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CASE STUDY

EMBROIDERING A PERSONAL LITURGY: THE VESTMENTS OF HELENA WINTOUR

A letter from Father George Grey, S.J., to his Provincial dated 17 November 1668 preserves the image of one Catholic needlewoman at work. Grey was visiting Helena Wintour, daughter of Gunpowder Plotter Robert Wintour, at her home at Badgecourt on the family's Cooksey estates. The primary purpose of his visit was to establish the extent of the bequests Wintour intended to make to the Jesuits in her will, but Grey also made particular mention of the way in which Wintour was spending her days:

She hath bene these many yeares, and is yet, piously employed in making rich embrasured Churchstuffe, which she designes for this particular Mission, or the intended College, not being willing it should be conveyed beyond Sea upon colour of safe custodie, least it should never returne againe. A parcell of curious worke I saw actually in fieri upon the frame, but I understand she hath severall whole suits ech of severall colours, to comply with the Rubrickes.¹

Comparatively little is known of Helena Wintour. Her birth is dated around 1600, which would have made her about five years old at the time of her father's execution for involvement in the Gunpowder Plot. Unusually, for the female members of the Plotters' families, she remained in England. She never married, but lived quietly on the Cooksey estates that had been recovered for the family at some point after they were forfeited to the Crown in 1605.² In addition to Grey's description of Wintour's major needlework projects, she is described as having 'devoted herself to prayer, possibly to fasting, and

¹ Stonyhurst MSS A.1.22, no. 1
handed her ‘two out of the four best sets of vestments’ (p. 247). The vestments in possession of the Society of Jesus have been held by them since 1671, ‘in one or other of the Jesuit missions in the Worcester district’, and by the second decade of the nineteenth century were at the old Jesuit mission of Grafton Manor, seat of the Shrewsbury family (p. 247). In 1854 the vestments were sent to Stonyhurst College, Clitheroe, where they remained until they were transferred on long loan to the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester in the year 2000. The vestments in possession of Lady Wintour were bequeathed on her death in 1697 to a cousin, who subsequently married into the Hanford family of Woollas Hall. In the mid-nineteenth century the Hanfords, together with other Catholic families in the locality including the Throckmortons, founded a parish at Kemerton near Tewkesbury, whither the vestments were sent. Despite a perilous career (in the nineteenth century a cat gave birth to her kittens in the box the Stonyhurst set was stored in), both sets of vestments were preserved. The Lady Wintour set of vestments is currently held in a private collection.

The extant vestments correspond to Grey’s description of ‘severall whole suits ech of

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5 The source of the information is a note dated April 5, 1854 written by Father Henry Campbell at Grafton (Stonyhurst MSS A.1.22). ‘He gives as his authority Fr. Andrew Robinson, S.J. who died in 1826 aged 84, and had himself received the information in his younger days from some of the old Jesuits’. For reports of the dispute, see the unpublished catalogue of ‘Stonyhurst Vestments’ prepared by T. G. Holt, S.J., pp. 3-4, and ‘Helena Wintour and her Vestments’, pp. 245-47.

6 Helena Wintour’s two executors were Mary Talbot (sister of John Talbot, 10th Earl of Shrewsbury) and the 10th Earl’s son Gilbert. Mary Talbot was the daughter of Sir John Talbot of Grafton, whose sister was Helena’s mother Gertrude, making Mary Talbot Helena’s first cousin. The Talbot connection was reinforced in the next generation: Helena’s nephew Sir George Wintour first married his second cousin Frances Talbot, daughter of the 10th Earl. Gertrude Talbot’s family is only distantly related to the family of Bess of Hardwick’s fourth husband George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury: Gertrude’s father, Sir John of Grafton, was the 6th Earl’s third cousin.

7 There is no record of the vestments in the inventory of Lady Mary’s possessions (PRO, Probate 4 11253, reprinted in Inventories of the Landed Gentry: 1537-1786, ed. by William Wanklyn, Worcestershire Historical Society n.s., 16 ([n.p.]: Arrowsmith, 1998), pp. 262-66), although assorted trunks, chests, presses, boxes and cupboards are inventoried.

8 Helena Wintour’s great-grandmother was Catherine Throckmorton, daughter of Sir George Throckmorton, of Coughton Court. Through Catherine Throckmorton’s marriage to William Wintour, Helena Wintour was a second cousin once removed to Robert Catesby and Francis Tresham, Plotters together with their second cousin, Helena’s father Robert.

9 The cat incident is recorded by Henry Campbell in Stonyhurst MSS A.11.28 no. 117.
certainly to almsdeeds and varied works of charity'. Apart from a little correspondence, scant mention in the correspondence of others, and a few documents of public record, Wintour left no textual trace behind. But a large part of her 'rich embroidered Churchstuffe' has survived. And where text has been erased, Wintour's textiles speak for her. This case study seeks to theorise some reasons behind the making of the vestments, to read Wintour's design concept, her choices of embroidered liturgy, symbolism and iconography, and to suggest that Wintour used the undertaking to practise a personal form of Jesuit-led meditation on the Virgin Mary. Finally, I want to suggest that although Wintour's liturgical colours may 'comply with the Rubrickes', in the design details and especially in the textual relationship of embroidered liturgy to Tridentine liturgy, Helena Wintour had space in which to express to some extent her personal emphasis of certain aspects of her religious experience over others.

The embroidered vestments were divided shortly after Wintour's death into two separate collections. Wintour died intestate, but two days before she died, she had an instrument prepared, which she signed the day of her death, in which she left 'unto the said Society all the Vestments and other Alter ornaments therto belonging wherto I am at present possessed'. Nevertheless, the bequest was immediately the subject of acrimonious dispute between the Society of Jesus and Wintour's heir Lady Mary Kemp Wintour, widow of Wintour's nephew George. According to the Jesuit records of events, summarised by Henry Chadwick, 'wearied and alarmed by her importunities' the Jesuits

3 Henry Chadwick, 'Helena Wintour and her Vestments', Stonyhurst Magazine, 29 (1948), 244-50 (p. 245). Subsequent references are given in the text.

4 The bond confirming Wintour's intestacy is held together with the inventory of her goods and chattels in the Worcester Record Office, WRO wills series 0087, 9 May 1671. Stonyhurst MSS A.122, no. 2 is an attested copy of the instrument which is referred to in other contemporary documents as her 'will'. It is reproduced in full in 'Helena Wintour and her Vestments', p. 249-50. Wintour made one other bequest of church needlework in this codicil: 'I doe except the spangle stuffe sute whch I give to Nell Attmor during her life, and after her to her son John Attmore'.
handed her 'two out of the four best sets of vestments' (p. 247). The vestments in possession of the Society of Jesus have been held by them since 1671, 'in one or other of the Jesuit missions in the Worcester district', and by the second decade of the nineteenth century were at the old Jesuit mission of Grafton Manor, seat of the Shrewsbury family (p. 247). In 1854 the vestments were sent to Stonyhurst College, Clitheroe, where they remained until they were transferred on long loan to the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester in the year 2000. The vestments in possession of Lady Wintour were bequeathed on her death in 1697 to a cousin, who subsequently married into the Hanford family of Woollas Hall. In the mid-nineteenth century the Hanfords, together with other Catholic families in the locality including the Throckmorts, founded a parish at Kemerton near Tewkesbury, whither the vestments were sent. Despite a perilous career (in the nineteenth century a cat gave birth to her kittens in the box the Stonyhurst set was stored in), both sets of vestments were preserved. The Lady Wintour set of vestments is currently held in a private collection.

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severall colours, to comply with the Rubrickes'. The Stonyhurst set (examples in figs. W.1-4) is made up of a set of white High Mass vestments comprising a cope, a deacon’s dalmatic, a subdeacon’s dalmatic, a chasuble (the so-called ‘Alleluia vestment’), and a chalice veil, burse, stole and maniple (not contemporary), and a set of red Pentecostal vestments comprising a chasuble with matching chalice veil, burse, stole and maniple. The Lady Wintour set (examples in figs. W.5-8) comprises three sets of chasuble, stole, maniple, and veil in white, green and black, with an additional white veil and burse.

An undated inventory of ‘M’ Ell. Wint. Churchstuffe’ links both Lady Wintour and Stonyhurst sets, and would appear to predate the division of the vestments. It includes, for example, ‘One rich white vestment with flowerpots with peasecots, pearle’, identifiable as the Lady Wintour chasuble, and ‘an other rich white vestment’ and ‘one crimson satin vestment’, tentatively identifiable as the Stonyhurst Alleluia and Pentecostal chasubles. The inventory also lists an ‘old violet vestment of Churchworke’, which describes a purple chasuble with medieval wool-embroidered saints held together with the Lady Wintour set.

But there are discrepancies between the inventoried items of ‘Churchstuffe’ and the body of needlework that has come down to us. There is no mention in the inventory of the cope, for example, or the deacon’s and subdeacon’s dalmatics, which form a set of vestments for High Mass. This does not surprise Chadwick. It was, he considered, highly improbable that Mistress Wintour, living in the midst of the persecution days, would ever have thought of making a High Mass set of vestments — to be used presumably at one or other of the little Jesuit

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10 A *burse* is a stiffened square fabric envelope used to store and the corporal (a square of linen placed under the chalice on the altar).
11 Stonyhurst MSS A.122 no. 16.
Fig. W.1 Helena Wintour: Alleluia chasuble (Stonyhurst College)

Fig. W.2 Helena Wintour: Deacon’s dalmatic (Stonyhurst College)

Fig. W.3 Helena Wintour: red chasuble (Stonyhurst College)

Fig. W.4 Helena Wintour: High Mass cope (Stonyhurst College)
Fig. W.5 Helena Wintour: 'peasecod' white chasuble (private collection)

Fig. W.6 Helena Wintour: black chasuble (private collection)

Fig. W.7 Helena Wintour: green chasuble (private collection)

Fig. W.8 Purple chasuble with medieval wool embroidery (private collection)
missions in her neighbourhood! One may very reasonably doubt if she ever attended a High Mass in her life (p. 247).

Chadwick cites correspondence which shows that the dalmatics, and perhaps some of the embroidery for the cope, had been taken from Wintour's original antependia. The inventory mentions five antependia, or altar frontals: a ‘red Antependium of Cloath of Gold’, an ‘old Red embrodered Antipendium’, an Antependium to go with the peasecod set (presumably white), one to go with the ‘other rich white vestment’, and an antependium to match the ‘rich crimson satin vestment’. By the time the missioner of Grafton Manor Father Henry Campbell sent the vestments to Father Johnson at Stonyhurst in 1854, it appears that of these five antependia only one red and one white one remained. The red one was ‘in the same state as when it left [Wintour’s] hands’, but the backing silk of the white one, together with the red and white vestments, had been ‘in a putrescent state’ (presumably after having the cat give birth on top of them), with ‘hundreds of minute insects underneath the embroidery’. Campbell had had the embroidery removed and remounted. The original red and remounted white antependia went to Stonyhurst in 1854 together with a red and a white chasuble (the Pentecostal and Alleluia vestments), and other accessories.

What then, is the origin of the High Mass set, the ‘Wintour’ cope and dalmatics? The original red antependium was described by Campbell in 1854:

> At the bottom [...] you will find her arms in a lozenge (sable a fesse ermine) with the family motto *omnia desper* & with the date 1655, as also the crest of the Wintours — a falcon issuing from a white tower, with the words, *Orate pro me Helena Wintovr*. This will be found repeated on the white antependium. Three out of its five compartments

12 Letters dated 26 January and 1 February 1854, from Father Henry Campbell to Father Johnson, Provincial S.J., cited in ‘Helena Wintour and her Vestments’, pp. 247, 248; Letter from Campbell to Father Clough, dated 24 February 1854.
always struck me as very beautiful. In one you have the Pelican — in another the Phoenix — in the centre the sacred name surrounded with glory. Over the first is the word Redimenti — over the second the word Resurgenti — and over the third the word Trivmphanti (p. 247) 13

At some time after their arrival at Stonyhurst in 1854, the embroidery from the red and white antependia was reused to make the High Mass set of cope and dalmatics 14 It seems likely that the central panel of the (white?) antependium contained the monogram of the sacred name with the word ‘Trivmphanti’ above it which now decorates the cope hood (fig. W.9), and the four panels flanking it contained the four bird emblems which now ornament the front and back of the two dalmatics. The outer birds must have been the eagle and chicks on its nest on the left (fig. W.10) and the hen and chicks on the right (fig. W.2), with their superscriptions reading out the Jesuit motto Ad Maiorem | Dei Gloriam. The pelican and the phoenix would thus have flanked the sacred name in the centre of the design. The pelican now forms the back of the deacon’s white dalmatic (fig. W.38), the hen and chicks the front. The phoenix appears on the back of the subdeacon’s dalmatic (fig. W.37), with the eagle and her chicks on the front. Wintour’s arms, and the family crest and motto were shared out between the new cope, and the existing Pentecostal and Alleluia chasubles. Brother Houghton, sacristan at Stonyhurst for fifty years and in office when the Wintour vestments arrived in 1854, left notes commenting on the vestments. Of the Wintour Alleluia chasuble and dalmatics, he said that

the embroidery of these vestments and a cope also were brought here by Fr Johnson when he was Provincial. His reverence can tell the history. They were a red and white antependium and a white chasuble and they

13 The Alleluia chasuble bears the date 1655, and the cope, 1656. Chadwick suggests that Campbell may have ‘got the two dates confused in his memory’, p. 249.
14 The crude nineteenth century application of Wintour’s embroidered slips onto new backing fabric with thick coloured skeins of silk can be clearly seen in figs. W. 10 and 33, and compared with the original invisible stitching on the Lady Wintour peasecod vestment in fig. W.30.
Fig. W.9 Detail of cope showing sacred monogram surmounted by the word ‘Trivmphanti’

Fig. W.10 Detail of subdeacon’s dalmatic showing eagle and chicks, surmounted by the word ‘Ad Maiorem’
were all arranged as they are now.\footnote{Stonyhurst Archives, Brother Houghton’s notebooks, II, p. 25.}

Brother Houghton’s ambiguous syntax confirms that two antependia and a chasuble arrived at the College from Grafton. The creation of the High Mass vestments from Helena Wintour’s original antependia and the additions to the Pentecostal and Alleluia chasubles must be born in mind when making a study of the iconography, but it is important to note that when the vestments were made up with the embroidery, the design concept was essentially conserved.

A further problem with the inventory is that, despite linking the Lady Wintour and Stonyhurst sets, it does not make specific mention of green and black vestments. Another difficulty is presented by the fact that there are three, and not two sets of ‘Wintour’ vestments in the Lady Wintour set as the Jesuit accounts suggest. Apart from the purple vestment with medieval wool embroidery that was owned by Helena Wintour, the inventory mentions only red and white vestments and accessories, as we have seen. But Grey’s letter mentioned ‘severall whole suits ech of severall colours, to comply with the Rubrickes’, and this would seems to suggest a wider range of colours than the red and the white. Perhaps the green and black sets are the inventoried ‘Mereland vestments’. A further possibility, which would explain the anomalous number of the Lady Wintour vestments, is that the inventory postdates the splitting of the bequest, and the inventoried peasecod white vestment and the purple vestment joined the Lady Wintour set at a later date. The existence of the missing Worcester chasuble would support the notion of later and undocumented movements of parts of the collection.
I: ‘For this particular Mission, or the intended College’: Wintour’s intentions

The traditional explanation for the making of the vestments that has achieved popularity over the centuries and endorsed by Chadwick is that Helena Wintour sewed them ‘in reparation for her father’s share in the plot’ (p. 245). This is partly due to the embroidered dates 1655 and 1656, marking the half-century following the Gunpowder Plot. Documentary evidence, and the evidence of the embroidered iconography itself, does not support this claim.

The ownership of the vestments — and consequently their purpose — was in dispute even at the time of Helena Wintour’s death. Lady Mary Wintour claimed that they were family property, the Jesuits that they had been made for their use. The Jesuit records paint Lady Wintour as an acquisitive ‘termagant’, who

set covetous eyes upon the vestments and “Churchstoffe” which Mistress Helen had been accumulating with so much skill and care. More than once her Ladyship had proposed to borrow some of these vestments; but her aunt, being no fool, had always politely resisted the suggestion (pp. 247, 245). 16

If the vestments were Lady Wintour’s by right, Chadwick asks rhetorically, ‘why had she previously tried to borrow them?’ (p. 247). He himself provides the answer in a footnote earlier in the article: all the family vestments and other articles necessary for Mass had been seized after the arrest of the Gunpowder Plotters. In ‘a hollow place within a wall near unto the clock house’ at Huddington, the searchers had found

a cross gilt with the picture of Christ, and other pictures upon it, a chalice of silver partly gilt, with a little plate or cover to the said chalice, and certain boxes of singing bread, and all other ornaments fit for a Popish

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16 See also ‘Stonyhurst Vestments’, pp. 3-4.
priest to say Mass in.\textsuperscript{17}

Gray's evidence that Helena Wintour spent years in the making of her collection of vestments perhaps shows her working hard to replace the confiscated articles for the use of her own (Jesuit guided) household. Lady Wintour's request to borrow 'some of' the vestments also suggests this. In Lady Wintour's defence, if the vestments had indeed been in use and not simply held in storage for the Jesuits, it is entirely possible that she believed the 'churchstuffe' to be included within the estate she inherited from her late husband's aunt, and that she had needed to borrow vestments because her establishment also had had none.\textsuperscript{18} The writer of notes in Stonyhurst Magazine speculates that since an aumbry (a recess for holding sacred vessels) was discovered at Badgecourt, concealing a priesthole behind it,

\begin{quote}
it may well be that the Wintour vestments were first used secretly at Badgecourt itself, possibly by Blessed John Wall the martyr, amongst others, whose missionary activities were for many years in this area. He was in fact finally captured at Rushcock Court, not three miles from the house.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

The ferocity of the argument between the Jesuits and Lady Wintour was also, it must not be forgotten, an index of the intrinsic value of the materials. At a time when the wealth and status of a family was measured in part by its textiles, the inheritor of Helena Wintour's vestments would acquire a significant treasure in the gold and silver thread, the sequins, metal ribbon and braid, and the jewels sewn onto the fabric, which included garnets, many hundreds of pearls and a number of small enamel jewels (figs. W.11-13).


\textsuperscript{18} The vestments had been Helena Wintour's own, and not part of the inheritance from her nephew George's estate which devolved entirely upon Lady Mary Wintour after Helena's death. This is suggested by Stonyhurst MSS Al.22: "the vestments etc were M' Wint' owne goods, before S' George's death [...] she had them always in her possession, the best of them were her owne Hand-worke".

\textsuperscript{19} Anon, "Two Chasubles", in \textit{Stonyhurst Magazine}, 30 (1951), pp. 339-41 (p. 239).
Fig. W.11 Detail of MRA monogram on the peasecod chasuble showing garnets, pearls, metal thread and sequins

Fig. W.12 Detail of dove’s wing on the red chasuble showing pearls, seed pearls and folded silver ribbon

Fig. W.13a Detail of the red chasuble showing enamel jewels
But the weight of evidence indicates that, even if the vestments had been in use in her household in her lifetime, Helena Wintour intended her vestments to go to the Society of Jesus after her death. Apart from the legal document, the codicil to Wintour’s will, there is Gray’s description of the work on the frame, ‘rich embrodered Churchstuffe, which she designes for this particular Mission, or the intended College’. Two types of evidence, documentary and iconographical, back up Gray’s statement. It appears that Helena’s nephew Sir George, had made his will in favour of the English Jesuits if, after the deaths of his inheriting wife and aunt, his Talbot heirs failed to produce male heirs of the body. According to a study of the testaments of Sir George and Helena Wintour by Father Holt, if the Talbots did father sons every priest in the district was to receive forty shillings and the English Jesuits were to receive a bequest of £4,000. Holt cites documentary evidence from Wintour’s lawyer John Walstead charting large gifts of money from Helena Wintour to the Society ‘for the good of the Catholic religion’, and, in particular, signifying ‘her intention of giving Evenlench farme in Tibberton to the Society of this District of Worc’tershire’. It is possible that this farm, held in secret trust for ‘Mrs St George’ (a code name for the Jesuit District), was ‘the intended College’ referred to by Gray, for in the years following Wintour’s death one or more Jesuits almost certainly lived out at Evenlench and there are reasons to believe that a school was conducted there in the earlier years of the eighteenth century, probably by Joseph Brunetti, a Jesuit who arrived in the Residence of St George from Flanders in 1699. There are signs in the surviving accounts of building there for school purposes in

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20 Sir George Wintour had been educated by the Jesuits at St Orners, and had considered entering the Society of Jesus (Holt, ‘The Wintours, the Jesuits and Evenlench Farm, Tibberton’, p. 72). He died 4 June 1658, aged 36.
21 Holt, ‘The Wintours, the Jesuits and Evenlench Farm, Tibberton’, p. 72. In addition, Sir George had borrowed £1000 from the Society, and Helena Wintour’s will and other documents considered by Holt make provision for the repayment of this debt, which remained unpaid at Sir George’s death.
22 Holt, ‘The Wintours, the Jesuits and Evenlench Farm, Tibberton’, p. 73.
Perhaps the Stonyhurst vestments, in the early part of the century and a half before they turned up in the box at Grafton Manor, were in use by the secret college at Evenlench farm. The secrecy surrounding the project and consequent lack of documentary evidence would certainly explain the temporary vanishing of the vestments.

Aside from a powerful desire to aid the Catholic Church and work towards its restoration in England, Helena Wintour seems to have had more than a passing interest in Catholic education. Her wish to endow and furnish a College is echoed in the older item of embroidered churchstuff in the Lady Wintour set: the old wool embroidery on the purple vestment owned by Helena Wintour depicts St Anne teaching the Virgin to read (fig. W.14), and St Catherine, the patron saint of female scholars (fig. W.15). The embroidery is, of course, not her own, but the choice of subject matter may nonetheless reflect Wintour's personal interests. At the very least the image of St Anne reading a sacred book both sanctions and mirrors Wintour's own devotions, and the figure of a woman passing on reading skills for devotional purposes parallels Wintour's actions in supporting a Jesuit College. The iconography of the Virgin's family was a significant interest elsewhere in Wintour's own work, as will be seen below.24

Certain iconographical elements of the vestments' design also support the notion that the vestments were intended for the Society after Helena Wintour's death. The inclusion on the Pentecostal chasuble and two High Mass dalmatics of the Jesuit motto AMDG ('Ad maiorem Dei gloriam – 'to the greater glory of God') is a case in point (fig

23 Holt, 'The Wintours, the Jesuits and Evenlench Farm, Tibberton', p. 75. See also Anne Vaux's support of a Jesuit school, below p. 251n
24 See p. 240
Fig. W.14  Detail of purple chasuble showing St Anne teaching the Virgin to read

Fig. W.15  Detail of purple chasuble showing St Catherine, patron saint of female scholars

Fig. W.16  Detail of red chasuble showing AMDG motto with Wintour’s initials
W.16), as is the general prominence on all the vestments of the sacred IHS monogram in rays of glory, a familiar Jesuit device (fig. W.17). More subtle iconographical links are provided by the use on the Lady Wintour peasecod and black vestments of multiple IG and XA monograms, recalling the Jesuit saints St Ignatius of Loyola and St Francis Xavier (figs. W.18-19).

The embroidered dates 1655 and 1656 commemorate not just the half-centenary of the Gunpowder Plot. The centenary of Ignatius of Loyola's death fell in 1656 (St Francis Xavier's centenary had been in 1652). Furthermore, Husenbeth's *Emblems of Saints* records that Ignatius is depicted commonly with the IHS monogram 'on his breast, or within rays in his hand'. The dates and iconography suggest that the vestments as a whole or in part were a devotion undertaken by Wintour in honour of St Ignatius (and possibly also St Francis Xavier). This is further supported by the embroidered inscriptions *Orate pro me Helena Wintovr* on the cope and Alleluia chasuble: in dedicating the work of her hands to St Ignatius and the Society of Jesus it is her own soul, and not the soul of her father, for which she seeks intercession.

As a body of work produced over a number of years, then, the vestments suggest a devotional undertaking to commemorate the centenary of St Ignatius, used, perhaps, by Helena Wintour's household in her own lifetime, but certainly dedicated to the use of the Jesuits (and perhaps especially in a hoped-for college which Wintour intended to endow) after her death. The medium, finely detailed stump work slips, embroidered

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26 F. C. Husenbeth, *Emblems of Saints: By Which they are Distinguished in Works of Art* (Norwich, Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, 1882), pp. 107, 84.
Fig. W.17 Detail of peasecod chasuble showing IHS monogram in rays of glory

Fig. W.18 Detail of black chasuble showing XA and IG monograms

Fig. W.19 Detail of peasecod chasuble showing XA monogram
motifs and a variety of texts in a carefully planned design framework, supports this reading on a more detailed, and a more intensely personal scale.

II: ‘A Garden of al flowers’: Meditations on the Virgin

The link between Wintour and her vestments and the Society of Jesus provides a further key to reading her chosen iconography, for the floral emblems and Marian monograms are strongly reminiscent of the Jesuit strategy to fuse emblem and meditation, exemplified by Henry Hawkins’s 1633 Partheneia Sacra. Hawkins, dedicating his emblem book to ‘the pleasure and devotion especially of the PARTHENIAN SODALITIE of her Immaculate CONCEPTION’ (fig. W.20), uses the traditional conceit of the Virgin Mary as hortus conclusus as a framework on which to hang a seven-part structure for meditation developed from the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. I wish here to use Partheneia Sacra to read Wintour’s iconographical expression of Mary-as-garden, and to suggest that such a reading offers further interpretation of Wintour’s religious experience.

The notion of using embroidery as both the vehicle of and the subject for Protestant meditation is familiar. Grace Sherrington Mildmay’s account of intense meditative concentration whilst embroidering, thinking ‘of nothing else but that I was doing in euery perticular’, has previously been noted and Mary Rich’s description of an early-

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27 Henry Hawkins, Partheneia Sacra, (Rouen, 1633; repr. Aldershot: Scolar, 1993), p. 79. All further references to this edition are given in the text.
29 Mary’s virginity was considered prefigured in the Song of Solomon 4. 12: ‘a garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed’. Michael Bath devotes Chapter 9 of Speaking Pictures to Hawkins’s ‘Symbolical Theology’ (pp. 233-54), discussing in particular the relationship of Partheneia Sacra to the developing emblem tradition both in terms of its roots and its influence.
PARTHENEIA SACRA.
OR
THE MYSTERIOUS AND DELICIOUS
GARDEN
OF THE
SACRED PARTHENES;
Symbolically set forth and enriched
With
PIOYS DEVISES AND EMBLEMES
for the entertainement of
DEVOUT SOVLES;
Contriued
AL TO THE HONOUR
of the Incomparable Virgin
MARIE
Mother of
GOD;
For the pleasure and devotion especially of the
PARTHENIAN SODALITIE
of her Immaculate
Conception.
By
H. A.
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Fig. W.20 Title page of Henry Hawkins's Partheneia Sacra (Amsterdam, 1633)
morning meditation upon the crown embroidered on the tester of her bed. But meditation arising from the activity of embroidery was also contemporary currency in Catholic devotional painting on the Continent: Francisco de Zurbarán’s rendering of *The Young Virgin* (1635-40) illustrates a passage from the Apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo Matthew, portraying the Virgin Mary as a child meditating as she sits embroidering in the temple (fig. W.21). An urn filled with conventional Marian floral emblems is placed to the right, and minute single blooms are strewn in front of her, symbolising her chastity. The episode as a whole, embroidery-as-devotional-meditation, is summarised by a small table on the left side of the painting, where a sacred book is juxtaposed with Mary’s embroidery scissors. For Zurbarán’s Mary, ‘self-effacement in the act of stitching has filled her with a kind of wonder, causing her to become enraptured’.

One of the ways in which Protestant and Catholic meditation essentially differ is in their degree of appeal to sensual experience. The Protestant Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick sharpens her gaze to extrapolate, in her brother’s words, ‘some important Moral Instruction, or perhaps some Theological Mystery’. The Ignatian method, on the other hand, applies each of the senses, ‘keyed up to the pitch of its capacity’, in order to create a vivid mental picture of the subject for meditation. The intensely visualised image is the first part of a tripartite Ignatian meditative structure. The *compositio loci* or composition of place, is followed by analysis, and finally the *colloquium*, ‘in which the soul speaks intimately with God and expresses its affection, 

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30 See above, pp. 107-09.
32 See above p. 108.
33 Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery*. Sussidi Eruditi, 16 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1967), p. 170. His explication of Jesuit meditation upon emblems is largely negative; it was, he asserts, ‘one of the favourite weapons of propaganda of the Society of Jesus’. 

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Fig. W.21 Francisco de Zurbaran, *The Young Virgin* (1635-40) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)
resolutions, thanksgivings and petitions'. But although they made use of the underlying tripartite structure provided by their founder's Spiritual Exercises, the Jesuits did not consider themselves bound by it, and, on the contrary, applied the method in various ways to their media. For example, Höltingen, in surveying Jesuit emblematisms, reads Herman Hugo's technique in *Pia Desiderata* of 1642 as representing the *compositio loci* by the tripartite emblem's *pictura*, the analysis by the explanatory poem, and the *colloquium* by the final epigram. Similarly, in setting forth the Ignatian method, Louis Martz's ultimate interest is its literary application, the 'vividly dramatised, firmly established, graphically imaged openings that are characteristic of the poets we are considering', and the 'easy colloquial style' which the poets of devotion used in 'dramatising theological points'. Without labouring the issue, I would argue that Hugo's emblematic structure for meditation is paralleled in Wintour's vestments. Her use of polychromy to render floral surfaces with vividly imagined iridian intensity (figs. W.22-23) is the equivalent in embroidery for the Ignatian heightened sense of vision (*compositio loci*). The Marian or Christological monogram provides direction for interpretation and analysis, and the dialogue and petition of the *colloquium* is rendered by her personal and family arms, crest and motto. Similarly, Martz's seventeenth century poets' meditative technique of colloquial dramatisation is paralleled by Wintour


35 Jesuit application of emblems is thus a further example of the fluidity of early modern emblematic form. Traditional literary study of the emblem has tended to prioritise literary applications of a mode, which could be applied, to a multitude of media. When studying the use of emblems in early modern embroidery it is important to remember Michael Bath's observation that the term 'applied emblematics' does not 'necessarily imply the priority of the literary models. An applied art is not necessarily secondary, nor of minor importance' (*Speaking Pictures*, p. 8). Peter Daly has done much to promote a wider concept of understanding the early modern emblem, for example, with his edited volume *The English Emblem and the Continental Tradition*.

36 *Parthenoe Sacra*, p. 6. For Hawkins's development of the Ignatian structure into a new, seven-part form, see Höltingen's introduction to *Parthenoe Sacra*, p. 6.

37 Martz, pp. 31, 29.
Fig. W.22 Detail of peasecod chasuble. Iris showing gradations of colour achieved with silk threads

Fig. W.23 Detail of green chasuble. Marigold showing gradations of colour achieved with silk threads
in the way in which she employs the stitch and design techniques common to domestic embroiderers of her time to portray intensely visualised floral emblems upon the surface of a vestment essential to the performance of the sacrament. I will return to the performative aspects of vestments later.

Whilst the Jesuit application of emblems to meditation is in general a useful tool with which to bring Wintour’s emblematic iconography into focus, it is a comparison with Henry Hawkins’s Partheneia Sacra which yields the most profit. The son of Sir Thomas Hawkins of Nash Court, Kent, Henry Hawkins (1577-1646) entered the English College of the Society of Jesus in Rome four years after the death in January 1605 of his wife, Aphra Norton, after only eleven months of marriage. After studying with the Society in Flanders, Hawkins returned to England as a missioner, travelling in the West Midlands. It is not impossible that he might have come into the circle of Recusant Catholics in which Helena Wintour moved: Høltgen suggests that Hawkins might have been the ‘priest or Jesuit’ who taught the children of the William Standford (to whom Hawkins’s 1634 emblem book The Devout Hart is dedicated), in the family homes on the outskirts of Birmingham. Hawkins’s Life of St Aldegondis dedicated to Lady Anne Arundell of Wardour. Not only was Lady Arundell the patron of Hawkins, she was also patron of one of the Marian sodalities (Høltgen suggests it might have even been the same one to which Partheneia Sacra is dedicated). These sodalities, the members of which took private vows, were established for the purpose of perfecting personal virtue,

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38 Works such as Sabine Chambers, The Garden of Our B. Lady, ed. by D. M. Rogers. English Recusant Literature 1558-1640. 381 (1619; repr. Ilkley and London: Scholar, 1978), confine the conceit of a garden to the introduction ‘to give you a full description of this Garden, and to tell you [...] what Roses, what Lilies adorn it, were newer to end, wherefore desiring you to be curious perusers of it your selves, & not to passe any thing vnoted [...]’ (sig. 6'), but are not emblematic in nature. They rather constitute guided recitations of the Rosary.

39 Høltgen gives a more detailed personal and literary biography of Hawkins in his introduction to Partheneia Sacra, pp. 1-12
for directing study and prayer, and for performing works of charity, self-sacrifice and
the conversion of souls to the Catholic faith. 40 Although members of Sodalities were
predominantly male, women were also granted membership: according to her
biographer, Anne Dacres, Countess of Arundel, was ‘admitted into the Society or
Confraternity of the Rosary, as also into the Sodality instituted in honour of the
Immaculate Conception’. 41

The garden is a sign that may be read in many ways. On one level it signifies the
embroiderer herself, for in creating her explosion of many-coloured floral emblems
Wintour represents the image of her own inner nature: ‘the Hart consecrated to the love
of Jesus’, wrote Hawkins in The Devout Hart, ‘is a flourishing garden’. 42 But in
assembling her floral iconography Wintour also recalls the moment when Christ
appeared to his disciples ‘in the forme and habit of a Gardener’, tending the ‘Garden of
their Soules’. 43 Wintour’s garden, in the context of sacramental vestments especially,
also recalls the hortus conclusus in the Song of Solomon 4. 12. The fringe or borders
containing the embroidered slips act as the garden’s boundary walls, containing and
protecting their virtue entirely within, as Hawkins’s ‘plat-forme of the garden’ is laid
out for the reader, ‘enclosed round, and compassed-in with a wal’ (p. 1).

But for Wintour, and for Hawkins, the garden in general and the hortus conclusus in
particular is quintessentially the emblem of the Virgin Mary, and of her Immaculate

40 On Sodalities see Freeman, pp. 180-81, and Philip McCosker, ‘Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary
41 The Lives of Philip Howard [. . .] and of Anne Dacres, his Wife, pp. 297-98.
42 Stephanus Luzvic The Devout Hart, trans. by Henry Hawkins, English Recusant Literature, 119
43 ‘Epistle to the Parthenian Sodalitie’, Partheneia Sacra, sig. A1’.
Fig. W.24 Detail of cope, showing floral symbols growing in a garden
Conception. Wintour's presentation of the floral emblems (fig. W.24) is analogous to that of Hawkins, who announces to the Sodality readers his intention to 'personate, and make her appear to your viewes [...] in the habit [...] of a Garden, under the veyle of Symbols' (sig. A1'). Thus, in Wintour's garden, as in Hawkins's 'emblem of the Rose', single blooms emblematic of the Virgin rise directly out of the ground (fig. W.25): on the front and backs of the deacon's and subdeacon's dalmatics, these alternate between carnations and stylised marigolds bearing the Virgin's monogram, the crowned letters MAR (fig. W.26). Flanking the flowers are vines with heavy bunches of grapes. In emblematic terms the garden that is Mary is the fertile ground which nourished the Saviour. But the overwhelming majority of the other flowers and fruits depicted in the embroidered garden are emblematic of Mary, and when a flower is emblematic of Christ, an alternative or simultaneous Marian reading is almost always possible. Unlike the revealed meaning of the monogrammed bloom, most of the embroidered flowers must be meditated upon with diligence for their true significance to be revealed, for 'nor would I wish you perfunctoriously to view her only, and passe her over with a slender glance of the eye' (sig. A1'). As in an exercise of Ignatian meditation the object viewed must be analysed. With the compositio loci of the sensual embroidered garden before him, the beholder must picture himself entering it with the mind, 'and with the wings of Contemplation [...] secretly view, reflect, review, survey, delight, contemplate, and enjoy the hidden and sublime perfections therein, and lastly obtaine, no doubt, anie

44 Collapsed into the emblems of the garden are other emblematic aspects of the Virgin available to the diligent meditator, since when she 'presents herself for your delights in Garden-attire [...] in this coarse and rural array, of herbs and flowers', it is 'as if she were clothed with the Sunne, crowned with the Starres, and trampling the Moone' (sig. A1'). And as Marina Warner's detailed study of Marian iconography shows, 'it is principally as the Immaculate Conception that the Virgin is associated with the moon and the sky' (Marina Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary, enlarged edn (London: Pan, 1985), p. 267). For another discussion of Marian emblems and iconography, see Freeman, p. 181-83.

45 The dalmatics thus present the interpretation of the emblem to the congregation as the sacrament is celebrated, and the emblem itself to the altar. This subtlety was not intended by Wintour, however, for as explained previously, the dalmatics were created from Wintour's original antependium.
Fig. W.25 Emblem of the Rose, from Henry Hawkins’s *Partheneia Sacra*

Fig. W.26 Detail of Subdeacon’s dalmatic showing single marigold and vines
reasonable suite at the hands of the SACRED PARTHENES’ (p. 4). Like a guide or example, the embroiderer lays out the steps of her own meditative process, culminating in her colloquial request for intercession: ‘ora pro me Helena Wintour’ (fig. W.27).

Wintour and Hawkins share a common emblematic vocabulary, Hawkins’s explicit, Wintour’s implicit. The introductory tour round Hawkins’s garden maps Wintour’s embroidered surface and lays out the significance of its ‘Flowers of al Vertues’ to clearer view: ‘the LILLIE of spotles and immaculate Chastitie, the ROSE of Shamfastnes and bashful Modestie […] the Gilloflower ol [sic] Patience, the Marygold of Charitie […] the SVN-FLOWER of Contemplatiō, the Tulip of Beautie and gracefulnes’ (p. 11). The shared emblematic vocabulary continues in the level of detail provided. Where Hawkins in his meditative essays expands the detail of his botanical descriptions, Wintour emboiders in silk and gold thread just such naturalistic and sensuous colour effects. Thus, the outline of her columbine (the ‘dove-flower’, emblematic of the Holy Spirit and thus of the Annunciation), like Hawkins’s ‘columbin’, is exquisitely ‘enameled with drops of gold’ (p. 10) (fig. W.28). Wintour has pursued the same painstaking observation and wondering analysis in depicting her tulip leaves with minute and startling gradations of colour (fig. W.29) as Hawkins, in his meditative exhortation to

looke and obserue it wel. How were it possible, one would think, so thin a leaf, bred and nourished in the same ayre, and proceeding from the same stem, should be golden in the bottome, violet without, saffron within, bordered on the edge with fine gold, and the prickle of the point blew as a goodlie Saphir? (p. 10)

In Wintour’s depiction of roses at various stages of bloom (one is ‘yet in its folds, and dares not hazard so much as to pheepe forth, this heer puts forth the bud, and now half-open smiles withal, and showes forth a glimps of its purple, through a cliff [sic] of the
Fig. W.27  Detail of cope showing scrolls issuing from garden, ‘Orate pro me’ ‘Helena Wintrovr’
Fig. W.28  Detail of peasecod chasuble showing columbine

Fig. W.29  Detail of Alleluia chasuble showing colour detail on tulip leaf
green Case’) (fig. W.30), we may read emblems both of the blushing, bashful virgin ‘when her glorious Paranymph discovered her Embassage to her in her secret closet’, and of the exalted Queen of Heaven, ‘a glad spectacle vnto GOD’, who is exhorted to ‘shew [...] thy face, for thy face is comelie’ (pp. 8-9, 18, 23). And Wintour presents for us (to cite one last example) an embroidered equivalent of Hawkins’s Essay upon the rose (fig. W.31), with certain golden points, and little threds of Musk or Saffron, sticking into the hart of the Rose. But to speake of the fires of its Carnation, the snow of the white Satin, the fine Emeralds, cut into little toungs round about [...] [would] fortify the hart [...] clear the cristal of the eyes [...] banish clowdes [...] coole our harts (pp 20-21).

Wintour’s full spectrum of glowing colours invites close scrutiny and analogous emblematic analysis.

