

Elizabeth I: size matters

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Miniature is one of the refuges of greatness (Gaston Bachelard,
The Poetics of Space)

At first, David Starkey didn't recognise Princess Elizabeth in this portrait (Figure 3). However, he was immediately struck by her 'painfully thin shoulders, exposed by the low, square-cut dress, [that suggests] an aching vulnerability'.¹ Inspired by the smallness of the princess in this portrait, which has been attributed to William Scrots, Starkey composed *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (2000): a book about the queen when she was little. The portrait, which Starkey believes Elizabeth 'gave to her father just before his death', provides an emblem for his project, which offers an alternative to the prevailing vision of Elizabeth as Astraea or Gloriana.² Starkey dismisses the monumental and the magnificent in Elizabethan portraiture, so central to the work of Dame Frances Yates and Sir Roy Strong, as mere 'apparatus', all 'flummery' and 'superstructure' (xii).³ His work reflects the recent interest, instead, in the Elizabethan aesthetics of the miniature, the diminutive, the trifling, the fragmentary.⁴ Of course the Astraea and Gloriana of Yates and Strong were a response to the tendency of their Victorian predecessors to diminish Elizabeth, either by recollecting her as a child or by placing her in undignified settings, as Nicola J. Watson puts it, 'in disarray or *en déshabillé*'.⁵

Just as each generation refashions Shakespeare, each generation recreates Elizabeth I in its own image. Yet, as our book title *Goddesses and queens* illustrates, scholars often pay closer attention to the aspects of magnificence and monumentalism in the portraits of Elizabeth, reflecting the various agendas of nationalism and feminism. However, portraits of Elizabeth depict an unresolved tension between size and scale. On the one hand, they celebrate Elizabeth as Gloriana, while, on the other, they call attention to the diminutive qualities that led to Elizabeth being dubbed the Fairy Queen. This allows them to be read either way. As Stephen Orgel comments in 'Gendering the Crown', an analysis of the competing gendered image systems attached to Elizabeth I, 'the

notorious profligacy of Renaissance symbolic imagery' allows 'its endless adaptability to conflicting, and often diametrically opposed, ideologies'.⁶ The dialectic produced by the conflicting imagery of large and small in portraits of Elizabeth provides if not Ariadne's thread itself then at least a provisional 'guide through the labyrinthine ways of Elizabethan art' that Strong himself requests.⁷

As they rework the visual markers of Henrician magnificence, portraits of Elizabeth reflect debates concerning women and power motivated by Protestantism and by the presence of a woman on the throne of England. They illustrate the interactions between the contemporary vogue for limning and the miniature, and the long-established traditions of life-size or large-scale portraiture.⁸ They reflect, as well, the ongoing Elizabeth conversation about size crystallised in Marlowe's line, 'infinite riches in a little room'.⁹ Whereas Holbein and others represented Henry VIII as great, Elizabethan portraitists represented Elizabeth's power as, instead, a conversation between (as the famous nineteenth-century hymn puts it) great and small.¹⁰ The Bachelard quotation that provides the epigraph to my chapter suggests how this Elizabethan dialogue between great and small actually constitutes a meditation upon the dynamics of Elizabethan power, which wavers, compellingly, between the monumental and the human, the awesome and the pocket-size.

To a certain extent, representations of Elizabeth as great or small reflect simple chronology. Like Starkey, Strong begins his *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (1963) with this 'slip of a girl'.¹¹ (3). The painting provides the perfect starting point to chart the movement from the diminutive princess portrayed in the Scots portrait, to the 'visionary figure, towering above her realm of England, a vision of almost cosmic power' in the Ditchley portrait.¹² The Scots portrait, painted around 1547, when Elizabeth was a teenager, is a conventional early Tudor portrait in the tradition of Holbein. The subject creates a slender triangular shape in the centre of the canvas, with her narrow head and shoulders tapering out into a skirt made stiffly conical by means of a Spanish farthingale (a kind of reinforced petticoat). The bell-shaped sleeves reinforce this elegant visual rhythm. Whether the painting was presented to her father or to her brother, it is consistent with Elizabeth's self-presentation within the family as '*humillima filia*', to use her signatory phrase in letters to her father and to Katherine Parr.¹³ At a time when she had been declared illegitimate and was denied her place in the succession, the Latin *humilis* signifies not only the modesty of her appeal but also the lowliness and insignificance of her position. Often frightened for her life, the young Elizabeth described herself as 'altogether nothing' and her accomplishments as 'small work', making apologies for her 'small learning'.¹⁴ Casting herself as small, Elizabeth casts aside her imposing royalty and maximises the impact of her appeal to addressees, such as her brother King Edward VI, whom she thanks for the 'magnitude' of his generosity.

