

A FOUCAULDIAN READING OF THE MONARCHY IN HATSHEPSUT'S EGYPT

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Abstract:

'Power', may be, one of the key concepts gaining considerable importance in the academic parlance of thinking for centuries. Michael Foucault's ideas and invaluable explorations regarding the notions of power stand as an immobile influence to the academic circle in particular and culture in general. Foucault elaborately asserts how power plays and controls human's mobility and freedom through different agencies like prisons, hospitals, mental asylum's etc. etc. The present study problematizes how the monarchic power acts and controls the kingdom and its inhabitants to a certain extent. Kara Cooney's one of the popular biographies titled 'The Woman Who Would Be King: Hatshepsut's rise to power in ancient Egypt' shows Hatshepsut, the queen's charismatic rule and valor in ancient Egypt and also her long standing command over tradition of the narratives that need to be historicized properly.

Key Words: Power- Ascending individualization- Monarchic power -Ancient queen ship in Egypt- Kara Cooney's *The Woman Who Would Be A King*- Visibility of Power- female king.

Power relations are not only ubiquitous in human life but also an intrinsic part of social relationships. However, like other complex social phenomena, the definition and analysis of power vary widely. The explicit considerations of power in archaeological contexts such as Ancient Egyptian monarchy focus on discussions of elites and their apparent ability to control trade and/or direct the construction of large civic works, such as monumental architecture or irrigation. According to Foucault, under such monarchies, power was to be made visible through the body of the king who undertook such tasks as mentioned above. The king was the source of power and justice. His magnificence became apparent to people by means of the public spectacles and the royal ceremonies. Foucault called this structure 'ascending individualization.' The ones who are at the top would be most striking in their individuality in

This is framework. In his own words, "the more one possesses power or privilege the more one is marked as an individual by rituals, written accounts or visual reproductions." (74) The power of the monarch was also made visible through architecture. In his own words, "architecture manifested might, the sovereign, God." (75) Hatshepsut attracted the focus of Egyptologists on her majorly because of her statues and the way in which her gender was advertised as 'a prediscursive fact', one beyond her control. Hatshepsut's images of monarchy stir up not just a break with tradition, but instead a beginning of power-relations that befit female kings, the establishing of a precedent of female power. Hatshepsut became a kingly body that was neither male nor female, but instead an icon of ancient Egypt as a female king. Her power was propagated through architecture, statues and customized imageries. Only kings/pharaohs 'ruled' Egypt. Traditional queens were not acknowledged as rulers of Egypt and served instead as wives or mothers to pharaohs. Thus it was uncharacteristic for Hatshepsut to rule as king in ancient Egypt. Hatshepsut's long-standing command over the iconography and tradition of narratives in Egypt therefore needs to be historicized properly.

Queen Hatshepsut is probably the least studied ancient Egyptian queen. Kara Cooney's humane biography of Hatshepsut came out in 2005 entitled: *The Woman who would be King: Hatshepsut's Rise to Power in Ancient Egypt*. There have been several Egyptological documents in the modern times including

such classics as *Daughters of Isis* by Joyce Tyldesley and *Nefertiti and Cleopatra* by Julia Samson. Cooney's account takes cues from all her predecessors and tries to contribute further into the understanding of how Hatshepsut has been a woman of mettle. Egypt has always been a popular "other" for modern Western culture. Especially the Egyptian woman: they have been announced to history in various exoticized phrases: the graceful Nefertiti, the seductive Cleopatra, the manipulative Hatshepsut. 'King' Hatshepsut commanded a mighty empire during the New Kingdom, as part of the Eighteenth Dynasty that brought Egypt back from the turmoil of the Second Intermediate Period, and ushered in an era marked by deep-standing religious and political changes. Cooney says that Hatshepsut's visual representations went a long way in Egyptian monarchic tradition and that Akhenaten was influenced by the visual paraphernalia she had used. This has to be understood in the specific context of Foucauldian explanation of how monarchic traditions used visibility as a means to maintain their god-like stature. Akhenaten was attracted to Hatshepsut who had broken with tradition due to his zest for revolution and change. Several techniques that Hatshepsut used to stamp her figure in the history of her dynasty can be seen as telling manifestations of Foucauldian explanations of monarchic power.

