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Chapter 3: 'By the queen': Collaborative authorship in scribal correspondence of Queen Elizabeth I

Melanie Evans

Introduction

G. B. Harrison suggests, as a rough estimate, that the letters of Queen Elizabeth I number between two to three thousand. As recent editions indicate, less than 100 of these are written in the queen's own hand, with around eighty written in English, yet this minority includes some of the best-known epistles by the queen such as the two-decade exchange with James VI of Scotland.[1] The enduring popular and scholarly appeal of Elizabeth's autograph correspondence is understandable. These manuscripts provide insight into Elizabeth's opinions and involvement towards particular individuals, events and affairs of the realm, and moreover allow us to appreciate the extent of her education, her mastery of the written word and her use of language as means of constructing and reflecting her royal identity.[2] However, the majority of Queen Elizabeth's letters are not autograph, but scribal manuscripts, often headed with her sign-manual or the statement 'by the queen'. Collectively, these letters can be classified as official correspondence, in contrast to the more personal nature of her autograph letters. The topics and purposes of these scribal letters are diverse, incorporating domestic or international matters to do with finance, politics, religious affiliation and even marital affairs.[3] As H.R. Woudhuysen has astutely noted, the personnel and operations of Elizabeth's secretariat are woefully under-investigated. This oversight is only now beginning to be addressed, for example in the study of the

[1] *Autograph* is used to denote a letter written and signed by the named author. *Scribal* denotes a letter written in a different hand to the named author. G. B. Harrison (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I* (Cassell, 1935), Introduction. J. Mueller and L. Marcus (eds.) *Elizabeth I: Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2003). Much of the autograph correspondence between Elizabeth and James VI is collected in British Library (hereafter BL) Add. MS, 23240.

[2] See Mel Evans, *The Language of Queen Elizabeth I: A Sociolinguistic Perspective on Royal Style and Identity* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) for a detailed account of Elizabeth's language in its social and stylistic context. Susan Frye suggests that Elizabeth believed 'monarchs created themselves through language'. Susan Frye *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (New York: OUP, 1993), p. 4.

[3] A scribal letter, BL, Lansdowne MS, 10, fol.39, offers marital advice to the Earl of Derby.

extensive foreign correspondence produced on Elizabeth's behalf.[4] The vernacular epistolary manuscripts, however, despite their status in the historical record, offer considerable, untapped potential.[5]

A question that immediately arises when examining the range of Elizabeth's scribal letters is to what extent the queen was involved in their composition? How accurate is the description 'letters of Queen Elizabeth' at a textual level? The present essay explores Elizabeth's possible involvement in two types of scribal letter by implementing a flexible, comparative method of authorship analysis. If we can reliably assess and evaluate the queen's participation in the creation and issue of her scribal correspondence, then we will greatly enrich our understanding of her relationship with her secretaries, her scribes, the mechanisms leading to the production of these letters and their position within the cultures of Early Modern English correspondence.

Composition methods for scribal letters

In the sixteenth century, autograph and scribal letters had different epistolary roles. A scribe was typically used for letters concerned with business or administrative matters, formal or official in purpose. This convention perhaps reflects the physical demands of sixteenth-century letter-writing, as well as the (related) perception of letter-writing as a menial activity by the social elite.[6] Autograph letters were typically used for more personal and intimate topics, and a letter written in the author's own hand had a greater social and interpersonal value. Thus, even Henry VIII, renowned for his dislike of letter-writing, took the time to pen a series of love letters to Anne Boleyn in the 1520s.[7]

However, recent work on Early Modern correspondence has increasingly emphasized the collaborative qualities of letter-writing in the period, which suggests that the scribal letter should not be immediately dismissed as unrepresentative of its

[4] See Carlo Bajetta, Guilliaume Coatalen and Jonathan Gibson (eds.), *Writing Abroad: The Foreign Correspondence of Elizabeth I* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).
[5] H.R. Woudhuysen, 'The Queen's Own Hand: A Preliminary Account' in *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing*, ed. by Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (British Library, 2007), pp. 1-28.
[6] James Daybell, 'Female Literacy and the Social Conventions of Women's Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603' in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1540-1700*, ed. by Daybell (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 59-76.
[7] Henry VIII, *The Love Letters of Henry VIII*, ed. Henry Savage (A. Wingate, 1949).

named author's language and intentions. The complexities have been especially noted within the field of women's letters, where the limitations of the extant material necessitate the consideration of scribal material. In his work on female correspondence, Daybell posits that there is a spectrum along which the named author's contribution to a letter can be placed, reflecting the different composition methods available to Early Modern writers.[8] Of the composition processes posited for the period, a scribal copy based on a draft written by the author presents the best opportunity for an accurate and faithful replication of an author's expression. Dictation could also ensure a good rendering of the author's language, as the scribe documents their words as spoken. Significantly, the conduct books of the era stress the fidelity and faithfulness a secretary should show in the reproduction of their master's language.[9] Scribal letters could also be based on written notes provided by the author, which the scribe would formally work into a letter, although this method is less likely to replicate an author's expression. At the more distant end of the spectrum, a scribe might produce a letter based on an epistolary model, modified according to the particular purpose; in such cases, the author's contribution to the final text would be minimal, if not entirely absent.[10]

Looking at Elizabeth's correspondence, it is clear that her letters (in the broadest sense) occupy different positions on the spectrum. On the one hand, we find autograph drafts and sent copies of the same letter that show Elizabeth's complete autonomy over her correspondence, such as the 1594 letter to James VI of Scotland.[11]

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[8] James Daybell, 'Women's Letters and Letter Writing in England 1540-1603: An Introduction to the Issues of Authorship and Construction', *Shakespeare Studies* 27 (1999), 161-86 (p.180). See also Graham Williams's detailed study of holograph and scribal practices in the Thynne letters: Graham Williams, *Women's Epistolary Utterance: A Study of the Letters of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575-1611* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014).

[9] Angel Day suggests that the secretary's pen 'is not his own, but anothers, and for this cause the matter to him committed, are to depend upon the humor of his commander, and upon none others', *The English Secretorie, or Plaine and Direct Method, for the Enditing of all Manner of Epistles or Letters, Aswell Familiar as Others: Distinguished by their Diuersities Under their Seuerall Titles* (C. Burbie, 1595), Part II, p. 132. See Alan Stewart 'The Early Modern Closet Discovered', *Representations*, 50 (1995), 76-100, for an illuminating exploration of the conflicted role of the secretary in the Early Modern period.

