

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF QUEEN ELIZABETH I AS A CHARACTER  
THROUGH FIVE REPRESENTATIVE GENRES

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Lindy Bartruff  
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Robert R. Waitout, Jr.  
Reader

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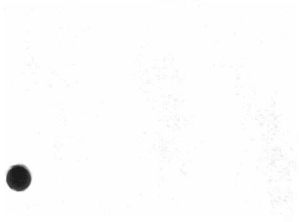
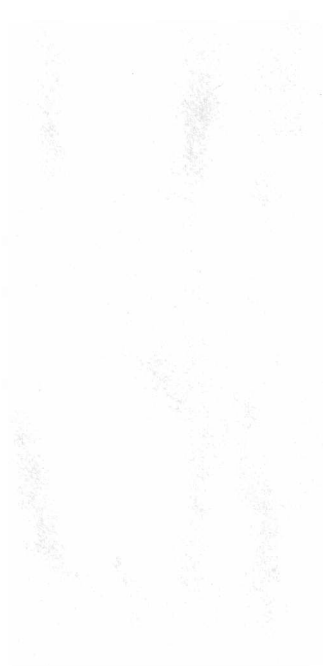


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## INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth I was an intriguing and fascinating Queen. From the moment of her birth on 7 September 1533, she was the object of speculation and scandal. She had been thrust into a world that perceived her as a bastard and a mere female. Throughout her life Elizabeth had to fight this double stigma. She had to live through her mother's execution, her father's dangerous ideas, and her stepsister's bloody reign.

It was during her stepsister's reign (Queen Mary I)<sup>1</sup> that the young Elizabeth began to come into her own. The people were weary of Mary's endless religious persecutions and they started to focus on her energetic half-sister, Elizabeth. Suddenly, Elizabeth was thought of as the people's rightful heir and ally. Her past seemed to have been forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup>Queen Mary I (1516-58) was the Queen of England from 1553-58. She was the wife of King Philip II of Spain and the daughter of King Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon. Mary became known as "Bloody Mary" because of her countless Protestant executions.

When she came to the throne in 1558, "she was a beautiful young woman, with a profusion of auburn hair, a broad commanding brow, and regular features that were capable of rapid changes of expression as her hazel eyes flashed with anger or sparkled with merriment."<sup>2</sup> She died an old, sickly, and heavy-hearted woman on 21 March 1603. The Queen's forty-five year reign had been full of turbulence, but she still was regarded as a great Queen and a legendary figure.

Elizabeth's life and character have been written about throughout her long reign to the present day. Admiring courtiers of her time sought to edify her through verse; historians of the past and present have strained to paint an accurate picture of her through historical text; modern writers have striven to connect the remaining dots through biography, fiction, and drama.

The purpose of this paper is to establish a composite picture of Queen Elizabeth as a multi-faceted character through five representative genres. These five genres will include works of nonfiction, fiction, poetry, drama, and film. A nonfiction biography will objectively explore the Queen's background and personality while underlining her importance within history.

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<sup>2</sup>Sir Sidney Lee and Sir Leslie Stephen, eds. "Elizabeth," Dictionary of National Biography (Great Britain: Oxford Press University, 1950), vol. 6. p. 648.

A fictional novel will subjectively present the Queen as a forceful and domineering personality. Two contrasting poems will be used to present opposite views of the Queen's character. The first of these poems will idealize her for her accomplishments. The second will criticize her because of them. Both the recent drama and film will shed biased light on the Queen as an impervious ruler and a vulnerable woman. Together, these five comparative genres will weave a vivid, unified tapestry of Elizabeth I, Queen of England.

## CHAPTER I

### QUEEN ELIZABETH AS AN HISTORICAL CHARACTER

A nonfiction work, The First Elizabeth, by Carolly Erickson, seems the most appropriate way to begin this introduction to the Queen as an important historical personality. This recent and thorough biography affords the opportunity to unlock the sealed doors of history, revealing hidden secrets about that unique time and its fascinating Queen.

Of all the characteristics Erickson claims Queen Elizabeth possessed, there are three outstanding ones that best describe her. These are: her bright, quick intelligence, her immense assertiveness and her mercurial temperament. All three characteristics can be traced consistently throughout the book in terms of the Queen's child and adult years, her governmental policies, and through her relationships with others.

Elizabeth had a very strange and precocious childhood. To begin with, her father, King Henry VIII,<sup>1</sup> had wanted a son to succeed him. After all, he had disrupted church and

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<sup>1</sup>King Henry VIII (1491-1547) was king of England and Ireland from 1509-47. He had six wives and was the father of Elizabeth I by Anne Boleyn. He was responsible for the execution of Elizabeth's mother.

state by divorcing Katherine of Aragon<sup>2</sup> on the pretense that she was unable to give him a son. Of course, his real intent was to marry his mistress, the beautiful and haughty Anne Boleyn,<sup>3</sup> heavy with his child. Once again, Henry became obsessed with the idea of a male heir. Needless to say, Elizabeth's arrival was unwelcome.

For most of her childhood she was kept in the shadows, living in various country estates in England. By the time Elizabeth was two years old, her mother, Anne Boleyn, had been executed; Elizabeth was considered a bastard; she was hated by her stepsister, Mary; and, she was ignored by her father, King Henry VIII.<sup>4</sup>

How did she survive childhood? Ironically, it was because she was a Tudor that she survived. A Tudor child in the sixteenth century was to be educated and treated like an adult. Even as a child Elizabeth was bright.

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<sup>2</sup>Katherine of Aragon (1504-1536) was King Henry VIII's first wife and Queen Mary I's mother. Henry divorced this Spanish Queen in 1532 in order to marry Anne Boleyn, causing great turmoil within the Catholic church.

<sup>3</sup>Anne Boleyn (1507-36) was the second wife of King Henry and Elizabeth I's mother. Anne was accused of adultery in 1560 and was beheaded one thousand days after becoming the Queen.

<sup>4</sup>Carolly Erickson, The First Elizabeth (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 41.

She had an exceptional memory and a natural flair for languages. Her intelligence helped her to survive her seemingly impossible childhood.

Elizabeth was educated by "ancient and sad persons."<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, she benefited from their scrupulous, attentive training and was influenced by their particular world views of protestant humanism. Elizabeth was fluent in the French and Latin languages, a proficiency she used to her advantage throughout her long reign. She quite easily translated Boethius and Sallust; and, toward the end of her rule, lashed out at an ambassador, hurling a long speech at him in Latin, surprising herself with her own fluency.

Though Elizabeth had the "solid beginnings of a classical education,"<sup>6</sup> she had a creative side to her intellect as well. This creativity was expressed in many different ways: she could skillfully play the virginal and the organ; she wrote English Verse; she loved pictorial art; she adored pageants and plays; and, she was known for her elaborate flower arrangements and gardens that filled her castles and country estates.

It was Elizabeth's quick and creative intelligence, as a young adult, that saw her through Queen Mary's stifling reign. There are two significant events that occurred

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<sup>5</sup>Erickson, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>Erickson, p. 49.

during this time that most clearly illustrate this.