The imagery that describes gardens and embroidery overlaps. As Hawkins’s garden is ‘the Pallace of Flora’s pomps, where is the wardrobe of her richest mantles, powdred with the starres of flowwers, and al embroadred with flowrie stones’, so Wintour’s vestments, embroidered with silks and precious metals and enriched with a wealth of pearls and semiprecious stones, recall the robes of the Virgin they depict (p. 6). The sunflower or ‘Heliotropion’ is ‘a verie Mart of silks, sarcenets, taffeties, and satins’ (p. 49). Its centre is like ‘some finer cloth wrought with curious needle-work’ (p. 52). Reaching for the most vivid metaphors he can imagine, Hawkins describes lilies as seeming to be made ‘of white Satin, streaked without, and al embroadred within with gold’ (p. 9). The vestments themselves are a performative surface, a ceremonial textile integral to and symbolic of the performance of the Mass. In this context the embroidered flowers sewn onto the silks are mirrored by Hawkins’s elucidation of the garden as symbol and device: it is, he said, ‘a goodlie Amphitheatre of flowers, upon
Fig. W.30 Detail of peasecod chasuble showing rose at various stages of bloom

Fig. W.31 Detail of green chasuble. ‘The fires of its Carnation, the snow of the white Satin, the fine Emeralds, cut into little toungs round about’
whose leaves, delicious beauties stand, as on a stage, to be gazed on, and to play their parts, not to see so much, as to be seen’ (p. 5). The act of gazing in meditation is transformative, but in a simile in which he explains the process of emblematic signification, Hawkins attributes a special effectiveness to the medium of iconographical textiles to help signify something beyond imagining: ‘to behold, as in a Tapestrie, the Symbol turned into an Embleme, piously composed’ (p. 3).

Hawkins’s text also sheds light on the elements of Wintour’s garden which are not botanical. He anchors the jewels that ornament and enrich Wintour’s embroidered surface in the iconography of the Virgin. Jewels reflect another aspect of the embroidered emblematic garden, and vice versa, since the Virgin-as-garden is ‘the Cabinet of flowrie gems, or gems of flowers’ (p. 6). Pearls are a particular feature of the Lady Wintour white vestment, and its wide vertical band of scrolling gold peasecods filled with hundreds of pearls and enclosing large monograms of Christ and Mary in glories of rays is a striking and unique design (fig. W.32). According to Warner, the association of the Virgin with a pearl is rare, but was debated in the mid-seventeenth century in connection with the search for the most effective way of representing the Immaculate Conception in visual terms. A pearl, ‘pure and imperishable’, is also ‘glistening, white, and spherical, an exact epiphany of the moon’, and represents Mary both in her aspect of Queen of the Heavens and also Stella maris, the star of the Sea.40 Despite these attributes, Warner continues, ‘the suggestion was not acted upon, principally because there is no biblical foundation for associating the Virgin with a pearl’.47 But Hawkins’s text is one of the few which does develop the notion, devoting

40 Warner, p. 267.

47 The pearl is used by Jesus in a parable as a metaphor for the Kingdom of Heaven, which ‘is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it’ Matthew 13: 45-46.
Fig. W.32  Vertical orphrey of pearl-filled peapods and monograms on back of peasecod chasuble
a whole section to a meditation on the emblematic representation of the Virgin as a pearl. He describes it as a polyvalent symbol, signifying that the Virgin is both 'the Pearl itself' and the 'Mother of the true Oriental Pearl, which descended from heauen' (p. 190). Wintour's enclosure of the ray-surrounded monograms of both Christ and the Virgin in her pearl-covered embroidered design represents this same double significance, Mary-as-pearl, and Mary-as-Mother-of-pearl:

the Virgin-Mother-Pearl itself, which opened her Virginal soule, at her mysterious Annunciation [...] to receive the new Margarit: that is, to conceaue that precious Pearle, Christ Iesus, in her womb [...] the Celestial deaw of the Holie-Ghost descended into her, and so this infant-Pearl was diuinely begot in the virginal womb of the Virgin-mother -Pearl (p. 192).

Wintour's peasecods are themselves an effective Marian emblem (fig. W.33). She shows them opened to show their ordered pearly contents, in the same way as her embroidered pomegranates split open to reveal the seeds (fig. W.34). The pomegranate (ancient symbol of fertility harnessed in the iconography of the Virgin, such as the Madonna of the Pomegranate in Naples), flanking the peasecod band on the Lady Wintour white chasuble, is an element of Hawkins's garden. It is 'an ordination of Vertues, and a wonderful sweetnes of Deuotion; for loe, Pomegranats haue their graines disposed in an admirable order, and are indeed most delicious fruits; to which kind of Apples the Spouse invites her Spouse' (p. 15).

Wintour's embroidered phoenix, hen and dove also occur as emblems in Partheneia Sacra. Like the pearl, these birds are double symbols. The phoenix, the central image on the Lady Wintour white burse and surmounted on the subdeacon's dalmatic by the word Resurgenti ('to the resurrecting one'), was a symbol of Christ's resurrection from
Fig. W.33  Detail of peasecod chasuble showing scrolling peapod design

Fig. W.34  Detail of pomegranate on peasecod chasuble with ‘graines disposed in an admirable order’
the early church onwards, although an unusual one (figs. W.35-37). On the burse the phoenix emphasises the resurrection which transformed the supreme sacrifice of Christ’s crucifixion into redemption, on the antependium from which the dalmatic was made it was one of a five-panelled sequence which included the pelican in her piety, symbol of the Christ who feeds his children with his blood (fig. W.38). But Hawkins makes it clear that within Wintour’s Marian-centred iconography the phoenix does double duty. For Hawkins the phoenix is the Virgin, for when God ‘framed the Incomparable Virgin Marie, and chose her to be his Mother, he made her so incomparable a Phænix, not only to all, that euer were, or shal be, but euen to such, as he intended or was able to frame’ (p. 263). Hawkins emphasises the doubleness of the symbol by juxtaposing his phoenix with images of wounds shared by Christ and his mother:

one Virgin-Mother, Phenix of her kind,

And we her Sonne without a father find.

The Sonne’s and Mothers paines in one are mixt,

His side, a Launce, her soule a Sword transfixt (p. 266).

The image of the soul or heart transfixed with a sword also occurs on every Marian monogram embroidered by Wintour (figs. W.39-40).

The hen and chicks which are applied to the front of the Deacon’s dalmatic (but which

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49 See above, p. 219.
50 The image of the pierced heart has its origin in Simeon’s prophecy to Mary in the temple, that ‘a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed’ and is the symbol in Marian devotion of the Five Sorrowful Mysteries (Luke 2: 35). The rose symbols of Marian mysteries are central to meditative techniques: the five petals of the white rose in Marian devotion signify the Five Joyful Mysteries of Mary (the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, the Finding of Christ in Temple); the five petals of the red rose the Five Sorrowful Mysteries (the Prayer and Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion and Death of Christ); and the five petals of the gold rose are the Five Glorious Mysteries (the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, the Assumption, and the Coronation of the Virgin in Heaven and the Glory of the Saints).
Fig. W.35 Helena Wintour: Phoenix burse (private collection)

Fig. W.36 Detail of phoenix on burse
Fig. W.37 Back of subdeacon's dalmatic, phoenix under archway bearing the word 'Resurgenti'

Fig. W.38 Detail of deacon's dalmatic, pelican in her piety under archway bearing the word 'Redimenti'
Fig. W.39 MRA monogram on peasecod chasuble showing pierced heart

Fig. W.40 MAR monogram on red chasuble showing pierced heart
probably originated on the white antependium) have their origins in Matthew 23.37 and Luke 13.84, in Christ’s simile, ‘how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings’ (fig. W.41). This symbol, particularly appropriate to the persecuted church appealing to the protection of their Lord, was also harnessed for iconographical purposes by Helena Wintour’s kinsman, Sir Thomas Tresham. Hawkins includes the hen in his garden because she is ‘a truly gallant Symbol of the fruitful Mother of GOD’ (p. 179). In Hawkins’s vision, it is the Virgin-as-hen who is the protector, who ‘wil rather euen dye in the place in defence of her brood, then by flying away leaue them in anie danger’, and there is ‘No mother, like the Hen, preserves her yong, | Protects, & shelters with her wings’ (pp. 179, 183) (fig. W.42). The hen is the symbol of the double fruitfulness of the Virgin: her natural fruitfulness as the mother of Jesus Christ, and her spiritual or mystical fruitfulness. The notion of mystical fruitfulness applies the Gospel verses about God the Father to Mary’s relationship with the wider church, and visualises a ‘fecunditie’ ‘which euen filleth and embraceth the whole world, that invocates and calleth upon the name of MARIE, and their common Mother’ (pp. 179, 180). Perhaps more significantly for the hen’s appearance in the context of Helena Wintour’s embroidery, Hawkins singles out the hen as the special signifier of the Sodality:

But nothing demonstrates her spiritual fecunditie so much as the innumerable multitudes of Families of the Sodalitie of her Immaculate Conception, the true Parthenian Children of our Sacred Parthenes. For in how short a time, throughout al Europe first, & then through America,

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51 Sir Thomas was the son-in-law of Sir Robert Throckmorton, brother of Helena’s great grandmother Catherine, and thus Helena Wintour’s first cousin twice removed. Tresham had assembled a very complex system of iconography around himself before his death two months prior to the Plot in September 1605, and the hen and chicks emblem is one of a number of devices used to ornament Tresham’s architectural designs, as he explains in a memorandum written 15 July 1597 (HMC, Vouchers, Series 55, III, pp. xlv, 91). Helena Wintour’s use of the symbol may signal a knowledge of his building programme and personal iconography. The families were certainly very closely connected in terms of kinship and political activity, and Sir Thomas’ grand-daughter Lucy went to St Monica’s at Louvain with Helena’s sister Mary.
Fig. W.41 Front of deacon’s dalmatic

Fig. W.42 Detail of deacon’s dalmatic. ‘The Hen preserves her young, Protects, & shelters with her wings’
the new world, the Indies as wel the East as West, haue Sodalities of al sorts and conditions whatsoever either Secular or Ecclesiastical been instituted, vnder the soueraigne and most blessed name of MARIE? which with al observance and due worship serue her as the Mother of GOD, and their common Parent: while they doubt not by her meanes to be led [...] and to obtaine Eternal saluation, if they serue her truly indeed, and but obserue the Rules of her said Sodalities (p. 180).

The dove is, of course, the principal symbol of the Holy Ghost, and as such appears on the back of Wintour’s Pentecostal red chasuble and on the front at the place where the arms and vertical element of the cross-shape meet (figs. W.43-44). A third dove is placed at the centre of the matching Pentecostal veil (fig. W.45). More unusually, the dove is also a central design element on the Lady Wintour black vestment (fig. W.46), intended for use on Good Friday and in the masses and offices of the dead. The placing of the embroidered doves in relation to the other elements of the designs is structurally significant, and may provide the key to the dove’s appearance on the black vestment. On the chasubles all three doves are placed immediately above a large Marian monogram, producing a hierarchical, symbolic representation both of Mary’s Immaculacy and her Annunciation. This notion is arresting and unanticipated on a vestment designed to be worn at Pentecost, on which the traditional tongues of flame

52 The theory and practice of liturgical colours has varied enormously over time. The most complete study of available records is by Sir William St. John Hope and E. G. Cuthbert F. Atchley, English Liturgical Colours (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan, 1918). This study surveys a vast range of printed church records, inventories and wills, as well as calendars, rubrics and customaries. It is generally agreed that the prevailing official stipulation was that red was the liturgical colour for Passiontide and Good Friday (see, for example, Hope and Atchley p. 162), but Hope and Atchley have shown many occurrences of black vestments in use for Good Friday up to the Reformation (for example, Exeter Cathedral in 1506 used a ‘casula de nigro serico’ (p. 86)). The Rev. H. G. Morse, in Observations on Notes on the History of the Liturgical Colours (London: Masters. 1882), prints a table of liturgical colours in use in six French Dioceses in the eighteenth century, and five out of the six order black vestments for Good Friday. The tradition handed down with the Lady Wintour set is that the black vestment was for use on Good Friday.

53 The black vestment is believed to be in its original state, and the embroidery of the red chasuble was reapplied in the nineteenth century, conserving the original design. The similarities in the location of the dove with respect to the Marian monogram support this belief.
Fig. W.43 Dove on back of red chasuble

Fig. W.44 Dove on front of red chasuble
Fig. W.45 Helena Wintour: red chalice veil showing Pentecostal dove

Fig. W.46 Dove on black chasuble
and clouds of falling dew illustrate the descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. On a Pentecostal vestment, the conjunction of dove and monogram suggest that this embroiderer envisages the descent of Pentecostal grace through Marian devotion, and a devotion to the Immaculate Conception and Annunciation in particular. On the front and back of the Pentecostal chasuble grace is visualised as dew dropping from the wings of a dove onto the Marian monogram in a glory of rays (figs. W.47a-b).

Hawkins glosses ‘Deaw’ at length in Partheneia Sacra, where the fall of dew is synonymous with the Annunciation: ‘Deawing, that is, the Incarnation’. Thus Mary ‘is sayd to be ful of Grace, which is a kind of Deaw’ (pp. 64, 63). Hawkins’s emblem suggests that the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles is understood by Wintour in terms of the descent of the Holy Spirit to Mary at the Annunciation, the grace of which descends further to Wintour herself and her family in emblematic showers of Marian dew falling upon Wintour personal and family devices and heraldry. And indeed, Marian intercession is understood by Hawkins in the same terms as the Annunciation, as Mary ‘with her graces and favours, as Deawes falling from heauen, perpetually doth nothing, but showre downe vpon her children and Deuotes’ (p. 68). On the back of the Pentecostal chasuble Wintour’s hope for Marian intercession is perhaps envisaged being achieved through the mediation of the Society of Jesus, since her initials and the Marian monogram are separated by the Jesuit motto A. M. D. G. Alternatively, Wintour’s embroidery, ‘to the greater glory of God’, may be her response to her trust in the Virgin’s intercession. Wintour’s Pentecostal vestment is richly ornamented with diamonds, rubies, garnets and hundreds of large pearls, and her jewelled drops of dew are rendered in variously coloured silks and silver thread (fig. W.48). She renders in embroidered terms Hawkins’s conception of spiritual dew being closely linked with the idea of mystical pearls (p. 68), an idea based on the fact that,
Fig. W.47a Front of red Pentecostal chasuble showing grace as dew descending from Holy Spirit through the Virgin to the Wintour family.
Fig. W.47b  Back of red Pentecostal chasuble showing grace as dew descending from Holy Spirit through the Virgin to Helena Wintour
looked at from one side a drop of dew 'wil looke like an Orient-pearl, and being turnd
some other way, becomes a glowing Carbuncle, then a Saphir, and after an Emerald, and
so an Amethist' (p. 66). Lastly, Hawkins names 'deaw' as the origin of the garden:

the Deaw it is which falling on our gardens empearls them with a
thousand muskie gemmes: Heer it makes the Rose, there the
Flowerdeluce; here the Tulips [...]. It is the deaw, that couers the rose
with scarlet, that clothes the lillie with innocencie [...] which embroders
the marygold with gold, and enriches al the flowers with gold, silk and
pears (pp. 62-63).

Dew first creates the flowers themselves and then, in an extension important for an
understanding of Wintour's emblematic process, endows them with symbolic meaning
by giving them colour.

My reading of Wintour's Marian-oriented understanding of Pentecost is strengthened by
the employment of the same juxtaposition of dove and monogram on the black vestment
(fig. W.49). Here, a wholly unexpected Marian emphasis on the events of Good Friday
has organised a series of monograms and ciphers below the dove to illustrate Christ's
maternal heritage: his mother Mary (MR, MRA, MAR), his father Joseph (IOSPH, IOS),
Mary's mother Anne (AN) and her father Joachim (IO). Sixteenth century Jesuit
Marian devotees Saints Ignatius (IG) and Francis Xavier (XA) are included in the
hierarchy (fig. W.50). Hawkins's Poesie on the dove provides an explanation for the
dove's presence on the black vestment. The final couplet yokes the image of Virgin-as-
Dove to crucifixion: 'But while her Sonne is shadowed on the Crosse, | The mourning
Douve in blackes laments her losse'.54 The notion of the Virgin as a 'mourning Doue in

54 A marginal note by Hawkins gives a quotation from Pierus Valerianus: 'Columbam nigram
pingebat[ur] Aegiptiu ad significanda[m] vidua[m] cum et constantem: inquit Pierius' ('Pierius
says that the dove was painted black in Egypt to signify the [chaste?] and constant widow').
Fig. W.48 Detail of Pentecostal veil showing dew ornamented with coloured silks and jewels
Fig. W.49 Front of black chasuble

Fig. W.50 Detail of black chasuble showing Marian family monograms
blackes' is perhaps linked in the Jesuit or Jesuit-directed mind to the Madonna of Monserrart, one of the mysterious 'black madonnas'. It was before this twelfth century image that Ignatius of Loyola spent the night in prayer in 1522 that led him to found the military Society of Jesus. The Madonna of Monserrart holds the child Jesus, clasping a pinecone, on her lap. On Wintour's Alleluia vestment, slips of pinecone sprays anchor into the design a panel of Spanish embroidery showing a scene from Revelation (fig. W.51). As Hawkins's Poesie on the phoenix drew a reflective comparison between the wounds of Christ and his mother, so here the experience of the grieving mother reflects her son's death, since 'they in colour sute, and to the flower correspond's the fruit' 55

In arranging the elements of her black vestment, Wintour has chosen to understand Good Friday through a distinctly Marian experience, coming to the crucifixion as a devotee of the grieving mother-as-dove. Likewise, the masses and offices of the dead are filtered through iconography that sees the Virgin as the source of intercession and, ultimately, redemption.

The embroidered silver doves are splendid centrepieces, demonstrations of Wintour's virtuosity as an embroiderer and testifying to the centrality of the dove to her theology. The upper wing feathers of the doves on the Pentecostal chasuble and veil are formed from overlapping tabs of silver ribbon depending from double rows of pearls, and the lower feathers are rendered with painstaking double rows of tiny seed-pearls highlighted by vertical bands of silver thread and silver sequins (fig. W.52a). The dove on the black vestment has coloured silks worked into the metal threads of its breast to give the

55 The idea is not developed anywhere by Hawkins in the dove emblem prose passages, although the notion is depicted in the 'Embleme' which shows a Holy Spirit dove descending to a cloud-surrounded kneeling virgin who is contemplating a rocky outcrop with a black dove perching on a branch. Above the dove is a scroll with the words 'Nigra sum', and connecting the dove and Virgin along the line of the Virgin's gaze is another scroll, 'sed formosa' (p. 207).
Fig. W.51  Detail of Alleluia chasuble showing pine-cones anchoring Revelations panel

Fig. W.52a  Detail of dove on Pentecostal chasuble
impression of a flashing rainbow (fig. W.52b) — perhaps the most striking of all Wintour’s embroidered images. Hawkins provides a key for this unusual ‘impressionistic’ feature which reinforces the reading for Wintour’s dove as a Marian symbol in her Good Friday context. According to Hawkins Mary-as-dove is exceptional in that

her neck being opposed to the Sun wil diversify into a thousand coulours,
more various then the Iris it-self, or that Bird of Iuno in al her pride; as
scarlet, cerulean, flame-coulour, and yealding a flash, like the Carbuncle,
with vermilion, ash-coulour, and manie others besides, which haue no
name, but as you borrow them from other things (p. 201).

Hawkins does not provide a theological interpretation for this natural curiosity beyond its denoting Mary’s singularity. But on the mourning black of the Lady Wintour black vestment the rainbow-coloured silks on the dove’s breast stand out, a reminder both of the new covenant between God and his people, and of Marian protection for her persecuted church in the darkest hour of the liturgical year.56

**Partheneia Sacra**, as Josephine Secker has noted, elucidates a ‘spirituality of retirement’ for which the dove is the major emblematic vehicle.57 The dove’s habit of ‘digging [...] holes in the rock, and planting [its] little pauillions there’ makes the dove the pattern for the contemplative life of ‘Reading [...] Meditation [...] Contemplation’ of Christ’s life followed by the Virgin (pp. 199, 200-01).58 A shared position and a reflection on her

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56 Freeman comments that Henry Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman* glossed ‘divers colours together, as in [...] a pigeon’s neck’ (ed. by G. S. Gordon (1634; repr. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 155), and that this was a ‘conventional comparison’ or ‘commonplace of description’ (Freeman, p. 190n). Michael Bath disagrees with Freeman as to the commonness of the image, suspecting that it was more ‘a technical image from contemporary discussion of the art of painting’ (p. 244).


58 The emblems and iconography assembled by Hawkins in *Partheneia Sacra* in general, but the dove in particular, advocate contemplative withdrawal from the world, and in this stance Hawkins supported the Tridentine canon that ‘virginity and celibacy are better and more blessed than the bond of matrimony’ (‘Melius ac beatus quam jungi in matrimonio’), Canon 10, 24th Session, Council of Trent,
Fig. W.52b  Dove with rainbow breast on black chasuble. ‘Her neck being opposed to the Sun will diversify into a thousand colours, more various than the Iris itself.’

Fig. W.53  Detail of cope showing urn of flowers, with a white, red and purple-red rose top centre, turk’s cap lilies bottom left, sunflower bottom right.
retired and pious life may be indicated in Wintour’s embroidery by the emphasis on the Virgin’s Immaculacy and Annunciation; the iconography of the Holy Spirit (such as the dove and rays of light) was particularly popular with nuns in the early seventeenth century.  

If, as I have suggested, major sources for Wintour’s iconography were indeed devotional books of the Hawkins type, designed to guide meditation, this fact would add weight to the notion that Wintour used the time she spent embroidering to meditate on emblematic representations of the Virgin Mary, her Immaculate Conception and Annunciation. The floral emblems of the Virgin represented on Wintour’s vestments cover the entirety of Mary’s life, and the sum of her virtues. Hawkins uses the same technique in his three main floral emblems of the Virgin, the rose, the lily and the sunflower. These three floral symbols are endlessly flexible subjects for meditation, and indeed, Hawkins’s text reads like a rosary. On Wintour’s embroidery Mary, the Mystical Rose, is symbolised by different coloured roses for each stage of her life (fig. W.53), as itemised by Hawkins. At her Immaculate Conception, for example, ‘the Virgin sprung even from the barren earth, | A pure white Rose was in her happie birth’. At the Annunciation,

the Holie-Ghost inflam’d, & so the white


See Geoffrey Scott’s study, in That Mysterious Man: Essays on Augustine Baker, ed. by Michael Woodward (Abergavenny: Three Peaks Press, 2001). I am grateful to Father Scott for this reference, and for his comments on an early version of this case study. St Elizabeth’s emblem was a rose, an image frequently occurring on the Wintour vestments.

He lists the significance of other floral emblems, such as the carnation, gillyflower and marigold, although he does not develop them.
By him was made a Damask firie-bright.
Lastly her Sonne made her purple-red,
When on the Crosse his precious Bloud was shed' (p. 25).

Similarly, the Virgin’s virtues may be chanted like rosary beads in contemplating the image of the lily (figs. W. 54-55):

Above, being enclosed with the Lillie of eminent Charitie; beneath, with the Lillie of profound Humilitie; inwardly, with the Lillie of internal Puritie; outwardly, with the Lillie of Virginitie; on the right hand, with the Lillie of Temperance, in prosperitie; on the left, with the Lillie of Patience, in aduersitie; before, with the Lillie of Prouidence, in future things; behind, with the Lillie of Gratitude, for passed benefits (p. 34).

The lily is the perfect image in Hawkins’s view for the secular woman ‘who vowes her chastitie’ (p. 30). And finally, as the sunflower’s natural property is to follow the sun, so Mary is steadfast in ‘regarding indeed the true Sunne of Justice, whom she followed stil in the whole course of her life, vnto her death’ (p. 52). And thus the Virgin is to be found ‘alwayes [...] turned to the Sun. In her Natiuitie, an Heliotropion; in the Presentation, an Heliotropion; in the Annunciation, an Heliotropion; in the Purification, and in euerie action, a true Heliotropion’, until the hour of her death, when, her eyes still fixed upon her son, ‘she was translated from the earth and assumpted into heaven’ (pp. 54, 55).

Hawkins’s botanical descriptions may or may not have served Helena Wintour, and she may or may not have followed his emblematic meditative process; no record of Wintour’s reading matter has survived. But the parallel reading of printed and embroidered text has shed much light on Wintour’s devotional practice, and the information so learned may usefully be borne in mind when making a closer study of the liturgical aspects of her embroidered texts.
Fig. W.54 Detail of cope showing crimson lily

Fig. W.55 Detail of cope showing turk’s cap lilies
III: *Veni Sanctus Spiritus*: The Iconography of Personal Devotion

The textual elements of Wintour's vestments are in themselves strikingly unusual. In exerting a choice over texts to embroider, including phrases from scriptural texts and non-scriptural hymns, from sequences and doxology, Wintour exerts a subtle influence over the interpretation of the Mass as it is performed. I want here to suggest that Wintour's choice of text is consistent with her choice of emblems, emphasising a personal devotion to the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception and Annunciation, through which she understands the Scriptures, the Offices, and the liturgical calendar.

It is unusual to see the early modern church and its ministers clothed in the liturgy. Monograms are familiar devices on church ornaments including vestments and furnishings, as are heraldic representations of their donors, but Wintour's embroidered vestments emphasise the importance of the word, understood both literally in terms of the spoken words of scripture and liturgy, and spiritually as the Word made flesh. Her Jesuit priests, clothed in text, perform a literary and literal version of the raising of the gospel to altar and congregation, and her iconography and text, carefully-positioned in their compartments and separated by gold bands, mirror for the early modern worshipper the gilded binding of books and illuminated manuscripts for the medieval laity. These vestments are not intended for an illiterate multitude, but for an intimate, literate minority, the educated Catholic recusant laity. They constitute a statement of resistance to the Anglicising pressure of the Protestant King James Bible and emphasise the Latin Vulgate of the Roman Church.61 Thus, three biblical quotations in rings

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61 Although there were, of course, those Protestants, like Donne and Andrewes, who still cited scripture from the Latin.
containing the Jesuit IHS monograms underscore the scriptural basis for the Jesuit devotion to the Holy Name and provide a textual gloss on the IHS monograms: on the Alleluia vestment (fig. W.56), ‘Sit nomen Domini benedictum in eternum’ (Blessed be the name of the Lord forever), from Daniel 2. 20; on the cope (fig. W.57), ‘Datvm est nomen qvod est svper omne nomen’ (God [...] hath [...]given him a name which is above every name), from Philippians 2. 9; and on one of the Lady Wintour chalice veils (figs. W.58-59), ‘Nomen dulce, nomen delectabile’ (Sweet name, delectable name). 

Wintour’s embroidered vestments narrate, symbolise and perform the moment at which God becomes man and man relates to God through the mystery of the Sacrament. At the same time as the fertile gardens on Wintour’s dalmatic and cope and the iconography of the Immaculate Conception and Annunciation on the Pentecostal chasuble narrate the Word made flesh, and the vestments play their integral role in the performance of the sacrament, the High Mass cope (assembled from the old antependia embroidery) invites the Holy Spirit to descend with the words of the Golden Sequence, the Pentecostal gradual: ‘Veni Sanctus Spiritus’ ‘Veni pater paupervm’, ‘Veni dator mvnervm’, ‘Veni lvmen cordivm’ (Come Holy Spirit, Come thou Father of the poor, Come, thou Giver of gifts, Come, thou Light of hearts) (fig. W.60). The text in scrolls encloses flaming hearts for which Hawkins gives an emblematic gloss: the heart ‘enflamed with the love of Jesus shines al with light and flames’. We have seen how the Pentecostal vestment shares the Marian iconography of the Immaculate Conception and Annunciation with the rest of the vestments. But of course it also narrates, symbolises and performs its

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62 One source for this phrase is the Burnett Psalter, fol. 58', in the University of Aberdeen (the page is illustrated at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/historic/coll_s/text/058r.htm, with a Latin transcription and English translation. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) also wrote of the sweetness of the name of Jesus. Translations of his writings on the subject were set as hymns in the nineteenth century (I am grateful to John Horoyd for this reference).

Fig. W.56 Front of Alleluia chasuble with IHS monogram in rays of glory overlaid with gold ring bearing words ‘Sit nomen Domini benedictum in eternum’

Fig. W.57 Hood of cope with HIS monogram in rays of glory overlaid with gold ring bearing words ‘Datvm est nomen qvod est sver omne nomen’
Fig. W.58 Helena Wintour: chalice veil with IHS in rays of glory (private collection)

Fig. W.59 Detail of chalice veil with IHS monogram in gold band bearing words ‘Nomen dulce nomen delectabile’
Fig. W.60 Detail of orphreys on cope with golden sequence, ‘Veni Sanctus Spiritus, Veni pater pavpervm, Veni dator mvenvm, Veni lvmen cordivm’

Fig. W.61 Detail of red Pentecostal chasuble with text completing the golden sequence, ‘Veni Sancte Spiritvs, Reple tvoorvm corda fidelivm’
precise liturgical function with respect to the descent of the Holy Spirit in the same way as the High Mass cope.

Unexpectedly, both vestments share their liturgical texts and iconography. Although she covers all the colours required by the rubrics in her collection of vestments, Wintour does not treat the events of the liturgical calendar in the same way. Textually, she emphasises the descent of the Holy Ghost, imagined within her Marian iconography as referring to her Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation and to the Pentecostal events understood through the frame of Marian devotion. For example, she pares down the four sequences enshrined by Tridentine reform to just one, the Golden Sequence of Pentecost. The sequence is split between vestments, and completed on the Pentecostal red veil with the exhortation ‘Veni Sancte Spiritus’, ‘Reple tvorum corda fidelium’ (Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people) (fig. W.61). That the original intention was to divide the sequence is indicated by the iconographical treatment of the scrolls, which differs from the cope scrolls both in shape and in the placing of the heart emblems: the text on the veil is split into four parts, one for each corner, and the scrolls curve into the corners with a heart pendant from each one. It would seem logical for the Golden Sequence to have been mounted originally on the red antependium, although this cannot be said for certain.64 Helena Wintour’s preference for the iconography of the Immaculate Conception, Annunciation and of Pentecost extends throughout the liturgical year. Thus, a silver dove appears on the Lady Wintour black vestment, the scrolling peasecods and floral symbolism on the Lady Wintour white vestment emphasise the Virgin’s own immaculacy, and Christ’s spotless incarnation, the ‘LILLIE

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64 This would leave the emblematic birds in their compartments for the white antependium. This would make sense of the rather ambiguous nineteenth century description of the antependia before they were dismantled, see above, p. 218-19.
of spotles and immaculate Chastitie', ornaments the High Mass cope.

The text Wintour chose to illustrate the Easter liturgy is 'Alleluia' (fig. W 62). Omitted from the Masses and Offices in the nine weeks between Septuagesima and Easter, the Alleluia is the liturgical expression of joy and praise. It appears four times on the vestment, echoing the Roman usage of chanting the normal double Alleluia, scriptural verse and another Alleluia at Easter with an extra verse and another Alleluia added. Other liturgical texts might have been chosen. The panel of Spanish embroidery (which appears integral to the design), depicts the vision of Revelation 5 in which a book is sealed with seven seals, which 'no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open' (v. 3). A slain lamb standing 'in the midst of the throne' is found worthy to break the seals and open the book, and a company of angels is heard 'saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing' (vv. 6, 12). Instead of this text, or the Paschal Sequence Victimae paschali laudes, the Alleluia has been chosen to anchor the vestment within the liturgy.

The simple, immediate Easter cry of joy is the textual expression of the uncontainable explosion of flowers bursting out of the confines of their strapwork panels (fig. W 63). In the golden tulips of Wintour's embroidered Easter garden of resurrection Christ's 'bitter cup' is transformed into a living chalice (fig. W 64). His love is represented by red and white carnations and roses. Scrolling vines and bunches of grapes symbolise not only Christ's redemptive blood and his victory over death, but also his promise to his disciples in the parable of the vine. They celebrate the body of the newly established church, united in sacrament: 'I am the vine, ye are the branches' (John 15.5). Pomegranates embroidered on back of the shoulder panels are split wide open to reveal
Fig. W.62 Back of Alleluia chasuble showing the ‘Allelvia’ scrolls

Fig. W.63 Front of Alleluia chasuble
Fig. W.64 Tulips as crimson-stained chalices on Alleluia chasuble
their countless seeds, underscoring the creation of the Christian church. And simultaneously, Wintour’s iconography as usual filters the Easter experience through Marian devotion. By placing a jewel-encrusted and crowned Marian monogram at the top of the front band above the IHS monogram in its glory of rays, Wintour glories in the apotheosis of the Mother of Christ through the resurrection of her Son (fig. W 63). The Virgin’s floral emblems reflect this apotheosis. No longer separate slips, the flowers appear to grow riotously from the same stems, drawn into a single design by the strapwork. They are all here: the lily of her chastity, the rose of her modesty and purification, the gillyflower of her patience, the marigold of her charity and the tulip of her beauty and grace. And each virtue has been ornamented by the Easter miracle. The blood of Christ has drenched the embroidered golden lilies, the white roses and carnations and tinged each of them with red, transforming the Virgin’s garden into an emblem of the Resurrection (fig. W.62).

The irrepressible riot of flowers and textual cry of joy on the Alleluia vestment are designed to provide the strongest possible contrast with the stripping of the altars on Maundy Thursday and the black vestments of Good Friday. As the Alleluia vestment illustrates a central moment in the Paschal liturgy, so the Lady Wintour black vestment illustrates the Good Friday offices. Mass was not said on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Instead, it was replaced with the Liturgy of the Word, the Veneration of the Cross, and the Reception of the Eucharist. Wintour responds to this spare liturgy by paring down her iconography to her series of Marian-related monograms, reflecting the Liturgy of the Word. The conventional form of the cross on which the monograms are borne echoes the Veneration of the Cross. The final element of the Good Friday Office,
the Reception of Communion, is dramatised by the presence of Wintour's embroidered silver dove.

Two other texts give indications of Helena Wintour's religious life. Above and below the Golden Sequence on the left- and right-hand orphreys of the High Mass cope are phrases from the *Te Deum*, 'Sanctus, sanctus', 'Divus Devs Sabaoth', 'Plena est orbis terra gloria tva' (Holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory), and the Lesser Doxology, 'Gloria Pri et Filio et Spiritu Sancto', 'sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper' (Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and for ever shall be) (figs. W.65-66). The scrolls containing the texts surround embroidered cherubim or seraphim, who continually cry the Sanctus, according to the *Te Deum*, and stand in for the missing text with their winged forms. Both texts are contained in the breviary Offices (the lesser Gloria appended at the end of every Psalm), and form an important part of the daily devotions recited alone or in small groups by the laity when a priest is not available to say Mass (indeed, the Greater Doxology which Wintour chose not to embroider, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, would have been more appropriate for the Mass for which the cope was subsequently created). The choice of texts embroidered on the original antependium may thus have served Wintour's private daily Offices. This notion is supported especially by the inclusion of the *Te Deum* which is not part of the Mass itself.

Personal and family arms, crest and motto and Jesuit symbols and iconographical emphasis create a memorial and an embroidered testament which may be read clearly after three and a half centuries. Wintour's memorial is designed to be performed with each mass. Her prayer for intercession, 'ora pro me Helena Wintovr' is directed as
Fig. W.65 Left-hand orphrey of cope with Te Deum liturgy, ‘Dnvs Devs Sabaoth’, ‘Plena est orbis terra gloria tva’, ‘Sanctus’
Fig. W.66 Right-hand orphrey with Lesser Doxology, 'Gloria Pri et Filio et Spiritu Sancto', 'Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper'
much to the Virgin as to the clergy who are clothed in the prayer and the laity who witness it. The iconographical version of Wintour testamentary bequest to the Jesuits is clearer and more effective than the legal documents that provide for it. She ‘signs’ her work with personal and family heraldry, but also, perhaps, with floral iconography: a spray of honeysuckle at the base of the Lady Wintour green vestment where one would expect donor/maker heraldry to be found is conspicuous in its smaller scale, and may be a modest reference to Wintour’s enduring faith (fig. W.67).

Whilst the link between Hawkins and Wintour cannot be firmly proved, it is a fact that, while most of the unmarried women in the Gunpowder Plot families (including Helena’s own sister Mary) left the country to seek refuge in the convents on the Continent, Helena Wintour remained in England, living the type of life that Hawkins advocated. She remained unmarried, lived in retirement, and dedicated herself to prayer, self-sacrifice, performing works of charity, and supporting the Catholic church. In undertaking to embroider a cycle of vestments which uses as its central conceit the notion of the Virgin Mary as garden, Wintour emphasised a personal devotion to the Virgin Mary, and to her Immaculate Conception and Annunciation. The iconography

66 Charlotte Mayhew gives this reading for the honeysuckle in an appendix of religious symbolism. On the back of the vestment, a small sprig of borage is placed in the same way at the base of the design. There were three main trends in the directions taken by those female relations of the Plotters who took vows, suggesting that plans to move to the continent were made together. Mary Wintour joined the newly-formed convent of St Monica’s, Louvain, together with Francis Tresham’s younger daughter Lucy (third cousin of Helena and Mary Wintour), and Dorothea Rookwood, half-sister of the Plotter Ambrose. Helena Wintour’s third cousin once removed Joyce Vaux (daughter of Eliza and niece of Anne Vaux and Eleanor Brookeby) joined Mary Ward’s Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Dorothea Rookwood’s sister Susanna. See p. 190 above for more details and connections. The third trend was to remain in England and take secular vows. Helena Wintour’s second cousin twice removed was Anne Vaux. She was the dedicatee of Leonard Lessius’ *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons*, trans. by J. W. P [John Wilson Priest?] ([St Omers], 1621), and lived ‘to all intents and purposes as a nun’ (Anstruther, p. 189). Interestingly, in the context of Helena Wintour’s retired lifestyle and her likely endowment of a Jesuit school at Tibberton, Anne Vaux’s name was given to the Privy Council in 1635 ‘for harbouring a Jesuit School for the education of young Catholic gentlemen at her mansion, Stanley Grange, near Derby’ (Fraser, p. 268).
Fig. W.67 Honeysuckle at bottom edge of green chasuble

Fig. W.68 Wintour family and personal heraldic devices within the protection of the Marian garden, with embroidered date '1656' on bridge, and flanking the garden 'Orate pro me' 'Helena Wintovr'
on the cope even envisages Wintour within the protection of the Marian garden (fig. W 68). The Immaculate Conception was not enshrined in doctrine by the Council of Trent, and indeed was not declared dogma until Pope Pius IX’s Bull of 1854. In the sixteenth century, according to Marina Warner, Oxford scholars used folios of fourteenth-century theological texts arguing the immaculate nature of Mary’s conception as wastepaper. Warner describes seventeenth century debate over the Immaculate Conception in terms of a ‘conflict’, argued on the Jesuits’ side with ‘fierce militancy’. Debate on the issue was actually banned by Pope Paul V in 1616. Nonetheless the Immaculate Conception had its devoted followers. In Jesuit-led communities, in convents and for those in the wider community who had taken private vows (such as members of a Sodality devoted to the Immaculate Conception), the Virgin Birth was of vital significance and importance. It was reflected in the iconography they created and with which they surrounded themselves. The emphasis in Helena Wintour’s embroidered hortus conclusus on the iconography of the Immaculate Conception, the ubiquity of pearls as both ornamental and structural device, the floral symbols of virginity and holy spirit (lilies and columbines), the recurring dove and the rays of light surrounding her monograms, and the Jesuit-led doubleness of the phoenix and hen symbols are powerfully persuasive of a personal devotion to the Immaculate Conception, and perhaps suggest that Wintour leant towards, or had taken, private vows of the sort made by a member of a Sodality dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

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68 Warner, p. 237.
69 Warner, pp 248, 247, 249.
CHAPTER THREE: EMBROIDERING POLITICS

I opened this thesis with three paradigmatic instances of needlework which, in their diversity, suggested that values obtained for early modern needlework other than those we might ordinarily expect, that more lay behind the practice than was readily apparent. After unfolding the significance of Bess's lawsuit and Helena Wintour's vestments in the previous chapters, I want here ultimately to revisit my remaining original instance, Mary Stuart's gift of a personally-embroidered skirt to Elizabeth in 1574. The gift and Elizabeth's reaction to it were of sufficient significance to contemporary observers to be mentioned in international diplomatic reports. Gifts, however small, were understood to carry discursive weight: one of James's Privy Councillors, the Earl of Worcester, told the Earl of Shrewsbury that he did not understand the 'meaning' of the unusual gifts which the French Queen had sent to Queen Anna and others at Court in 1604. Gifts of needlework crop up regularly in letters, diaries — even state records — in relation to suits to the crown or crown representatives, suggesting that needlework had a widely accepted role to play in political patronage. In this chapter I want to examine how a number of aristocratic women used the needlework gift as a mediating vehicle within the structures of patronage at the courts first of Elizabeth and subsequently of James, to have their political needs met. These needs will be seen to be various: in extreme cases (such as those of Mary and Arbella Stuart) personal liberty was at stake; in other cases suits were made for land, for preference or for political gain, but all cases demonstrate a

1 See above, pp. 17-18.
political use of needlework by politically sophisticated women.

Many studies have been made of Early Modern gift-giving in general, relating the practice to the networks of patronage which structured aristocratic relations. Early modern gift-giving is understood to have positioned both the giver and receiver in a web of obligations, of acceptance and reciprocity, which bound them together, socially and politically. Gifts constituted a well-defined mode of social intercourse within the royal courts, and everyone, of necessity, participated. Arbella Stuart, for example, was seriously concerned about the effect on her allowance of having to make expensive embroidered New Year’s gifts, as she confessed to her Aunt Mary Talbot.

