

A judge on Thursday refused to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a Georgian chess master who alleged that she was defamed in an episode of the Netflix series “The Queen’s Gambit.”

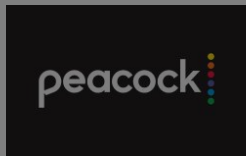
[Nona Gaprindashvili](#), who rose to prominence as a chess player in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, sued Netflix in federal court in September. She took issue with a line in the series in which a character stated — falsely — that Gaprindashvili had “never faced men.” Gaprindashvili argued that the line was “grossly

sexist and belittling,” noting that she had in fact faced 59 male competitors by 1968, the year in which the series was set.

Netflix sought to have the suit dismissed, arguing that the show is a work of fiction, and that the First Amendment gives shield to fictional characters.

But in a ruling on Thursday, Judge Judge G. Jack Phillips said that works of fiction are not immune from defamation claims.

## Related Stories



### GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

#### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

[List of Partners \(vendors\)](#)

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All

“Netflix does not cite, and the Court is not aware, of any cases precluding defamation claims for the portrayal of real persons in otherwise fictional works,” Phillips wrote. “The fact that the Series was a fictional work does not insulate Netflix from liability for defamation if all the elements of defamation are otherwise present.”

“The Queen’s Gambit” is based on a 1983 novel by Walter Tevis, and follows a fictional American character, Beth Harmon, who becomes an international chess champion in the 1960s. In the final episode, set in Moscow, Harmon defeats a male competitor. A chess announcer explains that her opponent underestimated her: “Elizabeth Harmon’s not at all an important player by their standards. The only unusual thing about her, really, is her sex. And even that’s not unique in Russia. There’s Nona Gaprindashvili, but she’s the female world champion and has never faced men.”

Netflix argued that it had relied on two chess experts in an effort to get the details right, and that the show creators meant no offense to Gaprindashvili.

“The Series’ reference to Plaintiff was intended to recognize her, not disparage her,” the streamer’s lawyers argued.

In her ruling, Phillips noted that the show's theme involves breaking gender barriers. But, she said, the show could be seen as building up the achievement of the fictional Harmon by dismissing those of the real-life Gaprindashvili.

"An average viewer could reasonably conclude that the show was asserting the superiority of the accomplishments of the fictional American woman over those of the real-life Gaprindashvili. At the very least, the line is drawn."

Netflix had relied heavily on the fact that the show was based on the life of a real person, Olivia de Havilland. In that case, the court ruled, the show was asserting a significant artistic freedom in the entertainment community.

The de Havilland case was a landmark ruling. The appeals court ruled that those who had taken from real life. The false impression that the show was asserting a factual claim.

Netflix also noted that "The Queen's Gambit" featured a standard disclaimer, stating that "the characters and events depicted in this program are fictitious. No depiction of actual persons or events is intended." But the judge ruled that was not enough to dispel the notion that the show was asserting a factual claim.

"In context, therefore, Netflix 'creat[ed] the impression that [it] was asserting objective facts,'" Phillips wrote. "Plaintiff sufficiently pleads falsity because the Line is 'reasonably susceptible of an interpretation which implies a provably false assertion of fact.'"

Netflix declined to comment on the ruling.

*Correction: This story originally described Gaprindashvili as Russian. She is from the Republic of Georgia.*

## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

**List of Partners (vendors)**

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All

Case 2:21-cv-07408-VAP-SK Document 37 Filed 01/27/22 Page 1 of 25 Page ID #:541

United States District Court  
Central District of California

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 Nona Gaprindashvili  
6 Plaintiff  
7 v.  
8 Netflix, Inc.; Does  
9 Defendant  
10  
11  
12 Before the Court is  
13 ("Motion") Plaintiff Non  
14 pleading claims of fals  
15  
16 After considering a  
17 the Motion, the Court c  
18 hearing pursuant to Lo  
19  
20  
21 This action arises f  
22 Gaprindashvili in the p  
23 ("Series"). (FAC ¶ 1).  
24 allegations in Plaintiff's  
25  
26

## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

#### List of Partners (vendors)

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All

Document ▼



1

of 25



55%



**Read More About:**

Nona Gaprindashvili, Queen's Gambit

### GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

#### We and our partners process data to provide:

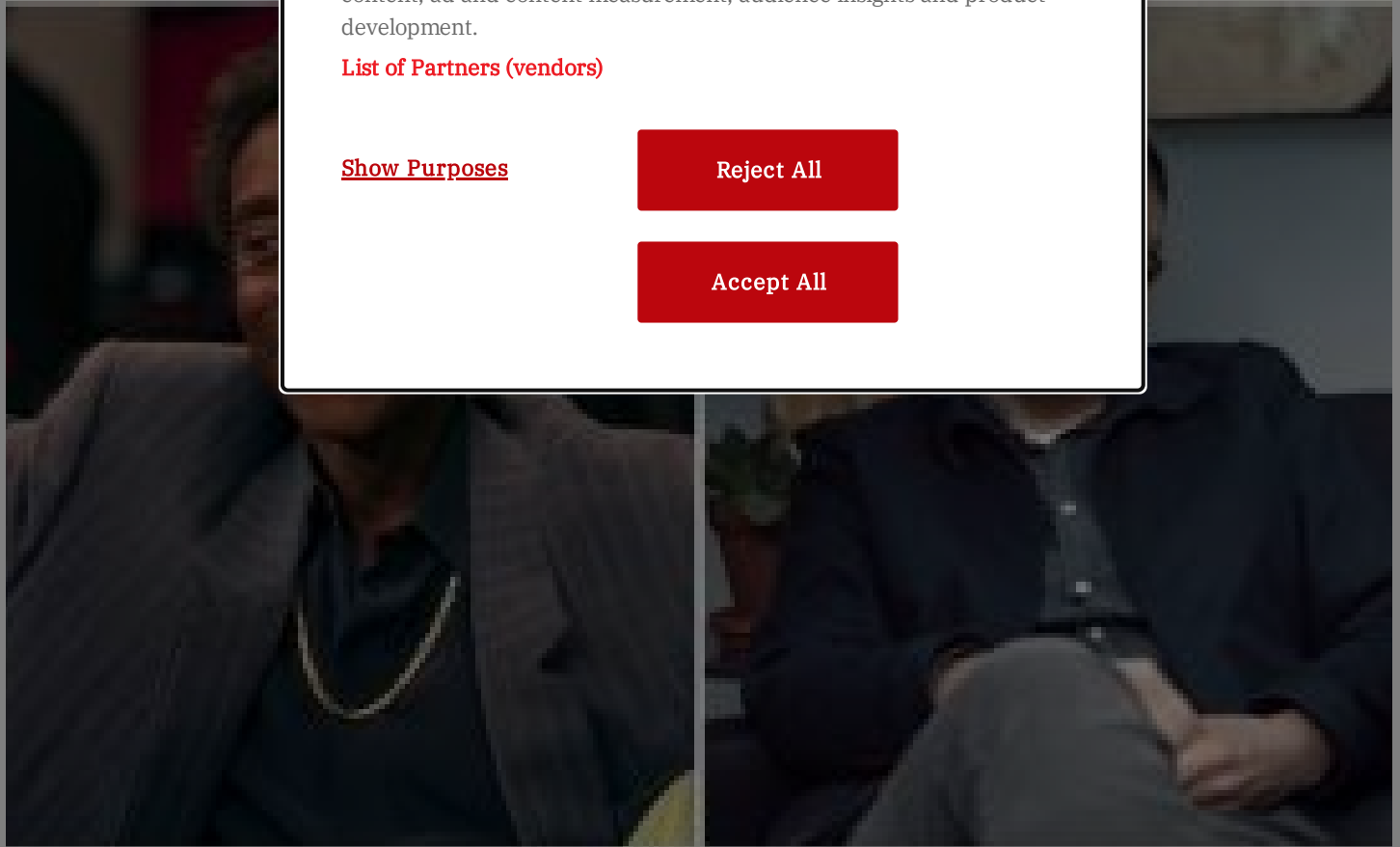
Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

[List of Partners \(vendors\)](#)

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All



**‘Black Monday,’ ‘Work in Progress’ Canceled at Showtime**

**AT&T Q4 Reaction: Not Out of the Woods Just Yet**

**President Joe Biden Special; Apple TV Plus Date (TV News Roundup)**

**‘Spider-Man: No Way Home’ Session’ Held for Tom Holland, Tobey Maguire**

**The 40 Most Anticipated New TV Shows of 2022**

**Quay Street Productions Bolsters Team With New Hires Across Production, Development, Business Affairs**

## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

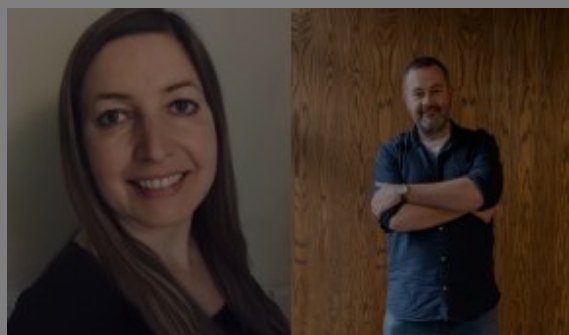
Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

**List of Partners (vendors)**

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All



2 COMMENTS

#### LEAVE A REPLY

Enter your comment

Your email address will not be published.