Half a century later, in 1592, Marcus Gheeraerts's Ditchley portrait illustrates the evolution of Elizabethan representation. Here, to quote Strong, 'an individual

has been transposed into a symbol' (Figure 4).¹⁵ The Ditchley portrait presents not an elegant, conical, triangle but a square, even squat, pentagon. Elizabeth's dress extends and expands the proportions of her figure to three or four times her width: no longer just starting with the petticoats, expansion is a process that moves from the head up and out. As the upswept hairdo and wired, bejewelled headdress, known as a *palisadoe*, extend Elizabeth's height, the trunk (or demi-cannon) sleeves and immense floor-length hanging sleeves, along with the farthingale, magnify her width. Although her feet are touching Oxfordshire, Elizabeth was international in her taste: as one chronicler recalls, she possessed 'diverse attires, italian, spanyshe and frenshe, as occasion served'.¹⁶ These continental fashions facilitate the portrait's emphatic expression of size: the fan-shaped ruff, a style usually worn by single women, frames the head and expands its circumference.¹⁷

Yet the overall effect of the portrait is not to make Elizabeth look large, but instead to flicker between the appearance of greatness and the appearance of smallness. Elizabeth's slim and delicate fingers, complete with ringed little finger, clutch a tiny fan. Her waist is minimised by a tight corset and lengthened with an inverted triangular stomacher, setting off the expansive sleeves and skirts. She is bedecked with dozens of diminutive pearls. Note also the tiny little feet that peep out from beneath Elizabeth's skirts. As the painting is saying that Elizabeth is great, it is also depicting her as somewhat overwhelmed. Whereas the famous images of Henry VIII (Figure 5) are all sword and swagger, the Ditchley portrait expresses something very different. It is as if Elizabeth could just float away if she weren't anchored by so much silk and fustian.

The Ditchley portrait enshrines the idea that it is necessary to protect what is little about the queen as well as to celebrate what is great. Elizabeth famously deploys this dialectic between great and small in her Tilbury speech, which plays upon the contrast between her small frame and the qualities of greatness that it contains: 'I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king.'¹⁸ Her writings make frequent reference to the idea of the smallness of woman; as she puts it, 'being a woman by my nature weak, timid, and delicate, as are all women'.¹⁹ She enjoys casting herself in the role of 'maidservant' or 'handmaid' to God.²⁰ After the defeat of the Armada, Elizabeth expresses thanks that she, as 'the weakest sex hath been so fortified by Thy strongest help that neither my people might find lack by my weakness nor foreigners triumph at my ruin'.²¹ An alternative to the commonplace of the 'queen's two bodies', Elizabeth's self-representations as small reflect the evolving idea of a little England, which Elizabeth describes as her 'little flock'. Pope Sixtus comments on the inverse relation between England (and Elizabeth's) size and power when he exclaims, 'She is only a woman, only mistress of half an island, and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the Empire, by all'.²² In the case of Elizabeth, small is not only beautiful, it is also intensely powerful.

Visiting Ditchley, the Oxfordshire estate which Elizabeth's toes are touching, the eighteenth-century antiquarian Thomas Hearne paid homage to this portrait in the Great Hall. He then proceeded to Elizabeth's bedroom, where she stayed when she

visited Ditchley, a mark of favour that signified her forgiveness of Sir Henry Lee, its owner, for living openly with his mistress. On the bedroom Hearne writes: 'it is far from being large. The bed is still preserved, in which she lay; low, but decent, and agreeable enough to the humour of this queen, who affected popularity, and tho' proud and imperious, yet would not seem to aim at high things.'²³ In this passage Hearne expresses the characteristically Elizabethan combination of great and small as a tension between elitism and populism, entitlement and diffidence. Hearne's entry into the queen's bedroom constitutes a retrospective performance of the Elizabethan dialectic, according to which queenly power performs itself by moving theatrically between the magnificent and the slight. As Hearne performs the need to penetrate the secret, human places associated with this goddess-like figure, he participates in the portrait's deft use of light and dark, and large and small. He thus engages the terms of Lee's experience itself, with fidelity ultimately overcoming infidelity, just as sunshine follows storms.

