

‘Eliza Fortuna’: reconsidering the Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth I

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THE SYMBOLISM OF Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger’s portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, known as the Ditchley portrait, remains uncertain despite many recent studies of Renaissance portraiture (Fig.2). It is a rare surviving example of a full-length portrait of the queen, and the largest extant image of her known, but its imagery has attracted relatively few interpretations. When most recently exhibited in 2002 and 2007, the catalogues maintained that ‘a major theme of the allegory is forgiveness’, which has been little disputed but not fully explained.¹

Roy Strong contended that its central conceit of sunshine banishing storms was intended to convey the queen’s restored favour towards Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611), her Master of the Armoury and Champion at the Tilt, who commissioned the portrait to accompany the lavish festivities he arranged in 1592 when seeking pardon for taking Elizabeth’s former lady-in-waiting Anne Vavasour as his mistress without royal permission.² Some scholars have surmised that the Ditchley portrait was executed after Lee’s entertainments as a commemoration.³ Susan Simpson commented in her recent critical biography of Lee that this ‘portrait of Elizabeth was full of enigmatic references, not all entirely explained even today, and the full implications of the symbolism in Lee’s portrait collection remain the subject of speculation among art historians’.⁴ Yet, as argued here, the correlation between portrait and pageant strongly suggests that the picture was commissioned in advance of the Queen’s visit and that it played a key part in the festivities staged for her at Ditchley in Oxfordshire in 1592.⁵

Gheeraerts depicted Elizabeth life-size balancing on the globe that occupies the lower quarter of the large canvas. An enormous gown supported by a wide farthingale festooned with diamonds and rubies anchors her to a map of England in the centre of the globe. Dressed in a wired ruff and winged sleeves, she fills the picture plane. The background is bisected down the middle: the sun shines in clear blue skies on the left, while lightning rends stormy skies on the right. Elizabeth wears a large red wig surmounted by a crown. A jewel shaped like an armillary sphere is tied by her left ear. A ribbon is attached to a folding fan in her right hand and she carries a pair of gloves in her left. Also included are a sonnet, now fragmentary, in an ornamental cartouche, and three barely legible Latin inscriptions – one each below the sun, the storm, and the hem of her dress on the lower right.⁶

The painting’s title derives from Ditchley Manor in Oxfordshire, which belonged to the Lee family, where the antiquary Thomas Hearne first recorded it in 1718.⁷ Shortly after, in 1725, George Vertue described the portrait as ‘Queen Elizabeth under her feet england painted, all the Counties as a Carpet several Latin Mottos. and an Episode in Verse in English. 14 lines’.⁸ Further inventories confirm its presence at Ditchley throughout the eighteenth century.⁹ An unpublished drawing of the portrait made at Ditchley by Henry Bone in 1822 named Federico Zuccaro as the artist, an attribution retained by Henry Lee’s descendants for exhibitions in 1857 and 1868.¹⁰ Many Elizabethan portraits were attributed to Zuccaro in the nineteenth century, but it is now known that he spent only a few months in England

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¹ K. Hearn: exh. cat. *Marcus Gheeraerts II: Elizabethan artist*, London (Tate) 2002, p.60, note 2; exh. cat. *Great Britons. Treasures from the National Portrait Gallery*, London, Washington (National Portrait Gallery) 2007, p.5, which suggests that the portrait represents ‘magnanimity’; and K. Hearn, ed.: exh. cat. *Dynasties. Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530–1630*, London (Tate) 1995, pp.89–90, no.45.

² R. Strong: *Tudor & Jacobean portraits*, London 1969, I, p.106, no.2561; *idem: The Elizabethan image. Painting in England 1540–1620*, London 1969, p.45, no.78; and *idem: Gloriana. The portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, London 1987, pp.137–38.

³ F.A. Yates: *Astraea: the imperial theme in the sixteenth century*, London 1975, p.106; and S. Doran: ‘Virginity, divinity and power: the portraits of Elizabeth I’, in *idem* and T.S. Freeman, eds.: *The Myth of Elizabeth*, London 2003, p.190.

⁴ S. Simpson: ‘Sir Henry Lee (1533–1611): the life and career of an Elizabethan courtier gentleman’, Ph.D. diss. (University of Southampton, 2008), p.267. Simpson updates E.K. Chambers: *Sir Henry Lee. An Elizabethan portrait*, Oxford 1936.

⁵ This builds upon hypotheses of Simpson, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.128; and E. Goldring: ‘Portraiture, patronage, and the progresses: Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and the Kenilworth festivities of 1575’, in J.E. Archer, E. Goldring and S. Knight, eds.: *The progresses, pageants, and entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I*, Oxford 2007, pp.184–88, suggesting the central role of portraiture, including the Ditchley picture, in Elizabethan progresses.

