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**The Glorious and the Oppressed: Regenerating History through  
Cinema**  
**Case studies: Napoleon 2023/ Pocahontas 1995/ Lincoln2012.**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master in Language and Culture**

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## ***DEDICATION***

We dedicate our thesis to our parents for their endless love, support and encouragement throughout our pursuit for education. We hope this achievement will fulfill the dream they envisioned for us.

And here is a specific appreciation to the strongest woman I ever seen, my sister Bouaguel Manel, the survivor of Cancer disease. Congratulations to you my dearest, you have won the greatest battle in the world, your spirit is stronger than anything that could happen to it, you became a hope for a lot of women who are like you.

May God heal them.

To my dear father Bouziane Nabil, thank you for everything and I truly hope

I made you proud.

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The study has indeed helped us to explore more knowledgeable avenues related to our topic and we are sure it will help us in our future.

## **Abstract**

Certainly! "The Glorious and the Oppressed: Regenerating History Through Cinema" likely explores the intersection of cinema, history, and social dynamics. This abstract tackles how cinema has been used to depict both the triumphs and struggles of societies throughout history. It discusses how filmmakers use their authority to highlight moments of glory, such as triumphs in war or moments of societal progress, as well as periods of oppression, injustice, and struggle. This abstract also touches upon the ways in which cinema shapes and reshapes our understanding of history, influencing societal perceptions and interpretations of past events altering the public perception. Additionally, it examines the power dynamics inherent in the representation of historical cinema, and how filmmakers manipulate and use these complexities in their storytelling.

Key words: Glory, oppression, cinema, history, depiction.

## خلاصة

بالتأكيد! "المجيد والمظلوم: تجديد التاريخ من خلال السينما" من المحتمل أن يستكشف تقاطع السينما والتاريخ والديناميات الاجتماعية. يتناول هذا الملخص كيفية استخدام السينما لتصوير انتصارات ونضالات المجتمعات عبر التاريخ. ويناقش كيف يستخدم صانعو الأفلام سلطتهم لتسليط الضوء على لحظات المجد، مثل الانتصارات في الحرب أو لحظات التقدم المجتمعي، فضلاً عن فترات القمع والظلم والنضال. يتطرق هذا الملخص أيضاً إلى الطرق التي تشكل بها السينما وتعيد تشكيل فهمنا للتاريخ، مما يؤثر على التصورات المجتمعية وتفسيرات الأحداث الماضية التي تغير التصور العام. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فهو يدرس ديناميكيات القوة الكامنة في تمثيل السينما التاريخية، وكيف يتلاعب صانعو الأفلام بهذه التوقعات ويستخدمونها في سرد القصص.

الكلمات المفتاحية : المجد، الظلم، السينما، التاريخ، التصور.

## **List of abbreviations**

<b>CGI</b>	Computer generated imagery
<b>USA</b>	American united states
<b>VFX</b>	Visual effects
<b>RIC</b>	Royal Irish Constabulary
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>LOTR</b>	Lord of the rings

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## **Introduction**

Cinematography is the art form of visual storytelling through motion picture photography. (Olzacka, Elżbieta,2022). It encompasses all visual elements on screen, including lighting, camera angles, composition, and color grading. Cinematographers are responsible for capturing the images that convey the director's vision, and they work closely with the director to ensure the visual narrative is consistent with the film's intended narrative. The concept of "cinema" was first described by Charles Francis Jenkins, pioneer of early cinema and one of the inventors of the motion picture.

According to his 1913 article in the "Encyclopedia Britannica", "cinema" is the scientific name for the optical effects produced by intermittent motion of the film and is often used to denote the series of known as moving pictures. In 1917, "cinema" was further defined by the "Century Dictionary", an American encyclopedic lexicon, as a theater for the exhibition of moving pictures, also by extension the mechanical equipment by means of which these are produced or exhibited; the exhibition of moving pictures; the light and shade and the effect produced by it; the whole modern art of representing objects and actions by eye impressions which give rise, not merely to textures and surface apparent in solid forms, but to form and movement.

These classic definitions highlight the three most important aspects of cinema: the place where a film is revealed to the viewer, the technique for forming and depicting motion on film, and the motion picture itself. From the literature retrieved, it is evident that the definition of cinema has evolved slightly in the past century to conform to current technology from a pure scientific study to the actual modern day art and entertainment.

The definition of historical cinema is not as straightforward as it may seem. At first glance, historical cinema appears to be any film depicting an event of historical significance; however, the real defining feature of historical cinema lies not within the words themselves, but within the depictions. With this in mind, historical cinema may be defined as any form of film that looks to the past for inspiration in depicting our present. This means that historical cinema includes any film that uses history as a framing device - such as "Pride and Prejudice", set in the 19th century, and literature and film about the Romans - as well as films that are specifically focused on a historical event or individual.

More recently, the cultural impact of these depictions has also been included as a defining feature of the genre. This means that when a modern film is classed as historical cinema, the public response and resulting popular knowledge of that time period can be taken into account within the definition. By extension, this also acknowledges the potential for this genre to influence public thought and make an impact on our collective understanding of history. All these factors come together to demonstrate that, rather than being seen as a single, specific type of film, boasting a clear genre definition and recognized narrative, historical cinema can offer an exploration of developing attitudes and themes within both the history and film-making industries.

The purpose of this review is to examine the literature on the subject written by diverse authors. It is advisable to employ a variety of data sources in the search, selection and criteria of choice, for instance, books, periodicals, articles and websites. The goal of this review is to find out how does cinema regenerate history and change the public perception towards the real historical events as its ability lies in its depiction of diverse narratives, challenge of dominant ideologies, and provision of platforms for cultural expression and social critique. By exploring themes of glory and oppression, cinema does not only preserve historical memory but also re-imagines and revitalizes historical narratives for present and future generations.

Cinema plays a significant role in shaping historical memory by acting as a repository for individual and collective recollections.

Historical cinema can be defined as a genre of film-making that focuses on representing past events, figures, and cultures, often with the aim of preserving historical memory, interpreting historical narratives, and engaging audiences with historical themes. The definition of historical cinema is not fixed but rather contingent on the context in which it is produced and consumed. It serves as a visual medium through which historical events are re-contextualized, re-designed, and presented to audiences, offering a unique perspective on the past.

Historical cinema plays a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of history, influencing cultural memory, and contributing to the construction of collective historical narratives. Films within this genre often explore themes of glory and oppression, representing the struggles of marginalized communities, challenging dominant ideologies, and advocating for social change. By delving into historical events and figures, historical cinema provides a platform for reflecting on the complexities of the past and understanding how historical narratives are constructed and interpreted. Moreover, historical cinema serves as a valuable historical source, offering insights into different time periods, cultures, and social contexts.

Films within this genre can be used as tools for historical research, providing visual representations of historical events and helping to bring the past to life for contemporary audiences. Through the lens of historical cinema, viewers can engage with the past in a dynamic and immersive way, fostering a deeper understanding of historical events and their significance. In essence, historical cinema is a dynamic and multifaceted genre that plays a vital role in preserving historical memory, interpreting the past, and engaging audiences with historical themes. By representing past events through visual storytelling, historical cinema

contributes to the regeneration of history, challenges dominant narratives, and fosters a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the past.

The relationship between cinema and memory has attracted growing academic interest, emphasizing film's ability to represent, shape, and recreate various forms of memory (Kuhn & Meers, 2017). Films such as "Winter Soldier" have been pivotal in depicting collective and traumatic memories, highlighting the close connection between documentary cinema and historical memory (Grinberg, 2013). Cinema, particularly in the context of the oppressed, serves as a powerful medium for representation and emancipation. Films within the genre of the cinema of the oppressed, as explored by (Labidi 250-265), play a crucial role in giving voice to marginalized communities and challenging oppressive systems.

These films not only represent the struggles and experiences of the oppressed but also contribute to their emancipation by shedding light on their narratives and advocating for social change through cinematic representations of the glorious and the oppressed, filmmakers have the opportunity to challenge dominant narratives, highlight the experiences of marginalized communities, and foster a deeper understanding of historical events. By engaging with themes of oppression, emancipation, and historical memory, cinema plays a vital role in shaping societal perceptions, advocating for social justice, and preserving the narratives of those who have been historically marginalized.

Though historical cinema provides a powerful means of educating the public, people do not stop to question if what they are watching is actually true. It is not that they do not understand that what they are watching is a movie, but rather this knowledge is overridden by the strong images that are on screen. The film "Braveheart," which depicts the story of William Wallace, a national hero in Scotland. The film manages to represent the injustices that the English imposed on the Scots, the suffering of the Scots, and the courage and strength of their leader Wallace, who is fighting against the English till his death. This creates a sense of patriotism

and love for the nation and its history. However, in reality, the reign of Edward "Longshanks" was not so harsh and masterly as it is shown in the film, and Scottish people do not have to struggle so much for their freedom under his rule. This suggests that although historical cinema can create national identity and pride, it is not always accurate. National identity refers to the sense of belonging and collective identity within a nation, and historical cinema can play an important role in the formation of this.

This is especially useful in countries that have a diverse and multicultural society in the present day, and cultural heritage is at risk. By providing an engaging and accessible way for people to connect with their national history, historical cinema can encourage a sense of unity and understanding between the different ethnic groups within that particular nation. In fact, some people even propose that it should be used as a means of teaching history, suggesting that key stage history classes should take students to the cinema to see a historical film. However, filmmakers should bear in mind the ethics and should create a fair representation as what they are doing will influence a large population and future generations, and it cannot be taken lightly.

Our growing understanding of the important role that historical cinema plays in shaping our memory of the past and knitting us into a shared understanding of history actually leads to growing caution and awareness in both academic and public discourse. The idea that visual memory supplements, alters, or even overwrites the practices and traditions of historical memory presents significant challenges to the study and judgment of historical events, personalities, and understanding of general stages of human development. For example, works like Oliver Stone's "JFK" and "Nixon," both known for indulging in conspiracy theories and promoting a negative image of American government and policy, have been criticized for revising viewpoints on topics such as the Vietnam War and presidential

leadership; events that have long been explained through traditional historical traces and testimonies.

Professor of film and media Annette Kuhn argues that the term "collective memory" is now insufficient to explain the use of film to remember, given that films are shown to create new memories for the viewer. This goes some way to suggest the impact of historical cinema on shaping our memory of the past; it creates new memory and, in doing so, diverts our attention and sense from the old memories previously fixed and sustained. This could be seen as a crucial point of concern, considering that many historical films perpetuate a sense of national identity and belonging by echoing and reflecting on important cultural, historical, and political struggles and achievements. By keeping the viewers not only engaged as individuals but also sharing a visually created memory of the past, these types of historical films serve to perpetuate a collective sense of "belonging to a community of the past" and loving and caring about the nation as a whole.

Historical films often depict the powerful in a society, such as kings, emperors, and military leaders. One common theme in those films is the depiction of the powerful as great and virtuous individuals. For example, in the film "Braveheart", King Edward I of England is depicted as the villain of the film in his attempt to conquer Scotland. The king's portrayal in the film fits the common criteria of a villain. That is, he is shown as heartless and ruthless. The movie also depicts the king's political wrongdoing, such as execution without trial and disregard for the English common laws.

The contrast between the king and the Scottish protagonist, William Wallace, showcases Wallace, the oppressed, as the hero and the personification of the oppressed Scottish people's hope and struggle. The portrayal of King Edward I in "Braveheart" not only bears a bias against that character, but also builds upon the established historical opinion, as in England, King Edward I is commonly perceived as a successful and ruthless medieval monarch. Many

view him as an effective ruler who strengthened the state and he is often remembered for his memorable suppression of the mass rebellion led by William Wallace in Scotland.

The comparison created between such a notorious figure and the Scottish hero has undoubtedly influenced the audience into associating the hero's qualities with the success of his real-life counterpart. Such influence not only effectively perpetuates the long-established respectful remembrance of William Wallace, but also serves to sustain social and nationalistic emotions in Scotland. Therefore, the representation of the glorious and the oppressed in cinema is the best way to influence the perception of history and have a lasting influence.

The goal of this research is to find out how does cinema recreate history and to examine how is the glorious and the oppressed are depicted in films. Through the discussion of variety of movies, historians and films critics hypothesized that movies are directly related to the public memory and historical perception in regenerating the events. The goal of this research is not only to show how cinema regenerates history but also to analyse how films represent historical events, by glorifying or oppressing certain minorities cinematically.

The study also aspires to achieve the following main objectives:

- To gain insight on the cinema transformative power.
- To show how historical cinema contributes to the rewriting of historical narratives.
- To shed light on the glorious and the oppressed representations in the chosen films.

This dissertation aims to explore how cinema acts as a tool for regenerating historical understanding. By analyzing how films portray the "glorious" and the "oppressed," the study seeks to illuminate how cinema can challenge traditional narratives and give voice to marginalized perspectives as it can glorify others.

The study is divided into two parts:

- ❖ A theoretical part: it is subdivided into two chapters:

- Chapter one: Tracing the footsteps: Cine-history embarks on a journey to understand how cinema, from its origins to its power over audiences, shapes and reshapes our perception of historical events.
- Chapter two: Cinema's depiction of Glory, Oppression, and the Re-designing of History, this chapter delves into how cinema depicts victors and victims, questioning historical accuracy to reveal how films can both reflect and rewrite our understanding of the past.

❖ A practical part: holds one chapter:

Chapter three: Comparative Analysis, this section compares and contrasts different films or cinematic approaches to highlight how they shape our understanding of the regenerated history.

## **Chapter One: Tracing the footsteps: Cine-history.**

### **Introduction:**

The term "cinema" (short for cinematography) means "motion picture" that is derived from Greek and French roots. This designation aptly captures the essence of a largely visual art form that has been called "the most complete and powerful medium of communication and expression". A true definition, however, eludes us "for cinema is a synthesis of many arts (as well as a uniquely new one) and any adequate definition must account for the complex interrelations that obtain between the art's aesthetic and technological elements." These relations have been undergoing continual redefinition and transformation since the cinema was invented in the 1890s.

Given such complexities, any brief definition such as "The film is a story-telling medium; and story-telling is a vital form of thought" (to borrow a resonant phrase from the philosopher Susanne K. Langer) would be to oversimplify, and to ignore the mental potency of the image, which is a vital concern of many filmmakers working in both the fictional and non-fictional modes. (Dahllund, 2023) Cinema is secondly a socially-oriented expression. It provides a realistic and comprehensible portrait of society. It is a tool of education and entertainment. It is effective as it is flexible, indefinite, and simple, ready to attract and influence.

