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<i>Dissertation title: How did Elizabeth I represent herself during her time and how does this compare to modern representations of her?</i>		
<i>Supervisor: Alex Scott</i>	<i>Word count: 9589</i>	
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**How did Elizabeth I represent herself during her time and how does this compare to
modern representations of her?**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of a B.A. (Hons.) in History

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

May 2020

Abstract:

Elizabeth I presented herself as a Virgin Queen to weaponize herself against those who would seek to do her harm. This has created a powerful mythical symbol of the Virgin Queen, this dissertation aims to find how this image has stood the test of time. The dissertation explores the most recent film that Elizabeth features in Mary Queen of Scots and explores how this presentation of Elizabeth match up to how she presented herself in her time. Elizabeth used portraiture and the symbols within to portray a strong figure who is immortalised today in pictures such as the Armada portrait which presents the greatest victory of her reign. However, since her death she was no longer able to personally control how she was portrayed and this therefore gives filmmakers license to portray her however they want based on the facts that have come to light after her death. Such as the rumoured romantic connection with Robert Dudley which has not stayed in the sixteenth Century but has pervaded to the modern day.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my supervisor Alex Scott for helping guide me through this project.

Especially for giving feedback no matter how late I send it in. I would also like to thank my mum and dad for sticking with me through the panic and also helping to read through my work.

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How did Elizabeth I represent herself during her time and how does this compare to modern representations of her?

Elizabeth I (1558-1603) represented herself as the Virgin Queen and weaponised the myth and legend surrounding her continuing to the modern day. This is seen through how she is thought of today and her portrayal in movies the most recent being in *Mary Queen of Scots*. The lore around Elizabeth has set her as a powerful feminist icon with the wits to avoid being overthrown as well as seeing off the supposedly formidable Spanish Armada.

Portraits, novels and films have changed how we view certain historical figures. This is seen in the portrayal of Richard III (1483-1485), who Shakespeare in his play about the King called a “poisonous bunch-backed toad”¹, thus creating the belief that Richard was a severely deformed hunchback. Recent discovery of the bones of Richard have revealed that although there is curvature in his spine he would not have had a hunched back or a withered arm. This presents how fiction influences the thoughts and portrayals of past figures. Thus, begging the question, how much can these methods used to influence the portrayal of historical figures compare to how they themselves portray themselves. This can be seen with Elizabeth I through her many portraits that survive which are laden with symbolism and show how she wished to be portrayed as she had a tight grip on her presentation. I will focus particularly on the Armada portrait as well as the Ditchley and Rainbow portrait due to the wealth of symbolism which presents how Elizabeth and others portrayed herself in this time. This is important as the way in which the modern day presents Elizabeth may be different to how Elizabeth presented herself based on newfound evidence and letters as well as real world changes in topics such as feminism and female rule.

The film *Mary Queen of Scots* is important as it is the most recent portrayal of the Virgin Queen as well as Mary Queen of Scots therefore, the two portrayals can be compared to each other. This is because the relationship between the two ultimately led to Mary’s death and therefore based on the writers views on this event could lead to Elizabeth being portrayed as a villain and Mary a martyr. Due to how recent the film is there are many film reviews but not much scholarship on the topic. Furthermore, there has been no comparison between how Elizabeth presented herself to her subjects versus how modern day presents Elizabeth which could have changed due to new information such as letters and being able to now look beneath the layers of paint in a portrait. I will pay particular attention to what reviews have said about the film including historians.

¹ William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. by Jonathan Bates and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan Publisher LTD, 2008) I. 3. p.186.

The dissertation will be set out as follows:-

A discussion of Elizabethan portraiture as that was the main propaganda the Queen used to portray her image. The symbolism within these portraits will be explored which Elizabeth used to solidify her power and portray her desired image even going so far as to censor some symbols such as snakes due to the ambiguity of the snakes meaning within a portrait.

The next chapter will focus on *Kenilworth* a Victorian novel by Sir Walter Scott which reignited the conspiracy around Amy Robsart's death and marred Elizabeth's reign. This is significant as the book reignited scholarship into looking into Amy's death as well as presenting the close relationship which Victorians had for Elizabeth even comparing Victoria to her. This chapter will also explore how Victoria was viewed and how that may have affected the presentation of Elizabeth.

The final chapter will explore modern day films and how they present the Queen and look into how both portraiture and the *Kenilworth* novel have influenced the ideas surrounding Elizabeth. The chapter will also present how the comparison between Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots is used to present how the modern day audience view both Queens.

In conclusion the aim of this dissertation is to explore how much of Elizabeth's image today is effected by her own portrayal of herself in her time versus how modern views have changed and if this has affected our view of her character. This is important as views can change over time, furthermore, the depictions of Elizabeth made after her death meant that she is not physically in control of her image as she would have been if she was alive.

How Elizabeth I portrayed herself:

Elizabeth I faced many tribulations due to the tumultuous time she was brought up in, that of the reign of her father and her siblings. During her father's reign she was labelled a bastard, during Edward's reign (1547-1553) the scandal between her and Thomas Seymour threatened her reputation, as he was her stepfather and it was rumoured that he had been inappropriate towards her and sought to marry her, and her sister Mary (1553-1538) imprisoned her in the tower on charges of treason. These events made it clear to Elizabeth that she had to preserve her reputation at all costs. This can be seen in the imagery used in her paintings to portray her as the perfect Queen to her people; due to this there is evidence that some symbols were removed and painted over. Imagery which Elizabeth used included symbols of virginity as she is known as the Virgin Queen as well as that of a monarch which was used to defend her right to rule. In addition, the Armada portrait used to portray a great achievement in her rule. New scientific discoveries have made it possible to look beneath these Elizabethan paintings further illuminating the lengths used to uphold her image.

