



JOINT FACULTIES
OF HUMANITIES
AND THEOLOGY

Centre for Languages and Literature

Master of Arts in European Studies

EUHR18

Supervisor: Hedvig Ördén

Performing Rebellion

A Case Study on the Evolution of the Cinematic Portrayal
of Sisi's Rebelliousness

Stephanie Mock

May 2025

Abstract

Over the past century, films and series about Empress Elisabeth of Austria, known as Sisi, have reflected her lasting role in European cultural memory. These cinematic portrayals continually reimagined her character. This thesis focuses on one aspect: her rebelliousness, exploring how it is constructed in film and how it has evolved over the past seventy years in response to shifting societal norms.

While prior research has examined Sisi as a historical and cultural figure, little attention has been paid to how her rebellion is depicted or how evolving social values shape it. This thesis fills that gap by analysing three major screen adaptations: Ernst Marischka's trilogy (1955-1957), Xaver Schwarzenberger's mini-series (2009) and the first season of the Netflix series *The Empress* (2022). Each production was examined using a two-phase qualitative method combining thematic and semiotic analysis, guided by Judith Butler's concepts of performativity and gender. The individual results were later comparatively discussed.

The findings reveal that Sisi's rebelliousness is continually reimagined to align with the gendered expectations of each era, reaching from romanticised restraint in post-war Austria to politicised defiance in a post-#MeToo context. Film thus emerges not only as a medium of historical reflection but also as a mirror of evolving societal norms. This thesis contributes a replicable framework for analysing female rebellion in cinema and offers new insight into the evolving intersection of gender, cultural memory, and European cinematic representation.

Keywords: Empress Elisabeth of Austria, Sisi, female rebellion, performativity, gender representation, European cinema, cultural memory, semiotic analysis, Judith Butler;

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Aim and Objectives	1
1.2. Questions	2
1.3. Contribution to Existing Knowledge	2
2. Literature Review	3
2.1. Background: The Habsburg Monarchy	3
2.2. The Cinematic Portrayal of Sisi	5
2.3. Female Rebellion in Film	6
3. Theoretical Framework	8
3.1. Performativity and Gender.....	9
3.2. Signifier, Signified and Connotation.....	10
3.3. Other considerations	13
4. Methodological Framework.....	13
4.1. Research Design.....	13
4.1.1. Individual Film Analysis	13
4.1.2. Comparative Discussion	15
4.2. Film Selection.....	15
4.3. Limitations and Viability	17
4.4. Operationalisation	17

5. Analysis.....	18
5.1. Sissi.....	19
5.2. Sisi	34
5.3. The Empress.....	46
6. Comparative Discussion.....	60
6.1. Similarities.....	60
6.2. Differences	61
6.3. Evolution of Signs	62
6.3.1. Hunting	62
6.3.2. Corset.....	62
6.3.3. Political Representation.....	63
6.3.4. Interaction with common people	63
6.3.5. Motherhood	64
7. Conclusion and Recommendations	64
7.1. Research Aim and Objective Fulfilment	64
7.2. Conclusion	65
7.3. Recommendations.....	67
Bibliography.....	68

List of Figures

Figure 1. Austria-Hungary in 1914.....	4
Figure 2. Sisi releasing the birds in Possenhofen.....	20
Figure 3. Sisi in the carriage heading to Possenhofen	22
Figure 4. Sisi in a sleeping gown in Franz’s office	24
Figure 5. Sisi with a beer jug next to Franz	26
Figure 6. Sisi placing red roses behind Franz’s desk	27
Figure 7. Sisi sneezing while hunting with Franz	29
Figure 8. Sophie confronting Sisi about her call for <i>Damenwahl</i>	31
Figure 9. Sisi looking thoughtfully out of the window	33
Figure 10. Sophie telling Sisi that her ideas do fit in	35
Figure 11. Sisi passing by Sophie to see Franz	37
Figure 12. Sisi receiving flowers from a young girl	39
Figure 13. Sisi’s corset being tightened	41
Figure 14. Sisi standing behind Franz during a meeting	43
Figure 15. Sisi hugging her son in uniform	45
Figure 16. Sisi on her way to the wedding in a crystal carriage	48
Figure 17. Sisi kneeling surrounded by the crowd	49
Figure 18. Sisi and Leontine smoking in the tree.....	51
Figure 19. Sisi handing her shoes to a poor girl	53
Figure 20. Sophie tying Sisi’s corset.....	54
Figure 21. Franz gifting Sisi a horse	56
Figure 22. Sisi shooting while hunting with the Tsar.....	59

List of Tables

Table 1. Table for Semiotic Analysis.....	15
Table 2. Operationalisation.....	18
Table 3. The birdcage as a sign of captivity.....	20
Table 4. Possenhofen as a sign of freedom and autonomy	22
Table 5. Running in as a sign against emotional repression	24
Table 6. The beer jug as a sign of cultural identity and authenticity	26
Table 7. Red roses as a sign of Sisi's presence	27
Table 8. The sneeze as a sign of feminine defiance.....	29
Table 9. <i>Damenwahl</i> (Lady's Choice) as a sign of feminine intervention	31
Table 10. The window gaze as a sign of longing.....	33
Table 11. The wall as a sign for the Viennese court rules.....	35
Table 12. Running in as a sign against emotional repression.....	37
Table 13. The flower girl as a sign of breaching aristocratic distance	39
Table 14. The corset as a sign of aesthetic discipline.....	41
Table 15. Standing Sisi (behind Franz) as a sign of political presence.....	43
Table 16. The military academy as a sign of patriarchal authority.....	45
Table 17. The crystal carriage as a sign of deprived freedom.....	47
Table 18. The curtsy as a sign of solidarity.....	49
Table 19. The cigarette as a sign of class transgression	51
Table 20. Shoes as a sign of social status.....	53
Table 21. The corset as a sign of suppressed individuality.....	54
Table 22. The gift as a sign of possessive control	56
Table 23. Hunting as a sign of power inversion	58

Glossary

For readability, this thesis refers to the following historical figures by the names by which they are best known:

Empress Elisabeth of Austria.....	Sisi
Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria.....	Franz
Archduchess Sophie of Austria.....	Sophie
Duke Maximilian Joseph in Bavaria.....	Maximilian
Duchess Ludovika in Bavaria.....	Ludovika
Count Gyula Andr��ssy	Andr��ssy
Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria.....	Rudolf
Otto von Bismarck.....	Bismarck

1. Introduction

“Ach Franz, es wär alles so schön, wenn du kein Kaiser wärst!” (Oh Franz, everything would be so beautiful if you weren't the Emperor!) (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:32:40)

With this line, Marischka's iconic 1950s trilogy about the Austrian Empress Elisabeth, commonly called Sisi, cemented her place in European cultural memory. Sisi emerged as a symbol of romantic longing and personal conflict within the constraints of imperial duty. To this day, these 1950s films are replayed annually in Austria and Germany, underscoring their enduring cultural resonance.

Yet across the decades, directors have reimagined Sisi in varied forms: from a romanticised figure, seemingly confined within the golden cage of the Danube Monarchy, to a more independent woman actively resisting imperial oppression. This contrast in cinematic representations reflects the evolving perception of Sisi's character, shaped by shifting societal norms. While earlier depictions emphasised her constrained existence within the rigid structures of the Habsburg court, later interpretations increasingly highlight her agency, portraying her as a woman who challenges authority and seeks autonomy.

This shifting cinematic portrayal reflects changes in how Sisi is imagined and raises questions about the nature of rebellion and its representation in film. These questions form the foundation for this thesis's aim and objectives.

1.1. Aim and Objectives

This thesis aims to analyse the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness to trace how it has evolved over the past seventy years in response to shifting societal norms.

To achieve the research aim, the following five objectives are set:

- I. To explore how Sisi's rebelliousness is portrayed in selected films using thematic analysis.
- II. To use linguistic structuralism to examine key signs attached to Sisi's rebellious character trait.

- III. To apply the concepts of performativity and gender to interpret Sisi's acts of rebellion as ruptures of her imposed role as empress.
- IV. To compare the portrayals of Sisi's rebelliousness and situate them within their respective societal context.
- V. To contribute to the scholarly discourse on rebelliousness in film by offering a case study that traces the cinematic representations of female rebellion over the last seventy years.

1.2. Questions

To achieve the objectives outlined above, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

- I. How is Sisi's rebelliousness portrayed in selected films?
 - This question investigates what Sisi's rebellion looks like on screen by focusing on identifying visual and narrative elements that depict Sisi as rebellious.
- II. How has the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebellion evolved over the past seventy years?
 - This question explores in what way Sisi's rebellious portrayal changed over time, revealing how changing societal values shape the cinematic character of Sisi.

1.3. Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This case study on the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge in empirical, methodological and conceptual terms. While there is extensive scholarship on Sisi as a cinematic and historical figure (as discussed in 2.2), no comprehensive comparative study has systematically examined how portraying her rebelliousness has evolved across multiple cinematic productions. Thus, by studying the evolution of Sisi's rebelliousness over time, this thesis contributes to filling an empirical gap in research on her changing cinematic portrayal and offers broader insights into how rebellious historical women are represented on screen.

Methodologically, this thesis contributes an innovative two-phase approach for examining cinematic rebellion, combining thematic analysis, semiotic analysis, and the concepts of performativity and gender (as detailed in Section 4.1.1). This integrated framework offers a replicable model for analysing how rebellion is constructed and represented in film, which can also be applied to other performance-based personality traits.

Conceptually, this thesis advances the broader understanding of rebelliousness in cinema. While existing research broadly focuses on rebellion within feminist, revolutionary, or political frameworks, little attention has been paid to historical female figures reimagined as symbols of rebellion. Hence, this thesis offers new insights into how rebelliousness has been adopted over the last seventy years to mirror societal norms. Furthermore, it contributes to the emerging discourse on post-#MeToo representations of female rebellion in film.

2. Literature Review

This chapter presents a background to enhance the historical understanding of Sisi's life. Moreover, it situates this thesis within the existing body of knowledge on Sisi's cinematic portrayal and the display of female rebellion in film.

2.1. Background: The Habsburg Monarchy

The section elaborates on the Habsburg Monarchy by providing a historical background of the films and establishing a link to European studies, pinpointing a relevant overview for this thesis.

“The Habsburgs were the greatest dynasty of modern history, and the history of central Europe revolves round them, not they round it.” (Taylor 1948, 8)

As the English historian Taylor (1948, 7–8) states, having ruled considerable parts of Europe from 1526 to 1918, the Habsburg monarchy shaped the European continent for centuries. Its territory went further than its nickname “Danube Monarchy”, reaching lands far off the central European river, such as Spain and Italy. While the famous quote *"Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube"* (Let others wage war, you, fortunate Austria, marry.) (Kohler 1994, 461) is an exaggeration of the real marriage politics of the Habsburgs, especially by Emperor Maximilian I, the Habsburg Empire profited from marrying into other royal families that were on decline (Kohler 1994, 461). Consequently, the diversity in culture, language, and heritage led to the Habsburg Monarchy never having a common national identity but rather a linguistic, cultural, and historical mix of people with diverse needs and ambitions (Taylor 1948, 18).

On the 24th of April 1854, Sisi, sixteen at that time and, hence, eight years younger than the current emperor Franz, married into the Viennese court (Vance 1957, 74). Born as Princess

Elisabeth Amelie Eugenie of Bavaria, she is depicted as a spirited and independent young woman in literature. From an early age, she had a particularly close bond with her father, Duke Maximilian, while her relationship with her mother, Duchess Ludovika, was more strained (Vance 1957, 14). Her desire for independence became even more evident after her marriage. Like Merkel (1998) explains, scholarship describes Sisi as resistant to court life's strict expectations, causing a tense relationship with her mother-in-law, Archduchess Sophie. Her frequent travels across Europe are often interpreted as a form of escape from the constraints and duties of her imperial role.

Figure 1.

Austria-Hungary in 1914, by Britannica (2025)



Sisi's journeys also had political resonance, particularly in Hungary, where she developed a strong emotional and cultural affinity. This connection became especially significant as the Habsburg Monarchy faced increasing pressure from nationalist movements across the Empire. With a growing claim for nationalism in the nineteenth century, the Habsburg Monarchy faced difficulties. Different ethnic groups within the Empire started claiming self-rule, turning the diversity of the monarchy into its weakness (Taylor 1948, 18). Hungary was one of the lands

with the strongest claims for self-control. In response to its hard push towards greater autonomy, the Habsburgs were forced to establish the *Ausgleich* (compensation) in 1867, transforming the Austrian Empire into the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. With that, the Hungarian people were given their own constitutional, administrative, and judicial system, and Franz and Sisi were made King and Queen of Hungary, besides being Emperors of Austria (Gruber Florek 2023, 62).

Despite the Habsburgs' long and influential reign, the early twentieth century marked their end. While the *Ausgleich* was an attempt to cope with nationalism, it marked the Habsburgs' fundamental issue: the imperial structure failed to meet the demands of its people, ultimately causing its collapse (Taylor 1948, 206).

Understanding the historical and political context of the Habsburg Monarchy and Sisi's position within it is essential to grasp how her image has been reinterpreted in cinema. As later chapters will explore, these imperial dynamics and cultural tensions are not only central to her biography but also to the evolving portrayals of her rebelliousness on screen.

2.2. The Cinematic Portrayal of Sisi

This section reviews key academic work on Sisi's cinematic portrayals to situate this thesis within existing scholarship. As the following discussion demonstrates, Sisi's cinematic portrayal plays a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of her cultural memory. As Müller (2008, 1), Nighswander (2024, 44) and Hofstadler (2013, 79) agree, the 1950s trilogy, starring Romy Schneider, is the most influential and widely examined adaptation of Sisi's life and played an essential role in transforming Sisi into a sentimentalised national icon. Her romanticised portrayal functioned as a symbolic restoration of imperial order, created to ease Austria's post-war anxieties in the 1950s (Müller 2008, 9; Nighswander 2024, 45–46). By omitting Sisi's internal struggles and the political tensions of the Viennese court, Lugmayr (2008, 76) and Nighswander (2024, 18,77) argue that the trilogy instrumentalised her image as a nostalgic symbol of imperial harmony, tailored to reinforce dominant cultural narratives of the time.

In light of this, existing literature highlights that the societal context of each production profoundly shapes Sisi's cinematic character. Hametz and Schlipphacke (2018, 18) and

Hofstadler (2013, 56) point out that this influence extends to Romy Schneider's performance, which became so culturally significant that she remains inseparable from the figure of Sisi herself, blurring the boundaries between cinematic construction and historical memory. Though the 1950s trilogy remains the most extensively studied portrayal, the mythologised image it helped establish continues to evolve in contemporary contexts, from media to tourism, generating new narratives that, in various ways, remain disconnected from historical fact (Nighswander 2024, 7).

Existing scholarship on Sisi's cinematic representation generally follows one of two main approaches: either a diachronic analysis that traces the development of her portrayals over time, or a comparative analysis that contrasts film adaptations with historical truth. Within the first category, Hofstadler (2013) and Nighswander (2024) offer in-depth examinations of Sisi's evolving screen image. Hofstadler (2013) focuses on recurring visual motifs and reception patterns across film and television, while Nighswander (2024) situates recent portrayals within broader discourses of national identity and gender studies. Within the second category, papers such as Raebel's (2024) dissertation about *The Empress* or Carter's (2010) research about the 1950s trilogy. Both focus on discrepancies between cinematic representations and historical fact, highlighting narrative distortions and ideological framing.

While both approaches offer valuable insights into representational shifts and the construction of cultural memory, they focus on Sisi as a whole figure, overlooking the significance of specific character traits in shaping her cinematic portrayal. This thesis addresses that gap by examining how the trait of rebellion is portrayed and reconfigured across adaptations.

2.3. Female Rebellion in Film

As presented in the previous section, extensive scholarship exists about Sisi as a cultural and historical figure, but little focus is on her rebelliousness on screen. To frame the aim of this thesis, i.e., to analyse the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness and trace how it has evolved, it is necessary to position it within the broader academic discourse on female rebellion in film. Thus, this section explores the existing body of knowledge on the cinematic construction and evolution of female rebellion, showcasing the gap this thesis aims to fill.

Overarchingly, scholars state that throughout the twentieth century, portrayals of female rebellion in film were widely constrained by established gender norms. Both Mulvey (1989,

19, as cited in Tasker 1993, 114-115) and Wearing (2007, 283) emphasise that classic film is structured around the male gaze, where women serve as passive objects, and the male perspective shapes the narrative. Moreover, the sources agree that when female rebellion does take centre stage, it is problematically framed within existing power hierarchies. The passivity associated with female roles in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries extended beyond film, with literature of the period similarly portraying women in passive and subordinate positions (Brown and St. Clair 2002 as cited in Day, Green-Barteet, and Montz, 2014, 2).

Moving to the 1970s and 1980s, Tasker (1993, 19–20, 132) traces a shift from the aforementioned passivity towards more actively rebellious female characters, such as action heroines. While these heroines challenge the traditional gender norms through masculine-coded actions, their rebellion is frequently contained by a narrative that reaffirms the heroine's femininity. Thus, rather than dismantling gender norms, Tasker (1993, 19–20, 132) argues that this shift reinforces the binary gender system. This narrative containment through gender typecasting was already present in early twentieth-century film, as Förster (2017, 317) claims. Examining the construction of early female stardom, Förster (2017, 317) revealed that actresses were allowed physical agency on screen by embodying traditionally masculine-coded traits which maintained their rebellion within gender norms.

Emerging in the 1990s and extending into the early twenty-first century, post-feminism significantly influenced the cinematic construction of female rebellion. Coulthard (2007, 169) claims that postfeminist action films construct female rebellion not as a challenge to gender norms or power structure but as a performance based on irony, spectacle, and nostalgia. Characters may appear rebellious, but traditional patriarchal norms contain their agency. This observation aligns with McRobbie's (2007, 37–38) argument that female empowerment in postfeminist culture is framed through self-confidence and consumerism, as illustrated in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Sex and the City*. These seemingly deliberate choices, celebrated as expressions of personal freedom, in fact reinforce traditional gender roles. While rebellious acts are presented as freely chosen, they ultimately mask the societal expectations that continue to shape women's lives (McRobbie 2007, 37–38). Similar to this, Projansky (2007, 44) found that girl power is a concept that highlights female independence while still glamorising traditional beauty and gender norms. She concludes that while girls in popular culture may appear disruptive, their rebellion is contained by idealised emotional responses or romantic

scripts (Projansky 2007, 67). Thus, these sources collectively agree that rebellion is constructed to serve gender norms.

However, not all scholars see rebellion as fully constrained in the post-feminism era. While Day, Green-Barteet, and Montz (2014, 4–5) acknowledge that gender norms can limit rebellion, they argue that in dystopian fiction, i.e., narratives set in oppressive, authoritarian worlds, female rebellion is depicted as active agency through challenging gender stereotypes. Green-Barteet (2014, 34) emphasises this by highlighting examples in which female characters gradually become empowered and self-governing when performing acts of rebellion. Thus, this demonstrates that gender norms do not necessarily fully constrain rebellion in film.

Looking into the post-#MeToo era, i.e., a global movement against sexual harassment and gendered power imbalances, it becomes apparent that the impact of this movement on female rebelliousness in film is little explored. Scholars who have studied it gather different insights. Réti (2023) suggests that the movement prompted a shift from individualised revenge fantasies toward more complex critiques of systemic power structures. However, Taylor and Glitsos (2023) observe that this shift has not significantly transformed mainstream film, where feminist characters may appear visually empowered but remain narratively constrained, with their rebellion ultimately contained through commercially appealing aesthetics.

To sum up, this exploration of the existing body of knowledge reveals an overall profound understanding of the construction of female rebelliousness of fictional characters in film. However, little has been explored about how rebelliousness is framed in portrayals of historical figures who have been retrospectively reimagined as symbols of rebellion. This thesis addresses that gap by offering a comprehensive case study of *Sisi*. As one of the examined film adaptations, *The Empress*, was filmed post-#MeToo, it also contributes to the evolving discourse on post-#MeToo constructions of female rebellion in film.

3. Theoretical Framework

This thesis approaches the research questions through two main theoretical lenses: the concepts of performance and gender by Butler, an American philosopher and gender theorist, and the theory of signs by Saussure, a Swiss linguist whose structuralist theories laid the foundation for modern linguistics, and Barthes, a French literary theorist and semiotician. First of all, the

concepts of Butler are explained as they serve to understand Sisi's conformity and rebellion against her role as empress. Secondly, the theory of signs is presented as it assists in getting more profound insights into how meaning is created and transmitted.

3.1. Performativity and Gender

Performativity is described as a ritualised and citational concept, meaning that it does not describe a one-time conscious act but rather a repeated process through which identities, for instance, gender, are produced (Butler 1993, 2). The foundation of it lies in the regularity and constrained repetition of certain norms and is, hence, not a pre-existing matter, but evolves through repetition (Butler 1993, 95). Opposed to a deterministic view of a fixed identity, performativity sees gender as an identity that was produced over time by repeating certain acts in a social and external context. These acts, however, do not mirror inner essence, but are merely part of a public and collective performance that creates the illusion of a consistent, gendered identity (Butler 1990, 179).

Through the lens of performativity, gender, which Butler sees as a performed activity rather than a fixed identity (Butler 2004, 32), can be considered a product of power (Butler 1993, 15). Using normative frameworks that impose certain ideals of femininity and masculinity on an individual, usually with underlying heteronormative expectations, power is actively generated and regulated (Butler 1993, 15, 232). Hence, the act of gender is always a repetition of formerly established practices that are legitimised through historical reiteration (Butler 1993, 227). Performativity has, therefore, a productive dimension that goes beyond merely reflecting gender identity as it generates the phenomena by cultural repetition and socially endorsed norms (Butler 1993, 2, 107). Using one of Butler's examples, the declaration "It's a girl!" serves as a powerful example, as it instantly projects a normative, heterosexually future trajectory on the newborn. Thus, gender is, in that moment, forcefully imposed by social norms and not individually chosen (Butler 1993, 231–32).

When talking about performativity, distinguishing it from performance is crucial. Performance can be defined as conscious and contained actions. In comparison, performativity involves unconscious and normative repetition of behaviour that predates and surpasses the individual. This distinction points out how the outwardly performed act can mask the unperformed dimensions of gender identity. Performance does not automatically display the truth, but might

hide deeper traits that are not compliant with the socially expected gender identity (Butler 1993, 234).

Linking performativity to rebellion, as repetition of norms is never identical, rupture opens up the possibility for subversion. By failing to comply with gender norms, either intentionally or unintentionally, it is revealed that identity is not a fixed concept, but it exposes its constructed nature. This gap between the norm and the performed act creates a space for resistance to emerge as it outlines the unrealistic nature of the gender expectation (Butler 1990, 179). Thus, by not conforming to a traditional grid of norms, an individual reveals the instability of the grid (Butler 2004, 41).

Applying Butler's theory on Sisi, the role of an empress is not what Butler (1993, 15, 232) would consider an inherent quality, but was constituted over time through strict adherence to court ceremonials. Thus, it relies on the repetition of past authoritative practices. Butler sees all acts, such as attending official receptions or being called empress, as performative. They make the imposed identity reality, as they do not emerge from individual agency but are imposed on Sisi. Her rebellion, for instance, by withdrawing from court life, shows a rupture between the royal expectations and Sisi's performance. Through the lens of Butler (1990, 179), this showcases the constructed nature of royal identity and the potential for Sisi to show resistance against established norms.

Butler's concept is added to this thesis to analyse how her refusal to conform to her role as an empress can be understood as an act of rebellion. These performances rupture and, hence, destabilise the traditional role of an empress. This aligns with Objective III, as stated in 1.1.

3.2. Signifier, Signified and Connotation

To profoundly analyse how Sisi's rebelliousness is pictured, the developed method (as explained in 4.1.1) is deeply grounded in Saussure's and Barthes's work of linguistic structuralism. The central idea of linguistic structuralism is based on the Dyadic Model of Signs of Saussure (1959, 65–78), which states that signs consist of two interdependent components: the signifier and the signified. The signifier refers to the perceptible form of the sign, such as a spoken sound or a written word, while the signified represents its conceptual meaning. Applying this to the word, and thus the linguistic sign, dove, for instance,

a relevant sign in films about Sisi, i.e., in the final scenes in front of the Venice dome (Marischka 1955-1957, 4:57:05), the signifier is the sequence of the letters d-o-v-e, as well as the sound image these letters make. The signified is the idea of a species of bird, typically small and white, with a slender body, short legs, and a rounded head. The signified in Saussure's model considers the denotation of words, i.e., the primary meaning and straightforward connection of the signifier and signified of a sign in the given linguistic setting (Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025b).

With this model, Saussure challenges the notion that words have a direct or intrinsic connection to objects in the real world. Instead, he argues that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary (Saussure 1959, 67–70). Projecting this on the aforementioned example, it is not instinctive to connect the letters d-o-v-e to the concept of a dove. In fact, the connection is based on a social convention of the English-speaking society and is not given in any other linguistic system. This arbitrariness underscores the structuralist principle that language is a system of differences, where meaning is derived not from isolated signs but from their relational contrasts within the linguistic system. Thus, from a structuralist point of view, language is seen as a system of conventions based on social agreements and not based on instinctive connections between words and meanings (Saussure 1959, 71–73).

This assumption suggests that Saussure's structuralism theory intertwines with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in their shared emphasis on language as a determinant of human cognition and perception (Hussein 2012). While Saussure (1959, 67–68) highlights the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs and the relational nature of meaning, Sapir and Whorf extend this idea by arguing that linguistic structures shape how individuals perceive and categorise the world (Hussein 2012). The notion that different languages produce distinct worldviews resonates with Saussure's structuralist framework, as both theories assert that meaning is not inherent but constructed within a linguistic system. By integrating Saussure's emphasis on difference with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it becomes evident that, from a structuralist perspective, language does not merely convey thought but actively shapes it, reinforcing the idea that linguistic systems impose constraints and affordances on human understanding (Saussure 1959; Hussein 2012).

Furthermore, Roland Barthes (1915–1980) extended Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs by applying it beyond linguistic structures to culture, media, and ideology. While the initial

model of semiotics focused on the sign as a combination of a signifier and a signified, this remained limited to the first level of meaning: denotation. Signs within this level refer directly to their basic conceptual counterparts, grounded in the structural differences that define language systems (Saussure 1959). However, this denotative model alone does not account for the full meanings that signs can carry within a cultural framework.

A second level of signification, i.e., connotation, builds on the foundational sign structure by introducing meanings shaped by cultural, emotional, or ideological associations (Barthes 1977, 91–94; Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2025a). This layer allows signs to function not only as carriers of information but also as tools that reflect and reinforce dominant societal beliefs. The concept of myth emerges from this connotative level, where signs become embedded with values and ideologies that appear natural or self-evident but are, in fact, culturally constructed.

Returning to the example of a dove, the denotative level refers to the specific type of bird. The connotative level, however, includes associations such as peace, purity, and harmony. These are meanings produced through repeated cultural use and shaped by visual symbolism and context (Chavannes-Mazel 2013). This second-order signification is especially relevant to this thesis, as it provides a framework for analysing how symbols in film carry ideological weight and contribute to the construction of character traits in film like Sisi's rebelliousness.

