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Jméno a příjmení: **Kateřina Pecková**
Osobní číslo: **H19123**
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Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.**
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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doc. Mgr. Jiří Kubeš, Ph.D.
děkan

Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

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Kateřina Pecková

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals with the depiction of the Elizabethan Era and English Renaissance in two modern historical novels. The theoretical part introduces the genre of a modern historical novel written by women and describes aspects of the English Renaissance of the 16th century, such as education, poetry, and drama. Furthermore, it presents the context of the reign of Elizabeth Tudor, focusing on her succession, position as a woman in politics, faith, and her approach to marriage. The analytical part then aims at the portrayal of these aspects of the life of Elizabeth I in the two chosen works – *Elizabeth I* by Margaret George and *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir.

KEYWORDS

Elizabethan Era, English Renaissance, Elizabeth I, modern historical novel

NÁZEV

Osobnost královny Alžběty I. v moderním historickém románu

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vyobrazením alžbětinského období a anglické renesance ve dvou moderních historických románech. Teoretická část práce představuje žánr moderního historického románu, který je psaný ženami a popisuje dané aspekty anglické renesance 16. století, jako vzdělání, poezie nebo drama. Dále prezentuje kontext vlády Alžběty Tudorovny a zaměřuje se na Alžbětino následnictví na anglickém trůnu, postavení ženy v politice, víru a přístup Alžběty ke sňatku. Analytická část se pak těmito aspekty života Alžběty I. podrobně zabývá a zaměřuje se na to, jak jsou vyobrazeny v dílech *Elizabeth I* od Margaret George a *The Marriage Game* od Alison Weir.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

alžbětinské období, anglická renesance, Alžběta I., moderní historický román

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INTRODUCTION

The Elizabethan Era is the period of the reign of one of the most famous English monarchs – Elizabeth Tudor. Her interesting life, full of various obstacles and complicated relationships, presents an appealing topic for many writers. Therefore, the character of Elizabeth I is frequently occurrent in historical novels, the genre, which probably originates at the beginning of the 19th century, and which has become popular ever since. Such fiction written in the past years gained a new title – “the modern historical novel”. For this paper, it is essential to introduce some of the characteristics of this literary form first. This is crucial, especially because of the fact that the practical part will compare aspects of the English Renaissance and the Elizabethan Era on two modern historical novels written by women, and the genre will not be dealt with in the analysis on its own. Consequently, the first chapter will consist of a commentary related to the two chosen works, too.

The English Renaissance was an important part of people’s lives in Tudor England. It was a cultural and intellectual movement that appeared already in the 14th century in Italy. However, it took a long time before there were good enough conditions in England for the new movement to thrive. More precisely, it was around two hundred years later than in Europe. Despite this delay, the Renaissance represented a period of flourishing in many areas, including schooling, poetry, and theatre. Thanks to this, the era is often referenced to as the Golden Age in English history. Many authors whose literary efforts are admired even today contributed to this success. In terms of poetry and drama, the works of William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, and Christopher Marlowe are very significant.

Apart from the Renaissance, the reign of Elizabeth was influenced by other factors. The succession of Elizabeth to the English throne was uncertain itself, since her father Henry VIII had six wives, in hopes that at least one of them would give him a son. For the purpose of divorce, he established the new Anglican Church and separated it from Catholicism. After his death, young Elizabeth had to endure the cruel rule of her stepsister, who rejected the new faith and accepted papal authority again. As soon as Elizabeth became the Queen after the death of her sister, her first changes were regarding faith. She restored Protestantism and secured a relative peace in her kingdom. There were times when Elizabeth’s position on the throne was threatened. It was the situation of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, who saw herself as the rightful Queen of England, or of Robert Devereux, who planned a political coup against Elizabeth. As a woman, the Queen was almost immediately considered weaker than if she were a king, but

Elizabeth was resistant to such assumptions. It can be seen, for instance, on the way she used her gender in diplomacy. Keeping the marriage negotiations open in order to avoid potential conflicts with other countries was one of her many talents. But she was not usually serious about marrying anyone, there were probably only two men with whom she shared genuine affections – the Earl of Leicester and the Duke of Alencon.

These aspects of the English Renaissance and the Elizabethan Era will be introduced in chapter 2 and 3, and later discussed in two following chapters in the practical part. The analysis then aims to show and compare the portrayal of the Tudor queen in *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir and in *Elizabeth I* by Margaret George.

1. MODERN HISTORICAL NOVEL AND WOMEN'S WRITING IN THE 20TH CENTURY

A novel, the lengthiest of the forms in literature, can be divided into many genres. For the analytic part of my bachelor thesis, I have chosen two modern historical novels written by female authors in the 21st century. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the definition of the modern historical novel, briefly discusses its origin, and mentions some major aspects of the writing done by women about Elizabeth Tudor in the 20th century, which contributed to the trends in recent historical fiction.

When defining the modern historical novel, it may be convenient to separate the term into two. The first term would be “the modern novel”. There are more viewpoints to this one, considering someone may perceive the word “modern” in a sense of contemporary, while someone else sees it as a product of the Modernist movement. David Daiches says that “the breakdown in community of belief about what was significant in experience, new notions of time, new notions of consciousness”¹ are the main characteristics of the modern novel. Jesse Matz agrees with Daiches, he suggests that the modern novel brings new things to literature, including techniques, theories, and languages. But he admits that the term also refers to all fiction written recently, in modern times.² With the genre of a historical novel, modernity most probably stands for the time when the piece was written as it is implied in the following descriptions of historical fiction.

To define the historical novel, it is clear from the title that this type of prose deals with events and persons of the past. It would be expected that the protagonist is a very important character that in a way changed history but Clive King stresses that the characters of these works do not have to be necessarily royalties and nobles.³ What connects all historical novels is the fact that they cannot be set in the writer's present time. Several authors find it difficult to agree on how many years the difference has to be for the novels to be called historical. According to Fleishman, it should be written at least 40–60 years prior to the author's present, which are two generations.⁴ Historical Novel Society agrees and asserts that “a novel must have been written at least fifty years after the events described, or have been written by someone who was not alive at the time of those events (who therefore approaches them only by

¹ David Daiches, “What Was the Modern Novel?” *Critical Inquiry* 1, no. 4 (June 1975): 816.

² Jesse Matz, *The Modern Novel: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 6–7.

³ Clive King, “The Historical Novel: An Under-Used Resource,” *Teaching History*, no. 51 (April 1988): 24.

⁴ Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: From Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins Press, 1971), 3.

research).”⁵ One of the authors who are not content with the established range of approximately 50 years is Alastair M. Taylor. In his article, he does not highlight any time period, he just comments on the relevance of the novels being written by someone who has never seen the times in which the story is set.⁶ Consequently, the author of the historical fiction is not fully familiar with the era and thus must do thorough research to make their writing authentic.

As it was suggested, historical novels need to stem from some factual information. It is fiction so it cannot be one hundred percent accurate. Diana Wallace even points out that the term “historical fiction” can be seen as an oxymoron since it deals with history which is based on facts on one hand and with made-up things on the other.⁷ In order to avoid their novels sounding pretentious, authors need to go through many materials and spend long hours preparing. To support this, Alfred B. Guthrie says: “The historical novelist must know his history—which means that in the actual preparation of a book he must spend at least as much time in research as in writing.”⁸ He further clarifies it and states that the authors of historical fiction must, among other things, know about the social conflicts, political situation, and economic concerns and their effects on the lives of people of their setting. The novelists must pay attention to the way people dressed, talked and how they spent their time.⁹ Georg Lukács shares the same opinion. He adds that the historical novel demonstrates with precision that something happened, or someone existed in a particular manner.¹⁰ Thanks to this, the readers can come to a better understanding of the people and events of the past.

Also, it is unusual for historical novels to focus on a whole era. As Max Byrd says it is rather a job of an academic historian to write a story as a chronicle from beginning to end.¹¹ This is true for the two novels about Elizabeth I in my analysis. One of them starts in 1558, when Elizabeth became the Queen, and ends the year of her death (1603). The second one has the same ending but opens the story in 1588. In addition, Byrd suggests that the majority of historical novels are written in the third person and can be narrated from numerous points of view. He draws an example from his own writing when he says that he finds it arrogant to write

⁵ Grant Rodwell, “Defining the Historical Novel,” in *Whose History?: Engaging History Students through Historical Fiction* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2013), 47.

⁶ Alastair MacDonald Taylor, “The Historical Novel: As a Source in History,” *The Sewanee Review* 46, no. 4 (Oct. – Dec. 1938): 470.

⁷ Diana Wallace, *The Woman’s Historical Novel: British Women Writers, 1900–2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), x.

⁸ Alfred B. Guthrie, “The Historical Novel,” *The Montana Magazine of History* 4, no. 4 (Autumn 1954): 4.

⁹ Guthrie, “The Historical Novel,” 4–5.

¹⁰ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, transl. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 43.

¹¹ Max Byrd, “The Brief History of a Historical Novel,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 31, no. 4 (Autumn 2007): 27.

in someone else's voice and hence uses the third person.¹² When looking again at the two chosen books, unlike *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir who follows Byrd's example and writes in the third person, Margaret George in *Elizabeth I* chooses to narrate the story in the first person singular, using two different points of view – Elizabeth's and Lettice Knollys'. To conclude, based on the characterisations above, the modern historical novel can be defined as longer prose written quite recently that is set in times before the author's birth and which is at least partly factually accurate, enriched by fictional characters and events.

