DISSERTATION SUMMARY – YAFIT SHACHAR

This dissertation explores the discourse of the body in the political writings of Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603) and her Parliament during her forty-four-year reign (1558-1603). The first female monarch to rule the Kingdom of England as an unmarried woman throughout her entire reign, Elizabeth I functioned de facto as both King and Queen of England. While she engaged in various marriage negotiations, especially during the first decade of her reign, she ultimately chose not to marry or produce children. This was an uncommon path for women at her time, let alone queens, who were expected, first and foremost, to give birth to heirs to the throne. Since Elizabeth I was the last Tudor alive, this decision marked the end of the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603) and the beginning of the Scottish Stuart dynasty, which would rule England for the following century.

That Elizabeth I remained childless, and therefore heirless, sparked and sustained political debates among contemporaries relating to the queen's natural and political bodies. These debates lie at the heart of this dissertation. Who controls the monarchical female body? What are the implications of this control for the entire kingdom? Given the weight her personal life decisions carried for the entire kingdom, such questions were repeatedly raised throughout the reign of Elizabeth I and are widely reflected in her political writings, as well as in the writings of her advisors, Parliament, and other political players, both in England and on the Continent. The battle over the body of the Queen, and the complex relationship it implied between her physical, metaphysical, and political bodies, profoundly impacted the ways she was required to assert her authority. As I argue in this dissertation, the more different political forces tried to control, nationalize, and instrumentalize the Queen's female natural physical body, the more she pushed for an intangible, ungendered perception of her body that would liberate her from its perceptual physical limitations and conflate it with the body of her kingdom. In practice, this meant concentrating her efforts on ruling England as a leader regardless of her gender. These processes of bodily abstraction depended, in turn, on Elizabeth's ability to overturn received notions of metaphysical hierarchy and use to her advantage ideas and concepts drawn from contemporary Neoplatonic humanist thought about the immortality of the ungendered soul.

Given the varied contexts in which Elizabeth I speaks of herself and her body in her political writing, this dissertation takes a wide, interdisciplinary approach to its materials, combining the study of rhetoric, political thought, gender, and religion in sixteenth-century England. It explores Elizabeth I and her political circle's perception, engagement, and reclaiming of body tropes and political metaphors as part of a larger discourse on the body, and more specifically, the female body, in early modern thought. This study, therefore, examines the conflation, dissociation, replication, and collision between female and political bodies during the reign of Elizabeth I in a broader context. It engages with early modern theories relating to gendered and ungendered bodies, the monarchical body, political bodies, the body of the realm, spiritual bodies, and the relationships between them. It explores the challenges and limitations of political metaphors, such as the "King's Two Bodies," adapted in this case into the "Queen's Two Bodies," the realm as a human body, and the borders of the potentially porous royal body when applied to the context of a female monarch. In this context, the dissertation also discusses early modern perceptions of the female body, as they pertain to Elizabeth I, especially with respect to the expectations placed on it, the attempts to control it, and the implications that arose when the female body

did not meet these expectations. As will be shown, the resulting political discourses focused on a variety of "body conflicts:" from the multiplication of overlapping notional bodies, the metaphoric fragmentation of these bodies, to the actual consequences of the ill or imperfect monarchical body, and how the body politic and the monarchical female body were seen in these cases to infect each other with dis-ease.

The departure point of this dissertation is the corpus of Queen Elizabeth's political writings. These include more than 20 speeches, published prayers (two main volumes, 1563 and 1569), several poems, and more than one hundred letter exchanges. I analyze Elizabeth's political writings and other texts attributed to her as part of a conversation with a variety of political writings written in Tudor and Elizabethan England. These include various correspondences within Elizabeth's political circle, Parliamentary petitions, as well as political criticism conveyed from outside the political body. I also look into state papers and reports of foreign ambassadors to their monarchs, reported conversations they had with Elizabeth, and correspondences they exchanged with her close advisors, such as William Cecil and Robert Dudley, focusing mainly on the Spanish, Scottish, and French delegations.

When analyzing the discourse between these varied texts, certain patterns of thought about the Queen and her many "bodies" soon emerge, which require situating these claims within the wider intellectual, social, and political history of the sixteenth century. Consequently, the dissertation focuses on rhetorical theory as it was practiced in the sixteenth century, combined with methods drawn from the history of ideas, political thought, and the cultural-historicist study of the perception of the body in the early modern period. These texts are also examined in relation to the cultural, gendered, and religious discourses of the time, as reflected in a wide array of related sources, including literary, theological, philosophical, and pictorial works. In taking this wider approach, this dissertation not only explores specific bodily tropes, as they appear in Elizabeth I's public speeches, but primarily the illocutionary force of the texts in how they respond to, agree with, or question other intellectual and political texts from sixteenth-century England.