I am making the King a purse. And for all the world else I am unprovided. This time [New Year] will manifest my poverty more than all the rest of the yeare [...] my quarters allowance [two hundred pounds] will not defray this one charge I believe.’

Two studies of the early modern gift process provided the foundations for the study of the political function of elite gifts of needlework. Patricia Fumerton’s *Cultural Aesthetics* (1991) saw the early modern ‘self’ (what has in this study been termed ‘persona’ and ‘personage’) constitute itself from the circulation of fragmented trivia, miniatures, sonnets, aesthetic gifts which symbolise the self in such a way that it can be

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4 Arbella Stuart to Mary Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, dated 8 December 1603, *A Calendar of Talbot Papers*, ii: Talbot Papers in the College of Arms, fols. 206-07, cited in *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart: 1575-1615*, ed. by Sara Jayne Steen (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 195. Arbella was at this time living with her grandmother Bess of Hardwick, and forbidden to travel away from her. Let alone attend court: as Bess reported to Cecil’s investigator, Sir Henry Brounker, on 10 March 1602 Arbella ‘asked if she was a prisoner, and said she would see, and so went to the gates, and would have gone out but was not suffered’ (JMC Salisbury [Herefield], XII, p. 689, n. 27).
moved about, positioned and repositioned 'amid the collective bonding and identity of gift society'.\footnote{Furnerton, p. 64.} Furnerton's study examined the significance of the gift to Elizabethan court society, and maintained that 'Elizabethan aristocratic society created itself in great part […] through an imaginative recreation of its practice of exchanging trivial things'.\footnote{Furnerton, p. 31.}

The documentary material that accompanies or discusses needlework gifts at the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts will be seen to place elaborate stress on the trivial nature of these gifts (despite the economic realities that lay behind them), and to be engaged in the kind of 'imaginative recreation' of the gifts which is concerned to bind courtier to courtier, courtier to monarch. Janet Arnold's major 1988 study of the Great Wardrobe of Queen Elizabeth had previously devoted a chapter to the needlework gifts given to and from Elizabeth I, including much factual information on the well-formulated custom of giving New Year's gifts to the monarch. Arnold advances the intriguing hypothesis that in the later years of her life Elizabeth's subjects were, in part, responsible for her public image in their choice of gifts:

Elizabeth became not only a glittering symbol of church and state power, but also a cult figure — Pandora, Gloriana, Cynthia, Belphoebe, Astraea, Queen of the Sea […]. The often complex symbolism expressed in the rich embroideries was in many cases chosen by close friends and loyal subjects as well as those trying to climb the ladder of preferment […]. Although the ladies-in-waiting could advise donors on colours and fashions, to a certain extent Elizabeth's clothes in the closing years of her reign reflected her subjects' attitude towards her and their taste'.\footnote{Arnold, p. 2. Such a theory merits further study, although for reasons of scope Elizabeth's image as monarch is not considered in detail in this thesis.}

Of more importance to my present study, however, is Arnold's suggestion of an intimate
connection between the evolution of textiles during the reign of Elizabeth and the real business of politics. She argues that it was the practice of court gifting, more than sartorial fashion (itself a matter of political statement) that was the engine of change for national tastes. Embroidery and fabrics, she believes, became more elaborate during the reign of Elizabeth precisely because ‘the donors were not only striving to please the Queen and show their loyalty, but also to keep abreast of each other’.\(^8\) Fumerton and Arnold have opened up opportunities for others, such as Lisa Klein and myself, to examine the practice of court gift-giving. Following on from Klein’s analysis of the socially constitutive nature of Elizabethan gifts of needlework, ‘essays in self-promotion’ which ‘ingratiate in order to empower’, I will argue that the gift of a hand-made needleworked article, often accompanying a suit to the monarch, was used by individual women seeking to further their political strategies.\(^9\) This was particularly the case for that epitome of the Jacobean court correspondent, Arbella Stuart.

I will need to explore the way in which discourses of patronage and gift-giving are connected. Scholars have recently begun to focus their critical attention on what Linda Levy Peck has termed ‘the usually veiled role of women as patrons, clients and brokers’.\(^10\) Their discussions will provide me with a political context in which to read the significance of needlework gifts that have been equally invisible until comparatively recently.\(^11\) The patronage process is recorded in letters between Arbella Stuart as client,

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\(^8\) Arnold, p. 2.
\(^9\) Klein, pp. 484, 461.
\(^10\) Peck, *Court Patronage*, pp. 47-48. Peck notes that ‘the Countess of Bedford and Countess of Denbigh were more important at the Courts of James I and Charles I than their husbands’, p. 68.
and her brokers and patrons at court. Stuart's see-sawing fortunes meant that she was often in the position of having to correspond with her would-be patrons, rather than bringing her petitions in person. Clearer traces remain of her gifting practices than would otherwise have come down to us, and the rigorous editing and revision of her letters reveal her to have been a woman alive to the most subtle nuances of diplomacy. In this context we may view her needlework as a diplomatic instrument employed with the highest degree of sophistication. Stuart and her correspondents frequently dwell upon the needlework gift as a sign that, in the way it is given and received, charts the evolution of their patronage relationship. I will need to unpack the syntax of the political needlework gift, to explore the way language was used to bring about a 'social contract'.

The choice of language employed for the purposes of patronage is significant: political reality finds expression in a contemporary theory of grace, its neo-Senecan vocabulary pervading courtly literature of the time from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* to James I's *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*. The aristocratic vocabulary of grace, it will be seen, locates the gifts both as symbols of and mediators in court-crown relations. The dual function of the needlework gift is also visible in the court masque, in which the presentation of needlework gifts mirrors the masque's structure, language and significance. The performance of such gifts within the context of masques seems not only to have been currency in the flow of patronage between monarch and elite subjects, but also to have been symbolic of the ties of loyalty and need which bound the court together, and of the interconnectedness of the members of the social elite. Needlework

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12 Klein investigates needlework's part in formulating a social contract, 'the self-interested organization of individuals into a community', pp. 463-71.
gifts, I will argue, were symbolic of the network of power relations at the same time as they were playing their part in the continuous reformulation of those relations.

The theoretical bases constructed by the survey of the treatment in Stuart’s correspondence of her needlework gifts will provide a context in which other traces of political gift-giving become visible. As Stuart’s gift-giving history moves from the reign of Elizabeth into the reign of James, such bases will allow interpretation of Anne Clifford’s seemingly slender but densely compacted references to her experience of the patronage process. Needlework’s contribution to issues of access and brokerage will be explored within the structures of an alternative centre of power: the Court of Anna of Denmark, James’s consort. I will suggest that Anne Clifford was one member of a ‘feminine commonwealth’ that could and did avail itself of the operation of power structures parallel to those of James’s departments. I want to argue that needlework, women’s work, facilitated women’s political agency in a female political hierarchy. Once again, such political practices will prove to be encoded within the symbolic presentation of needlework gifts at the final masque danced before the Queen’s Court at Greenwich.

Needlework is located in this chapter as an important instrument accompanying suits to the Elizabethan and subsequently Jacobean crown, and an established vehicle for political mediation. The chapter, and the thesis, will conclude with an extended study of needlework’s political function in action, examining in the case study the way Mary Stuart employed her needlework as her part in diplomatic negotiations with Elizabeth. Mary’s sequences of discursive needlework stands both at the beginning of the period of time covered by this thesis, and as the logical end point of the thesis’s argument, inasmuch as it locates needlework as a discursive tool employed at the very highest
I: Arbella Stuart: Embroidering the Currency of Patronage

In 1601 Arbella Stuart (fig. 3.1) presented Queen Elizabeth with a New Year's gift of a 'scarfe or head-veil of lawn cut-worke flourished with silver and sundry colurs'. Elizabeth's reception of Stuart's needlework gift was of considerable interest to connected parties, as had been the case for the embroidered gift of Arbella's aunt Mary Stuart. Lady Dorothy Stafford, a Gentlewoman of the Queen's Privy Chamber from the first year of Elizabeth's reign, wrote to Stuart's grandmother Bess of Hardwick to report how the gift had been received. The Queen had taken 'an especiall likeing to that [gift] of my Lady Arbellas', said Stafford, with the result that the Queen 'would be carefull of her'. Less encouraging news followed, however. The Queen 'withal hath returned a token to my Lady Arbella, which is not so good as I should wish it, nor so good as her ladyship deserveth in respect of the rareness of that which she sent unto Her Majesty'. Cut-work was an intricate technique, and an example is shown in fig. 3.2. It is clear from this and other documents mentioning Arbella's gifts to Queen Elizabeth that they constituted political manoeuvrings, 'tokens' of the status of a political relationship. In this case, the reception of the gift was an indicator of Arbella's likely marriage prospects with Queen Elizabeth as broker. This slender exchange, at an angle from the main axis of giver and recipient, is a good example of the density of language that surrounds needlework gift exchange. The terms 'likeing', 'carefull', and 'token' are

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13 Stafford was the daughter of Henry, Lord Stafford, and the wife of Sir William Stafford. She served Queen Elizabeth for forty years, dying at the age of seventy-eight the year following the Queen's death (Arnold, p. 103).


15 Although we have no record of the nature of this token returned, the subtleties of the response, giving and retracting favour, seem to have been typical of Elizabeth's dealings with Arbella. See, for example Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, pp. 20-21.
Fig. 3.1 ‘C. V. M.’: Arbella Stuart. Oil on panel, 1589 (Hardwick Hall)

Fig. 3.2 Coloured cutwork cushion, and detail (inset). Silk and metal thread on linen (Hardwick Hall)
replete with codified meaning. I intend here to explore the language used by Stuart to present her needlework to the crown, the political meanings of royal responses to gifts, and the significances that lie behind the gift given in return, seen here to be interpreted closely by Stafford for signs of political favour.

It is here worth reviewing the salient features of Stuart’s life, to create the context in which her need for patronage, and the letters and needlework gifts she made, can be located. Born in 1575, Arbella Stuart was the daughter of Lord Henry Darnley’s younger brother, the Earl of Lennox Charles Stuart (and thus was the grand-daughter of Henry VIII’s sister Margaret Tudor by her second husband, the 6th Earl of Angus), and of Bess of Hardwick’s daughter Elizabeth Cavendish. Arbella’s father died when she was six months old; her Scottish and English estates were appropriated by James VI and Elizabeth I. 16 Despite her poverty her lineage made her a strong contender for the throne of England, and as such, her marriage was a serious political issue, first for Elizabeth I, who refused to sanction any union, and subsequently for James I. 17

Arbella was brought up by her grandmother Bess after her mother’s death in 1582, at Bess’s expense. Arbella’s favour with Queen Elizabeth was precarious: she was alternately summoned to, and sent away from, court. After her disgrace and dismissal in 1588, for reasons that are not entirely clear but are perhaps connected with an unwise display of pride in front of Elizabeth, she languished at Hardwick for more than a

16 Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, pp. 15-16.
17 Various plans and marriage possibilities for Arbella are discussed by Steen in Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, pp. 19-22. She concludes (p. 28), that ‘Stuart would disappoint her family’s hopes if she did not marry well. She had been denied her inheritance and awarded an inadequate pension that made her financially dependent on her relatives. Unmarried, she was a liability, when, were she but suitably wed, she could advance them. And marriage offered escape; she would no longer be forced to remain at Hardwick Hall. Thus Stuart’s needs were directly opposed to those of Queen Elizabeth, for whom Stuart was valuable while she was unmarried and marketable’. 260
decade. In 1602 Arbella tried unsuccessfully to arrange a marriage with the Earl of
Hertford, Edward Seymour, but her letters to him were passed to the crown, and the
matter was investigated.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, shortly after the presentation of her lawn scarf, Stuart
was again a virtual prisoner at Hardwick. She was denied outdoor exercise, her leisure
activities were curtailed severely, her correspondence was intercepted. Relations
between the Bess and Arbella deteriorated as Arbella became increasingly frustrated
with her situation. But Stafford’s report of the scarf’s reception stands as evidence of
one thing the two women did have in common: a powerful awareness of needlework’s
value as a political tool.\textsuperscript{19} Arbella was a skilled needlewoman. The embroidered gifts
she presented initially to Elizabeth I and then Queen Anna are a constant thread running
through the various chapters of her life, and the letters accompanying them chronicle her
changing fortunes. Later, she also corresponded with Queen Anna’s brother King
Christian IV and Queen Anna Catherine of Denmark, whose patronage and support she
sought, and she sent needlework to the Danish Queen. Stuart’s politics of gift-giving
had its blueprint in her aunt Mary Queen of Scots’s gift of the embroidered skirt to
Elizabeth, and would later find an echo in Anne Clifford’s gifts to Queen Anna.\textsuperscript{20}

With Elizabeth’s death, Arbella was eventually welcomed back to the court, to an
honoured place in the retinue of Queen Anna, whom she served as Carver and Train-
bearer.\textsuperscript{21} As Sara Jayne Steen says in her edition of Stuart’s letters, correspondence
with her family in these court years reveals ‘much about the patronage network in which
Stuart and her relatives were active participants’. She ‘worked not only for her

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{19} Letters from Bess to her broker at court regarding a needlework gift to Elizabeth are cited and
discussed by Arnold, pp. 95-96.
\textsuperscript{20} See below, pp. 301, 308, 317.
\textsuperscript{21} An account of Stuart’s years with the Queen’s Court is given by Lewalski, \textit{Writing Women}, pp. 79-84.
individual advancement, but also for the wider network of her family and friends'. They sought patronage of every kind and at every level, using Arbella as intermediary at court. In the other direction, she passed on insider information about court politics and advice for self-presentation to her family away from court. But despite her best efforts, a marriage arranged by the crown was not forthcoming, and Arbella eventually contracted a private marriage with William Seymour (nephew of Jane Seymour) without James's permission.

When news of Arbella Stuart's private marriage to William Seymour became public on 8 July 1610, William Seymour was imprisoned in the Tower, and Stuart ordered into exile in the north of England. Prevented by indisposition from undertaking the journey and granted time to convalesce, she organised a visit, disguised as a man, to her husband in the Tower on 3 June 1611. Seymour escaped the same day from the Tower dressed as a carter, and both husband and wife effected separate escapes to France. Sara Jayne Steen records that Stuart raised most of the money for her escape by the sale to Mary Talbot of the needlework panels that Mary Queen of Scots had made during her imprisonment in the north. Seymour made the voyage successfully, but Stuart was captured off Calais and returned to England, and imprisonment in the Tower, where she

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22 *Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, pp. 49-51. In geographical terms, the court and its fashions were so distant that those who by choice or by fortune lived on their country estates depended mainly on their court contacts for essential advice on political manoeuvring. Arbella's grandmother, Bess of Hardwick, as Lady St Loe, consulted Lady Frances Cobham on the suitability of gifts to the Queen. Lady Cobham's advice was to forward her unmade-up embroidered fabric, 'for that the fasshuyne ys much altared senes yow were heyr' (letter, dated 21 October (no year), Folger X.d.428 (16), quoted in Arnold, p. 96). Linda Levy Peck gives a chapter to her study of Court Patronage and Corruption to the subject of communicating with the court from a distance, in Chapter 4: 'Court Connections and County Associations: The Case of Buckinghamshire', pp. 75-105.

23 'Somehow, Arbella had scraped together £2,800, of which £1,800 was from Mary Talbot, including £850 which Mary had given to Arbella in payment for some needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots (later said to be not worth an eighth of the sum paid). This needlework could be the octagons and panels now at Oxburgh Hall, which may have arrived there through Mary Talbot's daughter Alathea' (recorded unreferenced in David Durant, *Arbella Stuart* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), p. 191).
died on 25 September 1615.

i: The Grateful Gift and the Language of Patronage

On 24 October 1606 Arbella Stuart wrote to thank Queen Anna Catherine of Denmark for having accepted a needlework gift of 'my handyworke'. She describes it as 'that trifle, which with blushing at the unworthinesse thearof I presumed to present unto your Majesty'. The 'trifle', she continued, had been intended as 'the signification of my dutifull respect and affection to your Majesty in hope it will please you by wearing my handiworke, to continue me in your gratious favour and remembrance'. Stuart makes explicit the status of the gift. It is not simply a mnemonic object (although its function in part had been to recall Stuart to the Queen's mind, and it is pressed into service once more in this connection), it is also a signifier of Stuart's loyalty, representing her as a social and political subject. As such it has its place in the structuring of power relations through the delineation of the patron-client system. In accepting the needlework gift, and publicly displaying it, Anna Catherine will endorse Stuart as a personal client: the 'wearing' of her 'handiworke' functions 'to continue me in your [...] favour'. Stuart learned of the reception of such gifts as far as the status of patronage ties was concerned, and their concrete political outcome, through the Danish King Christian's Lord Chamberlain, Sir Andrew Sinclair. For example, in a letter dated 26 August 1606, he wrote that

'It hes plaisett bothe thair Magesties to command me to vrett thair Most gratious Recommendations to your Ladyship and to thank your Laydyship for the honnest favours it hes plaisett your Laydyship to bestou on bothe thair Magesties. the Queene in speciall estimes Mutche of that present your Laydyship her sent hir Magestie and sayes that hir

Magentie vell vair it for your Laydyships sake the Kinge hes commandett me to assure your Laydyship that there is no honnour advancement nor plaisour, that his Magestie kand do you Laydyship bot he sall do it faithfully, and vellingly, as one of the beste frends your Laydyship hes in the varld.\textsuperscript{25}

The letter makes plain that the gifts were understood and received as a bid for patronage, although we have no record of the King of Denmark's expression of his favour in any concrete terms. The gift-patronage connection is (perhaps unconsciously) highlighted by the syntactical elision of the gift's reception by the Queen and the King's expression of assurances of patronage and mediation.

Contemporary attitudes to the giving of small gifts as a crucial element of the patronage process were noted down amongst 'Certain Precepts for the Well Ordering of a Man's Life' written by William Cecil, Lord Burghley for his son (c. 1584):

\begin{quote}
Be sure ever to keep some great man thy friend, but trouble him not for trifles, compliment him often, present [him] with many yet small gifts and of little charge, and if thou have cause to bestow any great gratuity let it then be some such thing as may be daily in sight, for otherwise in this ambitious age thou mayest remain like a hop without a pole, live in obscurity, and be made a football for every insulting companion to spurn at.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

In her letters it is clear that Stuart was effectively implementing a system like that recommended by Burghley. She diligently nourished her relations with those at court (or, in this case, in the Danish court with its family links to her own Queen Anna), and constantly reminded them of the patronage ties that bound them with a flow of 'many


\textsuperscript{26} 'The counsel of a father to his son left as a legacy at his death in ten several precepts', printed in \textit{Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Osborne}, ed. by Louis B. Wright (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 9-13 (p. 12).
small [needlework] gifts'. The two examples cited above were sent three months apart and do not appear to have been sent in connection with any specific request, showing Stuart preparing the ground for future, more concrete requests.

Stuart’s editing process shows how she worked to contextualise and recontextualise her needlework gift to best effect. For example, her first English draft of a letter to Sir Andrew Sinclair encloses a letter for the King, ‘for whose prosperity none doth more dayly and devoutly pray then I’, and a piece of needlework for the Queen, which is so very a trifle as I was ashamed to accompany it with a letter to hir Majesty and if a piece of work of my owne which I was preparing had binne ready I had prevented his Majesties gracious and your kind letter in sending to you, but I was desirous not to omitt her Majesty in the aknowledgement of my duty to hir Royall husband, and therefor loth to stay in the finishing of a greater have sent this little piece of worke in accepting whearof hir Majesties favour will be the greater. Thus am I bold to trouble you even with these womanish toyes whose serious mind must have somm relaxation.27

In this first draft, Stuart emphasises the unworthiness of her gift, weighing it against the need to expedite the performance of her duty to the Danish monarch, and which, she knows, is an occasion to present an accompanying gift to the queen. The ‘trifle’ is further trivialised by being designated a ‘womanish toye’, its feminine associations belying its political value. It is suggested that the gift of needlework not executed by Arbella’s own hand has a lower intrinsic value than ‘a greater’ personally embroidered item. Stuart adroitly overcomes this seeming faux pas by elegantly complimenting the added value of the Queen’s graciousness in accepting it — and in fact the seeming haste

27 Letter to Sir Andrew Sinclair, undated [July 1607?] (BL Harley MS 7003, fol. 54). Cited in Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, pp. 218-19. The gift is presented as a ‘trifle’ of small worth, but other evidence shows how financially pressed Stuart was, and how she found it difficult to finance these gifts from her allowance (see above, p. 254).
in which she must write (therefore necessitating a small gift) might even be a conscious strategy, for the smaller the gift, the greater the Queen's grace in accepting it.28 In the final, Latin version of this letter, Stuart crafted the diplomatic sentiments into a much more sophisticated form:

may it please you now with most humble thanks to present this letter to the most puissant King and this trifle to the most serene Queen, which I would ask your most generous worthiness to offer again to the most puissant princes in whatever way is appropriate to my case, which you are most expert at doing. [...] you who know what is suitable, and have intelligence of the most convenient access to royalty, these things that I send are little dependent on their own virtue and splendour, at least grace will adorn them, which is usually granted when gifts are offered in good faith, benevolence, and a convenient reason for presenting and conveying what is selected as a gift.29

The notion of the trifle's 'unworthiness' is expunged. Instead, the sense now is that the 'trifle' stands for 'good faith' and 'benevolence', a fitting and courtly gift worthy of the grace of reception. Stuart is engaged in a Jacobean extension of that 'imaginative recreation' of the trivial gift that Furnerton recognised in the Elizabethan period. The 'trifles' apparently have no intrinsic value, but at the same time as they are effective tokens of proffered loyalty and returned favour, they are also tokens of Stuart herself, of whose value Stuart has no doubt.

28 The courtiers were practised in the political commerce of trifles, but the more unworldly needed advice in this delicate process. One Michael Hicks from Ruckholt in Essex, expecting a visit from Queen Elizabeth in 1597, was concerned about the meagre accommodation he could provide. His court contact told him that 'you were unwise to be at anie such charge: but onelie to leave the howse to the Quene: and wished that theare might be presented to hir Majestie from you wife sum fine wastecoate or fine ruffe, or like thinge, which he said would be acceptablie taken as if it weare of great pnce' (Original Letters Illustrative of British History, ed. by Henry Ellis, first series, 4 vols (London: Harding, Triphook and Lepard, 1824), ii, pp. 274-76, cited in Arnold, pp. 94-95).

The exchanges between Sinclair and Stuart are helpful to us in making visible a connection between needlework gift exchange and patronage which, because of the conventional subtlety of the language used to transact the exchange, has been more or less invisible. 'Gift-giving', says Peck,

like patronage of which it was frequently a component, was to appear to be generous and disinterested but was, in fact, performed with formal pretence and social deception. Crucial to the success of court patronage was its disguise. While contemporaries were frank with one another about their desire for court offices and titles, the rhetoric between patron and client drew on another language, one which stressed the free gift of royal patronage, the magnanimity of the patron, and the dependence of the client.30

Stuart's 'trifling' treatment of her gifts is part of this 'formal pretence'. But the gifts and their acceptance are a symbol of a political relationship that is understood to be a reciprocal one, and this is made clear in a succinct passage in Hobbes's *Leviathan* of 1651, identified in the context of needlework gifts by Lisa Klein. Gratitude, he says, depends

on antecedent grace; that is to say, antecedent free gift; and is the fourth law of nature [...] no man giveth but with intention of good to himself, because gift is voluntary; and of all voluntary acts, the object is to every man his own good.31

Stuart's gifts are not functioning within a cultural vacuum, but within a well-established set of rules governing the patronage network, formulated for us here by Hobbes.

Elsewhere in her letters, Stuart is less overt in her political strategies. But the language she employs, of free gift and selfless generosity, denotes something more binding:

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30 Peck, *Court Patronage*, p. 18.
obligation and encumbrance. And so in July 1610, imprisoned as a consequence of her marriage, Arbella Stuart wrote to her cousin Jane Drummond, the first lady of Queen Anna’s Bedchamber, enclosing a gift of hand-embroidered gloves intended for the Queen:

I pray you likewise present hir Majesty this peece of my worke which I humbly beseech hir Majesty to accept in remembrance of the poore prisoner hir Majesties most humble servant that wrought them in hope those Royall handes will voutchsafe to weare them which till I have the honour to kisse I shall live in a great deale of sorrow. I must also render you my kindest thanckes for your so frendly and freely imparting your opinion of my suite. [...] And I do earnestly intreate you to move hir Majesty to voutchsafe the continuance of hir so gratious a beginning on my behalfe and to perswade his Majesty to weigh my cause aright.32

The language suggests that Stuart’s gift is a transparent token of ‘remembrance’, and on the surface this needlework gift, like Drummond’s mediation for which Stuart renders her ‘kindest thanckes’, are gifts ‘freely’ given. But Stuart’s ultimate goal is to obtain the king’s approval of her marriage. Her vehicle is her embroidered gloves, which if Queen Anna accepts them, will oblige her to reciprocate, follow up ‘so gratious a beginning’, and ‘perswade his Majesty’.

In a sequence of three letters which ended with the one just quoted, Stuart had explained to Drummond her understanding of the weight of influence of the Queen’s Court. ‘I presume to make suite to hir Majesty because if it please her Majesty to intercede for me

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32 Letter to Lady Jane Drummond, written summer 1610 (BL Harley MS 7003, fols. 66-67), Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, pp. 245-46. Jane Drummond was the daughter of Patrick, 3rd Lord Drummond. She married Robert Kerr, Lord Roxborough in February 1614, was dismissed from Anna’s service in October 1617, and replaced by Lady Barbara Grey of Ruthven.
I cannot but hope to be restored to hir Majesties service and his Majesties favour. \(^{33}\)

Editing of this letter shows that Stuart had at first expressed her hopes of gaining ‘favour’ from rather than ‘service’ to the queen. The revised version clarifies both her position and the patronage system: her ultimate goal, favour from to the king, will be achieved by providing ‘service’ to the Queen, who will then be obliged to render ‘favour’ to Stuart. This first letter was followed within a matter of days by a second letter to Queen Anna in which Stuart regretted her inability ‘so much as to kisse your Royall hands’. \(^{34}\) Stuart effectively solved this problem in the third letter with her needlework gift of gloves, the wearing of which by the Queen will, while Stuart continues in her ‘great deale of sorrow’, stand in for Stuart’s privilege ‘to kisse’ ‘those Royall handes’. The embroidered gloves are a triple token of service: the embroidery is the product of hours already spent, in effect, working for the Queen, and promises of future services use as surety the hours of service already dedicated by the giver in the gift’s making. Secondly the gloves are the emblem of Stuart’s pledge of service, designed to be worn, Arbella says, by the receiver’s hand in lieu of the kiss of obeisance. Thirdly, as a gift made within the conventions of the patronage system, the gloves promise service from a dependent client. \(^{35}\) Stuart’s words echo Mary Queen of Scots’s designation of her needleworked gift as ‘evidence of the honour I bear [Elizabeth], and the desire I have to employ myself in anything agreeable to her’. \(^{36}\) Acceptance by the Queen of Stuart’s token of service will oblige her to reciprocate and ‘intercede for me’ with the King.

\(^{33}\) Letter to Lady Jane Drummond, written July 1610 (BL Harley MS 7003, fol. 61), Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, p. 236. Stuart was writing to Drummond for information about her standing with the Queen in respect of her marriage.

\(^{34}\) Letter to Queen Anna dated 23 July 1610 (BL Harley MS 7003, fol. 75), Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, p. 238.

\(^{35}\) Arbella, aware of the threat posed to James by her rank, pacifies and reassures through the giving of gifts to his Queen which pledge the work of her hands to their service. The glove emblem that may in other circumstances stand as a defiant challenge, is here laid down in acquiescence.

\(^{36}\) See above, p. 17, and below, p. 341.
The hand-made glove, token of the hand that made it and the hand that will wear it, is a potent signifier, and Stuart’s rhetoric stresses the importance of hands in the transaction. A record survives of the reception by Elizabeth of sumptuous embroidered gifts from the Czar of Russia, Ivan the Terrible in 1587. Ambassador Sir Jerome Horsey carried back to his country powerful assurances of ties cemented between the two heads of state:

I delivered to her hightnes — she touchinge everie parcell with her hand — first fower peces of Percia [Persian] cloth of gold and two whole peces of cloth of silver, of curious worckes; a large rich cloth of state of white arras — the representacion of the sun shining in his full splendancie; gold and sillver beams interwraught with most orient coullers; silkes silver and gold, the threed sliked flat, to illustrat the bewty thereof [...] The Queen did eaven sweat by takinge paines to handell the canapie cloth of gold.

The moment when Elizabeth extends her hand to touch the gifts is the moment that the bonds of friendship are created between the two heads of state, and Horsey’s special emphasis on the ritual touch suggests that not all gifts were received in this way. Arbella Stuart’s hope that her gloves will be worn is encoded by established court rituals in which hands giving and hands receiving take on paramount symbolic importance.

The letter that ended with the gift of Stuart’s gloves passed through three successive revisions, and the gloves were introduced only in the second draft. Stuart’s editing clearly shows that she was experimenting with different styles of presentation, to find

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the most effective phrases to introduce her gift:

I presume to send [hearwith a peec of my worke] [a] <this> peec of [my] <my> worke [during] [<during my restraint>] [since my coming hither that [hir] if it please hir Majesty]\(^{38}\)

It is interesting to note how Arbella first highlights the needlework as a product of 'restraint', hours spent virtuously and uninterruptedly in the service or employment of Queen Anna, and then shifts the emphasis away from the idea of imprisonment, 'since my coming hither'. Further references are made, and subsequently deleted, to the 'poore prisoner [...] that wrought them' 'during this time of my exile from hir Majesties presence'. In the third version of the letter laboured references to needlework as the by-product of imprisonment are deleted, but the letter closes with the more striking 'I pray to likewise present hir Majesty this peec of my worke which I humbly beseech hir Majesty to accept in remembrance of the poore prisoner hir Majesties most humble servant'.

The gift, of course, passes through the hand of an influential third party, Stuart's broker at court, her Scottish cousin Lady Jane Drummond.\(^{39}\) Client and broker are also bound into a patronage relationship, and elsewhere Stuart makes explicit the return that she expects to give on the work of a broker who proffers her suit together with letters and needlework:

The letter I had sent not long ago to the most august King, and the trifles

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\(^{38}\) Second draft of Letter to Lady Jane Drummond, summer (BL Harley MS 7003, fols. 68-69), cited in *Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, p. 245. Steen's textual symbols are as follows: <as>: indicates letters or words that were added or that replaced deletions in the manuscript; [as]: letters or words that were deleted or written over in the manuscript; [<as>]: letters or words first added and then deleted in the manuscript.

\(^{39}\) Klein explores the detailed correspondence between Bess of Hardwick and her court contact Anthony Wingfield, who in turn consulted Lady Cobham and Lady Sussex on the minutiae of a New Year's embroidered gift for Elizabeth, made at a time when Bess of Hardwick's standing with the queen had been compromised by her 'dynastic ambitions', pp. 469-71. See also Arnold, p. 95. See also the discussion of access and brokerage, pp. 309-11, 313-14 below.
I had sent to the most serene Queen, rendered to their Majesties by your means, were far from unwelcome, which I confess I find very pleasing, and I readily acknowledge your service, but since this is not the first act of courtesy that holds me bound to you, you must claim from me such benefits (if ever chance offer and opportunity) that your excellent favours to me demand, and which I freely acknowledge.  

The flow of gifts to and from the court via third parties eventually involves the whole court in successive waves of obligation and requital, or, as Stuart puts it, ‘acts of courtesy’. But the rhetoric of courteous free gift coexists, in Stuart’s letters, with clear statements of an ‘intention of good’ to herself. Stuart’s gifts employ the ‘coercive tactics’ which ‘confirm the presence of a competitive, Hobbesian self-interest’ which Klein recognises as a feature of the early modern gift of needlework. And her frank epistolary exchanges with her brokers Drummond and Sinclair make it possible for us to interpret records of needlework gifts by others, who omit overt discourses of patronage, for example Anne Clifford, whose patronage relations with Queen Anna will be traced in due course.

Courteous reciprocal gift-giving was fundamental to the seventeenth century perception of the way social bonds were created in a peaceful society, and is a familiar trope in the context of literary patronage. In dedicating his *Faerie Queene* to his earthly queen, Spenser’s vision of reciprocal gift-giving is specifically located in a court context, presented as being the essence of the courtesy which structured their relationships:

> Then pardon me, most dreaded Soveraine,
> That from your selfe I doe this vertue bring,
> And to your selfe do it returne againe:

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40 Letter to Sir Andrew Sinclair, written February 1607/8 (BL Harley MS 7003, fol. 50), translated from the Latin in *Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, pp. 222-23. The original Latin is given in *Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, p. 272.

41 Klein, p. 466.
So from the Ocean all rivers spring,
And tribute backe repay as to their King.
Right so from you all goodly vertues well,
Into the rest, which round about you ring,
Faire Lords and Ladies, which about you dwell,
And doe adorne your Court, where courtesies excell.\textsuperscript{42}

Spenser compresses all the issues of the reciprocal nature of patronage in nine lines, dedicating a literary gift (like a needlework gift, the work of his hands and mind) which itself successfully courted patronage. His model of courtly giving is an endlessly circular process, perpetually renewed by the grace of the monarch. Visible in the image of the flow of virtue to and from the monarch and the courtiers, and echoed in the rhyme scheme, is the way in which gift-giving cements not only the relationships between the queen and her court, but also between the fair lords and ladies that constitute the aristocracy. The imagination of the Spenserian vision of the creation of social bonds is literary as Hobbes's is political and philosophical and Stuart's (and, indeed, Spenser's) is reified in actual practice.

Stuart showed that she perfectly understood the doctrine of the reciprocal gift in her account of her response to ‘the patronage of so worthy a Prince’, King Christian of Denmark, and his Queen, Anna Catherine, in a letter written from court during happier times in 1606: ‘I perceiv vertu is of it selfe delighted to do good, and the neglect of offred bounty, would deprive them of the honour and contentment they receive in well doing’.\textsuperscript{43} As the object and source of the flow of virtue to and from the court, patronage, or ‘well doing’ is one of the King and Queen’s primary functions. Again, the

\textsuperscript{42} Spenser, \textit{Faerie Queen}, VI, pr. 7, also cited by Klein, p. 467.

\textsuperscript{43} Letter to Sir Andrew Sinclair, undated [October 1606?] (BL Harley MS 7003, fol. 48), cited in \textit{Letters of Lady Arbeila Stuart}, p. 213.
coercive nature of the system of gifting is visible in the way Arbella gently reminds them that well doing is their duty. It is the courtly gloss to Hobbes's philosophical system. The complex flow of two-way courtly favour is modelled by Arbella Stuart earlier in the same letter to Sir Andrew Sinclair, Chamberlain to the King of Denmark. She defers expressing her gratitude to Sinclair for his efforts on her behalf, 'till God make me better able to expresse my thanckfulnesse, as I doubt not by Gods grace but I shall be made, by your good indevors, and the mediation of your most gratious master'. Stuart believes that any future change in her fortunes will brought about by graceful gifts, acts and mediation. The ultimate source of grace is God, and his gift is reflected in the responses of Arbella, in an epistolary genuflection. His grace flows downwards through the 'patronage' of so 'gratious' a King, and downwards still through the efforts of Sinclair. The flow of grace returns backwards to the King and Queen in her acceptance of their 'offred bounty', and will be reversed in the direction of Sinclair when Stuart is in a position to reciprocate.

Stuart was careful to reciprocate like with like when she did receive gifts from her royal patrons. The embroidered gloves she sent Queen Anna were themselves Stuart's grateful response to a double grace received from the Queen: intercession on Stuart's behalf with the King, and a tangible 'token' of future favour to cement the patronage connection. Grace filters down through the brokerage of Drummond:

yesterday being sonday I could have litle tym to spek with her majestie, but this day her majestie heth sin your ladyships letter, her majestie sayes that when she gaive your ladyships petition and letter to his majestie, he did taek et wellanuch, bot gaive no uther anSur then that yee had etne of the forbidne trie, this was all her majestie comands me to say to your ladyship in this porpos, bot withall did remember her cyndly to your ladyship and sent you this litle tokne inn wotnes of the contineuance of
her majesties favor to your ladyship. The ‘token’ stands for words that are not spoken. The Queen is careful only to report the response of the king without any interpretation on her part, but interpretation effectively given nonetheless in the speaking silence of the ‘litle tokne’ which is a wordless ‘wotnes of […] favor’. Whether or not Anna’s token was an item of needlework is not known, but its politically discursive power is shared by needlework gifts: Mary Queen of Scot’s skirt had stood as ‘evidence’ of the honour she bore her cousin Elizabeth.

Stuart’s letters show clearly that needlework gifts and tokens had a semiotic and discursive value. The embroidered petticoat worn by an unidentified lady in a portrait at Cowdray Park (figs. 3.3-3a) may be painted evidence of needlework’s part in the patronage process. The design of pyramids or spires and twining botanical forms, as Janet Arnold notes, has been adapted from an emblem in Whitney’s *A Choice of Emblems* (1587) illustrating a pyramid or spire entwined with ivy (fig. 3.4). The accompanying poem makes explicit the meaning of the emblem:

A mightie spyre, whose toppe dothe pierce the skie,
An ivie greene imbraceth rounde about,
And while it standes, the same doth bloome on highe,
But when it shrinkes, the ivie standes in dowt;
[...] And whiles thow raignst, oh most renownmed Queene
By thie supporte my blossome shall bee greene.

The emblematic message of the portrait’s painted embroidery speaks of a bid for

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44 Letter to Arbella Stuart from Lady Jane Drummond (BL Harley MS 7003, fols. 64-65), cited in *Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, p. 292. The nature of the ‘litle tokne’ sent by the Queen is not specified.
45 Arnold, pp. 86-87.
Fig. 3.3  Portrait of unknown woman. Oil on panel (Cowdray Park)

Fig. 3.3a Detail of Fig. 3.2
AMIGHTIE Spyre, whose tope dothe pierce the skie,
An iuie greene imbraceth rounde about,
And while it standes, the same doth bloome on highe,
But when it shrinkes, the iuie standes in dowe:

The Pillar great, our gratious Princes is:
The braunch, the Churche: whose speakes vnto hir this

I, that of late with stormes was almofte spent,
And brued fore with Tirants bluddie blesse,
Whome fire, and sworde, with perfecution rent,
Am nowe felt free, and overlooke my foes,
And whilste thou raigneft, oh most renowned Queene
By this suppliour my blossome shall bee greene.

Fig. 3.4 ‘Te stante virebo’ emblem, from Whitney’s A Choice of Emblems

Fig. 3.5 ‘Te stante virebo’ emblem, from Paradin’s Devises Heroiques
patronage, for political support from the monarch. The portrait may record a more concrete participation in the patronage system, however, if Arnold is correct in her suggestion that the petticoat (which she believes was domestically, rather than professionally, produced) may have been a New Year’s gift to Elizabeth. The suggestion is based on an item in the 1600 Stowe inventory of the Queen’s Wardrobe that seems to describe the painted garment: ‘one Peticooate of white Satten embroderied allover like perarydes and flowers of venice golde and silke’.47 The surface of the embroidery would then emphasise in emblematic terms the meaning of the gift itself, the transaction recorded in the portrait, as in the Cowdray portrait. Arnold notes further that this emblem was originally the impresa of the Cardinal of Lorraine, as illustrated by Paradin (fig. 3.5), and had been used to signify the adherence of the Cardinal to his faith, its meaning subsequently altered by Whitney. This fact might then suggest a further interpretation of the portrait, as the assertion by a crypto-Catholic of faith upheld.