Moving on to the origin of a historical novel, Sir Walter Scott is believed by most people to be the first one to write in this genre. His novel *Waverley* was written in the first half of the 19th century, and as Elizabeth D. Ermarth says, Scott's achievements were an inspiration to many Europeans in the nineteenth century who "were able to write into existence a new historical narrative of social identity."¹³ Since both novels chosen for my analysis are written by women, there is one more author worth mentioning. Her name is Ann Radcliffe, and some people are convinced that it is she who is responsible for the rise of historical fiction. In his book *The Historical Novel* translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, Georg Lukács even calls Radcliffe one of Scott's "forerunners."¹⁴ *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, published 20 years before Scott's *Waverley*, can be indeed considered a historical novel for its story takes place in the past. Diana Wallace supports this theory and says:

[...] Anne Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), is in fact a 'historical' novel, being set (however vaguely) in the sixteenth century. Radcliffe, in contrast to the writers of 'real history', uses her historical setting as a fantasy space in which she can centralise a female consciousness and explore female fears and desires.¹⁵

Although Scott's and Radcliffe's writing was influential, historical novels written by women were not very common until the 20th century. Maybe women started to write this type of fiction in reaction to their gender constantly being overlooked and left out of important events in history, as well as they tend to be excluded from traditional historical narratives. Diana Wallace suggests that thanks to historical novels by female authors, women can become central to the story.¹⁶ There were multiple reasons for writing such works. As probably most novels, one of the purposes is to escape everyday reality. But there is more to that. Wallace says that historical fiction in women's hands often approaches topics that would otherwise be taboo, or they project

¹² Byrd, "The Brief History of a Historical Novel," 31.

¹³ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *The English Novel in History 1840-1895* (London: Routledge, 2005), 71.

¹⁴ Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 30.

¹⁵ Wallace, *The Woman's Historical Novel*, 1–2.

¹⁶ Wallace, *The Woman's Historical Novel*, ix.

a critique of present issues into the past.¹⁷ When it comes to the development of this genre written by women in the 20th century, according to many authors, the 1930s was the decade of its boom. Anthea Trodd claims that before the 1920s these novels were even unpopular. Feminism was crucial for their newly achieved success because the interest in knowing the women of the past and their lives increased.¹⁸ Wallace agrees with Trodd that feminism played a role, and to supplement it, she says that another reason for the emergence of the novel was the fact that there was the first generation of women who studied history at university, for instance, Winifred Holtby or Rose Macaulay.¹⁹ It does not mean that the books had the same tone throughout the century. Almost every decade had its specifics. For my bachelor thesis is, however, more relevant to look at the writing dealing with the theme of Elizabeth I in 20th-century literature.

The Tudor period presents a very attractive subject to many female writers, mainly due to the variety of heroines they can choose from. Alison Light says that the thought of the number of queens with historical importance, from Henry's six wives to Elizabeth's cousins – Lady Jane Grey and Mary Queen of Scots, can be appealing.²⁰ Wallace agrees and says: “This fascination is further based on the confluence of public and private history in their lives, and on the possibility of female power.”²¹ It is especially the rivalry between Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart that inspires many novelists. As a result, authors take sides with the queens. In her book *Elizabeth I: A Feminist Perspective*, Susan Bassnett recalls having always been on Elizabeth's side since she seemed to be a winner.²² The allegiance of a writer to a particular monarch may shift with some trends in society. This is the case of Margaret Irwin, an author who started her famous trilogy about Elizabeth Tudor (*Young Bess; Elizabeth, Captive Princess; Elizabeth and the Prince of Spain*) about which Wallace says that it “fictionalises the life of Queen Elizabeth I from the age of 12 to her coronation and the beginning of a reign.”²³ Irwin started writing her trilogy in the 1940s, reflecting on the situation regarding the possible succession of Elizabeth II to the British throne. Light praises Irwin's detailed research and careful descriptions²⁴, but she also notes that it is apparent that “the historical representation of Elizabeth which Irwin

¹⁷ Wallace, *The Woman's Historical Novel*, 2.

¹⁸ Anthea Trodd, *Women's Writing in English: Britain 1900–1945* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 110.

¹⁹ Diana Wallace, “‘History to the Defeated’: Women Writers and the Historical Novel in the Thirties,” *Critical Survey* 15, no. 2 (2003): 79.

²⁰ Alison Light, “‘Young Bess’: Historical Novels and Growing Up,” *Feminist Review*, no. 33 (autumn 1989): 61.

²¹ Wallace, *The Woman's Historical Novel*, 18.

²² Susan Bassnett, *Elizabeth I: A Feminist Perspective* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 3.

²³ Wallace, *The Woman's Historical Novel*, 94.

²⁴ Light, “‘Young Bess,’” 60.

offers does circle around mid-twentieth century.”²⁵ Moreover, in the 1950s, novels about Elizabeth I became tremendously popular. Many of them tried to somehow compare the contemporary Elizabeth with her namesake from the 16th century. Also, the subject of marriage became pertinent in relation to both queens since, in contrast to the Tudor queen, Elizabeth II decided to wed. The reason for this, according to Wallace, can be the fact that the matter of marriage had political and strategic importance during the Elizabethan era.²⁶ The decision not to marry in the world of political marriages was exceptional itself and even nowadays some authors find it fascinating and write about it. It is the case of one of the books for the analytical part of this work, too, because *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir focuses mainly on this topic. Furthermore, there are many more female writers of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century who wrote about Elizabeth I, for instance: Philippa Gregory, Eleanor Hilbert, or Margaret George.

To conclude this chapter, from all above said it is evident that the genre of historical fiction is popular. However, for most of its history, it has been perceived as a typically male genre. Female novelists gained recognition in the thirties of the twentieth century which was also a result of feminism. Themes of such novels are various, but the number of works written thematically about Tudor England suggests that this period is a great source of characters, not only in terms of kings, but also queens – Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart are examples.

²⁵ Light, “‘Young Bess’,” 65.

²⁶ Wallace, *The Woman’s Historical Novel*, 18.

2. ENGLISH RENAISSANCE: EDUCATION, POETRY, AND DRAMA

Renaissance was a very impactful period in many areas. It came to England later than to most European countries, and for this reason, this chapter starts with the explanation of this delay. As the English Renaissance thrived mostly during the 16th century, both historical novels about Elizabeth Tudor that I have chosen for the analytical part of this thesis touch upon some of its aspects. The two novels deal with education, poetry, and drama, although each of them to a different extent. Hence, the rest of this chapter discusses these topics.

At first, it is important to define the term “Renaissance” itself. According to Paul Poplawski, this label was first used in the sixteenth century to describe a period with a major focus on the renewal of Ancient Greek and Roman cultures and on the human as an individual.²⁷ This definition is very similar to the one from the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* which says that the Renaissance is “the period in Europe during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries when people became interested in the ideas and culture of ancient Greece and Rome and used these influences in their own art, literature, etc.”²⁸ As it is suggested, the influence of this cultural movement began to rise in some countries already in the 14th century (with the origin in Italy). However, Poplawski states that in England it was not until the arrival of the Tudors on the throne, namely Henry VII, which marked an end to the unrest called “the War of Roses”.²⁹ Thanks to this, the cultural exchange with Europeans was finally enabled.

Following the Medieval Period, the primary interest shifted. While religion was the most important aspect of the Middle Ages, Renaissance celebrated human beings. Therefore, intellect and education played an important role. Elizabeth Tudor cared about schooling and contributed to its development. To support this, Alison Weir says:

Learning, once the province of the ruling classes and the clergy, was now embraced by the burgeoning middle classes, and from 1550 increasing numbers of grammar schools were founded, many under the auspices of Queen Elizabeth herself, who cared passionately about education.³⁰

With this interest in intellectual development, some new disciplines emerged. Jerry Brotton claims that apart from traditionally taught grammar, logic, or rhetoric, there were also subjects

²⁷ Paul Poplawski, ed., *English Literature in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 106.

²⁸ *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, Albert Sydney, Hornby, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), s.v. “renaissance.”

²⁹ Poplawski, ed., *English Literature in Context*, 106.

³⁰ Alison Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen* (London: Vintage, 2020), 6.

as classical philology, literature, and moral philosophy.³¹ From this, it can be implied that the fields of education at universities were not meant for everyone. In *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* edited by Michael Hattaway, Jean R. Brink comments that “nearly one-half of those enrolled at Oxford and Cambridge at the turn of the century were members of the gentry or the nobility.”³² Moreover, during Renaissance, the popularity of languages was immense, and many scholars enjoyed translating ancient classics. Elizabeth was one of them. Peter Ackroyd suggests that she, for instance, translated from sixth-century Latin *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius.³³ But Latin was not the only language the Queen was proficient in. Ackroyd says that she did not need translators for she could speak Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, and German.³⁴ The fact that Elizabeth I was such an intellectual person, and as David Loades asserts probably “the best-educated member of her family,”³⁵ was perhaps one of the reasons why the English sovereign was a big supporter of schooling.

English Renaissance also presents an era of the boom in literature. However, the start was quite crucial for some writers. Michael Hattaway points out that there were authors who mixed features of medieval and Renaissance attitudes at first. Despite this, he says, they had to have particular knowledge in terms of classical rhetoric and forms to be able to produce such works.³⁶ There were several writers in the centre of this boom. Hattaway mentions Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Nashe, Shakespeare, and Johnson.³⁷ These men produced various writings from poetry to drama, the literary forms which flourished the most during that period.

When it comes to Renaissance poetry, the lyric genre prevailed. The main focus of these works was on love. It was then when the new form of poetry – sonnet – appeared. Jerry Brotton says that one of the pioneers of the sonnet was the Italian humanist scholar and poet Petrarch in whose writing Shakespeare found inspiration. Based on Petrarch’s model, Shakespeare created a sonnet depicting a triangulated relationship: the poet, his mistress, and a male rival.³⁸ This type of sonnet usually comprises three quatrains and a concluding couplet. Besides Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney was also interested in composing sonnets. Theodore Howard

³¹ Jerry Brotton, *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

³² Michael Hattaway, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 3.

³³ Peter Ackroyd, *The History of England*, vol. 2, *Tudors* (London: Macmillan, 2012), 376, <https://www.pdfdrive.com/the-history-of-england-from-henry-viii-to-elizabeth-i-tudors-e196172201.html>.

³⁴ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:252.

³⁵ David Loades, *Elizabeth I* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), XII.

³⁶ Hattaway, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 3.

³⁷ Hattaway, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 3.

³⁸ Brotton, *The Renaissance*, 117.

