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Elizabeth's Silver Age

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Elizabeth’s Silver Age

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Introduction

“Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
   Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee.
Nor none of thee [silver], thou pale and common drudge
   Tween man and man.
But thou, thou meagre lead,
Which rather threaten’st than dost promise aught,
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence,
   And here choose I.”

-- William Shakespeare (Merchant Of Venice, Act 3, Scene 2, 101-106)

In 1547, Henry VIII, King of England, Ireland and France, died. His disastrous decision to debase the currency in the 1540s, in order to use the profits to war with France, left his kingdom in financial ruin and economic turmoil. Furthermore, Edward VI, who was only nine years old, inherited the kingdom. This left powerful lords and the boy’s uncle, Edward Seymour, Protector Somerset, in charge. He decided to push Henry VIII’s religious reformation farther towards Protestantism than Henry VIII ever intended, and indeed farther than Elizabeth I later would. Churches were smashed and plundered of everything that Henry VIII left after his dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, and a new radical prayer book was established.

Moreover, Protector Somerset provoked an expensive war with Scotland, and he further debased the currency. But then, suddenly, in 1553 Edward VI took ill and died at the age of 15. He made an attempt through his will to establish his Protestant cousin, Jane Grey, as his immediate successor; but after she reigned for only nine days, Mary I -- Henry VIII’s eldest daughter from his marriage with Catherine of Aragon -- entered London with the popular support of the people
and most of the nobles. So, in 1553, Mary I, a staunch Catholic, acceded to the throne of England. Shortly, popular support for Mary I would wane, and she would go down in history as England’s most infamous queen -- Bloody Mary. First, she entered an unpopular marriage with Philip II, the Hapsburg king of Spain and the Netherlands. Then, in turn, she brought the Spanish Inquisition to England -- burning 280 men and women for heresy. Perhaps worse (given that none of the Tudors were particularly tolerant in religious matters), she engaged England in another war with France, this time as an ally of Spain. The alliance benefited Spain more than England, however, as Philip II raided the English treasury and again debased the currency for the purpose of advancing a Spanish/Hapsburg agenda, with little thought to England’s own interest. As a result, the English lost their last remaining foothold on the continent, Calais, to the French in 1558: Mary I, already sick and in isolation, died shortly afterward, still deeply bemoaning the loss.

Therefore, in accordance with Henry VIII’s will, his second daughter -- a bastard according to canon law -- Elizabeth I, acceded to the throne of England. Immediately, she faced several major problems. First, she was surrounded by enemies. France and Scotland straddled England’s borders, and Mary Queen of Scots (who was married to the Dauphin of France and briefly became queen consort of France in 1559-60 before her husband died as King Francis II) claimed a better lineage to inherit the crown of England than Elizabeth I -- Mary was a great-granddaughter of Henry VII, and more importantly not a bastard. She cornered her sigil and everyone at the French court addressed her as the queen of England. As such, Mary Queen of Scots posed an imminent threat to Elizabeth I. Second, Catholic Spain and Philip II controlled possibly the wealthiest empire the world had seen to that time, and also the Netherlands only a
short distance across the channel from England. This added to the threat that Elizabeth I faced from Catholic powers. Third, Elizabeth faced religious discord in her own kingdom. No one knows the exact balance of Protestants and Catholics (and those in between) upon her accession, but without doubt the issue created the potential for domestic unrest and gave her Catholic enemies a possible weapon to use against her. Fourth, her treasury was empty, and her revenues scarce. As mentioned above, the wars of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Philip II had all stretched the financial capabilities of England to the limits by using financial expediencies -- mainly debasing the coinage. This created Elizabeth’s last problem -- the debased currency itself, which many blamed for the inflation that plagued the realm: starting in the 1540s, prices and wages rose sharply, and continued to rise for more than a century. The great inflation, as some historians have later called it, boggled English minds and inspired discourses that blamed social and economic changes on inflation. By the time Elizabeth I acceded to the throne, the debasement of the currency had become the official explanation for the cause of the inflation plaguing her kingdom. Elizabeth I’s recoinage of 1561, that restored the value of English coins -- attributed to her as her third greatest achievement on her gravestone -- intended to halt this inflation. Of course, the attempt to halt the inflation failed, but overall Elizabeth I prevailed; she reigned for 45 years, ruling over what has become known as a golden age.

For example, she fixed England's financial woes, and set her on a path towards a global empire. England’s royal merchant, Thomas Gresham,¹ wrote to Elizabeth I at the time of her accession on 17 November 1558 to “Come in as small debtt as you can beyond seays” and “keep your creditt, and specially with your owne marchants, for it is thaye must stand by youe att all

¹ The man credited by modern economist with Gresham’s Law: that bad money drives out the good.
eventes in your necessity.” A bullion shortage in the realm should have made this nationalistic advice impossible, however. For instance, it has been estimated by Sir Albert Feavearyear that Elizabeth’s entire realm contained only 900,000 li worth of silver coinage, while C.E. Challis has estimated the circulating medium at only 1,454,000 li after the recoinage of 1561. Nevertheless, Elizabeth found a way to keep Gresham’s advice long after his death in the early 1570s. Between 1559 and 1574 Elizabeth I borrowed 1,000,000 li overseas; from 1575 onwards, however, she borrowed only on her own island. She borrowed from the Corporation of London in 1575-6, and in 1588-9. She also forced loans from her wealthiest subjects in 1569, 1588, 1590, 1597, and 1601 that raised a total of 330,600 li. She borrowed another 90,000 li from London between 1598 and 1601. This transition from a reliance on foreign loans towards a reliance on domestic sources of liquid capital remains one of the signal achievements of the Elizabethan Age; perhaps overlooked because, despite war and famine and pestilence, Elizabeth I left more gold and silver to James I than debt.

Moreover, the English renaissance reached new heights during her reign. The achievements of Shakespeare and the other great playwrights, who benefitted from the movement of plays from town squares and common halls to immense new theatres, provide the best example of this. The first theatre was built in 1576 and called The Theatre. It was named after its amphitheater shape adopted from Roman culture. Playhouses were elaborate constructions: silver was needed to pay ironmongers, carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers and

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painters in order to build them. Moreover, the entire investment only made sense if one could expect a consistent audience willing to pay in silver coins to watch the players. It seems this happened and London city dwellers possessed plenty of silver for the theatre. William Harrison wrote some time between 1572 and 1592 that it was “an evident token of a wicked time, when plaiers waxe so riche that they can build such houses” -- such houses as The Rose (1587), The Globe (1599), and The Fortune (1600). One actor in particular has been noted by historian Christopher Hill: “the financial genius of James Burbage brought playing from a small scale enterprise to a big business.” Indeed, James Burbage, a leading member of the earl of Leicester's company, obtained a 21 year lease on the first theatre; and, thereafter, he participated in the building of several other playhouses before he died a rich man.

On top of this, England saw her exploration, and more importantly trade, expand in an unprecedented fashion by the end of Elizabeth’s reign. In fact, the establishment of the East India Company (EIC) in 1600 marks perhaps the most outstanding achievement of the Elizabethan age. Starting in the 1540s the famous silver cycle developed, which transferred silver from Japan, Europe, and the New World towards China, where it could be disposed of at 50% premium. The EIC aimed to take advantage of the price of silver in the east, and was thus a part of the silver cycle. In its first voyage, it exported 21,742 li worth of silver to the east for trade. By 1624 the company had exported altogether in 23 years 753,336 li in silver bullion.

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8 The Queen’s company was formed in 1583 largely of Leicester’s men -- and probably because of the large profits made by James Burbage from The Theatre.
11 Ibid.
Throughout this period the company sought to export its silver specie in the form of the Spanish coins known as rials of eight, the Spanish rial having been made familiar in Asia by the century-old trans-pacific trading activity of the two Iberian powers.\textsuperscript{12} Interestingly, in October 1600, the Court of Committees sent two agents to the West Country commissioning them to buy provisions and rials, a supply of which appears to have come to that part of the country as a result of some privateering expeditions.\textsuperscript{13}

The question, then, is how did England -- despite all the challenges -- find a way to prosper during the Elizabethan age? The answer, perhaps, has to do with the expansion of the English money supply: the circulating medium, calculated by Dr. C.E. Challis, doubled during the reign of Elizabeth I. From a modern perspective, the importance of the increased bullion supply to Elizabethan England becomes clear; it is well accepted that an increased money supply can help to grow a modern economy. This truth probably holds for Elizabethan England, as many other elements required for increased economic expansion were in place: a growing population, an active public authority, towns and specialization, for example.\textsuperscript{14} Silver coinage matters specifically because, at this time, it linked region to region and allowed for international trade. An economic observer in England recorded in 1603 that “payments run betwixt merchant and merchant in silver; in the Customs House in silver; and all petty payments throughout the kingdom in silver.”\textsuperscript{15} This linkage allowed by a ready supply of coinage increased production: the producers could now acquire silver specie with their excess production in order to buy goods

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. 30
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. 31
\textsuperscript{14} Alexander Murray, \textit{Reason and Society in the Middle Ages} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 52
not available locally.\textsuperscript{16} Without this ability, it becomes a waste of time for the producers to produce more than the local economy needs or can absorb. Truly it can be said of the time that “plenty of money is the life of trade, scarcity is the maim of trade.”\textsuperscript{17} Perhaps most importantly, a silver economy in England allowed merchants and the moneyed class to thrive as their position allowed them to prosper most from the situation. Without a doubt, Elizabeth’s merchant class possessed enough liquid capital by the 1590s to fund her wars against the Irish rebels and Spain -- an ability they lacked in the 1560s and 70s -- while at the same time still possessing enough to invest heavily in trade and privateering and colonial planting.

The historiography of the expansion of the Elizabethan money supply seems confused at best. The Dutch historian Jan De Vries makes it clear in his book, \textit{The First Modern Economy}, that an increased money supply helped spark the Dutch “Golden Age.”\textsuperscript{18} He also lays out the path of the silver, with the main source being the Dutch Republic’s positive balance of trade with the Habsburg Netherlands; the money traveled to Spain and then to her armies in the Netherlands and from there was drained to the North through trade with the Dutch.\textsuperscript{19} By way of comparison, no path for the Spanish silver has been laid out in the English economic history of the sixteenth century.

The more general economic and social histories of the era tend to give the topic perfunctory treatment (and tend to come down on whatever side best fits their larger argument).\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Supple, \textit{Commercial Crisis and Change in England}, 13
\textsuperscript{18} Jan De Vries and Ad Van Der Woude, \textit{The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1800} (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1997), 89
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 371
Lawrence Stone wrote specifically about the economic and social history of England in his classic *Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641* published by Oxford University Press in 1965. His argument about a collapsing aristocracy probably led him to write-off Elizabethan privateering as a negative; perhaps purposefully placing his privateering chapter next to his chapter about the aristocracy’s love of gambling -- in order to drive home the point without providing any hard evidence that privateering lost money for the aristocracy (who had invested heavily in it).

Christopher Hill also had a general economic and social history of England published in 1967, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, reprinted in the Pelican Economic History of England series by Penguin Books in 1969. He overtly argues that capitalist change spurred social change and thus brings attention to the influx of bullion in the reign of Elizabeth I -- because an expanding source of liquid capital or real money helps explain the rise of capitalism. He wrote about the immense amount of bullion coined into liquid capital during the reign that “most of it [was] believed to be plunder seized from Spain.”

So clearly Hill suggests that privateering was the source of bullion that led to an increased money supply, although he barely treats the issue and only cites Kenneth Andrews’s work, to be dealt with below.

