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Queen Elizabeth I's Self-Representation Through the Petrarchan Convention*

Kraliçe I. Elizabeth'in Petrarca Şiir Geleneğiyle Şekillendirdiği Portresi

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Abstract

During the last two decades of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the Petrarchan convention lived its glorious age. Along with enriching the Elizabethan literature with sonnets and sonnet sequences, most of the poets of the time also employed the elaborate language of the convention in their eulogies for glorifying and idealizing the Queen. However, not only the poets, but also the Queen herself adopted it – in her own way – as a means in her self-representation and as a strategy in her relations with her male courtiers. It is commonly agreed that the Queen used Petrarchism politically especially during the last period of her reign, establishing a distance between her courtiers and herself, and making them feel powerful while in fact she held all authority and control. Although Elizabeth I's speeches are primarily studied in terms of tracing the main features of her public image set by herself, her two poems, "On Monsieur's Departure" and her answer in "Verse Exchange Between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Ralegh" are equally significant in her self-representation and her use of the authoritative voice. Her public and her private selves are conflated, she uses the gendered discourse of the Petrarchan love convention, accommodates herself within the tradition, casting herself both as the object and subject of the poem. In "On Monsieur's Departure," through the use of the Petrarchan paradoxes, Elizabeth I describes the yearnings of her heart but acknowledges her duty to repress them for she is the Queen and should not be conquered by love. She changes the conventional gender of the speaker, expresses her dilemma and her choice despite all its consequences. A stronger self-assertion is evident in the verse exchange where she answers the Petrarchan complaint of Sir Walter Ralegh who blames fortune for his loss of favour. The Queen expresses her superiority over him and "Fortune," and shows how much she allows

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herself be represented and wooed by her courtiers in poetry. Both poems bear a determination and authority similar to that which is evident in her speeches. In these poems, through her own way of using the Petrarchan convention, Elizabeth I fashions herself as remote, unattainable, chaste, but above all, as authoritative and superior.

Keywords: Elizabeth I's poems, female poetic persona, female lyric voice, Petrarchan convention, Elizabeth I's speeches.

Öz

Petrarca şiir geleneği Kraliçe I. Elizabeth'in hüküm sürdüğü dönemin son yirmi yılında en ışıltılı dönemini yaşamıştır. Çoğu şair Elizabeth çağı edebiyatını yazdıkları soneler ve sone dizileriyle zenginleştirirken aynı zamanda da bu geleneğe dair ifadeleri methiyelerinde kullanarak Kraliçe'yi övmüş ve yüceltmişlerdir. Ancak Petrarca şiir geleneği sadece şairler tarafından değil, I. Elizabeth tarafından da – kendi amaçları doğrultusunda – kendisini temsil etmek üzere bir araç ve aynı zamanda erkek saraylılarla karşılıklı ilişkilerinde bir strateji olarak kullanılmıştır. Eleştirmenlerin genel görüşü, Kraliçe'nin özellikle de hüküm sürdüğü dönemin sonlarına doğru Petrarca geleneğini politik bir amaçla kullandığı, saraylılar ve kendisi arasına bir mesafe koyduğu, asıl güç kendi elindeyken onların da kendilerini güçlü hissetmelerine müsade ettiğidir. Genellikle I. Elizabeth'in yapmış olduğu konuşmalar kendisi tarafından oluşturulan toplumsal portresini şekillendiren unsurları görebilmek amacıyla incelense de, yazmış olduğu iki şiir, "Mösyö'nün Gidişi Üzerine" ve "Kraliçe I. Elizabeth ve Sir Walter Ralegh Arasındaki Karşılıklı Şiir"deki cevabı, sahip olduğu otoriter sesi ortaya koyması ve kendisini temsil etmesi bağlamında önemlidir. Her iki şiirde de I. Elizabeth'in toplumsal ve kişisel yönleri bir araya gelmektedir. Petrarca geleneğine has ifadeleri kullanan Kraliçe kendisini şiirin hem konusu hem de şairi kılmaktadır. I. Elizabeth "Mösyö'nün Gidişi Üzerine" adlı şiirinde Petrarca geleneğinde yer alan zıt kavramları bir arada kullanarak bir yandan gönlünden geçenleri dile getirir diğer yandan ise sahip olduğu konum nedeniyle bunları bastırması gerektiğini ifade eder. Şiirin hem konusu hem de şairi olarak Petrarca geleneğindeki ifadeleri kontrolü altında tutar, bu gelenekteki bir şair olarak konuşur ve yakınır, aynı zamanda da geleneksel olarak erkek olan şiir kişisini bir kadın olarak değiştirir. Diğer şiirinde, Petrarca geleneğinin kalıplaşmış ifadelerini kullanarak kader yüzünden sahip olduğu aşkı ve makamı kaybettiğinden yakınan Sir Walter Ralegh'e verdiği cevap ile daha güçlü bir şekilde kendisini ifade eder. Hem "kaderi" hem de Ralegh'i kontrol edebilecek güce sahip olduğunu söyleyen Kraliçe, bu gelenek çerçevesinde kendisini temsil etmek isteyen saraylı şairlere ne ölçüde izin verdiğini de gösterir. Petrarca geleneğini kendine has kullanış şekli ile I. Elizabeth uzak, elde edilemez olan, iffetli ama hepsinden de öte otorite sahibi, yüce bir varlık olarak portresini şekillendirir.