Banks suggests that Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* is a sonnet sequence.³⁹ On the other hand, one of the authors who focused mainly on epic was Edmund Spenser. He is famous for his long allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene*. In this piece, he transforms the person of the Queen into mythical characters. John Guy says that Spenser uses names like Diana, the moon-goddess, Cynthia, or Belphoebe to characterise Elizabeth.⁴⁰ Furthermore, since writing poetry was a widespread trend, there is evidence that the Queen herself wrote poetry. Jennifer Summit supports this idea and says that Elizabeth's position as a female monarch made her uniquely qualified for it. Summit implies that "the Queen sanctioned and encouraged this recognition of her poetic activity" and says that "among Elizabeth's surviving poetic efforts is the partial verse translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*."⁴¹ Summit's words show that not only was the Queen a poet, but she also wanted to get recognised for it.

Like poetry, Renaissance theatre underwent great development and was an unprecedented success in the second half of the 16th century. Suzannah Lipscomb says: "Before the 1570s, theatrical performances had been the preserve of bands of traveling players, acting in whatever spaces they could find."⁴² This changed as artists started to settle down and perform in local inns, or specially built playhouses. According to Lipscomb, the reason why they stopped touring was the act of English authorities who wanted to prevent wandering beggars from entering the cities due to the rising population in England.⁴³ Originally, drama was rather amateur, but in *A Companion to English Renaissance* edited by Michael Hattaway, Thomas Pettitt says that "Renaissance England saw the emergence, out of local, customary traditions, of the professional skills, practices, and ambitions that ultimately become the national, commercial, 'popular', theatre of Marlowe and Shakespeare."⁴⁴ Indeed, these two playwrights were dominant figures of sixteenth-century drama, each of them representing a different playing company. In the case of the former of them, it was the Admiral's Men, while Shakespeare wrote plays for the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Lipscomb says that works like *Tamburlaine*, *Dr Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, or *Edward II* can be considered Marlowe's most phenomenal creations. She also suggests that Shakespeare's first plays were staged a little later, and the fact

³⁹ Theodore Howard Banks, "Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* Reconsidered," *PMLA* 50, no. 2 (June 1935): 403.

⁴⁰ Kenneth Owen Morgan, ed., *The Oxford History of Britain*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 323.

⁴¹ Jennifer Summit, "'The Arte of a Ladies Penne': Elizabeth I and the Poetics of Queenship," *English Literary Renaissance* 26, no. 3 (autumn 1996): 398.

⁴² Suzannah Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2013), 153, <https://www.pdfdrive.com/a-journey-through-tudor-england-hampton-court-palace-and-the-tower-of-london-to-stratford-upon-avon-and-thornbury-castle-e194256595.html>.

⁴³ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 153.

⁴⁴ Hattaway, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, 464.

that Shakespeare was so productive in his work was because of commercial pressure, since the Elizabethan theatre had a huge demand for new plays.⁴⁵ The Queen contributed to the popularity of theatre because she enjoyed it herself. On several occasions, a playing company would be invited to court to provide entertainment. In his book *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance*, Michael Hattaway comments on this and says:

The same companies that were playing in the public playhouses were called to Court at Christmas or contributed to the staging of the great civic pageants like the Midsummer Shows. Occasional and festive plays were then brought to the public stage – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* are examples.⁴⁶

As Hattaway suggested, Shakespeare's plays were favoured and often presented in front of the Queen. Additionally, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines the Golden Age as “a period during which something is very successful, especially in the past,”⁴⁷ this can be also used as a classification of the Elizabethan Era and its flourishing of the theatre industry.

To sum up, this chapter shows that English Renaissance strongly influenced the cultural lives of people during the reign of Elizabeth I. In spite of the delayed arrival of the Renaissance due to the conflict known as the War of Roses, many artistic fields experienced significant growth and success in the second half of the 16th century. The Queen herself encouraged such development because she, as an educated person, valued knowledge and appreciated entertainment through poetry and drama.

⁴⁵ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 153.

⁴⁶ Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1982), 18-19.

⁴⁷ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Albert Sydney, Hornby, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), s.v. “golden age.”

3. ELIZABETHAN ERA

Elizabethan Era is the period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in England, which lasted from 1558 to 1603. For this thesis, it is important to outline some aspects of this age which affected the character of Elizabeth Tudor in both analysed novels. As *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir opens the story in 1558, the year of Elizabeth accession to the English throne, this chapter provides brief background information about Elizabeth's family and her right to rule. Then it deals with the position of an unmarried female monarch in the predominantly male world of politics, discusses how Elizabeth approached religion and marriage.

Elizabeth I was the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn. Since she was Henry's second wife, many people questioned the validity of this marriage and considered Elizabeth illegitimate, in other words, a bastard. Alison Weir says that despite this fact, the king had declared her as his heir. However, when Anne was found guilty of adultery and treason, Henry VIII changed his mind and excluded Elizabeth from the succession. After some years, he reconsidered his decision and named his daughter in his will as his successor, third in line after her two siblings – Edward and Mary.⁴⁸ During the reign of her brother, teenage Elizabeth lived in a household with her widowed stepmother Catherine Parr and her new husband Lord Thomas Seymour for some time but was sent away later. In *The Tudor Queens of England*, David Loades explains why she had to leave, he says that pregnant Catherine found out that her husband was secretly visiting Elizabeth in her chamber.⁴⁹ Owing to Edward's poor health, followed by his death, Mary began to rule quite soon, re-establishing the Roman Catholic Church. These years were full of fear for Protestant Elizabeth, Mary imprisoned her and according to David Loades, she made it clear on several occasions that she did not want Elizabeth to be her successor.⁵⁰ As Mary did nothing to prevent it, after she died of cancer in 1558, it was Elizabeth's turn to be the Queen.

Both Queens found themselves in a difficult position because of their gender. Cristy Beemer says that there were certain expectations of them, such as that they would reign, produce a male heir, and provide a strong image for their people.⁵¹ To prove that the gender stereotype did not apply to them, they had to show people that they were capable of ruling the realm. Alice Hunt and Anna Whitelock try to compare the Queens, they claim that unlike Mary,

⁴⁸ Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, 4.

⁴⁹ David Loades, *Tudor Queens of England* (London: Continuum, 2009), 136.

⁵⁰ Loades, *Elizabeth I*, 88.

⁵¹ Cristy Beemer, "The Female Monarchy: A Rhetorical Strategy of Early Modern Rule," *Rhetoric Review* 30, no. 3 (2011): 258.

Elizabeth received education worthy of a male sovereign and was seen as the warrior queen who led the navy's ships to victory in 1588.⁵² In other words, Elizabeth was in a stronger position as a woman on the throne than Mary. The defeat of the Spanish Armada was probably the most significant event of Elizabeth's reign. The Queen could not join the troops as a soldier, but she went to support them at Tilbury. Susan Frye says that she reviewed her troops twice and upon the second occasion, she likely gave her celebrated speech.⁵³ This example demonstrates that Elizabeth was a skilful ruler who truly cared for her people. In addition to this, she often went on progresses to meet her subjects and listen to their problems. In her book *Elizabeth the Queen*, Alison Weir describes such tours as follows: "Every summer, unless the plague threatened, custom decreed that English monarchs go on a progress through parts of their kingdom, staying in the houses of the great and seeing, and being seen by, the people."⁵⁴ But Elizabeth did not see it as an obligation, Weir stresses that she enjoyed these trips.⁵⁵ Consequently, all the above said testifies to the fact that the Queen did not let her gender define her reign and restrain her actions.

When it comes to religion, it is generally known that the new sovereign was a strong believer. As David Loades asserts, the Queen, having been brought up similarly as her brother Edward, was a Protestant, and the easiest thing to have done would have been to restore the Church of England as it had been during the reign of her father.⁵⁶ The reform of religion was unavoidable since Rome did not want to accept Elizabeth's succession. Peter Ackroyd adds that she could not embrace Catholicism for multiple reasons. To clarify this, he points out that the Queen would never countenance the demands of Rome, and apart from that, this Church called her a bastard and her mother a prostitute.⁵⁷ As a result, Elizabeth re-established the Protestant Church with some changes as soon as possible. Probably the most significant difference was in the position of the monarch. Ackroyd says that the Queen represented herself as "supreme governor", instead of declaring herself as the head of the Church, for she believed this position belonged to Christ. He also suggests that Elizabeth required only outward conformity to the Church of England – her subjects were obliged to attend parish churches every Sunday and holy day.⁵⁸ Therefore, many people perceive her attitude towards religion as tolerant. Suzannah

⁵² Alice Hunt, and Anna Whitelock, ed., *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4–5.

⁵³ Susan Frye, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no. 1 (spring 1992): 98.

⁵⁴ Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, 76.

⁵⁵ Weir, *Elizabeth the Queen*, 76.

⁵⁶ Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, 219.

⁵⁷ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:249.

⁵⁸ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:250.

Lipscomb agrees with this claim to some extent. She states that although the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign could indeed be considered as lenient towards members of the dissident faiths, after Pope Pius V started encouraging English Catholics to overthrow Elizabeth, her attitude changed. In 1585 it became treason for any Catholic priest to enter England in order to fulfil the Pope's orders.⁵⁹ It may seem that the Queen was strictly a Protestant, however, some authors see a possibility that she was not so opposed to Catholicism as it is acknowledged. Peter Ackroyd says that her religious opinions are not easy to discern for she liked choral music, appreciated much of the ritual of the Roman Communion, kept a small crucifix in the royal chapel and strongly disliked married priests.⁶⁰ Without a doubt, religion played a very important role in the 16th century and was even the cause of some quarrels.

