

## MASCULINITY IN HISTORICAL DRAMA: A STUDY ON THE FILM THE EAGLE OF THE NINTH

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### *Abstract*

*The conceptions of Gender and Sex were studied and comprehended as single entity from the dawn of Modernity. Any discourses distinguishing both Gender and Sex were scarce or none until 1955, when sexologist Jon Money proposed a distinction of Sex and gender as terminologies. In present scenario, the distinction is recognised in the areas of Humanities and Social sciences. Previously it was common to identify the gender with sex of the organism. The idea of Gender is mistaken with Sex. The individual is a male by sex but female by gender it indicates the social and biological contexts of the individual.*

**Keywords:** Masculinity, Historical drama, Gender, Sex, Modernity

### INTRODUCTION

The conceptions of Gender and Sex were studied and comprehended as single entity from the dawn of Modernity. Any discourses distinguishing both Gender and Sex were scarce or none until 1955, when sexologist Jon Money proposed a distinction of Sex and gender as terminologies. In the subsequent years, the theoretical advancement in the field of feminist studies especially in 1970 started to identify sex as a biological identity and Gender as a Social construct. In present scenario, the distinction is recognised in the areas of Humanities and Social sciences. Previously it was common to identify the gender with sex of the organism. The modern perspectives deconstruct these stereotypes and the tendency of limiting the gender. Gender had become a frequent topic when gender identities had been started to reveal during the post-modern period. New identities are yet to be termed and introduced into the common sphere. The celebrations of different identities also enhanced studies on Gender. Still the concept of Gender and Sex as distinction has not been widely comprehended in the common public. The idea of Gender is mistaken with Sex. The individual is a male by sex but female by gender it indicates the social and biological contexts of the individual. The discourses on Gender identities are wide in now a day. Gender studies are widely focused on the Feminist perspectives while masculine perspective is only considered in comparison. The popular media is source of discourses on how the gender had been portrayed in multitude. Film as popular contemporary media had subjected to several depictions of gender. Likewise, every discourse from feminine, masculine and other gender identities are studied and celebrated. The tendency to relate nature and gender was visible with eco feminist and eco masculine studies.

The Eagle of the Ninth was an Adventurous Historic novel for children by the British Author Rosemary Sutcliff and published by Oxford University Press in 1954. The Novel was the first of the sequels including The Silver Branch, Frontier Wolf, The Lantern Bearers, Sword at Sunset, Dawn Wind, Sword Song and The Shield Ring. The Novel is contextualised in The Roman Occupied Britain in the first Century AD. The Protagonist is a Young Roman Military Officer Marcus Flavius

Aquila who was stationed in the Northern frontiers of Britannia after his Posting. Aquila is arrived in Britain with the intention of seeking out his father's Disappeared legion along with the Iconic Golden Eagle, The Glory of the Roman Empire. He dared to pass the Famous Hadrian wall, built by the emperor Hadrian to separate and resist the Invasions of Northern Tribes. A freed Briton Esca accompanies him. He learnt about the resistance of his father's legion. He fights the tribes, retrieves the Golden Eagle, and restores the glory of the Roman Empire. The Novel had been adapted into several into Radio, Television and Film. Upon the screen, A BBC Television series was made in 1977 out of the Book. The book was adapted in to the big screen The Eagle in 2011 directed by Kevin MacDonald. It was Historical Drama starring Channing Tatum, Jamie Bell, Donald Sutherland, Mark Strong etc.

### DEPICTIONS OF ROMAN MASCULINITY

The film is set under the Roman Invaded Southern Britain. In the Historical Perspective, it is important to notice that traits of Roman Culture were already in the Islands. The Ideals of Roman Empire like the Culture, Beliefs and Customs are reached out in the Roman Invaded lands. The Native Populations are observed to be heavily influenced by these ideals. In the case of Britain, it is important to notice this aspect on two matters, The Establishment of Londonium (London) and the use of Latin as Classical, Elite Tongue. In the Film, However the Native Populations are depicted as Barbarians as it was in any other sources. When the Celts attack the Fort or The discovery of the Golden Eagle in a Temple of Seafarer people, the aspect of a Civilized Roman intervention is visible. The quest is the important element to be analysed as both personal and political for the protagonist Marcus Flavius Aquila. As a Roman Soldier, he exhibits each and every traits of Roman Masculinity. Rome is mainly a patriarchal society. The centre of Power is vested among men. Although the women of the upper class had some of the freedom. This was not true in the case of the women from the lower strata of life. The roman men are ideal; the concept masculinity could also derived from pantheon itself. In roman mythology, gods are the abode of every qualities. The gods are vested with individual powers. Likewise, the masculinity had also thought to be associated with mercury. As Rome was in war with many of its history, it was military state. The tactics developed by the romans had also influenced the modern world. The soldier's life was synonymous to a men's life. The masculine characteristic that a roman soldier possess determine the fate of the nation. As in the movie, it is provide a hint at a point that it is the cowardice of the legion of the ninth to lose both the battle and the eagle and ultimately brought disgrace to the Roman Empire and the rise of the Hadrian Wall.

