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Leadership and Elizabethan Culture

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Leadership and Elizabethan Culture

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership and Elizabethan Culture assembles contributions from political and cultural historians who identify many of the problems confronting early modern English government as well as sources that authorities and their critics found useful as they addressed those problems during the 45-year reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Susan Doran's chapter offers a synoptic view of the challenges Elizabeth faced. The Queen's conduct and accomplishments have been variously regarded. Many scholars have written and write with admiration; a few with contempt. James Anthony Froude, notoriously, with both. Doran explains why—to this day—some corporate strategists adopt the Queen as a model, and how, “until very late in her reign,” her “proficiency at team building,” “command of image and performance,” and “mastery of creative deceit” resulted in her realm's “remarkable stability.” The consensus now is that Elizabeth took “the lead role in policy formulation,” although Patrick Collinson invented the term “monarchical republic” to signal the “active participation at many layers of society and of locality of pretty well everybody” in England.¹ Collinson's “pretty well everybody” is, of course, subject to qualification, yet no historian denies the importance of what we would call the Queen's management teams. In his chapter, Norman Jones looks at literature circulated to “create political managers,” repossessing curricula designed to refine the sixteenth century's “managerial culture.” Charlotte Bolland's chapter sifts dedications to give us “a glimpse of Elizabeth's Court through the eyes of an aspiring courtier.” Several subsequent studies assess the conduct of the Queen and her government during crises, early and late in the reign. K. J. Kesselring's chapter redraws “the fine line” Elizabeth walked “to preserve the dignity and inviolability of queenship” after her Catholic royal cousin and could-be successor, Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots, fled to England in 1568—and especially after the Northern

Rising or insurgency the next year. Peter Kaufman's chapter, *Leadership Abroad*, evaluates Elizabeth's efforts to prop up Dutch rebels into the 1570s, just enough to have them distract the Spanish and French. Janet Dickinson's chapter on leadership in the 1590s attends to the last quarter of Elizabeth's reign, when the aging Queen seemed increasingly "side-lined." Still, Dickinson presents "striking evidence of her continued centrality," foregrounding the occasional cooperation between her two most conspicuous (and usually competing) advisers, Robert Cecil and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. The latter was counseled by Francis Bacon who discussed the dangers of political success and urged caution on the earl. Todd Butler's chapter, *Imagination and Leadership*, catches Bacon along with other influential *eruditi*, "deeply concerned with image management" and trying to advance the careers of select late Elizabethan leaders. This collection also reaches beyond queen and court to discuss features of and crises in local, ecclesial, and commercial leadership. Neil Younger's chapter, looking into leadership "in the land," probes "resource mobilization," and appraises the effectiveness of the "personalized rather than bureaucratic" approach of Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Elizabeth's chief representative in more than one-third of her English and Welsh counties. Timothy Scott McGinnis's chapter, *Pastoral Leadership*, focuses on that realm within the realm crawling with critics, the religiously reformed church, and concentrates on the polemical protests of George Gifford, Anthony Gilby, and Arthur Dent. Their dialogues "dress down" bishops and parish clergy, yet also, McGinnis shows, conjure "imaginative world[s]" where the bad may get replaced by the better leaders. Ritchie Kendall's chapter, *Commerce and Community*, introduces London entrepreneurs and relatively business-friendly playwrights and social critics, all of whom were interested in "the regulation and rationalization of trade," in "negotiating the relationship between emerging forms of wealth production... and traditional forms of political and social authority," and in discovering "what commercial leadership might look like and how it might intersect with older forms of authority." Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare are center stage in this volume's final three chapters on leadership and culture. Meg Pearson documents the former's criticism of late Tudor leaders' "penchant for the spectacular" in his *Tamburlaine the Great*. Showmanship, in Pearson's reading of the play, is unreliable; it cannot have the desired results when "unwilling audiences undermine" what impresarios hope to accomplish in political plays as well as political pageants. Kristin Bezio's chapter, *Servant Leadership*, retrieves from Shakespeare's *King John* an emphasis on the significance of the

sovereign's generally loyal yet independent retainers. The play subtly celebrates "the rise of bureaucracy, an institutional development that offered hope for a . . . smooth succession" in the playwright's time. Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, first staged a year after Elizabeth's death, can be read as a reflection on effective leadership, Karen Bruhn claims; her chapter develops the distinction between Duke Vincentio's and Angelo's use of power into a "leadership model."

