



Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots: History Masterclass 2020 teachers' notes

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this [five-question survey](#).

Listen to the podcast here: <https://audioboom.com/posts/7494272-history-masterclass-elizabeth-i-and-mary-queen-of-scots>

Follow-up questions

1. 'I will have but one mistress and no master' Elizabeth I, 1566. Was it possible for a female monarch in the 16th century to be the sole master over her male advisors?
2. To what extent was the English Protestant settlement actually Cecil's Protestant settlement?
3. Why was the Divine right of Kings so difficult to establish in England after 1603?
4. How far do Elizabeth and Mary's actions confirm or challenge the stereotype that Elizabeth ruled with her head and Mary with her heart.
5. Mary gave birth to James in 1566. She asked Elizabeth to be godparent and also surrogate mother, should anything happen to her. John Guy states that in return Elizabeth sent 'a solid gold font, for the baptism, which weighs three hundred and thirty-three ounces of solid metal, or twenty-one pounds...that must be the most generous and expensive gift that Elizabeth ever gave to anybody in her entire life. Elizabeth was notoriously mean'. What does this tell us about the relationship between the two queens?
6. "Historians focus too much on Elizabeth I's gender rather than her actions as a monarch". To what extent do you agree?
7. Elizabeth and Mary were both anointed queens. What significance did 'anointing' have in the 16th century and how did that impact on the relationship between the two queens? Use the following two sources to help you.

Source 1

⁸ Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. ⁹ He said to

Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? ¹⁰ This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD’s anointed.’

From the Bible - Samuel 24: 8-10

Source 2

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.

From Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, Act III Scene 2. Written c.1595-1597

Transcript

Speaker:

Dr John Guy

Chair:

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Friends, a very warm welcome to St Margaret’s Church, Westminster Abbey, for this afternoon’s lecture. I hope you’ve had a very good morning.

We are in the Church in which is buried Sir Walter Raleigh, that other great Tudor figure, but before we begin, I want you to put your hands up if you’re in the process of applying to university at the moment. So, quite a few of you. Let me tell you, one of the greatest joys of university is getting to know people who don’t do your course. Now, Dr John Guy, who is a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and I first met through sitting next to each other at a university lunch, a university dinner, and this sense of being alongside people who are absolute thoroughbred experts in their field, which is not necessarily your field, is one of the greatest joys of a university life; that sense of mutual connection, of finding interdisciplinary links with your own subject.

John is one of our most foremost Tudor historians. He is somebody who has developed a reputation over decades of being a key expert in his field, and many of you will have come across him, maybe unknowingly, through watching the film *Mary Queen of Scots: Two Queens, One Future*. John wrote the book upon which this film is based, *My Heart is My Own*, and is somebody who has managed to balance a career not just as an absolutely top academic historian, but also somebody who is able to make connections with the worlds of film, of theatre and drama, of biography, and of fiction. There really is no better guide to the relationship between Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart.

So, this afternoon, this is for you, and possibly for me, in this context, a once in a lifetime opportunity to hear from somebody who knows this field and these two remarkable women better than almost anybody else. John, thank you so much for being here. A very warm welcome.

Dr John Guy

Thank you very much.

In 1561, Mary Queen of Scots returned from France to take up her throne. She'd left Scotland as a child during what were effectively civil wars in Scotland, she'd been sent to the safety of France, she'd married the French Dauphin, she'd briefly been Queen of France, the Dauphin had become King Francis II, he had died. Catherine de' Medici, the then regent of France, didn't particularly like Mary very much and so Mary decided she would return home. She also wanted to return home, she believed that she was called to return home, called by God, actually, to return home and be the Queen of Scots. Elizabeth - Elizabeth Tudor, Anne Boleyn's daughter - had succeeded to the throne in 1558, just three years before. Now, these are relatively young women, there is a nine-year age gap. Mary is nine years younger than Elizabeth, and she looks even younger in that particular image *[referring to slide]* because that's painted when she's fifteen, in 1558, it's just the point when she's about to be betrothed to the Dauphin of France. That one's a little bit later. You're getting not quite a world-first, but that portrait on the right has never been seen since it disappeared into California sometime, probably in the 1950s, when it was overpainted and thought to be somebody else. It returned to auction at Bonhams in December 2019. It's the earliest recognisable decent portrait of Elizabeth that actually looks like her, that is painted while she was queen, at a time when all the other portraits of Elizabeth, after she had succeeded to the throne, were said to look nothing like her whatsoever, and that's the Earl of Sussex who is saying that. So, you can see here, two relatively young women. Now, they are relatively still inexperienced. Elizabeth has a steely temperament, yes, but she has to deal with very experienced male councillors, and that's even more so for Mary.

Now, the key thing to know, probably the most important thing you ever need to know about Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth is that they were not mortal enemies from the beginning of the story. You may have seen old A level questions which said, 'Which was the greater threat to Elizabeth I: Mary Queen of Scots or the Puritans?' Forget it, that is just codswallop. In the first place, no one really knew what a Puritan was in the 1560s, and if there were any, they certainly weren't a threat, quite the opposite, I suspect, and there was no way that Mary was seen by Elizabeth, herself, as a threat. These are two relatively young women, very curious about each other. Both believed that they were called by God, they were both anointed queens with holy oil. They believed they were called by God to rule their subjects, they believed they were accountable to God alone. More to the point, I think, each woman was the only woman on the planet who knew what it was to be like in the other one's shoes; young,

surrounded by ambitious courtiers at every turn. Now, of course, naturally, between these two women, and of course they are cousins, they're actually second cousins but actually they called each other cousin. They called each other sister. When, in the film, they called each other sister, this is not Hollywood fiction, they actually called each other sister. They had this sisterly relationship, and like all siblings, there was a certain amount of rivalry, but it was over things like, 'What does she look like? Is she taller than me? Is her complexion better than mine? Can she play the virginals better than I can?' All those sort of things. There were not yet political rivalries between the two women.

But, of course, they both have to deal with experienced male councillors, and Mary had to deal with these two [*referring to slide*]: on the left, James Stewart, Earl of Moray, on the right, William Maitland of Lethington, also known, at least by his critics, as the Scottish Cecil, the man who could wheel and deal and wriggle in and out of every possible corner. James Stewart is the illegitimate half-brother of Mary Queen of Scots. He is the man who thinks he ought to be king because he's a bloke, but of course, legitimacy stands in the way. He's ambitious, he's ostensibly friendly and brotherly to Mary, but he's always looking for the best possible chance. He postures, as many politicians do, as the Protector of the Commonwealth and the servant of the people and all of that stuff, but actually, you know, his character is best inferred and worked out from the things that he actually does. Maitland of Lethington; clever, clever, he was also known as Michael Wylie, which was a pun on Machiavelli. He's also known as The Chameleon because he can change his colour, change his affiliation. These Scottish lords changed their affiliations and they changed their, sort of, alliances with kaleidoscopic frequency.

Now, both guys, they go to see Mary before she returns to Scotland, but after the moment when she said she's coming back, and they go to make deals. And this is where it first starts to get quite interesting because Moray goes to talk to her about the religious settlement in Scotland. While Mary was away, Scotland had been ruled by her mother as regent, Marie de Guise, who was her mother, and she was the French princess who had married Mary's father, James V, but of course, James V was killed, or died, in 1542, and so there was a, sort of, period, as I've said, of what's tantamount to civil war, but in the end, the winner was Marie de Guise, who became regent. Now, she was a Catholic, and Scotland had been a Catholic country, but James Stewart, Earl of Moray, joined a Protestant revolt called the revolt of the Lords of the Congregation; Scottish nobles, who were ambitious, they wanted to achieve more, who latched on to Calvinism, they attracted genuine Calvinists, and a religious revolution took place in Scotland, and as part of that, James Stewart, Earl of Moray, attempted to depose Marie de Guise and replace her with a council of twenty-four nobles. It didn't work, but Marie de Guise helped him out by dying of dropsy shortly afterwards. So, at the beginning of this story, before Mary is about to return to France, Scotland is ruled by a council of twenty-four Protestant nobles, and this guy is the most important figure.

