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“Elizabeth: The Golden Age” – An Analysis

Or

Pictures Speak Louder than Words



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1. Introduction – Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made on

Watching a fascinating fictional film is like falling through the rabbit hole into a wonderland of new experiences and attending a lavish celebration for your senses, emotions and your brain. As Alice fell asleep, she entered a world of new dimensions. I think that dreaming is not that different from watching a fictional movie. The Italian director Federico Fellini puts it like this: “Talking about dreams is like talking about movies, since the cinema uses the language of dreams. [...] It’s a language made of image.” (Think). Either way we experience something special. The real difference might be that film absorbs us into the imagination of others, while dreams are our *own* imagination.

A film that appeals to us, usually communicates with us on more than one level. The dialogs might be beautifully elaborate like in *Dangerous Liaisons* but there are other ways to convey messages, of which the most significant might be the visual impression, as the eye is our most important sense organ. What we see on the screen can initiate many mental processes in our head so we are able to decode the complicated message of one shot or a filmed object.

In my opinion the Indian director Shekhar Kapur and his team have a lot to say with their movie *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, which remains unspoken. Here, communication between the screen and the viewer takes place especially with the help of visual impressions – one could say that in this movie, pictures speak louder than words.

In this paper I want to examine the messages of the visual language in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. The aim is to figure out to what extent the images reinforce the spoken words and in particular, what they reveal, while the characters remain silent.

The first important step is to provide some background information, as the plot of the film and some biographical facts of Elizabeth I, to establish a better understanding of the topic.

2. Plot Summary

The film opens in 1585: Spain is the most powerful country in Europe under its Roman Catholic ruler, Philip II (Jordi Molla). He sees England – the centre of Anglican faith – as a threat to Catholicism as well as to the Spanish treasure ships, which are the target

of English piracy. Hence he plans a war to take over England and make his daughter Isabella Queen of England.

Meanwhile, in London, Sir Francis Walsingham (**Geoffrey Rush**) tries to pressure Queen Elizabeth I (**Cate Blanchett**) into a marriage to produce an heir. Without an offspring, her relative Mary (**Samantha Morton**), Queen of Scots, will inherit the English throne. A lot of powerful political figures as Ivan the Terrible propose to her, but Elizabeth refuses to take someone's hand in marriage. Instead, she fancies the pirate Walter Raleigh (**Clive Owen**), who just returned from the New World, where he founded the colony *Virginia* in honour of Elizabeth. But his presence offends the Spanish ambassador, as Raleigh brings boxes full of gold he looted from Spanish ships. Elizabeth and her favourite lady-in-waiting, Elizabeth Throckmorton (**Abbie Cornish**), who everyone calls "Bess", become fascinated by Raleigh's tales of adventure and his honesty.

At the same time, an English Jesuit group connives with Philip to assassinate Elizabeth. Walsingham discovers that Bess' cousin is involved in that conspiracy, which is called "The Enterprise of England", and Elizabeth angrily confronts the Spanish ambassador. He pretends to be insulted and after he offended her in return, she throws the Spaniards out of her court. Afterwards, Elizabeth seeks advice from her astrologer Dr. Dee, whom she hopes to find out details on England's future in the upcoming conflicts. But the future of her country is not the only cause for concern. Raleigh asks her permission to sail back to the New World, but she wants to keep him near and names him spontaneously to "Captain of the Royal Guard", so he has no choice than to stay.

Soon after that, Bess' cousin is hanged and Raleigh provides her a shoulder to cry on; it ends up in a love affair and Bess becomes pregnant. Elizabeth, yet not knowing explicitly about Bess' and Raleigh's closeness, survives miraculously (later on is discovered that there was no bullet in the gun) an assassination attempt. Walsingham who knows from intercepted letters that Mary advised the Jesuits to wipe Elizabeth out, learns that his brother was part of the plot and exiles him to France. In the meantime, after tormenting herself, whether she should excuse Mary or not, Elizabeth signs her cousin's death warrant and soon has to pay for that; the Spaniards, who have been cutting their forests and building ships for their Armada, declare war. Walsingham discovers that the Spaniards knew that he was reading the correspondence between Mary and the Jesuits and understands, why the assassination on Elisabeth failed. The murder of Mary, a Catholic queen, serves Philip as a pretext to attack England.

Elizabeth's bad patch continues, as she finds out about Bess' pregnancy and her secret marriage to Walter Raleigh. Bess is banished from court and Raleigh is imprisoned. But Elizabeth changes her mind as the Armada approaches England and sets Raleigh free to fight against the Spaniards. Elizabeth finds herself in an almost hopeless situation: Spain has far more ships and troops than England and she tries to collect as much men as possible to brave the enemy. Nevertheless, she is willing to fight and, if this is fated, to fall next to her countrymen, as she announces in her Speech to the Troops at Tilbury (Thom). Finally, a storm prompts the Spanish ships to drop anchor and the English seize the opportunity to steer fire ships into their formation. Philip is defeated, while Elizabeth celebrates her most significant military triumph.

During the last minutes of the, film she attends the dying Walsingham and pays Bess, whom she forgave, and Raleigh a visit, to bless their son.

3. Biography of Elizabeth I



This biography is based on the internet page <http://www.britannia.com>, British Monarchs, Queen Elizabeth I. All further additions are listed separately in "Works Cited".

Elizabeth's reign took approximately 44 years, during which she turned England from a poor and religiously divided country into a world power. While she was Queen, literature produced some of its most witty spirits like Shakespeare and England established its influence in the New World. But her life began anything but glorious. Elizabeth was born on 7th September 1533 as King Henry's VIII second daughter. Her mother was Anne Boleyn, Henry's second wife, who badly disappointed him by giving birth to a girl, as Henry hoped for a male successor. Anne was executed on his order two and a half years later and Henry started to change his wives very fast. It is possible that this behaviour traumatised Elizabeth, so that she refused to marry all her life.

Elizabeth grew up far from court, but still enjoyed an excellent education – it is said that she could speak five languages fluently. Her favourite pastimes were horse riding, music and dancing.

No sooner Henry was dead than courtiers started to conspire against his decision that his son Edward should be heir to the throne. Elizabeth was used as a tool of power in these conspiracies and was once sent to the Tower as a prisoner by her sister Mary. Mary was Queen of England after Edward's death and charged that Elizabeth planned a plot against her. On 17th November 1558 the apparent impossible came true: Mary died and Elizabeth became Queen of England and Ireland.

Although Elizabeth re-established the Protestant Church, which her father had inaugurated in England and which Mary tried to eradicate during her reign, she refused to punish the Catholics among her people.

As soon as she became Queen, powerful men proposed to her. Instead of marrying one of them, Elizabeth played with her suitors to gain advantages for her country for years. Twice she considered seriously the bond of matrimony; once with Robert Dudley, whom she had known for a long time and whom she truly loved, and once with Duke of Anjou, heir to the French throne. Both times she abandoned the wedding plans in favour of her political state and her country.

Elizabeth used her unmarried state again to create a “cult of virginity”, which intrigued artists and made her seem supernatural (Wiki; E). On the other hand, her unwillingness to marry meant that there was no successor to the English throne and it was unclear who would become the ruler over England, in case of her death. This may have encouraged some Catholics to make plots to dispossess Elizabeth of her throne and make the Catholic Marie Stuart, also called “Mary, Queen of Scots”, Queen of England. But Mary doesn't seem to have been the right candidate for that, as she couldn't handle the turmoil in her own country. She had to resign her throne and to flee Scotland. As soon as she came to England to seek for Elizabeth's help, she was imprisoned. Mary was Elizabeth's prisoner for about 20 years, before she was beheaded. The decisive reason for that was Mary's participation in the Babington Plot, a conspiracy to murder Elizabeth. But still the Queen of England faltered strongly, before she signed the execution order for Mary. The execution of a Catholic queen was the catalyst for a great conflict with Spain and, in the end, for Elizabeth's dazzling triumph.

