

Power of politics or politics of Power: A Gendered Re-reading of Shekhar Kapur's Elizabeth

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Abstract

Gender roles are the expectations attributed to men and women based on their gender and are often based on a society's cultural values and beliefs. (Blackstone, n.d.) They are perceptible through social interaction as they are rooted in formal and informal practices. They pave the way for stereotypes, which seep into cultures and propagate freely without intervention. Similarly, visual the visual media, including television shows and films, out of all the numerous artistic mediums, give an accessible way for people to experience and immerse themselves in specific eras, locations, and events outside of their own lives. Fictional films, like other types of representational art, serve as historical evidence by bringing events to life, expressing social attitudes, and even uncovering the notions of past societies. In 1998, Shekhar Kapur directed *Elizabeth*, a historical drama film that depicts the early years of Queen Elizabeth I of England's reign. The film has been widely acclaimed for its accurate portrayal of the political and social climate of Elizabethan England, and for its nuanced portrayal of the queen herself. In this paper, Kate Millett's theory of sexual politics, as outlined in her seminal work, *Sexual Politics* (1969), will be utilized to analyze Elizabeth.

Key Words: Elizabeth, Sexual Politics, Gender Roles, Patriarchy, Stereotyping

INTRODUCTION

Cinema has been used as a response to current political and social trends as well as to propagate cultural ideas and values from their inception. Films and television shows have been used to depict harsh realities, criticisms, and a wide range of social commentary, and to investigate the past (Bales, n.d.). Cinema, often known as ‘the seventh art’ is extraordinarily productive in sculpting audience mindsets and reforming beliefs. While today’s society has its own set of challenges, there are some broad societal issues that have remained constant over time. Many areas of conflict, such as gender, race, sexuality, and class, come from previous beliefs and practices. Interestingly, gender norms are social standards that define allowable and fitting actions and manners for women and men in a given society. Gender roles are the expectations attributed to men and women based on their gender and are often based on a society’s cultural values and beliefs. (Blackstone, n.d.) They are perceptible through social interaction as they are rooted in formal and informal practices. They pave the way for stereotypes, which seep into cultures and propagate freely without intervention. Hence, this paper intends to scrutinize Sekhar Kapur’s movie *Elizabeth* (1998) while referring to the theory of sexual politics (1969) by the second wave feminist Kate Millett. Through this feministic lens, this paper aims to analyze gender roles and their stereotyping in the movie ‘Elizabeth’ by Shekar Kapur and in an attempt to elucidate the gender roles ascribed to Queen Elizabeth I, it dissects dialogues and scenes from the movie to better understand the monarch’s standing in society and how people looked at her through the lens of gender norms.

Similarly, Kate Millett’s theory of sexual politics posits that patriarchal power structures are maintained through the oppression of women, and that these structures are reinforced through cultural representations of gender. By examining how the film portrays the queen’s struggle for power in a male-dominated society, the ways in which her gender is employed to undermine her authority, and her relationships with men as examples of patriarchal power structures, it can be demonstrated how these themes align with Millett’s theory. Additionally, the extent to which the film serves as a symbol of female empowerment, challenging traditional patriarchal views of women, will also be evaluated.

THE MOVIE: ELIZABETH

The extensive global outreach of movies as a source of entertainment also makes them a firm part of literature. Both television shows and films, out of all the numerous artistic mediums, give an accessible way for people to experience and immerse themselves in specific eras, locations, and events outside of their own lives. Fictional films, like other types of representational art, serve as historical evidence by bringing events to life, expressing social attitudes, and even uncovering the notions of past societies. (Films as Social and Cultural History, n.d.). It’s easy to believe that cultures and societies from centuries ago have little influence on today’s world, but the fact that these societies ultimately formed the foundation for today’s society means that understanding the structure and ideas of the past is essential for better understanding the present.

Exploring the past through the perspective of films allows today's society to look at the societies of the past and find meaning and relevance in their own lives. (Bales, n.d.) The movie 'Elizabeth' (1998) by Shekar Kapur shows the journey of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of the Tudor dynasty. She reigned as the monarch of England for a glorious 45 years from 1558-1603. Elizabeth I is recognized as one of the greatest monarchs of England.

