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Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

On the Historical Accuracy of the Queen's Attire in Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

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2016/2017

ABSTRACT

The fascinating reign of Elizabeth I has been depicted in numerous film and television productions. One such film, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007),* has garnered much academic attention and criticism for its lack of historical accuracy. There is, however, insufficient research explicitly focused on Elizabeth´s attire, its historicity and the image perpetuated. This paper addresses this important omission. Firstly, a study of the Acts of Apparel enforced by Elizabeth (1574) demonstrates how she limited the attire of others, whilst she dressed extravagantly in order to construct her unique image. This is followed by a technical analysis of the fashion of her era, indicating her dresses in the film were accurately recreated. Lastly, a comparative analysis is established between the gowns worn by Elizabeth in the film and four portraits of her from the period in which the film is set. It is found that Elizabeth's image is faithfully depicted in the film through the accurate representation of her gowns.

KEY WORDS: *Elizabeth: The Golden Age,* Tudor fashion, Queen Elizabeth I of England, Elizabeth I's portraits, Acts of Apparel, Elizabeeth I's appearance.

Numerosas películas y series han retratado el reinado de Isabel I. *Elizaebth: The Golden Age* (2007) recibió gran atención por académicos y críticos por su falta de historicidad. No obstante, la historicidad de los atuendos de Isabel y la perpetuación de su imagen no han sido explícitamente abordadas. Este trabajo se centra en tal omisión. Primero, los "Acts of Apparel" dictados por Isabel (1574), demuestran cómo la reina restringió la vestimenta de los demás mientras ella vestía de forma extravagante disfrutando de una imagen única. Seguidamente, un análisis técnico de las tendencias de la época indica que sus atuendos en la película están representados fielmente. Por último, un estudio comparativo entre los vestidos llevados por Isabel en la película y cuatro de sus retratos de la época en, la cual la película se desarrolla, se ha realizado. Esto concluye a través de una reproducción precisa de la vestimenta de Isabel I su imagen es fielmente representada en la película.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, moda tudor, Reina Isabel I de Inglaterra, retratos de la Reina Isabel, leyes suntuarias, apariencia de la reina Isabel I.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the National Portrait Gallery, London, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, Hatfield House, Hatfield, the British Library, London, and the Royal Museum of Greenwich, London, for granting me permission to reproduce images of *Queen Elizabeth I,* NPG 190 (© National Portrait Gallery, London), *Queen Elizabeth I* (Hatfield House, Hatfield), and "," BL G.6463 (© The British Library), .

I would also like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Janet Arnold and Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies, for their invaluable contributions to the field, which inspired my research and without whose excellent scholarship and detail I could never have completed it.

I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Anunciación Carrera de la Red, for her expert advice, ideas, and incessant encouragement through the way. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for their support and interest along the way.

INTRODUCTION

"Dressed to impress" could have been Elizabeth I of England's motto since by now it is no secret her attire were explicitly designed to remind the rest of the world of her status. Clothes have always been a key factor in building a favourable image of the self. The Virgin Queen was aware of this.

History has pictured Elizabeth I not only as a powerful ruler and talented orator, but also as a great image maker. With her clothes, accessories and manerisms, she defined an iconic image of herself which has been transmitted from the 16th century until today. The strength of this transmission may be appreciated in the way in which the Elizabethan era has become the main topic of numerous recent cinema and television productions such as *Elizabeth: The Virgin Queen* (1998), *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) and *The Tudors* (2007-2010), amongst numerous others. As a general rule, these have been often criticised because, rather than accurately depicting the historical events of this period, they mainly focus on the dramatic facts. The works of Carol Levin (1999) and Belen Vidal (2012) exemplify this.

One of the most recent films which depicts Queen Elizabeth I as its main character, and which will be the main object of analysis in this dissertation, is *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), directed by Shekhar Kapur. As is the case with other Tudor films, despite having been warmly received by the audience, the film academy and numerous scholars such as Bethany Latham (2011) or Rogert Joseph Ebert (2007) have criticized the historical inaccuracy of the events it depict. Criticisms include Elizabeth's portrayal as a dramatic heroine, rather than as a ruler, and the superfluous scripts of her enemies. Surprisingly, the question of the authenticity and historical accuracy of the Queen's costumes in the film has not yet received any critical attention. Even though the film has received the Academy Award for Best Costume Design and there exist invaluable studies reconstructing the Elizabethan wardrobe (such as *The Tudor Tailor* (2006) by Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies) and the Queen's attire (such as Janet Arnold's *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (2014)), no scholars have focused on studying the costumes. Due to this there is a clear informational gap.

The following dissertation focuses on demonstrating how the costumes and attire worn by Cate Blanchet in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* conform to Elizabethan fashion trends from 1570 to 1600, and at the same time contribute to the dissemination today of Elizabeth's iconic image as a powerful ruler.

In order to do so, I have followed four main steps. Firstly, I reviewed the literature related to Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, from reviews and articles to interviews with the film's costume designer Alexandra Byrne, and also the most recent studies, discoveries, and interpretations on the Tudor wardrobe, and Queen Elizabeth I's attire. Secondly, I analysed the Queen's portraits in the light of the Tudor dress code in order to identify in them their main patterns, fabric, accessories and ornaments used during this period. Finally, I looked into the costumes used in the film and compared their construction to Tudor dress-making, examining bodice shapes, materials, and colours, the usage of kirtles, ruff, and cuffs, among other elements. The aim is to test whether these are historically accurate reconstructions of the Elizabethan models.

The results of my analysis have been presented in three separate sections:

1. 'The Creation of Elizabeth's Image: Dressed to Impress' evidences how Elizabeth I managed to promote her image through her portraits and statutes of apparel, by using artistic depictions of herself, on the one hand, and political action, on the other.
2. 'An Analysis of Elizabeth's Gowns Through her Portraits and Statutes of Apparel' sheds light on the main characteristics of the Queen's attire through the examination of the gowns, accessories, and apparel shown in her portraits, and establishes a relationship between the image conveyed and the exertion of social control.
3. 'An Analysis of Elizabeth's Gowns in Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*' compares the main gowns worn by Cate Blanchet in the film to those in the historical portraits of Elizabeth I, in order to conclude the historical accuracy of the gowns based on evidence from the portraits.

Through the study of Elizabethan fashion, the analysis of Elizabeth I's attire in portraits and of the gowns worn in the film, the present dissertation aims to shade new light on the following two questions:

1) What image did Elizabeth's gowns promote during the last thirty years of her reign?

2) Are the gowns used in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* historically accurate with respect to the ones used by the Queen in her own time?

In my interpretation, an attempt will be made to show how despite the fact that *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* may not be historically accurate *per se*, the Queen's attire and apparel used in the film do not have a lack of historical authenticity and transmit to contemporary times the same image of a powerful queen that her portraits conveyed during her reign.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Elizabeth I became Queen of England, countless published works have focused on analysing her persona. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, film-making (probably more than any other artistic activity) has contributed to the myth-making of Elizabeth's image as a queen. The reason for it may rest, as Bethany Latham explains in *Elizabeth I: In Film and Television* (2011), in the many political conflicts, personal dilemmas and religious intrigues of the period, which can be highly exploited in dramatic terms. As a consequence, there is much recent research evaluating the historical accuracy of the portrayal of the Elizabethan era in these cinematographic productions. A great part of it examines the accuracy of the political and religious events that they include, while its presence in the costumes and settings used remain largely unexplored. It seems that dress and costumes are considered a banal topic as compared to the seriousness of historical events.

That is what happens with Shekhar Kapur *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), a sequel to the 1998 film *Elizabeth: The Virgin Queen*, also directed by himself. Despite having been relatively warmly received, especially by audiences, and its costume design having been highly praised, earning the Oscar award for "Best Achievement in Costume Design", the question of the authenticity and historical accuracy of the Queen's costumes in the film has been ignored, whereas comments on the lack of historicity of its script have been reiterated.

1. Film reviews and articles: The Historicity of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*

Elizabeth's figure has been portrayed in numerous screen productions. Various sources consider these portrayals: all of them underscore a lack of historicity. Carole Levin (1999) argues that Elizabeth is depicted "more as a 16-year old than an adult," speaking about Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Virgin Queen* (1998). She criticises that rather than exploring the depth of Elizabeth's persona she is represented as a "weak and indecisive" character through the film. Belen Vidal assesses that drama seems to be more important than history, in productions such as *The Tudors* (the BBC series

produced from 2007 to 2010) or *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*; both are full of conflicts and sexual allusions, allegedly in order to engage the audience (33-36). This opinion is backed up in *Elizabeth I: In Film and Television*, as previously mentioned. However, there are also reviews that find accurate depictions of the Queen, but in the earlier productions. Sue Parrill and William Baxter Robison (2013), for example, consider the six-part BBC series *Elizabeth R*, first broadcast in 1971, "the best screen account" of Queen Elizabeth. They conclude that earlier reproductions tend to be more accurate to reality, whereas the films from the 1990s and the 21st century mainly exploit the drama contained in the historical events.