Needlework gifts were interpreted and appreciated within the patronage process beyond monetary considerations, especially when they were the product of personal labour. But despite Burghley’s advice to give ‘many small gifts, and of little charge’, we know from correspondence regarding New Year’s gifts that face value must have been significant, since the value of these gifts and the other expenditure accruing to the preferment of a suit was carefully recorded. Elizabeth, Dowager Lady Russell itemised the costs of securing a lease of land for her daughter in an exasperated letter to Sir Robert Cecil, dated 5 March 1600. The effort had involved included needlework gifts, jewelled hats (in excess of £100 for the one, with a pendant pearl at £30 more), gold (£30) and

47 BL Stowe MSS 557 and PRO LR2/121, fol. 60/58. cited in Arnold, pp. 86, 300.
attendance by her daughter Bess, as one of Elizabeth I’s Maids of Honour.

it cost me truly, twelve years since, a gown and petticoat of such tissue as should have been for the Queen of Scots’ wedding garment; but I got them for my Queen, full dearly bought, I well wot. Beside, I gave her Majesty a canopy of tissue with curtains of crimson taffety, belited gold. [...] I will be sworne that, in the space of 18 weeks, gifts to her Majesty cost me above 500l, in hope to have the Dunnington lease; which now if you will get performed for Bess’s almost six year’s service, she, I am sure, will be most ready to acquit any service to yourself.48

The list of Russell’s gifts swirl possessively around their object, a grant of land to be leased from the Crown. And this letter is particularly noteworthy in the way it equates the different kinds of gifts given, textile gift with the ‘gift’ of the daughter’s self in service.49 Patricia Fumerton has written of the circular politics of Elizabethan child exchange: the bringing up of one child in the house of another, whose child in turn is given to another family (and indeed, Fumerton records the Russells’ participation in this ring of gift from 1585 onwards).50 Fumerton shows how gift culture in general (and especially here, the practice of gifting Elizabethan aristocratic children) effectively ‘generated social bonds’, because, she maintains, what was ultimately given was the gift of the Elizabethan self.51 In Elizabeth Russell’s letter this same kind of self may be glimpsed residing in Russell’s gift: the self that is donated to Elizabeth’s service, symbolically in the needlework and literally in the gift of the daughter.52 The same

48 HMC, Salisbury (Hatfield), X, pp. 51-52. Also cited in Arnold, p. 97.
49 Klein notes that ‘alongside [Russell’s] several material gifts to the queen was the prior gift of her own daughter, whose service added to the Queen’s debt’, p. 461.
51 Fumerton, p. 42.
52 Klein, following Mauss, interprets handmade or personally chosen gifts as having spiritual associations. Thus, for example, a jewelled whip presented to Elizabeth by Sidney ‘conveys the spirit of the persona Sidney displayed in his literary works’ (p. 472), and ‘hand-made works [...] had a unique capacity to evoke the giver, her hands occupied in painstaking and loving labour and outstretched in an attitude of presentation, devotion, or supplication’ (p. 476).
process may be visible in the Cowdray portrait, which may map the identity of the sitter onto the needlework gift itself. The self that is offered ostensibly as a gift, is in fact located through the gift in political relation to the crown. In her grammatical elision, Elizabeth Russell states that the needlework and the child are utilised in identical ways on separate occasions in an effort to secure a particular item of economic business: the ‘Dunnington lease’. The self-perpetuating circularity of patronage obligations is highlighted in Russell’s last comment, as she promises that her daughter will ‘acquit’ Cecil ‘any service’ for his action in obtaining the lease performed ‘for Bess’s […] service’. Broker-client relations form further social bonds, circles within a-circle.

Were it not for this letter, the correlation between textile gift and lease allocation would have been lost: Russell’s letter makes visible an otherwise invisible patronage transaction. And needlework is once again situated on a border between public and private, because Russell’s itemisation — almost notarisation, in her sense of the precise return due on her original gift — also makes public an otherwise private transaction, by involving the Administration through her appeal to Secretary Cecil. Doubly so, because here too, in the context of the court gift, a piece of gold-embroidered fabric which began its life intended (or fit to be intended) for a public, state occasion, the Queen of Scots’ wedding, is recycled ostensibly as a private tribute to Elizabeth, and in effect as a form of payment for a lease of land. The cycle of the returned gift (the lease) having been

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53 In the context of Russell’s equation of gifts of children and of needlework, Furnerton records a very early incident in Elizabeth’s reign, when Sir Humphrey Radcliffe ‘brought forward his daughter Mary and laughingly presented her as a New Year’s gift’ for the year 1561 (Violet A. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth’s Maids of Honour and Ladies of the Privy Chamber* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1922), pp. 38, 41, and cited in Furnerton, p. 43]. Mary Radcliffe, accepted as a Maid of Honour, becomes, says Furnerton, a trivial ‘ornament’, added to the ‘disjointed pile of personalised and inventive New Year’s Gifts’.

54 Arnold wonders whether this fabric, in the Royal Wardrobe, was ever re-utilised by the Queen of Scots (Anna) after their accession in England.
broken by Elizabeth, the memory of the former public status of the fabric is invoked by Russell as she registers the gifts, as it were, in the public records.

Russell implies that her gift, ‘dearly bought’, is a token or symbol of her unswerving loyalty to ‘My Queen’. As Fumerton points out, the nature of the symbol is that ‘it “stands for” something as if a contract were drawn between signifier and signified’ — and ‘is in economic terms a market notion’. Fumerton’s assertion is borne out in Russell’s letter in the way the letter lays bare the relationship between gift and patronage process. Cecil’s refusal to accept Jane Lovell’s needlework in 1606 implies that acceptance of a gift was to enter into a contract of obligation; Russell certainly seems to have considered Elizabeth’s acceptance of the freely-given ‘gift’ as the promise of concrete patronage. Russell documents needlework’s part in the patronage process, as a symbol or token of loyalty — but one that on this occasion has a precise monetary value and a specific desired outcome. Bishop Godfrey Goodman, writing retrospectively in the 1650s, echoes Russell’s sentiments, commenting that, at Elizabeth’s court, ‘suits were very hardly gotten, and in effect more spent in expectation and attendance than the suit could in any way countervail’. Russell’s letter and Goodman’s comments contradict the courtly rhetorical trope of the freely-given gift, and expose the realpolitik which is rendered into linguistic terms by would-be clients such as Spenser. They also make visible what was to become a distinct feature of the next reign, a tense negotiation between the economics of Jacobean political patronage (the purchasing of a good or service with loyalty and gifts of a certain face value) and the moral or philosophical framework constructed around political relationships. It shall

55 Fumerton, p. 16.
56 For Lovell see above, pp. 190-94.
subsequently become clear, in discussing the place of the needlework gift in Jacobean court masques, that these relations were figured as the natural bonds accruing from grace flowing downwards from the king to his people and vice versa.\textsuperscript{58}

The trajectory traced by the frustrated Elizabeth Russell is taken further in Arbella Stuart's correspondence. When a frantic Stuart needed urgently to convey her alarm at the court rumours which were costing her her standing with Queen Elizabeth, she chose a needlework gift as an extended metaphor, expressing in one sophisticated conceit the complexity of patronage relationships at court, her loyalty to Elizabeth, and the disloyalty of the rumour mongers.\textsuperscript{59} In desperation at not being able to do anything in 'exile' as she was at the house of Bess of Hardwick, Stuart revisited, or effectively recycled, her former New Year's gifts to Elizabeth. In this exceptionally long letter, her grammar almost breaking down with uncontrollable emotion, the rumour mongers, were, she said,

\begin{quote}
paiching every idle worde to every foolish imagination and gathering every unlikely possible conceite with a deale of trash of theyr own invention and lining it with secret whisperings, and shaping it as best pleaseth theyr fancy \textit{<who>} have made you present hir Majesty with a mishapen discouloured peece of stuffe fitting none not fitt for hir Majesty to looke upon which either if I might be suffered or not hindered I will not say helped but why should I not be helpt I pray you in such a peece of worke? should have been presented to hir Majesty in such a forme well beseeming hir Majesty whearas now it is so tossed up and downe that it hath almost lost the glosse, and even by the best slubbred up in such hast
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} Anne Clifford will negotiate the same shifting territory being negotiated as she records the cost of her gifts to the crown, see p. 301.

\textsuperscript{59} Stuart had for some time been concerned that Henry Brounker understood the slanders that were being practised against her at court, slanders that were only words, but that had the power to upset. She had, she says, 'spent a little breath in evaporating certeine court smoke which converted into sighes made somm eics besides ours runne or water', letter dated 4 March 1603 (Cecil Papers, (Hatfield), vol. 135, fols. 159-60), cited in \textit{Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart}, p. 151.
that many wrong stitches of unkindnesse must be picked out which ned not have binne so bestowed and many wrong placed conceits ript out whearof somm may be cast away but most being placed will do very well, the more you thincke to make the more you marre when all is donne I must take it hand [sic], and shape my own cote according to my cloth, but it shall not be after the fashion of this world god willing but fitt for me, and every way becomming of that virtu in me.60

The letter itemises for us cultural and political practice in emotionally forceful language.

Stuart, although she writes for page after page with uncharacteristically few revisions, turns her justified pride in the quality of her own needlework, and its employment in past gifts to Elizabeth, to her own advantage. The resulting metatext matches rhetorical brilliance with its subject matter, the brilliance of her own needlework, and her own capacity for fashioning her own suit, which was denied her.

The letter makes clear that fashioning, for an Elizabethan courtier, means self-fashioning, and presentation means self-presentation. Implicit in Stuart’s metaphor are the gifts she has already made to Elizabeth, which she presses into renewed service to remind Elizabeth of their currency as pledges, tokens of a loyalty which has been called into question by the rumour mongers, and which now bear renewed witness of that continuing, unshakeable loyalty. She contrasts by implication the fine quality of the materials used in her gifts (literal as well as metaphorical) with their second-hand, ‘idle […] foolish […] unlikely trash’, and compares the false complexity of their operations, ‘paiching […] gathering […] lining […] and shaping’ with her own more meticulously crafted gifts. For their work is ‘slubbred up in such hast’ as to ruin the work with ‘many wrong stitches’ and ‘many wrong placed’ appliqued embroideries, which now should be

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60 Letter to Sir Henry Brounker, written 9 March, 1602/3 (Cecil Papers (Hatfield), vol. 135, fols. 130-38), cited in Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, p. 166.

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'ript out'. The form of Arbella's gifts were devised, she would have it understood, diplomatically and with great care, with the Queen's tastes in mind, whereas Stuart's detractors please their own fancy. And the rumour mongers, the so-called 'best' of her courtiers, present Elizabeth with the shoddy, ruined work, 'so tossed up and down that it hath almost lost the glosse'. Arbella's gifts are in contrast 'presented to hir Majesty in such a forme well beseeming hir Majesty'. Arbella seeks to overwrite their preferment with her own paramount skill in needlework and in the courtly art of gift-giving, by which her own unmatched loyalty is expressed. The 'peece of work' given to the Queen is understood to be a representation of her self, fashioned as descriptively and inaccurately in words by the whispering courtiers as Arbella previously fashioned it symbolically (and accurately, she wishes it believed) in her needlework tokens. She now re-makes that self in words, using the language of unpicking, recrafting their misshapen gift (picking and ripping out the inaccuracies and misrepresentations) as much as re-presenting the self that she has not been allowed to lay in Elizabeth's hand.

In the construction of her metaphor, Arbella lays bare the process of making a gift for the Queen, and in her outline much of the workings of the practice are visible, the standards that gifts are judged by and, most importantly, the speaking properties and socially constitutive function of the needleworked gift. The extended metaphor then slides into another, more elevated textile conceit, projecting the earthly lack of self determination onto an afterlife in which Stuart is not only her own tailor, but in which the virtue she has accrued in this life becomes the stuff her heavenly coat is made of, 'fitt for me'. She is, she argues, already stitching her raiment in heaven here on earth, in her innocence of the charges imputed to her.61

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61 The words spoken and actions taken against her are 'pleites and foldes and slight devises' which 'do but glitter in the ey and theyr small value is discerned whosoever make them wore for fashion shake, whereas mine shall be strange, and new and richly worth more then I am worth [... ] but you shall not know the device at Court least you prevent me, or the foreknowledge take away the grace of the
The language that Stuart used to structure her grateful needlework gifts within the culture of courteous reciprocation and court hierarchies was the language of patronage. And patronage, as Peck recognises, was not only 'central to the political life of the poetical elite but [also] to the language in which they wrote, spoke, worshipped and symbolised themselves'. The social and political imperative which required the Elizabethan and Jacobean nobility to locate themselves within the patronage system created the need for symbolic and hierarchical display at the place where their public and private worlds met. 'The language of patronage,' says Peck, 'included the vocabularies of the masque and contemporary architecture and art'. Because the apogee of the patronage system was the Crown, discourses of patronage were translated into iconographical terms at the place where Crown met Court, in displays of state masquing and painting (Rubens's Banqueting Hall ceiling paintings are the often-quoted example), in courtly and state literature (in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, as we have seen, or in James's *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*), and in all forms of cultural production intended for public display, including needlework.

The language of patronage, whether spoken or visualised in iconographical terms, has one overarching and controlling topos: the notion of grace. Samuel Daniel

soudain and gorgeous change of my suite which how little so ever my mourning weede be respected will make me envied who am not pittied, but hard it will be for any of them all to follow me it will be so costly and yet to me so easy', *Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, p. 174.

62 Peck, *Court Patronage*, p. 29.
63 Peck, *Court Patronage*, p. 28.
64 Thus in architectural terms apartments were designed for the use of visiting royalty, and gifts were commissioned which linked the giver with the royal receiver, as in Philip Sidney's jewelled whip (Klein, p. 492), or the Hardwick portrait of Elizabeth I, or the Cowdray Park portrait of the unknown lady discussed above.
65 Catherine Bates considers the place of grace and courtesy in the patronage process in *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge, New York and Victoria: Cambridge
paraphrases the function of the Stuart court masque in his 1604 masque The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses, in a song sung by the three Graces:

Desert, Reward and Gratitude,
The Graces of Society,
Do here with hand in hand conclude
The blessed chain of amity:
For we deserve, we give, we thank,
Thanks, gifts, deserts, thus join in rank.\(^{66}\)

Daniel here envisions the court masque primarily as a vehicle for consolidating the social contract, 'the blessed chain of amity', and the grateful gift is understood to be one fundamental element of the triad of grace upon which hierarchised court society is based. It comes as no surprise to discover that presentations of needlework gifts were made within two graceful masques enacted and danced by and for the Stuart court – and no great surprise either that the needlework has been all but invisible to scholars of the masque. As Daniel's Graces sing, the twelve Goddesses present their gifts, which include 'a scarf of divers colours' given by Venus, 'instead of her cestus, the girdle of amity' (ll. 69-70). In Daniel's second masque, Tethys Festival, an embroidered 'skarffe, the zone of Love and Amitie' is given to Prince Henry. Before examining the embroidered scarf in Daniel's Tethys Festival, a discussion of how the patronage system was framed in terms of grace is useful as a way of opening up to critical view gifts of needlework within Stuart court masques.


\(^{66}\) Samuel Daniel, The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses, ed. by Joan Rees, in A Book of Masques (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 19-42, ll. 353-8. Daniel, recommended to Queen Anna by Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, wrote the Twelve Goddesses for the Stuart court's first English Christmas (p. 22). One of the reasons given in Macbeth for the breaking apart of the Scottish court after the murder of Duncan is that Macbeth has committed the 'sin of ingratitude' and broken the natural order of the chain of amity (1.2.16). Macbeth's sin towards his monarch is all the greater since he knows the bonds which hold crown and court together: 'The service and the loyalty I owe | In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part | Is to receive our duties' (ll. 23-25).
A glance back at the citations from Arbella Stuart’s epistolary bids for patronage confirm that she, and her interlocutors, use the language of grace as a recurring trope. Thus, for example, a needlework trifle Stuart sent to Queen Anna is intended ‘to continue me in your gratious favour’; other gifts of needlework are presented in response to ‘hir so gratious a beginning’, or ‘his Majesties gratious and your kind letter’ — a trifle only, in the knowledge that ‘at least grace will adorn [it], which is usually granted when gifts are offered in good faith [and] benevolence’. That the words are more than conventional rhetoric is hinted at by Stuart when she defers expressing gratitude to Sinclair ‘till God make me better able to expresse my thanckefulnesse, as I doubt not by God’s grace but I shall be made, by your good indevors, and the mediation of your most gratious master’. 67 Stuart’s references to grace construct a theological model of society in which the transformative grace of God is transmitted downwards through the person of the King to members of the aristocracy, who then pass it from one to the other — in Arbella’s case, through the medium of the needlework gift. 68

The theological system which imagined the bonds tying the monarchy and aristocracy together in Christian terms found its correspondence in Classical philosophy. Sixteenth and seventeenth century translations of Seneca’s De Beneficiis provided several models

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67 Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, p. 213.
68 D. J. Gordon argued that the transformative power of grace was imagined by Jonson in the Masque of Beauty in one of his eight elements of beauty:

Pico echoes Ficino, insisting that the name Venus or beauty is properly to be given to [...] ‘a certain quality which we cannot call by a more appropriate name than grace’.

[... ] And Ripa write in explanation of the pearls which his figure of gratia wears that they [...] ‘shine and delight by a singular mysterious gift of nature, like grace, which is in men a certain special beauty, which moves, and ravished the soul towards love, and strangely generates devotion and good will. [...] Jonson’s sixth element VENUSTAS is then Ficino’s gratia [...]. This figure is dressed in silver and is enveloped in a delicate veil. At her neck and forehead she has pearls, and her sock are embroidered with them. She carries lilies.

of ‘benefitting’, a ‘vertue, which chiefly concerneth humane society’, in effect, ‘a law of living’ to which the Early Modern court pictured itself adhering (for example, in the *Masque of the Twelve Goddesses*).\(^6^9\) Mutual benefit was symbolised by the image of the three Graces with interlaced hands, dancing, in Edgar Wind’s words, to ‘the triple rhythm of generosity, which consists of giving, accepting, and returning’ (fig. 3.6).\(^7^0\) Golding’s 1578 translation of *De Beneficils* explains the symbolism of the Graces’ dance for court relations: ‘one of them bestoweth the good turne, the other receiueth it, and the thirde requiteth it’, resulting in the perpetual motion of Daniel’s ‘chain of amity’.\(^7^1\) Interpretation of the dance of the Graces was fluid;\(^7^2\) one aspect of the ‘chain of amity’, for example, centred around Servius’s observation that ‘one of them is pictured from the back while the other two face us, is because for one benefit issuing from us two are supposed to return’.\(^7^3\) This interpretation provides a theoretical framework for the expectations of operators gifting within the patronage system, such as Russell and Stuart, and supplies a context for Arbella Stuart’s confidence that grace will ‘adorn’ her ‘trifle’. Needlework prestations are at once self-interested gestures, made with the expectation of reaping greater benefit than their face value, and, in Stuart’s words, an act of social ‘benevolence’.

Edmund Spenser illustrates how graceful giving multiplies the grace circulating around the world of the court. In Book 6, canto 10 of the *Faerie Queene*, the knight Calidore wearies of hunting after the vain shadows of courtly favour, resolves to shun painted


\(^{71}\) Arthur Golding (London: Day, 1578), 1.3. (sig. Aiii).

\(^{72}\) Edgar Wind traces the reception of the trope in Chapters 1 and 2 of *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*.

\(^{73}\) Wind, p. 33.
Fig. 3.6 Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, detail of the Three Graces (Uffizi Gallery, Florence)
Fig. 3.6 Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, detail of the Three Graces (Uffizi Gallery, Florence)
show, and retires to rest among the rustic sort. On a mountain, he sees the three Graces dancing to the tune of Colin Clout's shepherd pipe. Naked, their dance around an unnamed, crowned maid is circular, and they are themselves in the middle of a ring of other dancing ladies, the whole making a pattern of concentric rings, with forward and backwards movements. This dance symbolises the reciprocity of graceful giving, that 'good should from vs goe, then come in greater store' (24.9). In Arbella Stuart's terms, grace received from Queen Anna is returned to the Queen in the form of the hand-embroidered gift. In the evolutionary stages of the letter to Drummond of summer 1610 accompanying her gloves, Arbella experimented with various forms of the language of grace, varying the stress from the grace of reception to the final stress on a more generalised (but more beneficial) graceful patronage: in her draft she hopes 'those Royall hands will gratiously accept and voutchsafe to weare them [...]. I do earnestly intreate you to move hir Majestie to voutchsafe the continuance of hir so gratious a beginning'; in the final version the emphasis on grace shifts to the extended context. But for a while at least, in the life of this letter, the grace of receiving is linguistically and conceptually yoked together with the grace of reciprocation.

Grace, from the Latin gratia, from gratus, pleasing, is linked in our language to its derivative 'gratify', and in 1590 the word was first used to mean making a present (usually of money), as a reward or recompense. Thus Stuart, having received 'gratious' signs from Queen Anna, extends back again her 'gratitude' (this word itself only in the language since 1565), because she knows, perhaps better than King Lear,

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74 Furnerton also discusses this episode, and the Proem, in terms of courtly gift-giving pp. 29-30.
75 Letter to Lady Jane Drummond, written summer 1610 (BL Harley MS 7003, fols. 66-67), in Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, pp. 245-46. See above, p. 268.
76 OED, sense 2.
'the effects of courtesy', the 'dues of gratitude' (11.4.178).\textsuperscript{77} And the Queen, 'gratified' at receiving the grace-ful gift from Stuart, might pursue her suit further with the King. The social yoking together of giving and receiving is also elided within the word 'gratuity', meaning both graciousness and favour, but also the gift made in return for such services. As Wind reminds us, in his discussion of the Classical symbolism of grace, gratias agere means 'to return thanks'.\textsuperscript{78} That Stuart ultimately failed in her bid for regained favour is surely no slight on her powers of diplomacy: as we have seen, she coupled rhetorical brilliance with the judiciously ingratiating deployment of handmade needlework gifts which seemed to be having the desired effect upon Elizabeth I: Elizabeth instructed Brounker to tell Stuart in January 1602/3 that she 'gave her thanks for her new year's gift and did graciously accept it and would be glad to know how she did'.\textsuperscript{79}

\section*{II: The Graceful Masque: The Needlework Gift in Samuel Daniel's \textit{Tethys Festival}}

In Daniel's \textit{The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses} social cohesion amongst the court fostered by their graceful 'rule of living' is visible in the way

\begin{quote}
Gratitude, Rewards, Deserts,
Please, win, draw on, and couple hearts.
\end{quote}

For worth and power and due respect
Deserves, bestows, returns with grace

\[\ldots\]
And turning in this course of right,

\textsuperscript{77} 'Ingratitude,' bellows Lear, is 'a marble-hearted fiend', destroyer of kingdoms (\textit{King Lear}, 1.4.259). When Shakespeare's Coriolanus denounced ingratitude as 'monstrous' (\textit{Coriolanus}, 11.3.10), he was stressing a sense of social duty. Ironically, Coriolanus lacks the social and rhetorical art of ingratiating himself with the people with whom he needed to court favour.

\textsuperscript{78} Wind, pp. 32-33.

\textsuperscript{79} HMC, \textit{Salisbury (Hatfield)}, XII, pp. 593-94.
Make virtue move with true delight (ll. 63-66, 69-70).

The masque asserts that aristocratic virtue, which confers the right to rule, gives rise to graceful, circular relations within their society, engendering in turn further virtuous behaviour, and social harmony. Words are then mirrored by action as the twelve goddesses, represented by Queen Anna and her ladies, proceed to lay their symbolic gifts upon the altar of peace. Venus, clothed ‘in a mantle of dove-colour and silver embroidered with doves’ (l. 68), lays upon the altar ‘th’all-combining scarf of amity | T’engird strange nations with affections true’ (l. 301). Venus’s encircling cestus-as-scarf is glossed within the masque as ‘the hieroglyphic of empire and dominion, [...] the ground and matter whereon this glory of state is built’ (ll. 49-50), and is thus the symbol of the masque’s main theme, Jacobean peace.

The scarf as symbol appeared again in Daniel’s second Queen’s masque, Tethys Festival (1610). Intricately embroidered this time, the graceful gift was presented by the Queen

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81 ‘If we further consider that all communion between mortals and gods was established, according to Plato, through the mediation of Love, it becomes clear why in Ficino’s and Pico’s system the entire Greek pantheon began to revolve around Venus and Amor’. Venus ‘defined [...] the universal system of exchange by which divine gifts are graciously circulated’ (Wind, p. 41). Proserpina is dressed ‘in a black mantle embroidered with gold flames’ (l. 78), Ceres ‘in straw colour and silver embroidery with ears of corn’ (l. 98), Tethys, ‘in a mantle of sea-green with a silver embroidery of waves’ (l. 100). Lined up, the twelve ladies’ embroidered robes form a rainbow (l. 251), the Divine sign of the New Covenant of peace. Peter Holbrook focuses on the part played by Twelve Goddesses in James’s promotion of the doctrine of peace, in ‘Jacobean Masques and the Jacobean Peace’, in The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque, pp. 67-87.
to the Prince. The embroidered surface of this second scarf also represented in emblematic form the significance of the entire political event to which it was connected. A description of the masque will provide the context in which the function and semiotisation of the scarf will be explored.

*Tethys Festival*, written by Samuel Daniel with Inigo Jones as architect, was performed on 5 June 1610 as part of the celebrations for Prince Henry's investiture as Prince of Wales. Young Charles, Duke of York, with 'eight little Ladies neere of his stature' representing the Naiads, Nymphs of Fountains, and two Tritons are sent in the antimasque from Tethys 'to give notice of her intendement' (p. 349). She is to bring thirteen river nymphs (the geographical locations of which represent the lady masquers' 'dignitie, Signories, or places of birth') to honour Oceanus (King James) and his son Meliades (Prince Henry) (p. 348). Zephyrus carries with him Tethys's gifts, and presents James with a trident, and Henry with a jewelled sword and the embroidered scarf. The children dance and depart. The first part of the masque discovers Tethys and her river-nymphs in tableau 'in their severall cavernes' (p. 353). The nymphs dance before the court, then 'repose' in tableau for the singing of a song which records the masque's function as being perfectly to express 'the measure | And height of our devotion' in their 'motions, soundes, and wordes' (p. 355-56). After a second dance and repose for a song, the lady masquers act out the theory of transmitted grace by inviting certain 'Lordes to daunce their measures, corantes and galliardes' (p. 356). After

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82 Arbella Stuart, who danced in *Tethys* as the Nymph of Trent on 5 June, contracted her secret marriage to Seymour less than three weeks later, on 22 June. The text of *Tethys Festival* is printed in J. B. Nichols, *Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James and First, his royal Consort and Family*, etc, 3 vols (London: AMS, 1828), II, pp. 346-358. Subsequent references are given in the text.

83 Jonson eulogises masque dancing in *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618, ed. by R. A. Foakes, in *A Book of Masques*, pp. 227-50) as similes for certain 'actions of mankind' (I. 236) which are themselves symbolic of a greater truth. The dance is also, for Jonson, a re-enactment of the dance of the Graces: 'And when they see the graces meet, | Admire the wisdom of your feet' (ll. 242-43).
further dancing, ‘they returne againe into their severall cavernes and sodainly vanish’. Attention is distracted from the device by which the vanishing is achieved (‘the confusion which usually attendeth the dissolve of these shewes’) by Zephyrus and his two Tritons, and speeches preparing the spectators for a ‘transformation of farre more delight’, the re-appearance of Queen Anna and her ladies ‘in figures of their owne’ (p. 356; 357). The figure of Mercury charges Zephyrus with the task of fetching them. The Queen and her retinue appear in ‘a most pleasant and artificiall grove’ and process from thence towards the King.

The masque applies the equation between river sources and founts of grace within the English court to Queen Anna, in the persona of Tethys, and the aristocratic women masquers in their watery personae (figs. 3.7-8). Thus the occasion is adorned by Tethys’s ‘all-gracing presence’, and the ‘traine | of some choice Nymphs’ includes ‘the Graces of cleere Uske, Olwy, Dulesse, Wy’ (p. 351). The Nymphs of Trent and Arun are summoned from ‘gracefull streames’, the Nymph of Severne brings ‘ample streames of grace’. The river of graceful courtesy which the courtiers represent is in *Tethys Festival* envisioned flowing downwards through their estates and, true to its reciprocal, grace-engendering nature, returns to them in the form of gifts: ‘e’en as seas | And lands are grac’d by men of worth and might, | So they returne their favours’ (p. 351). This is modelled in ceremonial form as the speech that introduces Tethys and her nymphs continues with the ceremonial presentation of Tethys’s gifts.

The presentation follows the patronage pattern observed above with Arbella Stuart, and
Fig. 3.7 Inigo Jones: Design for Tethys or a nymph. Pen and brown ink (Duke of Devonshire)

Fig. 3.8 Inigo Jones: Design for headdress, probably for Anna of Denmark. Pen and brown ink (Duke of Devonshire)
is made through intermediaries: 'Triton, in the behalf of Zephyrus, delivers Tethys's message with her presents' (p. 351). First, a trident is presented to James as Oceanus, 'the seale | and ensigne of her love and of your right' (p. 352). Then Prince Henry, newly created Prince of Wales, is greeted in the person of Meliades

with this sword
Which she unto Astraea sacred found,
And not to be unsheath'd but on just ground.
Herewith, sayes she, deliver him from mee
This skarffe, the zone of Love and Amitie,
T'ingird the same; wherein he may survay,
Infigur'd, all the spacious emperie
That he is borne unto another day.
Which, tell him, will be world enough to yeeld
All workes of glory ever can be wrought.
Let him not pass the circle of that field,
But thinke Alcides' pillars are the knot;
For there will be within the large extent
Of these my waves, and watry government,
More treasure, and more certaine riches got
Then all the Indies to Iberus brought;
For Nereus will by industry unfold
A Chimicke secret, and turne fish to gold (p. 352).

The symbolism of the scarf and its figurative embroidery is clearly a key element of Tethys's message — it is the gift on which the greatest number of lines are expended.  

Scarfes were a functional item of clothing that shielded the face from strong sun or

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Nonetheless it has been passed over in the paraphrasing of one recent scholar, writing, ironically, about the opposition enacted by women (and specifically Queen Anna) within the Jacobean masque, a theme revisited below. According to Barbara Lewalski's version of Tethys Festival, the gifts were 'a trident to the King and the rich sword of Astraea to Henry' (Lewalski, Writing Women (p. 39). Only one critic has discussed the significance of the scarf, John Pitcher, 'In those figures which they seeme': Samuel Daniel's Tethys Festival', in The Court Masque, ed. by David Lindley (Manchester and Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 33-46.
wind, although as high status articles they were richly decorated. They consequently came in for the disapprobation of Stubbes who, Arnold notes, described scarves as ‘extravagant accessories’ in 1583:

Then they must have their silke scarffes cast about their faces, and fluttering in the wind with great tassells at every ende, eyther of gold, silver or silke. But I know wherefore, they will say, they weare these scarffs, namely, to keep them from Sunne burnyng.  

But scarves were also a significant military symbol, and the scarf of Tethys, wrapped around a sword, is one such symbol. Scarves were the classical badge of identity on the field (Plutarch, for example, tells how Pyrrhus is recorded as ‘changing his scarf and his arms with Megacles, one of his friends, and, obscuring himself, as it were, in his’), and denoted a soldier in the early modern period and beyond. Shakespeare’s ‘braggart’ Parolles, passing himself off as a ‘gallant militarist’ in All’s Well that Ends Well, claims to have ‘the whole theoret of war in the knot of his scarf” (iv.3.135). When Parolles is exposed as a turncoat fraud by the French Lords, his military costume is described as being intact, while his reputation — and seemingly his life — is in tatters: ‘you are undone Captain all but your scarfe, that has a knot on’t yet’ (1.300).

In its emblematic depiction of a military subject, a map showing the extent of the British Empire, Tethys’s scarf is not dissimilar to a cypress scarf richly decorated with reversible embroidery in Elizabeth I’s Great Wardrobe:

Item to John Parr our Enbrauderer [...] for enbrodering of a skarf of white silk Sypers richlie wrought with a brode border both sydes alyke at eche ende scalling Ladders, armed men, scrowles with wordes handes

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and fethers artyfycyallie wrought with sondrie other devices of venice
gold silver and silke of sondrie Colours with a welte on eche syde the
same borders lykwise embroidered and a narrowe border downe both
sydes, the same skarf with a brode riche Lace of silver rounde aboute
with a rich spangle lace and buttons of silver tufted with silver spangles
enryched with silver plate and spangles.  

From this entry in the Lord Chamberlain’s records of warrants we know that this scarf
was commissioned by the Crown from Elizabeth’s embroiderer to support a specific
area of her developing iconography – and not made as a gift, which would therefore
have been the product of the iconographical impulses of a subject.

Elizabeth’s scarf presents her as martial queen, and Tethys’s scarf has an analogous
function, writing Anna as military strategist of foreign policy. The embroidered
message it sends to Henry counsels him that when he inherits the throne he is to be
content with the extent of the Empire as it stands, and look upon the Pillars of Hercules
as his natural boundaries. The scarf feeds into James’s persona as Rex Pacificus and
projects the image of the peace-bringing king into the future reign of his son Henry: the
rusty sword of Queen Elizabeth is replaced by the scarfed-up sword of Henry, and the
scarf-as-military-emblem of men’s bellicose ‘workes of glory’ is reworked by women’s
work, and ‘wrought’ into a symbol of peace. Francis Quarles, in the introduction to
his 1643 emblem book Emblems was to explain an emblem as ‘but a silent Parable’
which mirrors God’s way of making Himself known on Earth: ‘before the knowledge of

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88 PRO, LC5/36, fol. 188, warrant dated 27 September 1591, cited in Arnold, p. 192. Elizabeth’s scarf, and Anne’s scarf of empire, trace a historical line which continues with the sash-type scarves worn in the Civil War, of which Victoria and Albert Museum no. 1509-1882 (illustrated in Nevinson, Catalogue of English Domestic Embroidery pl. LXV) is a good example.

89 John Parr was also employed as the ‘King’s Embroiderer’ in James’ service after his accession, although it is not known whether he undertook to make the scarf presented in Tethys Festival. For notes on Parr and Elizabeth’s other embroiderers, see Arnold, pp. 189-92.

letters, God was known by hieroglyphics. And, indeed, what are the heavens, the earth, nay every creature, but Hieroglyphics and Emblems of His Glory? The scarf, Tethys’s messenger tells us, is also an emblem of ‘workes of glory’, an emblem (like the British Isles themselves, ‘infigur’d’ in the embroidery) of James’s and Henry’s divine royal nature, an earthly mirror — or emblem — of God’s divine reign. Henry’s future wise rule is a concern of this masque, and the scarf, a tangible form of an idealised reign (and an emblematic representation of an emblematic representation), raises in Tethys Festival ‘the recurrent motif of the king’s wisdom which, in turn, generates peace, the Golden Age’.

Anna continues in her explication of military strategy. In return for Henry’s gift of imperial peace, Tethys will requite him with the fruits of the sea, her ‘watry governmment’, which she claims will yield more in economic terms than the spoils of the Spanish colonies in the Indies. The reciprocal arrangement proposed by the goddess was to be supported by the political theorist Hobbes, who indicated how the fact of the graceful gift within the masque was itself a fundamental part of the creation of a peaceful society:

If men see that they shall be frustrated [in not getting something in return for their gift], there will be no beginning of benevolence or trust, nor consequently of mutual help, nor of reconciliation of one man to another, and therefore they are to remain still in the condition of war, which is contrary to the first and fundamental law of nature which commandeth men to seek peace.

The masque goes on to reify Tethys’s counsel of peace. John Pitcher points out that ‘in

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92 Jerry Limon, The Masque of Stuart Culture, p. 89.
93 Hobbes, Leviathan, Book 1, Chapter 15, cited in Klein, pp. 405-66.
the second and third scenes of the masque, this advice and its outcome are given physical form. From out of a cavern beneath the ocean, come the beauty and riches of English and Welsh river-nymphs (the court ladies) and the Queen of the Ocean (Anna), so generous to Britain and its princes'. The riches of the kingdom, envisaged as female, issue forth from the embroidered — feminised — icon of empire. And following the neo-Platonic theory of grace, the relationship between Tethys and her nymphs suggests that the pattern of courteous and peaceful gift-giving which the Consort lays down may also be followed by those within the national borders, thereby securing domestic as well as international peace.

To emphasise the symbolism of the needlework gift, the scarf is given an epithet: 'the zone of Love and Amitie'. 'Zone', the Greek 'circle', recalls the graceful 'chain of amity' wrought by Samuel Daniel's first masque for Queen Anna, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, and locates this needlework gift firmly within the conventions of graceful giving. The scarf is thus both a link in the circular chain of graceful giving, and a symbol of the circle itself. Its presentation is also a signifier of Henry's investiture, the link in the chain of inheritance that sustains the court system. John Pitcher's analysis sees Tethys's scarf, or circular 'zone', 'which girdles or encircles the other gift, the sword of justice' as fitting into a repeated stress within the masque on the form of the circle. Thus, Tethys, 'the intelligence which moves the sphere | Of circling waves', counsels Henry not to 'pass the circle of the field, | But thinke Alcides' pillars are the knot' (p. 351-52). Pitcher recognises that these are 'circles of power', but does not go on to identify the rhetorical and philosophical system from which the image of

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94 Pitcher, p. 38
95 Pitcher, p. 38
the circle is taken, and to which it refers: the iconography of grace. The ‘knot’ which literally transforms the scarf into a circle and which metaphorically symbolises a boundary beyond which it is forbidden to pass, is itself part of the language of grace. Seneca’s query about the dance of the Graces, ‘quid ille consortis manibus in se redeuntium chorus’, was rendered in Golding’s 1578 translation as ‘why walkes that knot in a roundell hand in hand?’ More than simply part of graceful vocabulary, the word indicates the dance itself as the very generation of grace in OED senses 11 and 12, ‘something that forms or maintains a union’, and ‘a bond or obligation; a binding condition’. The word was current as a term for the social ties symbolised by dances within the genre of the masque: Jonson wrote in 1618 of masquers who ‘interweave the curious knot’. Thus the masquers symbolise the ties which yoke them together in their dances, which involve ever greater rings of courtiers in their socially binding rituals, and the needlework gift with its knotted, circular form has the same function. Once again, at the site where the court symbolises its relationship with the crown and vice versa, a needlework gift is symbolic of and party to the formulation of a network of power relations.

Marion Wynne-Davies and Barbara Kiefer Lewalski have discussed the participation of Jacobean women, and specifically Queen Anna, in the creation of court masques, and suggested that Anna and her most intimate female courtier-masquers might have been engaged in activity coded as subversive in relation to the state. The Jacobean masque, says Lewalski, offering a critique of the writings of Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg on the subject,

is usually treated as a mythic idealisation of James, a Neoplatonic

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* Seneca, Concerning Benefitting, 1.3. (sig. Ant-Ant*).
* Jonson, Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue, 1.229.
representation of his concept of sovereignty. [...] But we have not much considered the subversive elements in the earliest Jacobean masques, arising from the Queen’s dominant presence as planner, promoter, performer, and first audience. For the first decade or so, it seems that the Stuart masque Orgel describes has not yet taken normative form, that the masque is instead a site for contestation about gender, power and status.98

Lewalski formulates the notion that subversion was not necessarily even a consciously implemented strategy on the part of the Queen and her women, but asserts nonetheless that

the effect was to subvert the representation of James as exclusive locus of power and virtue by means of texts and symbolic actions which exalt the power and virtue of the Queen and her ladies — and by extension, of women generally. That the Queen is in some way responsible for these subversive features is indicated by their presence in both Daniel’s and Jonson’s masques and entertainments for her.99

Lewalski interprets Jonson’s Masque of Queens as providing a platform for the women of the court to perform the parts of ‘militant queens whose force is directed against Kings and husbands’, and who ‘need, and find, a female referent in Queen Anna not in King James’.100 Tethys Festival, she believes, sees Anna promoting the King’s policies but passing over King James in her address to Henry, who will be credited with restoring the Golden Age.101

Queen Anna’s gift of the scarf to her son had its iconographical roots in a portrait commissioned the year of the Accession, when, according to the assessment of J. Leeds Barroll, ‘the object of Anna’s attention’ was ‘to exert considerable influence of her own

88 Lewalski, Writing Women, pp. 28-29.
99 Lewalski, Writing Women, p. 29.
100 Lewalski, Writing Women, p. 38
101 Lewalski, Writing Women, pp. 39-40
Fig. 3.9 Robert Peake the Elder: Prince Henry with John Harrington. Oil on canvas, 1603 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)
through the agency of Prince Henry, the future King of England. Prince Henry is portrayed by Robert Peake the Elder in a martial pose drawing a sword from a scabbard knotted around with an embroidered scarf (fig. 3.9). He is accompanied by the young John Harrington, brother of Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, and thus linked firmly to the political circles of the Queen's influence. It is unusual to see a scarf knotted about the scabbard in this kind of portrait; scabbards are in other portraits pictured strapped on with narrow guards of leather. The original portrait creates an iconographical vocabulary for Anna's bid for influence over Henry, a vocabulary that is employed seven years later with the scarf's reappearance in Tethys. Tethys's scarf marks Henry as heir to the empire, and confers upon him a state identity to mirror his creation as Prince of Wales. He will wield power 'emanating from both his parents, but by means of symbolic objects unmistakably originating with the queen'.

Even if it is not subversive, Tethys certainly asserts and affirms the political position of female masquers within the court structure. The embroidered scarf is the semiotic locus of grace-conferring generosity from a group of enfranchised women lead by a powerful queen. Its gift establishes an imperial theme, predicated upon the rights of the virtuous aristocracy to inherit land. The theme is underpinned by the assignation of rivers to Anna's favourite female courtiers according to their 'dignitie, Signories, or places of birth', and the masque sees Anna asserting Tethys's territorial rights over 'my waves and watry governmente' (pp. 348, 352). The presentation of the scarf states semiotically that the empire is within Anna's gift, and the masque, following on from the Masque of

102 Barroll, Anna of Denmark, p. 117.
103 Peake was commissioned to execute another portrait the same year. It is a close copy of the first, but with the substitution of the Earl of Essex (then twelve years old) for John Harrington, from the circles of Jacobean influence. See Barroll, Anna of Denmark, p. 118.
104 Barroll, Anna of Denmark, p. 124.
Queens, envisages female property rights upheld by a community of women acting against the hegemony of husbands and kings. For Anne Clifford, participating in Tethys Festival as the nymph of Ayr, this semiotisation was to become highly significant, and I will explore below how her use of needlework gifts within a community of women mirrored the masquing model.