Julia M. Walker examines the iconography of Queen Elizabeth during her rule and after in *The Elizabeth Icon: 1603-2003*, and discusses how the Elizabeth icon changed the British monarchy image into a thing rather than a person, influencing the rulers after her. Elizabeth cultivated her image from a woman on the throne to a "mythic figure to icon in a chronological viewing of her portraits," similar to Hatshepsut's chronological transformation from a queen regent to a king invoking traditional pharaonic characteristics, neither a male nor female. (15) Rather Hatshepsut appears as a female king instead of queen or male king. Hatshepsut and Nefertiti alike, dealt with this challenge of creating a female monarchic identity, one that allowed women to be acceptable rulers in the eyes of the public. Elizabeth I reigned as monarch in a period of wealth and prosperity for England, exactly like Hatshepsut's circumstances of ruling during a flourishing period in New Kingdom Egypt. Additionally, Elizabeth I's iconic imagery impacted the historical record of seventeenth-century Britain as well as throughout the ages in much the same way that Hatshepsut's influence spread; both were the first major female rulers who created a new female monarch identity that dealt with Gender.

One could consider canonical pharaonic imagery as those typical of ancient Egyptian royal portraiture previous to the New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1070 BCE). In ancient Egypt, pharaohs were considered gods, and myths were created to explain their deification, which were portrayed in various monuments. The permanence and immortality of the king were represented by images carved in stone. The role of the king in ancient Egypt was as god, father, and protector of the land of Egypt, and accordingly, pharaohs have particular accoutrements, iconography, and hierarchy to validate their role. Nemes headdresses, staphs, uraei, and crowns are examples of the typical accoutrements adorned by pharaohs in images throughout Egypt to legitimize the rule and power of the king. The king was not only a god, but also an intermediary between the divine world and Egypt; the king performed temple rituals in order to keep the world working in accordance to maat, or the correct order of things. (20) Thus, traditional pharaonic images displayed the power of the Egyptian king, through hierarchy and iconography as the king was depicted on a larger scale than any other figure on the picture plane. Canonical Egyptian kings were regularly depicted distinctively different than other figures portrayed near him, reinforcing his status as ruler and god. Gods were thus traditionally displayed on a different hierarchical plane than human figures to honor them.

Visibility of power is a major concern for Foucauldian interpretations of monarchy. In fact Foucault would say that the transformation from monarchy to modern governance is a move away from visible forms of power as happened in the monarchies. In the panopticon power model that the modern governments follow, power becomes invisible and integrated into a multitude of disciplinary practices. In a sense, the growing invisibility of power is also equivalent to its virtualization. Power in that sense in the

modern society is ubiquitous in all social relations.

Canonical images of ancient Egypt displayed pharaohs in characteristically ideal male physiques, tall with muscular arms, legs and chests. In these images, traditional kings wore only a wrap around their waist, and were never depicted in robes as Akhenaten which was rather a typical queen characteristic. Traditional Egyptian kings were adorned with a nemes headdress, a pleated cloth worn over the forehead and covering the entire head with two rectangular cloth pieces on either side of the face, behind the ears in their imagery

As can be inferred from Cooney's narrative, Pharaohs were frequently depicted with their principal wives who were typically born of royalty. In these images the woman is portrayed as a supporter of her husband through holding her arm around the king's torso. The queen acts here not only as an adornment of the king, but as the mother of Egypt, reinforcing the king's role as father of Egypt. Diplomatic marriages ensued throughout the history of ancient Egypt, predominantly by an Egyptian king and a foreign princess, allowing Egypt to gain strategic political alliances with other political powers. Thus queens became mere adornments of the pharaoh further displaying his power, wealth and right to the throne as father of Egypt.

Cooney takes a non-typical perspective to talk about the popular image of Hatshepsut. Although motherhood was considered the pinnacle of a woman's achievement in ancient Egyptian society, women (typically upper-class and royal women) were legally allowed to be educated to own property and businesses, to obtain a job, and were even allowed to be involved in military leadership. More importantly, women legally obtained the right to rule as pharaoh beginning in the second dynasty. However, women of royal birth were not considered future kings of Egypt, and the few instances of a queen becoming king of Egypt are instances of last resorts, where the queen would take over for her son who inherited the throne until he was old enough to rule as king. Thus, says Cooney, until Hatshepsut, these kingships did not last long and were not of significant impacts in Egyptian history.