Altogether, there are more than seventy films and series set in the Tudor period (Gaskell). Today, the revival of the Tudors on film is undeniable. Among them *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, a Universal Pictures production, has been one of the most pleasing to the audience. The film collected over 72.4 million dollars worldwide, received twenty-nine nominations both sides of the Atlantic and won six of them for best costume design, actress, and production. This suggests the impact of the film, which not surprisingly has been critically reviewed many times, was not viewed favourably. Many of those reviews analyse Elizabeth's image as a monarch, and remark how the political, religious and social aspects are translated into melodrama. Their range of criticism varies.

An article signed by Dargis, titled "Now, Warrior," published in the *New York Times* (2007), has established a comparison between Elizabeth's image in *Elizabeth: The Virgin Queen* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*; the earlier version is considered to be "more restrained" in contrast to the more recent production, which took a more liberal approach. Roger Joseph Ebert, known as one of the best cinematography critics at the moment also reflects on the same line of thinking in an article written in 2007; he adds a critical point of view about Elizabeth's excessiveness when dressing: unlike *Elizabeth* (1998) by the same director, "this film rides low in the water, its cargo of opulence too much to carry." Ebert also carries out an analysis of the historical accuracy of some of the main characters and their diminished role in the film. For example, that of Sir Walter Raleigh is limited to his courtship: "In the court, he is also a swordsman, seducing and impregnating Elizabeth's favourite lady-in-waiting, Elizabeth Throckmorton." Style, war, rhetoric and history are other main topics found

in an article published in *The Guardian* written by Alex von Tunzelmann (2011). It openly criticizes the lack of historical accuracy in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, as it can be seen in its opening sentences: "Yes, the costumes are amazing. But too little actual history in Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth*: part 2 lets ridiculousness reign." Likewise, **Sukhdev Sandhu** (2007) mostly disapproves of the superfluous characterization of Elizabeth's, enemies by which the majesty of characters such as Philip II of Spain or Mary of Scotland is taken away, turning the film into a drama rather than a historical piece. This article, published in *The Telegraph* (2007), insists on the **lack of significance of the character's portrayals: "**A lack of continuity or character depth might have been excused if the film worked as swashbuckling drama". The research paper written by Nassima Terki (2015), in which a selection of scenes from the film are analysed, argues similarly, but adds that Elizabeth's image was constructed through her body language: all her gestures combine to create a self-confident, powerful and decisive political persona (44-79, 99-115). In the same line of thought, Lin May-Shine (2010) concentrates on the relationship between Elizabeth's attire and her speeches and concludes that "clothes as material thing seemed to be more difficult for Elizabeth to use as flexibly as she manipulated her rhetoric" (122). From these writings we can infer a clear consensus: *Elizabeth: The Golden* Age lacks historical authenticity.

Despite the fact that costumes have never been the main topic of these articles, in one way or the other, they are somehow always present. Consider again, for example, Tunzelmann's opening: "Yes, the costumes are amazing, but […]," or May-shine's allusion to the Queen's clothes as an instance of her rigidness. They suggest the importance of costumes in the building Elizabeth's persona, but also that their presence speaks of excessiveness, particularly because of the absence of historical accuracy in the film.

2. Alexandra Byrne's confession and the discovery of Elizabeth's skirt

One of the interviews with the costume designer of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, Alexandra Byrne, seems to confirm that the director of the film did not worry too much about the matter: "'Shekhar is not bound by historical accuracy,' Byrne explained. 'He

wanted this film to look very different'" (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov 21, 2007). Yet, Byrne herself appears to have thought differently.

Byrne has stated several times that she has read about the period and about Elizabeth's costumes. In a transcribed interview Byrne confesses she is acquainted with the historical period of Elizabeth I: "[W]ell I think the benefit of doing the first film meant that I actually know, I knew the period really well, so there is this kind of inherent backbone of, of research that I knew." ("Femail"). In another interview for *Los Angeles Times* (2007), the designer admits she was inspired by different images from the Elizabethan period. However, Byron does not specify which images she took into account. And still more, Byrne declares she paid attention to academic interpretations on her portraits: "And I read books, including Roy Strong's *Gloriana* and *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*, academic works that delve into the symbolism in her portraits" (Los Angeles Times, 2007).

Coincidence or not, the scientific study of the Tudor dress fully emerged immediately after the film was released. Drama costume design had a long-standing tradition in Britain, but surely the question of the Tudor dress has been an active field of historical study since then. Proof of this is a two-year investigation into Early Modern European Dress and Textiles which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in 2009. Its main aim was to deal with "practical and theoretical problems concerning early modern dress and textiles," as declared on the research group's website, by bringing together scholars and practitioners. Another highly valuable research tool is the book The Tudor Tailor (2009) which reconstructs the sixteen-century dress, precisely focusing in the Tudors as its name suggests.

That the topic is not only a living subject of interest for researchers, but for the general public, may be illustrated by its dissemination on the mass media. Only recently, the discovery of a piece of fabric which surely was part of Elizabeth's attire, became news in broadsheet newspapers and tabloids: "The garment is thought to be the only surviving piece of clothing owned by the Virgin Queen." As they report, when Eleri Lynn, a curator of historic dress at Historic Royal Palaces, found the dress, she had no doubt about its importance: "As I examined it, I felt as though I had found the Holy Grail, the Mona Lisa of fashion" (The Telegraph, 2017). Her words indicate that

the myth of Elizabeth is thus attached to her clothing, that her garments are treated as a relic, and that they have kept her alive through the centuries.

3. Then and Now: The Acts of Apparel and recent approaches to Elizabeth's attire

But the attractiveness of the Queen's attire dates from her own lifetime. When Elizabeth ascended to the throne she maintained the restrictions on manners and clothing of the Acts of Apparel that her predecessors had dictated. These sumptuary laws were first introduced in the late Middle Ages, reinforced under Henry VIII, and re-enacted during Elizabeth's reign, with further regulations developed: "Elizabeth I added three new statutes, and found it necessary to fortify the Acts of Apparel with twelve proclamations" (94), as Netherton and Owen-Crocker remind.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find a multitude of research which focuses on Early Modern England's dress code and on the fabrics, patterns, and colours people were allowed according to their status. John N. King analyses the image of the Virgin Queen embodied by Elizabeth I through the study of her portraits, establishing the main differences between the early Elizabethan portrayals, which transmit her marriageability, and the later ones where the image of a Virgin Queen is exalted. To emphasize Elizabeth's youth, she was represented with less extravagant dresses in terms of contrast between colours, decorative patterns and ornaments such as precious stones. However, later in her reign, when she has become the Virgin Queen, her garments also reflect that. Her dresses are excessively decorated, with contrast between colours exalting her uniqueness and status (30-74).

Indeed, Elizabeth's clothes have been analysed from very different approaches. The most frequent one is by considering their influence in the creation of her iconic image. Not surprisingly, one essential book when analysing Elizabeth's attire is Janet Arnold's *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (2014). The work concentrates on exploring the gowns of the Queen through dresses left by the Queen after her death. Arnold establishes comparisons between some of those still existing dresses and the gowns in Elizabeth's portraits. The main focus of this work is to analyse and describe the patterns, fabrics, ornaments, colours of Elizabeth's garments taking into account

the ones used during Elizabethan period. Some of them such as the usage of the purple or gold colours, velvet or damask enclose certain symbolism due to their association to royal or noble social status.

Symbolism, in fact, has become omnipresent in popular interpretations of the Queen's attire. It can be found, for example, in the Royal Museums Greenwich website. The rose means the "unity [between the House of Lancaster and the House of York] it brought to the realm," the pelican is "a symbol of motherly love" and the phoenix is understood as "endurance, eternal life and purity". These comments are essentially the same as what Susan Doran writes on the representation of virginity when examining Elizabeth's gowns in paintings. She explains the symbolism of certain elements such as the rose, used as a decorative element on her clothes, and associated to chastity (171-193). Kendrick Smaellie, for his part, provides a more original overview of the complexity of Elizabeth's attire. He starts by analysing elements of her clothing which cannot be seen, such as underskirts, and finishes by discussing her accessories (1-19).