The movie starts with England on the brink of a religious war between the Protestants and the Catholics. Upon the death of Queen Mary, her half-sister Elizabeth ascends to the throne. Elizabeth's reign is shaky as she inherits a distressed England besieged by debts, crumbling infrastructure, hostile neighbors, and treasonous nobles within her administration. She is shown 'frolicking' around with Lord Robert Dudley which comes to a tragic end because of his betrayal. Threats to her life seem unending, even then the only agenda her empire has for her is to get married and produce an heir. After a long struggle, aided by Sir Francis Walsingham she manages to kill her enemies and ascends the throne proclaiming herself married to England, as the 'Virgin Queen.'

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Historically, gender stereotypes, though widespread, are oversimplified assertions that are seldom accurate and impact the way people define themselves and are treated by others. Understanding various stereotypes can help individuals in assessing situations better and differentiate fact from disguised fiction. Hence, Debra Hayward, co-producer of *Elizabeth* said in an interview with India Today, "We wanted to have a non-British perspective on the material, someone not so steeped in British history, who could bring a fresh eye to what could potentially be a very difficult biographical subject; Shekhar Kapur brought exactly that." (Chopra, 2013) Shekhar Kapur confirms it while saying, "I actually took what they called 'The Virgin Queen' and showed her in bed with a man. I quite enjoyed doing what I did, much to the initial regret of a lot of British historians, who said she was a virgin. And I said, 'Prove it.'" ("Bollywood to Hollywood: Director Embraces Chaos," 2011)

Shekhar Kapur's 'journey from innocence to loss of innocence' was visualized by Michael Hirst, the screenwriter. In order to fit what Kapur calls the '*essence of history*', Elizabeth has been rebranded as a weak and fragile leader which is reflected in the way she is addressed by the masses. This Elizabethan society is known to be notoriously patriarchal and women are considered as the 'weaker sex', physically and emotionally. Here, a female monarch's authority is hardly welcomed without heightened tensions and it boasts of a "birthright priority whereby males rule females" (Millett, 25). However, Millet believes that compared to conventional politics, aristocracy, "with its emphasis upon the magic and dynastic properties of blood, may at times permit woman to hold power" (p. 25) and Elizabeth marks a powerful representation of such an authorization.

ELIZABETH'S RECEPTION BY HER SUBJECTS AND OUTSIDERS

Kate Millett believes that "in a patriarchal society, sex is the basis for the formation of power

relations structures in society which are used as sexual power which forms an ideology which then penetrates into culture and becomes the main concept of power” (Sari, Wiyatmi 114). Accordingly, it results in gender stereotypes, which though widespread, are oversimplified assertions that are seldom accurate and impact the way people define themselves and are treated by others. Understanding these stereotypes can help individuals in assessing situations better and differentiate fact from disguised fiction and can be seen that in the movie where Elizabeth is recurrently called the ‘*bastard queen*’, ‘*servant of wickedness*’ and even, ‘*pretend queen*’ how the female leadership is openly questioned during her reign.

As one of the central themes of Elizabeth is the queen’s struggle for power in a male-dominated society, throughout the film, opposition from male advisors and courtiers who seek to undermine her authority and control her actions is portrayed. This aligns with Millett’s theory that patriarchal power is maintained through the oppression of women, as she states “patriarchal power is structured like a pyramid, with men at the top, women at the bottom, and the weight of the structure held by women” (p. 24). Elizabeth’s experiences in the film can be seen as a manifestation of this power structure, as resistance and hostility from the men around her is consistently portrayed. The film also portrays how Elizabeth’s position as a woman in a powerful position was viewed as a threat to the patriarchal society and the men in power, and thus, are constantly trying to undermine her authority.

In the year of her succession, celebrated theologian John Knox stated his concerns in ‘The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women’. He considered female rulers ‘*repugne to nature*’, and compared to men, ‘*foolishe, madde and phrenetike*’ (translation: repugnant to nature, and compared to men- foolish, mad and frenetic). (*The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women, by John Knox, n.d.*) Time and again, Elizabeth is made to succumb to the conventional belief of male and female being “really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different” (Millett, 31).

