

"A great and long voyage" – Princess Cecelia of Sweden's visit to England in 1565

Aidan Norrie
University of Otago

Queen Elizabeth I of England is unique among English monarch for several reasons. Not only is she the only female monarch to date to have not married, but she also never left England during her 44 year reign—a feat that every monarch since (including the short-reigned Edward VIII) has managed to accomplish. Many historiographical debates have attempted to address these incongruous aspects of Elizabeth's reign. Unfortunately, there isn't time in this very short presentation to even begin debating why Elizabeth never married.¹ Leaving that issue to one side, however, I do have space to note that the debates that occur in the historiography as to why Elizabeth never left England can usually be boiled down to two key points. Firstly, as an unmarried woman without a publically acknowledged heir, or even a clear candidate who would rule in her stead as regent during an absence, Elizabeth leaving England would have plunged the country into a precarious legal, religious, and constitutional position. Secondly, it was expected that any of Elizabeth's potential marriage suitors would come to England, and present themselves both to the English court and to the Queen. Thus, Elizabeth based her foreign policy stance on what Charles Beem and Carole Levin have described as the "home court advantage."²

By never leaving England, a kind of abstract and almost mythical view of Elizabeth's court spread around Europe. This view is evident in much of the historiography of Elizabeth's reign. Never leaving England meant that even today, historians debate her foreign policy stance—her varied and changing opinions preventing a clear picture from emerging. Nevertheless, this paper will focus on the diplomatic relationship that existed between Elizabeth and the Swedish monarchy, with emphasis on Princess Cecelia of Sweden's visit to

¹ I would suggest reading Susan Doran's *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Queen Elizabeth* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) for the most thorough analysis of the debates.

² Charles Beem and Carole Levin, "Introduction," in *The Foreign Relations of Elizabeth I*, ed. Charles Beem (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 16.

England from September 1565 to April 1566. Particular focus will be placed on how the visit of Sweden's princess to the English queen was compared to the Queen of Sheba's progress to the court of King Solomon in the Old Testament.