The first event took place within her fifteenth year. King Henry was dead, and his sixth wife, Catherine Parr,<sup>7</sup> had quickly married her old lover, Thomas Seymour.<sup>8</sup> Seymour wasted no time in playing for the young Elizabeth's affections. Of course, suspicions flew and tempers blew until one day when Catherine caught Elizabeth in Seymour's embrace. Elizabeth soon left the premises and an investigation ensued. Unfortunately, by the time the story had reached Queen Mary's ears, Elizabeth and Thomas were not only lovers but had planned to overthrow Mary and her beloved King Philip of Spain.<sup>9</sup> Though this rumor was not true, Seymour's ardent intentions toward Elizabeth seemed to be. Throughout the rigorous interrogation, Elizabeth held her own without support or advice. She had utilized her sharp wit to proclaim her innocence and clear the name of her dear governess, a suspected conspirator. Elizabeth's disciplined attitude in this situation and its aftermath was to be the turning point of Elizabeth's girlhood.

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<sup>7</sup>Catherine Parr (1512-49) was King Henry's sixth and last wife. After his death in 1547, she married Thomas Seymour. She ordered his execution one year later for adultery.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Seymour (1507-49) was the flamboyant nobleman who married Catherine Parr to advance his career. He was executed in 1549.

<sup>9</sup>King Philip II (1527-98) was king of Spain from 1556 to 1598 and Queen Mary I's husband. He was the king who sent the Spanish Armada against England in 1588.

The second event nearly cost Elizabeth her life. In her twenty-first year, Elizabeth was imprisoned by Queen Mary for being a suspect in plots against Mary's life. Elizabeth was first imprisoned in the famous Tower for two months and then the medieval palace of Woodstock. At this time, Elizabeth wrote letter after letter to Mary appealing for her release. All her attempts were futile. So Elizabeth finally resorted to composing a letter that was harshly argumentative and legalistic. Mary was incensed. The damage had been done; Elizabeth was not far from the block. There were two things that saved Elizabeth: her relation to Mary, and her final appeal to Mary.

It would have been a political mistake for Mary to execute her stepsister at the peak of her reign. So Elizabeth was spared, though still imprisoned. While Elizabeth was languishing in her stifling environment, she tried one last appeal. This time she put her quick intellect to work by appealing to Mary's religious nature filling a letter with pious phrases and lamentations. Elizabeth was released and summoned to her sick sister's bedside. She had once again transcended her circumstances, thereby saving her own life.

Elizabeth was undoubtedly her father's daughter when it came to asserting herself. As a child and on into her adult years, Elizabeth had an endless zest for life. She lived her life vigorously which later prepared her for

her rigorous role as Queen. Early in life Elizabeth made two assertive decisions that most profoundly affected her as a woman and as a Queen. First, she decided, when she was quite young, to put her mother's past behind her and to dismiss any rumors that linked her name with her sinful mother. In other words, she forced herself to look toward the future. Above all, she knew that she alone was responsible for developing her assertive nature. Thus, it became her policy early in life to let no one stand in her way.

Her second decision was made when she was only nine years old. She had confided in a new companion that she would never marry. Whether this was because of her mother's situation or because she was a child, is hard to say. But regardless of the reason, this assertive decision made so early in life lasted the rest of her life. It also carried with it ironic overtones since this same companion later became her greatest love, Robert Dudley.

Of her three characteristics, her mercurial temperament best describes her. Though this trait is most strongly observed in her adult years, it begins in her girlhood years. There are three descriptive insights into this characteristic that best illustrate this.

When Elizabeth was young, she prided herself on her simplicity in dress. She liked to wear nothing but black and white with no signs of adornment. Yet, she was known

to become suddenly jealous of the pearled and jewelled gowns Queen Mary wore.

Elizabeth worked at her formal education diligently throughout her young life. She thirsted for intellectual stimulation and would study for hours with her teachers and by herself. Yet she was known to suddenly acknowledge, in the midst of study, her dislike for learning and learned men.

Often she could be heard telling her attendants and her teachers how she loved her stepsister, Mary. Elizabeth would feel badly for Mary's difficult childhood. But in the next breathe Elizabeth could be heard shouting obscenities in connection with Mary, saying she hated her.

When Elizabeth became the Queen in 1558, she brought with her beauty, intuitive leadership qualities, and wisdom beyond her twenty-five years. Unfortunately, she lacked experience. She not only had inherited her crown, but a devastated England as well. The church was in a chaotic mess, the country was in financial straits, the people were exhausted from war, famine, and pestilence. Nevertheless, this inexperienced Queen utilized her intelligence, her assertiveness, and her mercurial temperament to enforce her governmental policies. Her principal policies dealt with the issues of politics, religion, and power.

It was through her intelligence and her assertive

abilities that Elizabeth began to strengthen an England weakened by the political and military rise of France and Spain. Elizabeth felt that she should play the commanding role in all aspects of politics. She wished to be informed constantly about all that was happening within and without the castle walls. Above all she feared war. The Queen incessantly prodded her eighteen councillors about the fear of France, the threat of Spain, and the crumbling military strength of England. Her strong will helped smooth the waves between France and England, and kept greedy Spain at bay. For twenty-five years, she maintained peace and strengthened England at the same time. Elizabeth had a gift for diplomacy. She was able to mesmerize visiting dignitaries and potential enemies with her witty talk and ingenious political tactics. She would use her changing moods to try and keep her enemies constantly off balance. "Her tactics baffled everyone, including her principal advisor, Cecil."<sup>10</sup> She could successfully conceal her own political opinions as they took shape in her mind, while at the same time manipulating those of others.

She also used her moodiness as an effective and manipulative tool in the issue of religion. Elizabeth found Catholicism to be distasteful. So she used her

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<sup>10</sup> Erickson, p. 173.

William Cecil (1520-98) was Elizabeth's principal minister and close associate for nearly forty years.

influence to change England's faith from Catholicism to Protestantism. Elizabeth became head of the church in 1559, but the church she established early was "built on compromise and concessions, politically workable but spiritually insipid."<sup>11</sup> Moreover, any humanistic elements of her Protestantism seemed to disappear as imprisonment became the favorite answer for those who attended Roman Catholic Mass. And, many an outspoken priest was either put in the Tower or beheaded. Of all the opposition to this new Anglican church, though, she could least tolerate the Puritan Movement. "By the punishment of John Stubbs,<sup>12</sup> she meant to punish all puritans, and to rebuke their insolence and self-righteous presumption."<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth used her moodiness as a rather destructive and manipulative tool to gain Protestantism by punishing Catholics.

Elizabeth felt most strongly about the issue of power. She believed in the "divine right of Queens," but at the same time, she was known for her loyalty to her people. She was intelligent enough and perceptive enough to know that she must keep the peace among her people as well as among those who advised her. She used her power in two

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<sup>11</sup>Erickson, p. 307.

<sup>12</sup>John Stubbs (1543-91) was a lawyer and country gentleman who was active in the Puritan Movement. He wrote a pamphlet which insulted Queen Elizabeth and he was sentenced to die. His life was spared but his hand was cut off to make an example for other Puritans.