This literature review highlights the complex construction of Elizabeth I's image, through every element included in her standard attire, and its transmission through the ages. Two main questions arise to be explored:

1) What image did the Queen's attire promote during the last thirty years of her reign?

2) Are the gowns used in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* historically accurate with respect to the ones used by the Queen in her own time?

CHAPTER 1

THE CREATION OF ELIZABETH I'S IMAGE: DRESSED TO IMPRESS

The importance of Elizabeth I's image during her reign seems undeniable. Ralph Lewis (2003) explains how the creation of Elizabeth's image had a political purpose. Elizabeth realized she had become the queen of a decaying country facing powerful nations, such as France and Spain, which were becoming more and more influential. To legitimate her figure as a queen not only in England, but also abroad, Elizabeth used the art of her time. As Lewis reminds us, the majority of these sources were used as a tool to create a positive image of her in order to improve the country's stability. There have been many interpretations of the Queen's role as inspiration for literature, music, painting and art in general. In them, Elizabeth was not only defined as a wise and decisive monarch, but also as an object of male desire. Bell, for example, argues, that Elizabeth's depictions embodied both femininity (being desirable) and masculinity (power and logic) as a way to obtain recognition in a patriarchal society (2010). This may be a way to understand why Spenser, Shakespeare, Sidney and Donne wrote poetry based on the marriage proposals Elizabeth received and how she rejected them, but also how she took advantage of every opportunity to disseminate her words as a great speech-maker, policymaker and negotiator. In any case, there is general agreement that the arts were used as propaganda to underpin the stateswoman's political decisions.

Now this essay will consider the dresses and apparel which could have contributed to propagating a strong image of Elizabeth as a ruler. First, the portraits the Queen commissioned are considered, and then, the sumptuary laws she enacted.

1. The symbolism of the Queen's clothing and ornaments in her portraits

Her public image was one of Queen Elizabeth I's main concerns. In order to achieve and perpetuate the uniqueness of her image, Elizabeth was served by the most acknowledged and talented painters in her court. The propagandist use of her image in their portraits has often been interpreted. As Janet Arnold shows in *Elizabeth's*

Wardrobe Unlock'd (2014), the fabrics, colours, patterns, and symbolic elements used in her dress and apparel, altogether, contributed to emphasize Elizabeth's status as a queen. This can be seen in her portraits, the one means of visual representation in her time.

It is commonly believed that the image of the Queen was frequently manipulated in her portraits. Especially, during the later years of her reign, Elizabeth tried to hide that she was aging (Riehl). The skin of her face was always represented white and idealized to hide imperfections. This is not surprising since skin-whitening was a practice in Early Modern England in order to ensure female beauty and stress the Queen's purity and virginity. However, Riehl emphasized that the use of rich decoration, especially in her attire, could be interpreted in a similar way, as an atempt to distract the viewer's attention away from Elizabeth's face (2010, 125). This would allow her image to be perceived as an icon and certain symbols to be associated with her own persona.

What is interesting is how this manipulation of the Queen's face in her portraits contrasts with the faithfulness of their representation of her attire. In *Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (2014), Janet Arnold states that many of Elizabeth's paintings were made in the Queen's absence; the process of depicting accurately every element of her clothes and accessories would have been too tedious. In fact, only a few painters were probably allowed to paint the Queen's face, with an intention to create official patterns of Elizabeth's face which would subsequently be copied by the rest of painters (15). Arnold suggests that women from the court posed for the painters instead of the Queen. These women were dressed with Elizabeth's gowns, and wore the necessary accessories accurately disposed. In this way, the fact that the representations of Elizabeth's face (a simple copy in many of them) were not so precise (17) does not diminish the level of accuracy of the representation of Elizabeth's gowns and of the fashion of her era.

Now the Queen's clothing, which may have been used to attach certain qualities to her image, will be the main focus. Many times, these symbols were images included in her attire. Some of the most significant portraits which represent Queen Elizabeth I are the following:

Figure 1

The ‘Pelican’ portrait

Queen Elizabeth I, associated to Nicholas Hilliard, Oil on panel, *c*.1575. WAG 2994. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

The painting known as the ‘Pelican’ portrait, associated to Nicholas Hilliard and dated circa 1575 (Fig. 1), is rich in symbolism. The pelican in the jewel at her breast is interpreted to represent self-sacrifice, as in Christian tradition. In classical literature the pelican, which drew blood from its own breast to feed its young, represented Christ and his sacrifice. The onlooker would then be prepared to interpret Elizabeth as a Christian ruler and acknowledge her sacrifice in remaining single and marrying her country, becoming “the mother of her nation,”. This message is reinforced by the two cherries in her right ear which “probably refer to her virginity” ("The Phoenix and the Pelican: Two Portraits of Elizabeth I, C.1575 - National Portrait Gallery")

Figure 2

The ‘Phoenix’ Portrait

Queen Elizabeth I, associated to Nicholas Hilliard. Oil on panel, *c*.1575. NPG 190. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

In the ‘Phoenix’ portrait (Fig. 2), the powerful image of the phoenix, again in the jewel at her breast, is associated with uniqueness and immortality. The red rose held by the Queen is a symbol of virginity, since it was traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary, a quality that, Larson writes, is reinforced by the white pearls which surround Elizabeth’s waist (2017). According to Arnold, presumably a lady-in-waiting has been wearing the clothes and accessories for Hilliard, so that he could faithfully represent them (22). The same author remarks, moreover, that in this portrait jewellery and accessories have been more carefully arranged for the painter. This is in contrast

with the face, which appears to have been copied from the Pelican portrait, probably painted not more than a few months prior (23-25).

Another portrait that may be interpreted symbolically is the ‘Ermine’ portrait from around 1585 (Fig. 3), which is attributed also to Hilliard.

Figure 3

The ‘Ermine’ Portrait

Queen Elizabeth I. Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard. Oil on panel, *c*.1585. Reproduced with permission of the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House.

Larson finds many meanings to the clothing and jewellery and allegoric paraphernalia it includes: the ermine on the Queen’s right hand embodies nobility and chastity; the black pearls represent prosperity; and the Sword of the State on the right, power (123). As a result, it is argued, the portrait “disassociate[ed] her natural visage

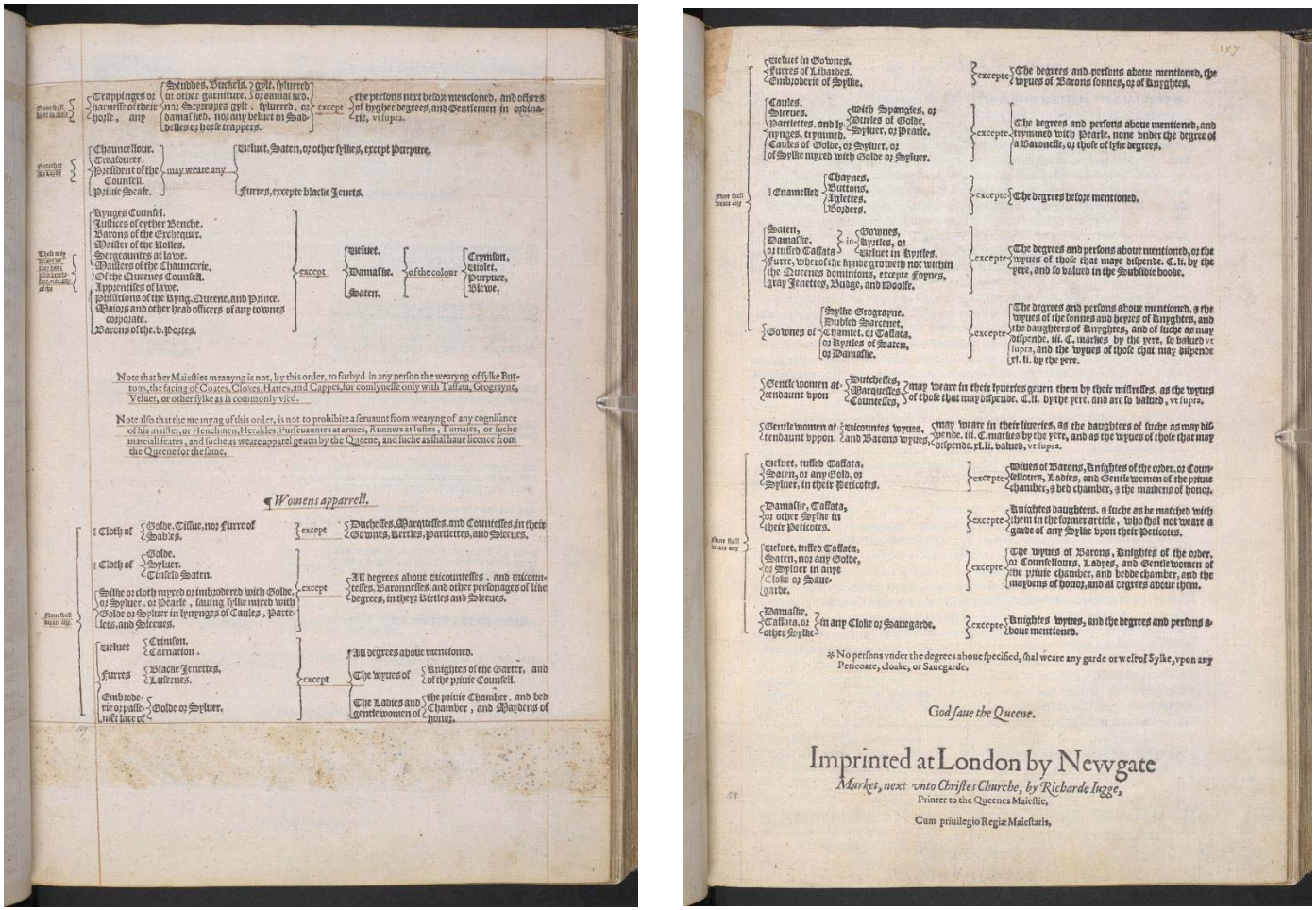
[…] recreated it anew" (128), successfully communicating her royal status and great power.