As it has been already mentioned, Catholics had an issue with the Protestant queen. In their eyes, Mary, Queen of Scots, was a more suitable choice for the Crown. Their family relations meant that if the English sovereign were to die without an heir, Mary would be her rightful successor. It all presented a threat to Elizabeth. Suzannah Lipscomb says that the Scottish queen was convinced her cousin had no right to reign⁶¹ and what was not helping, according to Ackroyd, was the fact that Mary married the French King and openly styled herself Queen of England, which emphasized the diplomatic problem.⁶² After the death of Mary's husband, she returned to Scotland and found herself in the same position as Elizabeth. Ackroyd comments on this, saying that in contrast to Elizabeth, Mary was actively seeking a new husband, preferably French or Spanish.⁶³ She succeeded in finding him, although he was of Scottish origin. They had a son together and Ackroyd says that Elizabeth was alarmed by the news of the birth of James Stuart, having seen it as the increase of Mary's following in England.⁶⁴ When Mary's husband, Lord Darnley, was murdered and Mary almost immediately remarried, there were suspicions that Mary was linked to the murder. Lipscomb claims that as a consequence, Mary fled to England. Elizabeth could not send her back and therefore decided to imprison her, but with the luxuries that would fit her status as a queen.⁶⁵ During the years of her imprisonment, Elizabeth's councillors tried to find evidence of Mary plotting against Elizabeth. This evidence was discovered. Suzannah Lipscomb says that it was the Queen's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham, who found incriminating proof of secret correspondence

⁵⁹ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 156.

⁶⁰ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:249.

⁶¹ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 143.

⁶² Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:256.

⁶³ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:277.

⁶⁴ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:284.

⁶⁵ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 143.

coming from and to Mary. In these letters, she planned a Catholic rebellion aided by the Spanish to rescue her and assassinate Elizabeth.⁶⁶ This was enough to secure Mary's execution. Lipscomb states that the English queen was at first reluctant but then signed the warrant and Mary was beheaded for treason in 1587.⁶⁷ However, some authors, including Peter Ackroyd, believe that the signature might have not been entirely intentional. He claims that the warrant was mixed with other papers and Elizabeth signed it without paying much attention. When she found out about the execution, she was devastated.⁶⁸ Despite these different interpretations, it is clear that one threat to the Queen was averted.

Another potential problem presented Elizabeth's indecisiveness regarding marriage, which is the prevailing topic in Weir's novel *The Marriage Game*. According to Loades, for many years Elizabeth ignored the pressure of her council and parliament to wed and secure the succession.⁶⁹ It was unheard of that a queen would refuse to marry and Peter Ackroyd says that it was a brave decision when taking into account the circumstances of the Renaissance period.⁷⁰ Yet, Elizabeth considered marriage a few times but as Loades asserts, she swore never to marry a man whom she did not know.⁷¹ That may be the reason why she was not keen on most of her suitors and had probably only two real adepts – Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Francis, Duke of Anjou. Most likely, the Queen felt a deep connection towards the former of them. Robert Dudley became Queen's favourite very soon after the coronation. Lipscomb explains that he acquired the position of Master of the Horse thanks to which he could spend a lot of time with Elizabeth. Later, she gave him another prestigious honour, Knight of the Garter.⁷² It did not take long, and people started to whisper about them. Lipscomb says that Venetian and Spanish Ambassadors commented that the Queen and her Master of the Horse were very intimate with each other.⁷³ Though Peter Ackroyd agrees that there was fondness between them, he argues that the nature of their relationship is unknown and if there were an affair, it would be most certainly observed, since Elizabeth was rarely alone.⁷⁴ However, then Leicester secretly married Lettice Knollys, the Queen's cousin. It was a shock to Elizabeth when she learned about it. Lipscomb says:

⁶⁶ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 144.

⁶⁷ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 144.

⁶⁸ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:360.

⁶⁹ Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, 209.

⁷⁰ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:259.

⁷¹ Loades, *Elizabeth I*, 79.

⁷² Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 146.

⁷³ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 146.

⁷⁴ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:260.

When Elizabeth discovered that they had secretly married in September 1578, she was incandescent with rage. She had regarded Leicester as her own possession and it took him five long years to claw his way back into her affections, while his wife was never welcome at court in his lifetime.⁷⁵

At that time, and maybe due to Dudley's marriage, the Queen renewed negotiations with the French prince Francis, Duke of Alencon. Susan Doran suggests that although Elizabeth was serious about marrying the Duke, she insisted on his personal visit.⁷⁶ This meeting could in fact be arranged. Doran points out the Queen wanted to keep his arrival a secret for, notwithstanding the age gap, she seemed genuinely impressed by Francis and wanted to avoid popular demonstrations against the marriage.⁷⁷ The opinion of her council was fundamental for Elizabeth, so she let them vote in that matter. Ackroyd says that the councillors were divided, which disappointed Elizabeth who wanted them to decide in favour of the wedding.⁷⁸ This led to the end of negotiations with the French and after some time, the Queen restored her relationship with the Earl of Leicester. John Guy says that albeit Elizabeth considered getting married to Dudley, she decided it was too dangerous.⁷⁹ Yet, they remained friendly and when the Earl died unexpectedly, she was heartbroken. To support this, Lipscomb claims that for several days she would not leave her chamber.⁸⁰ In other words, she might have not married him, but all above said demonstrates that he was very important to her.

There is one more man worth mentioning because he plays a very important role in one of the books for my analysis, *Elizabeth I* by Margaret George – Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. He was the son of Lettice Knollys who became one of the Queen's favourites. However, this favour changed over time. The main reason was, as Loades states, Robert's mistake of trying to turn his personal favour into political power. He was also overconfident in terms of his abilities which affected his actions negatively.⁸¹ While it may be true that the Queen was a little harsh with him sometimes, he often disobeyed Elizabeth's orders. For instance, David Loades says that she found it upsetting when Essex knighted too many men.⁸² The situation reached its climax at the beginning of 1601 for Robert Devereux was planning a coup. Peter Ackroyd develops this idea, saying that together with his supporters he wanted to remove his enemies,

⁷⁵ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 147.

⁷⁶ Susan Doran, *Monarchy & Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 156.

⁷⁷ Doran, *Monarchy & Matrimony*, 162.

⁷⁸ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:332.

⁷⁹ Morgan, ed., *The Oxford History of Britain*, 305.

⁸⁰ Lipscomb, *A Journey Through Tudor England*, 147.

⁸¹ Loades, *Tudor Queens of England*, 224.

⁸² Loades, *Elizabeth I*, 310.

Elizabeth's councillors – Robert Cecil and Walter Raleigh. After Essex imprisoned some royal officers who demanded admittance, he rode out into streets with his allies, hoping to find more adherents.⁸³ As he found none, he was soon tried for treason and executed. According to Ackroyd, Essex even admitted that “while he lived, the queen would not be safe.”⁸⁴ Moreover, it is possible that if Essex had succeeded in his cause, the Civil war would have most likely started.

To sum up this chapter, during her reign, Elizabeth faced many obstacles. From the first moments on the throne, she had to show that she can be a woman and a ruler at the same time. She also decided not to marry, which was a significant choice in the Renaissance period. Lastly, the Queen was very religious, but her faith caused some serious disputes with the Catholic Church which did not perceive her as a rightful queen and wanted Mary Stuart in her place. Overall, despite these problems, the Elizabethan Era is mostly presented as a peaceful age and Elizabeth as a celebrated sovereign.

⁸³ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:390.

⁸⁴ Ackroyd, *The History of England*, 2:391.

4. ENGLISH RENAISSANCE IN SELECTED HISTORICAL NOVELS

The focus of this chapter is on the aspects of the English Renaissance as they are presented in *Elizabeth I* by Margaret George and *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir. The features are the same as in chapter 2 of the theoretical part - education, poetry, and drama.

Both novels portray Elizabeth as a woman of many talents: she could dance, play some musical instruments, compose literary works, speak many languages. She knew she was good at these things and liked to compare herself with others. This was especially the case of the character of Elizabeth in Weir's novel. In *The Marriage Game*, the Queen was a great musician, for she could play the virginals and gittern in a very accomplished way. Weir says that "like all her family, she had a gift for music."⁸⁵ Elizabeth enjoyed showing her skills to others, not only in terms of music but also dancing. For instance, when the Scottish Ambassador came to English court, the Queen tried to do everything in her powers to show him that she was better than Mary Stuart at all these aspects. Although Elizabeth in George's book fancied dancing and playing the virginals, too, she seemed not to display such competitiveness with anybody.

When it comes to education, neither of the historical novels deals with it in detail. However, from the information provided, it is clear that the Queen valued learning and schooling in general. While Alison Weir describes Elizabeth's appreciation of intellect, namely she mentions her councillor Walsingham who pleased the Queen for he was on the same intellectual level as herself, Margaret George presents Elizabeth's views on schooling. In George's *Elizabeth I*, the Queen showed her disappointment with Henry Cuffe, who had ended his university studies at Oxford to join Essex in politics:

I had met Cuffe before. He was formerly a scholar of Greek at Oxford and had welcomed me there with a poem on one of my official visits. At the time, I had been struck by his good looks and oratory; I had thought he would go far. But somewhere along the line he had left academia and cast his lot with politics. It had saddened me when I learned of it. Like many, I endowed the scholar's life with an aura it probably did not possess in daily living.⁸⁶

From this extract, it is evident that Elizabeth had a high opinion of university education. Moreover, the Queen herself was proficient in many languages. In *The Marriage Game*, Alison Weir claims that she could speak four languages. Probably the most significant one was Latin.

⁸⁵ Alison Weir, *The Marriage Game* (London: Arrow Books, 2014), 82.

⁸⁶ Margaret George, *Elizabeth I* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2012), 452.

Margaret George illustrates this on the visit of the Polish Ambassador. He dared to say some rude words in Latin to the Queen, and though she had not spoken it for years, she replied in rapid Latin and put him in his place. Apart from that, both novels suggest that Elizabeth translated old works. In *The Marriage Game*, there are mentioned translations of Tacitus and Plutarch's works. In the other book, George provides an example of another translation – more than a thousand-year-old *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius. The character of Elizabeth found this piece challenging, yet she decided to translate this philosophy on her birthday. In addition, she pointed out that it was her favourite activity. On the other hand, the Queen in *The Marriage Game* did not appear to be so passionate about it.

