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"Tinseltown as Teacher": A Case Study of Historical Feature Films as Interpretive
Sources of History within an Educational Context

Paul D'Amboise

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in

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ABSTRACT

"Tinseltown as Teacher": A Case Study of Historical Feature Films as Interpretive
Sources of History within an Educational Context

Paul D'Amboise

There has been a burgeoning growth in the production and popularity of historical

feature films, as well as in the academic literature devoted to the impact of such films,

over the past decade. While a major concern of this literature has been the influence of

feature films on historical perception and the need for visual literacy, the majority of the

discussion has failed to offer concrete suggestions either for assessing the influence of

such films or for developing visual literacy. This study, using a small-scale qualitative

approach, examines the influence of historical feature films on their audiences'

perception of history and offers a model for integrating feature films into the discipline of

history. The specific audience examined in this study is a group of Grade Eleven

students enrolled in a university level Advanced Placement European history class at St.

George's High School—a private, English language, co-educational school in Montreal,

Quebec. Some of the issues addressed in this thesis are: the suitability of film as an

academic source of historical knowledge, the persuasiveness of filmed presentations of

historical events, the need to develop visual literacy skills akin to those used for

understanding traditional printed material, and practical approaches to teaching with

feature films. The thesis concludes with sample units from a course designed to teach

visual literacy skills within the framework of history and film.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter One: Introduction

The ability of fiction to influence historical perception can be established by any number of examples. In my own case, two or three should suffice to make this influence clear. Roman history, for me, will always be inextricably bound up with my reading of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. It matters little whether Marc Antony ever gave a speech remotely resembling that found in Act Three, Scene Two: the influence still exists. In *Henry V*, the St. Crispin's Day speech (Act Four, Scene Three) given by Henry before Agincourt illustrates the leadership qualities he must have had to inspire his men to fight against such overwhelming odds (though Henry's eloquence likely failed to rise to the level ascribed to him by the Bard). And who can ignore the damage wrought upon Cardinal Richelieu's reputation by Dumas in *The Three Musketeers*, one of my favourite adventure stories? Years after reading Dumas, when studying the real Richelieu, a smidgen of doubt yet remained regarding the Cardinal's character. If words on a page can have this influence, imagine the power of moving pictures.

As Hollywood films and television programmes become the main source of historical knowledge for the public at large[1], we must equip that public, while they are students, with critical viewing skills akin to those we expect them to develop vis à vis the printed page. As a teacher of history, it would be irresponsible for me to do otherwise. To that end, I devised an experiment to help me determine how best to impart those critical viewing skills. Through the use of questionnaires and various modes of film

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[1] John E. O'Connor, ed., *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1990), 2.

presentation, I generated case studies that have given me some early direction in addressing this issue. Allow me to explain how I arrived at this experiment.

I have long been fascinated by the relationship between film and history, particularly when film is used in a learning environment. One of my earliest memories of an historical feature film is *Johnny Tremaine and the Sons of Liberty* (1957)[2]. As I recall, it was presented at my elementary school in 1976 during a flurry of activities commemorating the bicentennial of the American Revolution. Grades Four, Five and Six were brought into the basement of St. Christopher's church, seated in rows and shown *The Sons of Liberty*. This was a major event. In 1976 it took considerable effort for an elementary school to acquire a print of a commercially produced film and screen it for a student body. I remember sitting next to the projector, almost as engrossed by the complex machinery as by the actual film. As for the film itself, to a nine-year-old boy it was exciting, dramatic, suspenseful and immensely satisfying (in part because it meant an afternoon off from regular schoolwork but largely owing to the experience of being whisked back in time). I can still recall the pride I felt of being American during the Boston Tea Party scene. The whole student body (or so it seemed) cheered as the boxes of tea were cracked open and thrown overboard. I have not watched this film since and yet, whenever I have read about or discussed the events of the Boston Tea Party, I have always recalled snippets of the events I saw on the screen a quarter of a century ago. Such was the power of *The Sons of Liberty* to influence my perception of the past.

Throughout the intervening years, there were moments in the classroom where I was exposed to history via feature films but these moments were exceptional. Access to films and projection equipment remained fairly rare until I went to university in the mid-

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[2] Directed by Robert Stevenson.

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1980s. By 1991, however, with the proliferation of VCRs and available film titles, the use of feature films in the classroom became increasingly common. I was a new teacher in 1991 and my appreciation of film had developed considerably since childhood and I was eager to exploit this resource in the classroom. My first opportunity to do so came in October 1991.