⁶ The painting (NPG 2561) has undergone technical analysis as part of the ‘Making Art in Tudor Britain’ project ([www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-](http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/matbsearch.php)

[in-tudor-britain/matbsearch.php](http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/matbsearch.php)), which the Project Curator, Charlotte Bolland, kindly shared with me. None of the original tacking edges of the painting survives, but X-radiography reveals cusping along the top and down the left side, which suggests that only a small amount has been taken off. There is no cusping evident on the bottom and right edge, supporting the evidence from the incomplete cartouche that the painting has been reduced along this edge. My reconstruction of the badly cropped text largely follows Strong 1987, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.137: ‘The Sonne by whom things [. . .]/Of heaven the glorie, and [of] earthe the g[ra]ce/Hath no such glorie as [of] grace to g[ive]/Where Correspondencie May have no pla[ce]/Thunder the ymage of that power dev[ine]/Which all to nothinge with a word ca[. . .]/Is to the earthe when it doth ayre r[. . .]/Of power the scepter, not of wra[. . .]. This yle of such both grace [and?] power /The boundles ocean [. . .] lye [. . .] em[. . .]/P[. . .] prince [. . .] their [. . .] ll[. . .]. Rivers of thankes, retourne for Springes [. . .]/Rivers of thanckes still to that oc[. . .] [. . .]/Where grace is grace above, power, po[wer]’.

⁷ P. Bliss, ed.: *Reliquiae Hearnianae: the remains of Thomas Hearne*, Oxford 1857, p.398: ‘her [Elizabeth’s] picture was drawn at full length, and it is now remaining here in the fine long gallery above stairs . . .’.

⁸ ‘The note-books of George Vertue’, *The Walpole Society* 20 (1931–32), p.13.

⁹ A 1743 inventory lists ‘a whole lenth queen Elizth. in Gilt frames’ in the ‘Coffoy Bedchamber’, while a 1772 inventory records, ‘A D^o [i.e. large painting] of Queen Elizabeth’ in ‘Lord Litchfield’s Dressing Room’; see T. Murdoch, ed.: *Noble households. Eighteenth-century inventories of great English houses*, Cambridge 2006, pp.148 and 156.

¹⁰ National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG D17098), pencil drawing, inscribed: ‘After the original by Zuccharo/in the collection of Lord Dillon–Ditchley 1822. Queen Elizabeth Aug. 1822’; see G. Scharf et al.: exh. cat. *Catalogue of the art treasures of the United Kingdom collected in Manchester*, Manchester 1857, p.111, no.11; and R.H. Soden Smith and F. Althaus: exh. cat. *Catalogue of the third and concluding exhibition of national portraits commencing with the fortieth year of the reign of George III and ending with the year MDCCCLXVII*, London (South Kensington Museum) 1868, p.131, no.642.



1. *Allegory of Fortune*, by Frans Francken II. c.1615–20. Canvas, 67 by 105 cm. (Musée du Louvre, Paris).

in 1575 and that Elizabeth I and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, were the only individuals to sit for him.¹¹ Not until the end of the nineteenth century was its commission linked to the entertainments Lee hosted during the royal progress through Oxfordshire in September 1592, the text of which is preserved in manuscripts at the British Library and elsewhere.¹² Viscount Lee-Dillon also suggested in his 1908 catalogue that this occasion was the reason for the portrait to be commissioned, a proposal accepted by Lionel Cust, who first attributed it to Gheeraerts.¹³ On the death of Viscount Lee-Dillon in 1932, the portrait was bequeathed to the National Portrait Gallery, London, when much of Lee's original art collection was auctioned.¹⁴ Strong supported Gheeraerts's authorship through palaeographic comparison of its inscriptions with the painter's autograph works.¹⁵

Since there is no documentary evidence regarding the commission, previous studies have attempted to decode the Ditchley portrait's imagery using the surviving record of the 1592 pageant, or relating it to Elizabeth's politically charged guises. Strong, and more recently Mary Hazard, speculated that she is cast as the Spenserian Fairy Queen, Gloriana,¹⁶ while Jean Wilson suggested she represented Urania, the muse of astronomy, aloft in the heavens.¹⁷ Yet while these identifications are valid for other portraits of the queen, neither figure appeared in the entertainments arranged by Lee. Much emphasis lately has been placed on

her supposed identification with the Virgin Mary or a 'divine monarch'.¹⁸ The absence of religious iconography and the secular theme of Lee's pageant, however, make such proposals unlikely.