Marion Wynne-Davies argues that the Queen’s masque ‘challenged the gendered preserves of authorship’ and questioned the legitimacy of absolute male power as symbolised by the Stuart King’. The masque, she says, ‘proffered the opportunity for personal artistic participation. Not only were the ladies of the court able to commission the text they desired, they were also able to share the planning for its performance and act in its presentation’. Within the fiction of Tethys Festival, the embroidered scarf, as ‘women’s work’, is ‘authored’ by Tethys/Queen Anna, and thus itself ‘challenges the gendered preserve of authorship’. The masque enfranchises embroidery as a political text, generally, within the culture of gift exchange, as we have seen, but also specifically, as a statement of a political position. Nonetheless, it is difficult to assess where Samuel Daniel’s invention ends and where Queen Anna’s authorship actually begins. Critics have spoken of the scarf being ‘personally embroidered’, but there is no record of Anna’s executing this complex project herself. Nonetheless, within the culture of the court, it reinforces the ‘gesture of shared authorship’ extended by Jonson to Queen Anna for so many of the early masques, referred to by Wynne-Davies as ‘persistent allocation to the Queen’. The fact that the literature of Jacobean female


106 Wynne-Davies, p. 81.

107 Lewalski, Writing Women, p. 37; Wynne-Davies, p. 79. Wynne-Davies notes that the Venetian secretary reported that ‘her Majesty [was] the authoress of the whole’, and that ‘author’ was understood also to mean the ‘initiator’ or ‘instigator’ of a work. In other words, that ‘the masque was a
courtiers does not frequently engage in political discourse does not mean that they did not participate in debates in other ways. *Tethys Festival* and, as will be seen below, masques like *Cupid's Banishment*, involved the female masquers in performative politics, in dancing, masquing, or exchanging embroidered gifts. And if at this point critical debate on whether the Queen’s masques were subversive or conformist remains essentially unresolved, I want to argue, through further discussion of the place of embroidered gifts in the performative politics of patronage, that by the end of her life an alternative and potentially subversive patronage network was in operation at the Jacobean court of Queen Anna. My material is firstly private discourse, in the needlework gifts of Anne Clifford, and secondly public, in the gifts presented in the final masque staged before the Queen’s court at Greenwich.

### III: Anne Clifford: Embroidering a ‘Feminine Common Welthe’

On Sunday 2 November 1617 Clifford recorded in her diary that she had ‘dined with my Lady Ruthven’ and

> sent the Queen by Lady Ruthen the skirts of a white sattin gown, all Pursled & Imbroider’d with Colours [which cost me five score pounds besides the sattin] (p. 93). 108

Such a gift, seen in the context of patronage practices, would suggest that with her needlework gift Clifford was making a suit to Queen Anna for patronage. Sure enough, the next day Clifford records in her diary that she went to Whitehall and had a conversation with Ruthven, during which Ruthven and Lady Arundel ‘told me that the next day I shou’d speak to the King for my La. Arundel was exceeding kind with me all

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108 Clifford’s marginal note is in brackets.
this time' (p. 94). Clifford went as instructed to the Court the following day, where the Queen sent for me into her own Bedchamber & here I spoke to the King. he used me very graciously & bid me go to his Attorney, who shou’d inform him more of my desires (p. 94).

Although Clifford makes no explicit connection between the gift of the skirt and the royal audience in the intimate royal space of the Queen’s bedchamber, my reading of Arbella Stuart’s gifts and letters makes visible the intention behind the spare prose with which Clifford records her gift and its consequence. Clifford was engineering a meeting with the King on territory that was as favourable to her as possible, by forging patronage connections with the Queen’s Court. The currency Clifford used in her suit was needlework, and the path followed by Clifford’s embroidered skirts ascends the hierarchy of Anna’s household rather than the King’s. With some success: the November meeting with the King to discuss ‘the Business’, as Clifford termed it, was brokered by the Queen and took place, significantly, in her own Bedchamber with Ruthven acting as intermediary between Anna and Clifford. I want to use Clifford’s embroidered gift, and two similar gifts which Clifford records making to Queen Anna, to explore the way in which patronage by the Queen’s court could be invoked to support a suitor in direct opposition to the King.

109 Althea Talbot, Lady Arundel, was the daughter of Gilbert Talbot, 7th Earl Shrewsbury, and Mary Talbot, and thus a cousin to Arbella Stuart. Arundel was one of Clifford’s court contacts: other diary entries relating to her see her dining with Clifford, taking her to the Queen’s masques, and visiting her. Some patronage connection is thus likely, especially if she is recorded as being ‘exceeding kind’. But Arundel did not, however, have an appointment in Anna’s household staff, and does not appear to have acted as broker to Clifford, as did the Ladies Ruthven and Derby. Arundel’s husband, the Earl of Arundel Thomas Howard, unsurprisingly took the King and Sackville’s part, and Clifford recorded his badgering her to give up her estates: on New Year’s Day 1617 at Somerset House the Earl ‘had much talk with me about the business & perswaded me to yeild to the King in all things’ (Acheson, p. 64), see below, p. 311. According to the Knole manuscript of Clifford’s diary it was Lady Arundel who pressed Anne Clifford on this occasion to ‘yeild to the King’: in the Portland manuscript (the version Acheson follows) it is Lord Arundel. Lewalski follows Sackville-West’s edition of the diary, and thus the Knole manuscript, in ascribing the pressure put upon Clifford to Lady, rather than Lord, Arundel (Writing Women, Chapter 5, ‘Claiming Patrimony and Constructing a Self’, pp. 125-151 (p. 145n)). This seems unlikely, however, given Lady Arundel’s support of Clifford’s cause in November.
Anne Clifford was involved in the protracted litigation about the fate of her late father’s estates with her father’s brother, Francis Clifford, ‘my Uncle Cumberland’, and her husband Richard Sackville. By entail of Edward II the estates had been decreed to descend to the direct heir of either sex, but Clifford’s father had willed them to his brother, who inherited his title. Clifford’s cause had been sponsored by her mother, Margaret Russell, but events were to come to a head after Margaret’s death in May 1616: King James found in favour of Francis Clifford, and Anne Clifford’s disinheritance was formalised with the ‘King’s Award’ of 14 March 1617. Clifford eventually came into her inheritance on the deaths first of her uncle in 1641 and then his son Henry in 1643, but as 1616 drew to a close Clifford found herself playing, as she termed it ‘a new part [...] upon the stage of this world’ (p. 62). In order to assert her rights she had to take a personal stand against King James himself, and the dispute became a matter of great public interest: she was ‘much sent to & visited by many [...] every body persuading me to heare & make an end since the King had taken the matter in hand’ (p. 62). Clifford recorded in her autobiography that King James was ‘extreamly against my mother and me’.

In the matter of litigation, King James was a firm upholder of Sackville’s cause. Clifford makes clear that her husband enjoyed the patronage of his monarch, recording in a marginal note for the February entries of 1617 that her husband was in ‘great grace & favor with the King, so as he useth him very kindly & speaketh very often to him &

110 Richard T. Spence devotes a chapter of his biography of Clifford to the ‘Great Inheritance Dispute 1606-1617’, pp. 40-58. The King’s Award is detailed on pp. 56-57. The award fixed Clifford’s compensatory portion at £20,000, payable to her husband Sackville, who was legally entitled to his wife’s moveables. £17,000 of this was payable within two years and the remaining £3,000 was due if Clifford accepted the award. She never did, and battled unceasingly for the institution of her rights.

better of him than any other man. My Ld grew very great with my Lord of Arundel’ (p. 70). Similarly, Clifford’s entry for 13 February records that, when the King made a speech in the Star Chamber, Sackville stood ‘standing by his chair where he talked with him all the while, he being in extraordinary grace & favour with the King’ (p. 71). Clifford, in contrast, wrote that at that time her ‘Soul was much troubled & afflicted’ (p. 72). 1617 was a very difficult year for her. When in April she refused again to sign away her rights to her northern estates, her husband cancelled her jointure. Clifford’s eyes were ‘so blubered up with weeping’ on Whitsunday that she ‘cou’d scarce look up’ (p. 85). She passed the time needleworking, spending ‘many wearisome days’ in working and walking (21 June), was ‘still working & being extreamly melancholy’ on the 30 June, and ‘still working and sad’ on 1 July. 3 July she spent ‘weeping most of the day’ (pp. 86-87). July was the month she received the King’s Award, which was ‘as ill for me as possible’ (p. 86).

The diary entries reveal that while her husband was busy making himself genial to the King, Clifford, though depressed, was nonetheless mobilising her own support network at court. Clifford’s efforts were not directed at King James’s household, where her husband had created his own solid patronage connections, but were rather aligned along the axis of power that lead to Queen Anna (fig. 3.10). Earlier in the year when she had been so desperately unhappy, Clifford had established herself as a grateful (and successful) suitor at the Queen’s Court: on 19 June she records writing a letter to the Queen ‘of thankfullness for all the favours she had done me & inclosed it to Lady Ruthen desiring her to deliver it’ (p. 86). Clifford took care not to waste her sad days. She stitched needlework cushions for court contacts: Lady Rich, gifts for whom Clifford was embroidering in March, sent ‘a Letter of Kindness’ proffering support in July (p. 86).
Fig. 3.10 Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger: Queen Anna of Denmark. Oil on canvas, c. 1611-14 (Woburn Abbey)
87). Small details build up to create a picture of the patronage networks within which Clifford was operating: the contacts she mentions at court, the individuals who pass messages to her, even those who offer advice (which, in its conflicting nature, reveals which side of the dispute — and which royal household — the individuals support), not to mention the specific location where meetings with the King and Queen take place.

There is a body of research that opens up the Queen's Court to view. Following Neil Cuddy's study of the organisation and operation of the Jacobean court, in which he mapped out the political significance of Jacobean changes to household and other political departments and focused attention on the crucial part played by Bedchamber appointments, J. Leeds Barroll recognised that Queen Anna's court had been 'vastly underestimated'. He argued that, in contrast to the male-dominated political arenas of Elizabeth I's and James's courts, the formation of the court of the Queen Consort after James's accession could and did 'activate [...] the political aspirations [...] of a number of ambitious and talented women'. His useful study surveys Anna's political career in Scotland, then analyses her initial choice of entourage in England to reveal the circles of influence and patronage which the members of her household brought with them. It was, Barroll argues, Anna's traits of 'persistence and personal loyalties' which characterised her political life in England. Clifford was to exploit these traits, as will be seen. Linda Levy Peck, as we have seen above, surveys the part women played in court patronage at the Queen's Court, and links this to positions in the royal

112 Frances Hatton Rich was the daughter of Sir William Hatton and Elizabeth Gawdy. When both parents died early, Frances was brought up by her stepmother, Elizabeth Cecil. Frances married Robert Rich.


114 Barroll, 'The Court of the First Stuart Queen', p. 191. Chapter Three of Barroll's new cultural biography, Anna of Denmark, is an expanded version of this paper.

115 Barroll, 'The Court of the First Stuart Queen', p. 198.
entourage. Much of what she has to say about the King’s court is equally valid for Anna’s retinue: ‘appointment to the Household meant not just private service to the monarch but a role at the centre of court patronage and often politics’, because ‘the keys to the control of resources, political power and social status still depended on access to the royal court and to the king, the fount of favour. Such access was personal. Court patrons acted as middlemen in transactions between the king and the political elite’.

The two courts with their parallel hierarchies of power, though, did not necessarily work in harmony. In her study ‘Enacting Opposition: Queen Anne and the Subversions of Masquing’ Lewalski charts the subversive currents in Anna’s court as they took shape throughout her life, her public persona, her children and her household, her religion, court appointments, theatre patronage and political manoeuvring. Lewalski’s deeper study of the Queen’s masques sees them as a locus for resistance to Jacobean politics, as noted above. This view of the Queen’s masques will once again prove useful to my argument as it follows the line traced by Clifford’s cultural agency in using needlework to resist male political hegemony, and uses it to decode the final masque at her court, Cupid’s Banishment.

James I himself highlighted the new locus of female power that came into being with his accession; or, more particularly, when he and Anna began to live apart in 1607. It was, he wrote to Robert Cecil in 1608, a ‘Feminine Courte in the olde fashon’, one which
Lewalski notes was at the time seen as being ‘a separate and competing locus of interest and power’: ‘The Lords of the Council’, wrote Dudley Carleton in 1605, ‘are tyed to attendance at the Queen’s Court, and they have a letter from the King to be more diligent in his affairs’. This from a King who professed the theory that Kings should never suffer their wives to ‘meddle with the Politicke gouernemente of the common weal, but hold her at the Oeconomicke rule of the house’. But at least one contemporary political observer was reading the construction of Anna’s household at the beginning of the reign not as interfering in the masculine province of James’s commonwealth, but as actually constituting Anna’s own, autonomous ‘feminine common welthe’, which she herself led. One astute commentator, Lord Deputy of Ireland Sir Arthur Chichester, defined a commonwealth as ‘nothing more then a commencement or continual suppeditac’on of benefits mutually receiv’d and done between Men’. In other words, a political structure the nature of which is to create an environment for patronage to be practised.

Queen Anna’s court, like that of her husband, was considered as a political superstructure, a centre for suits and grants of patronage. But the suggestion is that it was also a commonwealth particularly for women, a ‘feminine common welthe’ in

120 Nichols, ii, pp. 203-04; Carleton to Sir Ralph Winwood, January 1605, in Sir Ralph Winwood, Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigins of Q. Elizabeth and K. James I, ed. by Edmond Sawyer 3 vols (London: Ward, 1725), ii, p. 44, cited in Lewalski, Writing Women, p. 26. It is interesting to note that this record of Jacobean concern about a potentially ‘competing locus of interest and power’ comes in the same letter in which Carleton famously criticises the Queen and her ladies for blacking up like courtesans for the Masque of Blackness.


123 Letter dated 23 October 1612, Chichester to the Archbishop of Canterbury, in “Letterbook of Sir Arthur Chichester, 1612-1614”, ed. by R. Dudley Edwards, Analecta Hibernica, including the Reports of the Irish Manuscript Commission, no. 8 (1938), 1-177 (p. 56), partially cited in Peck, Court Patronage, p. 13. This being so, Chichester says, he will make a bald request that the Bishopric of Downe should go ‘unto some Country Man and acquaintance of mine own’.
which women might deliberately appeal to the court of the Queen for their patronage requests in preference to that of the king. This was certainly the case with Anne Clifford. Clifford was to have two personal audiences with the King in 1617 to discuss her affairs, and before each meeting, Clifford consolidated her own patronage contacts. On each occasion she made a needlework gift to Queen Anna, which was followed up by significant contact firstly with her female brokers at the Queen’s court, and then with the Queen. Only then, once her own network of access and structures of support and influence were in place, did she meet the king (fig. 3.11).

The first occasion on which Clifford records preparing to marshal support from the Queen’s side against the king with needlework almost escapes notice, since the needlework gift takes the form of a New Year’s offering. But it was a present that nevertheless had the impact of a patronage gift. On 31 December 1616 Clifford ‘sent Thomas Woodgate with a sweet bag to the Queen for a New Year’s Gift’, which, together with another gift, came to the value of sixteen or seventeen pounds (p. 63). The following day, 1 January 1617, Clifford went to Somerset House to the Queen, where I met Lady Derby, my Lady Bedford, my Lady Montgomery & a great deal of company that came along with the King and the Prince. My Lord Arundel had much talk with me about the Business & persuaded me to yield to the King in all things’ (p. 64).124

Somerset House (renamed Denmark House) was one of the residences of the Queen’s Household. Clifford, following the consignment of her traditional gift, positions herself on the Queen’s side of court structures. Thus located she has access to both courts, and is singled out for public favour both by her patron Anna and by the King. A marginal

124 Lord Arundel had been mentioned in the February as being a fast friend of Sackville.
Fig. 3.11  attr. John de Critz the Elder: King James I. Oil on canvas, 1606 (private collection)
note to the above adds that ‘as the King passed by he Kissed me[.] Afterward the Queen came out into the Drawing Chamber were she kissed me & used me very kindly’. It appears from this note that the King and Queen distanced themselves from the courtiers and kept mostly to the Bedchamber, ordinary access to which political inner sanctum necessitated the entrée. In this environment of receding levels of royal intimacy, it was clearly all the more vital that Clifford cultivate female contacts in the parallel court of the Queen. Edward Somerset, Earl of Worcester, reporting from court to Gilbert Talbot on 2 February 1604, described the keen competition for places in the strictly hierarchised ‘feminine common welthe’ at the beginning of the reign:

Youe must knowe we have ladyes of divers degrees of favor; some for the privat chamber, some for the drawing chamber, some for the bed chamber, and some for neyther certeyn, and of this nomber is onely my La. Arbella and my wife. My Lady of Bedford howldethe fast to the bed chamber [...] My Lady of Derbee the yonger, the Lady Suffolke, Ritche, Nottingham, Susan Walsingham, and, of late, the Lady Sothwell for the drawing chamber, all the rest for the private chamber, when they are not shut owt, for many tymes the dores ar lokt.125

Amongst the ‘great deal of company’ congregating at New Year 1617, Clifford singled out three significant women for especial mention, two of whom are mentioned in the scramble for places in the Household recorded by the Earl of Worcester. Elizabeth de Vere, ‘My Lady of Derbee the yonger’, was married to William Stanley, the sixth Earl. His mother was Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford’s aunt from her grandfather Henry Clifford’s first marriage to Eleanor Brandon, making Clifford the Countess’s cousin by marriage. Susan de Vere, Countess of Montgomery, was Elizabeth de Vere’s sister, and

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125 Lodge, III, pp. 227-28, also cited in Lewalski, p. 23. It is interesting that Somerset notes that Arbella Stuart did not have an appointed place in the Household. Her rank certainly merited it, but perhaps Anna and James were keeping Arbella at a distance, not wanting to regularise her status within Anna’s court.
they both held appointments as Ladies of the Drawing Chamber. Lucy Harrington Russell, ‘My Lady of Bedford’, was married to Edward Russell, third Earl of Bedford and the brother of Anne Clifford’s mother, Margaret Russell. As an aunt by marriage and Anna’s chief appointment to the Bedchamber, Lucy Russell was potentially a very useful ally. All three women were useful patronage connections, wielding as they did considerable political clout: they had the entrée and the influence consequent upon it that others were denied. As Cuddy makes clear, entrée to the new Jacobean department of the Bedchamber meant significant influence, in terms of both politics and patronage, and in view of this it might be expected that Lucy Russell would have been Clifford’s broker of choice. But Russell is little mentioned in the diaries, and four months after this January meeting, Clifford reveals why, as she recounts with some bitterness, that

this footman told me that my Coz. Russel & my Lady Bedford were agreed [...] & that next week they were to seal the writings & the agreement which I little expected (p. 84).

Lucy Russell was acting against Anne Clifford’s interests. Susan de Vere too is seen allying herself with Sackville’s cause: on 19 May Clifford went to the Queen’s drawing chamber where ‘my Lord Duke my Lady Montgomery my Lady Burleigh preswaded me [sic] to reffer these businesses to the King’.

126 The daughters of Edward, 17th Earl of Oxford, and Anne Cecil, they were the nieces of Robert Cecil. Susan de Vere was married to Philip Herbert, whom Anne Clifford was to marry on Susan de Vere’s death in 1629.

127 Cuddy describes how, as the Bedchamber replaced the Privy Chamber, the balance of power moved from Privy Council to the Bedchamber and the king’s favourite. The Privy Chamber became politically insignificant under James, ‘changed and fallen’, in the words of a petition of the Gentlemen of Privy Chamber to Charles I in January 1638 (CSP, Domestic, Charles I, XII: 1637-38, p. 216). The Gentlemen lost their ‘nearest access’, and the entrée was restricted to a very few. The Bedchamber now ‘took over the whole of the king’s intimate, informal service’, leaving the Privy Chamber ‘with the formal and ceremonial — and not even very much of the latter’, use being restricted by James to ‘formal audiences with Secretaries of State and masters of Requests, and the semi-public dining in the Scooto-French fashion which he so much enjoyed’ (‘The Revival of the Entourage’, pp. 183-84).

128 26 May 1617. The agreement centred on the inheritance of the Bedford title by Clifford’s cousin Francis. On this day too, Clifford learned that Sackville had cancelled her jointure.
In this climate of opposition, in which even kinship courtiers such as Lucy Russell were against her, Clifford used Elizabeth de Vere, Lady Derby, as broker. Thus, summoned to the King for 18 January, Clifford moved along the patronage channels she had established:

I went presently after dinner to the Queen to the drawing Chamber, where my Lady Derby told the Queen how my business stood & that I was to go to the King, so she promised me she wou'd do all the good in it she could (p. 66).

De Vere, in her drawing chamber territory, has the ear of the Queen and speaks successfully on Clifford's behalf. An extraordinary marginal note adds

the Queen gave me warning to take heed of putting my matters absolutely to the King lest he should deceive me.

In this note the 'feminine common welthe', its wheels set in motion and lubricated by Clifford’s New Year's sweet bag is seen operating in direct opposition to the will of the King. The female patronage hierarchy at the parallel court of Queen Anna had set up a framework of political support that Clifford could use to brace herself against the King.

For, armed with the Queen's backing, Clifford was sent for:

my Lord & I going through my Lord Buckingham's Chamber who brought us into the King being in the drawing Chamber. he put out all that were there & my Lord and I kneeled by his chair side when he perswaded us both to peace & to put the matter wholly into his hands. which my Lord Consented to; but I beseech'd His Majesty to pardon me for that I would never part with Westmorland while I lived upon any Condition Whatsoever.

The 'feminine common welthe' represented on this occasion by Clifford, de Vere and Queen Anna is mirrored on the King's side by Sackville, his broker Buckingham, and the King. Except that of course the meeting takes place on the King's territory, and Clifford, in this private meeting with none of her own patronage connections present, is
at a distinct disadvantage. As the king’s favourite, in control of the Bedchamber to which he was appointed in April 1615, George Villiers extended his remit, paying, amongst other things, ‘a minute, painstaking, personal attention to the machinery of patronage’. Anne Clifford’s diary shows this machinery in operation from an opposing perspective. Access to the King’s drawing chamber is provided through Buckingham’s chamber, and (as at Clifford’s meeting with the Queen above to whom she was presented by Elizabeth de Vere), personal access to the King is achieved through Buckingham’s introduction.

The image of the two parties kneeling before the king and being asked to submit to his judgement in their quarrel is powerfully evocative. Holmes persuasively interprets this occasion as feeding into the iconography of James-as-Solomon, ‘a kind and gracious prince, condescending, in his divinely-inspired wisdom, to settle the affairs of his less fortunate subjects’. But it seems that the Queen had anticipated this strategy and forewarned Clifford against Solomon’s impartial decision-making powers. So although Sackville readily acquiesced, Clifford, visually signifying submission and reconciliation in her kneeling position, steadfastly refused to buy into James’s myth-making. She exploded his strategy by forcing him into indignity, into arguing with her: ‘sometimes he used fair means & persuasions, & sometimes fowle means but I was resolved before so that nothing wou’d move me’. Clifford holds out partly because it is in her character to do so, and partly because she has the Queen’s patronage to support her and is forewarned by Anna. Once the audience with the King is over, Clifford immediately retreats along her patronage channels and ‘went to the Queens side’. For a short while

129 Cuddy, p. 218. In 1618, for example, the then Marquis of Buckingham had procured 42% of warrants issued, despite the fact that the Secretary had formal control of the royal signature.

the King was stymied by the ‘feminine common welthe’; Clifford’s experience bears out Lewalski’s analysis that ‘the Queen’s presence and court provided a locus, unstable but yet influential, of female resistance to Jacobean patronage’. 131

But Clifford was forced to call on her patronage contacts again two days later when she was summoned before the King once again for the matter to be settled. Again the two parallel patronage systems were kept separate. While Sackville ‘went up to the Kings side about his business’, Clifford ‘stay’d in L’Y Ruthins chamber till towards three o’clock about which time I was sent for up to the King in his drawing chamber’ (p. 66). 132 Barbara Ruthven was Clifford’s other broker, and was perhaps a more powerful ally than de Vere since Ruthven held a Bedchamber appointment. She replaced Jane Drummond, Lady Roxburgh (who had been Arbella Stuart’s court intermediary and bearer of needlework tokens), and it was Ruthven whom Clifford would ask to deliver the embroidered skirts later in the year. The appointment, which Ruthven won ‘though there be much competition’, had itself been a stand against James’s hegemony, and in this regard it is perhaps worthy of note that it is to Ruthven that Clifford chooses to appeal for mediation. 133 Ruthven was the daughter of the 1st Earl of Gowrie (executed for plotting against King James), and she and her sister Beatrix had been the ladies-in-waiting most intimate with Anna in Scotland at the time of the Gowrie plot in August 1600. In the wake of the plot both brothers were executed, the family estates were

131 Lewalski, Writing Women, p. 18.
132 There followed a terrible scene. ‘The door was locked and no body suffered to stay there’ but Clifford, Sackville, and a menacing all-male group of lawyers and courtiers, all threatening Clifford. She resisted pressure to give up her Westmoreland rights, ‘at which the King grew into a great Chaffe’. Eventually Sackville (supporting Clifford against all expectations against the unimaginable stress of this interview) prevailed upon one of those present to open the door and release Clifford. The audience continued without her, though, and ‘it was resolved that if I wou’d not come to an agreement, there should be an agreement made without me’ (pp. 67-68).
133 CSP, Domestic, James I, IX: 1611-16, p. 464
forfeit, and the sisters were expelled from court by James. But Anna persisted in her subversive loyalties, and Barbara Ruthven was brought by Anna to the English court and given a pension shortly after James’s accession. Barbara Ruthven is mentioned often in Clifford’s diary and, in January 1617 especially, Clifford recorded occasions where she stood in a box with Ruthven to see the court masque, dined with her, and was Ruthven’s companion at the sermon, as well as waiting in her chamber for the King’s summons (pp. 65-67). On 19 January, Ruthven presented Clifford in the Queen’s drawing chamber. It was perhaps Ruthven who counteracted Lucy Russell’s negative influence with the King with regards to Clifford; ‘personal loyalties’, which Barroll identified as a powerful political motivation for Anna, would seem to have been harnessed in Clifford’s favour.

In November of that same year, the connection between needlework and royal patronage consequent upon it came into sharper focus with Clifford’s gift of embroidered skirts and the subsequent meeting with the Queen. The Queen had in January promised Clifford she would provide any aid possible, and indeed in November, Clifford was granted an interview with the King in the Queen’s bedchamber. The strategy is revealed in records of Anna’s involvement in the knighting of George Villiers: it had been the Queen who had headed the alliance of aristocrats that promoted Villiers as the king’s new favourite. She ‘so pressed it with the King, that he assented, which was so stricken while the iron was hot, that in the Queen’s Bed-chamber, the King knighted him with the rapier which the Prince did wear’. In choosing her Bedchamber as the site for her

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134 Beatrix Ruthven was smuggled back in by Anna (Barroll, ‘The Court of the First Stuart Queen’, p. 198).
135 George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury (one of the alliance who promoted Villiers), ‘from the Narrative which the Archbishop wrote in his defence, when [...] he was sequestered from his See’, cited in Nichols, III, pp. 80-81.
political manipulation, Anna had bound James into her parallel patronage network, and this was also the policy she appears to have pursued with Anne Clifford. In contrast to the meetings in the King's drawing chamber on 18 and 20 January connected with Sackville's patronage suit, the November meeting took place in the intimacy of Anna's Bedchamber under the patronage and influence of the Queen, secured by Clifford's embroidered skirts.

Recent critics all concur on 'the extent to which Clifford attempted to empower herself by conflating the discourses of aristocratic privilege and gender difference'. The diary entries relating Anne Clifford's efforts to secure patronage from Queen Anna both support and qualify the above view. Clifford's manipulation of the aristocratic patronage process, and her use of subversive tensions in the Queen's court in deliberate defiance of James's wishes and actions, may be interpreted in two ways. They may indicate colonisation of male space under sign of the female, using needlework to stimulate a political process and the drawing-up of lines of political demarcation. Clifford positions herself as politically active in her adroit navigation of the patronage system, her staunch insistence upon her landholding rights and her adamant refusal to part with her northern estates 'upon any reason whatsoever'. But she also creates a persona for herself which is submissive: the needlewoman, stitching cushions for her female friends and giving embroidered gifts to the Queen, who kneels in capitulation before her king. Clifford's diaries, however, reflect a political self-confidence and a

136 Acheson, in her introduction to her edition of Clifford's diaries (p. 32). Barbara Lewalski, in Writing Women, pp. 125-31; Helen Wilcox, in 'Private Writing, Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen', in Gloriana's Face, pp. 47-62; and Mary Ellen Lamb in 'The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading', ELR, 22 (1992) (pp. 347-68), have all explored similar notions.
familiarity with patronage structures which she shares with a number of women all of whom sought patronage at court through their needlework: Arbella Stuart, Dowager Lady Russell, Bess of Hardwick, Jane Lovell. In other words that political patronage was as much a female power structure implemented through the offices of the Queen’s court, as it was a male structure implemented through the offices of the King.

It is perhaps not surprising that, given the general invisibility of the social and political roles played by early modern aristocratic needlework, that none but a very few of the critics have paid attention to Clifford’s needlework gifts, especially her crucial present of the embroidered skirts in November 1617. Acheson concludes her assessment of Clifford’s position during the years 1616-9 with the view that

she finds strength in the network of noble women, whose separation from, and sometimes resistance to, patriarchal power gave her symbolic assistance and contributed to her self-fashioning, even if these women, such as Queen Anne, could not ultimately determine the outcome of the property suit (p. 34).

Clifford did undoubtedly find strength in her female friends and contacts, but I would add that rather than merely providing emotional solidarity and sisterhood, the ‘network of noble women’ constituted an effective system of political patronage. Indeed, it was a ‘feminine common welthe’ as Edward Somerset termed it, manipulated in precise ways by Anne Clifford. The tokens of female political patronage were appropriately, women’s work, needlework. Clifford’s embroidered gifts show that issues of access to the Queen could be mediated by needlework gifts, and that the politics of comportment when granted access to the King was in turn mediated by relations with the Queen.

We unfortunately have no record of Clifford’s diary for the year 1618. She gave birth to a son in the February of that year, but he died five months later. Acheson posits the
notion that the child’s death explains the missing months. The diary for 1619 finds Clifford apparently surfacing after a long illness; the opening entry begins: ‘the first of this month I began to have the Curtaine drawne in my chamber & to see the light’. After the long climb out of sickness, almost her first action was to send a needlework gift to the Queen: ‘a Cloth of silver Cushion, Embroidered richly with the King of Denmark’s arms, & all over with slips of tent stitch’ (p. 97). It is conceivable that the tent stitch slips were Clifford’s own handiwork. The diary’s missing twelve months conceal the continuation of Clifford’s patronage relations with Queen Anna; the resumption of the diary indicates that Clifford was still working towards her own political agenda. But eight weeks later Clifford lost her patron: Queen Anna died at Hampton Court on 2 March 1619.

The final piece in the patronage needlework sequence honours the Queen in Spenserian circular form. In thankfulness for graces conferred, the cushion with its embroidered arms gives back the queen her own self, in the form of the blazon of her identity, her own ancestral and heraldic house. And I want to argue that in a world where patronage was not only ‘central to the political life of the poetical elite but to the language in which they wrote, spoke, worshipped and symbolised themselves’, patronage access within a feminine commonwealth was not only practised in a very real sense in 1617 by those such as Clifford, but was also at the same time imagined symbolically in the emblematic rhetoric and structure of the masquing space.

137 Acheson, p. 171, n. 97.
138 Clifford outlived her inheriting cousin and came into her inheritance on his death in 1659.
IV: 'Sylent Rhetoricke' in a Feminine Commonwealth: Embroidery in Robert White's Cupid's Banishment

In May 1617, two of Queen Anna's god-daughters presented her with a gift of symbols signifying her initials wrought in embroidery. The gift was the culminating moment in the final masque to be presented at the Queen's Court, performed by twelve young gentlewomen of the first English girls' school, the Ladies' Hall in Deptford, before the court of Queen Anna at Greenwich. The masque ends with two symbolic moments of performance: a ritual dance in which the masquers' bodies form the letters A. R. for 'Anna Regina', and the needlework presentation to the Queen by two of the girls:

   The GODDAUGHTERS presenting their needlework gifts – one, an acorn; the other rosemary – beginning with the first letters of the QUEEN'S name. They retire all, two by two.139

Introduced as 'the timely fruits of their chaste labours', the embroidery is given in performance of a 'deuine duty' which the god-daughters 'owe | vnto your Highnes grace' (ll. 559, 556). The gifts are interpreted within the masque as a vehicle for showcasing the feminine accomplishments of the daughters of the gentry, but within the context of the masque their courtly skills, dance and embroidery, are figured as rhetorical elements which, coupled with the 'sylent rhetoricke' of the 'Gracious looke', work 'a league betwixt the state of harts' (ll. 601-03). Dance and needlework are at once the wordless call for, and answer to, the silent rhetoric of graceful patronage. In May 1617 King James was away from his own court on progress, and Anna had just failed in her bid for regency in her husband's absence. Staged by women and for women, Robert White's Masque of Cupid's Banishment is a unique case, a 'statement

for female performative and political authority in the face of its marginalisation. I aim to show that the performance of Cupid's Banishment, the structure, language and significance of which is mirrored and symbolised in the needlework rhetoric, contributed to the representation of the Queen's Court as a powerful feminine commonwealth which stands alone without need of reference to the court of James I, in which the performance of female accomplishments locates the individual within a hierarchy of graceful patronage.

The claim for political authority drives directly to the heart of the masque, to what is ostensibly its purpose. Occasion presents the sovereign with the revels which should have been acted at Candlemas by the Ladies' Hall: the coronation of 'a Kinge and Queene | of Fortunes choice'. As McGee points out in his study of the masque, this tradition created the appearance of 'a situation in which two ruling monarchs were present at once'. He backs his assertion with contemporary evidence. Thomas Randolph, present at revels at Mary Stuart's court in 1564 during which a King and Queen of the Bean were elected, commented that 'two such sights in one state, in so good accord I believe was never seen as to behold two worthy Queens posses without envy one kingdom both upon a day'. The revels legitimise, in carnivalesque form, Anna's regency in James's absence from the country. Randolph's sophism creates the conditions by which the masque, a mythic idealisation of sovereignty as we have seen,

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141 Cupid's Banishment, p. 231.

may be interpreted as representing a world in which Anna’s status as sovereign is not only equal to that of her husband, but which indeed, locates her at the head of a female commonwealth in her own right. I have discussed above Lewalski’s interpretation of the court masque’s potential for opening up space for women at court, and I would agree with McManus that this masque, the last to be staged before her court, and from the performance of which Anna had withdrawn to assume ‘the coveted centre point of power at the head of the masquing hall’s hierarchy’, can indeed be read as a ‘sophisticated performative compensation for the Queen’s failed bid for regency in James’s absence’.143

The political claims are reinforced by a reversal of real-world gender politics: it is women who banish men from this political stage and not the other way around. As Occasion prepares to depart the hall, Cupid irrupts onto the stage and demands a ‘iubile’ which would take the form of an ‘amorous sceane’ (ll. 120-1). But Diana appears in her arbour, surrounded by her nymphs, and silences the boy. The theme of the revels, she commands, is to be chaste love, and Hymen is duly summoned, ‘but not his fires’ (l. 221). This is first and foremost a masque staged by and for women, organised by Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford (to whose ‘worthy protection’ White desired ‘to commit this shew […] deeming none more worthy that your Honor to bee Patronesse thereof’), and danced by the pupils of the Ladies’ Hall for their Queen (ll. 32-4). The overarching context within which the fiction of the masque takes place emphasises this all-female environment: it is a community, a ‘glorious company’ of ‘starres of women’, and it is ‘royall resolution | of female worth’ which stimulates Occasion to make the time available for the revels (ll. 559-60; 79). The centre reference point of this world is

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143 McManus, p. 2.
Anna, 'Albion's Queen', and the male royal succession is all but excluded, James and Prince Charles, extraordinarily, being mentioned only silently in the rhetoric of the dance (one of a number of 'sylent rhetorickes' which constitute the main vehicle of signification in this masque, and which I will examine in detail below). Diana's 'chast festiuall' facilitates the notion of the superfluity of men, creating the possibility of a marriage in which Hymen's lamps are unlit. The presence of Diana sanctions male absence, indeed, makes it a narrative necessity. The sources of the visual images have their roots in the emblem tradition — an important precedent that I will discuss in detail below. McGee points out that 'the characters, their costumes and their properties are largely derived from Cesare Ripa's Iconologia (1611), whose emblem of Chastity standing in triumph over Cupid sums up nicely the action of the first part of the masque'.

Hymen then summons Fortune to smile on the festivities, and introduces the masque, performed 'to shew the blessed chaine of amity' (l. 271). The theme of the masque is thus to present, in physical and symbolic form, the structures of courtesy and patronage that link the sovereign with the court. Not so much an 'idealisation of sovereignty', therefore, as a representation of the constitution of court society as a whole. But it nonetheless presents an idealised version of this society, a chaste, female-only environment. As shown above, the needlework gift plays a part in the forging of the 'blessed chain of amity'. The contrast to the masque's theme of chaste love is provided next in the form of another interruption: the riotous dancing of Bacchus and his Bacchanalians. The antimasquers are permitted to stay on condition that they behave modestly, and the Coronation of the King and Queen takes place. Theirs is a chaste

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144 Cupid's Banishment, p. 229.
marriage, at the sight of which Cupid ‘stamps and stormes’ in frustration, ‘What a marriage and Cupid no actor in it’ (ll. 352-3). It is the final straw: Diana calls for her wood nymphs to chase ‘this Bedlame forth’ (l. 378).

At Cupid’s departure the Nymphs sing in joy of Philomel:

Harke harke how Philomell
whose notes no ayre can paralell
Marke marke hir melody
Shee descants still on chastity (l. 403).

In this female world the banishment of Cupid is celebrated under the sign of Philomel, whose chaste history is narrated in the needlework discourse that is to come. In the same way that needlework, index of female chastity, is an apt signifier in such a context, the invocation of Philomel is particularly appropriate in this place. Silenced and then claiming a voice in her textile narrative, then given back a voice in her transformation into nightingale, Philomel’s story is a metaphor for this masque in which politically silenced women claim a voice on the stage which is designed to represent monarchy. 

*Cupid’s Banishment* is the first masque to give a woman a speaking part: according to the ‘note of all the Maskers names’, ‘Mris. Ann Watkins acted Fortune’ (ll. 1, 3). Conspicuous in the first line of the manuscript rather than hidden away amongst the other names, the masque sets out one of its key projects: an identified, speaking female presence. The significance of the explosion of the traditional voicelessness of female masquers within the context of a masque which summons the voiceless yet discursive needleworking woman as its inspirational *genius loci* will be explored in more depth below.

Following a drunken song and a dance performed by Bacchus and his antimasquers,
called upon to provide entertainment, Diana charges her twelve Nymphs to execute a
'whisperinge measure' to 'charme harts and eyes with neuer ending pleasure' (ll. 151-2). The graceful dance of the schoolgirls, positioned to achieve maximum contrast with
the antimasquers' ungainly stumbling, forms the names of the royal family, as 'they
daunce Anna Regina in letters their 2 maskinge daunce Iacobus Rex theire departinge
daunce is Charolus P' (ll. 537-9). The dance over, the final ritual moment is reached.
the gift of the needlework, transcribed here in full:

Diana descends from the
mount with 2 of the Queene godaughters and
presents thern to hir maiesty
with this speech.

Diana: From our chast throne wee condiscend
to greet your majesty with this my trayne
my Nymphs retird from the leauy wods
haue left their wonted habitts all of greene
their sportiue quiuers and their huntinge weeds
their loose girt garments which they vse to weare
the hills and dales the brookes and fountanes cleare
deckt all in virgins hue they come to see
faire Albions Queene enthrond in Maiesty.
and see two of all the rest do seeme to show
a deuine duty which they owe
unto your Highnes grace
who to intimate their loues aboue the rest
presente the timely fruits of their chast labors
of which bright shinninge lampe that in humane shape
showst heauens perfection voutchsafe to accept
and Phebe with hir trayne
deuoted to your grace foreuer will remayne

The speech beeing ended the Goddaughters
presenting theire needleworke gifts
one an Acorne the other rosemary beginninge with the
first letters of the
Queenes name they retire all 2 by 2 makinge their honors
they ascend the
mount with
this songe (l. 542).