Philip II, King of Spain, who once wanted to marry Elizabeth, was now her bitter enemy. He wanted to include England into the Spanish realm, which was the most powerful realm by that time. Mary's beheading served him as a legitimation to send a

superior fleet, the Spanish Armada, against England. Six months later, the English fleet won over the Spaniards with Elizabeth in the lead, who wanted to support her troops till the last moment. The English people celebrated their victorious and beloved Queen.

Shortly after these events Elizabeth tried in vain to support the Protestant Henry IV, heir to the French throne, and entangled herself in her feelings for Earl of Essex II, who philandered with her and whom she still pitied after his execution in 1601(Wiki; E). The English forces were more successful in the Catholic Ireland, which did not want to accept the Protestant Queen but had to give in, shortly after Elizabeth's death (Wiki; E).

Elizabeth died on 24th March 1603; she was 69 years old. Her personality and her lifestyle gave her several names, as "The Virgin Queen", "Good Queen Bess" and "Gloriana". As Elizabeth did not leave an heir, King James VI of Scotland, Marie Stuart's son, became King of England.

4. Analysis – What Does the Unspoken Reveal?

While Elizabeth's reign went down in history, her private thoughts and feelings are still a mystery (Thom). That leaves much room for interpretation of her character. Shekhar Kapur offers us in his films *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* among other factors one possibility of what Elizabeth's character and her relationships with her fellow men might have been like. One major task of this paper is to explain and interpret his illustration of Elizabeth I, focusing on the second film, with the help of all the tools, cinema has to offer. I concentrate on three aspects, which I find the most important, namely Elizabeth's relation to her bitter enemy, Philip, and her relationships with Bess and Raleigh, as this are the persons, she is attached to the most. In the end I analyse her development from a human to a goddess, as this seems to be one of the major topics of the film. For the analysis of colours I basically used the book *Farben* by Norbert Welsch and Claus Chr. Liebmann.

4.1. Elizabeth vs. Philip

4.1.1. Philip as a Contrast to Elizabeth



Tim Bevan, the producer of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* frames the relationship between Elizabeth and Philip as follows: “It is a clash of those two ideologies” (Making; 01:58). He explains that they “portrayed the Queen as a tolerant woman” and Philip as a “religious



fanatic” (Making; 01:45-01:55). The viewer probably notices the difference in Elizabeth’s and Philip’s dress first. He is always dressed in black, while Elizabeth wraps herself in different bright colours at the beginning and middle of the film, or in pallid colours in the end. This might be already a hint of their attitudes. Philip clings to Catholicism and “plunge[s] Europe into holy war” (0:01:03-0:01:12). His adherence to a small spectrum of values and ideas is reflected by his very limited choice of colour. However, tolerance is the affirmation of diversity, so Elizabeth’s attitude is visualized through a lot of colours (detailed interpretation of the colours in 4.2. and 4.3.). Altogether, they might represent her tolerance, which is confirmed by her words: “If my people break the law, they shall be punished. Until that day, they shall be protected.” (0:03:50-0:03:55). These are principles, which seem familiar to us from our own life and this is why the audience likes her much more than Philip from the beginning.

Furthermore, both monarchs differ in their facial expressions. Once Elizabeth complains about the lines on her face. Bess’ answer: “Smile lines, my lady.” (0:18:11-0:18:20) is, on the one hand, of course, to soothe her mistress, but, on the other hand, one could interpret her words as follows: Very mobile features, which express different feelings, cause lines. And if one concentrates on Elizabeth’s face, one notices that it definitely shows a lot of emotion (e.g. 0:34:39; 0:37:46-0:38:26). However, Philip’s face almost does not move – in the different situations in his life, it is mostly the same (e.g. 0:02:57; 1:10:40-1:11:01). Again, the costumes of the two rulers can be used to elaborate on this observation, this time by going into detail. Colours can be used, among other things, as symbols of emotions. Red stands for love and hate at the same time (58), green can mean mercy and hope (65) and psychologists describe blue as the epitome of yearning (70) – and these are only a few examples. Elizabeth’s differently

coloured dresses match her various emotional facial expressions. Philip's black contrasts with her colourful dresses, as "black means the absence of all colours" (96) and consequently constitutes something like an anti-colour. Analogously, one could call Philip's face as "anti-emotional". Moreover, black stands in the "western symbolism" for "the idea of nothingness and negation" (97-98). These terms correspond to the emptiness in Philip's face. Black is also considered to be *the* colour of conservatism (98), which underlines the already proposed thesis that his monotonous clothes reflect his political and religious convictions.

One could interpret Elizabeth's various facial expressions – not each of them separately, but altogether – as a symbol of her tolerance and Philip's stiff face as a visualisation of his narrow-mindedness, as the face often functions as a projection screen for our interior processes.

An exception to Philip's stiff facial expressions is the last Philip-shot, when everyone turns away from him (1:37:08). In this shot the viewer sees only the upper half of his head and the way he wrinkles his features while crying. Through this extreme close-up the viewer realizes the mightiness of his failure. One could say that in this shot his face is as big as his mistake. His realization is made clear with the help of the transition from medium shot to close-up and finally to extreme close-up (1:36:22-1:36:49). Philip's slow but determined movement towards the camera corresponds to the process of his insight, which happens slowly but surely, until he sees his failure as clearly as the viewer sees his crying face. The cross-cutting (1:36:30-1:36:35) with the sinking crucifix is a conformation of that. If one regards this crucifix as Philip's interpretation of God and right behaviour, then one can draw the conclusion that his interpretation "sinks", that it crumbles and that he is aware of this.

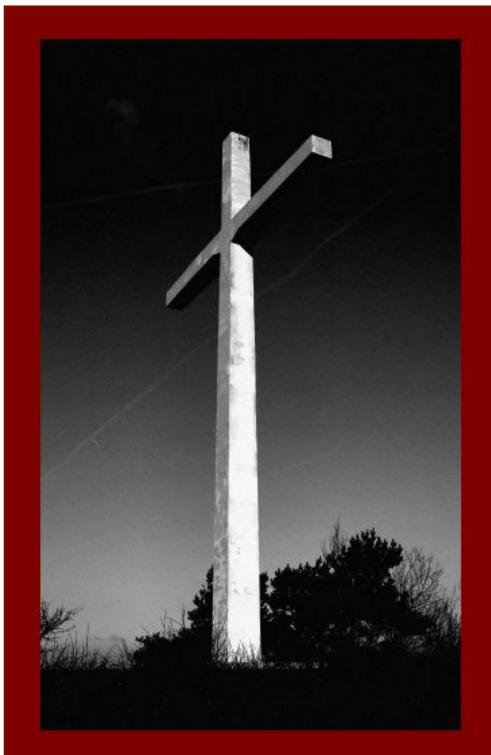
In Elizabeth's case, there is a turning point after the decisive battle, too. Her facial expressions, which were diverse before, appear relaxed, dignified and hardly emotional now, in contrast to Philip, who sheds remorseful tears. Consequently, the pattern of contrast may be applied to the faces of these two characters before and after the outcome of the war.

Another striking contrast between Elizabeth and Philip is the light-darkness contrast. Philip always moves around gloomy rooms, while Elizabeth's presence is accompanied by light, mostly daylight. The audience feels the difference between light and darkness at the end of the film probably the most intensely, when Philip's candle goes out and he is enclosed by darkness (1:35:30), whereas Elizabeth dissolves in light (1:37:30). This is the point, when the contrast is the strongest and corresponds to the climax of the story,

namely the victory over the Spanish Armada. This contrast contributes to the audience's sympathy for Elizabeth and for its dislike of Philip. Almost every child has a phase, when it is afraid of the dark (Bov; 107). Who does not know the threatening shadows and the fear of the creatures, which might hide under your bed? Our subconscious feels pushed off by Philip's omnipresent darkness and regards Elizabeth's light as some kind of rescue.