Sixty years have passed since E.K. Waterhouse characterised the portrait as of 'some avenging and protecting deity'.¹⁹ It is almost certain, as we shall see, that Elizabeth appears as the goddess Fortune in the Ditchley portrait, as Sandra Billington tentatively proposed in 1991.²⁰ She did not elaborate, but her contention convincingly accounts for the symbolic weather, the dualistic inscriptions and the queen's widespread celebration as Fortune throughout the later years of her reign. David Norbrook has pointed out that 'Elizabethan courtiers frequently viewed Elizabeth as the personification of Fortune' particularly when 'in the 1590s anxiety about the queen's mutability reached its height'.²¹ However, no serious attempt has been made to further explore the queen's representation as Fortuna in the Ditchley portrait despite Gheeraerts's apparent borrowing of this iconography, which was featured in Lee's pageant. Unravelling the picture's allegory also brings the portrait's role in the 1592 entertainments into sharper focus.

Although the iconography of Fortune is well documented from the fifteenth century through to the seventeenth, apart from Billington, commentators on the portrait have overlooked it as the subject.²² A survivor from Roman antiquity, Fortuna was believed to control all earthly life and was alternately praised and scorned for her mutability that associated her with the unpredictability of the ocean and tempestuous weather, in which she is often shown.²³ Because of her instability she is depicted balancing on a wheel or sphere and holding a sail that, like her favour, shifts with the wind. As in the Ditchley portrait, Frans Francken II represented her on the seashore between cloudy and sunny skies (Fig. 1), while Rubens painted her sliding on a sphere in stormy seas.²⁴

Fortune was frequently represented on the English stage in the second half of the sixteenth century as a corollary to Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne.²⁵ Fortune's rule over human affairs was perceived as analogous to the absolutist female sovereign's manipulation of state and people. Whereas in the visual arts she appears naked, in the theatre, Fortune was clothed and distinguished by her attributes: a globe and a wheel or wings.²⁶ The queen's costume in the Ditchley portrait corresponds to the goddess's contemporary theatrical dress, her gown's large

¹¹ R. Strong: 'Federigo Zuccaro's visit to England in 1575', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 22 (1959), pp.359–60; and E. Goldring: 'Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I and the Earl of Leicester for Kenilworth Castle', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 147 (2005), pp.654–60.

¹² F.M. O'Donoghue: *A descriptive and classified catalogue of portraits of Queen Elizabeth*, London 1894, p.vi. For accounts of the festivities, see BL Add. 41499A and BL Add. 41499B, Dillon's nineteenth-century transcription of the former, reproduced as 'Appendix E' in Chambers, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp.276–97; BL Add. 41498; and Inner Temple Petyr MS 538/43. Gabriel Heaton further discusses the 1592 MS sources in E. Goldring et al., eds.: *John Nichols's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I: A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources*, Oxford 2014, III, pp.680–705.

¹³ H.A. Lee-Dillon: *Catalogue of paintings in the possession of the Right Honble Viscount Dillon at Ditchley Spelsbury, Oxfordshire*, Oxford 1908, pp.20–21, no.26; and L. Cust: 'Marcus Gheeraerts', *The Walpole Society* 3 (1913–14), p.24.

¹⁴ *Catalogue of the well-known collection of pictures by Old Masters and English historical portraits from Ditchley, Oxfordshire, the property of the late Rt. Hon. Harold Arthur, Viscount Dillon, C.H. Wednesday, the 24th May 1933*, sale, Sotheby's, London, 24th May 1933, p.iii: 'Queen Elizabeth (Standing on a map of Oxfordshire; now the property of the nation)'.
¹⁵ R. Strong: 'Elizabethan painting: an approach through inscriptions – III Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 105 (1963), pp.153 and 157.

¹⁶ Strong 1987, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.140; and M. Hazard: *Elizabethan silent language*, Lincoln NE 2000, p.188.
¹⁷ J. Wilson: 'Queen Elizabeth I as Urania', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld*

Institutes 69 (2006), p.173.

¹⁸ L.A. Montrose: *The subject of Elizabeth. Authority, gender, and representation*, Chicago 2006, p.130; S. Frye: *Elizabeth I. The competition for representation*, New York 1993, p.114; and D. Williams: 'Elizabeth I: size matters', in A. Connolly and L. Hopkins, eds.: *Goddesses and queens: the iconography of Elizabeth I*, Manchester 2007, pp.70–71.

¹⁹ E.K. Waterhouse: *Painting in Britain 1530–1790*, London 1953, p.23.

²⁰ S. Billington: *Mock kings in medieval society and renaissance drama*, Oxford 1991, p.79.

²¹ D. Norbrook: *Poetry and politics in the English Renaissance*, London 1984, pp.152–53.