<sup>13</sup>Erickson, p. 307.

ways: as a weapon toward her potential enemies, and on behalf of her people.

Her first duty was to the crown. She believed and asserted that no one should stand between herself and the crown. If someone got in the way of this duty her shifting moods came into play. The best example of this would be the execution of the Earl of Essex. Essex was her last lover who, though the Queen adored him, was put to death because he wished to marry her and be her king.

On the other hand, the Queen believed she was a servant to her people. She exercised her power by charming them through loyalty and attention. "She seemed to hear every word called out by every well-wisher; she spoke not so much to the crowd as to each individual within it."<sup>14</sup>

Elizabeth's three evolving characteristics can be most clearly observed, however, in her adult relationships with others, namely with her advisors and her lovers. As was hinted at earlier, she had a very inconstant relationship with her advisors. She respected them, but she continually rebuked them for their conservative attitudes about women rulers. They believed that men were more fit to rule. With her amazing intellect and her assertive abilities, though, Elizabeth proved to them over and over again that she could handle the job. She also kept them unnerved by her

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<sup>14</sup>Erickson, p. 177.

unpredictable temperament. "She perpetually astonished them by the range and mutability of her passions. And, they came to know that, with Elizabeth, nothing was ever what it seemed."<sup>15</sup>

Elizabeth's relationships with her lovers were unique. Though her greatest love of all was Robert Dudley, she always kept other young courtiers on hand for her amusement. She shocked them all with her quick wit and amazed them with her powerful intellect. Her young men became her playthings. They were her dance partners, her jesters, and her consolers. It seemed she came closest to marriage with Francois, Duke of Alencon. She encouraged his affections, tested him with her intellect, and teased him with her moods. Ultimately, however, the Queen became bored and called off the whole affair. Though this spinsterhood was a sore spot with her advisors and her people, she stuck by her childhood conviction that she would never marry.

Through this objective biography, Elizabeth's three distinct characteristics are developed. It was her bright, quick intelligence, her immense assertiveness, and her mercurial temperament that made her a strong and powerful ruler within history. Not only did she strengthen England as a country, but she became a model of excellence and determination for women as well as men.

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<sup>15</sup>Erickson, p. 173.

## CHAPTER II

### QUEEN ELIZABETH AS A FICTIONAL CHARACTER

The historical novel, My Enemy the Queen, by Victoria Holt, on the other hand, subjectively presents the Queen as a negative character. Elizabeth becomes the enemy within a love triangle. This love triangle actually existed between Elizabeth, Robert Dudley, and Lettice Devereux. In this novel, the story is narrated by Lettice Devereux who paints the vindictive picture of the reigning Queen.

Throughout the book, Elizabeth's personality was based upon her immense assertiveness. This assertive nature was taken to extremes. She became so assertive that she took control of Robert and Lettice 's life. She appeared as the main puppeteer controlling their strings.

Lettice Devereux condeded that she had felt Elizabeth's presence throughout her life. Elizabeth was her cousin and Lettice was told as a very young child that "Elizabeth was the model for us all to follow."<sup>1</sup> In fact, Lettice's education (especially in music and dancing) was geared toward preparing her to one day meet the Queen and possibly serve in Elizabeth's court. Lettice was received at court,

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<sup>1</sup>Victoria Holt, My Enemy the Queen (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 6.

at seventeen, and became an attendant to the Queen. From that day forward, their lives remained interlocked. Lettice was immediately attracted to the Queen's handsome and charismatic lover, Robert Dudley. The novel can then be separated into three explicit themes concerning Lettice and Robert's relationship and Elizabeth's character: the love affair, the marriage, and the betrayal.

Though the affair between Lettice and Robert did not begin until several years after their first meeting, their attraction to one another was immediate. Unfortunately this was a risky mistake since the Queen had an undying love for Robert as well as an endless need for flattery and attention. It seemed Robert supplied her with both this adulation and attention. Her obsessive vanity, too, made her outrageously jealous of any other attractive woman. She wasted no time in asserting this opinion to all her young ladies of the court. So, when Elizabeth caught the wandering eye of her lovely cousin, Lettice, she arranged for Lettice to marry one of Lettice's many admirers, Walter Devereux. Lettice was then safely out of the way, living in Chartley Castle near Stratford.

It was when Lettice had been invited back to court, after having had two children, that the love affair with Robert actually began. She was asked to participate in the Twelfth Night festivities at court. She was determined to look exquisite for Robert, despite the Queen's displeasing

looks. As Elizabeth was preparing for the festivities, she spotted Lettice and Lettice noticed that "I looked too attractive to please Elizabeth. Inwardly I laughed with triumph. Elizabeth could not scold me for overdressing as she did some of her ladies." (p. 59) Lettice and Robert finally consummated their love that very night just doors away from the Queen. Their passion suppressed all fears and for the time being they felt safe.

Throughout their long love affair, they took pains to keep it a secret from Elizabeth. They met in secret rooms and dark corridors, always wary of Elizabeth's presence. Despite Robert's passionate love for Lettice, though, he selfishly felt he still had a slim chance of marrying the Queen and inheriting the crown. In essence, the Queen controlled each of their destinies. The more Lettice saw of Robert, the more insecure she became with Elizabeth. "When I was with her I felt less brave. There was that in her which could strike terror into the boldest heart. When I contemplated her fury if we were discovered, I wondered what her punishment would be." (p. 69) Whether or not the Queen suspected the affair, she never let on. But Lettice was sent back to Chartley.

Lettice would not see Robert again for another eight years, though she named her third child after him. She was finally summoned to court to be by her dying mother's bedside. It was in Lettice's description of the Queen's

sympathies toward her at this time, that Elizabeth 's first redeeming quality surfaced: she was loyal to her friends. "She insisted that my mother be buried at her expense in St. Edmund's Chapel. She sent for me and told me how deeply she had loved her cousin and that her loss would be sincerely felt." (p. 83) After her mother's death, Lettice was sent back to Chartley. The Queen believed that Lettice would find comfort in her husband and home.

Events and time past and the love affair continued. It endured despite Robert's endless loyalty to the Queen; it lasted despite rumors that Robert was married to a young country girl; and, it grew even stronger when Robert and the Queen visited Lettice at Chartley Castle. At last, Robert and Lettice wished to be married. Up to this point, the Queen played the role of a strong and assertive woman, but her real strength and fury was yet to be unleashed when their secret marriage was revealed.

Walter Devereux' sudden death in Ireland opened the way for this anticipated marriage. Lettice and Robert realized, though, that they must bide their time for propriety's sake. A year passed and they could wait no longer, for Lettice became pregnant. "They made the journey to Kenilworth (Robert's estate) and there went through a ceremony of marriage." (p. 171) How they kept the marriage from the Queen was miraculous. But Lettice could feel her presence, as always, even on her wedding

night. It seemed the Queen was there in the bedroom with them even though the Queen was hundreds of miles away. "She was there with us." (p. 176) The very day after the wedding, it seemed the Queen's intuitive powers were at work. Elizabeth had planned to stay at Robert's estate on the last leg of her journey to Greenwich. The Queen had control of their lives again, though unconsciously. Lettice had to leave the premises and the Queen stayed longer than expected. Elizabeth learned nothing, however, and Robert remained high in her favor.

