

## **Queen Elizabeth I: The Rhetoric of a Unique Paradoxical Image**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at scrutinizing Elizabeth I's creation of a unique paradoxical image, demonstrating that her self-representation was often contradictory. As an unmarried female sovereign and being cognizant of her vulnerability, she employed a discourse of contradiction, an instrumental political asset to challenge Renaissance gender expectations. The discrepancy in Elizabeth's rhetoric is evident in her speeches, prayers, and poetry. This research suggests that the process of self-representation was carefully and skillfully attained through the projection of conflicting depictions. It explores three erratic depictions: masculine and feminine, virgin and mother, and divine and human. This project provides evidence that in her struggle with her gender and with the Renaissance culture, Elizabeth's rhetorical strategy was the creation of paradoxical images, arguing that this clever tactic allowed her to circumvent the issue of gender, legitimize her rule, and craft a unique regal identity. Her approach to leadership was, particularly, effective because she recognized the bonds between representation, gender, authority, and language.

**Key Words:** discourse, Elizabeth I, gender, imagery, self- representation

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