Philip's portrayal in this film is rather simplified; he is a flat character (NC; 282), which might be criticised. We get to know him only from one angle, namely as the religious fanatic. His attitude towards his daughter, his relationship to his subjects and the way he handles his daily duties remain unexplained. One can assume that he is not truthfully portrayed, as he could not have been that simple, being one of the most powerful men in the world. Then again, one has to consider that this film is about Elizabeth I and one of its main objectives is apparently to show that she was a great monarch. To achieve this within one hour and 40 minutes is not easy. This justifies the extreme simplification of Philip's character. As he is limited to only few character traits, which therefore become predominant, he strongly contrasts Elizabeth even more and she seems more glorious.

4.1.2. The Aspect of the Holy War



One should probably mention the light-darkness contrast in the context of the Holy War once more. In the religious sense, we associate light with closeness to God, because the image of God existing in the kingdom of heaven is stuck in our minds. At the same time, we know the devil, whose location is the dark underworld, as a black creature from the Christian iconography (97). As Elizabeth's symbol is light and Philip's symbol is darkness, one could interpret the fight against the Armada as a battle between good, represented by Elizabeth, and evil, represented by Philip. The impression of Philip as the evil is supported by the greenish touch of the shots of

the Spanish court, as green stands for “poison (poison green) [...] and demonic things” (65). Especially lovers of modern comics will associate green with bad characters (65). All this reinforces our sympathy for Elizabeth once more.

Furthermore, the darkness stands for Philip’s mistake, as he does not identify himself with evil, but thinks he is doing God’s Will (0:02:22-0:02:35). If one assumes that the light is also a symbol of realization, then one can take the darkness as Philip’s aberration from the right path; he is acting wrongly, and this is why he loses to Elizabeth. In contrast to him, the English Queen does exactly the right things, which is symbolized by the permanent light.

Now from the white light to a white horse, which jumps in slow motion off the Spanish ship (01:33:50). It might emphasize Philip’s defeat, because generally the white horse symbolizes the sun and, therefore, light (Bis). So this horse creates a connection to the already analysed shot, when Philip’s candle extinguishes and he is surrounded by darkness, which makes him look like the loser and the bearer of evil. The white horse also stands for enlightenment (Bis) and this is why one could regard this shot as a summarizing metaphor for Philip’s aberration from the path of God. While the white horse jumps off the ship, the audience’s suspicion that the Spanish King has missed realization is confirmed.

The shot of the rosary, which swims on the surface of the sea against the fiery background (1:36:16-1:36:18), also has a special meaning. The rosary in the foreground, which reminds the viewer probably of Philip, who constantly holds a rosary (e.g. 0:02:52; 0:08:21; 1:06:12), indicates that he was the initiator of this war. In addition, this rosary-shot overlaps with the words of the Spaniards, which actually belong to the next shot: “Oh God Almighty calm your wrath.” The wrath might be symbolized by the orange background, which looks like the burning sky, in which God expresses his anger. An interpretation from the perspective of the theory of colours might be interesting as well. Orange is a mixture of the two “primary colours” (37) red and yellow. One of the meanings of red is “war and bloodshed” (58), while “yellow was classified as a colour of shame in the European Middle Ages” (75). A simultaneous interpretation of both colours in the context of the Holy War shows that this war is a shame and Philip, who is responsible for it, acts shamefully and thus wrongly.

The outcome of this Holy War speaks for Elizabeth, while Philip is fatally mistaken. Although we think today that it takes two to tango, this war seems like a firework of positive and negative. It is a fight between good and evil, reason and delusion, innocence and guilt. Philip represents all the bad aspects and we cannot do anything but

condemn him and praise Elizabeth, which is not realistic, as no one gets entangled in a conflict, being a saint-like person. This is again a tool, to show that Elizabeth was a unique ruler.

4.1.3. The Relation between Elizabeth, Isabella and Philip

Philip's daughter, Isabella, seems to play a special role, which is connected with Elizabeth. It is notable that Isabella keeps silent throughout the whole film. Her silence limits her character, but it emphasizes her symbolic meaning. Isabella is a smart child, although she never says anything, as only one movement of her head reveals during her apparent inattention shows that she notices everything that happens around her (0:08:21). On closer examination one realizes that she might know even more than her father and his court.

In the decisive moments Isabella is always with her father, for example in the carriage (0:08:20), during the talk with the Spanish ambassador (1:06:42) or at the moment, Philip understands that the defeat of the Armada is also an individual defeat for him (1:36:19-1:37:09). Interestingly, there are some parallels between the Isabella in the film and the historical Isabella. Although Philip II of Spain had male successors as well, "he and his eldest daughter Isabella had an exceptionally deep connection" and she even helped him with his state affairs (Wiki; I). In the film, she seems to be superior to him, which is supported by her looks. Philip's gaze (e.g. 0:02:57; 1:06:42; 1:33:55) creates the impression that his mind is permanently absent and indicates his distance from reality. On the contrary, Isabella has an attentive look (0:08:21) and a mature aura, as she never runs around or behaves capriciously, which seems a little unnatural, even for a royal child. This superiority is reinforced by the use of light. In the first scene, when Isabella leads her father to the balcony (0:02:37-0:02:58), she is flooded with light, as soon as she steps out. Of course the warm yellow light corresponds to the cries of blessing and admiration of the subjects, but it also stands for rationality and insight (see also 4.1.2.). Philip's reason is clouded, which one can conclude from the way he stays in the shadow instead of stepping into the sun.

One can comprehend the fact that Isabella holds a higher truth from the last Philip-scene (1:36:19-1:37:09), in which she turns away from him to face the altar instead. She distances herself from him because of his great mistake. The altar and the crucifix symbolize God and Isabella turns towards God and therefore towards the good and right

thing. In the medium-shot (1:36:19) the cross seems to jut out from her head, which might highlight that she bears a divine revelation in her mind. The low angle shot from Philip's point of view (1:36:54) emphasizes the ranking between him and his daughter, namely that she is superior.

Isabella and Elizabeth have actually the same name, which means "God is my abundance" (Wiki; gn). Of course it is a historical fact that both women had synonymous names, but it nevertheless underlines that Elizabeth and Isabella are both close to God and suggests a connection between them. The way, Isabella is attached to her doll (0:03:14; 0:08:17; 1:36:51), which looks like a small version of the English Queen, emphasizes this connection and makes clear that it is not a mere toy. Its meaning becomes evident in the scene of Philip's realization (1:36:19-1:37:09). Under the disapproving glance of Isabella, Philip moves slowly, with tears on his face, towards her and falls to his knees so that his whole face fills the screen. A close-up of the Elizabeth-doll makes the viewer ask himself, whether he is kneeling before his daughter, or before the small porcelain-Elizabeth. Perhaps Isabella and Elizabeth form a unit in this moment, which is represented by the doll. It is not likely that a child would behave like Isabella towards its father in such a situation. She turns away from him looking merciless, like a winner would turn away from a loser after a fight. The camera films her from Philip's perspective, which is a low angle shot. He looks up to her, as if admitting defeat.

After the extreme close-up of Philip's face one sees Elizabeth, dressed solemnly, standing in the middle of a room, which is brightly lit (1:37:10-1:37:32). The fast transition between Philip's face and this shot reinforces the impression that Isabella represents the victorious Queen, to whom Philip actually kneels down.

The music sounds quite mighty because of the apparently large choir and its aspiration for higher pitches and therefore indicates the finale of the events. Moreover it sounds like a hymn in honour of the winner. The circular camera movement around Elizabeth creates the feeling that she is located in an arena and the singing voices represent the jubilant crowd who praise the winner. In this shot the light might function also as a spotlight, which God himself trains on Elizabeth.