Nearly everyone has been to the cinema and seen a movie at some point in their lives. Whether they view it as a culturally significant act and a relatively new form of artistic expression with only a hundred-year history or not, everyone has had an experience with cinema and has been influenced and affected by this extraordinary medium. (Nevill, 2021)

Historical cinema is the re-creation of historical events in the form of a feature film which is characterized by the need for accuracy and detail in the depiction of the event. Historical events are re-enacted and recreated to the best of the director's ability with props and settings comparable to the period in which the event took place. This often involves the use of historical figures, major or minor groups involved with the event, and the construction of elaborate background scenery. The earliest instances of historical cinema were documentary films of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as *The Great Train Robbery*, a 1903 western set in 1860s Wyoming. The set of the film was designed to look historically accurate, yet there was little detailed accuracy. The film was meant to entertain. At the height of historical cinema, historical events were often depicted in propaganda films such as *The Battle of the Bulge* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* both depicting events of World War II. Today, historical cinema is often thought of as re-creating the past in a way that can teach people of the present about future events.

Marxism is one of the most influential theories of all time. Marxism is also referred to as a political and economic theory which describes the class struggles and their relation to production, and for revolutionary movements to a socialist society and finally to a classless society. (Block2021) Throughout history, there is no era where there was not some form of class system. As long as man has existed, there have been those who rule and those who are ruled. With ruling classes come culture, and inevitably culture becomes a way for the ruling class to distinguish themselves from the dominated classes.

While the ruling class elite partook in theatre and grandiose stage productions, the working class could often only afford cheap seats in music halls, which would depict comical or melodramatic sketches of their own social environment. This would often entail that the characters and situations depicted would offer no real critique of society for fear of upsetting the audience. The audience themselves would often struggle to comprehend the conclusions of the acts due to the vast social and intellectual differences between themselves and the middle-class performers. All this serves to show the cultural segregation and unequal worth of art aimed at different classes.

Moreover, the objective is to explore the existence of Marxist thought and themes in some of the world's most well-known and loved cinema. Starting with the Silent Hollywood era all the way through to modern-day New Zealand, we are to look at the ways in which Marxist ideas emerged during particular moments throughout history, with particular attention directed towards the Russian Revolution and the era of Stalinist Russia.

At the heart of Marxist theory is the idea that everything in history is determined by economic conditions. What this means is that art and culture will inevitably reflect the political and social climate of the time, no matter what the artist's intentionality. 'Political and social climate' at this stage in history was indeed a turbulent one, and as we will explore, the changing Marxist ideas of the time will also be reflected. Additionally, we are to look at film as a tool in which the ruling classes hold over the dominated classes, something which will then lead into the various methods of propaganda used by both capitalists and Marxists in their attempt to sway the general consensus of the working classes at the time. (Perry, 2021)

Furthermore, The Marxism theory in every historical cinema cannot be separated by the limitations of this study. Since too many historical cinemas related to the materialistic conception of history. However, the writer has analyzed a company to find every factor of production in its film and has found an epic film Rise and Fall of an Empire Caesar (1983). Who is trying to portray

Roman history by the materialistic conception of history and give some back references to the ancient Roman life who is identical with the slave system and class struggle.

Walter Lippmann introduces the term "Pseudo Environment" in his book "Public Opinion" in the year 1922. Later, he also introduced the term "Stereotypes" in 1943. He appears to be the first person to refer to any situation as a "Pseudo Environment". According to Lippmann, our existence through media is completely externalized. This externalized reality, which is based on our pseudo-environment, is very different from external objective reality. Further, he says media is the observer. On one side, the "real observer" is the reader. Between both, there is the newspaper. In other words, the newspaper or mini screen television is the observer. The "real observer" is only on the reader's side. Thus, he emphasized that in any scientific investigation, the real observer should be on the active side and through newspapers or movie theaters, he should perform all of his investigations (Arnold-Forster, 2023).

The concept of pseudo-environment is an important idea as we try to examine the mediation of cinema in film experience. This idea of pseudo-environment may either operate to enhance or distort the impact and the effects of the cinema towards the recognition and satisfaction of the film viewer. Also, an important element in the pseudo-environment concept is what Lippmann calls "The Cards fact and the News" that for each subject the environment contains facts or from these facts we create stories. The cards fact are the identifiable things that correspond to phenomena in the physical world while the news are the stories which we thereby structure round about those facts. (Arnold-Forster, 2023)

In his book "Public Opinion," Walter Lippmann described the very same phenomenon in a chapter entitled "The World Outside and the Pictures in our Heads." He termed this phenomenon pseudo-environment. The most striking thing about the pseudo-environment described by Lippmann is that it so largely consists of information received from others. It is an image of the

world created by information and experience. But in such a world, people might be wearing different glasses or viewing the world from different perspectives, and so the view is fragmented and selective. (D'Alessandro2023)

### **1.1. Brief history of cinema:**

The cinema first began, as far back as ancient Greece, with the use of shadow play. Using flat-surfaced figures, such as clay or cut paper, with a single source of light, the figures would throw a shadow on a wall that was captured by an audience. Though not direct manipulation of light and shadow, it was a very rudimentary form of projection. Fast forwarding to the Middle Ages, lantern projections were used to tell stories with simple cut figures on a glass slide, shifting and moving the figures to project motion. The invention of the magic lantern, in the 17th century, paved the way for slide projectors, which became widely used in the late 20th century. By focusing on the development of entertainment purely based on moving light and shadow, I'll be avoiding discussing photographic and optical technology before the introduction of the motion picture film, as that is a history in itself. (Herbert, 2021)

### **1.2. Evolution of cinema technology**

The basic building block of the cinema originated with Thomas Edison and the invention of the kinetoscope. This was a simple machine consisting of a spool of film passing over a light source, and onto a roller. The film was attached to a cylinder by pegs and passed over said cylinder to create a moving image. This method was quite inefficient, with only one person being able to view the film, by looking into the top of the cylinder. Nevertheless, this was the first step from still to moving photograph, and with some refinement ultimately led to the invention of the movie camera. Patented by Edison and his associate William Kennedy Laurie Dickson in 1891, this device, called the Kinetograph, had a huge impact on the cinematic medium.

This was the first machine to actually take photographs which when viewed at speed gave the impression of a moving image. A further device, called the Kinetoscope, was developed for the

viewing of films created with the Kinetograph. This helped to establish the cinema as a medium of private and individual entertainment, and in 1893 built the first contemporary cinema as we know it, called the Black Maria. Despite the glaring inefficiencies in this method of film production, Edison's machine had set the standard for the future of cinema, and by the turn of the 20th century was widely adopted. (Lipton and Lipton2021)

**Figure 01: Kinetoscope.**



120 years later, the Kinetoscope returns to Syros | Life | ekathimerini.com

In the early 18th century, people discovered that when they viewed the individual drawings in sequence, so very quickly (less than the 16 per second's standard now used for cinema), they created the illusion of movement, a phenomenon they named persistence of vision. Joseph-Antoine Plateau and Simon Stampfer each independently designed a stroboscopic device that led to the development of the phenakistoscope (though these were 6 years apart) in 1832 and 1833. A thaumatrope is a simple

toy, a disc with a picture on each side, that when spun creates an illusion that the two pictures have become one. It was invented in 1825.

The inventor of the Zoetrope is uncertain, several people devised it in 1834 and 1835, however credit usually goes to William George Horner who dubbed it the "Daedatelum". The term Zoetrope was not in popular use until the 1860s. The zoetrope is a cylinder with vertical slits cut along the sides. On the inner surface of the bottom of the cylinder is a band with images from a set of sequenced pictures. As the user peers through the slits at the pictures on the opposite side, the cylinder is then rotated and the user looks through the slits at the pictures opposite them, and due to persistence of vision, the user still sees the stationary images as a moving sequence. This was a very modern development of the basic concepts of the phenakistoscope. The zoetrope was different in that it was more affordable and less cumbersome, and it had the advantage that it was usually capable of being used by several people at once to see the moving picture sequences. It was a more durable predecessor of the flip book and a very early form of proto-cinema. (Veras, 2022)

**Figure 02: Zoetrope.**



#### History of Flipbooks & Moving Image – Fliptomania

The Lumiere brothers had a background in the photographic industry and were inspired by Edison's demonstration of moving pictures in 1889. With an inheritance of 50,000 francs from

their father, they pursued a career in photography. In 1894, they patented a plate-coating machine which Louis adapted into a motion picture camera and printer called the cinematographe. They patented this invention in February 1895. The brothers began filming and showing short documentaries, culminating in the first public exhibition of motion pictures at the grand cafe in Paris in December 1895. The success of the cinematographe led to international invitations and the production of over 700 films. In 1906, they sold the machine and focused on film production. Antoine's death in 1910 marked the decline of their filmmaking activity. The Lumiere archives contain over 1500 film titles, including notable works like "L'arroseur arrosé" and "La sortie des usines." (Lipton and Lipton2021)

**Figure 03: The Lumière Brothers.**



The Lumière Brothers, Pioneers of Cinema | HISTORY

**Figure 04: The Cinematograph.**



## The Lumière Brothers, Pioneers of Cinema - History in the Headlines

After the invention spread to Europe, the USA, and then the rest of the world, cinema shows brought an amazing escape and entertainment from real life to society. At that time, real life (during the invention and the early age of cinema) was quite hard because the whole world was facing economic depression of the 20th century and also World War I and II. People never thought that cinema would have such a big impact on their society and culture. On the other hand, many filmmakers incorporated the events of the world wars into their films. They not only depicted the events, but also described how they started and wanted to prevent the next war. This era created a different perspective and understanding of images and cultures. People began to understand that an image can convey a thousand meanings and that cultures need to be preserved. This event led to the long-lasting archiving and different perspectives of the world. (Abel, 2023) (Lipton and Lipton2021) (Neupert, 2022)

### **2.1. Historical Cinema Through Time**

This chapter aims to define historical cinema. It is a broad category, covering a wide range of films from the earliest actualities, reconstructed and re-enacted, to films that recreate the period and events for more metaphorical or symbolic purposes. Many of the key films,

moreover, have been made in countries other than the United States, though Hollywood has inevitably loomed large. Nevertheless, reference will be made throughout to specific examples from American cinema, and there will be a concentration on US films in the post-1960 period. This is chiefly for reasons of space and analytic manageability, but it also reflects the fact that a great deal of recent historical cinema has been concerned with the history of the United States itself.

Any consideration of the historical film needs to be sensitive to two overlapping but distinct dimensions of 'the past'. On the one hand, everyone has an immediate or unmediated sense of belonging to an historical epoch, what Arthur Marwick termed an 'organic relationship with the recent past'. Sustained investigation shows that only a tiny proportion of historical research written prior to the new academic trend towards social history has been 'about' the past as a set of relationships rather than in matters that are essentially timeless. But this 'history' is not necessarily immediate, and one of the principal vehicles for recalling past styles of life for lay people has been the historical film.

## **2.2. Evolution of historical cinema**

Historical cinema began to appear in the early 20th century with the birth of narrative film. The first uses of the historical past in film occurred "with the historical biograph," which included reenactments of newsworthy events and the lives of famous persons. This represents an important moment in the understanding of historical cinema, for it is the precursor to the historical film, in which the past is recreated for audiences to interpret and understand. Since this time, historical films have been offering evidence or popular ideas about the past, concentrating on dramatic or tragic events, memorable persons, or ordinary people in extraordinary situations, and usually are made in a manner to generate high box office and critical acclaim. Historical cinema has to be understood in its relation to the past, a past which is constantly being reinterpreted and renegotiated.

This concept of history as a continuing dialogue between the past and the present is profoundly affected by an audience's interpretation of the modern world, their concern for particular social and political issues, and the way they perceive their own cultural identity. This dialogue also assumes that there is a continuity from the past to the present, a connection of the cause and effect of events that created the modern day. This suggests that every chosen topic in historical film is, in essence, a comment on something contemporary to the filmmaker, which it often is but not necessarily on a conscious level.

### **2.3. Technological advancements in historical films**

The technology in the film industry has managed to change over the years, and this has helped to evolve cinema into what we see today. During the early years, technology in the film industry was very basic, and this was evident as it took around 70 years for the synchronization of sound and picture through the first 'talkie' film in America (1927). There are numerous ways in which technology has advanced cinema, but the biggest and most noticeable change is the use of computer-generated imagery (CGI), and the special effects which this technology allows for. The Lord of the Rings trilogy is a perfect example of a film(s) which has been enhanced by the use of CGI.

The director Peter Jackson made use of various CGI special effects to create the visual style of Middle Earth, but more so to enhance the battle scenes. This was evidently successful, as he later went on to use CGI in another two projects involving a remake of King Kong in 2005, and more recently the two recent Hobbit films adapted from the original novel by J.R.R. Tolkien. With such advanced technology in modern-day cinema, it is extremely easy to create a visually stunning fantasy genre film, but in all, this has affected the genre of historical films, allowing for more captivating visual effects and increased interest from spectators. An example of how the technology has advanced and changed historical films is the 2004 film King Arthur directed by Antoine Fuqua. With the use of CGI, more realistic and visually stunning battle scenes were

created. Although this is not an accurate representation of Arthurian Legend, it has increased the visual appeal to potential spectators. (Monaco, 2023)

In addition, the technological advances of the 20th century also had a significant influence on the way in which historical events were presented. Throughout the silent period, filmmakers began to move away from the stagey style of early filmmaking, towards a more naturalistic method. This was in part due to the improved quality of sound recording and projection, and a desire to compete with the growing spectacle of television. One of the most significant films to reflect this change was D.W. Griffith's *Abraham Lincoln* (1930) which utilized newly developed electrical recording techniques to produce a more naturalistic dialogue delivery.

#### **2.4. Representation of historical figures in cinema**

The continuing dominance of television as a source of historical information has motivated filmmakers to push the boundaries of historical realism, and one of the most successful ways in which this has been achieved is through the use of visual effects. Such effects have become far cheaper and more widely accessible since the 1980s. Many modern epics such as *Gladiator* (2000), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), and *The Alamo* (2004) utilize visual effects to recreate historical architecture, cityscapes, and vast battle scenes. It is likely that the trend towards historical realism and the use of VFX will continue, as it allows contemporary audiences to viscerally experience the past in a way that is both accessible and entertaining. (Lama, 2024)

On top of that, depiction of historical figures in cinema can be much disputed. A main genre in which historical figures are depicted is in biographical films, or 'biopics'. A biopic is a film that dramatizes the life of an actual person or people. Some biopics are a depiction of a specific event in an individual's life. Most often though, they attempt to show a balanced depiction of the person, including their character and faults. This is disputed as to how accurate a representation it is. To highlight this, Kingsley saw the depiction of Gandhi in Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* as so perfect as to put an end to his own depiction of the character in a

different film. Similarly, famously US LIFE magazine stated 'Historians are bound to argue over some points.