Anahtar sözcükler: I. Elizabeth'in şiirleri, kadın şiir kişisi, kadın şairin sesi, Petrarca geleneği, I. Elizabeth'in konuşmaları.

In the last section of *The Teares of the Muses* (1591), Edmund Spenser complains about the neglected state of poetry since he claims that it is not respected and maintained by princes or by the clergy. Although he thinks that poetry is in the hands of the least literary minded, he singles out Queen Elizabeth I as the only monarch, who as a "myrrour

of her Makers maiestie" (572) "[s]upports the praise of noble Poësie" (574). Moreover, she is at the same time a matchless poet:

> Most peereles Prince, most peereles Poëtresse,
> The true *Pandora* of all heauvenly graces,
> Diuiene *Elisa*, sacred Emperesse . . . . (577-579)

Elizabeth's poetic gift and talent is similarly praised by George Puttenham in the First Book of *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589). Among the leading poets of the English poetic tradition and of the Elizabethan Age, Puttenham exalts her as "the most excellent Poet" (1968, p.2) of the time and "first in degree [. . .] whose learned, delicate, noble Muse, easily surmounteth all the rest that haue writtē before her time and since" (1968, p.51). Puttenham also compliments her with reference to her poem "The Doubt of Future Foes." He praises the poem not only for its poetic qualities and as being the best example of "the *Gorgious*" but also in terms of its subject matter for it denotes Elizabeth's wisdom in showing her knowledge and concern about the "secret practises" and the dangers of "ambition and disloyaltie" that threaten her peaceful reign. The Queen appears as the one who with her "great wisdome and pacience dissembled it" (1968, p.207). However, it has been widely contended that, with her royal authority, her humanist education and her power as the sovereign, Elizabeth could hardly have been regarded as a representative woman poet of Renaissance England.[1] This distinctive feature of her royal authority is evident in the eulogies both Spenser and Puttenham make of her poetic gift. While Spenser acknowledges the distinction between the "two bodies"[2] of the Queen, and, hence, glorifies her both as a "Prince" and a "Poëtresse," Puttenham underlines the Queen's education as the most remarkable aspect of her character, which enables her to write poetry. Elizabeth's literary achievement is inseparable from her status as the monarch, for her wisdom in governance along with her public and private character is evident in both praises.