Andrews’s works can be classified into another category of monographs, which deal primarily with the history of the Elizabethan Privateers, and these books rarely elevate privateers by discussing their contribution to the money supply or to economic expansion in the Elizabethan Age. Andrews wrote the preeminent book in this category, *Elizabethan Privateering*, published in 1964 by Cambridge University Press. He focuses on the profitability of privateering. Unfortunately, he ignores the issue of an expanding money supply altogether,

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21 Christopher Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 77
though his chapters about the rise of the merchant class and professional privateers does lead one to assume that privateering explains the expansion in the English money supply -- as Hill did only a few years after Andrews’s book was published.

Other works in this category follow a similar path to Andrews’s book in that they overlook or bypass the privateers as an explanation for the expanding money supply. James A. Williamson’s *The Age of Drake* published in 1938 by Macmillan Press in London -- with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi war machine gearing up -- had a noticeable and understandable tendency towards nationalism (and the contributions of pirates towards English nationalism). Williamson wrote that “the whole world today would have been unimaginably different, but for the achievements of the Age” and that the Elizabethan privateers were “great men whose spirits blazed in such a galaxy as was never seen in England before, nor has been since.”22 A more recent work, *Pirate Nation*, written by David Childs and published by Seaforth Publishing in 2014, tries to undermine the contribution of the Elizabethan Privateers to the history of England, and therefore leaves out their potential contribution to the money supply. Instead, he focuses on the opportunity cost of privateering -- i.e. delayed expansion in trade and colonization -- without consideration of its benefits.

An exception to the rule of this category is Mark Hanna’s book, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire*, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2015. It probably reigns as the most elaborate recent work on English pirate history. Hanna, much like Hill before him, relies heavily on Dr. Andrews’s work in his first chapter (1570-1603) to argue for the importance of pirates or privateers to the economic history of England. His argument elevates the

significance of bullion captures stating that “Inadequate money supplies could foster the perception, and perhaps reality, of ‘Collapsing prices, labourers laid off, bankruptcies amongst merchants and resultant poverty and weakness in the State.’” In other words, a lack of silver coinage created deflationary pressure on an early modern economy. Unfortunately, an inherent difficulty persist in citing the numbers produced by Andrews to explain an increasing money supply. Here, Hanna runs into the same problem as Hill before him, in that his argument lacks definitive evidence that privateering was the source of Spanish bullion coined at the mint.

Interestingly, the histories of the mint tend to touch more upon the heart of the matter than the general, economic, or pirate histories of the period. In 1952, John Craig wrote a history titled *The Mint*, published by Cambridge University Press. Discussing the reign of Elizabeth I he wrote that the “coinage of the reign passed the then phenomenal total of £5,400,000” with almost all of the new bullion “believed by the mint to be the plunder of Spain.” However, outside of this short note, Craig leaves the issue undiscussed and he provides no citation for the claim. In 1978, C.E. Challis wrote *The Tudor Coinage*, published by Manchester University Press. Challis discusses all the possible ways to explain the boom in mint production without drawing any firm conclusions. He mentions mining, de-hoarding, bimetallic flows, trade and privateering. He also notes that “there is clear evidence of Spanish bullion not only influencing but actually dominating mint supply,” and that “depredations on the high seas did in practice bring the most important net gains.”

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24 John Craig, *The Mint*, 132
25 C.E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, 197
26 Ibid. 150
The source of these net gains matters because, as mentioned above, the money supply doubled during the reign of Elizabeth I. This claim, of course, is a complicated one. Afterall, it is not as simple as looking at coin production and adding it all up: coins are lost; coins wear out; people clip coins; coins are lost through an unfavorable balance of trade; foreign coins are gained through a favorable balance of trade; and there are a number of other inflow and outflow considerations. Nevertheless, Challis tackles the issue at great length in his book *The Tudor Coinage*, dedicating an entire chapter to determining the size of what he called the circulating medium at any given time. While the calculations seem impossible, he simplifies the matter by observing that “the circulating medium at a given time may be the equivalent of no more than the accumulated stock of the preceding thirty years.”

He then concludes that the circulating medium in October of 1561 (after Elizabeth’s restoration of the coinage) stood at 1,454,000 li, while also estimating the circulating medium in 1603 (the year of Elizabeth I’s death) amounted to 3,490,000 li -- more than a 100 percent increase. Challenging the exactness of these figures seems almost irrelevant, because whether the circulating medium increased by 120 percent or by 80 percent, it still increased dramatically. Moreover, other historians have accepted Challis’s calculations as the best available and roughly accurate.

Of course, the character of the money supply was in many ways as complicated as today. In England, the pound sterling (represented by li or £) began as a unit of account in 758 CE. King Offa declared that one pound of silver should be cut into 240 pieces, called pennies, and

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27 This paper will consider the money supply and the circulating medium as interchangeable, although other factors certainly affect the money supply such as the amount of credit available.  
28 Ibid. 247  
that the pennies should circulate as currency. By the time of Elizabeth, two units of account were in use in England: the pound\(^{30}\) and the mark. A mark equaled about two-thirds of one pound (although usage of the mark in official documents fell out of style throughout the period). Too many different types of coins circulated during the Elizabethan age to list here, with their values being only fractions of the units of account mentioned. Probably the most important coin that regularly circulated was the Elizabethan silver shilling. The shilling was also a unit of account, with 20s equating to 1 \(\text{li}\). In theory, the regime controlled the value of these coins, rather than the bullion content alone determining value; but, in practice, market forces caused coin values to converge with their bullion content. Mostly because of this, the Elizabethan regime always attempted to keep coin values in line with their bullion content value -- Elizabeth I took great pride in her restoration of the value of coins after she had initially inherited the debased coins of the previous regimes.

With those basics out of the way, the shortage of small coinage that plagued Tudor England also needs attention, as it led to localities creating tokens, mainly from lead, that circulated within small areas. For example, the second largest city in England at the time, Bristol, had a token that circulated as currency. The problem -- besides the shortage of bullion that was a problem at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign and for all the reigns before -- was the value of silver; even when coined to the smallest size practicable, the bullion content in the coin had too much value to trade for many small goods or services. So, tokens and other forms of micro credit filled this need when necessary. As it happened, the tokens filled a need, but also created problems. They had an unstable relationship to gold and silver, meaning these makeshift

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\(^{30}\) There actually was a gold coin minted worth a pound, but it was also struck in small numbers for ceremonial purposes and rarely circulated; it also had to be revalued to 30 shillings (One and one-half pound) a short time after production.
currencies only had local utility. This, of course, hampered trade and thus economic growth because it dampened the incentive for production (as mentioned above, the producer needed the incentive of silver coinage that could be used to buy goods not available locally in order incentivise him/her to produce a surplus). This seems crucial as, on the one hand, the lack of small coinage should be seen as a large reason that regional economies failed to integrate for over a thousand years, and the lack of even regional integration led to practically stagnant -- if variable short term -- economies throughout Europe over that time period. On the other hand, it was only when the Dutch economy accumulated enough silver coinage in the 1580s to integrate its towns and cities that its economy exploded -- allowing a very small but integrated nation to compete with the largest states and empires of its day, even building its own empire in the process. Thus, the prevailing belief among many early modern and medieval historians that any object agreed upon could serve as currency seems flawed, in that only gold and silver were ever agreed upon in a way that allowed them to circulate in wider than a ten-mile radius. As it happened, Elizabethan England possibly failed to accumulate enough silver to solve the issues involved with the usage of tokens to support local economies. A high estimate of 3,500,000 li for the circulating medium in 1603 leaves less than 1 li per person, given the estimated population in England at the time of 4 million people. It is not clear, but probably unlikely, that this “sufficed for a fully cash economy.”31 Moreover, Elizabeth I failed to heed available advice that suggested she mix silver with copper in order to produce coins large enough but valuable enough to fill the need for small coinage. So, even if the supply could have sustained a fully silver coin economy, Elizabeth I seems to have held too tightly to other economic theories about a pure coinage --

31 Pallister, The Age of Elizabeth, 136
such as those held by her royal merchant, Thomas Gresham -- to cede to the higher wisdom of fixing the problem of a lack of small coinage. For reference, tokens are left out of Challis’s calculation of the circulating medium (which strikes me as the correct decision as tokens allowed a local economy to function, but did not allow for growth beyond a certain point).

The Irish war at the end of Elizabeth’s reign serves as a good example to further illustrate the point about tokens or other makeshift currencies. The bullion supply played a vital role during the Irish rebellion of the 1590s, commonly called the Nine Years’ War. In 1601, the English minted lead coins (tokens) in Ireland to simultaneously pay for the war and to attack the earl of Tyrone’s ability to purchase goods in foreign markets. The move, however, backfired on the English. The Irish controlled most of the countryside, and therefore most of the commodities. Merchants proved willing to pay bullion coins for Irish commodities, and at the same time unwilling to accept the newly minted and debased English coins. As a result, English trade in Ireland dropped substantially, and commodity prices rose by 50 percent. In 1603, the commander in Ireland, Lord Mountjoy, had to advise the Privy Council that a mutiny in the army and another rebellion were probable unless they fixed the debased currency. This incident in Ireland demonstrates the central role of the bullion supply in paying and maintaining an army, as well as the link between the bullion supply and trade -- a link that could be weaponized in a time of war.

The issue of foreign currencies that circulated in England and their contribution -- or lack of contribution -- to the money supply and the circulating medium also needs attention. The regime’s ability to change the value of coins, regardless of their bullion content, did prove useful as officially devaluing foreign coins helped expel them from circulation in England. In fact,

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William Harrison explained in his *Description of England* that many foreign coins circulated during the reign of Mary I, as her husband Philip II had made it legal for Spanish coins as well as coins from the Netherlands to circulate freely. Elizabeth I, or her councillors, on the other hand, used their ability to legally devalue foreign coins to clear England of foreign coins. This leads to some ambiguity, but in the event, Challis does not include foreign coins in his calculation of the circulating medium after 1561. So, if Spanish rials of eight minted in Mexico and Peru circulated in large numbers then the calculations of the money supply only increase. And, it does seem reasonable to speculate that Spanish rials of eight captured by pirates or privateers circulated in England rather than to assume that they were recoined at the English mint. It also seems fair to speculate that merchants preferred the rials of eight for foreign trade, however, as seen through the example of the EIC above, thus shortening the lifespan of rials of eight within England’s circulating medium. Whatever the case, the larger question remains: why did the circulating medium increase so sharply between 1561 and 1603? Do contemporary assumptions about plundering the Spanish have it right? Do Hill and Hanna and Challis have it correct that piracy and privateering and plundering the Spanish brought the majority of this silver into England? Ultimately, was Sir Francis Drake’s nephew, Francis Drake, correct in 1620 in his call for the English to once again plunder the Spanish to solve the problem of the mint running dry (and the resulting dearth of coinage in the kingdom) in *Sir Francis Drake Revived; Calling upon this Dull or Effeminate Age to Folowe His Noble Steps for Golde and Silver*? Only an examination of the evidence to see exactly what happened on the high seas during the reign of Elizabeth can answer this central question concerning the source of the expansion in the Elizabethan money supply.
An examination of the Admiralty Court, then becomes paramount to answering these questions. For example, most of the relevant English documents, in regard to the value of prize captures, pass down from records of the Admiralty Court and the vice admirals who occupied the ports and registered the cargoes of prize captures. The Admiralty Court was created in the thirteenth century, along with the creation of the office of the lord admiral. From the time of its creation and throughout the sixteenth century, the Admiralty Court “remained a private franchise”\textsuperscript{33} of the lord admiral -- an official chosen by the monarch and one of the highest offices in the land. The lord admiral then chose men to fill the role of vice admirals for the coastal counties and ports of England. The vice admirals played a key role in creating much of the evidence still in existence from the Admiralty Court about the size of privateering captures. Among many others, their responsibilities included examining the captures made by privateers so that the queen’s fifth and the lord admiral’s tenth could be collected. In a sense, vice admirals can be considered as the customs officers of privateering. Of course, the documents created by the vice admirals are not the only source for the value of prize captures that passed down from the admiralty. In theory, an English victim of piracy could file a claim with the Admiralty Court, and foreign victims complaints about English piracy also fell to the courts. In the first case, the Admiralty Court considered the case and decided to issue a letter of reprisal if the merchants claim seemed satisfactory. This letter of reprisal gave the merchant the right to arm ships and plunder on the high seas until his losses had been recouped. In the latter case, if the Admiralty Court found the evidence convincing, it would attempt to use its enforcement apparatus, which centered on the vice admirals, to capture the pirates and return the goods to the foreign claimant.