While instantiating of sexual politics, Millett discusses the concept of masculine and feminine and believes that formation of the conventional stereotyping is “based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, ‘virtue’ and ineffectuality in the female” (p. 26). Similarly, one can see that the theme of ‘innocence’ has extensive importance in the movie and is central to Elizabeth’s character. This becomes evident as William Cecil demands to see the majesty’s sheets every morning because he “*must know all her proper functions*”. He defends his outrageous order by stating, “*Her Majesty’s body and person are no longer her own property. They belong to the State.*” Her innocence had a ‘political motive’ which needed to be harbored to gain the respect of her subjects, which otherwise, was scarce. Likewise, Duke of Norfolk, who covets Elizabeth’s throne relentlessly, barges into her bedroom disrespectfully to wake her up despite being told “*Her Majesty is not yet ready to receive visitors.*” William Cecil, her closest advisor, feels the need to speak for the Queen when he ensures Monsieur de Foix that “*Her Majesty will consider the proposal most carefully*” without once consulting Elizabeth. In the Elizabethan era, women were believed to lack the strength to make decisions for themselves. According to a documented

historical incident, William Cecil was furious when one of the queen's messengers discussed a dispatch from Paris with her, because he believed it 'too much for a woman's knowledge.' (The National Archives, 2020)

Eventually, escaping unhurt from an attempt on her life, Elizabeth receives a lambasting from William Cecil in regards to rumors that surround her private life.

"The world knows Lord Robert visits your chambers and you fornicate with him! It's even said you already carry his child!"

This makes Elizabeth wonder 'how so bad a judgment' has been formed of her. In *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England* (1588), William Allen, a Cardinal of England said Elizabeth only serves her "filthy lust" and accused her of 'shamefully defiling her person and country' (Allen, 2008). In order to be an ideal monarch, Elizabeth's bodily and emotional autonomy belonged more to her subjects than her person. This implies that political authority resided with the queen's advisors, the 'self-appointed' representatives of 'the state' rather than the queen herself.

Likewise, outsiders' perception of Elizabeth did not reflect the position she held in society. Duke Anjou kisses her on the lips twice without her consent and engages in vulgar talks, ignoring her overt discomfort believing that "a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female' (Millett, 26). His repeated transgressions against the Queen go unpunished. Later, he tells Mary of Guise why he could never marry Elizabeth- "*She is frigid! They even say she is really a man!*" Monsieur de Foix shows the temerity to comment upon her marital choices- "*Perhaps Her Majesty's heart is already set upon another.*" Thus, a reasonable sequitur that can be drawn from the attitude of her advisors and foreigners is that Elizabeth's gender proved to welcome unwarranted calumny and vituperation.

MARRIAGE AND HEIR

The plot of *Elizabeth* revolves heavily around Elizabeth's marriage. Her council constantly pressurizes her to find a suitor in order to produce an heir.

"Everything now depends upon the husband that woman takes."

"Madam, until you marry and produce an heir, you will find no security."

"In marriage, and in the production of an heir, lies your only surety."

"Your Majesty would improve all these matters if you would agree to marry."

The biggest predicament for the Virgin Queen in a hereditary monarchy was providing a successor to her own rule. This issue dominated Elizabeth's reign. In fact, the entire parliament had misgivings about Elizabeth's marital status and went to extreme lengths to pester her to specify her next heir as they thought her incapable of ruling England alone. In the book *Sexual Politics*, Millett observes that biologically, "women can conceive, give birth, and breastfeed

because they have organs that support this. However, the facts are instead used as a tool to limit women to women's roles related to their biological experiences. Thus, women's sexual roles are only related to the dichotomy of the public and domestic spheres (Sari, Wiyatmi 117). Similarly, In the year of her being crowned the Queen, Commons requested a petition for her to get married; and again in 1563 and 1566. Her council was infamous for blackmailing and threatening to not pass necessary bills as long as she remained unmarried. Thomas Gargrave, the House Speaker, delivered a speech in the Parliament in 1559 and said, "*Nothing can become more alien to the public interest than to see a Prince, who by marriage may continue the Commonwealth in peace, to live single, like a Vestal virgin*"(Heisch, 1980).

