

“Mary Queen of Scots”

By Helen Lutz

After tons of political recycling, being pounded for months by political candidate rhetoric and having all the talking heads espousing their ‘take’ on the political sphere at any given moment, I really looked forward to November 7th, the day after mid-term elections. A time when life could quiet down, after all what’s the real difference? Just about all our elected ‘leaders’ have managed to ‘pull themselves up by their boot straps’ and are now millionaires – mostly at our expense. As in Oz, “pay no attention to that man behind the curtain.” Hearing “I want to represent cha” was like fingernails on a chalk board.



Ah yes, the peace of November 7th arrived only to be shattered by talk of 2020. It appears that politics is a favorite dirty little ‘party’ game on which our representatives, would be representatives, and media thrive. A moment doesn’t go by without someone digging up dirt (fake or not) or making threats (elections have consequences) or just having a good old time with innuendo. As Lord Acton stated in the 1880’s, “Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely” is seen today and vividly in the new period piece currently in theaters “Mary Queen of Scots.”

The film is set in the mid 1500’s and opens with Mary (Saoirse Ronan) in her dungeon cell. Director Josie Rourke then tells the tale of Mary, Queen of Scots. At the ripe old age of 17 Mary, a French raised Catholic and widow of King Francis II of France, returns to her home, Scotland where she assumes the throne which doesn’t sit real well with her half brother the Earl of Moray (James McArdle) who has been ruling in her absence. She’s a head strong young woman not afraid of power.

Mary also yearns to assume what she feels is her rightful place on the throne of England; something which her cousin Queen Elizabeth I (Margo Robbie) and current English monarch, isn’t wild about. “Mary Queen of Scots” tells the tale of the rivaling queens who were both strong-willed women – and we all know it’s a man’s world and that women should be seen and not heard, pregnant and barefoot, and in the kitchen in the 1500’s. (Shoot, look at the Me Too Movement still going on today.)

Every play, on both sides, is designed for political advantage whether it is offering up a lover, taking and using a husband or setting up a face-to-face meeting (President Trump meeting with Kim Jong-un was a walk in the park in comparison). If Mary doesn’t have enough trouble within, then the community organizers – the Protestants, led by John Knox (David Tennant), are sure to rile things up and cause her grief.

As a period piece where we know the players and how the story goes, Rourke does a nice job of re-telling history and Ronan and Robbie bring their characters to life. My favorite scene involves the eventual meeting of the two queens in a setting of flowing linens which historically never really happened, but sure adds a nice Hollywood touch; history easily rewritten. “Mary Queen of Scots” plays to feminism with lots of skullduggery mixed in to keep the story interesting. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “Mary Queen of Scots” ... TWO 1/2 HARTS. The movie isn’t for everyone or true history buffs, but it is an interesting retelling of an old tale.