[10] James Daybell 'Women's Letters and Letter-Writing in England 1540-1603', p. 170.

[11] The draft is preserved in Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, 133/80, fol.120. The sent copy is BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol. 132. Alison Wiggins discusses another draft and sent letter to Bess of Hardwick, 'Draft and sent versions of a letter from Elizabeth I regarding the earl of Leicester's visit in June 1577: Bess's social networks', in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, University of Glasgow, web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield

Contrastingly, there are the warrants and patents that are endorsed by Elizabeth's signature or embossed initials, but offer little indication that she was involved in their production; e.g. the exemplification of a fine documenting Shakespeare's purchase of New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon issued in Elizabeth's name.[12] However, whilst the extremes of the spectrum can be identified with reasonable confidence, the letters positioned towards the middle of the spectrum are less clearly disambiguated; how can the relationship between a scribal text and Elizabeth's possible contribution be established? Given the probable composition methods used for scribal letters in the period, theoretically a scribal letter based on an autograph draft or dictation may contain textual evidence of the queen's contribution. However, establishing what the evidence of these authorial traces might look like and separating them from formulaic conventions and the scribe's own preferences is a complex task.

Authorship analysis

Underpinning all authorship analysis is the principle that a writer uses language in a way that can be distinguished from other writers. The characteristic style may encompass their choices of grammar, vocabulary, phonology (in spoken contexts), graphology (e.g. spelling, in written contexts) and higher-level discourse practices. Within the field of forensic linguistics (and linguistics more generally) this concept is known as the *idiolect*: the language of the individual.

The field of forensic linguistics has provided a number of high-profile authorship studies of modern texts, such as the landmark case of the Unabomber. Plagiarism software devised for contemporary texts has proved productive in investigations of historical pamphlets, although at present relatively few forensic studies consider non-contemporary works.[13] For historical texts, computational stylistics is thus perhaps the more familiar methodology, with the on-going debate

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Humanities Research Institute (April 2013)
http://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=151 (last accessed 2nd July 2015)

[12] A reproduction of this manuscript can be found in Felix Pryor, *Elizabeth I: Her Life in Letters* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 118-9. The manuscript is located at the Stratford-Upon-Avon, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, ER 27/4a.

[13] For a discussion of the Unabomber case, see M. Coulthard and A. Johnson, *An Introduction to Forensic Linguistics: Language in Evidence* (Rotuledge, 2007), pp. 162-3. For the forensic analysis of 18th century pamphlets, see P. Clemit and D. Woolls, 'Two new pamphlets by William Godwin: A Case of Computer-Assisted Authorship Attribution', *Studies in Bibliography*, 54 (2001), 266-85.

over the authorship of Shakespeare's plays the most high profile example.[14] However, there are key differences between the afore-mentioned studies and the present enquiry, particularly concerning the length of texts and general availability of material. Hoover's analysis of the nineteenth-century novel *Blind Love* considers a novel of several hundred thousand words, compared against texts of similar length.[15] The volume of data at his disposal is a sharp contrast to the typical 100-1000 word documents that we find in the archives of Elizabeth's correspondence, necessitating a different approach to Hoover's computational, statistical techniques. Moreover, traditional authorship attribution typically looks to identify one writer from a pool of potential authors, in keeping with the modern conception of solitary authorship. By simple fact of the letter being written in the hand of another, the presence of a third-party is inevitable. For Elizabeth's scribal letters, a better conceptualisation of authorship attribution is to look for evidence that can signal a 'degree' of authorship within a collaborative text.

The approach applied in the present paper builds on previous work on scribal composition methods and epistolary authorship. Daybell notes that 'the evidence' that might arise from dictation 'is rather indirect and relies on examining the consistency of style achieved by particular writer over a range of letters'. He proposes that different types of evidence may be taken as an indicator of the said author's involvement. The repetition of particular 'common words or phrases', a characteristic 'confidence and self-assurance', and 'a discernible personal intimacy' with the recipient may all indicate the author's involvement with the text.[16]

Studies of particular authors and letter collections support the value of each type of evidence. Muriel St. Clare Byrne notes that the scribal letters of Honor Lady Lisle show a consistency in style despite the use of three different secretaries, which she takes to be evidence that the letters were dictated, Lady Lisle being the sole constant factor in the correspondence.[17] Graham Williams' research into the scribal

[14] For a critical overview see B. Vickers, 'Review Essay: Shakespeare and Authorship Studies in the Twenty-First Century', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54/1 (2011), 106-42, and, for a didactic response, John Burrows, 'A Second Opinion on Shakespeare and Authorship Studies in the Twenty-First Century', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 63/3 (2012), 355-92. For a valuable demonstration of non-Shakespearian attribution work, see D. Hoover, 'Authorial Style' in *Language and Style*, ed. by D. McIntyre and B. Busse (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 250-271.
[15] David Hoover, 'Authorial Style'.
[16] James Daybell, 'Women's Letters and Letter Writing in England 1540-1603', p. 171.
[17] Muriel St. Clare Byrne (ed.) *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), IV, 229-31.

and authorial letters of Joan Thynne offers evidence that linguistic features can be helpful in exploring authorship. He observes that compound adverbs such as *thereof* and *hereby* are more frequent in Joan Thynne's scribal correspondence. As a stylistic feature associated with legal writing, the presence of the adverbs in the scribal letters suggests they were the independent contribution of 'professionally trained scribes', rather than the less formally educated Joan Thynne, who 'very rarely, if ever, wrote like this'.[18] His work suggests that the frequencies of certain linguistic features in a text, when considered against the profile of the author, can offer a measurement for their probable involvement. This approach is comparable to the techniques used in forensic linguistics, although the quantitative figures are smaller, and interpretations perhaps more sensitive to the historical context. Finally, Daybell provides an example of the intimate and personal expression that is a strong indicator of an author's involvement, from a letter by Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk to William Cecil in which she declares: 'What a weary beggar I am'.[19] It would presumably be highly inappropriate for a scribe to independently include such remarks. These studies suggest that an assessment of Elizabeth's contribution in a scribal letter should take into account a range of textual and material features. It should pay attention to the communicative context, which drove the composition of the letter in question, as well as the norms of that particular author, and the overarching societal conventions of the period.

