



9 *Portrait of an Unknown Lady*

[Mary I; Mary I When Princess; Lady Jane Grey; Lady Jane Dormer]
c. 1557

Oil on Panel

43 ¼ x 31 ½ in. (109.9 X 80.0 cm)

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Accession Number: P.D. 1-1963

Provenance: Francis Barchard (d. 1856) or Horstead Place, Uckfield, Sussex, who bought it in September, 1854 from London art dealer John Webb; Mrs. Maude Barchard, the widow of his great-grandson; bought from her by P & D Colnaghi & Company Ltd., London, in 1949, when it was purchased by Sir Bruce Ingram; bequeathed by him in 1963 to the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Exhibitions: Holbein Exhibition (London), 1950, (#28) as *Queen Mary as Princess* by ‘A Close Follower of Holbein.’

Selected Literature: J.W. Goodison, (1951), *Illustrated London News*, 42-3; E. Waterhouse, (1953), *Painting in Britain 1530-1790*, 30; J. Cornforth, (1963), Great Pednor, Buckinghamshire, *Country Life*, 13 June, 1380-84; R. Strong, (1964), *Hans Eworth, A Tudor Artist and his Circle*, London 1965, 14; R. Strong, (1969), *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, London, 105; J.W. Goodison, (1977), *Catalogue of Paintings in the Fitzwilliam Museum III: British School* (Cambridge University Press), 72-4; Y. Hackenbroch, (1979), *Renaissance Jewellery*, 283-5; H. Tait, (1985), The girdle-prayerbook or ‘tablett’: an important class of Renaissance jewelry in the Court of Henry VIII, *Jewellery Studies*, 2, 29-57; E. Drey, (1990), *The Portraits of Mary I, Queen of England*, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of London/Courtauld Institute of Art, 35-6; J. Arnold, (2001), *Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlock’d* (Maney, London), 117; J.S. Edwards, (2005), ‘A new face for the lady,’ *History Today*, December, 44-5; H. Walker, (2007), ‘A portrait of Lady Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria?’ in *Lost Faces-Identity and Discovery in Tudor Royal Portraiture*, Philip Mould, Ltd. March, 86-7; E. Ives, (2009), *Lady Jane Grey-A Tudor Mystery*, 16.

Inscription: ‘D’ on the prayerbook binding face.

Technical Data: A dendrochronological report by J.M. Fletcher, Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford University, dated 22 January 1976, in the files at the Fitzwilliam indicates that the “likely period of use of the panel (was) 1547-1556.”¹

¹ See K. Haneca et al, ‘Provenancing Baltic timber from Art Historical Objects: Success and Limitations,’ in *Journal of Archaeological Science* 32 (2005), pp. 261–71 for a discussion of issues and problems surrounding Fletcher’s methods.

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Attribution: When Francis Barchard purchased this picture in 1854 it was then attributed to Lucas de Heere. It was first attributed to Eworth sometime between 1950, when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy as “A Close Follower of Holbein,” and before January 1951, when it was published in *The Illustrated London News* as “generally accepted...by Hans Eworth.” Yet, in spite of the fact that the picture has a recent history of being attributed to Eworth, it lacks Eworth’s customary ‘HE monogram and an inscribed date. This may be because these inscriptions were lost due to previous damage, past aggressive cleaning, and/or over-painting, although a preliminary visual inspection of the picture provides no such evidence. And because the Fitzwilliam Museum has undertaken no technical studies (aside from Fletcher’s 1976 dendrochronological examination) that may be useful in further solidifying this work within Eworth’s *oeuvre*, it is not known if these attributes hide underneath the visible paint layers. The provenance of the portrait is also very limited and offers no clues as to the question of attribution.

There are, however, marked similarities between the Fitzwilliam picture and inscribed Eworth pictures that cannot be ignored. The Society of Antiquaries’ *Portrait of Queen Mary I* (7) and the *Portrait of an Unknown Lady* (15) de Walden collection, for example, share much in common and both are close in date to the Fitzwilliam picture. These similarities include the three-quarter length motif, the overall frontal position of the body, and the clasped position of the hands at the waist.² The handling of paint in this work is also stylistically similar to these inscribed works. The details of the jewels, for example, are handled with the same careful attention to highlighting (in fact, an identical triple-highlight in gold, black, and white) and extremely fine brushstrokes, especially in the depiction of the jewels. Another similarity found within the picture is the shadow in the background. This shadow is very comparable to that found in a *Portrait of Nicholas Heath* (41) in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery and *Portrait of an Unknown Lady* (47) in the Tate Britain collection. In each case the shadow has been carefully composed so that it matches the dress of the sitter before it.³

² In the case of Mary I, she is facing forward although her face is turned lightly toward the viewer’s left. The lady in the de Walden picture faces entirely forward.