Now, when James Stewart goes to meet Mary, he wants that religious settlement to be preserved, and Mary does an extraordinary thing for the 16th Century. She is a devout Catholic, her mother was a devout Catholic, this guy has actually attempted to depose her mother, but she keeps her cool and she agrees with him that when she returns to Scotland, the Protestant settlement, the status quo will be preserved as long as she can worship with her own household as Catholics in the royal chapels in the Scottish palaces, and there's an inference here also that, provided Catholics elsewhere in Scotland worship quietly and don't, you know, present themselves as troublemakers in the society as a whole, that situation can continue. So, here's a remarkable thing. Elizabeth would never have done anything like that, she would never have granted, essentially, de facto religious toleration. Elizabeth had Catholic

sympathies, that doesn't mean to say that she was interested in official toleration, and of course, Elizabeth's ministers did not allow this situation to arise when the suggestion was that Elizabeth would marry Charles of Austria, who was a, sort of, moderate Catholic, but wanted to worship in his own chapel as a Catholic, this was absolutely forbidden and the deal was off.

Now, Maitland of Lethington went with a different agenda. He wanted, basically, Mary to make a pact with Elizabeth, and came up with a proposal, which Mary quickly made her own and held on to it for the rest of her life, that she would recognise Elizabeth, despite the questions over Elizabeth's legitimacy. Remember, when Elizabeth was conceived, her father was not officially married to her, he was still officially married to Catherine of Aragon when Elizabeth was conceived. There was, later, a supposed annulment, which was not recognised by Catholics, and so on, and also, Elizabeth had been bastardised by Parliament, so if you're on the legitimacy ticket, you don't necessarily think that Elizabeth is the strongest horse to back. But Mary and Maitland worked out this deal whereby Mary would offer to recognise Elizabeth as the lawful legitimate Queen of England in exchange for being recognised as the heir apparent, as the number two, or, as it was put, the highest person in the realm, being the next person to succeed, and that, I think, is an extraordinary deal. This deal was put to Elizabeth, and Elizabeth considered it, as we will see later on in this talk, several times.

So, Mary is, you know, far from being Elizabeth's mortal enemy, far from being the person who comes in and poses an immediate, terrible threat, either religious or dynastic. Actually, this woman is extraordinary for the 16th century, for her willingness to compromise and, if you like, accept, really, sort of, if you like, the realities of power, especially as Scotland is a much weaker monarchy than the English monarchy. And, in fact, this woman... there is absolutely no evidence that Mary Queen of Scots was any less astute than Elizabeth, politically. Of course, it was much more difficult to be a queen in Scotland, but when you actually look at the facts, as opposed to doing your, sort of, Googler historian thing, and looking it all up in Wikipedia, or, you know, I mean, sort of, very out of date books which are influenced not by searching the archives and actually reading these women's letters, but essentially by, you know, propaganda which has come down to us, you know, through the centuries; pro-Protestant propaganda, anti-Catholic propaganda that's come down to us through the centuries, not least through books like Holinshed's Chronicles, or John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, and so on, you start to get a very different picture. But Mary had to deal with somebody else. A man with whom she had several stand-up confrontations, and that's John Knox, the fiery Calvinist Scottish preacher who commanded... He was linked to Moray. Moray could keep him under check, to some extent, but Knox was really a very powerful force among the Edinburgh Protestants. And Knox had written this book, which was published in 1558, called The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women. Of course, the title says it all. It was a polemic by a Calvinist against Marie de Guise in Scotland, because it was written, of course, before both Marie de Guise died and before Mary Tudor died, and it was a polemic against Mary Tudor, the Catholic Queen of England, who was Elizabeth I's half-sister. If you're near enough the front to actually read it off the slide, it just opens, you know, pretty much as it continues:

"To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city is repugnant to nature; contumely to God, a thing most contrary as to his revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice."

And Knox was getting this from Calvin's Geneva. This was fairly standard stuff in Calvin's Geneva. Unfortunately for Knox, this came out and it was on sale on the streets of London just in the week that

Elizabeth was becoming Queen of England. Now, the thing about this is that it has a line, it has a take, and the take is very simple, very elementary, which is that Catholic women rulers are tyrants, they are extremely dangerous, they should be removed, it's God's will that they should be removed, and they can be deposed, and you can do this, essentially, as the Jewish people did to both Athaliah, in the Old Testament, and to Jezebel; women rulers, who had flirted with idolatry, and who were removed and the true religion restored and all of those things, but in fact, the crucial thing about them is that they were both assassinated. Knox justifies the assassination of a Catholic ruler really simply because of the reasons given there, that because she's a Catholic, and therefore a Catholic woman ruler is essentially not just a tyrant but someone who rules out of passion and not reason. Now, as I have said, when Knox, who by the way, never wanted to go back to Scotland after he had left for Geneva and was waiting at Dieppe after Elizabeth came to the throne, he wanted to come back to England, live in London and send his sons to Oxford or Cambridge, but Elizabeth wouldn't have him back. So, he wrote a grovelling letter in which he said, 'Actually, I didn't mean this to apply to a Protestant woman, because sometimes God calls extraordinary women, like Deborah in the Old Testament, to be the redeemer, the saviour, the protector of the Church, and Elizabeth is such an extraordinary woman.' To which Elizabeth replied, 'You can forget that for a game of soldiers. I'm not having any of that. I am not Queen of England by some sort of extraordinary right given to me by God. I am Queen of England by dynastic right, and even if I were to say that I'm Queen as an extraordinary woman, the dynastic right would still be out there, and it would be somebody else's and not mine.' But in the course of this discussion, in fact it's also in the book, Knox says that an extraordinary woman, who of course is a Protestant, not a Catholic, governs through reason and not from passion, that is the antithesis. And here, ladies and gentlemen, is the source of that great stereotype that has always plagued discussions of Elizabeth and Mary, and you can see it all over the internet and in many, many books; the stereotype that Elizabeth ruled from the head, whereas Mary ruled from the heart. What this goes back to is John Knox, and it's based entirely not on the, sort of, political ideas, but on religious sectarianism, and we will touch briefly, in a moment, on an episode where Elizabeth did most definitely not rule from head and did something as emotional and frankly silly as anything Mary was ever said to have done.

Now, in England, Elizabeth has to deal with men too. On the left [*referring to slide*], Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, he's been her backstairs fixer since 1548, even in her brother Edward VI's reign, he's been her steward, he's looked after her, he's protected her during Mary's reign, he's also protected the Protestant exiles who left in Mary Tudor's reign, the Catholic Mary Tudor's reign, and fled abroad. He's extremely pleased to get back into power, once Elizabeth succeeds in 1558, and he is resolved that he will never ever find himself on the wrong side of the politics and religion ever again, and that England will remain Protestant forever. This guy has what's pretty much close to a messianic zeal; that England is called to be Protestant, must remain Protestant. He's also got a guilty conscience, because like Elizabeth herself, in Mary Tudor's reign, he conformed to Catholicism when it came to the push. He was forced, by Mary Tudor, to hold a special High Mass at Wimbledon, with all the special [*unclear*] brought along the river from the City down to Richmond and taken along to Wimbledon, and Mary Tudor made sure that Channel 4 News had the cameras there so that it was broadcast worldwide to humiliate him. So, he's a fixer, he's a mastermind, as we'll see.

On the right [*referring to slide*], Robert Dudley with Boy, his dog, that belongs to the Rothschild's, it's at Waddesdon, it's an absolutely glorious picture. It was painted by Steven van der Meulen, and those symbols, which represent the fact that Leicester was made Earl of Leicester in 1584, have to be painted

after the painting because Steven van der Meulen was dead by the end of 1563. But there is Dudley in all his finery, on borrowed money, of course, with his dog, and whoever painted that must have seen the very famous painting of Charles V with his dog, or an engraving of it. But Robert Dudley is Elizabeth's favourite. He is the only man that Elizabeth ever truly loved. He's the only man that Elizabeth ever really seriously contemplated marrying, but of course, at the time that she contemplated marrying him, he was married to someone else, and that was a problem, especially when that person then fell down an incredibly short flight of stairs at Cumnor Place, near Oxford, which was effectively a, sort of, forcible, sort of, care home, where this young wife of Robert Dudley, Amy Robsart, had been basically stuck, and he went to see her once a year in black clothes, because Elizabeth didn't want anything to happen between them. Elizabeth was not a very nice person for much of the time. But Dudley is a great man of influence at Court, and Elizabeth will listen to Dudley. She has something on the go with Dudley. There was never anything emotional between Cecil and Elizabeth, it was pure business, but with Dudley, it's a mixture of emotion but also business.