Their three lives continued to be interlocked. Lettice returned to court after Lettice and Robert's baby, Robert, was born. Ironically, Lettice not only served as the Queen's attendant but also as her confidant. At that time the Queen was contemplating marriage to Francois, Duke of Alencon. Though she opposed marriage, talk of it always brought a flush to her cheeks. "She was as frivolous as a young girl, and indeed she acted like one." (p. 170) Both women were content with their new men, though Robert was never far from the Queen's side. Then disaster struck: The Queen was told, by Francois' confidant, about the secret marriage. This was done in hopes that this would speed up her decision concerning the Duke. Her fury was swift and terrible. She swore at Robert and announced that she no longer needed his services.

The betrayal cost Robert and Lettice dearly. Not only

had Robert married the Queen's cousin, but he had married her without the Queen's consent. Upon receiving the information, she shouted, "I'll tell you this, Robert Dudley, you have married a she-wolf and you will discover this to your cost." (p. 193)

Robert was temporarily put under house arrest. Eventually, though, the Queen softened toward Robert and he gradually worked his way back into her favor. Lettice, on the other hand, was banished from court. Elizabeth refused to see or hear from her traitorous cousin. At the mere mention of her name, the Queen would fly into a violent rage. Her cousin had everything Elizabeth did not: youth, beauty, and the man she loved the most, Robert.

Elizabeth, the puppeteer, still had Robert's loyalty, and this she shrewdly used to her advantage. Whenever possible Elizabeth kept Robert away from Lettice. She even made him "Lieutenant General of the troops as a mark of her absolute confidence in him." (p. 274) This plan almost backfired on the Queen, since it was as Lieutenant General that Robert accepted the sovereignty of the Netherlands. Not only had Robert accepted this title without the Queen's permission, but it meant that the beautiful Lettice would become his queen. The thought of Lettice as a queen as well as Robert's wife was more than Elizabeth could bear. Thus, the title was denied Robert.

Ultimately, the Queen did gain the upperhand by

keeping Robert busy and away from Lettice. Lettice felt neglected and took on a lover. The Queen was in full control. It was the Queen, though, who seemed to lose some of her strength and domineering presence when Robert died one year later. Of course, the final irony of Elizabeth's character was that the man she chose as her next lover was the Earl of Essex, Lettice's son. So the Queen still held Lettice's strings. And, even though the Queen died before Lettice, her controlling presence remained. Not only had Elizabeth kept Robert to herself and banished Lettice, but she had executed Lettice's son. The Earl of Essex had become consumed by his desire to take over the court and become king over England as well as Elizabeth.

Elizabeth as a fictional character was very dramatically portrayed in My Enemy the Queen. Though she possessed some human characteristics, she was drawn larger than life in her controlling presence and forceful nature. Perhaps the ultimate message the author communicated through this fictional character was that, "It is dangerous to dabble with crowns." (p. 218)

### CHAPTER III

#### QUEEN ELIZABETH AS THE SUBJECT OF POETRY

On a different level, two contrasting poems can effectively show opposite sides of the Queen's personality. The first poem, "Sorrowful Verses Made on the Death of Our Most Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth my Gracious Mistress," is a 1603 broadside ballad, by Thomas Churchyard, meant as an elegy for Elizabeth on the occasion of her death. Elizabeth is presented as a very idealized character. The second poem, "The Looking Glass," is a 1930 ballad, by Rudyard Kipling, that is a critical look at the Queen as a hard character.

The first poem, "Sorrowful Verses, . . ." though not the best nor most well known poem on Elizabeth, is valuable in exploring the Queen's character from a renaissance perspective. She is projected as a Queen who strove for and gained god-like perfection as the result of her accomplishments:

England may mourn, as many kingdoms may,  
A loss of late that gold nor pearl redeems,  
A gale of wind that made kings hoise up sails  
When blust'ring blasts brought barks in great  
extremes.

Her realm she rul'd and bridled as God would  
     With reason's rein, that holds back Bayard's bit,  
 To purchase peace paid massy sums of gold,  
     Did what she might to win a world with wit.  
 Wisdom rules stars, climbs up to heaven's gate,  
     Makes peace and wars, and stays a tottering state.<sup>10</sup>  
 Her insight saw all outward flaws of wind,  
     Her judgment crept into our cunning age;  
 No practise could surpass her princely mind:  
     Her calmy words could swelling sea assuage;  
 Religion burn'd like lamp in her bare breast,  
     And for her faith she still set up her rest.  
 She gave great things to thousands, world well knows,  
     As at well-head and fountain water flows,  
 Caesar's sharp spirit her speeches utt' red oft;  
     Cyrus' great power and wealth she wanted not.      20  
 She pluck'd down pride to set meek hearts aloft;  
     Her matchless deeds great fame and glory got.  
 Opened her bags to such as suffered wrong,  
     Much money lent but felt the loss too long,  
 Escap'd bad men that sought to shed her blood,  
     Forgave great faults to win world's love and zeal.  
 But when most safe in health we thought she stood,  
     Her ghost pass'd hence from crown and commonweal  
 To God's high throne like torch and candle blaze,  
     Lost earthly light and left us in a maze.<sup>1</sup>      30

As is quite obvious, the ballad is full of adulation and elaborate comparisons. This subjectivity creates a very elevated picture of the Queen. The first ten lines of this thirty-line poem set the tone for the entire piece. Loss of the Queen is so great that she will not only be mourned, but mourned in "many kingdoms." Her value was even greater than "gold or pearls." The first comparison made in lines three and four, likens her to "a gale of wind" that makes the kings take note of her and be helped by her in times of "blust'ring blasts." The Queen probably helped the kings by defeating the Spanish Armada in 1588.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Churchyard, "Sorrowful Verses, . . ." in The Renaissance in England: Nondramatic Prose and Verse of the Sixteenth Century (New York: Heath, 1954), p. 250.

Lines five and six begin to reveal the Queen's character more fully. Comments are made on how she ruled "her realm." She was, above all, an effective ruler able to control her kingdom with "reason's rein." Elizabeth could even hold back the bit of the legendary and magical horse, "Bayard." The Queen ruled successfully because she maintained peace no matter what it cost her, whether it be amounts of gold or using her winning wit. She utilized her heaven-sent wisdom that "make peace and wars," and stabilized an unbalanced England.

In lines ten through twenty, the Queen's intrinsic qualities are brought to the surface. She is insightful, seeing through "ourward flaws" of the changing times, making judgments based on her insights. She could not be surpassed in her decisions because of her "princely mind," that rose her above deceitful times. Furthermore, she could calm "swelling seas" of trouble with her words. And, her religion was so strong that it seemed to radiate from her "bare breast." Her Protestant faith still cost her, though, since she died troubled: England remained divided between Protestantism and Catholicism. Lines seventeen through twenty, unfold the Queen's nature more by elaborating upon her accomplishments. "She gave great things to thousands," which could include money, office, and advice. The world, too, was aware of her giving, comparing her to a "well-head" through which water

generously flowed. She was not only generous, but wise. Her speeches to her people were compared to those "utt'ered" by the great Roman General, Caesar. Moreover, she was not interested in "power and wealth" as was Cyrus, king of Persia.