Applying linguistic structuralism to this thesis offers the semiotic tools necessary to decode how meaning is produced visually and narratively in the chosen productions about Sisi. Saussure's Dyadic Model of Signs supports the denotative analysis of key symbols within the films. At the same time, Barthes' theory of connotation enables a more profound understanding, illuminating how these signs are culturally coded to convey ideological meanings. This aligns with Objective II and strengthens the discussion in Objective IV by contributing a method for analysing the visual and narrative mythologising of Sisi's rebellion over time.

To sum up, this framework enables a layered approach by combining Butler's concepts of performativity and gender with the semiotic theories of Saussure and Barthes. While Butler reveals how norms are enacted and disrupted through repetition, semiotics exposes how

rebellion is symbolically encoded in film. This synthesis allows an analysis of Sisi not only as a character but as a shifting signifier of gendered resistance across different societal contexts.

3.3. Other considerations

While Metz's film semiotics was initially considered for this thesis due to its foundational influence in applying linguistic models to cinema, it proved less suitable for the research aim. Metz's approach prioritises the formal grammar of film, i.e., narrative codes, cinematic syntax, and structural patterns, and thus, offers valuable tools for analysing film language at a technical level (Metz 1974). However, this thesis is less concerned with cinematography and more focused on how rebellion is constructed and performed as a gendered and ideological act. Hence, the selected framework better accommodates this focus, enabling a more nuanced analysis of both form and meaning within societal contexts.

4. Methodological Framework

This chapter presents the methods for analysing rebellion in cinematic portrayals of Sisi. First, the developed research design, a two-phase approach consisting of a thematic and semiotic analysis, is presented. Butler's concepts (as elaborated in 3.1) are incorporated in both steps to make the design a viable tool to analyse rebellion. Secondly, the film selection is presented and justified, followed by the limitations and viability of the design. To wrap up this chapter, an operationalisation is stated, i.e., an overview of how the theories and methods are understood and used in this thesis.

4.1. Research Design

According to the research questions, this research is based on a qualitative design split into two steps. A two-phase method combining thematic analysis with the theoretical framework is used to tackle Research Question 1, i.e., how rebelliousness is portrayed. For Research Question 2, the analysed films will be comparatively discussed.

4.1.1. Individual Film Analysis

First of all, to analyse Sisi's rebelliousness in the individual films, the following methodological approach was developed:

The first phase of the individual film analysis involves a thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes within the film, based on the assumption that rebellion does not occur in a single part of Sisi's life, for instance, only against the monarchy, but throughout her whole life. As Braun and Clarke (2022, 34) explain, a thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify patterns within a given data set, group them into themes and analyse and interpret them. There are two main ways to conduct a thematic analysis: inductively or deductively. While in an inductive approach, the themes emerge impartially from the data, a deductive approach is theory-driven and, hence, the themes are predefined based on the theoretical framework (Braun and Clarke 2022, 98–99).

For this thesis, an inductive approach is applied as the goal is not to use a specific theory of rebellion or define a particular form of rebelliousness as a deductive study would, but to explore how rebellion manifests in Sisi's character through language and actions. While Braun and Clarke's (2022, 98) suggestion that no analysis is entirely free from interpretative bias is acknowledged, the inductive choice will allow a more open exploration of the complete portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness. Nonetheless, as the chosen films showcase a similar lifespan of Sisi, emerging themes are expected to be comparable.

For the thematic analysis, the following steps are carried out:

1. A manual transcription of the film scenes, where Sisi either acts according to her imposed identity or ruptures it (in line with performativity and gender as stated in 3.1), is established.
2. The transcript undergoes colour-coding to group the scenes into subthemes.
3. Those subthemes are revised and joined together into overarching themes.
4. Each theme is analysed and contextualised in a written analysis with performativity and gender (3.1).

In a second phase, the themes established in the thematic analysis are explored more profoundly by analysing selected highly representative signs of Sisi's rebellion. For this purpose, the following table was established, combining all theories presented in the theoretical framework:

Table 1.

Table for Semiotic Analysis

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
The signs can either be visual or auditory.	On denotational level, it is described that literally happens in the scene where the sign emerges.	On a connotational level, the deeper meaning, involving cultural contexts and past experiences.	The sign gets put in dialogue with the concepts of performativity and gender (3.1) to show how Sisi's rebellion is embodied.

4.1.2. Comparative Discussion

A comparative discussion of the analysed films follows the individual film analysis to address Research Question 2. The discussion focuses on the most significant similarities and differences in portraying Sisi's rebelliousness. The findings are contextualised within the societal context of the period in which the films were produced. Through this, the discussion aims to highlight how representations of rebellion have evolved over the past seventy years.

The comparative discussion follows a two-step structure. In a first step, the overarching similarities and differences between the portrayals of Sisi's rebelliousness across the film productions are presented. In continuation, a theme-based comparison is conducted in a second step using selected key representative signs previously identified in Chapter 5. Each selected sign is traced across the three films to highlight how its meaning evolved over time and according to the societal context at the time of each film's production. This design allows for a layered understanding of how rebellion is constructed by integrating the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3, as well as the historical contextualisation of the shift. While this step is interpretative, it is grounded in the theoretical framework and builds on the same themes and signs identified in Chapter 5 to maintain consistency across this thesis.

4.2. Film Selection

This thesis analyses three major film productions about Sisi's life, which were chosen based on cultural impact, audience reach, suitability of comparison, and production time. As the three adaptations span almost seventy years, the selection allows a conclusion on the evolution of Sisi's rebelliousness. This enables tackling Research Question 2. Moreover, neither biographical nor satirical films are considered, as this thesis neither aims to portray the

historical truth of Sisi's rebellion nor evaluate it through irony and exaggeration. The chosen films serve to explore the reimagination of her character through cinematic narratives.

The earliest and unarguably most famous film production portraying Sisi's life is the trilogy, i.e., *Sissi, Sissi: The Young Empress* and *Sissi: The Fateful Years of an Empress*, by Ernst Marischka, released between 1955 and 1957, starring Romy Schneider, who for many is the personification of the Empress. The films represent the post-war nostalgia for the empire by showcasing the imperial love story and Sisi's life within the court, from the first meeting with Franz to the reunion in Italy after Sisi's recovery. Still, nowadays, the Austrian and German national broadcasting services, i.e., ORF and ARD/ZDF, air the trilogy at least once a year during Christmas, demonstrating its cultural importance and influence (TV Spielfilm 2024).

Moving to the twenty-first century, the two-part miniseries *Sisi*, directed by Xaver Schwarzenberger, provides a middle ground between a romanticised and revolutionised portrayal of Sisi. Being an Austrian, German and Italian co-production, this miniseries is the only choice not entirely filmed in German as actors spoke in their mother tongue, i.e., Cristiana Capotondi as Sisi in Italian and David Rott as Franz in German. The plot spans from meeting Franz in Bad Ischl, over the death of her firstborn daughter, to a reconciliation appearance of Sisi in Hungary with her children.

The latest production, *The Empress*, was released in 2022, a post-#MeToo era, and reflects a cultural moment where historical women are being re-evaluated through feminist perspectives. As argued by McHugh (2023), 2022 saw renewed interest in historical female figures who resisted power structures, with series like *The Crown* and *Marie Antoinette* capturing modern audiences. Being produced by the streaming service Netflix, *The Empress* reached a global audience, showcasing a politically engaged woman who actively resists imperial control. This thesis explores the series' first season, from the meeting with Franz in Bad Ischl to Sisi announcing her pregnancy.

Throughout the investigation process, a fourth film, *Prinzessin Sissy* by Fritz Thiery (1938), was explored (Appendix 7). While the increase in sample size would have extended the examined period and added the layer of Third Reich propaganda, Sisi's life span, i.e., childhood in Bavaria, was found unsuitable for comparison to the selection. Central themes of the selected films, such as political influence and motherhood, are not covered.

4.3. Limitations and Viability

While this study offers a comprehensive overview of Sisi's rebelliousness in the chosen films, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the film selection is limited to three major productions, as clarified in 4.2. While these films are carefully chosen according to their cultural significance and timing, they do not represent the whole spectrum of cinematic portrayals about Sisi's life. Genres such as biography or satire are not considered in order to guarantee a focused and comparable sample.

Secondly, this thesis takes Sisi's rebellious personality as given and does not aim to assess its historical accuracy. Instead, films are seen as cultural texts, and the focus is on how Sisi's rebelliousness is constructed and reimagined. Thus, tension between historical fact and fictionalised portrayal remains outside the scope of this analysis.

Thirdly, the scope of this research solely relies on the chosen films as primary material and does not include external parameters such as audience reception or critical reviews. Hence, this thesis comments on the construction of rebelliousness on screen, rather than how spectators have received Sisi's cinematic portrayals over time.

Fourthly, the chosen methodological framework, rooted in thematic and semiotic analysis, is interpretative. While Butler's, Saussure's, and Barthes' theories are used for guidance, the interpretation remains inherently subjective. Acknowledging this subjectivity, the thesis maintains transparency in its analytical process, documenting all steps in the appendix.

Finally, the generalizability of this thesis's findings underlies geographical bias, as the production of the chosen sample films is limited to Germany, Austria, and Italy. This limits its transferability to other national or cultural settings. Still, this research offers a valuable case study of how Sisi's image is adopted within European cultural memory.

4.4. Operationalisation

The table below illustrates the integration of theory and method, providing a straightforward approach to analysing how Sisi's rebelliousness is constructed across different levels of meaning. It grounds the analysis in theory while keeping the methods structured and consistent, enabling a layered interpretation of rebellion as narrative, symbol, and performative act.

Table 2.

Operationalisation

Theory	Understanding	Implementation	Method
Dyadic Model of Signs (Saussure)	Meaning is created through the relationship of the signifier and signified, emphasising the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs.	Identifying signs (e.g., costumes, gestures, dialogues) that contribute to Sisi's character trait of rebelliousness and their denotational signified.	Identifying relevant signs in the thematic analysis and stating their denotational meaning, i.e., Row 1 and 2 in Table 1.
Connotation (Barthes)	Signs acquire secondary cultural meanings beyond their literal meaning (denotation), shaped by society and past experiences.	Analysing the connotation of the identified signs for an in-depth analysis of the construction of rebelliousness.	Adding the connotational layer to the sign analysis as demonstrated in Row 3 of Table 1.
Performativity and Gender (Butler)	Performativity is a socially regulated repetitions of norms that constructs an identity through performed acts rather than the pre-existing self, and gender is one of these identities.	Putting the themes and signs encountered in the analysis in context with the concepts to allow a deeper understanding of how Sisi's rebellion is performed.	Observing both, the findings of the thematic analysis and the sign analysis (Row 4 in Table 1), through the lens of performativity and gender.

5. Analysis

The chapter presents the individual film analysis, as explained in 4.1.1, to analyse recurring themes and significant signs within the three chosen films: *Sissi* (Marischka 1955-1957), *Sisi* (Schwarzenberger 2009), and *The Empress* (Eyssen 2022). Each theme is introduced by a short

introductory paragraph, followed by a semiotic analysis table and an accompanying image of the chosen representative sign to illustrate the empirical data. This provides a focused entry point and sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the theme.

5.1. Sissi

Sisi's rebellion in the 1950s trilogy is portrayed as a balance between embracing and challenging the role imposed on her, showing that disruptive acts expose the fragility of aristocratic and gender norms, even if they happen within the constraints. Across the dominant themes, Sisi frequently ruptures sociable norms by small gestures that act as subtle rebellious performances, such as sneezing to save an animal from being shot (Table 8) or inviting Andrassy for a dance to save the Austrian-Hungarian relationship (Table 9). While her rebellion is rarely overtly confrontational, it destabilises the identity of royal femininity by pointing out the constructive nature of gender roles and aristocracy. Still, the 1950s trilogy illustrated Sisi's rebellion within the constraints of the structures she opposes, much like the returning birds (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:33:00), she cannot fully escape the court rules imposed on her as empress.

Theme 1: Freedom

The tension between Sisi's longing for personal freedom and the performative demands of the imperial duty acts as agency for her rebellion against her imposed role as empress.

Table 3.

The birdcage as a sign of captivity

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Birdcage	Sisi releases the birds that she held in a cage in Possenhofen before marrying Franz, giving them the freedom, she cannot have.	By releasing the birds, Sisi enacts a symbolic gesture of liberation, projecting her own longing for freedom onto the birds. The act emphasises Sisi's empathy and identification with trapped beings and implies her critique towards being trapped in her role as empress. The Viennese court acts as a golden cage for Sisi, illustrating both privileges and imprisonment.	The birdcage stands for an apparatus of disciplinary power. By freeing the birds from the cage, Sisi momentarily refuses her imposed role as a decorative, reproductive figure and instead expresses a desire for self-determination. This critiques the notion that gender identity as an inherited duty, exposing its constructed nature.

Figure 2.

Sisi releasing the birds in Possenhofen, by Marischka (1955-1957, 1:22:12)



The tension between Sisi's longing for personal freedom and her imperial duty is recurrent throughout the trilogy, shaping her character and choices. She consistently craves autonomy, for instance, through her passion for horse riding. While her father Maximilian encourages this individuality, praising her as a „*Prachtmädchen*“ (splendid girl) (Marischka 1955-1957, 5:50), her mother Ludovika frequently tries to impose discipline, as seen when she locks Sisi in after misbehaviour (Marischka 1955-1957, 24:20), i.e., an act that only fuels Sisi's rebelliousness. This can be seen as Maximilian encouraging Sisi's rebellion by praising her for disruptive acts against the gendered role of princess and later empress. At the same time, Ludovika aims for performances within social norms. Through this, it is exposed that her role is constructed by the repetition of social norms and its viability is questioned through disruptive acts (Butler 1990, 178).

Sisi's idea of happiness is rooted in freedom, not status, as shown by her repeated rejection of the aristocratic role. The trilogy draws a clear contrast between the places where Sisi feels free, such as Possenhofen and Hungary, and the places where she feels trapped, like Austria. The recurring image of the birdcage symbolises her view of the imperial system: a life where all material needs are met, but personal autonomy is stifled. Releasing the birds becomes a powerful metaphor for Sisi's rebellion, reflecting her deep identification with beings trapped by forces beyond their control. Yet when the birds return (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:33:00), it suggests that, like Sisi, they cannot fully escape, and their freedom remains out of reach. It becomes clear that the intelligible domain, as elaborated by Butler (1993, xi), i.e., Sisi's role of the imperial wife and empress, is haunted by what it suppresses: Sisi's longing for freedom and a life outside the Viennese court, desires that the system cannot accommodate. This tension gives rise to Sisi's rebellious figure. It ties closely to the theme of fleeing, as Sisi repeatedly runs from the court but ultimately returns to Franz, caught in a constant pull between rebellion and duty to her husband, country, and child. While she flees to rebel, Sisi always returns to the court, because, applying Butler (1990, 183-184), a true escape would require a fundamental redefinition of the norms that uphold the imperial feminine role and deny legitimacy to any alternative forms of life.

Theme 2: Fleeing

Sisi's rebellion is often shown through fleeing, as she passively resists situations that clash with her values.

Table 4.

Possenhofen as a sign of freedom and autonomy

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Possenhofen	After Franz agrees to let Sophie care for the baby, Sisi feels she has no other option but to flee to Possenhofen without informing anyone.	Sisi's childhood home, Possenhofen, represents a space of personal freedom, authenticity, and emotional refuge for her. It contrasts the life on the Viennese court, showing a place where Sisi can go back to her identity before having become the Empress. Still, it is evident that staying in Possenhofen does not comply with her royal duties and thus, cannot be sustained.	Possenhofen becomes a site where Sisi temporarily escapes the performative demands of imperial femininity. There, Sisi suspends the repetition of acts that construct the role as empress and thus, manages to momentarily disrupt her monarchic femininity. Possenhofen demonstrates that, while Sisi can temporarily inhabit an alternative, freer self, her departure from this space reveals that she ultimately cannot escape the overarching structures of power that constrain her.

Figure 3.

Sisi in the carriage heading to Possenhofen, by Marischka (1955-1957, 2:24:10)



While strongly connected to the theme of freedom, fleeing is a central way Sisi demonstrates her rebellion. Even before becoming empress, Sisi runs away to escape situations that conflict with her values, for instance, when she realises that Franz chooses her over her sister. Later, disputes over childcare drive her to retreat to Possenhofen (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:24:10), portrayed as her place of freedom and where she reconnects with her grounded self. Furthermore, Andrassy's declaration of his love makes Sisi flee Hungary, showing that her rebellion is often not confrontational but passive by removing herself from uncomfortable situations.

Putting the fleeing in dialogue with Butler (1993, 22), a withdrawal from the gendered and imperial scripts she is expected to follow can be identified. Still, this escape is only temporary, as she ultimately returns, like the birds described in theme 1. This underscores that resistance is possible, but occurs within the systems it opposes. Thus, it illustrates how rebellion can take the form of absence rather than confrontation, and how such acts expose the constraints of gendered roles and the difficulty of entirely escaping them (Butler 1993, 22).

Theme 3: Inappropriate Behaviour

Sisi's frequent inappropriate behaviours, emerging from spontaneous emotions, act as performances that disrupt the monarchy's rigid norms and expose imperial identity as an artificial construction.

Table 5.

Running in as a sign against emotional repression

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Running in	As reaction to the doctor telling her she was pregnant, Sisi impulsively runs into a meeting of Franz to tell him, still wearing her night gown and open hair.	Sisi's spontaneous entry into Franz's office signifies an act of emotional immediacy and personal joy. Her desire to immediately share intimate news interrupts the court's rigid protocols of emotional restraint. Her appearance marks her vulnerability and authenticity in this moment, contrasting her imposed royal sovereignty.	By entering uninvited, emotionally expressive, and physically informal, Sisi refuses the performativity of passive, ornamental, emotionally contained femininity imposed on her. This disrupts the repetition of gendered behaviour and asserts a claim to agency and authenticity, signalling a temporary breach of her imposed imperial gender performance.

Figure 4.

Sisi in a sleeping gown in Franz's office, by Marischka (1955-1957, 2:15:30)



Sisi frequently challenges the rigid hierarchy and court rules through small but meaningful gestures. Whether giving water to a horse (Marischka 1955-1957, 19:40), a task usually left to servants, or addressing Sophie informally, Sisi violates court etiquette throughout the trilogy. These repeated acts of defiance are subtle but significant, disrupting hierarchy that defines her role as empress, similar to what Butler (2004, 52) describes about changing gender norms. Growing up in Bavaria, where her father largely rejected formal etiquette, Sisi is deeply uncomfortable within strict social structures. As the first woman in the Habsburg Empire, all other women kiss her hand due to her elevated status, but she expresses discomfort towards this ritual (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:31:07), a rupture of her performativity. Moreover, she openly dismisses court rules as nonsense, preferring to horse ride freely in the park rather than spend time learning etiquette. Through Butler's (1990, 178) lens, while Sisi's rebellion is not loud, its consistency threatens the monarchy, since the role of empress is sustained through the repeated performance of norms. Sisi's refusal to comply exposes the fragility of those constructs.

Moreover, throughout the trilogy, Sophie acts as the embodiment of court order, repeatedly criticising Sisi, calling her a „*Fratz*“ (uneducated child) (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:07:30) and framing her nonconformity as immaturity. This contrast between Sisi's formal status and her youth highlights her imposed identity's artificial and constructed nature (Butler 1990, 179), sharpening the tension between rebellion and expectation. This is furthermore illustrated through Sisi's habit of appearing unannounced in Franz's meetings. These performative ruptures showcase Sisi's rebellion against the emotional repression expected within the monarchy. Her spontaneous joy, especially in response to the news of her pregnancy (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:15:30), contrasts sharply with the court's emotionally sterile atmosphere.

Theme 4: Traditional and grounded self

The trilogy portrays Sisi as a relatable and grounded empress who embraces common people's ways while balancing her rebellious spirit with deep devotion to Franz.

Table 6.

The beer jug as a sign of cultural identity and authenticity

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Beer jug	Franz hosts a Bavarian dinner to help Sisi cope with homesickness for Possenhofen. During the meal, Sisi encourages everyone to drink beer, embracing a joyful, informal atmosphere. Sophie disapproves of this behaviour.	The beer jug symbolises Sisi's connection to her Bavarian roots as well as identifying herself with the common people, in contrast to the court etiquettes embodied by Sophie. Moreover, the beer functions as a symbolic marker of regional Bavarian identity, and cultural rebellion within the imperial setting.	By encouraging everyone to drink beer, Sisi motivates others to break aristocratic norms and embrace a more authentic self. Thus, her rebellion, displayed as a disruptive act against court norms, spills over to other court members. Still, Sisi's defiance operates within constrained boundaries of the monarchy and is portrayed as rather charming than threatening.

Figure 5.

Sisi with a beer jug next to Franz, by Marischka (1955-1957, 2:01:26)

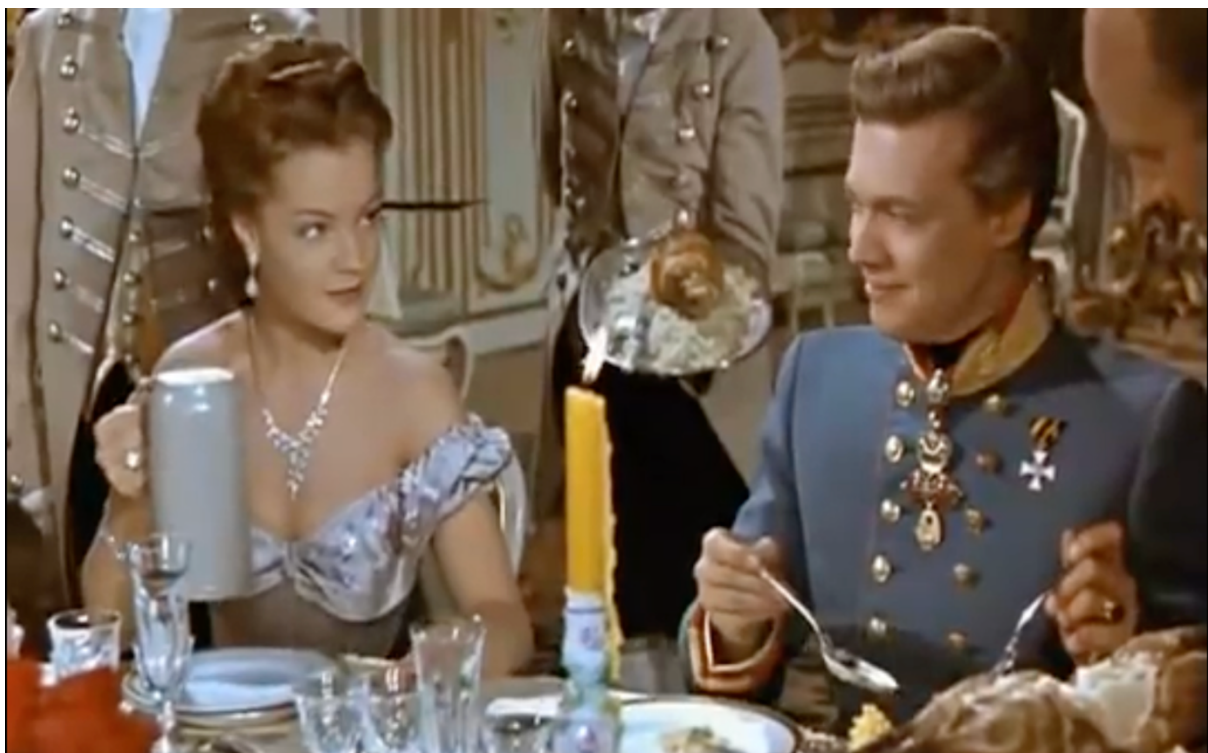


Table 7.

Red roses as a sign of Sisi's presence

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Red roses	Sisi places red roses, her favourite flowers, behind Franz's desk, which is a place where he spends most of his time working.	Being Sisi's favourite flowers (recurring symbol within the trilogy), the red roses symbolise Sisi's personal presence within Franz's political matters. By placing them behind his desk, Sisi ensures to be symbolically present, illustrating that her political interventions are playful and charming, unlikely for this male-dominated domain.	Placing the roses behind the desk is a performative act of marital devotion but can also be understood as a disruption of gender norms. Expressing Sisi's longing to be close to Franz, it is a gesture of emotional presence that reinforces gender roles, i.e., Sisi as decorative figure. Still, the connotational meaning of the act exposes a quiet and symbolic disruption that pushes the boundaries of her imposed role as empress and illustrate her political influence with the Empire.

Figure 6.

Sisi placing red roses behind Franz's desk, by Marischka (1955-1957, 1:51:20)



Throughout the trilogy, Sisi consistently embraces qualities and activities far from royal norms but closely tied to common people. By playing the zither (Marischka 1955-1957, 49:00), using informal greetings like “*Servus*” (Marischka 1955-1957, 21:00), and wearing a dirndl, i.e., traditional Bavarian dress, she expresses a clear identification with the people rather than the aristocracy. This connection is rooted in her upbringing in Possenhofen, where her father only loosely observed aristocratic rules. From this background emerges Sisi’s grounded self, which subtly challenges aristocratic expectations but still aligns with traditional feminine ideals valued among common people. This dynamic weaves together her royal identity with traditionally feminine traits like warmth, care, and cultural attachment to Bavaria, producing a layered and unconventional performance of both gender and class. Through a Butlerian lens (Butler 1990, 184–185), Franz’s support of Sisi, for example, hosting a Bavarian dinner to help her cope with her homesickness, can be seen not only as acceptance of her grounded side but also as a way of containing her rebellion. It represents a slight shift within court norms, where repetitions are never identical, but it does not radically transform Sisi’s role as empress.

These grounded qualities are complemented by Franz calling her a “perfect little housewife” (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:48:31) as she cleaned their shoes during their hiking trip, a typical performance for the idealised housewife, as it shows devotion towards the husband. While this behaviour can be seen as rebellious against her role as empress, she is also portrayed as strongly following her marital duties, which were common for that time. She is there for her husband, missing Franz when he is not there, and putting Franz’s needs over hers by saying she wants to get healthy for him (Marischka 1955-1957, 4:18:50). Moreover, Sisi is shown to be jealous towards anything that keeps Franz away from her, like his work desk (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:22:40), even placing red roses, her favourites and a recurring symbol, behind the desk to make sure he has a little piece of her with him. Sisi’s longing for Franz and her prioritisation of his needs over her own can be read as performances that reinforce the ideal of the devoted, self-sacrificing wife, even though her rebellion acts against court protocol and disrupts the performance of imperial femininity. This contradiction illustrates how individuals do not entirely escape the role scripts but move within and between them, sometimes reinforcing and destabilising the norms that shape their identities (Butler 1990, 179, 185).

Theme 5: Nature

Sisi's deep connection to nature is shown through her love of the forest, animals and hunting as a protector, not killer, reflecting both her free spirit and subtly constrained rebellion against imposed norms.