Royal symbols and titles attributed to the gods were used to legitimize the king's role as a deity. Ancient Egyptian queens in the pharaonic period held different titles, such as "God's Wife," "Divine Wife," "Great Royal Wife," and "Lady of the Two Lands." These titles, which were written on the queen's monuments, established the authority that queens held over the land of Egypt and their role as mothers and protectorates of Egypt. The cobra (uraeus snake) and vulture symbols on royal headdresses were iconographic of goddesses. In some instances, ancient queens were depicted as goddesses to promote their deification, using goddess symbols including a pair of horns, a sun disk, and crown of feathers that were associated with the goddess Hathor and the goddess Isis.

As she discusses Senenmut's affiliation to Hatshepsut's queen imagery, Cooney notes of the break in this traditional iconography: "His statuary included poses that Egyptians had never seen before, and not just one form, like the squatting figure holding the princess in the folds of his garment, but multiple novel types" (141). She goes on to list several poses and says how these images represented the fertility and regenerative processes held in high regard and power. Women were traditionally depicted in sheer clothing, highlighting their fertility, while kings were never depicted in sheer wraps, except for Akhenaten who frequently adorned translucent robes in his pharaonic imagery. Hatshepsut was also depicted in translucent robes, but only in her female imagery such as in Hatshepsut as a Female King. Regeneration and fertility were integral aspects of life and religion for the ancient Egyptians, thus sheer clothing was meant to display the regenerative abilities of royal women, not to sexualize them.

However, in terms of gender relations, women in Egypt enjoyed relatively equal status with men, because they had rights and responsibilities typically not given in other societies. In the Second Intermediate Period, the era preceding the New Kingdom, the Hyksos invaded, dividing Egypt for roughly one hundred years until King Ahmose drove the invaders out in the early New Kingdom. In the New Kingdom era, Egypt was united once again and flourishing both politically and economically. It is from this era that much of the Egyptian artifacts, objects, and buildings survived today due to the change in

building materials from mud and brick to predominantly stone. Significantly, it is during this prosperous period during the New Kingdom that Hatshepsut ruled as king for a prolonged period of time

Visual representations of Hatshepsut ranged from depictions of her as a female king, as physically female in form with male accoutrements such as the nemes headdress, to images of her as a physically male king with male features such as a man's chest and build. Both of these types of imagery are common early in her rule, an indication that Hatshepsut was attempting to establish a kingly image displaying her power.

Hatshepsut's husband, Thutmose II, died early in his reign, leaving his young son, Thutmose III, the son of the king's second wife Isis, as the pharaoh of Egypt. It is a known fact that because Thutmose III was too young to rule, Hatshepsut chose to become his regent. Hatshepsut was appointed regent because she was Thutmose III's closest relative of royal birth, as her father was the previous king before Thutmose II became ruler. Soon after, Hatshepsut assumed the throne claiming herself king and she began constructing images depicting her divine birth to prove her divine right to be king. Cooney describes at length how Hatshepsut commissioned the chapel in Karnak temple: the palace in the Heart of Amen. (173-5).

Hatshepsut's images stressed traditional male king attributes as well as dual gendered Images of her female body wearing the pharaonic beard. Her later representations depict her as a male king, in physical form as a man, without breasts or any single feminine attribute. Hatshepsut also used other forms of representation typical of canonical kingly imagery including images of herself in the form of a sphinx to display her power equal to that of traditional male kings. Hatshepsut had to defy the typical feminine visual representations used by queens before her, in order to establish herself as a king rather than a queen who took over the throne temporarily. To enhance her rule, Hatshepsut began a huge building campaign, constructing numerous images, temples, and obelisks, as well as leading military expeditions. Her building campaign was not only useful in constructing an identity, but also to promote her acceptance and popularity with the people and reinforce her full right to kingship. Hatshepsut's portraiture featured her likeness and closeness with the gods such as *Hatshepsut Kneels to Nurse from the Udder of the Hathor Cow*. Hatshepsut had to find a solution to the seemingly problematic question of pharaonic imagery. In other words, Hatshepsut had to confront through public imagery the question of her self-appointed rule as king instead of remaining a regent. As Cooney shows clearly, she used her visual representations not only to legitimize her rule, but to create a new kingly identity, that of a female king, creating a precedent for female pharaohs in ancient Egypt. Hatshepsut, thus became an icon for women in power after her to emulate, much in the same way that Queen Elizabeth I's precedent has lived on after she had passed. Julia Walker states that "Coming into being as Elizabeth passed to dust, this new public sphere has granted the queen resurrection at once relentlessly secular and perpetually mutable." Both women's imagery lived on after them as iconic female rulers. It is as though for women to rule or co-rule, their status had to be elevated to a higher power, typical of pharaohs, yet women were typically depicted alone for such situations without a male counterpart. As Karen Cooney also shows, Hatshepsut was predominantly depicted alone, without a female or male partner, since she did not need a partner to establish her power to the throne as king. As an alternative she used aspects of female physicality to include both genders in her imagery, allowing her images to adhere to her Egyptian subjects' traditional beliefs so that they would accept her as a female king. Hatshepsut broke with tradition by portraying herself as a man, rather than merely using symbols and accoutrements to embody both genders as the canonical pharaohs had done. Similarly, Walker concludes that Elizabeth "[turned] herself from a woman into a thing" in order for her subjects to accept her. (69) Dual-gendered images of Hatshepsut are prevalent in her colossal statuary in the intermediate period of her reign when she had taken over as king.