Now, just to position Cecil, he had himself depicted, he drew that himself [referring to slide], he was something of an artist. That is his tomb, the design for his tomb, at Stamford Church. He didn't die until 1598, but he'd drawn this in 1562. There he is. The Protestant chivalric knight, kneeling at the altar, or on the monument, and what does it say? What does the inscription say? Well, if you actually go there, and take the photo, it says that his great achievement was to protect the queen and the queen's safety and the security of the state, and by that he meant eventually he managed to get the head of the Queen of Scots cut off. Remember, Cecil, in Edward VI's reign, had been a chum of John Knox; they'd had dinner together, they knew each other. For the next twenty years, until Knox's death, in Scotland, he's writing to Cecil every now and then. In fact, Knox writes just two weeks before his own death in what I call the 'Victor Meldrew letter', because it's written, as he says, with "one foot in the grave". And he's still on about the same thing; 'You haven't killed the Queen of Scots yet, you know, we need to get on with it.' Cecil, by the way, could barely speak Mary's name. He called her SQ, he had to describe her by an acronym, it's always SQ, or the Scottish Queen, or the Queen of Scots, he can hardly bear to say Mary Queen of Scots. And if you look on the right-hand side, I'll probably have to read it to you because it's in the 16th century handwriting, but there, in paragraph two, basically it's the second paragraph that begins, 'Finally...', this is almost Cecil's manifesto, and it's written in 1559, two years before Mary even thinks of returning from France to Scotland, and it's almost like a script for what's going to happen in the next twenty-five, twenty-seven years: "*Finally, if the queen*" that is the Queen of Scots, "*shall be unwilling to this,*" and what the previous part of the document says is that Scotland shall be continued to rule by a council of twenty-four nobles, even if Mary returns from France. Mary will be queen only in name, it's the Protestant Lords who are going to be, effectively, the de facto regents of Scotland, and Scotland isn't going to be a monarchy any more, it's effectively going to be a bit of a republic, rather like Venice, with a titular doge as head, a titular ruler as head, rather than a queen. "*If the queen shall be unwilling to this, as it is likely she will, in respect of the greedy and tyrannous affection of France, then it is apparent that Almighty God is pleased to transfer from her the rule of that kingdom for the weal of it.*"

So, this guy, I mean, this is a really appropriate place to be reading out something like that, I mean, this guy even thinks he knows the will of Almighty God. You know, it's the will of Almighty God that Mary Queen of Scots, if she doesn't agree, essentially, not be a monarch anymore, but to basically defer to these twenty-four Protestant nobles, then she should be ousted or deposed. In many respects, that says everything you need to know about William Cecil and Mary, and indeed about William Cecil and

Elizabeth because Elizabeth did most definitely not think that. Elizabeth and Mary, as human beings, as queens, were both fully paid-up members of the women monarchs' trade union. They were going to defend their rights, and their duty, and their honour against all comers.

Now, if you're Mary and you come up with the idea of a pact, you need to seal the pact, and to seal the pact, you need a meeting, and Mary always believed that if she could meet her sister face to face, the two women could talk without all these ghastly politicians, all these ghastly men around them, they could reach a deal in a relatively short space of time, and a very amicable binding treaty, an amity as it was called. And, of course, Mary also believed that, you know, the succession might well be settled in her favour, in terms of being the next rightful heir. And how did she know that it might be settled? Because William Maitland of Lethington, the guy who'd first come up with the idea of the pact and then basically Mary had made it her own, Lethington went south in the summer of 1561 and met Elizabeth at the summer progress, in East Anglia, in the late summer of 1561. And fortunately, he wrote it all down, he kept a record of exactly what they had said. And what Elizabeth said was, 'Yes, I absolutely recognise that Mary is the next one in line. She has the best possible claim, and no one else has a claim that can match it. She is the rightful heir, but I am not going to say so in public, and I am not going to recognise it, and I am not going to name her, because I am not going to name anybody.' And Elizabeth had this, you might call it a superstition, I think that's quite misogynist, actually, I think she had a calculated view that to name a successor was going to actually be dangerous, because she is looking back to what happened in the 1550s. She's looking back to the contention, you know, the Jane Grey episode, Edward VI's, you know, Devise for the Succession, and so on, the troubles in Mary Tudor's reign. She also makes this remark, which actually was put straight into the film, that no one can underestimate the inestimable, she said, 'cupidity', but actually that was changed to 'ambition', because it makes it easier for people to understand it in the Midwest, essentially, the Midwest of America, who don't know, necessarily, what cupidity is without a dictionary, no one can underestimate the insatiable cupidity of men. So, she wasn't going to name anyone. So, it isn't that she doesn't recognise Mary, it's just that she's not going to name her, but of course, Mary is looking to be named. But anyway, this meeting is arranged, and it really was arranged, you know, one of the things I am most often asked is did they ever really meet? And they came so close in 1562, because they both wanted it. The person who didn't want it was William Cecil. He thought that if they met, they might actually settle their differences, and basically cut things up so that Mary might... the Catholic Queen might actually succeed, because remember Elizabeth settles the throne on the basis of dynasty, not a religious test. That's the difference.

So, it's all agreed that they're going to meet. First, it was going to be either at Nottingham or York, and then it settled that it was going to be at York. They'd even hired the 16th century equivalent of Travelex UK to set up the exchange booths where people could exchange their Scottish money for English money, all the food and drink had been ordered, everything was set, and then the French Wars of Religion broke out in France, and the French Wars of Religion began when Mary's uncle, the Duke of Guise, was leading his forces through the village of Vassy, in the eastern side of France, and his troops heard a bunch of Huguenot worshiping, singing psalms in a barn, and they went in and Huguenot... over one hundred were injured, and I think twenty or so were killed. And Cecil used this as a reason to cancel the meeting; you can't have a meeting with someone who's uncle has just murdered Protestants in France, it's absolutely unacceptable, and Elizabeth agreed with that. The only problem is Cecil had already written the press release cancelling the meeting two weeks before the massacre at Vassy. He was determined that this should be cancelled, and this is one of his preliminary documents, long before the massacre,

which is worked up in his private papers. The great thing about William Cecil, if you're a historian, people here from The National Archives will know this very well, was that this guy sat up late at night, until two in the morning, writing memos to himself, so you can actually do in history, with Cecil, what you can only do, otherwise, for most people, if you're a biographer, in fiction; you can look inside his head and see what he was thinking, almost day by day.

And Cecil wrote, "*The Affairs in France remain not only uncompounded, but by bloodshed on both parts likely to increase.*" He was expecting something nasty to happen, and it did, and secondly, "*The desire that the Queen of Scots hath to meet with the Queen's Majesty is to be intended chiefly for her own profit. It may be thought that by her journey she will insinuate herself to some sorts of people of this realm to further her claim and shall give occasion to such people as love change.*" They still talk that way over the road. You know, I mean, you want to stop something these are the sort of classic sort of ways that you're going to stop it, and that's our guy, William Cecil, you know, he's much more than Elizabeth's bureaucrat minister, much, much more than that, but he knew how to be a bureaucrat when it counted.