Hence, in addition to her struggle for power, the ways in which her gender is utilized to undermine her authority is also depicted. Throughout the film, she is referred to as 'the virgin queen' and her virginity is used as a tool to control her actions and decisions. This is a clear example of how patriarchal societies use the sexualization of women to maintain their power, as Millett writes, "The sexualization of women is a method of control and a weapon of oppression" (p. 131). Through the portrayal of how Elizabeth's virginity is used to control her, the film illustrates the expectations placed on her by a patriarchal society. Her virginity is used as a means to control her actions, her marriage options and her political decisions. It is also used to question her ability to rule, as virginity is seen as a symbol of purity and innocence, and thus, her ability to rule is questioned as she is not pure and innocent.

Elizabeth was always more hostile to establishing a succession than to marrying. Any such explicitness, she believed, was a colossal political blunder that endangered both the incumbent and the designated successors (Heisch, 1980)- in the former, by providing alternative rallying points for dissatisfied subjects, and in the latter by casting a designated successor as an arch-rival to the incumbent. Thus, Despite being the Queen of England, Elizabeth was solely viewed as an 'heir producing' being. Her entire being was considered dependent on giving England the next heir in the line of succession. Elizabeth's competence was constantly questioned because she did not choose a suitor or provide an heir.

Hence, Elizabeth's relationships with men in the film also reflect Millett's theory of sexual politics. Her relationship with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, is characterized by power struggles and manipulation. This serves as a clear example of how patriarchal power structures can infiltrate and shape intimate relationships between men and women. As Millett argues, "sexual politics begins in the bedroom" (p. 10), and the film's portrayal of Elizabeth's relationship with Dudley illustrates this point. The relationship between Elizabeth and Dudley is clearly influenced by the power dynamics between men and women in a patriarchal society, and serves as a representation of how these dynamics play out in personal relationships.

INCOMPETENCE

Elizabeth's portrayal in Kapur's film was falsely delicate and incompetent. As soon as she ascends to the throne, Elizabeth's decisions are met with animadversion and it shows the patriarchal mindset of the Elizabethan society. As according to Millett "patriarchy is like an

endemic in human social life which can be explained and is inevitable because patriarchy is deeply rooted to carry out political, social, or economic forms, in caste or class, feudal or bureaucracy (Millett 25), as a direct consequence of her 'so-perceived' passivity, she finds herself being blamed for the death of children sent off to war in Scotland. Crying, she confides in Walsingham, "*I have been proved unfit to rule.*"

In an attempt to get the Act of Uniformity passed, behind closed doors, Elizabeth is seen hesitating and weeping before talking to the parliament. Walsingham, her savior, manages to get the Act passed by locking several prominent opponents outside the session. According to the movie, without Walsingham's cunning subterfuge, Elizabeth would have indisputably lost the argument. While talking to the Bishops, Elizabeth asks, "*How can I force you, Your Grace? I am a woman.*"

After stating in open court that she shall have "one mistress here and no master", Elizabeth once again finds herself as a mere spectator in the political arena while Sir Walsingham clears the battlefield of her adversaries. A historically inaccurate murder of Mary of Guise and the planned execution of Norfolk and several others at the hands of Walsingham paints him as a masculine vessel of ultimate authority while Elizabeth, though Queen, remains subjectively uninvolved. (McLees-Frazier, 2009)

As England faces the imminent death of Queen Mary, Elizabeth is *shown relying on Lord Robert's shoulders for support*. "Remember who you are", Lord Robert says reassuringly. Elizabeth's tricky relationship with Lord Robert Dudley through the film shows she has a flimsy disposition with a wavering sense of judgment. The film's prime plot device—the romance between Robert Dudley and Elizabeth just reinforces the idea of a very weak and flighty character who often showed terrible judgment. She sleeps with Dudley where all her ladies-in-waiting could see her; later they have a lover's spat in front of her court and the French ambassador. (*Elizabeth: Romantic Film Heroine or Sixteenth-Century Queen? | Perspectives on History | AHA*, n.d.)

Particularly apparent is the parallel to Scotland's regent Mary of Guise, a strong, sexually liberated warrior queen. In one scene, a small boy is sent back to Elizabeth by Mary on the battlefield while she is wearing armour; the boy's English blood has stained her French colours. In contrast, Elizabeth is seen hunched over in front of her father Henry VIII's veiled picture, sobbing over the deaths of the English youths who had been forced to battle in Scotland due to a lack of reinforcements. When it comes to emotion, the public finds Mary to be a much more appealing monarch than Elizabeth in the moment. (*AHA*, n.d.)