But this, no one will ever believe to caption an image from the film Abraham Lincoln (1930), referring to the fact that the film was a talkie, and at the time of the Civil War the events shown could not have been filmed. This highlights the problems of 'living memory', i.e. when the lives of figures are still in the memory of people living today. A balanced depiction that explored the good and bad of the figure would be considered controversial in this respect. Another problem is the depiction of off-key events that emerge as alternate history.

A good example would be the film *The Patriot*, it was intended as a completely fictional story, but due to its main character's many similarities to Francis Marion, and Marion's contested depiction in history it was seen by many as 'historically accurate' and was criticized for this. Stephenson argues that the main problem is that people aspire to learn their history from feature films, rather than from historians and books, and thus there is a demand for films to be an accurate depiction, but it is not always possible for this to happen. In an ideal world, a biopic of a figure or event would be accompanied by a documentary giving the detailed history so that people can differentiate between what they have learned from the film, and what really happened. Started in 2004 and overseen by Robert Rosenstone, the docudrama has made an attempt to bridge the gap between feature film and documentary, with mixed success. (Gupta, 2023)

## **2.5. Historical cinema and Racial stereotypes**

Native Americans have fared no better with the depiction of "the Noble Savage" in films such as "Last of the Mohicans" or "Dances with Wolves." While it may seem positive, the stereotype remains the same. The Noble Savage is depicted as close to nature because he is considered too stupid or undeveloped to create a real society and is ultimately doomed - a stereotype no better than the previous one of the drunken Indian who sells his land to the

whites. The damage caused by these stereotypes is the miseducation of today's society about the true history of the affected people, leading to unconscious prejudices among their descendants. (Berny2020)

For instance, Africans have largely been characterized by the stereotype of the "coon" - the happy-go-lucky, lazy, subhuman being who is content to be a slave to his white master. This stereotype originated from the depiction of blacks in minstrel shows in the early 19th century and has been a constant in historical films involving Africans. The most recent example of this is in the film "Amistad." The Africans who revolt and take over the ship are depicted as savage warriors unable to even understand the language of their Spanish captors, let alone organize a revolt without their white savior, Cinque. Although the film attempts to give a positive account of the event, and despite what the director may argue, the film is riddled with racial connotations of black inferiority. (Cuevas, 2023)

It is not difficult to imagine that historical films, with their depiction of ethnic groups and the cultures, customs, and traditions of those particular groups, would project racial stereotypes and a common identity for the entire race. These racial stereotypes have become more damaging and divisive over the past two centuries, as colonization and imperialism increased contact between Europeans and the peoples of other lands. The treatment of racial stereotypes has been largely tied to the depiction and misrepresentation of colonized peoples, particularly Africans and Native Americans. Throughout the history of American historical film, both colonized peoples have been depicted as uncivilized, backward, and inferior in order to justify the acts of European colonizers in subjugating them. (Young, 2020)

## **2.6. Marxist themes in historical cinema**

At the most obvious level, a great deal of historical cinema will depict moments of revolutionary activity or change. This is useful for Marxist analysis as these moments of change are times when contradictions in society are at their most tense, and often lead to the upheaval

of one class by another. Moreover, revolution itself is a basic concept within Marxism. The Marxist theory of historical inevitability of revolution hinges mainly on the theory of the inevitability of the fault at the heart of historical materialism.

In history, says Marx, the final cause of all social changes and political revolutions will be found in economic changes in the mode of production and exchange. This is an idea that has been explored by many historical films. Often, they will show the failure of a particular set of ruling elites to adapt their mode of production to the changing economic climate, which according to Marx would lead to a crisis of the relations of production and pave the way for revolution by the subordinate classes. An example of this kind of theme can be found in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

The film is set during the French and Indian war, a time when the European modes of production and colonization changed the economic landscape of America and paved the way for a new ruling class, however the native Americans did not have the same power to change their already existing mode of life, resulting in a contradiction and ultimately the destruction of the Indian way of life. At the end of the film, we see the beginning of the conquest of Quebec by the English, a battle which would change the ruling classes in North America, an event that would according to Marx be due to a change in the relations of production. This is but one example, historical cinema is rife with tales of revolution and change, all of which are easy to fit into the Marxist theory of history. (Rosenstone, 2020)

The common theme between the Irish in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* and the Africans in America in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is that oppression of their class has resulted in their debasement to positions where they are indistinguishable from their own slaves. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, African Americans who are already slaves are subject to the Tom shows the change of the position of the Irish social class of Ireland as they were drawn into the treaty into

an English-speaking country, effectively making Ireland a civilian was required to join, the Royal Irish Constabulary or RIC as a preceding position to joining the British forces.

Here they would be required to suppress the nationalist movements through many conflicts with their own countrymen. They felt they were losing their own sense of national identity, and the Kells recruitment scene illustrates this by showing that the group must, in fact, relearn the Irish language in order to work as officers at a higher wage than their civilian counterparts.

(Bhroin, 2021) (Humble, 2020)

History has shown, despite racism not being solely present in any age, that it has been a means to justify the oppression of others through the division of class or to ease one's own situation through knowing that at least they are of a higher class than someone else. Uncle Tom's Cabin encompasses the plight of African Americans during the time of the Civil War and Emancipation Act who largely consist of former slaves or descendants of slaves, were largely below the poverty line, and subject to prejudice throughout the southern states of America. Evident in the scene where Tom is sold by a property owner to settle debts, it is clear that he is considered a possession and his emotional resilience at this time is poignant in demonstrating the human suffering because of class division and racial oppression. (Thompson, 2021)

## **2.7. Social inequality and oppression**

The existence of social inequality and oppression is a result of capitalism, either intentionally through the exploitation of people and resources or unintentionally through a badly set economic system. "There is an immense accumulation of the population in Ireland. The misery in these cesspools is something unexampled. These people are almost naked, filthy beyond description, squalid, worn down and in part crippled." The result of this was an uprising by the lower classes who sought to improve their situation. The Irish do so through an attempt to emigrate, although they are not driven as immigrants but pulled as slaves. This resulted in

failure as all other classes were able to use emigration as an easier alternative to relieve economic pressures and improve life quality, social mobility, and benefit, effectively assimilating or escaping their class. (Das, 2022)

### **3.1. History through Hollywood lens: Facts or Fabrications.**

Films play a significant role in shaping our views of the past. We are frequently introduced to specific events in our history via engaging film or television, yet sometimes those events have been dramatized to make them more appealing to the viewers. More often than not, oversimplification of events and a desire to tell a good story are the reasons given. The result is that the general public may accept a good deal of what they see in historical films as "what actually happened". This is especially true of periods of history that are not well-documented, like medieval times. In this case, people will often accept the facts as presented in a film, where they would be more skeptical were the same information delivered in the form of a textbook. Thus, it is the responsibility of the teachers to make critical viewers of their students when examining portrayals of historical events in the popular media.

Nowhere is this more relevant than in the teaching of Arthurian legend. Hardly any other legend steeped in the historical culture of a nation has endured so well in the modern era, or been represented more times in more forms. Since its supposed heyday in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this subject has been used by novelists, playwrights and of course filmmakers to give a sense of national identity to the English. For a nation that has lost and gained a sense of national identity a number of times throughout its history, the Arthurian legend has addressed what it was to be English at that time, and at many other times since then.

### **3.2. Distortion of historical events**

Emmerich's "The Patriot" also shows distortion of American history. The facts of the false British burning of a church with people inside it, and the massacre of British wounded and

prisoners were put in his film for heroizing Benjamin Martin's character, which in actual history may not be proven.(Messham-Muir et al., 2023)

In a similar manner, Ridley Scott's "Gladiator" also shows the extreme distortion of historical events. The character of Commodus is highly exaggerated. The real Commodus thought himself to be a tough ruler that appealed to the army, and was killed by his wrestling partner in the gladiator ring, not slain in the Colosseum by a general preceding from a victory over Germanic tribes. Because the events in the film contrast sharply with the historical record of Commodus' reign and the emperor's relationships with leading senators and his sister, these changes qualify as more than mere artistic license. (Bright, 2020)

Narrating the related events most coherently in order to make a sound story, Hollywood cinema often resulted in distortion of historical events in their films. Most of them changes reflect a major absence of confidence on the part of the movie makers who think that the original events were not interesting enough and American audiences may find it rather dull. These changes, however, may also reflect the ignorance on the part of the movie makers, who were likely cutting corners. There have been numerous examples of changes made in historical events to suit the taste of audiences and sometimes to satisfy the sense of national pride of certain groups.

The epic "Titanic" shows the historical event of "women and children first," yet it was twisted when Caledon Hockley bribed the crew to lock non-first-class passengers below decks. In fact, this never happened and the Master-at-arms was killed for letting the third-class passengers up to the boat deck. Here it reflects the typical class tension of people at that time when Titanic sank, to suit its today's audience specific issues. (Betts, 2023)

When people with little interest or knowledge of who a historical figure was and what they did think about that person, it is more than likely that they will think about the figure in the context of something they have seen on TV or at the movies. This is a scary thought since it can

have little to no resemblance of who that person actually was. Many figures in history have been misrepresented or turned into someone they weren't by Hollywood films. Richard Attenborough said, "When you make a film, you make a story. A film is not a history lesson" (Schwarz, 2003).

While this may be true, it is still a fact that films are a major source of historical information for many people. So, when a figure such as Abraham Lincoln is reincarnated into a vampire slaying action hero in the film "Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Slayer," the results can be horrific. At the same time, it is hard to fault Hollywood studios for distorting historical figures. They are making movies to make money, and the sad fact is that the almost unrecognizable action hero vampire slaying Lincoln made over \$376 million worldwide according to boxofficemojo.com. But the issue remains that movies such as the action hero Lincoln version are created too often and go on to be a person's main view or only view of who that figure actually was. In the case of Lincoln, it is of a great president who abolished slavery and preserved the union during one of the most tumultuous times in American history. (Rosenstone, 2020)

### **3.3. Historical accuracy in Hollywood film**

Historical accuracy has often been debated in terms of the cinematic depiction of historical events. The release of films that are supposed to portray particular historical events or eras become instant points of discussion through its content and its historical accuracy. "History through Hollywood's Lens: The movie" has an interesting title, research directed by J. E. Neville and based on a book by Robert Toplin, explains that history is becoming interesting and also giving a subject more appeal through celluloid. (Bales, 2020)

Several authors who have written on history and film have criticized Hollywood and its depictions of history. Robert Rosenstone first raises the question, "Does it make sense to criticize a film for distorting history? After all, historical accounts do vary, and most films include a degree of distortion" (Carnes, 313). While it is true that historical accounts often vary,

many films do take great liberties in their portrayals. Much of the criticism from historians towards Hollywood stems from the fact that filmmakers take these liberties because they realize that an audience's preconceived notions of history are often stronger than the truth. David McCullough stated that Hollywood is "not only slightly off on history. It is a perversion of history" (Carnes, 313).

This perversion of history is what many historians and authors find troubling with Hollywood's depictions. Supporters of historical films often argue that while the movie may not portray the actual events, it gives the audience a feel for what actually did occur. This argument brings about another debate in itself as to whether or not understanding and interpretation take precedence over historical knowledge (Rosenstone, 87). Fundamentally, much of the critique that historical authors have of Hollywood's efforts is rooted in the fact that films take history out of its context and pervert the actual events in order to make a movie more entertaining and coherent to an audience. (Lee, 2023)

One of the most striking elements of "The Hispanic and Italian in American Films" was the distortion of history and fact that has occurred within Hispanic and Italian cinema. Historical events were depicted in a fabricated manner and the lives of the Italian and Hispanic communities were represented in an entirely different light. The Spaniard and U.S. government dealings regarding water and electricity rights for the Los Angeles area from Mexican farmers and landowners in the early 20th century was largely an unseen aspect in the history of the United States pertaining to the Hispanic community.

Within the film "Tortilla Soup," the scene consisting of the family's first dinner together at Miss. Ybarra's house captured the essence of the community and the trivial events in life that are the biggest. This moment in time had no historical significance nor did it depicted the poverty, struggle, or discrimination faced by the Hispanic community over the past hundred years in the United States.

The "California Inheritance Tax" was an exact replica of the "The Spaniard" tale of a Mexican-American family who were left a house by their relatives and later had it taken by the U.S. government due to debts and minimal knowledge of English. This instance is depicted in the film when the Oldest Son goes to the local government office and is confronted by disorienting advice on how to keep his money out of the government's hands. Although it is a different event in history, it is still a distortion of what really happened and the echoes of laughter and hardships are reflected in the film. The mere mention of these surroundings in a lighthearted family film undermines the true events and the trials and tribulations faced by Hispanic communities in Los Angeles to this day. (D'acierno, 2021)

But there are deeper motivations behind attempts to exonerate historical cinema from truthful scrutiny. History has long been used as a legitimating device in contemporary social and political issues, a tool that has not gone ignored by the film industry. Due to the aforementioned potential for film as history to shape public memory, there is significant fear that persistent evidence of historical films as distorters of truth may lead to a decline in the film's contemporary use as a kind of 'shadow history'. The concerns of the modern era are not simply confined to the making of historical film, as alterations in history past are still seen to hold potential to affect social issues in the present, and as such the potential effects of distorted cinematic history are considered to have lasting implications.

#### **4.1. Cinema's Transformative Power.**

The historical content of Western films has often been questionable, yet alleged inaccuracies and distortions in comparison with the real historical events may not be significant. According to Lowenthal (1988), the essence of the past for an individual is something apart from what professional history has established, and the films with the most historically accurate content may not be the most powerful and effective. (Qizi and Umarova2021)

In Hollywood, the major historical film has been the exception rather than the rule. A costly enterprise, Hollywood has only taken the risk of producing such a film during periods of national crisis, such as the 1930s and during the war years. The job of interpreting and upholding the value and glory of the American past has been left largely to the Western genre. The more recent films, such as "We Were Soldiers," have purported to show less glorious events.

