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## Review of Maria Perry, *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I from Contemporary Documents*

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Maria Perry. *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I from Contemporary Documents*. Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 1990. 352 pp. \$39.

As Lacey Baldwin Smith suggests in his 1975 biography, *Elizabeth Tudor*, the appetite for books on Elizabeth I never seems to be satisfied. This is even more true today. Within the last few years we have the publication of Susan Bassnett's *Elizabeth I* (1988), Christopher Haigh's *Elizabeth I* (1988), Lisa Hopkins' *Elizabeth I and her Court* (1990), and Christopher Hibbert's *The Virgin Queen* (1991). And now added to the list is Maria Perry's *The Word of A Prince*. Bassnett and Haigh each take a particular stance. Bassnett is concerned with evaluating Elizabeth from a feminist perspective and Haigh's is a study of Elizabeth's use of political power. Hopkins' book is the most disappointing; based on basic secondary sources, it has nothing new and no useful scholarly apparatus. Hibbert's study is agreeably and accessibly written but again lacks notes; it may well find a solid popular audience. Maria Perry's book takes much more care than Hibbert's but is also not saying much that is particularly fresh. Beautifully put together with magnificent illustrations. Perry's work has more the feel of a coffee-table book. What Perry, a professional actress, has done is to gather well chosen documents and string them together into a biographical narrative.



right that it was Elizabeth's hurt ego over Dudley's secret marriage that impelled the relationship with Alençon.

Perry's book is surprisingly slight in dealing with the Earl of Essex and the final decade of the reign. Her tone is often non-scholarly, and the language she uses is sometimes irritatingly filled with slang. The source notes at the end are not as easy to follow as numbered notes, though they make the text cleaner. Yet despite these criticisms, this is a handsomely produced book with some wonderful passages in Elizabeth's own words and fine descriptions of her by her contemporaries. Anyone interested in Elizabeth will thoroughly enjoy *The Word of a Prince*; scholars, however, will not learn much that is new.

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