In a direct contradiction to historically approved narratives, the motion picture portrays Elizabeth as an easily influenced victim, rather than a highly intellectual sovereign confirming the concept of politics as referred by Millett as a "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another" (p. 24).

REBRANDING AND LABELS

The motif of rebranding is heavily prevalent. Elizabeth is compelled to address herself using masculine terms alluding to androcentric strengths as her gender puts her at a great disadvantage. By adhering to ambiguous double-gender norms, Elizabeth became a political hermaphrodite. (Rebecca Dean, 2018) According to historical evidence and several scenes in the film, she refers to herself as the ‘prince.’

In Kapur’s interpretation, when William Cecil doubts Elizabeth’s political strategies by saying,

“*Forgive me, Madam, but you are only a woman.*”, Elizabeth answers with a stoic face—*“I may be a woman, Sir William, but if I choose I have the heart of a man.”*”

In her Tilbury’s address in 1588, Elizabeth was documented saying, “*I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king*”. (Elizabeth’s Tilbury Speech, n.d.)

In order to become a successful Queen, not only must Elizabeth conform to masculine roles; she also needed to part with her sensuality. It is nothing but a consequence of age-old patriarchy and “patriarchy’s greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity. ... Patriarchy has a still more tenacious or powerful hold through its successful habit of passing itself off as nature” (Millett, 26). Likewise, this movie’s dramatic end finds Elizabeth saying, “*I have become a virgin.*” By labeling herself a virgin, she achieved the highest priority of a woman in the Christian faith—chastity. (Rebecca Dean, 2018)

Dressed in all white, her purity produces an answer to misogynistic concerns. “*Must I be touched by nothing?*” she asks Sir Walsingham. In order to ‘*reign supreme*’, Elizabeth must provide all men something divine to look up to. Her duty as a monarch was not limited to serving political needs but extended to include her transformation to a symbolic Virgin Mary. When she cannot be a man, she implores her subjects to believe she’s the immaculately pristine woman by becoming ‘The Virgin Queen.’

Choosing to stay romantically uninvolved to garner support for her reign, Elizabeth chose instead to be “married to England”. William Camden, in his book, *Annals of the affairs of England and Ireland during the reign of Elizabeth- 1615*, reported Elizabeth showing her coronation ring as proof of her marriage to her duties as a queen. By being married to her kingdom she became maternally attached to the people of England and hence, became pure in her body and mind. (Heisch, 1980)

SHEKAR KAPUR’S PERSPECTIVE AND PORTRAYAL OF ELIZABETH

According to Shekhar Kapur, the movie *Elizabeth* is “the story of a journey from innocence to loss of innocence.” In an interview, Kapur revealed that he did not aim to make the movie historically accurate. Prioritizing emotionality over veracity, Kapur added, “The question was: what would it have been like to have been Elizabeth?”, “We took the icon, and went behind the

icon.” Kapur believed that Elizabeth had to make the declaration of virginity as a political statement in order to gain the respect of her council and the parliament. He added, “History has not proved she was not a virgin”, citing her three well-documented relationships, “It was important for her to make a statement that she was.” (Lisle, 1998) Although Elizabeth is widely known as a strong and independent ruler, Kapur’s depiction finds the ‘no man’s Elizabeth’ depending on the three men close to her- Sir William Cecil, Lord Robert Dudley, and Sir Walsingham for both political and emotional support. Kapur loosely played with the historical facts to make Elizabeth seem more like a ‘damsel in distress’ who constantly needs reassurance and rescue. (*Elizabeth: Romantic Film Heroine or Sixteenth-Century Queen? | Perspectives on History | AHA*, n.d.)

The primary arc of Elizabeth’s portrayal in the film is an oversimplified portrayal of the actual queen’s metamorphosis into an icon; “it shows how Elizabeth becomes Elizabeth” (Betteridge, 2003b). The film takes liberties with historical facts and what is known about Elizabeth I’s personality in its portrayal of the historical monarch.

Shekhar Kapur in ‘The Making of Elizabeth’ directed by Richard Leyland (1998) stated that the film’s goal was to explore not only how a person becomes an icon, but also to suggest the concept of destiny. This is communicated in part, he claims, through visual elements:

“The look [of the film] was dominated by my need to show that destiny is bigger than man. Destiny is even bigger than Elizabeth I and becomes—is this the story of a woman that pushed herself to this point, or was it her destiny to come to this point and she was just inexorably being pulled towards this destiny?”