Another consideration for the analysis of authorship is the availability of material that can represent the author's norms. Fortunately, the extant autograph letters provide a relatively large body of data to represent Elizabeth's letter writing preferences, and these form the comparative baseline for the analysis. To most effectively explore the textual dimensions of Elizabeth's letters, the current investigation uses an electronic corpus compiled by the author that collects the English autograph letters from before and during Elizabeth's reign. As a further consideration, analysis needs to accommodate for the instability of the linguistic preferences of an individual over their lifetime. For manuscript scholars, the changes in Elizabeth's handwriting from her youthful italic to senior mixed hand are the most

[18] Graham Williams, '"Yr scribe can proove no nessecarye consiquence for you"?: The Social and Linguistic Implications of Joan Thynne's Using a Scribe in Letters to her Son, 1607-11' in *Women and Writing, c.1340-1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. by Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Philippa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), pp. 131-45.

[19] BL, Lansdowne MS, 2, fol. 46, cited in James Daybell, 'Women's Letters and Letter Writing in England 1540-1603', p. 172.

immediate example.[20] Spelling and linguistic features show similar developments. Elizabeth's pre-accession letters differ from the post-accession letters, most obviously in the absence of *royal we*, but also in the use of particular spellings (e.g. extensive <gh> variants) and morpho-syntactic items (e.g. *the which*).[21]

Using the autograph corpus, orthographic, grammatical and lexical features can be assessed in a scribal text against Elizabeth's preferences for the same period, and the findings set alongside an evaluation of the letter's content and context. To facilitate analysis, the corpus is accessed and searched using the *AntConc* concordance programme, which allows automatic retrieval of a search term (e.g. a word or phrase).[22] Overall, the approach should offer empirical grounds for an interpretation of Elizabeth's involvement in the composition of a scribal letter. The following analysis considers two scribal letters written in 1586 and compares their textual properties with contemporary autograph correspondence (1582-1595), and considers to what extent the queen participated in their composition.

Letter One: Elizabeth to William Cecil, Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham, October 1586

In his edition of Elizabeth's 'selected works', May argues persuasively that scribal letters classifiable as 'in-house memoranda' have a 'strong claim to authenticity'.[23] One such example, included in the edition, is addressed to William Cecil and Francis Walsingham, two of Elizabeth's most influential and long-standing statesmen, and is a memorandum on Mary, Queen of Scots and the Babington plot.[24] Although notation on the reverse gives the year as 1568, May suggests the more plausible date of October 1586. There are no indicators that this is a letter by Elizabeth. The scribal endorsement is vague: 'Coppy of a lre from ~~my~~ a lady to :'. The copy is written in secretary hand, and the arrangement of text resembles a conventional epistle. The

[20] See Woudhuysen, 'The Queen's Own hand'.
[21] Mel Evans, *The Language of Queen Elizabeth I*.
[22] The corpus includes the monarch's pre- and post-accession autograph correspondence, parliamentary speeches and translations, based primarily on the manuscript originals. For a list of contents see Mel Evans, *The Language of Queen Elizabeth I*, L. Antony *AntConc* 3.3.0, 2011.
[23] Steven. W. May (ed.), *Queen Elizabeth I: selected works* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), pp. xxvi-xxvii.
[24] BL, Lansdowne MS, 10, fol. 213. A modernized transcription can be found in May (ed.), *Queen Elizabeth I*, pp. 179-80.

main body of the letter takes up the top half of the page, with the subscription positioned immediately below on the right-hand side.

Epistolary conventions and content

There are a number of epistolary features that suggest Elizabeth's involvement with the letter. The letter begins 'Sir Spirit, myne and you Master Moore'. 'Spirit' and 'Moor' are among the many nicknames used by Elizabeth for her councillors, and their inclusion here rather than a standard epistolary address (e.g. My Lorde) offers immediate and quite persuasive evidence of Elizabeth's contribution.[25] It seems highly unlikely that a scribe working independently would address senior councillors in such a personal way, absconding from the formulaic constraints of official correspondence. Similarly, the closing salutation is more intimate than we might expect of an autonomously produced scribal text: 'Such am I to you as your faiths have deserved'. The note terminates with the initials 'E.R.' in the same scribal hand. Whilst the signature deviates from Elizabeth's normal practice of signing her name in full 'Elizabeth R', this technique occurs in other autograph notes with a comparable 'in-house' function; for example, the letter to Sir Robert Cecil, written in 1598.[26] The scribal copy is notable for the obscure reference to Mary as 'the prisoner k[ing]', as well as the deletions that transform 'she' to 'he', further obfuscating the subject matter. This suggests that the text of the letter was carefully scrutinized, although it is difficult to establish if this was the choice of the scribe or Elizabeth.

The letter's main communicative purpose is to give instruction regarding the questioning of Mary, Queen of Scots. However, the directions are couched in statements of Elizabeth's cognitive processes: 'I consider', 'I remember', 'methinks', which personalise the instruction. There is interest in the recipients' wellbeing: 'I have commanded this bearer to bring me word of both your healths', which adds an interpersonal layer to the communication. The letter concludes with a self-debasing assertion: 'and so, when a foole hath spoken, [s]he hath all donne'. This compares favourably to the intimate expression in the scribal letter by Catherine, Duchess to Suffolk. There are also comparable statements in Elizabeth's autograph letters to

[25] For a comparable autograph example, see the letter to Cecil: 'Sir Spirit, I doubt I do nickname you for those of your kind (they say) have no sense': BL, Harley MS, 787, fol. 66a.
[26] Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, 133, fol. 187. Transcribed in May (ed.), *Queen Elizabeth I*, p. 228.

Cecil, such as a brief note written in 1572: ‘me thinkes that I am more beholdinge to the hindar part of my hed than weL dare trust the forwards side of the same’.[27]

Linguistic evidence

The first step in the linguistic analysis is to evaluate elements that were in a state of flux, i.e. undergoing change, during the sixteenth century. A linguistic variable is defined as two (or more) forms with the same denotative meaning; for example, a sixteenth-century speaker could form a negative using post-verbal *not* e.g. ‘I took not’ or by inserting auxiliary *do* e.g. ‘I did not take’. A speaker or writer typically shows a preference for one variant over another and this provides a range of features with which to build a linguistic profile. Elizabeth’s preferences identified in her autograph letters can be compared to the distribution of forms in the scribal letter, and the degree of ‘fit’ evaluated.