²² L. Thomson, ed.: exh. cat. *Fortune: 'all is but Fortune'*, Washington (Folger Shakespeare Library) 2000; and L. Galacteros de Boissier and Y. Giraud, eds.: exh. cat. *Fortune*, Lausanne (Musée de l'Élysée) 1981.

²³ A. Pigler: *Barockthemen. Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Budapest 1974 (2nd ed.), II, pp.486–87 and 488–89; and A. Doren: 'Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, 1922–23 I* (1924), p.134.

²⁴ *Fortune* (c.1636–37; Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, inv. no.Po1674).

²⁵ F. Kiefer: *Fortune and Elizabethan tragedy*, San Marino CA 1983, pp.xvii and 83. Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, first performed in 1603, makes this correlation clear: 'Great mother Fortvne, Queene of humane state, Rectresse of Action, Arbitresse of Fate,/To whom all sway, all power, all empire bowes' (5.4.178–80), quoted in Thomson, *op. cit.* (note 22), p.13.

²⁶ F. Kiefer: 'Fortune on the Renaissance stage: an iconographic reconstruction', in Thomson, *op. cit.* (note 22), pp.69–76.



3. Detail of John Farnham, gentleman pensioner to Elizabeth I, by Steven van Herwijck. 1563. Panel, 110.5 by 83 cm. (Worcester Art Museum, Worcester MA).

wing-like ruff and sleeves recalling the winged figure stricken by a cloudburst in Hans Sebald Beham's engraving of *Infortunium*.²⁷

Paintings of Fortune were rare but not unknown in Tudor art.²⁸ In 1530 Cardinal Wolsey owned a 'Wheel of Fortune', and Henry VIII had a picture of Fortune steering a ship in stormy seas.²⁹ An inventory of the collection of John, Lord Lumley, in 1590 includes 'A table of the Ficlens [fickleness] of Fortune', ostensibly known at court and by sophisticated courtiers in Henry Lee's circle, since Lumley was obliged in 1592 to make over to the crown his seat, Nonsuch Palace, and its contents.³⁰ Although untraced, Lumley's painting probably resembled Fortuna's representation in Steven van Herwijck's *John Farnham, gentleman pensioner to Elizabeth I*. The portrait of Farnham commemorates his misfortune in military campaigns, one of which appears in a vignette over his shoulder (Fig. 3). The battle has come to a crucial juncture where blindfolded Fortune stands upon a sphere inscribed 'DO CASU NON[N] CO[N]SILIO' ('I give by chance, not by reason'), suggesting the events of Farnham's life remain subject to her capriciousness.³¹ While it is possible that Gheeraerts knew pictures such as these, his sources were more probably Continental prints and emblem books. Lee, too, must have been involved in devising the portrait's iconography, since he would have overseen the allegorical imagery of the pageant and, as was the convention of aristocrats playing host to Elizabeth on a Royal Progress, almost certainly acted in the masque. Lee had organised the Accession Day Tournaments from 1570

to 1590. Furthermore, the intricate planning of Lee's estate at Quarrendon in nearby Buckinghamshire placed him at the forefront of contemporary fashion for garden and architectural design, having focused his energies from the 1590s on 'the building of 4. goodly Mannors' and on commissioning portraits for his long gallery at Ditchley.³²

The queen's likeness to Fortune would have been more pronounced before Gheeraerts's canvas was trimmed on either side at an unknown date, reducing the globe's spherical appearance and portions of the background.³³ These lost passages would have made clear Fortuna's conventional depiction in a landscape divided between stormy and sunny skies transmitted through prints at this time. Cornelis van Haarlem's *Allegory of Fortune* (1590) for the burgomasters hall in Haarlem, engraved by Jan Harmensz Muller in the same year, shows the goddess on a sphere framed by foreboding weather.³⁴ Both artists worked with Hendrick Goltzius, who was associated with Gheeraerts in England, where his prints circulated widely.³⁵ Gheeraerts seems to have known Theodor de Bry's engraving of Fortuna from *Emblemata Nobilitati* (1592; Fig. 4), which mirrors the Ditchley portrait's composition of a foreground figure flanked by sunshine and tempest. As the Latin inscription makes clear, Fortune is alternately a maternal protector and wicked stepmother.³⁶

Past interpretations have related the Ditchley portrait's volatile weather to Elizabeth's fickleness, characterised in her godson John Harington's comment: 'When she smiled, it was pure sun-shine [. . .] but anon came a storm from a suden gathering of clouds, and the thunder fell in wondrous manner on all alike'.³⁷ Such rhetoric matches the portrait's imagery and derives from Fortune's iconography. In over ten passages in the *Faerie Queene* (1590–96), for example, Spenser describes adversity as a 'storme of fortune', as does Shakespeare when he assigns to Fortune 'thunder, rain and wind' in sonnet fourteen.³⁸ The purchase of this sun/storm trope is evident in the full title of Petrarch's dialogues on Fortune published in London in 1579 as *Phisicke against fortune, aswell prosperous, as aduerse* [. . .] *aswell in tyme of the bryght shynnyng sunne of prosperitie, as also of the foule lowryng stormes of aduersitie* . . .