Imagery was important as different symbols were used to portray different elements of a person. The main imagery that Elizabeth used was that of a virgin solidifying her as the Virgin Queen. Symbols such as pearls appear in almost all of the portraits of Elizabeth as they were a symbol of virginity and purity, which is also why Elizabeth wears white clothes in some paintings to portray her virginity. This imagery was important to Elizabeth as she refused to marry perhaps for personal reasons or political but more

probable is a combination of both, based on the disastrous marriage of her sister Mary and the abuse from Thomas Seymour as well as the relationships that her father had with his multiple wives most likely impacted her view of marriage.² Therefore, her use of virgin imagery portrayed her as married to her country and secured her power as Queen of England.³ The imagery was also used to refute rumours of improper conduct between Elizabeth and her favourite courtier Robert Dudley however, these rumours persist to the modern day and excite the imagination of historians and storytellers alike. She also used her virginity as a weapon to present her purity used to portray that she is favoured by God particularly in the English victory against the Armada. It is also used to present that she is married to her country and therefore, cannot marry and also that she is a strong and dependable ruler. This may have been done to combat the unpopular marriage between Philip of Spain and her sister Mary, as their marriage put England into debt paying for Spanish wars. This change presents that unlike her sister Elizabeth was fully loyal to England and nobody else, which her virginity proved.

Another important image for Elizabeth was the crown and sceptre. This portrayed the monarchy and therefore Elizabeth as the rightful Queen. This is important as after the reformation England was thrown into religious turmoil, which can be seen especially in

² David Starky, *Elizabeth* (London: Vintage Books, 2001).

³ Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.154.

the years after Henry VIII's death. As Edward took a hard-line Protestant approach and Mary a tough Catholic approach which earned her the nickname 'Bloody Mary'. Elizabeth on the other hand took a moderate approach to religion again changing the English religion. This therefore made Catholics her enemy as they aimed to bring England back into the Catholic religion. Elizabeth also used this imagery to portray her legitimacy as like her sister she was named illegitimate, furthermore her mother's beheading for adultery also brought her parentage into question. Therefore, meaning that she needed to portray her legitimacy to stop those people like Mary Queen of Scots proving that she was in fact a Tudor and therefore held a greater claim to the throne than her Catholic cousin. However, this is still used in later portraits after this threat has left which can then be said to stay in the forefront of her images as a reminder of her status. This is because if those who had never met the queen happened to see these portraits the crown would be a clear symbol to the viewer of who they were looking upon. However, if the crown was not in fact there it may be hard for the viewer to accurately tell who the sitter was.

The Armada Portrait (1588):

The Armada portrait is a well-known portrait from this time and there are three versions made for different consumption. The imagery of the portrait is important as it portrays Elizabeth as a strong and powerful Queen who defeated the Armada even though she did not fight on the ships, and as Lucy Worsley points out that this was pure propaganda and

did not reveal the truth about the real battle, as her famous speech did not occur until after the Armada battle.⁴ Furthermore, this battle is said to have kickstarted the English Empire, which is depicted in said portrait as Elizabeth has her hand over the globe pointing towards the newly discovered America and pointing towards Virginia which was named in her honour. Similar to many other paintings depicting Elizabeth her virginity is advertised and, in the story portrayed of the Armada used as a “superpower”.⁵ This is because it portrayed her chastity as being rewarded by God with the victory over the Armada as well as the start of the English Empire. It may also symbolise that just like herself and her ideals to maintaining her virginity Elizabeth herself is impenetrable like England therefore, portraying herself as one with England. This is important that it is a reward from God due to the English religion changing yet again from Catholic to Protestant this would therefore portray that Protestantism was preferred by God rather than Catholicism. Pearls are used to portray her virginity and are placed over the same place as a codpiece further symbolising her virginity. Similarly Henry VIII’s portraits gave his codpiece prominence portraying his virility which presented his ability to produce an heir for England. This was important to be presented in this way as Elizabeth at this time was 54 and therefore, after childbearing age and succession for the English throne was in question. Therefore, presenting even in old age that she is still a strong and

⁴ ‘1:2 The Spanish Armada’, *Royal History’s Biggest Fibs with Lucy Worsley*, BBC 4, 25 February 2020. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000frf0/royal-historys-biggest-fibs-with-lucy-worsley-series-1-2-the-spanish-armada>> [Accessed: 26 February 2020].

⁵ ‘1:2 The Spanish Armada’, *Royal History’s Biggest Fibs*, 2020.

powerful ruler, capable of fending off the “invincible Armada”. Furthermore, Elizabeth facing towards the calm seas of the English ships compared to away from the sinking Armada portrays Elizabeth as a steady ruler and also one of peace. As her ships are sailing steady on calm waters whereas the Spanish are in turmoil therefore criticising their ruler as destructive as the ships.

Interestingly there are three different Armada portraits, one was painted over in the 18th century another retains the original paintwork and another was cropped down for unknown reasons leaving Elizabeth the main figure of the portrait and practically erasing the seascape behind her.⁶ These three versions of the portrait present how Elizabeth wished to capitalise on her Spanish success as not just one was commissioned. The place where these paintings would be held the Long Gallery would be a constant reminder of the victory of the Spanish. This a place that would be walked when the weather did not permit a walk in the gardens furthermore, servants who would be walking past would also be constantly reminded of their Queen’s victory over the Spanish.

⁶ Royal Museums Greenwich, *Why are there three versions of the Armada Portrait*, 2020
<<https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/royal-history/queen-elizabeth-i/armada-portrait-three-versions-differences>> [Accessed: 31/03/20].



Attributed to George Gower, *Armada Portrait*, (1588)⁷

Elizabeth held a strong control over her image, giving out templates to painters to speed up painting time and also make sure that they portray her looks the same way. This is an

⁷ Attributed to George Gower, *Armada Portrait* [Oil on panel] (1588)

<<https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/royal-history/queen-elizabeth-i/armada-portrait-three-versions-differences>> [Accessed: 31/03/20].

important power play as Roy Strong points out that in the, last reign decade of her reign Elizabeth passed out templates of her likeness so that her old age did not cause worry as the succession of the English throne was in question as she did not have any children.⁸ This can be seen in many depictions of Elizabeth as she did not want her reign to be questioned, this also may explain the removal of some symbols from her portraits for this very reason. For instance, the portrait below (*Queen Elizabeth I*, 1580s-90s) removed a symbol of a snake which is an ambiguous symbol as it means knowledge but can also refer to the original sin. The time that this portrait may have been made is around that of Mary Queen of Scots who was Catholic and as Elizabeth's cousin, had a claim to the throne and was an attractive alternative ruler to Elizabeth by Catholics. This was around the time that Mary was under house arrest by Elizabeth and may have also been around the time that Catholics were plotting to put Mary on the English throne ultimately leading to her death. Furthermore, if the painting was put out with the snake it would give evidence to the Catholics that Elizabeth was as they believed the devil incarnate and would give ample opportunity for those to condemn her. Thus, this portrays the careful use of images that Elizabeth asserted and portrays the political power that the portraits possessed as one errant symbol could spell disaster for Elizabeth. This painting is not the only one to contain an image of a snake, the Rainbow portrait also contains a snake however, this is not a live snake instead a decoration on her dress. This, therefore,

⁸ Roy Strong, *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting, Iconography: II. Elizabethan (Tudor & Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting, Iconography)*, (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1996) p.5.

portrays that Elizabeth was not averse to snake imagery in her portraits which presents that there must be a specific reason for the changing in symbol. As the Rainbow portrait was made after Mary Queen of Scots death therefore perhaps a safer time for Elizabeth to be seen with this imagery. This is because Mary Queen of Scots was one of the biggest threats to Elizabeth and without this threat it therefore made Elizabeth stronger and her place as Queen more secure.