It is not only in these eulogies made by her contemporaries but also in Elizabeth's speeches that the distinction between the "king's two bodies" is an eminent feature in her claim for authority and justification of her right to rule. In her speech on November 20, 1558 to Sir William Cecil and her lords before her coronation she said "I am but one body naturally considered, though by His permission a body politic to govern" (2002, p.52). Elizabeth's metaphorical use of the doctrine of the king's two bodies constitutes the basis of her self-representation (and her representations), and is recurrently used in her speeches, most significantly in her Tilbury Speech and Golden Speech.[3] As Greenblatt

1 Summit emphasises the "cultural authority" and the central place the Queen occupies in the Elizabethan culture that makes her different from the female poets of the time (1996, p.400). Walker draws attention to Queen Elizabeth's difference from the woman poets of the Renaissance with reference to the subject matter and voice, particularly in her occasional poems (1996, p.67).

2 For a detailed account of the doctrine of "King's Two Bodies" that defines the monarch as composed of an immortal body ("body politic") and a mortal body ("body natural") see Kantorowicz (1957, pp.7-14) and Axton (1977, pp.11-13).

3 For a detailed study of Queen Elizabeth's speeches see Heisch (1975, pp.31-55); Rose (2000, pp.1077-82); Teague (1992, pp.63-78).

has stated "[e]ven without this elaborate doctrine [. . .] kingship always involves fictions, theatricalism, and the mystification of power" (1984, p.167). The Petrarchan love convention, in this respect, is one of these fictions that plays a noteworthy part in Elizabeth's self-representations, mainly in the last two decades of her reign.[4]

The Petrarchan love convention was a prevalent literary fashion in Renaissance England from the mid-sixteenth century to the later years of Elizabeth's reign. With the publication of Richard Tottel's *Miscellany* in 1557, a year before Elizabeth came to the throne, it gained popularity and recognition among the literary circles of the period through the earlier translations made by Wyatt and Surrey from Petrarch. However, the Petrarchan convention lost its popularity for about two decades, and then from about 1579 onwards it was revived through the sonnets and lyrics written by Sidney and Spenser, who evidently had in mind the Queen's interest in poetry.[5] Elizabeth inspired the poets of the time, who through their use of the elegant and refined vocabulary of the convention, established the cult of celebrating, glorifying and idealizing their Virgin Queen.

Petrarchism not only enriched the Elizabethan literature with sonnets and sonnet sequences written by the prominent poets of the time but also used by the courtiers to address, reach and express their expectations and concerns to the Queen who is distant due to the power and authority she holds (Frye, 1993. p.108; Marotti, 1982, p.398; Montrose, 1986, p.326). By the same token, the convention plays a significant role in idealizing and glorifying the ageing Queen, and she is immortalized as an ageless sonnet lady, the symbol of virtue, perfection and spiritual beauty, reminiscent of Petrarch's Laura (Forster, 1969, p.146). A similar attitude is visible in her portraits that are equally important in Elizabeth's public representation. Strong suggests that the portraits of the Queen after the 1590s were made under governmental control, and Nicholas Hilliard was appointed to evolve a formal face pattern; thus a "Mask of Youth" was used in the portraits to present Elizabeth as always young and beautiful (1987, pp.147-50). Crane, however, points out another aspect of such ideals, stating that they are designed by male writers who reflect her not as she is but in the way they wanted to see her; that is, they feminized her and "tended to freeze the queen in a static and symbolic posture removed from the actual operations of government" (1988, pp.1-2).

This study, therefore, aims to analyse how Queen Elizabeth I employed the Petrarchan ideal as a means of her self-representation in her two poems "On Monsieur's Departure" and her answer in "Verse Exchange Between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Ralegh." The outstanding aspects of her self-portrait fashioned through her speeches are relevant to this self-representation and both poems present a similar picture of the Virgin Queen,

4 Frye discusses "Petrarchism, Neo-Platonism and medieval political theology" as the three later strategies of Elizabeth's self-representation (1993, pp.107-14). Greenblatt talks about the Petrarchan structure of Elizabeth's court and also refers to some instances of how the courtiers appeal to Elizabeth through the use of this convention (1984, pp.164-6). For how the socioeconomic aspects of this courtly relation is projected through Elizabethan love poetry see Marotti (1982, pp.396-428). For another aspect of the use of Petrarchism, Elizabeth I's "self-presentation" as Petrarch's Laura of the *Triumphs* in in terms of its strong political associations with victory and authority see Campbell (2007, pp.83-100).