Table 8.

The sneeze as a sign of feminine defiance

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Sneeze	While hunting with Franz, Sisi sneezes to scare away the deer as she doesn't want it to be shot.	Hunting is a masculine-coded activity that embodies dominance and control and thus, not a typical place for a female aristocrat. Still, by disrupting the hunt with a sneeze, Sisi implicitly critiques the violence inherent in the hunt and introduces an act of empathy, a quality stereotypically associated with femininity.	By sneezing, Sisi disrupts the masculine-coded ritual of hunting and inserts feminine values of care and protection into the space of masculine dominance and control. While even joining the hunt is disrupting her imposed role as empress, Sisi's sneeze challenges the expected performance of aristocratic women as silent and decorative and thus, shows her resistance.

Figure 7.

Sisi sneezing while hunting with Franz, by Marischka (1955-1957, 47:30)



Sisi's deep connection to nature is a constant theme throughout the trilogy. The forest is portrayed as the place where she feels most at peace, with her father mentioning that Franz should take her there when court life becomes overwhelming. Franz follows this advice, taking Sisi on a hike where she impressively demonstrates her climbing skills, breaking performativity as she is expected to be carried up the mountain by a donkey. This disrupting performance earns the admiration of both Franz and their companions (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:43:27) and reveals that gender is actively constructed and not inherently natural (Butler 1990, 33).

Hunting also plays a key role in Sisi's life, as she often accompanies her father or Franz on hunts, an uncommon activity for women of her rank and, hence, a rupture in performativity. Yet Sisi's approach to hunting is atypical. Rather than aiming to kill, she helps scare animals away, reflecting traditionally feminine traits of care and compassion and showing that her acts comply with some gendered rules within her rebellion. While she performs in a typically male activity, i.e., hunting, she still represents the female expectations to avoid violence. Hence, hunting as framed in the trilogy is a rupture in the repeated acts that constitute the expected gender performance, but also reaffirms feminine-coded values. Sisi exposes the constraints but also the flexibility within the gender system (Butler 1993, x, 231).

Not only hunting exposes Sisi's love towards animals, but also other signs do, as seen when she frees the birds (Figure 2) or eagerly searches the castle for the animals Franz promised her before their wedding (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:29:04). Her love of horse riding, declared as her favourite pastime, further underscores her bond with nature and her longing for freedom.

Theme 6: Political influence

Sisi is portrayed as both an active and passive political force. She uses her charm, empathy, and rebellious spirit to influence decisions, especially regarding Hungary and Italy, while also being instrumentalised by the Empire.

Table 9.

Damenwahl (Lady's Choice) as a sign of feminine intervention

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
<i>Damenwahl</i>	After Sophie refuses to welcome Andrassy, the Hungarian guests prepare to leave. Sisi intervenes by inviting Andrassy to dance, offering a gesture of reconciliation. Franz supports her decision.	The <i>Damenwahl</i> dance is an opportunity for Sisi to execute her initiative publicly within the aristocratic structure. By choosing Andrassy, she performs a political gesture of reconciliation while she still embraces her feminine charm. Thus, the act transforms a decorative moment, i.e., Sisi dancing with a man, into a strategic political intervention, i.e., alliance-building between the Habsburgs and Hungary.	By inviting Andrassy for a dance, Sisi ruptures the expectations of her political passivity. Her imposed role expects her to be ornamental and supportive towards Franz but Sisi expands the scope of acceptable female performances, using her grace and elegance to enact a form of soft power. This reveals that female agency can operate within gendered rituals and demonstrates the political potential of embodied femininity.

Figure 8.

Sophie confronting Sisi about her call for *Damenwahl*, by Marischka (1955-1957, 2:10:13)



Sisi is portrayed as a key influence on political decisions within the Empire, particularly with Hungary, due to her repeatedly reaffirmed affection for the country, its people, and its language. This recurring display of affection illustrates Sisi's feminine political agency, rooted in empathy and emotional connection. While she defies the passive role expected of an empress by becoming politically active, she still operates within traditional gender norms by expressing that agency through typically feminine qualities. As Butler (1993, 122–123) suggests, even when individuals resist the roles imposed on them, they inevitably draw on the very social norms and power structures that shaped them, making Sisi's influence both a challenge to and a product of the gendered system she inhabits. She shapes Franz's stance on granting amnesty to Hungary (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:48:28) and takes an active role herself by, for instance, inviting Hungarians to a ball despite hostility from the Viennese court (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:07:24) and helping preserve Austria-Hungary relations through the *Damenwahl*. The Hungarians see her as the human face of the monarchy and place their trust in her (Marischka 1955-1957, 4:48:57).

Franz claims to rely on Sisi's advice in political matters, frequently reminding her of her imperial duties, while Sisi consistently prioritises her children (explored further in theme 7). Moreover, Sisi is not only an active political player but is also instrumentalised by the Empire, for instance, her reunion with Franz after her time in Greece is used as a diplomatic gesture to reconcile with Italy (Marischka 1955-1957, 4:40:10). Her natural charm, authenticity, and joy at seeing her child are depicted as breaking down the distance between the monarchy and the Italian people, winning their affection and leading to the crowd's cheers of "E viva la mama" (Long live the mother) (Marischka 1955-1957, 4:57:05). Even though the trip is arranged to instrumentalise her, she is handling the Italian upper class's protests at the theatre (Marischka 1955-1957, 4:44:50) still reflects her spirit of rebellion. Adopting Butler's (1990, 179) view, Sisi's gestures, whether through her charm or acts of defiance, contribute to the impression of a stable feminine identity, while her moments of resistance reveal the temporary and fragile foundation beneath that appearance.

Theme 7: Motherhood

Her devotion to motherhood deeply shapes Sisi's role as empress. She prioritises her children over Franz and royal duties, even defying court pressures to raise them herself.

Table 10.

The window gaze as a sign of longing

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Window Gaze	As Sisi asserts that politics do not matter to her as she prioritizes her child, she turns away from Franz, Andrassy, and Ludovika, gazing out of the window. They pressure her to stay and attend the Hungarian event.	The gaze out of the window symbolizes Sisi's longing for escape and her emotional withdrawal from the imperial role. The window acts as a threshold between the interior, i.e., imperial duties, and the exterior, i.e., freedom. Thus, gazing out the window shows the inner conflict between her personal maternal identity and the public role as empress, highlighting that she feels trapped withing monarchic constraints.	Sisi's withdrawal from public duties signals a rejection of the performative demands placed on her as empress. By prioritizing her child over political obligations, she momentarily resists the gendered and imperial scripts expected of her. However, the collective insistence on making her stay compels her to stay, signalling the power of the monarchy over Sisi.

Figure 9.

Sisi looking thoughtfully out of the window, by Marischka (1955-1957, 2:58:20)



Motherhood is central to Sisi's identity as empress, being prioritised by Sisi over both Franz and the monarchy. The trilogy highlights the pressure she puts on herself to produce a male heir (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:18:00) and her deep, personal desire to raise her child herself. When Sophie claims the cradle for her wing, Sisi flees to Possenhofen in protest. Ludovika defends Sisi's maternal instincts as both natural and mature, ultimately helping Sisi assert her right to prioritise her child by raising it on her own, over court expectations (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:40:42), forcing Sophie to give in.

Looking at the performativity and gender role, Sisi's desire to raise her child herself highlights the tension between gender expectations and royal duty. While, on one hand, it reflects maternal devotion and self-sacrifice, it, on the other hand, challenges the imperial model of motherhood. Her rebellion against Sophie's control reveals Sisi's wish to assert her more grounded, human side over her imperial identity, as further explored in theme 4. By ultimately winning the right to raise her child, Sisi not only disrupts the role imposed on her but also exposes that it is socially constructed, showing that identity is fluid and shaped by the repeated actions that sustain it (Butler 1993, 10).

5.2. *Sisi*

The 2009 mini-series portrays Sisi's rebellion as a subtle and continuous negotiation of her free spirit and the imperial norms imposed on her. Sisi constantly breaches role boundaries as empress by asserting emotional authenticity over aristocratic distance, for instance, when letting the flower girl approach her (Figure 12). She consciously uses her appearance and charm as a soft power to interfere in political matters, which, despite disrupting her passive role, is encouraged by Franz. The power of her rebellion becomes apparent when fighting to decide about her children's upbringing and thus, challenging the monarchic norms of the institutionalisation of child education. Still, all her rebellious acts happen within the aristocratic structures that oppress her, highlighting that her rebellion does not mean an escape from imperial norms but rather a transformative reworking of her imposed identity.

Theme 1: Freedom

The theme of freedom shapes Sisi's character throughout the trilogy, shown in her constant push against court restrictions, her longing for independence, and her fight to secure that same freedom for her children.

Table 11.

The wall as a sign for the Viennese court rules

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Wall	Sophie asserts that liberal ideas (referring to Sisi's wish to educate her child herself) have no place within the walls of the court.	The wall Sophie is referring to metaphorically represents the boundaries that preserves the monarchic authority, shutting out Sisi's agency. It makes the limits of what complies with aristocratic and gender norms and what does not. Thus, the wall triggers a sense of confinement and exclusion of everything that does not fit the norms.	Sophie's statement acts as a reminder for Sisi to perform within the aristocratic role imposed on her, i.e., passive and focused on reproduction. Thus, it operates as a moment that highlights how gender and power roles are sustained through repeated acts of setting boundaries. Hence, the wall is the barrier that Sisi's rebellion opposes to.

Figure 10.

Sophie telling Sisi that her ideas do fit in, by Schwarzenberger (2009, episode 2, -49:30)



The theme of freedom is a key element portrayed in the miniseries. Sisi's longing for independence is shown throughout, especially represented by her love for horse riding and

using it to escape her sorrows. Her fascination with the foreign, expressed in her desire to travel, learn new languages, and engage with other cultures (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -55:29), signals her restless spirit but disrupts the monarchic expectations imposed on her. The court, represented by Sophie, is displayed to contain her longing for the unknown, for instance, when Sophie restricts her access to a book about Hungary (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -52:07), a place that symbolises freedom for Sisi. To feel free, Sisi flees to her childhood home, Possenhofen, where she seeks refuge from the suffocating court. Through the lens of performativity and gender (Butler 1990, 174), these acts disrupt the narrow, controlled image of femininity expected at court by temporarily breaking the continuous performance of imperial womanhood, revealing its fragile and constructed nature. While Sisi cannot completely break free from the gendered and political norms placed on her, her longing for freedom exposes the limits of those norms and points to the possibility of resistance or redefinition through repeated acts of defiance.

The tension between Sisi and the court is further shown when Sisi questions Franz if etiquettes make him say that she has to inform him when she leaves Vienna, or if it is his concern about her free nature (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -22:04). Sisi also projects her belief in freedom on her children, emphasising the importance of a childhood filled with freedom and self-expression, which contrasts with Franz's upbringing by strict rules of the court. These constraints are now also applied to Sisi, illustrated when Sophie mentions that liberal ideas have no place within the palace walls (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -49:30), highlighting how the court itself becomes a symbol of constraint. Still, the court's rules are not natural, but they gain legitimacy through repetition, much like what Butler (1990, 186) argues about gender roles.

Theme 2: Court Ceremonials

The tension between Sisi and the court ceremonial highlights her ongoing struggle for individuality. She repeatedly defies rigid royal norms through impulsive actions, class-challenging choices, and a sharp awareness of the court's controlling nature.

Table 12.

Running in as a sign against emotional repression

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Running in	Sisi bursts into Franz's bedroom without formal permission after learning of the assassination attempt on his life.	By running into Franz's room, Sisi breaks court rules and asserts a personal, impulsive claim over Franz, that makes her suppress imperial norms. Her emotional urgency and authenticity mark a moment where intimacy and emotional concern displace formal political structures, emphasizing that personal affection matter more to Sisi than societal norms.	Running into a space without permission temporarily disrupts Sisi's role as empress as the expected submission and control is replaced by emotion and agency. This rupture reveals the fragility of her imposed role as it showcases alternatives to the emotionally controlled royal figure and opens room for challenging established norms.

Figure 11.

Sisi passing by Sophie to see Franz, by Schwarzenberger (2009, episode 1, -1:15:44)



The tension between Sisi and the rigid ceremonial life of the court is a recurring theme that underscores her longing for individuality, showcasing that gender and power are maintained through repeated acts and not naturally given (Butler 1993, 12). She confronts the constraints of royal protocol with her impulsiveness. Her habit of running out of the carriage or into rooms, for instance, to interrupt Franz's diplomatic meeting (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:22:25), highlights her disregard for formal boundaries. In addition, her natural expressions, such as her spontaneous laughter (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:19:49) clash with the expectations of a passive and contained empress that the court and Sophie project on her. Moreover, Sisi's rebellion against court rules is portrayed to influence Franz through moments like the wedding kiss (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:08:21) and the couple's escape from their observed wedding night into the royal park (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:04:14), reflecting defiance of both ceremonial and religious expectations. This shows that her rupture in performativity is not only individual but also destabilises the monarchy as a whole.

Closely tied to theme 3, i.e., grounded self, Sisi repeatedly refuses help from servants, insisting on doing things herself and thereby challenging the class-based hierarchy of court life. Her choice to appoint a low-ranked Hungarian countess (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:26:26) further underscores her rejection of tradition and status and shows the rupture with her imposed identity. Additionally, her sharp observation that the court grants small freedoms to keep people compliant (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -56:15) reveals her awareness of the system's underlying control mechanisms. This demonstrates her understanding of the power relations underlying social performance, which aligns with Butler's (1993, 34) insight that power operates not only through force but through the regulation of everyday acts.

Theme 3: Grounded Self

The theme of Sisi's grounded self highlights her deep empathy and humility, as she consistently resists imperial distance and seeks meaningful connection with ordinary people.

Table 13.

The flower girl as a sign of breaching aristocratic distance

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Flower girl	A young girl runs up to Sisi to offer her flowers while she approaches the church for her wedding. The guards attempt to stop the girl, but Sisi allows her to approach.	Letting the flower girl symbolises Sisi's openness and warmth towards the common people. It illustrates her accessibility despite expected aristocratic distance imposed by court rules. With this act, Sisi softens the monarchy's image, framing her as an approachable empress.	Rather than distancing herself and acting as an untouchable royal décor, Sisi breaches her role by becoming approachable for common people. Through this, she challenges the role of female royalty, incorporating emotions and maternal care into her public performance. Sisi's performative rupture is an alternation of royal femininity without openly defying it.

Figure 12.

Sisi receiving flowers from a young girl, by Schwarzenberger (2009, episode 1, -1:10:35)



The theme of Sisi's grounded self reveals her deep connection to ordinary people and her resistance to the isolating effects of imperial life. When a little girl runs up to her with flowers

and the guards try to intervene, Sisi insists on letting the child approach (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:10:35), showcasing her openness and warmth toward the common people. Her desire to visit the people despite Sophie's disapproval stands for the breach of court ceremonials, and her compassionate gestures during visits to an orphanage, where she shares her food with the children (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -41:42), further highlight her empathy and rejection of aristocratic distance. It, thus, reveals the performative nature of her imperial role. Forcing Sisi to keep distance from the people and her deliberate choice to bridge that gap reveals a deviation from the expected performance, which, through Butler's (1993, 3) lens, exposes the artificial nature of monarchical status.

Moreover, Sisi's groundedness comes through in her service as a nurse, caring for war survivors and the wounded (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:09:49, -12:30), where she downplays her actions as nothing extraordinary, reflecting humility and a refusal to see herself as above others. This showcases her grounded self as she challenges the aristocratic and feminine superiority expected from her, revealing that her imperial identity is not fixed but created through repeated performances (Butler 1990, 23).

Theme 4: Body and Clothing

The theme of body and clothing reveals Sisi's struggle between meeting beauty standards and seeking more profound meaning. At the same time, her physical and emotional battles reflect the personal costs of life within the imperial system.

Table 14.

The corset as a sign of aesthetic discipline

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Corset	While dressing, Sisi requests that her corset be tightened even further, despite the countess warning her that she will not be able to breathe. Still, Sisi insists on it as she wants to impress Napoleon.	Sisi's demand of overly tightening the corset reflects an internalisation of the expectation to be visually pleasing and an assertion of control over her own body. The corset becomes a tool to shape her into the visual expectation of the male gaze. Sisi claims to not to just be a passive object moulded by the corset but to actively use her female display in a political context as a reaction of Napoleon mentioning that he values female beauty alongside powerful man (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:21:23).	The act highlights the performative nature of femininity as Sisi actively participates in her own aesthetic disciplining, tightening herself into the form of desirable femininity. While the act reinforces her imposed royal femininity, the scene simultaneously disrupts it, as Sisi strategically embraces feminine roles to intervene in political matters. In this way, her rebellion operates from within the very gender norms imposed on her, using them as a means of subtle resistance.

Figure 13.

Sisi's corset being tightened, by Schwarzenberger (2009, episode 2, -1:23:23)



The theme of body and cloth highlights Sisi's complex relationship with beauty, control, and vulnerability. The tightening of her wedding corset (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:12:11) points to the physical discomfort of her role as empress, a tension that intensifies when she later demands an even tighter corset to impress Napoleon (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:23:23), despite warnings it might restrict her breathing. This underscores how femininity is produced through repeated acts imposed on and performed through the body, while also showing that it is not a natural essence but the result of performative acts that create the illusion of a stable, gendered identity (Butler 1990, 33, 179). Still, Sisi rejects superficiality, challenging Napoleon's emphasis on having a pretty wife, arguing that mutual understanding matters more (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:21:23). This reflects her more profound desire for meaningful connection beyond appearances as well as the fragility of gender norms.

Her body also becomes a site of emotional struggle, as seen during her depression after the death of her daughter, symbolised by the dark room and drawn curtains (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:35:20). Moreover, the doctor's observation that she has lost the will to recover underscores how closely her physical state is tied to her psychological battles, especially the conflict over her child's upbringing. Throughout the trilogy, Sisi's body acts as a tool of resistance and a symbol of the burdens she carries within the imperial system, revealing the double bind of gender performativity. Her body is the site where she is disciplined into her role, yet it is also the means through which she expresses her rebellion. It becomes an active space where the artificiality of gender norms, as exposed by Butler (1990, 10), is negotiated and made visible.

Theme 5: Political Influence

The theme of political influence reveals Sisi's rise as a key diplomatic and political force. She challenges gender roles and uses her insight, charm, and intuition to shape imperial affairs and strengthen the empire.

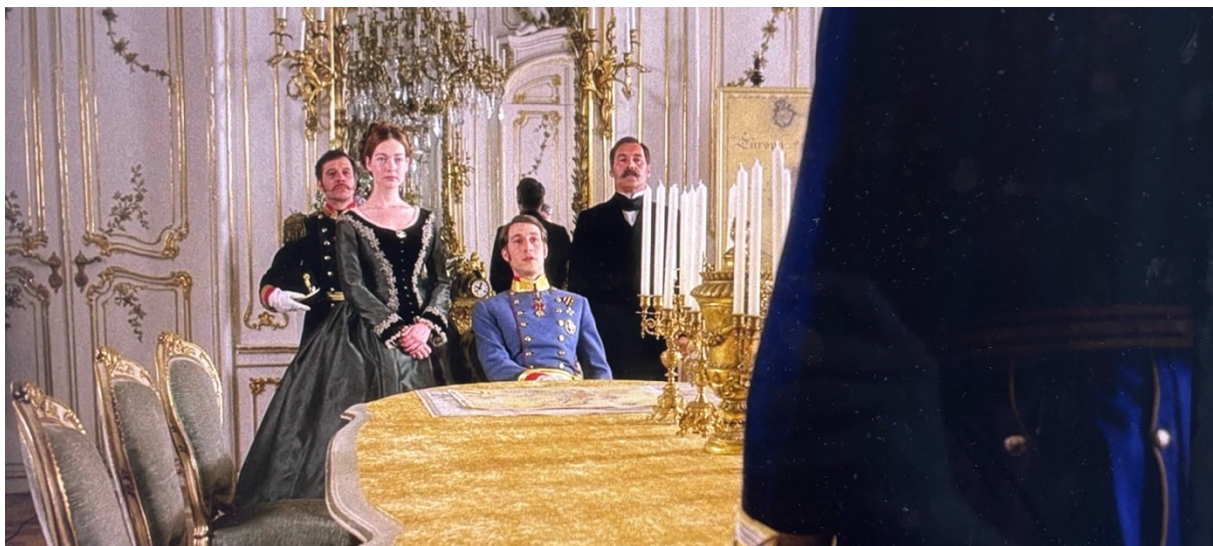
Table 15.

Standing Sisi (behind Franz) as a sign of political presence

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Standing Sisi	During a political meeting, Bismarck remarks that he is not used to political discussions occurring in the presence of women. Franz responds that he is glad about Sisi's presence. During the whole meeting, Sisi stands physically behind Franz.	The image of Sisi standing behind Franz suggests two implications. While the traditional gender role suggest that Sisi is positioned as a supportive figure to her husband when standing behind him, it also implies her influence into Franz's policy making. Thus, the act shows Sisi's support but also her quiet power.	Sisi's presence in the political meeting ruptures her imposed passive role as empress. As Franz appreciates her presence, it simultaneously expands the performative boundaries of acceptable femininity, granting her a role as participant in governance. While she is physically positioned in the background, her acknowledged presence challenges the exclusion of women from political discourse, allowing her to inhabit a liminal space between visible power and traditional feminine passivity.

Figure 14.

Sisi standing behind Franz during a meeting, by Schwarzenberger (2009, episode 2, -20:40)



The theme of political influence highlights how Sisi challenges the gender norms of her time by actively shaping imperial affairs. She demonstrates political awareness by urging Franz to recognise the changing times (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -34:14), being not just a passive wife or empress but Franz's political ally. This is made visually clear when she stands behind him at a political meeting, making Bismarck express discomfort about the presence of a woman in the room (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -20:40). Sisi's sharp intuition about political actors reveals her active role in and suitability for state affairs, even pushing Franz toward reforms like establishing a parliament (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:00:32). Observing this through Butler (1990, 185), it demonstrates that by repeatedly disrupting the passive and decorative role imposed on her, she not only challenges and exposes its constructed nature, but also enacts a variation on the repetition of gendered norms, i.e., a process through which agency emerges, which ultimately drives the transformation that Franz accepts.

Regarding the central political topic Sisi interferes with, i.e., Hungary, Sisi's father encourages her to engage with Andrassy (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -27:00), positioning her as a channel for his political rebellion. Still, Sisi reminds Franz that she is no mere puppet but only does what she believes in (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -20:42). Her fluency in Hungarian and Andrassy's acknowledgement of it highlight her unique diplomatic value. Her state visit to Hungary, where she helps restore trust and secures the future of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, reveals the full extent of her influence. Sisi is portrayed not only as a political actor but as the empire's human face. Especially her achievements with Hungary are framed as reconfigurations of the passive role of empress into active political interventions, aligned with Butler's (1992, 13) statement that identities and norms are produced through repetition. Thus, they can be reworked through rupture.

Theme 6: Motherhood and Marriage

The theme of motherhood and marriage shows Sisi's fierce devotion to her children and her constant struggle to balance love, family, and personal autonomy against imperial pressures and expectations.

Table 16.

The military academy as a sign of patriarchal authority

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Military Academy	Sisi discovers that her son, Rudolf, has been placed in a military academy without her consent. She protests, emphasizing his sensitivity. Ultimately, she succeeds in having him removed from military life.	The military academy symbolises the authoritarian structures of imperial power and is designed to mould the heir into that power structure. Sisi's opposition represents a clash between maternal care and institutional discipline as she embraces a protective role against the monarchic expectations. Thus, military academy also represents the conflict between Sisi's personal will and the imperial values.	By contesting the military education of Rudolf, Sisi disrupts her scripted passive roles of motherhood that excludes her from decision over education. Her success of removing Rudolf from the academy signals a momentary expansion of gendered power within the monarchy, showcasing that rupture can change the artificially made roles within aristocracy and gender.

Figure 15.

Sisi hugging her son in uniform, by Schwarzenberger (2009, episode 2, -52:24)



The theme of motherhood and marriage reveals Sisi's dedication to her children and the constant tension between her desires and the imperial expectations. Rather than passively embodying the ideal of the compliant imperial mother, Sisi repeatedly disrupts and redefines that role, revealing its constructed nature and carving out space for a maternal agency that goes beyond the narrow confines of aristocratic femininity. She shows that, aligned with Butler's (1990, 32–33) take on identity, motherhood is not a fixed identity but a product of repeated acts of continuous resistance to assert her agency. Sisi defies aristocratic norms by clashing with Sophie over the children's upbringing, whether it's the empty crèche (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -33:00) or her determination to bring them on the trip to Hungary without asking permission (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -13:50). During the latter, Sisi's daughter died of pneumonia, and Sophie subsequently blamed Sisi for the loss, which only intensified the Empress's protective instincts.

While Sisi faces pressure from the court to produce an heir (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -1:25:18), her loyalty to Franz and her children reflects her belief that family comes before empire. Still, it is depicted that her children's well-being matters more to her than even her relationship with Franz. Despite declaring deep love for him, she refuses to read his letters until he agrees to remove Rudolf from the harsh military education (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -38:20). This highlights both Sisi's stubbornness and her ambivalence toward her role. While she fulfils the gendered expectations of a devoted mother, she disrupts the expected performance of obedient, self-sacrificing femininity toward her husband. Sisi's determination not only asserts her agency but also shows how gendered power dynamics can be negotiated and resisted from within, as suggested by Butler (1993, 122–123), even as she remains shaped by them.

5.3. The Empress

The 2022 series characterises Sisi's rebellion as strong feminine agency against the passivity imposed on her. Her rebelliousness consists of subtle gestures, like handing her shoes to a poor girl (Figure 19), and strong acts, like shooting a boar (Figure 22). Through this, she openly displays the rejection of her passive role as an aristocratic woman and breaks both gender and class boundaries, directly challenging the identity imposed on her. Still, the Viennese court does not see her as an eminent threat but rather a subject to contain, giving her certain freedom

within the court boundaries. While Sisi is aware that the court sees her as naïve and incapable, her rebellion still unfolds within the structures that confine her, making true escape difficult.

Theme 1: Freedom, Fleeing, Hiding

Sisi's constant attempts to flee, hide and escape are performances that rupture her role as empress and show her inner desire for freedom.

Table 17.

The crystal carriage as a sign of deprived freedom

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Crystal carriage	Sisi is brought to the wedding in a crystal carriage. Thousands of spectators are on the way shouting her name, knocking on the glass, trying to get a glimpse of the bride. Sisi appears anxious and fearful.	Sisi is displayed as a visual spectacle, a passive object of the public gaze. The crystal carriage intends to symbolise royal prestige and a Cinderella-like princess but rather function as a transparent cage. Sisi wants to be close to the people, but, ironically, her display to the public in the carriage distance her, not physically but hierarchically, from the common people. She is put on display like an animal in the zoo, creating a distant and untouchable empress who seems trapped within the monarchical system.	Sisi is expected to embody the ideal of the joyful royal bride but her body language displays discomfort and fear, causing a disruption in her performativity. The carriage enacts a performance of containment, physically (cage) and symbolically (court rules), which exposed the power structure Sisi is ruled by.

