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***Queen Elizabeth I in Selected Movies: A Barthesian-
Historicist Approach to Modern British Myth***

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To Andrew H.C, always and forever.

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Abstract

The present research paper is entitled *Queen Elizabeth I in Selected Movies: a Barthesian-Historicist Approach to Modern British Myth*. It highlights the way Queen Elizabeth I's biography has been adapted and updated by filmmakers since the end of World War II. To look at the representation of this Tudor Monarch, I throw light on selected snapshots taken from four selected biographical films: *The Virgin Queen* (1955), *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1971), *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* (2007) with the use of Roland Barthes theoretical framework developed in *Mythologies* (1972), *Image-Music-Text* (1977) and *Elements of Semiology* (1986). The analysis of selected snapshots in the films shows that this Tudor Queen is depicted as a heterogeneous character. She is associated with very different political social and cultural values. The different representations are drawn to adapt her image to the circumstances of the film's production and release. Finally, her image is used to help the nation readjust itself to face the different the challenges of post-Empire Britain.

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There is never *art* but always *meaning*¹.

Rule Britannia, rule the waves
Britons never will be slaves².

¹ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.24.

² James Thomson quoted in Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.05.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The more technology develops the diffusion of information [and notably of images], the more it provides the means of masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning¹.

In his essay *The Power of Movies*, the French theoretician Noel Carroll draws our attention to the difference between “classical film theory”, mainly, with the works of André Bazin who used to argue that “the film image was an objective re-presentation of the past”, and contemporary one which rejects the idea that film depicts reality. In very memorable words, he states that film “gives the impression of reality itself; film causes an illusion of reality; or film appears natural”². It is from the same outlook that Stuart Hall claims that films are not transparent bearers of meaning. He speaks of “coded” messages that need ways of “decoding”³.

From the same perspective and relying on Roland Barthes’s theoretical framework, this paper investigates the sign system at work in selected snapshots taken from four biographical films, biopics, dealing with Queen Elizabeth I. The purpose of this research paper is to provide a clear understanding of the nature of the interaction of various signs in selected snapshot to construct different representations about Queen Elizabeth I. These different representations use signs to connote messages that celebrate national identity. They also make reference the British “bourgeois ideology” as far as the monarchy, foreign policy, and imperial heritage are concerned.

Speaking about the historical film, James Chapman argues that “British film makers adapted the past to meet their own cultural and ideological concerns”⁴. Thus, the fascination with bringing back the past is not done for pleasure. On the contrary, “historical films tell us more about the period in which they were made than about the period in which they were

¹ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.46.

² Noel Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.78.

³ Stuart Hall, *Introduction to Media Studies*, eds., Stuart Hall and Dorothy Hobson, *Culture, Media, Language Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, (Birmingham: Routledge, 2005), p.104-109.

⁴ James Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B.TAURIS: 2005), p.06.

set”⁵. This is fair enough because, although film is not exactly a language, it functions like one⁶ through shots that contribute to the construction of the whole. Actually, films represent a distinguished background and cultural commitment which influences their content. Every camera move, every object included in the scene, and every pose and colour involve a message. Thanks to directors’ creativity, films elicit multiple interpretations⁷. As a result, “reality is not represented as it is but as it is when refracted through ideology”⁸. In this way, cinema and television become mere instruments of control and power.

As far as the representation of royal families in cinema and television is concerned, the British Royal Family has always enjoyed wide popularity⁹. For decades, Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603) has been an unfailing inspiration for filmmakers. Internet Movie Database list of Royal films comprises six films dealing, exclusively, with Queen Elizabeth I, in addition to other films, miniseries and series dealing with the Tudor Age¹⁰. The list reveals that Tudor rulers dominated silver screen and are the favourites among image makers.

As far as Queen Elizabeth I is concerned, Bethany Latham states that the myth of the Virgin Queen “did not end with the historical woman, it certainly began with her”¹¹. Indeed, the first appearance of Queen Elizabeth I in cinema goes back to the Silent Era when the French Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton directed **Les Amours de la Reine Élisabeth** (1912). J. Stuart Blackton directed the first British silent version, **The Virgin**

⁵. James Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B.TAURIS: 2005), p. XII.

⁶. James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: the World of Movies, Media, and Multimedia Language, History, Theory*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.152.

⁷. Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p.113.

⁸. Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, *Cinema / Ideology/ Criticism*, (1969) in *Cahiers du Cinéma.*, Trans., Sussan Bennett, p.30.

⁹. Geoffrey Macnab quoted in Jim leach, *British Cinema*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.207.

¹⁰. Internet Movie Database list of Movies about Royalty by Silverquill in <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0413559/bio>.

¹¹. Bethany Latham, *Elizabeth in Film and Television: a Study of the Major Portrayals*, (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2011), p.04.

Queen, in 1923. With the talkies, William K. Howard's **Fire over England** (1937) and Michael Curtiz's **The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex** (1939) and **The Sea Hawk** (1940) are the most prominent examples¹².

After World War II, Elizabeth I's depiction in cinema knew a questionable extension. In 1953, George Sidney directed **Young Bess**, and two years later, Henry Koster's *The Virgin Queen* (1955) was released. The most recent productions include *Elizabeth* (1998) and its sequel *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) directed by Shekhar Kapur. As far as television miniseries are concerned, Richard Martin's and Roderick Graham's **Elizabeth R** was the first displayed on the British televisions during the 1970s. Lately, in 2005, Tom Hooper directed two television miniseries covering both her early life as a princess and late days as a monarch, **The Virgin Queen** and **Elizabeth I**. This is in addition to many documentaries and other productions where Elizabeth I is a supporting character like **Shakespeare in Love** (1998)¹³.

Review of the Literature

An immense number of biographies are written about Queen Elizabeth I. As far as film production is concerned, as already mentioned, Elizabeth I's biography constitutes a strong background for successful cinematic productions. It is worth mentioning that these films received a considerable amount of interest.

Both René Pigeon and Brittany R. Rogers look at the most recent films dealing with Elizabeth I from historical perspective. Pigeon, for example, claims that the films are not do faithful to history. According to the author, films like **Orlando** (1992), **Shakespeare in Love** (1998) and *Elizabeth* (1998) focus on the Virgin Queen's giving up her private life for public power¹⁴. He adds that the public image of the Virgin Queen is created and

¹². List of films dealing with Elizabeth in <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizafilms.htm>

¹³. Ibid.

¹⁴. Renée Pigeon, 'No Man's Elizabeth': *The Virgin Queen in Recent Films*, eds., Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter and Imelda Whelehan, *Retrovisions Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p.824.

fictionalized by historians who were in a rush to find out the secret behind her refusal to marry. This resulted in a kind of psychobiographical approach that overlooks historical facts¹⁵.

Rogers sheds light on the extent to which the selected films and miniseries (1939, 1955, 1998, 2005 and 2007) are faithful to the historical context of the Elizabethan age¹⁶. The author evaluates the levels of accuracy and reliability as far as the Tudor Age is concerned. In these motion pictures, Elizabeth's character is played by three different actresses: Helen Mirren, Bette Davis and Cate Blanchett. The productions, according to the author, suggest dissimilar representations of the Queen moving from victim to antagonist, to icon¹⁷. The author concludes that unlike the 1939 and 1955 productions that invent romantic dramas that ignore historical facts, the 1998, 2005 and 2007 films put forward a committed and original view of the Queen¹⁸.

Scholars such as Elizabeth A. Ford and C. Mitchell show interest in Hollywood's increasing curiosity in adapting Elizabeth I's biography. Their work *Film as a Historical Text: Exploring the Relationship between Film and History through the Life and Reign of Elizabeth I* (2008) studies, quite superficially, three films: **The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex** (1939), **Young Bess** (1953), **The Virgin Queen** (1955), and three miniseries: **Elizabeth R** (1971), **Elizabeth I: The Virgin Queen** (2005), and **Elizabeth I** (2006). Both authors look at the way the productions spotlight on the Queen's struggle to balance private and public life. The authors argue that these biopics, especially those of the 1930s, show that "though these queens' decisions shaped history, their lives followed the rhythms of

¹⁵. Renée Pigeon, 'No Man's Elizabeth': *The Virgin Queen in Recent Films*, eds., Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter and Imelda Whelehan, *Retrovisions Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p.09.

¹⁶. Brittany R. Rogers, *Film as a Historical Text: Exploring the Relationship between Film and History through the Life and Reign of Elizabeth I*, (Ohio: Department of History Marietta College, 2008), p.04.

¹⁷. *Ibid.*, p.55.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*, p.58.

most women's lives"¹⁹. The authors assume that it is the Queen's private life that fascinates the audience, and not the historical authenticity.

Other critics are interested in the motives behind producers' adaptation of historical figures' lives to silver screen. James Chapman points out that British film-makers adapt mainly two periods of the British history, the Tudor and the Victorian. He gives the example of 1998 film *Elizabeth* which received, when it was released, a massive attack from British historians and critics because it questions the chastity of the Virgin Queen, at a time when the British people needed such revival, especially after the death of Princess Diana in 1997²⁰.

Maria Theresia Gymnasium is among the very few who tried to study Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* by examining the messages implied in images. The author draws attention to the power of the image as a means "to reinforce the spoken words"²¹. She claims that the mentioned film is "a multi-dimensional film as the meanings, which the pictures of this film contain, are manifold and require an in-depth exploration"²². In fact, the director uses light and colours to contrast Elizabeth with Walter Raleigh and Philip of Spain, and shapes the image of goddess out of Elizabeth²³. These messages are not mentioned, but loaded in the image.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

As we can see, though there is a considerable amount of work done, critics' analyses is limited when it comes to deal with the film itself, as far as the theoretical framework and findings are concerned. Scholars are trapped in assessing the historical and biographical accuracy. In fact, what is still missing in these discussions is dealing with the film as a set of

¹⁹. Elizabeth A. Ford and Deborah C. Mitchell, *Filming the Lives of Queens Royal Portraits in Hollywood*, (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), p.05.

²⁰. James Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B.TAURIS: 2005), p.309.

²¹. Maria Theresia Gymnasium, *Elizabeth: the Golden Age an Analysis or Pictures Speak Louder than Words*, (Abgabetermin, 2009), p.03.

²². Ibid., p.31.

²³. Ibid., p.07.

images. This media text combines both visual and speech to produce meaning outside the historical context of its content, but in relation to present-day issues. Besides, nobody, to my best knowledge, dealt with the four films I selected to study the ideological evolution of Queen Elizabeth I's representation in post-World War II Britain.

Regarding the aforementioned review of literature, I intend to study the different representations of Queen Elizabeth I in four selected feature films. These films cover the period between 1955 and 2007. I selected the most important productions taking into consideration time distance, key events and the decisive turning points in the British modern history. They are: *The Virgin Queen* (1955), *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1971), *Elizabeth* (1998), *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) directed, respectively, by Henry Koster, Charles Jarrott and Shekhar Kapur.

In his *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Post-war Britain* (1989) Alan Sinfield states that “the ‘cultural monuments’ of England served as an instrument of ‘national domination’”²⁴. Can we consider Queen Elizabeth I as one of these “cultural monuments” used as an instrument of national domination? Furthermore, each film draws attention to one aspect more than others. Probably, the motives behind these various and divergent interpretations of her biography are defined by the circumstances. When we watch the 1955 film, for instance, and we move forward in time to the next production, many alterations appear. Each time the painted picture reflects, not only the period or an element in Elizabeth's biography, but it also alludes at the political and social atmosphere pertaining to the time of the film release.

In 1955, *The Virgin Queen* was produced just three years after Elizabeth II's coronation. In 1971, at the peak of the feminist movement, two motion pictures in which Glenda Jackson, Member of Parliament, starred as Elizabeth I are produced: **Elizabeth R**

²⁴. Alan Sinfield quoted in Gauri Viswanathan, *Raymond Williams and British Colonialism*, ed., Christopher Prendergast, *Cultural Materialism on Raymond Williams*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.188-210.

and an adaptation of Antonia Fraser's *Mary, Queen of Scots*, as if the television mini-series were not enough, another film was produced for the cinema. Kapur's *Elizabeth* deals with the first years of Queen Elizabeth I as a princess moving to rule. The filming started in 1997, the same year Princess Diana passed away.

In addition to these aspects, there are several issues common to the selected feature films which highlight the multiplicity of representations drawn about Queen Elizabeth I. In a nutshell, this dissertation investigates the sign system at work in selected snapshots. The study aims at assessing how Queen Elizabeth I's image, via the cinematic productions, is updated and adapted culturally to sustain, reinforce, but also challenge the ideological structure of the British society applying Barthes' conception of popular culture and ideology in, mainly, *Mythologies*, *Image-Music-Text* and *Elements of Semiology*.

Theoretical Framework

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), in his work *Cours de Linguistique Général* (1960), argues that "the principles which structure the linguistic system can also be seen to organize other kinds of communication systems, not only writing, but also non-linguistic systems such as those governing images, gestures"²⁵. In this way, he announced the birth of "Semiology", or Semiotics, a discipline that would take into consideration "the study of signs"²⁶. A field that is not limited to the study of linguistic signs, but it includes other types of communication such as film.

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was among the first who drew attention, in the 1950s, to the importance of studying media and popular culture substances. Marcel Danesi explains that, together with Jean Baudrillard, Barthes "may have unintentionally "politicized" Semiotics far too much, rendering it little more than a convenient tool of social critics"²⁷. Currently, Semiotics is one of the best ways of making explicit what is implicit whether in

²⁵. Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: an Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p.13.

²⁶. Ibid.

²⁷. Marcel Danesi, *Understanding Media Semiotics*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.33.

literature, films or photographs to see the most obvious and “naturalized” ideologies, to use Barthes word.

According to Barthes, cultural elements that have a clear influence on everyday life are reproduced, adapted to the needs of the time to convert their particular “historical class-culture into a universal nature”²⁸. He, through different publications, deals with “culture is ‘a language’”²⁹ by analyzing signs. His critical look at wrestling, soap powders and detergents, the drinking of wine, toys, and his analysis of the young black man in French military uniform, appearing on the cover of the Paris Match magazine, are all used to elucidate that no matter how simple and innocent the image is, there is always a second level meaning. In other words, Barthes establishes a theory that we can use to study the language of culture. Hence, his framework, as he confirms, is “an ideological critique” of the language of mass-culture³⁰.

In *Rhetoric of the Image*, Barthes proposes a useful methodology to deal with image analysis. In this methodology, denotation is the first order signifying system where the literal and obvious meaning appears, whereas, connotation is the second order signifying system where an additional cultural meaning is implied³¹. In the same perspective, we come to understand myth as “the connotative level of signification, in which cultural and ideological meanings are attached to the sign through codes”³². Myth, in Barthes’s notion, is ideology.

Methodological Outline

The selected films I am concerned with in this paper are either adapted directly from biographies or inspired by history which is quite complex. Therefore, the opening chapter of the present work will deal with both the methodological and the historical background. I

²⁸. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.08.

²⁹. Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.64

³⁰. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.08

³¹. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.41-42

³². Bella Dicks, *Semiotics*, eds., Roberta E. Pearson and Philip Simpson, *The Critical Dictionary of Film and Television*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.554.

would like to give a general overview of the interaction between film and history as well as the role of film-makers in shaping the content of the historical film. My intention in mentioning all these aspects is to outline a brief theoretical background. I will look at the ideological dimensions of the historical drama genre. Besides, I will try to account for Barthes's theoretical frame work as a useful means to tackle my issue.

Given the fact that my purpose in this dissertation is to study cinematic productions that deal with Queen Elizabeth I, I shall devote a section to the times and life of Queen Elizabeth I. I will set the biographical and historical contexts to which the films refer to. I will move then to establish the general background of the films' release during post-WWII. Establishing both contexts is useful to look at the way the directors have interpreted history to reflect contemporary issues.

The second chapter will deal with the different representations of Queen Elizabeth I. I will start with Elizabeth I as a woman, a mother, a warrior, a Media Saint in the image of Princess Diana, and finally Elizabeth I as a Monarch. The third Chapter in the dissertation will include two sections concerned with the shift of representation of Queen Elizabeth I with a focus on ideology. The first section is a diachronic study of how the representation of Queen Elizabeth I developed since 1955. The second one will be concerned with the study of the way her image is associated with the monarchy, the Empire and euroscepticism. In this respect, Raymond Williams's three clusters of values, Residual, Dominant, and Emergent ideologies will be useful.

The analysis will be done through the examination of selected signs in selected snapshots. Then, I will look at the denotative meaning of the signs. Afterwards, I will use the literal meaning to grasp the connoted one. The signs will be picked according to their significance in relation to the different representations drawn about Queen Elizabeth I.

CHAPTER ONE:
METHODOLOGY AND
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Since the end of WWII and the beginning twenty first century, popular culture transmitted through television and films has become dominant¹. Visual media are almost entirely outside the audience's control. Even its makers find themselves overwhelmed by its creativity and powerful content. Robert Rosenstone claims that "an image of a single scene contains much more information than the written description of the same scene"². The details provided by every shot in a film are open for both film fans and experts. Nowadays, cinema, as an art, and history, as a scientific discipline, are put together to speak a new language for a new audience.

Therefore, in this chapter and through three sections, I will try to put these two different elements together, history and film. I will start, in the first section, with some theoretical facts about the adaptation of history. Then, I will explain in which way Barthes's vision is a useful tool to address the issue of Elizabeth's representation. In the second section, I will put forward some historical aspects about the Tudor Age and the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. In the third section, I will briefly throw light on the important changes that Britain witnessed after the WWII.

Section one: History, Film and their Dimensions

1. History and Film

For a long time historical films, like most film genres, received little interest from scholars. This changed significantly by the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, international organizations, institutions and universities started to sponsor global conferences on history and film. These organizations like The American Historical Association and The New England Foundation for Humanities reward the best historical

¹. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, *Adventures in Media and Cultural Studies: Introducing The Key Works*. eds., Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Key works*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2006). p.xxi.

². Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Understanding of History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.28.

film each year. According to Rosenstone, the general interest in historical films began as an attempt to help students who did not or could not read history. Since then, new questions are asked about film and history interconnections,

The process of comparing film to the written word in the classroom led inevitably to larger questions about the relationship between the moving image and the written word, about exactly what could be learned from watching history on screen³.

a. Historical and Biographical films (Biopics)

Scholars and film studies specialists agree that it is rather controversial to give an exact definition to any genre. Yet, it is worth mentioning that the epic, the war, and the biographical, also known as biopics, fall into the historical film genre. They share “the documentable past”, as well as the will “of making the world of the past knowable and visible”⁴. In point of fact, “This tradition”, as Rosenstone argues, has been known since the dawn of film industry. It “is as old as the medium”⁵. In Hollywood, for instance, D. W. Griffith’s **The Birth of a Nation** (1915) was one of the first films in this genre, and is one of the most famous historical films that “have served as vehicles of artistic ambition and as catalysts of public debate”⁶.

James Chapman, in his *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film* (2005), affirms that the historical film “quotes from historical sources”, and has a tendency to create “a historical verisimilitude” through mise-en-scene, costume and visual effects⁷. He adds that the issue of national identity is one of its major concerns. For her part, Natalie Zemon Davis points out that the historical film “is composed of dramatic feature films in which the primary plot is based on actual historical events, or in which an imagined plot unfolds in such a way that actual historical events are central and intrinsic to the

³. Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Understanding of History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.02-03-04.

⁴. Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008), p.02.

⁵. Op cit, p.03.

⁶. Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008), p.01.

⁷. James Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B.TAURIS: 2005), p.04.

story”⁸. The quotation implies that historicals are two types. Some of them are based on historical facts and real events whereas others are fictional stories where real historical events are folded in the happenings. Mel Gibson’s **Brave Heart** (1995), for instance, is a story of the thirteenth century Scottish hero William Wallace, while **Gladiator** (2000), by Ridley Scott is a fictional story with some historical references.

The Critical Dictionary of Film and Television (2001) identifies the historical film as heritage film. It claims that these productions are primarily British. They spot light on the most glorified periods of the British history, including the Elizabethan age and the nineteenth century. They are also adaptations of the most eminent literary texts⁹.The definition makes it clear that historicals are concerned primarily with the most significant periods of the British history.

As far as the biographical film, or biopics, is concerned, Giselle Bastin, in *Filming the Ineffable: Biopics of the British Royal Family* (2009), defines it as a film that depicts historical figures’ lives and in which the film is named after him or her¹⁰. Films like **Lincoln** (2012), **The Young Victoria** (2008), **Ali** (2001) and **The Iron Lady** (2011) are historical biopics in which the central character is a historical figure. Valentina Cucca, in *Biopics as Postmodern Myth Making* (2011), distinguishes between “classical” biopics and “contemporary” ones. She clarifies that contemporary biopics are produced from the eighties onwards. They develop a real interest in “the subject not as *pretext*”, but “as a *text*”, or a final product¹¹. In other words, producers are interested in this kind of films as an alleged excuse to treat some other elements and not simply to tell the biography. Consequently, the biographical film of the late twentieth century is a purposeful one.

⁸.Natalie Zemon quoted in Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008), p.02.

⁹. Moya Lugket, *Heritage Film and Television*, eds., Roberta E. Pearson and Philip Simpson, *The Critical Dictionary of Film and Television*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 292-293.

¹⁰. Giselle Bastin, *Filming the Ineffable: Biopics of the British Royal Family* in *Autobiography Society*, Vol02, N01, Summer 2009, p.34 in https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ab_autobiography_studies/v024/24.1.bastin.pdf

¹¹. Valentina Cucca, *Biopics as Postmodern Mythmaking*, (2011) in *Academic Quarter*, Vol02, Spring 2011., p.170.

Statistics show that historical records constitute an important source of material in the film business. In fact, both film-makers and cinemagoers are interested in history as it is conveyed in these productions. During the last half of the twentieth century, thirteen out of twenty-five Academy Award winners (Oscar) for the Best Picture were those based on history. During the same period, thirty-two out of one hundred films nominated for the best picture, including **Twelve Years a Slave** (2013), **Shakespeare in Love** (1998) and **The English Patient** (1996), and many others, are films that “have had their events based on real historical events”¹². One common aspect is that they all won more than five Oscars and received more than twenty other nominations including Oscar, Golden Globe and BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Art).

What is obvious is that producers by the last half of the twentieth century turned their interest to reviving historical figures. They can be kings and queens like *Elizabeth* (1998), politicians like Malcolm X in **Malcolm X** (1992), singers and musicians like Bob Dylan in **I’m Not There** (2007), sport figures like the American boxer Micky Ward in **The Fighter** (2010). Each of these films is biographical or simply a biopic¹³.

b. The Adaption of History/Biographies

In 1975, *Cahier du Cinema* interviewed Marco Ferro, “a historian turned film-maker” about the relation of film images with understanding reality. He was asked, “What are the relationships between the formation of this stock and different political powers? [...] At what point did these images start being considered as ‘documents’, as ‘historical proofs’, even as ‘weapons?’”¹⁴. The quote looks at film and history from the same angle, as a “proof” and a “weapon”. The reporter questions the stock of images produced, through films, and the way they are controlled through what he refers to as “political powers”.

¹². Robert Niemi, *History in the Media*, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p.xxi.

¹³. Moya Lugket, *Heritage Film and Television*, eds., Roberta E. Pearson and Philip Simpson, *The Critical Dictionary of Film and Television*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.292.

¹⁴. Serge Daney and Ignacio Rament, *Cinema and History*, eds., David Wilson, *Cahier du Cinema (1973-1978): History, Ideology, Cultural Struggle*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.192.

Marco Ferro goes back to WWII when the Soviet and the Nazis started to consider and give credit to the work of the cameraman, cinematographer or “image-messenger”. He says that cinema during WWII was more than “an instrument of propaganda”, it spread information. When he is asked, “Where does this generalized interest in history come from?” He answers, “I believe that the “retro” fashion is linked to the general questioning of ideas and certainties that is the mark of our times”¹⁵. In other words, it is the disappointment we feel about our lives that creates the need of the retro-fashion, which is the return to the style of the past (clothes for instance). Jim Leach asserts that film-makers use cultural mythologies to help nations to conceal the differences and promote national character: “National cinemas thus provide a good site for exploring the relations between the coercive effect of cultural myths and the diversity that they seek to organize and conceal”¹⁶.

Although no one can be a hundred percent sure about written history, Rosenstone, among many others scholars, shows a particular concern about the authenticity of historical films. He argues that this constructed past is “an ideological and cultural product of the western world”¹⁷. He claims that despite the fact that the products seem the result of coincidence, film-makers use historical events and figures to build a combination of “signifiers” to “signify history”. Actually, they are a set of signifiers intentionally put together. He says, “The focus tends to be on the creation and manipulation of the meanings of the past, on a discourse that is free of data other than that of other discourses, on what seems to be the free play of signifiers signifying history”¹⁸. He goes on about how the historical film produced in a different epoch displays, using sound, vision, and montage,

¹⁵. Serge Daney and Ignacio Ramonet, *Cinema and History*, eds., David Wilson, *Cahier du Cinema (1973-1978): History, Ideology, Cultural Struggle*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.193-195.

¹⁶. Jim Leach, *British Cinema*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.05.

¹⁷. Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to our Understanding of History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.11.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*, p.10.

through a personalized and emotional sight, a different past to a different audience. It simply offers “a new relationship to the world of the past”¹⁹.

Directors are free to include, exclude, and alter history. In other words, the same historical event transmitted through written or visual history is not the same. This reduction is inevitable because two or three hours are not enough to put even one single battle of the WWII on screen. However, films’ ability to make the viewer live history, feel the realities of the battlefield is a fascinating aspect that the written word can do, but differently. I can quote: “Film can plunge us into the drama of confrontations in the courtroom or the legislature; the simultaneous; overlapping realities of war and revolution; the intense confusion of men in battle”²⁰.