Cinema as a means of mass production and of potentially affecting the masses became an important tool in the 20th century. Both military and civilian authorities have been quick to realize its potential. Given the freedom and money to pursue their interests after the war, the Hollywood moguls and the Soviet filmmakers quickly set about the task of interpreting and reshaping the past in a visual form.(Schatz)

The power of cinema is evident in the fact that historians have often expressed concerns over the ways in which specific historical events are depicted in films, especially when the depiction varies greatly from the actual historical account. The concern here is that individuals will eventually adopt the film's depiction as the "true account" of the event. This was the general concern from historians in New Zealand regarding the film "Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers". The concern was that generations to come would assume that the film portrayed an accurate account of the World Wars and would further assume that this was common knowledge in the academic community. (Keen2022)

Cinema, perhaps more than any other medium, can be an incredibly influential and vital force when it comes to shaping and molding an individual's understanding and perception of the aesthetics encompassing a particular historical time period or event. Through the mesmerizing power of film, we find ourselves relying predominantly on these captivating mental images bestowed upon us by movies as our primary reference point whenever we cast our minds back to significant events throughout history. Remarkably, these cinematic

depictions, meticulously crafted by the capable hands of filmmakers, tend to hold even greater sway and impact over us than the images that emerge from the depths of historical evidence.

The reason behind this lies in the extraordinary ability of film to forge an indescribable bond with our deepest emotions, surpassing that which can ever be achieved by the written words etched upon a document or the logical propositions penned on a piece of paper. Thus, it becomes undeniable that the medium of cinema possesses an unparalleled prowess in molding our perception, leaving an indelible mark on our understanding of history's unyielding tapestry.

Film is the most appreciated medium for regenerating history. It has been one of the main channels for delivering historical knowledge and culture to the public, and, in this respect, it has a significant role in historical culture. Films produced up to the present day reveal that the period depicted in the film is a good vehicle for actualism: the writer and the director want to tell us how similar the phenomena of the past are to a similar problem today. This creates the feeling that these events will actually happen. It is revealed that around 10 percent of spectators believe that what they see on the screen is a real event. This is referred to as the "illusion of reality in cinema". The cinematic illusion of reality not only relates to the represented reality but is also maintained by projective techniques, e.g., close-ups and tracking, that are used to exhibit reality. In addition to reality, it can also be adapted to a story by substituting edits and by mimicking the reality through a stable approach, a stable approach that belongs to pre-classical cinema and that has been used in many feature films, figures, and space figures.

Films are products that can be enjoyed but are also means of exploring an interpretation of historical events. They, therefore, warrant historical scrutiny. If the spectators become aware that fictional characters and events are used to illustrate historical facts, then the film actors and settings should bear an extensive resemblance to the people and objects they represent. The problem is that whenever the film industry produces a historical film, it offers a highly artistic interpretation of historical events that does not necessarily follow the rules of historical science.

Moreover, except for the existential theatrical representation, films are the only complex art form that demonstrates historical events through an audiovisual medium. It may closely follow a historical narrative or entirely diverge from it, but what is relevant is the imposed originality or slight modification of the historical events by means of a personal artistic act. Then the history of a nation and its myths can be manipulated and given a specific interpretation.

Too often, matters of veracity have occupied more of the debate about films that contain historical elements than such other critical concerns as what those films mean, how they are likely to affect their viewers, and even how they differ from other film genres. They ignore fundamental facts about the nature of historical trauma, i.e., that its single most consistent aspect is its ugliness, that its myriad effects on both survivors and victimizers are frequently dire and irreversible, and, most significantly, that history cannot be changed. Director Michel Brault admitted that "it is necessary to fabricate when you are making a film. That does not mean that you must lie, but that you have the right to wrap truth in fiction. The problem is to not lose the truth." Though Brault's expectations are reasonable, many directors who take similar liberties are accused not only of "adaptational license" (Gorbman's term), but of deceit or a lack of artistic ethics.

Vividly bringing historical events and figures to life is a legitimate and fascinating aspect of cinema that has existed since the earliest days of the medium. Critics and audiences have noted, however, that for various reasons film renderings of history often deviate, at times significantly, from history itself. Friedrich, for one, acknowledges this fact yet insists on the "absolute right" of the filmmaker, under "artistic privilege," to diverge from the historical record. While Gorbman sees such deviations as "gross misrepresentations or even outright fabrications of the facts often [which] tend to distort or limit public awareness of the complexity of the actual events," he concedes that history also "necessarily undergoes a transformation in the process of

becoming a film narrative: for any historical representation even a scholarly treatise is, at base, an act of interpretation." (Rosenstone, 2020)

The main reason why history movies are deemed controversial is the perception of bad or weak history (with some nuances on disapproval, political resistance, or mild dislike) rather than the one of good history movies that represent real historical events poorly or inaccurately. These entertaining films are remembered as exceptions of the genre rather than as quality samples of historical discourse (historical discourse not only acting as conductors of historical knowledge but, very importantly, as conduits for historical knowledge, though).

At this point we can reconnect with the mainstream current in cinema studies: how we interpret films, and its uses, is as important as the artistic/technical qualities of movies themselves. Especially those uses which are deeply embedded in our socio-cultural attitudes. In this sense, cinema has been a "transcendental waterloo" for all the disciplines that subscribe to it: cultural studies, reception studies, and sociology, in general, have gone to it. This approach has facilitated and has amplified the construction of a strong "popular legend" for history movies that limit our interpretative horizons about these narrational representations of the past. (Rosenstone, 2020)

### **5.1. Reconstructing realities: historical narratives re-shaping public perception**

The creation of national historical narratives is at the heart of collective human thought; it is the vehicle through which a nation's collective memory is passed from generation to generation. What has been discussed to a lesser degree is the influence of evidence, especially new evidence, on that cultural dialogue, mainly because the new evidence has often been disseminated by those whose best intent has been to show that which is considered a historical fact is not well supported in primary-source records. What the public has often taken for the truth is exposed as not completely so.

It should be the duty of intellectuals to take into consideration the widest possible public opinion, and thus to communicate with a wide range of interests. Historians have a similar obligation. The majority of society informs themselves with the knowledge accessible to the public. Both of these groups serve in the creation and dissemination of historical narratives, no matter how fast they are reforming. The challenge is to find a way to integrate them to better influence public opinion and policy through these newly reforming historical narratives. For many years, historical narratives have been created almost exclusively by the intellectual elite. Only until the introduction of distinguished films, television, radio, magazines, and newspapers could stories be brought into an immediate general focus. The use of these media sources has made it more difficult for historians and others to look forward to influencing the interpretation of historical narratives in a method that is more exact.

## **5.2. The impact of historical narratives on public perception**

This part will explore the influence of historical narratives on public perception. Both historical narratives and public opinion play an important role in the implementation of policy and how it is carried out. It is through historical narratives, the lens in which a society views the past, that many people derive their opinions. However, these narratives have largely been shaped by the elites. Taking this into consideration is important when analyzing how public opinion is formed and implemented.

As Strolovitch puts it, "communication across racial, economic, gender, and ideological divides is difficult to foster and sustain, even when people agree on some underlying premises and differ only in their preferred policy." Through the deliberate crafting and manipulation of historical narratives, it becomes possible to make people across the divide believe that they are

not in fact in agreement. By using framing and collective memory, people can be persuaded to believe that they are in fact polar opposites.

Historical events shape countries' identities. How people perceive their own as well as foreign nations is often affected by historical narratives in which key events, moments, or figures are addressed or manipulated. Adjustment of historical narratives can be particularly instrumental in shaping undesirable public perceptions, thus allowing policymakers to try to alter unwelcoming or negative public opinion. Most diplomatic tensions occur when historical accounts differ in reinterpretations, or when events are directly overlooked in meaningful ways. While states aim to minimize conflicts that emerge from different historical interpretations and recognize the influence of historical narratives, governments on both sides of the fence equally try to manipulate or alter the narrative and strategic position. (Ecker et al.2022)

The book studied by Brewer and Stern not only emphasized that there is more to belief in the past than evaluating and assessing the source, evidence, and political discretion available to the observer, but also that we know very little about why people seem to genuinely appear to hold as truth what the book terms historically acquired knowledge. In this context, history is understood as a particular consensus based on interpreted, unchanged, reified communicated facts about which people are passively duped or selectively isolated. According to the book, the historical events can occur either in the past or in the future and may never be evident. (Bhat et al., 2023)

### **5.3. Historical narratives shaping public perception**

This article explores how historical narratives help shape public opinion. Two main ideas are analyzed. Firstly, that history can be used to manipulate information and beliefs. In this, it may or may not be constructed. Second, that it is widely acknowledged that there are historical sea changes that influence the manner in which events of the past are analyzed and understood by people. This study has not only noted the manner in which ideas about past events have

taken root and grown into real beliefs, in absence of any proof, but has also drawn out the link between these beliefs and people's subsequent attitudes, opinions, and preferences. So, the researchers concluded that while some opinions are the result of limited and partisan historical accounts to which people have been pushy-sold, others are the result of the way in which past events are reified and have grown into real beliefs that exist objectively in absence of any skeptical manipulation.

The focus here is only on the general public and the influence of historical narratives on them. There are several reasons for this theoretical choice. This choice is justified first, because there are practical reasons. It makes sense to define research problems that can be investigated in a short time and within the reach of a group of scholars. Second, there are theoretical reasons. Historical narratives influence political decisions and definitions of collective identities, but to a certain extent these kinds of influence are analyzed by some scholars. Instead, the role of historical narratives in shaping perspectives and theories of the general public is often overlooked. Finally, public perceptions of historical events shape the main historical narratives. These discourses, therefore, heavily depend on the public's historical consciousness.

The way history is depicted to the public can vary widely from one era to the next, even when different historical accounts refer to the same actual facts. The process through which these different viewpoints are created is based on the mechanisms by which individuals and social groups select, interpret, and communicate historical narratives. History is constantly changing, since the reading of different sources or the discovery of new interpretations on pharaonic papyruses and archives can modify the way we frame a historical fact. Historical narratives are inherently biased, because the perspectives of those interpreting the history of the past are influenced by the historical, social, and cultural background in which they live. This statement can also be applied in the case of scientists.

## **Conclusion**

Cinema is not just a form of entertainment; it is a complex art form that combines various elements to create a powerful medium of storytelling. It has a significant impact on society, shaping our perceptions, beliefs, and values. Through its ability to educate and entertain, cinema has the power to influence and inspire audiences.

One of the key aspects of cinema is its ability to reflect the political and social climate of its time. Films often serve as a mirror to society, addressing important issues and challenging prevailing ideologies. Historical cinema, for example, re-creates past events with accuracy and detail, allowing audiences to gain a deeper understanding of history. By depicting historical events on screen, cinema not only educates but also helps to preserve and commemorate important moments in time.

Furthermore, cinema has been a platform for the exploration of Marxist ideas and themes. Many well-known films have delved into the complexities of class struggle, inequality, and the exploitation of labor. By presenting these ideas in a visual and narrative form, cinema has the power to provoke thought and spark discussions about societal structures and power dynamics.

The concept of pseudo-environment is another important aspect of cinema. It highlights the role of media in shaping our perception of reality. Through the use of visual effects, sound design, and storytelling techniques, cinema creates a simulated environment that can sometimes blur the lines between fiction and reality. This pseudo-environment can influence our understanding of the world and shape our beliefs and attitudes.

Moreover, the evolution of cinema technology has revolutionized the medium and paved the way for modern filmmaking. From the early days of the kinetoscope to the invention of the cinematographe, advancements in technology have allowed filmmakers to push the boundaries of creativity and storytelling. The introduction of sound, color, and special effects has

transformed cinema into a multi-sensory experience, captivating audiences and enhancing the power of storytelling.

## **Chapter Two: Cinema's depiction of Glory, Oppression, and the Re-designing of History.**

### **Introduction**

Cinema has long been a powerful medium for depicting various themes such as glory, oppression, and the re-designing of history. In the context of glory, cinema often depicts historical events, military achievements, and heroic figures in a glorified manner. This depiction of glory in historical contexts serves to evoke a sense of pride and admiration among viewers. On the other hand, oppression is a recurring theme in cinema, where the struggles of individuals or communities against oppressive forces are depicted. This theme

can be seen in various forms, such as political oppression, social injustice, or personal struggles.

This chapter aims to define the terms "glorious" and "oppressed" in order to establish a framework to evaluate the depiction of historical concepts in films, specifically focusing on the critique of their depiction. It will argue that the representation of significant historical moments often lacks thorough examination and is inaccurate in providing a truly historical account. Conversely, the depiction of suppressed historical events is often overlooked or downplayed, overshadowed by the emphasis on glorious events. This correlation between the two concepts in the latter situation will be identified as problematic, as it implies the presentation of a one-sided perspective and highlights the difficulties filmmakers encounter in maintaining a balance between these two types of events.

Moreover, the current chapter examines how cinema depicts historical events, specifically focusing on both glorious moments and experiences of the oppressed. By analyzing these contrasting depictions, the chapter aims to show how movies re-shape our understanding of history and to show that films are in fact historical artifacts that are shaped by a specific social and political context.

### **Defining the: "Glorious" and "Oppressed" in Historical films**

the Glorious and the oppressed are terms used to describe the actions of individuals who lead a certain lifestyle. Typically, these individuals embody the struggles of a hero who is determined to guide their community towards a new and independent life, or to attain newfound freedom. This type of hero is often depicted as facing oppression (Darmawan and Simanjuntak2022). An excellent example of this can be seen in the movie "The Patriot," where Benjamin Martin fights alongside his son to rescue him from the hands of Tavington, who intends to kill him. This particular scene highlights Benjamin Martin's refusal to accept

the current state of affairs. He understands that in order to improve the lives of his people, he must take action to liberate them from the British Empire's rule.

This scene is considered glorious because its purpose is to save and liberate the people, leading them towards a brighter future. The criteria for categorizing an action as glorious is flexible (DeSilva and McGuire, 2021) as it depends on the impact it has on others and the assistance it provides in transitioning to a better situation.

On the other hand, those who are classified as oppressed are individuals who strive to improve their present circumstances. However, they lack the freedom to actively bring about change. Often, they face negative experiences as they are perceived as traitors or threats by those who wish to maintain the existing status. Generally, individuals with experiences or traits that align with the oppressed are often overlooked by heroes and treated as secondary priorities. However, there are occasions where heroes choose to deliberately assist the oppressed due to shared experiences or characteristics. Typically, these heroes depict the struggles of a leader who is determined to guide their people towards a new life, establish an independent community, or gain newfound freedom. They are commonly depicted as facing oppression themselves.