5 Marotti states that there is no satisfactory answer to the question why so few sonnets were written during the period between the publication of Tottel's *Miscellany* and Sidney's poems (1982, p.396).

with her royal authority, power, her two bodies, distance and with the central place that she occupies in the Elizabethan period with this unique identity. Although the dates of composition and the occasions on which the poems are written differ from each other, Elizabeth's use of the Petrarchan vocabulary both as a sovereign and as a woman in the former poem and her self-assertive answer to the Petrarchan plight in the latter expose a striking contrast in term of her use of the convention. In both poems she is the speaking subject and the one who has control over the convention.

It is evident that her poems, which are only a few when compared with her great body of speeches, can hardly reveal her power, but they are worth considering in order to trace her authoritative voice and the way she uses her masculine and feminine selves as she does in her speeches. Montrose underlines Elizabeth's "capacity to *work* the available terms to serve her culturally conditioned needs" which is indeed seen as a reciprocal condition practiced both by the Queen and her subjects (1986, p.310). It is, therefore, possible to discuss her use of Petrarchan convention within that context, particularly with reference to her answer to Ralegh's complaint.

The Queen's use of the convention is defined by Frye as "engendering" the "masculinist discourse" and it is argued that Elizabeth "straddles both the masculine and feminine positions, gaining power from both and from her claim to both" (1993, p.109). Elizabeth's use of the Petrarchan discourse provided her with a role with which she can present her power in more acceptable and conventional terms easily tolerable for her courtiers. Moreover, Montrose also believes that through the Petrarchan language Queen Elizabeth played down "the authoritarianism of her regime" (1986, p.325). Forster's title to the chapter, where he studies the use of Petrarchan convention both in the representations and in the self-representation of Elizabeth, "The Political Petrarchism of the Virgin Queen" indeed summarizes the Queen's intentional use of Petrarchism due to the political circumstances in which she found herself. The convention is employed not for aesthetic concerns, but for purely political purposes by the Queen, primarily to maintain control over the powerful nobles and to "attach their loyalty to her person" through devotion (1969, pp.127-128). For Forster, it is not merely a coincidence that Elizabeth used Petrarchism:

> [S]he wished to have it so because it was politically expedient. She was the only sovereign in Europe who was fitted to assume the character of the petrarchistic ideal; she was the only Virgin Queen, who could combine in her own person political sovereignty and ideal dominion over men's hearts. She saw her advantage and she used it. (1969, p.147)

Elizabeth's strategy of projecting her power in a more accustomed manner can also be observed in her speech (November 20, 1558) when she states that she would direct all her actions "by good advice and counsel" (2002, p.52). Crane takes this instance as a part of Elizabeth's strategy of asserting her authority and believes that she appointed Lord Burghley as her chief advisor "to reassure her subjects that she was receiving suitable advice, but did not in practice allow him to approach her as an authoritative advisor" (1988, pp.6-7). Elizabeth accommodates her authority within a patriarchal structure,

adjusting it to its rules. With The Act of Supremacy, enacted in 1559, Queen Elizabeth took the title "supreme governor" (1998, p.89)[6] instead of Henry VIII's title "supreme head," and this can also be regarded on her part as a deliberate manoeuvre to play down her authoritarian position. Another instance can be seen in her speech of January 14, 1559, the day before her coronation.[7] She assured her subjects that she would fulfil their expectations that she would be their "good lady and queen" ready to sacrifice herself for the safety of her subjects, and "be good unto [them] as ever queen was to her people" (2002, p.54).