2. Roland Barthes and Image /Film Analysis

Roland Barthes’s framework, developed in *Mythologies*, *Image-Music-Text* and *Elements of Semiology*, is a very useful means to deal with image analysis. To elucidate Barthes’s vision, several key concepts require explanation. Gilles Deleuze, in his *Cinema 2: the Time Image* (1989), summarizes the power of the image saying,

The image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows [...] What is specific to the image [...] is to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented object and do not allow themselves to be reduced to the present²¹.

The starting point of Barthes’s theoretical framework is Saussure’s notion of the sign. As far as images are concerned, signs can be a sound, an image on screen, a musical tone, a gesture, or an object that stand for something outside the image content. However, and contrary to Saussure’s arbitrary linguistic sign, Barthes asserts that the semiological sign is

¹⁹. Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to our Understanding of History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.11.

²⁰. Ibid., p.32.

²¹. G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-image*, trans., H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta, (London: Athlone Press, 1989). p. xii., p.xii.

very loaded in content²². In his signifying system, the nature of the sign is “drawn from a cultural code”²³. In this way, the relation signifier-signified is given a more complex, productive and cultural dimension. The study of signs varies depending on how they are perceived and interpreted. It is the result of a motivated combination of the signified and signifier. These signs, as he goes on, are assembled in semiological systems, including images and photographs. The result of this combination is signification²⁴.

In *Rhetoric of the Image* (1964), Barthes argues that an “analogical representation”, like films and images, produces meaning at two levels: a non-coded iconic message which is the literal denoted one and a symbolic connoted message²⁵. The denoted message corresponds to the first degree of understanding, the literal image or the dictionary meaning. It is a clear, innocent and objective description of the content of the image. Though superficial, it offers the details from which the symbolic message can be extracted²⁶. Connotation is “the ideas and values expressed through what was being represented, and through the way in which they were represented”²⁷. It is associated with a wider social context since it amplifies and extends the literal meaning. To decipher connotations we need to convert it to a simple clear communiqué using extra elements as well as taking into consideration: Photogenia, Trick Effects, Pose, Objects, Aestheticism, and Syntax²⁸ to exploit its “polysemic values”²⁹. Overall, the denotation of the image is nothing more than the description of its content. The connotation, on the other hand, indicates a cultural, elevated meaning. The combination of denotation and connotation offers the ideological meaning “myth”.

²². Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans., Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), p.35.

²³. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.44.

²⁴. Ibid., p.48.

²⁵. Ibid., p.37.

²⁶. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.42.

²⁷. Mentioned in Paulo Emanuel and Novais Guimarães, *What did Barthes mean by 'Semiotics'? How Useful Is his Account for Social Theory and for Accounts of Ideology?* (2012) in <http://www.academia.edu/4698696>.

²⁸. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.21-22-23-24.

²⁹. Stuart Hall, *Encoding/Decoding*, eds., Stuart Hall and Dorothy Hobson, *Culture, Media, Language Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79*, (Birmingham: Routledge, 2005), pp.117.

Myth can be explained from two angles. On the one hand, there are “*myths of genealogy*”. It is synonymous with stories and legends that include gods and super heroes used to explain natural phenomena like rain, birth and shaped ancient times³⁰. Quite apart from this classical notion, there is the cultural theory meaning of myth as a “*semiological system*”³¹ as defined by Claude Levi Strauss and Roland Barthes. Barthes’s use of myth is difficult since he sometimes uses it to refer to connotation, ideology, and discourse³². Thus, connotation is related to the hidden messages that are ideologically coded. Historical knowledge and contextualization are needed to decode the possible implications lying behind. He says that “the reading depends on my culture, on my knowledge of the world”³³. Evidently, this is the reason why the examination of the films cannot be accomplished without making reference to the historical context in which the films are released.

For Barthes, reading myth involves through three major stages. It is on the third stage that myths take their ideological aspect and reveal their purposes. According to him, myth is used by the bourgeois class to serve its ideology; “Myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines this society”³⁴. Myths, Graham Allen clarifies, are “not simply delusions”, but “tricks played upon us by those in positions of power”³⁵.

3. Multimodality in Visual Texts

R. J. Raock, in his *Historiography as Cinematography: a Problem to Film Work for Historians* (1983), claims that the complexity of the world can only be depicted in media texts and images thanks to its ability to use and mix images and sounds with the cuts, camera movements, speed-ups. He adds that “only film can provide an adequate empathetic reconstruction to convey how historical people witnessed, understood, and lived their

³⁰. Martin Bronwen and Felizitas Ringham, *The Dictionary of Semiotics*, (London: Cassell, 2000), p.89.

³¹. Valentina Cucca, *Biopics as Postmodern Mythmaking*, (2011) in *Academic Quarter*, Vol02, Spring 2011., p.171.

³². Sara Gwenllian Jones, *Myth*, eds., Roberta E. Pearson and Philip Simpson, *The Critical Dictionary of Film and Television*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.419.

³³. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.29.

³⁴. *Ibid.*, p.142.

³⁵. Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p.38.

lives”³⁶. In short, films “recover all the past’s liveliness”³⁷. This happens thanks to the multimodality of the visual text.

Chiaoi Tseng’s in his article *Coherence and Cohesive Harmony in Filmic Text* explains that, “Within film there is a complex interaction of co-occurring modality, for example, words, images, sounds, colours, actions, etc that combine and cohere to create meanings”³⁸. The quotation clarifies that film is a multimodal text in the way it puts together lightening, colour, score, sound, and other mise-en-scène aspects like camera movement and position as well as special effects, in some genres.

Noel Carroll, in his essay *The Power of Movies* (1996), explains that films are authoritative because they speak for everyone³⁹. His argument centres around three important points: the image, variable framing i.e., camera movement and narrative. According to him, narrative is the final story told thanks to film editing which allow the film to stand as a clear whole. Variable framing is achieved thanks to camera movement, closer and farther away from the filmed objects or the characters. Undeniably, throughout the film, the positioning of the camera helps the audience and guides its gaze. He writes, “Through cutting and camera movement, the film maker can rest assured that the spectator is perceiving exactly what she should be perceiving at the precise moment she should be perceiving it”⁴⁰.

Carl Casighino, in *Moving Images: Making Movies, Understanding Media* (2011), explains more about different camera angles. Nevertheless, two angles are particularly attention grabbing in the way they highlight different meanings,

³⁶. R. J. Raock cited in Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to our Understanding of History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.25.

³⁷. Quoted in Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Understanding of History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.25-26.

³⁸. Chiaoi Tseng , *Coherence and Cohesive Harmony in Filmic Text*, eds., Len Unsworth, *Multimodal Semiotics Functional Analysis In Context Of Education*, (London: continuum, 2008), p.89.

³⁹. Noel Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.78-79.

⁴⁰. *Ibid.*, p.84.

The Angle	Camera Positioning	Aims
High Angle Shot	Camera above the subject with lens facing down	This camera position makes character seems weak and allows the audience have control over him or her
Low Angle Shot	Camera lower than the subject	It highlights the stand of characters and objects by giving them magnitude and power.

Table 01: Camera Angles and their Meaning According to Carl Casinghino⁴¹.

In another instance, the same author explains the different camera shots and their content. Close-up shots where the camera focuses on the actor's face from the forehead to the chin, the medium shots where the human body is shown from the waist up, full shots where the entire human body is shown in front of the camera. There is also the wide shot where the camera is far from the character, and introduces much of the background. All these shots can be medium or extreme shots. For instance, the extreme close-up can focus on the eyes of the character, mouth or any part of his body⁴².

In addition to variable framing, "pictorial representation" is one of the most important cinematic features. In other words, the image's power resides in its accessibility. These images are representational or cultural inventions. He adds that we cannot proclaim "that anything looks like anything else, though we may decree that anything stands for anything else"⁴³. By the end of his essay, Carroll mentions music as another important element the makes films a prevailing media text.

⁴¹. Carl Casinghino, *Moving Images: Making Movies, Understanding Media*, (New York: Delmar, 2011), p.23.

⁴². *Ibid.*, p.08-09-10.

⁴³. Noel Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.83.

Section two: the Times and the Life of Queen Elizabeth I

This section is an overview of historical background of the Tudor Age as well as the biography of Queen Elizabeth I. The section deals starts with Henry VIII (1509-1547) and Anne Boleyn. It looks then at Queen Elizabeth I's biography. Queen Elizabeth I, together with Queen Victoria, is one of the most famous and adored British Monarchs. Many historians tried to report her biography through written historical materials. This section will look briefly at the birth of the Tudor Queen, early years as a princess, then her reign. A particular attention will be granted to the religious settlement, foreign policy and the issue of marriage during her time in power. The final important aspects are the major consequences and achievements of Elizabethan Age.

1. Henry VIII

The age of the Tudors has left its impact on the English-speaking world as a watershed. Hallowed tradition, native patriotism, and post-imperial gloom have united to swell our appreciation of the period as a golden age⁴⁴.

Late fifteenth century England was marked by the event that brought Henry VII to the throne: the War of the Roses. The conflict started by the end of the Hundred Years' War (1337-1463). The war was a dynastic conflict over the throne of England between the House of York and the House Lancaster. The quarrel between Henry VII and Richard III ended with the battle of Bosworth Field (August 22nd, 1485). Henry VII proclaimed himself king and reunited both houses by marrying Elizabeth of York. This marked the inauguration of the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII was able to unite the nobility and reduce their powers to serve the king and the country. During twenty four years of reign, he was able to restore and maintain the authority as well as the respect of the monarchy⁴⁵.

In beginning sixteenth century, England held a weak position among the European counterparts, and Spain and Italy were the major leaders. Henry VIII, who was excessively

⁴⁴. John Guy, *The Tudor: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.01.

⁴⁵. *Ibid.*, p.13.

ambitious, could not accept this state. He was interested in achieving recorded victories⁴⁶. He is remembered as the founder of the navy and the one who launched England's religious freedom through the Reformation. It was, also, during this period that England, like the rest of Europe, saw the propagation of the Renaissance. Victor Stater claims that Tudor rulers, predominantly Henry VII and Henry VIII, enforced the status of the monarchy,

An important theme in English history in the early modern period is the changing centrality of the court in political and social life. Its importance under the Tudors grew, if anything, as Henry VII and Henry VIII consolidated the monarchy's power over church, state, and nobility⁴⁷.

2. Anne Boleyn

Anne Boleyn was born in 1507 to Sir Thomas Boleyn and Elizabeth Howard. Since her early childhood, she was had a considerable learning abilities. At the age of six, she started studying French. She spent a year at the court of Margret of Austria, the regent of the Low Countries, who was extremely cautious about giving her girls a sophisticated and refined education. By 1520s, the Anglo-French relations declined, her father brought her back home. She was just twenty and already a self assured young lady⁴⁸.

In 1521, she entered the English court to be banished shortly after for contracting a secret betrothal with Lord Henry Percy. By the beginning of 1522, she returned as Catherine of Aragon's maid of honour. The position allowed her to attend court's ceremonies. She was, as one contemporary put it, "very eloquent and gracious, and reasonably good looking"⁴⁹. Anne captivated, among others, the king by her sense of humour and wittily conversations in both French and English. She was active and very independent. In brief, she was a woman with her own agenda. This fascinated Henry VIII who wanted her to be his mistress, but she refused. A love affair then started between them, while he was seeking away to divorce Catherine. In fact, during 1528, Wolsey's fall in power allowed her to come

⁴⁶. John Guy, *The Tudor: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.01.

⁴⁷. Victor Stater, *The Political History of Tudor and Stuart England*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.05.

⁴⁸. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.113-114.

⁴⁹. Quoted in David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.115.

to prominence and influence. Anne revealed herself to be a skilled politician. She offered Henry the encouragements and the advice he needed. By the beginning of the 1530, Henry's court became dominated by the Boleyn family⁵⁰, but, as the French ambassador wrote, "above everyone, Mademoiselle Anne"⁵¹.

Loades states that contrary his other marriage, Henry's marriage to Anne was the most important. In fact, to marry her, Henry needed to redefine the ecclesiastical powers in England⁵². During the 1520s and 1530s, Lutheranism penetrated into English universities, especially Cambridge, and the king's court thanks to Anne and her family. It is also thanks to her and Thomas Cromwell that Henry agreed on William Tyndale's New Testament in 1526 that he previously rejected⁵³. A letter sent to Thomas Cromwell shows how Anne favoured the diffusion of the scriptures in vernacular. In the correspondence, she asked him to free Tyndale since he was trying to settle the New Testament in English. She wrote:

put and expelled from his fredome and felowshipe of and in the Englishe house there, for nothing ells (as he affermethe) but oonly for that that he dyd bothe with his gooddiss and polHcie, to his greate hurte and hynderans in this Worlde, helpe to the setting forthe of the Newe Testamente in Englishe. We therefore desire and instantly praye you that with all spede and favoure convenient ye woll cause this good and honeste marchaunt, being my Lordis true faithfull and loving subjecte, restored to his pristine fredome, libertie⁵⁴.

3. Elizabeth I

a. Elizabeth as a Young Princess

While Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, his new wife, England, and the whole Europe were waiting for the desired male heir, Elizabeth was born on September 7th, 1533 at Greenwich Palace in London. She was Henry VIII's second daughter from his second Protestant wife

⁵⁰. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 115-116-117.

⁵¹. Quoted in David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.117.

⁵². *Ibid.*, p.212 .

⁵³. Doreen Rosman, *From Catholic to Protestant: Religion and People in Tudor England*, (London: UCL Press, 1996), p.27.

⁵⁴. *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, vol. II, ed., Henry Ellis, (London, Harding, Triphook and Lepard, 2010), p.46.

Anne Boleyn. She was baptized on September 10th, and named after her two grandmothers, Elizabeth of York and Elizabeth Howard⁵⁵.

At the age of two, some historians say three, Elizabeth lost her mother who was executed for adultery and high treason. Six weeks later, Henry VIII, and Parliament declared her illegitimate. As a result, Elizabeth lost her title of Princess, and was placed under the care of several lady Mistresses. In 1537, Henry had the male heir he was waiting for from his third wife. As a result, Elizabeth faded to the background. It was Henry's sixth wife, Katherine Parr who helped her to bring some balance to her life by offering the model she needed to prepare herself to be a queen⁵⁶.

Elizabeth was certainly one of the best-educated women of her time. Her early tutors were scholars in Cambridge. They were chosen to give her an extensive education; William Grindal became her tutor in 1544. He taught her Latin and Greek. Thanks to that, at a very early age, she was able to read and speak Italian, Spanish, and French. In 1546, she translated John Calvin's *How we Ought to Know God*⁵⁷. After Grindal's death, Elizabeth chose Roger Ascham who was a public orator and teacher at Cambridge University to instruct her⁵⁸. In 1550, Ascham wrote to a friend,

She has just passed her sixteenth birthday, and her seriousness and gentleness are unheard of in those of her age and rank. Her study of the true faith and of good learning is most energetic. She has talent without a woman's weakness, industry with a man's perseverance⁵⁹.

Elizabeth could read Greek, Latin, French literary as well as religious texts. She studied, also, history, theology, and other sciences updated to the Renaissance. For entertainment, she enjoyed dancing and, like her father, horse riding and hunting. She also enjoyed music, and learned to play some instruments. However, and unlike her brother, she

⁵⁵. Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levin, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Women in the Renaissance Italy, France, and England*, (California: Abc-Clio, 2007), p.127.

⁵⁶. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.07.

⁵⁷. *Ibid.*, p.08.

⁵⁸. Simon Schama, *History of Britain Body of the Queen: Benefit of Wigs*, (London: BBC, 1994), (00:08:50).

⁵⁹. Roger Ascham quoted in Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.10.

has never been prepared to be a ruler⁶⁰. She said, “I gave myself to the study of that which was meet for government”⁶¹. Without doubt, she learnt a lot from both her brother and her sister’s experiences.

After her father’s death, Elizabeth moved to live with her stepmother, Katherine Parr, in Dowager, Chelsea. When Katherine married Admiral Thomas Seymour, rumours about a relationship that grew between her and Seymour spread. Described as a notorious womanizer, Seymour was forty years old. Elizabeth was teenager, only fourteen⁶². In January 1549, Seymour was arrested for illegal activities, and executed in March 1549. After these events, Elizabeth retired to the quiet life of the countryside. She learnt how to be very careful about her public image⁶³.

Henry VIII fixed the order of succession from Edward to Mary, then to Elizabeth. However, Edward changed the order of succession in favour of his cousin, Lady Jane Grey who was executed after Mary’s coronation⁶⁴. When Edward died in July, 1553, Mary succeeded to the throne. At that time, Elizabeth was 19, the Venetian ambassador stated, “her figure and face are very handsome and such an air of dignified majesty pervades all her actions that no one can fail to suppose she is a Queen...her manners are very modest and affable”⁶⁵.

Mary’s popularity diminished when she decided to marry Philip of Spain, England’s most feared enemy. In 1554, Elizabeth was falsely accused of plotting against her sister by encouraging Wyatt’s rebellion which was motivated by England’s disapproval of Mary’s marriage to Phillip of Spain⁶⁶. Sir Thomas Wyatt’s public declaration that Elizabeth was not

⁶⁰. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.10.

⁶¹. Elizabeth I quoted in Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.08.

⁶². David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.212.

⁶³. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.09.Ibid.

⁶⁴. Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levin, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Women in the Renaissance Italy, France, and England*, (California: Abc-Clio, 2007), p.127.

⁶⁵. Quoted in Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levin, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Women in the Renaissance Italy, France, and England*, (California: Abc-Clio, 2007), p.127.

⁶⁶. John N. King, ed., *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs Select Narratives*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.266.

responsible for the rebellion saved her from execution, after months of imprisonment in the London Tower. Instead, she was sent to Woodstock in the charge of Sir Henry Beding Field⁶⁷. The faked pregnancy of Mary ended with Elizabeth's coronation on November 17th, 1558⁶⁸.

b. Elizabeth's Reign (1558-1603)

Elizabeth Tudor, at the age of twenty five, inherited a country which has been perceived as the "appendage of Spain". The country was facing a religious civil war and unable to resist foreign threats. George Macaulay Trevelyan writes that only Elizabeth's strategy saved the heretic island from France and Spain, which its monarchs hoped to control either through marriage or war⁶⁹. John Guy argues that during her reign, "her father's expansionist dreams were absent, her sister's ideological passions were eschewed [...], and a dynastic marriage was avoided"⁷⁰. Elizabeth I during her reign did not refer to any of these ideological aspects. She focused more on securing the country from the religious war that the previous Tudor rulers declared.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth I can be divided into two periods. The first one ended in 1585 when an English expedition was sent to Netherlands⁷¹. This event was a turning point in the English foreign policy that adopted non-interventionism since Elizabeth I's succession to the throne. Guy states that despite the fact that she was not as brilliant as Sir Walsingham as far as "real politik" is concerned, she exceeded Lord Burghley's talent in state affairs. Undoubtedly, through the Via Media policy, Elizabeth was able to avoid her father's unrealistic ambitions, and her sister's ideological passions to re-establish the

⁶⁷. John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.270.

⁶⁸. Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Carole Levin, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Women in the Renaissance Italy, France, and England*, (California: Abc-Clio, 2007), p.127.

⁶⁹. John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.234.

⁷⁰. John Guy, *The Tudor: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.67-69.

⁷¹. John Guy, *The Reign of Elizabeth I Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.01.

Catholic Church through the Counter-Reformation. Contrary to what they did, she eschewed marriage for imperialistic and dynastic aims⁷².

b.1 Religious Settlement

What Henry VIII started as a personal will to marry and have a male heir ended with the break with the Roman Catholic Church. Ever since, England has been under the threat of a religious war between Protestants and Catholics. Hundreds of families have been burned, during Mary's reign, for heresy. Therefore, the throne's survival was strongly related to its ability to handle the disturbing issue of religion⁷³. In fact, with "the Henrician-anti-Papalism", "the Edwardian Protestantism" and "Marian Catholicism", the task of building an Anglican church was close to the impossible⁷⁴.

Elizabeth inherited a divided country. England was torn apart between Catholics and Protestant, but also between the different views about how the new church should be⁷⁵. Establishing the Protestant faith was a difficult burden that Elizabeth committed herself to, especially after Mary's attempt to restore Catholicism. Religious settlement was important to keep England safe from a religious conflict. It also cleared out the Anglican Church from its ambiguities⁷⁶. The Marian Restoration met support from a massive selection of the clergy, but not from commoners, Londoners and the sea-faring population. Elizabeth, from her first year as Queen, used the supporters of Protestantism to "re-establish the supremacy of the national, laic State, with a national church"⁷⁷. In brief, "Concord" was Elizabeth's slogan, and from her coronation onward she kept her credo.

It is with the help of Parliament that she completed the Reformation and officially established the Church of England. In January 1559, Parliament met to introduce a bill that

⁷². John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.67-69

⁷³. Antoine Mioche, *Les Grand Dates De L'histoire Britannique*, (Paris: Hachette, 2003), p.47.

⁷⁴. John Guy, *The Tudor: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.70.

⁷⁵. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.22.

⁷⁶. John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.271.

⁷⁷. George Macaulay Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.232-233.

would restore royal authority and full Protestant worship based on the 1552 Prayer Book⁷⁸. The Act of Supremacy and the Uniformity were passed through Parliament and without churchmen's consent. By 1563, the Elizabethan Settlement, which included 39 articles defining the Church of England's set of guidelines were completed. Finally, Elizabeth was recognized as the "Supreme Governor" of the Anglican Church⁷⁹ instead of the word Head which was, according to many Protestants reformers, inappropriate for a woman⁸⁰. Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York, stated,

Her highness, being a woman by birth and nature, is not qualified by God's word to feed the flock of Christ, it appears most plainly...To preach or minister the holy sacraments, a woman may not...A woman, in the degrees of Christ's church, is not called to be an apostle, or evangelist, nor to be a shepherd, neither a doctor or preacher. Therefor she cannot be supreme head of Christ's militant church, nor yet of any part thereof⁸¹.

However, John Guy, in his *Tudor Monarch and Political Culture* (1996), argues that though the title is different, her powers were not different from her father's. In the same perspective, William Haugaard claims that Elizabeth "fought passionately to establish her vision of the national church"⁸². Elizabeth's way of practising her religion showed Catholics that there was not much difference between both faiths. However, in public, she was Protestant. As a result, she benefited from the support of Lutheran Princes in Germany⁸³. The established stability at that period was "a miracle of the state craft". It certainly shut the voices of those who found her policy "too protestant" or "not protestant enough"⁸⁴.

Antoine Moiche considers the Elizabethan Settlement as one of the greatest events of the British history. According to him, it "was an adjustment of the earlier reforms, both a compromise and a consolidation"⁸⁵. The Settlement passed through Parliament settled the

⁷⁸ . John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.69.

⁷⁹ . Ibid., p.70.

⁸⁰ . Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.24.

⁸¹ . Quoted in Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.24.

⁸² . Ibid.

⁸³ . Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.25.

⁸⁴ . George Macaulay Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.233.

⁸⁵ . Antoine Mioche, *Les Grand Dates de L'histoire Britannique*, (Paris: Hachette, 2003), p.42-43.

Anglican Church by law. Elizabeth's next task was to have the trust of her catholic subjects'⁸⁶.

b.2 Foreign Policy

During Elizabeth's reign the issues of marriage, succession, religious settlement and foreign policy were inter-related. Marriage was a step to secure succession and England from foreign threats. However, Elizabeth was uncertain about the identity of the new king; English or a foreign protestant. Elizabeth I, like many of her protestant subjects, feared Catholics. Besides, she, because of her father and sister's experiences, thought that marriage would not provide England with a male heir. Finally, marrying a foreigner would mean taking side in the continental conflicts, a concern that Elizabeth was highly prudent about since the beginning of her reign⁸⁷.

Facing a Spanish/French/Scottish Catholic coalition was dangerous for England. This is the reason why Elizabeth was very careful about her decisions, as far as her foreign policy was concerned. Consequently, during the first twenty years of her reign, Elizabeth's foreign policy was highly related to the question of marriage. She used this issue as a political strategy⁸⁸. During the 1570s and the 1580s, both Parliament and Private Council, especially Lord Burghley and Sir Walsingham, showed a commitment to the European Protestant cause. The advocates of this Protestant foreign policy aimed at gathering allies and preparing England to face, probably, Spain. Yet, in 1588, England faced alone the Spanish threat⁸⁹.

b.2.1 Relations with Scotland

After James V's death, Mary, only eighteen, became Queen. She was a devoted Catholic. In 1558, she married Francis, the French dauphin. After his death (1560), Mary

⁸⁶. John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.70.

⁸⁷. John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.271.

⁸⁸. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.40.

⁸⁹. John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.77.

put an end to her ambitions to be the new French Queen⁹⁰. She went back to Scotland, and started her fight for the Scottish succession. She re-married and had an heir. Nonetheless, her reputation in her kingdom deteriorated and her subjects and administration wanted her to leave. She was imprisoned and forced to abandon the throne in favour of her little son and brother-in-law⁹¹.

Elizabeth Tudor and Mary were very different, but had almost the same right for the English crown. In May 1568, Mary managed to escape to England where she was imprisoned for 19 years. However, keeping Mary alive kept the threat of Catholicism over England. Soon, Elizabeth's enthusiasm and goodwill ended when plots of murder targeted her. She understood that, as far as Mary was alive, her reign was not safe⁹². Guy argues that The Northern Rising of 1569 and Mary's imprisonment began a different stage in the English politics. Actually, after these events, the Pope declared Elizabeth excommunicated. Besides, England seemed to be the country protecting the Protestant cause all over Europe⁹³.

The Scottish question was a concern over which Elizabeth and William Cecil disagreed. In fact, Elizabeth wanted to put an end to the French domination in Scotland. Moreover, the corrupted ecclesiastical institution⁹⁴ helped the rising Presbyterian Church. It asked the help of Elizabeth to get rid of the French Mary of Guise who was ruling on behalf of her daughter in law, Mary Stuart, Queen of France in 1559⁹⁵. On July 5th, 1560, the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed to end the alliance between Scotland and France to replace it with an Anglo-Scottish accord. France and England withdrew their troops from Scotland and Mary gave up the claim to the English throne⁹⁶.