In the last lines, twenty through thirty, the Queen is fully revealed in all her glory. Since she was not interested in power and wealth, she cast down the prideful and "set meek hearts aloft." Lines twenty-two to twenty-six expound upon her virtuous nature. Her unmatched deeds brought her "great fame and glory." She gave money to those who had suffered wrongly, like the Protestant clergy who had suffered under "Bloody Mary's" rule. Elizabeth also escaped "bad men" who sought to kill her and forgave "great faults." Her people loved her and were enthusiastic about her because of this. Lines twenty-seven to thirty deal once again with her death and the world's loss, framing the ballad. She died when it seemed she was most healthy, and "her ghost pass'd hence from crown and commonweal." She, of course, symbolizing perfection, went to "God's high throne" like a fiery light. Her death left all stunned.

The Queen as the subject of this 1603 ballad, then, is idealized. Through praise of her attributes and deeds, legendary and historic reference, and many comparisons, she is elegized beyond reproach. Because of her purity and

generosity, she was known and loved throughout the world. The exalting tone of this poem illuminates the superior nature of the Queen, preserving her glory almost 400 years later.

While "Sorrowful Verses. . ." magnifies Elizabeth as a person due to her accomplishments, "The Looking Glass" belittles her because of them. This poem, objective in nature, gets its judgmental message across within a creative framework. On one level, the poem's six stanzas are a very obvious attack against Elizabeth. But on another ironic level, the style of the poem softens the blow by using a song-like rhythm and quality. Its rhyming couplets and use of a refrain help to emphasize this melodic quality:

Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Stand forward  
 partners all!  
 In ruff and stomacher and gown  
 She danced King Philip down-a-down,  
 And left her shoe to show 'twas true-  
 (The very tune I'm playing you)  
 In Norgem at Brickwall!

The Queen was in her chamber, and she was middling old.  
 Her petticoat was satin, and her stomacher was gold.  
 Backwards and forwards and sideways did she pass,  
 Making up her mind to face the cruel looking-glass.  
 The cruel looking-glass that will never show a lass  
 As comely or as kindly as what she was!  
 Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Now hand your partners  
 all!

The Queen was in her chamber, a-combing of her hair.  
 There came Queen Mary's spirit and It stood behind her  
 chair,  
 Singing 'Backwards and forwards and sideways may you  
 pass,  
 But I will stand behind you till you face the looking-  
 glass.  
 The cruel looking-glass that will never show a lass

As lovely or unlucky or as lonely as I was!  
 Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Now hand your partners  
 all!

The Queen was in her chamber, a-weeping very sore,  
 There came Lord Leicester's spirit and It scratched upon  
 the  
 door,  
 Singing 'Backwards and forwards and sideways may you  
 pass,  
 But I will walk beside you till you face the looking-  
 glass.  
 The cruel looking-glass that will show a lass,  
 As hard and unforgiving or as wicked as you was!'  
 Queen Bess was Harry's daughter. Now kiss your partners  
 all!

The Queen was in her chamber, her sins were on her head.  
 She looked the spirits up and down and stately she  
 said:-  
 'Backwards and forwards and sideways though I've been,  
 Yet I am Harry's daughter and I am England's Queen!'

And she faced the looking-glass (and whatever else there  
 was)  
 And she saw her day was over and she saw her beauty pass  
 In the cruel looking-glass, that can always hurt a lass,  
 More hard than any ghost there is or any man there was!<sup>2</sup>

As is obvious, this creatively critical poem explores  
 the Queen's relationships with King Philip II (of Spain),  
 Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Earl of Leicester (Robert  
 Dudley). She is criticized for what she has done to them.

In the introductory stanza, "Queen Bess, Harry's  
 daughter," is found dressed in her finest including her  
 stomacher, dancing "King Philip II down-a-down." These  
 lines suggest two ideas: one is that she loved to dance and  
 dress, and second, she managed to dance King Philip away

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<sup>2</sup>Rudyard Kipling, "The Looking Glass," in The Oxford  
 Book of Modern Verse (New York: Oxford Press University,  
 1937), p. 74.

from invading England. She left her "shoe (or mark) to show 'twas true," indicating the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

In the second and remaining stanzas, the Queen is described as an old woman who is afraid of facing reality. In the second stanza, she is in her chamber dressed as richly as ever with "her petticoat of satin, and her stomacher of gold." But she cannot make up her mind whether or not to face the "cruel looking-glass." This glass or reality could reveal her not "as comely or as kindly" as she thinks she is. The refrain following the stanza moves the poem along with "Queen Bess" and "partners all!"

In the third stanza the Queen is, as always, in her chamber primping herself. In this case, she is "a-combing her hair." As she does, the first spirit, Mary, Queen of Scots, visits her. Mary is there to stand behind her and haunt her until she faces up to what she has done. These lines suggest, of course, Elizabeth's imprisoning and beheading Mary. This time it is as if Mary is singing to her in a sad voice telling her that no matter how she passes the mirror, she must see the truth. She must see that what she did was unjust because Mary (I) was just a "lovely, unlucky, and lonely" Queen.

In the fourth stanza, the Queen is in her chamber "a-weeping." This could indicate that she is weeping for

her dead lover, Lord Leicester, since his spirit is the next to visit her. He "scratches upon the door," singing the same lament: she must face the "cruel looking-glass." He will stand beside her as her equal and her lover until she faces the truth, and not behind her as Mary, Elizabeth's enemy did. Leicester's spirit wants Elizabeth to see that she was "hard, unforgiving and wicked." This implies the fact that Elizabeth never married Leicester and never forgave him for marrying Lettice Devereux. This time the refrain changes to "kiss your partners all," in reference to their love relationship.

In the fifth stanza, the Queen acknowledges the spirits that accused her of being unfair and wicked. Though her accomplishments are called "sins upon her head," she is ready with a reply. She says that no matter how she did things, she was still right. She was right because she was, after all, King Henry VIII's daughter and "England's Queen." The absence of the refrain in this stanza and the last stanza gives the poem a dramatic finish.

The sixth stanza is the most dramatic in tone. The Queen finally faces the "looking-glass." She finally sees that she is really an old woman whose beauty has passed her by. Furthermore, she sees that this reflection can "hurt a lass" more than ghosts, like Mary and Leicester, or "any man there ever was," like King Philip II and Leicester.

The poem, then, artistically presents Elizabeth as a

hard character. She had hurt and destroyed people and loved ones throughout her reign, often out of a sense of vanity and insecurity. Now she is left an old woman who does not want to face reality. When she finally does, it is too late. A negative light is shed on "Queen Bess."

Though these two poems are both ballads in form, their views on Elizabeth's character are extremely opposite. In "Sorrowful Verses, . . ." the Queen is examined from a renaissance perspective: Queens were meant to be elegized. Elizabeth represented purity and grace in this poem. She was a holy light on earth who ascended to the heavens in death because of her accomplishments in life.