In terms of poetry, both historical novels refer to some big names of this literary form. In *The Marriage Game*, Elizabeth praised Sidney's achievements and talent. Another poet, Edmund Spenser, is mentioned. However, not in a very flattering context, for he wrote a disrespectful poem called *Mother Hubbard's Tale* about the relationship between the Queen and the French prince. Although he was recommended by the Sidneys as a gifted poet and was supported by Robert Dudley, this poem caused that he was sent away to Ireland. Furthermore, Elizabeth herself is described as a talented writer. For example, after the Duke of Alencon returned to France, she composed a poem about it and entitled it "On Monsieur's Departure". Besides poetry, the Queen was also the author of a prayer. Generally, she had a way with words. Thanks to her ability to say the right things to achieve her goals, she could be almost considered a manipulator. Contrastingly, in *Elizabeth I*, George focuses more on poets at court than on the creative side of the Queen because it was very common for courtiers to write poetry. The character of Elizabeth claims that Raleigh, for instance, presented her with many allegorical poems:

I was Diana, chaste huntress; I was Cynthia, radiant goddess of the moon, whom shepherds adored. What else had he called me? Athena, wise above all mortals, strong protectress of my realm. That exhausted the store of the virgin goddesses, except for Hestia, but the imagery of a hearth-loving goddess did not fit me.⁸⁷

However, when the Queen got her hands on a poem meant for one of her ladies, she found it shockingly vulgar, considering the poems devoted to her were much more tender. In the book, it is suggested that during some royal events, poets often gave out copies of their newest works to the Queen or distributed them around the court in a different way. Even though Shakespeare is depicted as a very promising author, Elizabeth admits not being a fan of his poem *Venus and*

⁸⁷ George, *Elizabeth I*, 137.

Adonis, for it was quite heavy for her. What she was dazzled by was Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. She saw it as a remedy for his offensive poem that led to him leaving for Ireland. Moreover, both novels show that Elizabeth appreciated poetry but disliked pieces about marriage.

This Queen's aversion to works concerning marriage did not apply only to poetry. It was in the case of drama, too. To illustrate this, Alison Weir in her historical novel says: "Elizabeth was all smiles – until she realised that the comedy was a play about marriage."⁸⁸ Or similarly, in George's *Elizabeth I*, the Queen comments: "I disliked plays and poems about arranged marriages and all their variations, having escaped from them myself."⁸⁹ Otherwise, she is depicted to enjoy theatre. Although, *The Marriage Game* touches upon this topic only nearing the end, when the dying Queen remembers the delights of the past years and shares that she admired two playwrights in particular – Marlowe and Shakespeare. When comparing the two novels, *Elizabeth I* deals with drama much more. It describes all the occasions on which plays were performed and shows the everyday importance of theatre. During the Renaissance period, there was enormous production of new plays to satisfy the demand of people. The reason for this could be the fact that there was a competition between two companies – The Admiral's Men and The Lord Chamberlain's Men. Each of them had a different repertoire. The former of them performed mainly Marlowe's plays, such as *Doctor Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, *Dido*, *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Jews of Malta*. Despite these successful works, this company was disadvantaged because of a quite limited repertoire since Christopher Marlowe was dead. The second company had Shakespeare. He is introduced as an aspiring artist with an uncertain future who proved himself to be very talented and gradually became popular. Unlike Marlowe, he could provide his company with a great number of new plays of various genres from historical plays to comedies. His works were often performed in front of the Queen, for instance at Christmas or during other festivities. It is suggested that she was sometimes sceptical of his pieces but enjoyed them in the end. Some plays were allegories, reflecting on the current political situation. Shakespeare's play *Richard II* was one of them, it was modified to imply that a king can abdicate. It was an idea of Essex to show that Elizabeth can get overthrown. However, George makes it clear that neither Shakespeare nor actors were happy about these changes and made up for them eventually. Additionally, theatrical performances were from time to time used to recreate important events from English history, including the defeat of the Spanish Armada; or to entertain the Queen on her visits around the kingdom.

⁸⁸ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 208.

⁸⁹ George, *Elizabeth I*, 191.

In conclusion, Renaissance was a very important part of the Elizabethan Era. Both historical novels, therefore, discuss Elizabeth's approach to education, poetry, and drama, which are some of the most important areas that thrived during the Renaissance. They show that the Queen had a positive attitude towards all of them and that these aspects became an integral part of everyday lives of people in the 16th century.

5. PORTRAYAL OF ELIZABETH I IN MODERN HISTORICAL NOVELS

During her reign, Elizabeth I had to make some difficult decisions and secure her position on the English throne. From early childhood, she grew up without her mother and had to live through the rules of her two siblings. When she finally became the Queen, she had to face some issues of her own. She re-established the old faith, and when it came to marriage, she had to prove that she needed no man by her side in order to be a strong sovereign. These aspects were important in the life of Elizabeth. Therefore, they are also significant in the storylines of both historical novels – in *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir and in *Elizabeth I* by Margaret George.

Even though both novels are set long after the deaths of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII, each of them comes across the topic of Elizabeth's parents at some point. In George's book, which starts in 1588, the protagonist admitted how deeply she missed her mother:

It was not in my early days that I most keenly missed my mother, but later. Each year, as I grew in understanding, her vacancy seemed to expand until being motherless threatened to engulf me. Even today that gap is still there, when, if she still lived, she would be an elderly lady of ninety-one. But the dead never age, and a motherless child is always a child, even if she is a queen and sixty-four.⁹⁰

To have a memory of her mother with her, Elizabeth kept a necklace with Anne's initials. She was curious about Anne Boleyn and wanted to get to know her a little better, so in 1602 she invited her estranged cousin, Lettice, on a trip to Hever Castle, the place where Boleyn sisters grew up and met with the King. It was on this trip that Elizabeth recalled her childhood. She revealed that she was brought to court to see her father and his newest wife occasionally but spent most of her days hidden in the country. Her aunt Mary Boleyn was like a mother to her because she "was warm and encouraging."⁹¹ Moreover, this encounter helped Lettice and Elizabeth get past their old grudges, especially Lettice's marriage to Robert Dudley. In *The Marriage Game*, the Queen's approach was slightly different. From her first moments on the throne, she decided to clear Anne's name. Elizabeth was convinced the claims of her mother's adultery and treason were untrue. She often asked Kat Astley about her, for Kat was her close friend who had known Anne personally. Thanks to this testimony about the innocence of

⁹⁰ George, *Elizabeth I*, 383.

⁹¹ George, *Elizabeth I*, 628.

Elizabeth's mother and the findings of obviously fake documents that led to Anne's downfall, the Queen could come to a conclusion that all the incriminating evidence was, in fact, falsified.

When it comes to Henry VIII, George shows that Elizabeth thought of him every day. She wished to talk to him again to tell him all about what had happened since his death. Sometimes, she could not help herself and compared their reigns. Weir's Elizabeth had very similar views. Like George's character, she thought very highly of him, and Weir says: "He had been a king among kings and Elizabeth was proud to be his daughter. She always thought of herself as the lion's cub, a lioness in Henry VIII's mould."⁹² She was inspired by his reign and Alison Weir says: "She would be another ruler such as her father, but more merciful, not as severe."⁹³ Elizabeth's strong resemblance to the King made her therefore very happy. What she struggled with was the understanding of how her father had been able to sign her mother's death warrant. In addition, both novels show that the Queen was convinced that if her parents had lived to see the days of her reign, they would have been proud of her.

Apart from Anne and Henry, Elizabeth's stepsister Mary is very briefly mentioned in the novels, too. In *Elizabeth I*, she is described as a tragic figure. Elizabeth did not hate her, she felt sorry for her and declared that Mary's rejection of the validity of the marriage of her parents and her restoration of Catholicism led to much terror in the country, "yet she was not by nature a cruel woman."⁹⁴ In her novel, Weir focuses more on the relationship between the sisters. She says that when Elizabeth was a child, Mary adored her because she loved children and wished to be a mother, "but later there had been nothing but resentment and jealousy."⁹⁵ So it seems that while in George's novel, Elizabeth felt grief for her sister and her way of living, Weir's protagonist rather remembered her sister with abhorrence.

Since the King did not expect his daughters becoming Queens, neither did many politicians in the 16th century. For their gender, they were often underestimated or disrespected. In *The Marriage Game*, Weir points this out many times. She shows how Elizabeth's secretary William Cecil treated the Queen after her succession: "Madam, I pray you, be governed by me, or some other wise person. With respect, you are a woman and in need of masculine guidance."⁹⁶ Her councillors also made a remark that if she got married, her husband could relieve her in terms of her royal duties. Elizabeth hated to hear such things. In the second book, Margaret George describes similar situations. For instance, when Elizabeth was angry with

⁹² Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 25.

⁹³ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 23.

⁹⁴ George, *Elizabeth I*, 22.

⁹⁵ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 9–10.

⁹⁶ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 6.

Essex for turning his back on her, smacked him, and he reacted by grabbing his sword, intending to draw it on her, crying: “I neither can nor will put up with so great an affront, nor would I have borne it from your father’s hands!”⁹⁷ Although it was provoked, Elizabeth comments: “A subject had denied and threatened me in public. Not only that, he had implied I was not a true prince, that I was less because of my sex.”⁹⁸ Despite the fact that the Queen was sometimes thought to be a weaker monarch because of her gender, both novels show her braveness on the same exact scene. As the war with Spain was a huge threat to England, Elizabeth wanted to join her soldiers as a warrior. It was not possible because her councillors and the Parliament worried for her safety, but she still decided to visit her troops and be useful in that way. She had a special breastplate made for her and looked divine – people called her Pallas Athena or an Amazon. Then she had her famous speech, in which she addressed her love for her subjects, rejected tyranny and showed support. The speech is in both novels almost identical and one part – when the Queen talks about herself – is especially important: “I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England, too – and think it foul scorn that Parma or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm.”^{99,100} By this, Elizabeth manifested that she was strong enough to be a ruler and she would protect her kingdom at all costs.