Gheeraerts's tempest imagery also depends upon visual puns to personify Elizabeth as Fortune. In sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Italian parlance, *fortuna* denoted storm and shipwreck, as in '*fortuna di mare*'.³⁹ For painters, as well as poets, this synonymous meaning was clear. Leonardo's treatise on painting devoted a section to the depiction of storms, or '*Come si de figurar una fortuna*', and in his *Osservazioni nella pittura* (1580) Cristoforo Sorte gave instructions for painting '*tempestose fortuna di mare*'.⁴⁰

²⁷ R.A. Koch, ed.: *The illustrated Bartsch. Early German masters. Barthel Beham, H.S. Beham*, New York 1978, XV, no. 141–[IV] (170).

²⁸ Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, owned a 'picture of occasion and time' (a subject often conflated with Fortune) probably acquired in anticipation of the queen's visit to Kenilworth in 1575; see Goldring, *op. cit.* (note 11), p. 660.

²⁹ For Wolsey's collection, see G. Delmarcel: exh. cat. *Los honores. Flemish tapestries for the Emperor Charles V*, Mechelen (Cultureel Centrum Burgemeester Antoon Spinoy) 2000, p. 25. The imagery of Henry VIII's picture survives only through an ekphrastic poem by John Leland published in T. Newton: *Principum, ac illustrium aliquot & eruditorum in Anglia virorum, encomia, trophaea, genethliaca, & epithalamia*, London 1589, p. 32; see S. Foister: *Holbein and England*, New York 2004, p. 118.

³⁰ L. Cust: 'The Lumley inventories', *The Walpole Society* 6 (1917–18), p. 27.

³¹ *The Weiss Gallery 25 Years 1985–2010*, London 2010, p. 87, no. 73.

³² On these topics, see Simpson, *op. cit.* (note 4): Lee's role in the tournaments, pp. 69–76; for his garden, pp. 184–85; quoted from his tomb inscription, *Memoriae Sacrum*, p. 270; for his art collection, pp. 227–32.

³³ The conservation file held at the Heinz Archive and Library of the National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 946/26/59), does not indicate when this damage occurred.

³⁴ J.L. McGee: *Cornelis Corneliszoon van Haarlem (1562–1638). Patrons, friends, and*

Dutch humanists, Nieuwkoop 1991, pp. 206–17 and 440–41, figs. 46 and 47.

³⁵ Goltzius reportedly purchased 'many things' in Italy in 1591 for 'Marcus of Bruges' (i.e. Gheeraerts); L. Gent: 'Marcus Gheeraerts's "Captain Thomas Lee"', in C. van Eck and E. Winters, eds.: *Dealing with the visual. Art history, aesthetics and visual culture*, Burlington VT 2005, p. 95.

³⁶ It is inscribed: 'HIS FORTUNA PARENS ILLIS INIVSTA NOVERCA EST'.

³⁷ Letter from John Harington to Robert Markham, 1606; N.E. McClure, ed.: *The letters and epigrams of Sir John Harington*, Philadelphia 1930, p. 125.

³⁸ S.K. Heninger: *A handbook of renaissance meteorology*, Durham NC 1960, pp. 157–58.

³⁹ *Vocabolario degli accademici della crusca*, Venice 1612, p. 361: Fortuna: '*Per burrasca di tempo. Lat. procella, tempestas adversa, tempus turbulentum*'; and entry no. 5 under the same heading: '*Per misera, disgrazia, avvenimento cattivo. Lat. mala fors, res adversa*'.

⁴⁰ L. da Vinci: *Treatise on painting*, ed. A.P. McMahon, Princeton 1956, II, p. 52v; for Sorte, see P. Barocchi: *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento. Fra manierismo e controriforma*, Bari 1960, I, p. 292.