In "The Looking Glass," on the other hand, the Queen is viewed from a contemporary perspective: she is a mean and deceitful character because of what she did to others. Together the poems represent two different images of the Queen as a subject within poetry.

## CHAPTER IV

### QUEEN ELIZABETH AS A DRAMATIC CHARACTER

Up to this point, the Queen has been presented as a character through historical, fictional and poetic text. It is time, now, to bring her to life through the spoken dialogue of the two-act play, Vivat! Vivat Regina!, by Robert Bolt. This play investigates her character by comparing her with Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland (not "Bloody Mary"). It can be divided up into three major themes: the contrasts between the two Queens, the use and misuse of power, and the execution.

Elizabeth and Mary were rivals within this play. Elizabeth was threatened by Mary, as a Queen, and jealous of her, as a woman. Their differences were many, but the most striking ones were background, religion, and choice of lovers.

As has already been established, Elizabeth was born and raised in England. She was raised and educated by various distant relatives and strict teachers. It was in her first monologue, in Act I, that Elizabeth most poignantly expressed her feelings about her background.

My father killed my mother and disowned me, and I can't remember a summer when it was not raining after that. I was raised by cautious strangers in the shadows between prisons. I was taught: Mathematics,

Latin, Greek, and caution, too well; and saw too soon where love could lead. Prisons were familiar, and so I put my heart into protective custody.<sup>1</sup>

Because of her cautious growing up, she was wary of foreign affairs and foreign queens. So, she did not trust Mary's ways and opinions.

Mary, Queen of Scots, on the other hand, had a Scottish/French background. She was known for her beauty, but was a very controversial Queen. She lived a very politically secure life until her husband, the King of France, died from syphilis. Once her husband died, she had to return to Scotland and rule as Queen. Throughout the play, these three things worked against her: she was unaccustomed to the Scottish way of life; she was Catholic; and, she openly opposed the Queen of England. This last factor was to cost her everything. But Mary believed Elizabeth had to be opposed. In fact, she calls Elizabeth a "bastard and a heretic. . ." (Act I, p. 5)

The two differed vehemently on the subject of religion as well. Elizabeth was, after all, the head of the reformed church of England. She was a Protestant who found Catholicism and the practice of Mass particularly distasteful. Since Mary was a devout Catholic, this added yet another spark to the already raging fire between them.

Mary, then, accredited her strength to her Catholicism.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Bolt, Vivat! Vivat Regina! (New York: Random House, 1971), Act I, p. 11.

She believed that Elizabeth's Protestantism mocked God. She also believed that not participating in the Mass made for a weakened sovereign. Mary's faith survived demagogues like Knox:<sup>2</sup> "I (Mary) have heard this vulgar stuff a hundred times before and I know how to refute it." (Act I, p. 16) Mary even remained true to her faith as Elizabeth held her prisoner in England.

Their choice of lovers also reflected their different personalities. Elizabeth, of course, loved only one man, Robert Dudley. In the first act, Elizabeth talked about Robert, saying "Robin had a magic word, that opened doors for me." (Act I, p. 11) But it is discovered, by the end of the act, that Elizabeth cannot marry Robert. His wife had died mysteriously, by falling down a flight of stairs and breaking her neck. Rumors circulated about the court that Elizabeth and Robert had planned his wife's death. The Queen had two choices: she could either ignore the rumors and marry Robert, jeopardizing her position, or she could forget Robert and marry someone for political reasons. Being Elizabeth, however, she chose neither, retorting that she "would marry as her heart and conscience say." (Act I, p. 8) Though she knew deep down that marriage to Robert would be impossible, she desired love, with no political strings attached.

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<sup>2</sup> John Knox (1505-72) was a leader of the Protestant reformation in Scotland as well as a preacher, statesman, and historian.

It was very ironic, then, when Elizabeth offered her beloved Robert Dudley (the Earl of Leicester by then) to Mary with just such political strings attached. Mary, however, was both appalled and amused by the offer. She refused, saying "your offer is an insult-" (Act I, p. 32) Mary's choice for a husband, though, was taken as a double insult by Elizabeth. Not only did she refuse Robert, but she chose Lord Darnley, a young English Catholic who possessed Tudor blood. Though Mary had the future King of England, James I, by Darnley, their relationship was a failure. Darnley refused to accept that a woman ruled over Scotland as well as himself. Thus he turned to drink and whore-chasing. Like Elizabeth, Mary had sought love for love's sake. "I'll have a husband I can love, or else I will have none at all." (Act I, p. 34) Mary's other choices in lovers also came to tragic ends. By the end of the play, her musician lover was murdered and her Scottish lover had abused and abandoned her.

Mary and Elizabeth differed most strongly on how they handled their power. They each believed that the other took their office for granted. In this accusation, they seemed to reveal the essence of each of their characters. They had different ideas about the purpose of power that helped determine their own destinies.

Throughout the play, Elizabeth's character used power as a controlling measure. Though she did admit that she

"tried to be as wise as she could," she was not entirely successful. (Act I, p. 9) Part of the Queen's problem was that she was pulled in too many directions. She had to deal with impending threats from Spain, she had to face the fact that she was not married and had not produced a male heir, and she had to come to grips with the threat Queen Mary and her son represented. Therefore, this high-strung sovereign and jealous woman chose to use her power as a dominating tool, to uphold her inherited office.

Elizabeth maintained the upperhand over Mary because of Mary's mishandling of power. Mary was unfit to be a Scottish Queen. Because of her refined French upbringing, Mary was not sensitive to the Scottish people's needs. She did not understand the Scottish lifestyle and manners. She even remarked that she was not used to their music (bagpipes). "My Lords, forgive us. Our ear is not yet tuned to this wild instrument." (Act I, p. 14) She started her reign out badly and continued to lose momentum. She was already looked down upon by some of her councillors because she was a woman and had married the sniveling Lord Darnley. When Darnley turned to women-chasing and liquor, Mary turned to her musician friend, Rizzio. Her councillors planned Rizzio's murder, and Mary was labelled the adultress. Mary's power had slipped from her fingers before she had really begun. For a moment, it seemed that Elizabeth was on Mary's side, too, when Elizabeth called

Rizzio's killers, "murderers." Queen Mary had misused her power, though. On that, Queen Elizabeth agreed. Mary was not only insensitive to her people, but had presented them with a poor excuse for a king in Darnley. Her misuse of power brought her to her end. By the second act, Mary had alienated her people so much that she had to escape from the Scottish castle. They were incensed even further when she escaped with and married Lord Bothwell. Finally, Mary was forced to give up her crown, after Bothwell abandoned her, and had to escape to England, leaving her son behind.

What, then, did Elizabeth do when Mary fled to England seeking her help? She imprisoned Mary and decided upon her fate. It was within the second act that Elizabeth's character was fully disclosed. She now controlled the destiny of two Queens. She applied her power by imprisoning Mary. But she still insisted that Mary "could do anything a Queen could do, except leave Sheffield Castle." (Act II, p. 67) Elizabeth did not, however, want to be responsible for Mary's death, though this was in direct opposition to her councillor's advise. Even when her councillors added that Mary had been involved in plots against her life, Elizabeth refused to act. She kept insisting that "I will not do it (execute Mary) without proof." (Act II, p. 73) She did not want to misuse her power.