Now, they don't have the meeting. What's the next best way that you can control an independent woman, a woman who knows her own mind, in the 16th century? How do you deal with a troublesome woman? You marry her off to a bloke, a bloke who's under your thumb, because, of course, in the 16th century, gender kicks in. I mean, gender assumptions, you know, the 16th century was not an age of equal opportunities. In England, for example, if a woman married a man, she lost her legal identity, all her money was her husband's, her lands were her husband's, and all of this except in very exceptional circumstances. So, the idea is we should now try and get Mary married off to someone that we trust, and this idea is sold to Elizabeth, who then thinks it's actually quite a good idea, and who do they pick? Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, by then. He's made Earl of Leicester, actually, so he's of sufficient title, perhaps, to marry Mary Queen of Scots, and when Mary, you know, says, 'Why on earth do they think I'm going to marry Elizabeth's cast-off lover?' Actually, he wasn't quite cast-off but, you know, you take her point, and she actually says to the English ambassador, Thomas Randolph, 'How does it stand with my honour to marry my sister's subject?' Which is in the film and is actually straight out of the documents. What a line, which Saoirse Ronan delivers, you know, with all her characteristic aplomb. And actually, no one was more relieved than Robert Dudley that she decided not to marry him. He was her friend forever afterwards, I have to say. And by the way, you're in the 16th century. Dudley, Elizabeth's, you know, councillor favourite, he keeps on writing to Mary Queen of Scots, he meets her later, when she's in England at the baths at Buxton, at the springs at Buxton, he keeps in touch with her, because you never know, Elizabeth might pop her clogs, and you know, she really might be the next one, you keep in touch. But anyway, Mary goes her own way, and she meets Henry Darnley, who's actually, despite what they tell you on the TV, by nationality he's officially English, he's not Scottish, although he does have also Scottish as well as English descent. He is as tall as Mary, they're of pretty similar height, they're both about six foot one, something like that, Mary is certainly six feet tall, it was remarkable for the 16th century. He's handsome, he is gallant, he's, as it turns out, quite a nasty piece of work. He's probably already got syphilis, you know, when he actually goes up to Scotland and meets Mary. He's pretty effeminate, he's a drunkard, and he's a bit of a sexual predator. His nickname was the 'great cock chick', and the pun was intentional. However, especially ladies and female students here, you will meet guys like this all your life. He was one of these guys who knew how to behave until the ring was on the finger. He could behave for three to six months, and that's exactly what he did. Mary thought she was in

love with him. It's a great picture, that [*referring to slide*]. It's at Hardwick hall, which is now a National Trust property. But she marries him. He's also got a claim to the throne, because he's descended from Margaret Tudor, Henry VII's elder daughter, amongst other things. And so, Mary is tightening her claim to the English throne by marrying him as well as finding a husband. Now, there's two things happening here. Not only is she tightening her claim to the throne of England, given that Elizabeth isn't recognising her as the next heir, but also, she's doing what a queen ought to do, a dynastic monarch ought to do; she's marrying, planning to have a child, and settling the succession in her own country. And I have to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, when this marriage was announced, and when it took place, William Cecil was practically shaking in his shoes. He writes a memo, which is in The National Archives, in which he says, 'The people of England will flock to her, because she's done what a queen ought to do. She's done what our own queen ought to do. She's marrying and she's going to have an heir, and what's more, the people of England will flock to her whether Catholic or Protestant, because dynastic security, when push comes to shove, is going to count more than the settlement of religion.' So, this is a dangerous moment. Trouble is that once Darnley is married, once the ring is on the finger, he demands to be king. Actually, he demanded to be king a few days before, and actually, one of Mary's mistakes was to say that he could be, and then she began to have second thoughts and realised what he was like, very soon after the wedding, and she said, 'No, I think I'm just going to make you a duke.' And this is the source of the friction that now emerges between them, virtually from the beginning. Remember, gender is kicking in here. If you know anything about Lady Jane Grey, you will know that in 1956, a manuscript fell out of a drawer in the Escorial, Philip II's palace just outside Madrid, which had a report from a Venetian cardinal, Commendone, who was sent to England at the beginning of Mary Tudor's reign to report for the Pope on what was happening in England, and because he's Venetian, he's not Roman, he's Venetian, he stays at the Venetian embassy, and he talks to people who were there and saw it all, and they say that as soon as Jane Grey was proclaimed queen, her new husband, Guildford Dudley, turned up and said, 'Well, that's good stuff because now I am the king.' And Jane Grey, being a woman of spirits, said, 'No you're not. The most I'm going to do is make you a duke.' To which, according to this manuscript, Guildford Dudley then says, 'Well, I'm on a sex strike; no sex, no heir. You're in trouble.' At which point, he has to be taken off and given a stiff drink by the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke. Now, the point about this you see though is that you can see the gender issue kicking in, and there is no better case than this.

But also of course, Darnley was a threat to Moray, to Maitland, and to the other Scottish lords. Moray was totally against this marriage. The reason that he gave officially was that Darnley was too effeminate, he wasn't masculine enough, but of course, the reason, really, is that once Darnley is there, he's going to nudge out these other established councillors, and maybe he really will become king. Moray leads a rebellion, at which point Mary gets on her horse, and there's no slide for this but she gets on her horse and, as the English ambassador reports, she puts on a steel cap with a gun in a holster, she rides astride the horse, which of course was not protocol in the 16th century, women rode the horse side-saddle, and she leads her army into battle, and this really happened, and all those people who, you know, wrote to newspapers, or Googled, and whatever, and said that the idea of Mary was the warrior queen was completely unhistorical were talking through their hats. That criticism is completely codswallop and fatuous. Mary, you know, [*referring to slide*] that would be the breast plate, the sort of armour she'd put on, the steel cap, you know, etc. Whether she fired the gun, I really couldn't say, but she certainly had the pistol in her holster. Look at the quote at the bottom. John Knox admired her for this so much, even though she was actually clobbering the guy who was the leader of his own side, said, "*Albeit the most*

part waxed weary, yet the Queen's courage increased man-like..." you know, you love that, you just love the gender point, *"...increase man-like so that she was ever with the foremost."*

So, Moray is driven out of Scotland and he flees to England. He's in exile now, in England, with many of his supporters, and Mary is triumphant, but of course, this is only the beginning of her troubles, because Mary then decides that those rebels are going to forfeit their lands, and she summons a parliament, at which forfeitures will take place, and Moray will be stripped of his lands, and possibly even of his titles and those around him.

Darnley, meanwhile, is sulking because he wants to be king, and in addition to that, Darnley is jealous of this Savoyard, originally a musician but also secretary, David Rizzio, who came to see Mary's coronation as the secretary of the Duke of Savoy's ambassador, but stayed in Scotland, and eventually becomes Mary's secretary. And Darnley's father, who's on the left here [*referring to slide*], Matthew Stewart, Earl of Lennox, we're in Scotland remember, conjures up this conspiracy, this plot, by which those lords who essentially want Moray and those of his supporters to be restored to their lands, work out a plot, largely with Lennox, whereby, in return, they will agree that Darnley will be king, he will then either cancel the Parliament or cancel the prescription which takes away the lands, and also, as part of the deal, Darnley, who doesn't like Rizzio and wants rid of him, will get Rizzio murdered. And they all seal what's known in Scotland as a bond, a bond of manrent, which is literally signed, you know, practically in blood. It's a blood feud. This is what they're going to do, and they all sign it, and Darnley signs it, and in fact, the plot takes place; Rizzio is murdered, he's murdered actually in Mary's... just outside her supper room, in the main chamber at Holyrood on the first floor. If you go to Holyrood, they'll still show you the blood stain on the floor, even though the floor was stripped and revarnished in the 19th century, and the building restored, but nonetheless, it's all good for business. But Rizzio is dragged out of the supper room where he's there with a number of Mary's close friends, having dinner, and he's dragged away, and he's taken away, and he's actually stabbed fifty-seven times by everybody who signed this bond. It's an absolutely bloody night. She's pregnant and in the course of this, when she stands up to try and interpose herself between the assassins and Rizzio, Andrew Ker of Fawdonside points a gun to her belly, and of course she's pregnant. This is an incredible thing to happen to a queen, but it happens. This is the sort of thing that happens in Scotland.

Mary rises above all this. She escapes, she regroups, and she has her baby in Edinburgh Castle, not in Holyrood. She has it under guard in one of the most secure parts of Edinburgh Castle. And just to go back to this for a moment, William Cecil had two weeks' notice that Rizzio was going to be murdered. Actually, if you're an archive person, I know there are some people here, this is really interesting because there's a letter... Sometimes really important things are hidden in plain sight in archives, it's not just finding new things. There's a letter that Elizabeth wrote to Mary, shortly before Rizzio's murder in 1566. She was fed up with Moray being a cuckoo in her nest, she wanted rid of him out of the country, and basically Cecil drafts a letter and Elizabeth signs in, and it's sent up to Scotland, addressed to Mary, it's a beautiful document, it's absolutely spectacular. It's in The National Archives in Kew, and it says. 'I need you to take Moray back, I want rid of him.' Basically, 'Do me this favour.' Okay, well, it's quite interesting, but nothing to report is it? But, see, I was a student of Geoffrey Elton, the great Tudor historian who understood, like art experts do now, that you need to know not just what the document says but what's its provenance. What's it doing in The National Archives in London? Well, I researched that, and what did I find? It was sealed, it was sent up the Great North Road, it got to Berwick, and when it got to Berwick they said, 'Oh, send that back to London. You're not going to need that.' Somehow,