Returning to Isabella, one can say that her role in this film does not correspond to her historical personality. Kapur's Isabella is rather a symbol than a child, which represents Elizabeth in the decisive moment of the Spanish defeat.

4.2. The Triangle Elizabeth-Bess-Raleigh

4.2.1. Elizabeth and Bess – One Life for Two



Director Shekhar Kapur regards the two women as one person, of whom Elizabeth “represents the spirit and Bess [...] the mortal side” (Com; 0:05:49-0:06:02). The choice of the two actresses Cate Blanchett and Abbie Cornish and their physical appearance indicate this intention. Bess has round cheeks and feminine curves, while Elizabeth’s body is rather slim and her face appears bony and androgynous as soon as

she does not wear make-up (0:51:00). Bess’ long blond hair is very attractive, whereas Elizabeth’s short hair, which grows in all directions, seems uncomely and masculine. Although pale skin was an ideal of beauty then, Bess’ youthful complexion seems more appealing to us than Elizabeth’s natural (e.g. 0:50:35) or powdered paleness (e.g. 0:58:03). In the scene in which Elizabeth and her entourage sail along the Thames (0:05:26-0:06:46) one probably notices that she wears a high-necked dress, while Bess’ dress has a plunging neckline. Bess shows the erotic part of the female body, the bosom, which Elizabeth covers. All this contributes to the thesis that Bess represents the flesh and Elizabeth the disembodied spirit.

Although Elizabeth and Bess symbolize two different parts of a human, they belong together anyway, as only the body and the soul together make a person complete. This unity is demonstrated with the help of several factors, from which the fact that they have the same name (0:22:13), is the least important. The way the camera films them, so that Bess walks behind Elizabeth and only half of her body is seen (0:07:14; 0:09:04), or the way their bodies overlap sometimes (0:09:56; 0:23:50-0:24:00), catches one’s eye. The bathroom-scene is especially striking, when nothing of Bess’ body is seen but her head and shoulders; it almost looks like it was Elizabeth’s (0:31:32-0:32:00). This unity, which is emphasized even more, when their fronts touch (0:32:43), fits to Kapur’s statement that they are representing one human being. The shot, when the Queen examines herself in the mirror (0:18:14-0:18:24), confirms this, too. The camera is directed at the mirror and one sees Bess for some moments in the background. At first

glance the viewer notices how close the women in the mirror seem. They are almost locked in this little round area, as body and soul of one person are closely connected. But at the same time some distance is implied, as Bess is blurred in the background, while Elizabeth's face is shown in a close-up and in deep focus. That creates the impression of the two women existing in different dimensions, like body and soul do. Later on, Bess is shown more and more often on her own (e.g. 0:32:44; 0:42:42-0:43:48). That illustrates the growing conflict between her and Elizabeth as well as the increasing separation of body and soul.

Another way to express their unity is to dress them similar. Apart from some exceptions, they wear almost the same colours at the same time and, at the beginning, the cut and the material is similar as well (0:11:23-0:11:28). The similarity of their dresses demonstrates their special connection, as Bess' is the Queen's favourite lady-in-waiting. On the figurative level, it illustrates that they are two halves of a whole, that they form one person. Later on, their dresses start to contradict each other, analogously to their growing cleavage.

A striking exception to that is the first time, Elizabeth and Bess are shown together (0:05:26-0:06:46). The Queen wears a red dress and her ward a white dress. The Indian goddess Pakriti holds a white, a red and a black thread in her hands as an embodiment of the three ages of a female, namely girl, woman, old woman (17). The functions of Elizabeth's red dress are explained in detail in chapter 4.3., but in this scene, red might symbolize her mature age, while Bess' white stands for her youth. Aside from that, white probably symbolizes Bess' "innocent [...] purity and virginity" and her "youth and freshness (?)" (103) – she is indeed a virgin, until she sleeps with Raleigh (Com; 0:50:12). On the other hand, white shows the "desire for independent freedom" (104), which is definitely the case for Bess, who veers away from Elizabeth to start her own life.

This Elizabeth-Bess-scene also foreshadows Raleigh's first entrance. Bess wants "an honest man" and Elizabeth answers: "There must be any amount of princes in the undiscovered lands across the sea. Find me an honest one of those". These statements contain two hints. First of all, Raleigh is a sailor, who returns from North America, which was an "undiscovered [land] across the sea" at that time. Secondly, he is an honest man, because he is not afraid to contradict Elizabeth, in order to define his position (e.g. 0:45:13-0:45:17; 0:51:40-0:52:00). Elizabeth's cited words contain also a foreshadowing of the outcome of the private affairs. She wants a man for Bess and not for herself. Although she falls in love with Raleigh later on, he marries Bess, exactly

like her own words predicted. But the description “prince” does not fit Raleigh. Elizabeth and Walsingham consider different princes and kings for Bess, but she picks a “16th century dude” (Making; 04:42). The fact that Bess falls in love with someone completely different, than Elizabeth considered for her, reflects her desire for freedom once more.

The first step of the estrangement between Elizabeth and Bess is caused by Raleigh, as one can see during their talk in the bathroom. When Elizabeth says that Raleigh likes Bess not for herself, Bess agrees, but her look reveals that she does not like hearing these words and that she maybe even does not believe them (0:32:00-0:32:17). The unique interaction between the two women is especially obvious in the scene when Elizabeth examines some portraits of her admirers. Bess gives her advice, whom she could invite (0:11:20) and they talk about their private matters like the “puddle man” (00:11:10), or make little jokes (0:11:35). In these moments, one sees a perfect harmony between those two, which does not last long, as Bess starts to make her own way with Raleigh. Elizabeth’s words “You’re free to have what I cannot have. You’re my adventurer.” (0:32:35-0:32:40) foreshadow Bess’ separation from her. Elizabeth regards Bess as some kind of property and makes her settle her private affairs, like delivering messages to Raleigh (0:20:13-0:20:25). But her feelings are ignored, when her cousin is hanged and no one cares for her except Raleigh (0:46:53-0:49:00). One could claim that she gets nothing in return for her services to Elizabeth. But, on the other hand, she can achieve something that Elizabeth will never have: the love of a man and the happiness a family can bring. This is what Elizabeth’s cited words probably refer to.

Elizabeth, Bess and Raleigh have a threesome-relationship, which becomes particularly noticeable in the scene, when Bess and Raleigh sleep with each other, while Elizabeth examines herself in a mirror (0:50:48-0:51:11). The overlapping of the three naked bodies in one shot symbolizes their entanglement in this complicated relationship. But there is another message in this shot, too. The mirror might serve as a symbol of realization. The overlapping of the close-up on Elizabeth’s face and the two lovers creates the impression that the picture of them was in her mind. This is reinforced by the blurriness of Raleigh and Bess. She has a vague thought of them, but as it is only her suspicion and not clearly stated yet, it is out of focus.

As soon as Bess and Raleigh surrender to their passion for each other, Elizabeth loses her control over them irrevocably. During the Volta-scene (0:51:12-0:54:34), Raleigh annoys her with his remark “You eat and drink control”, whereupon she forces him to dance with Bess. She brings their bodies into position, as if they were her puppets. But



Figure 01

during a special shot, the three form a triangle, in which Bess and Raleigh face each other in the foreground, while Elizabeth stands on her own in the middle ground (figure 01), which creates a sense of distance between her and the couple. During the dance, she observes them from far away from her throne. One could interpret this distance as her lack of control over them, while their physical closeness during the dance symbolizes their newborn love and intimacy.