⁴¹ G.P. Lomazzo: *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura*, Milan 1584, bk. 6, ch. 38, p. 374. Although Haydocke includes the chapter on shipwrecks in his table of contents, book six does not appear in his published text, though sophisticated English patrons would

Gian Paolo Lomazzo's *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* (1584), translated into English in 1598 by Richard Haydocke, even included a chapter, 'Nelle fortune de mare o vogliamo dire naufragij'.⁴¹

Henry Lee's circle was well travelled and well educated, in which knowledge of Italian was not uncommon. Lee visited Venice and Naples in 1561 and Florence, Padua, Rome and Venice in 1568–69, as did at some point his brother Cromwell Lee who compiled an Italian–English dictionary at Oxford.⁴² Sir Henry's pageants revelled in allegorical wordplay; writing of Gheeraerts's 1592 Ditchley commission, Lucy Gent has remarked that 'Sir Henry Lee had a mind teeming with inventions [. . .] well honed in the use of conceits and imprese [. . .]. In devising a picture Lee would think not in terms of composition, but in terms of constructing an impresa which would amaze by its visual ingenuity'.⁴³

Evidently Lee and Gheeraerts collaborated to produce a portrait conceived as a grandiose emblem, a tradition with which both were conversant.⁴⁴ Its vernacular verse and Latin mottos provide a gloss on the central icon of the monarch with Fortune's dualistic power to bestow and rescind mercy. Below the cloudy sun is written 'DA [. . .] [E]XPECTAT' ('She gives and does not expect'); at the bottom right in the sea 'REDDENDO [. . .] CE [. . .]' ('In giving back she increases'); and, most ominous of the three, written below the thunderbolts 'POTEST NEC VLCISCITVR [. . .]' ('She can but does not take revenge'). The fragmentary sonnet further dwells on the meteorological conceit of royal favour, represented by the sun, and displeasure, by the storm. It warns that favour will be withheld from those who are disloyal, or rather that the queen 'Hath no such glorye as of grace to gi[ve]/Where correspondencie May have no place'. Elsewhere the verse characterises the queen's authority as, 'Thunder the y[m]age of that [po]wer div[ine]', equating her scorn with Fortune's notorious storms.

The Ditchley portrait therefore expands on Elizabeth's supernatural command of the seas and weather represented in George Gower's earlier *Armada portrait* (1588) and its variants. Like Gower, Gheeraerts's allegory positions her between sunshine and tempest as if she were a conduit for the divine will guiding English destiny.⁴⁵ As God's instrument on earth, Elizabeth was frequently compared to Fortune after the defeat of the Spanish Armada.⁴⁶ On a Royal Progress to Cowdray in Sussex in 1591, she was greeted as 'Nature's glory. Fortune's Emprasse, the world's wonder!'.⁴⁷ Lee's friend Fulke Greville asserted in a sonnet of the 1590s from *Caelica* that, 'Fortune can here claim nothing truly great/But that this princely creature is her seat'.⁴⁸ This might explain why Fortune appeared in a series of



4. *Fortuna*, by Theodor de Bry. 1592. Engraving, 6.6 by 8.2 cm. Printed in T. de Bry: *Emblemata Nobilitati*, Frankfurt 1592, no.3. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

wall-hangings seen at Hardwick Hall in 1601 amid royal virtues of Magnanimity, Prudence and Fortitude.⁴⁹

Elizabeth was represented as Fortune during her final Progress to Harefield in 1602. Among the entertainments was a song sung by a mariner carrying a lottery-box from which the queen and her ladies drew gifts and verses. The sailor's song commended the 'queene of seas and landes,/Thatt fortune every wher commandes'. She received a jewel in the form of Fortune's wheels, the attached verse declaring, 'Fortune must now noe more in tryumphe ride;/the wheelles ar yours thatt did hir chariott guide'.⁵⁰

Although the Harefield jewel is untraced, the queen appears wearing another Fortune jewel in three portraits of her made around 1575–1603.⁵¹ A nude female holding a sail stands on a sphere flanked by tritons and dolphins (Fig.5).⁵² Its attributes identify her as Fortuna Marina and relate to Elizabeth's imperial rule over the seas of a maritime nation. Similar ornaments produced for Princess Elizabeth of Denmark and the court of Rudolph II in Prague survive.⁵³ Inventories compiled throughout the sixteenth century reveal that many female nobles and regents (and some men) owned Fortune jewels. These include Margaret of Austria, Duchess of Savoy and Regent of the Netherlands (1531);⁵⁴ Anna of Austria, Queen of Hungary (1547);⁵⁵ Camilla Martelli de' Medici, wife of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany (1585);⁵⁶ Ranuccio Farnese, Duke of Parma (1587);⁵⁷

have known Lomazzo's edition.

⁴² Simpson, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp.36–42 and 212.

⁴³ Gent, *op. cit.* (note 35), p.93.