Such was the influence of Elizabeth's portrait paintings. What concerns us here is that their influence was not just symbolic, but material. As in her public apparitions, her style dictated fashion all over the country. This effect was secured by the Acts of Apparel she dictated.

2. Acts of Apparel: Elizabeth I uses her status to exalt her image

The Acts of Apparel were sumptuary laws specifically focused on establishing limitations regarding to clothing. Although these laws already existed in medieval England, restrictions gained more importance under Henry VIII, who reinforced them. During his reign, the Acts of Apparel were changed four times between 1509 and 1533 (McCarthy, 2016). Once on the throne, Elizabeth I maintained and also increased them (Shulman 81), modifying them twice. The Westminster's Act of Apparel of 7 May 1562 reserved "the most lavish accoutrements" for the royal family "including traditional royal colours of purple and gold" (79). Later on, in Greenwich, 15 June 1574, Elizabeth reinforced these restrictions with a new Statute of Apparel, which was even more specific **(**about the fabrics, colours and garments permitted for each person depending on their social status) (Flavin 124).

She ensured that those regulations were known to the people in general and enforced. The sixth homily in the Second Book of Homilies (1571), which the Church of England appointed to be read to the congregation in church, was a homily against excess of apparel. It seems obvious the Acts of Apparel were used as a tool to preserve Elizabeth's status as a queen since, in texts like this, women were encouraged not to dress excessively and Elizabeth, as queen, "delight[ed] in gorgeous apparel" (12).



Note that her Maiesties meaning is not, by this order, to forbyd in any person the wearyng of sylke Buttons, the facing of Coates, Cloakes, Hattes, and Cappes, for comlynesse only with Taffata, Grograyne, Velues, or other sylke as is commonly vsed.

Note also that the meanyng of this order, is not to prohibite a seruaunt from wearyng of any cognisance of his maister, or Henchmen, Heraldes, Pursuauntes at armes, Runners at tuftes, Turnaies, or suche marciall feates, and suche as weare apparel geuen by the Queene, and suche as shall haue licence from the Queene for the same.

¶ *Womens apparrell.*

Imprinted at London by Newgate
Market, next vnto Christes Churche, by Richarde Iugge,
Printer to the Queenes Maiestie,
Cum priuilegio Regiæ Maiestatis,

Figure 4. Proclamation against Excess of Apparel by Queen Elizabeth I (15 June 1574). Source: *A Booke containing all such Proclamations, as were published during the Raigne of the late Queene Elizabeth* (London, 1618). BL G.6463. © The British Library

What concerns us most here though, is how very precise and specific these Statutes of Apparel were in establishing (to the minutest of details) dress code, that is, the colour and fabrics forbidden to the common people ("None shall weare anu […]") and permitted to be used by the aristocracy ("except […]"), depending on their status.

The proclamation on women's apparel begins **by** establishing that the **use of** cloth of gold, tissue, and sable fur are limited to duchesses, marqueses and countesses in their gowns, kirtles (an underskirt), partlets (a piece to cover the neckline, generally of lace) and sleeves. The wearing of cloth of gold, silver, and tinseled (glittering) satin is also forbidden, as well as silk or gold, silver, and pearl embroidery, for all the degrees above viscountesses and baronesses, who may wear them, but only "in theyr Kirtles and Sleeves," that to say, not all over their outer gowns and on their main pieces.

The next restriction is for all women, except those of the degrees mentioned above and the wives of the Knights of the Garter and those of the Privy Council and the Queen's maidens. Only these can use velvet, crimson or carnation (both hues of red), of black genet or lynx ("lucerne") fur, as well as of embroidery and gold or silver lace.

The proclamation follows with much more specific restrictions for all women except the above mentioned. None of them shall wear, for instance, silk embroideries, linings of gold or silver in cawls (a long, hooded garment), partlets and sleeves, with small pieces ("spangles") of gold, silver or pearl, enamelled chains, buttons, "aglettes" (silver metal tips at the end of lace), or borders, or fabrics such as satin Damask, or tufted tafetta. These examples not only established limitations about colours or fabrics in general, but they specified in what part of the gown these colours or fabrics could appear. It seems therefore, that these restrictions also focused on limiting the quantity and visibility of these colours, ornaments and fabrics, and the limitlessness with which the Queen could dress to stand out clearly.

Although it is claimed that restrictions were used to maintain people's financial status by controlling the acquisition of expensive clothes and materials (if we agree with Dunkerley, 2017), there are clear indications that suggest these Acts of Apparel were an apparatus used by Elizabeth I to distinguish her image from the rest of people. As Queen of England and also Head of the Church, Elizabeth had the privilege to wear any fabric, colour, or material prohibited for the rest. It can be observed how Elizabeth

wisely took advantage of other things to exalt her image. The excessive usage of jewellery together with purple, crimson, silver or gold colours in her gowns strongly distinguish her image from the rest of the people.

This, I believe, can be observed in the portraits mentioned beforehand, or the ones that will be analysed in the next chapter. Therefore, it can be assumed that Elizabeth managed to distinguish herself from the others thanks to the use of portraits and proclamations to enforce the Statutes of Apparel.

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS OF ELIZABETH I'S GOWNS IN HER PORTRAITS

The late Elizabethan era was marked by a noticeable evolution in clothing, mainly in women's garments, especially between the 1570s and 1590s. It can be assumed these changes were caused by the Greenwich Acts of Apparel which Elizabeth enforced in 1574 and which brought women within its terms. As seen in the illustrations below, a clear difference exists between the austere clothing of commoners and that of the nobility. Also apparent is an evolution of style throughout the period, which was most marked in the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign.

Figure 5. Evolution of ordinary people's clothes and clothes of the elite.

Source: Niniya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies, *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) pp.12-13

As can be imagined, it must have not been an easy task to dress in adherence to Elizabethan fashion, especially if you belonged to the elite and, even more, if you were a woman. Now this essay will describe the main pieces of garment worn by Tudor women of the elite, together with their patterns, fabric, and colours, before considering four of Queen Elizabeth's portraits in order to demonstrate the characteristics and transformation of her dressing style.