The process of the final separation of Elizabeth and Bess takes place during Bess' and Raleigh's wedding (1:18:34-1:19:03). Elizabeth does not sleep well, which can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, the Armada approaches (1:18:24-1:18:33) and she senses the closeness of this great danger. On the other hand, she loses Bess and feels this change, although she does not know it yet. One could interpret her separation from Bess and the approaching danger as related events. Elizabeth's body, represented by Bess and her soul have to disconnect so that the latter is strong enough to fight and win the war.

When Elizabeth and Bess meet after the wedding (1:19:26-1:21:13), both women seem filled with dislike – body and soul have no connection any more. To emphasize this disharmony, they wear totally different colours. The change that happened in their relationship can be seen especially from their gesture. At the beginning of the film, Elizabeth held Bess' hand before her prayer and they exchanged intimate looks (0:07:50). But during the argument, Elizabeth beats Bess and their eyes have lost their intimacy. On the figurative level, body and soul, which were one unity, reject each other



Figure 02

now. Elizabeth's state, which becomes more and more spiritual, is no longer compatible with the vices and failures of flesh; this is why she expels Bess.

Before Elizabeth and Bess grow apart because of Raleigh, they are one pole and he is some kind of anti-pole, as "he's a man that lives in a world far beyond the court" (0:23:53). But soon he comes between them,

as a particular shot shows (figure 02). Although Elizabeth and Bess sit on the same level, from this angle it looks, as if Raleigh sits between them and thus separates the Queen and her ward. During the Volta-scene, Raleigh and Bess are one pole and

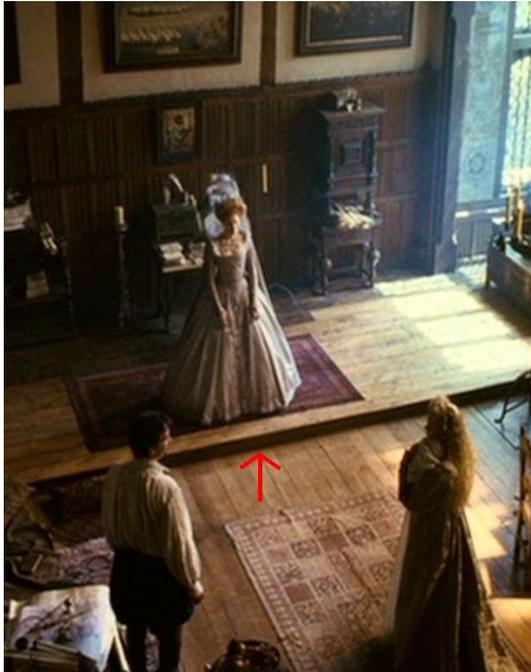


Figure 03

Elizabeth is the “outsider”, the anti-pole (figure 01). The reconciliation of Elizabeth, Bess and Raleigh at the end (1:39:05-1:41:35) is not a returning to the old state. The separation between the two women is irreversible, as Bess leads her own life now and Elizabeth’s transformation to a spiritual creature is completed (more details in 4.3.) During Elizabeth’s visit, one can see the constellation of the three characters; Elizabeth is again the anti-pole, as the line on the floor separates her from Bess and Raleigh (figure 03). This last constellation emphasizes the differences between

Elizabeth and the couple. Bess and Raleigh found happiness in starting a family, which Elizabeth most likely will never have. On the other hand, they are mortal, while she is a divine creature. But Elizabeth and Bess still have something in common: they are both mothers. Bess became mother in the biological way, while Elizabeth is mother in the symbolic sense; she is “mother to [her] people”. This shows that Elizabeth found the same fulfilment as all the other women who create families by regarding her subjects as her children.

One can conclude that the relationship between the two women proceeds according to Elizabeth’s interior changes. The split between her and Bess is necessary, if one regards them as the visualisation of Elizabeth’s body and soul, so that the Queen is strong enough to beat Spain and, therefore, the evil.

4.2.2. Walter Raleigh: The Love of her Film



Bess: "An honest man with friendly eyes."

The reason that Elizabeth is so intrigued by Walter Raleigh might be hidden in Bess' words: "H's a man that lives in a world far beyond the court" (0:23:52). He is different from the courtiers, as we see especially during the visit of Charles of Austria. The latter delivers Elizabeth a passionate speech, in which neither Elizabeth, nor her court is actually interested, in the most boring way (0:18:47-0:23:37). The viewer shares Elizabeth's opinion, who wrinkles her forehead (0:19:26), that the situation with Charles is absurd. Not only are his skills as a speaker quite modest, but the words of his speech are nothing but hypocrisy. He utters terms of love and passion, which should have been produced by an impulse – otherwise they are not honest. You cannot learn a feeling by heart. The way, he delivers his speech, shows that he is not interested in Elizabeth – which is self-evident, as he never met her before – and that his words are only a formality. This speech is a contrast to Raleigh's and Bess' conversation about honesty. Bess advises Raleigh to "pay [Elizabeth] the compliment of truth". The fact that Raleigh is an honest man was already determined in chapter 4.2.1. and one could say that he is, being a pirate, the opposite of the Austrian Archduke. Elizabeth is disappointed by the poor reaction of the latter to her suggestion, he should try to touch her, in spite of the "pane of glass", and turns away from him to look in Raleigh's direction. Subjective sound begins at this point and the tender melody creates the impression that she longs for something the Austrian cannot give her, but her look to Raleigh conveys that he might be the right man. Indeed, Raleigh soon shows that he is not afraid to approach her and to make her open up to him (e.g. 0:27:08; 0:34:25-0:34:43).

Charles could take a page from Raleigh's book who shows some rhetoric skill during his "immensities"-talk, which intrigues Elizabeth (0:24:14-0:26:39). Her facial expression and her reaction to the interruption show her interest – in contrast to her

boredom with Charles. Raleigh heeds Bess' advice to be honest and talks about his own experiences and feelings and therefore wins Elizabeth's affection. The content of his speech indicates some similarities between him and her. He talks about his life "in the grip of fear". She, too, has to fight her fears, as she once admits herself that she is "always afraid" (1:35:54). Raleigh also talks about "pure naked fragile hope", which does not leave him at sea. Elizabeth cannot do without hope as well, as she pleads Dr. Dee to "just give [her] hope" (1:21:45-1:21:55). Furthermore, both have the desire to live "right to the end" (1:13:18-1:13:33). It seems that the Queen and Raleigh share similar feelings, as both have to overcome great challenges. On the other hand, Raleigh is some kind of representation of her yearnings, as one realizes during their argument, when she says that she would follow him to his unexplored places, if she could (0:45:26-0:45:44). In particular her blue dresses, which she wears after she met Raleigh, underline that, as "blue is considered as the colour of the mind, [...] of dreams and of yearning" (70). They are some kind of visualization of her inner wishes and longings. One could interpret the blue also as an expression for her wanderlust, as blue reminds one of the wide ocean. Raleigh's fascination with his sailing grabs her during his "immensities"-speech. It seems almost paradoxical that the colony *Virginia* was found in honour of Elizabeth but she never saw neither *Virginia* nor any other place outside of England (Making; 04:00-04:23). Maybe Elizabeth falls in love with Raleigh because she thinks he might soothe her yearning, as he enjoys experiences, she would love to have.

Elizabeth's claim that she was "very, very tired of always being in control", and Raleigh's contradictory answer (0:51:47-0:51:58) express Elizabeth's predicament. First of all, she is a dedicated Queen, as she is willing to earn the love of her people (0:04:12-0:04:18). But she is also a human, who wants more than control and bearing the responsibility for a whole nation. The short and amusing time she spends riding with Raleigh (0:28:37-0:30:09), makes the viewer believe that she could break out of her role as Queen. The panoramic nature-shots create a feeling of freedom and the pure physical pleasure is a contrast to her position as Queen (Com; 0:25:50-0:25:57). Her statically standing entourage at the end of the ride contrasts with her and Raleigh's speed. Their unexpected emergence in front of the camera is like a reminder of her position and her duties. Her smile suddenly vanishes and her inhibited movements under their disapproving look suggest that she feels like she enjoyed some inappropriate delight and that her happiness with Raleigh is only for a short time.

