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978-0-521-81573-4 - Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History, Sovereignty

John Watkins

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REPRESENTING ELIZABETH IN STUART ENGLAND

This is the first book to examine Elizabeth I's lasting impact on the Anglo-American historical imagination. John Watkins attributes her abiding popularity to her iconic role in seventeenth-century debates over the nature of sovereignty. Watkins focuses on England's most turbulent century because it witnessed the consolidation of enduring attitudes toward both the Tudor past and the English monarchy. He explains that seventeenth-century representations of Elizabeth intersected with the period's wider debate over the sovereign's relationship to the people. He then traces the development of Elizabeth's iconic significance as the century moves on; the stories of Princess Elizabeth's sufferings under Mary Tudor or of her secret longings for Essex eventually figured more prominently in the popular imagination than records of her relationship with Parliament. By the early eighteenth century Elizabeth had acquired a new value as a model of the tragic individual pitted against a hostile social order.

JOHN WATKINS is Associate Professor of English at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. He is the author of *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* (1995), and numerous articles on early modern literature and culture.

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Frontispiece: "The Apotheosis of Elizabeth." William Camden's *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha* (London, 1625), frontispiece.

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For Andy and Dima

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1. George Carleton's *A Thankfull Remembrance of God's Mercy* (London, 1624), frontispiece. Reproduced by kind permission of the Newberry Library. 29
 2. Edmund Bohun's *The character of Queen Elizabeth; or, A full and clear account of her policies, and the methods of her government both in church and state. Her virtues and defects. Together with the characters of her principal ministers of state, and the greatest part of the affairs and events that happened in her times* (London, 1693), frontispiece and title page. Reproduced by kind permission of the Newberry Library. 202

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Acknowledgments

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Acknowledgments

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Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England began one Saturday morning in the catalogue room at the Newberry Library, when I noticed that a lot of strange works about Queen Elizabeth appeared in clusters that corresponded roughly to moments of seventeenth-century political crisis.

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Andrew Elfenbein, who was just starting his book on Romantic genius, was with me at the time, and he has shared with me every discovery, insight, and frustration that has gone into the making of this book. He has commented on multiple drafts of every chapter, helped me to define my central arguments, and listened to my daily rantings about residual Whiggery. He is my most demanding reader, and my greatest source of personal and intellectual inspiration. I dedicate this book to him and to our son Dmitri, whose first years were perhaps a little too shadowed by stories about the Queen of famous memory.

Wherever possible, I have cited modern scholarly editions of seventeenth-century writers. In all other cases, I cite original texts and spellings.