for instance, she was drawn into the plot of the shows at her coronation entry when delivered an English Bible in 1559 (*The Passage* C4v). She was also

well aware of the theatrical nature of her appearances and remarked in her speech of November 1586, “for we princes, I tell you, are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed” (*Elizabeth I* 194). As the seating of the Queen was very often on the stage itself, *The Arraignment of Paris* was easily transformed into a pageant-like performance, a stylised tribute to Elizabeth, resulting in one of the wittiest devices of flattery of its age.

Peele’s *The Arraignment of Paris* sets the ancient myth in a world of art, poetry, and grace with a profusion of songs and song forms scattered throughout the play. It echoes the atmosphere of Spenser’s novel collection of eclogues, *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), and the work’s significance partially derives from its positioning of the Judgement of Paris theme as an integral part of this new literary approach. Furthermore, the theme’s combination with the pastoral tradition contributed to the emerging patriotic discourse of the English in the 1580s—ensuing from the increasing threat of Catholic Spain—which resulted in the praise of England as a new Golden Age and her monarch as the patron of this learning. Two years before the quarto of the play was printed, but perhaps contemporary with its performance at court, the Hungarian scholar Stephen Parmenius of Buda published a Latin poem *De navigatione* (1582) which included a similar encomium of the Queen’s virtues and her country’s academic excellence as proofs of the recurrence of the fabled Golden Age (Stróbl, “A Vision” 207–215). It was also this equation of the Queen with learning that prompted Queen Elizabeth’s flattery in George Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589). In the first chapter of the first book, under the heading “What a Poet and Poesie is, and who may be worthily sayd the most excellent Poet of our time,” the Queen is flattered with the conceit of uniting the gifts of the *four* goddesses:

But you (Madam), my most Honored and Gracious . . . your selfe being already, of any that I know in our time, the most excellent Poet. Forsooth by your Princely purse-favours and countenance, making in maner what ye list, the poore man rich, the lewd well learned, the coward couragious, and vile both noble and valiant. Then for imitation no lesse, your person as a most cunning counterfaior lively representing *Venus* in countenance, in life *Diana*, *Pallas* for government, and *Iuno* in all honour and regall magnificence. (Clv)

By the late sixteenth century, the pastoral setting, the leisurely life of shepherds—their singing, piping, and lovemaking—served as a means to represent, idealise, comment on, or even criticise the court. It became a learned language

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of disguise as its poetical conceits were not perceived as a threat or challenge to the status of the established order. It was also a suitable medium—as Louis Montrose argues—for the “well educated but humbly born young men” to advertise themselves and to sharpen their pen in the courtly exercise of writing in the pastoral mode (433). By the 1590s, the Judgement of Paris theme had lost its fresh appeal and served young talents as a poetical exercise to show off their skill to a wider audience. Both Richard Barnfield’s *Cynthia* (1595) and Francis Sabies’s *Pan’s Pipe* (1595) belong to this category where the application of the classical trope and cult-like, formalised praise of the Queen are embedded in the wider context of shepherds and their pastoral trappings.

Barnfield’s *Cynthia* is an experiment to call attention to its author by exploiting the possibilities inherent in the genre and—at least in its verse form—imitating one of its greatest exponents, Edmund Spenser. In his introduction to the readers, Barnfield acknowledges his debt to the author of *The Faerie Queene*: “Thus, hoping you will beare with my rude conceit of *Cynthia*, (if for no other cause, yet for that it is the first imitation of the verse of that excellent Poet, Maister Spenser, in his *Fayrie Queene*)” (A3v). Francis Sabie also used his poem as a kind of debut, and in his foreword “to all youthfull Gentlemen, or Apprentises, favourers of the diuine Arte of sense-delighting Poesie,” he asked for encouragement: “. . . my sole and humble request is, that you would not forthwith proceed in condigne iudgement against me, but with the wise Faustus conceale your opinion, which doing, you shall animate, otherwise altogether discourage a young beginner” (A2r). Thus, in both pieces the function of the Judgement of Paris motif is formal, lacks originality, and openly exploits the value of imitating earlier, well-received literary works.

Barnfield’s poem used the old convention of a dream vision in introducing his theme. The poet narrator is summoned to the arraignment of Paris’s judgement, the new arbitrator is Jove, and the apple is awarded to Queen Elizabeth, whose encomium directly reflects the influence of Spenser:

In Westerne world amidst the Ocean maine,
In compleat Vertue shining like Sunne,
In great Renowne a maiden Queene doth raigne,
Whose royal Race, in Ruine first begun,
Till Heavens bright Lamps dissolve shall nere bee
In whose faire eies Love linckt with vertues been,
In everlasting Peace and Union.