\textsuperscript{33} Robert W. Kenny, \textit{Elizabeth’s Admiral} (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), 37
It appears that the judges and lawyers took their responsibilities seriously, and a wealth of material remains available to the historian willing to wade through it. In this case, the inability to travel as well as time constraints make the task of examining the records impossible. Therefore, a heavy reliance on Andrews’s and other historians’s work in the archives will be necessary.

Nevertheless, much other primary source material exists in print form and online that will help to answer the question. For example, Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, gives accounts of practically every English voyage that ever took place as well as many that did not. Despite the narratives being inexact or completely negligent when it comes to the size of prize captures, *Principal Navigations* remains useful as it gives an accounting of every voyage under consideration, which allows for ample comparison of sources. Also, Sir William Monson participated in many of the voyages during the latter half of the reign, and he remarkably survived intact enough to pen *A TRUE and EXACT ACCOUNT OF THE Wars with Spain, In the REIGN of Q. ELIZABETH.*\(^{34}\) This work should generally be considered neither true nor exact, as Sir William Monson places himself in the middle of every scuffle, slashing left and right, slaying foes at will. Yet interestingly, if anything the tendency to write fictitiously probably led Monson to undervalue the captures on the voyages he participated in for reasons that will become clear later. Besides these printed works, the ability to access primary sources online has also proved helpful. The State Papers contain the inventories of several major carrack captures that are important as a source, as well as documents

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\(^{34}\) Full Title: *A TRUE and EXACT ACCOUNT OF THE Wars with Spain, In the REIGN of Q. ELIZABETH, (Of Famous Memory.) BEING The Particulars of what happened between the English and Spanish Fleets, from the Years 1585 to 1602. SHEWING The Expeditions, Attempts, Fights, Designs, Escapes, Successes, Errors, &c. on both sides. With the Names of Her Majesty’s Ships and Commanders in every Fleet. Being a Patern and Warning to Future Ages.*
that relate to the plunder seized during the raid on Cadiz in 1596. Most importantly of all, perhaps, will be my usage of accumulated primary sources in secondary works. The appendix in *Elizabethan Privateering* by Andrews provides a vast list of prize captures and cargoes, for example, along with the reference to the primary source documents that provide the evidence. In the same manner, comparing the evidence largely supplied by Andrews with the evidence from the mint provided by Challis (*The Tudor Coinage*) and Craig (*The Mint*)—complied in a similar manner to Andrews, with results next to references in the appendix—provides a rather simple way to help answer the central question: Were privateering and piracy the source of bullion coined at the English mint between 1558-1601?

With the primary sources above, and with the method laid out, the hope is to establish an answer to that question. In the first section, the focus stays on the famous voyages of John Hawkins and Francis Drake before 1585. Tensions reached a breaking point between England and Spain in 1585, and afterward privateering ventures became far more numerous. Thus, the voyages by Hawkins and Drake largely stand alone before that period. By looking at their voyages and examining multiple sources in relation to each, the evidence of bullion captured will be highlighted and then compared with the sources from the mint to discover the correlation between mint production and these famous voyages. At the same time, a story of increasing aggression and boldness in English foreign policy will come to light, which largely led to the war with Spain escalating from cold to hot status in 1585. In the second section, the effects of privateering after 1585 will be examined, with the same idea in mind of comparing the prize

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35 It is of course possible that the bullion captured never arrived at the mint, a factor that needs to be considered as well. Yet, the input records of the mint have been lost, so establishing a correlation between bullion captures and mint production seems best because while correlation does not equal causation, a lack of correlation does disprove causation.
captures with the mint production. The number of significant captures increases substantially in this period, preventing the ability to track every voyage; but the sources also become better, with the appendix in Andrews’s work *Elizabethan Privateering* becoming relevant. This period also sees several carrack captures, as well as the raid on Cadiz in 1596; so, the State Papers accessed online provide ample and interesting evidence. The third section will focus on analysis: English piracy and privateering must be placed in the context of the broader maritime world. Also, other sources for the influx of bullion deserve some attention, in order to better quantify the results of the inquiry. Ultimately, it appears that the more famous voyages of Hawkins and Drake returned much less bullion than the more numerous voyages afterwards, while at the same time coin production remained consistent throughout the Elizabethan era -- which suggests that piracy and privateering became a more important factor supplementing the money supply as the reign of Elizabeth I progressed, rather than being the primary factor that caused the expansion.

**1563-1582: The famous age of Hawkins and Drake**

“I am a great servant of the majesty of King Philip, whom I served when he was king of England”

--Sir John Hawkins, 1564

In the year 1562, John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* was published, detailing the grisly acts of Mary I’s and Philip II’s Catholic regime in England with horrifying pictures and an elaborate telling of all 280 of the Protestants burnt during the reign. The book became a bestseller, so to
speak, for the time, and provided Protestants with anti-Catholic propaganda for centuries to come. Meanwhile, Elizabeth I busied herself by reducing her domestic debt, while at the same time borrowing in Antwerp in order to buy armaments for her kingdom. With hindsight, the year 1562 seems quite docile politically, as England signed a peace treaty with France in 1564, but clearly Elizabeth felt the need to be prepared. Besides France, with whom she remained at war, her other Catholic enemies seemed temporarily cooperative as Elizabeth used the possibility of her hand in marriage to political advantage. Amidst this relative quiet, the first English voyage to the West Indies was approved and set sail, starting the careers of two men who later became famous for their exploits -- cousins, John Hawkins and Francis Drake. The first voyage in 1563 was also the first English slaving voyage. Led by John Hawkins, it had enough success that two subsequent trading voyages followed in 1565 and 1568. A major conflict between Hawkins and the Spanish during the 1568 voyage, that coincided with a Protestant revolt against the Spanish in the Netherlands, and with a Spanish payship loaded with bullion being chased into English ports by Huguenot rovers, caused escalating tensions between England and Spain. Afterward, the English no longer sought to trade in the West Indies, but rather to raid. The raids started in 1570, with Francis Drake leading the way with two small ships. The period ends in 1581 when Francis Drake returned from his circumnavigation of the globe, the most famous raid ever attempted by the English. So while the English provocations against the Spanish increased, the strategy switched from trade to raid, and the bullion captures (especially by Francis Drake) turned two pirates into national heroes for starting a war with the wealthiest empire in Europe as well as the Catholic world.
The exact profit -- and bullion return -- from the first English slaving voyage remains elusive, despite its fame. John Hawkins made his first trip to the West Indies, in search of bullion through a combination of piracy and trade in 1562. (Of course, as far as Philip II of Spain was concerned, both piracy and trade were illegal for the English in the West Indies.) John Hawkins had connections on the Azores who had enthralled him with tales about the West Indies, and his father had also left him some knowledge of the area. So, “being amongst other particulars assured, that *Negros* were very good marchandise in *Hispaniola*, and that store of *Negros* might easily bee had vpon the coast of *Guinea*, [he] resolued with himselfe to make triall thereof.”

He departed from the coast of England in October of 1562, after he took investments from high ups in London, including William Winter -- the queen’s Surveyor of the Navy. In Sierra Leone, he captured “300 *Negros* at the least” along with other merchandise. Afterward, he sailed to the West Indies and made stops in three separate ports to sell his slaves. With his tremendous profit, he sailed home to England, where he arrived in September of 1563. Dr. Harry Kelsey tells the fullest tale of the slaving voyage in the biography, *Sir John Hawkins*. He reveals Spanish and Portuguese sources that claim Hawkins captured six Portuguese ships on his way to Africa with cargoes of “cloves, wax, ivory, and nearly four hundred black slaves.” Hawkins then sailed the slaves to the West Indies in order to trade, and eventually “Hawkins found that he had more than he could conveniently carry home.” In the event, he arranged for two Spanish hulks to carry home the extra goods, but these two ships were eventually seized by the authorities in Seville. Despite this loss of excess profit, Hawkins’s ships returned to England with “Spanish coins,

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36 Richard Hakluyt, *The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation*, vol. 3 (1591: EEBO) p. 500
37 Ibid.
39 Ibid. 16
jewels and trade goods. A later Admiralty Court document (filed by Hawkins in search of a reprisal letter against the Spanish after a conflict during his third slaving voyage covered below) claims each slave held a worth of 160 *li*. Even accepting that amount as an exaggeration, 400 slaves at half that price comes to 32,000 *li*. So while the range of possible profit remains wide, it rose high enough to inspire the queen to invest in a second slaving voyage the following year.

As with the first slaving voyage, the Elizabethan regime sought to keep the profits to investors tightly under wraps; in hopes that the peace could be kept with the Spanish despite the provocation of the voyages themselves. This perhaps went doubly so for Hawkins’s second slaving voyage, as this time the queen herself was an investor. Hawkins used the queen’s *Jesus of Lubeck*, a massive ship of 700-tons burden, as well as three other ships and sailed for the Guinea Coast in October of 1564. After spending time on the African coast collecting slaves and other merchandise, Hawkins sailed for the West Indies. Hawkins made contact with land in the West Indies on 3 April 1565, and he immediately sought to trade his human cargo. This time Hawkins made four trading stops in the West Indies, but with far more contention than on his first voyage; Philip II had ensured that his ministers in the West Indies knew that trade with the English was prohibited by making examples of the leaders who had traded with Hawkins in 1562-3. Hawkins’s third stop in the West Indies, Rio de la Hacha, proved the most querulous -- Hawkins even donned armor with 100 other men, and came ashore to confront the Spaniards; although, despite a lot of bluster from the Spaniards as well, no men were lost in the confrontation. Instead, the two sides struck a deal that allowed Hawkins to trade peacefully: the fact remained that Spaniards in the West Indies needed more slaves, so local authorities felt keen

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40 Ibid. 18
41 Roland, *Pirate Queen*, 141
to acquiesce in trade with the English and buy their tax-free slaves -- despite firm orders from their king. Hawkins unloaded the last of his cargo in Havana before he sailed back to England on 28 July 1565. Much later, in 1589, Richard Hakluyt reported that Hawkins returned “with great profit to the venturers of the said voyage” and also with great profit “to the whole realme, in bringing home both golde, siluer, pearles and other iewels of great store.” As they are discovered, the Spanish sources provide more clarity. For instance, a receipt from Hawkins’s sales in Borburata reveals a revenue of 4,176 li. Moreover, a letter written by an informant to the Spanish ambassador, Guzman de Silva, states that Hawkins “brought back more than 50,000 ducados in gold, plus some pearls, hides, and sugar in payment for his slaves.” The 50,000 ducats in gold alone converts to roughly 12,500 li, the exact amount of profit stated by historian David Childs. So, the documents for Hawkins second slaving voyage remain scarce, but it can be surmised that he probably returned with somewhat less profit than his first slaving voyage.