⁴⁴ Yates, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp.94–98 and 104–06; and P.M. Daly *et al.*: *The English emblem tradition*, Toronto 1988, I, p.6. Gheeraerts was trained first by his father, Marcus the Elder, who made engravings for the first emblem book published in England, Jan Van Der Noot's *A theatre for voluptuous worldlings* (London 1569), then by Lucas de Heere, who had illustrated Johannes Sambucus' *Emblemata*, Antwerp 1564.

⁴⁵ For an overview of Fortune's association with Providence, see A. Walsham: *Providence in early modern England*, Oxford 1999, pp.143–68.

⁴⁶ For example, Richard Nicols's poem 'England's Eliza', in J. Higgins: *A mirour for magistrates*, London 1610, p.786.

⁴⁷ J. Nichols: *The progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth*, London 1823, III, pp.90–91.

⁴⁸ D. Stump and S.M. Felch, eds.: *Elizabeth I and her age. Authoritative texts, commentary and criticism*, New York 2009, p.619.

⁴⁹ Illustrated in S.M. Levey: *The Embroideries at Hardwick Hall*, London 2007, pp.174–78.

⁵⁰ G. Ziegler: *exh. cat. Elizabeth I, then and now*, Washington (Folger Shakespeare

Library) 2003, pp.49–50; and J. Wilson: 'The Harefield entertainment and the cult of Elizabeth I', *The Antiquaries Journal* 66 (1986), pp.324–25.

⁵¹ Painted by unknown artists; one is a variant of the famous 'Rainbow portrait'; see J. Arnold: *Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe unlock'd*, Leeds 1988, p.25, fig.31; p.26, fig.32; and p.83, figs.143 and 143a.

⁵² Wrongly identified in the past as Venus; see R. Strong: *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, Oxford 1963, p.63; and repeated by Arnold, *op. cit.* (note 51), p.32, who infrequently appears with a sail and sphere.

⁵³ Illustrated in Y. Hackenbroch: *Renaissance jewellery*, London 1979, pp.240–44. A similar jewel appears in the anonymous *Portrait of a lady in her 29th year* (1582; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no.4833).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.400, no.66: 'Ung boton d'agate creux, ouvrant a charnières, ouquel est close une roue de fortune et au dessus ung crucifement'.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.397, no.V: 'Mer ain ganz goldens zaichen, Fortuna'.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.388: 'Una porta d'oro gioellata per tutto di rubini et diamanti entrovi una Fortuna con una perla pera grossa abasso'.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.389: 'Un gioiello d'oro smaltato fatto in foggia di un carro di Fortuna in cima, e 4 cavalli [. . .] e nella vela della Fortuna e sopra la schiena de' cavalli, et abasso vio sono in tutto 33 diamanti piccoli . . .'.



5. Detail of *Queen Elizabeth I*, by an unknown artist. c.1585. Panel, 92 by 71 cm. (Elizabethan Club, Yale University, New Haven).

and Elisabeth van Culemborg, Countess of Hohenzollern (1593).⁵⁸ The attributes of maritime Fortune circulated through Flemish and German prints by Philips Galle, Dirck Volkertsz Coornhert and others, available to Lee during his travels through Italy, and to Antwerp and Augsburg in 1568–69, and to Gheeraerts when he returned to Antwerp briefly in the late 1580s.⁵⁹

It might seem incongruous that Lee would have had Elizabeth depicted as a famously fickle goddess. Yet the central theme of his 1592 masque was ‘the triumph of constancy over inconstancy’, a change in fortune that the monarch’s visit symbolically generated and which Gheeraerts’s portrait evidently portrayed.⁶⁰ Some of the actors’ speeches hinted at this meaning. It was one of the ‘charmed pictures’ the queen was shown after passing through an ‘vnfortunate groue’ inhabited by ladies and knights imprisoned for ‘vnconstant weomans sin’. The latter alluded to Lee’s and Vavasour’s dubious relationship, described in his words as ‘By fortune forst [forced]’.⁶¹ Lee referred to ‘the unconconstancie of fortune’ that compelled him to retire from Court and described himself as

one ‘who neither embraced Fortune when she flew vnto mee, nor ensued Fortune when she fled from mee’.⁶² However, Elizabeth’s arrival allowed for Lee’s ‘delyuery from inconstancie’—the forgiveness presumed by critics—and the day’s performance concluded with a song bidding ‘Farewell all inconstancie’.⁶³