Occasion follows the last song with a closing speech dedicating the work to the Queen:

if the minutes Occasion made available for the entertainment 'haue runn

Soe happily that they haue wonne
the Olimpian prise your gracious fauor
wee haue atcheiud a piece of worke
far richer then the golden fleece
which Jason stroue to purchase (l. 589)

If not, Occasion craves pardon from the 'glorious Company

you starres of women
and lett the sylent rhetoricke
of that Gracious looke
that workes a league betwixt the state of harts
voutchsafe to shine vpon our childish sports
wee professe [our] stage no Helicon
our Muse is homespun our action is our owne
then bright Goddesse with one sweete smile
grace all
our Nymphs Occasion and our
LADIES: HALL: (l. 599)

Three separate silent rhetorics operate in the closing moments of the masque. Recalling
Philomel, both dance and needlework fulfil the cultural imperative of female silence, but
it is a striking feature of this masque that both also claim a voice and colonise the territory of text. Both are, as McManus points out, 'representations of language', instances of 'the female creation and performance of text'.

But it also seems to me that in their discursive wordlessness they are implicitly bound, within the vocabulary of the masque, within the compass of the third, specifically, 'sylent rhetorice': the 'Gracious looke' that sets the seal on patronage transactions.

Since the needlework constitutes a silent rhetoric which claims a linguistic function, one can go further with McManus's assertion that the presentation of the needleworked emblems 'is a staged act of memorialisation, the gift to the Queen of a concrete reminder of her place as privileged spectator'. In the context of the masque's performance to women at the Queen's court, the presentations are made to Anna in her aspect as 'the mirrour of our sexe' (the phrase is Arbella Stuart's).

Spenser's dedication provides the model for the transaction:

Then pardon me, most dreaded Soveraine,
That from your selfe I doe this vertue bring,
And to your selfe do it returne againe.

Following on from the dance of the Queen's name, the needleworked gifts with the queen's initials effectively give the Queen, who dedicates herself to her people, back to her self. Within the genre of the court masque, in which masques serve to celebrate the relationship of the court to the monarch, masques are presented as gifts to the monarch.

145 McManus explores this notion, and the possible significance of the acorn and rosemary emblems, pp. 6-8. Whilst being unable to prove significance for certain, McManus collects a range of possible meanings: 'the duality of the twice-flowering plant, marriage and funeral rites, dissident Catholicism and the ceremonies of Candlemas, festive celebration and the expression of loyalty to the monarch' (p. 8). McManus considers the significance of writing-in-dance pp. 9-12.
146 McManus, p. 5.
147 Letter to Queen Anna dated October 1610 (CSP, Domestic, James, vol. 57, fol. 224), in Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart, p. 248.
They thus invoke the gift culture which obligates the monarch to reciprocate, in the case of *Cupid's Banishment* with a 'gracious looke' directed towards the Ladies' Hall, as Occasion makes clear in the masque's final three lines. They are also an emblem-in-action of the social ties at court symbolised by the masque, and of the patronage system in general which structures socio-political relations. In the *Masque of Cupid's Banishment*, within the greater gift of the masque itself, are the smaller gifts of the embroidered initials and the dance, constituting a scale model of the larger transaction. Specifically, they symbolise the gift of the Queen's self back to her, once again modelling the Spenserian gift. The pattern performed, of gift within gift, further models the Spenserian concentric dance of the court around the graces, 'good should from vs goe, then come in greater store'. A literary conceit, Spenser's dance of the Graces is literalised in *Cupid's Banishment*, in the masquers' dance of grace. In addition, the two god-daughters, identified by Nichols as Anne Chaloner and Anne Sandiland, are themselves symbolic of gift: named for the queen, they are dedicated to her in their baptism at the same time as she dedicates herself to them as godparent, and in their gift of the Queen's self to her, they simultaneously connote the gift to her of their selves, their 'deuine duty which they owe | vnto your Highnes grace' and their 'loues aboue the rest' (ll. 556, 558). As they recall the Furnertonian ring of child-gift, they constitute in themselves emblems of the ties that bind the court together.

My reading of needlework's place in the silent triple rhetoric of grace is supported by the masque's vocabulary, by the spoken rhetoric of the only woman to speak in the Jacobean masquing space, and by a reading of that masquing space itself. In the wider vocabulary of the masque, needlework, dance and the gracious look form essential links in 'the blessed chain of amity', the construct that the masquers 'are come [...] to shew' (ll. 268, 271). The term was used as a euphemistic reference to the patronage system in
the Queen's first masque, Daniel's *Vision of Twelve Goddesses*, and occurring here it closes the cycle of the Queen's masques. The patronage system it signifies is represented in *Cupid's Banishment* by the performance of dance and needlework gifts and the answering gracious look. And action is echoed by imagery: the recurring topoi of circles and spheres are part of the masque's discourse of grace. Thus, Anna is the superluminary 'bright sphere of greatness', reflected platonically downwards in 'the circle of this sacred sphere', the masquing space (ll. 86, 94). The needlework gift is effectively a performatively rendered outer circle of the sphere that has Anna at its centre and her court radiating outwards, with Diana as broker. The specific vocabulary that was encountered earlier in Arbella Stuart's correspondence is also pressed into service: as Occasion calls for Queen Anna's 'free acceptance' of the masque gift, so Diana later extends her 'free acceptance' of Hymen (ll. 80, 245). Indeed, Occasion sets the whole tone for the masque by applying the epithet 'Gratious', the masque's first spoken word, to her 'Sovereignness' (l. 78). Within the fiction of the masque the young ladies become 'sacred sisters' (l. 518), a cluster among the 'thousand more' Graces which Spenser pictures as being 'ready [...] her to adorne' (6.10.21.7, 8). The 'sacred sisters' are engaged not only in the execution of a masque, but in a bid for royal patronage, via their masque organiser and broker Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford.

In this respect, they are arrayed in hierarchised fashion. Two in particular are singled

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148 See above, p. 284.

149 The opening moments of the masque are used to foreground the masque's function of binding the elements of the court together by reference to a parallel but connected system, the cycles of gifts. But of course gifting is not simply a reference in this masque: beginning and ending with the trope of the gift made to the monarch, *Cupid's Banishment* is positioned from its outset into the courtly cycle of gift-giving, which, as Spenser showed, also begins and ends with the monarch.

150 In the same way, White's Anna echoes Spenser's Gloriana, that 'Sunne of the world, great glory of the sky', who, with 'Diuiii resemblaunce, beauty soueraine rare, | Firme Chastity, that spight ne blemish dare, | ... such courteous doth grace, | That all her peres cannot with her compare' (Faerie Queene, 6.10.28.1; 6.10.27.4-7).
out for especial mention: the embroidering god-daughters. Their grateful gifts serve to
locate them within the hierarchy, and 'intimate their loues aboue the rest' (l. 558). It is
significant that the gifts occur at a moment of procession: recent research has suggested
that Anna's Stuart court masques, right from the beginning, functioned as a vehicle to
present a hierarchised procession of the most favoured court ladies. In an early
masque like Daniel's Twelve Goddesses, the procession used to showcase the court
women took the form of the presentation of gifts (including Venus' peace-embroidered
scarf) at the Altar of peace; in Cupid's Banishment the presentation of gifts in the form
of needlework literally displays the goddaughters' accomplishments. This masque
celebrates feminine accomplishments in general, and the needlework within it is a
powerful signifier of courtly female skill. Indeed, in a masque in part designed to
present the young ladies to the Queen and her court, such accomplishments assume a
central focus. The accomplishments are, conventionally, played down, and the grace
of Anna's smile is courted in exchange for trifles: the 'homespun' gifts of 'childish
sports' (ll. 606, 604). But like Arbella's trifles, the masquing needlework is emblematic
of much greater things: uplifted in the description of Diana's clothes ('hir Kirtle' is
'embrodered with gold', and, using a term harking back to the needlework-related
discourses of Tethys Festival, her 'very rich girdle' is described as a 'Zone of
chastity' (ll. 152-54)), the language of the needle is also, with a rhetorical flourish, used

151 Barroll, 'Inventing the Stuart Masque', pp. 121-43. Barroll points out that in engineering this, Anna
adapted a form of court entertainment which, at the close of Elizabeth's reign, was a gendered
spectacle, acted and danced by men (p. 122). He also notes that women did, however organise
masques 'as private, patriarchally supervised entertainment'.


153 Their presentation was, interestingly, a function also of the King and Queen of the Bean revels: McGee
notes that when Mary Queen of Scots' lady Mary Fleming played the Queen of the Bean her audience
remarked 'how fit a match she would be' (letter dated 15 January 1564, Thomas Randolph to Robert
Dudley, in HMC, Pepys (Magdalen College, Cambridge), p. 12, cited in Cupid's Banishment, pp. 231-
32). Whilst the masque celebrates the traditional skills a young woman must display if she is to make
a name for herself successfully within a gendered court, it locates these skills within the subversive
environment of the female commonwealth, the parallel court.
to describe the masque as a whole, a 'peece of worke' (l. 592).

Vocabularies, in this masque, typically overlap. Thus, skilful needlework is figured, like the 'peece of worke' achieved in the happy running of 'some nimble minutes', as the product of the good use of time (l. 589). 'Chast labors' yield embroidered 'timely fruits', and such handmade fruits are themselves the work of young women who have been tutored in the skill of exploiting Occasion, self-styled 'tymes handmayd' (l. 559). In the same terms, women's work is prioritised and male literary skills relegated, the 'timely fruits of their chast labors' contrasted sharply with 'idle fict[i]ons | forgd by some Poets fruiteles brayne' (ll. 141-2). Women's work is represented as fertile and creative, and (in the light of its appropriation and transformation of the linguistic form) takes precedence over literal forms of textuality. The statements made on its embroidered surface are presented as somehow more valid, as representing some higher truth, than the fictive forgeries of men's poetry. Women's speech, the embroidery argues, is a more elevated and subtler form of discourse than the linguistic product of the dull, unregenerative, quintessentially 'fruitless' male brain. Creative agency, both cultural and textual, is achieved by parthenogenesis.

But the female-authored embroidered gift is not simply a claim for cultural, or even textual legitimacy. Its assertions make far more subversive claims. The notion of parthenogenic fruitfulness summons up more powerful associations and accesses a discourse with weightier implications. The presentation of 'timely fruits' of 'chast labors' reappropriates for a female commonwealth the generative potential of the early modern woman which is so effectively prized and colonised by a male politics of heredity and genealogy, and the pain of labour, the sign of women's original sin, is here overwritten with purity and chastity by the sign of the embroidering, 'labouring'
woman. Fruits are harvested without the need for male intervention, preserving chastity intact. Parthenogenesis is a philosophical escape clause, side-stepping the sidelining of women. It is asserted in this masque on behalf of the female commonwealth as the two god-daughters (daughters in sacrament and chastity and not in blood) process before the court and present their needlework to the female state. Embroidery, in other words, is the site on which this masque predicates a philosophical and political heresy.

Alongside the silent rhetorics of needlework and dance which wrest a voice from voicelessness, and alongside the compacted vocabulary with which they borrow signification and are drawn into the discourse of patronage and grace, in Fortune's speech Cupid's Banishment also claims a literal voice. Watkins’s Fortune speaks eight lines of text:

We are engagd to Tyme for this occasion
that meetes our wishes with such good successse
for this great curtesie Ile create
some vnexpected ioy to crowne thy howers
thy minnutes Ile soe turne vppon this wheele of mine
that men hereafter shall call thee happy Tyme.
Hymen Mercury how wellcome you are hither
Wee can no more expresse then wee allready haue (l. 259).

Watkins, the spokeswoman for the female court, very specifically locates the masque within a self-consciously binding framework of the courtly, courteous gift, and its consequence, reciprocation, which will in turn engender further reciprocation from the receivers. Time, harnessed by virtue, is figured as the engine of female creativity, and in the wider vocabulary of the masque its good use by the young women (evidenced

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154 It is interesting to note that Watkins frames her gift as a work of 'creation'. So many of the early modern gifts encountered in this thesis are creative, from handmade needlework, through the creation of aristocratic titles, to the ultimate creation, the Elizabethan child.
in the needlework) makes broader political claims for the female commonwealth. Fortune draws ‘Tyme’ gracefully into the discourse of ‘curtesie’, and superimposes the circle of ‘this wheele of mine’ upon the court’s circular ‘chaine of amity’. Time is, explicitly, a graceful gift, a courtesy, to be filled with occupation (a masque, a ‘peece of worke’, needlework), which in turn is given in courtesy as a gift. Fortune’s costume reinforces her message visually, with her ‘wastcote enbroadered with gold many curious flowers wrought with siluer and silke with pleasant coulors’. The ‘curious flowers’ recall the ubiquitous practice of producing needlework slips, and foreshadow the god-daughters’ gifts of acorn and rosemary emblems. It is interesting to note that once she has accomplished this task, Fortune retreats once more into wordlessness: ‘wee can no more expresse then wee allready haue’. But on closer examination the words show that words are once again defined as falling short, as being inadequate to the task of signification, which is successfully performed by performance, by dance and by needlework.

My readings of the embroidered gift as the apogee of signification in the masque of Cupid’s Banishment are supported by the implications of research by Jerzy Limon. Limon follows Orgel and Strong in identifying the ‘dancing place’, and not the illusionistic stage, as ‘the most important acting area’ in the tripartite structure of the masquing space. The dancing space is prioritised as the site of presentations to the ‘state’, both literal presentations of gifts, but also more the more subtle offerings of dance, speeches, songs, the masque itself, all drawn into the overarching masquing discourse of the courteous gift. As we have seen, the architectural locus of real-world

patronage access to the monarch has proved to be a significant issue in the politics of the embroidered gift. So when the moment arrives for the presentation of the embroidered gifts and Diana 'condescends' from her 'chast throne [...] to greeete your maiesty with this my trayne | my Nymphs', she comes down into the dancing place (l. 546-8). The organisation of masquing space, according to Limon, has much in common with 'the typographical layout of printed emblems, where the poetic or narrative part is always set below the engraving to illustrate a given emblem'. The 'meaning' of the masque (which in a printed emblem takes the form of a poem or brief narrative explanation) is thus contained in what takes place in the dancing space set beneath the illusionistic stage. When emblem theory is applied to the shape of the masque, therefore, the performance of presentation, whether dance or embroidery, takes over the function of text (and we have seen that this is mirrored in needlework's appropriation of the primacy of language within the vocabulary of Cupid's Banishment). The exchanges of embroidered and danced initials are in fact meta-exchanges: they are a model of the binding framework of social relations at court.

My assertion that the meaning of the masque resides in the performance of the embroidered gift ultimately rests on the fact that the needlework and dance draw the liminal line of demarcation between masque fiction and political reality. The names of the real-world court are firstly written in dance by the Nymphs, and then the stage directions for the presentation of the embroidered gifts begin to break down the barriers between narrative fiction in illusionistic space and the real-world identity of participants, both masquers and spectators. 'Diana descends from the mount with 2 of the Queenes godaughters and presents them to hir maiesty' (l. 542). McGee draws

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157 Limon, 'The Masque of Stuart Culture', p. 214
attention to this moment when, crucially, Queen Anna and her god-daughters ‘reveal themselves as persons as well as personages’.\textsuperscript{158} In an otherwise perceptive study, McGee both glimpses and misses the significance of the embroidered gifts in a startling example of \textit{reductio ad absurdum}: ‘their gifts remind all of the real identity of the recipient [...] a great lady who likes needlepoint’.\textsuperscript{159} Suzanne Gossett has explored some aspects of the complex ‘audience consciousness’ required by Jacobean masque.\textsuperscript{160} Recognition of the masquers’ identity was ‘central to the meaning of the masque’, and so ‘the normal stage solution, of treating the whole as a consistent illusion, was not possible’ (pp. 96-97). There were conventions which the audience had to respect: ‘one must recognise that the queen is playing Bel-Anna’, and simultaneously ‘ignore any ridiculous overtones created by the boy playing the moon goddess’ (p. 97). Women’s silent participation, Gossett argues, helped the audience interpret female courtiers on stage, and their vocal subjugation contributed to the essential misogyny of Jacobean masque subtexts (those by Jonson in particular), which ‘idealised the masquers but also made them passive’ (p. 100). But Gossett’s analysis suppresses the very Queen’s masque which \textit{does} liberate women into speech, and which, in the absence of the male court, envisions an active female community. She passes swiftly on from \textit{Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly} to the masques at the Caroline court: ‘the remaining years of James’s reign saw no more queen’s masques or masques for women’.\textsuperscript{161} Erasing the Masque of \textit{Cupid’s Banishment} from the canon of Queen’s masques erases the female commonwealth it establishes, and silences not only the literal female voice, but also the discursive possibilities of the other forms of textuality at the critical point of the

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Cupid’s Banishment}, p. 234.

\textsuperscript{159} ‘In this culminating bit of business’, continues McGee, ‘\textit{Cupid’s Banishment} appeals to the human side of the queen’.

\textsuperscript{160} Suzanne Gossett, “‘Man-maid, begone!’: Women in Masques”, \textit{ELR}, 18 (1988), 96-113 (p. 96). Subsequent references are given in the text.

\textsuperscript{161} Gossett, p. 102.
masque's signification, needlework (given a mythical precedent in Philomel) and dance.

In the presentation of the embroidered gifts, identity becomes a key concern of the masque. I have argued that, in their embroidered and danced initials, the young women were participating in a courteous patronage transaction, and giving the queen back to herself. This performance of identity is a crucial moment in the masque, occurring at the moment where personae become people, and where the presentation of sovereignty dissolves, and is transformed in the instant of presentation to the sovereign, newly defined by the masque. The fictional claims for Queen Anna's court and commonwealth that are made in the masque are at this moment applied to her real self, both in the symbolic act of gift, and in the nature of the gift itself. A. R., Anna Regina, newly empowered. 'The name becomes both body and text', says McManus, and the opposite is also true: in performing the queen's identity the bodies of the dancing girls, the bodies of the two girls named for the Queen and their embroidered gifts all become the name, their moving forms constituting the state. It is a powerful meta-image mirroring the nature of the masque itself.
CASE STUDY

EMBROIDERING A ROYAL RELATIONSHIP: THE NEEDLEWORK OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

I turn now to my one remaining paradigmatic instance: the gift of a needleworked skirt from Mary Queen of Scots to Elizabeth I. To read the gift and its reception correctly, I need to contextualise both within the wider history of the Queens' relationship as expressed through the specialist rhetoric of political signification that was their mutual giving of gifts. I will argue that shifts in the tenor of the rhetoric surrounding gifts exchanged by Elizabeth and Mary mirror the development of their long and problematic relationship through Mary's fall from power in Scotland, her flight into England, and her long years of captivity. I began to consider Mary's needlework as a subtle and flexible discursive vehicle for Mary during her imprisonment in 'Embroidering a Royal Identity', and the analysis of some of the material considered here is developed from that previous study.¹ In reading Mary's needlework gifts as an index of diplomatic history, I will use parallel texts such as poetry, portraiture and planned masques to show that needlework played a crucial part in the development of an iconographical vocabulary with which diplomatic negotiations sought to clarify the Queens' position with respect to each other.

¹ This is the case particularly with material and analysis on pages 172-3, 175-7, 180-3, 342-5, 347-51, 362-4, 366-7, 369-71, 373, 378-9. In almost all cases the analysis has been extended or altered.
I: ‘Evidence of the honour I bear her’: Mary’s Needlework Gifts to Elizabeth

Mary’s putative claim to the throne of England was a life-long issue of contention. While she was still a child this claim was articulated publicly on her behalf in embroidered terms, during her early marriage to François, then Dauphin of France and subsequently François II. On the death of Mary Tudor in 1558, Mary’s father-in-law Henry II of France formally proclaimed the sixteen-year-old Dauphine Queen of England, Ireland and Scotland, ‘causing her to add the arms of England to her own of Scotland, and to style herself Queen of England’. The English ambassador sent home to his newly-crowned Queen Elizabeth inflammatory descriptions of the embroidered pageantry of the young couple’s state entrance into Châteelherault under a crimson damask canopy embroidered with the arms of the three countries. The heraldic statements were the talk of Europe: ‘the arms of the Queen-Dauphine were seen quartered with those of [England],’ the Venetian ambassador to France told the Doge and Senate, ‘and I understand that their seals were engraved in like manner, to show their claim publicly’.

Despite this initial tension, the diplomatic relationship between Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I developed over the next eight years into a more cordial understanding (figs. M.1-2). The relationship between the two queens was of necessity brought sharply into focus when the early death of François II in December 1560 led to Mary’s return to Scotland in August 1561. Behind the scenes Maitland of Lethington made overtures on Mary’s behalf for an interview with Elizabeth, and William Cecil

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2 Mary was a great-grandchild of England’s first Tudor king, Henry VII of England, and the granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII’s older sister and wife of King James V of Scotland. Thus she was next in line to Elizabeth Tudor, whose mother’s marriage to Henry VIII was regarded by many Catholics as unlawful, making Elizabeth illegitimate.


4 Letter dated 6 February 1559, CSP, Venetian, vii, p. 29.
Fig. M.1 Nicholas Hilliard: Mary Stuart. c.1580 (private collection)

Fig. M.2 Artist unknown: Elizabeth I. Panel painting, c.1575 (present whereabouts unknown)

Fig. M.3 Embroidered skirt, crimson satin and gold and silver thread (private collection)
cautiously responded, despite ‘knowing the diversity of both their intents’. Such frank, if private, admissions of the problems inherent in the Queens’ positions were not reflected in the public rhetoric of diplomacy between the two countries, which may be traced through the gifts exchanged by Mary and Elizabeth. These state gifts were designed primarily to cement political relationships. Portraits were exchanged in 1561, the year Mary returned to Scottish soil, and again in 1562. Jewels were also exchanged. In the summer of 1562 Mary sent Elizabeth a celebrated diamond in the shape of (her) heart, accompanied by a sonnet of her own:

\[
O \text{ utinam ambarum bene possem adamantina vincla} \\
(O \text{re fauete omnes}) \text{ cordibus injuncere} \\
\text{Quae neque huor edax, necque falsis acta susurris} \\
\text{suspicio, aut caries temporis ulla, terant.}\]

The ‘chain of amity’ seen above constructed by courtiers’ needlework gifts to Elizabeth and James is here visualised as adamantine chains linking the two monarchs’ hearts, not in a hierarchical sense, as in the courtiers’ ties to their monarchs, but in a relationship of equality. Elizabeth responded in kind by sending a ring which was ‘marvellously esteemed, oftentimes looked upon and many times kissed’ by Mary. The symbol of the Scots Queen’s heart together with the accompanying sonnet presents an allegory of the Queens’ bodies politic developed around an idealised conception of their bodies natural. The gifts, portraits and jewels effectively taking the form of tokens of the self, were contemporary with plans for a meeting between the two Queens.

\[\text{B.M. Add. MSS 35830, fol. 228, cited in Conyers Read, Mr Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth, Bedford Historical Series (London: Cape, 1962), p. 235. Read outlines Cecil’s assessment of the problem of the Scots Queen and discusses the planned meeting pp. 235-38.}\]

\[\text{6 ‘Would that I could join chains of adamant to the hearts of both the women (oh ye, all speak favourably of them), so that neither devouring envy, suspicion roused by false report, nor any other rot of time wear the chains out’. Quoted in Queen Mary’s Book: A Collection of Poems and Essays, ed. by Mrs P Stewart-Mackenzie Arbuthnot (London: Bull, 1907), p. 161. The ring is mentioned in a letter from Randolph to Cecil, dated 12 February 1562, in CSP Foreign, Elizabeth I, IV (1561-1562), p. 523.}\]

\[\text{7 Randolph, cited without further reference in Fraser, p. 205.}\]

\[\text{8 Patricia Fumerton discusses the function of portrait miniatures as tokens of the self in Chapter Three of}\]
When Mary fled to England in 1568, relations between the two queens instantly became more problematic and strained. Elizabeth branded Mary a ‘foreign banished Wight’ and ‘daughter of debate’ in her poem ‘the Doubt of Future Foes’, thought to date from this time. The strain had already begun to show when Mary escaped from imprisonment by her own countrymen on the island of Lochleven in May 1568. Whilst sympathising with Mary’s situation, Elizabeth was extremely concerned about rumours of Mary’s involvement in the murder of her husband Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, and her subsequent hasty marriage to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. The heightening of tension was evidenced in textile terms when Elizabeth significantly ignored a personal request for some of her own gowns on Mary’s escape from the island, whence Mary fled, uninvited by Elizabeth, to Carlisle in England. Mary had no clothes but those she was wearing at the time, and indeed even some of these were borrowed.

Given what we know of the importance in the early modern period of the clothes of the monarch, Elizabeth’s refusal to send Mary her own clothes may be understood: the wardrobe of

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Cultural Aesthetics. In particular, she discusses pp. 67-69 a meeting between Melville and Elizabeth during his nine-day visit to the English court in which he was shown a series of portrait miniatures, including one of Mary. The incident is recorded in the Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill, 1535-1617, ed. by A. Francis Steuart (London: Routledge, 1929), p. 94.

9 For Elizabeth’s reworking in this poem of the imagery in the masques planned for the Queens’ meeting and in Mary’s jewel sonnet of six years earlier, see below pp. 355-60, where it is discussed in relation to Mary’s needlework.

10 On Darnley’s death Elizabeth dedicated a large part of her letter of condolence to Mary to a warning: I should not do the office of a faithful cousin and friend, if I did not urge you to preserve your honour, rather than look through your fingers at revenge on those who have done you that pleasure as most people say. I counsel you to take this matter to heart, that you may show the world what a noble Princess and loyal woman you are.

(Elizabeth Tudor to Mary Stuart, 24 February 1567, in The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I, ed. by G. B. Harrison (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1968), p. 49). When Mary could not, or would not, heed this warning and eventually married Bothwell, Elizabeth’s response was unequivocal:

how could a worse choice be made for your honour than in such haste to marry such a subject who, besides other notorious lacks, public fame has charged with the murder of your husband [...]. And with what peril have you married him, that hath another lawful wife alive, whereby neither by God’s law nor man’s yourself can be his lawful wife nor any child betwixt you legitimate? Thus you see plainly what we think of the marriage.

(Elizabeth Tudor to Mary Stuart, 23 June 1567, in The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I, p. 50).

In response to a request for Mary’s apparel from Lochleven, Earl Murray initially sent Mary ‘but one gown of “taffyta”’, but eventually sent on the rest: ‘5 lytle carr loodes of apparylle, and 4 horse loods’. letters dated 7 and 20 July 1568 from Knollys to Cecil, CSP Scotland, II, pp. 453, 460.
Elizabeth was the wardrobe of state and her gowns, in which a sense of Elizabeth’s monarchy resided, would have signified the putting on of this monarchy by the Scots Queen. Worn by a courtier the gowns would have reflected Elizabeth’s glory, worn by Mary they would have overwritten it. Elizabeth did, however, send something. ‘The Spanish Ambassador reported that he had heard that the parcel delivered by Sir Francis Knollys (with whom Mary Stuart was lodging in Carlisle) contained two worn-out chemises, a length of black velvet and a pair of shoes, while Mary’s own version to France was that the Queen of England had sent her a little linen.’12 Fraser notes that Knollys was so embarrassed by the shabbiness of the gifts of actual clothing contained in the parcel that he pretended that they had been intended for Mary’s maids.13 Arnold analyses the episode further:

An item among the warrants for the Wardrobe of Robes lists ‘Sixtene yerdes of blak vellat: Sixtene yerdes of blak Satten; and tenne yerdes of blak taphata Delyvered by our Commandement to our trustie and right welbeloved Counsailor Sir Fraunces Knolles knight vice chamberlen of our Chamber, for the Quene of Scottes’[...]. If these three pieces of black material were in the parcel sent to Carlisle it would seem that the gift was a subtle message to the Queen of Scots [...] that she should go into suitable mourning. Elizabeth might easily have sent some plain black gowns of her own, but she would have known from Melville that the Queen of Scots was taller than herself and probably larger in the waist since the birth of James. Lengths of rich black velvet, satin and taffeta were, therefore, quite appropriate for the message which Elizabeth wished to convey to Mary, who had remarried so hastily after the violent

12 Arnold, p. 98.
13 Fraser, p. 443. Knollys explains Mary’s silence in response to Elizabeth’s gift thus: ‘I [...] said it was no present from her highness, but such necessary things, as one of her maids for lightness of carrieg chose out: and afterwards seeing her grace still silent, I added, that the maid had mistaken me, and only sent things such as a servant like herself required.’ (Letter dated 12 June 1568 from Knollys to [Cecil], CSP, Scotland, ii: 1563-1569, p. 428. In a letter of 2 June Knollys asked Cecil whether Mary should be allowed a cloth of estate, and, if so, whether it should be borrowed from the Earl of Northumberland (p. 422).
Once transferred in January 1569 to the confining care of the Earl of Shrewsbury and his wife Bess of Hardwick, Mary continued her part of the practice established between the two cousins of sending mutually binding gifts. The potential for creating public bonds between the two Queens with gifts had always been exploited by Mary, and it was now more than ever important for her to seek this kind of connection. Small, embroidered items were charged with the added burden of obtaining some relaxation of the strict regime of her captivity. Thus, for example, Mary told the French ambassador de la Mothe Fénélon that she wanted to make a gold lace nightcap (‘coiffeur [...] de reseuil’) to accompany a suit to Elizabeth, because the gift would ‘remind her of me’, and ordered ‘six ells of gold lace, ornamented with silver spangles’ for the purpose. The value and discursive properties of Mary’s gifts lay in the fact that they were the work of her own hands, and functioned in the same way as Jane Lovell’s gifts of her personal needlework, designed to mediate her petition to Salisbury. Lovell’s letter to Salisbury proffered the utility of time otherwise unaccounted for as a gift of service dedicated,

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14 Arnold, p. 98.
15 During her imprisonment in England, Mary gradually replaced her lost textile trappings of state, repudiating with iconography her forced abdication in Scotland and reasserting her right to rule, for example in the bed of state described by William Drummond of Hawthorneden. The individual emblems are discussed below. For the controversy surrounding Mary’s erection of her cloth of state see below, pp. 368-69.
16 ‘me remettre en son souvenir’: ‘de la bisette d’or garnie de papillottes d’argent, la plus belle et délicate que pourées’, letter from Mary Stuart to de la Mothe Fénélon dated 14 September 1574, in Labanoff, IV, p. 222 (translation by John Daniel Leader, Mary Queen of Scots in Captivity: A Narrative of Events [...] from 1569 [...] to 1584 (Sheffield: Leader; London: Bell, 1880), p. 331). Other gifts were a panel of the decorative darned netting known as ‘lacis’ in 1575, and three night-caps in 1576. Relaxation of the conditions of her imprisonment was also probably the desired outcome of an intended gift by Mary to the Shrewsburys of ‘a bed of rich materials’ ordered from France on 5 December 1577. It is not known whether the order was ever fulfilled, or whether the gift was ever made (Swain, p. 82).
proof of which is constituted by the needleworked token: 'I have much leisure to employ my works, which I would gladly dedicate to your service'. This closely resembles the charge borne by my original paradigmatic instance, the sumptuously embroidered satin petticoat skirt lined with taffeta that was carried to Elizabeth by the French Ambassador in May 1574 on Mary’s behalf. The embroidered gift, said Mary, constituted ‘evidence of the honour I bear her, and the desire I have to employ myself in anything agreeable to her’. In a graceful and powerful ‘spin’ on her situation (echoed later in the rhetoric of Arbella Stuart), Mary represents her enforced captivity in terms of leisure granted her by Elizabeth, providing Mary with the opportunity to reciprocate. Her densely significant message superimposes graciousness and subservience, the equality implied by the top-level diplomatic channel of communication and the desperate supplication of an imprisoned and impotent monarch. The point Mary made in writing was also made by the needlework, as evidenced by the ambassador’s explicit report back to France, cited again below:

The Queen of Scots, your sister-in-law, is very well, and yesterday I presented on her behalf a skirt of crimson satin, worked with silver, very fine and all worked with her own hand, to the Queen of England, to whom the present was very agreeable, for she found it very nice and has prized it much; and she seemed to me that I found her much softened towards her.  

The gift itself bears the same conflicting significance as the accompanying message. Formally, the present was a rich gift from one queen to another, the package sealed with Mary’s own seal. Contextualised, the gift achieves the status of a suit. The design
(shown again in fig. M.3) is an intricate floral composition in coloured silks and gold and silver metal thread, a carpet of scattered flowers, berries and leaves inserted into an overall trellis design, including strawberries, columbines, honeysuckle, pansies, pinks, daffodils, tulips, grapes, acorns, all of which would have had particular iconographical significance.\(^{19}\) Entwining lilies, roses and thistles, the conventional floral emblems of the two queens, imagine a politics of association and equality which would have been publicly declared had the petticoat been worn by Elizabeth.\(^{20}\) But inasmuch as the skirt bears a double and conflicting significance, Mary is here also presenting a gift to Elizabeth in the English queen’s persona of Flora.\(^{21}\) In doing so she inevitably takes part in a ritual that was for the Elizabethan court a highly developed symbolic act of duty or obeisance. Mary is constructed by her gift as one amongst the ranks of the many subjects who presented Elizabeth with New Year’s gifts of richly embroidered and perfumed items.\(^{22}\) If the iconography of the gift itself argues equality, the diplomatic rhetoric surrounding it locates Elizabeth in the role of patron and Mary as client. When Mary came to England the nature of gift exchange altered, and the mutual exchange of tokens of two equal selves was replaced with suits for grace. The French Ambassador read Elizabeth’s response to the gift as a barometer of favour: acknowledgement of the

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\(^ {19}\) Many of the individual flower-types also occur on the gown portrayed in the Hardwick portrait of Queen Elizabeth, which is thought to commemorate a New Year’s gift by Bess of Hardwick to her Queen circa 1599.

\(^ {20}\) Mary employed entwining roses, lilies and thistles as unifying decorative motifs on all her hangings, and these emblems also feature as narrative elements in several other pieces of embroidery described in the 1586 Chartley inventory, such as an unfinished ‘square with red ground, not yet enriched, with roses and thistles in compartments’ (‘quarre au fond rouge, non encore rehausé, semé de roses et de chardons par compartiments’), (Labanoff, VII, p. 240, translation by Swain, p. 91), and on two cushions at Hardwick Hall stitched with a trellis design containing roses, lilies and thistles. These cushions perhaps do not function as signifiers of conciliation, since the oval ‘histories’ framed by the trellis bear pointed and accusatory messages. The cushions are illustrated in figs. M.13-14 and are discussed p. 363 below. As well as stressing the blood connections and past amity between the two queens, the entwining floral emblems also perhaps express the aim of ‘naturalising’ James’s succession to the thrones of England and Scotland.

\(^ {21}\) Queen Elizabeth is often shown in portraits wearing gowns and sleeves embroidered with flowers. Pansies, honeysuckle, strawberries, lilies and carnations appear frequently. Janet Arnold reproduces many of these portraits in Chapter Two of her study.

\(^ {22}\) But which also, as Arnold suggests, might help to author the public image of Elizabeth. See above, p. 255.
II: *Pulchriori Detur*: Negotiating a Meeting

Needlework gifts from Mary to Elizabeth essentially encode two polarised positions with respect to the English queen: gifts asserting goodwill to an equal followed by gifts acknowledging subservience mirror Mary’s circumstances as they altered. Closer examination of the iconography developed by the two queens much earlier in their relationship reveals that hierarchical preoccupation was also an essential characteristic of earlier diplomatic negotiations for a meeting, and that alongside the formal correspondence of Cecil and Maitland ran a parallel set of negotiations conducted with iconography which sought to locate Mary and Elizabeth within a power relationship articulated vertically. Various versions of the myth of the Judgement of Paris were pressed into service to suggest that once this relationship had been formally established and acknowledged, a meeting could take place. Like Mary and Elizabeth’s contemporaneous state gifts of jewels and portraits the myth allegorised the queens’ bodies natural to achieve resolution for their bodies politic, but unlike those gifts the Judgement of Paris allegory sought to establish positions of superiority and inferiority rather than equality.

In the corpus of Mary’s needlework the starting point for unravelling the sequence of these iconographical negotiations is an octagonal emblem on the Marian hanging, executed at some point during Mary’s captivity, showing an apple tree and the motto *Pulchriori detur*: ‘be it given to the fairest’ (fig. M 4). ‘It’ was the golden apple thrown by Discord onto the wedding table of Thetis and Peleus, and which Juno, Minerva and

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23 The accounts of Melville’s audience and the masque plans were first considered in ‘Embroidering a Royal Identity’, and the analysis here takes further the issues raised.
Fig. M.4 Mary Stuart: ‘Pulchriori detur’ emblem, Marian hanging (Oxburgh Hall)

Fig. M.5 The monogrammist H.E. [Hans Eworth?): Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses (HM the Queen)
Venus all claimed. Judgement was made by Paris, who presented the apple to Venus, goddess of beauty, and the offence given to Juno and Minerva resulted in the Trojan War. But in the arena which was Mary’s political relationship with Elizabeth, there was a problem. Ronsard articulated it in his 1565 Bergerie dedicated to Mary Stuart: Elizabeth was a ‘belle Royne honeste & vertueuse’ (a beautiful, chaste and virtuous Queen), Mary ‘des Escossois la Royne sage & belle’ (wise and beautiful Queen of Scots). ‘Ces deux Roynes, fameuses’ he wrote, were ‘deux Venus’ (ll. 26, 33, 41, 44).

Elizabeth used Judgement of Paris iconography to claim the Venus persona as her own. In a portrait of 1569, the first year of Mary’s captivity, Elizabeth is preferred before all three goddesses in a remaking of the myth known as Elizabeth I and the Three Goddesses (fig. M.5). Juxtaposed, the needlework panel and portrait show Mary and Elizabeth ostensibly in dispute over which of them is the most beautiful. But Elizabeth’s portrait makes it clear that at stake is also the golden prize of political supremacy in the symbolic form of the orb of state, which she holds in lieu of the golden apple.

Elizabeth and Mary’s texts remain disjointed and essentially impossible to link and interpret except in the most basic terms until the connection is made explicit by a passage from the Memoirs of James Melville of Halhill, the record of Mary’s ambassador to the English court, in which he relates the events of a particular series of encounters with Elizabeth in the autumn of 1564.

At divers meetings we had divers purposes. The Queen my mistress had instructed me to leave matters of gravity sometimes, and cast in merry

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purposes, lest otherwise I should be wearied, she being well informed of that Queen's natural temper. Therefore, in declaring my observations of the customs of Dutchland, Poland and Italy, the busking of the women was not forgot, and what country weed I thought best becoming gentlewomen. The Queen said she had clothes of every sort, which every day thereafter, so long as I stayed there, she changed. One day she had the English weed, another the French, and another the Italian, and so forth. She asked me which of them became her best. I answered, In my judgement, the Italian dress: which answer I found pleased her well; for she delighted to show her golden coloured hair, wearing a caul and bonnet as they do in Italy. Her hair was more reddish than yellow, curled in appearance naturally. She desired to know of me, what colour of hair was reputed best; and whether my Queen's hair or hers was best; and which of the two was fairest. I answered, The fairness of them both was not their worst faults. But she was in earnest with me to declare which of them I judged fairest. I said, She was the fairest Queen in England, and mine the fairest Queen in Scotland. Yet she appeared earnest. I answered, They were both the fairest ladies in their countries, that her Majesty was whiter, but my Queen was very lovely. She enquired of them which was of the highest stature. I said, My Queen. Then, saith she, she is too high, for I myself am neither too high nor too low. Then she asked what kind of exercises she used. I answered [...] that sometimes she recreated herself in playing upon the lute and virginals. She asked if she played well. I said, reasonably for a Queen.

That same day after dinner my Lord of Hunsdean [Hunsdon] drew me to a quiet gallery, that I might hear some music (but he said that he durst not avow it) where I might hear the Queen play upon the virginals. After I had hearkened a while, I took by the tapestry that hung before the door of the chamber, and seeing her back was toward the door, I entered within the chamber, and stood a pretty space hearing her play excellently well. But she left off immediately, so soon as she turned her about and saw me. She appeared to be surprised to see me, and came forward, seeming to

25 Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon, was Elizabeth's French envoy in 1564
strike me with her hand; alleging she used not to play before men, but when she was solitary, to shun melancholy. [....] She enquired whether my Queen or she played best. In that I found myself obliged to give her the praise. [....] I was stayed two days longer, till I might see her dance, as I was afterward informed. Which being over, she enquired of me, whether she or my Queen danced best. I answered, The Queen danced not so high and disposedly as she did. Then again she wished, that she might see the Queen at some convenient place of meeting.²⁶

The need for reassessment of this event is summed up by Arnold: the 'oft-quoted conversation', she says, 'may have been as much to test him and gain information about the Queen of Scots as to obtain compliments for herself'.²⁷ I would argue that the compliments to Elizabeth were far from being platitudes, and that Melville's meticulous record of the encounters indicate that information gained about the Queen of Scots was not so much physical as political, for diplomacy was as much practised during 'merry purposes' as during discussion of 'matters of gravity'. The 'test' which Arnold hypothesises for Melville can be understood in the light of the needlework panel and portrait not as one of loyalty to one or other queen, but as a part of negotiations taking a sustained allegorised and iconographical form.