³ Strong also makes note of the shadows when he discusses issues of attribution. See Roy Strong, *Hans Eworth*, 14 for more.

Given that the more than forty known Eworth works are all inscribed with his monogram, such inscriptions suggest that he was interested in identifying a body of work separate from that of other artists in London during his working life. And, in spite of the fact that this picture is devoid of a visible monogram, because this work has many of the hallmarks of Eworth without the inscriptions, and has so much in common with known Eworth pictures, it is likely that further technical tests will ultimately prove that it is indeed by his hand or of his workshop.⁴

Description: The woman in this portrait stands adjacent to a stone windowsill through which a light falls, casting her shadow on the grey wall behind her and illuminating her rather solemn face. Indeed, the whole scene has a kind of dignified solemnity, standing as she is in a grey stone room entirely devoid of decoration while wearing such expensive attire and jewels. Although her identify is as yet unknown, based upon the quality and number of her jewels and the sumptuous attire she wears, she is likely to be of high rank and noble birth.

Her dress consists of a gown of black satin trimmed in black velvet over a forepart and undersleeves of red satin. The same red satin is also repeated in the band of her French hood. The gown also has a standing collar lined with white (probably silk) and edged with gold lace. Her chemise is edged with blackwork and around her neck is a collar with gold and black embroidery on a white (probably silk) ground. The red satin undersleeves are edged with gold lace above an embroidered ruffle at the wrist, itself edged in blackwork, and her turned-back sleeves are lined in black velvet.⁵ She also appears to be wearing a Spanish farthingale; its horizontal rings can be seen pressing against the satin of her forepart.

On her person fourteen pairs of aglets are visible, each of black enamel on gold. Falling from a (lovers-knotted?) gold chain at her waist is a prayerbook with gilt pages, bound in red and black leather with a gold clasp. She is also wearing four gold rings; two rings (a ruby ring and a diamond ring) on her left index finger, a ruby ring on her right index finger, and a gold band on her right fifth finger. On her left wrist she wears

⁴ Roy Strong describes the idea that this work is by Eworth, “a perfectly reasonable one.” See Roy Strong, *Hans Eworth, A Tudor Artist and his Circle*, 1964, 14. Ellis Waterhouse describes it as “surely Eworth’s unsigned masterpiece rather than by another hand.” See Ellis Waterhouse, (1953), *Painting in Britain 1530-1790*, 30.

⁵ See Janet Arnold (2001), *Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlock’d*, 116-7.

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a bracelet of interconnected woven gold squares. Pinned to her breast is a large gold and enamel pendant, with embedded and attached rubies and diamonds. The pendant depicts several figures surrounding an enthroned king and a kneeling woman. Above, at her collar, she wears a large gold and diamond cross-crosslet, with four pearls at its points and a large pearl hanging below.⁶ And attached to the collar at her neck are additional pearls hanging in alternate triangular clusters of three with single, larger, pearls between each cluster.

Discussion: In September, 1854 Bond Street art dealer John Webb sold this picture to Frances Barchard of Horstead Place as a portrait of Queen Mary I.⁷ It was part of a group of portraits of Tudor royals Webb sold to Barchard that year and was likely picked up by Webb in the London sales rooms, although its origins have as yet alluded discovery. By 1941 the sitter identification had been corrected and she was then identified as Mary I when Princess.

Two years after the Fitzwilliam Museum acquired the picture, in 1965, Sir Roy Strong acted as Curator and Senior Researcher for an exhibition of works by Hans Eworth at the National Portrait Gallery, London, where he was also Director. In the exhibition catalogue, which Strong also wrote, the picture is for the first time publicly described as something other than a portrait of Mary I:

“The portrait bears little resemblance to authentic portraits of Mary Tudor and the sitter is clearly too young to be her at this date. The lady is of exalted rank and unmarried. This is alluded to in the jewel at her breast, which depicts Ahasuerus touching Esther, a typological parallel in the Old Testament of the Virgin...”