Portraits of Elizabeth distinguish themselves not only from the Holbeins of her ancestors but also from the Titians and Van Dycks of her continental contemporaries. Their engagement with contrasts in size and proportion takes its cues from the mannerist tradition, with its rather fantastical (Arnold Hauser calls it 'fictitious') concept of space, which caught on in earnest in Jacobean England.²⁴ However, Elizabethan portraiture differs from classic mannerism in its interest in size instead of elongation, and in the emphasis upon girth rather than attenuation. A 1565 painting in the collection of Col. C.T. Wingfield presents Elizabeth with elbows bent and shoulders extended: a posture that pushes outside the clean triangular lines of the Princess portrait. In the late 1570s Nicholas Hilliard's attenuated lines use puffed sleeves to extend the horizontal thrust of his figure, creating the characteristically squarish and squat Elizabethan aesthetic. If, on the one hand, the Ditchley portrait depicts Elizabeth as fashion victim, drowned, or dwarfed, by the sheer volume of her dress, it also reveals an enlarged Elizabeth, standing on top of and dominating an England that is overwhelmed, even diminished, by her personality. No wonder Marcus Gheeraerts gives the skies an apocalyptic flavour. England has become a courtier's cape, thrown down over a puddle, for Elizabeth to walk over. This motif of physical domination may be found in images such as the 1589 *Eliza Triumphans*, by William Rogers, in which Elizabeth dominates a landscape with castles and moats and (most importantly) ships. In the Armada portrait, overstuffed bishop sleeves adorned with bows, pearls, and embroidery express sartorially the mastery that the English ships in the background symbolise in naval terms (Figure 6). There are also images of Elizabeth as Europa itself or as the cosmos, with Elizabeth's head topping a string of ever enlarging concentric circles.

The Siena Sieve portrait dramatises the interaction between expansion and diminution (Figure 7).²⁵ Attributed to Quentin Massys the Younger or Cornelis Ketel, this painting was unknown until 1895, when it was discovered rolled up in the attic of a former Medici palace. It depicts Elizabeth sweeping towards the viewer, its

composition looking back upon a tradition of paintings of Aeneas walking away from the burning Troy. The Siena Sieve portrait is one of a group of Sieve portraits produced through the 1580s which draw upon a popular Petrarchan emblem of chastity: a Roman vestal virgin, Tuccia, carries water in a sieve from the Tiber to her temple without spilling a drop. Together, these portraits forge a connection between Elizabeth's virginity and England's military, and specifically naval power. In the case of the Siena Sieve portrait, the painting places Elizabeth within the Virgilian narrative of empire: casting, as Strong puts it, 'Elizabeth as this century's Aeneas'.²⁶ The pillar to Elizabeth's right depicts scenes from the *Aeneid*, such as Aeneas's ships setting sail from Carthage, that pursue the themes of conquest and expansion raised elsewhere in the portrait: on the globe, England and its industrious ships are flanked by the coasts of Africa and the New World, and Elizabeth appears to be leading the merry troupe of courtiers in a kind of forward procession. As the portrait aligns Elizabeth with Aeneas, the solitary expansionist wanderer, the scenes on the pillar also include images of Virgil's paramour, Dido, Queen of Carthage. They include her first meeting with Aeneas at Juno's temple, their idylls in the cave, and, ultimately, Dido's self-immolation. The painting thus sets up the great Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, against a Dido diminished by love: Dido the sensualist, Dido the seduced, the Dido who wanted to marry Aeneas, and the Dido who considered herself married to him anyway.