1. Female Tudor fashion: fabrics, colours and patterns.

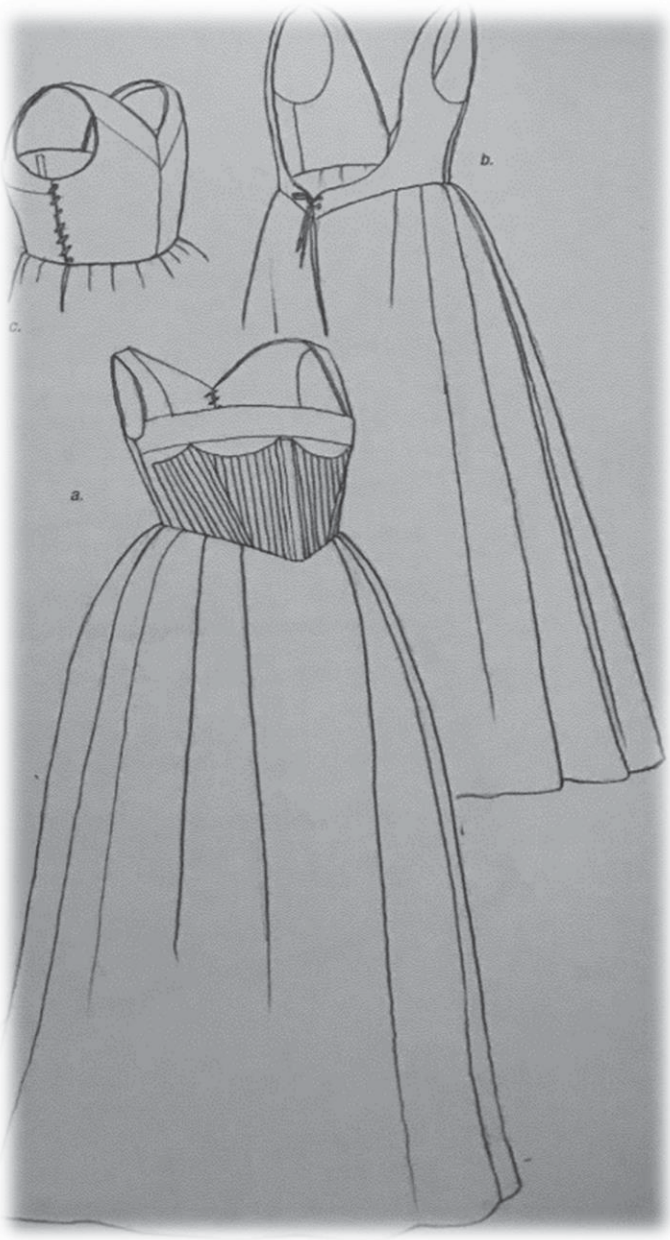
The Tudor tailor did not have an easy task. Special fabrics like silk, satin, fur, and velvet had to be imported from other continents and dying was a complex process that limited the range of colours available. The tailor had to decide whether the fabric would have its surface decorated with lining or embroidery and work on various clothing layers and underclothes, whose different parts had to be cut and finished separately before sewing them together.

The gown was the outer part of a woman's attire and it needed to impress. Therefore, expensive fabrics such as velvets or cloth of gold were used for it. Because of its high cost and complexity, "tailors made prototype garments in cheap fabrics to ensure the fit and style" (Mikhaila Ninya, and Jane Malcolm-Davies, 42). The front part of the body could be with reverse (a whole piece) or without reverse or with a stomacher (a part laced in internal laced strips) (131). As with the other pieces of garment, the different parts of a gown were finished separately and joined at the end. Such was the case of sleeves which were pinned, laced, or sewn to the bodice, when they were finished. Gowns could also have a train that trailed behind the woman.

As can be observed, the biggest evolution in Tudor gowns occurred in the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign (Fig. 6). The most common neckline was square-shaped, but later, the bodice adopted a "V" shape on the front (Fig. 7). The lacing was also moved to the front.

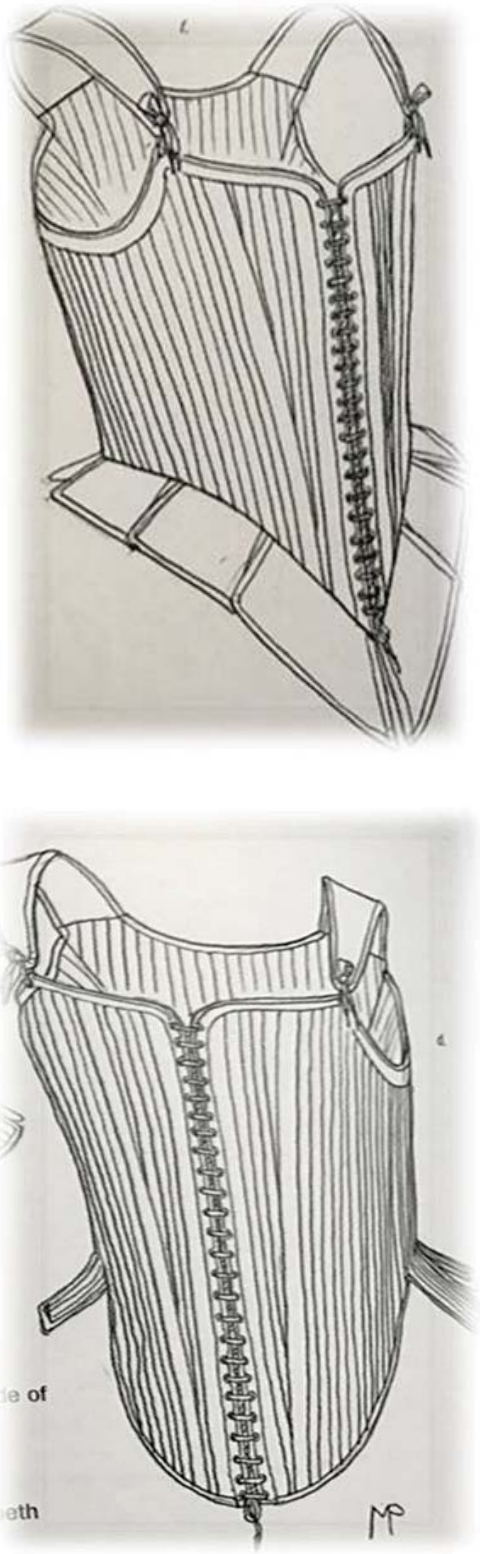
Gowns usually had a front central opening allowing the kirtle underneath to be seen. The kirtle was one of the three basic pieces of underclothing worn at the time: First, the smock, a white linen one-piece undergarment, like a chemise; then, the petticoat over it, a very light underskirt, holding from the waist, with or without an upper body; and finally, the kirtle, a bodice, made of stiffened linen, and skirt, which was laced to the side or on the back over the petticoat.

Figure 6. Fashionable Henrician lady: petticoat and kirtle



Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies. The Tudor Tailor (Batsford, 2006) p. 105

Figure 7. V-shape bodice and Figure 8. U-shape bodice



Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies. *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) p. 116

Skirts and petticoats did not need a lot of fabric, since, from the 1540s onwards, they were meant to be worn over a large, either Spanish or French, farthingale. Farthingales were thick supports worn under the skirt in order to provide more volume. Rolls were tied under the large French farthingale to support heavy skirts (Mikhaila, Ninya, and Jane Malcolm-Davies, 122).

Figure 9. Spanish Farthingale

Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies, *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) p. 122

Figure 10. French Farthingale

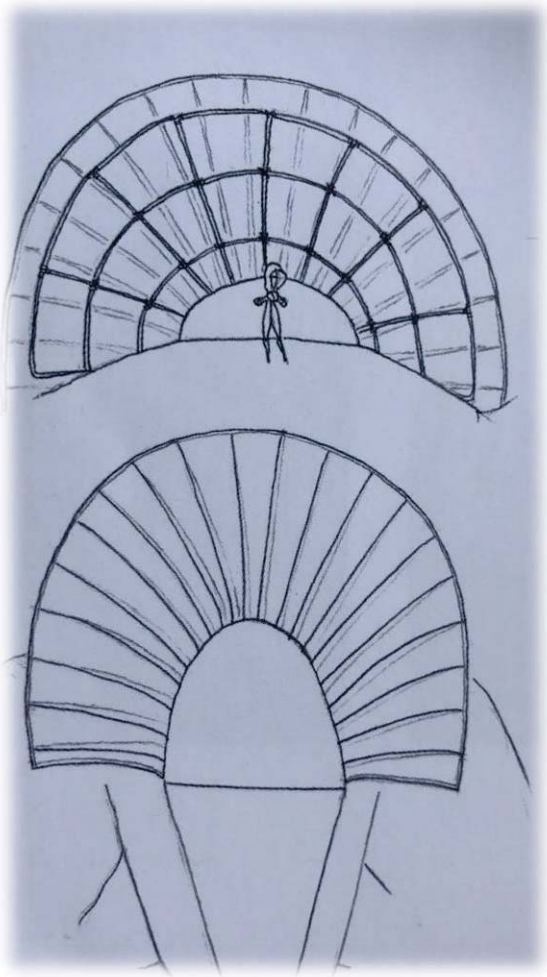
Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies. *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) p. 124

Cuffs complementing the sleeves were very common. They were independent pieces of fabric, usually lined and sewn at the end of the sleeves. Their pattern usually matched that of collars (the necklines of garments, commonly decorated with precious stones or embroidery) and ruffs (round folded collars worn around the neck or sewn into the neckline of the gown). It is noticeable how collars and ruffs increased their sizes and changed their shapes in the last two decades of Elizabeth's rule, to come, for instance, to the sort of elaborate ruffs that were lace-trimmed and pinned to the front of the bodice (134).

