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Reciprocity at the Elizabethan Court: The Earl of
Leicester and Private Gifts in a Political Arena

by

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AFFIRMATION OF INDEPENDENT WORK

This thesis represents my own work in accordance with University regulations.

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INTRODUCTION

Measuring nineteen millimeters tall, Nicholas Hilliard's pendant portraits of Elizabeth I and her court favorite Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester (figure 1), could rest neatly in the palm of a beholder's hand. Miniatures such as these, defined by their diminutive scale, do not function as a window into a fictional world.¹ Instead of compelling our body to participate in a perspectival fantasy, they invite the eye to peer and examine, and lock our gaze with the sitters' in this process. Dark dots spotted with white specks of reflective light, Elizabeth's eyes peer out at an angle. Her right eye, positioned slightly lower than her left, gives the illusion that she tilts her head as she appraises us viewers. We are privy to a captured moment, an enigmatic smile. Hilliard, in his treatise on limning, advises artists to watch and catch "lovely graces, witty smilings, and those stolen glances which suddenly like lightning pass" by arranging their sitters' expressions so that that these graces are called "one by one to their due places".² These intimate gazes, combined with the miniature's size, create a sense of immediacy and reject the obliterating stare found in many full-scale royal portraits of the previous generation, such as Hans Holbein's famous images of Elizabeth's father Henry VIII (figure 2).³ A figure of immense mass, Henry situates us at his mercy with his intimating physical presence. We must, in contrast, engage in a highly personal experience with the miniatures—the size of a pair of stamps—in order to fully grasp their details. It is an experience that is purely optical rather than bodily.

The miniature had a particular social definition, and its status as an object in our world rather than as an illusionistic scene is important. Miniatures, like clothing, are "materials of

¹ Elizabeth A. Honig, "Cultures of Love: The Miniature" (lecture, Elizabethan Renaissance: Art, Culture, and Visuality, Berkeley, CA, October 2, 2012).

² Nicholas Hilliard, *The Arte of Limning*, 77.

³ Honig, "Cultures of Love: The Miniature".

memory” whose ability to recall an absent person, living or dead, marked them as intimate gifts.⁴ As precious trinkets, miniatures attempted to make tangible the relationship between the wearer and the depicted. Yet, the bejeweled, hinged vehicle by which it flaunts a relationship also denies the common observer any specifics, including the identity of the painted. The Gresley Jewel (figure 3), believed to be a gift from Elizabeth on the marriage of Catherine Walsingham and Sir Thomas Greeley, conceals the couple beneath a shell of enameled gold, table-cut rubies, emeralds, and pearls. The two golden cupids drawing back their bows indicate a love story, but they are a trope that merely suggests, but never explains, the private affairs of the couple beneath the precious exterior.

The reason for which Hilliard’s pendant miniatures of Elizabeth and Leicester were commissioned can only be surmised. The British auction house Bonhams, who sold the miniature pair for £72,000 in 2009, dated the portraits to the 1575 Kenilworth festivities, and believes that they were exchanged to mark the end of Leicester’s marital courtship of Elizabeth.⁵ We do not know whether the portraits, now set in simple frames of gilt metal and gold bracelet, were originally housed in a single jewel or if they were exchanged as separate mementos. Neither is it known who commissioned the miniatures. Our lack of knowledge and subsequent questions indicate a motive behind the miniature’s creation and a purpose predicated on its form. A small ornament for accessorizing the body, the miniature represents a transition from the

⁴ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

⁵ "Stamp-sized Elizabeth I miniatures to fetch £80,000," *The Telegraph* (London, UK), Nov. 17, 2009. The article includes the subheadline: "A pair of miniature paintings thought to have been commissioned by Elizabeth I to mark the end of her relationship with Robert Dudley are to be sold at auction," which exaggerates and incorrectly simplifies the significance of the pendant pair as a symbolic end of their relationship. While the 1575 Kenilworth pageantry and festivities are regarded as the earl of Leicester’s last marriage proposal to Elizabeth, he continued to be Elizabeth’s favorite until his death in 1588. When Leicester secretly married Lettice Knollys in 1578, Elizabeth banished Lady Leicester from court, and Leicester in a letter to Lord Burghley reveals her wrath and his temporary fall from favor: "For her manner toward me, I may not find lacke, I know what I have bene, and am to her in all humble dewty. She may, perhaps, forthink her benefits bestowed. So may I say, I have lost both youth, liberty, and all my fortune reposed in her." (*Queen Elizabeth and Her Times, A Series of Original Letters vol. 2*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), 104-5.)

highly intimate—a gift whose interior portrait is visible to select few—to the overtly political—a token that acknowledged favor bestowed upon the receiver and could be paraded. It negotiated power by reinforcing the giver’s ability to grant favor and the receiver’s consequent indebtedness. Under the guise of courtly compliments, gifts of clothing and jewelry, including miniatures, were never disinterested and implied a returning of that debt.⁶ A visual demonstration of loyalty between monarch and subject, gift giving and receiving was a legitimate and effective way of creating a courtier-queen relationship.⁷

Gifts evoked two core beliefs in sixteenth-century Europe: one reflecting Christian beliefs of philanthropy and generosity and the other echoing Marcel Mauss’ system of reciprocal exchange.⁸ In his 1923 work *The Gift*, Mauss establishes how gifting mandates reciprocity and exchange creates bonds. Mauss observes that gifts are neither free nor disinterested—every gift elicits a return gift and yields a causal sequence that produces alliances, maintains peace, and confirms status. Failure to return gifts breaches etiquette obligations and leads to a loss of rank and dignity.⁹ In comparison, Christian belief linked human gifts to divine ones, which reflected the notion that everything, especially the supreme grace of Christ’s redemption and salvation, is a gift from God.¹⁰ In response to God’s blessings, Christians reproduced the act of giving in accordance with Christ’s words to his disciples, “Freely ye have received, freely give.”¹¹ Roman philosopher Seneca had similarly insisted on the “naturalness of gratitude” and used the Three Graces (figure 4) as an illustration of the mutual advantage of reciprocity: the first gives, the

⁶ Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, 3-4.

⁷ Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts: The Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature, 1580-1628* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 53.

⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 11-13.

⁹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison. (New York: Norton, 1967), 37-40.

¹⁰ Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 11-13.

¹¹ Matt. 10:8.

second receives it, and the third repays it, and the passing of a “good turne . . . orderly from hand to hand doth neverthesse return to the giver: and the grace of the whole is marred if it be anywhere broken off: but it is most beautifull if it continue together and keep [its] course.”¹²

In her work on gift giving in sixteenth-century France, Natalie Zemon Davis argues that the Senecan model of gifting is compatible with notions of princely magnificence and generosity.¹³ These views on conspicuous consumption, Kevin Sharpe demonstrates, were accepted in Elizabeth’s era.¹⁴ As the “fountain of grace, the ocean from which all rivers sprang and to which they owed unending tribute,” Elizabeth would then be considered God’s earthly representative who initiated, yet calculatingly sought, gifts of grace and peace from her subjects.¹⁵ However, natural hierarchy within Elizabeth’s court upset the uniformity of reciprocity, because gift exchange ultimately authenticated and enforced difference.¹⁶

While Seneca emphasizes the importance of the binding power between giver and receiver, Aristotle removes the power of gift exchange to require return:

Now the greatest external good we should assume to be the thing which we offer as a tribute to the gods, and which is most coveted by men of high station, and is the prize awarded for the noblest deeds; and such a thing is honor, for honor is clearly the greatest of external goods. Therefore the great-souled man is he who has the right disposition in relation to honors and disgraces.¹⁷

As Egon Flaig points out, gratitude now belongs to the subject, not the sovereign. “It is no longer the binding quality of gifts which is decisive,” he writes, “but rather the demonstration of superiority through giving and the superior giver’s strict preservation of his freedom from

¹² Seneca, *The Woorke of the Excellent Philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca Concerning Benefyting*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: John Day, 1578; facsimile edition Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1974), book I, chap. 3, 3r-v.

¹³ Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 11-14.

¹⁴ Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-century England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Lisa M. Klein, “Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabeth Gifts of Needlework,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 467.

¹⁶ Lisa M. Klein, “Elizabeth Gifts of Needlework”: 468.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H Rackman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 196), 1124 b 9-12.

commitments.¹⁸ Gifts can be idealized as voluntary, disinterested, and spontaneous, yet their conscious, self-promoting extravagance allowed gifting to easily turn into a political arena for competition among courtiers. Senecan obligations were certainly in play at the Elizabethan court, but gift exchange between monarch and subject was, in truth, never equal.

In this essay, I do not wish to explore what precisely constituted a gift between Elizabeth and her subjects, because only in retrospect does gift exchange seem “to have uniform and foreseeable effects and to conform to rules laid out by indigenous informers or scholarly observers.”¹⁹ Moreover, such gifts in kind were endless, including but not limited to titles, land, clothing, jewelry, and foodstuffs. Because strict definitions easily exclude exceptions, I instead will look at how gifts could be defined by the reaction of the receiver, particularly Elizabeth, and how such reactions could be supplemented by reiterating the gifts through portraiture and the physical act of wearing the gift. Personal gifts of miniatures, as well as clothing and other jewelry, not only served as visual reminders of the wearer’s debt to the giver but also implied the wearer’s privilege in owning such a literal and figurative gem. Items that could be worn on the public stage, personal gifts mediated the personal identity and the political persona.