Figure 16.

Sisi on her way to the wedding in a crystal carriage, by Eyssen (2022, episode 2, -3:21)



Throughout the season, hiding, fleeing, and Sisi's longing for freedom are constantly present, reflecting a resistance to the performative acts expected of her as empress. Being unhappy within monarchic structures, Sisi hides behind curtains, rides away on a horse from her problems, and tries to escape back to Bavaria while dreaming of being free like a bird. Parallels to the children's game of hide and seek can be encountered as Sisi seemingly tries to play hide and seek from struggles and duty, for instance, getting engaged or being caught hungover on the wedding day (Eyssen 2022, episode 2, -8:40). Considering that Sisi was only 16 years old on her wedding day, this childish behaviour seems fitting but still contrary to ceremonial expectations. These expectations operate as assumptions that build a regulatory apparatus defining her empress role (Butler 1993, 12).

As she faces the reality of her role as empress, defined mainly by producing an heir, her desire to escape intensifies. Sisi longs for Possenhofen and envies the birds that can fly away to foreign lands. Symbolic of this lack of freedom is the crystal carriage bringing Sisi to her wedding. In it, she is displayed to the public, not moving herself but being unwillingly carried (compare to Table 20), intensifying the feeling of being trapped, visualised through her anxious behaviour. In line with Butler (1993, 95) the lack of movement proves that Sisi is not the origin of the performance. The carriage is a ritual for royal weddings and hence, a repetition of a norm imposed on her. Still, there is no perfect replication of an act (Butler 1993, 226–227), as Sisi's anxious facial expression shows. While she engages with the act imposed on her, her visible

discomfort disrupts the gracious performance, revealing subconscious rebellion against her objectification.

Theme 2: Court Ceremonials

Sisi's resistance to the rigid court ceremonials expose the artificiality of the monarchy and her claim for autonomy by disrupting the structures meant to control her.

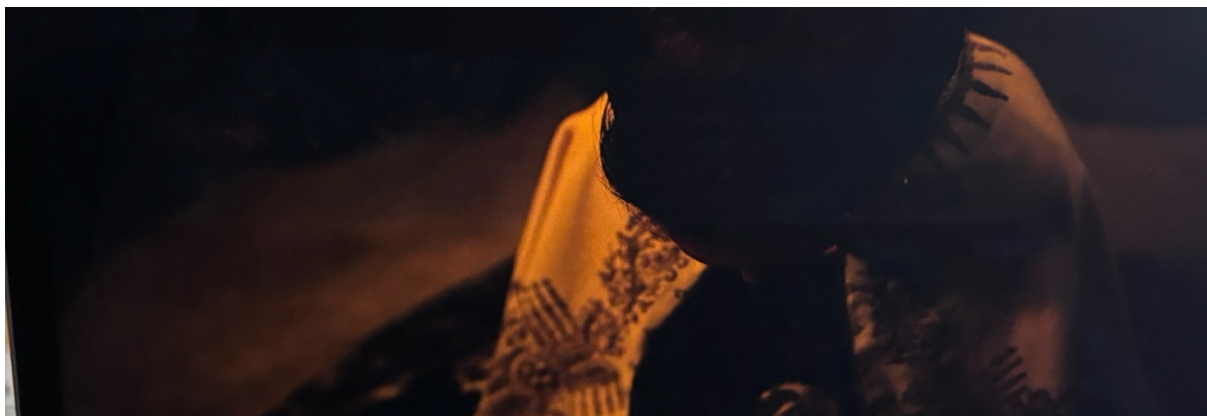
Table 18.

The curtsy as a sign of solidarity

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Curtsy	Being unable to leave the palace due the crowd outside, Sisi decides to go out and meet them, touch them, talk to them. Despite the risk, i.e., the crowd is angry, some holding fire, she kneels before them.	By kneeling, Sisi disrupts and reverses the rigid hierarchy of the imperial court. She lowers herself not before aristocrats, but before her people, transforming a gesture of deference into a radical act of solidarity. The gesture counters the monarchy's untouchable image. Instead of embodying divine rule, Sisi humanises the crown.	By choosing contact over distance and vulnerability over untouchability, Sisi enacts a disruptive performance that challenges the monarchic norms. Sisi's deviation from ritualised distance signals an interruption in performativity, exposing the artificiality of Sisi's imposed role as empress.

Figure 17.

Sisi kneeling surrounded by the crowd, by Eyssen (2022, episode 6, -09:12)



The series frequently contrasts rigid court ceremonial with Sisi's rebellious behaviour, using these moments to highlight her resistance to imposed norms. Court life demands discipline, and religious adherence, yet Sisi repeatedly challenges these expectations. Upon reuniting with Franz, her spontaneous kiss is met with coldness (Eyssen 2022, episode 2, -52:02), revealing how the monarchy regulates intimacy. In contrast, their private moments, for instance, hiding behind a door during dance class or having sex in nature, reflect a longing for authenticity and freedom outside court protocol. Sexuality is also intertwined with religious symbolism. On her wedding night, Sisi removes her religious dress before intercourse (Eyssen 2022, episode 3, -4:50), signalling a rejection of the sacred framing of her sexuality. She later questions the necessity of a virginity test in front of a priest, openly criticising the policing of female purity. The monarchy's ceremonials try to make Sisi perform ideal femininity, i.e., a forced performance of norms strictly associated with discipline and punishment (Butler 1993, 232).

Beyond sexuality, Sisi breaks other ceremonial codes such as spitting, lying on the floor and disobeying. These behaviours contrast with the performative rigidity of court life and act as counter-performance, revealing that the gendered identity at court is not naturally given but constructed by continuous ritualised performance (Butler 1993, 95). The recurring metaphor of the court as a circus underscores its artificiality and theatricality. In all this, Sisi's body becomes a site of protest, disrupting the imperial performances expected of her through impulsive, grounded, and human actions.

Sisi's curtsy is a significant sign illustrating her stand toward hierarchical structures, closely linked to theme 3. Her gesture symbolically reverses the hierarchy of power, expressing humility and political solidarity. It disrupts the monarchy's image of distance, divinity, and untouchability and, hence, goes strictly against the performativity of the role imposed on Sisi. This gesture humanises the Empress, showcasing her vulnerability, accessibility, and willingness to listen, as well as acting as both personal and political rebelliousness against the court ceremonies. Thus, she reshapes her role as empress not passively but through political openness and closeness to the people, mirroring Butler's (1990, 179) point that identity is not a static but fluid concept.

Theme 3: The grounded self

Sisi identifies with the common people, constructing a momentarily authentic and grounded identity while still being constrained by monarchic structures.

Table 19.

The cigarette as a sign of class transgression

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Cigarette	Sisi and Leontine some together at night in a palace garden's tree, sharing personal thoughts. Sisi had to sneak out, as both smoking and being outside at night are forbidden for her.	The cigarette is a symbol for social nonconformity as it is associated to the common people and masculinity and thus, inappropriate for aristocratic women. Sisi rejects her royal femininity by smoking and embraces her grounded self. She also withdraws herself from courtly surveillance as she sneaked out of the palace to smoke. Moreover, despite Sisi not knowing that Leontine is a commoner, their friendship illustrates that Sisi prefers natural grounded company over aristocracy.	Smoking a cigarette illustrates Sisi's desire to escape her imposed role and perform an alternative identity, away from court norms. This scene showcases a rupture of Sisi's imposed identity, revealing that her role as empress is not a fixed identity but constructed through repeated norms that she now breaks.

Figure 18.

Sisi and Leontine smoking in the tree, by Eyssen (2022, episode 5, -47:48)



Closely intertwined with the sign “shoes” (Table 20), it is widely illustrated that Sisi identifies herself more with the common people than with monarchs. This alignment is politically significant, reflecting her desire to access a version of herself unmediated by court protocol or aristocratic performance. Sisi’s acts toward the lower classes, for instance, giving away her shoes or picking up what the servant dropped, were designed to construct an image of humility and emotional authenticity. Her bond with Leontine, a commoner posing as a countess, further reinforces this dynamic. Leontine becomes Sisi’s closest confidante in the palace. Someone she entrusts, physically and emotionally, with her private thoughts and even personal care, such as cleaning her teeth. Despite being told she stands above others, Sisi openly challenges this narrative. In a conversation with Franz, she critiques the idea of royal distance, insisting that the people want a monarchy that feels grounded and human. This theme illustrated, aligned with (Butler 1993, 3), that the role of empress is imposed on Sisi and does not reflect her internal way of being, i.e., grounded and rejecting status. By approaching the lower stands, she attempts to reshape her identity outside the rituals that define royal womanhood, such as always obeying her husband. This highlights that identity is not a fixed concept but fluid and can be changed once the performances are adopted repeatedly (Butler 1993, 72).

Looking at the cigarette, while it is commonly associated with working-class men and, increasingly, rebellious women, it is firmly outside the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for aristocratic women. By smoking with Leontine, who is unknowingly to Sisi a commoner, Sisi steps outside the strict codes of imperial femininity. The act signifies not only a rejection of aristocratic restraint but also a yearning for authenticity and connection. It can be seen as an act that reveals that the gender and class norms are cultural fictions, as they have no legitimate grounds other than through repetition (Butler 1990, 187). Moreover, the setting, i.e., a tree, at night, outside the palace, further reinforces the theme of escape and freedom as mentioned in theme 1. Sisi’s choice to engage in this behaviour with Leontine creates a space of intimacy and equality, removed from the hierarchical logic of the court. It makes her closer to her grounded self.

Theme 4: Body and Clothing

Sisi uses her body as a site of resistance against monarchical control by performing subtle yet powerful acts that disrupt her imperial identity.

Table 20.

Shoes as a sign of social status

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Shoes	Sisi hands her shoes to a girl in the factory after noticing the girl's shoes are broken and the girls telling her that she cannot afford new ones.	Shoes symbolise material privilege and social status (as also illustrated as one of the reasons Leontine was exposed a commoner by another countess). Sisi attempts to bridge the imperial distance by performing an act of solidarity. Giving away her shoes temporarily erases the status difference.	By stepping onto the dirty factory floor, Sisi disrupts her gendered and imperial performativity as she embodies a forbidden closeness to the lower class. She is expected to remain elevated, literally (not touching the floor) and symbolically (untouchable aristocracy). Despite this momentary rupture, her being forcibly carried out underscores that her body is ruled by the aristocratic norms, emphasising that her resistance is overruled by the monarchy.

Figure 19.

Sisi handing her shoes to a poor girl, by Eyssen (2022, episode 5, -26:52)



Table 21.

The corset as a sign of suppressed individuality

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Corset	Sophie tightens Sisi's corset while scolding her, claiming that Habsburg's conflict with Russia was caused by her humiliation of the Tsar while hunting. Sisi shows physical discomfort and difficulties to breathe.	Not only being a fashion item, but the corset represents discipline and control over the female body, enforcing rigid ideals on Sisi. By tying it and cutting air, it illustrates how the monarchy (especially Sophie) does not leave space to move or breathe for Sisi. It operates both as a tool of aesthetic conformity and as a punishment. Sophie weaponizes the corset as a reminder of Sisi's supposed culpability in the Russian conflict, linking bodily suffering with guilt.	The corset is a literal act of shaping the female body into the role of an empress as it symbolically forcing her into the narrow role scripted by monarchical norms. Her discomfort shows an attempt of resistance as it breaks the gratitude that the corset should cause and thus, ruptures with the seamless performance the corset is meant to ensure. This showcases how gender roles are imposed by body discipline.

Figure 20.

Sophie tying Sisi's corset, by Eyssen (2022, episode 5, -41:00)



As the monarchy strictly controls Sisi's body, it becomes a powerful tool to express her disobedience towards it. Her constantly complimented hair, integrated with strands from her deceased horse Puck, turns a symbol of idealised femininity into a private expression of grief, transforming beauty into memorial, and showing the importance of the animal to the Empress. Despite the court's obsession with her appearance, Sisi rejects this objectification, expressing a desire to be known for her actions, not her looks. Thus, while she is a gendered subject created by court rules, she is also a subject that contests the standards imposed on her body. This shows that regulations have two sides. While they aim to constrain, they also enable agency (Butler 2004, 40–41). The corset symbolises the strict court rules, trying to shape Sisi according to the imposed identity. By tying it and cutting air, it pictures how the monarchy, in particular Sophie, does not leave space for Sisi to move, breathe or exist freely. Thus, the corset is not merely a physical item for repression but an instrument of regulatory power (Butler 1993, 22), shaping both the ideal physical form and character traits of an empress. It illustrates how bodily discipline maintains authority and suppresses rebellious deviation from expected feminine behaviour.

Furthermore, shoes play a crucial role as they signify class status, for example, Leontine's worn-out footwear and the factory girls' broken shoes mark their common status. By choosing to be barefoot, Sisi aligns herself with the lower classes and reclaims a sense of physical and emotional grounding. This emphasises that social class is not natural but forced through social norms (Butler 1993, 128–29). Bare feet signify not only physical vulnerability, especially given the location, but also Sisi's desire for authenticity and contact with the people, mirroring Butler (1990, 172–173)'s claim that public gestures can fabricate a coherent and meaningful identity. Still, while this gesture was intended to reflect empathy and challenge the distance between the ruler and the ruled, Sisi was held back from transmitting the whole message. The forceful carrying against her will showed the opposite: An empress who is too noble to touch the ground. These embodied acts show the conflict between the identity imposed on her and her desire for autonomy (Butler 1993, 15). Her rebellion lies in reclaiming control over the one thing closest to her: her body.

Theme 5: Intellectual Dismissal

Sisi's intellectual devaluation by the court highlights how gender and age are used to undermine her agency, reinforcing patriarchal control through performative dismissal.

Table 22.

The gift as a sign of possessive control

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Gift	As a surprise, Franz got a horse for Sisi as he noticed that she felt bored in the palace. When introducing Sisi to the horse, Franz mentioned that it was wild and restless just like her.	Franz sees Sisi's rebellion but trivializes it, framing her rebelliousness as an amusing personality trait rather than a challenge to patriarchal norms. The gift acts not as recognition of Sisi's autonomy but as a symbol to channel and domesticate her wildness within acceptable limits. Leontine immediately perceives this underlying purpose of the gift.	Franz enacts his masculinity through possessive benevolence, offering Sisi a symbol of her own wildness but contained within acceptable boundaries. Franz reinforces Sisi's position as a passive, decorative figure whose agency is mediated and limited through male control. Thus, although the act is framed as generous, the gift operates as a mechanism of discipline and confirmation of monarchic structures.

Figure 21.

Franz gifting Sisi a horse, by Eyssen (2022, episode 6, -55:09)



Sisi is repeatedly treated as naive or incapable by being told that she does not understand political matters or behaves like a child. She even confronts Franz with the feeling that people treat her as stupid. This infantilisation is strikingly contradictory. While Sisi is still about 16 years old, she is expected to fulfil the demanding and symbolic role of an empress, the highest woman in the country. The contradiction reveals the structural tension between her age and the expectations imposed upon her. Drawing on Butler (2004, 40–41), the emphasis on her infantility can be seen as a regulatory act, aiming to limit her political agency. Given the cultural context of Sisi's life, an overlap of qualities imposed on children and women can be found as both groups should, for instance, obey, depend on a male figure, be passive and appear sweet, showing the cultural impact on identity as elaborated by Butler (1993, 2).

Furthermore, aside from her reproductive duty, as further discussed in theme 7, Sisi is denied any meaningful responsibility, leading to boredom and frustration. While she proves her strength by demonstrating competence, most notably in the hunting scene where she outperforms male authority figures, she cannot convince the monarchy of her abilities. Her treatment as immature, despite her proven abilities, underscores how gendered and age-based assumptions work to undermine her agency. Franz tries to counteract her boredom by gifting her a horse, seemingly giving her a sense of freedom. Having a close look, the horse is meant to pacify Sisi and redirect her rebellious energy without addressing its cause. Thus, the gift becomes a tool of containment, wrapped in affection. Through Butler's (2004, 40-41) lens, Franz uses the horse as a regulatory means to redirect Sisi's energy into horse riding, something more appropriate for female royals than politics. While it first seems to offer freedom, the gift performs containment as it does not allow Sisi's true self to emerge (Butler 1990, 23).

Theme 6: Elisabeth

Sisi's rejection of her nickname is a performative act against the diminutive and sweet attributes imposed on her.

“Elisabeth” is a recurring sign in the series. While her mother continues to refer to her as “Sisi”, the Empress continually rejects this name. The preference for “Elisabeth” can be read as an attempt to assert maturity and autonomy, distancing from the diminutive, childlike “Sisi,” which connotes sweetness and harmlessness. “Elisabeth”, by contrast, carries a sense of formality, authority, and personal boundaries. Her correction, however, is often delivered with a tone of defiance, suggesting not only a desire for respect but also a form of passive resistance.

These moments are frequently socially inappropriate, for instance, when interrupting or correcting her mother in front of the Emperor (Eyssen 2022, episode 1, -29:23).

Her refusal to accept the name “Sisi” becomes a symbolic gesture of identity formation, marking her struggle to break free from infantilisation and to be recognised as an individual with agency. It can be seen as a disruptive act against the natural disposition of the identity (Butler 1990, 81), i.e., being sweet and harmless, imposed on her, particularly by her mother. By rejecting the name, she resists these qualities and asserts a more formal and autonomous self. Being a subtle yet powerful change, this discursive refusal shapes her public identity. Aligning with Butler's (1993, x) her example about her nickname, Judy, names are not natural but a performative act regulated with cultural expectations of gender, class and age.

Theme 7: Gender and Maternity

While Sisi is reduced to her reproductive role by the monarchy, her acts disrupt gender roles and expose their constructed nature.

Table 23.

Hunting as a sign of power inversion

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Performativity and Gender
Hunting	The Tsar aims for a boar but misses several times, making the animal angry. Sisi steps in and kills it with a single shot.	Hunting is a masculine-coded activity and a space from which aristocratic women are excluded. By not only participating but outperforming the Tsar, Sisi inverts gendered power dynamics. Tsar fails to perform in public and fails to protect the woman. This act symbolizes a disruption of patriarchal expectations as it is not only humiliating the Tsar's masculinity but also challenging the narrative of female passivity tied to her reproductive role.	This is a performative rupture as Sisi refuses her passive female role and takes on an active man-dominated role. By excelling where a man fails, she exposes the fragility of masculinity and show that women are capable. This underscores that gendered power is performative and not inherent.

Figure 22.

Sisi shooting while hunting with the Tsar, by Eyssen (2022, episode 4, -15:22)



Throughout the season, Sisi is repeatedly reminded, primarily by Sophie, that her sole purpose as empress is to produce a male heir. Failure to succeed will result in her replacement. To ensure success, the monarchy imposes invasive rituals on her, such as being forced to drink raw eggs to boost fertility, a practice that visibly disgusts Sisi. This reflects the socially constructed nature of the role of empress by repeated acts and conversations (Butler 1990, 178). Despite the emphasis on male succession, Sophie's behaviour can be contradictory. Unlike the gender rules, she greatly influences Franz's political decision, illustrating that power dynamics and gender roles are contradictory. While Sophie is found to be the personification of the court rules, her political power reveals that the gender norms imposed on Sisi are constructed as Sophie herself disrupts them.

Moreover, being solely reduced to producing an heir, Sisi increasingly turns to cigarettes and alcohol to cope with her isolation and boredom. These disruptive performances, ironically harmful to fertility, highlight the absence of meaningful tasks for Sisi's curious and rebellious mind. Beyond reproductive expectations, the series subtly attributes a form of female intuition to Sisi, for example, by sensing Franz's dishonesty and emotional shifts, suggesting a deeper intelligence often dismissed. This sensitivity is a trait typically connected to women, underlining Butler's (1990, 174) claim that the gender is a culturally constructed concept.

The theme of gender culminates in the hunting scene where she saves herself and the Tsar after the man's failed attempts. Applying Butler's (2004, 10) way of defining gender, the

characteristics of strength, control, and authority as tightly connected to both masculinity and hunting in the cultural context of the European monarchies in the nineteenth century. Impersonating imperial masculinity, the Tsar fails, on the one hand, to perform in public, and on the other hand, to protect a woman. By contrast, Sisi not only intervenes but also succeeds, effectively saving the man. This reversal humiliates the Tsar and challenges the assumption that men are natural protectors and providers. Within the context of a narrative that repeatedly reduces Sisi to her reproductive function, this scene is of deep meaning. It shifts her from passive object to active subject, defying the notion that her worth lies solely in bearing an heir. This sign clearly illustrates that gender is constructed and culturally determined (Butler 1990, 42–43).

6. Comparative Discussion

This comparative discussion addresses Research Question 2 by examining how the portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness evolves across the examined film productions. Despite being based on the same historical figure, each version reimagines Sisi's rebellion in ways that reflect the gender norms, values, and ideological tensions of their respective production periods. Thus, the comparison starts with an outline of the overarching similarities and differences before delving into more detail by following the style of the individual film analysis and comparing different themes of Sisi's rebelliousness through representative signs.

6.1. Similarities

Despite variations in how Sisi's rebellion is portrayed, all three adaptations consistently construct her as a figure who resists the performative constraints of imperial norms. Her desire to rupture these normative expectations is visualised through recurring signs such as horse riding and impulsive behaviour. Across the adaptations, Sophie appears as her primary antagonist, embodying the disciplinary structures of the court that seek to regulate Sisi's identity and actions. A central site of conflict is motherhood, as each version frames it as a contested site between Sisi's personal agency and institutional appropriation of motherhood. Furthermore, Sisi is aligning herself with the common people. Through gestures of kindness, informal speech, and symbolic acts that defy class boundaries, she constantly rejects the hierarchical structures of the Viennese court.

Looking across the identified themes, fleeing and running in emerge as recurring signs of Sisi's rebellion. Fleeing, whether to Possenhofen (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:24:10) or from moments of constraint, e.g. when she learns that Franz should marry her sister (Marischka 1955-1957, 52:50), signals her refusal to perform the role expected of her. Similarly, her impulsive entries into formal or restricted spaces disrupt courtly norms and assert emotional authenticity. These both spatial and symbolic acts highlight her resistance to containment and silence. Across all cinematic portrayals, they express a persistent longing for autonomy and trace a pattern of embodied defiance that evolves alongside shifting cultural narratives of female agency.

6.2. Differences

The three adaptations differ notably in tone, scope, and performance of Sisi's rebellion. The 1950s trilogy constructs a romanticised fairy tale, shaped by post-war nostalgia for imperial stability. Sisi's defiance is depicted as soft and symbolic, carefully contained within idealised femininity and never threatening the existing order, affirming post-war ideals of orderly femininity and domesticated rebellion. In contrast, the 2009 miniseries displays Sisi's internal conflicts, portraying her rebellion as an active renegotiation of her imposed gendered role to assert agency within imperial constraints. It engages with the tension between tradition and modern femininity, exploring emotional agency within the strict court norms. *The Empress*, emerging in the wake of #MeToo, offers the most radical form of rebellion as it stages a confrontational, politically charged feminist narrative in which Sisi's acts of resistance openly challenge the legitimacy and structure of the imperial system.

This shift in the overall tone of rebellion directly shapes the performance of Sisi across all examined themes. While all themes are further elaborated in the following sections, most notably, Sisi's relationship to her body and her presence in politics evolved. In the 1950s, her body is a passive site of aesthetic admiration, i.e., idealised, uncontested, and aligned with normative standards of post-war femininity. The 2009 version introduces bodily self-discipline and internalised pressure to conform with the corset functioning as a mechanism for self-regulation. By 2022, the body becomes a site of political struggle, instrumentalised by the court to control Sisi, for instance, by tightening her corset. Similar to this changed her presence in politics from symbolic absence, i.e., red roses as a sign of Sisi's presence (Table 7), to a silent presence, i.e., standing Sisi (behind Franz) as a sign of political presence (Table 15), to overt and vocal defiance, i.e., the curtsy as a sign of solidarity (Table 18).

6.3. Evolution of Signs

6.3.1. Hunting

The sign of hunting reveals how Sisi's relationship to gender and power evolves. In the 1950s trilogy, the hunting scenes with Maximilian (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:35:20) and Franz (Marischka 1955-1957, 47:30), underscore Sisi's emotional sensitivity and quiet defiance as she deliberately makes noise to scare away the animal, disrupting the ritual without directly opposing it. While it is an act of rebellion, it is coded as feminine and charming, and despite her interference in a male-coded activity, it is non-threatening to the patriarchal order. In contrast, *The Empress* depicts hunting as a sign of direct confrontation and role reversal. By shooting the boar (Eyssen 2022, episode 4, -15:22), Sisi asserts dominance in a male-coded space and thus breaks traditional power structures. This act aligns with the series' broader feminist framing of bodily autonomy and competence. Hence, the sign of hunting shifts from symbolic interruption to open confrontation, transforming Sisi from a passive disruptor through subtle, gendered subversion to an active rewriter of power dynamics, openly challenging patriarchy.

6.3.2. Corset

The corset marks changes in cultural attitudes towards the female body and gendered expectations. While it is present in the 1950s films, it is not instrumentalised for Sisi's rebellion. Instead, it shows her compliance with imposed imperial femininity, affirming her as a decorative rather than a resisting character. In contrast, the 2009 portrayal repositions the corset as a site of self-discipline, consciously performing her role as empress for political interests. Compared to the 1950s, this reflects a shift in how femininity is mobilised, i.e., not as passive compliance, but as a strategic performance through which women navigate and negotiate power structures. Reaching the 2022 depiction, the meaning of the corset shifts away from a self-disciplinary tool towards an instrument of bodily oppression by the court. Sisi's breath is physically constricted by Sophie (Eyssen 2022, episode 5, -41:00), making the corset a symbol of control over her autonomy and the suppression of her real identity. Thus, the corset evolves from a symbol of aesthetic conformity, to a mechanism of self-regulated performance, to an instrument of institutional control, reflecting a broader societal shift from passive ideals of femininity to politicised expressions of embodied resistance.

6.3.3. Political Representation

Sisi's evolving political presence is symbolised through two key signs, i.e., the red roses and her physical stance behind Franz. In the 1950s trilogy, she leaves red roses (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:51:20), her favourite flowers, behind Franz's desk, making her absent in body but present in sentiment and showcasing her presence in the political space. This act conveys indirect political agency rather than overt participation. The 2009 adaptation reimagines this presence by Sisi now literally standing behind Franz during a political meeting (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 2, -20:40). Though not speaking, her presence unsettles the dynamic and disrupts gendered boundaries of political space. In contrast to earlier depictions where Sisi remains positioned behind Franz, the 2022 series brings her to the front. No longer being content with silently supporting her husband, she enters spaces of power not to stand behind Franz, but to stake her own claim. This evolution from floral symbolism to silent presence to direct assertion reflects a broader cultural shift from idealised feminine support of the husband to the recognition of female autonomy and independent agency beyond the male influence.