This dissertation comprises four chapters in total, excluding the introduction and conclusion. After the introduction lays out the topic more generally, setting out the dissertation's main claims and methodology, the first chapter provides a more detailed historical and theoretical background for the dissertation. It surveys and analyzes theories of hierarchy in the period as they pertain to class, gender, and education, and looks into the perception of women, female bodies, and women in positions of power more generally. The first chapter attempts to understand the extent to which queens regnant, or a "female monarch" as I often refer to them in this dissertation, were such a disruptive force in this period when they did not confine themselves to patriarchal conventions and expectations. It examines Elizabeth's own perception of political and gendered hierarchies since the age of twelve, when she first attempted to secure her father's affection, until the end of her reign, as a *bona fide*, celebrated, and accomplished Queen. This chapter examines Elizabeth's rhetorical negotiation of the period's complex network of hierarchies in light of her struggle to prove her legitimacy – first as a child born to the convicted and executed Anne Boleyn, then as a Protestant woman in a period of religious uncertainty and instability, and finally as an unmarried, childless, female monarch in a time that often perceived women reductively as "wombs." It examines Elizabeth's rhetoric in relation to and as a response to the political discourse of her day – in England and on the Continent – on topics such as marriage, succession, and religion. It consequently argues that

Elizabeth responds to this discourse by engaging with contemporary ideas in metaphysical philosophy, which allow her to revise hierarchical tropes drawn from Neoplatonic thought. In this way, Elizabeth is able to un-gender the monarchical position and privilege her education, intellect, and general virtues, rather than her gendered body and the expectations placed on her as a royal woman.

The second chapter builds on the first one by discussing the various bodies that female monarchs were required to possess in light of the period's prevailing political thought. It begins by addressing the "King's Two Bodies" metaphor and doctrine, which suggests that the King has both a natural body and a political, conceptual body, which, in being permanent and theoretically immutable, overcomes and rises above any deficiencies of the physical human body. This doctrine became especially prevalent in Tudor England once the political and legal system needed to accommodate an underage king and two (potentially, three) queens regnant: Mary I, Elizabeth I, and Mary Queen of Scots. Indeed, following the death of Edward VI, England was left with only women as possible candidates for the position of King of England, and, therefore, needed to adapt to the new circumstances. Parliament was quick to adapt the concept for Mary I and claim that women can have the same power as men in the monarchical position. It was soon discovered, however, that the female version of the same doctrine required additional thinking when it came to early modern patriarchal conventions. If an early modern wife, conventionally, has to submit to her husband at all times, how can she rule him as a subject? And what happens when the husband is a foreign prince? Does it mean that the kingdom is subject to the husband's kingdom?

Indeed, Elizabeth I avoided the problem of defining the role of a potential husband and possible foreign control altogether by not marrying; however, this decision also meant having no natural heirs to the throne. This presented another complication for the adaptation of the concept to women: if a woman can rule as a King, who then is required to fill in the place of the Queen - or the female body who bears offspring? The second chapter discusses, therefore, a variety of cases related to this topic, divided into three main points: Elizabeth's employment of the "Queen's Two Bodies" to suggest a metaphysical union or "marriage" between herself and her realm, which render actual marriage redundant; the use of the Neoplatonic understanding of "matter," and hence the body, with and the ills of flesh as a way to avoid marriage; and, finally, Elizabeth's consequent use of the "body politic" metaphor of the realm, where the kingdom and its borders come to signify the limits of her earthly body. The "body as a realm" metaphor closely relates, in this context, to Elizabeth's image as "The Virgin Queen," which came to represent the impenetrable, secure borders of the kingdom. Together, these conceptual bodies create a meta-body trope that accommodated Elizabeth's changing political needs and ultimately served as a metaphoric substitution for her physical female body with an abstract body inhabited by a divine and ungendered soul.

The third chapter corresponds with both the first and second chapters by focusing on the rhetorical uses and implications of another political metaphor - the "realm as a human body," consisting of various members and organs ruled by a "head." The difference between this metaphor and other metaphors of the body politic explored in previous chapters lies in its inclusivity, since the realm as a body focuses on the parts and their importance in ensuring a functioning whole. This chapter, therefore, explores the relationship between the rhetorical figure of synecdoche in the description of body parts in early modern conceptions of sovereignty. It discusses the significance of synecdoche as a political and intellectual trope and the tension

between the body part the synecdoche describes and the whole body it implies. It then looks at the trope of synecdoche as a key component in the common poetic and frequently patriarchal technique of the blazon. In exploring the conventional uses of the blazon as they surface in key speeches of Elizabeth, the chapter suggests that her use of the trope in a reversed gendered manner is subversive precisely in its ungendered assumptions about the royal female body in the political sphere.

In the spirit of the blazon and its conventions, the chapter starts with the female "head" and why it why perceived as a threat to patriarchal society, continues with the employment of the "hand" and "arm" of the divine monarch, and the reappropriation of the gendered mouth and tongue, moving to debates about the meaning and function of royal "blood" and its possible shedding or sacrifice in the context of the wider political body. The chapter then concludes by demonstrating how all of these uses of synecdoche relate finally to a broader theory of theological accommodation. Looking in this case to sensory metaphors of sight and touch, it will be shown how the various body parts and fragments come together to signify a divine whole greater than its parts, allowing Elizabeth ultimately to assume a quasi-divine, ungendered persona and bolster her symbolic control over her subjects. This shows, finally, how Elizabeth consequently subverts the common practice of the blazon by fragmenting perceptions of her gendered natural body to strengthen the continuity of her political body, which emerges as omnipotent, omniscient, and finally divine.