As Queen, Elizabeth could reject an item’s status as a gift by simply refusing it. The reclassification of an object as a “non-gift” freed Elizabeth from the obligation to reciprocate without threatening her rank. Her acknowledgement of an item as a gift ultimately endowed the exchange from subject to sovereign with value and power, for only then was Elizabeth required to return the favor. Scholars have explored Elizabeth’s self-representation as a female monarch and Tudor methods of displaying power, and her relationships with suitors and court favorites

¹⁸ Egon Flaig, “Is Loyalty a Favor? Or: Why Gifts Cannot Oblige an Emperor” in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 53-54.

¹⁹ Gadi Algazi, “Intro: Doing Things with Gifts” in *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 17.

are well-covered topics.²⁰ I will partially draw on these studies in order to demonstrate how the Earl of Leicester employed various methods of gifting in his courtship of Elizabeth I, notably during the 1575 Kenilworth revels, in order construct himself as a giver, not recipient, of royal gifts and thereby challenge Elizabeth's authority.²¹ I will contrast his endeavors with those of others at Elizabeth's court. As attempts to manipulate self-presentation and status, these gifts often failed to create the binding power and obligatory reciprocity Seneca assumes to be embedded in any gift economy. Both Elizabeth and her courtiers exploited the highly visible nature of gifts in negotiating their desires, and these gift exchanges affirm Elizabeth's active negations of challenges to her power.

TUDOR GIFTING PRACTICES: WHAT CONSTITUTED A GIFT?

Gift-giving, something we may perceive today as a private act, was purposefully visible at the Elizabethan court. Gift exchanges were public events, especially those around holidays, because they announced order in a social organization. Marked by time, they established a ritualistic relationship that could be repeated.²² Some gifts can be defined as more "personal" than others, such as clothing and jewelry tailored to Elizabeth's tastes in contrast to gifts of gold and silver. Elizabeth was known to prefer gifts of gowns and jewels to a purse of sovereigns. In a letter to the Countess of Shrewbury advising her on a New Year's gift, Mrs. Wingfield wrote:

²⁰ Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*. Alan Kendall, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester* (London: Cassell, 1980). Alan Heyes, *The White Bear: Robert Dudley, the Elizabethan Earl of Leicester* (London: P. Owen, 1987). Neville Williams, *All the Queen's Men: Elizabeth I and her Courtiers* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

²¹ Scott, *Selfish Gifts*, 52-53. Scott argues that Elizabeth's status as women marked as unable to answer the sacred bonds of amity because of their being opposed the well-tempered male friendship: "As the focal point of male desire (for erotic and political favors) and the mistress to whom men owed their service, Elizabeth manifested that imbalanced 'other'. The result was that the exchange of gifts, so intrinsic to tropes of amity, was now something to which men had to aspire through the language of loving service." I look instead to Elizabeth's position as monarch, instead of as a woman, that influenced her ability to reject the equality of friendship.

²² Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 26.

Presently after I re[ceved] yow ladyships leter I went to my lady cobham and we longe confarde of the matter. I se[e] by her she was mucche against yow honour giving money. mr W and I founde her so mucche against the same that we ment if we coulde have founde any fine reare thinge to have bestowed thurty or fortye pounde of some suche thinge, but how she woulde like the best coulde be hade beinge not her owne doinge we mucche douted. now we have concluded she shal provided the same whiche she sayth she wyl do to her magisty likinge. truly if yow honour had geven money I feare yt woulde have bene ell liked.²³

Customized gifts allowed a level of privileged intimacy. For example, gifts of needlework and other handmade tokens could be personalized to convey the spirit of the giver. When presented to a superior along with the conventional plea to forgive its defects, the gift, compounded by the value of its materials and the time invested, proclaims its worth and that of the giver.²⁴ Courtiers often bribed Elizabeth's ladies-in-waiting for their advice on the Queen's tastes in order to express on fabric a complex system of symbols and emblems.²⁵

Gifts also encouraged pardon or restored favor. After the mysterious and scandalous death of his first wife Amye, Leicester remained unmarried for 18 years, partially in hopes of marrying Elizabeth herself. He secretly married Lettice Knollys, Countess of Essex, on 21 September 1578. Elizabeth discovered their marriage sometime in 1579; exactly how and when has been debated.²⁶ In an effort to appease her wrath, Leicester gave Elizabeth as part of the 1579-80 New Year's celebrations

²³ Letter date 4 December, no year given but possibly 1585. Manuscripts in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. 20003, X.d. 428 (131). Cited in Janet Arnold, *The Queen's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (Leeds: Maney, 1988), 97.

²⁴ Klein, "Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework": 483.

²⁵ For example, Elizabeth was presented at the Westminster Tiltyard during the Accession Day Tilts on 17 November 1590, "a vaile of white, exceeding rich and curiously wrought; a cloke and safeguard set with buttons of gold, and on them were graven empreses of excellent devise; in the loope of every button was a Nobleman's badge, fixed to a pillar richly embroidered'." "Justs at the Tilt-yard, 1590" in vol. 3 of *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Nichols (London: J. Nichols, 1823), 49.

²⁶ Simon Adams, "Dudley, Lettice, Countess of Essex and Countess of Leicester (1543–1634)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8159>. Elizabeth's displeasure is evident in Leicester's letter to Christopher Hatton, Elizabeth's vice chamberlain. Leicester bemoans, "I am not unwilling, God knows, to serve her Majesty where I may, to the uttermost of my life, but most unfit at this time to make repair to that place, where so many eyes are witness of my open and great disgraces delivered from her Majesty's mouth." *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Christopher Hatton*, ed. Nicolas Harris (London: R. Bentley, 1847), 97.

two bodkyns of golde; in the top of the one is a very fayre table dyamonde, garnished aboute with smale rubyes; and in the toppe of the other is a very fayre rubye garnished aboute with smale diamonds, and a capp of black velvet, with a broweke of golde, garnished with 18 diamondes, and a bande abowte it, with 14 buttons of golde, garnished with dyamonds, being raged staves and true-love knotts, garnished with rubyes and dyamonds, and 36 smale buttons, being true-knotts and raged staves.²⁷

Although we have no surviving letters or documentation detailing how well-received Leicester's gift of two gold bodkins and a magnificent cap was, that the items were recorded in the New Year's gift rolls suggests that Elizabeth did not reject them. Leicester likely appealed to her developing preference for gifts of elaborate jewels and exquisite clothing, and his symbolic use of true-love knots and ragged staffs affirms his eternal devotion and loyalty to Elizabeth.²⁸ Oftentimes, courtiers entwined their emblems with the image of the Queen when they commissioned portraits of themselves wearing these trinkets, effectively turning a personal gift into a political display.²⁹

Not all gifts were received with equal favor. Clothes in some cases were not fitted when given to the Queen to allow her tailor to make the proper adjustments. Janet Arnold observes that that unlined state of clothing noted in inventories many years after they were received suggests that the Queen had not liked the design, materials, or color enough for it to be made up.³⁰ Elizabeth's rebuff of certain items as gifts is also explicitly chronicled. In 1599, having fallen out of favor with the Queen, the Earl of Essex sent a "rich New Year's Gift which was very well

²⁷ "New-Year's Gifts to the Queen by the Earl of Leicester" in vol. 2 of *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Nichols (London: J. Nichols, 1823), 528.

²⁸ Arnold, *The Queen's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, 93. Klein, "Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework": 472.

²⁹ Honig, "Cultures of Love: The Miniature".

³⁰ For example, Lady Mary Vere's 1578 gift of on 'foreparte of purple Taphata set with Roses of whit Cipers and Cheines betweene of venice golde with a brode passamaine of venice golde unlined and unmade,' was still unlined and unmade when it was entered in the Stowe inventory in 1600. Janet Arnold, *The Queen's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (Leeds: Maney, 1988), 97.

taken,” by way of Lady Leicester.³¹ The good reception may have encouraged her to venture another gift, a gown “which will cost her 100/ at lest,” to the Queen.³² Though Elizabeth evidently liked the gift, she “did not accept it, nor refuse yt, only answered that Things standing as they did, yt was not fit for her to desire what she did, which was to come to her Majesties Presence to kiss her Hands, upon her going now to her poor home.”³³ Lacking even acknowledgement as a gift, Lady Leicester’s gesture was not enough to elicit the pardon of the Earl of Essex.

Gifts of clothing and other bodily adornments signified debt or ownership, a quality of which Elizabeth was evidently aware and chose to negate in the exchange with Lady Leicester. Functioning as forms of payment or displays of wealth, clothing reinforced social hierarchy by associating bodies to certain institutions. Livery and habits, which could also be stripped down and sold for their material value, were devices that marked the wearer’s indebtedness to the giver, such as retainer to lord, lady-in-waiting to mistress.³⁴ As monarch, Elizabeth did not rely on gifts of clothing and jewelry to identify her personal or political body. She had the power to refuse the gift and neutralize the mandated reciprocity. Based on God-given powers of supremacy, she could reject the “spirit of the gift”, in which people feel the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate.³⁵

Gifts from the Queen could not be removed from this economy. These visible tokens of favor and bodily adornments publicly recognized honor bestowed upon a recipient. Miniatures became actively worn in public in the 1560s. Pieces such as the Armada Jewel (figure 5), granted

³¹ *Letters and Memorials of State in the reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, Part of the reign of King Charles the Second and Oliver’s Usurpation, written and collected by Sir Henry Sydney. Vol. 1*, ed. Arthur Collins (London: T. Osborne, 1746), 158-59.