⁹⁰. *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, S-Sn, vol 17., (Chicago: World Book, Inc: 1986), p.171-172.

⁹¹. Simon Schama, *History of Britain Body of the Queen: Benefit of Wigs*, (London: BBC, 1994), (00:02:30).

⁹². John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.273.

⁹³. John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.76.

⁹⁴. George Macaulay Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.237.

⁹⁵. John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.272-273.

⁹⁶. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.42.

Elizabeth I, under pressure from William Cecil and Sir Walsingham, signed the Mary's execution order in 1587⁹⁷. Her death ended hopes to reconcile Spain and England. Besides, France turned her back to Scotland. In this way, well-founded basics were constructed to define the English-Scottish union. Finally, Henry VIII's ambitions became true under Elizabeth and William Cecil's administration,

The Scottish Reformation had become the vehicle for the expulsion of the continental influence from the British Isles, and the assertion of the hegemony sought by Henry VIII⁹⁸.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, England and Scotland were in a struggle. In 1603, the Scottish king James II ascended to the throne as the king of England to join both crowns⁹⁹. The issue of religion that had united Europe for long put England in a critical position, and finally split it off from the continent. Nevertheless, Protestant England achieved union with Protestant Scotland to guard the archipelago, and founded Great Britain.

b.2.2 Relations with Europe

b.2.2.a France

Since the Middle Ages and the Hundred Years' War, the relations with France have always been turbulent. The succession of Elizabeth was quite difficult because, on the one hand, by 1558, England was involved with France through Mary's war, which cost England the loss of Calais. On the other hand, the presence of Mary, Queen of Scots, as the second heir to the throne, was a threat that the French wanted to use to control England. Elizabeth, through the peace Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (April 1559), agreed with France "to hold Calais for eight years and then either return or pay an indemnity"¹⁰⁰. The treaty saved England from a French invasion. Finally, the king of France acknowledged Elizabeth as the

⁹⁷. John Cannon and Anne Hargreaves, *The Kings and Queens of Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.273.

⁹⁸. John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.76.

⁹⁹. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.38.

¹⁰⁰. *Ibid.*, p.41-42.

lawful heir and renounced claiming the throne for his daughter-in-law. This critical situation pushed Elizabeth to reconsider the issue of foreign policy with the continent¹⁰¹.

Obsessed with the loss of Calais, and her engagement as far as the Protestant cause is concerned, Elizabeth wanted to help Huguenots, a protestant minority in France, to capture Le Havre and exchange it with Calais. Nevertheless, the English soldiers failed to resist both the French army and the plague. By then, Elizabeth knew that she could not rely on the support of foreign protestant allies. At least, Elizabeth I realized after this disastrous intervention that the protestant cause could cost England its peace¹⁰².

b.2.2.b Spain

The English-Spanish relations have always been ambiguous, especially during the Tudor Age. Henry VII tried to build solid family relations with Spain through a dynastic marriage (1501) between his elder son Prince Arthur and Catherine of Aragon, Philip's sister. After Arthur's death, Henry, his younger brother, married her. Nonetheless, Catherine was unable to produce a male heir. Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon led to the break with the Catholic Church. The Pope excommunicated him and England faced not only Spain but also the Catholic world.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, during Philip II's reign, Spain possessed an empire that included lands in the New World, central and southern America and Europe. Spain was feared not only for its religious power, but also for its armada¹⁰³. It represented the eternal danger as the "head of the Catholic Church in Europe and the monopolist of the ocean routes to the new world"¹⁰⁴. Both France and Spain were waiting for the right moment to join England whether through a dynastic marriage or war.

Elizabeth's reign was a turning point in Anglo-continental relations because she did not try to keep Spain as a powerful ally. On the contrary, she tried, first, to secure the island

¹⁰¹. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.42.

¹⁰². *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹⁰³. John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.79.

¹⁰⁴. George Macaulay Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.232.

by joining Scotland and Ireland, and second, she refused the establishment of any family or dynastic relations with Spain. In 1559, after Mary's death and Elizabeth's coronation, Philip of Spain joined the queue of suitors for Elizabeth's hand¹⁰⁵.

c. Marriage and Succession

[In 16th century European society] Marriage was the triumphal arch through which women, almost without exception, had to pass in order to reach the public eye. And after marriage followed, in theory, the total self-abnegation of the woman¹⁰⁶.

The issue of marriage has always been a concern that preoccupied Parliament and Elizabeth's subjects. For many, Elizabeth was unfit to rule because she was a heretic bastard, but also because she was unmarried¹⁰⁷ and her rule was challenged by the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. The threat of Mary was doubled especially after her marriage to the French Catholic Dauphin. Carole Levin claims that the safety of the Queen obsessed her advisors and Parliament, especially William Cecil who understood that the Queen's death, without a male heir, would mean a civil war. This explains why they constantly put pressure on her to marry and secure the Crown¹⁰⁸.

For about four decades, Elizabeth used and associated her body with the realm¹⁰⁹. Preserving the purity of her body stood as a safeguarding of the purity of the throne and the land from Catholics and foreign threats. Clearly, remaining a virgin helped Elizabeth to handle the affairs of the state. It also avoided her risks of bringing a Catholic to the throne. Besides, she knew that if she would take the decision to marry, she would never take someone she wanted. Each proposal was tested if it was politically dangerous or not¹¹⁰. In other words, Parliament will guide her choice to what is better for England.

¹⁰⁵. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.38.

¹⁰⁶. Antonia Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII* (1993) quoted in *Symbols and Emblems used in Elizabeth Portraiture* in <http://www.rmg.co.uk/explore/sea-and-ships/in-depth/elizabeth/representing-the-queen/elizabeths-image>.

¹⁰⁷. John Guy, *The Tudors*, Eds., Kenneth O. Morgan, *Oxford Illustrated History of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.264.

¹⁰⁸. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.80.

¹⁰⁹. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.209.

¹¹⁰. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.41.

Clearly, her half sister's experience with marriage did not encourage Elizabeth to take a step forward. She knew that the risks of marrying were far more serious than those of remaining virgin. Surely, she believed that God put her in the throne to accomplish some kind of destiny. She regarded her position as a queen as "an exciting challenge" because, as a woman, she had the tools to accomplish her duties. She had to handle things in a different way. She managed to play out "the femme fatale", as the historian David Loades argues. Definitely, Elizabeth had her mother's "intellectual detachment", but also "the feisty sexuality" that once served her mother to marry Henry VIII¹¹¹.

As a Queen, Francis Bacon recalled, Elizabeth "allowed herself to be wooed and courted, and even to have love made for her, which dalliances detracted but little from her fame and nothing at all from her majesty"¹¹². Sir Christopher Hatton, Sir Walter Raleigh, Robert Devereux, and, especially, Robert Dudley were all among the most important Englishmen whom Elizabeth showed interest in. During the first months of her reign, the Spanish Ambassador testified: "Lord Robert has come so much into favour that he does whatever he likes with affairs and it is even said that her majesty visit him in his chamber day and night"¹¹³.

The relation that gathered Lord Robert and Elizabeth was a passionate love relationship. Dudley was the candidate that had most chance to marry her. However, their relationship preoccupied Parliament, especially William Cecil who used to point out Dudley's incompetence in the matters of state¹¹⁴. Moreover, his marriage and the scandals that would emerge, if she decided to marry him, pushed Elizabeth to end any enterprise to

¹¹¹. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.209.

¹¹². Francis Bacon quoted in John Guy, *The Tudors*, Eds., Kenneth O. Morgan, *Oxford Illustrated History Of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.266.

¹¹³. Quoted in John Guy, *The Tudors*, Eds., Kenneth O. Morgan, *Oxford Illustrated History Of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.266.

¹¹⁴. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.209.

marry him. This decision showed Elizabeth's efforts to put her emotions and role as a monarch apart¹¹⁵.

Private lives and diplomatic negotiations were mixed since most her suitors showed a faked love. Philip II, Eric XIV, King of Sweden, Duke of Hosteine, the Archduke Charles of Austria, and Henry, younger brother of Charles IX of France, who became Henry III were all her suitors. Nevertheless, and for England's sake, she always found a motive to give up on the question of marriage for a reason or another¹¹⁶. Henry, for instance, was Catholic, consequently, he is not going to support England against Spain¹¹⁷.

Ultimately, the issue of marriage became a metaphor she used to mention a powerful bond between her and England. In 1580, Parliament lost hope that the Queen was going to marry and give birth. Surely, Elizabeth was aware of the importance of her public image more than Parliament. Nevertheless, by being a politician by nature and an outstanding rhetorician, Elizabeth was skilled enough to manage what she considered "an unreasonable pressure to marry". She knew that when she would choose between being a wife and queen, she would opt for the latter¹¹⁸.

4. The Elizabethan Golden Age

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Elizabeth achieved 44 years of reign. The affection that grew between the Queen and her subjects was, in Samuel Willard Crompton words, "something seldom seen in history"¹¹⁹. Wallace MacCaffrey describes, in *Politics in an Age of Reformation, 1485–1585*, the last 20 years of her reign (1560s-1580s) as "golden years" because she kept England safe, peaceful and prosperous. Besides, she definitely "earned the love and respect of her people through her commitment to the policies

¹¹⁵. John Guy, *The Tudors*, Eds., Kenneth O. Morgan, *Oxford Illustrated History of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.266.

¹¹⁶. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.209.

¹¹⁷. John Guy, *The Tudors*, Eds., Kenneth O. Morgan, *Oxford Illustrated History of England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.267.

¹¹⁸. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.212.

¹¹⁹. Samuel Willard Crompton, *Queen Elizabeth and the Golden Age*, (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2006), p.122-123.

of peace abroad and sound economy at home”¹²⁰. MacCaffrey states, “Elizabeth would have retained among her contemporaries the image of Astrea, the golden age goddess of peace and plenty”¹²¹ which is an everlasting image.

Elizabeth’s devotion to satisfy her people and council kept the nobles’ respect and admiration. She loved typical English hobbies and pastime like hunting, masque, and pageantry. It definitely made her popular and approachable. She also enjoyed going on through the country in very informal visits, which was unusual with kings and monarchs in both Europe and England. At that time, she was also known for her unusual speeches. In brief, “This heroic woman was her own prime minister in war and peace for 44 years”¹²².

Thanks to her education, she was able to take care of universities. Her enemies have described her as the “Inglese Italianata”. Her way of dealing with religion was ahead of her time. Elizabeth’s Via Media Policy was the key strategy that saved England and established the Anglican Church. She was, therefore, able to avoid the civil war and settle the question of religion that preoccupied the English people for a long time¹²³. Since the Spanish Armada, the island has never been invaded. The unprecedented involvement of Parliament in ruling England put the rights of the English subjects and their freedom as the priority of the monarch. All these gifts are more or less the fruits of the Elizabethan age. At the end of the Elizabethan Age, England enjoyed full security from foreign threats which was not the case during the first three decades of her reign. Besides, the English felt neither taxation nor economic difficulties during her reign. It was during the second half of the sixteenth century that the economic difficulties of the English people decreased¹²⁴.

The reign of Elizabeth I was and is of incredible importance. It was her who was able to complete the religious reform that her father inaugurated during the first half of the

¹²⁰. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.104.

¹²¹. MacCaffrey quoted in Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.104.

¹²². George Macaulay Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.235-236.

¹²³. *Ibid.*, p.235.

¹²⁴. *Ibid.*, p.261.

century to eventually establish, a Protestant nation. Her reign ended up with a war with Spain. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 put an end to the Catholic and European ambitions in England. It was during Elizabeth's reign that England found its stability¹²⁵.

The Elizabethan age witnessed an important cultural renovation, too. William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser and Christopher Marlowe are important representatives of the age. It was also during Elizabeth's reign that trade and geographical exploration were encouraged and new routes were discovered and used for both commercial and colonial intentions¹²⁶. These were the first steps towards the creation of the British Empire.

Section three: Britain since the End of World War II

This section deals with three important aspects of Britain during post-World War II. It starts with the decline of the Empire and which impact decolonization had on Britain during the decades following WWII. It is an overview of the social changes that Britain experienced during the three successive decades: 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. It focuses on decolonisation, women's changing status and Britain in the late twentieth and beginning twenty first century. It highlights Blair's idea of New Britain.

1. Decolonization and the Challenges of Post-Empire Britain

The post war decades were harsh years for Britain. It struggled to maintain the position of influence it always had for centuries. At home, the decline of industry suggested that Britain was losing the image of the great industrial nation. The idea of the "break-up of Britain", especially during the 1970s, was dominant and a real controversy emerged of what it means to be British. Furthermore, Nationalism and demands for devolution grew strong in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well¹²⁷.

During the nineteenth century and up to World War II most of the world, especially Africa and Asia, was divided between Britain and France. However, and despite the fact that

¹²⁵. Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.01.

¹²⁶. Ibid.

¹²⁷. Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.109.

the British and the French (the Allies) emerged victorious from WWII, their position as world leaders was shaken. This definitely changed the way British look at the colonies, the colonized and themselves. As a result, the war urged decolonization and Clement Attlee's Labour Government accelerated its rhythm¹²⁸.

India was among the first major colonies that started a fight for independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. India's independence in 1947 inaugurated the tide of decolonization that spread over the Empire¹²⁹. After India, it lost Palestine. Then, between 1956 and 1964, Britain lost the Suez Canal, Ghana and many other colonies in Africa were granted independence. This was "the wind of change" that Harold Macmillan was speaking about in 1960, when he gave his famous speech in South Africa saying that "The wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. And we must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it"¹³⁰. British people seemed ready to accept change.

Paul Ward refers to John Darwin to explain that decolonization and the end of the Empire did not mean the end of the British influence and power. In a nutshell, if the Empire ended, it ended geographically. He quotes "decolonization was the continuation of empire by other means"¹³¹. In other words, the monarchy helped the British to keep the Empire and its privileges by keeping good relationships with the ex-colonies. In another instance, he refers to John Mackenzie's *In Touch With the Infinity: the BBC and the Empire 1923-1953* (1986) where he explains that the popular image of the monarchy advertised since the 1870s until the 1950s was primarily linked to its overseas possession despite the fact that the monarchy existed far before the Empire¹³².

¹²⁸. Trevor Llyod, *Empire, a History of the British Empire*, (London: Carnegie, 2001), p.169.

¹²⁹. John Callaghan, *The Foreign Policy of the Attlee Government 1945-1950*, eds., Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis, *The British Labour Party And The Wider World*, (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008), p.125.

¹³⁰. Harold Macmillan's speech *The Wind of Change*, (1960) Transcript of the BBC's recording in <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/apartheid/7203.shtml>.

¹³¹. John Darwin quoted in Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.32.

¹³². Mentioned in Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.31.

Actually, the 1950s were marked by two national celebrations. The first was the 100th anniversary of the Great Exhibition of Crystal Palace that revived the great achievements of the Industrial Revolution and the Empire in 1850. The second was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The event was an imperial occasion that inaugurated a new Elizabethan age. Edward Shils and Michael Young considered the occasion as an “affirmation of the moral values by which the society lives. It was an act of national communion”¹³³.

Despite its dissolution, the Empire remained a vital aspect that shaped Britishness. It provided safety, stability and continuation at a time when Britain struggled to find a new role at the international scene. Lord Salisbury, conservative leader in the House of Lords, was persuaded in 1952 that Britain was not “a continental nation. But an island power with colonial empire”¹³⁴. The struggle included an attempt to approach the Commonwealth as an alternative to the Empire. It definitely allowed the British to think in the same global way. The 1960s were characterized by the British’s attempt to join the European Economic Community. It was until 1973 that Britain officially joined the community. Yet, the anti European feelings never disappeared from the British politics and public opinion¹³⁵.

2. Women Liberation and Post World War II

Although WWII liberated women, directly after the war, many women magazines started a crusade to re-set women to their homes and domesticity. It stressed the primacy of the home and the family in women’s lives. Paul Ward says that this reformulation of women’s roles was motivated by the need to reconstruct men’s relationship to the nation after they have been away from home during wartime. It was a reassertion and a reaffirmation of males’ masculinity and an act to claim their position. Notions like the

¹³³. Edward Shils and Michael Young quoted in Ian Bradley, *The Spiritual Identity of Britishness*, (New York: I. B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2007), p.213.

¹³⁴. Lord Salisbury quoted in Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.108.

¹³⁵. Anthony Forster, *Euroscpticism in Contemporary British Politics*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.33.

gentleman, manliness spread as the main characteristics of the British and English character. In a nutshell, “masculinity and femininity were ‘restored’”¹³⁶.

Women were supposed to fulfil their duties as housewives to serve their husbands who were the only breadwinners in most homes in the 1950s. During that period, women magazines that led a crusade to re-establish motherhood as a decisive factor of femininity were read by 60 per cent of women in Britain. This can be explained by the revival of the ideology that confined women at home. Women magazines sought to make women more committed to the femininity within the household¹³⁷.

The 1960s was the decades when both family values and sexual behaviour changed. When looking at their participation in the labour force, for instance, from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1960s, women comprised less than one third of the labour force. Since the 1960s, women’s representation in the labour force started raising to be 47% of all employees in 1997¹³⁸. This rise was due, primarily, to taking part time jobs. Actually, during the 1950s, women were ready to give up work for marriage. During the 1960s, many women stopped work after having their first child and waited until the youngest kid is at school to get back to work. The number of women with children under four who worked increased to be 22%¹³⁹. Women fought to establish equal payment that came in 1970 with the Equal Payment Act.

The 1970s were identified as the turning point both in the British politics and society. Women took a step forward with the EPA. Women remained poorly paid and their tasks were spoken about as being “women’s jobs” and were, most of the time, underestimated. Jane Pitcher explains that even though part time jobs were said to be feminine, it increased women’s involvement in the work force, and helped women to take care of their homes

¹³⁶ . Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.50-51.

¹³⁷ . Jane Pilcher, *Women in Contemporary Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.116.

¹³⁸ . *Ibid.*, p.34.

¹³⁹ . *Ibid.*, p.46.

without giving up their professional careers. The inequalities in payment were highly reduced since 1971¹⁴⁰.

The shift of the British economy in towards the service sector and political legislation, especially EPA and Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 rewarded the feminist campaigns of the last decade. In addition to the economical and political factors that helped women's liberation movement, women, by the 1970s, started developing a new approach towards themselves and society. Because their level of education improved, they reordered their priorities. Work became the main concern not family life¹⁴¹. As a result, age of marriage raised and family size declined. While marriage rates fell, cohabitation, couples living together without marriage, increased. A study shows that 5% of women who married in 1960s lived with their future husbands before marriage¹⁴².

The Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and the 1970s was accompanied by the break down in morality that gave birth to the idea that something needs to be done to save Britain and make it right again. The sexual revolution transformed woman into sexual objects used in magazines such as Playboy. Woman's liberation activists protested against such representations. It was also in 1970 that the first woman liberation conference was organized in Oxford to look at women's situation and evaluate the new condition and challenges and achievement of earlier feminist efforts¹⁴³.

3. Tony Blair and the New Britain

Tony Blair was the youngest Prime Minister that achieved the best victory for the Labour Party since 1945. Blair's central point was to modernize Britain without losing the essence of Britishness. His program was linked to newness by trying to redefine the image of conservative Britain. The new broadcasted ideas were advertised by "Rebranding

¹⁴⁰. Jane Pilcher, *Women in Contemporary Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.41.

¹⁴¹. *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹⁴². *Ibid.*, p.83.

¹⁴³. Susan Kingsly Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p.338-339

Britain” to set the idea of “Cool Britannia”¹⁴⁴. In the Labour Party conference in 1996, Blair stated that one of the most important characteristic of the British people is Common Sense, and “standing for the underdog”. He also mentioned Britain’s glorious past saying that it is the British people who opened the first parliament in the world, led the Industrial Revolution, invented the major scientific devices, and fought in two world wars¹⁴⁵. Blair’s vision of national identity was flexible and open to difference and change. He used the past to secure the future without giving up on modernity.

The new Labour forwarded and realized devolution without threatening the powers of the national government. It launched devolution with Scotland and Wales. Then, it moved to the city-wide government in London and other local authorities. The decentralisation of power gave people, according to Blair, real effective participation in national matters¹⁴⁶. The Labour government preserved the prestige of the House of Lords and limited its power. The new government led a project to reform the Chamber and end life peers. The New Labour aimed at making of it a more democratic for a better participation in decision making¹⁴⁷.

The Labour Party started in 1997 focusing on domestic affairs. But, most Labourites, especially Blair, have interest in the world wide. The Labour was the party of “internationalist pretensions”¹⁴⁸. In fact, at the international scene, Blair thought that “the national interest cannot be defined only by narrow realpolitik”¹⁴⁹. He was very concerned with building strong relationships with the United States, and holding the role of the leader in the European Community. A series of international military involvement in different parts

¹⁴⁴. Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.110.

¹⁴⁵. Tony Blair quoted in Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.111.

¹⁴⁶. *The Labor Party Manifesto 2005*, p.108.

¹⁴⁷. *Ibid.*, p.110.

¹⁴⁸. Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.111.

¹⁴⁹. Tony Blair quoted in Casper Sylvest, ‘A Commanding Group’? *Labour’s Advisory Committee on International Questions 1918–31*, eds., Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis, *The British Labour Party and the Wider World*, (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008), p.63.

of the world with the United States confirmed the special relationships¹⁵⁰. He strengthened the place of the UK in the European Community without threatening the sovereignty of Britain. The Labour Government favoured the special relationships with the United States. In fact, by the end of the twentieth century, the UK became the principle ally for the USA.

Conclusion

It follows that the Elizabethan age is the age that witnessed the birth of the English nation. Queen Elizabeth I consolidated the English church which became known as the Anglican Church. She asserted the political independence of England from the world dominance of the Spanish Empire. Moreover, she launched the foundation of the empire by encouraging the navy and granting a charter for the foundation of the east India Company in 1603.

The WWII redefined the way the British people view themselves and the world around them. The devastating World War revealed the evils of colonialism. As a result, nationalism grew and colonies around the British Empire and colonies started their fight for independence. The British authorities re-defined her relationships with ex-colonies to give birth to the British Commonwealth. Maintaining good relationships with the ex-colonies helped Britain to face the emerging ones in the light of the Cold War (The United States of America and The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic). In one way or another, the Commonwealth was more or like another version of the Empire.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the birth of a Cultural Revolution gave birth to new morals that changed the British way life. Women's movement for equality and freedom had a fresh start with new priorities and more sophisticated agendas. It was mainly women's experience in paid work that revived the women's liberation movement during this period. New legislations like the Equal Payment Act definitely rewarded women's quest.

¹⁵⁰. Mark Phythian, *From Clinton to Bush: New Labour, the USA and the Iraq War*, eds., Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis, *The British Labour Party and the Wider World*, (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2008), p.211.

Last twentieth and beginning twenty first century is the period of innovation and change. Tony Blair's third way set the objective of making Britain a leader in Europe and of the USA best an ally. The Labour Government advertised the idea of the cool Britain. A country that is ready to embrace modernity, while keeping its most rooted cultural values.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE REPRESENTATION OF
QUEEN ELIZABETH I: ONE
MONARCH, DIFFERENT FACES

Introduction

Gore Vidal asserts that film is “the lingua franca of the twentieth century”¹. This media text is, in many scholars’ perspective, the best example of what Barthes calls an “Empire of Signs” where images, words, objects, gestures and colours are put together in “sign systems” to construct meaning. He says that wrestling is a stage managed spectacle just like acting where all the participants have to contribute to achieve an ultimate significance².

This chapter handles the way in which different signs interact with each other to construct different representations of Queen Elizabeth I in the selected films. These signs will be identified with the help of selected snapshots. It deals, first, with Elizabeth as a submissive woman through the male gaze. The next representation is that of Elizabeth as an independent and political woman. There follows Elizabeth as a mother in the image of the Virgin Mary, the warrior through an association with Joan of Arc. The last two representations are those of Elizabeth as Princess Diana then of Elizabeth a monarch.

1. Elizabeth I: the Woman Subjected to the Male Gaze in *The Virgin Queen* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

In the selected films, Queen Elizabeth I is defined almost entirely by her relationships with men. Being a female ruler in a court dominated by the patriarchy was very challenging. Sir Walter Raleigh is among the men who courted her. However, as a ruler, she was very careful about her public image. The selected films draw the image of this Queen as a woman from a modern perspective. I will deal with this representation with making reference to the feminist film theoretician Laura Mulvey.

When looking at the place that the woman holds in the media, feminist activists conclude that both in cinema and television, women occupy one central image: she is the looked at. Mulvey uses the words of the director Budd Boetticher to explain this issue,

¹ Gore Vidal quoted in Tony Barta, *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History*, (Westport: Praeger, 1998), p.x.

² Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.13.

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act in the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance³.

Mulvey elaborates more about the representation of women in films in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). She studied women's representation in films. She claims that the woman is a victim of an image constructed by men. Consequently, she

stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which men can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning⁴.

That is, the male need an Other to reduce to silent images to be recognized as the one who is in control. As a result, female characters are associated with thousands of images, but create none of them. They are again trapped in their bodies. When evoking the world of films and image making, Mulvey argues that the camera allows Scopophilia. Thanks to the power of their gaze, the audience submit those inside screen, especially women, to a powerful controlling curious look⁵. Sigmund Freud, in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), explains that Scopophilia is a phenomenon where viewer drives pleasure from looking and takes others for mere objects⁶.