Unknown, *Queen Elizabeth I*, (1580s-90s)⁹

⁹ Unknown, *Queen Elizabeth I* [Oil on panel] (1580-90)

<[https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02076/Queen-Elizabeth-](https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02076/Queen-Elizabeth-I?LinkID=mp01452&search=sas&sText=Elizabeth+I&role=sit&rNo=6)

[I?LinkID=mp01452&search=sas&sText=Elizabeth+I&role=sit&rNo=6](https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02076/Queen-Elizabeth-I?LinkID=mp01452&search=sas&sText=Elizabeth+I&role=sit&rNo=6)> [Accessed: 3/02/2020].

The Rainbow Portrait (1600-1602):

The Rainbow portrait also contains a wealth of imagery and symbolism. The portrait contains common themes found in other paintings of this time such as the Latin text by Elizabeth's dress. The text reads "no rainbow without the sun"¹⁰, this therefore implies that Elizabeth is the sun and because of this England cannot prosper without her. This is similar to the Armada portrait when Elizabeth is facing towards the calm sea the English sail on while she is turned away from the tumultuous water the Spanish sail. The symbol of the rainbow presents peace and since Elizabeth is holding the rainbow it means that she is portraying herself as a symbol of peace. This is a stark contrast to her sister Mary whose rule was violent and tumultuous. Thus, even twelve years after the Armada portrait she is still portraying herself as the sun of English forces that England can depend upon and look up to. This is perhaps due to the fact that this painting was done when the queen was 67 therefore, well past childbearing age and therefore leaving the succession of the English throne in jeopardy. This is presented in the youthful image of the queen which presents her as a timeless sovereign which would calm the nerves of those who would fear her death and the fallout of such an event. Interestingly the portrait has eyes and ears covering the dress which in the iconography of the time symbolised fame. This portrays that Elizabeth wanted to show off her fame especially after the victory of the

¹⁰ René Grazian, "The 'Rainbow Portrait' of Queen Elizabeth I and Its Religious Symbolism", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 35 (1972), pp. 247-259 (247).

Spanish Armada. The eyes and ears on the dress also give a sense that Elizabeth is always watching and listening certainly through her spy network further portraying her control. This would also portray the image to people that another plot such as the one to put Mary Queen of Scots on the throne would not succeed as she had eyes and ears everywhere. This sense of all seeing and hearing also fits into the symbol of knowledge and wisdom as she knows all. Furthermore, on Elizabeth's crown there is a moon hanging from it which is further a symbol of virginity. The moon is also a symbol of the Roman Goddess Diana who was God of the hunt of which Elizabeth was very fond. The symbolism of the hunt could also be used to portray her success in her imperialistic gains in the new world as well as success against the Armada.



Attributed to Isaac Oliver and Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Rainbow Portrait*, (1600-1602)¹¹

The Ditchley Portrait (1592):

The Ditchley Portrait, painted by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, is a rare full body portrait of Elizabeth for his friend Sir Henry Lee who was the Master of the Armoury and Champion of the Tilt. The portrait is important as it presents Elizabeth as the Goddess of Fortune which was an epithet of hers. Also the portrayal as the Goddess of Fortune Roy Strong suggests that it also presents the queen's favour being restored to Lee after he wed one her ladies in waiting without permission. The portrait also was involved in the pageant that Lee put on to appease Elizabeth and seen her forgiveness for the slight against her.¹² This is not the first time that Elizabeth has been presented as the Goddess of Fortune. Similar to the Armada portrait, Elizabeth is facing towards the sun and away from the storm behind her. The Goddess of Fortune Fortuna was a Roman Goddess who

¹¹ Attributed to Isaac Oliver and Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Rainbow Portrait*, [Oil on panel] (1600-1602)

<<https://maidensandmanuscripts.com/2019/07/07/glorianas-rainbow-elizabeth-i-and-the-rainbow-portrait/>>
[Accessed: 30/03/20].

¹² James R. Jewitt, 'Eliza Fortuna': reconsidering the Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth I', *The Burlington Magazine*, 156(1334) (2014), pp. 293-298 (293).

was believed to control all earthly life and was also known for the “unpredictability of the ocean and tempestuous weather”, which may be an allusion to the Armada and again implying that it was Elizabeth herself who was responsible for the victory.¹³ This also explains the dark weather presented behind Elizabeth as it presents that she is in control of both sunny weather as well as storms. It could also allude to the fact that Elizabeth was also known for her quick changes in mood and favour which some interpretations think. This is furthermore, presented by Elizabeth’s own godson who while Elizabeth was alive said, “when she smiled, it was pure sun-shine [. . .] but anon came a storm from a sudden gathering of clouds, and the thunder fell in wondrous manner on all alike”.¹⁴ The painting includes three Latin mottos much like the Rainbow portrait to overtly portray a message about the Queen which only those in highly educated circles would be able to read. Important to note Elizabeth was highly proficient in Latin as well as a variety of other languages meaning that she would be able to know what was being said. The Latin reads as “she gives and does not expect” which is underneath the sun, “in giving back she increases” by the sea and below the thunderbolt “she can but does not take revenge”.¹⁵ This makes the portrayal of fortune and also of Elizabeth interchangeable, furthermore, the somewhat ominous Latin by the thunderbolt could be interpreted as a plea from Lee

¹³ *Ibid* p. 294.

¹⁴ Letter from John Harington to Robert Markham, 1606; N.E. McClureters ed. *The letters and epigrams of Sir John Harington*, Philadelphia 1930, p.125.