³² *Ibid.*, 172

³³ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁴ Stallybrass and Jones, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, 17-21.

³⁵ Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 4.

by Elizabeth to Sir Thomas Heneage in the years following the defeat of the Spanish Armada, followed the miniature's shift from private display in the bedroom to open exhibition at the court. Though at first worn in an open frame, miniatures from the 1570s on were encased in elaborate finely enameled gold locket, often called "picture boxes".³⁶ Measuring seven centimeters high, more than three times the size of Hilliard's pendant portraits of Elizabeth and Leicester, the Armanda Jewel is encrusted in enameled gold, table-cut diamonds, and Burmese rubies. Underneath her gold profile relief on the cover of the miniature, the Elizabeth's soft, lively miniature portrait contrasts the border of scintillating stones and cast metal. Her heart-shaped face, whose cheeks are faintly dusted pink, is framed by a delicate lace collar peppered with jewels and rose buds. This almost girlish representation of the Queen, compared to her austere and formal depiction on the exterior of the jewel, is accessible only through the hinged back cover. It is a representation more of love mistress than of royal queen.³⁷ The act of penetrating the visible shell, Fumerton notes, mirrors the act of passing into the innermost quarters of the Queen's chambers.³⁸ Few are allowed to see her visage or enter her chambers, yet these spaces remain an orchestrated setting, no matter how intimate. Elizabeth creates this arena by removing herself from easy accessibility. The ones privileged enough to engage in her limited economy must partake in the acts of opening the jewel or entering the space in order to reciprocate the Queen's invitation, which cannot and must not be refused.

Elizabeth's gifting habits differed significantly from those of her father Henry VIII and her successor James I, for she rarely gave away property, castles, or titles. Prior to the 1530s, the distribution of titles by Henry was a solely ceremonial act, because very little land accompanied

³⁶ Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 72.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

these titles and most recipients came from well-established and landed noble families.³⁹

Following the 1534 Act of Supremacy, Henry started freely distributing monastic spoils to the English aristocracy in order to encourage loyalty, especially that of the militaristic nobility.

Titles, awarded with “unprecedented freedom,” accompanied these endowments of monastic property, and occasionally, grants of complete estates allowed new owners to fully operate monasteries as going concerns with clear ownership, rights, and feudal responsibilities.⁴⁰ Seventy years later, James, “so delighted at becoming a rich English king instead of a poor Scottish one,” awarded royal grants and favors at a pace and with a lavishness that appalled his ministers.⁴¹

For Elizabeth, however, such acts were highly selective. Her favorites Christopher Hatton and Walter Raleigh were respectively able to purchase Corfe Castle for £4,000 in 1572 and to secure the lease of Sherborne Castle in 1592. Robert Dudley, though, was granted Kenilworth Castle outright. The gift of the great Warwickshire estate came in 1563 and he was made earl of Leicester in the following year. A gift of this size and nature speaks beyond Leicester’s level of favor at Elizabeth’s court. The castle, a pre-eminent symbol of the nobility, retained its status as the most prestigious form of residence through Elizabeth’s reign. During the time of Henry VIII, the English nobility defined itself as a militaristic body enriched by the possession of land and offices, and the castle was a visual indication of their power.⁴² A lord might embellish or expand his castle, but he would never destroy, rebuild, or abandon it.⁴³ Ownership of a castle authenticated Leicester’s noble status and his aristocratic heritage. That only Elizabeth could

³⁹ John Goodall, *The English Castle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 411.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 424.

⁴¹ Mark Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture: Its Rise and Fall, 1540-1640* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 21. See also: Goodall, *The English Castle*, 486. Goodall writes, “It was James I who made the first serious reductions to the vastly disproportionate body of residences collected by the Tudors. A wave of surveys in 1603-4 followed his accession to the throne, a reflection of his attempt to grasp what he had inherited. Many of the most attractive and valuable properties were parceled out to his circle of favourites as part of the round of gifts that followed his accession.”

⁴² Goodall, *The English Castle*, 402.

⁴³ Girouard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 2.

grant Leicester land and title demonstrates Elizabeth's exclusive power and Leicester's subsequent debt. A 1577 book on good manner for children reminds the reader that

If gifts thou receive of any wyght,
Well ponder that degree:
A kynde pore mans hartly rewarde
Is worth the other three.
Of whomsoever thou receyvest,
Give somewhat, friend, agayne,
For empty fyste, men use to say,
Cannot the Hawke retayne.⁴⁴

Though not the intended audience for *The Booke of Nurture*, Leicester nevertheless understood the weight of his gift, compared to those received by his competing courtiers, and the unspoken expectation to answer in kind. Elizabeth likely anticipated gracious entertainment at Kenilworth during her summer progresses if she ever desired, and Leicester was required to oblige.

Elizabeth's self-invitation into her subjects' homes was difficult to refuse but encouraged gift exchange when Elizabeth had rewards to offer. During her reign, Elizabeth, a notoriously parsimonious builder, neither bought palaces nor took others' property and transformed them into her own palaces. She instead relied on royal progresses, a type of "social drama" that proclaimed her symbolic and physical possession of her realm, to foster loyalty and obedience.⁴⁵ At least seven cases of owners trying to decline exist, and these costly royal visits were tenuously correlated with grants of receipts of knighthood, office, grants, or perquisites.⁴⁶ However, when executed correctly, hosting the Queen created a more immediate platform on which lords could voice their concerns to Elizabeth. Understanding this, potential hosts wrote anxious letters to Lord Chamberlain Burghley for advice on how to manage a visit. Elizabeth's

⁴⁴ *The Babees Book*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (Early Eng. Text Soc., original ser., xxxii, London 1868), 102.

⁴⁵ Felicity Heal, "Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress" in *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, Sarah Knight (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 47.

⁴⁶ Girourard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 20.

later inability— not selective refusal— to return her hosts’ obliged generosity, as she aged and her rewards dwindled, led fewer nobles to open their doors so hospitably.⁴⁷ In the 1570s, nobles at times politely suggested that the Queen might be happier going elsewhere, excusing their estate due to construction or the plague. In the last five years of Elizabeth’s reign, in contrast, some dared to explicitly express in letters her unwelcome and others bolted their doors and fled the area.⁴⁸ Later visits by James and his loose purse were “likely to be worth it.”⁴⁹ The rules of gift exchange therefore were backed by the unspoken ability to reciprocate and the power to make that act null or material.

FORTRESS AND PLEASURE GROUND: KENILWORTH CASTLE IN 1575

The 1575 Kenilworth festivities are often seen as Leicester’s last attempt for Elizabeth’s hand in marriage and as a request for permission to pursue military ventures in the Netherlands. Kenilworth Castle (figure 6) originated as a gift from the Crown to a local baron. It dates to the early twelfth century, when Henry I ordered the young and doubtfully loyal Roger de Beaumont, Earl of Warwick, to grant a substantial estate of about seventeen knights’ fees to Geoffrey de Clinton, a royal favorite appointed as sheriff of Warwickshire county. Though Kenilworth today is a shadow of its original leviathan size, with one of its walls blown out with gunpowder during demolition work in the 1640s, it was likely laid out as a fortified enclosure surrounded by a moat.⁵⁰ It was a project undertaken during times of peace, a formidable architectural trophy of wealth, political success, and royal favor.⁵¹ It was twice seized by royal forces during times of

⁴⁷ Mary Hill Cole, *The Portable Queen: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Ceremony* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 63.

⁴⁸ Cole, *The Portable Queen*, 85-94. Heal, “Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress”, 46-7.

⁴⁹ Girourard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 21.

⁵⁰ Goodall, *The English Castle*, 98.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

rebellion and passed through the hands of the Lancastrian and Tudor kings of England. John Dudley, Robert Dudley's father, officially acquired Kenilworth from Edward VI in 1553, only a few months before he was executed for high treason against Mary I.

Before Robert Dudley was yet an adolescent, the Dudley family had rapidly risen to fame and fortune twice and earned a proximity to the crown that eventually put them at the mercy of the executioner's axe. Robert's grandfather, Edmund Dudley, and his legal acumen caught the eye of Henry VII immediately upon his accession in 1485. By the age of twenty-three, Dudley had become a Privy Councillor.⁵² His proficient political and financial skills earned him many enemies throughout Henry VII's reign. When Henry VIII succeeded the throne, the young king did not hesitate to sacrifice Edmund Dudley to his nobles' demand. Unpopular due to his financial transactions, Dudley was accused of conspiring to assemble arms in the event of Henry VII's death, was charged with treason, and imprisoned. Following a failed escape attempt, Edmund Dudley was executed on August 18, 1510. His eldest son, John, became the ward of Sir Edward Guildford, whose daughter John subsequently married. The Dudleys were restored to power in 1513 by Act of Parliament, for the young Edward VI had hoped to use the family's services.⁵³ John Dudley, like his father, steadily consolidated his power over the next several decades, eventually attaining the dukedom of Northumberland in 1551. During the 1530s, John Dudley seized from a relative control of Dudley Castle in Staffordshire, the former Beauchamp seat and the Dudley's symbolic claim to noble ancestry, and was appointed joint-constable of Warwick Castle, his first office.⁵⁴ John Dudley was created earl of Warwick in 1547, and his

⁵² Kendall, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*, 3.