In *The Virgin Queen, Elizabeth*, and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, Sir Walter Raleigh and Robert Dudley are examples of the male protagonist who "is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action"⁷. Barthes mentions the notion of the male gaze in *Novels and children*. He reports that in this kind of magazines where women are at the heart of their own world, "Man is never inside, femininity is pure, free, powerful", however, in truth males dominate the film. In the world

³. Budd Boetticher quoted in Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, eds., Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p.837.

⁴. Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, eds., Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p.834.

⁵. Ibid.

⁶. Sigmund Freud, *Psychoanalysis in Culture*, Peter Gay . ed., *The Freud Reader*, (New York: WW Norton and Company, Inc, 1989), p.251.

⁷. Op cit, p.839.

of the virgin Queen, men are unable to conquer her body. Nevertheless, twentieth century media creates a Queen where the man, even if absent, “makes everything exist”. Barthes adds, “he is in all eternity the creative absence”⁸. Consequently, like in the feminine world of *Elle*, Elizabeth excluded men from her life, but, yet in these films, her image is constituted by the male gaze.

a. Sir Walter Raleigh’s Gaze through Richard Todd in *The Virgin Queen* (1955)

The Virgin Queen starts with a fight in a bar that shows Sir Walter Raleigh’s, in the image of Richard Todd, exposing both his physical strength, when entering in a fight with a soldier in a bar. Later, we notice his talents as a charmer as he impresses the ladies at the court of the Queen as Mr. Stranger. The dashing soldier and sailor Raleigh is performed by Richard Todd. This Irish charmer is one of the most famous British film stars, especially during the fifties. He was both an actor and a captain in the British Army during World War II. After the war, he shined to stardom playing many British characters like **Robin Hood** (1952) and **Heathcliff** (1953)⁹. Mulvey says that the male hero is “the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen”. He “emerges as the representative of power”¹⁰. This is the case of Raleigh. He is the representative of power in a film about the virgin queen where men are absent.

Violet LeVoit states that Twentieth Century Fox executives intended the focus on the love triangle relationship between Elizabeth, Raleigh, and Elizabeth Throckmorton to make of him a star¹¹. In other words, the film is Raleigh’s not Elizabeth’s. Many reviewers acknowledge the fact that the film is more about Raleigh’s plans to sail to the New World than about the Queen. He, definitely, commands the stage as an actor around whom the

⁸. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.51.

⁹. Richard Todd’s Biography in http://www.britishcinemagreats.com/Actors_page/richard_todd/richard_todd_page_1.htm.

¹⁰. Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, eds., Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p.838.

¹¹. Violet LeVoit, *The Virgin Queen* (2008) in <http://www.tcm.tv/this-month/article.html?isPreview=&id=552207|536419&name=The-Virgin-Queen>.

events are centred. Therefore, in one way or another, both his private and the professional lives are the central events that keep the narrative moving forward.

I would argue that if there is one prevailing element that dominates the screen whenever Raleigh appears, it is his powerful gaze. **Figure 01**, for instance, is a medium shot in the prison scene. His stand is that of confident man who is not ready to give up his plans for the sake of a childish Queen. He faces her while narrowing his eyes and asks her to leave him by pointing his index finger. Allan and Barbara Pease claims that in body language finger pointing is a frustrating gesture especially when it follows a high voice tone¹². The pointing of the finger serves as a means to submit the other and make her/him listen. According to the authors, it is a gesture that we usually see from parents, teachers or politicians giving a speech¹³.



Figure 01: Raleigh's Angry Gaze when Facing the Queen (01:24:00) in *The Virgin Queen*

In the snapshot, both his gaze and finger are the signs that make him more authoritative. The Queen refused to grant him her consent to start his journey to the New World, and imprisoned him for secretly marrying her lady in waiting. Raleigh's speech about the authority of a dead man while moving his finger is convincing. This sentence silenced the young Queen and made her subject to his authoritative voice. Therefore, Raleigh is showing his power by pointing out his index finger towards the Queen who leaves him without response.

¹². Allan and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, (Buderim: Pease International, 2004), p.72.

¹³. *Ibid.*, p.38.

The Queen here (Bette Davis) is immature and obsessed with power. By contrast, Raleigh is fully grown, both mentally and physically. Elizabeth falls under the charm of this hero who dares, in more than one occasion, to face the Queen with what she does not see. He even challenges her and raises his voice in her presence. When she mentions that it is an honour for him that she picked him to serve her; he says “I return such honours gladly”.

In scene (00:32:42), he appears standing and the Queen sitting down. In another instance, scene (00:33:00), he raises his voice and proclaims in the middle of the court while pointing his index finger “I wish not to serve you but England”¹⁴. Apparently, at this time of history there is a distinction between what England as a nation means and what the monarchy, more exactly the Queen means. Here the Queen is like any woman. She is subjected to this man’s gaze and dominant presence. Queen Elizabeth I, performed by Davis, stands at the periphery of Raleigh’s notice. The film ends with the Queen alone in her office dealing with state affairs, while Raleigh starts his journey after she gave him the ships he was asking for.

b. Sir Walter Raleigh’s Gaze through Clive Owen in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

At the very beginning of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, Elizabeth, performed by Cate Blanchett, Francis Walsingham by Geoffrey Rush, and her ladies mention the issue of marriage. Bess when of her ladies in waiting mentions “the honest man with friendly eyes”¹⁵ that both Elizabeth and her lady in waiting want to marry. Afterwards, the audience find out that this honest man with friendly eyes is Clive Owen. Owen is an English actor who started his career on stage performing William Shakespeare’s plays. When the “smoothly virile actor”¹⁶, in the role of Raleigh, appears on screen for the first time, he lays his cloak down for the Queen to walk on supposing that there is a puddle in her way. Therefore, the puddle

¹⁴. Henry Koster. *The Virgin Queen*, (Twentieth Century Fox Film, 1955), (00:33:18).

¹⁵. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (Universal Studios, 2007), (00:06:40).

¹⁶. Ibid.

and Owen are used together to attract her Majesty's attention. In **Shakespeare in Love** (1998), the puddle appears, but Raleigh is not there to take off his cloak for Elizabeth.

Thus, the director Shekhar Kapur exploited the account of the puddle and supplements it with charming manners of Owen, both important signs, to represent Elizabeth as a woman who is easily enchanted by this man who does not only have friendly eyes, but also a powerful gaze. Raleigh swaggers into the court with New World gifts potatoes and tobacco leaves. He promises with a cunning smile that these leaves, when smoked, are very stimulating. Looking at the scene when Elizabeth receives Raleigh (00:12:54), she seems pleased and does not hesitate to make a joke about the name he chosen for the colony, that is Virginia. Raleigh on the other side of the court is very confident. He even dares to penetrate to a place where the Spanish ambassador calls him as a pirate. When going back to history, Raleigh did not discover or found Virginia. Actually, he was one of the sea dogs in the English navy. Again here the director used history to create the ideal hero.

Mulvey states that cinema satisfies the temporal "wish for pleasurable looking"¹⁷ because directors behind the camera capture the human face in a close-up shot to empower the representation. Late twentieth and early twenty first century cinema by its focus on the human body, especially female body, encourages Scopophilia. This pleasure from looking, which, actually, takes place between active/male and passive/female, is clear between Raleigh and Elizabeth. In this sense, Barthes states that "capturing the human face" is like a love potion that "plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy"¹⁸. The close-up shot below is a powerful moment when the image draws attention to the power of Owen's gaze and charming impact on the viewer, especially females.

¹⁷. Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, eds., Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p.836.

¹⁸. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.56.



Figure 02: Walter Raleigh's Gaze in a Close-up Shot (00:14:35)

By using Blanchett's physical appearance, the director displays her as a sexual object. Mulvey argues that appearance is used to create a "strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness"¹⁹. In **figure 02**, Owen's appealing gaze is directed towards Elizabeth. She is standing on the top of the Whit Hall amazed by this political pirate who is speaking about the stimulating smell of tobacco while staring at her. He is the honest man with the friendly eyes who adventures in the undiscovered land that both Elizabeth and Bess are looking for. A reviewer in The New York Times wrote,

Mr. Owen looks as if he's having a grand time. whether he's revving Elizabeth up with his tales of seafaring adventure [...]. With his seafaring movie tan and muscular physicality he matches up well against the forceful Ms. Blanchett²⁰.

By 2005, public opinion strongly supported Owen as a Pierce Brosnan's substitute in James Bond films. This association with James Bond is obvious since Brosnan has been known, during decades, as a womanizer taking control of several women in his action films. Critics also approved that Owen would fit in James Bond, probably because of his handsome look, charming smile and powerful gaze²¹. Thus, the choice of Owen to star as one of the most famous English sea dogs is not random,

Kapur's 1998 and its 2007 sequel are the brightest, and the most colourful as far as image quality is concerned. Therefore, they are influential vis-à-vis the viewer. As a result,

¹⁹. Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, eds., Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p.836.

¹⁹. Ibid.

²⁰. Manohila Dargis, *Now, Warrior*, October 2007 in <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/movies/12gold.html>.

²¹. Clive Owen's biography in <http://www.clive-owen.org/bio.php>.

they both create moments when “looking itself is a source of pleasure”²². In fact, Elizabeth is shown wearing open clothes, showing parts of her body, or completely naked for the pleasure of the male audience. This is the image of the woman Other in a book constructed by men’s standards where the “split between active/male and passive/female” is obvious. In scene 00:52:00, Bess is reduced to a mere sexual object. Of course, the hero is Raleigh. He is responsible for making things happen. He controls the story. Therefore, he cannot be an object. Whenever she falls in love with Raleigh, Elizabeth lives in his shadow “losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalized sexuality, her show-girl connotations, her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone”²³.

Moreover, Todd and Owen transform Sir Walter Raleigh to what Barthes calls “the jet-man” hero of the story²⁴. In fact, Raleigh in *The Virgin Queen* starts his expedition or “*aventure*” to the sea commending royal ships. In *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, Raleigh achieves his adventure. At this stage of history, he is looking for more action; establishing an Empire in the New World. Furthermore, he is the brave gentleman and savior of the Queen at the time of the Spanish Armada. Elizabeth is symbolically the heroine, but when facing danger the man is there to perform heroic deeds.

At the end we can say that the actors chosen to perform the historical figure, Clive Owen and Richard Todd, have both a powerful gaze. Through their powerful gaze, Sir Walter Raleigh is “bearer of the look”. This, clearly, gives them power over the looked at, in this case, Elizabeth. A powerful position held by the controlling gaze of the portrayed historical figure.

²². Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, eds., Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), p.836.

²³. Ibid.

²⁴. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.51.

2. Elizabeth I Vs. Bess in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*: two Faces for one Woman

In *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*'s blog diary, Kapur states that he does not enjoy films with long dialogues. He adds that he prefers other modes of communication, primarily visuals and music. I can quote: "I love music and visuals in a film and feel that a film needs as minimum dialoge as possible. Looking back on films of mine that have succeeded, I notice that in those I never struggled with long pages of dialogue"²⁵.

When directing his biopic *Elizabeth* (1998), he certainly uses the visual as a primary source to construct his own interpretation of the biography of the Tudor monarch. James Chapman says that the film is "notable for its expressive visual style and its baroque *mise-en-scène*"²⁶. In other words, the colours, the setting and the stage make *Elizabeth* a sensational biopic. In his frame of reference and because of the "impressive visual style" of historical films in general, Barthes argues that both the cinema hall and the widescreen make the audience stand on "the balcony of history"²⁷. This statement "captures the impressive power of historical films to represent the past from what seems like an ideal vantage point"²⁸. These quotes elucidate the power and the significance of the iconic representation and image making in historicals.

Starring as Bess, Abbie Cornish emerges with a fair hair, small face, round pink cheeks, clear eyebrows, hazel-shining eyes, and a small mouth with full lips. In short, her face liberates signs of youthfulness and femininity (**Figure 03, left**). From the iconic representations and in addition to the role they play in the British monarchy, and the nature of life they live, age is the most visible distinction between the two actresses and historical figures. I shall argue that the choice of the actresses is intentional. The physical resemblance is a motivated sign (**Figure 03**).

²⁵ . <http://shekharkapur.com/blog/category/golden-age-diary/>.

²⁶ . James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p.10.

²⁷ . Roland Barthes quoted in Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008), p.02.

²⁸ . Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film*, (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2008), p.02.



Figure 03: Elizabeth (Blanchett) and Bess (Cornish) in *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

In *The Face of Garbo*, Barthes states that in **Queen Christina** (1933), a biopic directed by Rouben Mamoulian, Greta Garbo’s “snowy solitary face” captures the audience’s attention²⁹. Like her, the skinny and pale face, the invisible eyebrows, the powerful blue eyes, and the wig are signs put together to make Elizabeth I a flair Queen (**Figure 04, right**). When Elizabeth I and Bess, the lady in waiting, appear together, and rare are the shots where Elizabeth comes across alone, a clear juxtaposition is established between these two characters.

In fact, in re-enacting Elizabeth’s biography, Kapur uses the Queen’s lady in waiting to reveal another face of Elizabeth’s representation. He brings to stage two different actresses to represent one character. In addition to their physical resemblance, both blondes with a fair complexion, Blanchett (1969) and Cornish (1982) are Australians. Born in 1982, Cornish was 25 years old³⁰, in 2007. Accidentally, this is the age of Elizabeth I when she succeeded to the throne. They are chosen to perform different characters with the same name; Elizabeth Tudor and Elizabeth Throckmorton. Kapur’s vision illustrates the complexity of Elizabeth’s position. He says, “Elizabeth represents the spirit and Bess [...] the mortal side”³¹. To put it simply, both actresses stand for one person Elizabeth I, the Queen.

²⁹. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.56.

³⁰. Abbie Cornish’s biography in <http://www.abbie-cornish.com/information/biography.php>.

³¹. Shekhar Kapur quoted in Maria Theresia Gymnasium, *Elizabeth: the Golden Age an Analysis or Pictures Speak Louder than Words*, (Abgabetermin, 2009), p.14.

Barthes in *Romans in Films* claims that it is thanks to the hair on the forehead that the audience “is reassured, installed in the quiet certainty of a universe without duplicity” of the “Roman-ness”³² of the actors. Here, it is worth to mention that the historical film is also called the costume drama film. Therefore, the director is confronted with the necessity of using garments to establish the historical context. However and more than an instrument of establishing historical accuracy, Barthes argues that garments are merely a way to imply meaning. He writes: “Clothes are used for the protection and food for nourishment even if they are also used as signs”³³.

Consequently costume is used in order to stress the physical resemblance between Cornish and Blanchett. In fact, their costume is almost the same in all the scenes where they appear together. In scene (00:10:12), for instance, they are wearing a white dress while entering the church. In scene (00:21:08), both are wearing blue dresses and shown very close to each other. In scene (00:28:52), they are wearing grey dresses. Hence, the director uses costume to draw the viewer’s attention to both figures; Bess and Elizabeth. It is also a way to connote the struggle Elizabeth is living, a struggle to be a politician and a woman.



Figure 04: Bess and Elizabeth in the Whitehall (00:11:52) in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

Barthes explains more about the power of fashion in his *The Fashion System* (1976). According to him, the Object is always the same i.e., a dress is always a dress; what changes

³². Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.24.

³³. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans., Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1986), p.41.

is the Variant and the Support of Signification³⁴. In **figure 04**, for instance, Elizabeth and Bess wear the same dress with the same white decorated collar. Nonetheless, the golden colour of Elizabeth is more dominant than Bess's golden dress. This is the case with almost all Elizabeth and Bess appearances in the film.

To stress this implication, when evoking their private lives, Kapur uses Sir Walter Raleigh as another sign. It is difficult to know which Elizabeth he is in love with, despite the fact that the film ends with his marriage to the lady in waiting. **Figure 05** is an over shoulder shot where Elizabeth and Bess are sitting down smiling and looking at each other. At the core of the shot, Raleigh facing both women creates a love triangle. The camera is inviting Raleigh to choose between both Elizabeth(s). The choice seems to be obvious because of the light behind.

Barthes affirms that light is a powerful means of magnetism. He says, "light without shadow generates an emotion without reserve"³⁵. In this sense and contrary to Elizabeth's shadowy side, Bess's illuminated area makes her more appealing for Raleigh than the aging Elizabeth. Elizabeth was there in 1998's film bearing the image of eternal beauty and youthfulness. She comes back again in 2007 with Cornish's performance.



Figure 05: Walter Raleigh Facing Elizabeth and Bess (00:36:23) in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

Elizabeth asks Raleigh to leave her alone at the feet of the Coronation Stone in scene (00:47:56). However, Bess and Raleigh's relation developed from this moment to be real

³⁴. Graham Allen, *Roland Barthes*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p.47.

³⁵. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.13.

love. The camera moves from the scene where Bess and Raleigh are together to the lonely Elizabeth. She is shown naked looking at the mirror wearing the engagement ring she received the day of her coronation. In this context, Barthes claims that this natural state stands for her chastity³⁶. To put it simply, if Elizabeth, through her nakedness, celebrates her virginity, the ring celebrates her symbolic marriage to England.

As viewers we do not question the authenticity of Blanchett's performance or Cornish starring the lady in waiting. This Queen, unlike Bess, renounces her femininity for her people. Myth has power to purify things and make them innocent so that we take them for granted. I can quote from *Mythologies*, "it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives that a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact"³⁷. Pamela Church Gibson draws attention to the fact that, unlike other genres where protagonists can give way their duties to pursue their own ambition and neglect social conventions, in royal films, such decisions are not acceptable because it can involve a crisis³⁸. Kapur is under the obligation to make Blanchett choose her duties first in an attempt to safeguard the memory of Elizabeth I. Thus far, Kapur, through Blanchett, creates a "mythological Queen whom suitors loved but could not possess"³⁹. The connotation here is that, for the British people, keeping the idea of the Queen who gave up her life to marry England through the engagement ring is a fundamental aspect of their identity.

This Queen is preoccupied with the welfare of her people. She says "I will not punish my people for their beliefs, only for their deeds. I am sure that the people of England love their Queen. My constant endeavour is to earn that love"⁴⁰. Historically speaking, Trevelyan affirms that during her reign her people, especially private council were preoccupied with their Queen's safety. He says: "men treasured the life of the queen because it meant for

³⁶. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.13.

³⁷. *Ibid.*, p.143.

³⁸. Pamela Church Gibson quoted in Jim Leach, *British Cinema*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.209.

³⁹. <http://shekharkapur.com/blog/category/golden-age-diary/>.

⁴⁰. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (Universal Studios, 2007), (00:04:15).

them peace and prosperity while the neighbour nations were ablaze with religious war”⁴¹. In fact, Queen Elizabeth I meant, during the sixteenth century, religious security. During the twentieth and twenty first centuries it means, in addition to religious security, pride and prosperity, but also continuation. Thanks to the presence of Bess, Kapur naturalizes the image of the Elizabeth Tudor as a cultural myth of “an eternal ‘culture’”⁴².

3. Elizabeth I: the Independent Woman of the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries

a. Glenda Jackson in *Mary, Queen of Scots*

Charles Jarrott’s *Mary, Queen of Scots* stars Vanessa Redgrave as Mary, Queen of Scots and Glenda Jackson as Elizabeth I. Mrs. Jackson is among those who starred as Queen Elizabeth I in both television and cinema. The film is an adaptation of Antonia Frasier’s 1969 biography about the Scottish Queen. The biopic is about Mary, but the events turn around the relation of rivalry between Elizabeth and Mary over the throne of England. Latham says, “the use of only Mary’s name in the title, however, clearly shows where the viewer’s sympathy should lie”⁴³. In other words, the director focused on Elizabeth as much as he focused on Mary’s representation. However, all along the movie, the viewer meet Mary who is passionately kind and fragile. Whereas, Elizabeth is severe and cruel.

Vanessa Redgrave performed the role of Mary, Queen of Scots. The director’s choice of Redgrave is unclear since there is not any resemblance between the historical figure and this actress. In fact, the Scottish monarch was not blonde nor blue eyed. I would argue that her blue eyes are nothing more than a sign the director uses as a connotation of a second Elizabeth. In fact, she is much more like Blanchett or Cornish in Kapur’s productions (**Figure 03**) than like the real Queen of Scots.

⁴¹. George Macaulay Trevelyan, *A Shortened History of England*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p.233.

⁴². Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.82.

⁴³. Bethany Latham, *Elizabeth in Film and Television: a Study of the Major Portrayals*, (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2011), p.131.



Figure 06: Vanessa Redgrave as Mary, Queen of Scots in *Mary, Queen of Scots*

The features of these two actresses are clear when they appear in close-up shots. **Figure 06**, for instance, shows one of the rare scenes where Mary appears in a close-up shot. On the one hand, Mary is blonde with shining blue eyes and fair hair. Her gaze liberates tenderness from a nice hearted, but weak woman. Elizabeth, on the other hand, through Jackson's face, is severe, and her gaze is more confident (**Figure 07**). Peter Hansons writes that while, Jackson commands the screen with a potent appearance, Redgrave's face brings to notice the struggles of a woman growing in cruel conditions⁴⁴.

In addition to their contrasted faces, the background of both shots is also contrasted. Mary is set on a luminous background where light is spread all over the scene. Elizabeth is set on a darker background with light placed on her to create the focus. In body language, a determined gaze and down-mouth⁴⁵ depicts a bad tempered rigid woman. Indeed, Elizabeth I in this representation is harsher and more dominant when compared to the other biopics I selected.



Figure 07: Glenda Jackson as Elizabeth in *Mary, Queen of Scots*

⁴⁴. Peter Hansons, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, March, (012 in <http://every70smovie.blogspot.com/2012/03/mary-queen-of-scots-1971.html>).

⁴⁵. Allan and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, (Buderim: Pease International, 2004), p.85.

To emphasize this representation, Elizabeth appears first on screen on small boat trip with Robert Dudley is courting her with one of her father's song. This scene recalls Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII. Like her mother, Elizabeth "adored being adored"⁴⁶, and this is true in both history and the selected films. Actually, Anne was an exotic woman who had strong opinions, very knowledgeable and had the ability to lead. These were the skills that men, including Henry, in the sixteenth century feared especially in their wives. As a Queen, Anne showed an intellectual intelligence that made her an unconventional wife. Loades states that she was unable to show any submissiveness. Her behaviour did not fit a sixteenth century wife. Contrary to Catherine, she never allowed any other woman to seduce her husband. Simply, she did not understand that there was a difference between being a wife and a mistress. Until late 1535, the Queen has had always a strong influence on the king⁴⁷.

Mrs. Jackson gives the example of this powerful, determined woman, while Mrs. Redgrave is more feminine and submissive. Elizabeth I, in scene (00:38:00), states that Mary is "first a woman", but she is "is first monarch". Clearly, the role of the monarch takes over Elizabeth. In this way, the film backs up the feminist discourse of the 1970s in Britain. The film represents Elizabeth as a determined monarch who cares about her subjects and country first. Elizabeth chooses to handle the affairs of the state herself, whereas Mary accomplishes what it is expected from sixteenth century women. She married to become shortly after a hollowed widow and a desperate woman looking for any man's support. In a nutshell, she is not like Elizabeth. As Peter Hansons puts it: "Elizabeth is a master strategist who remains unwed lest a husband diminish her stature, whereas Mary is a naïve optimist who tumbles into impetuous romances until time and tragedy make her wise"⁴⁸.

⁴⁶. Simon Schama, *History of Britain Body of the Queen: Benefit of Wigs*, (London: BBC, 1994). (00:09:35).

⁴⁷. David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), p.123-124.

⁴⁸. Peter Hansons, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, March 2012 in <http://every70smovie.blogspot.com/2012/03/mary-queen-of-scots-1971.html>.

To make of Elizabeth a political woman, the director needed a self-affirmed woman. During her career in television, cinema and theater, Jackson was known for acting emancipated women roles. She is also the first actress to receive an Oscar for **Women in Love** (1969) where she appears naked. In **The Bloody Sunday** (1971), for instance, she starred as a business woman who has been married to a bisexual man. At the beginning of 1990s, she started a political career⁴⁹. The controversial roles she is known for make of Jackson and Elizabeth good counterparts as far as the ability to challenge the prevailing social norms is concerned.

The 1970s in Britain witnessed the birth of the Second Wave of Feminism which justifies the director casting strategy when choosing Jackson for the role of Elizabeth I. James Chapman affirms that Jackson's career, both as a politician and an actress, goes with the emergence of Women's Liberation movement⁵⁰. She is an example of those women who launched the feminist movement in Britain. She is a confident politician who dares to use her lover as a gift and a weapon of war against her most dangerous rival over the English throne.

b. Cate Blanchett in *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

How can I force you, Your Grace?
I am a woman.
I have no desire
to make windows into men's souls⁵¹.

At the beginning of *Elizabeth*, Mary Tudor orders her soldiers "Feed her to the wolves. Let her see what they are like"⁵². The wolves symbolically stand for the male dominated society and court that Elizabeth is about to face. However, what is appealing in this Queen is that when facing the court, she shows in both performances the image of cold,

⁴⁹. Bethany Latham, *Elizabeth in Film and Television: a Study of the Major Portrayals*, (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2011), p.270.

⁵⁰. James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p.310.

⁵¹. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (00:56:00).

⁵². *Ibid.*, (00:19:05-00:19:11).

fade, yet irresistible woman without much effort⁵³. The director through Blanchett makes of Elizabeth a beautiful woman who succeeded in finding a middle ground spot between being a wit and intelligent monarch and a fun enjoyable woman.

Elizabeth dramatically responds, “I am not your Elizabeth I am no man’s Elizabeth. If you think to rule you are mistaken” in scene 01:20:25 to Robert Dudley who commented “for God’s sake you are still my Elizabeth”. The scene demonstrates Elizabeth’s willing to make her court understand that she will not let any man rule for her. Facing and humiliating Dudley, while proclaiming, "I will have one mistress here and no master" (**Figure 08**), is definitely a moment of triumph for the strong woman that she is. This is the turning point that transforms her to the self-confident woman and the queen of the Golden Age. She is now standing at the top of the male dominated court in scene 01:20:46.