In regards to colours, red, blue, black and white were the most common Elizabethan dyes. Black was used for the majority of the outer clothes such as coats of cloaks, with white silk reserved for the upper classes. Later in her reign, Queen Elizabeth "adopted black and white as her colours and it was complementary to her to wear them at court" (40). Blue and red were colours associated with ordinary men and women respectively. But blue and crimson in a velvet fabric were reserved for the nobility. In the case of ordinary women, red (not velvet) colour was usually used for

the tailoring of petticoats. However, there are records which point out that "Elizabethan kirtles and waistcoats were also red" and "1,123 petticoats left in Essex wills, [out of which] 52% are described as red" (40), a very high rate and also evidence of Elizabeth's unique status as a queen, since crimson red was an extremely expensive colour which ordinary people were not allowed to use, all the more, since it was used also to create other colours such as blue, purple, brown, black, or violet. The intensity of the colours was closely related to the price of them and the combination of these with a costly fabric, like grain silk, for instance, were exclusively reserved for the royal family.

Figure 11: Back and front view of standing collar with supportasse underneath, tied to the bodice collar



Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies. *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) p.132

Figure 12: Plain and Darted cuff

Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies. *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) p. 132

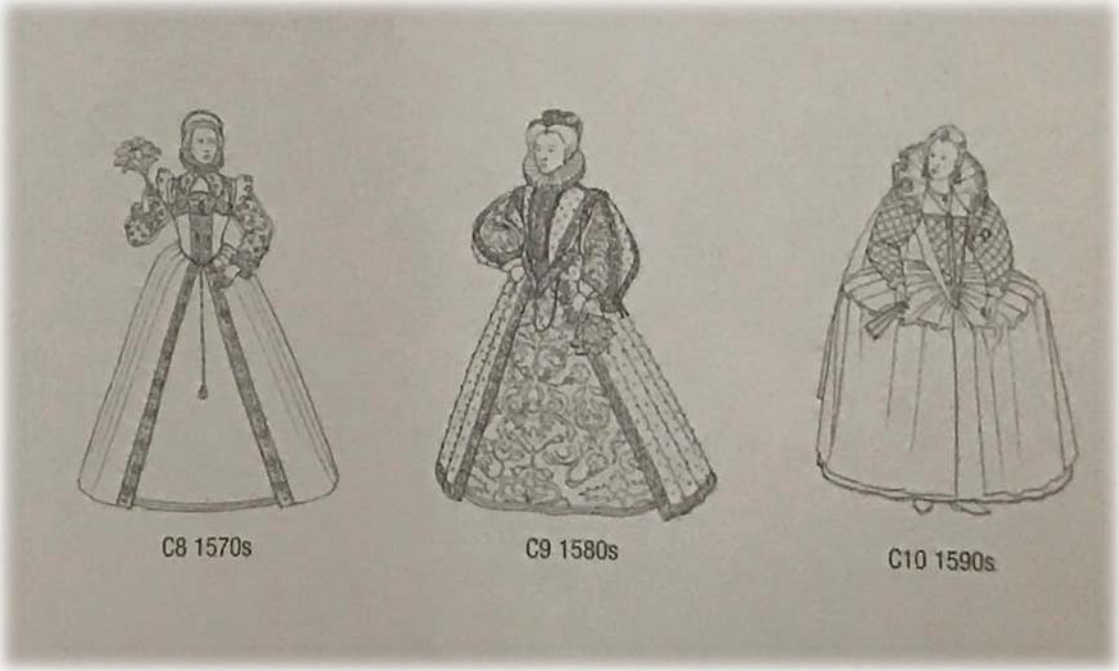
Gowns usually had a front central opening allowing the kirtle underneath to be seen, playing with the different texture of the materials and contrasting colours. As Mikhaila and Malcolm-Davies remind us, in Elizabethan times, surface decoration featured on clothing (43). Lining and hemming were commonly used for women's skirts in order to increase their volume. Kirtles were usually manufactured from different material, but the same colour. Stripes "applied in single or multiple rows" in outer garments were also common for all social classes (43). Embroidery was also a very popular tendency. Nature motifs were widely used, such as floral and animal designs. It is essential to mention pearls as a desired piece of jewellery for any noble woman during this time.

2. Women's clothes evolution: analysis of four portraits

The evolution in style of Elizabeth I's gowns is shown in her portraits. After Elizabeth's death, it was estimated the Queen left 6,000 gowns. An inventory from 1600 listed 1,900 items (Mikhaila, Ninya, and Jane Malcolm-Davies, 46). This is not surprising considering Elizabeth's aim to create a powerful image of herself in front of the public. Proof of this is found in the many portraits left where the appearance studied above can be observed. To illustrate this, Elizabeth's gowns in four of her most

significant portraits from the second half of her reign are analysed, not before considering the sequence of style illustrated below:

Figure 13: Late Elizabethan noble women's clothing evolution



Source: Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies. *The Tudor Tailor* (Batsford, 2006) p.13

The first portrait to be studied is known as the 'Darnley' portrait, in reference to a previous owner. It dates from 1575 and its authorship is unknown. The National Portrait Gallery, where it hangs, considers "[i]t was almost certainly painted from life and the resulting pattern for the Queen's face was regularly reused for the remainder of her reign."

Figure 14

The ‘Darnley’ Portrait

Queen Elizabeth I, associated to unknown artist. Oil on panel, c.1575. NPG 2082 © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Elizabeth appears in a floral pattern gown. There is a contrast between the embroidery, which seems to be brown or gold, and the almost silver colour of the dress. However, the National Portrait Gallery suggests colours have faded over the years, and

that originally the embroidery was of a crimson red colour. Considering the red decoration of the bodice part and the red buttons, this is a more than reliable theory. As mentioned previously, crimson was a very expensive dye, and since it was a very bright colour it was reserved for nobility and royal members. The bodice has a "V" shape, but it is not exaggeratedly pronounced. The edges are decorated with precious stones matching the colours of the gown. The gown was probably worn over a Spanish farthingale. The sleeves are puffed and they have white lined cuffs which match the pattern of the big ruff which encircles Elizabeth's face. Pearls appear here for the first time. No less important is the feather fan, also considered a noble accessory, and prohibited by the Act of Apparel for the non-elite women. The lack of excessive jewellery does not mean Elizabeth I is not taking advantage of her status as queen; the crimson colour used for the embroidery of the gown was strictly restricted to royalty, and it can be seen how she manages to differentiate herself by its usage in this gown. Furthermore, "the masculinity of the queen's Polish-style doublet in this portrait helps to create an image of a woman equal to her male counterparts in other European countries," in the view of the researchers of Making Art in Tudor Britain.

The second portrait subject to analysis was also painted around 1575. Its painter is also unknown. It is said to have been commissioned by the Earl of Leicester for festivities at Kenilworth, hoping that Elizabeth might marry him. It is now part of the collection of the Reading Museum in Reading.

Figure 15

The ‘Reading’ Portrait

Queen Elizabeth I. By Unknown artist. Oil on board, *c.*1575. REDMG 1980.168.1. Reading Museum, Reading.

Elizabeth appears in a stunning white gown. However, its colour probably was bright silver, and faded with the years as in the rest of the portraits. The bodice has its neckline tight to the neck and finishes with a ruff lined with golden thread. The sleeves have rolls attached to the shoulder part of the bodice in order to give volume. The rest of the sleeve falls freely. Likely, the main fabric of the sleeves is vailed in transparent silk. The bodice has a distinct “V” shape, emphasized by the use of a chain, probably made of precious stones. The skirt is most likely worn over a Spanish farthingale and it is also lined to give more volume. There is a central opening through which a kirtle

may be seen, in matching colours and patterns. The decorative pattern of the bodice part matches the sleeves' rolls, the bodice's hems and the kirtle.

There is a marked contrast between the gold colours of the surface clothing and the black colours of the underclothes which can be seen in the many openings. The gown is decorated in a more austere way. Both patterns follow a floral design as in the previous portrait. The gold of the embroidery contrasts the silver-white of the gown. Elizabeth has many pieces of jewellery, with precious stones and pearls that match the accessories worn to decorate her hairstyle.

The colours used for the Queen's gown, all the excessive jewellery and the materials are closely related to the Statutes of Apparel enforced by her. For instance, the whole gown has been embroidered with gold thread (which was exclusive for some social rankings). Moreover, the whole dress has ornaments which presumably are made from precious stones. Once more, Elizabeth I is opulently represented, to distinguish her status as a queen among the rest of people through the usage of her unique image created by her apparel.