¹⁵ Jewitt, “Eliza Fortuna”, p.297.

for the Queen to not take revenge for his slight against her. This portrays how the image of Elizabeth was used to gain favour through use of the image for which she was known.



Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *The Ditchley portrait* (1592).¹⁶

To summarise Elizabeth represented herself in the best possible light to refute rumours and also celebrate her achievements such as the defeat of the Armada. Her most used symbol throughout her portraits was that of virginity. Another symbol prevalent in her portrait was that of the monarchy at first used to provide an assertion of her legitimacy to be a monarch and later once she is secure on the throne it is used as a status symbol representing her position. The continued fascination with Elizabeth's virginity will be presented in the coming chapters which will feature heavily in modern works such as films and books. However, as will be seen in future chapters some rumours such as an affair with Robert Dudley have not stayed in the 16th century but has haunted Elizabeth to the present day as it is still presented in movies and also documentaries questioning if Elizabeth was in fact a virgin.

¹⁶ Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *The Ditchley portrait* [Oil on canvas] (1592)

<<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02079/Queen-Elizabeth-I-The-Ditchley-portrait?LinkID=mp01452&search=sas&sText=Elizabeth+I&role=sit&rNo=10>> [Accessed: 09/05/20].

How did the Victorians portray Elizabeth?

Kenilworth was written in 1821 by Sir Walter Scott at “the apex of his popularity and influence” and reignited the public imagination of Elizabethan England and the Elizabethan court.¹⁷ Walter Scott was famous as a novelist and historian and wrote novels based on historical events but not necessarily true to these facts as seen in *Kenilworth*. During this time the Victorians believed that, “Elizabeth was thought to have sponsored the development of almost any sort of modernity associated with the greatness of Victorian Britain” leaving them to feel a close relationship with the Virgin Queen.¹⁸ This can be seen in the many comparisons that were made between the two monarchs Victoria I and Elizabeth I. This book can also be seen to fit into the popular movement of historical biographical books written with a female audience in mind, this can be seen with Scots prior novel about Mary Queen of Scots which was popular and therefore made a demand for *Kenilworth*.¹⁹ The novel focuses on Amy Robsart, who was Robert Dudley’s wife and died under suspicious circumstances, which are dramatized in this novel because of a fictionalised romance between Dudley and the Queen, as mentioned in the previous chapter due to rumours in court. This portrays how Elizabeth struggled to contain this rumour as seen from this publication it has lasted over a hundred years after

¹⁷ Stephen Arata, ‘Scott’s Pageants: The Example of “Kenilworth”’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 40(1) (2001), pp. 99-107 (99).

¹⁸ Dobson and Watson, *England’s Elizabeth* p. 151.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.153.

her death and into films which also depict their romance. In this chapter I will explore the comparison between both Amy and Elizabeth as well as the romance portrayed between herself and Dudley. I will also look at how the Victorians and Romanticists like Scott viewed Elizabeth as well as how the reputation of Elizabeth and Victoria became intertwined, which contributed to how Elizabeth is portrayed in the novel.

Elizabeth was crucial for the Victorian era as their ideals came from the Elizabethan era therefore making the English identity at that time intrinsically linked with the image of Elizabeth I. The public linked Queen Victoria to Elizabeth from the start of her reign even though Victoria herself deemed Elizabeth as “immodest”,²⁰ this is primarily because of her young age when she came to the throne as well as the fact that Victoria was a virgin thus presenting the inseparable link found between the two in this era as even though Victoria found fault with Elizabeth the public viewed them as one of the same. Furthermore, during this era there were many works which in fact carried a comparison between the two including portraits and books like *Kenilworth* which were used to portray not only Elizabeth but also Victoria herself although she does not appear in the novel Victoria is represented by the characterisation of Elizabeth. This representation of Victoria and Elizabeth would change because of Victoria’s marriage to Albert and the

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 147.

subsequent birth of her nine children, therefore, settling into the maternal role that Elizabeth refused and also making Victoria no longer a Virgin Queen.

The novel was published 16 years before Victoria took the throne in 1837 however, the book was very popular and due to the comparison made between Victoria and Elizabeth also contributed to the perception of Victoria. In the novel the common people describe Elizabeth as, “ a good Queen and generous”²¹, which due to the comparison can be taken to be Scott also describing Victoria as Elizabeth is used to also represent the reputation of Victoria. This is interesting that Elizabeth is presented in a positive light during the novel and portrayed as a victim in Dudley’s schemes rather than a co-conspirator, as during Elizabeth’s own time it was rumoured that Elizabeth herself was responsible for the death of Amy Robsart. This is because there was a rumour that Elizabeth was romantic with Dudley and wished to marry but with the inclusion of his wife was an obstacle to their coupling. This could be due to the fact that the royal family was still borne from the Tudor dynasty so it would reflect badly if an ancestor was portrayed in a bad light. There is also the possibility that as a historian Walter Scott did not think that there was sufficient evidence to say that Elizabeth had a definitive part in Amy Robsart’s death. The novel paints the picture of a monarch who can do no wrong in the eyes of her people as well as the fact that she is portrayed as a kind and caring individual. There is not a sign of her famous rage as she is portrayed as calm. This gives a sense that she is above her

²¹ Sir Walter Scott, *Kenilworth*, (US: Seven Treasures Publications, 2009), p.188.

subjects in a majestic way that she is the light. It could be due to the fact that in the time the book was written royalty was more a part of public life than it is today. As in the modern day the royals are seen in a celebrity status but certainly not the god like status which it once was in the past. This could explain why in the modern day books written about Elizabeth portray her as a more nuanced character that is not perfect but human. Furthermore, due to the way that Victorians viewed Elizabeth as a key part of their identity as Britons it would make sense that Elizabeth is viewed in such splendour.