The transition of Hatshepsut's images from traditionally feminine, to dual gendered images, then to male images, is a significant process in her construction of an identity. In the beginning of her role as regent, Hatshepsut portrayed herself distinctively as a queen, with physically female characteristics and

traditional queenly insignia. Soon after, Hatshepsut began depicting herself in dual-gendered imagery, as a queen with kingly characteristics, much like Hatshepsut as Female King. At about year seven of her rule, Hatshepsut began depicting herself in her gendered images in physically male form reminiscent of a canonical pharaoh. Later during her rule as pharaoh, Hatshepsut had much of her early queen imagery replaced with her new iconic female king imagery.

In effect, Hatshepsut was slowly addressing the intersections of gender and kingship, cultivating a new pharaonic identity. It is necessary to consider why Hatshepsut's images changed gradually into male images in order to understand what she intended to do to portray her power as king. She may have felt that her image as a female was not an authoritative portrayal of her power as king. She was able to convince the public that she was their rightful king because her images were the same as that of the canonical.

The Egyptian religious system brought out its shifts in power relations through subtle modifications in existing texts, through the insertion of glossary-model passages, or through new formulations and compositions that were eventually set next to older ones. Akhenaten and Nefertiti created a powerfully gender-neutral imagery of themselves in the line of Hatshepsut in order to persuade their Egyptian subjects to embrace Atenism, the new monotheistic religion. Their imagery combined both genders in a way that no specific gender type was represented or needed, an image of both genders incorporated into one figure. Akhenaten and Nefertiti promoted their new monotheistic religion throughout their public imagery, breaking away from previous canonical representations of the kingship, by a perceived oneness through gender unity.

Throughout ancient Egyptian history, pharaohs were considered gods over Egypt, Nefertiti and Akhenaten ruled as equals elevating both to the status of gods, enabling the Egyptians to accept the new monotheistic religion while adhering to their traditional concepts of king, queen, and multiple gods. Nefertiti and It is possible to contextualize the images of Hatshepsut and Nefertiti in terms of the power-relations contemporary to each in order to examine why gendered images of Hatshepsut influenced images of Nefertiti in New Kingdom Egypt and how Nefertiti and Akhenaten used the images in promotion of their monotheistic religion. In addition, it could also be explored how the role of monotheism as a religion in relation to the images of Nefertiti, such a drastic change in worship, could influence the change in style in the Amarna period from traditional pharaonic art styles. The desire to sensationalize Hatshepsut is self-evident through the pages of her historical treatment, and in the popular imagination she still has many iterations 'as a manipulative seducer who got whatever she wanted'; 'as a puppet being directed by shadowy male court figures'; and as 'a powerful ruler who had everything'. The commonly displayed religious pharaoh images engendered a larger-than-life eternal representations of the pharaohs for the Egyptian people to revere. These believers' monuments were made to last forever, just as the deified kings were considered immortal. Pharaonic imagery was accessible to all Egyptian people and spread throughout Egypt to promote the king's power and is an integral aspect of political propaganda.

Hatshepsut cultivated an iconic precedent that she created to provide the opportunity for women ruling as king of ancient Egypt after her. If this is the case, Hatshepsut would have wanted women to govern Egypt alone and possibly create imagery as female rulers, not a female in male physical form. One reason Cooney picks up the story of Hatshepsut is this hope and promise it holds for the women folk across centuries. Cooney notes that understanding Hatshepsut is a political-historical need for the twenty first century: "For Hatshepsut, her unprecedented success was rewarded with a short memory, while the failures of other female leaders from antiquity will be forever immortalized in our cultural consciousness" (231).

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