

Abstract of "Screening the Queen: Elizabeth out of Hollywood by Popular Genres"

SUSAN FRYE

University of Wyoming

WHEN IN 1999 CATE BLANCHETT AND Judi Dench received Oscar nominations for playing Elizabeth I, it was unprecedented for two actors to be nominated in the same year for playing the same character—a fact that Whoopi Goldberg acknowledged by opening the Academy Awards ceremony dressed as Queen Elizabeth, while calling herself "The African Queen." The films in which Blanchett and Dench starred, *Elizabeth* and *Shakespeare in Love*, present a complementary contrast: The dark exploration of the young, politically vulnerable Elizabeth and her court appeared first, forming a backdrop for the lively romantic comedy, in which the generation of Shakespeare's language outweighs the separa-

tion of the lovers and in which the aging Elizabeth, by moving from court to playhouse, figures as the arbiter of both love and language.

Hollywood's views of history are cast within the genres of the industry—*Elizabeth* calls on the matrix of loyalty and betrayal epitomized in *The Godfather*, while *Shakespeare in Love* recalls musical comedies like *42nd Street* and *Babes in Arms*, whose "Hey, let's put on a show" attitude stages the film against the realities of the outside world. As the two films reproduce and reinterpret these genres, which originated in and continue to reinterpret the theater, the genres have a profound effect on how the queen is screened. In a *Godfather*-like revenge film, Blanchett's Elizabeth emerges as a vulnerable, ruthless figure who approaches many aspects of the historical queen; the musical comedy, in contrast, frames Dench's nearly omniscient Elizabeth as a figure who not only controls the events of the 1590s but who also quotes and comments on the modes in which Bette Davis played Elizabeth.

Introductory Remarks

EARL MINER

Princeton University

IT IS MY DUTY AND PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE our two speakers. It was hoped that there would be a third, Edward Said. But uncertainties of health and certainties of pressure of business at the convention have made that impossible. With that loss we gain some extra time for questions from the overcrowded room I see before me.

There is also time for me to explain a bit and express gratitude for some obligations. Some of you have followed the series of sessions of which this is the third. You know that it was preceded by sessions entitled "Credo" and "Reality." All three have been sponsored by the Division on Literary Criticism, and I wish to express my deep gratitude to my colleagues on the executive committee of the division for their support of this series.

Each session has had its single topic discussed by a selection of especially esteemed colleagues, whose names rather than paper titles