Indeed, she seems to abandon Raleigh as soon as the conflict with the Spaniards breaks out (0:36:53-0:39:01). The meaning of her yellow dress could be seen as the opposite of the yearning-theme. For example, in China, yellow is regarded as the “colour of honour” and was reserved for the Chinese emperor for quite a long time (17). In Elizabeth’s case, it might emphasize her position as Queen, as she wants to deter the enemy, and demands respect, in contrast to the personal side she showed with Raleigh (0:34:25-0:34:43). We soon see her wearing blue again, because she becomes entangled in her private affairs with Raleigh and Bess. But as soon as Elizabeth has to decide whether to behead Mary or not, blue is passé. The threats she faces as Queen are far more menacing than her private problems.

Another way to visualize Elizabeth’s growing distance from Raleigh are the curtains through which she rushes (0:38:57). Of course they are part of the interior, but in some shots one could interpret these curtains as a symbol of her heart. Shortly after she meets Raleigh, one sees her walking past open curtains, after revealing her affection for him (0:28:10). Her heart is open, as she is interested in him. As soon as her country and her position are endangered, her heart shuts him out, as she cannot afford to amuse herself. When Raleigh visits her while she tries to decide, whether to sign Mary’s death warrant or not, they communicate through the holes of a wood carving (1:03:47), before Raleigh steps closer. This represents the barrier between her and him, as she is again in a very difficult position.

Kapur uses curtains again during the first talk of Bess and Raleigh, to partly hide their faces (0:21:43-0:22:19). He says it is “because this is the beginning of a love affair that they do not know yet” (Com; 0:21:32-0:21:41). One could also interpret the curtains as Raleigh’s and Bess’ need to keep their love secret, because curtains are usually used to cover and hide things.

During the Volta-scene (0:51:12-0:54:37) one sees open curtains again – this time behind Elizabeth’s throne. This might indicate that Bess’ and Raleigh’s relationship becomes more and more obvious, but they could also stand for Elizabeth’s heart again, which is filled with memories and emotions. While Elizabeth watches Bess and Raleigh, the camera approaches her slowly. This movement corresponds to her memories, which slowly arise in her mind. The cross-cutting shows some shots from the first film, *Elizabeth*, which tells the story of her youth and the first years of her reign, as well as her passionate and complicated love for Robert Dudley. Perhaps Elizabeth’s feelings for Raleigh remind her of Robert, as her relationships with both men have some parallels. As Robert supports her through hard times (Eli; 0:10:16; 0:23:10-0:25:06),

Raleigh tries to soothe her as well (1:03:00-1:04:42) and fights for her against the Spanish ships. But neither with Robert nor with Raleigh has she experienced a happy ending, as both men betray her in some way. Robert tries to make common cause with the Spaniards (Eli; 1:29:44-1:30:54) and sleeps with one of her ladies-in-waiting (Eli; 1:22:36-1:23:20), while Raleigh starts an affair with Bess behind Elizabeth's back. In a talk with Raleigh, Elizabeth asks him, if he could have loved her in another time and world (1:13:46-1:13:54). During the Volta-scene, she herself seems to fantasize about this time and world, where she and Raleigh could be together, like she was once with Robert. This is probably the reason, why her mind exchanges Robert (Eli; 0:08:04-0:09:07) with Raleigh. The subjective sound is taken from the first part, where it is the theme of Elizabeth's and Robert's affection, which is played, when they enjoy some intimate moments (Eli; e.g. 0:08:04-0:09:07; 0:24:46-0:25:06; 0:37:45-0:38:52). The romantic mood of Elizabeth's fantasies is ruined, as soon as the close-up of Raleigh whispering something into her ear is shown (0:54:20). She breathes hard and her face looks shocked, in contrast to the young Elizabeth's laughing face some seconds before. Whatever Raleigh tells her, there is no hope, neither for her nor for the viewer, that her fantasies could turn into reality. Her empty bed, which is shown some seconds before, while Raleigh and Bess are dancing, reinforces the impression that he will stay with Bess and Elizabeth will never have an intimate relationship with him.

The fireplace-scene (1:12:46-1:15:38) seems very important, as Elizabeth and Raleigh kiss for the first and last time. The sound of gunfire from the Spanish ships, which were seen in the shot before, overlaps with the beginning of this scene. This creates a feeling of intimate danger and signifies that it will not take long, until the enemy reaches the English coast. This impression is supported by Elizabeth's statement that her "thought turn dark". The gloominess of the room matches her mood and reinforces her concern that she might die in a Spanish prison, as the sparsely illuminated stony room reminds one of a prison cell. But one could interpret the dimmed light also in the context of Elizabeth's plea that the kiss is "not to be spoken of afterward". The darkness conceals the touch of their lips, so that they can forget it more easily. It is likely that Elizabeth longed for this kiss for a long time and now that it happens, one can call it confidential, but not passionate. It is not the kiss of two loving people. Raleigh's words "I *have* loved you" indicate that there will be nothing more between them than the platonic love of the past. The shot from inside the fireplace creates the impression that both are surrounded by fire. That hardly stands for sensuality, as the kiss is too short and too timid, but rather underlines their sensitive situations; Raleigh's

secret affair with Bess and Elizabeth's conflict with Philip. The fire could also be a foreshadowing of the fire ships, with which the English beat the Armada. On the metaphorical level the kiss between Elizabeth and Raleigh might visualize that they will win the battle against the Armada together, as she is the one who commands and he applies all his skills as sailor.

Elizabeth utters shortly after the kiss: "I die". The subjective sound of a fired gun is heard and she sinks down on Raleigh's knees, as if she was hit by a bullet. On the figurative level, this sentence could mean that she dies as the person she was before. The human and mortal part of her dies to enable her spirit to rise, so that she can fight and beat the Spaniards. But her transformation is not yet completed, because she seems very human and emotional during the argument with Bess (1:19:20-1:21:13). It takes some time to overcome her imperfect self (more details in 4.3.).

One could conclude that Raleigh is the opposite of Elizabeth's court, as he is a pirate, who is accustomed to the freedom of the wide ocean. But he and Elizabeth are nevertheless similar, as they both live a life "in the grip of fear". On the figurative level he helps her spirit to rise, as he takes Bess, representing the body, away from her and thus frees her soul (Com; 0:06:03-0:06:17).

4.3. Elizabeth's Development



The great Swedish director Ingmar Bergman said in the context of his movie *Cries and Whispers* the following on the colour red: "I [think] of the colour red as the interior of the soul." (Mar; 246). In my opinion, Kapur follows a different path and dresses Cate Blanchett in her first scene in a red costume to emphasize her position and her doings (0:03:24-0:04:18). As red was always hard to obtain, it was reserved mainly for the

“highest mundane dignitaries” (59). Red became also the “symbolic colour of justice” (59), and accordingly Elizabeth expresses this: “I will not punish my people for their beliefs. Only for their deeds.” In politics, red is mostly associated with socialists and communists, but generally it means the “liberty [and] the intention of freedom” (60). Both aspects determine Elizabeth’s policy, as she leaves the decision of the question of religion to her people and as she is not the one to attack another country. In addition, red stands for “economic and political advancement” (60) which Elizabeth definitely brought about, as her country prospered during her reign (see 3.).

