

THE DOWAGER COUNTESS AS A POOR OLDE AUNTE: LADY ELIZABETH RUSSELL IN “RETIREMENT”

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ELIZABETH COOKE HOBY RUSSELL

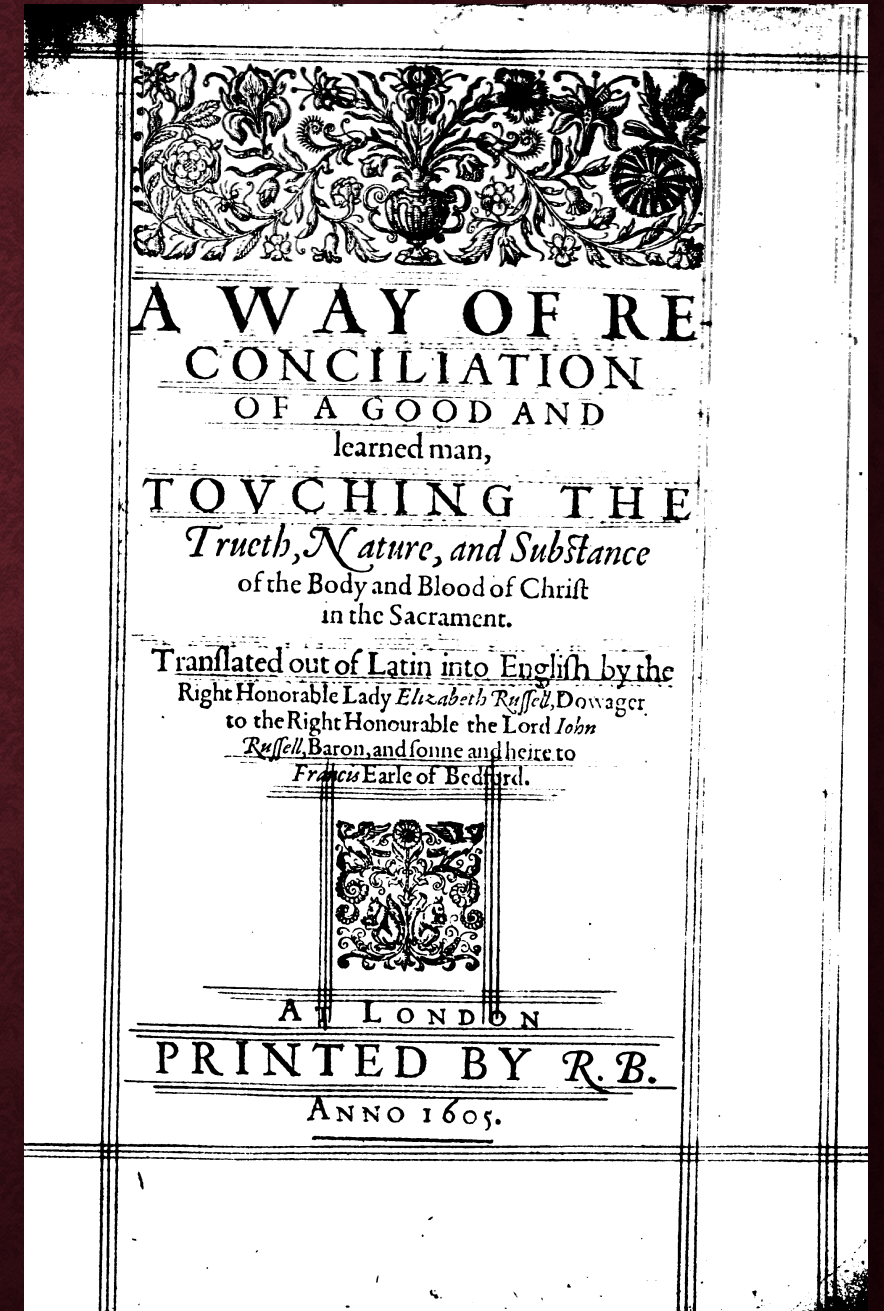
- Remarkably well-educated, along with her four sisters.
- Famous for rallying her neighborhood and the English government to force Shakespeare to move the Globe Theatre away from her house.
- Related to powerful families such as the Cecils and the Bacons.
- Wielded a lot of political power as a young widow, but faded from the public consciousness as an elderly woman – why? And why is that stage of her life understudied?

DEFINING LATE WIDOWHOOD

- Comparative age and length of widowhood. Especially poignant in the case of Elizabeth because she had been widowed twice.
- Lack of young children under her guardianship.
 - While her sons were young, she controlled their financial interests.
 - While her daughters were young, she controlled their marriage prospects.

ELIZABETH REMEMBERED

- Some of Elizabeth's most lasting legacies were formed in her old age.
- For example, her book was published in 1605.



FUNERAL MONUMENTS

- Elizabeth used the funerary monuments of her family to express socio-political statements that she no longer expressed at court, both in images and in words.
 - Her husband, John's, funeral monument features his daughters holding his coat of arms in a definitive statement that they were his legitimate heirs, despite being female.



ELIZABETH'S OWN MONUMENT



- Her children in various postures of power
- Dressed in widow's weeds
- Latin and Greek inscriptions display her expertise

OTHERS



CONCLUSION

- Although Elizabeth faded from court news when she moved back to her estate at Bisham, she continued to exercise her influence on those around her. She continued her work as a scholar and left monuments to herself and her family, helping to define the way that later generations would analyze her life.

IMAGES

- *A Way of Reconciliation of a Good and Learned Man*, Lady Elizabeth Russell Dowager, 1605. Provided by Early English Books Online.
- All remaining photos: author's collection, taken March 2019.