As a supply teacher in a Sarnia, Ontario high school, I was asked to show a video to a Grade Ten Canadian history class. The instructions were very simple. I was to play the video for the entire 80-minute period, take attendance and deal with any behavioural problems, should they arise. The teacher had left no activity sheet, no follow-up assignment nor had she provided any indication that the video was to be used for other than filling time. As a brand new teacher seeking a permanent job, and wanting to make a good impression, I took it upon myself to stop the film at various moments to question the class or explain a key point. The film was a made-for-television version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1979).[3] The novel on which it was based is famous, and has nothing to do, directly, with Canadian history. This was among several of the issues that I felt worthy of discussion. Why would a Canadian history class be watching such a film? I recall a good class, one with interesting discussions and a sense that, for at least a short time, history was interesting to these students. The following week, I returned to the same school for a different assignment and I was confronted by the history teacher that I had replaced. She was upset that I had not simply shown the film for the entire period and, as a result, her timetable had been disrupted. Furthermore, she was displeased that her students had asked her a number of questions on the First World War upon her return, questions she was not able to answer on the spot.

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[3] Directed by Delbert Mann.

This incident was not unique in my experience as a supply teacher. Frequently I would be asked to substitute for a history teacher and be left with a film and no other instructions. Not every teacher resented the fact that I took the time to make use of the film in a manner designed to enrich a lesson. Many were pleased at the ideas I used and wanted to know more about them. I relate this not to indulge in self-praise. It is simply an observation about the uses of film in a history classroom. Too often, films are used as a reward for a difficult series of tasks or as time fillers for supply teachers. It is easy to understand this rationale. Supply teachers are often drawn from fields entirely unrelated to history.[4] A film is an easy way to fill in a period. What is unfortunate is that teachers seldom seem to bother to integrate films into their lessons. What makes this even more regrettable is the dramatic increase in historical feature films over the last decade. While historical feature films do not constitute a genre[5] of their own—making a statistical reckoning of the number of such films difficult to perform—a quick perusal of *Video Movie Guide 2001*[6] yields the following films, in alphabetical order (and this list is by no means exhaustive): *Amistad* (1997), *Black Robe* (1991), *Braveheart* (1995), *Elizabeth* (1998), *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992), *Gladiator* (2000), *Jefferson in Paris* (1995), *JFK* (1991), *A Midnight Clear* (1992), *The Patriot* (2000), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *The Thin Red Line* (1998). These films are not all of equal quality but they do represent a sense of the burgeoning production of historical feature films.

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[4] This applies to every department. I am trained in history and French as a Second Language. I was asked to teach English, algebra, calculus, chemistry, physics and wood shop during the five years that I worked as a supply teacher. Moreover, I have taught at every grade level from pre-kindergarten to Grade 13 even though my certification is for Grade 7 and above.

[5] Pierre Sorlin, "Historical Films as Tools for Historians," in *Image as Artifact*, ed. John E. O'Connor (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1990), 42.

[6] Mick Martin and Marsha Potter, *Video Movie Guide 2001* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), passim.

At this point, one could ask, "Why should we care what Hollywood films have to say about history? What does it matter?" The answer, in part, can be found in the anecdote that opens this chapter. Perception is reality. I stated this point earlier, but it bears repeating. I still conjure up images, likely distorted, as it has been a quarter of a century since I last saw them, of a film I watched as a nine year old whenever I discuss the Boston Tea Party. The images may be distorted, but they are still there. Today, students are far more exposed to feature films in a class setting than I was and therefore have a far greater number of visual images affecting their perceptions of history. Films have been described as "the most powerful engine of popular history in our culture" and "as **shapers of historical consciousness**."[7] Such power, given the preponderance of visual media in learning, and indeed in the everyday lives of students[8], therefore makes it imperative for teachers of history to infuse their students with some critical viewing skills.

The increasing number of films and television programmes with an historical theme that have been produced in the last decade has only augmented the influence they wield over public historical consciousness, particularly that of students. Moreover, it is not unusual for historical feature films and television series to be released with study packages, packages that "never point out where dramatic license was taken, nor do they acknowledge that there may be very different but equally defensible interpretations of the issues and events portrayed."[9] The effect of these kits is to lend even greater weight to the interpretations offered by the accompanying film. *Amistad* (1997), a Steven

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[7] Tony Barta, ed., *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 8, and O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 2. The emphasis is mine.

[8] Peter Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," *The History Teacher* 26, no. 3 (May 1993): 351.