Robert Dudley was an important aspect of the Elizabethan court which is why he appears so readily in talk of Elizabeth as he is a notorious favourite of hers. He held an important role in the running of the court as he was the Master of Horse, this is important as it gave him intimate contact with the Queen as the role included accompanying the monarch on hunting trips as well as riding beside or behind the monarch during processions. This is an important role in the reign of Elizabeth as it changed the court dynamics as previously with kings the most important members of court were those who were part of the Kings privy chamber giving them the ability to converse freely with the monarch. However, due to a Queen being on the throne the privy chamber was thus made up of women for propriety. This meant that the positions outside of the privy chamber that gave access to the monarch thus making the Master of Horse a very influential position. Furthermore, due to the fact that Robert was known to be a favourite of Elizabeth and that she was unmarried gave rumour to a romance between them. This has been exploited throughout the years to present a secret hidden romance between the two and though a clear deep friendship can be found in their letters there is no clear definitive proof that there was a

romantic relationship. Some authors and moviemakers portray a mutual romantic relationship between the two while others portray Dudley seeking a marriage between him and the Queen due to political gain rather than romance. In this novel Walter Scott portrays the latter, Dudley seeking a marriage for political gain. Going so far as to hide his wife to do so within the novel foregoing historical fact. Thus, presenting Dudley as a shrewd political figure seeking gain at whatever cost. This presents the issue of marriage as Dudley is presented not as a servant but a suitor for her hand in marriage. This was common with many in the Elizabethan court and up until her aging years suitors were still seeking Elizabeth for her political value. Elizabeth however, did not marry perhaps due to the fact that she saw the disastrous marriage of her sister as well as the Xenophobia of her subjects prevented a foreign marriage. Also perhaps as she knew that marrying within her realm could lead to a rebellion as marrying one Lord would turn another against her. The marriages between her Father could also have played a part, as Jane Seymour died in childbirth as did Catherine Parr who after her father's death Elizabeth lived with.

The comparison between Elizabeth and Amy Robsart in the novel can be used to present the differences in how they are viewed. For instance the descriptions of the two women are vastly different. The actions which Amy takes are presented as that of an emotional woman without logic and the audience is made to sympathise with her as she is portrayed as obviously being the victim of Dudley and due to her gender does not have the power to change her situation, even though she was a noblewoman. Whereas, when Elizabeth is portrayed as acting emotionally she is seen to act with behaviour that is not normal for

her as when her outburst is over her advisor remarks “our sovereign is herself once more”.²² This quote portrays how Elizabeth is different than the average woman of these times, as she is more in control of herself. Whereas, when Amy is seen to have an emotional outburst Tressalin tells her “I must believe you indeed incapable of thinking or acting for yourself”²³ thus portraying how different in character they are perceived as being. For during the novel Amy is portrayed as relying on the governance of men which is her eventual downfall whereas Elizabeth is in control of herself and her surroundings. The two women are also described as beautiful specifically in Amy’s whose first mention calls her, “beautiful as an angel”.²⁴ This description could also be used to foreshadow her death in the latter part of the novel. This comparison between the two and their characters portrays the distinct difference between the two as it is made clear in the novel that Elizabeth as the Queen holds more power and control than Amy. The character of Amy is a sympathetic character throughout the novel and knowledge of the historical events the audience knows of her inevitable fate. Furthermore, at the start of the novel Amy is described in a mystical fashion due to the fact that the characters have not seen her thus giving her a mysterious element. This is similar to the evidence that historians have of Amy as not much is known of her and therefore it is hard to discern her personality, this means that writers such as Scott have artistic license to decide what type of person she

²² *Ibid*, p.275.

²³ *Ibid*, p.200.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.18.

could have been based on the small amount evidence given. As only two letters of her own hand survive whereas Elizabeth has many letters that survive. The two letters we do have tell that Amy was in charge of running some of the estates business which was unusual at the time as women were submissive to their husbands role in these ventures and had little say, seen in her letter to a mister Flowerdue about a debt owed to some workers.²⁵ The second letter to survive is to a tailor for another dress to be made, thus these impersonal letters make it hard for a discernible personality to come out as they are for business and thus have a certain way that they are formulated.²⁶ This leaves many to debate the importance of these letters and if they can be used to tell how Amy is feeling. I have come to the conclusion that though it gives indication of the responsibility Amy was given it is not enough evidence to discern a full personality as they are not written about personal matters it is therefore, impossible to know how she felt. Elizabeth on the other hand there is still evidence of letters between her and others, particularly her and Dudley. These letters were found hidden away and presents the friendship between the two as they are deeply personal letters from Dudley to Elizabeth. Although we do not have the letters from Elizabeth the replies from Dudley illustrate a clear friendship as well as how Elizabeth may have spoken before the reply. This therefore, makes it easier to discern a relationship between the two as well as her personality as the letters were not meant to be

²⁵ British Library, MS 4712.

²⁶ Catherine Padmore, 'Of 'Myne Owne Awtoryte': On Amy Dudley's Letters', in *Expanding the Canon of Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. By Paul Salzman (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) p.71.

seen by any other apart from Elizabeth therefore giving a deep look into their relationship.

Richard Varney is a key character in the novel and Dudley's main follower whose actions lead to the death of Amy Robsart. This presents that Scott is using historical fact to pursue historical fiction as the idea for this mysterious character came from a journal known as *Leicester's Commonwealth*²⁷ detailing the supposed murder and many others from 1584. The journal was written as propaganda to attack Dudley plainly saying "whereof the one killed his own wife (as hath been showed before) only upon a little vain hope of marriage with a queen".²⁸ Thus confirming the rumours of the time as well as exciting historians in the fact that the murder may be confirmed. The document in fact names a, "Sir Richard Varney, who by commandment remained with her that day alone, with one man only".²⁹ This presents the inspiration for the character of Varney as well as presenting the inspiration for the novel based on historical documents. However, the reports in this document is not truthful as the quote presents that Varney was the only person within Cumnor Place when Amy died, when in fact two female servants opted to stay reportedly to Amy's annoyance. The other source used in *Kenilworth* is, *The*

²⁷ *Leicester's Commonwealth The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge (1584) and Related Documents*, ed. By D. C. Peck (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006).

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.117.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.58.

Princely Pleasures, at the Court at Kenilworth which describes the pageants put on by Dudley for Elizabeth. This is what influences the court scene in Kenilworth and where the penultimate scenes in *Kenilworth* occur. This is important as it is written by George Gascoigne who was hired by Dudley to put on entertainments for Elizabeth. This is also important as he was specifically chosen to write a play which urged the Queen to marry. However, the performance of the play did not come to pass due to bad weather and he was forced to write a speech that would portray the message of his play. This is said to be Dudley's last attempt to convince the Queen to marry him as historically Amy had already died. It should be noted that this was written sometime after the Queens visit to Kenilworth therefore details may be fabricated or exaggerated. This is due to the fact that Gascoigne was a playwright and it was written to entertain furthermore the human memory can be deceptive and he may have misremembered some facts as well as forgotten therefore casting doubt on the reliability of the source.