The third portrait is the well-known 'Armada Portrait,' attributed to George Gower, was painted in 1588, after Philip II of Spain's failed naval campaign against England. It is now exhibited by the Royal Museums Greenwich, but it had remained in the possession of Sir Francis Drake's descendants until only last year.

The third portrait is the well-known *Armada Portrait* attributed to George Gower. It was painted in 1588, after Elizabeth's triumph over Spain in the Spanish armada.

Figure 16

The 'Armada' Portrait

Queen Elizabeth I. By Unknown English artist. Oil on panel, *c*.1588. ZBA7719. Royal Museums of Greenwich, London.

Clearly, the Queen's gown is even more ostentatious than the one from the previous portrait. It can be associated with the evolution in clothing between 1580s and 1590s. Elizabeth is wearing sleeves and kirtle in silver colour. They contrast with the black colour of the gown. The floral pattern in gold and black over the sleeves and the kirtle and the plain black used for the bodice and skirt also contrast. Moreover, there are decorative red laces on the edges of her gown (which is worn over the kirtle) and her cloak, which emphasize this contrast. It may be deduced the sleeves and kirtle are ornamented with pearls and gems. The sleeves have a puff pattern which increases the volume of the gown. The bodice part shows a very marked "V" shape reaching the

kirtle, which adds contrast between the colours. The gown was possibly worn above a French farthingale since it is bulkier than the previous ones.

Once more the sleeves' cuff and the ruff share the same pattern. Elizabeth's face is framed in a white big ruff accentuating her majestic expression of serenity. No less important are the pearl ornaments which appear on the edges of the Queen's gown and robe, as well as her splendid jewellery.

Again, Elizabeth takes advantage of the Statutes of Apparel to promote her powerful and unique image. She as a queen was the only one allowed to combine accessories, materials and colours without any limitation, and this is precisely what can be seen in this portrait. Her majesty is undeniable, not only because of the power transmitted by her apparel, but also by the background. The earth globe and the crown which appear as decorative elements are equally important in conveying meaning. Their role is to symbolize Elizabeth's power, not only in England, but all over the world.

The last portrait which will be analysed here holds no less weight of significance, because it is the portrait painted closest to Elizabeth's death. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger painted it around 1592. It is called the 'Ditchley' portrait, after the name of the residence of the courtier that commissioned it. It remained within the family until it was bequeathed to the National Portrait Gallery in 1932.

Figure 17

The “Ditchley” portrait

Queen Elizabeth I. By Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger. Oil on canvas, *c*.1592. NPG 2561. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

It is very different from the others in terms of colour range. In this portrait Elizabeth is wearing a completely white dress accompanied by a white cloak. In Janet Arnold’s words, “[t]he petticoat, matching stomacher, sleeves, and lining for the hanging sleeves of the gown are in white silk apparently with secondary weft of fine silver metal threads” (43).

Once more, the bodice has a pronounced “V” shape and the sleeves are puffed creating more volume. The gown is worn over a wide French farthingale and edged with silver lace. The pattern in the sleeves’ cuffs matches that of the ruffs’, which is laced and white. The decorative pattern is identical in all the pieces the gown is composed by. It uses floral and geometrical figures in a contrasting bright gold-orange colour. This conveys a striking image of firmness. But if one thing stands out in this portrait, it is the wired veil on the Queen’s shoulders, which in Arnold’s guess, resembles “cobweb lawn or cypress” (44), standing in two hoops at the back.

Once again, Elizabeth’s background is as important as her majestic image, since she is standing on a map of the world. It shows her political power, not only in England, but all over the world. Yet, the strength of the painting lies in that Elizabeth is wearing an exceptional gown which only she as a queen had the right to wear due to the many restrictions established by the Statues of Apparel, wisely taking advantage of her privileges as a queen, by mixing materials and accessories (which common and noble people were not allowed to) to distinguish herself among the rest of people. Elizabeth wears silk with gold, silver, and pearl embroidery, all over, which was limited to people from the degrees above viscountesses and baronesses. However, even they were restricted to wear them only in their kirtles and sleeves, as the proclamation of 1574 had commanded.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF ELIZABETH'S GOWNS IN KAPUR'S *ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE*

This section will analyse four of the gowns designed by Alexandra Byrne and worn by Cate Blanchett in the film *Elizabeth I: The Golden Age*, by comparing their main characteristics to those of the gowns in the portraits. The three are worn in some of the most important scenes in the film and emulate the rich, delicate fabrics and dress-making techniques of the Elizabethan period.

1. The crimson gown

The first comparison is between the 'Darnley' portrait (Fig. 14) and a crimson red gown worn by Cate Blanchet. Blanchett wears this gown in her first scene in the film, in which she is discussing with her counsellors the increasing Spanish influence among English population.

Figure 18: Elizabeth enthroned in a crimson gown.

Source: *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) by Shekhar Kapur. Substraed from "Costume & Movies". Pinterest, 2017.

It is quite symbolic to find Elizabeth in an astounding crimson gown the first time she appears on screen. It is also significant, because of the association of red-hue silk colour with royal status. Let us remember how, according to her own proclamations, the different shades of red ("purpure", crimson, scarlet) were only allowed to be used by the King and Queen, their family and higher nobility, especially when these were wearing gowns made of silk or velvet, and these were embroidered with gold, silver or pearls. The scene depicts her giving her opinion among her advisers, those being men, whose costumes contrast markedly hers. They are clothed in black, and her ladies-in-waiting, in white and grey hues.

Figure 19. Elizabeth among courtiers and ladies-in waiting

Source: *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) by Shekhar Kapur. Subtracted from "Fav Fames". Pinterest, 2017.

At first sight the colours seem to differ from the colour of the gown which appears in the 'Darnley' portrait. But as stated beforehand, studies carried out by

the National Portrait Gallery claim that colours faded and originally the colour of the gown's ornamentation was crimson red.

The gown in the film is made of crimson damask fabric, with velvet floral applique and embroidery on sleeves and skirt, and in bodice and kirtle (King, Sarah n.d.). The bodice part has a "V" shape, which, however, this time it is not so strongly marked. The gown is probably worn over a Spanish farthingale. The skirt is lined from the hems which are integrated with the bodice part. The sleeves are puffed, but not exaggeratedly so they match the volume given to the skirt by the farthingale. There are no cuffs, but undersleeves matching the ruff's pattern and colour. The ruff is lined in white fabric with red shades matching the range of colours used for the gown, as can be seen here.

In the 'Darnley' portrait, Elizabeth wears two pearl necklaces as accessories. By contrast, in the film the Queen is meaningfully carrying a necklace tied under her ruff, with a jester on a foolscap with bells pending, today's image of a woman's royal rule over the men. However, in the portrait Elizabeth sustains a feather fan which is accurately represented in the film (Fig.14). Moreover, feathers are used as an adornment in her hairstyle, exalting the grandiosity of the Queen.

Therefore, similarities between this gown and the 'Darnley' portrait are implicit. Both gowns not only share the same colour range and floral pattern used for the decoration, but the shape of the bodice part, sleeves and skirt also coincide. The implications of the use of a red-hued colour, in a member of the royalty, are also evident.

2. The silver-blue gown

The next comparison will be established between the 1575 portrait from the Reading Museum and the silver-blue gown Blanchett wears in the film. It is worn in a more private scene, with Elizabeth I about to have a private audience with Sir Walter Raleigh.

Figure 20. Elizabeth I in a silver-blue gown

Subtracted from “Elizabeth: the Golden Age”, 2007 by Shekhar Kapur.

The bodice part of the gown has a “V” shape, but it not strongly marked. Its shoulder part has a deep blue tone of colour made from other fabric to create a contrast. The sleeves have rolls, from the same fabric as the upper part of the bodice. The rest of the sleeves match the blue-silver colour of the gown.

The gown is worn over a Spanish farthingale, and the skirt is lined to increase the volume. There is a central opening from which the kirtle can be appreciated. The kirtle presents floral embroidered applique, which appears to be silver, and the fabric underneath is of a darker bluer shade. The rest of the gown has a plain colour without embroidery which makes it very suitable for more private situations, as the one Cate Blanchett embodies in the film. There is no big ruff or cuffs, which is consistent with that private atmosphere.

It seems clear this dress shares more than one element with the 1575 portrait. The bodices "V" shape, the front opening of the gown and the contrast it has with the embroidery of the kirtle are identical. Another key component to consider in this comparison are the rolls used to puff the shoulders' part of the sleeves also found in the portrait. What is for sure is that the shade of blue and silver used in this costume strengthens the Queen's image of majesty and nobility, given the lack of regalia adorning her attire. As is known from her Act of apparel of 1574, the use of cloth of silver, embroidered or not, was restricted to monarchs and higher aristocracy

3. The white gown.

The iconic 'Ditchley' portrait, perhaps not surprisingly, may seem to inspire not one, but two of the gowns Cate Blanchett wears in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, one white and another embroidered in gold.