As it is suggested, the Queen loved her subjects. In *The Marriage Game*, Elizabeth is said to have sometimes gone undercover to meet people. She liked to listen to the opinions of ordinary people who were not limited in what they were saying by her presence. However, these trips did not happen often. More common it was for the Queen to go on progresses. Weir describes how she enjoyed stopping by the people and exchanging a word with them. The subjects loved her for it. When Elizabeth had gone on a progress, she always returned in a better frame of mind. Unlike Weir, George does not suggest that the Queen would ever go among her people masked, but she agrees with the fact Elizabeth took delight in progresses. To illustrate it, George talks about some of the journeys. On one of them, the Queen met a few boys chasing geese and wanted to get to know their family. After she found out that they had a goose fair, she showed them her interest in the tradition. It was most likely their only opportunity to see the Queen in their lifetime, so the Queen wanted them to remember it. Both authors of the

⁹⁷ George, *Elizabeth I*, 377.

⁹⁸ George, *Elizabeth I*, 377.

⁹⁹ George, *Elizabeth I*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 403.

historical novels also share the opinion that Elizabeth did not marry a man, for she had already married England and had no children of her own because she had her subjects.

Another important aspect of the Elizabethan Era is religion, albeit the Renaissance presented a period of the focus on human beings. After the death of Catholic Mary, Elizabeth restored the faith of her father and brother. She probably had no other choice since Rome considered her a bastard. In *Elizabeth I*, Margaret George explains that Henry VIII broke from Rome but kept some features of Catholicism – the basic conservatism in ritual and formalities. She says: “It was an odd, tense marriage between inward Protestant theology and outward Catholic trappings.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, Elizabeth did not want to reject Catholicism completely and came up with a compromise:

I did not worry about what a man or woman personally believed, but the nation’s official religion should be outwardly practiced by all its citizens. A religion was a political statement. Being a Calvinist, a papist, a Presbyterian, and other secular things. The nation needed and accepted position on such concerns. Hence the fines for not outwardly conforming to the national church.¹⁰²

On one progress, she visited Anthony Brown, a loyal Catholic, in his household. When she found out that someone was secretly turning Catholic at night, she was curious and came closer to have a better view. She was as quiet as possible not to be seen. This also demonstrates that Elizabeth herself was not so strictly against Catholicism. Similarly, in *The Marriage Game*, Alison Weir claims that the Queen preferred the faith established by her father. She disliked some of the changes her stepbrother Edward made, for instance, when it came to some prayers. Moreover, she was determined to keep crucifixes in her chapels. After the Pope Pius declared that it would be no sin to kill Elizabeth, she was outraged. The years of conformity were suddenly ruined by the Pope’s permission for the English Catholics to disobey Elizabeth’s religious decisions. Margaret George does not deal with this situation explicitly in the story, it is taken more like an everyday reality, for the book starts a few years after the Pope proclaimed such things.

Considering that Mary, Queen of Scots, presented a threat to Elizabeth and was a fitting candidate for the English Crown in the eyes of Rome, it is essential to mention her, too. In *Elizabeth I*, George does not discuss Mary or the reasons for her execution much. Since she opens the story in 1588, the year after Mary’s death, it might have not been as relevant for Elizabeth anymore. The character of the Queen only says: “[...] I did not wish to execute Mary

¹⁰¹ George, *Elizabeth I*, 89.

¹⁰² George, *Elizabeth I*, 318.

Queen of Scots. But the law required it. She tried to touch my scepter.”¹⁰³ On the other hand, Alison Weir spends a lot of time on this topic. She reveals how complicated their relationship was. There were even times when it seemed that Elizabeth felt sympathy for her cousin. From the beginning, however, she used some unflattering words to describe Mary’s intellect. For example, the Queen called her cousin “brainless”¹⁰⁴, “empty-headed she-cat”¹⁰⁵, “imprudent”¹⁰⁶, or “a fool”¹⁰⁷. After Mary’s father-in-law, the King of France, proclaimed Mary Stuart the rightful Queen of England, it immediately endangered Elizabeth’s position on the throne. Mary was calling herself the English queen, which was something Elizabeth feared. When Mary became a widow, she started looking for a new husband. This was Elizabeth’s chance to intervene. She offered her cousin to find the match for her. It was the time when she was not on good terms with Leicester, so she offered him to Mary. As soon as she realised what she had done, she came up with a new plan. Her idea was to keep offering Robert, but in fact, she secretly had in mind another suitor – Lord Darnley. He was a young boy, inexperienced and spoiled. The Queen believed that the two of them would destroy each other. Moreover, he was Elizabeth’s relative so if they got married, it would be a union of two claims to the English Crown. The Queen also believed that neither of them would be clever enough to successfully claim the throne. As expected, Mary refused Robert, claiming that as a subject he was not good enough for her. In secrecy, she married Lord Darnley. The fact that Mary never asked for Elizabeth’s consent with the marriage angered the English queen. Soon, Mary was not happy with her husband, but she was with child, which meant that she would have an heir. Elizabeth envied her and was upset.

Following some suspicions that Mary cheated on her husband, Darnley and many lords attacked her and her company. As the Queen of Scots found herself in a vulnerable position, Elizabeth felt sorry for her. To support her, she wore a little portrait of Mary to show solidarity and wrote kind letters to her, wishing her peaceful delivery of her child. As soon as James I was born, Elizabeth’s attitude changed again. Darnley’s violent death and Mary’s decision to marry again almost immediately ruined the reputation of the Scottish queen. Even more so, taking into account the fact that she married the main suspect of her former husband’s murder. Elizabeth could not believe it but felt compassion for Mary when she was forced to abdicate. To her, Mary never stopped being a queen. When Elizabeth’s cousin came to seek Elizabeth’s help in

¹⁰³ George, *Elizabeth I*, 417.

¹⁰⁴ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 175.

¹⁰⁶ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 227.

¹⁰⁷ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 251.

England, in hopes that the English queen would provide her with an army to fight Scottish lords, it would mean for Elizabeth's reputation a certain end. Elizabeth knew that sending Mary back to Scotland would be dangerous for most Scottish subjects hated her. Setting her free, however, was not an option either. The final decision was to let Mary stay in England, but "in honourable captivity as Elizabeth's guest."¹⁰⁸ The English queen never intended to cause Mary any harm, even if she tried to plot against her person. These conspiracies that Mary planned to overthrow her cousin proved to be true. Elizabeth's spymasters found a secret correspondence in which Mary wrote about a Spanish invasion, Catholic rebellion, or the assassination of the English queen. This would be enough evidence to accuse Mary of treason. Elizabeth did not want to agree with execution. Weir says that she remembered all the queens that were beheaded in her family in the past, starting with her own mother. Maybe, she feared that she could suffer the same fate as them one day. However, when she received information that the French Ambassador was involved in the plots of the Queen of Scots, she decided to sign the warrant. This period was especially difficult for Elizabeth. She could not sleep or eat, and she faced constant pressure from her Council to allow Mary's execution. Once again, they used her gender against her. According to them, she would show people that her judgment is affected by her weaknesses of a woman. After she put her signature on the warrant, she almost instantly regretted it. She wished to take it back. Elizabeth's councillors did everything they could to get the execution into motion as soon as possible. The Queen did not even know that it had taken place already. She was devastated and felt betrayed by her councillors when she found out. But as Weir describes: "Time proved, as always, a healer."¹⁰⁹ This Weir's claim also supports George's choice not to discuss Mary Stuart in her novel more thoroughly.

What both historical novels deal with in great detail is Elizabeth's love life. In George's novel, *Elizabeth I*, is this topic more subtle than in *The Marriage Game* by Weir, who even put the word "marriage" into the title of her book. In *Elizabeth I*, the Queen recalled how madly in love she used to be with the Earl of Leicester. Their relationship went through some ups and downs, but they always found each other eventually. Elizabeth described their bond as follows:

Robert Dudley: the one person I could almost bare my soul to, could be more honest with than everyone else. Long ago I had loved him madly, as a young woman can do only once in her life. Time had changed that love, hammered it out into a sturdier, thicker, stronger, quieter thing—just as they say happens in any long-term marriage.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 252.

¹⁰⁹ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 396.

¹¹⁰ George, *Elizabeth I*, 17.

Furthermore, even though later Robert showed some signs of aging, she still saw his old charming self. Instead of a lover, he had a new, more important role. She called him: ““Friend, brother, heart of my heart.””¹¹¹ George also suggests that Elizabeth remained true to her nickname “the Virgin Queen”. In the other book, *The Marriage Game*, Alison Weir vividly narrates the changes in Elizabeth’s relationship with Dudley. She agrees with George’s claim that Elizabeth was in love with Robert and says that ever since she had become the Queen, he was in her great favour. He received some high posts and spent a lot of time with her. At the same time, the Queen enjoyed flirting with other men. It was her policy to keep European suitors interested and while they waited for her consent with the marriage, there was peace between their countries. Therefore, the “marriage game”. Weir says that Elizabeth had no intention of marrying these men. The Queen also proclaimed that she wanted to meet them personally to see if they matched. She knew well that it was not probable that they would arrive and was terrified when one ambassador jokingly mentioned that his master came to see her. With Robert, however, she shared a true bond. It came to the point when Elizabeth did not care what people thought about their relationship. They displayed their affections openly. Despite their intimacy, Elizabeth could not give Robert what he wanted, and he was sometimes frustrated because of that. But she explained to him that she had been in love before and allowed it once. It was during her brother’s reign, when she stayed with her stepmother and her new husband Thomas Seymour. Catherine Parr’s husband thought Elizabeth was like her mother and visited her in her chamber. This Elizabeth’s confession in *The Marriage Game* suggests that unlike the character in George’s novel, Weir’s Elizabeth was not the Virgin Queen in the literal sense. Nevertheless, Weir says that as the relationship was not complete for Dudley, he decided to look elsewhere but at the same time kept waiting for Elizabeth. She even told him she would marry him. The councillors counted on her to do as she promised, too, for they put pressure on her in the matter of marriage several times. The Queen was indecisive as always and for this reason, Leicester and she never got married. In addition, Elizabeth was cruel to him sometimes. Not only was she making him believe that he would be her husband, but also mocked him when she wanted to punish him for something. For instance, when she wanted to give Robert the Letters Patent of nobility:

Suddenly the Queen drew her small jewelled knife from its sheath on her girdle and, to the astonishment of all present, sliced the parchment across. Slash, slash. The courtiers

¹¹¹ George, *Elizabeth I*, 46.

gaped. Robert stared at her in horror. How in God's name could she humiliate him thus, in the presence of many of his enemies?¹¹²

Although they had these incidents, they were usually on their good terms quite soon after. More upsetting for Elizabeth was when Dudley married Lettice Knollys. In *Elizabeth I*, George says that the Queen found out about their wedding a year later from the French envoy and was very upset. Whereas Weir agrees that Elizabeth was hurt and betrayed, she claims that Robert himself wrote a letter confessing his relationship with Lettice. But like George, Weir says that the Queen loved Robert until his sudden death. Both novels also show that Elizabeth was shocked by the news and could not leave her room for days. What the books disagree on is the timing of the arrival of Robert's last letter to Elizabeth. In *The Marriage Game*, Weir says that Elizabeth had a chance to read the letter before receiving the sad news. On the other hand, in *Elizabeth I*, George suggests that it was after his death that the Queen got his letter. Moreover, even though in George's novel, the author describes Elizabeth's fondness for Robert only at the beginning because he died in the same year George opens her story, it is clear that their love affected Elizabeth for the rest of her life.

