

[Review: The Iron Lady](#) [1]

Written by [Dr Madsen Pirie](#) [2] | Tuesday 10 January 2012



The Iron Lady interweaves two compelling themes. One is of a love story, romantic and endearing, played out against a backdrop of great events. The other tells of a struggle against the odds, of a woman facing the supercilious and dismissive ranks of a male establishment.

The movie is utterly dominated by the mesmeric performance of Meryl Streep. A few minutes deep into the story it becomes apparent that we are witnessing a role that will become legend. We have to remind ourselves that we are watching an actress portray a role, rather than a documentary featuring the former Prime Minister herself.

The movie, fiction though it is, will probably prompt a reappraisal of Margaret Thatcher and the part she played in changing the nation she led. Meryl Streep's strong performance wins the audience into a sympathetic evaluation of Lady Thatcher's achievements.

The movie has been criticized for its portrayal of her dementia while she is still with us. That portrayal, however, is not remotely mocking; on the contrary, it powerfully elicits our sympathy and support, and the sad fact is that the lady we knew is already no longer with us.

There is nothing in this film for the Left. Where they demonized Margaret Thatcher, the movie humanizes her. It is not about the great events of her political life; these are its backdrop. Her entry into Parliament, her leadership bid, the miners' strike, the IRA and the Falklands War all feature, but the movie is not about them. Rather is it about the strength of character with which she confronted successive challenges and crises.

Her achievements are featured, together with the confrontation it took to bring them about. She took on a prevailing political ideology and overturned it, as well as the political elite that espoused it. The nation prospered again, spreading new opportunities for advancement and home ownership. The ailing state-owned giants became successful enterprises, and the brutal ideology that had enslaved half the world was overthrown.

Her faults are depicted, too. Towards the end she became progressively more imperious and insensitive to advice or criticism. She remained committed to the view that government was there to help people to improve their lot, and was equally firm in her conviction that she knew how to do that. A little more

readiness to listen and debate might have bought her a little more loyalty from her colleagues.

Overwhelmingly, though, the impression is favourable. Meryl Streep wins its audience over to identify with her struggles and to leave it more sympathetic towards the former Prime Minister than it was before. The movie will win accolades without doubt. And there will be new accolades and recognition of achievement for Lady Thatcher herself.

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