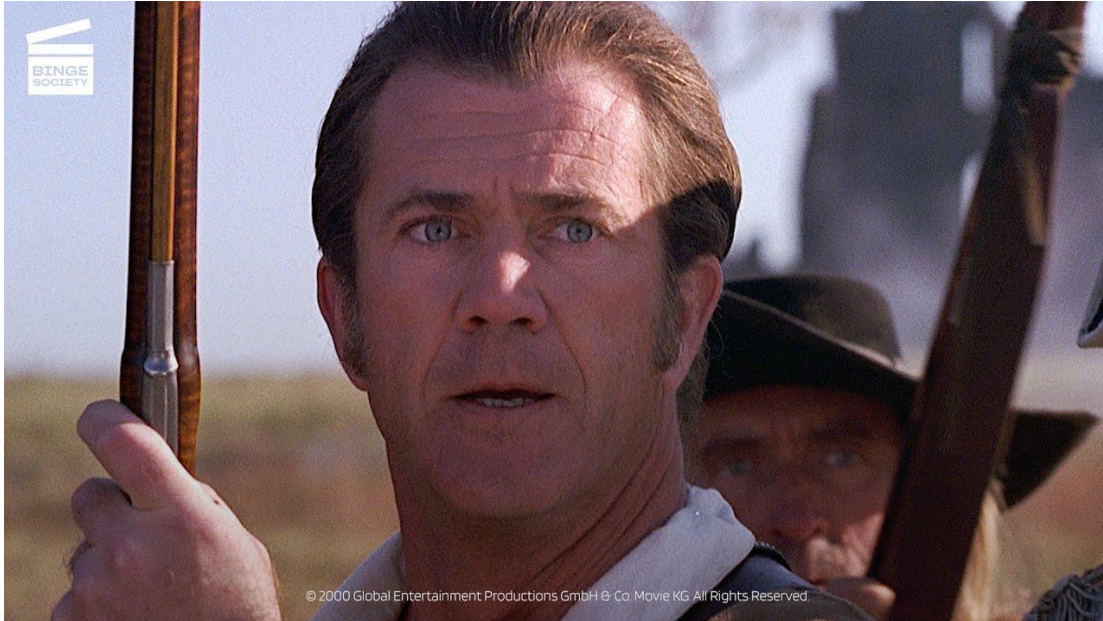
**Fig.5: The Patriot's battle scene in The Patriot 2000.**



**Source:** "True Action: The Patriot - THE BULLETPROOF ACTION."

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bulletproofaction.com%2F2016%2F11%2F28%2Ftrue-action-the-patriot.htm>

**Fig.6.:** The Battle scene in The Patriot 2000.



**Source:**The Patriot: It's personal- Binge Society-Youtube

<https://youtu.be/qoPpesf15Ig>

Glory in cinema can be interesting to discuss since its very broad characteristics allow it to be utilized in many ways. That being said, the impacts of themes depicting glorious moments and if they actually lead to victory can be rather profound. As represented in *The Lord of the Rings*, a small force of men, elves, and dwarfs will too often overcome immense evil working against a literal hell on earth. As seen in this example, the glorious theme often leads to victory, though that victory may not be permanent.

In contradistinction, the movie *Glory* shows how an all-black regiment of Union soldiers fighting in the Civil War initially suffered defeat, only to later prove their worth as soldiers in an assault on Fort Wagner. This theme can be a powerful one, yet what is more important to note is whether or not it was the theme that led to victory, or the victory itself gave credence to the theme. For the former case of *LOTR*, the theme brought the victory. But for the latter case of *Glory*, it was the brave actions of the soldiers that first led to the victory, giving the theme retrospective significance. It is the case where the theme itself must be shown to act as

a catalyst in that it changes the situation from what it would have been without it. Such a depiction is difficult and often rare to properly fulfill.

American cinema has played a significant role in the creation of historical myths about the nation and the relationships between the races, which have helped to shape self-conceptions and worldviews among the American people. When representing history on film, there is often too large an emphasis placed on specific historical events that are claimed to be presented with high degrees of accuracy. Due to this, viewers with little historical knowledge and understanding of causal relationships between events and the long-term evolution of historical processes can become misled into assuming that certain events depicted in history are more important than they actually are.

With one historian's interpretation of an event being different from another's, this is known to influence a film director's depiction of history with a particular spin. An interpretation which is largely influenced by the society and culture with which they belong, hence a strong American sentiment is likely to be reflected. In the case of 'Glory,' for example, one must consider the fact that the film was created to honor America's first all-black regiment, yet bear in mind the timing of the film's release was in the wake of America's civil rights movement.

The Glorious are typically depicted in their full grandeur. They are almost always shown to be of high class, and wearing the attire of this class. They are normally white and have very proper ways of speaking. When Kings and Queens are depicted, often the most familiar historical giants, they almost always have a sound education and know how to display this. For example, Abraham Lincoln has been glorified in movies through various depictions that highlight his leadership during a critical period in American history. Films depict Lincoln as a statesman who played a pivotal role in saving the nation, emphasizing his decision-making skills and the challenges he faced without attributing his actions to divine wisdom (Illness Crisis & Loss 2022).

Additionally, Lincoln is often depicted as a figure marked by sorrow and grief, showcasing his emotional depth and the burdens he carried during his presidency, which humanizes his historical persona (Religions 2012). Furthermore, children's literature and young adult trade books also contribute to the glorification of Lincoln by emphasizing his importance as one of the most influential figures in 19th-century America, ensuring that his legacy is remembered and valued by younger audiences (Social Studies Research and Practice 2018).

These depictions collectively contribute to the glorification of Abraham Lincoln in movies, immortalizing his contributions to American history and depicting him as a revered and iconic figure.

An allied cause to change the character of the protagonist exists in oppression of a darker tone, such as genocide and the destruction of a culture, which is seen in the movie "Pocahontas" (1995) has faced criticism from indigenous communities for whitewashing and erasing a genocidal history (Fonneland, 2020). This criticism suggests that the film may have depicted genocidal acts in a way that downplays or misrepresents the historical realities of violence and oppression faced by indigenous populations. The depictions of historical events in a manner that glosses over or distorts genocidal acts can contribute to the glorification or normalization of violence against marginalized groups.

This issue is not unique to the depiction of indigenous history in films, as historical inaccuracies and misrepresentations can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and narratives that undermine the gravity of genocidal acts (Srivastava, 2014). It is essential to critically examine how historical events, particularly those involving genocide, are depicted in movies to ensure that they are depicted accurately and respectfully, without glorifying or trivializing the suffering of affected communities.

The focus of the aforementioned emotion can come in various forms of oppression. A common depiction of the oppressed is slavery, which is seen in Spartacus. In this film, the

majority of oppression occurs to slaves, however, the hero of the story is a gladiator. Within the content of the film, his imprisonment and forced combat serve as an analogy to slavery. At the commencement of the film, Spartacus is purchased by a lanista to be trained as a gladiator. When he is informed of the nature of his servitude and taken away from his wife, he becomes enraged and attempts to break free but is unsuccessful. This serves as an alternate depiction of the oppressed, where the loss of freedom leads to a change in character to resist the status quo or succumb to a darker nature.

In the context of historical films, the oppressed are often a key focus in determining the morality of the opposition and moral compass of the protagonist. As such, various depictions of the oppressed are assembled to sway audience opinion and evoke emotion, whether it is pity, anger for the treatment of the oppressed, or satisfaction in knowing that justice is served.

## **2.2. Constructing Heroes and Villains: Shaping Historical Figures on Screen.**

The depiction of historical figures on screen is crucial as it influences perceptions, values, and behaviors. Historical figures depicted in movies act as models of values and beliefs, impacting how audiences perceive and interpret history (Wakefield et al.2003). The media, including films, plays a significant role in shaping behavior trajectories and influencing societal norms, with popular films being considered as influential as parents and teachers in modeling values and behaviors (Wakefield et al.2003).

Historical movies offer an alternative method of conveying historical atmosphere and educating audiences about significant events and figures (Azmi, 2017). Moreover, word-of-mouth communication's impact on movie admissions underscores the influence of audience perceptions and discussions on the success and reception of historical films (Moul, 2007). Additionally, the depiction of colonization in cinema, as observed in period movies, can provide insights into historical events and figures, shedding light on the complexities and consequences of colonization (Mustafa & Riaz, 2022). In summary, historical figures on

screen play a vital role in shaping cultural narratives, influencing societal perceptions, and educating audiences about the past.

Heroes and villains are integral components of films that fit within the classic storylines mentioned previously; as a result, historical films often depict historical figures as clear heroes or villains. For a figure to be depicted as a hero or a villain, it must first be determined what constitutes heroism or villainy.

The concept of "villain" is applied both to figures from history and moral. The concept of "heroes" and "villains" are especially useful in discussing the construction of historical characters in film. When a historical setting is chosen for a film, it still must have a story to tell. Often, historical narratives are presented in ways similar to classic storylines in which there is a hero figure who must overcome a great adversary in order to achieve his goals. Donald Maletz points out that the hero/villain dynamic is especially important in American films, as it is the basis for the American outlook on history as a chain of events led by great individuals (Maletz, p. 163). This simple perspective of history is easily convertible to film and is thus utilized in the depiction of historical figures.

Furthermore, although oppression is the framework of the story, moments where the glorious characteristics are expressed are often the highlights of the movie. These moments deviate from the main plot of the story and is a common technique used to amplify the characters of the oppressed. The representation of these glorious moments is often idealized, exaggerated, and characterized by a triumph or victory. An idealized moment is characterized by its larger than life qualities, where the character's greatness is amplified. The glorious characteristics are often exaggerated to the point where the character possesses near superhuman qualities. This is demonstrated in the movie *Gladiator* where the virtuous General Maximus is depicted as the savior of Rome and a near faultless character.

The recurring theme of his glorious characteristics is evidenced by the quote "there was a dream that was Rome, it shall be realized". This victory he claims for Rome and its people is another example of a glorious moment. The impact he has on the people of Rome eventually leads to his untimely death and therefore the oppression is the general framework of the story.

**Fig.07:** General Maximus in the battle scene in The Gladiator.



**Source:** Gladiator Best Quotes -What we do in life echoes in eternity - movie quotes.

<https://www.moviequotesandmore.com/wp-content/uploads/gladiator-1.jpg>

Films will often focus on the downfall of many historical figures when trying to complete the necessary journey of the hero. Micheletti and Johansen explain what happens when a historic figure takes the opposing role of a hero, "when a person is seen to oppose the kind of order that defines the speaker's own identity, the non-conformer is a candidate for the label of villain" (Micheletti and Johansen, 2003, 419). "Villains are either simple transgressors or rebels" (Micheletti and Johansen, 2003, 419). The rebel or transgressor is often anything but a villain from his or her own point of view, or someone else who shared similar beliefs or ideas. Transgressors such as Joan of Arc would be falsely accused and only years later declared innocent, while risking French lives at the hands of English rule she had much conviction in her belief that she was to lead France to freedom.

Moreover, Joan of Arc is represented on film as a deeply religious fanatic; this left both her motives and results open to opposing interpretation. An unmoving Henry VI was noted to have said that he personally absolved her of the charge, and even today the church declares that she was on a mission from God, inspiration and a medal of sainthood was the result of her canonization in 1920. A film centered on Joan of Arc and an in-depth representation of her character would be labeled as a tragedy. Such a genre requires a protagonist who fails or dies.

More severe misrepresentation occurs when a character is transformed from a hero to a villain. This can occur in a number of ways, sometimes it is a case that the historical facts of a character's life were not known at the time of the movie's production and the scriptwriter has taken dramatic license to create a controversial subplot. An example of this occurring is the misrepresentation of Sir William Wallace in the movie *Braveheart*. In the movie, Wallace is depicted as a lowland commoner and patriot who united Scotland to fight off the English and win its independence. In reality, Wallace was a knight and landowner, and his aims were more in line with being granted the Scottish Crown which was at the time claimed by several nobles.

He actually swore allegiance to the English crown and in 1297 led an uprising that was not so much driven by patriotism but by the nobility who had sided with the French. This was not the only time that Wallace switched sides, and he was later captured by the English and executed for treason. The dramatic subplot of Wallace's affair with the princess Isabella of France is mere Hollywood fantasy. By contrast, the series of events of Wallace's life are well documented in the medieval chronicle *The Acts of Sir William Wallace*. The misrepresentation of Wallace in *Braveheart* can alter modern perceptions of Anglo-Scottish relations and general attitudes towards patriotism.

One of the key factors in the depiction of heroes in historical films is the way in which certain characters from history are translated or adapted to fit a certain stereotype. This

inaccuracy can be created by simply taking Hollywood liberties, such as the decision to cut out a dire record of a character in history and interpret this as making the character into a great hero. Such an incident happened in the movie *The Patriot*, the scene in question revolving the British use of freed slaves that were promised freedom for fighting for the British. In the movie, the two slave characters are shown as having deserted the British to join and fight with the Americans, when historically this never occurred. Although this may seem a small misrepresentation, it actually alters the modern perception of race and American patriotism to the extent that the actions of the British in the American Revolution may be misinterpreted.

### **2.3. Cinema's Power to redesign the perspective towards historical events**

When we talk about historical events, we cannot distance ourselves too much from wars, assassinations, or invasions of foreign lands. It is the documented narratives that provide a sense of direction or opinion to an individual. And when this perspective gets tampered with, the truth gets bent. It is the visual portrayal of history that leaves a lasting impact on society. This portrayal becomes deeply entrenched in the minds of people and is considered to be as good as the original event. There are many historical events that have been recreated in cinema. Some of these cinematic interpretations have changed the popular view of the event and have sometimes led to a redesigning of the event's perspective.

Cinema and the advent of documentary film have had a marked influence on our understanding of the past. The power of moving images has now surpassed the written word in shaping public perceptions of history, especially in the modern era which is marked by historical amnesia and densely edited visual technological representations of reality. There is a growing body of academic literature concerning the interrelationship between film and history.

This examines not only how accurately film represents history, but also how history influences the messages found in film and the effects historical films have on shaping or changing history. Most of the debate and discussion concerning the influence of film on history has centered around feature films and Hollywood. However, the documentary film has been the genre that has demonstrated the most direct relevance to the history being represented.

Schlesinger argues that the scope of the impact of documentary movie-making is vast, and that the genre has, in fact, been a major actor in world history influencing events and helping to change things it sought to represent. And this is no less true in respect to the history it has depicted. Schlesinger goes on to suggest that the full impact of documentary upon the modern world is an area to which historians have as yet directed very little of their attention.

It is widely agreed that cinema is perhaps one of the significant tools used in shaping public perception of history. Many films have claimed to be accurate, but because of the nature of cinema and the need to entertain, combined with the level of skepticism of audiences and relative ease of access to information that audiences possess about certain historical events, it is incredibly difficult to portray certain events or figures without bias. Many historians would go as far as to say that the depiction of some historical films has been so far from the truth that it has actually been detrimental to the knowledge of those events for an audience that does not look further into it.