Even so, a third voyage was promptly planned, the profit of which also remains under debate. Richard Hakluyt later called Hawkins’s third voyage his “troublesome voyage,” because of a battle that took place at San Juan de Ulloa against the Spanish. On 2 October 1567 John Hawkins, accompanied by his cousin Francis Drake, left Plymouth with six ships including two of the queen’s warships (of which she had around 30). Just as on the second voyage, the queen’s 700-ton Jesus of Lubeck sailed as the flagship, and Hawkins ventured his ships towards West Africa in order to secure slaves to trade in the West Indies for gold and silver and pearls. Hawkins used two methods in order to gather his slaves: direct raids on villages, and the

\[42\] Hakluyt, *The principal navigations, voyages, vol. 3*, 521
\[43\] Roland, *Pirate Queen*, 103
\[44\] Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins*, 31
\[45\] Hakluyt, *The principal navigations, voyages, vol. 3*, 521
pillaging of Portuguese shipping. The first was legal, the second was piracy. In the event, Hawkins used these two methods to collect an estimated 400 slaves. After two successful trading stops in the West Indies, however, Hawkins sailed into a hurricane. Scattered by the storm, the fleet managed to reconvene, and then retreated to San Juan de Ulloa on 19 September 1568. The port accepted Hawkins and crew inside without any fight because Spanish officials mistook the English ships for the Spanish treasure flota that was shortly set to arrive. This coincidence turned out both fortunate and unfortunate for Hawkins. On the one hand, easy entrance to the harbor for his devastated fleet helped him avoid running out of water, starvation and possible mutiny, as no other landing spot existed on the whole coast. On the other hand, the treasure flota arrived with Hawkins’s fleet still in the port, creating a dangerous situation as well as a diplomatically sensitive one. In the end, Hawkins allowed the Spanish flota into the port under truce, but the Spanish broke the truce and a battle broke out. Battle details are hazy, but it is certain that the English managed to partially repel the attack and escape to sea, with Hawkins arriving in England at Mounts Bay, Cornwall, on 25 January 1569. In the event, it seems clear that before San Juan de Ulloa, Hawkins financial success had equaled or even surpassed his lucrative first voyage. An issue arises with the battle, however, in regard to how much of the English cargo might have been saved and returned to England. At the time, an English captain told his Spanish captors that “all the gold and silver and pearls that John Hawkins possessed on the day of the battle was taken by the Spaniards.” The Spanish viceroy, on the other hand, sent a letter to Spain explaining that Hawkins escaped with “the greater part of his loot.” For his own part, John Hawkins filed a claim with the Admiralty Court seeking a letter of reprisal for

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47 Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins*, 91  
losses equalling 28, 914 li.⁴⁹ Notably, the English only managed to escape San Juan de Ulloa because Spanish soldiers became distracted pillaging the first two ships. That left four ships that made it back to England, probably with more than their fair share of the treasure. Perhaps this is why certain historians agree the English escaped with the loot. John Sugden claims that much if not most of the treasure from the voyage was saved on the Judith, captained by Francis Drake,⁵⁰ and John Cummins agrees that Hawkins had time to transfer his goods.⁵¹ Still, a wide range of possibilities persist when considering the financial return on Hawkins third and last slaving voyage.

In the political world, the battle at San Juan de Ulloa added to already increased tensions between the English and the Spanish -- or more truly between Elizabeth I and Philip II, given the intensely personal nature of politics during the age. In 1567, the Duke of Alba arrived in the Netherlands with an army to quell the revolt there. This act placed a Spanish army just across the channel from England, and placed Elizabeth I in the position of having to decide whether or not to help the Protestant rebels in the Netherlands against the Spanish. Then in December of 1568, around the same time that the news of Hawkins’s fray with the Spanish at San Juan de Ulloa reached England, Huguenot rovers chased four Spanish treasure ships that were laden with bullion to pay the Duke of Alba’s army in the Netherlands into the English ports of Falmouth, Plymouth and Southampton. Elizabeth I ordered the cargo removed from the ships for safekeeping, but the Spanish took this as a sign that she meant to keep the silver (in reality she had not yet made up her mind). As it played out, Philip II forced her hand by suspending trade between England and Spain, a suspension that would last until 1573. The ships contained silver

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⁴⁹ Roland, Pirate Queen, 142
⁵⁰ Sugden, Sir Francis Drake, 37
⁵¹ Cummins, Francis Drake, 28
and gold worth the then extraordinary amount of 85,000 \textit{lt}. While the Duke of Alba wrote furiously to encourage Elizabeth to return the species, Elizabeth discovered that it actually belonged to Genoese bankers. Therefore, Elizabeth stored the bullion in the tower, and after much deliberation decided to use her leverage to negotiate her own loan terms with the bankers. The gold and silver stayed in the tower until at least August of 1569, when Thomas Gresham wrote to Elizabeth’s lead councillor, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, to encourage him to turn the bullion into English coin: “Now, sir, seeing this monney in the tower doth appertain to merchants, I would wish the Queen’s Majestie to put it to use of some profit; as to mynt into her own coyne: whereby she shall be gainer … and enriche her realme with so much fine silver.”

The Elizabethan regime then acted on this advice, and much of the treasure meant to pay the Duke of Alba’s soldiers ended up at the English Mint in London.

The years after these political developments saw the cold war between England and Spain escalate perhaps to a level of no return. In 1569 Elizabeth I faced a Catholic rebellion in the north that sought to free Mary Queen of Scots from imprisonment and place her on the English throne. In January of 1570, the Protestant Regent of Scotland, the earl of Moray, was assassinated by Catholic conspirators. Then, on 2 June 1570, the Papal Bull \textit{Regnans in Excelsis} -- which excommunicated Elizabeth I -- was nailed to Bishop of London’s door; every Catholic in England now had papal consent to assassinate Elizabeth. Shortly thereafter, in May of 1571, a plot (commonly referred to as the Ridolfi Plot) that involved the Bishop of Ross (Mary Queen of Scots ambassador to Elizabeth), the Spanish Ambassador, Guerau de Spes, Mary herself, and Elizabeth’s eldest male cousin the Duke of Norfolk, was uncovered. The group conspired to

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52 Roland, \textit{Pirate Queen}, 135; Guy, \textit{Tudor England}, 276  
53 Burgon, \textit{The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 1}, 313
assist the Spanish with an invasion of England led by the Duke of Alba and his forces in the Netherlands. In the end, Philip II delegated the decision of whether or not to invade England to the Duke of Alba,\textsuperscript{54} and he passed on the idea as his hands were already full in the Netherlands. Finally, and worst of all for Elizabeth, the Spanish and Catholic forces emerged victorious from the battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571. This freed Philip II from his conflict with the Turks and allowed him to turn his attention wholly towards the Netherlands and England. Indeed, without “Lepanto the Great Armada against England would have been an impossibility.”\textsuperscript{55}

Amidst this political chaos, motivated by religion, greed, and revenge for San Juan de Ulloa, Francis Drake departed England with the intention to make direct raids against the Spanish in the West Indies. Sometime in 1570, Francis Drake sailed out of Plymouth on the \textit{Swan} and the \textit{Dragon} (probably both around 25 tons). His voyage was pure piracy, as it held no commission from the queen nor sanction from the Admiralty Court. Very little remains in the sources about Drake’s first voyage; perhaps he captured a few prizes. Years later he claimed that the purpose of the first venture was reconnaissance. Whatever the case, Drake traveled back to the West Indies in February 1571 for more piracy, and had far more success. First, he raided two Spanish frigates and took all their valuables. Next, he traveled up the Chagres River and plundered the town of Venta Cruces. Afterward, Drake set about cruising the coast and sacking smaller ships, probably successfully over ten times. A complaint in the Admiralty Court later alleged that Drake captured “divers barks that were transporting of merchandise of 40,000 ducats [£10,000]” and also “gold and silver.”\textsuperscript{56} These 1571 raids made Drake notorious in Spain and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Geoffrey Parker, \textit{Imprudent King: A New Life of Philip II}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 371
\item \textsuperscript{55} Antonio Dominguez Ortiz, \textit{The Golden Age of Spain 1516-1659} (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 68
\item \textsuperscript{56} Sugden, \textit{Sir Francis Drake}, 51
\end{itemize}
properly begin his legend in England, as he brought back more booty than any of Hawkins’s three slaving voyages: the secondary sources mostly agree that he returned with at least 66,000 li of plunder.\textsuperscript{57} Contemporary Spanish accounts of these raids, however, claim losses of 250,000 pesos or closer to 85,000 li.\textsuperscript{58} Whatever the case, shortly after his return, Drake departed on a third piratical voyage to the West Indies. A voyage that ultimately exposed the Achilles heel of the Spanish treasure route. On 24 May 1572 the \textit{Pasco} and the \textit{Swan} moved towards open waters with 73 men and Francis Drake as their leader. Again, the voyage departed without a letter of reprisal; although, given that Francis Drake still had his head after returning from his 1571 voyage, and given that England and Spain seemed on the brink of war in May of 1572, it would seem he held at least the implicit permission of the regime. In any event, Drake decided to ally with the cimarrones, who were escaped slaves living about Panama, and to attack the port city of Nombre de Dios. Nombre de Dios, located on the eastern coast of the Panama Isthmus, was a key port in the Spanish treasure route that linked the gold and silver mines in western South America with Spain. In 1572, however, it lacked proper fortifications: it had only two guns facing the harbour, and no regular garrison. Nevertheless, Drake’s first attack on the town actually failed as he took a bullet wound and the attack was aborted. Only after the English regrouped, solidified their alliance with the cimarrones, and were joined by a group of French pirates did an attack on the mule train crossing the isthmus finally succeed. Drake and his companions successfully raided the mule train on 31 March 1573 before heading back to England with the booty. As David Childs recounts the tale, Drake “ambushed a mule train loaded with silver bars.”\textsuperscript{59} Other historians agree, however, that Drake captured gold rather than silver.

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\item \textsuperscript{57} Sugden, \textit{Sir Francis Drake}, 51; Childs, \textit{Pirate Nation}, 23; Roland, \textit{Pirate Queen}, 153
\item \textsuperscript{58} Harry Kelsey, \textit{Sir Francis Drake: The Queen’s Pirate} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 50
\item \textsuperscript{59} Childs, \textit{Pirate Nation}, 24
\end{itemize}
John Sugden recounts that Drake took away “100,000 pesos in gold.” Dr. Susan Roland agrees that “gold was loaded.” Sugden and Roland also agree on the amount, roughly 40,000 $li$. Others report an amount of 20,000 $li$ in gold, however, as the loot was split with the French pirates who helped on the raid. In either case, piracy made Francis Drake a rich man, and gave him the fame to plan his next adventure.

Unfortunately for Drake, that adventure would have to wait as political events had changed in Europe while he was at sea. Mainly, the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre in Paris on 23 August 1572 led Elizabeth I to reconsider her position, and to attempt a reconciliation with Spain and Philip II. The infamous massacre left the Huguenot leader in France, Admiral Coligny, many other Huguenot leaders, as well as thousands of their followers dead. The Queen Regent of France, Catherine de Medici, then declared the slaughter as justified, terrifying English Protestants -- including England’s new Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, who was present in Paris at the time. Moreover, rebellion erupted in Ireland in 1573, and Elizabeth ordered Drake to Ireland to serve under the first earl of Essex in suppressing it. There, Francis Drake remained until sometime in 1576; not a lot is known about his time there, but he did participate in the massacre at Rathlin Island on 26 July 1575 when English troops led by Sir John Norris murdered everyone on the island -- including women and children, some 600 Scots and Irish. Still, Drake clearly used his time and position and fame in order to network, because despite a political situation in which England was trying to placate Spain, upon returning to England he received approval for an ambitious plan to raid the western coast of South America.