Underscoring this action were references to the queen’s calming of the weather, attributes of Fortune unnoticed to date. She was informed in the masque that it was ‘the sole vertue of your sacred presence, which hath made the weather faire’, the figure of Inconstancie proclaiming that ‘by the glorie of hir countenance, which despereth the flying cloudes of vaine conceites commands me [. . .] to by myself as she is, *semper eadem*’. Elizabeth’s reward for restoring order was a jewel bearing Lee’s tournament motto, ‘*Coelumque solumque beaut*’ (‘She makes the earth and sky happy’).⁶⁴ Possibly this was the armillary sphere ornament that she is shown wearing by Gheeraerts. It could symbolise constancy, and was used to express devotion to the queen in Antonis Mor’s portrait of Lee made nearly twenty-five years earlier and since then displayed at Ditchley.⁶⁵ Given the correlation between portrait and pageant, it seems certain that the Ditchley portrait, rather than a commemorative commission as is sometimes suggested, was ordered in advance of the queen’s visit and employed as a key pictorial reference.

Gheeraerts’s representation of Elizabeth as Fortune exploited an image repeated throughout the last decade of her reign. It served as a visual counterpart to John Davies’s claim in *Hymns to Astraea* (1599) that Elizabeth ‘treads proud Fortune under,/Sun-like it sits above the wind,/Above the Stormes and Thunder’ and was ‘Exalted into Fortunes chaire’.⁶⁶ Yet it was never an official state portrait, but rather remained at Lee’s country seat until the twentieth century, its allegorical imagery, omitted in the five extant half-length variants, intimately connected to Lee’s reversal of fortune.⁶⁷

During the 1590s Lee initiated new building projects and made important commissions, the cornerstone of which was the Ditchley picture. Its subject is consistent with Gheeraerts’s subsequent portraits of Lee commemorating his fluctuating position at court and bearing his other mottos ‘*fide & constantia*’ and ‘more faithful then favoured’, one inscribed with a poem regretting that ‘fortune did him beare no frendes’.⁶⁸ The Ditchley painting also stood as the prototype for emblematic portraits addressing the queen upon which Lee and Gheeraerts were to collaborate, such as the Hampton Court *Lady in fancy dress* (c.1590–1600), *Captain Thomas Lee* (1594; Tate Britain), and the Cadiz portrait of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex (c.1596; Woburn Abbey).⁶⁹ These paintings confirm that Lee was an innovative patron about whose collection we still know all too little: Elizabeth’s portrait by Gheeraerts was evidently vital to the pageantry for which Lee is best known today.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.401: ‘Ein gefes zu fedem ein Fortuna als von diemandf’.

⁵⁹ For example, see J. Peters, ed.: *The illustrated Bartsch. German Masters*, XX, pt.2, p.433, 4.45 (368); I. Veldman, ed.: *The illustrated Bartsch. Dirck Volkertsz Coornhert*, LV, pp.237–40, .062.2–5; A. Dolders, ed.: *The illustrated Bartsch. Philips Galle*, LVI, p.314, .083; and I. De Ramaix, ed.: *The illustrated Bartsch. Aegidius II Sadeler*, LXXII, pt.1, pp.186, 115 S2. For Lee’s travels, see Simpson, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp.39–40.

⁶⁰ G. Heaton: *Writing and reading royal entertainments from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson*, Oxford 2010, p.64.

⁶¹ Chambers, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.283.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp.292 and 293.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.284–85 and 285–89.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.295 and 289. This Latin phrase, ‘always the same’, was Elizabeth’s personal motto and another clever allusion to her constancy.

⁶⁵ The sphere’s meaning is discussed in Wilson, *op. cit.* (note 17), pp.162–64.

Gheeraerts paints it fastened by a ribbon tied in the shape of a true-lover’s knot perhaps alluding to these devices embroidered on Lee’s sleeves in his portrait by Mor (National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 2095).

⁶⁶ J. Davies: *Hymnes of Astraea in acrosticke verse*, London 1599, pp.24 and 25.

⁶⁷ All are attributed to Gheeraerts’s studio and date to the 1590s: Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire (National Trust inv. no.207896); Burghley House, Lincolnshire; Palazzo Pitti, Florence (inv. no.1890, 4272); Blickling Hall, Norfolk; and The Elizabethan Gardens, Manteo, North Carolina. For further discussion, see Arnold, *op. cit.* (note 51), pp.42–47.

⁶⁸ R. Strong: *The English Icon*, London 1969, pp.281–82, nos.271–72, and p.290, no.286.

⁶⁹ See the respective analyses in Gent, *op. cit.* (note 35), p.93; P.E.J. Hammer: *The polarization of Elizabethan politics. The political career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597*, Cambridge 1999, p.208; and R. Strong: ‘“My weeping stagg I crowne”: the Persian lady reconsidered’, in *The Tudor and Stuart monarchy. Pageantry, painting, iconography*, Rochester NY 1995, II, pp.323–24.