This 'closed representation' of historical events is very influential in the formation of people's attitudes toward those events. Even events which occurred comparatively recently can become cloaked in mythology and misunderstanding when transferred to the screen. (Kubrak, 2020). The representation of the events of the Second World War in Hollywood cinema serves as a good example. The undoubted courage and sacrifice of the peoples of the allied nations has become translated into a good vs. evil scenario, a triumph of 'liberal

democracy' over fascism. The part played by the USSR in the defeat of Nazi Germany is hugely underplayed and controversial episodes such as the failure of the USA to join the war against Hitler until the bombing of Pearl Harbor are forgotten by new generations who see history as it is represented to them on film. An entire generation of British people have grown up with a 'false consciousness' about the Second World War as a result of the virtually inescapable influence of Hollywood representation.

### **2.3. Cinema's Power to redesign the perspective towards historical events**

Historical cinema, often drawing from documented historical sources and classic adaptations, serves as a vital tool in redesigning and representing historical events (Gascón et al., 2023). Through cinematic storytelling, filmmakers can breathe life into historical events, offering fresh insights and interpretations that challenge conventional views and stimulate critical thinking about the past. This cinematic reinterpretation process can create a teachable moment, encouraging audiences to deeply reflect on significant historical moments (Callahan & Hubbard, 2019).

American cinema has a significant impact on reshaping perspectives on historical events, particularly within the context of US history. The revisionist approach<sup>1</sup> in American cinema has played a crucial role in influencing the study of American films and the reception of cinema (Kuhn et al., 2017). This approach has revolutionized the depiction and interpretation of historical events on screen, thereby affecting the audience's understanding and perception of these events. By exploring historical perspectives, filmmakers can mold the narrative around historical actors, events, and institutions, influencing how viewers engage with and interpret history (Epstein, 1998).

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an approach to writing history that involves the reinterpretation of historical events through the lens of more modern views, theories, or philosophical perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of historical perspectives is, therefore, very direct in the production of cinema, because it depends on the interpretation of historical subjects and events, not only to impel creation to verify and develop its material necessary for the construction of all its media. Developed by the hegemonic society, Western movie only verifies official historical representations, especially the majority that focuses on the "educational" focus of intellectuals and the elite that has historically been created and maintained the stereotype of the "classic man", using traditional prejudices, and cultural heritage, as suitable or as Hegel looked everywhere to interpret history.

The twentieth century, as a result, begins with a series of ethnic-chauvinistic cases an influence of the modern rationalism that justified the territorial conquest for the good of another superior race, which thereby perpetuated the creation of a racial hierarchy, by contrasting European supremacy. Such situation had increased potential with the discovery of the blueprints of the root of history by Darwin's concept of natural selection limited and "misunderstood", thus, knowing the disparate theories that contradicted each other.

In the light of cinema's brief century-long history, numerous films bringing to screen historical events are not enough to construct a genuinely historical perspective. Yet, they provide the material for a cinema historian to compare historical data and suggest comments worth considering, that is, similarities between the perspectives concerning the events in question expressed in both cinema products and actual historical studies. As such, this study sets out to methodologically determine how cinema and history interact with the relation of mutual exchange between the two, and attempts to scrutinize the issue of how historical consciousness is reflected on cinematic images.

Another significant value of film lies in its capability to record, reveal, and mobilize particular relationships and ideologies connected with a specific historical moment. Thus, he further considers film as the product of the society that gives birth to it, its true reflection, and

representation. He illustrates this deeply when explaining the role of films in illuminating the many dimensions of American society as experienced after World War II. Specifically, the Infinity War trilogy being evaluated examines Hollywood's narratives of World War II, in the light of the ever-shifting approach to the historiography of the War, both in the oeuvre of films about the War and the understanding of such works in the public sphere.

On top of this, Gomery and Pafort-Overduin (2011, 52) recognize that films generally focus not so much on the stories that take a particular script or route but on the "mood, feels, and senses" depicted through cinematography, the narrative technique, and the dialogue of the film. As such, film can be said to be the product of artistic knowledge and interpretation of the filmmaker appropriate to depict the society's ongoing concept.

Filmmakers play a crucial role in representing historical events as they are capable of appealing to a broad public audience and can reach people who might never read. (Vuckovic Juros, 2016). Using various storytelling techniques, they give substance to the existing parts of the story or give more proportionate shades to the manipulated parts. This is done by translating the analytical history of historians in the form of narrative and how to use the visuals to create new impact. Thus, the filmmaker not only records an event but also constructs the event and in doing so, an event is sometimes turned into folklore. (Guerra and Sousa, 2022). The historian indeed discusses different shades of the facts of history and conveys it as analysis but the director tells the incident, creates characters acting in it, creates the reaction of the characters through dialogue, thought and looks, incidentally creates music etc. The historian of analyzed history presents it to the audience or the reader but the director presents it as a visual communion (Wainwright, 2013).

In conclusion, American cinema's ability to reshape perspectives on historical events stems from its adoption of revisionist approaches, utilization of historical sources, and employment

of innovative storytelling techniques. By rewriting historical narratives, filmmakers can influence how audiences perceive and interpret significant events from the past, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of history through the cinematic lens.

## **Conclusion**

Cinema has long been a powerful medium for shaping societal perceptions and values, particularly through its depiction of glory, oppression, and the re-designing of history. By presenting historical events and figures on the silver screen, films have the ability to influence audience interpretations of history and cultural narratives.

One way in which cinema shapes societal perceptions is through its depiction of glory. Films often depict heroic individuals who overcome great obstacles and achieve extraordinary feats, presenting them as symbols of glory and inspiration. These depictions can shape the way audiences perceive certain historical events or figures, elevating them to a status of admiration and reverence. For example, films like "Patriot" or "Gladiator" depict their protagonists as valiant warriors fighting for justice and freedom, leaving audiences with a sense of awe and admiration for their actions. By presenting these characters as heroes, cinema influences societal perceptions of what constitutes glory and valor.

On the other hand, cinema also has the power to depict oppression in a way that resonates with audiences and raises awareness about historical injustices. By showcasing the struggles and suffering of marginalized groups, films can shed light on the oppressive systems that have shaped societies throughout history. Movies like "12 Years a Slave" or "Pocahontas" depict the horrors of slavery and the marginalization, respectively, exposing audiences to the brutal realities of these historical periods. Through these depictions, cinema not only educates viewers about past atrocities but also encourages empathy and a desire for social change.

## **Chapter Three: comparative analysis: History between Life and Cinema**

### **Introduction**

Depiction of historical events can be manipulated to manipulate society for the interests of the rulers. Film directors also change historical events, characters, battles, and the relationships

between countries, often to achieve the same goals. Only a percentage of these errors can be associated with budget and time limits, careless scholars, or lack of technology of the period to convey the real world. The correctness of the movie will be bounded by four abstract borders: money, the respect of the masses for history, the honesty of the producer, and the integrity of history itself.

The depiction of glory and oppression has always been a significant part of historical cinema. Although historical cinema cannot be seen as contributing to historiography, as it has its own codes and unique truths it constantly offers to the audience, it often determines the way a historical event or period is seen and the feelings aroused as all societies react according to these films towards their past. This alone makes these films an important reflection of societies' "collective memory." Put in this particular realist approach based on visual and emotional evidence, history on the screen should not be omitted or underestimated by the historians and should not only be considered as purely entertainment.

### **3.1. Napoleon 2023: From liberty to dictatorship**

Napoleon is a 2023 epic historical drama film directed and co-produced by Ridley Scott and written by David Scarpa. Based on the story of Napoleon Bonaparte and primarily depicting his rise to power as well as his relationship with his wife, Joséphine Bonaparte, it stars Joaquin Phoenix as Napoleon and Vanessa Kirby as Joséphine.

Ridley Scott's ambitious attempt to portray Napoleon is a monotone epic covering decades of French history immediately following the birth of the United States. The Colonies don't win their independence without the support of the French, yet Scott focuses on the tumultuous, decade-long French Revolution without so much as a tip of the hat toward the recently concluded American Revolution. The film focuses on a man confident in his abilities as a military strategist, infused with terrific ambition, and a desire to bring Europe peace through war.

A figure who resonates centuries after his time, the Napoleon represented here by Joaquin Phoenix presents a dour man who through sheer will wins the affection of the love of his life, Josephine. However, Napoleon is pulled by an obsession stronger than his love for Josephine. His desire for acceptance by the aristocracy of the other major European powers and their petty conflicts. It leads to his making war to extend French control beyond her borders. General turned Emperor, Napoleon seeks to achieve through conquest what he could not otherwise, but it leads to exile, resurrection, and eventually downfall.

### **Film selection**

The film was selected for the following reasons:

- Rating: received 6.4/10 on IMDB, 57% on rotten tomatoes, 64% on Metacritic.
- Box-offices revenues: \$221 million estimated.
- Relevance of themes: dictatorship, glorification, oppression.
- Language: English.
- Publicity: the film received huge publicity mainly by the lead actor Joaquin Phoenix. At the 96th Academy Awards, the film received nominations for Best Production Design, Best Costume Design, and Best Visual Effect.
- Distributor: Columbia Pictures through Sony Pictures Releasing.
- Lead actor: Joaquin Phoenix. Vanessa Kirby.

### **Methodology:**

We opted for using content analysis methodology in analyzing the movie which is a research method used to identify patterns in recorded videos and communications in general. In addition, Klaus Krippendorff, the renowned professor of language and culture

at Pennsylvania University, defined content analysis in a more detailed way, he articulated in his book *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* that:

Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. As a technique, content analysis involves specialized procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher. As a research technique, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Content analysis is a scientific tool. (Krippendorff 18)

The aim was to spot scenes that depict certain ideas and themes and propagate them. We also deployed a *mise-en-scène* analysis as a part of the Film Analysis methodology by counting scenes and categorizing them into pre-decided coded themes, and choosing most relevant scenes to be shown and analyzed to spot out the construct of implements that is motivated by historical inaccuracies, oppression and glory.

psyche.

**Coding Scheme:**

Ratio of Scene Implements to the Totality of Scenes

<b>Implements</b>	<b>Dictatorship</b>	<b>Glory</b>	<b>Oppression</b>
<b>Number of scenes</b>	20/60	15/60	10/60
<b>Ratio to the sum of</b>	33%	25%	16%

<b>Scenes</b>			
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The results show that the movie is designed in a way to direct the audience to question the glorification of historical figures like Napoleon while highlighting darker aspects of his rule such as his abusive use of power and oppression. The ratio of scenes increases the results accuracy as it encourages viewers to reconsider their perception of historical events and figures.

### **Units of Analysis**

The films were examined at the level (units of analysis) of the scene. The scene analysis described:

- a) How cinema redesigns historical events and reshapes historical figures.
- b) How cinema depicts and tackles themes of glory and oppression.
- c) how does historical cinema alter the public perception towards history through films.

### **Mise-en-scène Analyses**

#### **Napoleon 2023 movie poster analyses**

#### **Figure 8: Napoleon's official poster**



**Source:** Napoleon 2023 movie poster. IMDB.

The official poster for Ridley Scott's 2023 film "Napoleon" depicts Joaquin Phoenix as Napoleon Bonaparte in the battlefield screaming for victory on the back of his horse and sword in hand. The poster's artistic elements are thoughtfully designed to express the film's themes of power, ambition, and historical grandeur.

The poster consists of 2 different color palettes. The first color palette consists of the colors blue, red, black, and white and reflects the mood of the film. Blue stands for confidence, intelligence, and socialization. Red is known as the color of fire, love, bloodshed and brutality in battles and anger. It is also used a lot in war, military, violence scenes. Black mimics evil, decline, death, darkness, and fear and most importantly dictatorship. The second color palette consists of brown, dark gray and reflects the visual view of the film. Brown is known for

stability, systematization, and support. Dark gray serves as sophisticated, depression, and inductive inspiration. Having more than one color palette in a movie poster says that the movie reflects more than one feeling and shows change. It is possible to say that the poster affects the audience with the movie's messages before the trailer and the first watch. It can be used to increase notably the feeling of watching the movie by using it effectively as the content for the movie marketing.

The film title is written in red font on a blue background and is in the middle of the poster. There are small black spots on the letters "N" and "E" behind the letters can be noticed on close examination. We understand that these are bullet holes as red blood-like colors are seen behind. It is understood that this is a war-tinted movie from these and from the army silhouette seen behind. The backgammon affects the poster by being in the helmet of the soldier. These symbols are either military, war, or togetherness signs, and they make the audience feel like these feelings.

As for the poster setting, the background of the poster can give viewers insight into the world of the film. For Napoleon 2023, it is associated with Napoleon Bonaparte's life and conquests, such as battlefields, or the French countryside that indicates war and battles. The lighting evokes a sense of danger, and a dramatic tone.

The expression "We came from nothing, we conquered everything" on the poster refers to Napoleon Bonaparte's rise from humble origins to becoming one of the most influential figures in history. This highlights his remarkable transition and ambitious conquests.

#### **a) Scene number 01: Implementation of dictatorship, Glory.**

The scene as mentioned above is constructed in the implement of dictatorship. The scene opens up with preparations in the futuristic palace's great throne room. Servants rush around, making final changes to the lavish decorations and lighting; Napoleon approaches the royal

room, followed by a procession of advisors and guards. Napoleon's presence draws attention as they boldly walk approach the dais, where the throne awaits. Throughout the action, the camera captures the majesty of the throne room with sweeping shots that highlight the fine elements of the setting. Lighting effects enhance the mood by generating dramatic shadows and emphasizing crucial moments of emotion and significance. The camera focus is then fixed on Napoleon face as what we call " a close-up shot" so that the audience can connect better with his emotions during this moment which chose the power and authority and the weight of responsibility associated with the ruling position. A focused close-up on Napoleon's face can create a visually strong intimate moment with the viewer enhancing the engagement with the scene.

**Figure 9: Napoleon's Coronation scene**



**Source:** Napoleon 2023 movie. IMDB.

The tone of the atmosphere in the crowning scene of "Napoleon" can be conveyed through different visual and auditory elements. The lighting is dramatic between soft and warm on Napoleon and crowd in contrast to the lightning in the back that is dark and shadowed evoking a sense of tension and importance to the scene. The soundtrack in this scene is an

orchestral music that features the Grandeur of the event. The music intensifies the closer Napoleon gets the throne as the intensity builds up when focusing on Napoleon's face signifying the emotional impact of this event. The camera movement is slow and deliberate such as the slow zoom, the steady pan and the swifiting of the camera create a sense of importance and reverence surrounding Napoleon's face, the crowd's reaction and facial expressions, and the focus on the crown.