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60 Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake*, 62
61 Roland, *Pirate Queen*, 177
The raid, which turned into Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe, has no modern parallel: it would be something like travelling to the moon, if the moon were in enemy territory. Nonetheless, Drake collected an impressive list of investors for this ambitious voyage (even if he could only find a crew by telling the men that he planned a trading voyage to the Levant). Investors included family names from the naval administration such as Hawkins and Winters. Moreover, both of Elizabeth’s favorites, the earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley, and Christopher Hatton, invested along with the queen’s Secretary of State, Francis Walsingham. Unfortunately, the document that reveals the investors in Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe is mutilated, with the top lines being burnt off, so it is possible that other important names invested too.\textsuperscript{63} As such, it appears that Drake again had the implicit permission of the queen and regime without carrying any official documentation. Probably, Elizabeth I avoided placing her name on anything that could implicate her, as at this point she still hoped to keep peace with Spain. Whatever the exact case, Drake departed Plymouth on 15 November 1577 with five ships and 164 men. The fleet fell in with the coast of Brazil around 15 April 1578, and entered the Strait of Magellan on 20 August 1578. Drake then made a lightning quick voyage through the strait, entering the Pacific Ocean on 6 September 1578. Massive storms blew Drake’s fleet apart once he exited the Strait, however, and left only his flagship, the \textit{Golden Hind}, of probably 150-ton burden. Nonetheless, armed with cannons that could fire farther and quicker than anything the Spanish had -- and armed with the element of surprise -- the medium sized vessel performed miracles. First, the English sacked a small town and recovered “very pure and fine gold of Baldiva.”\textsuperscript{64} Thereafter, they plundered the Pacific coast of South America, including the capture of a treasure

\textsuperscript{63} Williamson, \textit{The Age of Drake}, 171

\textsuperscript{64} Richard Hakluyt, \textit{The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, Vol. 11} (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904) 116
ship, the Cacafuego. Having made this immense capture, Drake sought the quickest and safest route to England, and decided to cross the Pacific Ocean. It took months to cross the Pacific, and almost another year after that before Drake arrived in England, but he finally landed in Plymouth on 3 November 1580 -- almost three years after he had embarked. No one knows how much treasure and bullion Drake returned with except for Drake and the Elizabeth I, but an amount in the millions seems possible. Francis Drake himself confessed in the *World Encompassed* that the Cacafuego carried “80 pounds weight of gold” along with “26 tons of silver.”\(^{65}\) Similarly, the account in *Principal Navigations* records “foure score pound weight of gold, and six and twentie tunne of silver.”\(^{66}\) Lastly, a letter written by an informant to the Spanish ambassador claimed the English unloaded “twenty of this countries tons of silver.”\(^{67}\) Most of this silver goes missing in the official English accounts, however. Elizabeth I assigned Edmund Tremayne, clerk of the Privy Council, to accompany Drake to unload the treasure in Plymouth and take the first government accounting. Concerning the event, Tremayne later wrote to Francis Walsingham about that “portion that was landed secretly.”\(^{68}\) Indeed, the total treasure officially recovered and booked by Tremayne weighed only five tons,\(^{69}\) much less than only the bullion cargo from the Cacafuego. A later document from the Lord Treasurer, Lord Burghley, updated the report from Tremayne and recorded that ten tons of treasure was booked into the tower;\(^{70}\) presumably in the same document wherein Burghley values the treasure in the tower at 264,000 *li.*\(^{71}\) In the event, the queen’s generosity in the wake of Drake’s return sheds some light on the cargo. She gave

\(^{65}\) Roland, *Pirate Queen*, 231
\(^{66}\) Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, vol. 11*, 109
\(^{67}\) Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake*, 215
\(^{68}\) Ibid. 214
\(^{69}\) Roland, *Pirate Queen*, 241; Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake*, 215
\(^{70}\) Roland, *Pirate Queen*, 241;
\(^{71}\) Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake*, 149
29,000 li to the Dutch for their rebellion against Philip II,\textsuperscript{72} she invested 42,000 li into the Levant trading company,\textsuperscript{73} and she presented the Duke of Anjou with between 42,000 and 100,000 li to lead an attack against the Spanish in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{74} She also extinguished substantial debt that she accrued during the Irish rebellion of the 1570s.\textsuperscript{75} Furthermore, the Spanish ambassador wrote to Philip II and estimated the prize value at a “million and a half,”\textsuperscript{76} while the Jesuit Robert Parsons proclaimed in \textit{Letters and Memorial of Father Persons} that two million had returned with Drake on the \textit{Golden Hind}\textsuperscript{77} -- although neither specified a unit of account.

As it happened, England received Francis Drake as a conquering hero upon his return, largely because the political situation had again reversed itself while he was at sea. First of all, France was in a state of civil war, with the Protestant Huguenots facing off against the Catholic League (formed in 1576, and led by the powerful Duke of Guise). Philip II provided funds for the Catholic League, while Elizabeth I sided with the Huguenots, both pouring financial resources into the war. More importantly, in 1578 Philip II had appointed the highly intelligent Duke of Parma to oversee his army and operations in the Netherlands; this led to a rapid advance as the Duke of Parma piled up victory after victory. Naturally, this set off alarm bells in England, because if the Dutch were to lose, the English themselves seemed the logical next target for the Duke of Parma and Philip II. And perhaps most importantly, Philip II had acceded to the throne of Portugal, increasing his wealth and monopolizing the East Indies in 1580, while simultaneously increasing the size of his fleet. For these reasons, Elizabeth I celebrated Francis

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. 149
\textsuperscript{73} Cummins, \textit{Francis Drake}, 215; Sugden, \textit{Sir Francis Drake}, 149
\textsuperscript{74} Sugden, \textit{Sir Francis Drake}, 149; Roland, \textit{Pirate Queen}, 241
\textsuperscript{75} Sugden, \textit{Sir Francis Drake}, 149
\textsuperscript{76} Kelsey, \textit{Sir Francis Drake}, 215
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. 476
Drake’s accomplishment: she had the *Golden Hind* brought to London and placed on display, and also had Francis Drake knighted as Sir Francis Drake on board the ship in a great ceremony. His plunder gave her the ability to fund anyone and everyone willing to fight the Spanish, and helped to secure her own financial situation as well. In theory, Elizabeth I continued to seek peace with the Spanish -- quite literally up until the time that the Spanish Armada arrived in the channel -- but by 1580 a clear cold war had broken out, with Elizabeth I and Philip II funding opposing sides in two different wars.

The circumnavigation also brings an end to the singular narrative of the exploits of Sir John Hawkins and his cousin Sir Francis Drake; what started as the desire to trade backed by only a small faction had escalated to all-out raids seemingly backed by the entire regime. These raids, then, helped ignite a war with the world’s grandest empire, and brought back a fortune to England. Declaring a specific amount of revenue pulled from these raids would be overly ambitious given the sources, and declaring the amount of bullion seized a more difficult (if not impossible) task. With that said, establishing a range of between 500,000 li and 2,000,000 li seems reasonable. And moreover, most of that probably came into the realm with Francis Drake upon his return from circumnavigating the globe. Thus, it seems clear that much of the revenue did take the form of silver and gold, even if an estimate of the bullion that returned on Hawkins three slave trading voyages and Francis Drake’s first three piratical raids seems ambitious. In any event, Elizabeth I chose to keep Sir Francis Drake on the sideline for the next five years for the purpose of avoiding further provocation of Philip II. Only after several key political developments between 1583 and 1585 did Elizabeth I decide to release the dragon, *El Draque,*
once again against the Spanish. And this time, there would be no holding back, as the entire maritime force of the English turned to raiding after 1585 -- in search of God, glory and gold.

1583-1603: Elizabeth’s War with Spain

“The war with Spain hath been profitable no man with reason can gainsay; and how many millions we have taken from the Spaniard a thing notorious.”

--Richard Hawkins, 1605

In January 1583, Elizabeth’s last potential marriage match -- if one ever existed -- the Duke of Anjou, met his final catastrophe at Antwerp leading an attack against the Spanish; he then returned home to France in ignominious defeat. Also in 1583, the vaunted spy network of Sir Francis Walsingham uncovered the Throckmorton Plot, wherein the powerful and ambitious Duke of Guise planned to invade England alongside a popular uprising after assassinating Elizabeth I. The uncovering of this plot caused Elizabeth to expel the Spanish ambassador, Bernardino De Mendoza, from England; the last Spanish Ambassador allowed in England until Elizabeth’s death in 1603. Events then turned from bad to worse in 1584. In June, the Duke of Anjou died, leaving the Protestant Henry of Navarre the heir-presumptive to the throne of France. Later that same June, the Spanish managed to carry out a successful assassination attempt on the rebel leader in the Netherlands, the Prince of Orange. Within days of the assassination, the leading men around Elizabeth drew up a document called the Bond of
Association that required all signatories to avenge Elizabeth’s death in the event of a successful assassination. On top of all this, the Duke of Parma was taking advantage of the fall of the Duke of Anjou and the Prince of Orange in the Netherlands, continuing to capture more cities as he advanced to what looked almost certain to be total victory. Finally, in May of 1585, English ships were arrested in Spanish harbors, their cargoes confiscated and their crews imprisoned; Philip II had closed trade between the English and the Iberian Peninsula. This action led to many well-funded English merchants seeking letters of reprisal from the Admiralty Court. While at first the Admiralty Court took its responsibility to issue reprisals seriously, it soon became apparent to everyone that Spain and England were in an undeclared war; receiving a letter of reprisal became as easy as following a routine and purchasing one from the court. After all, who but the merchants could say how much had been lost, and who would bother to challenge them? Indeed, given the limited offensive capability of the Royal Navy, the regime seemed to well understand the value of letters of reprisal as a war strategy; it seems probable that somewhere between 200 and 300 privateering voyages set sail every year between 1585 and 1603.78 Therefore, as much treasure and bullion as Hawkins and Drake acquired for England in the 1560s and 70s, it pales in comparison to what came after.

Drake still had his part to play, however, and in May 1585 -- the same month that Philip II closed trade between England and Spain -- he led the largest raid yet against the West Indies. This voyage by Sir Francis Drake shows the extent to which the war between England and Spain had advanced, and also the transition of Francis Drake, leader of small pirate vessels, to Sir Francis Drake, admiral in the queen’s navy. Sir Francis Drake departed Plymouth on 12

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September 1585 with 25 ships and 2300 men, carrying a letter of reprisal, and headed straight for the West Indies to plunder ships and raid ports. He captured Santiago on 17 November 1585 and held the port until 31 November 1585. In that time, the sailors plundered the port, and then burned the city to the ground upon leaving. After sacking the rather rich city of Santiago, Drake landed his men several miles west of the city of San Domingo on 1 Jan 1586, and then marched for four hours. He split his men into two groups and flanked the town, capturing the city the same day that he landed. The English held the island for three days and then agreed to ransom the town for 20,000 ducats (6,500 \( li \)). Feeling less than satisfied with this rather small ransom, Drake decided to raid the pearl hub, Cartagena. Despite Cartagena being well aware of Drake’s presence and well prepared for Drake’s arrival, the city still fell to the English. After sacking Cartagena, however, a sickness permeated Drake’s crew. He was forced to ransom the town for only 28,000 \( li \) in silver, and return home with only 700 men. Drake arrived back in Plymouth on 28 July 1586. Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* reports that the “totall value of what was gottin in this voyage… [was] esteemed at three score thousand pounds.”\(^79\) Likewise, David Childs gives a total of 60,000 \( li \).\(^80\) It seems that a committee run by William Winter and John Hawkins “eventually reckoned the total proceeds at about £65,000,”\(^81\) with around 45,000 \( li \) in bullion, plate or pearls.\(^82\) These reports fall roughly in line with a London informant’s report to the Spanish ambassador that placed the total value of the plunder at 48,000 \( li \).\(^83\) Often, this result has been seen as a disappointment, and indeed it was a disappointment at the time to the individual investors (not to mention the sailors who died). Given the large investment required to field such

\(^79\) Ibid. 133  
\(^80\) Childs, *Pirate Nation*, 107  
\(^81\) Sugden, *Age of Drake*, 199  
\(^82\) Ibid.; Cummins, *Francis Drake*, 160  
\(^83\) Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake*, 283
a massive fleet, the 60,000 *li* in plunder probably barely covered the cost. However, it must be noted that no bullion left the realm, but a lot of bullion entered the realm. So, in regard to the central question at stake, this adventure has some significance.