they knew what was inside these letters, even though they were sealed, 'Because Rizzio's going to be murdered next week and all hell will break out.' So, it goes back to Cecil, he knows that Rizzio's going to be murdered, he doesn't tell Elizabeth. Why? Because she'll intervene, she'll tip Mary off. Such are the convolutions of Tudor politics. But Mary has her baby, and in many respects, she's now at the height of her powers. She's a married queen who's had an heir to the throne. Yes? Except that in Scotland this could also be a weakness, because what is very common in Scotland? Regencies by male nobles in favour of minors. Now is the chance that maybe Mary could be ousted, and these nobles could rule Scotland for the next twenty odd years as regents, as a committee of twenty-four nobles, for Prince James. So, it was on knife-edge, but Mary thinks this birth is a moment of great triumph, and she organises the baptism at Stirling. It's the most spectacular fete seen, essentially, anywhere in Europe for many years, and probably one of the two great spectacular fetes, it cost an arm and a leg. Remember, that Mary is actually able to fund things because she's a Dowager Queen of France, and the French are actually paying her pension on a regular basis, so she is actually independently wealthy. But she organises this baptism as a great fete of reconciliation. The nobles are to be reconciled, feuding is to end, and Elizabeth sends a gift, and that gift is a solid gold font, for the baptism, which weighs three hundred and thirty-three ounces of solid metal, or twenty-one pounds. I've said this many, many times, but I was just thinking actually, on the bus, as I was coming down Whitehall, on the way to give this talk, that that must be the most generous and expensive gift that Elizabeth ever gave to anybody in her entire life. Elizabeth was notoriously mean. This is an extraordinary gift, and why does Elizabeth give this generous gift? Because, six weeks before, Mary had had a burst gastric ulcer and was lying practically in fear of death, at Jedburgh, in the Scottish borderlands, and she had made a will, and in that will, she said that, should she die, Elizabeth should be James's, basically, surrogate mother. Her sister should be the surrogate mother. She wasn't just to be the godparent, and James was to live with Elizabeth in England. And Elizabeth, who did occasionally have a human soul, was so touched by this that she was willing to reopen the succession question again. She was willing to open the possibility that Mary might indeed become her next heir, or at least she was willing to open it to the point where she was willing to refer Henry VIII's will, which had settled the whole business of the future succession of the British monarchies, to the judges, the English judges, to see whether it was lawful. In Henry VIII's will, the succession had passed from Henry to Edward to Mary Tudor to Elizabeth, but the Scots were, sort of, not exactly left out, but they were competing with others like Lady Francis Brandon and the Jane Grey... the Suffolk dynasty, to be Henry's lawful heir. But of course, was the will signed? The statute which said Henry could leave the throne by will, by designation by will, the will had to be signed by the king, and everybody knew, who knew, that it wasn't signed by the king, go and look at it in The National Archives, it's signed with the stamp, and it's almost certainly signed posthumously with a dry stamp and then inked in. And Mary knew that if the judges of England were shown that will, she was on a winning ticket, because most of the judges in England were Catholics and would have supported Mary in any case.

So, Mary, just after this reconciliation at Stirling and so on, or this ostensible reconciliation, she's talking to Elizabeth, she's reconciling her nobles, she does also something which was incredibly generous, she could be too generous, she could be too trusting, but was also, it turned out to be, extremely dangerous, inadvertently. Cecil had basically ordered the special ambassador, the Earl of Bedford, who went to the baptism to plead with Mary to allow that those who murdered Rizzio be allowed to come back to Scotland out of exile in England, and they included the Earl of Morton, James Douglas, who was a very, very dangerous man, and that, it turned out, for reason you'll see in a moment, was to be a mistake. But at the end of January 1567, it's very, very clear that a deal is about to be struck, potentially,

between these two sister queens over the succession, and that James, you know, is basically going to be brought up by his mother, and Darnley's going to be marginalised, and all of those things. Darnley, of course, is a problem because he's plotting, demanding to be king and threatening to abduct James and take him abroad. Well, the nobles then take things in to their own hands, because the minute the Earl of Morton and those people who've been chucked out to England after the Rizzio plot get back to England - remember that Darnley had signed a bond, practically in blood, and he dishonoured that bond and so they kill him. They kill him in the first British gunpowder plot at Kirk o' Field, in February 1567, and this is a narrative history painting [*referring to slide*]. In the 16th century, it's not like a snapshot. It's like a movie, but it's all in the one still; there's the explosion, the house blowing up on the left, Darnley is fleeing across the wall into the nearby garden where he's strangled. Then, basically, he's being buried down below. The body's being taken away, and there is, you know, Prince James pleading for revenge from the people who killed his father. This is commissioned, of course, by the Lennoxes, by Darnley's family, and it's a propagandist piece, but nonetheless, you know, Scotland is now in serious trouble, and Mary, you know, if you kill... This is a regicide. You could kill what Catholics believed to be a king.

So, Mary's in trouble, and how did this happen? Well, there's the Earl of Morton, on the right-hand side [*referring to slide*]. He, and I'm sure Moray knew about it, because he knew not to be there on the night, he knew to be on the other side of the Firth of Forth on the night, but the main orchestrator of this is the Earl of Morton, but the, if you like, the hatchet man that does the business is James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. And then, events take on a life of their own. I mean, Mary had coped incredibly well up to this point. They kill her secretary, she gets over it, she has her baby. They kill her husband in the gunpowder plot. You know, I mean, the woman's, you know, she's... is she friendless? She's certainly emotionally distraught, she's in pieces, I mean, she is, you know, I mean, post-traumatic stress disorder, you know, you might attribute to her, and this guy exploits it, and she listens to him, because he goes to her. She doesn't know that he's been involved with this plot, as such, but he goes to her and offers to be her protector, and she accepts that, why? Because he's solvent, and two, he can raise an army, and two, he's had a track record, all the way along, right from the beginning, of being the protector of Marie de Guise, he's the original Scottish nationalist because he's pro-French and anti-English, and when Cecil, without Elizabeth's knowledge, helped the rebel Lords of the Congregation, in 1559, to attempt to depose Mary's mother and impose a Protestant reformation on Scotland, Cecil covertly sent them three thousand pounds in English gold, untraceable English gold, across the border, and Bothwell stole it. So, they want this guy's blood. But Mary takes him as her protector, but then he does what all people do, certainly in Scotland, in this situation, he then demands to marry Mary as the price of protection, and then it all starts again, because now the lords turn on him. There are two versions of how he... it's simplest just to say that Bothwell said he insisted in marrying Mary, but wouldn't take no for an answer, because there are two routes to deciding how he actually enforced this on Mary; one is by raping her, which some historians go with, and the other one, which I go with, is coercive psychological control. But either way, he got Mary to marry him, and then it all starts all over again. And then, they want rid of Bothwell. They now drag Mary into a sex scandal. Now Mary supposedly knew all about Darnley's murder ahead, she was supposedly sleeping with Bothwell, you know, for months if not years before the murder, she'd been sleeping with him, allegedly, you know, for two years before Darnley ever got murdered. They give dates and places. It's like the charges against Anne Boleyn, in 1536; you look them up, they're all fictitious, it never happened, but mud sticks, people believe it. And placards were stuck up at Edinburgh, posted up by the Lennoxes, that's Darnley's father, who want their revenge. Mary,

now, suddenly, is turned into a femme fatale, an adulteress, a sex siren who lures victims to their fate. Bothwell's depicted as a hare, lust and cowardice and so on.

They then force Mary to abdicate. Imagine that, she's taken to Loch Leven. She's put on that island fortress, and you know, just really not far north... If you're driving up from Edinburgh, over the Firth of Forth, over the Forth bridge and just going north towards Perth, you know, it's the right turn, only about ten miles along. She's taken to Loch Leven, she's forced to abdicate, and she, very reluctantly, under pressure, signs the abdication document.