#### Environment and Masculinity

The tendency of associating gender with nature was seen early as the post second world war era. The advancements in the field of science and technology had improved much of the status of living in many parts of the world. Especially in the developed world. The discourses on social sciences had resulted in a variety of disciplines. These disciplines are varied in their nature and outcome. One such discipline came out of the feminist thoughts are the eco feminism. Eco feminism is an attempt to congruent women with nature and how it had been exploited. The peculiarity of eco feminism lies in the bon it creates in the association with the nature. The oppression of a feminine character is equated with nature. The exploitations of the nature is observed analogous to that of the nature. More over the characteristics of the nature ad been identified as feminine rather than masculine. The term eco masculinity is a developing discipline, which is considered as a complimentary field to the eco feminist studies. The early works on Eco Masculinity was done by

the likes of Richard Twine, Paul Pule and Greta Grad. The eco masculinity investigates the role of men in the eco feminist studies. But here the focus is on how the archaic roman masculine identity had been associated with the nature and the different dimensions along with it.

The nature is an important symbolism throughout the film. The background of the movie is set in Roman invaded Britain. The geographical entities of the Britain is shown with deeper symbolism. The initiations shots of the film are showing the roman troops are rowing through an inner channel narrow channel in a canoe. This symbolically represents the inroads of the roman influence into Britain. The Roman Empire is a state founded on military aggression. The male identity is the soldier's identity and it is ideal to be aggressive as a masculine feature. Conquering the unconquered is thematised through the movie. The terrain are sometimes considered difficult for structured expeditions. Here the difficult terrain along with the people who inhabit is considered as an unconquered factor upon the roman masculinity. The hero Marcus Flavius Aquila is representative of this roman military masculinist characteristic.

The Expedition, which undertook by Marcus and the Briton slave Esca in search of the Golden Eagle is carried out through the rough terrain of the northern Britain. The emperor Hadrian raised a wall separating the northern Britain, which also marked the end of the known world. The northern Britain, which later turned to be Scotland had history of long resistance to the roman invasion especially by the Celt. The roman masculine entity represented by the legion of the ninth was an attempt to gather the grip over the Britannia. The region had history of fierce resistance against roman invasion especially with the Celtic queen Boudicca. A toxic masculinity is visible throughout the film along with the hero. Marcus is personified as Rome itself with the authoritarian macho instinct. He is seems to be overs heading other weaker masculinities especially that of esca, who is a conquered Briton slave. Throughout the expedition they undertook the rough terrain prove to be difficult to Marcus but not to the esca. Here the nature is serving is a background for the native.

The Scottish Highlands are depicted with the eternal beauty of Britannia. The Misty forest and rivers, Moorlands, mountains touching the mist are all the symbolism although rough, the delicate nature of the Scottish life. The pride and glory of the Roman Empire with the masculine features enshrined in the eagle is a matter of prestigious to Rome. The more civilised Rome is a subject of masculine construction while the Britons are savages. The eagle is the important and ecological symbolism. The glory of Rome is depicted as synonymous with the golden eagle. But when the glory is authoritative with Masculine traits over the rough terrain of Britannia, the resistance is been met with in the middle. The film successful portray the ecological importance. The different dimensions understood are identified along with these ecological traits in the scenes.

## QUEST

The Quest is one of the aspect, which marks the Masculinity in the movie. The Character Marcus Flavius Aquila is represented as the trail of Quest. On the prime observation, The Quest can be identified with two different ideals. One is personal and other is national. Marcus Flavius Aquila had been taken cared by His uncle whom he never met rightly after the Feud he had with the Celts outside the Fort. Here Aquila is shown to be broken down in to the deepest emotions which over shades his Macho Roman Masculine Nature. Subsequently he reveals to his uncle that he was well aware of where he should be posted after his military training; Britain. The Scenes of Riddance