⁵³ David Loades, *John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 18.

⁵⁴ Richard K. Morris, "I Was Never More in Love with an Olde Howse nor never Newe Worke Coulede be Better Bestowed": The Earl of Leicester's Remodelling of Kenilworth Castle for Queen Elizabeth I", *Antiquaries Journal* 89 (2009): 242. Goodall, *The English Castle*, 434.

eldest son, also John, became Earl of Warwick upon Dudley's 1551 ascension to dukedom of Northumberland. His third son, Ambrose, was constable of Kenilworth from 1549 to 1553, and through him, John may have exercised influence on renovations and expansions of Kenilworth.⁵⁵

Elizabeth's respective grants of Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle to Ambrose and Robert Dudley in 1563 could be interpreted as merely a redistribution of their father's confiscated property, an appropriate act that accompanied Elizabeth's accession and the Dudleys' return to favor. However, it is important to recognize that although castles may be built and occupied by individual noblemen, the monarch traditionally reserved the right to occupy them and technically owned each castle. In 1135, a visiting papal legate had explicitly judged that 'all the chief men, in accordance with the customs of other peoples, ought to hand over the keys of their fortifications to the disposal of the king, whose duty it is to fight for the peace of all.'⁵⁶ Northumberland's titles and land were forfeited to the Crown upon his arrest, conviction, and execution, and Elizabeth was under no obligation to return them to his children. When she did present these two great castles to Ambrose and Robert, Elizabeth was "not offloading anachronisms, but making splendid gifts, the character of which they appreciated, fostered and exploited."⁵⁷

Elizabeth retained and readily exercised the ability to tour any county, any castle within her realm. Though she visited only 25 out of the 40 English counties and none of the Welsh ones over the course of her reign, William Harrison observes in his 1577 *Description of England* that "every nobleman's house is her palace, where she continueth during pleasure and till return again

⁵⁵ Nicholas A. D. Molyneux, "Kenilworth Castle in 1563," *English Heritage Historical Review* 3, 50. John Goodall, *The English Castle*, 101. Goodall notes that it is apparent from a c.1563-9 survey of Kenilworth that John Dudley had added a new stable in the outer bailey of the castle and extensively alluded to the ragged staff of the bear and ragged staff badge of the Beauchamp earls of Warwick throughout the decorative braces of the stable's timberframe.

⁵⁶ Goodall, *The English Castle*, 96.

⁵⁷ Girourard, *Elizabethan Architecture*, 2.

to some of her own.”⁵⁸ The Queen was “invited to consume that which was her subjects’ but also her own.”⁵⁹ When not on a progress, Elizabeth resided almost exclusively in the greater Thames-side palaces of Whitehall, Greenwich, Richmond, and Hampton Court. The royal court’s location near London encouraged an intermingling of the urban and commercial elite and allowed the court to become a prime customer of the burgeoning luxury goods market.⁶⁰ However, overcrowded London was also the breeding ground for fatal diseases, including smallpox and the plague. Elizabeth’s summer progresses allowed her to escape to towns and aristocratic homes far from London’s festering summer. They activated an implied contract between her and her subjects, one that participated in the dialectic of giving and receiving, an acceptance of offerings as “the proper manifestation of obedience” and a return of “appropriate thanks as the prerogative of kingship.”⁶¹ It harked back to the Senecan ideals of munificence but also pointed to potentially asymmetrical exchange between host and guest. Hosting the Queen provided an opportunity for the nobility to act as the munificent giver and to counter her sovereign role as benefactor.

The appropriate action in an exchange was partly determined by custom and social obligation rather than by profit maximization.⁶² Lawrence Stone’s caustic language highlights the unevenness of obligations: “erratic and destructive as a hurricane, summer after summer Elizabeth wandered about the English countryside bringing ruin in her train, while apprehensive noblemen abandoned their homes and fled at the mere rumour of her approach.”⁶³ However, recent research shows that the costs borne by the host were usually matched by the queen’s own progress costs. It may have been more expensive for her to go on progresses than to reside at her

⁵⁸ William Harrison, *Description of England*, ed. G. Edelen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 227.

⁵⁹ Heal, “Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress,” 48.

⁶⁰ Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 116-117.

⁶¹ Heal, “Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress,” 48.

⁶² Felicity Heal, “Food gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England,” *Past & Present* 199 (2008): 47.

⁶³ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 453-4.

favorite London palaces. In 1561, Elizabeth expensed £2,500 for 68 days of progresses, which breaks down to about £37 per day. In perspective, the average daily cost of hosting ran £34 for William Petre, £45 for the earl of Oxford, and £77 for Lord Rich. Hosts of course could choose to spend more during Elizabeth's stay and progressively spent much larger sums toward the turn of the century; for example, Elizabeth's 1602 visit at Harefield cost Sir Thomas Egerton £500 per day.⁶⁴

Progresses also offered hosts access to a momentarily accessible monarch and a sort of visibility different from normal court life, which allowed them to voice their concerns and encourage a desired form of reciprocity.⁶⁵ In 1591 and 1594, Burghley used Theobalds House to support his early retirement and the elevation of his son Robert to the secretaryship of state. The Elvetham entertainment of the earl of Hertford, also Lord Admiral, backed his naval policy, and Sir Edward Dyer, out of favor for several years in the early 1570s, was able to return to court and received the monopolistic right to regulate tanners following his performance in the somber "Song of the Oke" at Woodstock in 1575.⁶⁶ Subjects were aware of the tangible favors their hospitality could bring and sometimes even offered the conceit that their houses were built only for Elizabeth and thus belonged to her. Christopher Hatton refused to occupy his newly rebuilt family seat at Holdenby in Northamptonshire until Elizabeth, the 'saint' to whom it was dedicated, had visited. Unfortunately, Elizabeth never visited, and the castle was largely destroyed in the English Civil War.⁶⁷ In arguably the most famous progress, Leicester used the 1575 Kenilworth pageants to make one final case for the Queen's hand in marriage or for his freedom to marry someone else.

⁶⁴ Cole, *The Portable Queen*, 74-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 65. Heal, "Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress," 52.

⁶⁶ Heal, "Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress," 52-3.

⁶⁷ John Goodall, *The English Castle*, 446.

Elizabeth had visited Kenilworth three times prior to the eighteen days of festivities in 1575, and existing documents suggest that Leicester had been remodeling the castle for years in preparation for a visit. “They say my Lord of Leicester hathe many workmen at Kenilworth to make his house strong,” wrote the Earl of Shrewsbury to his wife Elizabeth, in a letter dated 31 August 1570, “and dothe furnishe it with armour, ammution, and all the necessaries for defence.”⁶⁸ Leicester gloated to Burghley that Elizabeth “never cam to place in her lyfe she lyked better ... or comendeth more” than Kenilworth.⁶⁹ In his detailed account of Leicester’s architectural works at Kenilworth, Richard K. Morris assembles evidence to show that Leicester’s Building, a tower on the south edge of the court, was built specifically to accommodate Queen Elizabeth in anticipation of her 1572 visit and that Kenilworth underwent considerable subsequent modification before it was completed for the 1575 progress.⁷⁰ Leicester modified almost every part of the inner court except for the great hall. His removal of industrial features from the outer base court (figure 7, 22), such as the mill and its associated structures, exposed the highly decorative stable to view from the new residential block, which contained the Queen’s quarters.⁷¹ As Master of the Horse, Leicester no doubt wanted to emphasize this intimate relationship with the Queen.

The details of the Kenilworth festivities are described in two commemorative texts: *A Letter: Whearin, part of the Entertainment, untoo the Quennz Maiesty, at KILLINGWORTH CASTL*, also known as *Laneham’s Letter*, and George Gascoigne’s *Princely Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelwoorth. That is to saye, The copies of all such Verses, Proses, or poetical*

⁶⁸ Edmund Lodge, “The Earl of Shrewsbury to the Countess of Shrewsbury. Aug. 31,” in *Illustrations of British History, Biography and Manners, in the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth and James I, etc. Vol. 1.* (London: John Chidley, 1838), 516.

⁶⁹ BL Harl. MS 6992, no. 6, f. II. Cited in Cole, *The Portable Queen*, 31.

⁷⁰ Morris, “The Earl of Leicester’s Remodelling of Kenilworth Castle for Queen Elizabeth I”: 241.

⁷¹ Molyneux, “Kenilworth Castle in 1563”: 58-9.

inventions, and other Devices of Pleasure, as were there devised, and presented by sundry Gentlemen, before the Quene's Majestie. Both *Laneham's Letter* and *The Princely Pleasures* were published soon after Elizabeth's visit, the former almost immediately and the latter within six months. The two texts record slightly different versions of the events, which makes the complete accuracy of either publication doubtful.⁷² The masque of Diana and Iris, published in *The Princely Pleasures*, was never actually performed, probably due to its argument in favor of marriage. The military skirmish advocating for English intervention in the Spanish-invaded Netherlands was likewise altered to position Elizabeth, instead of Leicester, as the hero of the hour.⁷³ Elizabeth, as we will see, effectively counters and nullifies Leicester's challenges to her authority.