The scribal letter offers a selection of features for comparison, and these support a case for Elizabeth’s involvement. Firstly, the letter uses the first-person singular pronoun *I*, rather than the conventional plural form *royal we* found in much of her official correspondence. The first-person singular is a consistent feature of Elizabeth’s autograph correspondence, and accords with the more personal and intimate qualities of a hand-written letter. Because scribal letters very rarely use *I*, this may indicate that the copy is based on an autograph original.

The scribal letter contains a negative formed with post-verbal *not*, as opposed to negative auxiliary *do*: ‘that she heard not’. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Elizabeth’s autograph letters show a clear preference for the non-*do* construction, as in this example from a letter to James VI of Scotland: ‘that you **suffer not** such vipers to inhabit your land’.[28] Another congruent feature of the letter is the use of *you* as a grammatical subject, rather than the alternative form *ye*: ‘if **you** fynd the matter sufficiently considered alredy **you** wipe them out ‘. Elizabeth shows a consistent preference for *you* throughout her life, although many of her scribal letters contain the

[27] Bodl. Lib., Ashmole MS, 1729, art. 7, fol.13.
[28] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol. 49. See Mel Evans ‘Aspects of the Idiolect of Queen Elizabeth I’, pp. 41-72 for a discussion of *do* in Elizabeth’s writing. For a broader sociolinguistic discussion of *do* in the period, see Arja Nurmi, *A Sociolinguistic History of Periphrastic do* (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique, 1999).

ye form, as do letters by Cecil and Walsingham.[29] The letter also contains the verb form *hath* rather than the more innovative (and now standard) *has*; in her autograph correspondence between 1582-1595, *hath* accounts for 55 of 56 instances.

The scribal letter contains no instances of the compound adverbs typical of letters produced by professional scribes in the sixteenth-century, e.g. *therefore*, *thereby*, *thereof*. Instead, the propositions are linked together with the conjunction *and* + preposition: 'And if', 'And so'. This accords with the trends found in Elizabeth's autograph correspondence, where compound adverbs are considerably outnumbered by *and + x* combinations: e.g. 'he hath no other scope than to keep us friends and increase that bond, **and if** he find any Opposite against so good a work he will obviate it'.[30] The lack of the distinctive, legalistic adverb compounds in the scribal letter is congruent with the personal expression signified by the address-forms. Overall, the linguistic features show a good fit with Elizabeth's preferences, and lend weight to its attribution as a copy based on an autograph draft or verbatim dictation.

Spelling

A final feature that may offer potential authorship evidence is the spelling used in the scribal letter. The significance of spelling in Early Modern letters is highlighted by the frequent apologies for bad orthography.[31] Whilst these admissions may be partly formulaic, they nevertheless indicate a social sensitivity to the representation of an individual's language in written form, and suggest spelling warrants as much scholarly attention as material and lexico-grammatical properties.

A distinct property of sixteenth century spelling is the absence of a national, standardized system. Instead, individuals were able to develop an individualized orthographic practice, drawing on conventions from local or international communities, and modifying and developing their preferences in response to new experiences, pressures or fashions.[32] The individuality of practice suggests that the

[29] Mel Evans *The Language of Queen Elizabeth I*; T. Nevalainen and H. Raumolin-Brunberg *Historical Sociolinguistics: language change in Tudor and Stuart England* (Longman Pearson, 2003).
[30] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol. 34: Elizabeth to James VI of Scotland, February 1586.
[31] See James Daybell, 'Female Literacy and the Social Conventions', pp. 60-61.
[32] Vivian Salmon, 'Orthography and Punctuation' in *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Volume III: 1476-1776*, ed by R. Lass (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). Mel Evans 'A Sociolinguistics of Early Modern Spelling? An account of Queen Elizabeth I's correspondence' *VARIENG: Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English*, 10 (2012), http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/journal/volumes/10/evans [accessed 7 November 2014].

orthography of a text may offer some indication of authorship. Hypothetically, the inclusion of spelling features characteristic of a named author in a scribal text would suggest that the scribe worked from a draft document and replicated the spellings. A dictated text or one composed from notes or instructions would show minimal, if any, connection between the author's spelling practice and the scribal text. Thus the spelling may add some incisive evidence for the composition method used for the letter to Cecil and Walsingham. That said, one of the problems encountered when studying Early Modern spelling is the sensitivity to interference. Copied texts, whether contemporary or later, are generally not thought to faithfully reproduce the spelling of the original.[33]

The manuscript originals of Elizabeth's autograph correspondence provide the most reliable source for an analysis of her spelling preferences. As these changed over time, the following comparison with the scribal letter uses only her correspondence written 1582-1595, analysed using VARD, a software package originally designed to automate the modernisation of original-spelling texts.[34] In a spelling analysis different aspects can be examined. Firstly, patterns can be identified in the proportion of Present-Day English non-standard and standard spellings. Whilst the ideological force, and textual reality, of a spelling standard was only at a nascent stage in the sixteenth-century, the distinction provides a comparable measure of spelling practice in different texts. Secondly, a writer's orthographic preferences for particular words, or particular graph combinations (e.g. <i> or <y>) can also be traced.[35] The terminology commonly used in lexical analysis is helpful here: *type* refers to a particular word form, and *token* to the number of instances of a particular word form. The word form may be a non-standard or standard rendering.

Looking first at the proportion of non-standard and standard spellings, the scribal letter contains a lower proportion of non-standard spellings than is typical of Elizabeth's autograph correspondence. Only 20% of the word types use a non-standard form in the October 1586 text, in contrast to the 59% in letters from 1582-1595. Furthermore, when the non-standard forms are compared in the scribal letter and the baseline autograph corpus, only five of the 19 words present in both datasets

[33] Thus, the editors of the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* advise against using the corpus for spelling analysis, as the corpus was compiled using a mixture of autograph and scribal texts, drawn from manuscript and print editions. T. Nevalainen and H. Raumolin-Brunberg, *Historical Sociolinguistics*, p. 44.
[34] A. Baron, VARD 2.4.2 (2011).
[35] It is conventional to represent graphological data in < > brackets.

use the same non-standard spelling. This includes Elizabeth's preferred rendering <myne> (9 of 10 tokens in the 1582-1595 autograph correspondence), <lerne>, <principall> and <hard> (*heard*). However, the double consonant in <considder> and <lett>, and the use of medial <e> rather than <i> in <procede> suggest some fundamental differences in spelling practice between the texts.