Figure 08: Elizabeth Facing the Court (01:20:46) in *Elizabeth*

Scene (01:35:50-01:36:34) is another instance of Elizabeth’s attempt to free herself from the influence William Cecil had on her decisions. It illustrates her struggle to build her own policy as a ruler,

I have followed your advice in all the affairs of my kingdom, but your policies would make England nothing but part of France or Spain. From this moment I am going to follow my own opinion and see if I do any better⁵⁴.

⁵³. Joshua Starnes, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (2007) in <http://www.comingsoon.net/news/reviewsnews.php?id=38298>.

⁵⁴. Skekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (01:35:50-01:36:34).

Sir William Cecil answers that she is “only a woman”. She furiously replies, “I may be a woman, Sir William, but if I choose I have the heart of a man!”⁵⁵. The passage also reveals an ambitious spirit of a young princess that sees England as a leader not a follower. This is the ambitious spirit that marked her age. The film shows a great lady skilful in the art of rhetoric. In fact, she is able to face both her councilors and subjects. When she stands opposite her court and parliament to propose what will be known as the Elizabeth Settlement, Elizabeth publicly mocks of one of the bishops saying that he cannot lecture her on marriage because he divorced twice, and he is upon getting married for the third time. In scene (00:56:30), she says,

Aye. But marry who, Your Grace?
Will you give me some suggestion?
For some say France, and others Spain, and
and some cannot abide foreigners at all.
So I'm not sure how best to please you
unless I married one of each.

The bishop answers her angrily, “Now, your Majesty does make fun of the sanctity of marriage”. The Queen silences him saying, “I do not think you should lecture me on that, my Lord, since you yourself have been twice divorced. And are now upon your third wife!”. There are not historical records that prove that this conversation took place. However, Elizabeth answered Parliament several times on the issue of marriage. She often used the art of public speech, Rhetoric to address her people. She evoked their wellbeing and the will of God. On February 10th, 1559, for example, she said:

And albeit it might please almighty God to continue me still in this mind to live out of the state of marriage, yet it is not to be feared but He will so work in my heart and in your wisdom as good provision by his help may be made in convenient time, whereby the realm shall not remain destitute of an heir. That may be a fit governor, and peradventure more beneficial to the realm than such offspring as may come of me. For although I be never so careful of your well doings and mind ever so to be, yet may my issue grow out of kind and become perhaps ungracious. And in the end this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin⁵⁶.

⁵⁵. Skekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (01:35:50-01:36:34).

⁵⁶. Queen Elizabeth I Speeches in <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizaspeech1563.htm>.

From the visual perspective, Elizabeth is placed at the top of the scene, light put on her. She is wearing a red dress. Elizabeth, , convinces them to pass the Act of Uniformity. She says,

Each of you must vote
according to your conscience
But remember this.
In your hands,
upon this moment,
lies the future happiness of my people,
and the peace
of this realm.
Let that be upon your conscience also.

If *Elizabeth* tells the story of a young princess standing opposite a court that hated her, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* depicts an experienced Queen who does not need much effort to be convincing. If in 1998 she had to face a court of haters, in 2007 she is protecting her country against the threat of the Spanish Armada. After its defeat, Sir Walsingham accomplished his task. In the farewell scene (01:42:22), he says: “you will not need me anymore”. He saw her growing from a naïve girl to the wise woman she is. In this context, Barthes speaks about “the ‘naturalness’ of an actor” that makes us believe that she is fully grown up.

By putting different signs together, as is the case in *Mary, Queen of Scots*, in both 1998 and 2007 films, Elizabeth is born to be a Queen in a court dominated by men. She, through the performances of Jackson and Blanchett, gives the example of an independent female ruler. Both icons perform the role of the “mature Queen”⁵⁷. In other words, it is the last half of her reign that dominated silver screen representations. Few are the moments when we see the Queen in obedient representations by the end of the twentieth century. These actresses confirm the view that Elizabeth I was a strong willing woman who is not easily conquered by her emotions. James Chapman claims that by drawing the image of the

⁵⁷. Renée Pigeon, “No Man’s Elizabeth”: the Virgin Queen in Recent Films, eds., Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, and Imelda Whelehan, *Retrovisions Reinventing the Past In Film And Fiction*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p.10.

Queen Elizabeth I as an independent woman, directors connote “an entirely unproblematic view of national identity”⁵⁸; this is relevant to both *Mary, Queen of Scots* as well as *The Golden Age*. In scene 00:40:30, she asks Raleigh, Clive Owen, to lower his eyes because she is the Queen. Here she liberates herself from the power of the male gaze when she says; “What are you staring at? Lower your eyes! I am the Queen! You are not my equal sir And you will never be”⁵⁹.

4. Elizabeth I: the Mother in *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth : The Golden Age*

When Kapur was asked how he sees Queen Elizabeth I’s struggle to balance private life and role as monarch, he answered that Elizabeth I lived a conflict between mortality and divinity⁶⁰. The director *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* draws a new representation of Queen Elizabeth I. Elizabeth is transformed from a human being into a divine creature.

Mary Tudor asks her sister, in scene (00:18:30) in *Elizabeth*, “Do not take away from the people the consolations of the blessed virgin, their holy mother”⁶¹. Elizabeth does not have any idea about the fact that another blessed virgin is in making. In fact, during her reign Elizabeth I fulfils her sister’s desire. She maintains the image of the blessed Virgin in her image. Her people look at her as their blessed holy mother. By the end of *Elizabeth*, and while looking at a statue of the Virgin Mary, she asks,

I have rid England of her enemies
What do I do now?
Am I to be made of stone?
Must I be touched by nothing?⁶²

Walsingham answers that,

Aye, Madam, to reign supreme.

⁵⁸. James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p.310.

⁵⁹. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (Universal, 2007), (00:40:30).

⁶⁰. Mark Glancy, *Three Films about Queen Elizabeth I*, (2010) in <http://www.elizabethfiles.com/elizabeth-i-in-the-movies/4156/>.

⁶¹. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (00:18:25-00:18:36).

⁶². Ibid.

All men need something greater than themselves to look up to and worship. They must be able to touch the divine here on earth⁶³.

In other words, the English people needed their Queen to be divine and immortal. Elizabeth, in scene (01:53:47-01:53:53), replies, looking at the sculpture, “she had such power over men’s hearts”, including hers. She adds that millions died for her⁶⁴. Here I shall highlight that it is right that Elizabeth here is mentioning the Virgin Mary, but she is also Blanchett referring to Elizabeth I. Both the Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth had followers and supporters who looked at them for blessing.

The director uses an important historical event, the Reformation, to make this representation potent. After the break with the Catholic Church, the English people replaced the Virgin Mary with another virgin, Queen Elizabeth I. The resonance the Virgin Mary faded with the establishment of Protestantism during the Elizabethan age. During that period, the English found what can replace the Virgin Mary. Contrary to this Virgin, their virgin is their Queen. She is real and immortal at the same time. In this context, kapur claims: “When we worship people who are in absolute power, we worship them and we think – when we expect them to be divine, and in a way they realize that they should be divine”⁶⁵.

Elizabeth is their virgin mother to whom they look for blessing. Walsingham, finally, concludes: “They have found nothing to replace her”⁶⁶. At this point, she admits that she is going to be the “new” Virgin Mary. She starts crying, holding her head between her hands because she knows that she is taking a tough decision. Like a woman entering a convent to

⁶³. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (01:52:57-01:53:40).

⁶⁴. Ibid., (01:53:47-01:53:53).

⁶⁵. Rebecca Murray, *Director Shekhar Kapur Discusses Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) in <http://movies.about.com/od/elizabeththegoldenage/a/elizabeth92607.htm>.

⁶⁶. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (01:53:10).

make the choice of a celibate life⁶⁷, Elizabeth cut her hair off like a woman joining a convent. This woman scarifies herself for her people.



Figure 09: Elizabeth turning to the Virgin Mary (01:58:30) in *Elizabeth*

When Elizabeth emerges, **figure 09**, to court and screen, painted in white looking like a statue, the audience is introduced to a new woman. The low angle shot gives Elizabeth power over the viewer and court. She found herself under the obligation of choosing one side to be the divine Queen that the English people need. Eventually, in a full shot and from a low camera angle the new Queen emerges facing the court. Behind her, red curtains emerge with the Queen's Coat of Arms on it. She says, while showing her finger with the wedding band to Lord Burghley, "observe Lord Burgley, I am married to England"⁶⁸.

Many iconic representations drawn about Queen Elizabeth I include significant signs that recall the image of the Virgin Mary like her open arms, light and the baby she is holding at the end of *The Golden Age*. **Figure 10** is one of the most famous iconic representations used by the Catholic Church to refer to the Virgin Mary. She is standing against a coloured background representing the church windows, opening her arms wide and wearing a long loose blue cape. The open arms sign comes into sight in **figure 09** in *Elizabeth* and in **figure 11** in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. It is important to mention that in body language, opening the arms with visible palms gives the impression that the person is

⁶⁷. Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr., *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series*, ed and trans., Susan Haskins, *Who is Mary? Three Early Modern Women on the Idea of the Virgin Mary*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.xvii.

⁶⁸. Skekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal, 1998), (01:57:36).

accessible⁶⁹. This is the impression that the Queen is giving. She can make others listen and have power on their lives.



Figure 10: The Virgin Mary



Figure 11: Elizabeth in *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*

The other instance that can be taken into consideration is the assassination attempt scene (01:01:01), where Elizabeth is, in the same way as in **figures 09** and **11**, opening her arms and wearing a white dress inside the church. The effect of light is used for more authenticity and closeness to the image of the Virgin Mary. Although, the young man faces Elizabeth and shouts: “Elizabeth! Die”, he fails in killing her. The camera focuses on the young man’s face to show his terrified eyes as if he is trying to assassinate the Virgin Mary herself, especially that he is Catholic. The shot is filmed inside the church, which makes it indistinguishable from the Virgin Mary’s stand in **Figure 10**.

At the end of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, the association with the Virgin Mary reaches its climax. **Figure 12** is a very rich representation where, in a close shot, Elizabeth is holding a small baby and staring at him. Her face, her gaze, the light set on her, the baby, the way she holds the baby close to her chest are all signs that make the snapshot full of connotation. Then, the viewer can hear her saying “I am called the Virgin Queen. I am not married. I have no master, childless”⁷⁰. She is indeed not married and childless; still, she is the mother of her people.

⁶⁹. Allan and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, (Buderim: Pease International, 2004), p.285.

⁷⁰. Skehkar Kapur, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (Universal, 2007), (01:45:37).



Figure 12: Elizabeth Holding Bess's son (01:45:34) in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

Mark T. Rohrs, in *Elizabeth Tudor Reconciling Femininity and Authority* (1978), argues that Queen Elizabeth used the art of rhetoric to reconcile her authority as a ruler and her nature as a woman. As a matter of fact, Elizabeth used the image of the mother to convince her people that she can rule⁷¹. In other words, because Elizabeth accomplished a task intended for a male, claiming virginity was necessary to stand against her opponents. Elizabeth would have been considered a witch since “power in a woman, without such sexual imagery, seems to have been indigestible by the culture”⁷². Thus far, the baby stands for her subjects for whom she cares for. When discussing the Act of Uniformity in *Elizabeth*, she says:

If there is no uniformity
of religious belief here
then there can only be fragmentation, disputes and quarrels.
Surely, my Lords, it is better to have a single Church of England.
A single Church of England! With a common prayer book.
And... a common purpose.
I ask you to pass this Act of Uniformity not... not for myself
but for my people who are my only care⁷³.

Figure 13 is an iconic representation of Virgin Mary's holding her baby Jesus. It is, once again, very close to Elizabeth holding Bess's son in **figure 12**, while declaring her ultimate status as the mother of her people.

⁷¹. Mark T. Rohrs, *Elizabeth Tudor Reconciling Femininity and Authority*, (Florida: University of Central Florida, 1978), p.02.

⁷². Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr., *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series*, ed and trans., *Susan Haskins, Who is Mary? Three Early Modern Women on the Idea of the Virgin Mary*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.xxv.

⁷³. Skehkar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 2007), (00:53:50-00:55:00).



Figure 13: The Virgin Mary Holding her Baby Jesus

Elizabeth's fictional marriage to England crowned her as the mother of her people, an image that no other monarch endured. Therefore, Kapur through this representation is correcting doubting her virginity in *Elizabeth*. In this sense, the film maker Stephen Frears argues that when any director is producing a film about the Royal Family and the Queen, it is almost like "making a film about your mother" and in England "the Queen really does serve as a kind of symbolic, emotional mother of the country"⁷⁴. At the end of the film, she turns into Greta Garbo while performing **Queen Christina**. In Barthes's words,

The name given to her, *the Divine*, probably aimed to convey less a superlative state of beauty than the essence of her corporeal person, descended from a heaven where all things are formed and perfected in the clearest light⁷⁵.

Barthes argues that producers, through the biopic film, take "people's real lives and transforms them into the realms of myth"⁷⁶. Undeniably, the power of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* resides in its use of the images of two loved women, link them to create an eternal image of the Virgin Queen that the same director had questioned ten years earlier. In this production, the Indian director announces the victory of the Virgin Queen. In *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, the Queen does not question her subjects' love as she did not question, ten years ago, the people's love for the Virgin Mary. She says, "I am sure that the people of England love their Queen". I shall argue that, at this stage, and because Elizabeth is

⁷⁴. Giselle Bastin, *Filming the Ineffable: Biopics of the British Royal Family in Autobiography Society.*, N01, Vol02, Summer 2009, p.46 in https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/ab_autobiography_studies/v024/24.1.bastin.pdf

⁷⁵. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.57.

⁷⁶. Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History*, (England: Pearson, 2006), p.89.

England's Virgin Queen, she is also her subject's Virgin Mary. She is, in fact, as Walsingham proclaims, "the divine here on earth".

It is right that, as Mark Glancy asserts it, for Elizabeth I, the image of the virgin was "a mask" she chose to wear. When she put the mask, she assumed "the unblemished virtue of the Virgin Mary"⁷⁷. However, by late twentieth century, the connotation is different. Indeed, the corporal state of being a virgin is not essential, what is essential are the assumptions associated with her as a Queen. She is a woman, a politician and a virgin. The representation of the Queen at this point exceeds the representation of an ordinary Queen who made during the sixteenth century the choice of celibacy. Her destiny holds a nation together.

Marnie Hughes-Warrington affirms that, in fact, directors and film crews have the power to shape the content of historical films⁷⁸. In this case, Kapur's Indian origins shaped the film's content. He states that if Elizabeth was an Indian princess, she would have been called a Devi⁷⁹. The Devi is an Indian goddess and an important figure in Hinduism. She is often depicted with four heads and arms⁸⁰. Like this goddess, after more than four centuries since her death, Elizabeth wears many guises. This shows the influence of Kapur's Indian vision. She is semi-divine, the woman saint and the force protecting her land. This also justifies the heterogeneous nature of Elizabeth representation in Kapur's productions. The Indian goddess definitely, inspired Kapur.

5. Elizabeth: the Woman Soldier in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

The representation of Queen Elizabeth I took different shapes to come, by the beginning of the twenty first century, to the image of the warrior or soldier. Manohila Dargis's review in The New York Times is simply entitled *Now, Warrior* (2007). The writer

⁷⁷. Mark Glancy, *Three Films about Queen Elizabeth I*, (2010) in <http://www.elizabethfiles.com/elizabeth-i-in-the-movies/4156/>.

⁷⁸. Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History in Film*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.06.

⁷⁹. <http://shekharkapur.com/blog/category/golden-age-diary/>.

⁸⁰. J.A.Coleman, *The Dictionary of Mythology*, (London: Arcturus, 2007), p.285.

mentions that Elizabeth “invokes God and country, blood and honour, life and death, bringing to mind at once Joan of Arc”⁸¹ without explaining how or why so.

Joan of Arc (1412-1431) is a heroine of the Roman Catholic Church. She believed that God chose her to save France during the Hundred Years’ War (1336-1565). So she convinced Charles VII to give her the command of French troops. Her participation in the Hundred Years’ War won for France significant victories that made one of the most famous female warlords. In fact, she was a peasant girl who claimed that God sent her to save her country which was, by 1420s, in a critical position⁸².

Figures 14 and **16** are representations of Elizabeth I in *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*. One must not confuse these two figures with **figures 15** and **17**. Actually, these two last figures are shots of Blanchett performing Elizabeth I. **Figure 14** and **17** in contrast are the most famous representations used to refer to Joan of Arc. Both snapshots are strikingly similar. In *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, the armour, the long hair and the pale face, and the white horse with the same decorated back are the signs that construct two indistinguishable iconic representations of two women, one French and the other English.



Figure 14: Queen Elizabeth I (01:32:22)



Figure 15: Joan of Arc

Queen Elizabeth shots are taken at Tilbury, hours before facing the Spanish Armada. The riders are wearing the same soldier uniform or armour; Joan’s is golden and Elizabeth’s

⁸¹. Manohila Dargis, *Now, Warrior*, October, 2007 in <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/movies/12gold.html>.

⁸². Tim Newark, *An Illustrated History of Female Warriors*, (London: Blandford, 1989), p.125-126.

is in metallic grey. In battlefield, both women are facing the enemy as well as a male dominated society. Elizabeth I declared herself as the Virgin Queen to convince the public to follow her.

Despite the fact that she represents what the English hate the most during the sixteenth century and in modern times, the French and the Catholic Church, Kapur uses the positive image of the woman warrior to connote Elizabeth's distinctive bravery. Like Joan, Elizabeth led her people and fought the enemy by their side. Both women are national heroes. In the same way, Joan "was the soul of French resistance to the English"⁸³; Elizabeth guided England and saved her people from the Spanish Catholic tyranny. In her unforgettable speech to the troops at Tilbury in 1588, she affirmed,

I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field⁸⁴.



Figure 16: Queen Elizabeth I (01:32:00)



Figure 17: Joan of Arc

Both historical figures faced the prevailing social norms of their age and rise above their societies' expectations. Joan of Arc is known as the Maid of Orleans and Elizabeth I is remembered as the Virgin Queen, for the Via Media policy and defeating the Spanish Armada. This bond brings to mind many female warriors like Artemisia, Catherine de Medici, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and Boudicca who are among the first androgynous heroines

⁸³. *The World Book Encyclopaedia*, J-K ., Vol II, (Chicago: World Book, Inc: 1986), p.105.

⁸⁴. Queen Elizabeth I speeches in <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizaspeech1563.htm>.

who combined “female persona with masculine powers”⁸⁵. Kapur through Blanchett associates the image of Elizabeth I to that of Joan of Arc to create a grandiose representation of the Queen.

The image of the warrior revives the myth of Britannia and the memory of the Romans who named the southern British province, nowadays England. The Romans transformed Britannia to a goddess. For over the last 400 years, Britannia still personifies the nation. During the nineteenth century, the peak of the British Empire, her image was transformed to include a trident instead of the spear to refer to Britain’s maritime power⁸⁶. Modern-day Britannia is usually depicted in a helmeted woman standing on water with a trident and a shield with the British flag and a lion (**Figure 18**).



Figure 18: The National Armada Memorial in Plymouth Depicting Britannia⁸⁷



Figure 19: Blanchett in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

⁸⁵. Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr., *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series*, ed and trans., Susan Haskins, *Who is Mary? Three Early Modern Women on the Idea of the Virgin Mary*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.xxv.

⁸⁶. Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction,2007), p.17-19.

⁸⁷. The National Armada Memorial in Plymouth Depicting Britannia <http://www.visitoruk.com/Plymouth/national-armada-memorial-15489.html>.

Figure 19 above is a snapshot from *The Golden Age*. It portrays Blanchett standing at the place of the defeat of the Spanish Armada facing the ocean. She is wearing a white robe; her arms are pushed to the back. Behind her, we can see the English camp with flags. In addition to her stand in this snapshot, the English flags appear to replace the lion (England's national animal). This figure recalls Britannia's stand at The National Armada memorial in Plymouth (**Figure 18**).

When looking at the events of the film, the Spanish Ambassador Don Guerau mentions that the wind will take away her pride, she replies with blazed words: "I too can command the wind, sir. I have a hurricane in me that will strip Spain bare, if you dare to try me!" One can relate these words to the roman mythology since Minerva, Britannia in the Roman Mythology is Minerva, was the virgin goddess of craftsman, education and also of war and wisdom⁸⁸ which justifies this association. Elizabeth then is the virgin goddess of wisdom, learning and war.

6. Elizabeth I: the Media Saint in *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

The BBC (The British Broadcasting Corporation) official website conducted in 2001 a national survey to choose the most famous British figures of all time. Contrary to the expectations, neither the present Queen Elizabeth II nor Queen Victoria appeared in the top ten. Two other female figures appeared in the top ten: Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997), third, with 13.9 % of the votes, and Elizabeth I, seventh, with 4.4% of the votes⁸⁹.

José I. Prieto Arranz, in his *Images of English purity: a comparative study of Elizabeth I and Diana, Princess of Wales, Identity, Self and Symbolism* (2006), looks at these two figures of the British history; Princess Diana and Elizabeth I. He argues that both Diana and Elizabeth are mythical figures of modern English history because they succeeded in preserving ideal images of themselves despite the circumstances. In fact, Diana's divorce

⁸⁸. J.A.Coleman, *The Dictionary of Mythology*, (London: Arcturus, 2007), p.701.

⁸⁹. Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction, 2007), p.99.

and her relationship with the Egyptian Dodi Al Fayed were supposed to put an end to her popularity, but it is the Monarchy which lost much of her reputation after Diana's death⁹⁰.

Jude Davies, in *Diana a Cultural History: Gender, Race, Nation and the People's Princess* (2001), states that Diana was able to construct a dynamic image. She started her royal life at the age of 18 when she married Prince Charles. Shortly after that, she became Queen of Hearts, a fashion icon and a symbol of female empowerment and the "avatar of new Britain". The cultural significance of this Princess is of huge importance. Davies, in very memorable words, says: "the sense of loss sharpened the need to recover Diana as a person"⁹¹.



Figure 20: Elizabeth on the DVD Cover of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

Kapur's films *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* contains images these English heroines who are separated by time, but connected when it comes to see the image they managed to create in media and literature. **Figure 20** is a close-up shot which gives the sight of Blanchett's face in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. Elizabeth rises her blue eyes up while her head is a little down. Behind her, there are two red flags. Blanchett's gaze, the looking-up cluster, is a gesture that attracts the attention of both men and woman. According to Allan and Barbara Pease, in *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (2004), this gesture makes the eyes appear larger and makes a woman appear innocent⁹². This sign was very famous with Princess Diana. Thus, to inject Diana's image to Elizabeth's most

⁹⁰. José I. Prieto Arranz, *Images of English purity: a comparative study of Elizabeth I and Diana, Princess of Wales, Identity, Self and Symbolism*,. N02, Vol 01, (Spain: University of Balearic Islands, 2006), p.117.

⁹¹. Jude Davies, *Diana a Cultural History: Gender, Race, Nation and the People's Princess*, (London: Palgrave, 2001), p. 21-22-23.

⁹². Allan and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, (Buderim: Pease International, 2004), p.173.

recent representations, Kapur uses one of the most famous aspects of Diana's emblematic face, her gaze.

Figure 21 below is a representation of Princess Diana. She is lowering her head down and looking up. This gaze makes her blue eyes appear bigger. During and after her marriage, the gesture made the public aware that she was victim of the monarchy's practices. The raised eyes and head tilted slightly upward gesture of both figures reveals the halo effect in Elizabeth's and Diana's faces. The gaze in both figures is indistinguishable.

One must question Kapur's choice of Blanchett to star as Elizabeth. Princess Diana was killed the same year Kapur launched the filming of his movie. Blanchett was chosen probably because of her artistic abilities and talent, but also, the physical resemblance to Elizabeth I. Nevertheless, Blanchett's blue eyes and fair hair make her strikingly look like Princess Diana who is also blonde and blue eyed. Thus, Kapur's casting strategy helps to make Elizabeth's image close to that of Diana. Kapur affirms this point saying that "behind the film's Elizabeth may stand the ghost of Princess Diana and the fascination people today have for a royal romantic heroine"⁹³.



Figure 21: Diana, Princess of Wales

To make the connotation more powerful, Kapur uses light. Both figures below show Elizabeth, in Blanchett's image, and Diana wearing white dresses. Diana is wearing her wedding dress. In order to make Elizabeth's representation close to that of Diana, Elizabeth

⁹³. <http://shekharkapur.com/blog/category/golden-age-diary/>.

is also wearing a white dress. Both representations are submerged by light (**Figure 22**). Their faces are radiant. Many signs are put together in the representation: dress, face and light, to make Elizabeth I like Diana.



Figure 22: Diana Spencer in her Wedding Dress (1981) and Cate Blanchett as Elizabeth I (2007)

In addition to this emphasis on the iconic similitude, *Elizabeth* portrays Elizabeth I as a lovely charming and outgoing princess, elements that Diana Spencer introduced to the monarchy as soon as she married Prince Charles in 1981. The film deals also with the inner struggle that Elizabeth I lived from the moment she inherits the throne. Similarly, Diana has always been considered as the victim of the monarchy's conservative attitudes. Thus, they both struggled from the tough task of balancing public duties and private lives. The image conveyed by both princesses is adjusted the monarchy's needs.

Like many others, James Chapman claims that *Elizabeth* revived royal Biopic in the 1990s "at a time when the British Royal Family was coming under greater public scrutiny and criticism than ever before"⁹⁴. It is in this perspective that Barthes clarifies that within new circumstances, a new meaning or "a whole new history is implanted in the myth"⁹⁵. During the 1980s, Diana's image was very important. It was used to ensure the monarchy's popularity at "critical times".

⁹⁴. James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p.10.

⁹⁵. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.117.