[9] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 2.

Spielberg film about a slave rebellion in the late 1830's, was accompanied with just such a study kit. The kit included an exercise in which the students were meant to analyze the relationship between Theodore Joadson, an abolitionist character in the film, and John Quincy Adams, a former U.S. President. By itself, the exercise is not without merit. However, the guide fails to point out that Joadson is a fictional character.[10] If a teacher were to show this film to his students and create exercises without the guidance of the study kit, he might be forgiven for not knowing that Joadson is fictional. After all, not all teachers of history, especially in high schools, are experts in anti-bellum U.S. history, even less so if they teach history in Canada. However, one would expect a teacher's guide to point such facts out, at least for the benefit of the teacher. Without such information, study kits provided by filmmakers risk blurring the lines between history and dramatization even further than the films already do alone.[11]

The prolific production of historical feature films in recent years, as well as the power of film to shape historical perception, has not gone unnoticed by the academic community. Several historians have devoted years of research to various aspects of the relationship between film and history. Some have acted as consultants for various film projects. Pierre Sorlin is a pioneer in the field, having written on the uses of film in history since the 1970s. Robert A. Rosenstone, the chief historical consultant for the film *Reds* (1981), has worked extensively in the field and promotes a new kind of filmmaking as a serious expression of historical scholarship. Natalie Zemon Davis' work on *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983), as well as her subsequent publications, has certainly

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[10] Garry Trudeau, "Amistad is important. Discuss," *Time Magazine*, 29 December 1997 at http://time.qpass.com/time/magazine/article/qpass/item/0,10987,,00.html?Qprod=1&QIID=11..

[11] I have raised the *Amistad* example to further illustrate the influence historical feature films can have in the classroom. A detailed examination of such study kits would be an interesting research project but it lies beyond the scope of this one.

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brought film and history into the mainstream of historical scholarship. Daniel Walkowitz, Robert Brent Toplin, Tony Barta, John O'Connor and Daniel Herlihy have all contributed to the field of film and history.[12]

Historical consultants can certainly provide valuable advice to filmmakers on questions of accuracy and interpretation but commercial filmmaking is usually a profit-seeking venture. As such, accuracy can often be sacrificed for entertainment and profit. While recognizing the valuable contributions of such consultants as Rosenstone and Davis, O'Connor asserts, "Producing films with greater historical integrity is a clear step forward. But given the continuing popularity of commercially produced historical film and docudrama...**teaching people to be more critical viewers of everything they see on film**...is an even more effective way for historians to influence the public perception of the past."[13]

How is this task of teaching critical viewing skills to be accomplished? The first step in any such pedagogical endeavour is to consult with colleagues. I have spoken with a number of them over the years. The general response of my fellow history teachers has largely been to advocate films as a form of advertisement for history. If watching *Spartacus* (1960) gets the students interested in Roman history, then showing the film is a good idea. If *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) captivates them with its romance and outlandishly exaggerated marksmanship, then the inaccuracies of the film do not matter. There is a compelling element to this line of reasoning. Get the students hooked, and then give the 'real story'. However, when it comes to a more complex treatment of films as historical documents, many of those with whom I discussed the matter had little to

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[12] The works of these, and other, scholars will be examined in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.
[13] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 3. The emphasis is mine.

offer. Perhaps the paucity of suggestions stems from a failure to consider commercial history films as more than mere entertainment. Academic historians seem reluctant to do this, "in part because of the absence of any accepted, coherent, and comprehensive methodology for analyzing them as historical artifacts."[14] Moreover, there appears to be little, in terms of support structure, available to teachers who might want to integrate films into the classroom in a pedagogically sound manner. One would think that the Internet would be of some use here. The proliferation of the Internet offers a number of ways for history teachers to consult with colleagues at a distance. H-Net[15] (Humanities and Social Sciences Online) is perhaps the most important site for consultation. It is sub-divided into sections for different teaching levels and each level has contact lists to which one may subscribe at no cost. The lists allow teachers to exchange information on a one-to-one basis or at-large. Moreover, there are frequent updates sent to members by e-mail, informing them of all manner of conferences and issues of interest. A good number of such updates include discussions of films, either feature films or documentaries, and television programmes. However, there is no systematic treatment of films on the site. The multi-media portion of the site, where one might find references to film, is largely devoted to integrating the Internet into history courses and very little is mentioned regarding films.