Leicester, the heir to a lineage deemed by his contemporaries as notorious traitors, found it necessary to shed his dynastic stigma in order to build a new legacy.⁷⁴ To validate his hand as suitor to the Queen, Leicester negotiated the social distance between himself and Elizabeth by writing his own Arthurian lineage. As part of her entry into the castle, "sixe trumpertters hugely advanced, much exceeding the common stature of men in this age" greeted her at the first gate. They were outfitted with "likewise huge and monstrous trumpettes counterfitted, wherein they seemed to sound: and behind them were placed certaine trumpeters, who sounded indeed at her

⁷² See: Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 63. Frye argues that the *Letter* is a satire, though not as acerbic or overtly scandalous as *Leicester's Commonwealth*, a 1584 scurrilous tract that attacked its namesake, and its humor derives from its gentle mocking of egos displayed in this entertainment for the Queen. She concludes that the disparities in the two texts granted Elizabeth varying degrees of dissenting and authoritative voice.

⁷³ George Gascoigne, "Princely Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelwoorth" in vol. 2 of *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Nichols (London: J. Nichols, 1823), 486.

⁷⁴ Contemporary writer William Camden in his 1625 biography of Elizabeth I notes that the Earl of Sussex condemned Robert Dudley as the heir of two ancestors who were both "Enemies and Traitours to their Countrey." See: William Camden, *The History of the most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth, late Queen of England...* (London: M. Flesher, 1688), 79.

Majestie's entrie."⁷⁵ Gascoigne's description is supplemented by his own observation that "by this dum shew it was ment, that in the daies and reigne of King Arthure, men were of that stature, so that the Castle of Kenelworth should seeme still to be kept by Arthur's heires and their seruants."⁷⁶ Leicester's adoption of Arthurian devices, a declaration of himself as Arthur's heir, echoes the appropriation of Arthurian figures by Elizabeth's father and grandfather, which had enabled the Tudors to establish their own dynastic claim to the throne.⁷⁷ His declaration of their shared fantastical bloodline raises his stature to an equal of Elizabeth.

After Elizabeth passes through Kenilworth's gates, she is welcomed by the Lady of the Lake, whose message bears similar Arthurian tones:

I wil attend while you lodge here,
(Most peereless Queene) to Court to make resort;
And as my love to Arthure dyd appeere,
So shl't to you in earnest and in sport.
Passe on Madame, you need no longer stand;
The Lake, the Lodge, the Lord are yours for to command.⁷⁸

Both *Laneham's Letter* and *Princely Pleasures* print this text, but only the *Letter* includes Elizabeth's curt response to this welcome: "It pleased her Highness too thank this Lady, and too add withal, we had thought indeed the Lake had been ours, and doo you call it yourz noow?"⁷⁹ Elizabeth rebukes Leicester's claim to an unconditional ownership of Kenilworth, and bluntly undermines Leicester's triumphant welcome of her as an equal.⁸⁰ With these words, she insists upon her sovereignty, her ownership of Kenilworth, and her lordship over Leicester.

While Gascoigne includes the Diana and Juno masque though it never was shown, he prints the actual altered performance of the Lady of the Lake device, followed by his regret that

⁷⁵ Gascoigne, "Princely Pleasures," 488-90.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 490.

⁷⁷ Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 65.

⁷⁸ Gascoigne, "Princely Pleasures," 491-2.

⁷⁹ "Laneham's Letter" in vol. 2 of *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Nichols (London: J. Nichols, 1823), 431.

⁸⁰ Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 69.

if the skirmish between the rapist Sir Bruse san Pitie and a Captain, perhaps played by Leicester himself, “had bene executed according to its first invention, it had been a gallant shew.”⁸¹ The preview and approval of plays before they were performed during Elizabeth’s progresses was probably common. This role lay within the jurisdiction of the master of revels, who normally chose performances for the court.⁸² Frye suggests that the censorship of the first masque was censored due to its representation of Elizabeth’s imprisonment prior to her reign, but her contention is refuted by Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank as referring to now-forgotten matters of nearly two decades past. The scholars agree that the Lady of the Lake masque bore aggressive military overtones that Elizabeth did not wish to address in public.⁸³ Elizabeth knew about Leicester’s efforts to engage in foreign policy, which would allow him to amass power abroad, yet she was continually unwilling to let her favorite leave court.⁸⁴ In 1565, she confronted Leicester about his plans to travel to France and solicit Catherine de Medici and Charles IX’s support for their marriage. She confessed, “I cannot live without seeing you every day.” She then continued and bitinglly reminded Leicester of his place within her realm: “You are like my lapdog, as soon as he is seen anywhere, the people say that I am coming; and when you are seen, they may say, in like manner, that I am not far off.”⁸⁵

Since pamphlets of ceremonies, pageants, and progresses were commonly printed, Leicester likely saw this as an opportunity to sway the public’s opinion, if not the Queen’s.⁸⁶ Parallels between the Netherlands and the distressed damsel, and between Spain and Sir Bruse, who attacks the Lady of the Lake’s tower in an attempt to “force her virgin's state full fowlie to

⁸¹ Gascoigne, “Princely Pleasures,” 501.

⁸² Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485-1603* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 633.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 631.

⁸⁴ Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 67.

⁸⁵ Kendall, *Robert Dudley*, 87.

⁸⁶ Pincombe and Shrank, *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, 633.

deface” in have been suggested.⁸⁷ The scene advocated a militaristic solution to Spain’s invasion of the Netherlands, possibly promoting Leicester as the vanguard in England’s defense of her Protestant brethren.⁸⁸ Elizabeth, however, refocused the center of the masque away from the would-be hero, Leicester, to her own body. In the revised masque, Triton tells the Queen:

Yea, oracle and prophecie, say sure she can not stand;
Except a worthier maide then she her cause do take in hand.
Loe, here therefore a worthy worke, most fit for you alone;
Her to defend and set at large, but you, O Queene, can none:
And God’s decree, and Neptune sues this graunt, O peerless Prince:
Your presence onely shall suffice, her enemies to convince.⁸⁹

Elizabeth’s rescue of the Lady of the Lake is ultimately a passive, even anticlimactic, act, for her presence alone is enough to dispel Sir Bruse and his forces.⁹⁰ The lack of suspense purposefully draws drama away from the scene and transfers the energy onto Elizabeth and her political body.⁹¹

Leicester’s challenge to her authority, with his princely self-elevation and ambition, was effectually refuted by Elizabeth, whose progresses were important as an opportunity for her to display herself to the public in a filtered and advantageous light. Frye suggests that by saving the Lady of the Lake, Elizabeth establishes her authority derived from God, myth, and magic, and supplies “the crucial link between sovereign and God assumed in medieval political theology.”⁹² However, this exchange is more than a pitting of her agenda against the Earl’s. That Elizabeth could nullify Leicester’s expression of his desires, and even rebuke his desires, speaks to the asymmetry of exchange. Leicester’s “gift” of housing and entertainment to the Queen was not without its own politicized agenda, but the Queen refused this exchange and muted the public

⁸⁷ Gascoigne, “Princely Pleasures,” 499.

⁸⁸ Gascoigne’s *Spoyle of Antwerp*, written in 1576, casts Antwerp as the injured female raped by the Spanish and features a woodcut of a woman in acute distress. See: Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 83-4.

⁸⁹ Gascoigne, “Princely Pleasures,” 499.

⁹⁰ Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 88.

⁹¹ Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 42.

⁹² Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 88.

addressing of two sensitive issues, her marriage and the invasion of the Netherlands, by robbing Leicester of the public stage that her progresses typically offered. While her court provided the environment for rituals of gift exchange, Elizabeth could deny individuals participation in this economy. Leicester is not the giver of gifts as he casts himself to be, but a recipient of the Queen's resplendent generosity.

Precedents for social contract negotiations upon a splendid stage existed at the Elizabethan court, where embellished wordplay was valued and endorsed. During the court's 1566 Epiphany celebration, the revels king—likely Christopher Hatton, of whom Leicester was known to be jealous—“commanded Lord Robert to ask the Queen... which was the most difficult to erase from the mind, an evil opinion created by a wicked informer, or jealousy?” Dudley, according to the rules of the game, was forced to ask Elizabeth the question, for which he was rebuked for his jealousy of Hatton. Dudley, angered by the situation, threatened to beat the new favorite, for which Elizabeth again chastised Dudley that “if by her favour he had become insolent he should soon reform, and that she would lower him just as she had at first raised him.” The queen, “moved by pity,” restored him to favor only after he remained in his room for four days, “showing by his despair that he could no longer live.”⁹³ The performative nature of their relationship is elaborated in Leicester's show of betrayal and anger and Elizabeth's acerbic authority and graceful forgiveness.⁹⁴ Leicester could only obtain Elizabeth's clemency by acting the part of the spurned but devoted favorite and relinquishing his claim to power as independent from Elizabeth's humor. Discourses on giver and recipient roles were not

⁹³ “Venice: February 1566,” in *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 7: 1558-1580*, ed. Rawdon Brown and G. Cavendish Bentinck (London: Institute of Historical Research, 1980), 374-5.

⁹⁴ Frye, *The Competition for Representation*, 58.

limited to annual revelries and progresses and often moved beyond pageantry onto the physical bodies of the Queen and courtier.