6.3.4. Interaction with common people

Sisi's interactions with common people, captured in symbolic moments like receiving flowers or giving shoes, trace evolving cultural narratives around social classes. In the 1950s trilogy, these encounters are marked by romanticised simplicity, reinforcing Sisi's authenticity while idealising the monarchy. Though breaching court protocol, her warmth toward local children aligns with post-war desires for a restorative national identity rooted in benevolent rule. The 2009 adaptation introduces greater emotional depth as her visits to orphanages and care for the wounded are framed as expressions of personal conviction. When a young girl offers flowers (Schwarzenberger 2009, episode 1, -1:10:35), Sisi becomes a revered, almost mythical figure, emotionally accessible, yet still positioned above. In contrast, the 2022 series reconfigures this dynamic. By giving her shoes to a barefoot factory girl (Eyssen 2022, episode 5, 26:52), Sisi rejects aristocratic distance and performs an act of material solidarity. Thus, this shift from symbolic admiration to embodied allyship mirrors modern expectations of female power as visible, accountable, and socially engaged.

6.3.5. Motherhood

Motherhood evolves significantly across the three adaptations, reflecting changing cultural attitudes toward female agency and reproductive control. In the 1950s trilogy, motherhood is framed as a romantic destiny intrinsically linked to Sisi's role as empress. When Sophie takes her child, Sisi escapes to Possenhofen in quiet protest but returns without altering the situation (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:24:10). Her pain is later captured in the window gaze, i.e., a visualisation of passive suffering that aligns with post-war ideals of obedient, self-sacrificing femininity. In the 2009 adaptation, the conflict over her child's education gains emotional and political complexity. Sisi's refusal to send her son to a military academy becomes an act of maternal resistance, challenging imperial authority and reframing motherhood as a contested site of power. Unlike in the earlier version, she actively defies the court until her wishes are respected. In *The Empress*, the conflict shifts from parenting to bodily control as Sisi's body is measured, her fertility scrutinised, and her identity reduced to reproductive function. Even before becoming a mother, her imposed role is defined by institutional expectations. This evolution from emotional longing to embodied resistance mirrors broader cultural shifts from post-war domestic ideals to modern feminist critiques of bodily self-determination.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter aims to summarise all the results of this thesis. First and foremost, fulfilling the aims and objectives is justified, followed by a conclusion on the most significant finding. Finally, this thesis concludes with recommendations for further research that emerged during the study.

7.1. Research Aim and Objective Fulfilment

This thesis aimed to analyse the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness to trace how it has evolved over the past seventy years in response to shifting societal contexts. Based on the analysis and discussion, the research revealed that Sisi's rebelliousness shifted from being portrayed as subtle, romanticised resistance within traditional gender roles to a more explicit, politically charged defiance of imperial authority, reflecting broader changes in societal attitudes toward gender, power, and female agency. The aim was fulfilled by accomplishing the objectives outlined in 1.1:

- I. The established variation of an inductive thematic analysis (as explained in section 4.1.1 and applied in Chapter 5) provides a holistic view on the portrayal of Sisi's

rebelliousness in each film, showcasing the performative ruptures of her imposed role as empress.

- II. Chapter 5 examined key signs of Sisi's rebelliousness by applying the established table for the semiotic analysis (Table 1). This revealed the denotational and connotational meaning of Sisi's acts and connected them to Butler's concepts of performativity and gender.
- III. Throughout the analysis in Chapter 5, the concepts of performativity and gender were applied to the findings, illustrating how Sisi's rejection of court rules and gender norms ruptures her imposed role as empress.
- IV. Chapter 6 comprehensively compares Sisi's rebellious character trait in the three examined films, revealing similarities and differences in the cinematic portrayals and connecting them to the changing societal values.
- V. This thesis provides a multi-layered analysis of the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness across seventy years (Chapters 5 and 6), contributing new insights into the evolving representation of female rebellion to the scholarly discourse on rebelliousness in film.

7.2. Conclusion

This thesis explored how the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness has evolved over the past seventy years, reflecting broader societal shifts. By carrying out a combination of thematic and semantic analysis and connecting it to the concepts of performativity and gender as established by Butler, the following conclusions can be made:

Firstly, in response to Research Question 1, this thesis revealed that Sisi's rebelliousness is portrayed through performances that rupture the performative expectations imposed on her as empress. These ruptures include physical and symbolic acts of defiance, such as during the hunting scenes (Marischka 1955-1957, 47:30; Eyssen 2022, episode 4, -15:22), and her resistance to imperial authority, for instance, by escaping to Possenhofen (Marischka 1955-1957, 2:24:10). The analysis found that Sisi's rebellion is visualised through a range of signs, for example, the bird cage (Table 3), that gain more profound meaning when examining their cultural connotation and looking at them through the lens of performativity and gender.

Secondly, addressing Research Question 2, this thesis discovered an evolution from a charming resistance in the 1950s portrayal to an overt and politically engaged form of rebellion in the

2022 series. It can be concluded that the 1950s trilogy presents Sisi as a softly rebellious figure as her actions are vastly femininely coded and do not threaten aristocratic boundaries, which can be traced back to the desire for nostalgic escapism, national unity, and a return to stable domestic ideals in post-war Austria. In contrast, the 2009 miniseries portrays Sisi with awareness of the constraints of her role, showing a more overt resistance and being influenced by a renewed valorisation of women's agency within private and familial spheres in the 2000s. *The Empress* pushes this further, showcasing Sisi as a figure of overt political agency and feminist critique. This portrayal is shaped by a post-#MeToo movement that reflects contemporary critiques of patriarchal structures and the reclamation of female voices.

Moreover, this thesis demonstrates that the cinematic portrayal of Sisi's rebelliousness is not a fixed trait, but a dynamic construction shaped by the societal values and gender norms prevailing at the time of each adaptation's production. Rather than functioning as a static historical figure, Sisi is continually reimagined to reflect contemporary conceptions of femininity, agency, and resistance, serving as a cultural lens through which norms are illustrated, reinforced, or critically interrogated. This observation resonates strongly with performativity as elaborated in section 4.1, which asserts that identity is not a fixed concept but is constituted through the repeated performance of socially regulated acts. In this context, Sisi's rebellion on screen emerges not as a singular act but as a series of performative ruptures, i.e., moments that challenge the repetitive norms embedded in her imposed role as empress. Although the expectations imposed on Sisi remain historically grounded and largely stable across the analysed cinematic adaptations, the form of her rebellion is reconfigured in relation to the societal discourse dominant at the time of each film's production. This illustrates the role of cinema as a site where historical figures are continually reinterpreted, adapting to the social norms of their cultural moment.

To sum up, the findings of this thesis demonstrate how Sisi's rebelliousness is portrayed in three chosen film productions and how her rebellion evolved over the past seventy years. Thus, the research questions in 1.2 are answered. Moreover, it contributes a methodological framework for analysing rebellion in film as presented in 4.1.1. Ultimately, this thesis enriches the scholarly discourse of rebellion in film, underscoring the importance of viewing film not merely as entertainment but as a cultural medium that reflects, constructs, and contests societal norms. Sisi in film offers more than a window into the imperial past. She serves as a mirror reflecting society's shifting understanding of what it means for a woman to rebel. This tension

between personal desire and political obligation is captured poignantly in the 1950s trilogy, when Sisi sighs: “*Ach Franz, es wär alles so schön, wenn du kein Kaiser wärst!*” (Oh Franz, everything would be so beautiful if you weren’t the Emperor!) (Marischka 1955-1957, 1:32:40)

7.3. Recommendations

Based on the insights gained through this thesis, the following recommendations for expanding its scope arise:

- Further studies could explore the audience’s reception of the selected films, investigating how different viewers interpret Sisi’s rebelliousness across generations and cultural contexts.
- A comparative analysis of another historical female figure, frequently reimaged in film, for instance, Marie Antoinette, could be established, proving a broader and more generalisable insight into the depiction of gendered rebellion in film.
- While this study only explores the cinematic portrayal, adding other media, such as literature and paintings, to the analysis would provide a more holistic view of Sisi’s rebelliousness across different forms of cultural display.
- During the research process, it was noted that the relationships and power dynamics between Sisi and other characters, particularly Franz, Sophie, Ludovika, and Maximilian, change across adaptations. While this is outside the scope of this thesis, further investigation could investigate how these evolutions contribute to or constrain Sisi’s rebelliousness.

Bibliography

- Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*. Translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2022. eBook.
- Butler, Judith. "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism.'" In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, 3–21. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Cambridge University Press & Assessment. "Connotation." *Cambridge Dictionary*. 2025a. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/connotation>.
- Cambridge University Press & Assessment. "Denotation." *Cambridge Dictionary*. 2025b. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/denotation>.
- Carter, Erica. "Sissi the Terrible: Melodrama, Victimhood, and Imperial Nostalgia in the *Sissi* Trilogy." In *Screening War: Perspectives on German Suffering*, edited by Paul Cooke and Marc Silberman, 81–100. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010.
- Chavannes-Mazel, C. A. "Dove. Visual Arts." In *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Vol. 6, *Dabbesheth–Dreams and Dream Interpretation*, edited by H. J. Klauck, V. Leppin, B. McGinn, H. Spieckermann, B. D. Walfish, and E. J. Ziolkowski, 1127–29. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1697357/121300_Chavannes_dove_ebr_.pdf.
- Coulthard, Lisa. "Killing Bill: Rethinking Feminism and Film Violence." In *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Pop Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 153–75. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Day, Sara K., Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz. "Introduction: From 'New Woman' to 'Future Girl': Examining the Girl Hero in Young Adult Dystopian Literature." In *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*, edited by Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz, 1–14. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014.
- Eyssen, Katharina, dir. *The Empress: Season 1*. Netflix, 2022.
- Förster, Annette. *Women in Silent Cinema: Histories of Fame and Fate*. Amsterdam:

- Amsterdam University Press, 2017.
- Green-Barteet, Miranda A. “‘I’m Beginning to Know Who I Am’: The Rebellious Subjectivities of Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior.” In *Female Rebellion in Young Adult Dystopian Fiction*, edited by Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet, and Amy L. Montz, 33–49. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2014.
- Gruber Florek, Olivia. *The Celebrity Monarch: Empress Elisabeth and the Modern Female Portrait*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2023.
- Hametz, Maura E., and Heidi Schlipphacke. “Introduction: ‘Sissi’: The Convergence of Memory and Myth.” In *Sissi’s World: The Empress Elisabeth in Memory and Myth*, edited by Maura E. Hametz and Heidi Schlipphacke, 1–16. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Hofstadler, Christina. “Sisi-Images im Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm des 20. Jahrhunderts und ihre geschichtswissenschaftliche Reflexion.” Diplomarbeit, Universität Wien, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.25365/thesis.29982>.
- Hussein, Basel Al-Sheikh. “The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis Today.” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 2, no. 3 (2012): 642–46. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.3.642-646>.
- Kohler, Alfred. “‘Tu Felix Austria Nube ...’: Vom Klischee zur Neubewertung dynastischer Politik in der neueren Geschichte Europas.” *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 21, no. 4 (1994): 461–82.
- Lugmayr, Saskia. “Die ‘Sissi’-Trilogie von Ernst Marischka.” Diplomarbeit, Universität Wien, 2008.
- Marischka, Ernst, dir. *Sissi Trilogy*. Erma-Film, 1955–1957. YouTube video, posted by RX Media Garden, December 26, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aICieh_xUfl.
- McHugh, Kathleen. “Genre as Feminist Platform: Diagnosis, Anger, and Serial TV.” *Television & New Media* 24, no. 5 (2023): 535–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764231171067>
- McRobbie, Angela. “Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime.” In *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Pop Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 27–39. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Metz, Christian. *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Müller, Sabine. “‘Finally a Human Being in This Palace’: How ‘Sissi’ Deals with the Past.” *New Readings*, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.18573/newreadings.63>.

- Munkwitz, Erica. "The Sidesaddle: The Unlikely Emblem of Equestrian Empowerment." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 39, no. 1 (2022): 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2021.2013206>.
- Nighswander, Lena. "Seeing Sisi: Contemporary Portrayals of Empress Elisabeth of Austria on Page and Screen." Master's thesis, Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, 2024.
- Projansky, Sarah. "Mass Magazine Cover Girls: Some Reflections on Postfeminist Girls and Postfeminism's Daughters." In *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Pop Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 40–72. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Raebel, Anastasia Marie. "Sisi." Honors thesis, Butler University, 2024.
- Réti, Zsófia O. "Film Genres after #MeToo." *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS)* 29, no. 1 (2023): 189–206. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27231683>.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959.
- Schwarzenberger, Xaver, dir. *Sisi*. ORF/ZDF, 2009. Streaming on Disney+.
- Tasker, Yvonne. *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Taylor, A. J. P. *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918*. New York: Penguin Books, 1948. eBook.
- Taylor, Jessica, and Laura Glitsos. "'Having It Both Ways': Containing the Champions of Feminism in Female-Led Origin and Solo Superhero Films." *Feminist Media Studies* 23, no. 2 (2023): 656–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1986096>.
- Thiery, Fritz, dir. *Prinzessin Sissy*. Vienna: Donau-Filmproduktion, 1938. YouTube video, posted by Dewi Bakkers, December 26, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbnDo2LhL-E>.
- TV Spielfilm. "'Sissi' im TV: Alle Sendetermine an Weihnachten 2024." *TV Spielfilm*, December 24, 2024. <https://www.tvspielfilm.de/tv-tipps/feiertagsprogramm/fernsehtipp/sissi-im-tv-alle-sendetermine-an-weihnachten,9221679,ApplicationArticle.html>.
- Vance, Marguerite. *Fight for the Wilding*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1957.
- Wearing, Sandie. "Subjects of Rejuvenation: Aging in Postfeminist Culture." In *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Pop Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 277–310. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.

3:01	Ludovika: "Die Sisi ist ausgeritten." Sisi missed breakfast
5:50	Sisi auf den wilden Pferd; Ludoviks: "Sisi auf dem wilden Pferd." Max: "Spring über die Rosen." "Ein Prachtmädchen." → wildes Pferd; gehorcht dem Vater
7:00	Sisi cared about birds in cage and bambi → Vogelkäfig (wie später)
9:30	Sisi: "Mami, ich darf mit Papi auf die Jagd gehen." Ludovika: "Aber deshalb musst du doch nicht so schreien." Nene will nicht mitgehen, hat keine Zeit. → die Jagd
14:50	Sisi with Max on the hunt. Sisi: "Weißt du, dass ich sehr glücklich bin, dass ich einen solchen Vater habe?"
18:00	Sisi: "Ich darf mit nach Ischl?" very excited to be able to come to Ischl → in contrast to what was shown in 2009
19:40	Sisi trinkt die Pferde und macht sich nass; Ludovika: "Am liebsten würde ich dich wieder nachhause schicken."
21:00	Sisi: "Servus, Karl Ludwig." Ludovika: "Was ist denn dieser Gruß?" → Servus
23:00	Sisi: "Wir gehen auf einen Ball?" Ludovika: "Aber du doch nicht." → Sisi würde gerne teilnehmen, wird aber nicht einladen.
24:20	Sisi macht Unordnung und Ludovika sperrt sie ein. Sisi bricht aus und will Fischen gehen.
31:00	Sisi beim Angeln; Fängt den Kaiser; Kaiser geht mit Sisi spazieren
33:04	Franz: "Hätten Sie Lust mit mir auf den Hirschgang zu gehen?" Sisi: "JA, gerne." → Jagd
35:20	Sisi und Franz in der Natur; Jagdkleidung
44:00	Sisi and Franz meet again on the hunt; Kleidung? Gehört sich das Jagen für Frauen?
47:30	Sisi: "Ich schau mit die Tiere Lieber an." Niest, damit Franz den Hirschen nicht erschießen kann.
49:00	Sisi mit Zitter (Franz hinter ihr)
49:50	Sisi: "Meine Lieblingsbeschäftigung ist Reiten und meine Lieblingsblumen sind rote Rosen." Franz: "Meine auch."
51:25	Sisi: "Wie kann man sich denn mit jemandem verloben, den man gar nicht liebt?" Franz: "Aus Staatsinteressen, aus dynastischen Gründen."
52:40	Sisi rennt weg, nachdem sie erfährt, dass Franz Nene heiraten soll.
54:20	Sisi: "Nein Mami, ich will nicht hingehen (zu Souffle)" Weil sie Franz nicht treffen will
57:09	Franz: "Ich freue mich dich wieder zu sehen, Lisl von Possenhofen."
59:30	Karl Ludwig: "Welche sind deine Lieblingsblumen?" Sisi: "rote Rosen."
1:03:00	Sisi sagt, sie fühlt sich nicht wohl beim Tanzen.
1:04:30	Sisi: "Nein, nie. Weil ich Nene nicht den Mann stehen will." Nach dem Franz ihr Komplemente macht. "Bitte sprich nicht weiter, sonst vergesse ich jede Etikette und laufe weg." Franz: "und wenn Nene nicht wäre?" Sisi: "Sie ist aber und sie liebt dich."
1:07:30	Sophie: "Du kannst doch nicht diesen Fratz heiraten!" Franz stellt Sophie und Sisi vor vollendete Tatsachen
1:09:21	Diener zu Karl Ludwig: "Majestät hat alle roten Rosen für sich selbst reserviert." → Rote Rosen
1:10:10	Sophie munter Sisi: "Ich bitte dich mich zu siezen."

1:11:54	Sophie: “ich habe nichts gehen das Reiten, weil es die Figur erhält, aber alles mit Maß und Ziel.” Sisi: “Ich will nicht Kaiserin werden.” “Ich wil frei leben ohne Zwang.” “Die Sprache, die mir mein Vater gelehrt hat, der die Freiheit liebt.”; Sisi hatte nichts zu sagen
1:13:25	Franz bittet mit roten Rosen Sisi um den Cottion. → Rote Rosen
1:16:32	Sisi: “Warum hast du mich vor vollendete Tatsachen gestellt?” Franz: “Weil ich gewusst habe, dass du nie Ja gesagt hättest.”
1:18:53	Ludowika und Sisi kümmern sich um ihre Haare;
1:21:10	Max freut sich über Luduvikas Rebellion
1:22:12	Sisi lässt Reh frei (Xaverl); und die Vögel; Sisi: “Ich möchte wenigstens den Tieren ihre Freiheit geben, wenn ich sie aufgeben muss.” → Vogelkäfig
1:24:00	Sisi: “Ich hab solche Angst vor Sophie und dem Hofzeremoniell.” Max: “Dann soll der Franz mit dir in den Wald gehen.” → Wald
1:29:04	Sisi wandert im Morgenmantel, Schlafrock, offenen Haar, durch das Schloss; Sophie: “Kannst du nicht schlafen?” Sisi: “Aber nein, ich suche die Tiere.” “Franz Joseph hat mir erzählt, dass ihr einen großen Tierpark in Schönbrunn habt?
1:30:13	Sophie: “Bereite dich auf die Beichte vor.” Sisi: “Es war unnötig mich daran zu erinnern.” “Ich spreche auch bereits die Sprachen, die Sie für so wichtig hielten.”
1:31:07	Sisi entzieht der Fürstin ihre Hand; Sophie: “Das auch noch.” Sisi: “Weil es mir peinlich ist, wenn eine ältere Frau meine Hand küsst.” Franz: “Hat nichts mit dem Alter zu tun” “Nach der Trauung bist du die erste Frau in meinem Reich. Nur meine Mutter hat das Recht dir die Stirn zu küssen (1:32:23)
1:32:40	Sisi küsst Franz; “Ach Franz, es wäre alles so schön, wenn du kein Kaiser wärst.”
2 nd part	
1:42:20	Gräfin Esterhazi regt sich über Vogelkäfig auf;
1:44:52	Gräfin: “Ungarisch” Sisi: “Diese Stunde liebe ich, ich liebe sowieso alles, was ungarisch ist.” Gräfin hasst Ungarn, weil sie dort Mann verloren hat. → Ungarn
1:45:30	Sisi soll 19 Seiten Hofzeremoniell auswendig lernen; Sisi: “Ich werde mich bemühen diesen Unsinn auswendig zu lernen.”
1:47:28	Sisi: “Ich weiß nicht wieso, aber ich fühle mich zu dem ungarischen Land, obwohl ich es gar nicht kenne, so hingezogen, wie zu keinem anderen.” → Ungarn
1:48:28	Sophie weiß, dass Sisi Franz zur Amnestie von Ungarn beeinflusst hat.
1:49:11	Gedicht aus Sisi’s Tagebuch: über Heimweh
1:51:20	Stellt rote Rosen hinter den Schreibtisch von Franz → Rote Rosen
1:51:40	Sisi sagt, dass sie sich einsam fühlt und glücklich ist, wenn Franz da ist. Aber sonst wartet sie nur auf ihn. → Heimweh
1:57:01	Sophie möchte wissen, ob Sisi das Hofzeremeoniell studiert. Sisi ist aber ausgeritten. (1:57:30) Sisi auf dem Pferd im Prater
1:58:44	Sisi war auf dem Kohlmarkt beim Einkaufen unter dem Volk.
2:01:26	Sophie: “Was ist denn das?” Sisi: “A Münchner Bier und a Schweinshaxen.” → Sisi mit Bierkrug “Na also, die Mehrheit ist für

	Bier.” Macht “Ahh” sound. Sophie: “ich hoffe nicht, dass du die wiener Hofburg in ein wiener Hofbräuhaus verwandeln wirst.”
2:03:44	Max auf Brief von Sisi: “Wie sie’s vorausgesehen hat. Sie sitzt im goldenen Käfig” → Vogelkäfig
2:06:00	Läd im Gespräch mit Andrassy den Ungarn zum nächsten Hofball ein → Ungarn
2:07:24	Sophie: “ich bin empört, dass Elisabeth unsere Feinde eingeladen hat.” → Ungarn “Ein Ungarn hat zuvor Dolch gegen Franz erhoben.” Sophie möchte Andrassy nicht vorgestellt haben → Ungarn möchten verlassen den Ball (2:09:20)
2:10:13	Sisi: “Franz, bitte verzeih, wenn ich jetzt etwas tue, das gegen das Spanische Hofzeremoniell verstößt” Ich tue es für dich und dein Land → “Damenwahl”; Sisi tanzt mit Andrassy Franz: “Ich kenne zwar noch nicht die Gründe, aber es ist selbstverständlich, dass ich mit allem, was sie tut, identifiziere.” Sophie nicht einverstanden
2:15:30	Sisi rennt im Morgenmantel mit offenem Haar zu Franz in die Audience, um Franz von der Schwangerschaft zu erzählen. Beide freuen sich sehr.
2:18:00	Sisi: “Ist es ein Bub?” Franz: “Eine Prinzessin. Ich bin sehr sehr glücklich.” Sisi: “Wie glücklich du erst wärst, wenn es ein Kronprinz wäre.” → Tronfolger; Sophie hat “befürchtet”, dass es ein Mädchen wird.
2:21:20	Sisi besucht das Kinderheim → Kinderliebe
2:22:40	Sisi: “Wo findet man dich? An deinem Schreibtisch.” → Schreibtisch; Eifersucht gegenüber Schreibtisch
2:23:40	Die Wiege der Prinzessing wurde verlegt; Sophie hat die Erziehung des Kindes übernommen; Sisi: “Ich kann selbst für mein Kind sorgen.” “Ich lasse mir mein Kind nicht wegnehmen.” Sisi rennt zu Sophie.--> Kindererziehung; Franz stellt sich auf die Seite Sophies → Sisi flüchtet nach Possenhofen; erzählt Eltern nichts davon
2:27:09	Sophie: “Ich habe dich immer gewarnt von dieser Heimat.” Franz: “Vielleicht haben wir einen Fehler gemacht. Ich bin sehr glücklich mit Sisi verheiratet.”
2:31:26	Ludovika: “Jetzt zieh dir dein Dirndl an. Ich möchte dich so sehen, wie du rumgelaufen bist, bevor du Kaiserin von Österreich warst.” → Dirndl
2:33:00	Alle Vögel sind wieder zurückgekommen. Max: “Ich kann mir schon denken, dass unser Wald und die Berge dir fehlen.”
2:35:20	Sisi auf Jagd mit Max; Vertreibt den Auerhahn, damit er nicht erschossen werden kann, → Tierliebe; Jagd für die Natur;
2:36:40	Sisi: “Ich bin weggelaufen, Papi. Die Tante Sophie hat mich gequält. Zuletzt hat sie mir mein Kind weggenommen.” Max: “Ich stehe zu dir, aber du darfst dein Land nicht verlassen.”
2:40:42	Ludovika: “Hier geht es nicht um das Ansehen des Kaiserlichen Hauses. Hier geht es lediglich darum, dass man einer Mutter ihr Kind weggenommen hat. Ich und jeder andere Frau hätte das selber getan.”
2:41:03	Sisi und Franz sagen beide, sie wollen einander Vorwürfe machen, aber wenn sie sich dann sehen, küssen sie sich und versöhnen sich und entschuldigen sich.