The proportion of standard spellings in the scribal letter is consequently higher than expected. However, 62 of the 65 standard word forms in the scribal letter also occur in the reference corpus. Many of these words are high-frequency grammatical items, such as <I>, <and>, <if> and <it>, all of which were stable in Elizabeth's post-accession writing, despite contemporary alternatives such as <iff>, or <hyt> and <itt>.[36] For many standard spellings, however, the scribal letter uses forms that are the less frequent rendering in the autograph correspondence, and thus can be considered less typical of Elizabeth's spelling practice. The form <shall> in the October 1586 text accounts for only 7 of the 84 tokens in the autograph correspondence. Similarly, the rendering <which> occurs only twice in the autograph letters, outweighed by the 84 tokens of <wiche>. Overall, the spelling evidence offers minimal evidence to support Elizabeth's involvement in the letter. If the scribe were working from an autograph draft of the letter, then there is little to suggest that he attempted to replicate Elizabeth's spelling. Although more research is required into the significance of spelling and its transmission across texts, the sensitivity of spelling to interference suggests that the lack of evidence should not over-ride the features identified in the preceding analysis.

Collectively, the letter's intimate features, such as nicknames and self-abasement, and the fit of the linguistic forms with Elizabeth's contemporary preferences offer positive evidence for her involvement in the letter, most probably via dictation.

Letter Two: Elizabeth to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1 April 1586

The scribal letter to Cecil and Walsingham offers a valuable insight into the epistolary exchanges between Elizabeth and her privy councillors. However, in-house

[36] A letter by Mary Grey to William Cecil offers a good example of alternative spellings of grammatical items: 'hyt ys no smaull comforte to me to oundarstand, as i doo by my sonne': BL, Lansdowne MS, 10, fol.140.

memoranda make up a surprisingly small part of the extant scribal correspondence. Thus, for the second analysis, I wish to explore a text that is more representative of the scribal letters issued in Elizabeth's name: a letter to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester dated 1 April 1586, part of an extensive set of documents and letters relating to the Low Countries campaign in 1585-6. [37]

The campaign was one in which Elizabeth was greatly invested, ostensibly because of the two nations' shared Protestantism, and their common foe in Spain, but also because of the prominent role of the Earl of Leicester. Bruce highlights examples of what he terms 'interference' by Elizabeth during the campaign (perhaps a curious term for the actions of the monarch), such as her refusal of Leicester's request for fresh funds before the existing monies had been accounted for, and the 'personal interviews' she held with the messengers operating between the Court and Leicester.[38] The Victorian editor also makes an interesting remark that foregrounds Elizabeth's role in the campaign's correspondence:

> With her own hand she wrote letters [sic.] containing practical directions, and official letters and instruction were prepared in pursuance of her verbal directions, and probably often in her very language. [39]

The description of 'pursuance of her verbal directions' may imply scribes working from notes or instructions, and 'probably often in her very language' is a hedged description that nevertheless suggests drafts or verbatim dictation. Thus, the 1 April letter provides a significant test to reconcile a historian's intuition with textual evidence.

The scribal letter was issued after several tumultuous months in the campaign. Leicester, against Elizabeth's explicit wishes, had accepted the position of absolute governor of the Low Countries: a post that granted him near-monarchic power within the states. As Cecil informed Leicester in a letter sent soon after the Earl's appointment in February, 'hir Ma[jesty] will not endure to heare any speche in

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[37] John Bruce (ed.), *Correspondence of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leycester during his government of the Low Countries, in the years 1585 and 1586* (John Bowyer Nicols and Sons, 1844). The scribal letter is preserved as BL, Cotton MS, Galba IX, fol.167.

[38] John Bruce (ed.) *Correspondence of Robert Dudley*, pp. vi-vii.

[39] The plural would appear to be an error. The collection documents only one autograph letter by Elizabeth, the text to Heneage discussed above. John Bruce (ed.), *Correspondence of Robert Dudley*, p. xxxv.

defense [of Leicester's position]'. In the following month, Elizabeth's anger was still palpable: 'Hir Ma[jesty] wold neuer be content to haue any speche of ye state of thingz nedefull to be known for your chardg. I have not desisted to move hir to gyve eare'.[40] The 1 April letter finally signalled a change of heart, as the queen acknowledged the value of Leicester's position in the Low Countries, and instructed him to find an appropriate resolution to the campaign.

Epistolary conventions

The extant copy of the letter bears no evidence (e.g. seals, folds, endorsements) that it was sent to the Low Countries. It is more probable that it was a fair copy made for administrative purposes. Nevertheless, it provides a striking contrast to the other English correspondence, contained within the volume Cotton Galba C IX, relating to the campaign. Unlike the scrawled advice and information sent by Burghley, Walsingham and others, the scribal copy is a pristine example of official royal correspondence, transcribed in a neat secretarial hand complete with small flourishes on the majuscule letters. The endorsement 'by the quene' is written at the top right corner, with the salutation and main body starting the mid-point of the page. Visually, the letter could be said to exude authority, such is its contrast with the autograph correspondence that Leicester more frequently received in the Low Countries. In this sense, there is no doubt as to the letter's sender.

The main purpose of the letter is to give Leicester the authority 'to iudg what is fitt to be don to bring such a qualificacion as we desire to passe'. The manuscript thus has material value as an endorsement of any consequent actions, with the status of the letter as 'by the quene' integral to its communicative function. In this sense, it is entirely logical that the letter was issued through formal, official channels rather than as an autograph note. This interpretation is supported by the absence of any apology for the scribal status of the letter, a trope that can be found in more explicitly personal and private instances of correspondence during the sixteenth century. Also contributing to the authority of the letter are formulaic epistolary components. The letter opens with the conventional salutation from a superior to an inferior, 'Right trusty and right welbelovid cousin and counseler, we grete you well'.

[40] BL, Cotton MS, Galba C IX, fol. 76 and fol.115, respectively.

In addition to the main instruction, the text is also concerned with interpersonal matters. The letter seemingly intends to flatter Leicester. The first two paragraphs of the letter are dedicated to retracting the previous months' criticisms of the Earl, acknowledging that he 'hath more nede of comfort than reproof'. Only once this had been made clear does the letter proceed to grant the authority to Leicester and Heneage discussed above, and even this is presented in a manner that compliments the recipient, acknowledging Leicester's intimate knowledge of the Low Countries, and emphasising the queen's personal investment in the political resolution. It is these intimate elements - the acknowledgment of Leicester's 'grieved mynd', for example - that elevate the letter beyond the functionality that might be expected of an autonomous scribal composition, and make the queen's involvement plausible.