NAME \*

EMAIL \*

WEBSITE

POST

#### GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

#### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

[List of Partners \(vendors\)](#)

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All

Comments are moderated. They may be edited for clarity and reprinting in whole or in part in Variety publications.

**vakhtang gurasashvili**

January 27, 2022 at 5:45 pm

She is not Russian, She is Georgian investigate before you publish such information the part of the case is also about that matter.  
Cheap very unprofessional

REPLY

**floppylobster**

January 28, 2022 at 3:46 am

If this goes through it would be a huge problem for Netflix/Sony Pictures Television if the royal family decide to sue about the later seasons of The Crown.

REPLY

# MOST POPULAR



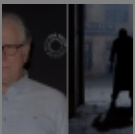
**Netflix Must Face ‘Queen’s Gambit’ Lawsuit From Chess Great, Judge Says**



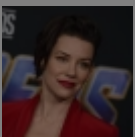
**'Spider-Man: Far From Home'**



**Nicole Kidman's 'The Undoing' Room'**



**John Law's 'The Last of the Mohicans' Sequel'**



**Marvel's 'The Falcon and the Winter Soldier'**

## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

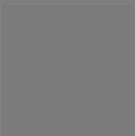
Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

[List of Partners \(vendors\)](#)

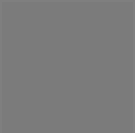
[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All



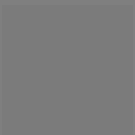
**Peacock Loss Grows to \$1.7 Billion in 2021 as Comcast Q4 Tops Expectations**



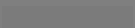
**Nicolas Cage Proclaims ‘I Am a Goth’ Ahead of Playing Dracula, Says His Pet Crow Insults Him**



**Oscars Predictions: Best Picture – Oscar Voting Begins As PGA and DGA Weigh Into Awards Season**



**In Removing Neil Young's Music, Spotify Didn't Need to Listen to the Artist, but Did Have to Heed His Label**



**DGA Nominations: Jane Campion, Kenneth Branagh and Denis Villeneuve Lead the Directors Field**

## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

**List of Partners (vendors)**

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All

## FILM

**Mahershala Ali and Bradley Cooper on ‘Swan Song,’ ‘Nightmare Alley’ and Not Quitting Acting**

## AWARDS

## Jon Watts Talks ‘Therapy Session’ for ‘Spider-Man: No Way Home’ Stars

TV

### ‘Pam & Tommy’ Is a **Review**

TV

### ‘Righteous Gemstones’ **Review**

FILM

## Back to Bond: Daniel Craig and Javier Bardem Share ‘Skyfall’ Memories

### GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

#### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

**List of Partners (vendors)**

Show Purposes

Reject All

Accept All

## Sign Up for Variety Newsletters

Enter your email address

**SIGN UP** →



## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

[List of Partners \(vendors\)](#)

[Show Purposes](#)

Reject All

Accept All

ROLLING STONE

**Bloc Party Recount a Bad Night Out in ‘The Girls are Fighting’**

ROBB REPORT

**Review: Driving a 1967 Ford Mustang Speedster Is a Cor**

SPY

**7 Genius Organizations That Wish You Knew About**

**Game-Time,**

**p: Where Is**

## GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

**List of Partners (vendors)**

Show Purposes

Reject All

Accept All

Variety



Legal



Variety Magazine



VIP+ Account



Connect



**VARIETY**

THE BUSINESS OF ENTERTAINMENT

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**

## HAVE A NEWS TIP? LET US KNOW

### GDPR

We and our partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data.

### We and our partners process data to provide:

Store and/or access information on a device. Precise geolocation data, and identification through device scanning. Personalised ads and content, ad and content measurement, audience insights and product development.

**List of Partners (vendors)**

[Show Purposes](#)

**Reject All**

**Accept All**