Which sweet Consort in her full well beseeme,
Of Bounty, and of Beauty fairest Fayrie Queene. (B4v)

The Diana context is introduced by placing Paris's judgement occurring on a hunt with Diana, though no further elaboration of the motif is made. Surprisingly, amid the classical context, Barnfield finishes the praise of the Queen on a Protestant note calling her "A second *Judith* in Ierusalem" (B5r).

A similar religious overtone is detectable in Sabie's work. The third eclogue in his *Pan's Pipe* employs the convention of the song contest among shepherds, where Thestylis's ode tells the story of the three goddesses. The object of the competition—as in John Lyly's "Iovis Elizabeth"—is not the golden apple, but the deities vie for the possession of Eliza (Queen Elizabeth). Paris is not mentioned; the judge of the dispute is Jove, who claims Eliza for himself. However, in the description of Eliza's virtues, Sabie turns to a Protestant rhetoric creating a rather motley assembly of different figures to flatter the Queen. Jove acknowledges God's grace in Eliza's excellence ("Oh what great and huge miracles Iehovah / Aiding, she hath wrought here" [D4r]) and calls her a new Moses ("That Moses which her people through the sea led . . . with *manna*, *nectar*, manie yeares she fed us" [D4r]). Sabie even references topical issues, such as the aggression of the "Spanish armies" and the threat of the "Romish Prelate" (D4r).

Sabie's work offers an additional comment on the theme of Paris's Judgement. It includes a second "judgement" scene, where the old shepherd, Faustus is asked to determine which song of the shepherds was the best. Yet Faustus, instead of making a choice, dismisses the idea of a competition altogether: "But which of you made best harmonie, for me to tell you, / Were but a needlesse thing, t' wold breed but brauling among you / Then let this suffice, you have al three pip'd very wel now" (D4v). Faustus not only fails to choose Elizabeth's panegyric as the best song but his attitude is critical about the concept of arbitrating. His non-decision pronounces a judgement on the material he has listened to, on the insignificance, the light and trivial nature of the songs, which included also the flattery of the Queen.

CONCLUSION

The motif of the Judgement of Paris became a prominent device of royal flattery in Elizabethan England and remained a continuous source of inspiration for

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courtly entertainment. As panegyrists of Queen Elizabeth applied the theme again and again in their courtly discourse, the changes of the details highlight the shift in the political agenda and literary taste of poets and dramatist. Though springing from a common ancient source, each adaptation thus represented an individual case with a topical agenda.

In 2012, a new portrait of the Queen appeared on the art market that reworked the 1569 oil canvas by Hans Eworth *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*. The watercolour, attributed to the miniaturist Isaac Oliver (Fig. 3), followed the composition of the earlier work but introduced slight changes of detail, thus altering the previous interpretation of the classic tale. Working more than twenty years later, perhaps around 1590, the painting is significantly different in its aesthetic and programme.¹⁰ While the later work preserved the previous canvas’s masque-like composition—the allegorical environment and the courtly hall are placed next to each other—it is more pastoral with an emphasis on an open countryside, illustrating a Golden Age. By adding one more lady-in-waiting and increasing the size occupied by the Elizabethan figures, the historical and fictitious worlds became equated through their balanced treatment. The work also emphasises the majesty of Queen Elizabeth as a single ruler by placing a halo-like portable canopy above her head and by expanding the size of the golden ball and the golden surface of her dress. Therefore, though using an early work to copy, this depiction reflects the contemporary tropes of praise in the last decade of Elizabeth’s reign.

While capturing the imagination of several generations of courtly panegyrists, the mode and application of the allegorical tale varied during the long reign of the Queen. Adopting a Humanistic discourse where beauty was as commendable a quality as intellectual skills and worldly power, it developed into a means to praise not only the Queen but also her country. Whereas in the early years, the emphasis given to the individual goddesses varied according to the courtly agenda whether to promote the idea of the marriage of Elizabeth or not, in the later years, as Elizabeth’s marriage possibilities were waning, a fourth goddess, Diana was introduced to flatter the ageing unmarried Queen’s “eternal” virginity.

¹⁰ For a detailed study on the subject see Hackett.

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Fig. 1. *Joanna of Castile's Entry into Brussels, 1496* © Kupferstichkabinett. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, MS 78 D5, fol. 57.

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Fig. 2. *Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses*, 1569, by Hans Eworth. Windsor Castle (RCIN 403446) Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018.



Fig. 3. *Queen Elizabeth I* (“Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses”), c. 1590, attributed to Isaac Oliver Portrait Gallery (NPG 6947) © National Portrait Gallery, London.

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