Other scholars have debated this view including Hugh Tait, a medievalist and former Deputy Keeper with the British Museum. He identified the

sitter as Lady Anne Penruddocke, primarily based upon the formal similarities between this portrait and Number 15, a portrait previously identified as a picture of Lady Anne in a private collection. Yet, as J. Stephan Edwards has noted, Lady Anne was not of sufficient rank and wealth to own the jewels depicted in this portrait and the two ladies have a very different physical appearance. In 2005, however, Edwards argued that the Fitzwilliam sitter was Lady Jane Grey. This, in spite of the evidence within the picture—most notably the sitter’s girdle prayerbook with the letter ‘D’ on its face—for which Edwards offered no plausible explanation as to why Lady Grey would own a prayerbook with such an inscription.⁸ Further, the picture has been dated to 1557-60 by costume historian Janet Arnold, placing it well after Lady Jane’s execution.⁹

In 2007 I argued that, in light of the ‘D’ found on the prayerbook, it may be that the sitter was Jane Dormer. The Dormer family was a prominent Catholic family in Tudor England, with ties to the Tudors going back to Flodden Field, where Sir Richard Dormer distinguished himself in battle. At the time that the Fitzwilliam picture was created, Jane Dormer was in her late teens and early twenties and unmarried. According to her biographer, she was courted by all of the eligible Catholic men of Mary’s court and, finally, nearly two years before Mary died in 1558, Jane agreed to marry Don Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, Philip II’s envoy in England, and later the Duke de Feria.¹⁰ She would marry him within a month of Mary’s death.

Jane was also related to, or otherwise linked with, other Eworth portrait sitters, including her cousin Mary Neville, Lady Dacre, whose unique double portrait by Eworth (#6) resides in the National Portrait Gallery, London. This places Eworth within Jane’s circle, not only within the context of the court of Mary I, but also within Jane’s extended family during a time when she may well have wished to have a picture created to memorialize her engagement.

⁶ This jewel is very similar to a design, drawn by Hans Holbein the Younger, now in the collection of the British Museum (SL.5308.101).

⁷ See Francis Barchard’s Account Book, Victorian & Albert Museum (MSL/1996/3/1/1); the portrait was sold by Webb, along with a portrait of Edward VI attributed to Holbein and a portrait of Princess Elizabeth attributed to Zuccherro, for £375 on September 1. See Clive Wainright, *The Romantic Interior*, Yale University, New Haven, 1989, 45-6, for a brief discussion on John Webb. According to Susan Ryan, who now owns Horstead Place, Webb also worked with Augustus Pugin to provide Francis Barchard with furniture for the house (personal communication, 19 October, 2005).

⁸ Edwards has since indicated that he no longer believes that the sitter is Jane Grey (personal communication, 2 February 2010) although the Fitzwilliam Museum continues to label the picture ‘Unknown Lady, Perhaps Lady Jane Grey’ (Fitzwilliam Museum Online Catalogue, accessed online 23 May, 2010 and again 21 Feb, 2021). Eric Ives also notes that there was hardly enough time—from April to June, 1550—for Jane to sit for and complete such a picture. See Eric Ives, *Lady Jane Grey, A Tudor Mystery* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Chapter 2.

⁹ Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth’s*, 117.

¹⁰ Henry Clifford (1887), *The Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria*, 11-2.

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I suggested that the similarities in the formal structure between the Society of Antiquaries portrait and the Fitzwilliam portrait were no accident, arguing that Jane Dormer was extremely close to the Queen, both in court and private connection, and was to be married to Philip II's close friend and representative in England. As such, an image like the Fitzwilliam picture picks up on these relationships and would have been the kind of picture that Jane would have been likely to commission for her engagement.



Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria, Age 25

Alonso Sánchez Coello

c. 1563

Oil on Panel

61 ½ x 42 ¼ in. (156.2 x 107.3 cm)

Burton Constable Hall, Yorkshire

Accession Number: 164

More recent research, however, has shown that there are at least three extant portraits which have been linked to Jane Dormer although, with the exception of the portrait by Alonso Sánchez Coello at Burton Constable Hall (left), none of them have been directly tied to her.¹¹ The sitter of the Burton Constable portrait bears little resemblance to the Fitzwilliam lady; she has dark brown hair, a longer nose with a significantly longer bridge, a more pointed chin and less pronounced cheekbones. And the sitter of the Coello portrait—age 25—appears significantly younger than the Fitzwilliam lady.

Eric Ives has also suggested that Jane Guildford, Duchess of Northumberland, or one of her daughters may be a candidate.¹² However, there is no known portrait of Jane Guilford or her daughter Katherine in order to provide a comparison of likeness and the *Portrait of Mary Dudley* at Petworth bears little resemblance to the Fitzwilliam sitter.