Other than providing Elizabeth with the traditional role of idealized lady, the Petrarchan convention also puts an irreconcilable distance between the poet/lover and the beloved. This notable feature not only made the Queen a remote and unattainable figure for the courtiers but also it "helped ensure her physical and psychological seclusion" which Frye believes was used by Elizabeth as a strategy to secure her authority (1993, p.107). Her poem "When I was Fair and Young," which is thought to have been written around the 1580s best illustrates this strategy of distancing herself when she is no longer young. Such metaphorical distancing is also said to have been practised by Elizabeth in real life. Frye considers the Queen's withdrawal into the inner rooms of the palaces and decreasing the number of her advisors as "her attempt to place herself beyond the control of others," suggesting that such seclusion may appear as a "self-protective" act against the mounting anxieties related to the succession; therefore the Petrarchan convention that suggested distance magnified her authority (1993, p.107). Such an establishment of distance can also be observed particularly on two occasions when she answered Parliament that she should not marry.[8] While articulating her decision Elizabeth, metaphorically speaking, established a similar distance between her and the patriarchal expectations, represented herself as the Virgin Queen who recognised no authority other than that of God.

In her two poems, "On Monsieur's Departure" and her answer in "Verse Exchange Between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Ralegh" the prominent aspects of Queen Elizabeth's speeches can be perceived. These two poems clearly embody her authoritative voice, her self-assertion, her distance, display of her power and control, her self-sufficiency, her two bodies – public and private selves – and her decisive nature. Recalling Greenblatt's idea of the use of fictions in kingship (1984, p.167), in both poems, from the frame of courtly poetry, yet in varying degrees, it is possible to observe how Queen Elizabeth's public and private selves are conflated. She uses the gendered discourse of the Petrarchan love convention, accommodates herself within the tradition, casting herself both as the object and subject of the poem, distances herself from her courtiers, reminds them of her superior status, asserts and at times reminds her power and control over them all.

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6 Elton states that Elizabeth's position as "supreme governor" is not only related to her gender but also to the Protestant doctrine and organisation of the Church that is "subject not to a lay pope but to the queen-governor in parliament" (1991, p.275).

7 See "Richard Mulcaster's Account of Queen Elizabeth's Speech and Prayer During Her Passage Through London to Westminster The Day Before Her Coronation, January 14, 1559" (Elizabeth I, 2002, pp.53-5).

8 See Elizabeth's speeches dated February 10, 1559 and November 5, 1566 (Elizabeth I, 2002, pp.56-60; 93-98).

In “On Monsieur’s Departure,” which is thought to have been written in 1582 after Francis, Duke of Alençon’s departure,[9] Elizabeth, through the use of the Petrarchan contraries, describes the yearnings of her heart but at the same time acknowledges her duty to repress them for she is the Queen and should not be conquered by love. In the poem the silent object of the Petrarchan convention is turned into the speaking subject. The poetic persona, the Queen with her two bodies, changes the conventional gender of the speaker; as the poet she uses the Petrarchan vocabulary, speaks and complains as a Petrarchan lover and states her own choice despite all the pain it will bring.

The occasion on which the poem was written is important to understand its context. Elizabeth’s marriage negotiations with Alençon has a political significance, and marks a turning point in the representations of Elizabeth. The marriage was strongly opposed by the Protestants on the grounds that the religious and political stability of the country would be endangered because of Alençon’s Catholicism.[10] The political condition was also reflected into the literature of the period and it was due to this opposition that the Queen’s virginity was insistently glorified. Her virginity was celebrated as a permanent condition and symbolically her unmarried state became the symbol of national unity; and consequently such glorification became what King calls a “patriotic cult” (1990, p.51).[11] Edmund Spenser’s praise “Of fayre *Eliza*, Queene of shepheardes all” (34) in the “Aprill” eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender* in this respect is given special emphasis, for it glorifies the Queen through an identification of her with the virgins of mythical and Christian tradition.[12]