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[14] John E. O'Connor, "History in Images/Images in History: Reflections on the Importance of Film and Television Study for an Understanding of the Past", *American Historical Review*, 93, no. 5 (December 1988): 1201.

[15] http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/ There is also a British site at www.filmeducation.org/index.html that contains a section called *Film and History* it is also not systematic. A central site will likely emerge but as yet, I have not been able to find one and until it becomes easy to do so, we are on our own. There is also www.teachwithmovies.org It offers a number of suggestions of films that can be used in the classroom. It provides detailed background information and lesson suggestions. However, it is highly moralistic and excessively literal-minded on the issue of historical accuracy. Many films are dismissed because "some historians think this movie may be inaccurate". I must concede, however, that the site offers a very good resource for *A Man for All Seasons*, (though it nearly recommended not using this film on the grounds that one historian found it inaccurate).

Since no one has done it for us yet, our next step is to make an effort to acquire a working knowledge of how films are made and the techniques they use to communicate. There are a number of guides available for this purpose[16] and a perusal of them renders the world of film far less mysterious than it initially appears. Another step would be determining "how young people 'read' the historical films they watch. If they take their textbooks as uncontested, authoritative presentations, do they make the same kind of assumption about the much more emotionally engaging films which they view?"[17] As yet, not much is known about how young (or old) people read films.[18] Once we have a basic grasp of film technique and some idea of how students 'read' them, our next logical step would likely be devising a course, or a unit within a course, that focuses on how to view historical feature films in a critical fashion.

The purpose of this project was to gather data to guide me in the creation of a film studies course specifically geared to historical feature films. In order to accomplish this task, I designed case studies to test various methods of presentation and evaluate the students' perceptions of the historical topics portrayed in three films (*1492: Conquest of Paradise, A Man for All Seasons* and *Elizabeth*). I chose to carry out these case studies with my Advanced Placement European History class. This is a course given to Grade Eleven students and it is the equivalent of a first year university survey of European

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[16] William V. Costanzo, *Reading the Movies: Twelve Great Films on Video and How to Teach Them* (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992), Louis Giannetti and James Leach, *Understanding Movies: Canadian Edition* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon Canada, 1998) and James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia*, 3rd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). They will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

[17] Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," 351. Seixas conducted a study of ten volunteer students to examine what kind of critical judgement these students brought to bear on a specific topic, Native-White relations, as portrayed in two commercial history films. I will discuss this study in greater detail in Chapter Two.

[18] Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," 351. Also note that even in *Image as Artifact*, the reference standard, there is not a lot about this subject.

history from the Renaissance to the present. I chose this class because the students are normally selected based on ability and also because it acts as a bridge between secondary and post-secondary education. Some similar exercises have been carried out elsewhere[19] but each of them addresses a different facet of film and history from my own.

The development of this exercise required me to incorporate areas of research outside my usual experience. I am not an expert on film, particularly its technical intricacies, but I did learn enough (and it was much less than I first imagined necessary) to understand that film can be read as a text as well as watched as entertainment. Moreover, in order to evaluate my students and their responses to the films, it was necessary to become familiar with sociological research on audience reception and perception. Therefore the thesis begins with a chapter that reviews some of the burgeoning literature on film and history, as well as pertinent selections on audience and film viewing. Following the literature review, there is a chapter devoted to the conception of the case studies, the films used in them and their results (some expected, some not). Chapter Four examines some components of a course on history and films. The thesis ends with a short conclusion and various appendices. The results of my case studies clearly demonstrate that there are many problems inherent in using historical feature films as a classroom tool. While students are avid consumers of historical feature films they lack basic visual literacy skills. My thesis identifies some of those problems and proposes a model for promoting an understanding of film and history.[20]

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[19] See Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," and also Ron Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, As Viewed Through the Lens of Hollywood," *The History Teacher* 23, no. 3 (May 1990): 215-236.

[20] A brief comment on the exclusion of documentary films from my study is in order. Documentaries are often privileged as pedagogical tools when considering film as a medium for the study of history. Documentaries raise a number of concerns (notions of truth and objectivity, point of view, dramatization vs. *cinema verité*) regarding their use in the classroom. Moreover, documentaries share important

In my thesis I have deliberately chosen not to write a traditional archive-based research essay, nor have I re-assessed a larger point of historical theory. I examined a number of issues about film and history: the ability of film to present a new kind of historical truth; the work of professional historians as consultants to filmmakers and the benefits thereof; the treatment of films as cultural artefacts; and an overarching concern about history in all forms of visual media (to name but a few). Although my case studies might resemble the kind of work seen in departments of education, my training is primarily as an historian and the bulk of the secondary literature to which I am responding is by academic historians. Nevertheless, the problem with this literature is that—notwithstanding its concerns about student visual literacy—it remains abstracted from the practical world of teaching.