However, the opposition between Elizabeth and Virgil's Dido is complicated by the fact that Elizabeth had a long-standing association with Dido, who was first known, in history and legend, as Elissa. As Dido was invoked as a paradigm of queenship in discussions of Elizabeth, the ancient Elissa became mixed up with Eliza, a short form of Elizabeth's name that Spenser associates with Dido in *The Shepheardes Calender*.²⁷ This Elissa/Dido belongs to an alternative, non-Virgilian tradition, according to which Dido is (like Aeneas) the founder of an expansionist city-state. When her brother Pygmalion tries to marry her off to Iarbus, the King of Gaetulia, she escapes her home in Tyre with a band of loyal followers, sailing across the Mediterranean to north-east Africa, where she founds Carthage.²⁸ An early example of colonialist bad faith, Dido pretends to the African inhabitants that she did not wish to establish a major settlement on their land, and requests, humbly, that they sell her only as much land on the beach as a cowhide could enclose. The deal made, Dido proceeds to slice up the cowhide into the smallest and thinnest possible strips, connecting them to enclose a very large piece of land around the port that became Carthage, eventually naming its highest tower Byrsa, in honour of the cowhide. Dido provides a model of female ruled empire that precedes Rome. Carthage grew from a small trading post to a major Mediterranean power. At its height, it controlled much of north-west Africa, southern Spain, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. During the Punic wars, when Carthage was a major obstacle to Roman expansion, Hannibal famously led the Carthaginian army, complete with elephants, across the Alps into Italy.

The Siena Sieve portrait thus invites the viewer to register the difference between Virgil's tragic Dido and the Dido of the earlier tradition, the solitary and mighty ruler

who transformed a tiny cowhide into a great empire. As Orgel explains, 'the epic iconography here ingeniously provided the queen with both her heroic ancestor and the prototype of her chastity. The sieve, emblem of the Roman vestals and thus symbolic of Elizabeth's virginity, declares that this Dido will resist the temptations of any modern Aeneas.'²⁹ The portrait argues that Elizabeth is not the Dido reduced to ashes, painted so small on the pillar, but the other Dido, the founder of the Carthaginian city-state (known for its Alpine-climbing elephants). By identifying Elizabeth with 'this Dido', the portrait presents the imperialist binaries of triumph and defeat, and the erotic and moral distinctions between discernment and profligacy, within the dialectic of great and small. Dido/Elissa's expanding cowhide is invoked by Elizabeth's sieve, covered in tiny holes: an emblem of virginity used as an aid to consolidate power. The Virgilian Dido depicted on the pillar is rendered even smaller, and more static, by contrast to the sweeping Elizabeth, who overwhelms her diminishing train of followers. As it shows the small becoming great, the Siena Sieve portrait celebrates Elizabeth.

The Rainbow portrait moves these questions of size and scale into a religious dimension (Figure 8). As René Graziani argues, the portrait moves between presenting Elizabeth as '*Fidei Defensor*, official champion of the Christian religion' and depicting her 'utter dependence on God'.³⁰ For Daniel Fischlin, who sees the painting as a response to the Essex rebellion and to anxieties about succession, the portrait's 'conflation of conflicting and ambiguous images represents the struggle to maintain the illusion of autonomy in the face of an approaching political apocalypse beyond Elizabeth's control'.³¹ Possibly painted as an altarpiece for an entertainment staged by Sir Robert Cecil in 1602, in which a maid, widow, and wife contend before a shrine to the goddess Astraea, the portrait depicts eyes and ears embroidered gorgeously into Elizabeth's dress, conferring on her the omniscience of a God. In her sixties at the time the portrait was painted, the queen sports an enormous fan-shaped double ruff. With her headdress like gossamer wings, she holds a rainbow in her hands like a child's toy hoop. The dress communicates how Elizabeth's position expands her physical form into that of a deity. At the same time, however, the embroidered eyes recall Elizabeth's complaint: 'we princes, I tell you, are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed. The eyes of many behold our actions; a spot is soon spied in our garments; a blemish quickly noted in our doings.'³² The portrait thus depicts Elizabeth deified and apotheosised, as well as the danger of Elizabeth diminished, with her smallest fault easily magnified in the eyes of the court.

With the motto *NON SINE SOLE IRIS* (No rainbow without the sun) the portrait places Elizabeth as the source of this world-enveloping magic: the rainbow possesses associations with peace and divine communion as well as conveying the idea of global dominion, as the ends of the rainbow connect one end of the world with the other. The rainbow alludes, specifically, to the covenant between Noah and God following the flood: the King James Bible reads, 'I do set my bow in a cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth' (Genesis 9:13). An image of Elizabeth's covenant with England, this painting also figures Elizabeth, with her crescent-moon-

shaped jewel, as Cynthia, goddess of the moon (reminding us how the moon itself waxes and wanes).