The fourth chapter finally considers how and when the strategies discussed in previous chapters foundered on the reality of Elizabeth's physical body. It challenges the rhetorical techniques of substitution, conflation, and reappropriation of the Queen's bodies by examining the crisis that emerged when the monarchical body became ill. It examines the diverse interpretations of diseases affecting the body of the monarch, and by association, the body politic, and the body of the kingdom, in medieval and early modern England. It studies Elizabeth and her political circle's political and religious writings on bodies in times of disease, crisis, and uncertainty against the backdrop of the divine right of the monarch and the greater good of the realm, which derived from that presumed divine right.

The chapter is divided into two parts: the first addresses the period before Elizabeth ascended the throne, during the reign of her brother, King Edward VI, analyzing Princess Elizabeth's correspondence with the boy-king during his recurring illnesses between 1547 and 1553. In these familial letters, the elder sister, now also his subject, attempts both to console her ill brother and, at the same time, make sense of divine intent and God's reasoning in afflicting the young monarch with such suffering. The second part, building on the insights of the first, turns to Queen Elizabeth's own experience of illness and the constitutional crisis it provoked in her body politic, following her near-fatal case of smallpox in 1562. This episode prompted a clash between the natural and political bodies of the monarch, raising urgent questions about the succession, governance, and divine will. Elizabeth's response to the crisis can be traced in speeches and prayers she composed in 1563, where she sought to exonerate herself from any imputed blame. The overall aim, then, is to explore how Elizabeth responded to the bodily "dis-ease" of her realm by deflecting two possible "causes" of her illness, the one political, the other broadly theological and spiritual. Elizabeth's principal advisor, William Cecil, attributed the emerging danger of the illness to Elizabeth's own irresponsible political conduct, mainly in her reluctance to marry, produce an heir, or name a successor. Elizabeth, meanwhile, focused on the theological argument by insisting that God's will and ways are always mysterious and therefore cannot be fully understood by men, thereby

exonerating her of any potential blame for having been afflicted by God as a punishment for some unnamed sin. The crisis ultimately resulted in a political solution proposed by Cecil: in the event of the Queen's death, the political body would temporarily continue to govern the English kingdom without the natural body of the monarch, which would mean, essentially, separating the bodies of the Queen's Two Bodies doctrine. The chapter concludes that by refusing to comply with political and gendered expectations in marriage and dynastic planning, the diseased body of the female monarch undermined the Queen's "Two Bodies" doctrine, placing the political body, and the entire kingdom at risk. More specifically, it demonstrates how Elizabeth's previous rhetorical strategies enabled her to confront this risk and turn it to her eventual advantage. In this respect, the fourth chapter adds an important dimension to the discussions of the previous chapters about hierarchy, political body metaphors, and accommodated synecdoche, always pointing to a mysterious, intangible divine body.

The conclusion of the dissertation serves a dual purpose: it both summarizes the findings of the preceding chapters and introduces a final political challenge to Elizabeth I's perceived gender and political hierarchy, and the body-debate that shaped her reign. This challenge comes from a different direction: England's northern neighbor, and its monarch, Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587). Accordingly, the conclusion charts Elizabeth I's struggle for legitimacy as Queen of England with Mary's persistent claim to the English crown in light of the dissertation's main claims. Mary was not only Elizabeth's cousin but also her closest blood relative and, in the eyes of many Catholics, the rightful heir to the English throne. Following several claims of conspiracy, Mary was tried, convicted, and executed in 1587. Her case is particularly compelling because, unlike Elizabeth's dealings with her male-dominated Parliament and political circle - relationships mediated through patriarchal norms - her dynamic with Mary was not patriarchal in nature. Instead, it was a rare and fraught confrontation between two female sovereigns of similar rank, bound by blood yet divided by politics, religion, and divergent approaches to marriage and their role as women. The conclusion juxtaposes the two queens, examining their positions within the gendered, political, and religious hierarchies that are discussed throughout the thesis. By analyzing their personal correspondence, as well as speeches and poems authored by both Elizabeth and Mary on their relationship, the conclusion suggests that the contrast between the self-perception of these two queens comes into sharper focus in light of the thesis's findings about Elizabeth's unique rhetorical perception of herself as an unmarried, ungendered monarch.

This dissertation, if so, explores issues that remain deeply relevant today: the challenges faced by women in positions of power, the ongoing need to carve out space for female leadership, the pivotal role of education and political rhetoric in this process, and the reclaiming of the female body from patriarchal demands. These are not simply historical concerns, but questions we continue to grapple with today. Elizabeth I recognized that control over the female body equates to control over the body politic, and, by extension, the realm itself. She maintained authority over her own physical, female body while rhetorically substituting it with abstract bodies and ideals such as the transcendental soul, the intellect, and cardinal virtues - all qualities required of an effective leader, then as now. To this day, Elizabeth I remains one of the most renowned figures in English history. By revisiting such historical models of successful female leadership, we can challenge lingering anxieties and fears about female leadership and offer inspiration to those still navigating the political sphere.