Even so, the myriad of privateering voyages -- researched in depth by Andrews -- that took place between 1585 and 1603 seem more important than any one adventure discussed in this section. For example, a letter written by Dr. Julius Caesar (judge of the Admiralty Court) to the lord admiral in 1590 maintained “that her Majesty hath gotten and saved by these reprisals since they began [1585] above two hundred thousand pounds,” an accounting almost equal to Elizabeth’s yearly revenue in 1590. Andrews used documents from the Admiralty Court that date between 1589-1591, as well as documents from the year 1598, in order investigate these claims and come to a conclusion about the profitability of privateering during this period; he concluded that “the value of prize-goods ranged from about £100,000 to about £200,000 a year,” somewhat less than the roughly 4,000,000 *li*, or 800,000 *li* a year claimed by Caesar. In any case, much of this plunder was in trade goods and not bullion. In fact, a close examination of the prize cargoes delivered to London between 1589-1591 shows that only 6 out of the 61 prize cargoes contained bullion, treasure, money, gold or silver. Moreover, of the 93 prize cargoes registered in other ports, only 4 contained the same. Although, in London the total listed value of the bullion captures is 31,500 *li*, while all 61 prize cargoes together have a value listed at 95,553 *li*. In the same manner, the 93 prizes that returned to other ports were valued at 178,270 *li*, while the values listed next to the four bullion captures account for 57,070 *li*. So while this is an

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84 Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, 22
85 Ibid. 128
86 Ibid. 243-249
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid. 249-264
incomplete and fractured list of prizes, the small sample suggest that about one-third of the value of prize captures came from bullion. That means that while Drake’s 1585-6 raid in the West Indies used 25 ships and 2300 men to return with roughly 60,000 li in ransoms, the small scale reprisal ventures carried out mainly by merchants, gentry and professional sailors perhaps clipped as much as 66,000 li a year in bullion off the Spanish.

Nonetheless, the queen, the court and merchants continued to invest in large-scale operations that Andrews considered official or semi-official in nature and therefore outside the scope of his inquiry. For instance, by early 1587 rumors had reached England of a great Armada being assembled in Spain that many suspected would sail and attempt an invasion of England that summer. Therefore, Sir Francis Drake left England in March of 1587 leading another large fleet, with loose objectives laid out by the queen. His strategic purposes were threefold: impede the Armada preparations, stop the Armada if it set sail, and also to capture any treasure ships on their way to Spain from the East or West Indies. On 19 April 1587, Drake entered the harbor at Cadiz with his fleet practically uncontested. The men (and certainly a few women) savaged the harbor; at least 50,000 li in Spanish shipping was either sunk or brought away, and preparations for the Armada were critically damaged.\textsuperscript{89} Drake did not stop after his military success at Cadiz, however. He heard a rumor that a fabled carrack from the East Indies was on a path to the Azores, so he immediately headed west to the islands 1000 miles off the coast of Portugal. On 5 May 1587, the English fleet captured four forts on the Azores, where they revictualed and destroyed more critical material meant for the Spanish Armada. Drake then sent ships out to look for the carrack from the East Indies. On 9 June, one of the search parties stuck gold and found

\textsuperscript{89} Sugden, \emph{Sir Francis Drake}, 210
the Portuguese carrack *San Felipe* -- one of the greatest carracks in the fleet, carrying a double cargo. The English surrounded the carrack, and forced her to surrender with only six Englishman killed; they then sailed their prize back London. The cargo was itemized and tallied in London, with an official value of 108, 049 *li* given in the State Papers.\(^9\) The listed inventory shows that the *San Felipe* carried a large quantity of gold and silver as well as reals of plate (the carrack also carried a significant amount of calico, cinnamon, cloves, ebony, silk, saltpetre, jewels, china, indigo and nutmeg). Contemporary Spanish reports have the cargo valued at more than 250,000 *li*.\(^\text{91}\) It is hard to tell how much of the difference to apply to Spanish exaggeration, sailor pillage, or the fact the Francis Drake signed off on the inventory -- just as with the circumnavigation, although seemingly with less secrecy this time. Whatever the case, investors had reason to celebrate Drake once again, for pulling off yet another miracle.

After Drake’s successful capture of the *San Felipe*, the flood gates opened and the English captured several more carracks before the end of Elizabeth’s reign. The first capture after the *San Felipe* came in 1589 when the third earl of Cumberland captured a carrack. It is somewhat of a suspicious case because on the way back to England this carrack was “cast away upon the Mounts Bay in Cornwall,”\(^9\) meaning that she sank off the coast of Cornwall. Sir William Monson, vice admiral on the voyage, supplies a valuation of 100,000 *li*\(^\text{93}\) in *A TRUE and EXACT ACCOUNT* by Sir William Monson. Generally, Monson’s accounts need to be viewed skeptically, and that is the case here as well. For instance, if Monson participated in any

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\(^9\) SP 12/204 f.16, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1581-1590 (Vol. CCIV, 9), Oct. 8 1587.
\(^\text{91}\) Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake*, 306
http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A51174.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext
\(^\text{93}\) Ibid.
smuggling activity after the capture then highlighting that by overvaluing the size of the capture
would have been less than wise -- placing him in danger of prosecution by the regime for
avoidance of the queen’s fifth and admiral’s tenth. As such, his valuation might rather be
considered an undervaluation. In this case, though, one historian, Richard Spence, agrees with
the estimate of 100,000 li, and no plausible reason to disagree, other than the consideration
above, comes to mind. Moreover, Spence convincingly argues that much of the cargo made it
onto shore either because the crew removed it before the ship sank, or because it washed onto
shore; eventually, the earl of Cumberland even brought a lawsuit against the leading gentleman
in the area of wreck, Thomas Penrose, for concealing shipwrecked treasure. The next major
carrack capture came in 1592, with the crew being led by the earl of Cumberland again. The
Madre de Dios exemplifies the nature of a carrack capture by the Elizabethan privateers: most
have estimated the cargo at 500,000 li before the pillaging that left only 140,000 li for Elizabeth
I, the earl and other investors; on the other hand, one historian estimates the prize value of the
cargo at closer to 1,000,000 li. In the event, when Robert Cecil travelled to inspect the cargo, he
expressed amazement at how quickly the smuggled merchandise disappeared into the
countryside. One captain alone later admitted to pillaging 10,000 li from the carrack. Moving
on, later examples of carrack captures include James Lancaster’s 1595 raid on Recife in Brazil,
and Richard Leveson’s capture of the St. Valentine in 1602. Lancaster only seized a carrack
cargo awaiting shipment when he raided the port at Recife; the cargo included, however, 50,000

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94 Richard T. Spence, The Privateering Earl: George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, 1558-1605
(Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995) 89
95 Spence, Privateering Earl, 92
96 Andrews, Elizabethan Privateering, 73; Roland, Pirate Queen, 330; Spence, Privateering Earl, 107
97 Cummins, Francis Drake, 225
98 Hanna, Pirate Nests, 42
99 Spence, Privateering Earl, 106
li worth of sugar. The capture by the lord admiral’s son-in-law, Richard Leveson, probably far exceeded that total. A vice admiral on this voyage too, William Monson later recorded that “the Wealth of the Carreck could then as ill be estimated, though after found to be great.” A partial inventory of the cargo taken at the time list the value at 64,309 li. Presumably far less than the actual value, as in 1607 Richard Leveson himself was accused of embezzling 40,000 li from the Saint Valentine. In the end, knowing what to make of all these carrack captures -- in regard to the central question of this paper -- remains difficult. In theory, the four major captures equated to somewhere between 400,000 li and 2,000,000 li in total prizes -- which it might be assumed would equate to between 130,000 li and 660,000 li in bullion. In practice, the reader can take that summation for what it is worth (not much). Still, the carrack captures inspired investors to continue to invest in large ventures because the return-on-investment for the fortunate could tempt even the most prudent of the time to try their hand.

Meanwhile, as men such as the Richard Leveson and the earl of Cumberland chased carracks, Thomas Cavendish set out to imitate Drake’s preeminent achievement: Cavendish departed from Plymouth on 21 July 1586 with three ships and 123 crew members on his own circumnavigation of the globe. He entered the Magellan Strait on 6 January 1587, and exited into the Pacific Ocean near the end of February 1587. Just as Drake had done before, Cavendish and his crew plundered the western coast of South America. In fact, in November 1588 the crew spotted the Santa Ana, a 700-ton vessel owned by Philip II. After the English fired multiple rounds of ordnance and attempted to board, the Spanish surrendered the ship, it “being in hazard

100 Andrews, Elizabethan Privateering, 132
101 Monson, A TRUE and EXACT ACCOUNT, 48
102 SP 12/285 f.22, Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1601-1603 (Vol. CCLXXXV, 12) Sept. 20 1602
103 Childs, Pirate Nation, 178
of sinking.” On board, Cavendish and crew reportedly found 40,000 li worth of gold and “much other merchandise.” Then, just as Drake before him, Cavendish needed to return his prize to London as soon and as safe as possible. Therefore, he turned his ships into the Pacific, and circumnavigated the globe. He arrived in the English channel on 3 September 1588, when he discovered from a Flemish ship that the Spanish Armada had been defeated in early August. The total haul brought into Plymouth after the second English circumnavigation of the globe was among the greatest of the age. David Childs confirms the 40,000 li of gold on the Santa Ana, claiming more specifically 122,000 peso do oro or 48,000 li. Moreover, Dr. Susan Roland claims that Cavendish returned with 100,000 li in treasure overall. Unfortunately, no citation is given, and the voyage remains somewhat under discussed. Regardless, 40,000 li in gold would alone make any single venture with only three ships a successful voyage.

Often, 1588 and the defeat of the Spanish Armada has been seen as the end point in the war between England and Spain, but it reality it only marked a transition point in the war. Certainly, the defeat of the Armada seriously weakened Philip II’s fleet, but he managed to rebuild remarkably quickly: by 1592 rumors of another Spanish invasion attempt had swept England. Moreover, it became evident by the Spring of 1593 that Henry IV, the Protestant leader in France, could no longer resist the assaults from the Catholics and their Spanish allies. He therefore converted to Catholicism himself in June of that year, which served to help him defeat the Catholic League and secure the throne of France. Nevertheless, he immediately found himself at war with Spain, who invaded Picardy, and had Calais under siege by March 1596. Everyone in England witnessed in shock and horror as the closest continental port to England fell

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105 Ibid.
106 Childs, *Pirate Nation*, 88
to the Spanish in April of that same year. To make matters even worse, a rebellion backed by the Spanish had begun in Ireland in 1595. This rebellion would later be called the Nine Years’ War, and it cost Elizabeth I some 1,900,000 li to maintain control of the island.\textsuperscript{107} So, throughout the period 1592-1603 the English feared another invasion attempt by the Spanish, especially one that used the route of Ireland. In fact, at one point Philip II even landed 4,000 Spanish troops in Ireland, but they landed on the southern coast while the main rebel power presided in the north. Thus, the English were able to surround the Spanish, slaughter them, and thereby promptly extinguish that threat. At the same time, Elizabeth I continued to use privateers to launch offensive attacks and land raids against the Spanish -- and to land several noteworthy blows before the end of the reign and the accession of James I.

