Podium Presentation

Mary, Queen of Scots: The Constancy of an Absolute Prince

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History

Mary Stuart, also known as Mary, Queen of Scots, lived when the “divine right of kings” still shaped royal ideology, when monarchs were the heads of states who received their authority from God. Mary Stuart was anointed under the Catholic faith and was once the queen consort of France, the queen of Scotland, and the potential heir to the English throne, but her resolve to maintain her position and image as an “absolute prince” oftentimes occurred at the expense of her nobles’ wishes and earned Mary the ire of Elizabeth I and her English Councilors. Scholarship portrays Mary Stuart as inconsistent and indecisive, but this project underscores the importance for historians to examine where she was consistent, that being her identification as an absolute monarch during her years as a queen regnant, a captive in England, and a prisoner facing her treason trial and execution in 1587. This project used primary source manuscripts found in the State Papers, which is the title given to the archives and records of the government of England, and the Newberry Library, which is a state-of-the-art research facility in Chicago. I underwent training in paleography where I learned to read early modern English handwriting and interpret manuscripts originating from the decades of Mary Stuart’s life as well as documents from Mary Stuart herself and those individuals she considered friends and foes. This allowed me to remove the Queen of Scots from the grips of modern day debates and reveal Mary’s consistent dogmatism regarding her status as an “absolute prince.”