Together, the moon and the story of Noah refer to England's naval strengths, underpinning the Protestant history of England's particular covenant with its queen and with its God, with a biblical narrative. Once there was earthly wickedness, with giants walking the earth and humans so corrupt that God repented creation. So God instructed Noah to build a little ark, 300 cubits long, in which to preserve a small selection of living creatures (much smaller than the world itself, of course, but 300 cubits is still about the length of a good-sized cruise ship). The rainbow signals the moment of peace, when the happy few, with their little patch of dry land surrounded by the waters, are given instructions to go forth and multiply. An allegory of the Reformation, of the nascent stages of English exploration and discovery, the painting is also a reminder of the fact that Elizabeth did not herself go forth and multiply, that she did not herself become great with child, or produce any little ones. Although she did not participate in the generational aspects of Noah's covenant with God, she made a little island great. The Rainbow portrait reminds us, in portraits of Elizabeth, to attend to the small as well as to the great, to be aware of what is magnified and to attend to what otherwise goes unseen.

The double vision of Elizabeth as at once great and small constitutes an Elizabethan aesthetic. The paradoxical nature of Marlowe's epigrammatic 'infinite riches in a little room' is consistent with the contradictions inherent in some recent accounts of Elizabethan culture. For Patricia Fumerton, the paradox lies in the interactions between secrecy and disclosure, and public and private; for Jeffrey Knapp it lies in the tension between the country's geographic status as a 'trifle' and its expansionist ambitions; for Julian Yates, it is in the distinctions between the appropriate use of objects, and their misuse.³³ Quintessential Elizabeth forms such as the sonnet and the miniature also express the paradox between great and small. Not merely (to use a favourite Elizabethan term) 'toys', they are instead parts that gesture toward an imposing whole. An individual sonnet takes its place within a sequence that, as the period continues, becomes more expansive and inclusive; the miniature is the alter-ego of the life-size portrait, with its size and scope, and often indicates a personage, or a relationship that is, indeed, larger than life. This dialogue between great and the small, which we may also think of as the constant refocusing of a lens, is illustrated by the famous anecdote in which Sir James Melville, the ambassador of Mary Queen of Scots, is shown Elizabeth's 'little cabinet', where she kept the miniature of Leicester wrapped in paper and marked 'My Lord's Picture'.³⁴ The miniature, the trinket, the little cabinet all provide ready metaphors for the romantic status of a suitor of Elizabeth, their diminutive size bearing an inverse relationship to the romantic attachment.

Elizabethan and Jacobean portrayals of Elizabeth as the queen of the fairies dramatise the dialectic between great and small in Elizabethan portraiture. In Shakespeare's *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream, Titania, Queen of the Fairies, is usually read as a figure for Elizabeth. Certainly her vexed relationships with men, from Oberon to Bottom, and the adoptive, protective role she takes on with the Indian boy invoke certain aspects of the queen's love life. The play's overarching interest in size, with references to acorns and dewberries paired with allusions to circumnavigating the globe, engages the interactions between great and small in Elizabethan portraiture, which qualifies the aching for solidity and centrality that is expressed through greatness with an attention to its opposite, the power of the small.

Shakespeare frequently pairs references to greatness and smallness throughout *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.³⁵ For example, Puck counters a fairy's claim to 'wander everywhere / Swifter than the moon's sphere' (II.1.6–7) with a collection of references to 'freckles', 'dew-drops', 'pearls' (13–15).³⁶ Shakespeare often endows the small with a higher value than the great. He figures the transformative qualities of love in terms of the smallness of the fairies, with their jewels and their flowers, and names such as 'Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!' (III.1.155) invoking small, delicate things. Their smallness not only contrasts but also counteracts what Titania calls Bottom's 'mortal grossness' (III.1.153). The lovers also make distinctions between great and small. They deploy the Petrarchan registers of celestial and earthly (or beastly), and of black and white, to reinforce rhetorically the differences between Helena and Hermia that occur when one becomes beloved of both Demetrius and Lysander, and the other of neither. Within this context, the idea of their physical difference – that Helena is tall and Hermia small – engages the key dialectic of Elizabethan portraiture. However, as the language of great and small fits into the metaphorical worlds of Petrarchan love, it produces a confusion in representation: the lovers are making distinctions without a difference.³⁷ Hermia's comment, 'And are you grown so high in his esteem / Because I am so dwarfish and so low?' (III.2.294–5) may magnify slight physical differences between the girls, but she is also creating distance. In the topsy-turvy world of the lovers, the smallness that is elsewhere associated with magic and beauty becomes an insult: 'you minimus, of hindering knot-grass made, / You bead, you acorn' (III.2.329–330).