Therefore, in “On Monsieur’s Departure,” the Virgin Queen’s voice is heard; speaking of the choice that she made along with its emotional consequences. Stating that “I grieve and dare not show my discontent” (1) Elizabeth presents herself as experiencing the conflict between her public and private selves. In a poignant tone she depicts her emotional state through the recurrent use of Petrarchan contraries; she loves, but she feels that she is “forced to seem to hate” (2), and though she seems absolutely “mute” she “inwardly” talks of her grief (4). In the Petrarchan convention, the poet/speaker talks about his sorrow and pain accruing from unrequited love, frustration, yearning rather than fulfilment. The poem is the only place where he can expose his discontentment, and at times his contentment, love and pain. His private world, the projection of his pain, torment and yearning constitute the subject matter of his poem, and subsequently he transforms the moment of pain into an artefact. The poet is Elizabeth herself, and her status is that of a monarch, and it is apparent that the poem can hardly be limited to a personal outpouring of sorrow, for the private concern is at the same time a public one.

9 In addition to it, Teague suggests another possibility about the identity of Monsieur, that he could be Robert Devereaux, the Earl of Essex (1987, p.526).

10 For a detailed account of the courtship and its consequences, see Levin (1994, pp.58-65).

11 For the public opposition against this marriage possibility and its reflections in literary works, see King (1990. pp.48-51).

12 For a critical evaluation of the importance of the “Aprill” eclogue in terms of its celebration of Queen Elizabeth I’s virginity as regards the political milieu of the time, see Coles (2002, p.44); Johnson (1990, pp.155-6, 170-1); King (1990, pp.51-8); Montrose (1986, pp.320-2).

Torn between private pain and public duty, her choice appears not as the choice of a woman, but that of a sovereign. Furthermore, the choice would not only affect her, but the whole nation. The poem indicates the Queen's prudence related to the threats to the peace of her realm and her wisdom in refraining from personal issues – the virtue that is most celebrated by Puttenham in relation to her other poem "The Doubt of Future Foes."

The presentation of a public issue from a private view is the most prominent aspect of "The Doubt of Future Foes." The poem, that was thought to be related to the Northern Rebellion (1569) in support of Mary, Queen of Scots and written around this date, was said to be secretly taken from the Queen's tablet (May, 1991, p.47). Summit thinks that in the poem Elizabeth uses privacy as a frame to present a public issue – her relation to Mary is presented as a private, not a public matter – and identifies "[t]his framing" as "Elizabeth's poetics of queenship." The manuscript circulation of the poem is also interpreted as a strategy to deal with the Queen of Scots (Summit, 1996, p.411). Similarly, Hackett states that this poem's "very privacy was strategically publicised" and so might be the case with "On Monsieur's Departure" (1996, p.175). In line with what is suggested, taking the public opposition against the marriage to Alençon into consideration, it is possible to argue that Queen Elizabeth with "On Monsieur's Departure" fashions herself in the way her nation wants her to be. Such fashioning also brings into mind the idea of self-sacrifice that is recurrently used in her speeches.

In the Petrarchan convention the lover has the power of words in representing the beloved who is his object of adoration; he establishes his own subjectivity as the male poetic persona who explicitly expresses his fulfilment and frustration, adores his beloved from a distance and silences her through idealization. Bell characterizes "On Monsieur's Departure" as "a female version of the Petrarchan lyric" and argues that due to its formal structure it "represents Elizabeth I's efforts to break away from the passivity and stasis imposed by the Petrarchan sonnet" (1998, pp.108, 113). The speaker of "On Monsieur's Departure" is not the silent lady of the Petrarchan lyric; in the first six lines, each line is marked by a projection of her public and private selves through a delicate balance of the Petrarchan contraries. Elizabeth presents herself in a dilemma since she has to act not as she feels but in the way she is expected to. The pain of love torments her, but she says that she has to keep silent and act as if she was not in love. This obligatory suppression of her feelings is followed by a complaint: "I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned, / Since from myself another self I turned" (5-6). The vacillation between the yearnings of her body natural and the dictates of her body politic continues in the second stanza; and the word "care" is repeated twice corresponding to two different meanings related to the contexts of her public and private selves. Her care, which is her public duty and responsibility, follows her like her "shadow in the sun" and it cannot comply with Monsieur's "too familiar care" – and so she rues (7-10). There is no remedy for the pain that she suffers from, and it has to be suppressed in time (12).