THE QUEEN AS GIVER AND RECIPIENT

Kenilworth not only questioned the extent of Elizabeth's and Leicester's respective jurisdictions, but also pioneered the use of portraiture as part of preparations for a royal visit. Surviving inventories reveal that Leicester displayed more than fifty paintings at Kenilworth Castle as early as 1578, and the bulk of these paintings may have already been on exhibit during the 1575 revels.⁹⁵ The highlights of Leicester's collection at the castle were four life-sized portraits of Leicester himself and the Queen that had been specially commissioned for the 1575 visit. Two of them are attributed to the Italian mannerist Federico Zuccaro, who had traveled to England for the express purpose of executing these portraits, and are known only through preliminary sketches (figures 8, 9). The latter two portraits, which I will focus on, are now truncated from their original full-length sizes and are executed by an unknown artist or artists (figures 10, 11). In their original display at the castle, the four paintings of Leicester and Elizabeth were likely veiled by silk curtains in order to protect them from external hazards and control access, viewable only after a dramatic unveiling.⁹⁶

Leicester's portrait in the second set depicts the Earl clad in a richly embroidered crimson doublet, fashionably slashed diagonally across the surface and tipped with double wings at the shoulders. Matching trim runs along the bottom, overlapping his paneled, brocade-lined trunk

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Goldring, "Portrait, Patronage, and the Progresses: Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and the Kenilworth Festivities of 1575," in *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For details on the archival findings, see Elizabeth Goldring, "Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I and the Earl of Leicester for Kenilworth Castle," *Burlington Magazine*, 147 (2005): 654-60.

⁹⁶ Goldring, "Portrait, Patronage, and the Progresses," 71.

hose, luxurious ruffs sprout from his sleeve cuffs and collar, and the Lesser George hangs laconically from a chain around his neck. Emblazoned across the upper right corner, the Earl's coat of arms and coronet again remind the viewer of his induction into the Order of the Garter, his family's restoration in blood, and his own rise to the earldom of Leicester in 1564. The painting is not a study of Leicester's character, but rather a memorial to his apparel and his honors.

The noble stature associated with these honors is solely enabled by the monarch's conferral upon the recipient and the recipient's belief in what the title represented. Honors such as the Garter offered more than reaffirming medieval principles of hierarchy and chivalry, which essentially bound its recipients to the giver via the notions of vassalage and honor. Belief in what the Garter represented— favor from the reigning monarch and membership in an exclusive society— accentuated the power difference between the giver and the recipient. The monarch's authority to bestow such honors upon his or her subject implies the dependency of the latter upon the former. The procession of the Order of the Garter at Windsor Castle was also one of the most important court festivals of the year and the Order's significance was reiterated through visual spectacle. The procession shown in Marcus Gheeraerts' engraving (figure 12) is oddly yet appropriately selective. Gheeraerts excludes typically present officials, inserts normally absent foreign knights, and omits the Queen's usual train- and canopy-bearers. The image focuses on the Queen and her knights as they move through a space fictionalized by superimposed coats of arms. Just as the induction of a new knight was often conveyed with Elizabeth's own hands, the ejection of a knight was similarly ceremonial: the insignia of the Garter was snatched from the offender and his banner, crest, helm, and sword were hurled from the Chapel at Windsor. The Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland, for their role in the Northern uprising, the Duke of

Norfolk for participating in the Ridolfi plot, and the Earl of Essex for his rebellion, were all ejected from the Order in this manner.⁹⁷ A nobleman's declaration of his honors and achievements could only be enabled by Elizabeth's partaking in and agreement to this exchange. A conversation impossible without her participation, this visual display of Leicester's authority conversely highlights his sovereign's might and his own servitude.

Though Elizabeth's authority was reinforced by the acts of servitude and ceremonial gift giving from her courtiers, her authority also depended upon these acts. In Kevin Sharpe's words, "all state ritual— from the coronation to the scaffold— depended upon an audience willing to partake of, and play their part in, the spectacle."⁹⁸ Gift giving at the Elizabethan court represented one of these myriad rituals. The social roles of each party are thus incorporated in a symbiotic relationship. Each party's social stake depends on the other party's reaction to and recognition of the former's actions. Tradition also affirms hierarchy and indicates who must initiate gift giving in order to maintain rank. Therefore, even if his gift were rejected, Leicester would have been obligated to "continue his acts of prestation, even when apparently unreciprocated by the queen, because he always owed allegiance and tribute."⁹⁹ Leicester, or any other courtier, cannot be considered an autonomous giver, because their gifts responded to political and social debts. They presented gifts as part of rituals that fulfilled their roles as servants to the Queen. Elizabeth also received gifts that played upon the nicknames she gave to her favorites, such as "water" for Walter Raleigh, "frog" for the Duke of Alençon, and "eyes" for

⁹⁷ Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 173.

⁹⁸ Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 418.

⁹⁹ Klein, "Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework": 469.

Leicester, which indirectly validated her labels of her courtiers.¹⁰⁰ The specificity of each gift reinforced Elizabeth's autonomy and acknowledged the giver's dependence on her favor.

The depiction of a gift from a subject to his sovereign similarly indicates a tense mediation of power. The accompanying painting to Leicester's portrait portrays Elizabeth in a jewel-encrusted doublet and is arguably identical to the white satin doublet, set with "18 very fayre payre of chaspes of goldsmith's worke enmuled, every paire of them set with five diamonds and eight ruybes, one diamonde in every paire bigger than the rest, one of the smaller dyamondes lacking, with a fayre pasmayne lace of damaske golde and damaske silver," that Leicester had presented to the Queen as a New Year's gift earlier in the same year.¹⁰¹ Elizabeth was neither obligated to accept or to return Leicester's gift, and her presents to her courtiers, typical 100 ounces of gold plate, were far less symbolic or splendid in comparison. That this particular item was recorded in the New Year's Rolls and subsequently depicted in a portrait suggest that it was accepted by Elizabeth, which momentarily puts the Queen within a closer circle, a tangible dimension.¹⁰² In other words, Elizabeth's recognition of Leicester's gift opened a channel across disparate statuses and gave rise to a "highly strained but genuine reciprocity between unequals in the social and economic order."¹⁰³ Leicester himself commissioned and possessed this portrait, but we do not know who chose Elizabeth's attire. Leicester may have commissioned the portrait and requested a doublet to be made based on the portrait, or perhaps

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Hatton, jealous of Walter Raleigh, sent Elizabeth a gold bodkin and a gold charm made like a little bucket, with a letter stating that he knew she may need the latter for 'Water' was sure to be near here. François, Duke of Alençon, often gave Elizabeth little jewels with gold and enameled frogs, such as "a leafe of golde enameled grene with a frogge of golde thereon, garnished with sparckes of diamonds. In yet another instance, Leicester presented Elizabeth on New Year's Day in 1574 with a "ringe of golde with an Agatt made like two eyes with Sparckes aboute it of Rubies." Arnold, *The Queen's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, 75. British Library, London: Royal Manuscripts in the old Royal and King's Collections, App. 68, f. 23, 33. Cited in Arnold, *The Queen's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, 76.

¹⁰¹ "New-Year's Gifts to the Queen by the Earl of Leicester", 527. Goldring, "Portrait, Patronage, and the Progresses," 174.

¹⁰² Susan Doran, "Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I," in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 190.

¹⁰³ Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, 42.

Elizabeth herself chose to be depicted in the doublet. Elizabeth permitted the idea of potential reciprocity, which encouraged loyalty and future acts of giving, by allowing or choosing herself to be shown wearing Leicester's gift. Though the Queen's debt, created when she accepted the gift, could not be enforced, the visual representation of her royal body bearing that gift perpetually proposed reciprocation.

Leicester evidently understood how overt these royal representations could be, and had to tread the line between suggestive and offensive. Whereas the standard for Renaissance marriage portraiture required the couple to face each other, the two subjects in all four Kenilworth portraits face the same direction. Refraining from literally and figuratively opposing Elizabeth, Leicester becomes Elizabeth's echo.¹⁰⁴ The paintings were also created for the pleasure of the Queen, not for a commercial market. Accordingly, Leicester could only show the images with Elizabeth's implicit consent. In contrast, when London stationers anticipated Eric XIV of Sweden's arrival in the summer of 1561, they were able to sell to the general public printed images of Eric and Elizabeth side by side as if they were a married couple, much to the Queen's dismay.¹⁰⁵ Shown in a visible but elite space, the Kenilworth portraits were predicated upon Elizabeth's pleasure. The need to please the Queen undermined Leicester's attempt to make their statuses equal, because Elizabeth could censor images she perceived as threats to her sovereignty. The portraits' mere existence emphasizes their palatability— even insipidity— and marks them as a failed attempt to make Leicester Elizabeth's equal. He could be no more than her shadow.

Elizabeth consciously manipulated her sartorial choices as part of her self-presentation, and she and her court were aware of the implications of gifts of clothing and their power to please and appease. In 1574, Mary of Scots embroidered and sent Elizabeth a gown "as evidence

¹⁰⁴ Goldring, "Portrait, Patronage, and the Progresses," 176.