between Marcus and his father is seen frequently in association with the quest. He admits that he was in search of His father whom went missing with the Ninth Legion surpassing the Hadrian Wall. The Hadrian Wall symbioses the boundary of the Known world since Romans could not conquered the Northern Celtic Tribes. Here The Ninth Legion itself was in a quest to expand the Roman boundaries and subsequently bringing the glory to the entire Roman Empire. However, since things went not as expected the entire quest became a Nightmare and Disgrace to the Roman Empire and Hadrian wall raised. The parental Alienation at very young age had compelled Aquila to leg into the quest of finding his father. This serves motive for personal ideal. The father absence Aquila had suffered might have contributed to it. The second is political in nature as well as symbolic. The eagle was the symbol of glory of the Roman Empire the quest Marcus under took with Esca across the Hadrian wall was in retrieving the golden eagle and restored the faded gory of the legion which was he was successful in assembling the old legion. The Roman Male is entitled to uphold the glory of the Empire. Marcus had successful in it through protecting the legacy and washing away the disgrace from the face of the Roman Empire. Here, quest serves as motif in developing a stronger masculine figure throughout the film. Marcus Flavius Aquila is powered by the quest in the movie.

### **DREAM**

Dream is not explicitly serving as an ideal in the film. However, behind the quest, it is the dream lies as the powerhouse in characterising the masculinity. As the quest serves on two ideals, the personal interest where Marcus Flavius Aquila is in search of this father. It is the dream, which leads to the quest. The psychological aspect have an immense in role determining the decisions of Aquila. When he decides to cross the Hadrian wall, Marcus faced combo threat or unfavourable atmosphere. First, the direct walk in t the threat and the accompaniment of Esca. Esca was a Briton, which turned to be a threat to the roman. His uncle warns him of Esca .but eventually he trusts esca and proceeds towards the quest. The dream whereas is the eventual source behind the trust and confidence. Although at some point of time esca was seemed to be overhanded him when they reached a tribal hamlet, it later becomes proved that he was trying to save Marcus by impersonating him as master with a Roman Slave. From the initial minutes, it is shown that Marcus s constantly having the mare of his father and the eagle. Masculinity and Dream could be associated as the quest itself a duty relies on the Roman soldiers to retrieve the Golden Eagle and restore the glory to the Empire. As far as Aquila is concerned, he build trust and confidence on this dream. It eventually proved out to be a triumph when he was finally able to full fil the unfinished business of the legion of the ninth by re assembling the legion and winning over the barbarians. Roman Empire was seen as an abode of civilisation and as far as Britain is concerned, it is nothing but a land of barbarians. The victory over Britons are the victory of civilized men against the savages. The toxic masculine tendencies such as the burden of civilizing the barbarians is also comes as an after effect of his dream. In the subsequent developments, the white man's burden on the imperialistic time which served as an explanation for the bloodshed and conquering might have come from the this invisible burden lies in the hands of the roman soldiers.

### **BRAVERY**

The essential element to be present in an ideal roman citizen was bravery. The depictions of bravery s an important aspect in the quest undertook by Marcus Flavius Aquila. It is a scale in determining the masculine features in the ancient cultures. The Roman Empire was no such exception.as military state bravery was considered an indistinguishable element of a soldier's

life in the film, bravery is depicted in several occasions. These occasions, when put under a scanner, will reveal that the traits of masculine characteristics are visible along its line. One such instance was with the conflicts with the Celts. The Roman soldiers dealt with the warfare in a more tactical way than the random approach of the Celts. Upon the fall of Marcus, he broke down regarding his aim or his uncle. It was later turned to be the quest for his father and therefore the golden eagle. Upon his revival, a gladiator scene is portrayed in a colosseum. Feuds were a part of the Roman warfare. The Roman civilization was fond of violence. The bravery of the gladiators determines their right to live. In the feud, Esca, a Briton slave turned to escort Marcus into the northern boundaries surpassing the Hadrian wall. Bravery turned to be important when he inspired the earlier members of the legion and reassembled them against the Celts. This scene even has a political instinct. It symbolically analyses that bravery is an essential part of Roman life and in order to maintain the glory of the empire, the life of the soldiers to be bound and brave to safeguard the eagle. The movie also provides hints that the legion of the ninth had failed in mission because of the lack of bravery. Upon the expedition with Esca, Marcus confronts a native Briton and realises an artefact that belongs to his father. When he enquired about it, he is answered that he had obtained it from a coward who begged for mercy. This even shows that the confidence of Marcus had shattered. As a young man, he always looked up to his father. This news came with a destruction of an idol in his mind. Later, confronting an earlier colleague of his father, Marcus came to know that his father was indeed a brave man who died in safeguarding the eagle, that is the glory of the Roman empire.

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