In the last stanza, the contrasting feelings of the two bodies are again presented and the poem ends with a bitter resignation. She knows that she is "soft, and made of melting snow" (14) but she is confronted with a choice to be cruel or to be kind, and to live or to die (15-18). In her speeches Elizabeth refers to a number of instances that threatened

her life but that she survived. On the day before her coronation, during her procession through the city of London, in her prayer she thanked God for his mercy and for he spared her "to behold this joyful day" (2002, p.54). Referring to the speech Elizabeth delivered about Mary, Queen of Scots (November 12, 1586) and to the Tilbury Speech – both of them emphasise the difficulty and dignity of survival, courage and self sacrifice, rather than yielding to death – Rose believes that Elizabeth does not present her survival and herself as "the passive if fortunate instrument of God's grace," rather, she "justifies her decisions" that are taken by her wisdom (2000, p.1080).[13] A similar apprehension can be discerned in the closing lines of the poem. The dilemma that accrues from the contrary feelings of the poetic persona will bring not a physical but an emotional death suggestive of the idea that denotes how hard it is to live: "Or let me live with some more sweet content, / Or die, and so forget what love e'er meant" (17-18).

A Petrarchan lover welcomes this emotional state; to live with some sweet discontent and to transform this moment of suffering into a poetic expression of pain and frustration. However, the poetic voice is not only that of a poet, but of a prince who is at the same time a woman made of "melting snow." Cerasano and Wynne-Davies believe that "the authorial voice carries the same painful paradox, that acute awareness of a double self, which penetrates the writing of Renaissance women" (1992, p.8). As regards this double identity, Miller states that Elizabeth's observation that " 'from myself another self I turned' may perhaps refer not only to 'Monsieur,' but also to her own alternating celebration and suppression of her femininity, in self-fashioning such roles as mother to her people and prince to her kingdom" (1996, p.37).

Another noteworthy aspect of the poem is that, despite its Petrarchan vocabulary, it is not written in the sonnet form, but consists of three sestets. Rose believes that in her speeches, Elizabeth's "goal in public rhetoric is not limited to the appropriation of masculine prestige; rather, she seeks to occupy and to monopolize all dominant gendered subject positions" (2000, p.1081). With this remark in mind, it is possible to argue that "On Monsieur's Departure" also illustrates Elizabeth's attempt at occupying and monopolizing the gendered subject position of the Petrarchan convention. As the persona with the royal authority, she not only appears as the subject of the poem and uses the stock expressions of the convention to express the emotional turmoil that she is in, but also she does not restrict her complaint to fourteen lines as in a traditional sonnet, but to eighteen lines.

In "Verse Exchange Between Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Ralegh" the Queen's answer ("Elizabeth to Ralegh")[14] to the Petrarchan complaint of Sir Walter Ralegh is another instance where her authoritative voice is strongly heard. In "Ralegh to Elizabeth," Ralegh complains that Fortune has taken away his beloved, his joy and hope. He is left in despair; wasted and lonely (1-4). He personifies Fortune as a blind and powerful goddess who can

13 For the speeches see Elizabeth I (2002, pp.186-90; 325-6).

14 In *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, in the editorial notes by Marcus, Mueller and Rose, a detailed account concerning the source of the poem and its authenticity is given, along with a reference to Puttenham who cited two lines of the poem, see (2002, p.307 n.1). Puttenham quotes lines 11-12 of the poem stating that these lines "which our soueraigne Lady wrate in defiance of fortune" are an example for "sententia or the sage sayer" (1968, p.197). About the authenticity and the discovery of another manuscript of the poem see Black (1968, p.535). Also, the poem is attributed to Queen Elizabeth I and reprinted in a critical edition by May (1991, pp.316-321).

conquer world and worldly things, and laments that she conquered Elizabeth despite her virtue (17-20). The poem ends with his farewell and his assurance that "No fortune base nor frail shall alter" him (24).[15] Although the complaint is reminiscent of a lovelorn lover who in woe, tears, sighs and despair laments for his loss, the Queen's answer does not bear such figurative and stock expressions, but is rather direct, clear, conversational and devoid of the conventional expressions encountered in "On Monsieur's Departure."