As the play addresses size matters in relation to the queen of the fairies herself, it translates them into the nascent realm of imperialism. Titania's famous speech about the Indian votaress situates her pregnancy within the context of mercantilism:

... we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following (her womb then rich with my young squire),
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
And fetch me trifles.

(II.1.128–133)

Here the burgeoning sails and the votaress's expanding girth contrast with the trifles the votaress fetches for Titania, trifles that would appear even smaller against her pregnant belly. Here, as the play attaches size to pregnancy (quite literally 'mortal grossness'), it distances the threatening world of female sexuality from Titania, queen of the fairies (who, on the Elizabethan stage, is played by a boy), displacing it instead on to her adult, mortal, great-bellied servant.³⁸ For Titania as for Elizabeth, pregnancy is something witnessed but never experienced. Yet each is an adoptive mother: Elizabeth to England, and Titania to the Indian boy; in each case, the child is inherited. Titania's loves, moreover, are anything but erotically charged. Her affair with Oberon is tinged with rivalry more than with eros, and her love for Bottom is primarily nurturing, defined by the maternal concern that Bottom is sufficiently fed. As an adoptive or surrogate mother, Titania remains 'virgin', outside the overwhelming physicality of sex and the ensuing magnification and loss of status as an object of sexual desire or conquest. She thus remains for ever small, childlike, and desirable.

Titania's speech associates the Indian votaress with the world of trinkets, trifles, and spices acquired through England's growing trade with the east. Elizabeth was beginning to enjoy, through her navy and her merchants, the experience of expansion that her votaress enjoys in bodily terms. To the east, John Newbery and Ralph Fitch made an overland journey to India in 1583, reaching Goa and the court of the Mogul emperor, Akbar. Newbery disappeared, and Fitch did not return to England until 1591, where his traveller's tales entertained the reading public. Oberon's account of the love flower brings the old Ovidian story of a flower turning purple together with the current language of circumnavigation:

It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound:
And maidens call it 'love-in-idleness' ...
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

PUCK: I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes.

(II.I.166-176)

Here the little 'western' flower, a thumbnail-sized herb, is juxtaposed against the 'leviathan', the naval term 'league', and Puck's plan to circle the globe.

Puck's journey around the world for a 'trifle' echoes the labours of Titania's votaress; as their efforts bring together great efforts and large distances with small, highly valued objects, they invoke the discourse of Elizabethan trade, and gesture towards the emerging world of imperialism.

However, the project of empire hadn't happened yet. Henry VIII declared, in the 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals, that 'This Realm of England is an Empire'.³⁹ And

Giordano Bruno endowed Elizabeth herself with the powers of Sir Francis Drake when he said that 'If her earthly territory were a true reflection of the width and grandeur of her spirit, this great Amphitrite would bring far horizons within her girdle and enlarge the circumference of her dominion to include not only Britain and Ireland but some new world, as vast as the universal frame'.⁴⁰ But the East India Company, formed in 1600, was more of a Jacobean creation: English ships started arriving at the port of Surat in 1608. And to the west, the English settlements in Roanoke failed intermittently through the 1580s, even as Thomas Hariot's *Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) gamely advertised its merits and potential. When Henry VIII used the term 'empire', he was invoking the Latin *imperium*, with its literal significance of command, order, and mastery, and its historical and humanist associations with ancient Rome. But during Elizabeth's reign the term was translating itself into a mentality of expansion. In the preface to the second edition of *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598), Richard Hakluyt writes in praise of Elizabeth, contrasting her to her predecessors:

For, which of the kings of this land before Her Majesty, had their banners ever seen in the Caspian Sea? Which of them hath ever dealt with the Emperor of Persia, as her Majesty hath done, and obtained for her merchants large and loving privileges? Who ever found English Consuls and agents at Tripolis in Syria, at Aleppo, at Babylon, at Basra, and which is more, whoever heard of Englishmen at Goa before now?⁴¹

Hakluyt's words literally put Elizabeth on the map – she is everywhere – and his compendium (a great collection of small treatises) places her representatives all over the globe. As Oberon says, 'we the globe can compass soon / Swifter than the wandering moon' (IV.1.96–7).