The use of romance in *Kenilworth* portrays how the virgin Queen could be portrayed as immodest. This is because her sexuality was exploited as seen in this novel with her alleged romance to Robert Dudley, this novel did not go so far as to say that anything of a sexual nature occurred between them but implies that she is half-chaste as she had romantic interactions with Dudley. This is portrayed in the scene where Dudley is kneeling in front of Elizabeth and it says she was, "tempted to prolong the scene a little

longer than there was, strictly speaking necessity for”.³⁰ The quote portrays Elizabeth’s romantic feelings towards Dudley, as well as the fact that she is tempted to forego propriety for Dudley. This presents the forbidden romance of their encounter which was included to interest the audience with forbidden intentions. As the book was aimed at Victorian ladies and at this time courtship among the upper classes was still arranged thus the thought of a forbidden romance was thrilling for a Victorian audience as many may not be able to marry for love and thus would understand the duty that Elizabeth faced which was to marry befitting her status. Furthermore due to the close comparison used at this time between Elizabeth and Victoria, this would explain Scott’s portrayal as forbidden love and also Elizabeth’s duty to her country as she is not marrying for love implied in the novel. Further adding to the idea that Elizabeth was married to her country, by doing this it would also be used to compare Victoria and her duty to her country. Victoria’s resolve to her country can be seen as a teenager when she refused to hand over power to her mother in 1835.³¹ However, other modern novels such as Alison Weir’s *The Lady Elizabeth*, portrays Elizabeth as being sexually exploited by her stepfather. Therefore, portraying that she was not in fact the virgin queen which she strived to

³⁰ Scott, *Kenilworth*, p.215.

³¹ Kate Williams, *The young Queen Victoria’s Struggle to Gain the Throne*, 2019

<<https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/young-queen-victoria-struggle-gain-throne-family-tree/>>

[Accessed: 03/05/20].

portray. This presents how in the modern day views have somewhat changed of Elizabeth and she is seen as more nuanced character.

In conclusion, the representation of Elizabeth in Kenilworth influenced the reputation of Victoria due to the comparison made between the two during Victoria's reign. This also effected the way that Elizabeth can be said to be seen as the comparison between the two became so deeply entwined that it is hard to tell what was representative of Elizabeth and what was Victoria's influence. Scott's representation of Elizabeth culminates in an entity that can do no wrong and who is above everyone else due to her status as Queen.

Furthermore, it presents how the rumour of a romance between Dudley and Elizabeth was far from her control as it has carried on far after both their deaths and is still being speculated to this day.

How is Elizabeth portrayed in modern movies?

There have been many television and film portrayals of Elizabeth I some more accurate than others. Films and TV are interesting to analyse as they can be used to present how we in the modern day perceive past events as well as how modern events can affect our perception and portrayal of the past. An example of art effecting our views of the past is Richard III in his titular play as he was portrayed as a hunchback it was then in the public mindset that his scoliosis was more pronounced than it actually was as proven by his recently found remains. The most recent movie depicting Elizabeth is *Mary Queen of Scots* (2019) starring Saoirse Ronan in the titular role and Margot Robbie as Elizabeth, the film details the rivalry between both Queens. One of the most well-known portrayals of Elizabeth I is by Kate Blanchett in *Elizabeth* (1998) and in the film's sequel *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007). These films portray how the modern day views the historical figures of Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots. The key themes that come from these films are romance and feminism, yet again portrayed through Elizabeth's decision to not marry.

Mary Queen of Scots, is the most recent movie to revisit the life of Queen Elizabeth although as the title suggests it focuses more on the Scottish Queen. The movie portrays two powerful women taken down by the patriarchy. This is portrayed by the beheading of Mary which is implied to be the doing of others, and Elizabeth's withering looks portraying the difference between the two. Elizabeth even stating that she is now "more man than woman", portraying her decision of beheading Mary is due to this change in

self.³² As a difference between the two in the movie is that Mary is more independent whereas Elizabeth is somewhat dependant on her advisors. This story is important as it is adapted from the biography of Mary Queen of Scots. The author John Guy cites that he wrote the biography to “demystify her, to go back to the archives and let her tell her story in her own words”.³³ As he views that the story of Mary has been “hijacked”³⁴ by William Cecil to create the myth around the Scottish Queen as well as represent Elizabeth in the best light. William Cecil was Elizabeth’s chief advisor and almost as favoured as Dudley, being close to the Elizabeth meant that he held sway as well as the power to produce propaganda around Elizabeth. This can be seen as the legend surrounding the Scottish Queen’s death, cites that Elizabeth was unaware she was signing her cousin’s death warrant as it was hidden in the midst of other papers. This is how the Elizabeth could plead ignorance and make it appear that she was in fact not the bad guy. Guy points out that Mary was “victim of the pen as of the executioner’s axe”³⁵ this is important as it presents that our ideas of Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth have been portrayed in a way the Elizabeth aimed to have been believed. This also presents how with new

³² ‘Mary Queen of Scots’, dir. by Josie Rourke (Universal Pictures, 2019).

³³ John Guy, *Mary, Queen of Scots: the real history behind the film*, 2019

<<https://www.historyextra.com/period/stuart/mary-queen-scots-real-history-film-movie-husbands-meeting-elizabeth-cousin/>> [Accessed: 04/05/20].

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

information found in documents our ideas surrounding Elizabeth have changed as well as the fact and therefore, deviated from how Elizabeth would have presented herself.

The movie holds some historical inaccuracies such as the race of some courtiers even though there is evidence of black courtiers at this time, the film portrays known white courtiers such as Bess Hardwick as a ethnic minority however, this is stated by the director as being an artistic choice to portray the ethnicity of the past as it is now today. This is similar to the recent musical *Hamilton* which also changed the ethnicities of historical persons to portray the diversity seen on the streets today rather than what it would have been in the past. Another historical inaccuracy is Mary's secretary David Rizzio is portrayed as homosexual and that Mary knows this and is accepting. This is a modern use to portray Mary in a positive light and is unlikely to have happened due to the time period and Mary's Catholicism. It is also unlikely as his death was due to the fact that it was rumoured that he was too close to the Mary. The most prominent moment of the film the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth is also not true as they never met face to face and only corresponded via letters. This is done as an artistic way to portray the feelings through letters and portray an imagined what if they had met and what these two powerful women would have said to each other. This meeting says a lot about the portrayal of Elizabeth in this film, she is ashamed of her looks and due to smallpox wears a wig and a smothering of makeup. It also presents her as bowing to the will of her advisors which is not always true as Elizabeth was known to avoid decision making and simply ignoring advisors until they gave into her demands if she did not agree on an issue. The differing in looks can also portray a symbolic difference as the more Elizabeth

becomes like her advisors the uglier she becomes. Whereas, Mary who in the movie is portrayed as going against her advisors wishes is portrayed as an independent woman ahead of her time.