The background details are blurred and obscured directing the viewer attention to Napoleon's face expressing his emotional state of intensity, ego, heavy responsibility, and greatness in this scene. The crowd reaction is a strong contributor to the atmosphere. Cheers and applauses underscore the celebratory tone, in the other-hand, murmurs and whispers hints to the fears and intrigue underlying the event.

As the scene's major protagonist, Napoleon's outfit is intended to demand attention and express power. Napoleon dresses regally, combining elements of classic royalty with modern elegance. The outfit could include a fitted coat or robe made of expensive fabrics with elaborate patterns and embellishments. The color palette could include rich jewel tones or metallic accents to represent riches and power. Accessories like a crown or elaborate jewels accentuate Napoleon's royal status and demonstrate their authority to rule.

As for the crowd, the costumes worn by supporting characters, such as courtiers, advisors, and guards, complement Napoleon's attire while also reflecting their respective roles within the court. Courtiers may wear garments that echo the opulence of Napoleon's ensemble, albeit with less embellishment or grandeur. Advisors might opt for more understated attire, emphasizing professionalism and authority. Guards may don uniforms that convey strength and security, with subtle futuristic details to align with the film's setting.

The clothes in the final sequence, in addition to being physically beautiful, serves to emphasize the film's themes and motifs. The juxtaposition of antique and modern components illustrates the narrative's recurring theme of past and future, tradition and innovation. The luxurious textiles and regal adornments stress concepts of power, position, and hierarchy, while futuristic elements suggest a society that has evolved and adapted throughout time. Overall, the clothes contribute to the immersive world-building of "Napoleon 2023" and enhance the visual spectacle of the closing scene.

## **B) Scene 02: Implementation of dictatorship and oppression**

**Figure 10: Self Coronation**



**Source:** Napoleon 2023 movie.IMDB.

**Act of Self-Coronation:** Unlike traditional coronations, in which the pope crowns the monarch, Napoleon removed the crown from the altar and placed it on his own head. This act represented his authority and independence, highlighting that his power was self-generated rather than conferred by the Church. The pope's presence was somewhat reluctant, underlining the tension between Napoleon and the Catholic Church. This event signified a distinct departure with the ancient régime (old regime) and monarchical customs, ushering in a new system under Napoleon's leadership and dictatorship. Napoleon's crowning sent a strong signal to other European nations about his ambitions and the strength of his government.

Napoleon Bonaparte's speech at his coronation is a dramatic reflection of his ascent to power and his sense of authority. The saying "I found the crown of France in the gutter and picked it up by the tip of my sword and I place it on top of my head" is a striking metaphor that conveys several major aspects about his leadership and the backdrop of his ascent.

The composition of the shots and the use of camera movements are important tools in creating *mise en scène*. The framing of Napoleon's coronation scene in the last shot can be found in the wide shot, the long shot, and the extreme long shot. These shots help show the whole body (wide shot), the physical details and behavior (long shot), and the wide world (extreme long shot) of the characters and locations. The presence of large crowds during the crowning ceremony is focused on by the filmmaker throughout these shots. The use of this framing creates a sense of epicness in the coronation scene.

In addition to Legitimacy and Authority Napoleon claims that conventional legitimacy (represented by the crown) is in disorder or abandoned "in the gutter". By stating that he "picked it up by the tip of my sword," he underlines that his authority was not granted by lineage or existing institutions, but rather by his own strength and military power.

The scene depicts the chaotic state of France following the French Revolution. The old monarchical order had been removed, resulting in a power void. Napoleon sets himself as the one who restored order and asserted control in the midst of turmoil.

As for the Personal Achievements, the phrase emphasizes Napoleon's self-created image. He sees himself as a self-made monarch who ascended from obscurity (a Corsican without noble ancestry) to the peak of power via his own efforts and competence.

This scene contains some historical inaccuracies:

**Inaccuracy:** The statement implies that Napoleon physically discovered an abandoned crown and picked it up with his sword. In truth, Napoleon's coronation as Emperor was a highly ceremonial and planned occasion.

**Historical event:** Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of France on December 2, 1804, in a magnificent ceremony at Paris's Notre-Dame Cathedral. Instead of finding a crown, he grabbed the Pope's crown and wore it on his own head, representing his self-made authority and independence from the Church.

**Inaccuracy:** The statement simplifies the complex process of Napoleon's rise to power into a single dramatic action.

**Historical Event:** Napoleon's journey to becoming Emperor involved numerous battles, political maneuvers, and reforms. His establishment of the Consulate, his role as First Consul, and the plebiscites that consolidated his power were all key steps that the metaphor glosses over.

**Inaccuracy:** The metaphor implies that the crown (a symbol of power) was merely lying in disorder, ready to be seized.

**Historical Event:** The changeover of power in France was chaotic, with multiple factions striving for authority. Napoleon's ascension was aided by his ability to negotiate

these groups, depict himself as a stabilizing influence, and use military victories to achieve political power.

In conclusion, Napoleon's metaphor of picking up the crown with the tip of his sword is closely related to the concepts of dictatorship, glory, and oppression. It captures how he gained and retained power, the personal and national grandeur associated with his authority, and the authoritarian control that defined his reign. This statement powerfully reflects the two-faceted character of his legacy, which combines parts of extraordinary achievement with the difficulties of autocratic control.

### **3.2. Pocahontas: Oppression**

Pocahontas is a 1995 American animated musical historical drama film based on the life of Powhatan woman Pocahontas and the arrival of English colonial settlers from the Virginia Company. The film romanticizes Pocahontas's encounter with John Smith and her legendary saving of his life. It was produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation and released by Walt Disney Pictures.

The Pocahontas movie, is set in the 17th century in America, at the time the British ships reached the New World for the purpose of exploration. In the film, the society of whites in the New World is shown as conservative and radical, while the Native American society is shown as peaceful and free. The modern film Pocahontas is a historical film that repeats the inhuman and inhuman behaviors imposed by white races in the form of whites taking over the land, imposing the traditions and taboos of capitalism on the people they dominate, and installing chaos on earth for the sake of mining.

When Pocahontas meets Captain John Smith, also a historical figure, she saves him from the indigenous people's attacks and feelings of affection start to develop between the two, in circumstances that may not have been romantic, according to some historians.

However, the film's fiction portrays a fact that did not really exist: there was no love between Pocahontas and John Smith, but rather inter-tribal negotiations. Later, a crisis is triggered because of the settlers' desire for land and the Powhatan tribe's desire to keep territory safe. As explained earlier, this clash between settlers and natives was a historical reality that took place during the early colonization period. Moreover, it represented the first of many clashes to come, with vast implications for the Native American people.

Choosing Pocahontas as a case study discuss oppression offers a starting point about complexities of the redesigning of history and cinematic representations in addition to power dynamics. The film provides a broader scope to explore issues of colonialism, racism, and oppression. It can be critically analysed how cinema shapes perceptions of history and marginalized communities. Emphasising the importance of authentic storytelling and the cinematic power in rewriting history.

#### **Film selection:**

- Rating: the movie received positive ratings. 6.7/10IMD, 53% on Rotten Tomatoes, 59% on Metacritic
- Box Office revenues: 346.1 million USD
- Relevance of themes: Oppression.
- Language: English.
- Publicity: Critics and audiences praised the film for its animation quality, musical score, and the positive messages of environmentalism and peace.
- Distributor: Buena Vista Pictures Distribution.
- Lead actors: Irene Bedard, Christian Bale, Mel Gibson.

### **Coding scheme:**

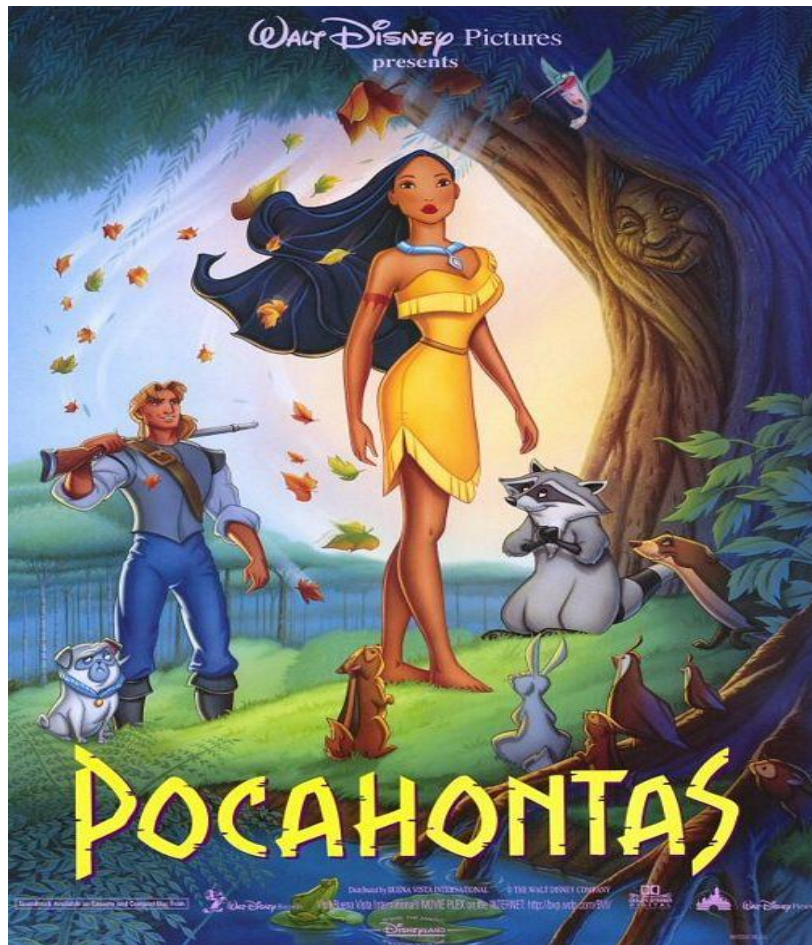
Ratio of Scene Implements to the Totality of Scenes

<b>Implements</b>	<b>Oppression</b>
<b>Number of scenes</b>	30/55
<b>Ratio to the sum of scenes</b>	16%

The analysis of the oppression ratio scenes in Pocahontas reveals the power dynamics between the native Americans and the European settlers emphasizing themes of colonization, exploitation and oppression. These scenes depict how one group imposes dominance over a marginalized one, highlighting the historical injustice and the impact of the oppressive colonization on indigenous communities.

### **Mise-en-scène analysis:**

**Figure 11: Pocahontas official poster**



**Source:** Disney movie Pocahontas official poster. IMDB.

This poster is composed of different elements that highlight the film themes. It features vibrant colors as yellow, Green, Blue, and brown, symbolizing the connection to nature and wilderness that the native americans have. In addition to the natural landscapes that evoke the spirit that indigenous people have to the viewer. Pocahontas is depicted wearing traditional attire symbolizing the link with her heritage and her roots. The use of this specific lightning emphasizes the importance the natural colors that are related to life itself and different nature elements as wind, water, earth, and sun.

The poster includes images of main characters as "Pocahontas" and "John smith" drawing attention to the film protagonists. The setting includes a lush forest, a river, and other natural

landscapes, depicting the spirit of adventure and exploration. Using symbols like feathers, animals represent themes of spirituality and cultural identity.

The font of the movie title is related to the native American design and calligraphy. And finally, the Disney logo that establishes the movie identity and credibility.

### Scene 01: implementation of oppression

Figure 12: The settlers' ship arrival scene



**Source:** Pocahontas movie animation. IMDB.

In this scene oppression is illustrated in a perfect way when Governor Ratcliffe and his man arrive in the new world with the intention of exploiting its resources. They oppressively assert dominance and authority to the land and its native people. Casting the lights over the colonial mindset that considers indigenous people as obstacles to be removed rather than respected partners living in coherence and peace. This scene highlights themes of greed, imbalance of power between the indigenous communities and the colonizer and immense oppression.

The setting in this scene is lush and vibrant in which we notice the natural surrounding depicting harmony and balance between the natives and their environment. In contrast, the arrival of the settlers is depicted in darker tones emphasizing the intrusion to this harmony. The natives in this scene are depicted in earthy tones as brown, green and warm yellow as well as orange evoking a spiritual natural sense of connection with mother nature reflecting their strong relationship with the settings. The rigid dichotomy is highlighted carefully between the two culture is served through the colors used to present each party, vibrant for the indigenous and darker for the settlers highlighting the ideological conflict between the two.

The use of this pallet in the scene shed the light on the themes of oppression colonization as well as the cultural clash. Red is a prominent color in the scene and the film in general. For the indigenous it is associated with the strong connection to the land the sacrifices and blood shed they are willing to give further cause against the colonization as well as their free spirit. For the settlers, red represents greed, violence, and their colonialist intentions to take over the land.

The camera focus in the scene is shifted between the settlers and the indigenous people it focuses on the approachal of the settlers' ships to the shore in a dark toned cloudy atmosphere emphasizing the intentions the settlers have for the land. As the scene progresses the focus shifts to a close up shot of the settlers face conveying determination, juxtaposed with wider shots of the indigenous people observing the newcomers with curiosity and wariness in their faces. The scene depicts the tention between the two groups.

The settlers dialogue and the language used reflects their sense of entitlement and superiority they feel over the land, indicating their colonial and oppressive mindset. For instance, Rattcliff calling the indigenous savages that are undeserving of the land. In contrast the language used by the natives is inferior in comparison to the settlers, responding with defiance, skepticism, and even diplomacy, according to their perspectives ascertain their

rights to the land in a challenge to the settlers' intentions of dominance. The difference between the weapons used while both groups is evident in the scene ( the settlers using guns, pistols and firearms representing the technology wielded by the European military at that time; whereas, the settlers using simple medieval tools like spears, bows and arrows and tomahawks crafted from natural resources found in the land. This reflects the bond they have with nature.

In this scene the contrast in clothing of both groups is noticed. The settlers are dressed in European clothing reflecting their heritage. For instance, the boots and armors symbolize the dominance, oppression and authority.

In the other hand, the clothing of the indigenous is characterized by simplicity and functionality, depicting the strong connection to native. These clothes are made of natural material such as feathers, shells, and bones representing the indigenous culture

In conclusion, this scene serves as a reminder of the theme tackled in this chapter "oppression". While also highlighting the historical injustices ongoing the marginalized groups and their cultural identity.