Now, what about Elizabeth? Elizabeth was shocked that Darnley was murdered, because Darnley was one of her cousins, but she was even more shocked that an anointed queen had been forced to abdicate. This, she said, was much more terrible, it's a much more dangerous thing than Darnley's murder, whoever had done it. She sends Nicholas Throckmorton, who's the, sort of, Tudor Henry Kissinger, up to Scotland, and Elizabeth gives instructions to Throckmorton; he's to get Mary out, she's to be restored as queen, she's to have her money back, these nobles are to be, you know, basically brought to heel, this absolutely has to happen. Mary had got a letter out. She'd got a letter out to Throckmorton, after he'd arrived in Scotland, there it is [*referring to slide*], it was rolled up, secreted away, it's on the left hand side, it basically says, 'I'm a celebrity, get me out of here.' But just as Throckmorton is about to leave London and go up to Scotland, Cecil sends for him. He gives him counter instructions, and those counter instructions, you can still see the draft in The National Archives; she's not to be got out, she's to be left in, if she's left out, she's to be a queen only in name, she's not to have any money, Scotland's to be ruled by a council of twenty-four nobles. All what was in the original script. Throckmorton can't do that, it practically destroys his career, because he can't please them both, but he can't tell the other one that, basically, he's got these other orders. But what I want to draw to your attention is not the detail of that, but this bit on the right here [*referring to slide*], if I can just get to it there, you probably can't read it here, from this distance, but I can see it and this was, actually, what I always regarded as my eureka moment, although I've got a surprise for you just in a couple of minutes, with a bigger eureka moment. But this was my eureka moment: "*Athaliah*" 4. Reg, "*interempta per Joas[h] regem*." Athaliah was assassinated so that Jehoash could be king, 4. Reg. In the 16th century, there were not four Books of Kings, there were two Books of Kings and two Books of Chronicles. Look it up. It's the very same reference to the assassination of Athaliah that Knox uses in The First Blast of the Trumpet. Athaliah was assassinated so that Jehoash could be king, and of course, Jehoash then ruled with godly nobles until he came of age, and meanwhile the true religion, and so on, was restored and idols were banished, and all of that. That is Cecil seeing the hand of God in history, and it shows him, you know, he's just waiting now for Mary to be killed. Somehow, she's got to be killed, and it's also the conceptual link, apart from the fact they're writing letters to each other, which links Knox and Cecil so very, very closely.

Mary gets out of prison, she escapes, she raises an army, she's really unlucky, she loses the Battle of Langside, and she probably makes her only really very big mistake; she flees to England, rather than trying to muster new forces and start all over again, she flees to England and throws herself on Elizabeth's mercy. She asks for a meeting. Elizabeth considers it, she doesn't even get the chance to finish considering it, because Cecil's already written and got Mary locked up. He's acted independently, and Mary's now brought into Carlisle Castle, and she stays a prisoner in England for the next nineteen years. But Mary still wants the meeting, and in 1570, she writes a humble letter, as she basically swallows her pride and writes a grovelling letter to Cecil, asking that she could meet Elizabeth.

Interestingly, she did meet Cecil. She wanted to meet somebody, and actually Cecil says, 'I'll have to go because I'm the only person she's not going to win over.' And they did briefly meet. And then, Cecil wants an end brought to this, he wants Mary to be tried and executed for the crimes done, allegedly, by her in Scotland, and the council for the prosecution, rather like the Trump impeachment, the prosecutors are going to be the Scottish nobles, who are going to come up and present this evidence. I'm, sort of, glossing over things a little bit here now. Elizabeth, actually, didn't think that Mary had done anything, she wasn't sure, but she certainly didn't want action to be taken against Mary. Cecil goes it alone. This thing appears [*referring to slide*], which everybody thought was written by George Buchanan, and was published in Edinburgh. Well, it never was. The title tells you all you need to know: A Detection of the Doings of Mary Queen of Scots Touching the Murder of Her Husband and Her Conspiracy, Adultery, and Pretended Marriage with the Earl of Bothwell. This is what I call the sexed-up dossier, the original sexed-up dossier. It was originally written in manuscript, for the Earl of Lennox, by George Buchanan, but George Buchanan threw up his hands and said he had no connection with this, and he didn't, because this was not published in Edinburgh, it was published in London by John Day, who was Cecil's tame printer, and the dossier was turned, even more incriminatingly, into phoney Scots by Thomas Wilson, who is one of Cecil's cronies. This is the first bit of truly, well, I mean, conspiratorial, what word do you want to use? This is, you know, this is politics at its most brutal. And it's published on the eve of the 1572 Parliament, which Cecil tries to get Mary executed, and it's almost certainly put into brown envelopes and given to all Cecil's assured friends, on the eve of the Parliament, because they quote from it in the debates. But Elizabeth won't do anything because, remember, Elizabeth actually thinks that the most important thing, in all of this story, is the protection, even sanctity, of the ideal of monarchy. Mary is the lawful anointed queen. She may have made mistakes, she may even have committed crimes, but if so, she's accountable to God and not to men, and this goes on.

Now, as everybody knows, the great question is were they going to meet? Did they meet? In the film, they meet because in theatre you have to have the two protagonists meeting, and I knew all along about this. This is a world first, you have not seen this [*referring to slide*], this has never been seen in public since 1762. It's taken me ages and ages to get a photocopy. I first saw it in 2010, when it disappeared. It had disappeared in 1762 with forty-two other documents, because they were ripped out of the Sadler papers. Ralph Sadler was Mary Queen of Scot's last but one jailor. We don't need all those details, but in the Sadler papers, you can go to the Sadler papers, and in this volume there's a lot of pages been ripped out, you can see the string. Sotheby's called me up, and I went down in 2010. This is the letter that I always knew had to exist. It isn't in my book, because my book was written long before this letter appeared, it is mentioned in my Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years, in 2015, because I'd seen it by then, but I wasn't allowed to have an image. But I had seen it, in Sotheby's, in Bond Street, in 2010. No notes, no pack-drill, you have to remember it, because it's become commercial property, it sold for a quarter of a million pounds to a British collector who's a multi-millions entrepreneur in America. It's the letter that had to exist. You can even see, when I saw it in Sotheby's, you can even see the string that matches the string from the Sadler papers. It's quite an extraordinary thing, but here we go. This is the letter in which Elizabeth writes, in 1584, at the time of the Bond of Association, when everybody else is trying to think of how to kill Mary, if she plots. This is written to Sadler, to be read to Mary:

"For she herself knoweth how great contentment and liking we had for a time of her friendship, which as we then esteemed as a singular and extraordinary blessing of God to have one so nearly tied unto us in blood and neighbourhood, so greatly affected towards us as we then conceived, so are we now as much

grieved to behold the alteration and interruption thereof. So Mary should send one of her secretaries to acquaint us with such matter as she shall think meet by him to impart to us. He was to bring with him such proposals as might work upon good ground. A thorough reconciliation between us."

Well, I think that's an absolutely extraordinary find. I always knew it had to exist because I always knew that what mattered to Elizabeth was as much as to Mary the ideal of monarchy, and that the ideal of monarchy should not be attenuated by any sort of public trial, or any sort of, you know, attempt to accuse her of treason, or execute, or any sort of stuff of that sort. And what Elizabeth in her heart yearned for, as much as Mary, was a reconciliation. You know, well, just two years, really, before Cecil's writing Mary's death warrant, Elizabeth can... And of course, this explains entirely why Elizabeth was so reluctant to sign the warrant, why when she signed the warrant, she called it back, and all of that. But feast your eyes on that because... you will see it again in public, it's going to be one of the centrepieces of... it's going to be loaned to the British Library. There's going to be a mega exhibition on Elizabeth and Mary at the British Library, starting in October and running until February, for which I've just written the introduction to the catalogue. I have to say that the British Library now call this The John Guy Letter, because it's the letter that I always said had to exist. Right, okay.