Shekar Kapur took inspiration from Indira Gandhi’s portrayal for the portrayal of Elizabeth I in the movie. According to him, both Indira Gandhi and Elizabeth I’s iconic status expressed itself in a duality that saw their fans compare them to beneficent female religious figures and their adversaries portray them as equally strong destructive female deities or archetypes. Elizabeth I was portrayed as the Virgin Mary, the goddess Astraea, the Whore of Babylon, and the Amazon queen in this film; Indira Gandhi was compared to the Hindu goddess of life and referred to as “Mother India,” or she was portrayed as Kali, the goddess of death and destruction. (McLees-Frazier, 2009)

Elizabeth was a fascinating and strong woman, but the film **shows little of** her complexity or strength of character. She is weak and indecisive for much of the film, and despite claiming to be “no man’s Elizabeth,” she appears to be dependent on Francis Walsingham (her master of spies) till the end. This is unfortunate because the film contains some stunning photography, stunning costumes, and occasionally magnificent moments. The cast is impressive, particularly its star, Cate Blanchett, who looks and acts perfectly as the young Elizabeth and has a tremendous presence. With a better script and direction, she could have been truly excellent. (*Elizabeth: Romantic Film Heroine or Sixteenth-Century Queen? | Perspectives on History | AHA*, n.d.)

IMPACT

Gender norms define how individuals of a certain gender and age are expected to act in a particular social situation. Inequalities between genders are caused by harmful gender norms. While gender norms affect all children, research has found that girls are disproportionately affected (“How Harmful Gender Norms Create an Unequal World for Children,” n.d.) Gender norms are neither universal nor static and they change with changing times. Some norms are beneficial, such as the restriction that children should not smoke. Whereas other norms create inequality. Girls are far more likely than boys to undertake household duties, for example. Similarly, unpaid caregiving and household duties take up to 2-10 times as much time for females as it does for males. Armed groups on the other hand frequently pursue men and boys for active combat roles due to the common association of masculinity with defending homes and communities.

The media, particularly television and movies, play an important role in the youth’s gender education. They present a plethora of role models for women and men, far more than children are exposed to in person. Children are also exposed to media representations of their potential employment and futures. Regular exposure to this substance, according to study, has negative implications. The biased representation of gender roles in films and media which have such a vast reach and impact on society has led to the underrepresentation of the genders in many places, like the STEM fields. Heavy TV viewing, particularly of content with traditional gender representations, can lead to more rigid or stereotypical beliefs about what each gender can and should do, as well as more stereotypical activity, and occupation preferences, and limits children's perceptions of their own abilities and future options, according to the findings. As Millett observes, “however muted its present appearance may be, sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power” (p. 26). Hence, for girls, this typically involves focusing on their beauty, physique, and sensuality rather than their abilities, particularly in academics, science, and math. For boys, this involves constructing a restricted definition of femininity and masculinity while avoiding “softer” qualities like nurturing, compassion, and romantic love.

CONCLUSION

In the entirety of the movie, Elizabeth is seen depending on the three men close to her- Sir William Cecil, Lord Robert Dudley, and Sir Walsingham for both political and emotional support. As she is portrayed as weak and fragile, her political decisions seem spontaneous instead of strategic. Her emotional stability influences the relationships she forms and as threats to her life seem unending, the only agenda her empire has for her is to get married and produce an heir even when she narrowly escapes death. Thus, through the lens of Kate Millett’s theory of sexual politics, we have established how movies influence the masses and how perpetuating gender roles and stereotypes can have dire consequences. The film’s portrayal of the queen’s struggle for power in a male-dominated society, the utilization of her gender to undermine her authority, and her relationships with men as examples of patriarchal power structures, are all illustrated. Additionally, the film serves as a symbol of female empowerment. Through Elizabeth’s portrayal, the film serves as a symbol of female empowerment, challenging

traditional patriarchal views of women. Elizabeth I was a brilliantly effective monarch. Her reign is still referred to as 'The Golden Age' and hence, to paint an influential historical figure as an impotent victim of gender norms is definitely a rewriting of history from a misogynistic standpoint conforming the theory of sexual politics.

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