²⁶ Melville, pp. 95-97. The meeting with the virginal-playing Elizabeth shows Elizabeth orchestrating apparently nonchalant meetings with ambassadors, in which she is seen displaying traditional feminine accomplishments. This scenario may be compared with Randolph's description of Mary in a letter to Elizabeth of 24 October 1561: 'I was sent for into the Council Chamber, where she herself ordinarily sitteth the most part of the time, sowing at some work or other' (reported, without further reference, in Swain, p. 32). These episodes show Mary and Elizabeth dealing with their controversial positions as female monarchs by engaging in strategies to present themselves as prototypes of feminine virtue whilst simultaneously articulating their sovereign authority. Melville's experience may also be juxtaposed with White's letter to Sir William Cecil dated 26 February 1569, transcribed in full in Strickland, Letters of Mary Queen of Scots pp. 379-84 (see also above, pp. 62, 145). White performs his own Judgement, and comes down unhesitatingly on the side of Elizabeth: 'beside that she is a goodly personage, and yet in truth not comparable to our sovereign, she hath withal an alluring grace, a pretty Scottish accent, and a searching wit, clouded with mildness.' (p. 384). From White's inability to read Mary's embroidered phoenix it appears that he himself did not have a 'searching wit'.

²⁷ Arnold, p. 2.
Melville, as Mary’s ambassador, stands for Mary. This episode, which took place the year prior to Mary’s marriage to Darnley (and a year before Ronsard imagined the two Queens as ‘deux Venus’), shows Elizabeth circumventing the problem of the Queens’ shared gender by creating a male version of Mary with whom she can interact and exploit the strengths of her own sex. Melville-Mary is required to act out a drawn-out version of the Judgement of Paris, in which s/he is constructed simultaneously as tested hero with the power to judge, and as petitioning suitor given tantalising glimpses of favour in the forbidden vision of the Diana-like queen playing the virginals, and in the public intimacy of the royal fashion show staged for his/ her benefit. In the creation of a heroic male incarnation of Mary-as-suitors, Elizabeth contrives to avoid Mary’s experience of being disempowered by her husbands Darnley and Bothwell, and on the contrary, strengthens the power inherent in her infinitely variable femaleness, her to-be-sought-after-virginity, her power to grant or withhold favours subject to admission of subservience on the petitioners part.

Inasmuch as Melville is successful in his trial he has symbolically wooed and won the English queen. Inasmuch as he is the diplomatic proxy for Mary s/he cannot ever win her. The ritual is articulated in terms of a Pulchriori detur contest, but in reality a far subtler negotiation to position the queens in a power hierarchy. Elizabeth has manoeuvred Melville and Mary into a corner as Melville admits in his ambiguous statement, ‘I found myself obliged to give her the praise.’ The instant Melville takes the position of diplomatic subservience and admits on Mary’s behalf that she ‘danced not so

28 Melville reported of Elizabeth that ‘sometimes she would say, that seeing she could not meet with the Queen her good sister to confer with her familiarly, that she was resolved to open a good part of her inward mind to me, that I might show it again unto the Queen’ (Melville, p. 92).

29 The blending of publicity and privacy is a typical, and formalised mode of court power ritual, as Fumerton demonstrates in Chapter Three of her study. On this occasion, moreover, it is accompanied by a confusion of the boundaries between diplomatic business and leisure (see above, pp. 100-01 for the relationship between otium and negotium).
high and disposedly' as Elizabeth did, Elizabeth publicly grants the suit, in part, whilst withholding right of refusal, in her wish 'that she might see the Queen at some convenient place of meeting.'

Thus contextualised, the Pulchriori detur contest comes into sharper focus as a structural part of negotiations for a meeting. At such a future meeting, diplomatic negotiations would hammer out once and for all the political relationship between the two, but Melville's Judgement of Paris experience makes it explicit that, in 1564, a meeting might only take place if Mary conceded ground to Elizabeth a priori. Once Mary was imprisoned in England, of course, the balance of power shifted dramatically, but Mary remained unshaken in her belief that might she be allowed to meet Elizabeth they could come to an understanding. So when, in captivity, Mary pressed Elizabeth for a meeting, she did so in established iconographical terms: Mary's open-ended embroidered image of the unassigned apple as yet on the tree recalls previous negotiations and might be interpreted as a willingness to talk terms. But Elizabeth's portrait declares the new balance of power, and announces the outcome of the contest. The orb from which Juno recoils in confusion makes the incontrovertible and public statement that it is Elizabeth who is in the position of unassailable power.

The Apple of Discord on Mary's octagonal panel (and possibly on Bess of Hardwick's 1574 table carpet), and the orb in Elizabeth's portrait were different aspects of one single element extrapolated from a richer symbolic dialogue between the two queens.

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30 In 1562 when plans for an interview came closest to being realised, Cecil had written to Maitland that in his opinion 'the desire of the Queen of Scots to meet with the Queen's Majesty is to be intended chiefly for her own profit [...] for seeing she hath a pretended title to the crown [...] it may be thought that by her journey she will insinuate herself to some sorts of people of this realm to further her claim' (B.M., Cotton MSS, Caligula B x. fol. 211, cited in Conyers Read, p. 237).
which had been developed in connection with the politics of setting up a meeting. The negotiations mentioned above between Maitland and Cecil for Mary and Elizabeth to meet at Nottingham had progressed so far by the summer of 1562 that Cecil had endorsed the masques designed for the occasion. The 'Devices to be shewed before the Queenes Majestie, by way of maskinge, at Nottingham Castell, after the metinge of the Queene of Scotts' were designed to be performed over three nights. The masques were to present the imprisonment of Discord and False Report personified, announce peace as the consequence of their defeat, and, on the third and greatest night, threaten a pulchriori detuiý contest instigated by Disdain and Malice Prepense, implied in trees laden with apples of gold which they were to drag into the masquing space. Discord and False Report must either be released or Peace delivered up to them. Discretion, Boldness and Courage were to vanquish Disdain and Malice Prepense and the orchard of golden apples was to be abandoned. Masque elements which appear in emblematic form in Mary's needlework are printed in bold type.

The first night was to show a prison, called Extreme Oblivion, with Argus or Circumspection for its jailer. A lady, personating Pallas, was to ride into the hall on a unicorn, bearing a banner, on which were to be painted two ladies' hands, one grasping the other, with the word, FIDES above in letters of gold. Next, two ladies were to enter together, one representing Prudentia, riding on a golden lion, the other

31 Mary sent Maitland to London on 25 May 1562 to negotiate terms for the meeting. Although as Conyers Read notes, 'we have no detailed account of Maitland's negotiations in London', it is known that 'Maitland and Cecil got together after Maitland's arrival in London and worked out details of the interview'. The manuscript account of the masques (BL Lansdowne MSS, no. 5) is endorsed by Cecil 'May 1562', suggesting that they formed part of the discussions between him and Maitland that month. Warrants had even been issued 'to deliver out of the Great Wardrobe a large quantity of silks, and other articles of the same kind' (John Payne Collier, The History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare: And Annals of the Stage to the Restoration, 3 vols (London: Murray, 1831), i (p. 180)). The account of the masques is printed in Collier, pp. 180-88, and in Inventaires de la Rayne Descosse Douairiere de France: A Catalogue of Jewels, Dresses, Furniture, Books and Painting of Mary, Queen of Scots 1556-1569, ed. by J. Robertson (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1863), pp. lxxx-lxxxii, from which this transcription is taken. Robertson's opinion of the masques is nothing if not dismissive: 'they were conceived in the spirit of dull pedantic allegory which disfigured the literature, and tainted the art of the age' (p. lxxx).
representing Temperantia, riding on a red lion, both lions having crowns of gold on their heads. These were to be followed by six or eight ladies in masques leading captive Discord and False Report, with ropes of gold about their necks. All these having marched round the hall, Pallas on her unicorn, turning to Queen Elizabeth, was to say in verse that the gods, telling them about the memorable meeting of two such Queens, had commanded her to tell them how Prudentia and Temperantia had long and earnestly prayed Jupiter to deliver up False Report and Discord to be punished as they should think good; how Jupiter at length had granted their prayer, and how they had not determined to commit the two offenders to the prison of Extreme Oblivion. The jailer, Argus or Circumspection, was then to receive from Prudentia a lock inscribed IN ETERNUM, and from Temperantia a key inscribed NUMQUAM; and when he had thus locked up False Report and Discord, the trumpets were to blow, and the English ladies were to lead the Scottish nobles in a dance.

The scene of the second night was to be a castle, named the Court of Plenty, with two porters at its gates, one called Ardent Desire, the other Perpetuity. Peace, entering in a chariot drawn by an elephant with Friendship on its back, was to march round the hall, followed by six or eight lady masquers. Friendship, addressing the English Queen in verse, was to set forth that Pallas had told the gods how worthily the night before Prudentia and Temperantia had shut up False Report and Discord in the prison of Extreme Oblivion; and that now the gods, understanding that Prudence and Temperantia were sojourning in the Court of Plenty, had sent Peace with them for ever more. The Court of Plenty was then to pour forth streams of all sorts of wines, and the English Lords were to masque with the Scottish ladies.

The third and greatest night was to open with the entry of Disdain riding on a wild boar, and Malice Prepense, in the likeness of a huge serpent, dragging after them an orchard with six or eight lady masquers, seated under trees laden with apples of gold. Disdain, directing his speech to Queen Elizabeth, was to show in verse how his master Pluto, the lord of hell, mightily incensed by what had passed on the two
preceding nights, had sent his chief captain, Malice Prepense, to demand either that Discord and False Report, his master's faithful servants, shall be set free from the prison of Extreme Oblivion, or that Peace, his master's deadliest enemy, shall be delivered up to him by the porters of the Court of Plenty. Here Discretion was to come in, leading the good horse Boldness, with Hercules or Valiant Courage on his back, followed by six or eight lords in masques. Discretion, turning to the English Queen, was to declare in verse, that Jupiter, foreseeing the mischievous intent of Pluto, has sent Valiant Courage to overthrow his designs; but that the fiends Disdain and Malice Prepense are such mighty warriors, that it will go hard with Valiant Courage unless he be encouraged by Prudentia and Temperantia, and that therefore Jupiter has ordered Discretion, in the presence of the two queens, to repair to the Court of Plenty, and there to demand of Prudentia how long she desires that Peace shall dwell between her and Temperantia, and of Temperantia, when Peace shall depart from her and Prudentia? These questions are answered by Prudentia letting down from the battlements of the Court of Plenty a shield inscribed EVER, and by Temperantia letting down a sword of steel inscribed NEVER. With these arms, Valiant Courage sets upon Disdain and Malice Prepense, puts Disdain to flight, and slays Malice Prepense outright. The six or eight lady masquers then leave their orchard, and the piece closes with a song of triumph.

It is striking that almost all the major elements of these masque plans feature in emblematic form in Mary's needlework. Of the twenty-two elements figured by Mary fifteen occur on the Marian hanging at Oxburgh hall, and seven are panels singled out by Mary's monograms or ciphers. Others crop up as panels on the rest of the hangings, and the remainder are recorded as appearing on the Bed of State described by Drummond of Hawthornden. The density of panels on the Marian hanging with a connection to the masque discourse reinforces the reading of panels which at first glance
seem pictorial embroideries devoid of significance as structured and coherent political discourse. And indeed, it becomes clear from a study of Mary's reapplication of the masque elements that her panels seek to renegotiate the relative positions of herself and Elizabeth which the masque had defined a decade before. In order to read Mary's emblematic panels clearly, I first need to investigate those aspects of the masque which specifically shed light on the queens' meeting and their relationship. Also germane to an exploration of Mary's emblematic reworking of the masque in captivity are two poems, one by Mary and one by Elizabeth, written very soon after Mary's arrival in England, the iconography of which marks the turning point in their relations as Mary passed from ruling monarch to abdicated captive.

The masques were designed to complement in allegorical terms the de facto cementing of political ties at a meeting between the two queens, personified in their monarchical function as two of the cardinal virtues, Mary as Temperance on the red lion and Elizabeth as Prudence on the white. In allegorical terms plans for the meeting had been made possible by a political resolution of the problem of Discord, and a major concern of the masque was to show this resolution. Once the matter had been resolved and a meeting was in progress, however, the masque symbolism, whilst subtly referring to the contest, distances itself from it. Discord personified is effectively imagined erased from memory, consigned to 'extreme oblivion', and the orchard with trees laden with the discordant apples is abandoned on the third and final night.

But the masques were never staged. Civil wars in France led to the postponement of the meeting. Effectively, in allegorical terms, Discord had been released from his prison; the outcome of his downfall, a meeting, had not been achieved. And so when plans for a meeting were once again resurrected, the problem of Discord was taken once again in
hand. Iconographically, it took the form of a germ contained in the 1562 masques: the assignation of one of the golden apples from the orchard of the third night, the *Pulchriori detur* contest. Thus in the autumn of 1564 Melville, standing in for Mary at Elizabeth’s court, played out a version of the Judgement of Paris. Melville’s concession to Elizabeth at the close of the sequence of days seems to have been working towards another resolution of Discord. The apple was assigned, banishing Discord, and Elizabeth ‘wished, that she might see the Queen at some convenient place of meeting’.

Whilst in the *Pulchriori detur* dialogue the accent was to be on emphasising difference, the imagery presented in the 1562 masques stressed the *sameness*, the common factors (whilst subtly deferring to Elizabeth, as the characters turn to her and only her, to speak). Both queens are in the same precarious position as unmarried female monarchs (in 1562 Mary was still three years away from her second marriage to her cousin Henry, Lord Darnley), exposed to criticism of their right to rule. By emphasising equality Elizabeth and Mary project legitimacy of female rulership. To strengthen their claims they assert in the masque joint possession of the male kingly virtues of courage and

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32 Both Mary and Elizabeth were in the same double bind. Open to criticisms of unfitness to rule based on their gender, they could not legitimise their status in the eyes of their nations by marrying and keep their sole sovereignty. The Early Modern cultural framework which, while conferring upon a married woman a certain status, situated her within a social hierarchy as subservient to her husband, has been well documented. This was no less true for a crowned queen: marriage effectively threatened her sovereignty. Elizabeth I’s avoidance of marriage, and the cult of the Virgin which she developed, have been extensively studied. Mary’s ambassador James Melville reported the following conversation with Elizabeth on the subject:

Yes, says she, I am resolved never to marry. [...] I know the truth of that, madam, said I; you need not tell it me. Your majesty thinks, if you were married you would be but Queen of England; and now you are both King and Queen.

(Melville, p. 94). Mary’s marriage to Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley in 1565 undoubtedly played a part in her disenfranchisement. Years later, Secretary Cecil argued against setting Mary free, because since Darnley had been ‘constituted King of Scots, and by Man, herself, he was “a public person and her superior”’ (cited in Fraser, p. 447). In this legal definition Cecil was presenting her as no more than one of ‘King Henry’s’ subjects, who as such, was legally bound to seek out his murderer. Despite the fact that soon after their marriage Darnley had become extremely unpopular and the Scottish Parliament had never given Darnley the crown matrimonial, Mary nonetheless lost sole status as the Scottish sovereign.
boldness, personified in the figure of Hercules. But of course subsequent events were to blow apart the iconographical illusion of sameness and equality, and by the end of the decade and beyond it had become necessary for Mary and Elizabeth to emphasise difference, and each was working hard to establish their own position with respect to the other as superior. It is in this tense context that Mary's needleworked emblems must be considered.

The poems exchanged by Mary and Elizabeth in the late 1560s flesh out this context, and demonstrate that both queens were familiar with the technique of reworking for their own purposes the iconography which had been developed for the masques to allegorise their cordial relationship and prepare for a meeting. Newly imprisoned in 1568 Mary passionately renewed her call for a meeting in a sonnet reproachfully addressed to Elizabeth:

Dear sister, if these lines too boldly speak
Of my fond wish to see you, 'tis for this—
That I repine and sink in bitterness
If still denied the favour that I seek

She continues by stressing the fragility of her position which poses no threat to Elizabeth, ironically recalling those 'adamantina vincla' which she had visualised linking the two women six years earlier:

*Iay neuf la nef relascher par contraincte
En haulte mer, proche d'entrer au port
Ainsi je suis en soucy et en cramante
Non pas de vous, mais quantes fois à tort

33 See also Carol Levin, "The Heart And Stomach of a King": Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), especially Chapter 6: 'Elizabeth as King and Queen, pp. 121-148. One of Cecil's stated aims for the meeting was to influence Mary's marriage policy.

34 (ll. 5-8). From the British Library Cotton MSS, Caligula B.V., fol. 316, also in Italian, and partially reprinted in Summit, p. 194. The translation is given in Queen Mary's Book, p. 99.
The image of the double cord sundered by fate both reminds Elizabeth of the chains constructed by Mary’s earlier gift and also appeals to her recollection of the golden chains which were to have bound captive Discord and False Report in the 1562 masque plans for their meeting. Mary’s heart-shaped diamond gift of the same year is itself recalled by the sonnet’s opening lines, their image of her captive, tormented, ‘aching heart’ (l. 2) implicitly contrasted with her diamond gift. The image of the ship is a classic poetic topos, as Jennifer Summit reminds us in her consideration of the Queens’ representation in poetic topoi of their unfolding relationship, but in the context of the Pulchriori detur debate its origin may well have been the Bergerie which Ronsard had written for Mary three years before. The ‘Deux Venus’ who echoed Melville’s Judgement of Paris experience were imagined in a ship ‘en la mer’, crossing ‘les vagues escumeuses’. Both Queens, both Venuses, ‘voudroient au rivage aborder’ (ll. 841, 842, 844). In Ronsard’s diplomatic utopia, the English had ‘juré la paix & jeté bien avant La querelle ancienne aux vagues & au vent’ (l. 831). The waves and wind of his peaceful scene are raised in Mary’s later sonnet, by the new twist to the ancient quarrel, to create the storm which tosses her ship. Where previously both Queens sought to come to shore now only Mary looks for harbour.

Harbour is categorically denied Mary in Elizabeth’s famous poem ‘The Doubt of Future

35 Ah, I have seen a ship freed from control, On the high seas, outside a friendly port And what was peaceful change to woe and pain Ev’n so am I, a lonely, trembling soul, Fearing – not you, but to be made the sport Of Fate, that bursts the closest, strongest chain (ll. 9-14) (translation by Arbuthnot, in Queen Mary’s Book, p. 99)

36 Summit, p. 195. Subsequent references are given in the text.

37 ‘on the sea’, ‘the foamy waves’, ‘seek to come to shore’, ‘sworn peace and thrown the ancient quarrel to the waves and wind’.
Foes'. Believed to date also between 1568 and 1570, it probably answered Mary's sonnet, or possibly stimulated it.

The doubt of future foes, exiles my present joy,
And wit me warnes to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy.
For falsehood now doth flow, and subject faith doth ebb,
Which would not be, if reason rul'd or wisdom wou'd the webbe.
But Clowdes of tois vntried, do cloake aspiring mindes,
Which turne to raigne of late repent, by course of changed windes.
The toppes of hoppe sopposed, the roote of ruth wil be,
And frutelesse all their graffed guiles, as shortly ye shall see.
Then dazeld eyes with pride, wich great ambition blinds,
Shalbe unseel'd by worthy wights, whose foresight falsehood finds.
The daughter of debate, that eke discord doth sowe
Shal reap no gaine where formor rule hath taught stil peace to growe.
No forreine bannisht wigt shall ancre in this port,
Ourr realme it brookes no strangers force, let them elswhere resort.
Our rusty sworde with rest, shall first his edge employ,
To polle their toppes that seeke, such change and gape for ioy.

The poem's violent rhetoric may well have been written as part of Elizabeth's response to the northern earls' Catholic Rebellion of 1569, as well as Mary's arrival in England. By coming to England and being the focus of Catholic conspiracies, argues Elizabeth, Mary, 'the daughter of debate', had created the conditions in which 'falsehood now doth flow, and subject faith doth ebb'. Elizabeth's choice of metaphor, falsehood and faith in flux, are straight out of the 1562 masque plans. That is, Elizabeth accuses Mary of reneging upon the diplomatic accords based on mutual trust which were to have been represented emblematically in the masque by 'two ladies' hands, one grasping the other, with the word, FIDES above in letters of gold', and of having effectively released False

Report and Discord from their masquing prison of Extreme Oblivion. The masque’s many-eyed prison jailer, ‘Argus or Circumspection’ is re-employed by Elizabeth to confound Mary’s supporters, since it is her ‘foresight’ that ‘falsehood finds’.

In picturing Mary sowing an iconographical seed from the masque’s golden apples, ‘The Doubt of Future Foes’ prefigures the growth of that seed into another tree bearing apples of Discord, the re-opening during Mary’s captivity of the *Pulchriori detur* debate developed in panel, portrait and table carpet between 1569 and 1574. In fact, Elizabeth’s poetic figure mirrors exactly her setting up of Melville’s Judgement of Paris experience when the notion of a meeting between the two queens was once again proposed in 1564. In the ‘Portrait of Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses’ Elizabeth shifts the emphasis of the Judgement of Paris myth from Melville’s earlier grant of general political supremacy. The orb of the English state which she holds in 1569, like her poem’s assertion that she ‘brookes no strangers force’, now specifically repudiates Mary’s claim to the English throne.

Jennifer Summit offers an insightful and pertinent reading of the two poems, which she uses to explore the relationship between the two queens, in her part-chapter “Chere Soeur”: The Queen of England and the Queen of Scots’ (pp. 196-96). Summit provides a literary parallel to my argument that Mary Stuart used her needlework as a vehicle for arguing her sovereign legitimacy in her exploration of the ways in which ‘both queens adapted poetic topoi [...] to construct a language of female rulership’ (p. 194). Mary, Summit argues, was more capable than Elizabeth of ‘refiguring’ poetic figures established by Elizabeth to her own advantage in their ‘struggle’ with each other, and Summit does provide a powerfully persuasive new interpretation of Mary’s Norfolk panel (which will be considered below in a discussion of that piece) to support her
argument (pp. 197, 193). But in the final analysis Summit's material and interest is primarily literary, and by confining the attention she does pay to embroidery to this one panel she comes to the exclusively literary conclusion that 'both queens used poetic figures to write their own scripts in this historical drama' (p. 201). If a different standpoint is taken, one which reads masques, poems, letters, portraits and needlework as parallel but not prioritised texts, it becomes clear that the radical revision which Mary performed in her needlework was of a much older and more extensive iconographical vocabulary, of which Summit's poetic topoi were a later part.

If, as seems likely, Mary's poem preceded Elizabeth's, then Elizabeth is responding to Mary's submissive, non-threatening iconographical appeal for refuge and protection with a threatening and aggressive refusal. Mary's appeal is presented in the most simplistic of terms (in the manner of the allegorical masques); Elizabeth's response acknowledges the obvious political difficulties, although the belligerent tone is, in turn, equally simplistic. Formal diplomatic protestations of equality have been abandoned. Negotiations still hinge on iconographical versions of the body politic, but it is now the body of one queen only: Mary. The poems both seek to deal with awkward political realities by figuring Mary's problematic body as a ship. 39 Jennifer Summit reads 'the interpretative struggle that Mary and Elizabeth enact over the figure of the ship' as bearing 'witness to each queen's attempt to gain the rhetorical upper hand through figurative poetry'. 40 I am here primarily interested in how Mary, for her part, continued

39 Mary had first applied the ship metaphor to herself in a letter to Elizabeth of 1 September 1568, when she had just landed in England: 'entreat you not to let me be lost for want of a safe port; for like a vessel driven by all the winds, so am I, not knowing where to find a haven, unless, taking into your kind consideration my long voyage, you bring me into a safe harbour' (Strickland, Letters of Mary Queen of Scots, 1, pp. 104-05). Elizabeth picked up this image in a letter to Mary of 15 May 1569: 'The bark of your good fortune floats on a dangerous sea, where many contrary winds blow, and has need of all aid to obviate such evils, and conduct you safely into port' (Strickland, Letters of Mary Queen of Scots, 1, p. 177), also cited in Summit, pp. 194-95.

the struggle for the upper hand on the surface of her needlework panels. Her
development of the ship metaphor serves to illustrate this point. At some point in her
captivity Mary embroidered a last version of herself as ship which repairs the fragility of
her own earlier diplomatically pathetic image of the storm-tossed ship and defies
Elizabeth’s belligerent version of Mary-as-foreign-vessel. Amongst the emblems
stitched onto her bed of state was ‘a Ship with her Mast broken and fallen into the Sea,
the word, Numquam nisi rectum’ (p. 210). The emblem’s motto, ‘Never, unless
right/straight’, is yet another reference to the 1562 masquing iconography, recalling with
irony the word numquam engraved on Temperantia’s key. This reference must have
been transparent to those familiar with the 1562 masquing rhetoric.

Just how familiar the rhetoric might have been, and how public was the Queens’
iconographical debate is indicated by George Puttenham, who reproduces Elizabeth’s
poem in his 1589 Arte of English Poesie as an example of the rhetorical figure of
exargasia (expolitio or gorgeousness). His treatment of the poem constitutes the final
link between the Queens’ two poems and the Pulchriori detur debate. He uses
Elizabeth’s command of the rhetorical figure, ‘the most bewtiful [and gorgeous] of all
others’, specifically to juxtapose the two Queens.41 Summit uses Puttenham’s reading
of Elizabeth’s poem as the starting point for her own discussion. Her interest in the fact
that Elizabeth was considered by her contemporaries as a poet develops into a
discussion of the ‘poetics of covertness’ and secrecy, and how figurative language and
emblems were employed in Elizabeth’s ‘strategy for dealing with the Queen of Scots’
(pp. 185, 190).42 But connecting ‘gorgeousness’ through mirrors to what is cloaked and
hidden, Summit fails to connect the specific resonance of ‘gorgeousness’ to a

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42 Summit, pp. 408, 411.
juxtaposition of Elizabeth and Mary. Puttenham’s discussion of Elizabeth’s poem
announces itself as being the final part of a much more extensive iconographical
sequence of masque, audience with Elizabeth, poems, portrait and needlework panels
which constitutes the political Pulchriori detur debate. More than a quarter of a century
after Melville was required to judge ‘which of the two was fairest’, Puttenham (author
of undated ‘Defence of the Honorable Sentence and Execution of the Queene of Scotes’)
reads rhetorical gorgeousness as Platonic correspondence and proof of Elizabeth’s
superiority.43 The figure and Elizabeth’s use of it are, he says, reflections of Elizabeth:
‘her selfe beyng the most gorgious and bewtifull, or rather bewtie of Queenes’. Writing
circa 1589 two years after Mary’s execution, Puttenham reveals the extent of public
awareness of the Pulchriori detur contest. With Mary dead, Elizabeth has no
contenders. Paris, in the person of Puttenham, performs a version of his Judgement one
final time.44

III: Et lepores devicto insultant Leone: Figuring Resistance in Captivity45

While Mary’s diplomatic correspondence with Elizabeth was cordial and her gifts were
submissive, in her needlework Mary responded to the accusations made by Elizabeth in
‘The Doubt of Future Foes’ with forthrightness.46 She employed emblems in several

43 Summit cites this manuscript and notes that the ‘Defence’ and the Arte of English Poesie are ‘roughly
contemporaneous’ (p. 181).
44 Although he does not participate directly in the Pulchriori detur debate, Robert Southwell echoes
Elizabeth’s verbal imagery of ‘The Doubt of Future Foes’ and Mary’s embroidered Norfolk Panel
emblem in ‘Desaccease release’ (The Poems of Robert Southwell, p. 47). His depiction of Mary Stuart’s
death as martyrdom employs their pruning conceit, thus in the same way as ‘the lopped tree doth best
and soonest growe’ (I. 4), ‘by loppinge shott I upp to heavenly rest’ (I. 8). Southwell extends the
gardening metaphor to map Marian floral symbolism onto Mary Stuart’s executed body: ‘the budd was
opened to lett out the Rose’ (I. 27). See also above, p. 170.
45 ‘And hares insult the conquered lion’. Emblem on Mary’s bed of state.
46 Frye bases her conclusion that ‘the majority of Mary Queen of Scots’ needlework constructed a
different message to the protestations of goodwill’ on a brief consideration of the Norfolk and dolphin
panels plus a third panel of a spider which does not bear Mary’s monogram or cipher (p. 170).
ways that rebutted Elizabeth's charges and turned Elizabeth's accusation back upon herself. Some of her panels addressed the specific issues raised by Elizabeth's poems: if Mary did have an influence on the iconography of Bess of Hardwick's Judgement of Paris table carpet, then Athene's owl in the border, for example, would argue that wisdom did, in fact, 'weave the webb' (fig. M.6). Taking a slightly different tack, Mary undermines the attributes Elizabeth claims as tactical strengths. Elizabeth's 'foresight', which recalls the masque's jailer, 'Argus or Circumspection', is represented in Mary's needlework in an otherwise impenetrable emblem described by William Drummond on the Bed of State embroidered by Mary. 'Mercurius' is depicted 'charming Argos with his hundred eyes, expressed by his Caduceus, two Flutes and a Peacock, the word, Eloquium tot lumina clausit'. It had been crucial to the fiction of the masque that Argus stayed awake and alert, and Elizabeth's whole argument in 'The Doubt of Future Foes' was based upon the premise that all plots were laid bare to her omnipotent vision. Just as Mary returned to the classical version of the Judgement of Paris in the Hardwick table carpet, so in her reworking of the masque events she depicts the classical version of the story in which Argus is put to sleep by Jupiter's messenger, Mercury. The embroidered Argus refutes Elizabeth's claim, and the motto turns the accusations back upon Elizabeth: Elizabeth's fair speeches have fooled many who should be more circumspect.

Mary's main rhetorical programme was to harness elements of the 1562 masque preparations which had been designed to present the relationship between herself and Elizabeth to figure an adjustment in this relationship as her captivity progressed. One

47 'Eloquence closed many eyes [lights].'
48 Compare also the portrait of Elizabeth, c.1600, in which she wears a mantle embroidered with ears and eyes (illustrated and discussed in Arnold, p. 81). Summit discusses the topos of secrecy and covertness in Elizabeth's writing, pp. 185-93, and between the two Queens, pp. 197, 201.
Fig. M.6  Judgement of Paris table carpet, border detail of owl (Hardwick Hall)

Fig. M.7  Mary Stuart: 'Unicorne' panel, Marian hanging

Fig. M.8  Mary Stuart: 'Lyone' panel, Marian hanging
emblematic strategy was to strike Elizabeth’s presence from the embroidered reworking of the masques. The unicorn of Pallas which was to herald the arrival of the allegorised version of the two queens on crowned lions is represented in the Marian hanging by the ‘unicorne’ panel, balanced by a single ‘lyone’ (figs. M.7-8). The ‘lyone’ bears Mary’s crowned cypher on its back in place of the figure of Temperance, the virtue being relocated into other emblematic vehicles. 49 Elizabeth’s erasure is underscored by the placing of the ‘lyone’ and ‘unicorne’ panels on the Marian hanging in their positions as heraldic supporters of the Scottish royal arms, on either side of the Norfolk centrepiece at the top corners (fig. M.9 shows the Marian hanging with a numbered key to the panels. The unicorn and lion are nos. 8 and 11 respectively on the key). 50 The identification of the unicorn as the one which in the masque was to have borne Pallas on its back is strengthened by the presence on the Marian hanging of the ‘Dragon’, monogrammed MR (key no. 5) and of another dragon on the Shrewsbury hanging (fig. M.10). Alciato’s emblem no. 22 shows ‘the true image of the virgin Athena and at her side is shown the good, faithful dragon, to which is given the protection of the temple consecrated to her’.

In Mary’s reworking of the masque’s opening night we may see another strategy in operation: assimilation. Mary appropriates Elizabeth’s iconography and assimilates it into her own persona. Temperance is rendered emblematically on the fourth Oxburgh hanging by the ‘Elephant’ panel (fig. M.11), but here Mary has selected an emblem

49 Mary represented herself on her Bed of State as a Big Lyon’ together with the ‘young Whelp beside her’ and ‘the word, umnum quidem sed Leonem’. Drummond commented that ‘this is for herself and her Son’.

50 As Swain notes, ‘the unicorn is on the left, not the right as in the English royal arms’ (p. 106). The unicorn also appears in the Judgement of Paris table carpet border (fig. B.8). Mary’s technique of encrypting signification using cyphers and emblems parallels Elizabeth’s ‘poetics of covertness’. Summit argues that the topos of covertness is a particular feature of women’s coterie writing, and that ‘The Doubt of Future Foes’ is a ‘material token of secrecy’ (p. 185). Mary’s Norfolk panel is literally a material token of secrecy.
Fig. M.9  Mary Stuart, Bess of Hardwick et al, Marian hanging (Oxburgh Hall), with key
Fig. M.10  'Dragon' panel, Marian hanging

Fig. M.11  'Elephant' panel, from 4th Oxburgh hanging
which erases the English queen by assimilation, because Elizabeth’s masquing persona of Prudence, one of the elephant’s emblematic meanings, accrues to Mary. Prudence is also claimed for Mary in a panel stitched to the Cavendish hanging showing a camel with the familiar Marian symbol of the marigold (fig. B.28b). But despite eliminating Elizabeth from the picture Mary achieves for her own glory the masquing result of the coming together of the two queens: the masquing elephant, remembered in a panel on the fourth hanging, would have been the vehicle to draw Peace onto the masquing stage and carry Friendship on its back.

In the same way as Mary had laid sole claim to the virtues of Prudence and Temperance, Peace and Friendship, Mary also colonised for herself the notion of ‘Discretion’ in the form of a frog, emblematic of ‘discretion and silence’. A Marian frog appears on the Cavendish panel in a cruciform panel of a ‘gleade’ (fig. M.12, the kite which according to Alciato’s emblem 129 expresses the charge that ‘you live from theft and you have nothing except what is another’s’), giving us to understand that Mary discreetly keeps faith with the diplomatic accord she may have been prepared to make in 1562, whilst encouraging us to identify the thieving gleade with Elizabeth.

The frog on the monogrammed gleade panel constitutes a needlework link between the discourses of the hanging panels and the text of a Hardwick cushion cover stitched with Mary’s cipher depicting frogs on a well-head in one of several oval inserts (fig. M.13).


52 The elephant is the emblem of peace in Alciato no. 177: ‘a wild beast who knows peace’.

53 Paradin, p. 63, Valerian, p. 211.
Fig. M.13  Mary Stuart: cushion cover depicting frogs on a well-head (Hardwick Hall)

Fig. M.14  Mary Stuart: cushion cover depicting emblems from Gabriel Faerno
The image is gleaned from fables published in 1564 by Gabriello Faerno, and the source motto is ‘Negotiorum jubeo spectare exitium ipsis qui inchoare quid volunt’, which given the proverbial risk to the frogs who are considering jumping into a well that might prove dry, might signify a message of prudence to any supporters considering a plan to rescue her. Sister ovals on the cushion reiterate the issue of theft raised by the gleade: a crow and a snake are taken from another fable with the motto ‘Infausta multis sunt sua ipsorum lucra’, making the claim that ‘[Elizabeth’s] riches, that are rightfully another’s, will prove unfortunate for many’. Exactly what is stolen is not made clear, but the implication is perhaps the throne of England. This is supported by another oval on a sister panel (fig. M.14, which together with the first might originally have made up a long cushion) suggesting that Elizabeth has effectively stolen Mary’s son (and through him the throne of Scotland) from Catholicism to Protestantism. It depicts the fox and the eagle who were friends until the eagle stole the fox’s cubs, and implies the motto ‘Qui tenuem amicum laedit, huic si humanitus impune fuerit, imminet vindex deus’.

In the masque Discretion personified appears at the turning point on the third and greatest night, when Pluto’s demands and threats are articulated. It is Discretion who

54 ‘I order those who want to begin it to consider the outcome of the business’ (Gabriello Faerno, Centum Fabulae Ex Antiques Scriptoribus Delectae (Rome: Lucino, 1564; repr. Brussels: Foppens, 1682), no. 37). J. L. Nevinson identifies these fables as the needlework design source in ‘English Embroidery Patterns of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, Journal of the Walpole Society, 28 (1939-40), 1-14.

55 Faerno no. 24.

56 The notion of stolen riches might also be understood literally. On Mary’s imprisonment in England the crown jewels of Scotland were pillaged, and among them, Mary’s personal jewellery. Mary’s pearls, used by her in portraiture as part of a programme dating from her time as Dauphine of France to present herself in the persona of Diana with external signifiers proclaiming inward chastity, were sold by Regent Moray to Elizabeth in 1568 (Fraser, p. 416). Elizabeth subsequently incorporated the pearls into her own Diana text of chastity, mirroring the process of appropriation that Mary sought to implement in her needlework.

57 ‘If she who hurts a friend believes she will escape punishment from the people, she will still have to face God the vindicator’ (Faerno no. 60). The fox subsequently ate the eagle’s chicks when they fell from their nest. Nevinson finds the fable of the fox and the eagle ‘hard to relate to Mary Queen of Scots’ story’ (p. 6). The ‘theft’ of James in the forced abdication of Mary, James’s rule by regent and his upbringing as a Protestant is in contrast to the socially constitutive practice of circulating children in the families of the Elizabethan nobility highlighted by Fumerton.
leads in Boldness (represented on the Marian hanging by the ‘Horse’ on the bottom right of the central panel, key no. 22) and Valiant Courage, slayer of Disdain and Malice Prepense, in the form of the ‘Tyger’ mirroring the horse on the other side of the central panel (fig. M.15, key no. 18). As a messenger of Jupiter, Discretion also functioned in the masque as a channel of communication between the personified queens, like Pallas on her unicorn. By asserting Discretion as her personal virtue in her embroidered frogs, and backed up by the horse and tiger of Boldness and Courage, Mary claims single-handedly to forge a resolution of the masque. The positioning of the unicorn, lion, horse and tiger emblems frame the central Norfolk panel of the Marian hanging. In re-staging the opening and closing moments of the masque, Mary presents what effectively amounts to a new political covenant, drawn up unilaterally.

Two tree emblems on the Marian hanging represent Discord and False Report from the masques. We are familiar with the Pulchriori detur apple tree bearing its golden fruits (key panel B and fig. M.4), which signs to the orchard drawn on to the stage in the third and final night and which also serves Mary by reopening the decade-old debate between the two queens and calls once more for a meeting between them. An octagon on the Marian hanging bearing an emblem of a palm tree echoes the imprisonment of False Report with its emblematic proclamation of ‘truth’, and the motto, ‘Dat gloria vires’ (fig. M.16, key panel F). In the motto Mary adds the quintessential masculine attribute

58 ‘Great fierceness and valour when enraged to combat; one whose resentment will be dangerous if aroused’ http://www.digiserve.com/heraldry/symbols.htm, excerpted from W. Cecil Wade’s The Symbolisms of Heraldry; or, A Treatise on the Meanings and Derivations of Armorial Bearings (London: Redway, 1898).

59 ‘Glory gives strength’. The emblem had an additional powerful and precise significance for Mary which has a bearing on the present discussion. On the silver ryal that had been struck to commemorate Mary’s marriage to Darnley, his name had appeared before that of Mary on the inscription ‘Henricus & Maria D Gra R & R Scotorum’. Mary and her Parliament were outraged. The coin was withdrawn and another immediately issued, a new ‘penny of silver callit the Marie ryal’, with the amended inscription ‘Maria et Henricus Dei Gratia Regina et Rex Scotorum’. Mary figured on the reverse face of this new coin, in the form of her emblematic body politic ‘ane palmetre crownit’. Darnley was

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Fig. M.15 Mary Stuart: ‘Tiger’ panel, Marian hanging

Fig. M.16 Mary Stuart: ‘Dat gloria vires’ octagon panel, Marian hanging
of virility and strength, *vires*, to boldness and courage in her virtuous armoury.