And Mary is not plotting until 1586, at the time of the Babington Plot. Why is she not plotting? Because it's in 1586 that Elizabeth ratifies the treaty with James, Mary's son, recognising James as the true King of Scotland, and ousting Mary from the equation. After all those years, it's taken Elizabeth all those years to, sort of, come over to this, but she finally recognises James as the true King of Scotland, at which point Mary says, 'Right, I've been locked up for nearly nineteen years, I've been deprived of my throne, I want to get out of here, and I want to get out of here by whatever means offer themselves to me. I am not Elizabeth's subject, I cannot commit treason against her, I am a sovereign prince. Under international law, if I escape and Elizabeth happens to get killed, that's God's providence.' That's her argument. I'm not defending it, but it's an argument and you could probably find a very good QC in the 16th century in international law to put that to a court, I mean, naturally, they tried to trap her. They intercept her correspondence, they get hold of her cipher. This guy, Sir Francis Walsingham, Cecil's right-hand man and the man conventionally known just as the spymaster, knows all about Anthony Babington and his so-called plot. You think the Babington plot was a plot by Babington? Forget it. I mean Babington was basically a rich Catholic playboy, with more money than sense, in the 1580s, who thinks it might be quite a good wheeze to liberate Mary Queen of Scots, and basically Walsingham's people stiffen up Babington, coach him. Basically, this is called a projection, where you actually create, you use an idea, or somebody else's, sort of, you know, fancy to conjure a plot that you can then discover, and then basically wreak vengeance on those who've been associated with it. So, Mary is drawn into this plot. Yes, she did write the letter. Yes, she did endorse Babington. Yes, all of those things, because she believed now that she had to absolutely get out of there, and of course, they catch her, she's put on trial, she's convicted. Elizabeth is unbelievably reluctant to sign the warrant. How does Cecil get Elizabeth to sign the death warrant? In 1587, he tells her the Spanish Armada's arrived in Wales a year early; she should double her bodyguards. It's an incredible lie. Cecil and Walsingham go to the French ambassador, and basically, they do a deal. They've caught the French ambassador out, and they blackmail him into conniving with them into reviving an old plot, which they pretend is a current one, also, to threaten Elizabeth, and she's told, as I say, to double her bodyguards. She signs the warrant, the next day she calls for it back, she wants it back, she tells her secretary not to do anything with it for the moment, until she's ready. Cecil calls a meeting of selected Privy Counsellors, those who want Mary

dead. He calls it, clandestinely, in his own private chamber. He coaxes them into sending Robert Beale, one of the Privy Council clerks, with the warrant to Fotheringhay regardless. The proceedings were to be kept very secret, and were justified as for Elizabeth's special service, tending to the safety of her royal person, and the universal quietness of her whole realm. Elizabeth is to know nothing until Mary was dead, until, as they put it, the dead was done, and then they all signed this. They all signed this paper, which was discovered... it got out into private hands, it was actually in the possession of the Earl of Kent, and his descendants gave it to Archbishop Laud, and it was seized from Archbishop Laud's study on the eve of the Civil War. On the second attempt, Lambeth Palace Library managed to buy it at the second attempt in auction. They lost out the first time, but they got it the second time. That is a remarkable document because that is, effectively, a republican document, in which the Privy Council overrule... they bypass the monarchy anyway. They've been told not to send this, to hold off with the warrant. She has signed it, but they're told to hold off. They sign this and they get it sent off, and the first thing that Elizabeth knows about this is when the bells in London are ringing, and she comes back in from meeting an ambassador, and suddenly discovers that the Queen of Scots is dead.

Okay, now, I've probably spoken for a little bit too long, but never mind. Just two things, or three very fast things. Okay, we've had a lot of detail here, what's the big picture?

Number one: in the 16th century, if you're a woman ruler, what you're going to do about marriage. Elizabeth and Mary did it different ways. If you marry, you're damned, as Mary Queen of Scots did, because your husband demands to be king, and then you finish up in a sex scandal. If you don't marry, you hold off like Elizabeth did, your dynasty dies with you, because you have no heir and, you know, I mean, you can never really maintain a totally stable state, because without the security of knowing what's going to happen in the future. You know, people ask me in college, in Clare they come for supervision and say, 'What did the Elizabethan Religious Settlement actually settle?' and I've begun to say, 'Well, how could it settle anything until you settle the succession first? It was always going to be, to some degree, in contention.'

Secondly: women rulers, in the 16th century, even if you're as steely as Elizabeth, are vulnerable. They are vulnerable to what you might call the gender issue, to that element of male DNA in the 16th century that just automatically assumes that, basically, this is the world in which men rule, and that women are somehow subordinate to the men.

And thirdly: something really quite cosmic happened in British history between the death of Henry VIII and 1603, because Henry VIII is something fairly close to what you might think, within the frame of reference of the time, an absolute monarch might be. So is Francis I. Now, you know, one hundred odd years later, you've got Louis XIV in France, *l'état, c'est moi*; an absolute monarchy. In England, in 1649, you've got Charles I, who gets his head chopped off. Both James I, when he came to England, and Charles I could never understand why they couldn't rule like Henry VIII, you know, in Charles case, impose a prayer book on Scotland, or all of those things. And the answer is that, when on Henry VIII's death, you had, first, minority rule, a little boy, and then you had female rule, and in that fifty, sixty years, the culture changed. The men infiltrated, through councils, through parliaments, the expectation that this was going to be a different sort of monarchy; something on the, if you like, the first stage towards the Glorious Revolution of 1688, you know, to the 19th century, and the sort of monarchy that we have got now, and if you think that that's whiggish, that's absolutely fine because maybe the Whigs were right. Thank you very much.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Well, ladies and gentlemen, friends, if you've heard John speak before, you will recognise that vintage brilliance and the gifts of an expert storyteller. If you have seen him live before, you will also recognise the rich, thorough, detailed academic presentation, which is, itself, such a masterful navigation, not just of the relationship between these two extraordinary early modern women, but the relationship, also, of the people at the sides, the people pulling the strings, the people trying to tug, as it were, the set towards them. John, we are massively in your debt.

Dr Guy has very kindly agreed to take some questions, and we've got a few minutes now. Who would like to kick us off with a question? Just over there

Audience Member

So, you were talking a lot about Cecil and how he was able to give orders, even though he was under the monarch. How was that possible, I mean, I know that you did kind of explain it a lot, but why did the Queen never limit Cecil's power and reassert her authority over him?

Dr John Guy

Yes, okay, this is a great question. Why didn't she sack him if she knew that this was going on? Fantastic question. This cuts to the heart of, if you're a woman monarch, you need someone who's on your side. Now, on all other issues, those two could work together. The issue that always, basically, was this problem was Mary, because it touched on religion and monarchy and brought those together. And so, actually, it's not as like a two-way relationship between Elizabeth and Mary, it's a, sort of, triangulated relationship between Elizabeth, Mary, and Cecil. I think there are actually two parts to the answer. One is that Elizabeth needed somebody on her side, Cecil was on her side, even if he was on her side too much. You know, he really did believe that he needed to kill Mary in order to protect Elizabeth's safety, but also, I think, there's a little bit more to it, they'd gone back a long way, she was dependent on him, you worked with the people that you know. They also, frankly, had something on each other. They both knew they would conform to Catholicism in Mary Tudor's reign, and they were ashamed and embarrassed about it, and they wanted that kept absolutely dark. But the second part, if you like, the last part is that, of course, the story continues after Mary's death. When Elizabeth found out what they'd done, she absolutely gave Cecil the bollocking of his life, and all of those who'd been involved in it. Walsingham was, you know, almost marginalised, she didn't care when, you know, he died shortly afterwards, there was no respect for him, you know, at the funeral or anything from her. William Davison, the secretary who'd let the warrant out of his possession to Cecil, was sent to the Tower, he was sacked from his jobs, basically, you know, he did, sort of, get back in in the sense that he was allowed to keep some salary, which Cecil arranged, but he wasn't allowed to hold a position again. With Cecil, who by then is Lord Burghley, Elizabeth won't speak to him for six months. She tells him that she would basically have sent him to the Tower if he hadn't been unwell, and you know, sort of, getting on a bit, and also, in order to clear his name, in the Star Chamber proceedings, Cecil has to commit perjury, in an affidavit, a signed, a sworn affidavit to the court of Star Chamber, in which he says that Davison said, that the Queen had said, that he could send the warrant, and it was a lie. So, actually, if you... I wrote another book, 2015, called *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years*, it more or less starts with this. Elizabeth's reaction to this is the moment when she actually, if you like, liberates herself from the sort of tentacles

that these men have built around her, and it coincides with really two things: one is the war with Spain, which obviously gives the monarch a lot more power. On the whole, governments tend to come together in war time, but also, secondly, by then, indeed by 1584, you know, I mean, neither women nor men knew a great deal about female gynaecology in the 16th century, but everybody knew that once you were over fifty, and certainly by fifty-three, fifty-five, a woman had passed the menopause, so there was absolutely no point badgering Elizabeth all the time to marry or do all those things because there was no point. They now were stuck with the whole fact that she really was a virgin queen, and they just had to make the best of it. So, in some ways this, for Elizabeth, it's catastrophic, because it does attenuate the ideal of monarchy. You couldn't have cut off Charles I's head in the way that it was done without first of all cutting off his grandmother's. Yeah.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Thank you, very much. Next question.