¹⁰⁵ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 30-35.

of the honour I bear her, and the desire I have to employ myself in anything agreeable to her.” In response, Elizabeth “very much softened towards her.”¹⁰⁶ Perhaps Leicester had hoped to elicit a similar favorable response. His gift of a doublet is remarkable for actively appealing to the Queen’s personal tastes and for its complex level of construction. As close-fitting items of clothing, doublets were difficult to tailor and gift givers often opted to send Elizabeth loose gowns or other less structured clothes.¹⁰⁷ Nobles thus took a risk when choosing what to give the Queen. The choice to limit risk or make a gamble creates an interesting dynamic that emphasizes the need for the giver to please the recipient while outdoing the competition.

The performance of giving did not exist solely in its original episode but was also visually reiterated and memorialized through costume and portraiture. For gifts to successfully elicit acts of reciprocity, they had to bind the recipient to the giver by obligating the recipient to make a return gift. Visual proof of a gift, such as wearing the item or depicting it in a painting, attempted to assert the giver as the benefactor. Gifts to the Queen could only suggest reciprocation, whereas the prestige accompanying gifts from the Queen was grounded in recipients’ belief in their value, their consequent debt to the Queen, and the implied binding power. Recognizing the worth of Elizabeth’s gift compelled the courtier to fulfill his duty in being loyal subject. Unlike gifts from courtiers, which did not bestow notions of honor upon their monarch, gifts from Elizabeth bore extrinsic worth in addition to their monetary value. Titles such as dukedoms and earldoms oftentimes came with land and salaries, but honors like knighthood were empty in and of themselves.¹⁰⁸ They appealed to ambitious nobles because they

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Swain, *The Needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), 83.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth was parsimonious in her distribution of honors. When the Earl of Essex created eighty-one knights during the 1599 Irish expedition without her consent or a military justification, Elizabeth was naturally irritated. Some went into battle for the sake of acquiring the title, creating the “curious situation whereby numbers of young gentlemen were swaggering about London as knights, while their fathers in their country manor-houses were obliged to content themselves with the humbler title of esquire.” Lawrence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 71-73.

could flaunt their status through crests, coats of arms, and other visible accouterments. Elizabeth relied on the strength of her covetable gifts to communicate value and stature, a power emanating from the hierarchical structure of her court and her exclusive ability to dictate worth.

CONCLUSION

Though a token likely given during Leicester's 1575 reception of Elizabeth at Kenilworth, Hilliard's miniature pair of the Queen and her courtier do not suggest the end of a relationship. Even though Leicester's courtship of Elizabeth was waning by this time, their roles as benevolent sovereign and obedient and grateful subject lasted till Leicester's death. Leicester, as Elizabeth's host at Kenilworth, was obliged by tradition to give Elizabeth a present of his choice, and popular gifts included clothing, gloves, books, plate, and jewels.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps these miniatures, which capture us with their piercing, candid gazes, were part of this gift. Leicester's grey-blue eyes, surrounded by long sweeping lashes and deeply set underneath arched eyebrows, regard us viewers as distantly as do Elizabeth's. They nevertheless bear a sense of liveliness and mobility, of a captured moment as described by Hilliard, and hint at an intimate relationship between the depicted pair. However, the two parties were not embedded in the same economy of exchange: Elizabeth reserved the ability to decline or even not recognize a gift as such. While gift givers could encourage reciprocity, they could do little more than appeal to the Queen's personal taste in jewels, clothing, and other gifts in kind. Elizabeth, however, acted as the benefactor of her courtiers, whose success at court depended on her whim and favor alone. Challenges to her authority and attempts to cast her as a receiver, like in Leicester's 1575 Kenilworth revelries, were shut down or altered. These acts of sovereignty were most visible when Elizabeth went on

¹⁰⁹ For example, Elizabeth received a pair of golden spurs from Lady Style, a gown from Sir William More, jewels from Sir Edward Coke and Sir Arthur Gorges, and a gown made from cloth of gold and a jeweled hat from Julius Caesar. Cole, *The Portable Queen*, 73-74.

her annual progresses through the English countryside and exerted her right to occupy nobles' homes.

Elizabeth nonetheless understood the importance of potential reciprocity and acknowledgement of her courtiers' obedience and loyalty and thus willingly, though sparingly, distributed titles, honors, and awards. Progresses provided her nobles temporary access to their monarch and intimate moments where they could more directly and easily suggest certain ambitions or political agendas. Rewards often were contingent upon the Queen's and courtier's participation and belief in their intrinsic value, which were amplified by recipients' visual affirmation of their worth, such as paintings incorporating their coats of arms, annual processions celebrating the exclusivity and prestige of the Order of the Garter, and other sartorial regalia. The display of honors gave them a visible value. Likewise, the visual reiteration of gifts to the Queen served as reminders of a suggested but never obligatory debt. Gift exchange at the Tudor Court was a mutualistic relationship, one that could not be coerced but instead depended on each side's understanding of its respective political role. Gift exchange reinforced rank and thus was an inherently impossible tool to use in reversing traditional roles of benevolent monarch and grateful subject. The Earl of the Leicester sought to counter-balance the conventional hierarchy by turning personal gifts into political displays, but ultimately fulfilled his own social obligations of tribute and allegiance.

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Figure 1. Nicholas Hilliard, *Miniature Pair of Elizabeth I and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester*. c. 1575. Watercolour on vellum laid down on card, gilt-metal frame and gold bracelet slide frame, respectively.

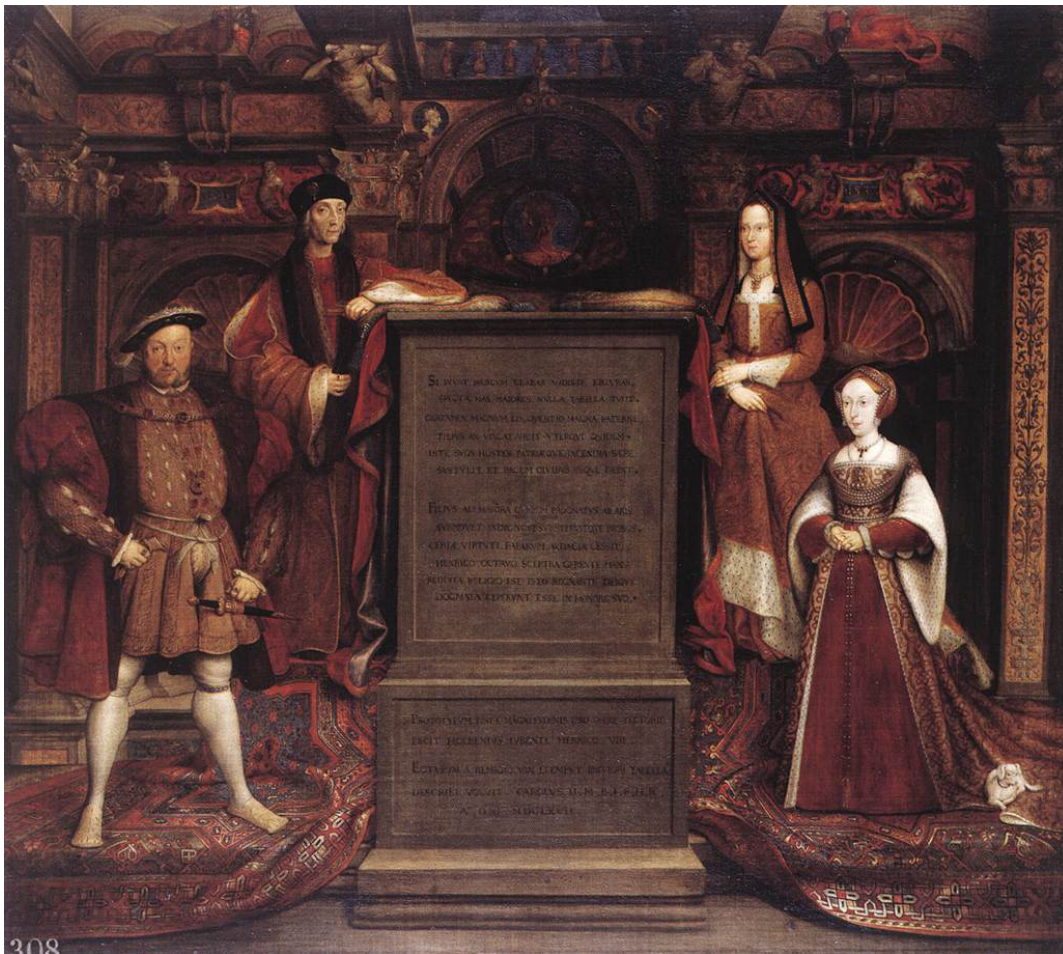


Figure 2. After Hans Holbein the Younger, *Henry VIII from the Whitehall Mural* (destroyed), 1536. Oil on canvas.



Figure 3. Nicolas Hilliard, *Gresley Jewel*, before 1585. Contains portraits of Catherine Walsingham and Sir Thomas Gresley, above right; closed lid, top left; front of locket, bottom left. Enameled gold, precious stones, pearls, and onyx cameo.



Figure 4. Raphael, *Three Graces*, 1502-03. Oil on canvas.