Steven W. May observes that Elizabeth 'embellishes her [autograph] prose with figurative language in ways almost wholly lacking in the secretarial prose of her formal correspondence'.[41] The aphoristic expression that follows the opening salutation would seem to fit this category, and is perhaps further evidence in favour of Elizabeth's involvement: 'It is alwayes thought, in the opinion of the woorld, a hard bargayn when both parties ar leasers'. The metonymic *the world* is repeated a few lines later: 'as to geve the woorld just cause to think'. Notably, such references to *the world* seem to be a recurring expression in the queen's autograph correspondence both before and during her reign, such as the following example to James VI of Scotland written in 1596: 'as shall make us no scorn to the world nor delight to our foes'.[42] The perception of a monarch's actions in society appears to have been a recurring concern for Elizabeth. The scribal letter may be seen to anticipate Elizabeth's acknowledgement in November of the same year that 'we princes, I tell you, are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world duly observed'.[43] These features could be considered representative of Elizabeth's letter-writing practices, and, contextually, better suited to a document with which she had direct involvement.

Linguistic features

[41] May (ed.), *Queen Elizabeth I*, p. xix. Giuliana Iannaccaro and Alessandra Petrina observe, for example, the cross-linguistic distribution of a 'metaphor of the scales' in Elizabeth's correspondence. See 'To and From the Queen: Modalities of epistolography in the correspondence of Elizabeth I', *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 3 (2014), 69-89.
[42] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol. 140.
[43] BL, Lansdowne MS, 94, fols 84-85.

The letter to Leicester contains several linguistic features that correlate with Elizabeth's preferences in her contemporary autograph correspondence (1582-1595). As with the letter to Cecil and Walsingham, the 1 April letter uses the second-person pronoun *you* consistently in both letters, with no instances of the accusative variant *ye*: e.g. '**You**, as we hear, are greatly grieved'. The post-verbal *not* negative structure, '**taketh not** more comfort of your well doing', also accords with Elizabeth's preferences in the 1580s. Another feature that aligns with Elizabeth's preferences is the example of single, rather than multiple negation: 'could **never** have looked…**any** such measure'. Despite the multiple negation being relatively frequent in the sixteenth century (rendering the above example as 'could never have looked...**no** such measure'), it is very rare in Elizabeth's post-accession correspondence.[44] Other features found in the scribal letter that can also be considered typical of Elizabeth's linguistic preferences include the relative pronoun *which*, rather than the archaic and literary alternative form *the which*, and the use of *whom* with an animate antecedent (i.e. human referent) with *which* restrained to non-animate antecedents: 'we ar had in contempt **by him** that ought moost to respect and reverence us, from **whom** we could never have looked to receve any such **measure, which**, we do asseure you, hath wrought'.[45]

However, the linguistic features of the scribal letter are not wholly congruous with Elizabeth's preferences. One of the most obvious differences is the consistent use of the pronoun *royal we*: 'that **we** are had in contempt by him that ought most to respect and reverence **us**'. As noted above, the pronoun is infrequent in Elizabeth's autograph letters. However, this feature can be confidently explained, as *royal we* fits alongside the material and epistolary features (noted above) emblematic of official royal correspondence. It is intriguing to wonder, if this letter was drafted or dictated by Elizabeth, whether it would be queen or scribe who implemented the royal pronoun.

A less satisfactorily explained feature is the frequency of positive declarative *do*. Unlike in Modern English, where the auxiliary *do* is used to add emphasis to the verb phrase (e.g. 'I *did* feed the cat'), *do* was used in the Early Modern period without

[44] Evans, *The Language of Queen Elizabeth I*; T. Nevalainen and H. Raumolin-Brunberg, *Historical Sociolinguistics.*

[45] *The which* is a notable feature of Elizabeth's earliest writing, but declines in frequency after 1550. The significance of animacy for the selection of *who, whom* and *which* is consistent throughout Elizabeth's autograph correspondence. Evans, *The Language of Queen Elizabeth I*.

such local emphasis, as found in the scribal letter: 'and so **doth** fall out in the case between us two'. Elizabeth's preferences for *do* changed considerably over the course of her lifetime. In the 1580s and 1590s, she appears to disfavour the form, and it occurs only 2.2 times per 1000 words in the autograph correspondence corpus. By contrast, *do* occurs 9.3 times per 1000 words in the 1 April letter. Furthermore, the occurrences of *do* show ~~co-textual~~contextual differences. In the autograph letters, *do* is typically used before a verb separated from its antecedent, as seen in the following example from a letter to James VI of Scotland in October 1586:

> **I** Was in mind to have sent you such accidents as this late month brought forth but the sufficiency of master Archebald made me retain him and **do render** you many loVing thanks for the Joy you toke of my narrow escape from the Jaws of Death.[46]

This differs from the close proximity between antecedent and verb phrase in the scribal letters: 'it is a thing that **we do** greatly desire and affect'.

However, it is unclear how much weight to place on *do* as counter-evidence for Elizabeth's involvement. In the sixteenth century, the form was most typically used in formal text-types, such as church sermons, and the association with officious and authoritative texts could thus have led the scribe to insert the form independently.[47] Alternatively, it is possible that Elizabeth augmented her usual linguistic practice to reflect the official status of the text - in the same way, perhaps, that she might shift from *I* to *royal we*.

Another troubling feature in the scribal letter is the third-person verb ending *-eth*. In the previous case study, the presence of *hath* was found to be comparable with Elizabeth's autograph correspondence. The 1 April letter also uses *hath* throughout, and the examples of *doth* are also typical of Elizabeth's practice.[48] However, there are also three instances of main verbs with the *-eth* ending: 'professeth', 'taketh' and 'standeth', which are less congruent with Elizabeth's preferences. Whilst *-eth* was the dominant ending used for *have* and *do*, Elizabeth used both *-eth* and *-s* with main verbs, often switching between the two forms within the same letter:

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[46] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol. 49.
[47] Matti Rissanen, 'Spoken language and the history of do-periphrasis' in *Historical English Syntax*, ed. by D. Kastovsky (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991).
[48] The form *does* does not occur in Elizabeth's autograph correspondence.