Indeed, the plundering of towns and cities brought back a fortune to England during the 1590s. The earl of Cumberland ransacked towns in the West Indies in 1594, for instance. He caused so much damage in the West Indies that Philip II sent a fleet to try and intercept him. Elizabeth I also sent men to intercept him and have his haul searched. Ultimately, the cargo was valued at a disappointing 10,350 li.\textsuperscript{108} The earl of Cumberland also attacked and held San Juan de Puerto Rico for two months in 1598; the total gain equaled only 16,000 li, but the earl of Cumberland later claimed that he could have had 500,000 li had he not stayed for two months trying to establish a permanent base for the English in the West Indies.\textsuperscript{109} Last, the sack of Cadiz in 1596 remains the preeminent land raid of the Elizabethan Age. Led by the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard, and the earl of Essex, the event perhaps brought more goods and treasure directly into the economy of England than any other single event.Shortly after the sack Sir

\textsuperscript{107} Hammer, \textit{Elizabeth’s Wars}, 217
\textsuperscript{108} Spence, \textit{Privateering Earl}, 119
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. 174
Anthony Ashley returned to England and reported to the queen, “The spoiles worth in the towne half that is London[sic]. The common sooldiers, disdayning bagges of peper, sugar, wine and such grosse commodities… with their armes full of silk and cloth of gold.”\textsuperscript{110} After most of the loot was embezzled rather than passed into proper channels, this early report to the queen and council led to the largest scandal of the 1590s. This is because the large scale plundering of Cadiz “lined the pockets of many a soldier and sailor”\textsuperscript{111} rather than the queen’s own coffers. Afterward, stories “circulated of great diamonds spirited away, of coffers containing hundreds of pounds disappearing, of treasures of all sorts hidden.”\textsuperscript{112} Even so, one contemporary inventory claims the value of goods captured from Cadiz at 155,375 \textit{li},\textsuperscript{113} while a second document from the same author estimates the value of plate seized at 65,300 \textit{li}.\textsuperscript{114} The queen’s share of the spoils came to 78,000 \textit{li},\textsuperscript{115} but she remained aghast at the massive scale of the plunder that slipped into England uninventoried.

Overall, it should be clear that offensive operations, public and private, during the time of the Spanish War seized far more bullion for England than during the previous two decades that were namely maked by the ascension of Hawkins and Drake. The numerous small-scale ventures alone may account for as much as 1,000,000 \textit{li} in bullion during this time. Moreover, the carrack captures could also add a possible 660,000 \textit{li}. And, of course, the numerous other adventures

\textsuperscript{111} Andrews, \textit{Elizabethan Privateering}, 237
\textsuperscript{112} Kenny, \textit{Elizabeth’s Admiral}, 193
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Spoils of the Cadiz Expedition}, \textit{ii. Similar Inventory and Valuation of the Plate Seized}, Vol. 174. Hertfordshire: The Marquess of Salisbury, 1596.
discussed above only add to the total amount. The only way that the rise of Hawkins and Drake can compete is if you accept the highest possible estimate of the prize value of Drake’s circumnavigation: 2,000,000 li. It seems more likely, however, that Father Parsons meant 2,000,000 ducats or 500,000 li given that Drake only had one ship to carry the cargo. In any event, Elizabeth I died in March 1603, probably of grief, six days after her long-time friend and wife to the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard, Katherine Carey, had died. This effectively brought and end to the Spanish War, as Philip II had died in 1598 and the two new monarchs sought peace rather than war.

1603: Aftermath and Analysis

“There ronneyth muche watter by the myll
that the millner knowyth not off”

--Sir Thomas Gresham, 1563

The famous courtier, vice admiral, privateer, adventurer and historian, Sir Walter Raleigh, famously quipped that in 1603 King Elizabeth had been replaced by Queen James. Often, this quip is referred to in reference to James I being a bisexual, but it seems more probable that it referred to James’s cessation of aggressive acts at sea against the Spanish. After all, for a certain faction in England, Protestantism, plunder and profit had become synonymous, and plundering the Spanish remained an obsession. Nevertheless, in order to remove the looming threat of a Spanish invasion of England, James I sought peace with Spain. His counterpart, Philip
III of Spain, could only agree to peace, however, on the terms that the English cease their plunder in the West Indies and allow the East Indies carracks to return in peace. Rightly or wrongly, James I agreed to these terms and sought desperately to keep his seaman under control -- even if a large amount of English piracy moved to the periphery and based itself in Ireland during the summer and North Africa in the winter. In any event, it appears that the decision to crackdown and reduce piracy and privateering ultimately had fatal results for the Stuarts.

For one thing, the privateering ventures under consideration do seem to have played a significant role in the expansion of the circulating medium -- especially between 1580 and 1603 -- even if the ventures of Hawkins and Drake do not correlate well with mint production before that time. For example, between 1558 and 1572, the mint produced roughly 1,100,000 li in circulating currency.\(^\text{116}\) Meanwhile, the single largest Spanish bullion seizure within that time frame only has a tangential relationship to English piracy: the Huguenot rovers chased Spanish payships into English ports. It turned out that much of the 85,000 li seized during this event found its way to the English mint, but that explains less than ten percent of mint production. Moreover, Francis Drake’s career remained in its nascency. He did return with at least 66,000 li of gold, silver and merchandise from the West Indies in 1571, but that adds little. More than that, English piracy in the West Indies was non-existent before Drake, and only minimally active afterward. With the lone exception being John Hawkins, who made slaving voyages to the West Indies in the 1560s, but only plundered Portuguese vessels off the coast of Guinea and Sierra Leone. These voyages lack the documentation of later voyages, but it seems safe to say that they account for at most 50,000 li in bullion, and perhaps much less. Therefore, a generous estimation

\(^{116}\) Craig, *The Mint*, 414; Challis, *Tudor Coinage*, 306-308
might allow that fifteen percent of mint production during this period can be explained through provocative actions against the Spanish. Furthermore, approximately 970,000 li of bullion was added into circulating currency from 1573-1582.\textsuperscript{117} Francis Drake’s raiding voyage to the West Indies in 1571 inspired others, but none of them had the success of Drake’s own imitations of himself. It seems clear that Drake returned with between 20,000 and 40,000 li in gold in 1574, after his raid on the mule train at Nombre de Dios. On top of that he returned with possibly millions in bullion in November of 1580, after his circumnavigation of the globe. The evidence for Spanish plunder dominating the mint in this period rest largely on Drake’s circumnavigation, then. A problem plagues that theory, however. Drake returned late in the period, while at the same time mint production remained consistent. For example, 1 June 1580 to 31 Dec 1581 -- the period in which Drake returned from his circumnavigation -- shows a significant drop in the production of silver coins from the period dated 31 Oct 1578 to 31 May 1580 -- before he returned. So, even if Drake returned with “six and twentie tunne of silver”\textsuperscript{118} and millions of pounds total, the prize capture fails to correlate with mint production. With that being the case, the 1570s and early 1580s need an explanation for mint production, other than piracy and privateering.

Several possible explanations could suffice to fill-the-gap. For instance, a favorable balance-of-trade might explain the mint production: in the 1550s the English opened up a new trade route with Moscow, the English also had significant trade, to the tune of around 100,000 li a year, with Spain. Moreover, the staple of English trade -- the export of wool to the continent -- remained a factor throughout the era. An investigation of mint prices and bimetallic flows might

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Hakluyt, \textit{Principal Navigations}, vol. 10, 116

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also offer an explanation. By setting favorable prices, some economists and historians believe that a country could attract either silver or gold to their mints. It does appear that Spanish gold was undervalued relative to silver,\textsuperscript{119} and thus that could explain a movement of silver out of Spain and into England. Third, dehoarding early in Elizabeth’s reign could also provide an explanation. Christopher Marlowe himself wrote about “all the wealth that our forefathers hid, within the massy entrails of the earth.”\textsuperscript{120} And in fact, the leading statesman of the era, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, invested in a corporation that sought to find buried treasure. It certainly seems feasible that an aristocracy short of ready cash and facing persistent inflation unloaded hoarded silver at the mint, causing the increase of production early in the reign. Finally, channel piracy cannot be ruled out based on the evidence. In 1563, for example, the Spaniards and the Netherlanders put their losses to channel piracy at over 500,000 \textit{li} during Elizabeth’s five year reign.\textsuperscript{121} Indeed, it seems that channel piracy had become an embarrassing hurdle for Elizabethan statesmen in the early 1560s. In 1563, Elizabeth’s royal merchant and informer in the Low Countries, Sir Thomas Gresham, called one vice admiral, “Mast Wynter”, a “theffe”\textsuperscript{122} because of his piratical activity. This “Mast Wynter” was William Winter, a vice admiral, and as mentioned above the queen’s surveyor of the navy. Gresham blamed escalation of tensions between England and Spain on the Winters and other members of the admiralty who partook in the proceeds of channel piracy; so, the amount must have been large enough to interfere in diplomatic relations.

\textsuperscript{119} Pallister, \textit{The Age of Elizabeth}, 146
\textsuperscript{120} Benjamin Woolley, \textit{The Queen’s Conjurer} (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001) 89
\textsuperscript{121} Roland, \textit{The Pirate Queen}, 62
\textsuperscript{122} Burgon, \textit{The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham}, 56
Whatever helped increase mint production in England in the 1560s and 1570s, privateering almost certainly played a large role after 1585. According to Craig, from 1583-1593, the circulating medium increased by roughly 1,350,000 li due to production at the mint.\footnote{Craig, \textit{The Mint}, 414} Challis, on the other hand, updated Craig’s records with a new Lansdowne document that confuses mint production between 1592 and 1597.\footnote{Challis, \textit{Tudor Coinage}, 306; The document in reference (BM, Lans Mss, 706) gives an astounding total of 2,010,993 li in silver coined between 1592-1601; although the total contradicts other sources leaving the issue confused.} Nevertheless, a number of about 1,000,00 li coined from 1583-1591 leaves Challis near enough in line with Craig.\footnote{Challis, \textit{Tudor Coinage}, 306-308} In this period, a clearer picture of the more obscure piracy and privateering voyages comes to light, with Andrews’s estimation of 100,000 to 200,000 li a year. Moreover, my own analysis of the prize cargoes allows for an estimation of 30,000 to 60,000 li a year in bullion. This amount alone could explain a quarter to a half of mint production -- if all the bullion were coined. Moreover, it seems that the plunder from Drake’s circumnavigation worked its way through the mint slowly over this period. And of course, Drake continued to plunder throughout the period as well. His first official voyage to West Indies returned with at least 36,000 li in gold and silver. More importantly, he captured the \textit{San Felipe} in 1587; a prize worth 108,000 li. Afterward, Thomas Cavendish circumnavigated the globe, and the earl of Cumberland seized two carracks: one in 1589 and another in 1592. All of this activity suggest that privateering probably started to contribute the majority share of the supply of bullion coined at the mint during this period. Indeed, the amount of bullion coined dropped slightly between 1594 and 1603, to around 1,200,000 li.\footnote{Challis, \textit{Tudor Coinage}, 306-308} Meanwhile, the estimate of 30,000-60,000 li a year in bullion captured by pirates and privateers stands. So,
again, this could account for a quarter to a half of the total bullion coined. At the same time, the sack of Cadiz in 1596, the earl of Cumberland’s raid on the West Indies in 1598, and Richard Leveson’s capture of the carrack *St. Valentine* in 1602 all contributed to the amount of bullion seized. It is also worth note that English piracy in the Mediterranean started to produce significant captures by the late 1590s. In 1598, 100,000 Spanish rials of eight fell into the hands of English pirates, and another 200,000 ducats (50,000 *li*) succumbed in early 1603. Also in 1603, Christopher Newport and Michael Greare captured two ships of 400- and 600-tons in the West Indies before they held the port of Puerto de Caballos for eighteen days. The attack set-off rumors of millions of pounds smuggled into Ireland that were probably “wildly exaggerated.” Whatever actually happened, a plausible case can be made the that bullion plundered from the Spanish during the last nine years of Elizabeth’s reign exceeded production at the mint.