* * *

The chapters here generally, yet not without some qualification, attest the moderation of Elizabethan leadership. Classical and Renaissance rhetorical traditions associated moderation with restraint, which bridled passions that should otherwise have proven disruptive. In late Tudor—and religiously reformed—England, "original sin cast such a long shadow upon human morality," Ethan Shagan notices, so "restraint was normally externalized." Sinister and sinful excess supposedly was difficult to avoid; hence, "the *via media* required the external, coercive power of ministers and magistrates." Shagan explains that the discourse of moderation was pervasive and included the Queen's and regime's justifications for caution (but a few of her closest advisers were disappointed by her strategic silences, as some contributors here indicate), as well as justifications for popular participation in government. On that front, Shagan ventures where the next collection on Elizabethan leadership might want to go, where "social moderation was in significant measure a political marker" referring to a moderate, "middling" sort "neither corrupted by wealth nor debased by poverty," and where the Queen's subjects became citizens "capable of participation in the polity." In a few accounts, they come across as moderates—as amiable, irenic, and "unwilling to privilege doctrinal difference over communal harmony."² Educated subjects / citizens, Michael Winship proposes, "had a participatory ethos of public service and responsibility" that braced their cooperation with their Queen's local lieutenants. Contributors to this volume who visit the counties and inquire about counsel, religious criticism, and commerce touch upon that "participatory ethos," yet their conclusions are measured, for, as Winship has warned, "slapping the name republicanism . . . on any sign that subjects or citizens became involved governing the country" raises rather than resolves interpretive problems. And Elizabeth was not alone in having "a very narrow view of who . . . should offer her advice."³ Yet she must often have felt that she was beneath an avalanche of advice. Although the case that counsel from

her subjects—as citizens—was symptomatic of monarchical republicanism has yet to be cinched, the idea that the Queen’s regime was “a mixed monarchy,” in which royal blood, “hedged by the virtue of her male counselors,” was a “godly and politique” arrangement was common in early Tudor political apologetic literature.⁴ Chronicling political developments, some chapters in this volume note the competition among counsellors but also reflect a consensus among historians that tensions between martial and bureaucratic interests at court generated factions only late in the reign. Earlier, there were differences of opinion and competition for Elizabeth’s attention, but William Cecil early on “vaulted into the first rank of contemporary politicians and to what must have seemed a decisive position of leadership,” historian Wallace MacCaffrey says; “No one could rival his talents either as a maker of policy or man of business.”⁵ Arguably, that remained true for nine-tenths of Elizabeth’s reign. (Cecil died five years before his Queen.) The study of leadership—Cecil’s, the Queen’s, and their contemporaries—is abetted (and complicated) by the wealth of documents Cecil has left us. Contributors to this volume are his beneficiaries. But results here only whet an appetite for more on leadership and Elizabethan culture. Cecil, his son and successor, Robert, as well as his contemporaries—notably Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Francis Walsingham, and Archbishop John Whitgift—ought to be interrogated again, given contexts created here. Leadership among resident Catholics, Jesuit missionaries, and religiously reformed conformists bears further study, as do rivalries among playwrights and other impresarios of Elizabethan culture, who scripted, organized, and funded early modern English pageants and spectacles and who set their Queen in miniatures, on canvas, and into history. Mention of those many players, playmakers, portraitists, and patrons returns us to Elizabeth and introduces us to what Louis Montrose calls “cult formation” and “instrumental adoration,” which enlivened influential Elizabethans’ pursuits of their material and geopolitical interests.⁶ Contributors to this volume in the Jepson Studies in Leadership series aspire to make it part of the exciting conversation about leadership and late Tudor culture that has been fascinating participants for more than four hundred years, a conversation that is still in its early innings.

Notes

1. Patrick Collinson, “Elizabeth I and the Verdicts of History,” *Historical Research* 76 (2003): 489. For “lead role,” see Natalie Mears, “Love-Making and Diplomacy:

- Elizabeth I and the Anjou Marriage Negotiations, c. 1578–1582," *History* 86 (2001): 465.
2. See Ethan Shagan, *The Role of Moderation: Violence, Religion, and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34, 222–23 and Debora Shuger, "A Protesting Catholic Puritan in Elizabethan England," *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 601–3. Also consult Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding the Peace* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).
 3. Michael Winship, *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 26–28. But also consult two collections of essays on topic, John F. McDiarmid, ed. *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, ed. *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) as well as Rosamund Oates, "Puritans and the 'Monarchical Republic': Conformity and Conflict in the Elizabethan Church," *English Historical Review* 127 (2012): 819–43.
 4. A. N. McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558–1585* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 199–202, citing apologists John Aylmer, John Jewel, John Foxe, and Thomas Smith, among others.
 5. Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 88. Also review the relatively positive evaluation of the Queen's court and council in MacCaffrey's essay, "Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics," in *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neal*, ed. S. T. Bindoff, Joel Hurstfield, and C. H. Williams, 95–126 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961).
 6. Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 90–113.