Although he takes his inspiration from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which represents Elizabeth as Gloriana, Shakespeare relates the queen to the fairy world in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to an extent that eludes Spenser. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, written a few years later, starkly dramatises the Elizabethan dialectic between great and small in its closing pageant of punishment. Falstaff, who is represented throughout the Henriad and *The Merry Wives* as 'plump Jack' and 'a globe of sinful continents', is captured and punished by children posing as little fairies, with names such as 'Bead'.⁴² His punishment is presided over by the housekeeper Mistress Quickly, who is dressed as the Faerie Queene. Pinching is, of course, a kind of punishment in miniature; fingers take a little piece of flesh and squeeze it together till it is, at least temporarily, smaller. As Falstaff's fat body is assaulted by tiny creatures, they sing a little song:⁴³

Fie on sinful fantasy,
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a bloody fire,

Kindled with unchaste desire,
 Fed in heart, whose flames aspire,
 As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.

(V.5.93–98)

Pinching, which is the traditional means by which fairies punish perceived malefactors, is tied to an overarching return to sexual order in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: Falstaff, his fat body associated with appetitive, 'unchaste desire', even poses as the Fat Woman of Brainford as a strategy of seduction. His great size dominated and contained by the diminutive fairies, Falstaff no longer represents a sexual threat.

Dressed as an Elizabethan queen of the fairies, Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly reinforces the rhetoric of chastity that overlaid the language of courtship as Elizabeth reached her sixties. Here, the Augustinian language of lust as a fire draws attention away from the cheeky decision to cast a servant as the Fairy Queen. Although it is placed within a similarly punitive context in *The Alchemist*, Ben Jonson's treatment of Elizabeth as Fairy Queen is a darkly satiric recollection of the queen. With Subtle, Face, and Dol 'cozening' the deluded and aspirational of London, the play looks back to the devotional aspects of the cult of Elizabeth, as well as poking fun at the meteoric rise of her favourites. Dapper, who requests a tiny 'fly' to help him with his gambling, is persuaded that 'he's o' the only best complexion, / The Queen of Faery loves' (I.2.105–106).⁴⁴ Dol (also a pincher), posing as the Queen of Fairy, possesses a name that classifies her as a diminutive plaything, like a puppet: it is also the name for a runt, the smallest pig in a litter. However, Dol is also called 'a Bradamante' by Sir Epicure Mammon, gesturing towards the Ariostan source material of Spenser's *Britomart*, and to the alternative, masculine and martial, Elizabethan persona. Discussions of Dol thus segue between small and the great: in one instance, Face calls Dol 'my little God's gift' (III.3.49), while he later observes, 'Why this is yet / A kind of modern happiness, to have / Dol Common for a great lady' (IV.1.22–24).

Dol's appearance of greatness fools not only Dapper but also Sir Epicure Mammon, who asserts that there is, in Dol, 'a certain touch, or air, / That sparkles a divinity, beyond / An earthly beauty' (IV.1.64–66). Of course, as no more than the daughter of an Irish costermonger, Dol's greatness is a disguise. This may be Jonson's posthumous insult to the (by then) late Queen Elizabeth, with whom Jonson was never popular. He had written *Cynthia's Revels* in 1601 in the hopes of gaining preferment and patronage: hopes which were dashed as the play's satire of the court, which hit a little too close to home, cast him even further out of Elizabeth's orbit. With Dol, Jonson caricatures the ideology of the Elizabethan prodigal – the idea that one may rise from insignificance to a position of power through courtly preferment – as well as the overarching Elizabethan aesthetic according to which smallness is a quality of greatness.

It is fitting that Shakespeare's final treatment of Elizabeth is not as Fairy Queen, but, instead, in a cameo appearance as a tiny baby at the end of *Henry VIII* or *All Is True*. This switch in size highlights the bewildering yet ultimately instructive changes

in perspective produced by the warring projects of magnification and minimisation that define responses to, and representations of, Queen Elizabeth I.