The execution did finally take place, after Mary was entrapped by Elizabeth's councillors. It was when Mary

was told that she was to be confined to her one-room prison, would be refused communication with her son, and was ordered to take down her cloth of state, that she signed her own death warrant. At last, the Queen was supplied with her proof. But she was still reluctant. At one point she became wistful as she thought about how it would affect Mary's son. She remembered how her mother's execution had affected her life and she sighed, saying "oh; little boy. . ." (Act II, p. 89) The play pointed out, too, the irony involved with the pending execution. Elizabeth, like her father, would be responsible for executing the mother of the next English sovereign. But according to her verified proof, (a letter that contained a plot against Elizabeth's life, signed by Mary) she knew she had no choice but to follow through with the execution.

Elizabeth's strength as a character was tested because of the execution. How did she handle the responsibility? On the surface, she admitted that Mary was "an adulterous, disorderly, lecherous, strumpet." (Act II, p. 91) But on a deeper level, she confided that "she (Mary) was-nay there are no words for saying what she was. Only words for saying what she was not." (Act II, p. 91) By the very end of the play, Elizabeth had gotten rid of a rival, but she was not proud of the deed. After the execution, Elizabeth left her throne "rising painfully and exited, ignored the fanfare." (Act II, p. 91)

Elizabeth as a dramatic figure, then, stood out as a believable character and a real person. Through the dialogue, a strong and cautious character emerged. Throughout the play, Elizabeth was tested by her unnatural demands as Queen, and tried to act wisely in exerting her power. Though she proved to be more human than anything else in this respect, she was, as Mary admitted, "Queen indeed." (Act I, p. 5)

## CHAPTER V

### QUEEN ELIZABETH AS A DRAMATIC CHARACTER IN FILM

Queen Elizabeth as a dramatic character can also be viewed on a very real and sensitive level in the film, Elizabeth the Queen. This 1983 movie, produced and directed by George Schaefer, is based on the play with the same title, by Maxwell Anderson. The film looks at the relationship that developed between the Queen and Robert Dudley's stepson, the Earl of Essex, in 1601. The two actors portraying Elizabeth and Essex, Judith Anderson and Charleton Heston, are able to bring this relationship to life. This is accomplished through the exploration of three important themes: love, trust, and power.

Throughout the film, the Queen appeared constantly in love. It was Essex Elizabeth questioned: does he love me or is he using me to realize his ambitious aims? This questioning was apparent at the beginning of the film. The Queen was excitedly awaiting Essex' arrival from Spain. He had been victorious in battle and had been away from the Queen for eight weeks. Upon the moment of their meeting, the Queen tested his emotions by feigning indifference. She mocked him by telling him that Sir Walter Raleigh was fond of her, and that many young ladies seemed to be fond

of Essex as well. Essex shattered her tough mask with his affectionate embraces and warm kisses. She gave in to his affections, calling him "young and strangely sweet."<sup>1</sup> Testing each other's emotions, then, was an integral part of their love relationship.

Throughout the relationship, the Queen operated on two levels. On the exterior, Elizabeth appeared as an impervious ruler. She claimed that "I was never sure who my mother was going to be the next day; it shook my nerves." Therefore, the Queen dealt with all her subjects, advisors, and Essex, in public, in a very hard-nosed manner. Her eyes flashed and her posture was regal as she barked forth commands and made proclamations. She had an aura of complete self-assurance about her.

On the interior, however, the Queen was revealed as a passionate woman. She wanted to be loved as a woman. She wanted to be loved so much that she gave her dear Essex, her dearest possession, her father's ring. She gave this to him to protect him in times of turmoil and to remind him of her. This she gave to him as he headed toward Ireland as Lord Protector. It was this excursion to Ireland that most tested their love for each other.

The odds were against them. Essex' enemies, Cecil and Raleigh, had arranged Essex' trip to Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup>George Schaefer, Elizabeth the Queen (New York: Compass Productions, 1983)

They wished to get rid of him and destroy his relationship with the Queen. Cecil intercepted both Essex' documents and Elizabeth's love-laced sentiments. So, when the Queen heard that Essex had gone against her orders by penetrating Ireland's interior and planned a meeting with Tyrone, she was livid. Since she had no word from him, she cut off all revenues and ordered him back to London. Cecil's plan seemed to work as Essex returned in a state of rebellion, and the Queen believed she had been used. She considered Essex a dangerous man, bellowing to advisor, Francis Bacon; "he walks on quicksand."

When Essex finally met with the Queen, Essex defended his actions and reaffirmed his love for her. They finally reach the conclusion ~~that~~ their letters had been intercepted. Elizabeth softened toward Essex and a very tender scene followed. Essex kneeled at her feet and rested his head on her lap. He kissed her hands and whispered, "Then hell is vanished and here is heaven." Unfortunately, by the end of the scene, hell returned to Essex as he ~~was~~ arrested. The theme of love ~~was~~ treated one last time in the final scene of the film.

Essex was summoned from his prison cell to the Queen, just moments before his execution. She told him that if he had just sent the ring to her, she would have forgiven him. She would have forgiven him just as her father had when she brought the ring to him. But Essex was resolved

to be punished for wanting to be King and rule over Elizabeth. Elizabeth accused him one last time of never loving her. She felt useless and old. He assured her that he loved her and always would and that was why he had to be punished for his ambitious desires. Essex leaves and the death bell tolls. This passionate woman falls into despair, exclaiming, "I will be Queen of emptiness and darkness."

The theme of trust, then, becomes a natural extension of their love/hate relationship. The Queen found it hard to trust Essex on two accounts: his quest for battle and his thirst for power.

Elizabeth abhorred war. She engaged in several arguments throughout the film on this subject. She commended herself on her ability to keep the peace, and to bring prosperity, music, and poetry to her people. Though Essex was a proven war hero, she accused him of being reckless with troops and money. Most of all, she did not want Essex to leave her again and go off to Ireland. She went so far as to say that he was more a "poet than a general." This kind of talk, of course, touched Essex' pride to the quick and he snapped back, saying "Do you want to be known as the weasel Queen who fought and ran away?" Only Essex could talk to the Queen this way and get away with it. Nonetheless, she mistrusted Essex for his irresponsible attitude toward war.

It seemed, too, that the Queen's judgment was correct

as Essex went against her orders in Ireland, and returned home rebellious. In fact, it was suggested that his band of troops had started riots in the streets of London and had captured the Queen's men. Elizabeth made no preparations to counter him. But she warned her advisors; "be ready for danger or if need be, death." When Essex and Elizabeth did at last meet, Essex appeared to have been forgiven. They discover the interception of their letters, and all seemed to be as it was before: they are affectionate and in love.