2:43:27	Sisi reitet den Berg hoch: “Warum muss ich denn den Berg hoch reiten?” Franz:” Weil’s für dich zu anstrengend ist?” Sisi:”Zu anstrengend. Was glaubst du, was wir mit unserem Papili schon für Bergtouren gemacht haben!” → Bergsteigen; Sisi klettert “wei eine Gams” den Berg zu Gipfelkreuz hoch.
2:48:31	Sisi und Franz in der Schutzhütte. Sisi war als Kind oft dort. Franz: “Ich habe schon gehört, dass in dir eine kleine perfekte Hausfrau steckt.” → Schutzhütte; verabschiedung “pfüati”; Sisi:”Ich freue mich, dass du auf diese Idee gekommen bist.”
2:51:00	Sisi: “Du kein Kaiser und ich keine Kaiserin.” Franz:”Sondern nur eine perfekte Hausfrau.” Sisi rennt zurück und fängt an Schuhe zu putzen.
2:54:30	Franz hat mit seiner Mutter geredet, aber ohne Erfolg. Franz: “Sie hat gedroht das Schloss zu verlassen, ehe sie die Erziehung des Kindes jemand anderem überlässt.” Sisi: “Sie soll bleiben, aber ich gehe für immer.” “Für dürfen anscheinend nicht lange glücklich sein, das ist unser Schicksal.”
2:57:30	Franz: “Ich brauch dich, Sisi. Ich brauche deine Hilfe. Ich brauche deinen Rat. Ohne dich wäre eine Versöhnung mit Ungarn nie geschehen.” Sisi: “Du siehst immer die Kaiserin in mir und nicht die Mutter unseres Kindes.” Franz:” Nein, Sisi, aber ich muss dich an Dinge erinnern, die für unser Land wichtig ist.”
2:58:20	Sisi: “Rechne nicht mit meinem Erscheinen (beim Ungarischen Empfang).” Franz: “Aber das ist doch ausgeschlossen, du weißt, was dieser Empfang für uns bedeutet.” Sisi: “Für mich bedeutet er nichts.” Franz: “Du bist Kaiserin von Österreich, vergiss da nicht.” Sisi: “Lebewohl, Franz” → Liebe zu ihrem Kind / Mutterliebe; Sisi will abreisen
3:03:00	Andrassy: “Wir sind heute nicht zum Kaiser sondern zur zukünftigen Königin gekommen.” Bitte Sisi am Empfang teilzunehmen.
3:03:30	Sisi zu Ludovika: “Was soll ich tun?” Ludovika: “Du darfst deinen Mann jetzt nicht im Stich lassen. Besonders weil du weißt, dass er dich liebt. Deshalb musst du stark sein und dich selber überwinden.” Sisi gehorcht → Franz: “Ich bin glücklich, dass du gekommen bist und ich kann dir auch eine Freude bereite. Mama hat eingesehen, dass das Kind zu seiner Mutter gehört.” → Kindererziehung
3:16:00	Sisi auf deutsch und ungarisch zum Ungarischen Volk über Liebe zu ihm.
3 rd part	
3:19:24	Sisi reitet durch Ungarn mit Graf Andrassy
3:21:06	Sisi: “Ich kann Ihnenn gar nicht sagen, wie glücklich ich in Ungarn bin. Hier fühle ich mit endlich wieder so frei wie in Possenhofen. In Österreich wäre es unmöglich für mich, so durch den Wald zu rennen.” → Freiheit; Ungarn
3:24:40	Sisi kommt einer Frau zur Hilfe, die von ihrem Mann geschlagen wird. Die Frau schüttet sie mit Wasser an. Der Mann brügelt weiter. Sisi: “Wenn sie ihren Mann so liebt, dass sie ihn nach dieser Brügelei noch in Schutz nimmt, dann soll er sie ruhig weiter brügeln.” → Häusliche Gewalt / Bügel gegen Frau

3:27:20	Sisi verbringt Wochen alleine in Ungarn mit ihrem Kind. Sophie zu Franz: “Mir sind Briefe zugekommen, dass dieser Graf Andarssy in Sisi verliebt ist.” Franz: “Ich liebe Sisi und sie hat mein vollstes Vertrauen.”
3:32:47	Max: “Mir ist doch egal, ob du eine Bürgerliche heiratest. Nur an Sisi hottest du denken können.” Ludwig (Bruder): “Sisi ist doch genau so wie du.”
3:36:00	Sisi spielt Café mit ihrer Tochter Sophie
3:39:00	Haare werden gekämmt
3:42:56	Handkuss als Geste der Freundschaft; Graf Battyani, der die K&K verachtet, weil sie seinen Vater umgebracht haben.
3:48:57	Graf Batthyani: “Die Gegensätze unserer Länder sind unüberbrückbar.” Sisi: “In meinen Augen gibt es keine unüberbrückbaren Gesetze.” Baryak: “Ich liebe mein Land.” Sisi: “Ich liebe es auch und der Kaiser will alles tun, um ihrem Land den wahren Frieden zu geben.” → Sisi als Diplomatin in Ungarn; Baryak: “Seit ich eure Majestät kenne, glaube ich, dass ich Vertrauen haben kann.” “Endlich ein Mensch in diesem Kaiserhaus.”
3:52:40	Graf Andrassy gesteht Sisi seine Liebe. Sisi: “Sie waren mein einziger Freund. Ich wäre unglücklich, wenn ich Sie als Freund und Ratgeber verlieren würde.” Andrassy: “Ich kann das nicht (vergessen). Ich weiß keinen Ausweg.” → Sisi verlässt Ungarn
3:58:45	Franz wollte nach Gödele um Sisi zu holen, weil er sie vermisst. Sisi war bereits auf dem Heimweg. Sie treffen sich zufällig in einem Gasthaus. Inszenierung als destiny; die Liebe zwischen beiden;
4:01:10	Franz zu Sisi: “Lass mich nicht mehr alleine. Bleib bei mir.” Sisi: “Ich hab auch eine Bitte an dich. Hab mehr Zeit für mich.”
4:04:50	Sisi pflügt Blumen mit Franz. Fällt in seine Arme, mit Stechen in der Brust.
04:11:10	Sophie schickt die Prinzessin weg von Sisi, entgegen des Wunsches Sisi's
04:14:25	Sisi erfährt durch Lauschen, dass sie krank ist und keinen Kuss an Franz und ihre Tochter geben kann. Franz: “Sie lebt und wird mit Gottes Hilfe weiter leben. Wenn sie ablebt, werde ich nie wieder heiraten.” “Das einzige Glück in meinem Leben war Sisi”
4:18:50	Franz: “Wie lange hast du in der Tür gestanden?” Sisi: “Grade lange genug um zu hören, was ich vielleicht hören musste.” “Mach dir keine Sorgen Franz, ich werde wieder gesund. Und wenn Gott will, auch eine Tronfolger gebären.” Sie sagt, dass sie für Franz alles macht, was die Ärzte sagen, um ihn nicht unglücklich zu machen.
4:23:12	Sisi auf Madeira: „Ich glaube nicht mehr an Prophezeiungen, Gräfin.“ „War ich jemals glücklich.“ „Ich war oft glücklich, aber dann kommt auch der Schatten.“
4:25:23	Ludovika, wir bewegen uns, schauen uns die ganze Insel an, und dann vergisst du, dass du krank bist. So machen das die Bürgerfrauen auch, die müssen arbeiten, wenn sie krank sind und vergessen dann die Krankheit.
4:29:10	Sisi: “Ich möchte am liebsten eine lange Seereise machen.” Ludovika: “Das hast du von deinem Vater” “Weißt du, dass du seit Wochen nicht über deine Krankheit gesprochen hast.”

4:37:35	Arzt: “Im Gegenteil. Das ist ein Mirakel. Majestät sind vollständig gesund!”
4:38:48	Sisi zu Ludovika: “Mami, ich bin gesund!”
4:40:10	General findet, das seine Wiedervereinigung von Franz und Sisi in Lombardo-Venezien am besten wäre, da dort politische Instabilitäten herrschen und der Charm Sisi’s Völker vereinigen kann.
4:44:50	Das Mailänder Theater ist voller Diener, da sich gegen die Österreichische Hymne stellen. Mailänder Adel will sich damit gegen Österreich stellen. 4:47:20 Sisi beginnt zu klatschen und der Kaiser folgt; Franz schaut Sisi an und schüttelt den Kopf; Auch der Empfang wird abgehalten, entgegen der Erwartungen des Adels
4:52:30	Sisi und Franz auf dem Schiff durch Venedig. Die Straßen sind leer. Niemand jubelt;
4:53:43	Sisi: “Sie kennen deinen Namen nur von Todesurteilen.” Franz: “Du hast Recht, sie kennen nur die Fehler, die von anderen begangen wurde.” Franz sagt, er würde Sisi gern den Gang zur Kirche ersparen. Sisi: “Der Gang nach Madeira war schmerzlicher, aber ich bin ihn gerne gegangen für dich.” Franz: “Was für eine Frau hat mir der Himmel geschenkt.”
4:56:20	Gang zur Kirche; Niemand jubelt. 4:57:05 Prinzessin Sophie taucht auch; Sisi rennt zu ihr und umarmt sie. Die Menschen jubeln: “E viva la Mama.” → Mutterliebe steckt die Menschen an; gewinnt damit Respekt des Volkes

Note: The time stamps are based on the available YouTube video, combining all three parts of the trilogy. Spelling and grammar mistakes might occur.

Appendix 2 – Sissi Trilogy – Thematic Analysis

Theme	Scene	Sign
Freedom	5:50 Sisi rides on a “wild horse” (Ludovika) and jumps over roses as requested by Max who calls her “Prachtmädchen”	Wild horse
	7:00 Sisi cares about her birds in the cage in Possenhofen and fawn	Bird cage
	24:20 Sisi gets locked in after misbehaving but breaks out	Locked in
	49:50 Sisi states horseback riding as favourite hobby	Horseback riding
	1:11:54 Sisi telling Sophie she wants to live freely and without constraints	Constraints
	1:22:12 Sisi releases the birds and fawn in Possenhofen, saying that they should have freedom if she cannot	Bird cage
	1:42:20 Esterhazy complaining about the bird cage	Bird cage
	2:03:44 Max realising by letter that Sisi feels like in a golden cage	Golden Cage
	2:33:00 Sisi sees that all the birds she freed came back	Birds
	3:21:06 Compares Hungary to Possenhofen; where she feels free, unlike in Austria	Possenhofen / Hungary
Inappropriate behaviour	19:40 Sisi gives water to the horse despite this being the job of the servants	Horse
	1:10:10 Sophie tells Sisi to address her formally, despite Sophie being her aunt	“Sie”
	1:31:07 Sisi withdraws her hand when countess tries to kiss as she feels embarrassed due to age; Franz telling her that she is the first woman, so everyone should kiss her hand	Hand kiss
	1:45:30 Sisi calls the 19 pages of court rules to be studied by heart nonsense	Court rules
	1:57:01 Instead of learning the court rules, Sisi is riding through the park	Horse (getting away from monarchic rules)
	2:15:30 Sisi interrupts Franz’s meeting in morning gown to tell him about pregnancy	Running in (connected to grounded self)
	1:07:30 Sophie calls Sisi “Fratz” (negative word for uneducated child)	Fratz

Traditional and grounded self	49:00 Sisi plays the zither	Zither
	21:00 Greats Karl Ludwig with “Servus”	Servus
	2:01:26 Franz holds a Bavarian dinner to help Sisi with homesickness	Beer jug

	2:31:26 Back in Possenhofen, Ludovika tells Sisi to wear a dirndl to look like before	Dirndl
	2:48:31 in the hut, Franz mentions that he heard Sisi was a perfect little housewife	Housewife
	3:03:30 Ludovika tells Sisi to stand with her husband as he loves her, that she has to be strong and convince herself; Franz is happy as he can also tell her that Sophie changed her mind about the child	Marital duty
	3:24:40 Sisi helps a woman who gets beaten by her husband, the woman throws water on her, she tells Andrassy that the woman should keep beating her if she still loves him so much after this	Domestic abuse
	4:18:50 Sisi states to want to get healthy for Franz (not herself)	Marital duty
	49:50 Sisi states red roses as favourite flowers	Red roses
	59:30 Sisi tells Karl Ludwig that red roses are her favourite flowers	Red roses
	1:09:21 Karl Ludwig gets told that Franz took all red roses	Red roses
	1:13:25 Franz asks Sisi for the cotillion with red roses	Red roses
	1:51:20 Sisi places red roses behind Franz's desk	Red roses (representing her)
	1:51:40 Sisi claims to be lonely but happy when Franz is there and otherwise just waiting for him	Loneliness (waiting for Franz)
	2:22:40 Sisi states "jealousy" towards Franz's desk as he's working so much	Desk
	4:01:10 Franz asking Sisi to not let him alone; Sisi asking for more time	Time with Franz

Fleeing	52:40 Sisi runs away from Franz when she realises that he should marry Nene	Running away
	1:04:30 in reacting to Franz's compliments threatens Sisi to forget all rules and run away	Running away
	2:24:10 Franz agrees with Sophies choice of caring for the baby, causing Sisi to flee to Possenhofen; still, Franz is questioning the choice	Possenhofen
	2:54:30 Franz tried to talk to Sophie about child, but she threatened to leave the castle; Sisi says either her or Sophie leave;	Sisi or Sophie
	3:52:40 Flees Hungry after Andrassy telling her his love	Fleeing Hungary

Nature	1:24:00 Sisi stating her fear of the court and Max answering that Franz should bring her to the forest to calm down.	Forest
	1:29:04 Sisi in morning gown wondering around the castle to find the animals	Animals
	2:43:27 Sisi doesn't want to ride up the mountain despite Franz thinking it was too exhausting for her; She proves her capabilities by climbing to the cross	Chamois
	3:01 Sisi misses breakfast as she went horseback riding	Horse
	9:30 Sisi asks Ludiovika if she can go on a hunt, Helene is not interested	Hunting
	33:04 After having "caught" Franz, he invites her for a hunt.	Fishing rod
	35:20 Sisi and Franz in hunting wear	Hunting wear
	47:30 Sisi prefers to watch the animals and sneezes to avoid Franz shooting a deer	Animal love (Sisi likes going hunting, but she doesn't want to kill a feminine)
	2:35:20 Hunting with Max, Sisi makes to capercaillie run off as she doesn't want it to be shot	Animal love

Political influence	1:48:28 Sisi influence Franz towards amnesty for Hungary	Amnesty
	2:07:24 Despite the court being hostile towards Hungary after assassination attempt, Sisi invited them to Ball but Sophie refuses to welcome Andrassy	Ball
	2:10:13 to avoid the Hungarians leaving, Sisi breaks rules by calling "lady's choice" and dancing with Andrassy; Franz supports	Lady's Choice
	2:52:30 Franz states that he needs Sisi and her advice, that she caused the reconciliation with Hungary; Sisi claims that Franz sees her only as Empress, not as mother; Franz denies but still puts the empire's well first	Imperial duty
	3:16:00 Sisi speaks about love to Hungarian people in Hungarian and German	Hungary
	3:42:56 Battyani kisses Sisi's hand as symbol of friendship despite hating the monarchy for killing his father	Hand kiss
	4:48:57 Sisi stating her love for Hungary and Battyani calling her trustworthy and finally a human within the monarchs	Human
	4:40:10 Radetzky suggests using the reunion of Sisi and Franz as political Instrument in Italy	Reunion

	4:44:50 As protest, the Italian royals sent their staff to the theatre who sing a revelational song instead of the Austrian anthem 44:47:20 Sisi stands up and claps, Franz follows; They also do the reception;	Clapping
	4:57:05 The hostile Italians start cheering once they see Sisi's mother love / when she sees Princess Sophie again;	"E viva la mama" (grounded human)
	1:44:52 Sisi stating her love for Hungary and the language	Hungarian
	1:47:28 despite knowing why and never having been there, Sisi feels attracted by Hungary	Hungary

Maternity	2:18:00 While Franz assures Sisi of happiness about baby, she thinks about how happy he'd be about a boy	Male heir
	2:23:40 Sisi is shocked about the cradle being moved, stating that she can care for her child and won't allow this	Cradle
	2:24:10 Franz agrees with Sophies choice of caring for the baby, causing Sisi to flee to Possenhofen; still, Franz is questioning the choice	Fleeing to Possenhofen
	2:40:42 Ludovika justifies Sisi's escape, saying that every mother could understand and that this is not about the reputation of the court	Mother love
	2:54:30 Franz tried to talk to Sophie about child, but she threatened to leave the castle; Sisi says either her or Sophie leave;	Sisi or Sophie
	2:58:20 As Sisi claims that politics don't matter as she puts her child first, she wants to leave and not join the event with Hungary; Franz, Andrassy and Ludovika tell her to stay	Mother love

Note: The highlighted signs are the most significant ones, chosen for the semiotic analysis. Spelling and grammar mistakes might occur.

Episode 1 1:38:08	Sisi with open hair horse riding through the forest while family is search for her. Ludovika: “Sisi, wir suchen dich seit einer Stunde.”
1:37:05	Sister got invited to Ischgl, she should come. Sisi: “Kann ich nicht hier bleiben?” Sisi wants to stay with dad but is obedient towards the mother; Max: “Deine Mutter hat entschieden.”
1:32:39	They arrive in Ischgl; Sisi wants to leave the carnage immediately; Ludovika: “Sisi, du kannst nicht einfach so austeigen. Wir müssen warten, bis wir empfangen werden.”; passiert erneut be 1:16:00; Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:31:05	Sisi runs into the room after being late. Sisi: “Verzeiht, ich muss mich verlaufen haben.”; Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:22:25	Sisi runs into Franz’s working room, despite knowing that the French ambassador is present to confront him that she doesn’t want to marry him. Franz: “Meine Cousine ist eine sehr bestimmende Frau.” Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:19:49	Sophie: “Sie darf nicht so lachen.” Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:16:44	Sisi immediately heads to Vienna after hearing of Franz’s assassination attempt, despite this being against rules; Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:15:44	Sisi runs into Franz’s room without permission; Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:12:11	Corsage for wedding gets tightened
1:10:35	Little girl runs up to Sisi to bring her flowers; Guards want to grab her; Sisi wants her to pass
1:08:21	At the wedding; Sisi: “Darf ich dich küssen?”; Franz: “Was, hier?”; Sisi kisses him and the audience is surprised but enchanted by the charm of the couple Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
1:04:14	Wedding night; Sisi wants to leave the room as they are observed by the mothers; They go into the royal park and have sex;
58:28	Sisi to Hofdamen: “Ihr braucht mir nicht helfen. Ich komme allein zurecht.”
56:59	Sisi in the bathtub; Sophie: “Man darf nur einmal in der Woche baden und das am Montag.” Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
55:29	Disagreement at teatime; States phantasies of traveling and embracing new cultures and languages;
52:53	Sisi runs outside in sleeping gown to farewell Franz; Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell

52:07	Sophie doesn't want her to get the book about Hungary she wants.
49:11	Makes the horse ready herself; Maximilian: "So demütigst du ihn (Bediensteter)."
45:00	Sisi tells Sophie that she wants to go see the common people; Sophie considers this ridiculous but Sisi doesn't ask for approval
41:42	Sisi: "Gräfin, fragen Sie doch die Kinder, was sie von Etiketten halten." While visiting the orphan house, getting close to children, giving them the food that was prepared for her: Verstoß gegen Zeremoniell
38:15	Motherhood; Right after she gave birth to little Sophie; Gräfin: "Die Amme wartet." Sisi: "Die Amme? Es besteht keine Notwendigkeit. Ich stille selber." Franz and Sophie agree that this is not according to their status.
34:14	Politischer Dialog mit Franz; Sisi: "Die Zeiten ändern sich, Franz." Franz: "Das kann ich nicht bestreiten. Ich hätte es mir nicht träumen lassen, dass ich einmal mit meiner Frau über Politik rede."
33:00	Sisi finds the empty crèche; Sophie: "Das sind die Regeln dieses Hauses und du wirst dich diesen Regeln anpassen müssen."
31:30	Flees to Possenhofen (home)
30:00	Sisi to Nene: "Wie einfach alles wäre, wenn er kein Kaiser wäre."
27:00	Max lässt Graf Andrassy mit Sisi reden; Max projects his rebellion on Sisi
22:04	Franz: "Verlasse nie wieder die Hofburg, ohne mir Bescheid zu sagen." Sisi: "Sagst du das wegen den Etiketten oder weil du nicht willst, dass ich meinen freien Willen haben?"
20:41	Politischer Dialog about Andrassy; Sisi: "Ich bin daran gewohnt, mir eigene Gedanken zu machen." Franz thinks she gets manipulated. 19:50: Sisi: "Ich stehe hinter dir, Franz. Ich bin keine Marionette."
18:10	Franz wants to leave the theatre. Sisi convinces him to stay.
17:15	Franz: "Lass mich nie wieder alleine, Sisi. Ich brauche dich." Seemingly obedience towards Sisi
14:44	Franz pardons political prisoners as wished by Sisi (and Andrassy) to celebrate the birth of Gisella
13:50	Motherhood; Sisi tells Sophie that she wants to bring the children to the trip to Hungary. Sophie disagrees but Sisi, again, didn't ask for permission. Sisi: "mit oder ohne Ihrer Erlaubnis"

8:48	Sisi runs to Sophie after she learned that her Hofdamen was fired
3:50	Motherhood; Sisi runs out of an event as she learns her daughter got sick with akuterer Lungenentzündung; 1:00 Sophie blames the death on Sisi

Episode 2 1:35:30	Sisi:“Nein, ich kann nicht, Mama. Ich muss allein sein.” Depression after death of daughter; dark room with closed curtains
1:32:00	Franz muss zurück nach Wien; Sisi: “Ich will wieder an deiner Seite stehen” Zu Maximilian: “Ich kann nicht in deinem Zimmer bleiben. Ich muss für Franz und Gisella da sein.”
1:26:26	Budapest as sign: negative connotation due to death; waelte ungarische Gesellschaftsdame; Spricht ungarisch; verleiht ihr Titel, um anerkannt zu werden; widersetzt sich Sophie
1:25:18	Sophie: “Mich konnte nur eines beruhigen. Wenn wir endlich einen Thronfolger hatten”; Sisi: “Der Kaiser wird seinen Thronfolger bekommen.”
1:23:20	Beim anlegen des Corsetts: Sisi: “Noch enger! Es muss doch noch enger gehen” Dame: “Ihr werdet keine Luft mehr bekommen, Majestat”; Will Napoleon beeindrucken;
1:21:36	Napoleon über die Wichtigkeit einer schönen Frau an seiner Seite; Sisi: “Ich weiss nicht, ob Schönheit eine solche Wichtigkeit hat. Ist es nicht wichtiger, dass man gehört und verstanden wird. Dass man in seiner Frau eine Gesprächspartnerin hat?”. Napoleon: “Ich habe gehört, dass sie nicht nur schön sondern auch klug sind.” --> Gesprächspartner
1:20:30	Zu Kaiserin von Frankreich: “Geschichte wird von Männern gestaltet. Uns Frauen bleibt nur sie zu lenken und in Vergesseneheit zu geraten.”
1:18:40	Sisi zu Franz: “Ich hoffe, du baust nicht zu sehr auf Napoleon, ich habe das Gefühl, dass er nicht so zuverlässig ist.” --> Intuition (female); Sisi: “Warum versuchst du nicht wieder zu verhandeln?”
1:12:30	Sisi: “Wie konnte Napoleon das tun? Was wird jetzt geschehen?” Franz: “Nichts, du wirst aufwachen und mit den Kindern spielen” Sisi: “Franz, bitte blieb hier.” “Ich will nicht, dass dir etwas zustösst” “Deine Familie braucht dich. Dein Reich braucht dich, Franz”
1:09:49	Sisi als Krankenschwester im Lazarett bei den Verbundenen; Sign: Krankenschwester; Sisi zu Andrassy: “Ich tue nichts Aussergewöhnliches, Graf. Ich bin nicht so mutig wie ich wirke.” Auch zu Andrassy: Steht hinter Franz, obwohl sie keinen Krieg wollte. Verteidigt ihn. “Mein Mann kämpft aus Liebe zu seinem Volk.” --> this sentence as sign? STEHT hinter Franz;
1:06:03	Gisella: “Maman, was hast du? Bist du traurig?” Sisi weint wegen Franz’s Brief über Krieg; schafft mit Kindern im Bett
1:03:04	Zu Franz’s Selbstzweifeln nach Krieg; Sisi hält seinen Kopf in der Hand: “Du bist der richtige Mann”. “Franz, es brechen neue Zeiten an. Vielleicht ist der Gedanke, die Verantwortung zu teilen, nicht falsch” Franz: “Ich wurde geboren als Kaiser.” Sisi: “Du musst ihr (Volk) Vertrauen gewinnen.” Franz: “Ich glaube, du bist die einzige Monarchin Europas, die zu ihrem Mann sagt: “du musst””

1:00:32	Sisi: "Ich denke, dass es am wichtigsten ist, dass man sich als Kind frei fühlt. Zu tun und zu denken, das man will"; Sign: Freiheit; zuhause in Possenhofen am See mit Franz; Franz agrees to setting up a parliament, follow the advise give by Sisi before
58:45	Franz: "Es kommt mir so seltsam vor, dass du ein Leben hattest, bevor wir uns kannten." Sisi: "Ich habe mein ganzes Leben auf dich gewartet. Du warst schon immer bei mir."
57:39	Sisi erfährt, dass Rudolph mit nur 6 Jahren in der Militärischen Erziehung ist. Franz wusste es. Sophie: "Die Frage der Erziehung eines Kaisers ist keine Privatsache, sondern Staatsangelegenheit." Sisi: "Der Bub, den du Kaiser nennst, ist ein sensibles Kind. Mein Kind." Sisi stürmt aus dem Raum. --> traditionelles Rollenbild; Gisella am Klavier; Rudolf weg in der Akademie;
56:15	Sisi läuft durch stromenden Regen "Ich kann mich auf niemanden verlassen/niemandem Trauen"; Regen Sisi: "Nichts hat sich verändert. Die kleinen Freiheiten, die sie uns zugestehen, sind nur, um uns ruhig zu stellen."
52:24	Rudolph in Soldatenuniform; will Sisi nicht umarmen; Rudolph: "Ich darf das nicht." Emotionallos; Antrainierte gehorsam; Sisi will nicht, dass Rudolph in der Akademie ist, aber Franz hat kein Verständnis
49:30	Sophie zu Sisi über ihren Wunsch der Kindererziehung: "Diese liberalen Ideen werden keinen Platz in diesen Mauern finden. Ich werde sie mit aller Kraft bekämpfen. --> Mauern
47:40	Sisi reitet in stromendem Regen
47:20	Rudolph weint. Sisi ist da und beruhigt ihn. "die Maman ist" --> Sign: Umarmung der Mutter
45:56	Sisi in der Militärakademie; Rudolphs Kopf wird unter Wasser getaucht, Sisi rettet ihn; Franz: "Charakter wird durch solche Praktiken gestärkt" Sisi: "Du halst dich nur an das, was man dir gelehrt hat." Franz ist nicht bereit zur Diskussion; Sign: Eisbad als Erziehungsmaßnahme
43:20	Sisi bricht zusammen; Lungenentzündung und Gewichtsverlust;
41:39	Arzt: "Es scheint als habe die Kaiserin selbst jeden Willen verloren, wieder gesund zu werden."
40:22	Sisi sieht Kinder in Venedig und weint. Sisi vermisst ihre Kinder.
38:20	Sisi schreibt an Franz, dass sie keine Leidenschaftlichen Briefe will, sondern nur hören will, dass Rudolf die Militärakademie nicht mehr besuchen muss. Wenn du mir das nicht sagen kannst, will ich keine weiteren Briefe. Sagt Hofdame, dass sie Briefe lesen und vernichten soll, wenn nicht der gewünschte Inhalt; sign: brief
36:20	Sieht Familie von weitem und hofft, dass es Franz und die Kinder sind
35:30	Hofdame: "Das ist schon der 10. Brief des Kaisers diese Woche. Wenn sie nur lesen würden, wie schon er schreibt" Sisi: "Franz weiß nur zu gut, wie er mein Herz erreichen kann. Doch hier geht es um die Zukunft meines Sohns. Ich kann dieses Risiko nicht eingehen. Zerreißen sie ihn (Brief)" Hofdame places it in desk.
34:20	Franz hört Rudolph weinen und tröstet ihn.
30:15	Sign: Ungarisch; In conversation with Graf Andrashin; "Es gibt nicht viele Österreicher, die meine Sprache sprechen."
27:00	Flirten von Graf Andrashi: Maske= wir kämpfen mit gleichen Mitteln. Ich will sie daran erinnern, dass ich verheiratet bin, mit einem Mann, den ich

	sehr liebe. Sisi:”Vor allem dann, wenn er sich irrt, denn dann braucht mich Franz am aller meisten.”
24:30	Sophie:”Ich weiss, dass es aussieht, als ware ich ihre Feindin.” “Kämpfe um sie, Franz!”
22:52	Blumen auf dem Tisch; “wie konnte man wissen, dass das meine liebblingssorten sind?”
22:38	Kinder rennen auf Sisi zu; Rudof ohne Uniform: “Ich habe jetzt einen neuen Erzieher. Papa wollte es so.” Franz: “Mit der Militarakademie ist es vorbei”; Sisi’s Willen wurde erfüllt. Sisi will nun alle Briefe, die Franz ihr geschrieben hat lesen. Jetzt, da sie ihrern Willen bekommen hat.
20:40	Sisi steht hinter Franz; Bismark: “Ich bin es nicht gewohnt über politische Fragen in Anwesenheit von Frauen zu sprechen.” Franz sehr froh über die Anwesenheit seiner Frau. Weibliche Intuition – Sisi weiss, dass Bismark etwas für die Unterstützung Preussens will.
18:00	Sisi: “Wann können wir wieder in Frieden leben”
14:40	Sophie: “Danke meine Tochter.” Sisi hilft ihr aus der Kirche
12:30	Sisi kummert sich erneut um Soldaten; Dieses Mal im Palast
10:49	Franz:”Es ist vorbei. Du hattest Recht.” Sisi:”Du darfst jetzt nicht aufhören.; Franz über Ungarn: “Du hast immer zu ihnen gepasst, zu den Liberalen.” “Ich habe ihr Vertrauen schon lange verspielt, aber dich lieben sie, als warst du eine von ihnen.” Sisi”Sag mir, was ich tun soll.”
6:00	Sisi mit beiden Kindern vor den Ungarn; Sisi:”Ich bin gekommen, um sie an die Liebe zu erinnern, die unsere Länder verbindet.” Spricht Ungarisch; Weint;
2:50	Andrashin: “Das Reich ist gerettet. Ihr habt es gerettet.” Sisi weint.