Feminism is a central theme in *Mary Queen of Scots*, this is seen in the portrayal of the two Queens as they are both portrayed as strong female leaders of their respective countries. This also portrays the key antagonism in the story as the patriarchy as it is portrayed that it is men's desire for power is the reason for the downfall of these two monarchs. Mary by her beheading Elizabeth in the fact that due to the actions of men in her court she was persuaded to behead her cousin and has become more man. Thus causing Elizabeth to be portrayed as a sympathetic villain in a way as it is implied she was tricked into killing Mary due to the evidence provided by her council. This also may be said to portray Mary as better than Elizabeth as she was able to defy her councillors even though it contributed to her downfall, whereas Elizabeth conceded to her council and became like them. This stance could be due to the fact that the director of the film was a woman effecting the portrayal of the film as the story was told by a woman therefore making it sympathetic to the female characters within the film. Film reviewer Peter Bradshaw, points out "Elizabeth comes off disconcertingly badly because there is, dramatically, only room for one proud-yet-vulnerable 16th-century queen in a film about

proud-yet-vulnerable 16th-century queens”,³⁶ and as the film is primarily about the titular character Mary it makes sense that there is not much for Elizabeth. However, as Kristy Pushko presents the monologue that Margot Robbie presents of Elizabeth choosing her country over her own person presents her as, “the Madonna, while Mary is the Whore”.³⁷ This is how Elizabeth aimed to be portrayed as the Madonna as she aimed to be portrayed as pure and married to her country, whereas Mary chose passion.

Furthermore, Elizabeth is often considered to be a feminist icon of sorts as her rule was dubbed the Golden Age, which in a period of history where it was not the norm for a woman to hold this power and do so well makes her a type of success story. Elizabeth is seen as a forward thinking individual in a patriarchal world at this time with forward thinking ideas as she did not bow to the words of men and also refused to marry taking control of her life and body in a time when this was not considered the norm. Christine Riding describes the relationship between Elizabeth and her advisors as, “they might try and manipulate her, they might try and manoeuvre her, they might even try to depose her,

³⁶ Peter Bradshaw, *Mary Queen of Scots review – Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie’s duel-like cousinmance*, 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/jan/16/mary-queen-of-scots-review-saoirse-ronan-margot-robbie-power-politics>> [Accessed: 03/05/20].

³⁷ Kristy Pushko, *Mary Queen of Scots is a Messy But Marvelous Bit Of Feminist Fan (Non)Fiction*, 2018, < <https://www.riotmaterial.com/mary-queen-of-scots-messy-marvelous/>> [Accessed: 07/05/2020].

but she was in charge”, presenting how she was a savvy political woman for her time.³⁸

This is considered a feminist point of view as she is in control of her own body. Many movies that portray Elizabeth carry the key theme of marriage and more importantly Elizabeth’s aversion to marriage. This is portrayed in *Mary Queen of Scots* as it is a worry of her councillors as they worry about the English succession. *Elizabeth* is a well-known film and an inspiration for the depiction in *Mary Queen of Scots*, which depicts the romance between Elizabeth and Dudley and her journey to becoming the Virgin Queen and her decision to not marry. Another film *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* which is a sequel to *Elizabeth* portrays Elizabeth’s aversion to marriage when her favourite lady in waiting Bess Throckmorton marries Walter Raleigh and she imprisons them both. This is a common theme and is not the only lady in waiting during Elizabeth’s reign that she imprisoned for marrying without her permission. This is due to the fact that Elizabeth took it as a personal affront not to be asked though it can also be speculated that she also did this due to her aversion to marriage. Furthermore, due to Dudley’s remarriage to Elizabeth’s cousin, he was demoted for a brief period as a favourite of Elizabeth and banished from court.

³⁸ Kate Wilkinson, *Young, female and powerful: Was Elizabeth I a feminist?*, 2017

<<https://www.rmg.co.uk/explore/blog/young-female-and-powerful-was-elizabeth-i-feminist>> [Accessed: 07/05/20].

Just like in literature a romance is portrayed between Elizabeth and Dudley. Again like in *Kenilworth* the match with Elizabeth in *Mary Queen of Scots* is ambiguous whether Dudley was in love with Elizabeth or if he courted her for political gain whereas it is clear Elizabeth harbours feelings for him. Furthermore, Dudley's feelings for Elizabeth stemming from political gain is portrayed by the councillors urging him to marry Elizabeth. This is an historical inaccuracy as there was a rivalry between Dudley and Elizabeth's key advisor William Cecil for favour of Queen Elizabeth. Furthermore Cecil was against the Queen marrying Dudley as that would give Dudley more political power than Cecil. This was seen in a letter between Cecil and a friend as he says that Dudley stopped the Queen from making important political decisions due to the amount of time they spent together. *Elizabeth* also portrays a romance between the Queen and Dudley and makes no secret of that fact and even talks of a marriage between the two. However, reminiscent of *Kenilworth* it is revealed that Dudley had been married the whole time the affair was occurring. This may be inspired by the *Kenilworth* novel, but also is presented as a reason to why Elizabeth will not marry after this betrayal. It is also presented as Elizabeth's refusal to marry is her taking control and is unwilling to give herself over to a man in fear of being betrayed again.