In Elizabeth's answer, unlike in "On Monsieur's Departure" where there is a reference to the frail body of a woman made of "melting snow," there is no indication suggestive of the gender of the speaker. The feminine qualities, along with the pronoun "she" are attributed to personified Fortune. Although Ralegh addresses Elizabeth in his complaint as "my love," "[m]y life's joy," "my princess" and "my true fantasy's mistress" (1-4) the voice that replies does not bear the same intimacy and that it seems to belong to the body politic of the Queen. While in the former poem, Elizabeth's public and private selves are conflated, in this poem her body politic is in the foreground. The voice that is heard reminds in her reply that she is the only one who decides on the social status of a courtier who supplicates for pardon.

Addressing Ralegh as "Ah, silly Pug" (1), Elizabeth reminds him that "It passeth fickle Fortune's power and skill" (3) to change her decisions. The tone of the poem is reminiscent of her words to the parliamentary delegation on November 5, 1566 when she is once again encountered with marriage and succession issues. She angry tells them that she is their prince, anointed by God and endued with superior qualities. She is the one who rules and who has the power and the authority; her words that are "spoken by their prince" should not be repeated again "[f]or it is monstrous that the feet should direct the head" (2002, pp.95-98). In a similar manner, Elizabeth expresses her superiority over Ralegh and also on Fortune, and asserts that it is beyond the power of Fortune to control her thoughts: "Fortune, I know, sometimes doth conquer kings, / And rules and reigns on earth and earthly things, / But never think Fortune can bear the sway / If virtue watch, and will her not obey" (9-12).

These lines are marked by a strong contrast, for Elizabeth makes a distinction between earthly things and herself who is divinely sanctioned. While fortune can conquer earthly things, and the ones devoid of will and virtue, with the power and authority that she derives from God, she challenges Fortune, and asserts that she can rule both fortune and Ralegh. She also states that she did not choose him with "fickle Fortune's rede" nor would she leave him for fortune forced her to (13-14). In her "defiance of fortune," so called by Puttenham (1968, p.197), Elizabeth proclaims her mastery over the blind goddess. She, therefore, rejects the status of being the silent object of the poem, reminds who she is, and thus admonishes how much she allows herself be represented and wooed by her courtiers in poetry.

Representing her public and private selves, occupying masculine and feminine positions due to what the occasion demands, Queen Elizabeth I employs the paradoxical

15 May states that Ralegh's complaint is thought to have been composed "during the first half of 1587 in an effort to counteract Elizabeth's growing partiality for Essex." It is also argued that Ralegh "played on the ambiguous meaning of 'Fortune' in this poem to attack Essex by implying that this nobleman's superiority was merely an accident of fate" chosen by blind fate (1991, pp.119-20).

nature of the Petrarchan convention in both poems. She projects a public event from the personal frame of lyric poetry in "On Monsieur's Departure" with an emphasis on the necessity of self-sacrifice, as well as of refraining from all that is related to the body natural. The "self" to whom the Queen said to have "turned" is no one but the Virgin Queen with all her power and authority inherent in her body politic. It is this voice that is heard in her answer to Ralegh's complaint. Reminding that with the virtues and wisdom bestowed on her by God, she is the only one who not only rules her subjects but also fortune. To conclude, with the Queen's voice dominating the feminine and masculine realms of the poetic convention, both poems display the similar self-justification, self-assertion, determination and authority evident in her speeches. Through her way of using the Petrarchan convention in these poems, Queen Elizabeth I fashions herself as remote, authoritative, unattainable, chaste and superior.

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