> whather he **knoweth** not the prise of my bloude wiche shuld be spild by bloudy hande of a murtherar wiche some of your nere a kin did graunt, A sore question you may suppose but no other act than suche as I am assured he **knowes**.[49]

In the 1582-1595 autograph correspondence *-eth* accounts for 31% of potential forms, compared with the 100% frequency in the scribal letters. However, the difference may reflect the official nature of the letter, as the *-eth* ending was preserved in more literary and official texts. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that sixteenth-century speakers perceived *-s* to be a spoken, contracted form of *-eth*, rather than a distinct alternative.[50] Thus, if Elizabeth did dictate the letters, the scribe may have interpreted and transcribed the verb-endings graphically as *-eth*.

The final feature considered in this section is compound adverbs, such as *therefore, thereunto, thereof,* which re-occur throughout the scribal letter (unlike that to Cecil and Walsingham). Quantitatively, *there*-x adverbs are twice as frequent (6.3 times per 1000 words) than the average distribution in Elizabeth's autograph correspondence (2.9 times per 1000 words). Conversely, the conjunction *and* + preposition occurs less frequently than would be expected for a letter by Elizabeth: only two occurrences of *and so,* and one example of *and yet* and *and for* (equating to 4.2 times per 1000 words). Thus the cohesive and anaphoric devices used in the 1 April scribal letter are those associated with legalistic language and professionally trained scribes. In his discussion of Joan Thynne's scribal letters, Williams surmises that the compound adverbs could be the independent contribution of a scribe to structure the content dictated or drafted by the named author.[51] Thus, although this feature of the scribal letter is certainly not congruent with Elizabeth's autograph practice, it does not suggest that she made no contribution at all.

Overall, many of the linguistic features accord with Elizabeth's contemporary preferences, although they do not provide indisputable evidence of her involvement. In part, this is due to the difficulty of evaluating atypical features that may reflect the

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[49] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol. 7. See also Terttu Nevalainen, *An Introduction to Early Modern English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006), pp. 90-92.

[50] Even in Modern English, *-eth* has associations with poetry and biblical language. See Terttu Nevalainen, *An Introduction to Early Modern English*, pp. 90-92.

[51] Graham Williams, '"Yr scribe can proove no nessecarye consiquence for you"?', p. 238.

official style of the correspondence. Whilst Joan Thynne may have lacked the necessary education and expertise to write in this way, Elizabeth seems a likely candidate to have been familiar with the styles of official correspondence, creating uncertainty over the provenance of these features. More information is needed on the characteristics of royal scribal correspondence, and the practices of the scribes and secretaries, to enable a more confident assessment of their role in letters to which Elizabeth may have contributed. On balance, however, the scribal letter contains a number of linguistic and epistolary features that support an argument for Elizabeth's involvement. In the next two sections, the spelling and lexical elements will be analysed, to see if they can offer more conclusive support.

Spelling

In the first case study, the spelling results showed considerable differences between Elizabeth's practice and the scribal note to Cecil and Walsingham. A similar contrast is found in the official 1 April letter to Leicester. As in the previous example, the scribal letter contains a lower proportion of non-standard forms (37%) than the autograph letters (59%). When the non-standard forms are compared, two-thirds (63 of 95) in the scribal letter occur in a different form in Elizabeth's autograph correspondence; for example, the spelling <doe> (*do*) appears highly atypical when compared with 60 occurrences of <do> in the autograph corpus and no occurrences of <doe>. As in the scribal note to Cecil and Walsingham, there are features that suggest fundamental differences in spelling practice. The double vowel <oo> in *work, world* and *would* contrasts with Elizabeth's preference for single <o>, and the use of medial <y>, e.g. <bargayn>, <contynuance>, <consyderacyon>, <fynd>, and <repayr>, is atypical for Elizabeth, who prefers <i> in comparable contexts <continuance>, <considar>, <repaire>. Looking at the standard forms, 155 of 170 types (91%) are shared across the two datasets - a proportion comparable to the first case study (95%). However, these forms often constitute the less-favoured spelling in Elizabeth's practice: <shall>, rather than <shal>, or <which> rather than <wiche>, for example.

Therefore the spelling evidence offers little evidence of Elizabeth's involvement, and certainly no direct evidence that the scribe worked from a handwritten draft text. This suggests that dictation is the more likely composition method, although the approach cannot presently discount the possibility that the

scribe disregarded a draft text to implement his own spelling system. The results again foregrounds the need for more information about spelling practices within the Early Modern court, and society in general, if the common traits and characteristics are to be established.

Phrasal elements

In Elizabeth's autograph letters, there are certain expressions that she uses repeatedly to organize her ideas and structure the content of her letters. A number of these phrases can be found in the scribal letter, and offer, in my opinion, quite emphatic and persuasive evidence for her involvement when placed alongside the other features already discussed. These findings highlight the importance of exploring the qualitative and contextual dimensions of the data.

The first example is the phrase 'And now to'. This occurs in 13 letters in the autograph canon, 6 of which were written between 1582 and 1595. The expression is used to mark a transition from one part of the letter to the next, as seen in this example, dated February 1586/7, to James VI of Scotland: 'And now to conclude'.[52] In the scribal letter the phrase is used for the same organizational purpose: 'And now to cum to the breach itself', acting as the hinge between the opening rehabilitation of Leicester's reputation, and the instructions specific to the Low Countries campaign.

Another expression used to make a transition to a new topic in Elizabeth's autograph correspondence is 'and for that', which occurs in four letters with this specific function (and five times as a more localized linking feature). Notably, all instances occur in letters written in the 1580s, which strengthens the case for the contextual likelihood, such as this example in June 1585:

> you oblige me for them for which I render you a million of most entire thanks as she that meaneth to deserve many a good thought in your breast throw good desert / **And for that** your request is so honourable retaining so much reason.[53]

In the 1 April scribal letter, the phrase is used with a comparable function:

[52] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fols 61-2.
[53] BL, Add. MS, 23240, fol.15.

> that they do now yeld unto you under the title of an absolut governor. **And for that** we are persuaded that you may be best able...to iudg what is fitt to be don

However, perhaps the most interesting phrasal and lexical qualities of the 1 April letter are the presence of intertextual 'echoes' that can be traced to a previous letter sent by the queen to the Earl of Leicester, written 10 February 1586. As the final type of evidence to be discussed, these examples highlight the importance of an analytic approach that is sensitive to the context and co-text of the epistle under investigation.

The 10 February letter was written to condemn Leicester's acceptance of the position as Governor-General and generally convey Elizabeth's disapproval of his actions. The letter famously begins with a direct statement of Elizabeth's feelings towards Leicester: 'How **contemptuously** we conceive ourself to have been used by you'.[54] As the 1 April letter reconfigures Elizabeth's position towards Leicester, the text refers to this opening line: 'one that…shuld deale so carlesly, we will not saye **contemtuosly**'. Notably, the verb 'say' foregrounds the adverb as one specific to Elizabeth's voice and expression.