Jim Leach argues that the public image of the monarchy came under attack because of the scandals related to the private lives of members of the royal family⁹⁶. As a result, Elizabeth I's relation to Robert Dudley and Diana's relation with Dodi Al Fayed come into perception. Both relationships are seen as scandalous, dangerous and inappropriate for different reasons. On the one hand, Dudley was unfit for the position of the king, and his father was a traitor. Al Fayed, on the other hand, was an oriental brought up Muslim. In other words, he was different. Authors like Jude Davies assert the whiteness of the British monarchy. Therefore, this relationship was dangerous and "raised the possibility that the heir to the throne might have half-siblings brought up as Muslims, whose father's heritage lay in Egypt"⁹⁷.

In this context, when interviewed in 1998, Edward Said mentioned an article entitled *A Match Made in Mecca* in The Sunday Times full of racist clichés of the Orientalist discourse⁹⁸. The article looked at that relation as a Muslim conspiracy arranged by the Prophet Mohammad to control this white woman. Clearly, the Di-Dodi romance was a threat to a whole tradition of white supremacy and British Orientalist tradition. The relation can end the British superiority and Egyptian inferiority which is the result of the colonial heritage. When looking back at the sixteenth century, Elizabeth and Dudley's romance was also a threat to the crown and England's safety. Contrary to Diana who went on in the relationship which, at least according to Mohammed Al Fayed⁹⁹, Dodi's father, led to their death, Elizabeth was smarter when she put an end to this relation.

Ian Ward, in his article *Fairy Land and Fairy Kings and Queens* (2001), claims that because these two women are national goddesses that symbolize Englishness, the monarchy

⁹⁶. Jim Leach, *British Film*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.08.

⁹⁷. Jude Davies, *Diana A Cultural History: Gender, Race, Nation and the People's Princess*, (London: Palgrave, 2001), p.196-197.

⁹⁸. Sut Jhally, *Edward Said: "On Orientalism"*, (Massachusetts, Media Education Foundation, 1998), (00:25:50) in http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g.

⁹⁹. Princess Diana Death - Al Fayed accuses Royals interview with Mohammed Al Fayed, part 01 in <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbZ83zF3jLU>.

benefits from their popularity to reinforce its position¹⁰⁰. In this sense, Barthes says that “Men do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use: they depoliticize according to their needs”¹⁰¹. In fact, producers refer the image of the mother with the Virgin Mary, the warrior with Joan of Arc and Britannia. At this point, it is Diana’s image, which is used to revive and celebrate the popularity of the monarchy. These images are also combined to help to save the public face of the Royal Family. By using Diana’s emblematic gaze and light, the director masks and naturalizes its meaning.

7. Elizabeth I: the Monarch in *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

In all the selected films, Elizabeth has never been depicted in her coronation day and uniform, except in *Elizabeth* where her coronation dress as well as the royal accessories are added. The figure below is a medium shot of the Queen in her Coronation Stone, sitting there for the first time. She is wearing the royal robe or pall, holding on her left hand the Orb, on her right hand the sword, and on her head the crown. Every piece she is wearing is part of the collective term Crown Jewels that denotes the regalia and vestments worn by the sovereign of the United Kingdom during the coronation ceremony¹⁰².



Figure 23: Elizabeth I’s Coronation (00:31:08) in *Elizabeth*

Stuart Hall, in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), argues that despite the similarities between a drawn, painted or digital copy of a

¹⁰⁰. Ian Ward mentioned in José I. Prieto Arranz, *Images of English purity: a comparative study of Elizabeth I and Diana, Princess of Wales, Identity, Self and Symbolism*,. N02, Vol 01, (Spain: University of Balearic Islands, 2006), p.117.

¹⁰¹. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.144.

¹⁰². The jewel of the crowns in <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/Symbols/TheCrownJewels.aspx>.

sheep, for instance, and the real animal, it remains a copy¹⁰³. As for the representation drawn about Queen Elizabeth I's coronation in *Elizabeth*, it is similar to the one of 1558 (**Figure 24**), but it remains a copy. A copy, as Barthes puts it, bears meaning or "signification more than the original". The director uses a powerful background, strong colours, and many other signs like her outfit as the signs to build a powerful visual narrative.

In fact, in **figure 24**, Elizabeth is sitting on her Coronation Stone. On her both sides stand the Earl of Norfolk and the Earl of Essex, two of those who opposed her. The series of continuous signs connote the male dominated society the young Elizabeth is going to rule. In addition to the hitches that she is going to face to prove that she is gifted enough to be a female ruler. The question asked here is about Elizabeth's ability to manage "the difficult feat of being simultaneously loyal and selfish and still likeable all the while"¹⁰⁴.



Figure 24: Elizabeth's Coronation in 1558

To draw the representation of Elizabeth I as a monarch, the director contrasts her to two other monarchs; Mary Tudor in *Elizabeth* and Philip of Spain in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, both Catholics. Right from the beginning of both films, they appear on screen; they are associated with gloomy fade colours.

¹⁰³. Stuart Hall, *The Work of Representation*, ed., Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p.19.

¹⁰⁴. Joshua Starnes, *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*, (2007) in <http://www.comingsoon.net/news/reviewsnews.php?id=38298>.

a. Elizabeth vs. Mary Tudor, Half Sister

Several reviews argue that the film is, in many aspects, anti-catholic. Mary Kunz, for instance, writes in The Buffalo News that, on the one hand, Catholics in the film are villains, including the Pope, Queen Mary, King Philip as well as the Catholic subjects. “The Anglicans, on the other hand, are rational and humorous, glowing with faith and common sense”¹⁰⁵. Mary Tudor, Henry VIII’s eldest daughter from Spanish Catherine of Aragon, is depicted as a devoted Catholic married to a Spanish heir.

Barthes clarifies that man’s interference while photographs through distance, the choice of the angle from which to take the photo, light, focus and the object to include and exclude contribute to creating connotation¹⁰⁶. Actually, the director’s use of light, close-ups and camera positions stresses this contrast and illustrates Catholic-Protestants rivalry established between these two queens. The very first shots of Princess Elizabeth and Queen Mary, half sister, are wide shots. However, the shots are very different. Definitely, it is not only these two women that are contrasted, but also their two different policies; fundamentalism and the Via Media Policy.

The figure below is a wide shot of Queen Elizabeth I’s court in *Elizabeth* (Figure 25). It is spacious, luminous, and warm. Elizabeth, at the right of the snapshot is standing at the top of the court. In front of her, and at the heart of the room, women are waving with a blue fabric to represent the sea, and men moving with ships to represent the Spanish ships, and one gentleman representing the English pirates attacking the Spanish ships.

¹⁰⁵. Mary Kunz, “Elizabeth” is “Resolutely Anti-Catholic”, (1999) in <http://www.catholicleague.org/elizabeth-is-resolutely-anti-catholic/>.

¹⁰⁶. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.44.



Figure 25: Elizabeth's Court in *Elizabeth* (1998)

Figure 26, in contrast, is an over shoulder shot where we have the first sight of Queen Mary. She is shot in a wide dark closed room with poor light going in from one window. In addition to the actors who are in black; the Spanish ambassador, the Earl of Norfolk, the Spanish husband, the Bishop Stephen Gardiner and several ladies in waiting, few candles, and the sculpture of the Virgin Mary, appear on the right of the shot. When going through “THE EFFECTS OF BLACK AND WHITE OBJECTS ON THE EYE”, Goethe testifies that “Black dresses make people appear smaller than light ones”¹⁰⁷. Consequently, the director, by choosing black outfits for Mary and her court, makes them small. They are not, in Barthes words, dressed “innocently”



Figure 26: Queen Mary's Court (00:05:28) in *Elizabeth*

The camera rises up to give a view of a gloomy scene that inspires fear, closeness and loneliness. It, most of all, connotes the sufferings Protestants have been through during her reign. In fact, thousands were burned for their religious beliefs. For sure, this image

¹⁰⁷. Goethe Johann Wolfgang Von, *Goethe's Theory of Colours*, trans., Charles Lock, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1840), p.06.

perfectly illustrates the image that the English people inherited of Queen Mary who is famously remembered for the bloody Mary.

b. Elizabeth vs. Philip, King of Spain

Joshua Starnes, in his review of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, describes Philip as the villain of the story. He is present to be contrasted with Queen Elizabeth I and not to tell his own story. I can quote,

He signifies the Catholic opposition to Elizabeth and Protestant England, but he does so with a mindless, religious fervor, showing up only occasionally to almost literally twirl his mustache and make vaguely menacing statements about Elizabeth's forthcoming destruction¹⁰⁸.

When looking back at history, one may notice that England avoided any direct conflict with the Spanish. The relationships were always those of rivalry. The clash between Catholic Spain and Protestant England is perfectly illustrated in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*.

From the beginning of the film, Philip of Spain is depicted in dim sittings and garments. He appears in a close medium shot, probably, in church, with one small candle giving small light. He is wearing black and opening his eyes wide. In this dark background only a small light is coming from the window behind him. He is moving his lips, murmuring prayers and looking straight at the burning candle. This candle will turn off with the defeat of the Armada in scene (01:39:34), by the end of the film.



Figure 27: A Medium Close Shot of Philip (00:01:59) from *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*

¹⁰⁸ . Joshua Starnes, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (2007) in <http://www.comingsoon.net/news/reviewsnews.php?id=38298>.

It is a gothic setting; the place is huge and very dark, gloomy and gives an impression of uneasiness, only windows and candles let some light in. To compare these iconic representations to those of Elizabeth I, I will take similar shots. **Figure 28** is the first snapshot where she appears at the beginning of the film. Clearly, light is falling on Elizabeth's Coronation Stone and on her randomly. While moving, light is following her. In contrast, Philip of Spain prefers darker outfits. The candle used with Philip is also used with Queen Elizabeth I (**Figure 28**). However, with Elizabeth the candle is not lighted up, it seems to be a new candle; taller and thicker. Elizabeth is standing while her hands are on the chair, talking to her councillors. The shot offers a clear insight to the Queen's face, speaking slowly, gazing at her councillors and answering trustfully. The camera, then, pushes in towards the Queen moving from a medium full shot to a closer view of the Queen, where the candle finally disappears from the scene.

According to Julius Fast, in *Body Language*(1978), it is the person sitting at the head of the table, usually the father in the family, who is the dominant member of the family¹⁰⁹. Consequently, and like the father, she is the leader of the discussion and the only voice heard. Besides, the same author explains that the wife in the family sits to the father's (her husband) right. In this perspective, it is obvious that Sir Walsingham is Elizabeth's closest member of the private council. He is sitting on her right. Historically speaking, sir Walsingham was one of Elizabeth I's most trusted advisors.



Figure 28: Queen Elizabeth Facing her Councillors (00:03:49) in *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*

¹⁰⁹. Julius Fast, *Body Language*, (London: Souvenir Press Ltd, 1982), p.51.

In comparison with Philip who prefers to stay in shadow, Elizabeth moves outside to meet her people. Interestingly, light is used to focus on the difference between Elizabeth and Philip. The latter, is surrounded by gloom symbolizing his despotism, tyrant character. His stepping back away from sunlight on the balcony scene shows his rejection or denial to see what is outside or beyond the Catholic faith. He says “England is enslaved to the evil, we must set her free”¹¹⁰. The candle offers small light that is not enough to enlighten his heart and mind. In contrast, Elizabeth is surrounded by light.

As far as their garments are concerned, Philip is trapped, once again, in his black outfit whereas Elizabeth is portrayed with bright, shining colours which contribute to her salience. The use of red, one of the primary colours, is a strong connotation of the red rose of England. In this perspective, in his *Contemporary Colour: Theory and Use* (2012), Steven Bleicher looks at the socioeconomic aspects of colours explaining that “the higher your economic status is, the more you will favour darker saturated, complex hues”, while “People in the lower economic brackets tend to prefer and respond favourably to simple, bright, pure hues”¹¹¹. Despite the fact that Philip and Elizabeth are both monarchs and have nearly the same economic status, in the movie they are dressed differently since the distinction here is not about the economic status but about the extent to which the person is approachable or not.

As a result, and to highlight the popularity of the Queen, she is always shown wearing bright colours. She even goes outside on a boat trip with her ladies in waiting and her private councillor, Sir Walsingham. Scene 00.05.40 shows Elizabeth smiling and joking while her subjects are shouting out her name. Philip, in contrast, allows his daughter, named Isabella, Spanish for the English Elizabeth, and a connotation of a second Elizabeth, to step outside to the balcony to salute the crowd, whereas he remains inside. Overall and through

¹¹⁰. Skekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, (Universal, 2007), (00.02.41)

¹¹¹. Steven Bleicher, *Contemporary Color: Theory and Use*, (New York: Delmar, 2012), p.62.

the contrast established, “the myth of Britain as the sole defender of liberty, tolerance, and justice”¹¹² is implied. The juxtaposition creates a “highly moral image”. Charles is the perfect bastard, while Elizabeth is the perfect monarch. The whole mise en scene represents a sort of mythological fight between good and evil¹¹³.

Conclusion

The representation of the Tudor Queen in the four selected films is different. Elizabeth is represented as a weak woman through the male gaze in both **The Virgin Queen** and in **Elizabeth: The Golden Age**. In the same film, two Australian actresses, Cornish and Blanchett who very close physically, are used as a connotation of Elizabeth I. She, then, moves to be portrayed as an independent woman thanks to the directors’ casting strategy. Glenda Jackson, for instance, matches the 1970s representation of the powerful queen who is in control.

The representation of this queen took a farther step by the end of the twentieth century. She becomes associated with three of the most famous women in history; the Virgin Mary, Joan of Arc and Princess Diana. Signs are used to show how Elizabeth I is associated with images of the motherhood and the modernity. Finally, Kapur draws the representation of Elizabeth I a monarch. This representation is achieved by contrasting her image to that of two other monarchs; Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain.

¹¹². Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction,2007), p.179.

¹¹³. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.21.

CHAPTER THREE:
QUEEN ELIZABETH I: THE
USABLE SIGN

Introduction

“History has always been an interpretation. So what makes it valid to us is to tell a contemporary story and use history as a moral story that is more relevant to our times”¹. Thus answers Kapur when asked about the accuracy of his 2007 sequel to *Elizabeth*. Clearly, the Indian director is not concerned with the exactness of the content of his films. He rather shows a concern about sending a moral message to a contemporary audience. He is not an exception. Actually, as far as Queen Elizabeth I’s biography is concerned rare are the directors who are preoccupied with the issue of accuracy.

The following chapter looks at the way the representation of Queen Elizabeth I developed through a diachronic study of five posters. It investigates Queen’s image and how it is used as a cultural myth to connote notions of British superiority and imperialist ideology. Three elements are highlighted: the Monarchy, the Empire and Euroscepticism. Throughout the analysis, the historical context of the films’ production is very important. Barthes affirms that in order to interpret or demystifying myth, the general circumstances turning around its construction are very helpful. Barthes claims that the contextualization of signs is an important stage in understanding its connotation, “The term ‘connotation’ is used to refer to the socio-cultural and ‘personal’ associations (ideological, emotional, etc.) of the sign”². In other words, the historical context is very important to understand different kind of texts and in this case a photograph³.

Section One: The Shift of Representation of Queen Elizabeth I from *The Virgin Queen* (1955) to *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007)

It is true that in the Barthesian view, myth, like connotation, is the third level of meaning where the ideological intentions of the bourgeoisie become apparent. Nevertheless, Barthes speaks of cultural myths that are used as instruments to transform “history into

¹. Rebecca Murray, *Director Shekhar Kapur Discusses Elizabeth: The Golden Age* in <http://movies.about.com/od/elizabeththegoldenage/a/elizabeth92607.htm>.

². Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p.138.

³. Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p.02.

nature”⁴. Thanks to myth, he adds, everything is “immediately frozen into something natural”. To clarify this point, Daniel Chandler says that “Barthes did not see the myths of contemporary culture as an agglomeration of connotations but as ideological narratives”⁵. Working on this argument, one can say that the different versions of Queen Elizabeth I’s biography as dealt with in the selected films are copies based on a material that has been worked on several times. Likewise, “mythical speech is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication”⁶.

In one way or another, Elizabeth herself comes to be viewed as an adapted myth to constitute “a signifying system” through visual communication with the use of colours, especially red, through garments via Elizabeth’s dressing, through body language and light. Thus, I consider that Queen Elizabeth I’s representation is re-adjusted since the dawn of film industry to make it her image convenient for each era. This point will be clarified through a diachronic study of five posters: two for *The Virgin Queen*, that of 1955 and 2008, and one for each of *Mary, Queen of Scots*, *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*.

1. Elizabethin *The Virgin Queen* (1955)

Bette Davis appears in both Twentieth Century Fox poster of *The Virgin Queen* film (Figures 29 and 34). In the 1955 version, only part of Elizabeth I’s face, Davis’s face, is included in the poster. Her eyes are open wide, and her gaze is directed up, probably towards Raleigh who emerges in a slightly bigger appearance. Barry Keith Grant, in *Film Genre from Iconography to Ideology* (2007), argues that cinema production from the 1950s to 1980s “remained almost exclusively the cultural property of a white male consciousness, the centre from which any difference regarding race, gender and sexuality was defined and

⁴. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.129.

⁵. Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p.144.

⁶. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.129.

marginalized”⁷. This, obviously, justifies the reason why Raleigh dominates the 1955 poster with two appearances. **Figure 29** below shows that the story is Raleigh’s not Elizabeth’s. Walter Raleigh’s holding a sabre and pointing it out is a major sign that attracts our attention not the image of the Queen.



Figure 29:1955 poster⁸

In fact, in contrast to Richard Todd who has the leading role, the Queen, in the image of Davis, is a supporting character. The poster reveals that Raleigh is a complete man. He is man of action ready to defend his lady and the Queen as well as land. Elizabeth’s representation gives the impression that this Queen is old and arrogant. The last scene of the film affirms the poster’s content. In fact, Raleigh starts his voyage towards the Indies, while she is shown in her locked office. Therefore, Grant’s words about the male hero in action films are valid here. Raleigh is one of those white men who are able to achieve “heroic deeds and drove the narrative”⁹. Hence, underneath the iceberg of the powerful self-determined woman that reviews prize, the poster and the film content draw and the image of a Queen at the margin.

The second element on the focus is Queen Elizabeth I’s gaze. It is a sign that connotes her supervision and command over Raleigh’s mission and dream. But when looking at the

⁷. Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre from Iconography to Ideology*, (London: Wallflower, 2007), p.80.

⁸. The official poster of *The Virgin Queen* in http://www.movieposter.com/poster/MPW-96272/Virgin_Queen.html.

⁹. Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre from Iconography to Ideology*, (London: Wallflower, 2007), p.80.

events, it is the angry gaze of an unhappy jealous woman. John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), writes that when contrasting the presentation of female and male characters in images “*men act and women appear*”¹⁰. This is exactly the case of the Queen here; Raleigh acts and Davis appears. He emerges as the representative of power. Mark Glancy, in *Three Films about Queen Elizabeth I* (2010), affirms that the film focuses far too much “on court gossip and scandal”¹¹ since Raleigh secretly engages in a relation with Elizabeth Throckmorton, the Queen’s lady in waiting. Their relationship provokes the Queen’s anger and frustration. The film also looks seriously at Raleigh’s talents as a soldier and a sailor.

Many reviewers agree that Davis’s performance is one of the strongest points of the film. Violet LeVoit, for instance, states that Elizabeth, thanks to this American actress, is an “imperious ruler”, arrogant and dominating¹². However, like most female stars of the 1950s, Davis failed to fulfill her potential. Davis shined to recognition with romantic roles in **The Man who Played God** (1932) and **Of Human Bondage** (1934). She is a two times Academy Award winner, in 1935 for **Dangerous**, and in 1938 for **Jezebel**¹³. Davis is a hero in many romantic films. She is definitely a good choice to perform Queen Elizabeth I during the 1950s.

The 1950s were a time of nostalgia and revival of the glorious past. The merry Britain was living enjoyable times through two national festivals. On June 2nd, 1953, it celebrated the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, at Westminster Abbey. She ascended to the throne on February 6th, 1952, after her father’s death. The British people were enthusiastic about the new Elizabethan age. Hence, as if the story of Queen Elizabeth I is told to remind the new Queen of the glorious history she is inheriting. Davis’s talent is exploited to help the British people to overcome the years of uncertainty following WWII.

¹⁰. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: the British Broadcasting Company, 1972), p.47.

¹¹. Mark Glancy, *Three Films about Queen Elizabeth I*, (2010) in <http://www.elizabethfiles.com/elizabeth-i-in-the-movies/4156/>.

¹². Violet LeVoit, *The Virgin Queen*, (2008) in <http://www.tcm.tv/this-month/article.html?isPreview=&id=552207|536419&name=The-Virgin-Queen>.

¹³. Bette Davies’s Biography in <http://www.bettedavis.com/about/biography.html>.Ibid.

Nevertheless, and unlike Davis and Elizabeth I, Elizabeth II is a young Princess, a wife and also a mother who emphasized on motherhood, responsibilities as a wife and her public duties¹⁴. Like “the imperious ruler” that Davis brings to the big screen, Elizabeth II was at that time a symbol of continuity. Her coronation, life as princess as well as her service during World War II showed that this new nation can reconcile tradition and modernity¹⁵. Inspired by the model, Davis brings to screen in *The Virgin Queen* to re-establishes woman’s real role; home and family.

Finally, even the dissolution of the empire is present in the poster as if the producers were actually saying that it is right that the age of the Empire is over; we are starting a new reign of a new queen that happens to be named Elizabeth. Therefore, Raleigh by dominating the poster connotes the imperialist nature of the 1950s. George Orwell, in his essay *England your England* (1941), mentions that a different nation was born after the WWII¹⁶. The lost empire shook the position of self-assurance that Britain maintained for centuries which explains the nostalgia felt during 1950s. The representation of Elizabeth I through Davis’s romantic performance was a readjustment for a society which was in need to adapt itself with this new reality.

2. Elizabeth in *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1971)

James Chapman argues the competition between television and cinema during the 1970s, urged production companies to adapted scripts of successful television productions to cinema. Directors expected these scripts will to attract the audience and score as good as it did in television or even better. These actions were taken to save film industry since the

¹⁴. Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties Gender, Genre and the ‘New Look’*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.175.

¹⁵. Jim leach, *British Cinema*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.208-209.

¹⁶. George Orwell quoted in Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction,2007), p.174.

1970s were, unlike the 1960s, described as “the nadir of the British cinema”¹⁷. During the 1970s, cinema production and attendance knew its worst percentages.

Barthes maintains that the huge power of film lies in its ability “to naturalise” the constructed meaning. In this way, it encourages viewers “to accept its reality and surrender an opportunity” to fight back its imposed “socio-cultural mores”¹⁸. This is exactly the case of Glenda Jackson who repeated her representation of Queen Elizabeth I in **Elizabeth R** in *Mary, Queen of Scots* opposite Vanessa Redgrave the same year. Elizabeth I is put everywhere; at home with Television in the miseries, and in cinema via *Mary, Queen of Scots*.

As already mentioned, despite the fact that the film is called *Mary, Queen of Scots*, the events depict the conflict between the two cousins Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth Tudor, Queen of England. The figure below is a 1971 Poster of the film. It is on a dark background showing red curtains, and the top of the Coronation Stone that both actresses appear; on the right, Mrs. Redgrave as Mary, and on the left Mrs. Jackson as Elizabeth. On the one hand, Mary looking down, and only the right side of her face is clear. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is facing Mary holding an envelope. Her face is definitely more serious and more shrewish. This stance gives her the power to dominate the poster.

To clarify Barthes view when it comes to denotation and connotation in photography, John Fiske says, “denotation is *what* is photographed, connotation is *how* it is photographed”¹⁹. Barthes points out that it is the various techniques used in film making that help to transform “a brute photograph (frontal and clear)” using “signs drawn from a

¹⁷. James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p.255-256.

¹⁸. Roland Barthes cited Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History in Film*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.58-59.

¹⁹. John Fiske quoted in Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p.138.

cultural code”²⁰. *Mary, Queen of Scots* is a product of its time. It is a film where two women are at the centre of the events.



Figure 30 : *Mary, Queen of Scots* 1971 poster²¹

This idea brings to my mind Blanchett’s speech when receiving the Academy Award for the best actress in leading role for her performance in Woody Allen’s **Blue Jasmine** (2013). The film tells the story of a rich woman from New York City who went broke and had to live a different life style in San Francisco. Blanchett says that the film’s success answers back “those of us in the industry who are still foolishly clinging to the idea that female films with women at the center are niche experiences. They are not. Audiences want to see them and, in fact, they earn money²². Similarly, *Mary, Queen of Scots* is a film with female experiences at the centre. It proved to be successful by receiving five Academy Award nominations.

In the poster, Mary and Elizabeth are facing each other. These two different women consider the issues of the crown and power in two distinctive ways. They are very different and their conflict connotes the struggling Britain. During the 1970s Britain was divided between “old” and “new”. The Cultural Revolution put into question all the moral values of

²⁰. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.44.

²¹. *Mary, Queen of Scots* official poster in https://www.movieposter.com/poster/A70-4781/Mary_Queen_Of_Scots.html

²². <http://oscar.go.com/nominees/actress-in-a-leading-role/cate-blanchett>.

the British society. Women's fight for equal payment became true with the 1971 Equal Payment Act. It was also during this period that men started sharing housework with their partners. This of course was not very common, but the basics were established to make of marriage an egalitarian relationship²³. Men felt pressure because of women's increasing participation in the labour force. The idea of man as the only breadwinner was replaced by the notion of "the New Man" who contributed to house and childcare²⁴.

Britain also witnessed a conflict between government and Trade Unions because of the industrial unrest which resulted in the Miners Strike of 1972 and 1974. These events culminated in outbreaks of violence. Besides, the relations with Ireland were at their worst because of the confrontations between the English government and Irish Republican Party that reached the climax with The Bloody Sunday, January 30th, 1972, where English Troops fired and killed thirteen civilians²⁵.