But it was not enough to erase Elizabeth or even appropriate her virtues. A final strategy of Mary’s embroidered re-staging of the masque text was to associate Elizabeth with the villainous elements of the masque. The boar ridden on by Disdain is seen rooting in the ground beneath the unfruitful branch of the Norfolk panel (fig. M.23) that contemporaries interpreted as a reference to Elizabeth. The serpent signifying Malice Prepense appears on one of the octagon panels on the Marian hanging (key panel G). The image shows an outwardly attractive arrangement of flowers, but the motto points up the danger of false-seeming: ‘*Latet anguis sub erba*’, ‘a snake lurks in the grass’. ⁶⁰ Other needlework references alongside the frogs on the Hardwick cushion cover accuse Elizabeth of broken faith and betrayal. Pallas’s masquing banner of clasped hands indicating FIDES (‘faith’) is rendered in Mary’s needlework by two linked emblems. The border of the centrepiece to the fourth Oxburgh hanging shows an emblem of two hands clasping a cornucopia, emblematic of plenty. The design is taken from Giovio, where the motto makes plain the benefits of trustworthiness: ‘*Ditat servata Fides*’ (fig. 2.21). ⁶¹ Mary, keeper of her word and maintaining the faith of the masque accord, is the

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⁶⁰ The motto is taken from Paradis, p. 70. The threat of the danger lurking in the grass is neutralised in an emblem in the border of the central panel of the fourth Oxburgh hanging (fig. 2.21), which shows Paradis’s emblem of a hand holding a writhing snake in the middle of flames and the motto ‘*Quis contra nos?*’ (‘if God is for us who can stand against us?’ (Paradis, p. 187). Elsewhere in the Oxburgh hangings serpents appear in connection with Bess of Hardwick’s family heraldry, in the knotted serpents of the Cavendish family (for example, the Cavendish panel, fig. B.23).

bringer of Plenty (the Court of the masque’s second night). The implication that Elizabeth has broken her faith, is made specific in the second emblem, linked to the first by the image of the cornucopia. On Mary’s bed of state the emblem shows two women on the Wheel of Fortune, one holding a cornucopia, the other a lance, with the motto ‘Fortuna Comites’, ‘companions in fortune’. Mary may here be coded once more as the faithful, trustworthy bringer of Plenty, and Elizabeth, the faithless betrayer of trust, may be refocused as the bearer only of violence.

Other panels too repeat the message of vilification. The monogrammed ‘Delphine’ on the Marian panel is shown beached on rocks as in Alciato’s emblem of one who is betrayed by his own kind, accusing Elizabeth of betraying the trust of equals and breaking her faith (figs. M.17-18, key no. 19). The ‘estriche’ with the horseshoe in its mouth accuses the English queen of ‘hypocrisy’, and of ‘false sanctity and religiousness’ (fig. M.19). Elizabeth is, Mary’s ‘Elephant’ argues, ‘undeserving of praise’.  

Mary turned accusations that had been made against her own character back upon Elizabeth. One criticism in particular, in the aftermath of Mary’s marriage to Bothwell, was that Mary was a wanton. A placard which appeared after the battle of Carberry Hill argued this in emblematic terms, figuring Mary’s body as a whore, a mermaid, crowned and naked to the waist. Bothwell was represented on this placard as a hare (in reference to his family crest), surrounded by a ring of swords pointing outwards. This presentation of Mary was echoed by the Scottish poet Buchanan when he claimed that

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62 ‘Fait côme les Ypocritytes [...] representante grande sainteté & religion’ (Paradin, p. 49).
63 Alciato no. 124.
64 The hare and swords emblem is included in Paradin’s collection (p. 206), with the motto Malo undique clades, ‘evil hides everywhere’.

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Fig. M.17 Mary Stuart, ‘Delphin’ panel, Marian hanging

Fig. M.18 ‘On one who will perish, from the harshness of his own’: emblem 167 from Alciato’s *Emblemata Liber*
Fig. M.19 'Estrich' panel on Cavendish hanging
imprisonment was protecting Mary’s chastity from ‘unbridled licentiousness’.\(^{65}\) Mary took advantage of the fact that the hare was a common mocking symbol for Elizabeth to redirect the accusation of wantonness back upon Elizabeth twice on the Marian hanging. In one monogrammed panel the eagle and the hare are portrayed with Mary and Elizabeth’s floral symbols the marigold and the rose (key no. 7).\(^{66}\) The identification of Elizabeth as the hare is strengthened by the hare’s appearance on the Norfolk panel, cavorting among the twigs of the unfruitful branch together with the boar of Disdain (fig. 2.17). A third instance of Elizabeth-as-hare occurs on the bed of state recorded by Drummond, an emblem of a ‘Lyon taken in a Net, and Hares passing wantonly over him, the word, *Et lepores devicto insultant Leone*.\(^{67}\) Mary, accused of baseness by her enemies, makes counter-accusations and displaces her supposed vices onto her enemies.

Other extant records show that quite apart from the treasonable assertions of the embroidered surface of Mary’s bed of state, the state textiles which Mary embroidered for herself during her time in England were perceived as a threat to Elizabeth *per se*, constituting as they did outward proof of her court in exile. Mary’s insistence upon her sovereignty in defiance of her forced abdication in Scotland presented an inflammatory challenge to Elizabeth’s sovereign authority. Mary’s cloth of estate figures in a *contretemps* reported to Walsingham by Mary’s punctilious gaoler Amias Paulet:

> I found at my arrival here in the great chamber where Sir Ralph Sadler did usually dine and sup, a cloth of Estate for this Queen, representing by

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\(^{65}\) ‘Her we have touched with no other punishment, but only restrained her from doing more mischief. For we deprived her not of liberties, but of unbridled licentiousness of evil doing’ (George Buchanan, *Ane detection of the duinges of Marie* [...] (London: Day, 1571), sig. Niiii", cited in Phillips, p. 67). Mary’s own claim for goddess-status is discussed in ‘Embroidering a Royal Identity’, p. 26.

\(^{66}\) For Elizabeth as hare see Rowland, p. 91. A hare also occurs in the border of the Judgement of Paris table carpet. The hare was also a symbol for a hermaphrodite (Rowland p. 91), and this emblematic meaning might have been used by Mary to turn Elizabeth’s claims to the male virtues back upon herself.

\(^{67}\) Drummond’s description of hares as wantons is interesting to note. This emblem follows the description of the ‘Big Lyon and a young Whelp’, ‘for herself and for her son’ (p. 208).
letters the names of her father and mother, and furnished with the arms of Scotland in the midst, and the same quartered with the arms of Lorraine on every side. Sir Ralph Sadler told me at my first entering into the said chamber, that this cloth of Estate was set up at the first coming hither of this Queen, upon a meaning that she should dine and sup ordinarily in that chamber [...]

Wherein I have considered that, in my simple opinion, her Majesty's [Elizabeth's] subjects may not with their duties allow in this realm of any more cloths of Estate than that which is due to her Highness.68

Paulet ordered that the cloth should be taken down, but Mary refused unless she received the order from Elizabeth herself. Paulet's outraged and righteous letter clearly shows that he understood the cloth of estate as a sign intended to be read publicly: a published text which insisted upon Mary's authority, resident in her by virtue of her bloodline, and which refuted her forced abdication in favour of her son James. In her refusal to comply with Paulet's order, Mary claimed her active rights as a reigning monarch: her authority was not to be relinquished to the mere subject of another.69 Her use of the cloth of estate was (and was recognised as such by Elizabeth's representative) a direct assertion of the validity of another court on the territory of a reigning monarch.70 Paulet and Sadler also recognised that the purpose of the cloth of estate in that particular room was to transform the act of eating into a state ritual of power.71

69 This assertion was all the more important to Mary in that, imprisoned on the island of Lochleven in the summer of 1567, she had been forced to sign instruments of abdication in favour of her son James (Fraser, pp. 411-13).
70 According to the 1586 Chartley Inventory, Mary had at least four different cloths of estate. One, of violet velvet, was embroidered with the arms of Scotland and Lorraine. Another, of 'brown crimson velvet' was 'embroidered with a single trewe love knot' (Labanoff, VII, pp. 236, 273-74).
71 The act also figured in Elizabeth's power rituals. Food and utensils were presented to Elizabeth's empty chair of state in the dining chamber with complex ritual before everything was taken into the adjoining private chamber where she actually sat and ate (Harrison's Description of England, being the Second and Third Books of his Description of Britaine and England, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall (London: New Shakespeare Society, 1877), appendix 2, p. lxxxv). Even more bizarre proof of the power inherent in this ritual presentation of food to the Queen is the account dated 12 April 1603 by the Venetian Ambassador of this act continuing after Elizabeth had died. As the Queen lies in state in Westminster, in the dining chamber the formal ritual is maintained: 'the Council waits on her
Mary claimed 'the great chamber' as the 'ordinary' stage for the spectacle of her royal person supping and dining 'in state' under the sign of the cloth of estate. Moreover, she strengthened the image thus presented by making a point of appropriating the sumptuous table linen kept for Elizabeth at Chartley, insisting carelessly, too, on the 'ordinary' luxury of its daily use which coded her regal status. Paulet resented this slight on Elizabeth's behalf, in the same report: 'it may please you to order that the linen for the Queen may be sent here, for her majesty [Elizabeth] is the loser because she [Mary] uses her best linen of damask work every day.'72 It is not clear from Paulet's report whether Elizabeth 'lost' in economic terms by the wearing-out of her linen, or whether she 'lost' inasmuch as Mary's use of Elizabeth's trappings of state power subtracted from Elizabeth's authority. Perhaps both meanings were intended.

On Mary's bed of state and in her Oxburgh panels, Elizabeth is personified as the enemy Other. Established iconography is used to locate Elizabeth as the discordant rumourmonger whose premeditated and systematic betrayal is responsible for Mary's tragedy. But where Elizabeth's presentation of Mary as Other, the 'foreign bannished wight', emphasises the difference between herself and the Mary who must be sundered from the kingdom by force, Mary's definition of Self and Other paradoxically yokes them both together.

I have said that the masque allegory presented the two women as like and the Pulchriori de tur dialogue stressed their differences. The emblems that Mary used to rework the masque imagery elaborate a relationship which is nothing if not contradictory. Unlike

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72 Letter dated 11 April 1586 from Paulet to Walsingham, CSP, Scotland, VIII: 1585-1586, p. 312.
her 1568 sonnet to Elizabeth, Mary’s needlework expresses the political complexity of Mary and Elizabeth’s situation. At the same time as they need to compete the two women must also declare their equality because the ‘other’ is simultaneously the threatening rival, and the female cousin and neighbour who is needed to support one’s own claim to the throne. The equality/inequality conflict is pondered in the placing of the panels on the Marian hanging. To the right of the Norfolk panel the names Mary and Elizabeth are superimposed in a crowned monogram on an octagonal panel (fig. M.20, key panel C). The equality asserted by this emblem is problematised and held in tension by the *Pulchriori detur* octagon, speaking hierarchy and discord from a mirror position on the left. The monogrammatic visual mapping of one woman onto the other is strengthened by the stitching of rose, thistle and lily emblems on three sides of the monogram and a crown on the fourth. But the motto to this octagon, *Virtutis vincula sanguinis arctiora* (‘the bonds of virtue are straiter than that of blood’) problematises the visual imagery. The implication is that, although Elizabeth has broken the bonds of their kinship by imprisoning Mary, Mary still respects the bonds of virtue which bind her.

Thus the two women riding the wheel of fortune on the bed of state are equals in birth but, according to Mary, different in the tone of the reigns they offer. Like companions in fortune, the cat-and-mouse symbols used by Mary to embody her situation are interchangeable: the Elizabeth ‘catte’ in the cruciform panel with its Marian cipher has

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Frye has also noted a tension in the embroidered relationship: ‘for all her needlework’s attempts to exclude and cut off Elizabeth, her work still relies on her kinship to Elizabeth in order to construct her own imaged identities’ (p. 171). The analysis of the present thesis has shown the matter to be more complex than a simple question of where Mary stands in line to the throne of England. Mary’s insistence on equality pulls against the imagery which was to build up around Elizabeth and which figured her as being immune to Fortune’s caprices: in Sir John Davies’s 1599 *Hymns to Astraea*, for example, Elizabeth ‘treads proud Fortune under’ (Grosart, Alexander B., ed., *The Complete Works of Sir John Davies of Hereford* [...] [n.p.]: Edinburgh University Press, 1878). Davies’s *Hymns* are quoted, with out page reference, in Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, p. 47.
Fig. M.20 Mary Stuart: Elizabeth/Mary octagon panel, Marian hanging

Fig. M.21 Mary Stuart: ‘Catte’ panel from 4th Oxburgh hanging

Fig. M.22 Woodcut of a cat, C. Gesner, *Icones Animalium*
red fur, and is portrayed eyeing up a Mary mouse – a detail missing from its source, a woodcut in Gesner (figs. M.21-22). On the Hardwick cushion covers with emblems from Faerno the symbols are reversed: the Mary cat is caged, while Elizabeth mice dance on top of them (fig. M.14). One defines oneself by defining the ‘Other’ as one’s opposite; the two are inextricably linked. Nowhere is this shown more clearly in Mary’s embroidered canon than in Mary’s portrayal of herself and her cousin in the Norfolk Panel as two branches growing from one stock, contrasting in their fruitfulness. This emblem is perhaps the most spectacular instance of Mary’s strategy of turning accusations made against her back upon the accuser: Elizabeth’s image of Mary’s political sterility and ineffectual plotting, the ‘frutelesse [...] graffed’ branches from her 1569 poem, is turned back upon Elizabeth the following year. It is Elizabeth herself who is figured as the fruitless, sterile branch to be pruned from the vine to make way for the fruitful, generative Mary.

IV: Virescit Vulnere Virtus: The Norfolk Panel

In the case study to Chapter Two I briefly surveyed the Norfolk Panel as a vehicle for Mary to figure herself in relation to her Catholic faith. The vehicle for Mary’s presentation of herself in the Norfolk Panel, from all points of view including Catholicism, is the rhetorical device we have encountered above: a contrast with Elizabeth. I want here to conclude my study of Mary’s developing relationship with her English cousin as it is traced by her needlework with an exploration of the ways in which Mary applied the various strategies I have outlined above to construct herself in the Norfolk Panel.

55 ‘Virtue flourishes by wounding’.
The *Pulchriori Detur* dialogue in which the queens struggled for iconographical supremacy forms part of a larger discourse of imagery both shared and competed for by Mary and Elizabeth. Just as both women claimed in the *Pulchriori Detur* dialogue to be the fairest of women, a Venus on earth, both queens also at various times capitalised on images of themselves as virtuous maidens, wives, and mothers.\(^{76}\) In Mary’s case she could present herself as *literal* wife and mother – but was in danger of forfeiting her power in the process.\(^{77}\) Elizabeth figured herself as symbolic wife and mother of the realm, but it was known to Mary via her ambassador Melville that Elizabeth despaired when Mary gave birth to a son:

so soon as the secretary Cecil whispered in her ear the news of the Prince’s birth, all her mirth was laid aside for the night; [...] for the Queen did sit down, putting her hand under her cheek, bursting out to some of her ladies, that the Queen of Scots was mother to a fair son, while she was but a barren stock.\(^{78}\)

Elizabeth sought to deflect her own vulnerability upon Mary in ‘The Doubt of Future Foes’ with her accusation of Mary’s ‘frutelesse [...] graffed’ guiles’, but in the Norfolk panel Mary homed in on Elizabeth’s self-confessed weakness, and returned the

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\(^{76}\) Mary’s deployment of the vision of herself as the mythological female in all her aspects parallels that of Elizabeth. Strong in *The Cult of Elizabeth*, and Frances Yates in *Astraea* explore Elizabeth’s use of goddess imagery in depth. Indeed, this was also a strategy employed by the strong women of the contemporary royal house of France: Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici too defined their lines of battle in silks and tapestry threads (Frances Yates in her discussion of *The Valois Tapestries* (London: Warburg Institute, 1959), Sheila ffoliot in ‘Catherine de’ Medici as Artemisia’, and Gail Patricia Lloyd in ‘Tapestries of Diane de Poitiers’ (*Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club*, 71 (1988), all discuss how tapestry furnishings contributed to programmes of mythmaking by these two royal adversaries). As Strong has shown, Elizabeth made extensive use of portraiture to harness the mythological female for political purposes: he uses the painting known as *Queen Elizabeth going in Procession to Blackfriars in 1600* as a starting point for a detailed examination of the iconography of Elizabeth-as-Astraea-Venus-Diana-Flora-Cynthia... the complex and shifting facets of this layered public persona rose to a culmination in the paintings of the closing years of Elizabeth’s reign which portray the 70-yr-old queen as a young and quintessentially beautiful virgin (Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, pp. 17-55).

\(^{77}\) Mary had also been seen as figurative ‘mother’ to Darnley: Fraser cites Bishop Leslie’s *Defence of the Honour of [...] Princesse Marie Queene of Scotlant* (London: Dicæophile, 1569), ‘she was to him not only a loyal Prince, a loving and dear wife, but a most careful and tender Mother withal’ (p. 291).

\(^{78}\) Melville, p. 131.
accusation upon her, picturing Elizabeth in her own words as a 'barren stock'. As she did so, I will argue, she took advantage of the absence of her three former husbands to select a view of herself as a faithful wife which recovered for her power and status. And in the Norfolk Panel's iconographical representation, Mary swept aside her abdication and the loss of her son to Moray's Protestant regency to rewrite herself a history which figures her as powerful sovereign mother.

The two women are primarily contrasted in this emblem as two branches growing from one stock, their bodies becoming literal branches of a family tree (fig. M.23). The contrast between the two is figured as centring upon the opposition of Mary's generative and Elizabeth's ungenerative bodies. The Stuart dynastic house on the right bears plump, juicy bunches of grapes: the succession, ensured by James through Mary's fertile body, which constitutes a direct refutation of Elizabeth's accusation that Mary is 'frutelesse'. The sterile branch being severed from the stock also bears a 'fruit', but the twin-towered, moated and gated house of Tudor is represented as a *domus conclusa*, shut up and closed, with no drawbridge to give access.

The emblem as a whole is enclosed by a border with fruit and flowers, the top and bottom edges depict ing fruits and the side, flowers. These elements have been arranged so that their emblematic signification echoes the composition in terms of the left/right split between Elizabeth and Mary, marking the fundamental difference between them. The key to this reading is the flower symbolism: some of the flowers are unidentifiable, generic in their forms but differentiated just enough to represent actual types, but the flowers on the right hand side certainly include the Marian lily and marigold, and those
Fig. M.23 Mary Stuart: ‘Norfolk Panel’, central panel of Marian hanging, with ‘Virescit vulnere virtus’ emblem
on the left, the Tudor rose.\textsuperscript{79} The left/right split in floral symbolism enables the fruits to be divided in a similar manner. On the top right is a pear, an emblem of fertility which echoes the tree on the Marian side of the central emblem.\textsuperscript{80} It is placed next to a bunch of grapes, the association again echoing the central emblem. To the left of the pear is another fruit, hard to identify, perhaps a pod of peas. On the bottom right-hand edge are two kinds of nut, hazelnuts, the acorns which are familiar Marian symbols (the Marian-ciphered ‘turtel dove’ cruciform panel on the Marian hanging (fig. 2.19) shows the dove perching on an oak branch with acorns), and another fruit which I have not been able to identify. On the left-hand side of the top and bottom edges are cherries and strawberries, conventional symbols for virginity coding Elizabeth’s unmarried, ungenerative state. Next to the cherries on the bottom edge is a cucumber, which Valeriani lists as coding ‘\textit{spes inanes},’ ‘pointless hope’.\textsuperscript{81} Mirroring it on the top edge is a pumpkin or gourd, which according to Alciato, symbolises the brief happiness of a plant who is soon to be destroyed.\textsuperscript{82} There are six ‘fertile’ fruits and only four ‘sterile’ ones, the composition being balanced by two leaf motifs on top and bottom of the left side, accentuating Elizabeth’s barrenness.

Iconographical stress on Mary’s fertility and Elizabeth’s barrenness may be a strategy which Mary pursued over a number of years. One final needleworked version of the Judgement of Paris connected with Mary Queen of Scots challenges Elizabeth’s 1569 portrait assertion of supremacy: the Judgement of Paris table carpet at Hardwick Hall bearing the embroidered date 1574 was executed at the height of Mary’s collaboration

\textsuperscript{79} Two others on the left are the gillyflower and the sweet pea. Although these flowers appear regularly on clothes worn by Elizabeth in portraits and in the Wardrobe records, their symbolism in this context is unclear.

\textsuperscript{80} C.f. Penshurst’s ‘ripe daughters […] […] whose baskets bear | An emblem of themselves in plum or pear’ (Jonson, ‘To Penshurst’, II. 54-56).

\textsuperscript{81} Valeriani, p. 418

\textsuperscript{82} Alciato, emblem 125.
with Bess of Hardwick. In the case study on Bess of Hardwick above the carpet was analysed as a signifier of persona for Bess as faithful wife. But in view of the *Pulchriori Detur* dialogue between the two Queens (and bearing in mind how the Cavendish panel carried a powerful subtext applicable to Mary’s own programmes of self-presentation), it seems reasonable to suggest that Mary influenced the table carpet design to include references to fertility which served her own purposes within the *Pulchriori Detur* dialogue. Elizabeth’s portrait saw her with the orb of state awarded as a prize over all the goddesses. The Judgement of Paris carpet recovers the prize for Venus. But as was noted above, it is specifically Venus Genetrix with the revealing drapery and apple who is the chosen one here, emphasising a fertility which feeds into the iconography of Mary, the mother of James I of Scotland. Border details echo this theme with quinces, medlars, bunches of grapes, and pears.

Mary undermined Elizabeth’s strategy of presenting her virginity as a powerful and almost mystical state. Six years after Melville was set up to glimpse the forbidden vision of the Virgin Queen at the virginals, Mary embroidered a cutting gloss on Elizabeth’s strategies for coding virginity as power. Mary’s version is a straightforward logical statement: virginity is effectively a form of infertility. With a familiar rhetorical sleight of hand Mary simultaneously appropriates for herself the conventional virtue of virginity, purity, by rendering herself in the needlework border with the lily of France, and denies Elizabeth virginity’s virtuous connotations.

At the same time as she pictures the virtues accruing to herself, Mary presents a view of Elizabeth which associates her with the specific vices which had been attributed by Elizabeth to Mary. Elizabeth’s character is further defined in the central emblem by the animals which inhabit the space between the twigs of the sterile, left-hand branch.
boar, emblematic of Disdain, we have encountered previously as a masque element applied to Elizabeth; as well as associating the negative aspects of that masque with Elizabeth, here it also may carry emblematic connotations of lechery and wantonness, charges which Elizabeth had laid at Mary’s door. The hare too is a recurring image in the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth which we have seen applied by Mary to Elizabeth to signify wantonness and which she uses to turn back slanders upon their originator. The part played by the stag in building up a negative portrait of Protestantism has been discussed in the previous chapter, and a fourth animal is unfortunately too badly decayed to be recognisable. Balancing these animals on the right-hand side of the composition there is just one representative from the animal kingdom. Crawling its slow but inevitable way up the stock of the vine is a snail, emblem of Mary’s inevitable revenge, ‘for, though Just-Vengeance moveth like a Snaile, | And slowly comes; her comming will not faile’. 83 In the context of this panel the revenge over Elizabeth would in part have been achieved by Mary’s plans to marry Norfolk. Vengeance is also promised in other places in Mary’s needlework: a cruciform ciphered panel from the Marian hanging showing ‘Sneiles’. To the woodcut taken from Gesner Mary has added the strawberries upon which the Marian ‘sneiles’ crawl, and which the central emblem’s border associates with Elizabeth (figs. M.24-25). The ‘Tyger’-‘Horsse’ conjunction remarked upon above in the context of masquing Courage and Boldness is read in the light of Valeriani as a promise of revenge: ‘ultionem significare qui volunt, tiigrarem et equum ab ea dilaceratum pingunt’. 84 Finally, Mary’s Faernian cushion warns, if earthly vengeance is not claimed Elizabeth will still face justice in heaven, for as was noted above, ‘if [s]he who hurts a friend believes [s]he will escape punishment from the people, [s]he will still have to face God

84 ‘Those who wish to signify revenge paint the tiger tearing the horse to pieces’ (p. 84").
Fig. M.24 Mary Stuart: 'Sneiles' panel, Marian hanging

Fig. M.25 Woodcut of snails, C. Gesner, *Icones Animallium*
Although the sterility/fertility theme is arranged on the Norfolk Panel with a left/right compositional split, the presentation of the two women is not that of equals. A number of iconographical statements in this panel balance each other within the composition, both preserving its symmetry and disturbing it in their joint references to Mary. In each half of the design a tree rises out of the ground. Both would seem to refer to Mary. The tree on the right is a pear, specifically emblematic of fruitfulness. The one on the left is less clearly defined, but may be a peach, its heart-shaped fruit sacred to Isis, goddess of fertility, as Peter Daly notes. Each tree is flanked by a device referring to Mary, a cipher on the left hand and the arms of Scotland on the right. They are placed, like the two fruit trees, behind the words 'virescit' and 'virtus' respectively, suggesting that the motto, cutting hand, trees and Marian symbols form a kind of basic structural unit in the shape of the letter 'M', upon which is superimposed the now 'contained' element of the unfruitful branch. This structure has the effect of a Mater misericordiae-type device, figuring Mary as the protecting mother not just of James, but of Scotland and England by extension. The royal arms of Scotland testify to Mary's divinely-sanctioned dynastic inheritance, in which she participates in the successful generation of her son James VI. The cipher more ambiguously but yet unquestionably testifies to her marriage with François II. Mary has deliberately selected the cipher encompassed by the Greek Φ of François, instead of the double 'M' device alone, or the monogram MR, which would emphasise her sovereignty, but de-emphasise her unfortunate marital history.

85 Faerno no. 60, showing the fox and the eagle.
86 Daly, 'England and the Emblem', p. 8.
87 See, for example, Piero della Francesca's Madonna of Mercy.
So what does the choice of this particular cipher suggest? The reference to François II is a formal way of overwriting Mary's disastrous subsequent marriages to Darnley and Bothwell. It recovers her fidelity. If the left-hand tree is an apple rather than a peach, it would signify faithfulness in a wife, and its juxtaposition with the François cipher strengthens this reading. In the 'M' superstructure the pear tree on the right combines with the arms of Scotland, the sign of procreative position within the Stuart dynasty. This is a brilliantly craftsmanlike manipulation of references, since the panel presents Mary as a potential wife to Norfolk (in the manner of the portrait miniatures sent as part of marriage negotiations, such as the Anne of Cleeves miniature in the Victoria and Albert Museum sent to Henry VIII), asserting her 'proven' faithfulness and generative potential at the same time as it reminds us of her past marital career, of her faithfulness - effectively - to another man. In contrast, virginity (which elsewhere in the needlework is a sought-after quality) is portrayed with reference to Elizabeth as a physical fact which codes impotence. But it also subtly recalls the Mary persona as it had been at the time of her French marriage: the personification of the divinely-sanctioned virgin-goddess consort of the French monarch. The cipher also reasserts Mary as a widow. It figures her previously married status as honourable (even powerful), and is another strategy which employs the politics of erasure to rewrite history and obliterate her two subsequent marriages.

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88 Alciato, emblem 191. For wifely fidelity in the Judgement of Paris table carpet, see p. 135.
89 This would have the added advantage of freeing Mary from being swallowed up within the French royal family, symbolised by the Φ reference, and reclaiming the power inherent in her own royal heritage.
90 See 'Embroidering a Royal Identity', pp. 24-29; 37-40. For a study of the portrayal of Mary Stuart in literature and the various personae which were claimed on her behalf, see James Emerson Phillips, Images of a Queen: Mary Stuart in Sixteenth-Century Literature (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).
91 Thus it is the same process by which Catherine de' Medici erased Diane de Poitiers from the French court, and which she used again in the Valois tapestries to rewrite history. Her excision of certain characters at the French court in the events of the Bayonne festivals of 1582 constitutes a similar
The massiveness of the ‘M’ superstructure has the effect of overwhelming the representation of Elizabeth in the unfruitful branch and rendering her compositionally, as well as symbolically, insignificant. It recovers mythological stature for Mary and reduces Elizabeth to something more earth-bound, worldly and impotent. The ‘M’ superstructure also emphasises the claims that the unmarried virgin Elizabeth cannot make: in the ciphered recollection of François II Mary portrays herself as the wife so faithful that even death cannot sever the bond between herself and her husband (whilst using the apparent strength of this bond to erase two subsequent and damaging marriages), in the trees, the Scottish arms and the grapes on the vine encode Mary as the mother of literal, but also metaphysical, quasi-religious proportions.

Jennifer Summit also reads the Norfolk Panel’s central emblem as Mary’s response to Elizabeth’s ‘Doubt of Future Foes’. But instead of reading the fruitless branch as a reference to Elizabeth, Summit understands the slicing pruning hook as proleptic of Mary’s execution. The Norfolk Panel, she argues, appears to ‘embrace that wounding from the point of view of the threatened’. If Mary is executed by Elizabeth’s blade, then ‘that blade will become a source of her fruition’ (p. 199). Summit’s assertion is supported by a record of two further emblems which in 1584 raised the suspicions of Elizabeth’s administration of ‘a plot already layd to set her at liberty’, as historian William Camden recorded:

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a scien graften into a stock, and bound about by bands, yet budding forth fresh, and written about, per vincula cresco, that is to say, Through bands I grow. A palme tree pressed down, but rising up againe, with this sentence, Ponderibus virtus innata resistit, that is, ‘Gainst weights doth
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inbred virtue strive'.

These, and three other emblems recorded by Camden all appear amongst those on the bed of state described by Drummond. Others which accompany them on the bed also suggest strength and growth through suffering: the emblem of ‘cammomel in a garden’, for example, is accompanied by the motto ‘fructus calcata dat amplios’, ‘trampled fruits give ample rewards’, and the phoenix panel bears the text ‘En ma fin git ma commencement’, ‘in my end is my beginning’. Taken together, the emblems strongly suggest that Mary was preparing the ground for her eventual death to be interpreted as martyrdom.

Summit’s reading differs from that of Mary’s contemporaries. The three emblems which Summit leaves out, in particular, were ‘taken in an ill sense’ by the investigators: ‘Argus with many Eyes lull’d asleep by Mercury sweetly piping, with this short Sentence, Eloquium tot lumina clausit; that is, So many Eyes hath Eloquence fast clos’d: Mercury cutting off Argus’s Head, who was Io’s keeper. [...] This Anagram also, Veritas armata, that is, Truth armed, according to her Name, Maria Stuarta, letters being transposed’. The investigators’ suspicions contrast with Elizabeth’s envoy Nicholas White’s inability to read Mary’s phoenix emblem in 1569, and Shrewsbury’s report of the innocence with which Mary and Bess needleworked together. The authorities were clearly worried about the difficulty of interpreting, and therefore controlling these needleworked texts. It was the interpretation of these emblems which, according to Camden, lead to Mary

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93 For a discussion of Mary’s construction of her programme of martyrdom see above, pp. 169-78
94 Camden, p. 500-1.
95 See above, pp. 123-34.
being removed from Shrewsbury’s care and given into the keeping of Amyas Paulet.  

Summit shares my view that in her response to Elizabeth’s poetic metaphor of fruitless grafted branches, Mary’s ‘manipulation of figures through her embroidered emblems […] constitutes an effort to redefine her relation to Elizabeth with the very forms through which Elizabeth proclaimed her power’.  

Mary’s emblems appear to interpret and answer [the] images from ‘The Doubt of Future Foes’. Where Elizabeth imagines her enemies’ plots to be ‘fruitlesse’ because ‘grafted’, Mary’s emblem of the ‘scien graften into a stock’ envisages such grafting to be a source of fruition […]. The battle over the tops of the trees ‘supposed’ (sub-ponere) is also refigured in Mary’s emblem of the palm tree pressed down by weights (‘ponderibus’), but springing back to its full height. As Camden notes, these emblems resonate with subversive potential; they suggest that the same mechanisms through which Mary is oppressed will be the very sources of her strength […]. Where Elizabeth figures her strength in punishment, Mary figures hers in being punished’ (pp. 198-99).

Summit’s argument is persuasive, and is supported elsewhere in Mary’s needlework, as the emblems on the bed of state show. But although Summit rejects the contemporary interpretation of the emblem as an exhortation to Norfolk and his supporters to depose Elizabeth, I see no reason why both readings may not be accepted simultaneously. There is a great deal of evidence that despite Mary’s overt messages of goodwill towards Elizabeth, her needlework emblems as a whole figure Elizabeth as the traitorous betrayer and enemy Other. But at the same time, in accepting the inevitable, Mary also seeks to turn her likely execution to her own advantage in whatever way she can. In the

96 But Camden’s account problematises Mary’s authorship of the emblems: ‘suspicions were laid hold on’, he writes, as if there were a Plot already laid to set her at Liberty: and those raised upon occasion of certain Emblems sent unto her’ (p. 500).

previous chapter I explored a reading of the Norfolk panel which inserts it within a wider programme preparing Mary's public persona for martyrdom, and Summit's reading supports this. But in a political context which itself embraces the religious aspects of Mary's needlework, the Norfolk panel's central emblem fits into a long-running engagement between Mary and Elizabeth in which each Queen sought to understand herself in relation to the other over a period of a quarter of a century. The exchanges between the two Queens show that both understood embroidered discourse to be a politically sophisticated form of communication at the very pinnacle of international relations.
CONCLUSION

This study opened with the documentary traces of three examples of needlework: Bess of Hardwick's lawsuit, Helena Wintour's codicil and Mary Stuart's gift. These instances suggested that, at moments almost a century apart, the three women concerned were using their needlework to mediate between themselves and their social contexts. Bess's appliqué hangings occupied the disputed space between estranged husband and wife; more eloquently than writing, the rich surfaces of Wintour's church vestments spoke of her religious experience and testamentary intentions; Mary sought to use her embroidered skirt to involve her cousin Elizabeth in a relationship of mutual obligation.

Even across the span of decades, the attitudes of these three women in respect of their needlework share common ground. At issue for Bess in 1586 was the economic value of her hangings: the recycled ecclesiastical fabrics used in their construction were of significant worth. The dispute over the hangings show a woman asserting personal property rights over her husband, and marking her claim at the highest court in the land for recognition as an autonomous owner of property and effects. But perhaps most importantly, the hangings constituted a repository of visual information which Bess particularly valued: the virtues personified and embodied in the figures of the heroines were intended to accrue to Bess's public persona. The hangings were, indeed, an important structural element in Bess's overall programme to create a persona and project it into her social context. Helena Wintour's mid-seventeenth century vestments were also an expression of identity, but unlike Bess's hangings, these vestments were not meant for public show. They indicated to a small community of family and recusants that the maker was Catholic, and Jesuit-directed. The economic value of Helena Wintour's vestments was also an issue after her death in 1671, when family and Jesuit...
community both claimed possession of the significant wealth of pearls, precious stones and gold and silver thread worked onto the fabric which constituted a far richer treasure than the total inventoried contents of Wintour's house. The issue of authorship for this needlewoman was also important: Wintour's initials, name and family heraldry constituted her signature to a patronage contract which supported the English Jesuit mission and asked for intercession in return. Mary Stuart also inserted herself in a patronage discourse with her gift in 1574 to Elizabeth of the embroidered panels for a skirt. Reception of the gift would obligate Elizabeth to reciprocate, and the hoped-for outcome of the prestation, a softening of Elizabeth's stance and a meeting between the two queens, was represented iconographically in the embroidered design by intertwining the floral symbols of the two queens, lilies, roses and thistles.

All three instances of needlework mediate between the individual woman and society in some way. For Bess needlework is a discursive tool with which she narrates to society the powerful persona of virtuous wife and widow. The hangings fit into a colossal programme of self-narration which includes Bess's three great houses and the entirety of their furnishings, textiles in particular. For Helena Wintour needlework is a tangible sign of her devotion to the Virgin Mary which she narrates in words and images. For Mary Stuart needlework is a political tool which can cross the boundaries of her imprisonment to narrate an unthreatening persona to Elizabeth. All three women are operating in a context, in other words, in which needlework items function as external signifiers which can be interpreted as 'tokens of the self'. A context in which, despite the many social, political and economic changes across the century which spans these instances, needlework is harnessed by elite women in the constitution of social relations.
'Context' has been essential to this study. Many pieces of elite domestic needlework have survived from the period which have come adrift from their context. The names of the needlewomen and the details of why they produced each piece, under what circumstances and for what purpose have been lost. We do not know the names of the sitters in portraits in which the detail of embroidered clothing clearly played a significant part in the portrait's function. Much textual and documentary information has also disappeared, and comparatively few women kept journals or wrote autobiographies. Partly because of this, the developing body of academic work on early modern needlework has tended to make little or no distinction between the practices of women from widely differing social classes, uncritically comparing, say, the needlework of crowned queens of the mid-sixteenth century with unknown women of the seventeenth century middle classes. This study has filled a critical methodological gap in concentrating on the practices of a number of individual women of comparable social standing who can be linked with a documentary context. It has aimed to examine surviving needlework and records of the practices of identifiable needlewomen, to provide a conceptual framework within which extraordinarily richly documented contexts, like those of Bess of Hardwick and Mary Stuart or other unique instances of sketchily documented needlework like that of Helena Wintour's vestments, might be examined. The frameworks within which the social, religious and political value of needlework become apparent may also serve to aid further studies of other instances of early modern domestic needlework of the elite classes. Although it is unlikely that individual pieces of anonymous domestic needlework will be linked with their elite makers, as more early modern women's manuscripts are made widely available, more instances will come to light of women documenting their needlework-as-practice.
Despite the loss of so much material and so much documentation, the needlework can, in many cases, speak for itself. The embroidered rhetorics which have been uncovered here are eloquent, sophisticated, and powerful. From our knowledge of conduct literature it emerges that the sight of the elite early modern woman embroidering was the sign of a woman conforming to the social idea of elite virtue occupied. But this study has argued that it was also the sign of social agency, because the double signifiers of needlework-as-practice and needlework-as-object were highly effective vehicles for the production of persona and personage.

I have aimed to show that the commonplace which reads the needleworking woman as icon of chastity, silence and obedience creates a false notion of how needlework served the Elizabethan or Jacobean embroiderer. Needlework — and the wider textile surfaces that were the elite housewife’s responsibility — were speaking pictures, visual rhetorics. The visitor to the country house, walking through the galleries, received in the state apartments, was primed to hear these embroidered pictures speak. Embroidered rhetorics spoke fluently, in William Drummond’s phrase, of ‘authorial intention’, of the representation of the self. Women could use embroidery to answer cultural accusations of luxury with demonstrations of domestic economy, of licentiousness with chastity. By actively engaging in and with needlework, these women could and did — and indeed, were expected to — participate in an intellectual vita contemplativa. Needlework has emerged as the vehicle through which elite women participated in patronage networks and consolidated their political relations at court, facilitating their political agency in a female political hierarchy.
Documentary traces testify to the extraordinary determination of recusant needlewomen to furnish their church with embroideries to be a 'living picture of the passion and death of our Lord'. The slenderness (and, it must be said, bias) of the available documentary evidence and the destruction of almost all the Catholic needlework made recovering this specific context a challenging task. This is surely one powerful reason why no other studies exist of Elizabethan and Jacobean English Catholic needlework. But exploration of the recusant and Jesuit contexts nonetheless provided a sound framework within which to read what little needlework remains which can be identified with particular women, and is essential in the case of the unique set of vestments to which authorship can be ascribed, the previously unstudied embroidered vestments of Helena Wintour.

Much work remains to be done. Whilst it is useful to read the vestments alongside *Partheneia Sacra*, none of Hawkins's plates were used as design sources. Identification of the sources for the floral emblems of the Virgin and the other elements of the needleworked slips may sharpen or even alter the focus of analysis. For limits of space this study did not permit an extended comparison of Wintour's vestments with other pieces of Catholic and Protestant church needlework dating from the Laudian period onwards (a subject which has remained almost totally ignored by needlework historians),¹ and which might usefully be undertaken with a view to producing an index or catalogue of existing vestments.

It is perhaps Mary Queen of Scot's needlework which offers the richest material with respect to the wider community of scholarship. In the sense that the Oxburgh panels
and other documented needlework such as her bed of state are Mary's vehicle for presenting different forms of royal persona they constitute a significant and hitherto unrecognised form of diplomatic discourse, as this study has argued, but the needlework produced during her time of captivity also effectively constitutes a previously unrecognised form of historiography. Scholars interested in the representation of Tudor and Stuart monarchy (currently interested, for example, in the writings of monarchs, royal portraiture and state pageantry) need also to take note of other forms of cultural production, since as the case study showed, Mary's needlework participates in debates in the public arena conducted in various media including poetry, masques, correspondence, literary theory and portraiture. In a wider sense, one of the most interesting aspects of Mary Stuart's needlework is the way the body of small panels impacts upon emblem theory. I have argued that the body of elite Elizabethan and Jacobean domestic needlework was impresa-like in function, and hope that Mary's use of the emblematic mode in particular can make an important contribution to this debate.

At a time when interest in the writings of early modern women has never been more intense, this thesis opens up to critical view the discursive uses of elite-authored domestic needlework as a previously undervalued but significant area for study. It has demonstrated the importance of needlework in the lives of individual early modern women, as a vehicle for representing persona to society, for building social and political relationships, as a repository of economic wealth. In short, it has demonstrated needlework to be a powerful, pervasive — and very beautiful — form of social agency.

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1 Exceptions are the rare articles which deal with individual pieces, such as Patricia Wardle's 'A Laudian Embroidery', in Victoria and Albert Museum Bulletin 1 (1965), pp. 26-28.
SOURCES FOR ILLUSTRATIONS

With the exceptions of the photographs of Helena Wintour’s vestments, which are my own, illustrations have been taken from the following sources:

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**Helena Wintour:** Hawkins, *Partheneia Sacra*, Pinkus, *Picturing Silence*;


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