## **Scene 02 : Implementation of oppression**

**Figure 13:** "Savages" song scene



**Source:**Pocahontas movie animation. IMDB.

Another strong scene that depicts oppression is when the song "Savages" is sung. Where it depicts both parties preparing for battle with each side demonizing the other as savages that needs extermination. This song depicts harmful stereotypes and dehumanizes the indigenous people, highlighting the destructive consequences of ignorance and white superiority.

The song "Savages" serves as an intense moment representing the uprising conflict between the native americans characters and the English settlers reaching a boiling point.

The song explores themes of fear, distraction, oppression and prejudice. It reflects the historical tention between the two groups in that period. The song is sung by both groups

preparing for battle, solidifying their stand to fight setting the stage for the film climax. The lyrics of the song are divided between the two parties as each group depict the other as barbaric, savage and violent. It also shows the mistrust between the two with lines like "Savages, Savages! Barely even human" highlighting the dehumanization of the polar group. The music is tense and dramatic with drums and uprising vocals making the song and the atmosphere more powerful by the second.

An important detail in the song is the constant shifting between the colors blue and red symbolizing the opposing dichotomy of indigenous people and the settlers.

a- Red: is associated to the settlers in the song representing their intention for bloodshed, aggression and oppression. It also symbolizes anger, power and violence, explaining the destructive nature of the English settlers and their actions to disgrace the natives and their land.

b- Blue: is associated the native americans symbolizing their spirituality, connection to nature and their peaceful self. Blue represents tranquility, harmony and wisdom. In the context of the song, it symbolizes the resilience of the natives to regain their rights over the land.

### **Historical inaccuracies:**

Inaccuracies: Age of Pocahontas: in the film Pocahontas is depicted to be around the age of 17/18 to normalize her relationship with John Smith

Historical event: in reality, Pocahontas is much younger than the film. She was likely around the age of 10 or 11 years old. When she met John Smith

Inaccuracies: the film depicts John Smith as a noble, compassionate character that only wants peace for both groups and Pocahontas's love.

Historical event: John Smith character in real life is a controversial feager with reputation for self-exaggeration and ego.

Inaccuracies: The film romanticizes the indigenous's lifestyle stereotyping their culture as simple.

Historical event: the native American culture is deeper than what the film depicted.

To conclude with, "Pocahontas" movie draws attention to the oppression theme and its impacts on marginalized groups through history, and the importance to preserve the historical legacy. The film also encourages viewers to study history.

### **3.3. Lincoln: Glory**

Lincoln is a 2012 American biographical historical drama film directed and produced by Steven Spielberg, starring Daniel Day-Lewis as United States President Abraham Lincoln.[8] It features Sally Field, David Strathairn, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, James Spader, Hal Holbrook, and Tommy Lee Jones in supporting roles. The screenplay by Tony Kushner was loosely based on Doris Kearns Goodwin's 2005 biography Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, and covers the final four months of Lincoln's life.

"Lincoln" is the American Film Institute's top film of 2012. The film portrays the president in his bid to legally end slavery through the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. By the time of his re-election, Lincoln knows the civil war is in its closing stages, and he believes the passage of the amendment will guarantee the end of slavery lawfully. He knows that even if the US government is willing to re-admit the Confederate states into the Union, the southern states are likely to re-legalize slavery. The House of Representatives has already turned down this Thirteenth Amendment. The Confederacy sends peace commissioners to Washington asking to negotiate an end to the civil war. But Lincoln's advisers are all telling him not to accept the conditions set by the Confederates for signing a peace treaty.

In 1865, as the American Civil War winds inexorably toward conclusion, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln endeavors to achieve passage of the landmark constitutional amendment that will forever ban slavery from the United States. However, his task is a race against time, for peace may come at any time, and if it comes before the amendment is passed, the returning southern states will stop it before it can become law. Lincoln must, by almost any means possible, obtain enough votes from a recalcitrant Congress before peace arrives and it is too late. Yet the president is torn, as an early peace would save hundreds of thousands of lives.

### **Film selection:**

- Rating: the movie received positive ratings. 7.3/10 on IMDb. 90% on Rotten Tomatoes. 87% on Metacritic.
- Box Office revenues: 275.3 million USD.
- Relevance of themes: Glory.
- Language: English.
- Publicity: historical accuracy, Daniel Day-Lewis impressive acting, to Academy for best actor, best production design, nominated for Best picture, Best director.
- Distributor: 20th Century Studios. Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures.
- Lead actor: Daniel Day-Lewis.

### **Coding scheme**

Ratio of Scene Implements to the Totality of Scenes

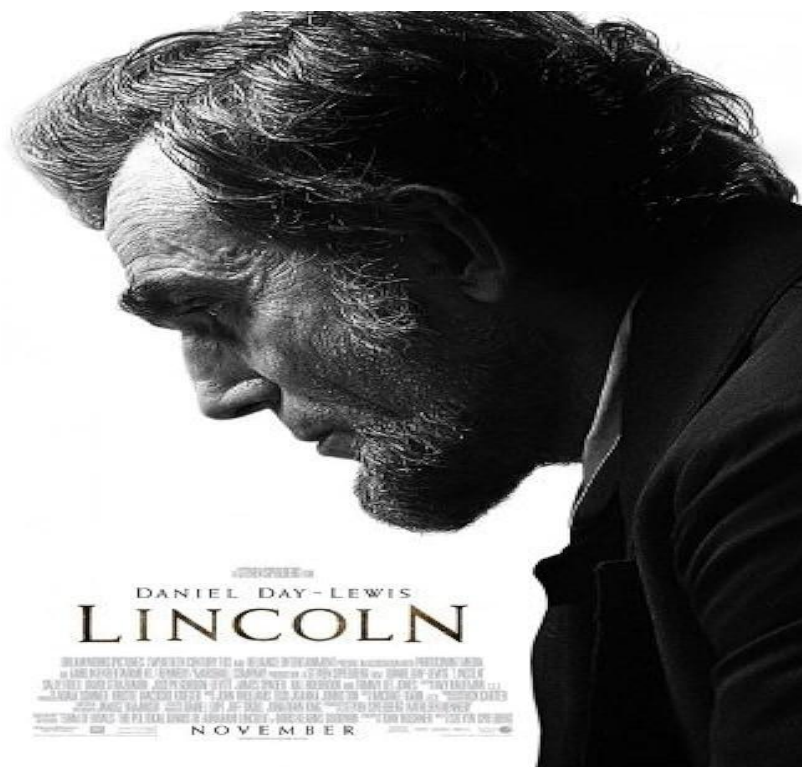
<b>Imlements</b>	<b>Glory</b>
<b>Number of scenes</b>	14/20

<b>Ratio to the sum of scenes</b>	70%
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The analysis of the ratio of Glory scenes Lincoln 2012 indicates the film emphasis of the heroic glorious aspects of Abraham Lincoln's presidency and his contribution to the shaping of the American history. The ratio of the Glory scenes by the director highlights his choice to emphasize the moments of triumph and achievement of this historical figure to uplift and inspire the audience such as Lincoln's famous speeches

### Mise-en-scene Analysis

**Figure 14 :Lincoln official poster**



**Source:**Lincoln 2012 movie. IMDB.

The poster's color palette consists of a monochromatic scheme (Black, White and Grey). This color choice gives the poster a sense of history, nostalgia and seriousness to fit the civil war era theme. The poster focal focus is on Abraham Lincoln portrayed by Daniel Day-Lewis

positioned in the center of the frame. His poster draws attention to the importance of this historical figure in the film. Lincoln is depicted in contemplative pose staring into the distance with serious facial expressions to convey the heavy weight of his position as a president in a white background emphasizing his aims to reach peace during turmoil.

The film title "Lincoln" is displayed at the bottom of the poster in bold capitalized letters. The font choice is classic reflecting the historical era. On top of the movie title is found the main lead name Daniel Day-Lewis in smaller font to indicate his appearance in the film. The depiction of Lincoln in the poster is captured thoughtful and contemplative conveying a sense of determination and his leadership qualities in addition to the challenges he faced during his presidency.

**Scene 01: implementation of Glory:**

**Figure 15: Lincoln "now" scene**



**Source:** Lincoln 2012 movie. IMDB.

The floor with a combination of red and gold, and the curve of the large clock at the top of the president's head as well as the statue in the gallery seemed to be depicted in a grand and anti-centrifugal way. The ceiling microphone-shaped chandelier also suggests a device that was used for lighting at the time. The similarity to the current representative hall seen on a television news program was high, except for differences between LED and candle lighting. The finish of the windows and the maintenance of the tapestry, which lined the entire circumference, were also equipped to support the stage with class and status. One critical point is the nature of the place as "Congress" and the actor's costumes. To suitably express the Congress environment and the variety of characters in the story, the props and the set must support the story while being complex when required but simple when not in a tangled mess.

The set, which symbolizes the US Congress in 1865, was built during the construction stage in 1860, but it was utilized as a set for two movies set in the 1860s. It has been said that although it may have had a good history, the characteristics and identity of the place as a movie set need to be emphasized as well. The vast and grand Congress design left a deep impression. The large marble area, domed ceiling, and semicircular seating arrangements, and the chandelier hanging from the ceiling all portray the power and image of the place.

The building, which matched the grand scale of the American government, was big, but symmetry was well pursued. Also, the idyllic props were after history and commerce as an integral part, as the building was set to be Congress. The walnut table (used to lengthen the scene), large chandelier, small glass lantern, numerous pens and ink bottles, and the candle on the desk suggest that it was a Congress. The bell and bell rope hanging over the Speaker's desk played an important role in supporting the legislative climax of the scene.

Throughout this scene, the main color palette consists of a monochrome color scheme with very little color diversity. Both the costumes and the furnishings in the room bear a limited and muted color palette, primarily consisting of black and grey tones. The color of the background characters is also desaturated. The skin, though natural, seems pallid and is generally not first in line of hierarchy within the video frame. At the important moment when the climax of Lincoln's speech is achieved, Janusz Kaminski also utilizes the contrast of black and white for dramatic emphasis, which contributes to the emotional weight of the scene in context. The slight bluish undertone of the light also denotes a cold, serious setting and adequately contrasts the coldness of the light and the warmth of the candles in the room. These are the moments before a pivotal decision is made by Lincoln.

As it could also be seen in the picture, most clothes are in heavily black and grey, thus they do not attract too much focus from the audience. However, the costume designed for Daniel

Day Lewis is outstanding. In fact, Lincoln's life demand unusual clothes that suits his personality and tolerance levels with other people.

Focusing on Lincoln's back creates an anticipation and raises the tension. This framing technique build suspense and emphasizes the importance of Lincoln's contribution to the debate. The camera focus on Abraham's back also reflects the perspective of the other characters of the congress who are observing Lincoln's action. The cinematic device is used to enhance an and increase the scene dramatic tension.

The use of low-angle shots looking up at Lincoln makes him appear larger-than-life, highlighting his leadership and the significance of his speech.

Lincoln is frequently framed centrally, with other characters surrounding him, drawing attention to him as the ethical center of the scene. Wide shots reveal the emotions of the other officials, depicting the tension and disagreements in the room. The dark, melancholy colors of Lincoln's outfit represent the gravity of the situation slavery and its abolition. The contrast between Lincoln's black suit and the more varied clothes of the other characters may represent his moral clarity and commitment.

The murmurs and occasional outbursts of the other members give a realistic backdrop, demonstrating the bitter nature of the debate. John Williams' musical score is understated but emotionally resonant, providing historical relevance and emotional weight to Lincoln's address without overshadowing it.

### **Historical inaccuracies:**

Inaccuracy: The film depicts Abraham Lincoln as directly and actively participating in the congressional machinations to pass the 13th Amendment.

historical event: While Lincoln enthusiastically favored the 13th Amendment and worked behind the scenes to achieve its adoption, he did not directly participate in legislative debates

or personally contact members of the House. This work was mostly carried out by his political associates and government officials.

**Inaccuracy:** The film simplifies and dramatizes the events leading up to the enactment of the 13th Amendment.

**Historical event:** The legislative procedure took longer and required more complex political negotiations than represented in the film. The procedure was more drawn out and less dramatic than the film depicts.

In conclusion, the *mise en scène* in Lincoln's speech about slavery in "Lincoln" uses setting, lighting, costume, acting, cinematography, and sound to powerfully convey the theme of glory. It highlights the historic significance and moral triumph of Lincoln's leadership in the fight to abolish slavery, making the scene both emotionally impactful and historically resonant.

### **Conclusion:**

The thesis, titled "The Glorious and the Oppressed: Regenerating History through Cinema," aims to reveal the various ways in which films interpret, redesign and depict historical themes. By focusing on the themes of glory and oppression, it seeks to highlight cinema's dual role of incorporating historical triumphs while also acknowledging the struggles of the marginalized. The thesis aims to demonstrate the instructive and creative value of historical cinema in linking the past to the present by conducting rich content and *mise en scène* analyses of the chosen films.

Napoleon (2023), Lincoln (2012), and Pocahontas (1995) are excellent examples of how films can tell rich, engaging stories that resonate with modern audiences. By doing so, they do not only depict the past but also provide insights into how does historical cinema rewrites events to fulfill the cinematic purpose and alter the public perception towards history.

For example, while Steven Spielberg's film "Lincoln" (2012) gets praise for its historical accuracy surrounding the passing of the 13th Amendment, it takes liberties with some exchanges and events to heighten the drama and symbolizes the moral and political difficulties of Lincoln's time. This dramatization emphasizes elements of leadership, moral strength, and the struggle for justice, making Lincoln's accomplishments more inspiring to the audience.

Similarly, Ridley Scott's "Napoleon" (2023) dramatizes historical events and the character of Napoleon Bonaparte. The film makes artistic liberties to highlight his military skills and personal ambition, often at the expense of historical authenticity. These exaggerations and dramatic interpretations emphasize themes of power, ambition, and the chaotic impact of Napoleon's actions on Europe, resulting in a more fascinating narrative.

In contrast, Disney's "Pocahontas" (1995) dramatically rewrites historical facts for narrative purposes. The film tells a romanticized and simplified story of Pocahontas' life and relationships with John Smith and the Jamestown colony. This recreation helps to tell an engaging story about cultural exchange, oppression, and conflict between Native American and European cultures. While the film has been criticized for its inaccuracies, it uses these flaws to emphasize wider theme of oppression.

In conclusion, Cinematic history does not necessarily depict history "as it is." Instead, filmmakers employ historical inaccuracies to generate intriguing films that connect emotionally and conceptually with their audiences. Whether acknowledging heroism or emphasizing oppression these deviations from factual accuracy can increase the film's impact on public, and regenerate history.

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