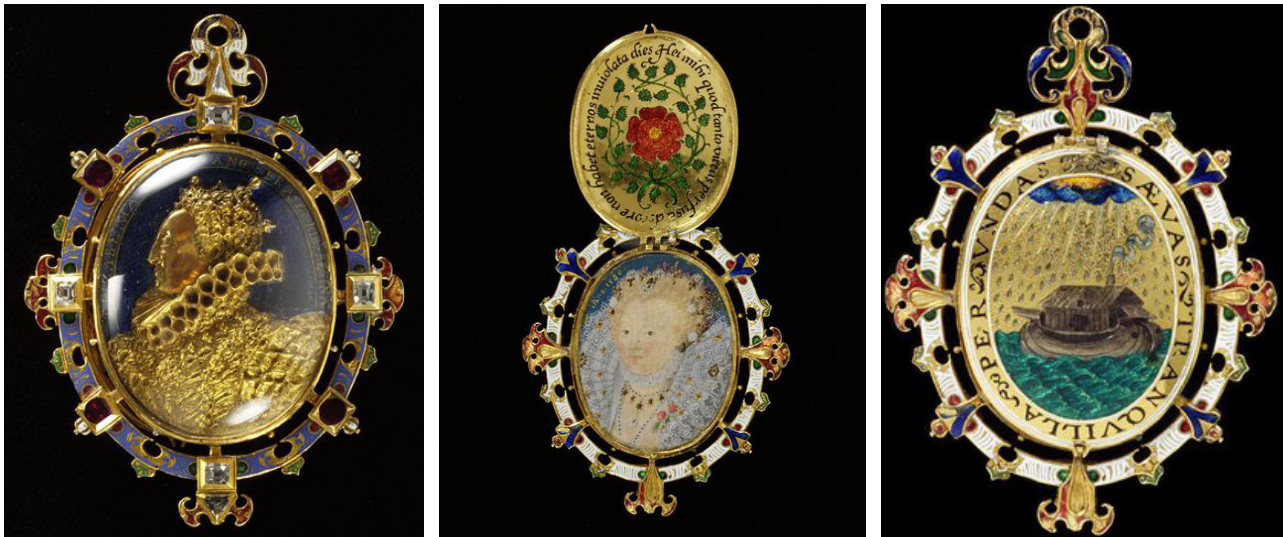


Figure 5. Nicolas Hilliard, *Armada Jewel*, after 1588. Contains portrait of Elizabeth I dated 1580 by Hilliard, above middle; outside lid, above right; front of locket, above left. Gold, ruby, diamond, enamel, watercolor on vellum.

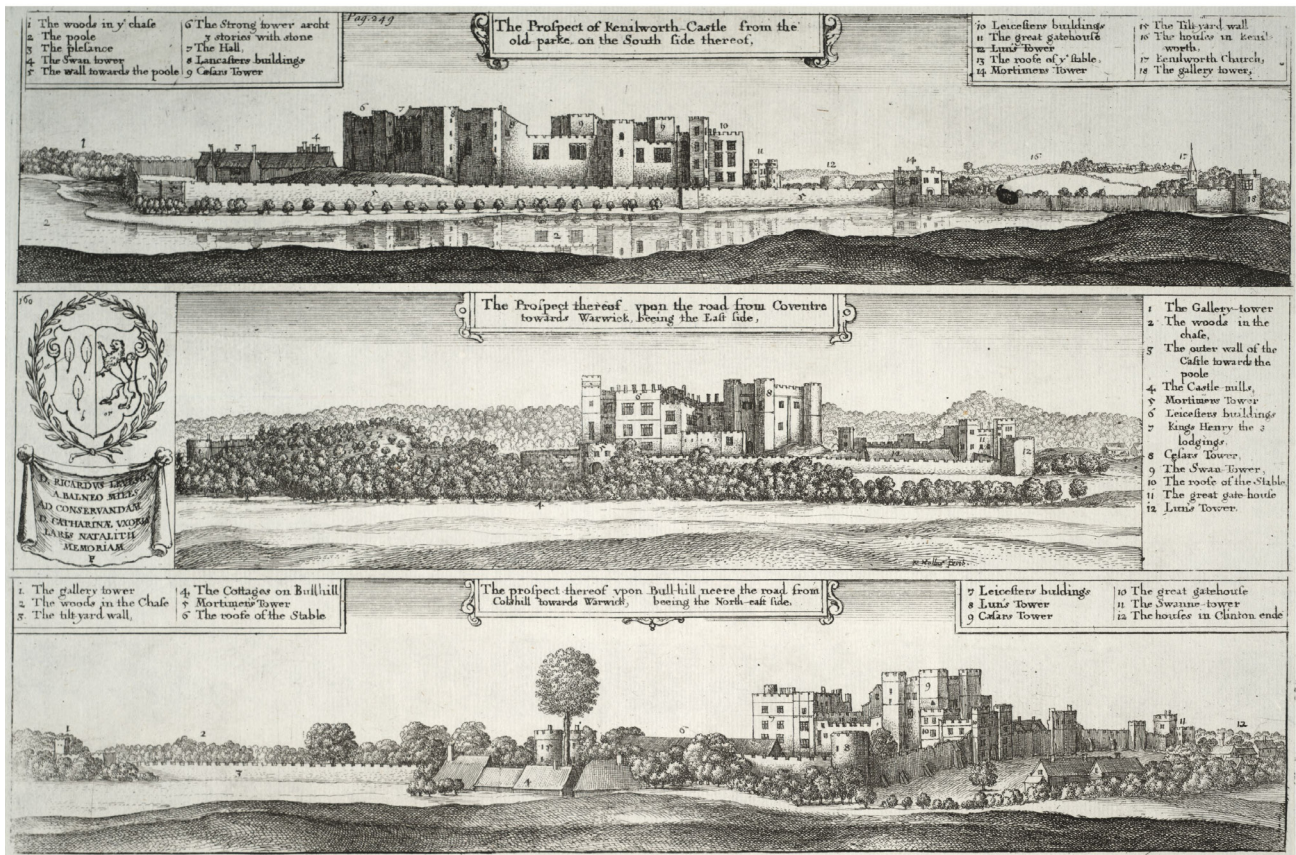


Figure 6. Wenceslaus Hollar, *Three Prospects of Kenilworth Castle*, 1656. Engraving.

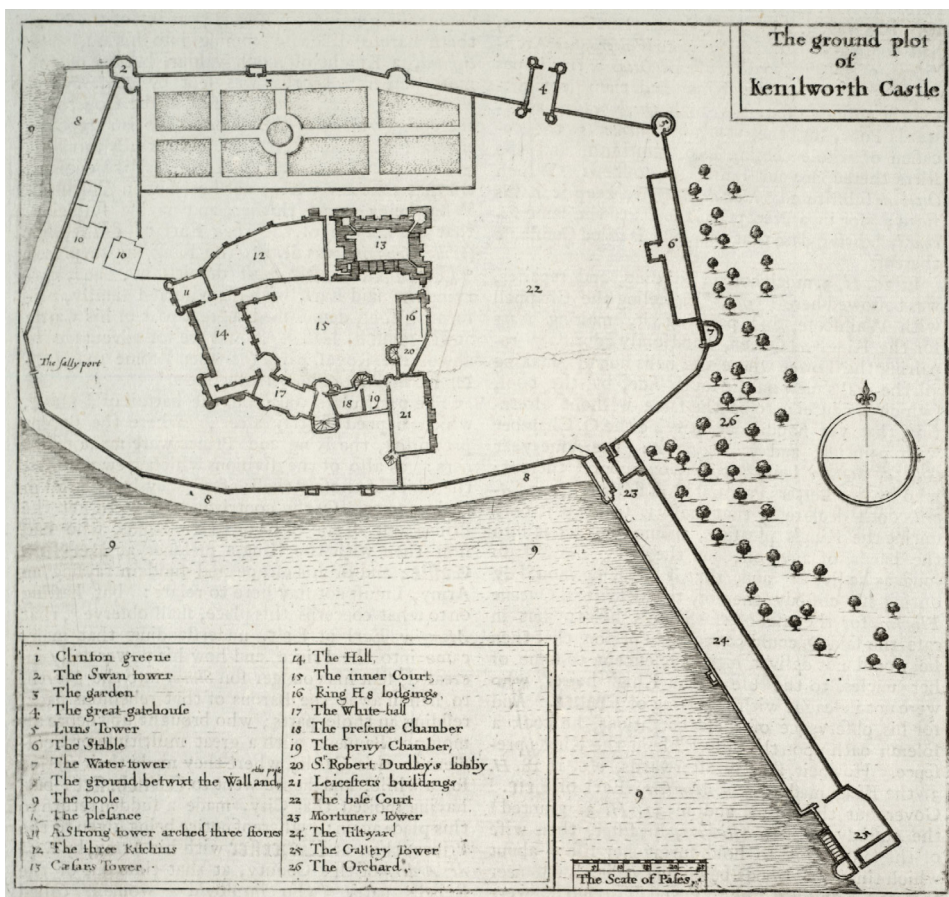


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Figure 12. Details from Marcus Gheeraerts, *Procession of the Knights of the Garter*, two of nine sheets: The ninth sheet of the procession with the Sword-Bearer and Queen Elizabeth, with a view of Windsor Castle in the background. The eighth sheet of the procession with the Emperor Maximilian II; the Usher of the Black Rod, the Register and Garter King of Arms; the Chancellor and Prelate; and two Gentlemen Ushers. 1576. Etching with hand-colouring.

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