Another possible sitter for the Fitzwilliam portrait is Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox.¹³ Like Jane Dormer, Margaret Douglas was extremely close to Mary I, as both her first cousin as well as one of her closest friends at Court. They were, in fact, separated in age by only a few months and were trusted intimates, particularly when Mary came to the throne; when Mary married Philip II in 1554, it was Margaret Douglas

¹¹ There are several copies of the portrait at Burton-Constable in the Dormer family collection. In addition, a portrait sold at Christies (Old Master Pictures, Amsterdam) in July, 1992 was said to be a portrait of Jane Dormer, although the portrait has no inscriptions and a poor provenance. Another portrait, now at the Prado, has sometimes been identified as a portrait of Jane Dormer (Anthonis Mor, In. No. 2115) although its identity is also questionable. See Karen Hearn (1997), *Dynasties*, pp. 61-2 for more on the Prado picture.

¹² Eric Ives, *Jane Grey*, 16.

¹³ I am grateful to Leanda de Lisle for her feedback on this possibility (personal communication, 18 July 2010).

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who was her chief gentlewoman and keeper of the Queen's purse and when she died, Margaret was her chief mourner.¹⁴

Even prior to Mary's ascension, and after her marriage to Matthew Stewart, Earl of Lennox in 1544, Margaret was, according to John Guy, "royally (treated) by Henry VIII."¹⁵ During this period she had full access to the royal stores and drew down sizeable quantities of silk and linen. In fact, her total requests were only slight less than those of Mary and Elizabeth. She also appears to have had an affinity for black, having drawn down 129 yards of black satin, 154 yards of black velvet, 75 yards of black damask, 70 yards of black sarsenet, and 35 yards of black taffeta.¹⁶ There is no reason to believe that Margaret would not have continued to maintain such access into the 1550s, particularly after Mary came to the throne, and this may explain why the Fitzwilliam lady wears such fine attire.

Although her will makes no mention of jewels that can be firmly connected to those seen within the Fitzwilliam portrait, over the course of Margaret's life Mary was to give her many magnificent jewels including, "a fair table dyamond, a gyrdill of golde sett through..with diamonds and rubies, and a paynted dyamant of greate valew."¹⁷ She was also of sufficient rank to own the jewels depicted in this portrait—perhaps one of the only women outside of Mary and Elizabeth who could.

Like Jane Dormer, Margaret Douglas can also be connected to Eworth, although perhaps rather more closely than Jane by virtue of the fact that Eworth painted at least two, perhaps three, portraits of Henry, Lord Darnley, Margaret's son.¹⁸ There is, as well, one portrait of Margaret Douglas in the Royal Collection. Although the faces are not identical, one would not expect them to be given that the portraits were made at least twenty years apart and by separate artists. Still, there are similarities in the egg-shaped face, the high forehead and grey eyes, the reddish hair, and the lips of both sitters. It is also interesting to note that in both portraits the ladies have a small prayerbook hanging from their girdles.

¹⁴ J. Leland, ed. (1770), *Collectanea de Rebus Britannicis*, IV, 399.

¹⁵ John Guy, *Historical Report*, 13. Also see J.S. Brewer et al, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, London 1864-1947, VII, Appendix 13, 634.

¹⁶ Maria Hayward (2007), *Dress as the Court of King Henry VIII*, 202-3.

¹⁷ TNA, SP 12/22, fos. 77-7v.

¹⁸ See Numbers 10, 11, and 12 for more.



Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox
British School
1572
Oil on canvas
92 x 54 in. (233.6 x 137.1 cm)
Royal Collection, RCIN: 401183

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Margaret, like Mary, was also a lifelong Catholic and it has been suggested that the jewels of the Fitzwilliam sitter infer a deep Catholicism. Although it is difficult to argue for a particular religious affiliation based upon jewels alone, the Fitzwilliam lady does wear some jewels with a reference to religiosity.¹⁹ The pendant she wears, for example, depicts Esther kneeling before King Ahasuerus and, as Roy Strong has noted, such imagery is “a typological parallel in the Old Testament of the Virgin.”²⁰ Further, the cross-crosslet and the prayerbook are themselves religious objects. However, none of the jewels within the picture can be conclusively linked to Margaret Douglas and in the absence of a relevant inventory or additional comparative portrait(s), it is unlikely such an identification can ever be fully proven.

¹⁹ Although one may assume that prayerbooks would be a decidedly Catholic object, Jane Grey—who was certainly not Catholic—carried one all of her (albeit short) adult life. See BM Harley MSS 2342.

²⁰ Roy Strong, *Hans Eworth*, 14.