Feminist history and gender history have seen an increase in interest, if not been invented, in recent decades. The feminist movements of the 1970s provoked a historiographical shift and produced a group of historians concerned with looking at the past. This has developed into a trend of looking at gender as a whole, in our study of history and attitudes to this topic and its effect on past events, are beginning to become new to be regarded almost in the same way that economics or politics have been for some time. However, when we look at the reign of Elizabeth I we are dealing with a different type of gender history. The analysis of Elizabeth's reign based on her sex is not a product of the last forty years, it was occurring at the time of her reign, and most often has not been undertaken by feminists historians but by those who view the sexes as at least then equal footing. Attitudes towards women at the time in the sixteenth century meant that Elizabeth was unavoidably affected in her reign by her sex. In areas of her rule and policy where this is the case, such as her military in war, in her relations with parliament and in her production, or lack thereof, of an heir, gender is rightly used as a tool of analysis. However in areas where this is not the case, and there are many as Elizabeth successfully dealt with many problems caused by her gender, this tool should be no more used that it would be if she were male. There is a considerable difference between looking at how gender and sixteenth century perceptions of it affected Elizabeth's reign, made of rule from the outside and how the fact that she was a woman affected her from the inside. The latter is not only overused, it is sexist, prejudiced and historically unhelpful as it leads to generalizations.
Of all the female monarchs of the sixteenth century, Elizabeth I is perhaps the one who deserves least to be analysed in terms of her gender. The two other female monarchs of this period, Mary I and Mary, Queen of Scots, actually faced far more problems as a result of their sex than Elizabeth did. The primary example is marriage. Mary I's marriage to Philip produced numerous constitutional problems; dealing with a king consort without a previous precedent was probably more problematic than dealing with a female monarch without precedent. The fact that the married queen also failed to produce a child, earning her the title of 'barren queen' was also not helpful. In the world of marriage, Mary, Queen of Scots faced even worse; her marriages to Henry, Lord Darnley and then to the Earl of Bothwell are considered by some to be her greatest political failings—a consequence of her gender. Elizabeth avoided this problem, narrowly missing at a marriage with the Duke of Anjou, much to her favour. In addition to this, she adopted a different tactic to Mary I's strategy of using feminine imagery and symbols of courtly romance to enhance her prestige, which ultimately backfired. Historical opinion of the reigns of the two Marys have undoubtedly both been influenced by gender. Mary, Queen of Scots, for example, had a very successful personal reign before 1565, which is often obscured by gender problems that are viewed through a gendered lens. If it is unfair to compare an, however, it is even more unfair to Elizabeth to overcome this lens to view her reign in which she successfully dealt with many of these problems.

One way in which Elizabeth overcame the problem of her sex was to, in contrast to Mary I, assume
a male persona and surround herself with male imagery. The picture she evoked of herself in her
homely speech of a man trapped inside "the weak and feeble body of a woman" and the similarieties
were clear between herself and her father, substantial
helped to eradicate fear that a woman would not
be up to the job of ruling and makes the analysis
of her as a woman even more unhelpful. Elizabeth's
decision not to marry and the image of the
"virgin queen" she created for herself also helped
to overcome gender sixteenth century go attitudes
to gender.

She cannot ignore the problems that being female
did cause Elizabeth. As the queen aged and it became
apparent that she was not going to produce an heir
she suffered a loss of political status. The contrast
she passed with the next in line to the throne and
King of Scotland James VI was stark and did her no
favour. In addition, gender attitudes within her
parliament made her relationship with council
perhaps more problematic than if she had been
a male and was one of the reasons why she
preferred to push religious reform through her senior
clergy creating what Claire Cross calls a 'gynocratic'
form of rule. The above are examples of where it is
historically helpful to use gender as a form of
analysis, as it directly affect the exercise of
Elizabeth's rule. It is a better an external factor rather
than a nebulous idea that may have affected Elizabeth
psychologically.

There were also plenty of aspects of Elizabeth's
reign that did not directly concern her gender. Apart
from her relations with parliament, Elizabeth's ideas
about religion and her religious policies were not as they were because she were female. Equally, her finances were not poor because of her sex, no historian could get away with saying that it was because women are generally bad with money that Elizabeth I's eschequer was being drained. The situation in Ireland is another example of Elizabeth I's reign virtually untouched by the issue of gender. There are many more instances of this kind which all point to the fact that to bring gender analysis into the historically important merely because a key figure is female is questionable and probably does not produce the best unhelpful.

The interpretation of Elizabeth's reign that continually attributes causation to her sex and seeks to explain all through this lens is antiquated. It is in the best part of it is not part of the feminist or gender historical movements and contradicts everything these schools have been arguing for. If we accept today that men and women are equal, then there should be no reason to bring in analysis of Elizabeth on the grounds that she is female when it does not concern sixteenth-century prejudices, but only modern gender stereotypes. In addition, and a problem that goes unnoticed if gender bias are facing today, to concentrate solely on gender or one sex or another study masculinity and femininity on their own is to further marginalise the subject. The recent fascination with gender bias produced works on this topic in isolation, which segregates this mode of study from the rest other historical writing. An integrated approach would be far more useful than the obsessional concentration on one theme.
James came to the throne of Scotland as a minor, and an incredibly young one at that. At the age of 1 year, he obviously was not gaining experience of leadership, but the fact that he spent almost his entire life as a king made him an incredibly experienced one. When he came to the English throne in 1603, he had been a monarch for over thirty years, a privilege not accorded to many succeeding rulers, and this helped him unanimously to deal with the array of problems he inherited. However, to say that he was a better king of England than he was of Scotland would be to assume that he abandoned Scotland as soon as he gained the English throne.

In fact, one of James' great successes was the way in which he balanced both kingdoms and kept the administration of both happy and aspiring of both relatively happy. Consequently, it is perhaps better to say that he was a better king of Britain rather than James, or indeed of today - than he was of Scotland.

James I and I was a keen political theorist, his works 'Basilicon Doron' and 'The True House of Free Monarchy' show the complexity and yet clarity of what he thought a king should be. One of his successes in his rule of England and Scotland together was to create the ideal of 'Britain'. Jenny Wormald calls it the noise and fuss that was made about Britain, a 'vast smokescreen' over the early years of James' reign. The way the new king created was to get to aim for and place himself at the centre not only reflects his political ideology but also reinforced his