Elizabeth although perhaps the most well-known film depicting the virgin Queen it is full of many inaccuracies which many historians have pointed out. This can be seen when Elizabeth is being grilled to confess to her supposed treason against her sister Mary I. Elizabeth is seen kneeling in front of her questioners, thus portraying Elizabeth as a victim as well as at a disadvantage as she is seen lower than those circling her. This

however, is not true as an obstacle those sent to see her during this time of arrest had was that she was still a princess and therefore, was still to be treated as such, thus those who came to see her were obligated to kneel. Furthermore, Elizabeth was very much in control of the situation as there was not enough evidence, furthermore, due to the lack of an heir those in the council sent to question Elizabeth did not want to offend her due to the fact that she may soon be Queen. Although the meeting between Mary I and Elizabeth presents her intellect when she refuses to outright promise to Mary that England will remain Catholic after her death. The comparison between Mary I and Elizabeth is far from the comparison between her Scottish cousin in 2019. Elizabeth here is portrayed as young and beautiful in comparison to the dowdy and irrational Bloody Mary. She is also portrayed as England's next hope as the film portrays the graphic burning of protestants portraying the dire lengths Mary was willing to go for religion. The film also portrays Mary's delusion of a pregnancy and how it caused her downfall which when compared to Elizabeth makes Mary appear unhinged. Furthermore, at the climax of the film Elizabeth aims to become a virgin, which is presented as abandoning marriage and receiving a makeover into the Elizabeth most commonly seen in portraits. This is seen by the pale complexion, big wig and dress adorned in pearls, which gives her an ethereal quality as she goes down the aisle. The gospel choir in the background of this scene make it appear as if she is blessed by God which is an image that with the defeat of the Spanish Armada Elizabeth aimed to present.

Comedies have also used the portrayal of Elizabeth such as *Black Adder*. *Black Adder* portrays Elizabeth as a belligerent child with a temper who it can be said incapable of

rule. This is obviously a inaccurate portrayal of Elizabeth to an extent as she was considered to be very intellectual and knowledgeable this can be seen as she was able to portray herself in a positive light to her subjects as well as avoid being overthrown in various plots. Her temper in the show is well known and is exaggerated for laughs due to the fact that the show is a comedy therefore it aims to be comedic rather than historically accurate. However, this does present the uneasiness of the court atmosphere as it presents that her favour can be fickle and that any minor transgression can lead to disaster. This is true to history as she was known to shout at her ladies in waiting if they did not tend to their duties properly. As presented above the show does portray Walter Raleigh as a favourite of Elizabeth before he falls from grace as the aforementioned reasons above. This presents how the known facts of Elizabeth have been used and exaggerated to portray an entertaining figure for television. Furthermore, it presents how the modern audience view Elizabeth which in her own time she would not have appreciated. This is also a far cry from her portrayal in *Kenilworth* which portrays her as a Queen above reproach and who can do no wrong.

In conclusion, depending on the views of the writer the portrayal of Elizabeth changes. However, a common thread that surrounds Elizabeth is the fascination of her refusal to marry. *Mary Queen of Scots* also portrays how for a long time the myth surrounding Mary was perpetuated by Elizabeth and therefore, Elizabeth was portrayed in a way which she aimed. Many films portray Elizabeth as never marrying for the betterment of her country thus perpetuating the same reason that Elizabeth gave in the 16th century. However, as presented in the last two chapters the supposed romance between Elizabeth

and Dudley is a rumour that could not be contained to Elizabeth's time and has haunted her reputation through the ages and no doubt will continue.

Conclusion:

To conclude, the way in which Elizabeth weaponised herself as the Virgin Queen have stayed strong through the centuries and she has become a feminist icon. Although the one part of her image which Elizabeth was not able to control was the rumoured romance between herself and her favourite Robert Dudley. Seen in subsequent films and novels a romance between the two that most of the time sees Dudley perceived as the villain and Elizabeth the victim. This adds to existing scholarship as it provides a comparison between how the likes of *Kenilworth* have inspired films as well as how Elizabeth's portraits influenced her future depictions. While also adding to the small pool of scholarship of the most recent film to present how the presentation of Elizabeth have changed in the modern era.

Elizabeth's portraits portray her as a virgin this is also portrayed in novels and movies. This presents that through the years Elizabeth's personification as the Virgin Queen has held strong and also provides her as appearing virtuous in novels such as *Kenilworth* where no wrong is said about her as she is placed on a pedestal. This is also seen in movies where her virginity is presented as her being a feminist as she is refusing to bow to the wants of men and is in control of her own body. This is important as still after centuries she is still being thought of as the Virgin Queen even if there is debate around this fact, films still portray the image that Elizabeth presented of herself in this way. Furthermore, the way in which she is portrayed as a virgin is viewed as a sacrifice for her

country and a mark of her being married to her country, thus presenting her duty to her country.

However, the romance portrayed in books and movies calls into question if Elizabeth was a Virgin Queen as she claims. This is seen through a suggested affair with Dudley that is still being debated by historians today. Though from novels such as *Kenilworth* and movies such as *Elizabeth* the romance is used to portray why she became the Virgin Queen and becomes a moment of triumph as she takes control back from a man who deceived her. Specifically in *Elizabeth* it is portrayed as a holy moment, thus portraying the weaponizing factor of her virginity as she is pure and therefore rewarded by God. It is also portrayed as her lack of marriage as her obligation to her country in *Mary Queen of Scots* it overtly presents that Elizabeth desired marriage and to have a family but did not due to her duty to her country she could not as she was married to her country.

Furthermore, often Elizabeth is presented as being betrayed in love especially by Robert Dudley, which presents that men are in some way in control of Elizabeth as they are able to deceive her for their own gain. However, by doing this she is presented as the victim and her overcoming the hurt and deception therefore, make her a hero who has the strength and power to overcome, which is implied to make her a better Queen.

Elizabeth in modern film portrayals is presented to be a feminist icon due to her successful reign during a period of history where men held most of the power. This can be seen as she is portrayed as being in control of her council and also being victorious in

the defeat of the Spanish Armada. This has been immortalised in one of the most famous and symbolic portraits of her reign, the Armada portrait. The use of symbolism in her portraits also comes through in films such as *Elizabeth* when she declares herself a virgin and as she walks down through the hall to her throne she is dressed in a white dress laden in pearls representing virginity and purity. This therefore, gives her an ethereal quality, presenting that she is chosen by God, which was used as a reason why the Spanish were defeated. Therefore, presenting that the way in which Elizabeth portrayed herself in portraits is very similar to how she is depicted in the modern day, therefore, presenting that she still controls the narrative of her reign through the legend she created as the Virgin Queen and how this was weaponised to make her the ideal monarch for England. This image shines through the narrative of movies and books depicting her as even though they present a rumoured romance the Elizabeth remains a virgin and often it is Dudley whose reputation is punished but not Elizabeth's.

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