Note: The transcript is a mix of German and English due to the linguistic capabilities of the researcher. Spelling and grammar mistakes might occur. Moreover, the timestamps should be read backwards, i.d. 2:50 indicating the last 2:50 minutes of the film.

Theme	Scene	Sign
Freedom	P1 1:38:08 Sisi with open hair horse riding through the forest while family is search for her	Horse riding
	P1 55:29 Disagreement at teatime; States fantasies of travelling and embracing new cultures and languages.	The foreign
	P1 52:07 Sophie doesn't want her to get the book about Hungary she wants.	Hungary
	P1 31:30 Flees to Possenhofen (home)	Fleeing
	P1 22:04 Franz tells Sisi to never leave the court again without telling him; She counters asking if he says that because of the etiquettes or because he doesn't want her to have a free will	Free will
	P2 1:00:32 Sitting on the lake in Possenhofen with Franz, Sisi says that the most important thing for children is to feel free and to think and do what one wants; unlike what Franz had but what Sisi had;	Growing up freely
	P2 49:30 Sophie says that liberal ideas (her educating the child) don't find space within the walls of the court	Wall (to illustrate the court)
	P2 47:40 Sisi is horse riding in heavy rain to flee the sorrows	Rain

Theme	Scene	Sign
Court Ceremonial	P1 1:32:39 They arrive in Ischl; Sisi wants to leave the carriage immediately; happens again at 1:16:00	
	P1 1:31:05 Sisi runs into the room after being late, claiming that she got lost	Running in
	P1 1:22:25 Sisi runs into Franz's working room, despite knowing that the French ambassador is present to confront him that she doesn't want to marry him; Franz calling her temperamental	Running in (recurring)
	P1 1:19:49 Sophie criticising Sisi's laughter	Laughter (impulsive/natural)

	P1 1:15:44 Sisi runs into Franz's room without permission after the assassination attempt	Running in
	P1 1:08:21 Sisi kisses him and the audience is surprised but enchanted by the charm of the couple	Wedding kiss
	P1 1:04:14 Wedding night; Sisi wants to leave the room as they are observed by the mothers; They go into the royal park and have sex;	First night (similar disobedience towards church/ sex in nature)
	P1 58:28 Tells countess that she does not need help, that she can do it alone;	Countess
	P1 52:53 Sisi runs outside in sleeping gown to farewell Franz;	Farewell (impulsive)
	P1 49:11 Makes the horse ready herself; Maximilian telling her she's insulting the servant;	Stable work
	P1 8:48 Sisi runs to Sophie after she learned that her Countess was fired	Running in (impulsive)
	P2 1:26:26 Sisi chooses Hungarian countess; they speak Hungarian; as she is from low stand, Sisi gives her title; against Sophie's will	Hungarian Countess
	P2 56:15 Sisi claims that the small bits of freedom the court allows are just to keep people calm	Freedom

Theme	Scene	Sign
Body and cloth	P1 1:12:11 Corsage for wedding gets tightened with discomfort	Corsage
	P2 1:35:20 Depression after death of daughter; dark room with closed = Depression curtains	Depression (MENTAL!)
	P2 1:23:23 When putting on the corsage, Sisi wants it tighter while the countess says she won't be able to breathe then; Sisi insists as she wants to impress Napoleon	Corsage
	P2 1:21:23 While Napoleon is talking about the importance of having a pretty	Conversational Partner (over beauty; similar to Empress)

	wife, Sisi questions this; saying it is more important to be understood and able to talk	
	P2 41:39 Sisi is sick; the doctor states that it seems like the empress lost all will to get healthy again;	Sickness (wants with all she got that her will (educating Rudolph herself) becomes truth)

Theme	Scene	Sign
Grounded Self	P1 1:10:35 Little girl runs up to Sisi to bring her flowers; Guards want to grab her; Guards want to grab her, but Sisi wants her to pass;	Girl
	P1 45:00 Sisi tells Sophie that she wants to go see the common people; Sophie considers this ridiculous but Sisi doesn't ask for approval;	Commoners (close to people)
	P1 41:42 While visiting the orphan house, getting close to children, giving them the food that was prepared for her	Orphan
	P2 1:09:49 Sisi as nurse helping the war survivors stating to Andrassy that she's not doing anything extraordinary and that she is not as brave as it seems;	Nurse
	P2 12:30 Sisi is again a nurse for the wounded	Nurse

Theme	Scene	Sign
Motherhood and Marriage	P1 38:15 Right after she gave birth to little Sophie a wet nurse should come but Sisi want to do it herself; Franz and Sophie agree that this is not according to their status	Breast feeding
	P1 33:00 Sisi finds the empty crèche; Sophie states that Sis has to adjust to the rules of the house	Empty Crèche
	P1 13:50 Motherhood; Sisi tells Sophie that she wants to bring the children to the trip to Hungary. Sophie disagrees but Sisi, again, didn't ask for permission.	Trip

	P1 3:50 Motherhood; Sisi runs out of an event as she learns her daughter got sick with pneumonia; P1 1:00 Sophie blames the death on Sisi	Child death
	P2 1:32:00 Franz needs to go back to Vienna; Sisi says she wants to be back on his side and that she has to be there for Franz and Gisella;	Duty towards family (over empire)
	P2 1:26:26 Budapest as sign: negative connotation due to death;	Budapest
	P2: 1:25:18 Sophie saying she can only be calmed if Sisi gives her an heir; Sisi saying that she will	Heir
	P2 1:12:30 Sisi asks Franz what to do, now that Napoleon turned on them and there is war. He says that nothing changes for her; she'll get up and play with the children.	Traditional roles (accepted)
	P2 57:39 Sisi learns that her son Rudolph who is only 6 is now in a military academy as according to Sophie, the education of a emperor is business of the country; Sisi claims that Rudolph is a sensitive child; Sisi runs out of room (to show disagreement); until P2 22:38 when Rudolph comes without uniform and Sisi learns that she got her will	Military academy
	P2 52:24 Rudolph in soldier uniform doesn't hug Sisi as he was told that was not allowed; showing coldness towards her; P2 47:20 Rudolph cries at night and Sisi hugs him to comfort	Hug (Franz in the beginning agreeing with the court as this is what he's used to)
	P2 45:56 Sisi storms into the military academy where she sees that Rudolph gets waterboarded and rescues him; Franz still defending the military education	Ice bath
	P2 38:20 Sisi doesn't want to read another of Franz's letters until he doesn't let her educate Rudolph; P2	Letters

	35:30 despite the letters being full of love for Sisi, she shows that the wellbeing of her child is above all (marriage and monarchy); still in P2 27:00 Sisi states towards Andrassy that she deeply loves Franz	
	P2 22:52 Sisi sees red roses on the table and wonders how the people in the guest house could have known that it was her favourite	Red roses

Theme	Scene	Sign
Political Influence	P1 34:14 While having a political dialogue, Sis tells Franz that times change (regarding the parliament) and Franz agrees, pointing out that he never thought he could talk politics with his wife	Times of Change
	P1 27:00 Max (Father) lets Sisi talk to Andrassy; Father projects rebellion on her	Paternal influence
	P1 20:42 Franz thinks Sisi's political opinion gets influenced by Andrassy; Sisi reassures Franz that she stands with him, claiming she is not a Marionette;	Marionette
	P1 17:15 Franz tells Sisi to never leave him again as he needs her;	Dependence (seemingly obedient to Sisi)
	P2 1:20:30 Queen of France stating that man design history, but women are gearing and trying not to be forgotten	Royal Females
	P2 1:18:44 Sisi telling Franz that they cannot trust Napoleon	Female intuition
	P2 1:03:04 Franz is self-conscious about the war but Sisi tells him that he is the right person to do the job; She says there are new times, he MUST win the trust of the people; Franz says she's the only royal woman to tell her husband MUST	MUST
	P2 1:00:32 Franz agrees to setting up a parliament	Parliament

	P2 30:15 Andrassy recognises that not many Austrians speak Hungarian but that Sisi does	Hungarian
	P2 20:40 Bismarck stating that he is not used to political questions getting discussed when women are present; Franz says he is very happy about Sisi's presence	Standing Sisi
	P2 10:49 Franz sending Sisi to Hungary as he has lost their trust, but they trust Sisi; P2 6:00 Sisi speaks to the Hungarians with both kids present and as Andrassy says in P2 2:50 saves the Austro-Hungarian Empire	Trust

Note: The transcript is in German as this is the original language of the film. Spelling and grammar mistakes might occur. Moreover, the timestamps should be read backwards, i.e., 2:50 indicating the last 2:50 minutes of the film.

E1	
1:00:20	Sisi versteckt sich von Ludovika und dem Herzog, der kommt, um ihr einen Antrag zu machen. Ludovika: “Wir müssen sie baden, anziehen und etwas mit diesen grassichen Haaren machen.” Sisi zu Schwester: “Ich will einen Mann, der meine Seele satt macht.” --> 58:50 Flucht auf dem Pferd vor Verlobung
54:20	Max unter Prosituierten; Sisi bittet ihn um Hilfe, weil Pferd verwundet ist. Max: “Kein Tag, an dem du keinen Arger bereitest” Max will Pferd erschiessen. Max zu Sisi: “Du halst dich an keine Regeln, du machst was du willst, dafür zahlst du jetzt den Preis.”
49:22	Ludovika: “Zwei Grafen hast du vertriebe, das waren alles gute Manner. Mein Geschwur, es konnte platzen und dann verblute ich von innen wegen dir, Sisi” Sisi: “Ich heisse Elisabeth” Ludovika: “Warum kannst du nicht sein wie deine Schwester” Zeigt nicht, wenn sie unglücklich ist: Sisi will über ihr Leben selbst bestimmen. Ludovika droht mit dem Narrenhaus. Sisi: “Mama bitte, ich bin nicht verrückt.”
43:19	Nene: “Genau wegen deiner ewigen Gedichte will Mutter dich ins Narrenhaus schicken.” “Ich hab Angst, dass du verloren gehst” Sisi: “Ich hab ein dickes Fell.” Nene: “Hast du nicht.”
42:21	Gedicht von Sisi: “Schwalbe nimm mich mit ins ferne Land...”
41:49	Sisi: “Ich werde mich benehmen” spuckt aus der Kutsche “ab jetzt”
39:41	Sisi zu Nene: “Du weisst immer was man sagt und was nicht.” “Ich wunschte manchmal ich konnte ein bisschen mehr sein wie du!”
35:40	Nene und Ludovika realisieren, dass sie nur Trauerkleidung dabei haben; Sisi: “Es wird nicht darauf ankommen, was du an hast.” Nene: “Natürlich wird es das.”
33:13	Franz: “Warum tragen Sie keine Schuhe?” Sisi: “ich bin gerne barfuss” Franz: “Warum haben Sie einen Vogel in der Hand.” Sisi: “Er war im Schloss und hat nicht mehr rausgefunden. “ Franz: “Das kenne ich.” “Das Reiten hilft, einen klaren Kopf zu bekommen. Sisi: “Das kenne ich.”
29:22	Sophie: “Und das ist?” Ludovika: “Sisi” Sisi: “Elisabeth”
20:09	Sisi liegt auf dem Boden; Franz: “Ist Ihnen nicht gut.” Sisi: “Nein.” “Es war so heiss und der Boden ist schon kuhl” “Es beruhigt.” --> beide liegen auf dem Boden
18:40	Haarstrahne von Puck (Pferd) in Sisi’s Haar
13:40	Sisi: “Ich habe versprochen diese Wochenende nichts durcheinander zu bringen.” Franz: “Dafür ist es zu spat.” “Konnen wir du sagen, Elisabeth?” “Das ist doch dein Name?”
11:25	Franz: “Seit Monaten fuhle ich mich tot und mit dir will ich plotzlich meinen Geburtstag feiern.”
7:30	Nene: “Niemals wirst du Kaiserin werden. Du wirst ihn ruinieren.”
5:40	Sis bindet Franz die Strahne des Pferdes an die Hand “Bis wir uns wieder sehen.”
4:31	Ludovika: “Sisi, horst du mir zu?” Sisi: “Nenn mich Elisabeth.”
E2	
52:40	Max: “Hier auf dem Hof, sag nicht jedem, was du denkst.” Sisi: “Franz liebt mich so, wie ich bin.” 52:02 versucht Franz zu kussen
48:59	Grafin Apalfi macht Knicks und sagt: “Eure Hochheit.” Sisi reicht ihr Hand und sagt: “Nenn mich Elisabeth” --> gegen Zeremoniell

48:05	Sophie: “Eine Kaiserin darf einen Schuh nur einmal tragen” Sisi: “DAs ist Verschwendung.”
42:10	Sisi: “Zu eng”! “Bitte horen Sie auf, ich krieg keine Luft” Esterhazy”DAnn sitzt es richtig.” --> Corsette “Dann gehe ich spazieren, ich brauche Luft”
40:50	Sisi betritt den Rasen, um sich einem Tier zu nahern. Nur eine Zopfe (die burgerliche) folgt ihr.
34:55	Sisi sieht Franz an, dass ihn etwas belastet. --> female Intuition
33:55	Sisi and Franz run off together from the dancing class and make out behind closed doors; Grafin Esterhazy unterbricht sie.
30:15	Dienerin (zum 2xMal) verliert etwas und Sisi nimmt es auf.
28:39	Sisi wird gynekologisch untersucht und strosst den Doktor weg “Ich bin unschuldig” Doktor:”Ich konnte nichts sehen” Priester: “Ohne Unschuldsnachweis keine Ehe” --> Sisi lasst es uber sich ergehen
23:50	Priester: “Wir hatten bereits das Vergnugen.” Sisi: “Ich bin froh, dass es wenigstens Ihnen eine Freude bereitet hat.” ---> Feststellung der Jungfraulichkeit; Sophie: “Elisabeth, seine Exzelence tut seine Pflicht.” Sisi: “Ach, das war ein heiliges Ritual, ich hatte nur das Gefuhl, mir schauen zwei Manner unter den Rock.”
23:00	Franz und Sophie bestehen darauf, dass Sisi sich ausruht, entgegen Ihres Willen
20:40	Dienerin: “Ihre konigliche Hochheit, die Zahne.” Sisi: “Das mach ich selbst” Leontin: “Das sollten Sie nicht, sonst gibt es nur gerede.”
19:40	Sisi geht auf Max’s soiree entgegen des Befehls von Esterhazy; Ausgelassene Party mit Alkohol 14:05 Helene: “Du bist betrunken. Eine zukunfitige Kaiserin benimmt sich nicht so.”
8:40	Sisi versteckt sich hinter Vorhang. Nene: “Die warten alle” Sisi: “Ist mir egal” --> Vorhang? Sisi: “Mich so zu sehen das freut dich jetzt” Nene:”Du riechst nach altem Champagna” Sisi:”Ich hoffe, das er das alles wert ist.” Nene: “Du wirst dich an den Zikus gewöhnen.” Sisi:”Das ich dich verloren habe meinte ich.” Nene: “Du hast mich nicht verloren.”
3:40	Sisi in der glasernen Kutsche, fährt durch die Menge; Gekopfe, Geschrei; Elisabeth fuhlt sich unwohl. --> Passt zum goldenen Kafir; zur Schaustellung
E3	
55:50	Elisabeth im Hochzeitskleid allein in der dunklen Kammer --> Zeigt Zweifel auf
45:20	Franz:”Der Hof tanzt zu unsrer Ehren. Erst am Ende des Abends tanzen wir.” Sisi:”Hat man dir das nicht gesagt. Das wurde gestrichen, damit du dich nicht blamierst.”
44:20	Franz bestreitet, dass er seine fruhere Geliebte kennt. Sisi ist skeptisch; --> weibliche Intuition
41:50	Sisi will, dass Helene ihrem Hofstab vorsteht. Esterhazy und Sophie dagegen.
34:10	Liebhaberin: “Sind Sie immer so gerade heraus.” Sisi: “Wenn ich kann.”
31:40	Sisi unterbricht Franz nach Gespräch mit Liebhaberin. Sisi: “Kann ich dich einen Moment sprechen?” Franz: “Es muss warten.” Sisi: “Es ist wirklich wichtig.” Sisi: “Ich sagte spater,” Sisi: “Natürlich” --> Sisi gehorcht; geht und atmet schwer. Ist den Tranen nah
24:29	Max (Vater): Betrunken singend im See; Sisi: “kannst du dich nicht einmal normal benehmen?” Max:”Was heist das normal? Sind die da drinnen noraml?” Sisi:”Du benimmst dich wie ein Arschloch und nennst das Freiheit.” Max: “Ach so, sie haben dich schon umgekrampelt.” Sisi: “Kannst du dich nicht fur mich

	freuen” Befiehlt ihrem Vater und der Mutter Wien zu verlassen Max: “Du kannst nie wieder du selbst sein, solange du da drin bist.”
17:44	Sisi rennt mit Feuerwerk im Hintergrund zuruck ins Schloss; Hofdame: “Man hat sie uberall gesucht. Wir dachten schon, sie wurden entfuhr.”
15:21	Sisi: “Ist es das richtige, dass Helene hier bleibt oder ist es selbstsuchtig?” Sophie: “Ob sie immer noch leidet...”
14:00	Franz: “Wie war dein Abend?” Sisi schliesst die Augen; “Ist alles in Ordnung” Hochzeitstanz beginnt; Sisi spricht kein Wort
11:00	Franz gibt zu, dass er die Liebhaberin kennt. Sisi: “Alle behandeln mich hier, als konnte ich nicht bis 3 zahlen”
10:13	Skepsis gegenüber Kirche!! Sisi”Dieses Nachthemd darf ich nicht ausziehen, sonst komme ich in die Holle” in sakastischem Ton, Franz schmunzelt;
9:20	Franz liegt sich auf den Boden, Sisi dazu, wie beim ersten Kennenlernen;
4:50	Vollstrecken den Akt erst am Morgen (ziehen die Kleider aus) --> Rebellion against Church
E4	
49:54	Sisi: “Grafin, Sie wissen, ich liebe ihr rohes Ei, aber konnte ich jetzt einen Kaffee haben? --> Trinkt das Ein angewidert; Sisi: “was ist, wenn ich eine Tochter bekomme?” Esterhazy: “Ein Madchen kann nicht regieren”
42:20	Sisi gefällt Leontin, weil sie flucht, nicht sticken will
41:30	Franz hat ein bisschen Zeit. Sisi geht mit ihm zum Fluss und malt ihn. Sie kussen sich, Sisi mit offenem Haar. Nackt; haben Sex im Dreck; nicht wie Kaiser; verliebte im Vordergrund
37:46	Sophie: “Ich hore es gibt Grund zur Hoffnung. Dann wird du auch bald eine Aufgabe haben.” Sisi lachelt; --> Klassisches Mutterbild
36:45	Sisi mischt sich in Staatsgesprache mit Franz und Sophie ein; Schlagt vor, dass man auf Jagd geht; Sisi:”Wenn ihr in Ruhe sprechen wollt, ohne Circus, dann ist es vielleicht das Richtige.” Sophie: “Circus??” Sisi: “Er sollte wissen, dass wir nicht versuchen, ihn zu beeindrucken, oder?” Franz willigt ein: “Kein Bankett, keine Angeberei. Ein Gesprach unter Freunden.” Sophie will nicht, dass Sisi mitgeht, aber Franz sagt er fahrt alleine mit Sisi und dem Zar und Frau – Sophie kommt trotzdem mit
32:02	Sophie: “ElN Kind zu bekommen ist harte Arbeit.” “Es ist deine Einzige Aufgabe (einen Tronfolger zu bekommen), erfulle sie, bis du dir eine andere suchst.” in schroffem Ton
25:39	Zaren Gattin: “Sie wollten lieber mit den Manner jagen, hab ich recht? Sisi: “Aber nein, das ist wunderbar” Zaren Gattin. “Was ist denn ihre Eigenheit als Kaiserin.” Sisi: “Braucht man denn sowas?” Gattin: “Es gibt den Menschen was zu reden und uns Frauen auch eine Bedeutung. Etwas, woran man sich erinnert.” Sisi: “Ich hoffe, die Menschen werden sich daran erinnern, dass ich eine gute Kaiserin war und nicht welche Frisur ich hatte.” Gattin: “Aber sicher, wunderschone Haare haben sie tatsachlich.”
22:16	Max: “Warum sind SIE hier? Sollten Sie sich nicht ausruhen?” Sisi: “Jetzt fangen Sie nicht auch damit an.” “Meine Familie braucht Sie fur eine Sachen und das ist nicht Aussenpolitik” Anspielung auf der Gebaren eines Thronfolgers
18:11	Zar zu Sisi: “Begleiten Sie mich diesmal Majastat (auf die Jagd)? Ich bestehe darauf!” Sisi: “Als Kind bin ich immer zu allein in den Wald gegangen.” Zar:”Hatten Sie keine Angst. Die Dunkelheit, die Stille” Sisi:”Es hat mich immer Magisch angezogen!”

16:23	Karl (Vater) zu Sophie: “Elisabeth ist wie du.”
15:22	Zar: “Vielleicht liegt die Zukunft Habsburg in Ihrem Schoss” Zar versucht Wildschwein zu erschieszen, trifft es nicht, macht es wutend. Sisi schießt es und rettet sie; --> Jagd Hofdame: “Das heist die Kaiserin hat dem Sohn des Zarn das Leben gerettet.” Zar will abreise; Zar in Ehre gekrankt
10:22	Sisi will wissen, die Gespräch mit Zar Alexander verlaufen ist. Franz: “Zerbrich dir nicht den Kopf” Sisi: “Willst du sagen, dass es meine Schuld war.” Franz: “Wahrscheinlich hattest du dich zurückhalten müssen, ja!” Sisi: “Weist du, wie er mich im Wald behandelt hat? Aber ich schätze, sowas ist erlaubt.” Sexualisiert; Sophie: “Ich hoffe, du weisst jetzt, was ich gemeint habe. Du hast keinen Schimmer davon, was du tust.”
8:50	Sisi: “Ich habe ihn blamiert.” Max: “Nein, das haben Sie nicht.” “Wir sind in dieser Familie um Beifall zu klatschen und habsch auszusehen.” Trinken Sekt Sisi: “und das soll die Losung sein?” Max “Es gibt keine Losung, es gibt nur hier und jetzt.”
3:58	Sisi kommt bereits heute nach Wien, obwohl Franz gesagt hat morgen: “Tut mir leid, wenn ich das mit Alexande falsch gemacht habe.” I mean it” Franz: “Warum musst du sofort wieder zu ihm rennen (Max)? I dont trust him and you know that!” Sisi: “Sprich nicht mit mir wie mit einem Kind.” Franz: “Dann benimm dich nicht so.” “Geh zu Bett, ja? Du solltest dich ausruhen.”
E5	
47:48	Sisi versteckt sich erneut hinter Vorhang. Schleicht sich raus, um draussen zu malen; Sisi raucht draussen; Leontin: “Ich danke Ihnen Majastat.” Sisi: “Ich bin es leid mit dir. Ich habe dir schon 10x gesagt, dass du mich Elisabeth nennen sollst.” -->Zigarette; Elisabeth (und Sekt trotz möglicher Schwangerschaft?! Wurde schon davor gesagt, dass sie Monatsblutung ausblieb.”
41:47	Esterhazy: “Denken Sie darn, für das Volk sind Sie ein göttliches Wesen. Befolge Sie stets die drei Regeln: 1. Berühren Sie niemanden 2. Kein direkter Blickkontakt 3. Richten Sie an niemanden ein vertrauliches Wort. Eine Kaiserin muss stets unantastbar sein.” Sisi”Brng ich auch ein Geschenk?” Esterhazy: “Sie sind das Geschenk.” Korsett wird fest geschnur (41:00) dass sie kaum Luft bekommt während Sophie sagt: “wegen des Konflikts mit Russland, für den Sie verantwortlich sind.” Sisi: “Der Konflikt wäre auch ohne mich passiert.” zu rohem Ei: “Können wir das heute bitte auslassen. Ich bekomme kaum Luft.” Sophie zieht Vergleich zu Leiden des Soldaten. Sisi übergibt sich/kann es nicht schlussan Sophie: “es wird Zeit, dass Sie ihren Zweck erfüllen, Elisabeth.”
36:40	Franz: “Wenn du nachts herumgeisterst, werden wir uns immer verpassen.”
30:54	Vor dem Besuch beim Volk mit dem kleinen Prinzen: “Haben Sie Angst?” Sisi: “Vom Volk nein, aber von ihr (Esterhazy)” Elisabeth will aus der Kutsche schauen: “Darf ich mein Reich nicht sehen?” Estherhazy: “Nicht alles auf einmal.”
28:05	Sisi sieht ein kleines Mädchen hinter den Männern der Fabrik. Es rennt weg, sie sieht ihm nach. Esterhazy: “unser programm erlaubt keine Verzögerung.” Sisi zu Fabrikleiter: Mochte in Firma eintreten und sehen, wie Leute arbeite. Estherhazy: Keine Zeit; Sisi: “Ich glaube schon!” 26:52 Der Farbiksleiter: “Geh weg da, Mädchen.” Sisi: “Nein, warten Sie.” Mädchen gibt dem Prinzen Wasser, weil er hustet. Sie lässt das Glas fallen; Sisi redet mit ihr: “Arbeitest du auch hier?” Kaputte Schuhe --> schuhe als Symbol für wohlstand – Leontin auch! 25:12 Sisi übergibt dem Mädchen ihre Schuhe “Du wirst hineinwachsen.”