Dr John Guy

Another question?

Audience Member

I think you mentioned, I perhaps missed a point afterwards, but you said Elizabeth did the silliest thing she ever did, at some stage, and I didn't quite pick up what that was.

Dr John Guy

Ah, the silliest thing she ever did, I think, was putting up Robert Dudley as a husband for Mary. There's absolutely no way. I think there's more to it than that. I'm really sorry for going over my time. It, sort of, does tend to happen on these occasions, but I could have said quite a bit more about that because it wasn't just that she thought that Robert Dudley should marry Mary, it was that they should then move south, and stay at Elizabeth's palaces in a ménage à trois; they should all live together as a happy family. And Elizabeth, she does use the phrase, you know, 'as a happy family', you know, I mean, how real is that? Is that governing from the head, as opposed to from the heart?

Elizabeth did a lot of silly things, Mary did some silly things. My desire is that these two women should be looked at on a level playing field, and that means going to archives, and it basically means actually finding out what these women did, what they said, as far as the best as you can do, what they thought, and I mean, remember that that propaganda tract that had been written by Buchanan, in the, sort of, sexed-up dossier that Cecil then, sort of, makes official and publishes, I mean, that was used to write history.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Yeah. Have we got any other questions? Anybody else like to ask John a question?

While you're thinking, I might abuse the chair and ask one of my own if I may?

Dr John Guy

Yes of course.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Was William Cecil the first person to push the sense that Elizabeth was the new Deborah? Or had that been developed before?

Dr John Guy

Okay, it comes out in two places. There were Protestants in London, not in Lancashire, but there were Protestants in London, in 1558, and in the Queen's coronation pageants, as she went through the city, there was one particular pageant... there were always pageants on the eve of the coronation, you process through the City of London, and the livery companies put on a show, and one of the shows was, basically, Deborah, sitting on a throne with a palm tree and, essentially, a little, sort of, inscription and actors saying that, basically, Elizabeth was to be the Deborah, the restorer of Israel, the restorer and judge of Israel, which I think is the quote from the Old Testament, and Elizabeth looked at it, and is reported to have scowled, because the last thing that she wanted to be was Deborah. The Geneva Bible, an edition published after Elizabeth has come to the throne, apostrophises her as various things, and one of them, of course, is this. And it's not what Elizabeth is, it's what, you know, those of a more radical, you know, quasi Calvinist disposition want her to be. And one of the huge confusions about all this is mostly, I have to say, I'm sorry to say, coming from English departments in the United States, is that people are now interested in these pageants, and they're working on these pageants, 'Oh, they're the pageants for Elizabeth's coronation. The Queen must have authorised them, and of course, it's compounded by the fact that there's a piece of evidence that you think you can find, which is that the costumes came from the Queen's wardrobe, which was then at the old Blackfriars monastery, dissolved monastery, that's where the wardrobe with all the, you know, the spare furniture, and, you know, whatever it is, the furniture store and the sort of costume store for things you weren't using was all down at Blackfriars. Now, the only thing that they didn't know was that the Master of the Revels, who had custody of all this, used to rent them out on the side. He was the Angels of Covent... Well, that used to be at Covent Garden, they've moved out, actually, near Harrow now, but if you're making a movie, or if you're doing TV, you want the Henry VIII costume, or the Elizabeth costume, you go to Angels, and they rent them out, and that's what's happening here. It's got nothing to do with Elizabeth's personal views. But yes, I mean, Deborah's a big thing because Henry VIII, you see, Henry VIII had been Constantine, he'd been Justinian, as a, sort of, you know, historical template, he'd been Solomon, he'd been King David, he'd been Hezekiah, all of those things. When Edward VI came to the throne, they needed a boy to do the same job, so he was Josiah, and of course, Josiah had godly councillors who'd, you know, helped to govern with him, so that worked really well. So, they're looking for something for Elizabeth. So, they try Constantine again, they try, you know, Hezekiah, it doesn't quite work, but Deborah's a good one for them, so that's how it is.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Thank you very much, I ought to have said, Deborah, of course, one of the Old Testament figures who restores true religion to Israel, that's the point.

Any other questions?

Audience Member

Although the film has quite an interesting take on it, knowing what their characteristics were like, had the two actually been able to do meet, do you think anything positive would have been achieved?

Dr John Guy

Oh yeah, I mean I was involved in this. The question is, if you didn't hear it, if they really had met, would it have been like it is in the film, where Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie meet, and my answer to that is if they actually had met, of course they didn't meet, but if they had met, I think it would have been absolutely like that. I saw that right from the beginning, I wouldn't say I vetted, but I advised on seventeen different versions of the script before anybody went into rehearsal or production. And I think that's exactly how it would be, and of course, I knew about the document that I showed you, then, that, you know, Elizabeth was looking for a reconciliation, and, you know, I mean, they might well have met, but if they had met, I think it wouldn't have worked. There was that residual, you know, by then, mutual suspicion and fear, and Mary, probably, would have lost her temper, somewhere along the line. She probably would have just lost her cool that little bit.

You know, just a couple of minutes that are left, before filming that scene, actually, it was... Margot Robbie filmed all her scenes first, and then Saoirse Ronan filmed all her... because you don't film the script starting with act one, scene one, you know, you do it according to the locations. So, Margot did all hers first, and the Saoirse came on and did hers, but they overlapped, and they overlapped for the meeting scene, and although they know each other quite well, and are good friends, they did not meet to talk about the script or anything to do with the film until they actually met, and they managed to do that meeting scene, pretty much, in one take, and that is absolutely phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal. I mean, both those women are absolutely fantastic actors, absolutely extraordinary.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

Well, I think we're going to have to leave it there.

Dr John Guy

Yes, of course, yes.

The Reverend Dr James Hawkey

But John, on behalf of everybody here in St Margaret's, I want to say an enormous thank you to you. Not only have you introduced us so much more deeply to these two women, talked about the politics around them, talked about, as I said earlier, the people pulling the strings, but also introduced us to questions of gender and identity, and shown us how exciting a career as a historian can be, because you would also be a detective.

Now, if you haven't seen the film, you really must go and see it, you must get it on DVD. In addition to Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie, you will never forget the sight of David Tennant as John Knox, that is a completely extraordinary portrayal. So, please go and watch the film.

John, we're massively in your debt this afternoon. Thank you so much.

Dr John Guy biography

John Guy is one of the best known Tudor historians of our time. He is a Fellow of Clare College, University of Cambridge as well as an award-winning writer and broadcaster.

John Guy wanted to be a historian from the age of 16. He studied History under Professor Sir Geoffrey Elton before completing his PHD on Cardinal Wolsey, for which he won the Cambridge University Yorke Prize in 1976. He has lectured on Early Modern British History and Renaissance Political Thought across Britain and the United States. He has presented television documentaries, appears regularly on radio and writes for numerous newspapers and academic journals.

The 2018 film *Mary Queen of Scots* is based on John Guy's book, *My Heart is my Own: The Life of Mary Queen of Scots*, which won the 2004 Whitbread Biography Award.

Selection of books by John Guy

'My Heart is My Own': The Life of Mary Queen of Scots (Harper Perennial, 2004)

The Tudors - A Very Short Introduction, 2nd revised edn (Oxford University Press, 2013)

The Children of Henry VIII (Oxford University Press, 2013)

Henry VIII: The Quest for Fame (Allen Lane, 2014)

Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years (Viking, 2016)

Context of the event

The Westminster Abbey Learning Department's annual History Masterclass offers 16+ students a 'taster' of university-level History as well as an enriching and informative experience. A themed guided tour of the Abbey is followed by a lecture from a distinguished historian speaking on the same theme. The question and answer session after the lecture provides a rare opportunity for students to quiz the historian behind the textbook.

In 2019, the theme for the Masterclass was Henry III and the speaker was Professor David Carpenter. In 2020, the theme for the Masterclass was Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots. The speaker was Dr John Guy.

To hear more about attending events like this with your students, and to find out about the 2021 History Masterclass please sign up to our [schools mailing list](#)

Feedback survey

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it has been a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

You can also find related resources on our [teaching resources](#) page.