The film emphasises, as was the political scene of Britain in the 1970s, building better relationships with Scotland and adopting the isolationist attitudes of the twentieth century vis-à-vis Europe, especially France, which was unenthusiastic about Britain. During the 1960s, it vetoed twice the British entrance to the Common Market through its president Charles de Gaulle²⁶. This attitude widened the gap, not only between the two countries, but also between the country and the whole continent. It unquestionably reflects the mood of the relations between both countries. These relations are not different from those Britain adopted during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

²³. Jane Pilcher, *Women in Contemporary Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.56.

²⁴. *Ibid.*, p.03.

²⁵. James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p.266.

²⁶. *Ibid.*

3. Elizabeth in *Elizabeth* (1998)

Shakespeare in Love (1998)

In 1998, two different actresses starred in two Oscar winning productions: Kapur's *Elizabeth* and John Madden's **Shakespeare in Love**. Cate Blanchett starred as Queen Elizabeth, and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress in Leading Role. It is Gwyneth Paltrow who won for her role in **Shakespeare in Love** as Viola De Lesseps. As for Judi Dench, who starred as Queen Elizabeth I, she won the Academy Award for the Best Actress in Secondary Role²⁷.

Without surprise, the 1998 Oscars ceremony was typically Tudor with eight Academy Award trophies. Seven Academy Awards were attributed to **Shakespeare in Love** including the "prestigious prize" of the film of the year, but also the Oscar for best actress in secondary role for Dench after ten minutes' appearance. Furthermore, Geoffrey Roy Rush (1951), the Australian actor and film producer, was attributed two different roles in both films. He was nominated to receive an Academy Award for best actor in supporting role for performing Philip Henslowe, and won the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture. The same actor starred in *Elizabeth* as Sir Francis Walsingham and won BFTA, British Academy of Film and Television Arts, award. In brief, for both roles, he received about eight different nominations²⁸.

It seems all these different associations rewarded not the cinematic productions, but the Elizabeth. The world is paying tribute and acknowledges the Golden Age. These films are just two examples of many others that are produced out of a need to recall the best of what the Tudor Age is remembered for; Elizabeth, the Queen, and William Shakespeare (1564-1616), the dramatist. True, he is remembered for his great plays. Nevertheless, he is

²⁷. <http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/legacy/ceremony/71st-winners.html>.

²⁸. Ibid.

also the one who achieved many innovations as far the English language is concerned²⁹. It is Joseph Fiennes, Robert Dudley in *Elizabeth*, who reprises the role of Shakespeare as a young dramatist.



Figure 31: Queen Elizabeth I (Judi Dench) in Shakespeare in Love (1998)

The figure above is the 1998 representation of the old Queen Elizabeth I performed by the Judi Dench. Yet, if *Shakespeare in Love* draws a picture of a confident, powerful Queen, in *Elizabeth* the Queen is young and is still learning to survive in a world she ignores. Barthes says that “there is no fixity in mythical concepts”³⁰. Thus, I shall argue that in the same way these films are used to reinforce and promote national identity; they are also used to challenge it. Jim Leach asserts that through films, “myths of the national character are represented, examined, reinforced, and/or contested”³¹.

It is enough to look at **Figure 32** to see a different Elizabeth. First of all, the film is called *Elizabeth*, which puts light on Elizabeth alone. Next, Elizabeth is at the centre of the poster wearing a golden dress directing her strong gaze towards the camera. She is at the centre of attention. Her fair hair is loose. In short, her young appearance invades the poster. The figure clearly liberates youthfulness, beauty and innocence of a young princess. On the background, several words; queen, murder, assassin are written in scarlet.

²⁹. David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.62.

³⁰. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.120.

³¹. Jim leach, *British Cinema*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.06.

According to Goethe’s *Theory of Colours* (1840), “a dark object appears smaller than a bright one of the same size”³². Thus, by submerging Blanchett with light and putting her on a darker background, she dominates the poster. The effect of the dress adds to the effect of light that makes her face bright and reveals, according to Goethe, “a softly exciting character” with a “noble effect”³³ that we see all along the film. Being from an Indian origin, Kapur was aware of the meaning of the yellow colour in the Indian culture. In Hinduism, for instance, it is the color of knowledge and learning³⁴. In the Far East, it is the colour of Sultan or the Emperor³⁵. This element shows the influence of the crew working behind the scene on the film and the poster’s design.



Figure 32: *Elizabeth* 1998 poster³⁶

Elizabeth’s filming started in 1997; the year coincided with the death of Princess Diana. Exactly like Princess Diana who was “a progressive, energetic, glamorous individual who symbolized the sort of modern, unstuffy, sensitive, creative, independent spirit”³⁷, the Princess we see in the poster is also glamorous, modern, modest and simply dressed. She is neither wearing a tiara nor sitting of the Coronation Stone. Chris Rojek in his *Brit-Myth*:

³². Goethe Johann Wolfgang Von, *Goethe’s Theory of Colours*, trans., Charles Lock, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1840), p.06.

³³. *Ibid.*, p.307.

³⁴. <http://www.sanskritimagazine.com/indian-religions/hinduism/meaning-of-different-colours-in-hinduism/>

³⁵. Ian Paterson, *Dictionary of Colour*, (London: Thorogood Publishing Ltd, 2003), p.424.

³⁶. *Elizabeth* official poster in <http://www.impawards.com/1998/elizabeth.html>

³⁷. Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction,2007), p.52.

Who Do the British Think They Are? (2007) asserts that “Some advisers want the monarch to become less aloof, more open and more in touch with people”³⁸. The British Royal Family needed to adapt modern ways.

Kapur introduces elements of modernity to *Elizabeth*, both as a film and a historical figure. She is an energetic young Queen who enjoys dancing, horse riding. She does not prevent herself from enjoying laughing out loud in front of her court as is the case in scenes (00:37:00) and (01:18:47) in *Elizabeth*, and scene (00:30:00) in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. This Elizabeth is approachable. Her gaze is directed towards the camera. She is in one way or another aware of the audience. The director uses the gaze to connect her to the public.

In 1997, Tony Blair won the general election. He came with the idea of New Labour New Britain. He launched his project of showing a new face of Britannia, “Cool Britannia”³⁹. This image is built through the use of the most famous English super stars like David Beckham. Blair wanted to remove the old fashioned conservative Britain. The poster above refers to the notion of the Cool Britannia in the sense that this new Queen is easy going, simple and a super star in a world that is known for its conservatism.

Valentina Cucca, in *Biopics as Modern Myth Making* (2011), argues;

Biopics not only stage problematic issues concerning postmodern subjectivities, identities, and their reconstruction on screen but they do it through the staging of not at all linear characters [...] contemporary biopics tell us of split, problematic and never entirely positive subjects⁴⁰

The image of the Queen in 1998 is the image of a woman torn between her duties and her personal desires. In brief, she is an “imperfect character” contrary to the 1955, 1971 and 2007 films which create a powerful self-confident and almost a perfect monarch. She adds, “Most of the time we are faced with enigmatic characters analyzed through prolonged close-

³⁸. A.J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399-1509*, (Essex: Person, 2000), p.23.

³⁹. Ian Bradley, *The Spiritual Identity of Britishness*, (New York, I.B.Tauris and Co Ltd, 2007), p.43.

⁴⁰. Valentina Cucca, *Biopics as Postmodern Mythmaking*, (2011) in *Academic Quarter*, Vol02, Spring 2011., p.170.

ups that scrutinize their faces trying to grasp their deepest secrets”⁴¹. Fair enough, since if there is one aspect that brings together *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, it is the focus on Elizabeth using, not only close-up shots, but also light. Therefore, the “modes of representations” are different, but the aim is one. Both **figures 31** and **33** are examples of close-up shots where the Queen’s face is at the centre of attention.

Kapur’s *Elizabeth* challenges the myth of the Virgin Queen by raising the question of her virginity; knowing that her virginity is the factor that kept England united to face its feared rival, Spain, in the sixteenth century. Kapur puts in peril her significance when probing the issue of her virginity by showing Robert Dudley and Elizabeth, in scene (00:40:10), having a sexual intercourse that would have ended her virginity. The Daily Telegraph attacked the film because it suggests that the Virgin Queen was, in fact, nothing of the sort. “An enraged editorial” states that “To question Elizabeth’s virtue 400 years after her death is not just a blackguardly slur upon a good, Christian woman, but an insult to our fathers who fought for her”⁴². He goes on; “It should rouse England to chivalrous anger”. For the newspaper, and most of the British, there is no doubt that “Elizabeth I died *virgo intacta*”. For his part, the director said; “her virginity is a matter of interpretation”⁴³.

4. Elizabeth I in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007)

Blanchett who shined in *Elizabeth* reprised the role of Queen Elizabeth I, accompanied by Geoffrey Rush, and received, for both, a nomination for an Academy Award for best Actress in leading role. Undeniably, her beauty and performance enriched the Queen’s image and “otherworldly” appearance. Manohal Dargis states;

Declaiming from a top her white horse, her legs now conspicuously parted as she straddles the jittery, stamping animal, she invokes God and country, blood and honor, life and death, bringing to mind at once Joan of Arc, Henry V, Winston Churchill and Tony Blair in one gaspingly unbelievable,

⁴¹. Valentina Cucca, *Biopics as Postmodern Mythmaking*, (2011) in Academic Quarter, Vol02, Spring 2011., p.170.

⁴². James Chapman, *Past and Present National Identity and the British Historical Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005). p.06.

⁴³. <http://shekharkapur.com/blog/category/golden-age-diary/>.

cinematically climactic moment. The queenly body quakes as history and fantasy explode⁴⁴.

From the quotation above it is clear that Elizabeth is stronger than she has never been before. Blanchett's face invades the 2007 poster of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (Figure 33). She is on the focus through a close-up. She is represented with a luminous face and a slightly open mouth. She is wearing armour. On the right of the figure, a red flag appears. It is momentous to mention that red is an important component of the British culture. Because it attracts the eye, it is used in post-boxes, telephone kiosks and the famous red buses⁴⁵. Most of all, red is the red of the Cross of Saint George used in both the English flag and the Union Jack.

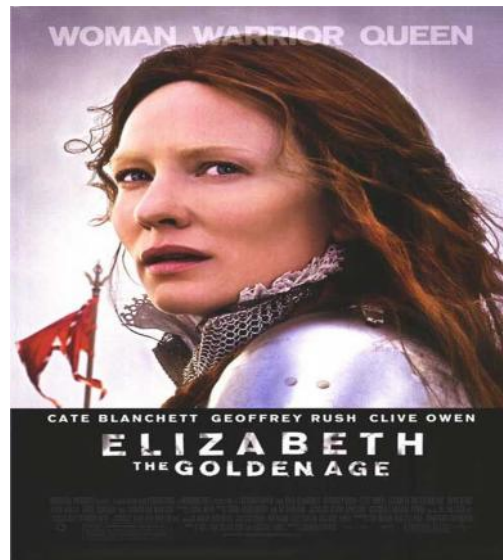


Figure 33: *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* 2007 Poster⁴⁶

The poster evokes the legend of Saint George who saved a woman from a dragon. The most famous representation depicts him in armour fighting a dragon⁴⁷. It is also the red rose of England, called also the Tudor Rose which is the result of a combination of the white

⁴⁴. Manohila Dargis, *Now, Warrior*, October, 2007 in <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/movies/12gold.html>.Ibid.

⁴⁵. Jonathon Crowther and Kathryn Kavanagh, eds., *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.120.

⁴⁶. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* official poster http://www.impawards.com/2007/elizabeth_the_golden_age.html

⁴⁷. Jonathon Crowther and Kathryn Kavanagh, eds., *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.219.

rose of York and the red one of Lancaster after the War of Roses⁴⁸. At the top, three words are written in white capital letters; WOMAN, WARRIOR, QUEEN. They are associated with her image. These three different representations are drawn of the monarch in the film.

The medium of light is used, some reviewers say over used by the director, to establish a distinction between Elizabeth and her rivals. Clearly, in Joshua Starnes words, Kapur “seems intent on creating an icon out of Elizabeth through constant shots of her bathed in light”⁴⁹. The self-assurance that Elizabeth emits is the self-assurance of a country celebrating in 2007 three-hundredth anniversary of Parliamentary Union⁵⁰. From the poster it is easy to say, as Manohila Dargis claims, that the Queen of *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* “bears little relation to the flushed young woman of the first film, who had not yet been unmoored from the merely mortal”⁵¹. In this sequel, the arrogant Duke of Norfolk will not dare to enter her private chamber the way he did in scene (00:41:22) in *Elizabeth*.

Finally, the image of Queen Elizabeth I is present in the selected materials. As Barthes says when speaking about “the Negro who salutes”, she “appears as a rich, fully experienced, spontaneous, innocent, *indisputable* image”⁵². Nevertheless, like the Negro who is tamed to the concept of “the French imperialism”, her image is used to bear the ultimate signification of the British distinctiveness and glory.

To show more clearly the way in which the image of Elizabeth shifted, let us compare the 2007 poster of *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* (Figure 33) and the 2008 version of *The Virgin Queen* (Figure 34). In the 2008 version of Cinema Classic Collection, Davis is at the lead in a much bigger space and much more clear face, behind her Raleigh and Bess. As we

⁴⁸. Jonathon Crowther and Kathryn Kavanagh, eds., *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.548.

⁴⁹. Joshua Starnes, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, in <http://www.comingsoon.net/news/reviewsnews.php?id=38298>.

⁵⁰. Ian Bradley, *The Spiritual Identity of Britishness*, (New York, I.B.Tauris and Co Ltd, 2007), p.31.

⁵¹. Manohila Dargis, *Now, Warrior*, October, 2007 in <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/12/movies/12gold.html>.

⁵². Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.117.

can see, the 2008 version of the poster re-introduces the Queen at the centre after she was at the periphery in 1955. Yet, the storyline is the same.



Figure 34 : 2008 Poster of *The Virgin Queen*⁵³

Elizabeth occupied a very small spot in the 1955 poster, and then we come to see her standing facing another Queen, in 1971. By 1998, she appears on a medium shot with signs of a vigorous young lady who “paraded her virginity at her coronation by leaving her hair down”⁵⁴. In 2007, Elizabeth is taking hold of the poster in a close-up shot. As we can see, the more we move forward in time, the more we face the Queen who occupies more space and therefore more significance in the British culture. Kapur explains the shift from *Elizabeth* to *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* saying;

Elizabeth was about Power. Survival in the context of Power. Love and Betrayal in the context of Power. And the trade off between the ruthlessness that is essential to gaining Power, against innocence, love, trust and joyfulness. Golden Age, on the other hand is about Immortality. It is about absolute Power and the aspiring to Divinity. To go beyond the ordinary and to be Divine. Almost immortal. It is about Elizabeth becoming the Divine, the Immortal being she is perceived as today⁵⁵.

Barthes argues the “end of the past” and the emergence of “presentness” that films evoke in us⁵⁶. In other words, films do not report the past, but the whole mise en scene makes us feel that it deals more with the present more it reproduces the past. Fredrick

⁵³. 2008 poster of *The Virgin Queen* in http://www.movieposter.com/poster/MPW-96272/Virgin_Queen.html

⁵⁴. Simon Schama, *History of Britain Body of the Queen: Benefit of Wigs*, (London: BBC, 1994), (00:12:25).

⁵⁵. <http://shekharkapur.com/blog/category/golden-age-diary/>.

⁵⁶. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans., Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p.44.

Jameson names this fact “the eternal present”⁵⁷. Here, the selected biographical films, through these posters, do not tell us how Elizabeth was in the sixteenth century. It narrates a new representation about the Queen, and the insight we need to have about her at specific period of times. Elizabeth was there, but she also is “*here-now*”.

Section Two: Elizabeth I’s Representation and Ideology

Barthes, in his discussion of “cultural mythologies”, asserts that they are used as natural substances to serve an external ideological motivation, “myth is always a language-robbery”⁵⁸. He later on clarifies that “the negro saluting the French flag” or “the seasonal fall in fruits prices” are not symbols of nationalism, but signifiers used to connote the French imperialism. This clarifies why Barthes says; “myth is a stolen language” where cultural aspects are used “to naturalize through them”, in this case, the imperial ideology. He adds: “nothing can be safe from myth”.

Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni write in *Cinema/Ideology/Criticism* (1969) that

when we set out to make a film, from the very first shot, we are encumbered by the necessity of reproducing things not as they are but as they appear when refracted through the ideology this includes every stage in the process of production: subjects, ‘styles’, forms, meanings, narrative traditions; all underline the general ideological discourse⁵⁹.

Therefore, there are not other alternatives apart from incorporating ideology in film making and in visual texts with the use of signs. The following section looks at the sign system at work to look at the power of ideology in the selected biopics. Here, a reference to Raymond Williams’s Residual, Dominant, and Emergent ideologies as elaborated in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) will be very useful. The Monarchy and the Empire, commonwealth and Euroscepticism will be clarified.

⁵⁷. Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History in Film*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.59.

⁵⁸. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.131.

⁵⁹. Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, *Cinema / Ideology/ Criticism*, (1969) in *Cahiers du Cinéma.*, Trans., Sussan Bennett, in *Cahiers du Cinema.*, Trans., Sussan Bennett in Screen, October-November 1969., p30.

1. The Monarchy and the Residual Ideology in *Elizabeth*

In 2004, a national survey among school teachers and pupils about the most famous symbols of Britain showed that the monarchy is second to the Union flag. In Germany, for instance, a census proved that in addition to multiculturalism and the English language, the monarchy is one the most attractive British symbols⁶⁰. A.J Pollard affirms that the United Kingdom and the British royal family are among the very few monarchies that resisted the tide of democratic wind that flew over Europe and the world. Undeniably, it still has its pervasive respect as a “dignified part of the British constitution”⁶¹.

Historically speaking, the British Monarchy was born in the ninth century. Mid seventeenth century witnessed the key events that changed the kingdom; the Civil War (1649-1660), the Restoration (1660) and the Glorious Revolution (1689). In modern times, the British monarchy has a lot of glamour because of the ceremonies of coronation, the state of Opening Parliament, Royal marriages and Jubilee (celebrating twenty-five or fifty years of the Queen’s reign). These events participate in building the symbolic power of the royal family as a unifying ingredient. In fact, far from political clashes, the monarchy “sells magic, history, state, and some attractive notions, like class privilege and social reality”⁶². More than that, it is an element of stability, reassurance and continuity. The British people with the presence of the Royal Family link easily the past, the present and the future. It is part of what Jim McGuigan calls “the cultural public sphere”. Even the God Save the Queen anthem focuses on the Queen more than the land. Therefore, “Britain can do without [...] the crown in parliament but the British cannot do without [...] the [...] queen in the people’s head”⁶³.

⁶⁰ . Ian Bradley, *The Spiritual Identity of Britishness*, (New York, I.B.Tauris and Co Ltd, 2007), p.46.

⁶¹ . A.J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399-1509*, (Essex: Person, 2000), p.23.

⁶² . Ibid.

⁶³ . Jim McGuigan quoted in José I. Prieto Arranz, *Images of English Purity. A Comparative Study of Elizabeth I and Diana, Princess of Wales*, in *Identity, Self and Symbolism*,. N02, VOL 01, (Spain: University of Balearic Islands, 2006), p.117.

Henry VIII

In addition to Elizabeth and Mary, Henry VIII is the third Tudor Monarch that makes a short, but significant appearance in *Elizabeth*. In fact, though physically absent in the selected films, there are many references to his name. His portrait appears in *Elizabeth*. Barthes argues that “pictures [...] are more imperative than writing”⁶⁴. This is true because, although he is silent, the moment when Elizabeth appears in front of that portrait is very significant. Originally painted by Hans Holbein in 1537, destroyed in 1689, the figure below is Walker’s copy derived from Whitehall Mural. During Henry VIII’s reign, the portrait was facing the door. A visitor remarked that it “was so lifelike that the spectator felt abashed, annihilated in its presence”⁶⁵. The portrait includes Henry VIII standing without the crown, clear facial expressions, fat body and fixed gaze.

In scene (00:48:21), Elizabeth is sitting on the ground facing her father’s portrait. This is the only instance where Henry VIII appears in a wide shot in a room with poor lightening. He is standing in his fashioned habits and pride. The shot brings Henry VIII alive. Paintings and old statues covered with old white torn fabric are put all over the room. Elizabeth is sitting down in front of the portrait, wearing a red dress with her head down, begging her father to guide her. She is confessing that perhaps she not ready to be a ruler yet. In another instance in scene (01:36:34), she says, “I am my father’s daughter I am not afraid of anything”, when answering Lord Burghley’s doubt about her ability to rule England effectively when he says “forgive me your majesty by you are only a woman”⁶⁶.

⁶⁴. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.108.

⁶⁵. Quoted in Derek Wilson, *Was Hans Holbein's Henry VIII the Best Piece of Propaganda Ever?*, April 2009 in <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/5206727/Was-Hans-Holbeins-Henry-VIII-the-best-piece-of-propaganda-ever.html>.

⁶⁶. Shekhar Kapur, *Elizabeth*, (Universal Studios, 1998), (01:36:16).



Figure 37: Henry VIII's Portrait in *Elizabeth*

Elizabeth's pose in front of her father's portrait is a sign that connotes the United Kingdom knee or need to remember the greatness of the past, as David McDowell affirms "when looking at Britain today, it is important to remember the great benefits of the past"⁶⁷. Eventually, instead of looking at Elizabeth seeking her father's help, we glimpse Britain in need of its imperial past to construct its future. Thus, the portrait of Henry VIII is "nothing more than an instrumental signifier"⁶⁸. His resonant revival in *Elizabeth* evokes Raymond Williams's notion of the Residual ideology. The latter is the revived ideology. The one that is still effective in the British way of life. Henry VIII is a historical figure of the British history, "but its place-in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly variable"⁶⁹. Consequently, Henry VIII's appearance in *Elizabeth* is, as Wilson claims, "the best piece propaganda ever", particularly with Britain coming to commemorate his 500th anniversary of succession (1509-2009)⁷⁰.

The use of Henry VIII's portrait recalls the Tudor Age. Henry VIII was the one who challenged the power of the Catholic Church, which was the most dominant institution in Europe, to launch Britain's religious freedom with the Reformation. This event clearly

⁶⁷. David MacDowell, *An Illustrated History of Britain*, (London: Longman, 2001), p.184.

⁶⁸. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.125.

⁶⁹. Raymond Williams, *Marxism in Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.122

⁷⁰. Derek Wilson, *Was Hans Holbein's Henry VIII the best piece of propaganda ever?*, April 2009 in <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/5206727/Was-Hans-Holbeins-Henry-VIII-the-best-piece-of-propaganda-ever.html>.

pushed England to seek better relations inside the British island; with Wales, Scotland and later on with Ireland. He also urged the English imperialist spirit to look beyond the continent borders and build the Empire. Furthermore, ambassadors, intellectuals, and visitors recognize the distinctiveness and the uniqueness of the British people by referring to Henry VIII. For many historians, including his subjects,

Henry VIII's character was certainly fascinating, threatening, and sometimes morbid. His egoism, self-righteousness, and capacity to brood sprang from the fusion of an able but second-rate mind with what looks suspiciously like an inferiority complex⁷¹.

Henry VIII with that curious instinct of oneness, with the English people which was a secret of Tudor greatness, saw deeper⁷²

2. The Empire, the Commonwealth and the Dominant Ideology in *The Virgin Queen* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

Barthes asserts that signs have meaning in isolation, but also in relation to each other. In a film, every shot includes signs that related to each other to speak an ultimate connotation⁷³. In these films, every snapshot is designed to disseminate the ideology that speaks up the supremacy of britishness and its imperial tradition.

The Virgin Queen was intended to be a story about Sir Walter Raleigh: **The Adventures of Sir Walter Raleigh**. Although the film's title was changed, Sir Walter Raleigh's adventurous plan to sail to the New World stills its central plot. The general circumstances of Britain during the 1550s encouraged this shift in representation. In fact, by 1555, the British Empire came to dissolution. The nostalgia of the vanishing Empire is felt. This explains the focus on the idea of shipbuilding, the Thames and getting ready to go beyond both the island and the continent boundaries.

In *Film and the Representation of History* (1998), Tony Barta argues that the British cinema of post-WWII includes examples of disappointed male heroes. He says; "the returning war hero who can find no satisfying role in post World War is a recurring figure in

⁷¹. John Guy, *The Tudor: a Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.20.

⁷². A.J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399-1509*, (Essex: Person, 2000), p.217.

⁷³. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.08.

British cinema of the late 1940s and 1950s”⁷⁴. Raleigh’s words are just another evidence of the way the English view themselves and the extent to which the Empire is a vital part of the British culture. Raleigh “like a daring amateur, not like a professional”⁷⁵ tells the alienation and frustration that Richard Todd as a returning war hero is feeling when looking at the British’s changing position. He says,

all England is not confined in the walls of this court
But ride pride and free in the bosom of the ocean
bothered only by her destiny and hope
yet while all the living and the nations in Europe are
pointing their ships
towards the Indies of the end
we English stand idly by⁷⁶.

He goes on saying,

But some Englishmen watch the sun on the waves
and dream of a future that will shine
but the brightness of a hundred suns
and God I am their company⁷⁷.

His words show, as Barthes confirms it, that he “came to motion equipped with an age-old moralizing which made its perception keener and enabled one to express its philosophy”⁷⁸. The “old-age” moral is that of Empire and the ethical of “The White Man’s Burden”. Regrettably, these morals do not have a place with Britain’s shifting position. England, the ocean, the Thames, the waves, hundred suns are all signs that connote the Empire. Here, Barthes’s words about **The Lost Continent** (1954) Italian documentary film are very appropriate in this context. He says; “what is more *natural* than the *sea*? And what more ‘political’ than the sea celebrated by the makers of the film **The Lost Continent**”⁷⁹. In the same way, the sea in **figure 36** is not just a natural view of the sea from any window. It is the Thames from the Queen’s office, and “what more political than” the view of Thames from the Queen’s office.