	Esterhazy: “Die Kaiserin muss getragen werden.” Sisi: “Ich kann laufen. Ich werde laufen.” Sie werd entgegen ihres Willen getragen – Volk: “Da du feine Dame; nur nicht schmutzig machen” -> Getragen werden
16:01	Zurück im Schloss Esterhazy: “Ein Diener wird Sie tragen” Sisi: “Niemand wird mich nochmal tragen.” “Wenn Sie mich hatten laufen lassen, wie ein normaler Mensch, wäre das alles nicht passiert.” Esterhazy: “wenn majestat meine Anweisungen befolgt hatte, dann wäre das alles nicht passiert.”
14:58	Sophie: “Sie haben kein Gespür dafür, was sich gehört und was nicht. Sie sind zu weit gegangen und das nicht zum ersten Mal.”
14:22	Franz: “Warum bist du nicht gefahren, als Kempten das angeordnet hat?” Sisi: “Weil es sich richtig angefühlt hat zu beliben” Franz: “Du darfst den Menschen nicht zu nahe kommen, es ist gefährlich.” Weil du die Kaiserin bist, du steht über ihnen.” Sisi: “Genau deshalb hassen uns alle, weil wir uns nicht benehmen wie Menschen.” Franz: “Du weißt gar nicht, was ich hier tue, damit sich etwas ändert und dein blutendes Herz hilft mir überhaupt nicht” Sisi wirft mit Früchten nach Franz; endet in leidenschaftlichem Kuss
5:45	Erneute Schlafproblem Sisi’s
4:50	Sisi: “Wenn er nur kein Kaiser wäre.” “Ich habe noch nie einen starken Menschen mit einfacher Vergangenheit kennengelernt (zu Leontine)!”
E6	
1:00:30	Brief an Sisi: “Du hast gesagt, ich könnte nie ich selbst sein am Hof.” “Das Leben ist wie ein Rausch, ich lasse mich einfach tragen, denn für etwas anders braucht man mich nicht.”; Sisi mit Zigarette; eventuell betrunken; fällt lachend und betrunken die Treppe hoch
57:00	Franz: “Hast du geschlafen?” Sisi mit zerzaustem Haar Franz: “Hast du dich amüsiert gestern Abend?” Sisi: “Die Damen und ich haben getrunken” Franz: “Es hatte mich gefreut, du hattest mich informiert.” Sisi: Warst du denn gekommen?” Franz: “Ich weiß, dass du unglücklich bist seit dem Vorfall in der Giesserei.”
55:09	Franz zu Sisi über Pferd: “Er ist wild und ruhelos. Da musste ich an dich denken.” Als Überraschung, weil Sisi sich nicht wohl fühlt; --> Geschenke statt Zeit (Reisen); Franz: “Ich will dich heute Abend sehen, nur wir 2, geht das?” Hofdamen über Pferd: “Wie aufmerksam. Sie wollte doch eine neue Beschäftigung und schon hat der Kaiser etwas für sie.” Leontine: “Ja, wie nett. Noch etwas, womit sie sich ablenken können.” --> Ablenken von politischen Ideen / nahe zum Volk sein; von dem, was sie wirklich will
50:18	Sophie: “Sie lenkt dich ab.” “Der ganze Hof redet, weil sie sich die Nächte um die Ohren schlägt. Du hast ein trotziges Kind geheiratet und das schwächt dich als Kaiser. Das Volk braucht ein Vorbild. Es muss sich etwas ändern, Franz, und das weißt du.”
49:21	Sisi versucht wegzureiten, aber Wachen auf Befehl von Sophie lassen sie nicht.
47:14	Sophie: “Was glaubst du, ist das Wichtigste, was ein Herrscher besitzen muss?” Sisi: “Mitgefühl. Ich weiß, dass sehen Sie anders.” Sophie: “Oft hilft es nicht nachsichtig zu sein. Manchmal muss man das Kranke herauscheiden.” Sisi: “Sie wollten eine Handpuppe.” Sophie: “Wir brauchen eine Kaiserin, die uns vor dem Untergang rettet.” “Das bist du nicht, Elisabeth.” Sophie schlägt vor, dass Sisi nach Bayern geht und die Ehe annulliert wird oder dass sie hier bleibt, ohne

	Reiten ohne nachtlliche Ausfluge, keine Hofdamen, nur Gräfin Esterhazy und an entsprechenden Tagen darf der Kaiser kommen.”
37:35	Sisi will Franz sprechen, wird nicht durchgelassen. Ihr wird ubel. Sisi: “Sie will mich los werden.” Max: “Nein, das werde ich nicht zulassen.”
35:03	Aussereheliche Kusse: Sisi und Max; Franz und Baronin (E5?)
30:30	Leonine: “Hast du gefruhstuckt?” Sisi: “Ich bekomme seit Tagen keinen Bissen runter.” Leontine: “Deine letzte Monatsblutung ist auchgeblieben.” “Du erwartest ein Kind, ich bin mir sicher.” Sisi weint aber nickt.
27:30	Sisi rennt zu Franz: Franz? Ich will dir etwas sagen.” Franz:”Gebe ich dir nicht alles, wovon man traumen kann?” Sisi:”Ich weiss nicht, was du meinst.” Franz: “Antworte mir.” Sisi: “Du machst mir Angst.” “Du weisst , dass mir das alles nichts bedeutet, Geschenke.” Franz: “Das sagt jemand, der sehr verwohnt ist” Sisi: “Zwischen ihm (Max) und mir da ist nichts. Ich liebe nur dich. Sieh mich nicht so an, ich kann nichts dagegen tun.” Geschenke; Liebe; Franz: “Damit hat sie auch Recht (das sich etwas andern muss).” Sisi:”Das ich den ganze Tag rumsitzen, Tee trinken, Kleider anprobieren, Kinder kriegten und meine Kopf ausschalten soll?” Franz: “Nein, dass du dich nachts herumtriebst, dass du dich in Gefahr bringst, dass du dich benimmst als hattest du den Verstand verloren, dass du dich an keine Regeln halten kannst.” Sisi: “Aber genau deshalb wolltest du mich. Ich will mehr. Ich kann nicht eingesperrt sein.” Franz:”Ich brauch jemand, der auch mal zufrieden sein kann.” Sisi:”Du bist so ein Feigling. Sag deiner Mutter, dass ich abreisen werde.” “Ich bin liebe verruckte in Possenhofen als ein Tag langer Kaiserin an diesem Hof” -->Verruckt sein / Narrenhaus von vorher
21:46	Leontin: “Weiss er, das du schwanger bist? Du musst es ihm sagen.” Sisi:”Nein, es ist vorbei.” Sisi: “Dieser Hof hat mich gebrochen.” Strohpuppe wird von Leontin angezündet: “Es geht nicht um dich, Elisabeth. Die Menschen zunden das an, wenn sie um Hilfe rufen. Wenn du ihnen Helfen willst, musst du bleiben.”
17:12	Sophie: “Elisabeth, the Fahigkeiten, die eigenen Grenzen zu erkennen, ist etwas sehr Wichtiges im Leben, glaub mir.” --> Sisi flieht gezwungen nach Possenhofen (vor Sophie) 14:12 Sisi weint auf der Reise nach Possenhofen; Das Volk blockiert das Tor, darum musste die Kutsche umdrehen.
13:02	“Wir haben Hunger.” Schreiendes Baby
10:40	Sisi tritt zum Tor, wo die Menschen mit Fakeln stehen. Sisi: “Offnen Sie.” Sie geht raus. (9:12) “Ich sehe euch.” Sisi geht auf die Knie --> Knicks vor dem Volk! Berührt die Menschen, gibt ihnen die Hand

Note: The transcript is in German as this is the original language of the film. Spelling and grammar mistakes might occur. Moreover, the timestamps should be read backwards, i.d.

2:50 indicating the last 2:50 minutes of the film

Theme	Scene	Notes / Signs
Hiding, Fleeing and Freedom	E1 1:00:20 from possible husband; doesn't want to get engaged	Curtain (shows the childish; considering age)
	E2 8:40 from Countesses / getting ready for wedding; got drunk the night before	Curtain
	E5 47:48 from guards; wants to go outside and smoke	Curtain
	E1 58:50 on the horse back from the engagement	Horse riding
	E6 49:21 to clear her mind; Sophie told guards to not let her; Sisi's trapped	Horse riding
	E6 17:12 to Possenhofen as forced to by Sophie; not successful as crowd blocks place gate	Horse carriage
	E5 30:51 Sisi wants to look outside the carriage to see the people but Esterhazy denies	Closed curtain
	E2 3:21 Sisi on the way to her wedding in crystal carriage seemingly unwell as crowd treats her like zoo animal	Crystal Carriage
	E1 42:21 Sisi's poem about being free like a bird	Bird
	E1 33:13 Sisi bringing a bird that got lost in the palace outside; Franz relates to being lost in the palace	Bird
	E6 27:30 Sisi claiming that her will from freedom once was that made Franz fall for her	Locked in
Hair and Clothing	E1 18:40 Hair of Sisi's dead horse (Puck) in her hair	Horsehair
	E1 5:40 gives Franz the hair of Puck to remember her until the wedding	Horsehair
	E1 35:40 Sisi trying to reinsure Helene that the dress she's wearing doesn't matter to impress Franz; Helene disagrees	Missing dress
	E4 25:39 Sisi to Tsar's wife about her wanting to be remembered as a good empress rather than for her hair	Hair

	E1 33:13 Sisi meets Franz outside without shoes as she likes being barefoot	Barefoot
	E2 48:05 Sophie mentioning that shoes can only be worn once; seen as wasteful by Sisi	Shoes
	E4 41:30 Sisi and Franz at the river with bare feet	Barefoot
	E5 26:52 Sisi gives her shoes to a girl in the factory; Shoes seen as symbol of wealth (cf. Leontine's shoe situation)	Shoes
	E2 42:11 Sisi asking Esterhazy to stop tightening her corsage as she couldn't breathe; Esterhazy refuses;	Corsage
	E5 41:00 Sophie tightens corsage so that Sisi can barely breathe, calling her responsible for the Russian conflict	Corsage
Naming	E1 49:22 insisting on "Elisabeth" when Ludovika calls her "Sisi"	Elisabeth
	E1 29:23 insisting on "Elisabeth" when Ludovika introduces her to Sophie as "Sisi"	Elisabeth
	E1 13:40 Franz asks to address Sisi informally ("du") and double-checks her name	Elisabeth Du
	E1 4:31 insisting on "Elisabeth" when Ludovika calls her "Sisi"	Elisabeth
	E2 48:59 insisting on "Elisabeth" when Leontine calls her "her majesty"	Elisabeth
	E5 47:48 insisting on "Elisabeth" when Leontine calls her "her majesty" stating that this is the 10 th time	Elisabeth
To be commoner	E2 40:50 Leontine (who fakes being a Countess) follows Sisi on the lawn	Leontine (as symbol of Sisi getting along better with commoners / identifying with them than with monarchs)
	E4 42:20 Sisi enjoys that Leontine swears and doesn't enjoy embroidery; identifies with that	Leontine
	E5 48:48 Sisi and Leontine smoke together	Leontine

	E5 4:50 Sisi sees Leontine as strong person and tells her here that there are no strong people with easy past	Leontine
	E5 41:47 Esterhazy tells Sisi that the people see her as a creature sent by god	Glorification
	E5 14:22 Franz tells Sisi that she stands above the commoners as Empress; Sisi tells him that that is the reasons why they that him	Social classes
Gender and Maternity	E4 49:54 Sisi sarcastically saying that she loves to drink the raw egg (for fertility)	Raw egg
	E5 40:50 Sisi asking to not have the raw egg today as she cannot breathe due to corsage; has to drink it and throws up	Raw egg
	E4 37:46 Sophie states that having a child will finally give Sisi a task; Sisi smiles and accepts that statement	Becoming a mother
	E4 32:02 Sophie saying that getting a child is hard work and that getting an heir is Sisi's only job and that she will be replaced if she fails	Heir
	E4 22:16 Maximilian telling Sisi that the Habsburg need her for one thing (getting an heir)	Heir
	E5 40:50 Sophie telling Sisi that it is time to do her job (getting an heir)	Heir
	E4 49:54 Esterhazy saying that a girl cannot reign	Female heir
	E2 34:55 Sisi feels that something bothers Franz	(female) Intuition
	E3 44:20 Sisi is sceptical when Franz denies knowing this former mistress	(female Intuition
	E5 14:22 Sisi says it felt right to say in the factory (and give the shoes to the girl)	Feeling of Right and Wrong
	E5 14:22 Franz saying that Sisi' "bleeding heart" does not help	Bleeding heart
	E4 36:45 Sisi suggests Franz invites the Tsar for a hunt as intimate meeting	Hunt

	E4 25:39 The Tsar's wife suspects Sisi would prefer to hunt with the men than promenade with her; Sisi denied	Gender separation
	E4 18:11 The Tsar invites Sisi to hunt with him	Hunt
	E4 15:22 The Tsar tries to shoot boar, misses twice, makes it angry; Sisi shoots it at first try to save them; Tsar feels embarrassed and leaves	Hunt
Alcohol and cigarettes	E2 14:05 Helene calls Sisi out that she is drunk the night before her wedding	Alcohol
	E4 8:50 Maximilian and Sisi drink champaign which is not the solution but according to Max, there is no solution	Champaign
	E5 47:48 Sisi sneaks out at night to smoke a cigarette	Cigarette (consider that her main task is to get pregnant! Contradictive behaviour)
	E6 1:00:30 Sisi drunk and smoking at party	Party
	E6 27:30 Franz accusing Sisi of partying too much	Party
	E6 1:00:30 In a letter to her father, telling him that she fouls around as there is no serious task for her	Lack of task
Intellectual dismissal	E3 11:00 Sisi feels treated like "she couldn't count until 3"	Intelligence
	E4 10:22 Sophie tells Sisi that she has no idea what she's doing	Intelligence
	E4 3:58 Sisi tells Franz not to talk to her like a child; Franz replies claiming that she behaves like one	Child behaviour (Franz treating Sisi like a child)
	E6 55:09 Franz gifts Sisi a horse; Leontine implies to distract her from political idea/ from coming close to the people	Gift
	E5 50:18 Sophie describes Sisi as a defiant child that weakens the emperor and states that the people need a strong role model	Defiant child
	E6 27:30 Sisi telling Franz that she wants to do more than sitting around, drinking tea, trying on	Lack of task

	dresses, having children and turn off her head	
	E6 27:30 Franz telling Sisi that she never gets enough while Sisi tells him that she doesn't care about gifts	Gifts
	E3 31:40 Franz doesn't take a moment for Sisi despite her insisting; she obeys and cries	Rejection
	E6 55:09 Franz gifts Sisi a horse as she feels lonely	Gift (instead of spending more time with her)
Court ceremonials	E6 35:03 Sisi and Maximilian kiss (Franz and former mistress kissed in E5)	Kiss
	E1 54:20 Maximilian of Bavaria shoots horse after Sisi disobeyed the rules, went horse riding and the horse got hurt;	Shot Horse
	E2 28:50 Despite feeling discomfort (physically and mentally) Sisi lets the doctor examine her virginity as the priest insists on it;	Virginity
	E2 23:50 Sisi criticises that the priest says he "they had the pleasure already" as their meeting felt like abuse on her side	Virginity test
	E3 10:13 Sisi sarcastically telling Franz she'd go to hell if she took off the dress (for wedding night)	Dress
	E3 4:50 Sisi and Franz taking of the wedding night dresses	Dress
	E1 41:49 Sisi spits out of the carriage	Spitting
	E2 52:02 Sisi tried to kiss Franz at reunion; gets blocked	Kissing
	E2 40:50 Sisi walks grass to approach animal	Garden
	E2 33:55 Sisi and Franz run away from dance close to make out	Kissing
	E2 20:40 Sisi refuses to let servant clean her teeth; Leontine does it	Teeth cleaning
	E2 19:40 Sisi and court staff attends Maximilian's soirée despite Countess Esterhazy forbidding it	Soirée

	E4 41:30 Sisi and Franz having sex in nature	Sexuality
	E5 30:51 Sisi wants to look outside the carriage to see the people but Esterhazy denies	Closed curtain
	E5 28:05 Sisi enters the factory against Esterhazy's will	Factory
	E5 14:48 Esterhazy, Franz and Sophie blaming Sisi for scandal at factory due to disobedience	Disobedience
	E5 9:12 Sisi touching crowd, shaking hands	Handshake
	E3 41:50 Sisi wants Helene to be head of her court staff	Helene
	E3 15:21 Sisi realises that keeping Helene in Vienna is selfish	Helene
	E1 20:09 Franz running in on Sisi lying on the floor as it calms her; he joins; connection to ground like barefoot;	Lying on the floor
	E3 9:20 Franz lies on the floor on wedding night; Sisi joins;	Lying on the floor
	E6 9:12 Sisi is kneeling before the people	Curtsy
	E2 30:15 Picks up what the servant dropped	Straw doll
	E4 36:45 Sisi suggests nothing glamorous to meet the Tsar; nothing like the usual "circus"	Circus
	E2 8:40 Helene to Sisi that she will get used to this Circus (synonym for the court)	Circus

Note: The transcript is in German as this is the original language of the film. The highlighted signs are seen as most relevant within the theme. Spelling and grammar mistakes might occur. Moreover, the timestamps should be read backwards, i.e., 2:50 indicating the last 2:50 minutes of the film.

Prinzessin Sissy (Wildfang) – 1938 – Fritz Thiery

Film plot: Sisi, around eight years old, is Max's favourite child and influenced by his rebellious nature. Max and his royal friends defy the King Ludwig I's orders by performing in a circus show to help a circus director whose carriage burned down. Inspired by Max, Sisi joins in.

Meanwhile, Ludovika suspects Max of an affair when she sees a woman wearing Sisi's necklace. She doesn't know that Sisi gifted it to the circus director, who pawned it, and the woman wearing it works at the pawn shop.

Coding of rebelliousness:

Category 1: Clothing

Sisi's attire is one of the most prominent markers of her defiance. Throughout the film, her clothing changes reflect her struggle against aristocratic expectations.

- Rejecting aristocratic femininity:
 - At 00:14:22, Sisi is dressed in tight trousers and a blouse, a practical, active outfit associated with horseback riding. This signals her independence and rejection of traditional femininity, which is reinforced when Ludovika criticizes her appearance.
 - When she is forced to change into a noble dress (00:16:23), she is momentarily confined to the image of a proper aristocratic woman. However, this does not represent personal acceptance but external control as she is obedient to her mother.
 - Later, when Max criticizes the dress as "doll-like", she changes into a traditional Bavarian dress, i.e., Dirndl (00:17:25), a significant moment. While the Dirndl represents simplicity and a connection to the common people, it also reinforces the romanticized myth that nobility should appear 'relatable' while still retaining status. Moreover, it is notable that more value is given to the father's word than to what the mother says.
- Rejecting aristocratic materialism:
 - At 00:28:39, she rejects a delicate royal necklace, saying she would prefer a pair of Lederhosen as her father's do not fit her. An overt statement rejecting aristocratic adornment in favour of practical, 'masculine' clothing that is showing the influence of her father on her rebellion.

- Her act of gifting the necklace to a circus family (00:33:07) reinforces the idea that true nobility is generosity, not wealth.

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Connotation	Myth	Interaction	Time
Equestrian garb (v)	Tight dark trousers combined with a white shirt and heavy boots	Traditional horseback riding attire for men	Traditionally riding on a side-saddle, allowing to wear a dress → rebellion against gender rules (Munkwitz 2022)	Horseback riding implicating freedom and power, challenging gender roles (Munkwitz 2022)	L: “Wie schaust du den schon wieder aus?” Ludovika’s disapproval given her aristocratic background	00:14:22
Noble dress (v)	Sophisticated dress with tulle and puff sleeves	Proper day wear for aristocratic women	Showcasing class, wealth and the distinction from the common people	Aristocratic women as symbol of grace, duty and representation of the monarchy	L: “Du musst immer daran denken, dass du eine bayrische Prinzessin bist.” Ludovika emphasising Sisi’s stand within aristocracy	00:16:23
Dirndl (Traditional Bavarian dress) (v)	Dress with apron with white blouse underneath	Everyday cloth for Bavarian common women in the 1800s	Simplicity, humility, and connection to folk traditions	The romanticized idea of rural life as pure, simple, and authentic	S: “Bin ich dir so recht, Papi?” Max projecting his rebellion against	00:17:25

					aristocratic rules on Sisi	
Lederhose (a)	S when receiving the necklace, “Eine Lederhose wäre mir lieber gewesen.”	Traditional Bavarian trousers, exclusively worn by men in that time	Portraying masculinity and the resistance to imposed femininity	Tough Bavarian man, drinking beer	S: “Die von meinem Papi ist mir zu groß” Max as role model of Sisi	00:28:39
Necklace (v)	Necklace made from precious metals set with gemstones	Valuable jewellery formerly owned by Sisi’s aunt Countess Nelly	Symbol of status, wealth and inheritance (as necklace lays in family property)	Materialist women	S: “Weißt was, ich schenk’s dir.” Sisi rejects materialist values, giving necklace to the circus director in need	00:33:06

Note. (a) – audio sign; (v) – visual sign

Category 2: Hierarchy and Etiquettes

Sisi’s actions throughout the film undermine the rigid rules of aristocratic conduct. She consistently redefines how a royal woman should behave, using charm as tools of rebellion.

- Rejecting aristocratic etiquette:
 - The scene at 01:10:25, where Sisi places a book on her head while curtsying for the King Ludwig I, is a humorous critique of etiquette training. She follows the instruction literally, exaggerating the practice to the point of satirizing the absurdity of aristocratic rules. This playful defiance suggests that aristocratic decorum is performative and unnatural, aligning with Barthes' idea that myths serve to normalize arbitrary social constructs.
- Rejecting hierarchic structure:

- At 01:16:30, after being threatened with imprisonment by the King Ludwig I, Sisi playfully invites him to yodel. Her charm subverts the power dynamic between them. The King Ludwig I, initially positioned as a strict authority, becomes enchanted by her authenticity and joins her. Here, folk traditions (yodelling) serve as a form of resistance, with Sisi using her spontaneity and connection to common culture to challenge the rigidity of royal authority.
- At 00:20:08, Max and Sisi state that if they were not royal, they would be part a circus, acknowledging their royal duty but stating that their societal status was not their choice.

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Connotation	Myth	Interaction	Time
Curtsy (v)	Movement of bending knees to salute royalty	Proper way of saluting royalty	Expected etiquette; signifies respect and obedience	Royalty as untouchable figures deserving of ritualized reverence	Sisi places book on head while curtsying in front of the King Ludwig I as she was formerly criticised for the form of her curtsy.	01:10:25
Yodelling (a)	The King Ludwig I singing a traditional Bavarian song	Traditional singing style in the Alpes	Playfulness, authenticity, regional identity; for a moment forgetting hierarchical structures	The King Ludwig I as one of us	Sisi's charm makes the King Ludwig I yodel (instead of bringing her to prison)	01:17:28
Circus (a)	S and M: "If we were not royal, we would be	A troupe of performers living	Freedom, danger, and spectacle; escape from	Myth of circus	Prior, Sisi fearlessly jumped on the back of a horse	00:20:08

	part of the circus”	outside the norm	rigid aristocratic life			
--	------------------------	---------------------	-------------------------------	--	--	--

Category 3. Physical Freedom

Sisi’s rebelliousness is most powerfully expressed through her physical actions, particularly horse riding.

- Defying gendered restrictions:
 - At 00:13:07, Sisi watches Max jump with his horse and expresses her desire to do the same. While Max first agrees, later both, Ludovika and Max both dismiss her ambition, reinforcing the gendered restriction that certain activities are ‘too dangerous’ for women. The framing of the scene emphasizes power imbalance. Max is above her on horseback, while Sisi is left looking up. This visually reinforces the idea that she is being held back due to societal expectations rather than her own abilities.
- Taking control of her own narrative:
 - At 00:47:53, Sisi performs tricks on horseback against the King Ludwig I’s orders but aligned with her father’s rebellion against the King Ludwig I. Not only is she engaging in a male-dominated activity, but she does so in trousers, a deliberate rejection of aristocratic femininity. This moment is framed dynamically, with rapid movement and the circus as a backdrop, symbolizing freedom and nonconformity. The King Ludwig I’s disapproval, combined with the circus audience’s admiration, highlights a clash between personal agency and institutional control.

Sign	Signifier	Signified	Connotation	Myth	Interaction	Time
Horse jumping (v)	Max jumps with his horse	Skill, confidence and mastery over horse	Strength, courage, and the thrill of freedom	Cowboy as symbol of independence and defying limits	M: “Sieht du, Kleine. Das war ein Cowboy Sprung.” S: “Darf ich das auch?” Sisi sees Max as role	00:13:07
Equestrian vaulting (v)	Sisi in equestrian garb and with face mask performing equestrian vaulting in the circus	Defiance of restrictions, artistic freedom	Rebellion against the King Ludwig I who forbid royal performance; against gender roles and mother	The act of performance as an expression of identity and defiance Myth of free spirit	Applauding audience	00:47:53

Based on these observations, the following conclusion on Sisi’s rebelliousness in *Prinzessin Sissy* (1938) can be drawn:

Sisi’s rebelliousness is portrayed as endearing and playful rather than radical and subversive. Her resistance is framed as personal expression within the boundaries of aristocratic structure, never causing a real threat for the monarchy. Despite moments of her own defiance, she ultimately submits to her father’s parental authority and adopts his rebellion, reinforcing a narrative of obedience and harmony.

Taking into account that *Prinzessin Sissy* (1938) is a production from Nazi Germany, Sisi’s character was aligned with the regime’s propaganda goals of promoting hierarchical structures, national unity and idealized role of women, obedient to the male, i.e., Sisi’s father. The Nazi ideology emphasized strong leadership and stable social order which is mirrored in the depiction of Sisi’s rebelliousness: rather than challenging the monarchy, her defiance aims to soften and humanize it, as seen in the yodelling scene with the King Ludwig I. These temporary

disruptions of tradition never escalate into real opposition towards the regime, allowing individuality only when it does not threaten the established system.

Moreover, Sisi's rebellion ultimately reinforces the idea that royals should be relatable and free-spirited while still upholding tradition. This myth of aristocracy is depicted as both admirable and unchallenged, aligning with the Nazi regime's romanticized vision of historic continuity and noble leadership.

Furthermore, Sisi's defiance is often expressed through symbolic acts rather than direct confrontation. By changing clothes and playing with etiquette, resistance is suggested but without direct aggression. This subtle, controlled form of rebellion mirrors the Nazi ideal of disciplined individuality, i.e., personal expression exists but never disrupts the social order.

Ultimately, Sisi's rebelliousness functions as a negotiation rather than a revolution, as the monarchy accommodates her rather than suppresses her. Hence, she is never fully free but moments of autonomy, such as her performing in the circus, are small victories within aristocratic constraints. In the context of the time of production, this depiction serves the propaganda role of reinforcing obedience, traditional roles and the myth of a benevolent ruling elite while allowing just enough individuality to make the system appear accommodating and humane.

Curtsy



Circus



Dirndl



Equestrian vaulting



Horseback jumping



Horse-riding trousers



Necklace



Nobel dress



Yodelling