But Essex went too far, delirious with his sense of power. He wished, now that he had gained fame and fortune, to share the Queen's crown. Perhaps the Queen would have consented to this, had he not made a fatal mistake of calling her his prisoner. Suddenly, the Queen withdrew behind her impervious mask. She appeared to offer him the crown, and Essex released her men and had his men withdraw. Immediately, the Queen clapped her hands and her guards appeared. Essex was arrested without delay. He was stunned, saying "I trusted you." The Queen very coldly replied, "I trusted you and learned from you that no one can be trusted."

The theme of power, then, became the underlying question of their relationship. Did Essex love power more than he loved the Queen? This question seemed to be answered through Essex' actions and the Queen's reactions.

Throughout the film, it was clear that Essex was portrayed as a very ambitious man. Though he had come from a good name, it was the Queen that had "made " him. He had gained wealth, fame, and power from the Queen. In scene after scene, he pridefully alluded to these advancements. He also showed his gratitude to the Queen by waltzing with her in her chamber, caressing her face, wooing her with poetry. But he still wished to be king above all else. He admitted to the Queen that men were more fit to be rulers. Thus, he believed that if he shared the crown with Elizabeth, he would rule over her as well as the people.

It was in the last scene of the film that Essex reminded the Queen of this again. He told her, though she was willing to save his life and forgive him, that if he was set free he would still want to be king and rule over her. He knew himself too well. The Queen realized that she could not forgive him again. In one of his last statements to the Queen, he revealed the essence of his character as he uttered, "I have a weakness for being first wherever I am." His thirst for power outweighed his love for her.

The Queen's ultimate reaction to Essex' desire for absolute power destroyed not her love for Essex, but her trust for him and her happiness. At first, she tolerated his requests and actions because she loved him. She dismissed his actions to youth. But it was when her crown

was threatened and Essex called her his prisoner that she was truly tested.

She realized that she must exert her absolute power. The key to Elizabeth's powerful character was revealed when she said to a newly arrested Essex, "He who rules must be quite friendless." As much as she needed to be loved, she needed to be Queen more.

When the hour of execution drew near, she became hesitant. She was indecisive, reflective, and irritable. She called upon the players to entertain her with Falstaff, but even this did not help. She finally could bear it no longer and sent for Essex. The situation had changed them both. Elizabeth was pleading and exhausted, and Essex was somber and thoughtful. She reached out to him and told him that she never meant for him to die. But Essex told her it was too late and reminded her that she was, after all, the Queen. For a moment, it seemed Elizabeth rose above her despair. Her face glowed with anger and her piercing eyes flashed with fury. Yes, she admitted, she was the Queen and he was her mere subject. As he descended the stairs toward his death, though, she crumbled. She was transformed into an old woman, helpless and pale, but the sentence stood. And, as the camera moved in on her tear-stained face, she signed and sadly muttered, "Take my kingdom, Lord of Essex, it is yours."

Elizabeth as a dramatic character in film was portrayed

as both incredibly tough and genuinely vulnerable. In exploring the three themes of love, trust, and power, Judith Anderson became Elizabeth through her demanding actions and tender words. She projected nobility and superiority as she gracefully walked to her throne or through her chambers, in her many glittering gowns. She became a very sympathetic character in her relationship with Essex. She was so pitiable and vulnerable in the last moments of the film, that it was as if one could reach out to the screen and brush away her tears. Elizabeth became a very real and human character through this film.

## CONCLUSION

The tapestry is complete. Through these five representative genres, many facets of the Queen as a character have been presented. The one idea that seems to remain consistent throughout the works is that Elizabeth deeply affected and continues to affect other people's lives.

As an historical character in the biography, The First Elizabeth, she was presented as a character who had impressed her people and uplifted her devastated country. She was able to achieve such power because of her three outstanding characteristics including her intelligence, her assertiveness, and her mercurial temperament. Elizabeth's England would never be the same again. "In the forty years since her coronation, Elizabeth Tudor had never ceased to be the object of intense speculation and scandal, but in the last decade her fame had transcended itself. She had become the stuff of legend."<sup>1</sup>

As a fictional character in the historical novel, My Enemy the Queen, the Queen takes on the role of the enemy. She not only controlled her destiny, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Carolly Erickson, The First Elizabeth (New York: Summit Books, 1983), p. 382.

destiny of many others as well. She represented the divine right principle in her absolute power and control. "She wanted them (her people) to realize that she was a glorious being, a divinity on earth."<sup>2</sup>

As the subject of poetry, she is idealized and criticized. In "Sorrowful Verses, . . ." Elizabeth is idealized to the point that she appears as a kind of angel possessing heavenly power and wisdom. Since it is an elegy, she is glorified as the greatest of Queens. Thus, in death, this angel of perfection ascends to her (ultimate) throne, to be shared with God in heaven. The people are left stunned by the loss of her light. ". . .like torch and candle blaze, lost earthly light and left us in a maze."<sup>3</sup>

As the subject of the contemporary ballad, "The Looking Glass," the Queen is criticized. Within its creative framework, she is put down for the kind of person she has become as the result of her actions. She has become a sorrowful old woman who is afraid to face reality. The several spirits that visit her are there to remind her of reality. In the end, this Queen faces reality and discovers she is old. Though she is Queen, she is human and must pay for her inhumane mistakes: ". . .And she saw

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<sup>2</sup>Victoria Holt, My Enemy the Queen (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Churchyard, "Sorrowful Verses, . . ." in The Renaissance in England; Nondramatic Prose and Verse of the Sixteenth Century (New York: 1954), p. 250.

her day was over and she saw her beauty pass in the cruel looking-glass, that can always hurt a lass more hard than any ghost there is or any man there was!"<sup>4</sup>

As a dramatic character in the two-act play, Vivat! Vivat Regina!, Elizabeth emerges as the dominant character when compared with Mary, Queen of Scots. Though Elizabeth was the more powerful character, she was also wise and played the game of queenship cautiously and consistently. Hence, she won her prize, total control of England. But in her wisdom, she knew the execution was wrong. "The world is deceived by nothing. The world must be given something by which to seem to be deceived. . ."<sup>5</sup>

As a dramatic character in the film, Elizabeth the Queen, Elizabeth is projected as a Queen of stone with a vulnerable woman's soul. Through the themes of love, trust, and power, the Queen and woman are tested. In the end of the film, with Essex' execution, the Queen survives, but the woman does not. "This is the end of me."<sup>6</sup>

This comparative study has developed a three-dimensional picture of Queen Elizabeth as a personality. Through the biography, she was objectively portrayed as an effective

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<sup>4</sup>Rudyard Kipling, "The Looking Glass," in The Oxford Book of Modern Verse (New York: Oxford Press University, 1937), p. 74.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Bolt, Vivat! Vivat Regina!, (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 89.

<sup>6</sup>George Schaefer, Elizabeth the Queen (New York: Compass Productions, 1983)

ruler in history. On a fictional level, in the novel and in the contemporary ballad, she was subjectively presented as an antagonistic character. She was the absolute protagonist in the personalized period ballad. On the deepest level, through the film and the play, she was clearly defined as both a tough and passionate person. Ultimately, this tapestry, woven out of the threads of these contributing genres, establishes Elizabeth as a very human individual who strongly influenced the writers of her day and ours. LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

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