Elizabeth’s hair decoration in this first entrance is quite striking. It looks like two wings, which grow out of her head. This might stand for her intellect (Pura), as she was a very educated woman (see 3.). One could regard these wings also as a suggestion of Elizabeth’s development to a spiritual creature, as wings symbolize the immaterial (Pura). Another hint in this scene is the round wall ornament, the individual elements of which remind the viewer of arrows targeted at Elizabeth and her staff (0:03:29). As the topic of conversation is Elizabeth’s lack of security, this is probably a foreshadowing on the attempt on her life (0:57:03-0:59:07). More general this ornament might suggest the upcoming difficult times. One sees these arrows targeted at her a second time (1:05:19), shortly before she signs Mary’s death warrant. In this case, the shot illustrates that Elizabeth places herself in a difficult situation, as Mary’s beheading serves Philip as a pretext to send his fleet against England.

Elizabeth does not want to marry, as we might understand during the portray-scene (0:10:14-0:11:50). For her it is just a “game”, an aspect of her policy, which is underlined by the music. It sounds light-hearted and therefore corresponds to her attitude towards the marriage matter, and the impression that it is only a “game” for her, which she plays again and again, is reinforced by the constant repetition of the theme.

Elizabeth I said once: “And, in the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.” (Wiki; E). The first time Elizabeth wears a white dress (0:09:04), is the first hint at the virginity-cult that she creates around herself, as “virginity is an asset that holds its value well” (0:11:45-0:11:48). It is assigned great meaning and power – one just has to think of Virgin Mary, the mother of God’s son – which Elizabeth tunes to her good account. One of the most famous virgins might be the virgin of Orleans, Joan of Arc. The similarity between her and Elizabeth during the Speech to the Troops at Tilbury (1:27:06-1:28:50) is unmistakable – both women wear an armour, both have red hair, although the cut is different (figure 04; 05), and Elizabeth’s white horse reminds the



Figure 04

viewer of Joan's white war horse (FVA). One finds many parallels between Joan's life and the life of Kapur's Elizabeth, besides the keyword "virgin". Joan had to assert herself against a male-dominated world (Wiki; J), the same problem Elizabeth faces and has to find a solution for. This is why she plays with her proposers, to survive among all the powerful men. Moreover both women act according to God's will. Though Elizabeth does not receive divine revelations like Joan, (Wiki; J), she still acts in a way that God approves, as the bright daylight during her speech makes clear (more on the connection between light and God in 4.1.2.). Like Joan led her men

(Wiki; J), Elizabeth wants to assist her soldiers in the fight (1:27:06-1:28:50). The fact that she does not want to watch the events from a safe distance, as one expects from a monarch, but takes the same risk upon herself, as her soldiers, shows that she does not distinguish between herself and her people. This is why one could call her a folk heroine for that moment. Folk heroes stir our emotions, as they are – as in Joan's case – of humble origins and they abandon themselves to serve a higher purpose (Wiki; J). Kings and emperors are mostly not regarded in that way. Elizabeth's reign fills history books, but it scarcely touches people's hearts. The film *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* shows that Elizabeth, too, has to cope with pressure and overcome fears again and again – is that not heroic? It seems as if Kapur's film demands the same love and admiration for the English Queen as we feel for folk heroes like Joan.



Figure 05

That Elizabeth becomes one of the soldiers can be proved with the previous shot, when she slips off her ring (1:26:56). She always wears this ring (e.g. 0:06:14; 0:09:50; 0:11:29) because of its special meaning. It is given to her when she becomes Queen in *Elizabeth* (Eli; 0:26:58). This ring could be regarded as a symbol of her position, which

evokes aloofness. As soon as she slips off her ring, she tears down the barrier, she breaks the “pane of glass [...] between [her] and them” (0:20:53-0:21:00) and becomes a warrior amid the others. Some minutes later, she puts on the ring again (1:34:46), as the fight is over and her position is at safety and she has to return to her routine as a ruler.

This ring also is of some importance in another shot. We return to the moment, when Elizabeth looks into the large mirror (0:50:59-0:51:11). Her naked body and her hand with the ring express her interior conflict. The ring stands again for her high position, while her naked skin symbolizes the human, the woman. Elizabeth’s unhappy face indicates that there is no harmony between those two roles. As the ring looks very small compared to her skin, which almost fills the screen, the possible conclusion might be that at this point in her life she regards herself more as a woman than a queen, which of course is connected to her feelings for Raleigh. Feeling love means being a human. But in a case like that she cannot do her duty satisfactory, being too distracted. In an earlier scene Dr. Dee mentions that “something has weakened” Elizabeth (0:42:15). “Something” might be her affection to Raleigh, which confirms the interpretation that after meeting him, she rediscovers the woman inside herself and neglects the Queen. As soon as she is ready to give England not only her life but her soul, too, thus is willing to overcome her feelings, she becomes slowly a truly great ruler. One could say that this is how she becomes consistent with her destiny, which is to be nothing but a queen, as she was born as such.

In the context of destiny and predestination, it is essential to mention astrology. Elizabeth believes in it, as she visits Dr. Dee regularly. In astrology one examines the position of the planets and tries to draw conclusions for the earth and its people (Brock; 58). This is how those who believe in astrology try to predict their lives. Astrology and destiny are therefore closely connected. Dr. Dee is like the messenger between Elizabeth and her fate. One can conclude that Elizabeth is influenced by the planets from the allegory-like picture during the banquet. The woman in the middle of the planets stands for Elizabeth, who is connected to the universe, which is represented by the different models of planets around her (0:23:10). As already mentioned, Dr. Dee’s statements are partly foreshadowings on Elizabeth’s future. During Elizabeth’s first visit (0:40:15-0:42:33), he tells her that hard times are to come and that she “will need all [her] strength”, which refers to the war with Spain. Elizabeth’s interesting hair style in this scene might mirror this upcoming war, as it consists of two halves. Probably her hair symbolizes not only the conflict with Spain, but all the other conflicts, which

intervene in her personal freedom. It might represent the battle between two religions as well as good and evil, in the context with Spain. But also her private conflict with Bess and her interior conflict, queen versus woman, could be symbolized by her hair.

Further, Dr. Dee mentions her doubts, which Elizabeth indeed has to fight later on and which reach their peak during Mary's execution (1:09:17-1:09:39). Her doubts are visualized with the help of the bird's-eye views. Always when she finds herself in a conflict, she is shown as a tiny figure enclosed by four walls (e.g. 0:38:33; 1:09:31; 1:21:01). The impression of a trap is created, which corresponds to the "trap" Spain sets for her to declare war (1:11:16-1:11:57). When we face a problem that seems too big to fix, we start to doubt ourselves, we feel helpless and small. Elizabeth's small size during these shots corresponds to her feeling of powerlessness.

When Elizabeth visits Dr. Dee the second time (1:21:21-1:22:48), a new trend is implied. His image of the flying eagle matches her strength, which is emphasized during her Speech to the Troops at Tilbury (1:27:06-1:28:50), where her horse constantly moves back and forth. Probably her inner energy is transmitted to her horse and makes it untameable. The eruption of this energy is captured in a particular shot, namely when she stands at the cliffs and attends the sinking of the Armada (1:34:58-1:35:26). Kapur puts his message like this: "The Armada was won by the spirit of this woman" (Making; 0:10:30). If one connects this statement with Dr. Dee's words, one could conclude that her free soul "soars on the wind" like an eagle and is strong enough to cause a storm. This strength is demonstrated with the extreme long shot. Her outward appearance reflects the freedom of her soul, too, as she wears a loose robe, which provides her free moving space in contrast to the dresses with uncomfortable corsages and awkward skirts. Further, she is not restricted by a wig, or jewels, or shoes.