Notes

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1. David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), p. x.
2. It may alternatively have been sent as a gift to Elizabeth's half-brother, King Edward VI. Elizabeth writes a letter to Edward accompanying, apparently, a portrait: 'For the face, I grant, I might well blush to offer, but the mind I shall never be ashamed to present ... when you shall look on my picture you will witsafe to think that as you have but the outward shadow of the body before you, so my inward mind wisheth that the body itself were oftener in your presence.' See Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
3. See Frances Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), and Roy Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977) and *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).
4. See, for example, Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Julian Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
5. See Nicola J. Watson, 'Gloriana Victoriana: Victoria and the Cultural Memory of Elizabeth I', in *Remaking Queen Victoria*, edited by Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 70–104, p. 85. See also the discussion of Victorian portraits of Elizabeth in Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter 4. Augustus Leopold Egg's *Queen Elizabeth Discovers She Is No Longer Young* (1848) has the queen looking away, mortified, from the mirror held up to her by a not-so-well-meaning member of her youthful entourage, and David Wilkie Wynfield's *Incident in the Life of Elizabeth* (1875) makes this point less subtly by figuring her as, quite simply, bald.
6. Stephen Orgel, 'Gendering the Crown', in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, edited by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 133–165, p. 155.
7. See Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, p. 60.
8. Elizabethan artists such as Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver worked in both media.
9. See Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, I.1.37, in *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe: The Jew of Malta*, vol. 4, edited by Roma Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
10. Although the hymn was composed by the nineteenth-century Irish poet Mrs Cecil Francis Alexander, it was based on a seventeenth-century melody.
11. See Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, p. 3.

12. See Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, p. 3.
13. See Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 25.
14. Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, pp. 170, 320, and 411.
15. Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, p. 15.
16. See Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Relations politiques des pays-bas et de l'Angleterre sous la regne de Philippe II* (Brussels: Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and Fine Art of Belgium, 1890), pp. ix and 336, and, for discussion, Strong, *Portraits*, p. 20.
17. This particular squarish kind of farthingale was known as a French farthingale: its shape is different from the tapering, funnel-shaped Spanish farthingale which was introduced by Catherine of Aragon.
18. See Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 326.
19. See Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 157.
20. For 'maidservant' see Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, pp. 146, 156; for 'handmaid' see *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, pp. 136, 140, 142, 143, 154, 158, 311, 317, 411.
21. See Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 424.
22. See J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Cape, 1938), p. 284.
23. *Reliquae Hernianae: The Remains of Thomas Hearne, M.A. of Edmund Hall, Being Extracts from his MS Diaries*, edited by Philip Bliss, 3 vols (London, 1869), II, p. 71.
24. See Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
25. For further discussion of this portrait see my 'Dido Queen of England', *English Literary History* 73 (2006), pp. 31–59.
26. See Strong, *Gloriana*, p. 99.
27. See Edmund Spenser's November Eclogue in *The Shepheardes Calender* (London: Hugh Singleton, 1579).
28. See Truedell S. Brown, ed., *Timaeus of Tauromenium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958) and Justin, *Epitome of Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, trans. J.C. Yardley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). For further discussion of the Dido tradition see Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
29. See 'Shakespeare and the Cannibals', in *Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance*, edited by Marjorie Garber (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 40–66, p. 62.
30. René Graziani, 'The Rainbow Portrait' of Queen Elizabeth I and its Religious Symbolism', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 35 (1972), pp. 247–259 at p. 255 and 259.
31. Daniel Fischlin, 'Political Allegory, Absolutist Ideology, and the "Rainbow Portrait" of Queen Elizabeth I', *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997), pp. 175–206 at p. 204.
32. See Marcus et al., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, p. 167.
33. See note 4.
34. This anecdote is discussed in Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, and is the jumping-off point for her earlier article, "Secret" Arts: Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets', *Representations* 15 (1986), pp. 57–97.
35. The Lion's 'smallest monstrous mouse' in the Pyramus and Thisbe masque renders Petrarchan opposites as nonsense. See *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, edited by Harold Brooks (London: Routledge, 1979), V.1.215.
36. For another example of this connection between the moon and small things see III.1.191.
37. On the metaphorical world of Petrarch see Roland Greene's *Unrequited Conquests: Love and Empire in the Colonial Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
38. On the threatening aspects of the maternal body see Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*:

Rhetoric, Gender, Property (London: Methuen, 1987).

39. 24 Henry VIII, c.12. 1533 in *English Historical Documents*, edited by Charles H. Williams, 12 vols (London and Edinburgh: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), V (1485–1558), p. 738. The complete phrase, from the 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals, is 'This realm of England is an Empire ... governed by one supreme head and king, having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same'.
40. Giordano Bruno, *La Cena de la Ceneri* (1584), discussed in Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 289.
41. Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, edited by Jack Beeching (London: Penguin, 1972) p. 34.
42. William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, edited by Giorgio Melchiori (London: Routledge, 1999). *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
43. Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Melchiori.
44. Ben Jonson, *Five Plays*, edited by G.A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).