Another Elizabeth's suitor mentioned in both novels is the French prince, Francis. In her novel, Margaret George points out that the Queen was sincere about marrying him. The character of Elizabeth says: "Francois had been my last, and in many ways my only, serious marriage possibility."¹¹³ He was an exception also in the fact that he came to England personally. This was delightful news for Elizabeth, who was hurt by Dudley's marriage at the time. They had a big age gap, and he was allegedly an ugly short man, so Elizabeth was worried about meeting him. When he arrived, Elizabeth was indeed disappointed by his looks, but she was astonished by his pleasant personality. He was not on an official visit and therefore they could enjoy their courtship in privacy. George reveals that the Queen found it important to arrange a meeting with her astrologer, John Dee, who had proven himself accurate in his predictions so far. Elizabeth wanted to know if their potential marriage would have a future. It disappointed her when Dee shared information about his early death. Also, she could not stand the gossip and mocking of people at court who did not know about Duke's visit. She could see that her people were not in favour of her marriage to Francis. In spite of that, she wanted to experience the feeling of a bride-to-be and spontaneously got engaged to the French prince. She regretted her decision immediately and called off the wedding the next day. In *The Marriage Game*, Alison Weir sees their relationship slightly differently. According to her, after Elizabeth

¹¹² Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 121.

¹¹³ George, *Elizabeth I*, 72.

heard the news about Robert, she wanted her Council to reopen the negotiation with the Duke of Alencon. Before he arrived, they were exchanging numerous love letters. When she saw him, Elizabeth found the man attractive, though he was much younger than herself. She felt like a teenage girl in love and people ridiculed her for it. Then he had to leave. Sometime later he returned mostly because of finances: “Anjou had run out of money. Desperately needing to boost his resources, he suddenly remembered that he was in love, and dispatched commissioners to England to revive the marriage negotiations.”¹¹⁴ Weir says that they renewed their old affections shortly after, but never mentions that they would visit Elizabeth’s astrologer. The engagement, however, happened just as unintentionally. Weir comments: “By nightfall – it had not even been twelve hours since she gave her promise – Elizabeth was regretting what she had done.”¹¹⁵ Suddenly, she wanted the Duke to go away and broke off the betrothal. Consequently, Francis became obtrusive, and the Queen had to pay him to leave England. In addition, she had to send someone with him to make sure that he actually left.

Despite Elizabeth’s hesitance whether to marry or not, in both novels, she often proclaimed that she would never marry. Yet, in *The Marriage Game*, the character changed her mind more often. But Alison Weir ends her book explaining, what were probably the real reasons for Elizabeth’s final decision of having no husband:

I believe that Elizabeth had an aversion to marriage for three reasons. First, having witnessed the breakdowns of several marriages within her own family, she did not see it as a secure state. Second, as she told Dudley, the man she probably loved more than any other, she had no intention of sharing sovereign power: “I will have but one mistress here and no master!” Third, and most importantly, in Tudor times a monarch was regarded as holding supreme dominion over the state, but a husband was regarded as having total dominion over his wife.¹¹⁶

When it comes to having children, similarly as with a husband, a son would have threatened Elizabeth’s position as the English sovereign. Elizabeth saw this already in the case of the Scottish queen, who was forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son.

To sum up, this chapter shows that both historical novels are very similar in most aspects but diverge in some details. Elizabeth’s childhood affected her behaviour immensely. Henry’s reformation of the Church inspired Elizabeth to re-establish Protestantism after her stepsister violently restored Catholicism. Her mother’s unfortunate fate, on the other hand, led to her reluctance to execute Mary, Queen of Scots. As a female, she also faced prejudice but managed

¹¹⁴ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 351.

¹¹⁵ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 358.

¹¹⁶ Weir, *The Marriage Game*, 418.

to prove herself to be the right Queen for her people, who were supportive of her decisions. She did not marry and did not even want to, though she considered it with her beloved Robert Dudley and the Duke of Alencon. For most of her life, marriage negotiations presented her diplomatic solutions to preserve peace among countries.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to analyse the depiction of the character of Elizabeth I in two selected historical novels – *The Marriage Game* by Alison Weir and *Elizabeth I* by Margaret George. Therefore, the first chapter deals with the genre of the modern historical novel. It explains that the term refers to fiction, which is set in the past, or more precisely, it must be set more than around 50 years prior to the author's present. To be considered historical, it needs to provide some accurate historical information and show the author's awareness of some major aspects of the particular period. The word "modern" in the title most probably means that the piece was written recently. Since both novels for my analysis are written in the 21st century and their stories are set in the 16th century, it can be said that they are indeed modern historical novels. However, historical fiction used to be predominantly a male genre. Thanks to the feminist movement in the first half of the 20th century, this genre could become popular among women writers, too.

The second chapter discusses the English Renaissance. It starts with the definition of this movement, saying that it presented a rebirth of ancient cultures. Furthermore, it explains that it came to England later due to the War of the Roses and as soon as this unrest was resolved, the Renaissance could flourish. It affected several areas, including education, poetry, and drama which are the most essential for this thesis. The chapter suggests that as the Queen herself was an educated person, she supported the establishment of new schools. Moreover, the Renaissance also led to the expansion of some subjects of study and the interest in translating old works. In terms of poetry, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Sidney were the most famous poets. But it was the theatre that experienced an even bigger boom during the reign of Elizabeth I. Consequently, there were built special playhouses for that purpose. Two playwrights – Shakespeare and Marlowe – were in the centre of this success.

Another topic presented is the Elizabethan Era. This is the focus of the third chapter which deals with various factors of the life of the Queen. Firstly, it provides the background information of Elizabeth's succession. It says that the Catholics did not see her as a rightful heir, but since her father established the Anglican Church, he included her in his succession. Nevertheless, when Elizabeth's stepsister became the Queen, she returned to the old, Catholic faith. These were difficult times for Protestant Elizabeth. Secondly, the position of a woman on the throne is mentioned because many people, especially male politicians, did not believe that a fragile female could rule without help. Thirdly, as it was suggested, England was a Catholic state after Mary Tudor died. Elizabeth revived Protestantism shortly after the coronation. But

she did not require much from her subjects, she only promoted outward conformity and regular church attendances. In connection with faith, there was another problem for Elizabeth. Her cousin, the Scottish queen, was a Catholic and proclaimed herself to be the Queen of England. After Elizabeth's spymasters found out about Mary's plots against Elizabeth, the English queen had to make one of the hardest decisions of her life, she allowed the execution of Queen of Scots. The fourth important aspect dealt with in this chapter is Elizabeth's approach to marriage. Although the Queen's Council tried to convince her many times, explaining to her that she needed a husband to secure the succession, she was determined to remain single. It did not mean that she did not have any suitors, she had many of them. There were two men she considered – Robert Dudley and Francis, Duke of Alencon. Francis was much younger than Elizabeth, yet they matched intellectually. Lastly, this chapter touches upon the topic of Robert Devereux, a young man who upset Elizabeth repeatedly for his overconfident behaviour and disobedience. It escalated as he was planning a rebellion to overthrow Elizabeth. He failed, and it resulted in his execution.

The following two chapters focus on how the aspects described in the theoretical part occur in the novels. Therefore, these chapters are in the same order, starting with the Renaissance and then continuing with the Elizabethan Era. The analysis of the two works shows that they share similar views on most matters and do not diverge much. Both novels agree that not only was Elizabeth a woman of many talents, but she was also a big supporter of education, and artistic efforts. They also show that Elizabeth enjoyed translating old philosophies. What they disagree on is the intensity. While in *Elizabeth I*, the character revealed it was her favourite activity, in *The Marriage Game*, the author never places a special value on it. It is similar in the next chapter which discusses the aspects of the Elizabethan Era. Even though the novels portray Elizabeth's relationship with her father almost identically, her opinion on her stepsister Mary is described very differently in each book. In one novel, Mary is seen as a person ruined by her bad decisions, the other one depicts her as someone, for whom Elizabeth could feel only hate. Moreover, the works differ in the way they see Queen's courtship to Francis. Unlike Alison Weir who suggests that Elizabeth found him handsome, Margaret George says she was disappointed by his looks. His departure after the end of their courtship is also portrayed differently. According to George, he just left. Weir describes the situation more dramatically. She says that he blackmailed Elizabeth into paying him a large sum of money and then had to be almost escorted from England. However, there are some aspects that could not be compared fully, for the books are not set at the same exact time.