The first scene in which Elizabeth appears in a white gown is in the early chapel scene. But she wears white on two other occasions: in the attempted assassination scene and in the final scene. The three scenes are associated with purity and virginity. In the first, she is at prayer, in the second, she must resist an assassin's attack, and in the third she eventually declares that she is married to her people. This essay will consider the dress in the second scene.

The bodice part has a very pronounced "V" shape, and the skirt is probably worn over a Spanish farthingale. This demonstrates the evolution Elizabethan fashion experienced during the second half of her reign. Gowns became wider and emphasized a round shape around the hips.

The skirt's lining starts from the hems on the waist part. The sleeves are puffed and attached to the shoulders. No cuffs can be seen, only undersleeves and a large lined ruff in matching colours. The gown does not have a front opening. Its ornamentation is composed by floral embroidery in the same shade of colour. As accessories, Elizabeth is wearing four necklaces of gold pearls and a long transparent veil.

Figure 21: Elizabeth I in a white gown

Subtracted from “Elizabeth: the Golden Age”, 2007 by Shekhar Kapur.

In the case of the gown embroidered in gold, the bodice part has a strongly emphasized “V” shape.

Figure 22: Elizabeth I in a golden gown

Source: Subtracted from Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007), by Shekhar Kapur.

The sleeves are puffed, but fall freely over Elizabeth's arms. The gown does not have front opening and it seems to be worn over a French farthingale which allows the gown to have a wider and rounder shape. This shape is accentuated by some extra layers of fabric which are attached to the waist where the bodice and the skirt are attached to each other. The skirt presents a plain golden colour which contrasts with the lavishly ornamented front part of the bodice and the sleeves. The bodice is fully covered with gold and precious stones. There is a large ruff lined in a golden thread. A veil as a main ornament is worn in two round wires, probably attached at the back part of the ruff. Various gold necklaces contribute to generate such grandiosity.

The role of this spectacular gown in the scene is to emphasize Elizabeth's power and contrast it with the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The triumph is underscored by the Queen's standing over the continent. This is a key scene and the gown is as grandiose as can be. According the Acts of Apparel, cloth of gold was reserved for the

king and queen exclusively; duchesses, marquesses and countesses could wear it, but only in their kirtles and sleeves.

Figure 23: Elizabeth I in the Map Room

Subtracted from “Elizabeth: the Golden Age”, 2007 by Shekhar Kapur.

There is not only a clear relationship between this gown and the ‘Ditchley’ Portrait. It also strongly influenced the background. It is perhaps not mere coincidence that the pattern of the gown worn in this scene very similar to the one which Elizabeth wears in the Armada portrait. The scene in which the Queen appears over the floor map of Europe dressed in a spectacular golden gown comes after the news of the fall of the Spanish fleet. However, colour range, shape of bodice, and accessories respond more closely to the ‘Ditchley’ painting of 1592. The fact that Elizabeth is standing on a floor map, exactly as in that painting, stresses this connection, and the loneliness of her position resembles that in the portrait.

All this enables me to say that the gowns described above, and the others mentioned, follow patterns that make them accurate to the historical costumes. Whether they still preserve today many of the meanings that the originals conveyed in

Elizabethan time is a different matter. It is true that, as Carol Levin suggests, many people support the idea that Elizabeth I represented the ideal of chastity to her people, but that "the way Elizabeth fashioned herself in her pubic presentations is far more contradictory and complex" (39). Yet, for the purposes of this dissertation, it seems reasonable to assume that all of the gowns used in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* create the uniqueness of the image Elizabeth I transmitted to her subjects during the last thirty years of her reign. Despite the fact that Kapur has been widely criticized because of the lack in historicity of his work, it appears undeniable that the uniqueness of Elizabeth's image stayed untouchable through the exclusiveness of the Queen's attire.

CONCLUSION

In analysing criticism on Tudor films, the main statutes and trends of Elizabethan fashion, and the gowns used in the film *Elizabeth: The Golden* Age (Universal Pictures, 2007), a number of conclusions can be made. It is undeniable Queen Elizabeth I used her dress and attire to create a unique and iconic image of herself. In spite of the fact that the topic of Tudor fashion has been thoroughly researched (as in Mikhaila and Malcolm-Davies's *The Tudor Tailor* (2006)), as well as Elizabeth's dress and attire (as in Janet Arnold's *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (2014)), it is surprising that no research has looked into the historical accuracy of the gowns designed for Shekhar Kapur's film. This is especially surprising given that the work of costumer designer Alexandra Byrne had been so highly acclaimed.

Because of this, this dissertation attempted to answer the following questions:

1) What image did Elizabeth's gowns promote during the last thirty years of her reign?

2) Are the gowns used in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* historically accurate with respect to the ones used by the Queen in her own time?

The view that Queen Elizabeth used her apparel to create an iconic image of herself may be concluded from the literature read, and the study of her portraits and that of her Acts of Apparel contributes to strengthen this point of view. After analysing them, it is clear that Elizabeth not only followed the fashion of her era, but created her exclusive appearance by taking advantage of this unique image in public, in her artistic depictions and in her proclamations.

Fabrics such as damask, silk, or linen, or colours like gold, silver or purple, were completely reserved for the royal family and the high nobility. However, the freedom of combining all these elements at the same time, and all over her attire, was an exclusive right for a monarch like Elizabeth. This can be seen a number scenes in the film, in which Elizabeth wears bright crimson attire, a blue-silver gown and white and gold costumes. The exclusiveness is achieved by the usage of these colours (ermine, rose, gold and crimson colours) for the whole dress, which would not have been possible for the rest of nobility due to the many restrictions established by the Statutes

of Apparel. That way, she maintained her exclusivity of appearance by taking advantage of her power as a queen to enforce these restrictions which affected the rest of population.

The gowns that Elizabeth is wearing in her portraits have real references. As mentioned by Arnold more than once, the gowns left after Elizabeth's death boast the same golden, silver, crimson-red or white colour. Also, their patterns are contemporary, their decorative motifs are floral, and the fabrics are frequently silk or damask. All these characteristics which may be observed in the Armada, Ditchley, and Darnley portraits, make clear how Elizabeth's gowns strictly follow the fashion of this historical period.

Therefore, in recalling the first question of this research paper, the answer seems to be clear. Elizabeth, through the usage of her gowns promoted an iconic image of herself, always related to power and self-confidence. Her gowns always emphasized her feminine attractiveness without leaving behind the masculine decisive side she needed in order to be recognized as a ruler by the rest of people. For example, the floral patterns, tight bodice parts and voluminous skirts emphasize Elizabeth's body shape. However, the colours, materials and decorative elements (such as precious stones or pearls) emphasize her unique social status and power as a ruler. She was the only one allowed to freely combine them.

The same characteristics are present in the four gowns from the film that have been analysed. The crimson damask gown with a floral pattern, a central opening, and Spanish farthingale clearly resembles the gown in the Darnley portrait. The silver-blue gown that was highly probably made of silk, with a central opening, was very likely worn above a Spanish farthingale and with floral pattern is very similar to the attire worn by Elizabeth in the Armada Portrait. The white gown and the golden gown seem to be inspired by the Ditchley Portrait due to their light colours. Both gowns do not have a central opening, but a beautiful floral pattern on the skirt or on the sleeves and bodice parts. The crimson red, white and silver gowns boast a highly marked "V" bodice shape, precious stones appliques, big cuffs and ruffs following the fashion of the time. The blue-silver gown is simpler in terms of decoration, since Elizabeth does not appear in it at public events.

This answers the second research question proposed. Here the information gap seemed to be bigger and more controversial, due to the many sources denying the historicity of *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. This paper however also concludes that the gowns in the film are historically accurate. By establishing a comparative analysis between Elizabeth's gowns in portraits and the gowns used in the film, this dissertation has demonstrated that the design of the gowns used in the film has been highly influenced by the real gowns Elizabeth used during her reign. Therefore, presumably the image a twenty-first century audience perceives when watching the film is very alike to the one Elizabeth transmitted to her people during her reign. Elizabeth's image stays untouchable representing the uniqueness and exclusiveness of her apparel which characterize her.

A future study investigating the historicity of the rest of the Queen's costumes in the film would be interesting, which should include more specific detail on textiles and decorative elements of each gown, but also a study on the historical accuracy of Elizabeth's armour. Further research might apply the same questions and method to the study of the first film Shekhar produced (Elizabeth.

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