Elizabeth's appearance changes according to her interior change. At the beginning of the film she is dignified, settles her state affairs conscientiously and one gets the impression that she has herself perfectly under control from the way she moves (0:03:24-0:04:18). But as soon as action begins and the two major conflicts loom – the private one with Bess and Raleigh and the one with the Spaniards – her appearance and her posture begin to change. She experiences emotional turmoil, which can be seen clearly during her argument with Raleigh (0:43:49-0:46:13). Her outward appearance seems neglected, especially her wig¹. Her voice and her nervous movements emphasize her restlessness. She seems to have lost control over her emotions, like she has lost

¹ This is funny, as wigs are not living hair and therefore always look the same, but Elizabeth seems to have a "bad hair day".

control over her looks. Her appearance and her behaviour are not befitting of a grand queen but an average human being. She seems also very human and undignified during the arguments with Bess (1:19:26-1:21:13), as she is jealous of Bess and furious because of her betrayal. The audience sees her in a similar state shortly before Mary's execution. When Raleigh comes to see her, he finds a tear-stained, huddled Elizabeth. She is devastated, as she does not know what to do. All humans are in a mood like this one time or another. When we see her wanting to cancel the execution (1:08:08) we probably might conclude that this is the moment she is the farthest away from the divine state, as emotions like fear and doubt make us the most human.

There is a turning point during her second visit to Dr. Dee (1:21:21-1:22:48). At first, she is desperate and implores him to make a positive prophecy, while she gesticulates wildly with her arms. But his decisive words on danger and the image of the eagle change her mood. Her voice becomes moderate and her face even indicates a smile. From now on, she has no emotional outbursts but shows her acquired greatness by forgiving Raleigh (1:24:51). Her words "as I, too, long to be forgiven" (1:24:57) refer in all probability to Mary's beheading. Already before Elizabeth has shown remorse about having "murdered God's anointed Queen" (1:12:06). This might be an explanation for her violet dresses, which she wears constantly after Mary's death, as violet stands for repentance in Christianity (23). The reason Elizabeth agonises over Mary's execution might be not only because of her mother's fate (1:03:32-1:03:39), but also because of her own experience. In her younger days, she was almost executed herself by her elder half sister, Mary (0:15:26-0:18:16). Although it is not mentioned in the film, Elizabeth

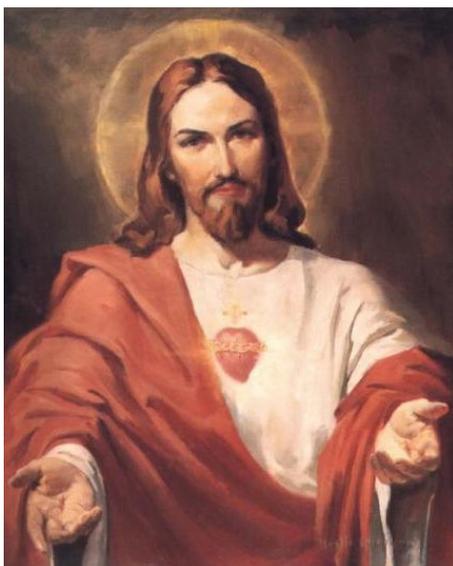


Figure 06

probably did not forget this horrifying experience and therefore finds it so difficult to get over the matter with Mary.

After the victory is achieved, everything about her indicates a divine creature (1:37:11-1:37:32). She wears a pompous white dress and golden spikes decorate her head, which remind the viewer of a halo. Her hands are in a position one knows from pictures of Jesus (figure 06). In Elizabeth's case, it probably means that she will protect her people as faithfully and lovingly as God himself is expected to protect us. The light reinforces the impression that she is a divine creature now (more

on light see 4.1.2.). There is more to say about the white dress and the light from the perspective of the theory of colours. White light is the sum of all wavelengths of colours (Gai; 161). As it includes all colours, it might be seen as a perfect state of harmony. If one transfers this to Elizabeth, then one could say that all her experiences and emotions, which were symbolized with the help of different colours, lead to an inner harmony. The “colourful” past is internalized inside her soul and made her into someone divine, like all colours together produce white light. Her white dress represents her spirituality, as in mythology and psychology white stand for “spiritualization or wisdom” and as it is also the “embodiment of the divine”, as “white gods and demigods [...] represent the enlightened spirit, which overcomes the physical” (103).

The next scenes confirm this thesis, as Elizabeth’s whole appearance indicates a spiritual creature. She wears a shining, light dress, she moves in an almost flowing way, her face is relaxed and her voice is calm (1:37:36-1:39:02). Actually everything about her look imparts harmony; the colours of her dress, her jewellery, the feathers fixed on her head, her hair and her skin are almost identical. The form of her wig reminds the audience of a halo again. The harmony of her outward appearance might be a projection of her interior harmony, which she attains, as soon as she commits herself entirely to her role as Queen, against her physical and emotional yearnings.

Her divinity is also expressed in her pale skin colour, which is a contrast to Walsingham’s typically human pink skin (1:38:09). Because of her porcelain complexion and the light illuminating her in the last scene (1:39:03-1:41:35), one gets the impression of a marble statue. Maybe the origin of the magic of a masterly marble statue lies in the conflict we feel when we look at it. On the one hand, we want to identify with it, as it seems to be a human being with eyes, a nose and a mouth. But, on the other hand, the faultlessness, the perfect colour and the smoothness of the stone block the identification process, as we have difficulties to identify with something immaculate, while we know our own flaws. Elizabeth seems to be as perfect as a marble statue and, therefore, unreachable and beyond comprehension. As we associate stone in general with something callous, the second connotation of this shot might be her emotional balance. But it is not supposed to signify something cold or ruthless, as she holds the child tenderly in her hands and smiles at it. This image creates a warm atmosphere and does not let her faultlessness become cold and stiff.

This shot also fits perfectly to her statement: “I am the mother of my people” (1:41:16). If one considers that the child is the product of Bess’ and Raleigh’s love, which they enjoyed behind Elizabeth’s back, then her ability to forgive is demonstrated.

She has forgiven them like a mother would forgive her children. If one compares this



Figure 07

shot to Michelangelo Buonarroti's marble statue "La Pietà", one notices, how similar the two women are at one particular point (figure 07; 08). One could draw the conclusion that Elizabeth represents the evolution of mercy, as "la pietà" means "mercy" or "compassion".

This shot equals an encomium for the Queen. A queen like that, who is as perfect and merciful as God and who regards her people as her children, seems to be the best ruler one can wish for.

In summary, one can say that Elizabeth – in contrast to Philip – is presented as a round character

(NC; 282) in the film *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. She experiences a huge development throughout the film; from a human to a goddess, which is probably the greatest development, one can imagine. On her way she takes on different roles; she is a politician, a woman, who yearns for love, she is a victim. But she is also a folk heroine, a mother and a divine creature because of her absolute power, as Spain is defeated at the end. She arouses compassion and at the same time admiration. She is authentic and comprehensible in contrast to the cool portraits of the historic Elizabeth. In my opinion, this is one of the major reasons, why one could call Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* a remarkable film. He and Cate Blanchett managed it to turn a person from a history book into a lively personality.



Figure 08

5. Conclusion – The Golden Oscar

I think one can call the film *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* a multidimensional film, as the meanings, which the pictures of this movie contain, are very manifold and require an in-

depth exploration. There is a lot of information, the movie gives us, and which is not obvious from the action or the dialogs. It is never mentioned that Elizabeth and Bess represent one and the same person, or that Elizabeth deserves the same status in our hearts like a Joan of Arc. Analysing this film is like analysing a dream, as we have to decode among other things the messages of the symbols and colours, of the music, or of the angle, from which we see a character.

In my opinion, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* is an outstanding film, which is qualified for a prize like the *Oscar*, because a satisfied audience leaves the cinema after watching this movie. Those, who have watched it superficially, are satisfied, as it contains the elements for a less sophisticated viewer, like famous actors, magnificent costumes and suspense. However, those, who let the film sink in and who are still thinking about it some time later, are pleased, too, because of the underlying meanings.



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