The repetition of the word has implications for the understanding of the compositional circumstances of the 1 April letter. The lexical specificity suggests that (at least) one individual involved in the 1 April letter was familiar with the preceding text. Given Elizabeth's status, it is worth questioning if a scribe or even her secretary would so directly present her voice in this way, without her permission. The specific retraction of the adverb relies on a shared knowledge between sender and recipient, and echoes the intimate expression and obtuse references seen in personal letters between Elizabeth and Leicester, such as her subscription to a letter written in July 1586: 'As you know, ever the same'.[55]

There are further phrasal and lexical similarities between the two letters. The 1 April letter replicates certain structural and lexical expressions when reporting and justifying Elizabeth's reaction to Leicester (highlighted in bold):

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[54] The letter is preserved as a scribal copy as BL, Cotton MS, Galba C VIII, fol. 27. Another copy occurs in the same volume, fol. 108. A transcript is included in May (ed.), *Queen Elizabeth I*, pp. 163-4.

[55] TNA, SP 84/9, fols. 85-6.

> **We could never have** imagined, **had we not** seen it fall owt in experience, that a **man** raysed uppe by ourselfe, and **extraordinarily** favored by us above anie other subiect of this land (10 February).
>
> by **him** that ought moost to respect and reverence us, from whom **we could never have** looked to receve any such measure (1 April).
>
> that **ever we could have** been drawn to have taken so hard a course herein, **had we not** been provoked by an **extraordinary** cause (1 April).

A further similarity is seen in the repetition of the expression 'fall out': 'had we not seen it fall out in experience' (10 February) and 'if it shall fall out to be such' (1 April).

The connection between the two letters suggests that the 1 April text was conceived and issued as part of an epistolary sequence. From a compositional perspective, it is plausible that a copy of the 10 February letter was consulted as the 1 April response was put together, which led to either the conscious or sub-conscious replication of these phrasal and lexical elements.

Relating these texts to Elizabeth's autograph letters is more difficult. Consultation of the autograph correspondence reveals that 'contemptuously', 'conceive', and the phrase 'fall out' do not occur in the letters, despite their repetition in the scribal texts discussed here. 'Extraordinary' occurs once. However, the sensitivity of vocabulary to subject matter offers one explanation for the recurrence of these items within the scribal sequence and not elsewhere. In the same way, the noun *amity* occurs eighteen times in the autograph correspondence from Elizabeth to James VI, but does not occur in letters to any other recipient. The provenance of the 10 February text also complicates the assessment of Elizabeth's authorship of the 1 April letter. Despite the 10 February letter generally being accepted by historians and biographers as being a letter by Queen Elizabeth, the manuscript is a copy, and attributed to Walsingham's hand.[56] Walsingham occupied a central role during the

[56] Maria Perry suggests that the queen wrote the letter 'in her own hand and the anger still leaps from the page', also citing BL, Cotton MS, Galba VIII, fol. 27. In my opinion, the hand bears a greater resemblance to Walsingham's autograph than Elizabeth's. Maria Perry *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Queen Elizabeth I From Contemporary Documents* (Folio Society, 1990), p. 296. John Bruce (ed.), *Correspondence of Robert Dudley*, p. 110.

Low Countries campaign, writing letters to Leicester with strategic advice and instruction. It is thus unclear how the connection between the 1 April letter and the 10 February text should be interpreted; how does Walsingham factor into the composition of the queen's official correspondence? Such findings again highlight the need for further research into Elizabeth's scribal correspondence, and the full correspondence networks of the Court.

On reflection, the evidence identified in the 1 April letter suggests that Elizabeth was involved in its composition. Cumulatively, the epistolary, linguistic and phrasal features lend support to Bruce's assertion that the scribal letter was composed 'in pursuance of her verbal directions, and probably often in her very language'.[57] Whilst not conclusive, the atypical spelling and the frequency of *do* and compound adverbs suggests that Elizabeth may have dictated the letter's contents, enabling the scribe to modify and add the stylistic features necessary for an official royal letter. At present, there is no way to establish if Elizabeth altered the style of her dictated language to reflect the letter's type.

As the final point, I wish to reflect on what the findings from the 1 April letter can tell us about the production and reception of Elizabeth's official letters. If the evidence is taken to indicate that Elizabeth was involved in the composition of this letter, then the next question is to ask *why* she was involved. Was it for her personal benefit, in the sense that, as ruler of England and upholder of the Faith, she could ensure control over what was being written officially in her name? Or did the severity of the situation and the individuals involved in this particular case necessitate a more personal touch, in the belief that this would be recognized by the recipient, and provide more persuasive force. Would Leicester have recognized Elizabeth's 'voice' in the 1 April letter? Would this have granted her instructions and retraction of former grievances more weight?

When considered against the broader context of epistolary convention, and the use of scribal and authorial letters for different purposes, the collaborative nature of the letter may be unavoidable. As noted above, the letter has material and symbolic value as one 'by the queen', providing official endorsement of Leicester's activities in the campaign that is perhaps unsuited to or inappropriate for an autograph letter. However, by playing an active part in the letter's composition, Elizabeth is able to

[57] John Bruce (ed.), *Correspondence of Robert Dudley*, p. xxv.

add a degree of intimacy that can also exist ‘on record’. The resultant combination of an authoritative document and personal expression may have been the most appropriate method to convey to her courtier the restoration of both their personal and professional friendship.

Conclusion

Over the course of this analysis, it has become clear that determining a ‘degree’ of authorship is a rather speculative endeavour. The historical distance, the limits of the data and the complex composition methods impede conclusive assessment. The uncertainty is also exacerbated by the fact that the current analysis is reliant on an incomplete picture of court and scribal letter-writing practice. Whilst the autograph corpus allows for a thorough investigation of Elizabeth’s preferences, the method would greatly benefit from the epistolary data of her secretaries and her scribes, so that the linguistic features of a text could be rigorously compared, contextualized and potentially attributed. It is hoped that the continued interest in sixteenth-century letter-writing will lead to this data becoming available. Nevertheless, the flexibility of the analytic approach, evaluating elements both quantitatively and qualitatively, holds promise for the investigation of collaborative authorship in royal correspondence, and perhaps Early Modern letters more generally.