RESUMÉ

Alžběta I. pravděpodobně patří mezi nejznámější britské panovníky. Vládla v šestnáctém století, tedy v době, která je známá svým rozkvětem v oblasti kultury. Královna ale byla v mnohém zajímavá i svou osobností. Žila v období, kdy bylo nevídané, že by se žena na trůnu odmítala vdát, a díky tomu je toto její rozhodnutí o to pozoruhodnější. Není proto divu, že se Alžběta stala námětem mnoha literárních děl, a především pak historických románů. Toto téma je také stěžejní pro tuto bakalářskou práci, která zkoumá, jak je tato historická postava vyobrazena ve vybraných moderních historických románech – v *The Marriage Game* od Alison Weir a v *Elizabeth I* od Margaret George.

Práce je zahájena teoretickou kapitolou, která se snaží přiblížit žánr moderního historického románu. Nejprve tento pojem definuje, přičemž jej pro plné vysvětlení rozděluje na dva samostatné termíny: „moderní román“ a „historický román“. A až poté poskytuje celistvou definici tohoto literárního žánru. Tato kapitola dále nahlíží na to, kdy tento druh románu vznikl a zmiňuje dva různé autory, kteří pravděpodobně stáli u jeho zrodu. Vzhledem k tomu, že oba vybrané historické romány byly napsané ženami, je pro tuto práci také důležité pohlédnout na to, kdy a jakým způsobem autorky začaly mít o tento druh literatury zájem. K oblíbenosti tohoto žánru mezi ženami totiž výrazně přispěl feminismus, který v první polovině dvacátého století vyvolal ve spisovatelkách touhu vědět více o ženách v průběhu historie a psát o nich. Poměrně často objevovaným tématem se právě stala i renesanční královna Alžběta I., která je také hlavní postavou ve zvolených knihách. Autorky pak pojaly toto téma velice různorodě, některé se zabývaly královniným vztahem se skotskou královnou, jiné daly přednost Alžbětinu milostnému životu.

Další teoretická kapitola se věnuje tématu anglické renesance. Tato kulturní epocha byla v životě královny velmi důležitá. Sama totiž podporovala mnohá odvětví, kterým se v této době významně dařilo. První, čím se kapitola zabývá, je objasnění pojmu „renesance“. Po představení tohoto termínu popisuje důvody, proč tento umělecký a myšlenkový směr dorazil do Anglie mnohem později než do evropských zemí, kde zažíval velkou popularitu už ve 14. století. Právě díky tomuto zpoždění se ale pravděpodobně renesanci dostalo takovému úspěchu, protože poměrně poklidná vláda Alžběty I. poskytla ideální podmínky pro její rozmach. Mezi oblastmi, které zaznamenaly nebyvalý úspěch, byly vzdělání, poezie a divadlo. A i z tohoto důvodu se tyto faktory staly součástí každodenního života v anglické společnosti šestnáctého století. Mnoho umělců je známých dodnes. Mezi tyto slavné osobnosti patří zejména William Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser a Christopher Marlowe.

Teoretickou část uzavírá bohatá kapitola alžbětinského období, která začíná popisem událostí, které vedly k nástupnictví Alžběty na anglický trůn. Je zde nastíněna skutečnost, že vůbec nebylo jisté, jestli se Alžběta stane královnou. Kapitola také rozebírá, jakým nástrahám musela panovnice od počátku své vlády čelit. V renesanční době totiž nebylo časté, aby žena rozhodovala v záležitostech státu. Její pozice byla proto mnohdy podceňována kvůli jejímu pohlaví. Avšak díky své vytrvalosti a podpoře ze strany lidu královna ukázala, že nemusí být muž, aby byla dobrým vládcem. Dalším tématem, kterým se tato kapitola zabývá, je otázka víry. Potom, co její nevlastní sestra Marie násilím obnovila katolickou církev, Alžběta jako protestantka po svém nástupu na trůn učinila důležité kroky a obnovila anglikánskou církev tak, jak ji založil její otec Jindřich VIII. Na rozdíl od svého otce se ale nepovažovala za hlavu církve, a přestože protestantství bylo oficiální vírou království, od svého lidu požadovala pouze pravidelné účasti v kostele. Římskokatolická církev působila Alžbětě mnohé komplikace. Kvůli tomu, že byla Alžbětina matka druhou manželkou krále Jindřicha, Řím, který neuznával rozvody, viděl Alžbětu jako neprávoplatného vládce. Skotská královna Marie by pro ně byla lepší volbou, protože vyznávala katolickou víru. I samotná Marie se nazývala anglickou královnou a v průběhu let, když byla v zajetí jako potenciální hrozba Alžbětě, začala plánovat její svržení. Jakmile byly záměry skotské královny odkryty a byla obviněna z velezrady, kvůli nátlaku ze strany svých rádců nezbyvalo Alžbětě nic jiného než podepsat rozsudek smrti. Dále se tato kapitola věnuje Alžbětinu přístupu k manželství. Poukazuje na skutečnost, že i když Alžběta často prohlašovala, že si nikdy nikoho nevezme, byly i časy, kdy nad sňatkem uvažovala. Během let měla dokonce spoustu nabídek, ale striktně odmítala muže, které nikdy osobně neviděla. Je možné, že z tohoto důvodu měla jen dva adepty, které opravdu zvažovala. Prvním z nich byl Robert Dudley, kterého znala skoro celý svůj život a který patřil mezi její oblíbence u dvora. Už od počátku své vlády mu věnovala několik cenných titulů a trávila s ním mnoho času. Poté, co se tajně oženil s Alžbětinou sestřenicí jménem Lettice, se jejich vztahy na chvíli zhoršily, ale později byl opět v její přízni. Druhým nápadníkem byl mladý francouzský princ František, kterého měla ráda, ale kvůli nelibosti svých poradců nakonec od svatby ustoupila. V této kapitole je i lehce nastíněna osoba Roberta Devereux, muže, jehož kariéra u dvora vypadala velice slibně, ale jenž brzy začal mít přehnané ambice a často neuposlechl královniny příkazy. Pro pokus o politický převrat, který skončil velkým neúspěchem, byl popraven.

První analytická kapitola této práce porovnává, jakým způsobem je vyobrazena renesance v *Elizabeth I* od spisovatelky Margaret George a v *The Marriage Game* od Alison Weir. Sleduje, jakým způsobem každá z knih přistupuje ke zpracování tohoto důležitého

aspektu, především tedy vzdělání, poezie a dramatu. Nad rámec těchto prvků také ukazuje, že oba romány zahrnují do svých příběhů i královniny talenty, jako například tanec nebo hru na hudební nástroje. Co se týče vzdělání, v obou knihách je královna vnímána jako někdo, kdo v něm vidí velkou hodnotu. Poezii a divadlo také představují velice podobně, avšak Margaret George dává těmto tématům ve svém historickém románu mnohem větší prostor. V každém z děl se shodně objevují jména významných autorů, kteří byli zmíněni již v teoretické části – Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare a Marlowe. V případě dramatu, oba romány dávají důraz na královnin pozitivní přístup, ale George navíc barvitě vykresluje, pro jaké příležitosti byly hry napsány a v jakých situacích sehrály důležitou roli.

Druhá analytická kapitola je poslední a nejrozsáhlejší kapitolou této bakalářské práce. Podrobně se věnuje tomu, jak vybrané historické romány rozebírají jednotlivé aspekty představené ve třetí kapitole. Nejdříve zkoumá, jaký vztah měla královna ke svým rodičům a nevlastní sestře, neboť i toto mělo vliv na to, jaká Alžběta ve skutečnosti byla. Popisuje, že ztráta matky v útlém věku je v obou dílech viděna podobně. Oba tituly totiž nastiňují Alžbětin smutek z toho, že ji její matka neviděla vyrůstat a nemohla jí být oporou. Jindřich VIII je v románech také popsán podobně, protože George i Weir uvádějí, že to byl Alžbětin velký vzor. Jednotlivá díla jsou však v rozporu v tom, jak hlavní hrdinka vnímá svou nevlastní sestru. Zatímco autorka románu s názvem *The Marriage Game* naznačuje Alžbětinu nenávist k Marii, v *Elizabeth I* Alžběta svoji sestru spíše lituje. Dalším tématem je Alžběta jako žena na trůnu. V obou románech autorky uvádějí, že byly situace, v nichž byla královna kvůli svému pohlaví podceňována. Zároveň téměř identicky popisují Alžbětin proslov, kterým podpořila své vojáky v Tilbury, nebo dokládají královninu lásku ke svému lidu. V otázce víry se také převážně shodují. Výrazněji se pak liší až v tématu Marie Stuartovny. Je to zejména proto, že v knize od Margaret George děj začíná až rokem po popravě skotské královny a ona událost je zmíněna jen okrajově jako nutnost. Alison Weir zabíhá do poměrně velkých detailů, když popisuje, jak Alžběta nechtěla popravu dopustit a ihned po podepsání rozsudku litovala svého rozhodnutí. Posledním, čím se práce zabývá je královnin milostný život. Vzhledem k tomu, že román od Alison Weir má slovo „sňatek“ už v názvu, není proto divu, v jak velkém rozsahu je toto téma probíráno. Oba romány se shodují, že Alžběta uvažovala nad sňatkem s Robertem Dudley a francouzským princem Františkem, ke kterým měla velmi blízko. V případě Františka se ale tituly rozcházejí. Jeden z nich ukazuje královnino zklamání, co se týče princova vzhledu, druhý naopak prezentuje Alžbětino nadšení v této oblasti. Konec námluv je také vyobrazen v každém románu jinak. Na rozdíl od Margaret George, která nevidí Františkův odjezd nijak dramaticky, Alison Weir ve své knize vypráví, jak ho Alžběta musela uplatit, aby opustil Anglii.

Analýza dochází k závěru, že oba moderní historické romány o Alžbětě I. představují tuhle historickou osobnost jako silnou panovnici, která podporovala kulturní rozmach a která během svého života čelila mnoha nástrahám. Přestože každý z románů zasazuje svůj děj do jiného období její vlády, v několika případech se dokonce prolínají či pozorují stejné aspekty na různých situacích.

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