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With that said, it then seems plausible that James I decision to cease abundant privateering against the Spanish led to England’s precarious financial position by 1620, and perhaps ultimately to fatal results for his son Charles I. For instance, an examination of the mint records shows that the production of silver coins had practically ceased at the mint by 1609, with only 175,983 li worth of silver coinage being produced between 31 March 1609 and 31 March 1619. Moreover, several treatises appeared by 1620 that sought to explain the dearth of coinage in the realm, such as Thomas Mun’s *Discourse on Trade* -- that blamed exports of silver by the EIC for the lack of coinage -- and Sir Francis Drake’s *Sir Francis Drake Revived* -- which called on the English to once again plunder Spanish shipping to solve the problem. And in fact, 1580 to 1630 were the peak years of Spanish silver crossing the Atlantic; so, it seems

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129 Craig, *The Mint*, 415
reasonable to argue that ceasing attacks on the Spanish treasure route in the middle of this period marks a key turning point -- a point when the English missed the opportunity to fully integrate their economy using silver coinage, and instead passed into a period of dearth that led to an outraged gentry and bloody civil war. In fact, this would not be the first time that a shortage of silver bullion in the realm served as a precondition to civil war, as a lack of silver coinage has also been noted as a precondition to the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{131} Building on the point, members of the Providence Island Company, a group of Puritan Privateers led by Robert Rich, the second earl of Warwick, became a major faction in Parliament that helped create a civil war in England. Certainly, many other factors contributed to the beheading of Charles I in 1649, but speculatively the outcome might have been very different had the Stuarts avoided a crackdown on privateering. At the least, many monarchs and dictators and tyrants have managed to maintain control of their populations by finding an outside enemy. So economic effects aside, had the Stuarts allowed Englishmen to carry out their aggressions against Catholic Spain, those aggressions might not have turned inwards towards the Stuarts themselves.

Furthermore, the amount of Spanish treasure seized by the English and accounted above probably underestimates the bullion captured substantially. For one, the vice admirals and other local authorities were frequently as willing to do business as the smugglers with whom they dealt. In a letter dated 15 June 1585, the then governor of the Isle of Wight, Sir George Carey, wrote to John Scudamore “if we shall have wars, as the king of Spain hath occasioned us, good John… We shall have better booties, richer spoils and braver robberies hereabouts in one day.

\textsuperscript{131} Michael Hicks, \textit{The Wars of the Roses} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 50
than you shall have in Wales in seven years.”\textsuperscript{132} It was also remembered for some time that when an attorney visited the Isle of Wight about an accusation of piracy, Sir George Carey “with a pound of candles hanging at his breech lighted, with bells about his leg, hunted owte of the island” that particular lawyer.\textsuperscript{133} Indeed, local authorities in the port towns of England made little effort to stop piracy and smuggling because they understood the benefits it provided to their local economy. If a captain committed an act of aggression against a foreign power on the high seas, there was little reason to prosecute and even less reason for a local jury to convict. The reason being that the said act of aggression helped the local economy -- and perhaps more importantly each individual -- by bringing in bullion and other goods. All the locals with significant financial interest in the town understood that, and much of the lower class also understood their own benefits.\textsuperscript{134} This allowed smuggling to prosper in the port towns of England. Lord Admiral, Charles Howard, complained in 1591 that “most of [the vice admirals] have seldom or never accounted since they first had office.”\textsuperscript{135} Meaning that they had failed to pay him any of his ten percent cut of prize goods captured at sea. In fact, the admiralty judge, Julius Caesar, made a trip to the West Countries in 1591 in order to collect, but the gentry and vice admirals ran him out their ports and towns (leading him to complain about his inherent lack of authority). The only conclusion being that the authorities in charge of inventorying prize

\textsuperscript{132} TNA, C 115/100/7364
\textsuperscript{133} Andrews, \textit{Elizabethan Privateering}, 98
\textsuperscript{134} Hanna, \textit{Pirate Nests}, 30
\textsuperscript{135} Andrews, \textit{Elizabethan Privateering}, 29
goods were clearly participating in smuggling, corrupting the sources -- especially in regard to small scale privateering.

Moreover, shady dealings and perhaps smuggling plagued the highest levels of command as well. For instance, one surviving letter written by the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard, to the judge of the admiralty court, Caesar, ask Caesar to lay-off one case because the man involved was his “servaunte.” Then, in 1603, after James I tried to cease acts of plunder at sea, Charles Howard found himself in disfavour at court, mainly because the Lord Admiral was not exempt from “these dealings with pirates.” It seems that after a pirate named Tompkins plundered a Venetian Ambassador’s ship, he sent gifts to the Lord Admiral and to the Lord Admiral’s nephew, the governor of the Isle of Wight. As such, “one can only conclude that [Charles Howard] willingly and knowingly accepted illegal gifts with an at least implied promise of protection to the giver.” In fact, by the end of Elizabeth I’s reign Charles Howard had turned the admiralty into a family affair. For example, Charles Howard made three marriage alliances with his daughters. The daughters married in 1583, 1587, and 1589. Despite being from ill-matched families, the first two son-in-laws quickly received promotion in the admiralty. The first son-in-law, Robert Southwell, was promoted to vice admiral of Norfolk and Suffolk. The second son-in-law, Richard Leveson, commanded ships and reached the rank of vice admiral of

136 Kenny, Elizabeth’s Admiral, 45
137 Ibid. 263
138 Ibid. 268-271
England.\(^{139}\) (Leveson in particular made for a peculiar match as his father had already been accused of piracy before Howard arranged the marriage.) For the third match, in 1589, Howard married his youngest daughter to Henry Fitzgerald, the twelfth earl of Kildare. In the first two marriages the Lord Admiral practiced his usual style and “placed in the higher levels of command men who had special reason to be loyal to him and in whose success he would like to share.”\(^{140}\) His youngest daughter's marriage, though, shows he valued a high connection in Ireland to go along with the connections he already had in England: probably the tremendous sums being smuggled into Ireland at the time influenced his decision. Certainly, Charles Howard possessed plenty of money to provide a sufficient dowry for the last two marriages: during the time of the Spanish War he owned Reigate, Blechingley, Esher, Skynners’s Place, Admiral House, Chelsea, Haling, and Arundel House all within a day's ride of court.\(^{141}\) Also, these were not just the daughters of any high lord; these women were the second cousins of the queen, and the daughters of her “intimate friend,”\(^{142}\) Katherine Carey. The marriage matches of Charles Howard’s three daughters fell short of the politically expected norm in every respect and remain difficult to explain, except for the fact that Charles Howard needed useful men and alliances to bolster his position as lord admiral.

\(^{139}\) Ibid. 94
\(^{140}\) Ibid. 144
\(^{141}\) Ibid. 215
\(^{142}\) Ibid. 19
On top of the ad hoc nature of the admiralty, other factors served to increase smuggling, including the lord admiral's tenth and the queen’s fifth as well as the landscape of England itself. In a recent work on smuggling, for example, Evan T. Jones points out that as much as two-thirds of customs duties were evaded at the port at Bridgewater.\textsuperscript{143} He goes on to claim that smuggling was an “integral component of city’s international commerce and the crown revenue lost to smuggling” probably exceeded customs revenues.\textsuperscript{144} Moreover, Evans shows that increased customs duties led to increased smuggling: an increase of the customs duties on wine from 6% to 42% in 1558 either caused Bristol’s most common import to collapse or the economic incentive to smuggle led to increased smuggling -- the latter almost certainly being the case. That seems relevant because the queen’s fifth, the admiral’s tenth and the crew’s third effectively levied a 48% tax on captains and merchants -- more than high enough to encourage vast smuggling. And as it happens, the natural landscape of England lent itself to smuggling in the sixteenth century. The second largest port town, Bristol, had a population of only around 20,000, and provided an excellent natural environment for smugglers. A 1565 port survey of Bristol by the crown found 59 creeks, quays, pills, and havens capable of being used by merchant vessels. A smuggler could “sail into one of these creeks, wait for the tide to drop, lade a cargo and then slip away” in “only a few hours.”\textsuperscript{145} A famous privateer, the third earl of Cumberland preferred

\textsuperscript{143} Evan T. Jones, Inside the Illicit Economy: Restructuring the Smugglers’ Trade of Sixteenth-Century Bristol (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 84
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid. 110-111
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid. 66
the another port, Southampton. It benefited from a double-high tide, which made it perfect for handling large vessels.\textsuperscript{146} More than that the thick trees covered the inlets of Southampton, and at least in 1565 “none of Southampton’s 14 inlets had their own customs house or any deputies operating at them.”\textsuperscript{147} All in all, then, given the widespread corruption in the admiralty (and therefore the unreliability of that evidence), and the economic incentive and the capability to smuggle on a large scale, it appears that the amount of bullion injected into the English economy through piracy and privateering in both of the two periods under consideration probably exceeds the estimations above.

In conclusion, England found a way to prosper during the reign of Elizabeth I despite religious conflicts and wars that saw her face-off against the wealthiest empire in Europe at the time. During the Elizabethan Golden Age, the regime reduced its debt, transitioned that debt from foreign lenders to local lenders, oversaw an expanse in new building, as well as an expansion in trade and exploration. A money supply that doubled due to immense mint production represents one major reason that England prospered in such a fashion despite wartime expenditures. Many contemporaries and many historians since have credited the Elizabethan privateers for supplying the English mint with Spanish plunder. In fact, the true picture seems somewhat more complicated than that: some unknown factor supplied most of the bullion to the

\textsuperscript{146} Leanna T Parker, “Southampton’s sixteenth century illicit trade: An examination of the 1565 Port Survey”, The International Journal of Maritime History 2015, Vol. 27(2), 270
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid. 270
mint during the 1560s and 1570s, despite the famous voyages of Hawkins and Drake over this period. Only after the turn of the 1580s, Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe, and Philip II’s suspension of trade between England and the Iberian Peninsula does privateering seem to become the major factor driving mint production. Moreover, it seems probable that the primary source evidence provided by Elizabeth’s vice admirals understates the true number of prize captures, as well as their values, due to rampant smuggling -- especially in regard to the numerous small-scale privateering ventures after 1585, documented in such detail by historian Kenneth Andrews. As such, it appears that James I made a critical blunder in suppressing privateering voyages and offensive attacks against the Spanish after 1603, because England was once again suffering from a shortage of silver coinage by 1620. In any event, the bullion captured by privateers and through offensive attacks against the Spanish in the second half of the reign of Elizabeth I either sustained or supplemented the immense increase in the production of coinage at the mint -- that doubled the money supply and allowed Elizabeth to fix England’s financial woes, as she ruled over a silver age.
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