⁷⁴. Tony Barta, *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History*, (Westport: Praeger, 1998), p.93.

⁷⁵. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.71.

⁷⁶. Henry Koster, *The Virgin Queen*, (Twentieth Century Fox, 1955), (00:33:00-00:33:49).

⁷⁷. Ibid.

⁷⁸. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.71.

⁷⁹. Ibid., p.144.

By the end of the *Virgin Queen*, as soon as Elizabeth stands in front huge window behind her desk (**Figure37**). A number of signs become clear to the viewer; the Thames, three sailing ships and an open horizon. The ships are part of a navy. This navy was launched and encouraged by Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII, and lived its most glorious times by her reign. The same navy protected England from her most feared enemies during late sixteenth century, and participated in the building of the Empire during the eighteenth century. It also safeguarded the kingdom throughout two successive world wars during the twentieth century,



Figure 36: A View of the Thames in *The Virgin Queen*

Therefore, when looking down at this view “that cannot be innocent”⁸⁰ of the Thames, the viewer recalls Joseph Conrad’s masterpiece *Heart of Darkness* (1899) when mentioning the Nellie. Here, I shall make reference to Barthes asserting intertextuality and announcing “the death of the author” in literary texts. He argues that a text is “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture”⁸¹. Figure 34 above is a visual quotation from Conrad’s work which is, without a doubt, a cultural ingredient in the British Imperial History,

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished spits⁸².

⁸⁰. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.96.

⁸¹. Roland Barthes quoted in Graham Allen, *Intertextuality*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p.13.

⁸². Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994), p.05.

The waterway, the offering view of the sea and the sky joined, the luminous space, all these phrases fit perfectly the figure above. Thus, Conrad's work contributes to the making of the film's imperial discourse about the open horizon and the British Empire.

I shall say that in the same way Barthes claims the "Italianicity" of the sign of Panzani advertisement, I can argue the "Britishinicity" of **Figure 36**. Like "Italianicity", "Britishinicity" "is the condensed essence of everything that could be" British. It takes us to the glorious days of "La Mission Civilisatrice" and "The White Man's Burden". Those times are remembered and, in truth, never forgotten. Britain still rules the waves.

Actually, Davis lifting her head up as in **figure 37** is certainly the legacy of the Empire. This gesture is a sign that reveals pride and arrogance⁸³. It is a sign that keeps appearing in all the selected biopics in a significant way. In Barthes words, "it is filled with very rich history"⁸⁴. The implications of this sign go back to centuries ago when the British used to see themselves as "empire-builders", taking part in "civilization projects"⁸⁵. Moreover, when looking at her face, we can clearly see Davis "Raising the brows and lowering the lids", while holding a spyglass, this denotes in body language according to Elizabeth Kuhunke, "a promise of things to come"⁸⁶. The spyglass is another important sign, which connotes the open horizon of the Empire on which the sun never sets.



Figure 37: Elizabeth I Looking from the Window her Head up and Holding a spyglass (01:26:57) in *The Virgin Queen*

⁸³. Elizabeth Kuhunke, *Body Language for Dummies*, (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, 2007), p.47.

⁸⁴. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.120.

⁸⁵. Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.x.

⁸⁶. Elizabeth Kuhunke, *Body Language for Dummies*, (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, 2007), p.90.

These moments in the film are, (**Figure 36 and 37**), par excellence, examples of the pervasive influence, the pride, that the past has over the present and the Empire on the way British people consider themselves and see the Other. This influence is seen in both literature and in popular culture. Besides, the open wide shot of the Thames from the Queen's office implies the immensity of the Empire and the huge geographical space it includes. These major elements contribute to the making of the British pride, self esteem and superiority that the Venetian ambassador summed up by the end of the fifteen the century in these words,

The English are great lovers of themselves, and of everything belonging to them⁸⁷.

They think that there are no other men than themselves, and no other world but England, and whenever they see handsome foreigner, they say "he looks like an English man" and that "it is great pity that he should not be an Englishman; and when they part take of any delicacy with a foreigner they ask him "whether such a thing is made in his country?"⁸⁸.

Here again it is the Residual ideology since the British people cannot look at the monarchy as an "effective element of the present"⁸⁹ without its Empire. It is an "imperialist nostalgia"⁹⁰, as Renata Rosaldo puts it in *Culture and Truth* (1989), or a "mourning of the passing of what we ourselves have destroyed, making racial domination appear innocent"⁹¹. For his part, Paul Gilroy in *After Empire* (2004) argues that, after the disappearance of the Empire, the British "are afflicted with a nostalgic, post-imperial melancholia for vanished imperial supremacy"⁹². The snapshot evokes the memory of "the British greatness and time when the empire offered Britain a supremacy" that, according to Chris Rojek, "it took for granted"⁹³.

⁸⁷. Quoted in A.J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399-1509*, (Essex: Person, 2000), p.198.

⁸⁸. Ibid., p.189.

⁸⁹. Raymond Williams, *Marxism in Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.122.

⁹⁰. Renata Rosaldo quoted in Jeffery Auerbach, *Art, Advertising, and the Legacy of Empire*, (London: EBSCO, 2003), p.04.

⁹¹. Jeffery Auerbach, *Art, Advertising, and the Legacy of Empire*, (London: EBSCO, 2003), p.04.

⁹². Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction,2007), p.179.

⁹³. Ibid., p.177.

Barthes clarifies that numerous signs can be used as one single connotator, “a large fragment of the denoted discourse can constitute connoted a single unite of the connoted system”⁹⁴. In this case, the view of the Thames, Davis lifting her head up and the spyglass are all “naturalized” “discontinuous scattered signs” that connote the Empire and the imperial ideology. All along the four films, these signs keep appearing in different ways which reveal the hidden intention of the film. In Barthes words, “this repetition [...] allows the mythologist to decipher the myth”⁹⁵ i.e., it is thanks to the reappearance of such signs that we recognize the connoted ideological meaning lying behind, in this case, the British imperialism.

The British self esteem and pride are definitely one of the consequences of the Empire. In *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, Raleigh (Clive Owen) enters the court swaggering in his pride announcing his return from the New World with a trunk of goods, including potatoes, some tobacco leaves, and gold. These gifts are for her majesty the Queen. He also proclaims founding the first English colony and naming it Virginia in her honour. These achievements put this “political pirate” at the centre of attention. In fact, Jamestown, Virginia, was the first English colony founded by English expeditions and explorers in 1607 and not during the Elizabethan age. But the colony was very important since it inaugurated the British ambitious to build an Empire.



Figure 38: The Navy and the Globe in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

⁹⁴. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans., Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1986), p.91.

⁹⁵. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.119.

In this court, two elements which stand for the British supremacy and pride appear the navy and the Globe Theatre (**Figure 38**). The Globe was built in 1599 on the south bank of the Thames⁹⁶. Together with the navy, William Shakespeare is one of the heroes of the nation. The BBC survey of the greatest Britons of all times put him in the fifth position⁹⁷. Whether in his histories, tragedies or comedies, Shakespeare always denounces monarchs' plots. But he also glorifies his land⁹⁸. I can quote from one of his most famous scenes;

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,--
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England⁹⁹.

In addition to Shakespeare, both Elizabeth and Raleigh are national heroes who embody national character. They are used to naturalize through them the Empire, its values and all its implications.

It is in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* that Raleigh's dream comes true. He is no longer the "daring amateur" he was in *The Virgin Queen*. Now, Raleigh is a professional explorer. He achieved what he launched about four centuries earlier and Raleigh dream of an Empire is accomplished. When referring to history, the real Walter Raleigh never achieved such accomplishments. He led unsuccessful expeditions to North America between 1584 and 1587. However, he was recognized as the one who introduced potato and tobacco in Europe¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁶. Jonathon Crowther and Kathryn Kavanagh, eds., *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, (Oxford: oxford university press, 2001), p.225.

⁹⁷. Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?* (London: Reaction,2007), p.90.

⁹⁸. *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁹⁹. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, King Richard II, Act 2., Scene 1. p.3128. (Electronic Version).*

¹⁰⁰. *The Hutchinson Illustrated Encyclopaedia of British History*, (oxford: Helicon, 1995), p.275



Figure 39: Raleigh and the Spanish ambassador (00:14:05) in the court of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

It is that potato which is used in the figure above as a sign. In fact, Raleigh is inviting the Spanish ambassador to try a potato's grain. Raleigh's eyes are directed towards the ambassador who, instead, is looking at the potato Raleigh is holding in his hand. Contrary to Raleigh who is pleased, the Spanish ambassador is not. The potatoes are coming from the New World which was discovered by a Spanish expedition. This suggests that Spain is losing her Empire to set space for the growing English one. Receiving a potato's grain coming from the New World in the hands of an English pirate is unbearable for the Spanish Ambassador who decides to leave the court.

Barthes stresses the fact that it is the historical context that gives birth to myth. With their imperative power, the audience is subjected to its control,

Myth has an imperative, buttonholing character: stemming from an historical concept, directly springing from contingency (a Latin class, a threatened Empire), it is *I* whom it has come to seek. It is turned towards me, I am subjected to its intentional force, it summons me to receive its expansive ambiguity¹⁰¹.

Noticeably, Raleigh pointing his finger in scene (00:33:00-00:33:49) while mentioning “all the living and the nations in Europe are pointing their ships towards the Indies of the end, we English stand idly by”¹⁰² is just an order to look beyond the continent's borders, as if, it is necessary, urgent, or an “imperious injunction”¹⁰³.

¹⁰¹. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.124.

¹⁰². Henry Koster, *The Virgin Queen*, (Twentieth Century Fox, 1955). (00:33:00-00:33:49).

¹⁰³. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.125.

In Williams' view, the Dominant ideology is nothing more than another or some version of the Residual ideology¹⁰⁴. In this case, it is the ideology of favouring the Commonwealth and being eurosceptic. The Commonwealth, especially during the 1950s and the 1960s, was nothing more than another version of the Empire. Anthony Forster quotes John Barnes's essay *Ideology and Factions* (1994) to explain that, effectively, the emerging Commonwealth was "no more than an intellectual fig leaf of the Empire"¹⁰⁵. With the birth of the Commonwealth, many ex-colonies moved from colonial rule to membership in the British Commonwealth as independent states¹⁰⁶. It allowed Britain to keep her presence in these ex-colonies and expand its culture and area of influence.

The decline of the Empire, the emergence of the United States of America, the Soviet Union and the European Community in post WWII put Britain in a critical position. Chris Rojek says that with the end of the Empire,

The British feel squeezed between the omnipotent American state, with which shares its language and has many customs and traditions in common, and the European Union, the principal countries, of which have a long history of intrigue against the British¹⁰⁷.

For centuries, the British used to be leaders. They were unable to identify themselves just like any "another nation in a world of nations"¹⁰⁸. Actually, Britain, since the late sixteenth century, has always been identified in relation to her colonies which constituted the Empire. Yet, the notions of "La Mission Civilisatrice" and "The White Man's Burden" became, by the second half of the twentieth century, empty.

3. Euroscepticism and the Emergent Ideology in *The Virgin Queen, Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

By the end of World War II, an important European organization was born. Despite being one of its founding fathers, Britain has always been described as an "awkward

¹⁰⁴. Raymond Williams, *Marxism in Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.123

¹⁰⁵. John Barnes quoted in Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties Since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.39.

¹⁰⁶. Denis Richard, *An Illustrated History of Modern Europe 1789-1984*, (Edinburgh: Longman, 2010), p.356.

¹⁰⁷. Chris Rojek, *Brit-Myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?*, (London: Reaction, 2007), p.177.

¹⁰⁸. Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.x.

partner” or “mauvais élève” as far as her relation with the European Union is concerned. Euroscepticism is used to describe this “negative point of view towards the European Union”¹⁰⁹. For centuries, Britain favoured the Empire on Europe. With the decline of the Empire, it favoured the Commonwealth. It was not acceptable that this nation would be equal to any other nation in Europe.

During the 1950s and 1960s, television and cinema production was engaged in a crusade against joining the European community. The xenophobia is illustrated in *The Virgin Queen* which portrays the French ambassador as a stupid politician facing a great Queen. This Elizabeth (Bette Davis) ridicules him in front of her Private Council. It is enough to watch scene (00:29:24-00: 30:26) to enjoy,

The Queen	We are honoured monsieur
The French ambassador	Me I congratulate you Madame on this beautiful palace There is no other like in all of Europe
The Queen	It was my father’s i will tell him when i see him
The French ambassador	But King Henry is dead
	Madame jests
The Queen	Madame never jests
The French ambassador	No, Madame
The Queen	I think monsieur I know the purpose of this audience You wish to report again the duke
The French ambassador	Ever since he saw you he can talk of nothing else
The Queen	He is a sweet boy but only a boy We have discussed this before
The French ambassador	But this time I am commanded by my queen to return with a definite answer
The Queen	Your queen then thinks to command me
The French ambassador	No, no I beg you Madame no
The Queen	And so you want a definite answer do you
The French ambassador	Yes
The Queen	Very well I shall give you one Go back to your Catherine and tell her I am tired of little French dukes and of old French queens and of ambassadors who laugh when I miss with an arrow and all French human in general Go back and tell her that ¹¹⁰ .

It was a national stereotype that Britain can do better without the integration in the European Community. Enoch Powell, a former Conservative member, argues that joining the community is a threat to the British independence and identity. Therefore,

¹⁰⁹. Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.02-03.

¹¹⁰. Henry Koster, *The Virgin Queen*, (20th Century Fox, 1955), (00 :29 :24)-(00 : 30 :26)

Euroscepticism is based on two major arguments. First, Britain can do better without the privileges that the European market would offer. The second argument concerns its sovereignty. It is a fear of a European federalism in creation¹¹¹.

The Virgin Queen highlights the Empire, the dissolution of the Empire and the establishment of the Commonwealth as an alternative. *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1971) emphasizes the domestic affairs of the island and rejects the European continent, which is the case of the British politics during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, in both 1971 and 2007 productions, Queen Elizabeth I murders her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots. In one way or another, Elizabeth I is not concerned with murdering the Queen of Scots in 1971. However, in 2007, Elizabeth shows enormous discontent and regret when signing the order of execution under pressure from Sir Walsingham.

Clearly, by the beginning of the twenty first century, the United Kingdom is not questioned any more. In *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), we see a “New Britain” not preoccupied by internal conflicts. This new country is more open to meet not only the continent but also the world. In fact, when Tony Blair was elected Prime Minister in 1997, “his goals were to put Britain at the heart of the European Union, including British entry to the single currency, and act as a bridge between Europe the United States”¹¹². Here comes Williams’s Emergent ideology. He asserts, “By “emergent” I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created”¹¹³.

The figure below clearly illustrates this foreign policy. Elizabeth who stands for England is sitting at the top of the Whit Hall receiving European ambassadors. When Sir Walter Raleigh comes in, he introduces two Amerindians for the first time in the history of

¹¹¹. Anthony Forster, *Euroscepticism in Contemporary British Politics Opposition to Europe in the British Conservative and Labour Parties since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.39.

¹¹². Dennis Kavanagh, *The Blair Premiership*, ed., Anthony Seldon, *Blair’s Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.12.

¹¹³. Raymond Williams, *Marxism in Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.123.

films produced about the Queen. She, then, asks Walsingham to treat them well. This clearly connotes the special relationships that are created since Tony Blair's premiership and Bill Clinton's presidency between Britain and the United States.

In addition to the Queen's position, the viewer can easily notice another important sign. It is the Royal Arms above Elizabeth's Coronation Stone. It is the personal slogan of the British king and Queen¹¹⁴. It consists of a lion and a unicorn holding a shield. The slogan written on the shield recalls King Edward III, who, in 1438, saved a woman from embarrassment by putting her garter on his own leg after that she dropped it saying "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*" i.e. "Shame on anyone who thinks badly of this"¹¹⁵. The incident definitely evokes the English gentle manners.



Figure 40: Elizabeth Receiving European Ambassadors (00:10:41) in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

It is momentous to point out that the attitudes towards Europe and the European community in *The Golden Age* are less unenthusiastic. The figure above overlaps a huge number of signs that connote an open country ready to receive the world including Europe. The snapshot exemplifies the ideological strategy that Barthes names "Operation Margarine". Thus and despite the drawbacks of joining the European Union, British leaders come to understand that it is beneficial. Tony Blair when he was elected Prime Minister in 1997 spoke of a third way. That is finding a middle ground area where Britain can be both a member and a leader. Barthes elucidates,

¹¹⁴. Jonathon Crowther and Kathryn Kavanagh, eds., *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.463.

¹¹⁵. *Ibid.*, p.394.

Here is the pattern of this new style demonstration: take the established value which you want to restore or develop, and first lavishly display its pettiness, the injustices which it produces, the vexations to which it gives rise, and plunge it into its natural imperfection; then, at the last moment, save it *in spite of*, or rather *by* the heavy curse of its blemishes¹¹⁶.

I shall end by saying that in the same way **Ghandi** (1984) creates a middle ground area between violence and peace, **Malcolm X** (1992) is a mediator between equality and racism, and **The Queen** (2006) is an intermediate between tradition and renewal¹¹⁷, *Mary, Queen of Scots* and *Elizabeth* are “cultural mediators” between conservatism and modernism. As for *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, it can be seen as a mediator between not only commanding conceptions and personal life, but also, between isolationism and imperialism.

Conclusion

Each of *The Virgin Queen*, *Mary, Queen of Scots*, *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* depicts the queen in a completely different way. Each representation is, for sure, different from the previous. Therefore, the circumstances definitely shaped the contents of the films. These posters, as is the plot of the films, are snapshots taken from different periods of the British history. In other words, Elizabeth I's representation is fashionable. The directors' casting strategy and choice of the different actresses that performed the role of the Queen helped to attract our attention to the shift in representation.

By re-adapting the image of Queen Elizabeth I, other symbols of the British history are used to stress different ideologies. In other words, Elizabeth is a cultural sign and through her image several other cultural myths are connoted. The different representations of Queen Elizabeth I are communicated through a combination of other signs. Finally, the immortalisation of Queen Elizabeth I's image is used as a readjustment in the post-Empire Britain.

¹¹⁶. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers, (New York: Hill and Wag, 1972), p.40.

¹¹⁷. Valentina Cucca, *Biopics as Postmodern Mythmaking*, (2011) in *Academic Quarter*, Vol02, Spring 2011., p.171.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Elizabeth I was only too obviously made of flesh and blood. She was vain, spiteful, arrogant. She was frequently, unjust, and she was often madly unassertive. But she was also brave shockingly clever and eye-ful to look at and on occasions she was genially wise. In other words, she had all the qualities it took to make the genius political she undoubtedly was¹.

Elizabeth Tudor was born in 1533. She became a Queen at a very critical period of the English history. Contrary to her people's expectations, Elizabeth I did not marry to produce a male heir. She married her country in a life alliance that never ended. Nowadays, her age is referred to as the Golden Age. One of her greatest achievements was her ability to keep England safe both from a religious war and a Spanish threat. The biographical films that I dealt with in this dissertation are produced and released in post World War II. In other words, four centuries after the death of the Virgin Queen.

Preserving her memory started during her reign through the different portraiture that has been produced about her. I can mention, for example, her coronation day portrait. The portrait I referred to in chapter one of this dissertation (**figure 24**). Hundreds of historians devoted their careers to writing about Queen Elizabeth I. It was not difficult for this Queen to attract the curiosity of filmmakers to take the myth of good Queen Bess to another level and give it another dimension. Most historical facts are clear about many elements in Elizabeth's biography; however the chosen biopics are not faithful when it comes to reporting the events to a modern audience. The films are not carbon copies of Queen Elizabeth I's biography

Through light, casting strategy, camera angles and shots, the directors manipulate films' content to send implied messages that appeal to different issues. The creative ability of directors and the power of film industry developed thanks to the different technologies introduced each decade produce multimodal texts that go beyond the historical background of its content. Roland Barthes' framework helped me to look beyond the image content and denotation to the cultural connoted content. The selected snapshots include objects, colours and gestures. These different elements are signs put together to draw different representation

¹. Simon Schama, *History of Britain Body of the Queen: Benefit of Wigs*, (London: BBC, 1994), (00:01:30).

about Queen Elizabeth I. Consequently, directors through the historical film “reinvent history”. They reconstruct it to generate a multiple meanings product. In this way, producers points at the past and recreate it. There is, then, no doubt about the “disturbing experience” of an historian involved in film making or of directors that dive into the world of the past through the biopics or other historical film genres.

The image of the “Semper eademe”, “always the same”, which was Elizabeth’s motto during her reign, is not respected by these film-makers. In fact, the producers inspired by the myth of the Virgin Queen adapt her biography creatively. These different portrayals reveal both a conflicting and divers heterogeneous character. Thus, the unchanging aspect provided a sense of stability that the British people rarely knew with Tudor rulers. The continued popularity of this Queen evokes pride and distinctiveness in the British society.

Like many of the other biographical films that i could not deal with, in the four selected films *The Virgin Queen (1955)*, *Mary, Queen of Scots (1971)*, *Elizabeth (1998)*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007)*, Queen Elizabeth I is represented as a queen, a mother and a politician. She is also given the image of a saint thanks to the association with the Virgin Mary, the image of the warrior through the association with Joan of Arc, and that of Princess Diana. These different representations are drawn about Queen Elizabeth I to adjust her image with every period of the British history. In the same way, she stood in the sixteenth century as a symbol of patriotism, by the twentieth and early twenty first century, she is transformed to a heroine who stands for justice, glory, heroism, and mainly British superiority and imperial heritage. Queen Elizabeth I’s image is used out of a need to stress the image of the Empire with its disillusion in post WWII.

Analysing the different Snapshot through identifying the denotative and the connotative meaning revealed that the monarch is used as a cultural myth to naturalize thorough different ideologies. Therefore, by narrating and re-narrating the story of Elizabeth I, the British imperial sense, and the eurosceptic attitudes are implied. The Empire have had always been a

very important part of the British identity. Its disillusion after the World War II shook Britain's position and a leader in both Europe and the world. Between variability of adaptation and immortalization in cinema, Elizabeth is both a sign and a cultural myth used to assert the assurance the British people felt during the Elizabethan Golden age.

Finally, this work supports the view that, effectively, whatever the film genre is, there is always an implicit content that has to be understood. Messages about the British imperial ideology are consciously included using the image of Queen Elizabeth I. Hence, neither directors and production companies nor the audience have had enough of the Tudors in the last decade. Recalling this Queen becomes necessary to welcome and accept the new challenges that the British society is facing.

This diversity of representation is rarely granted for Female leaders whether queens or politicians. Directors, each in his way, explore almost every side of her personality which causes the revival of the Queen with each new production. Definitely, Elizabeth is still loved and her biographical films always attract attention both from the public and critics. Through the different representations, the image of the eternal Elizabeth is born. The Tudor Queen is immortalized in cinema mainly because she revives the Golden Age. In short, she is used as a readjust the new challenges facing the British society in post world war years. When Kapur was asked about the possibility of producing a sequel to *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, he spoke of the image of a virgin Queen becoming immortal.

Throughout this dissertation, I hope I was able to show that films are a way of communicating meaning. This work on Film Studies is a contribution to understand films by contextualizing the "filmic text". It is an attempt to understand the role of media in building self-assurance, and in which way image-makers manipulate and use the past to elevate feelings of nationalism and pride. It is an attempt to provide an understanding of how media, in this case biopics about Queen Elizabeth I, can reflect ideologies of supremacy of

Englishness and Britishness. Besides, since I moved from history to Film Studies, my study is an interdisciplinary one that will contribute to the field of Cultural Studies.

Here I come to the end of this dissertation. The personal admiration that I feel towards this Queen despite my modest knowledge of her biography is immense. Looking at the way the British people love and respect the Tudor Queen is fascinating.

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Résumé

C'est à l'aide de Roland Barthes et son travail, reconnu comme un moyen utile et efficace pour l'analyse de l'image, des films et des fiches publicitaires, bâti à travers ses différentes publications, en particulier, *Éléments de Sémiologie* (1965), *Mythologies* (1957), et *Rhétorique de l'Image*, un essai qui apparaîtrait dans *Image Music Text (L'image-Musique-Texte)*, que ce travail de recherche examine le système des signes dans des images, dans quatre films différents. Les films historiques sélectionnés sont des films biographiques qui traitent la reine Elizabeth I (1533-1603). J'ai choisi les productions les plus importantes couvrant la période entre 1955 et 2007 ; *La Reine Vierge* (1955) réalisé par Henry Koster, *Marie Stuart, Reine d'Écosse* (1971) réalisé par Charles Jarrott, et *Elizabeth* (1998) et sa suite *Elizabeth: l'âge D'or* (2007) réalisé par Shekhar Kapur. Pour accomplir cette tâche, cette thèse est divisée en trois chapitres et chaque chapitre contient plusieurs sections et sous-sections. L'objectif de la recherche en question est de fournir une compréhension claire de la nature de l'interaction des différents signes de l'imagerie pour construire des portraits différents de la reine Elizabeth I. Ces portraits produisent des messages qui font appel à différentes questions; des messages sur le nationalisme, "l'anglicité" et l'identité nationale, un discours sur la suprématie de tout ce qui est Britannique. Les différentes représentations sont inspirées par les circonstances de l'Angleterre après la deuxième guerre mondiale. L'analyse des clichés sélectionnés dans les films montre que cette reine Tudor est associée à des valeurs très différentes politiques et socioculturelles. Enfin, son image est utilisée pour aider la nation Britannique à faire face les différents défis et à se réadapter à affronter de sa nouvelle position mondiale après la décadence de l'empire.