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similarities with feature films at a technical level. However, documentaries are sufficiently different from feature films to warrant separate treatment. They would, of course, be a critical component in any course on history and films but they are beyond the scope of this particular study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Historical Literature

Before launching a case study involving my students, it was necessary to examine what others have done in this area. As I plunged into the pool of literature on film and history, I was struck by its vastness. Owing to the disdain that my undergraduate advisor (years ago) had heaped on historical feature films, as well as the nit-picking, unflattering commentary to which these films are frequently subjected by academics in the popular press, I expected to find a relatively small body of work devoted to this subject. I could not have been more mistaken. The production of historical literature on film is burgeoning and shows little inclination to slow down. Moreover, it is diffuse and unwieldy, unlike the clear divisions of opinion that separate the interpretations of the French Revolution by Albert Soboul and François Furet, for example. There are no competing schools of thought on film and history in the traditional sense. Instead what we find is general agreement about one major point and a number of different responses to that point. The one thing that can be found over and over in the literature is the notion that, for ill or good, visual media is the chief source of historical knowledge for the public at large, in the West, and the trend towards visual media as the most important form of historical expression is growing.[1] The response of academics to this situation covers a broad spectrum of insights, prescriptions and concerns. This spectrum breaks into two

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[1] See O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 2, Robert A. Rosenstone "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", *American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (December 1988): reproduced at www.latrobe.edu.au/www/screeningthepast/reruns/rr0499/rrrr6a.html and Daniel J. Walkowitz, "Re-screening the Past: Subversion Narratives and the Politics of History" in *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History*, ed. Tony Barta (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 46, among others.

broad categories that raise a number of questions. The literature concerning the role of film in history raises the following questions: How can one use film in a serious academic fashion? How does one 'read' a film? What does the audience perceive when it views a history film? The literature concerning the effects of film on the discipline of history provokes these queries: Can history films express the complexity and ambiguity inherent in modern historical scholarship? Should history films be held to the same standards and expectations as traditional papers, monographs and books? What responsibilities, if any, do teachers of history, at all levels, have regarding visual media literacy and their students? These are but a few of the questions that confront historians concerned with film.

The scholars examined below offer a variety of answers to these questions. Robert A. Rosenstone argues that commercially produced, mass-marketed historical feature films offer little of value; thus the role of historians interested in film should be to help produce alternative, non-traditional films that expose a new kind of truth. Pierre Sorlin suggests that films should be treated as cultural artefacts, documents that reflect the times in which they were made. Natalie Zemon Davis argues that historical feature films should employ historians as consultants to ensure a measure of accountability. As well, there are scholars who say that typical commercial films are not about to disappear and we should therefore be preparing our students to cope with them. John O'Connor, a leading proponent of this last approach, compares the need for critical viewing skills with critical reading skills and considers it an essential part of citizenship training. Insisting on the need to develop critical viewing skills in students, O'Connor asserts: "Thirty years ago, this meant teaching them to read the newspaper critically, to identify bias there, and

to distinguish between factual reporting and editorializing. We must recognize that for the 1990's and beyond, critical viewing skills are an essential element in such citizenship training."[2] In addition to citizenship training, O'Connor believes that critical viewing skills will help people to cope with "the historical films and docudramas from which they will probably learn whatever history they do learn in future years."[3] They represent life skills as well as academic ones.

Despite the various approaches to history and film outlined above, the most basic response to history films remains 'fact-checking'. One need only look at *Patton* (1970) to see that the Second World War American tanks are really 1960's era German tanks (rented from the Spanish army). Does this detract from the film? The answer in this case is no. Unless one is an expert, or one consults a book (as I have), it is unlikely that the anachronism would be detected. Engaging in this kind of activity can often be amusing but it produces little of value where historical understanding is concerned.[4] Moreover, the 'fact-checking' approach to films holds disturbing implications about films and the discipline of history. Constraining films to such a narrow view suggests that history itself is merely about facts, dates and details; the very things students decry about history. As historians, do we want to reinforce this stereotypical perception of what we do? The work of the scholars discussed below suggests that we do not.

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[2] Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", passim, Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 9, and Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2000), Chapter 1, passim. O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 23. While the need to form good citizens might seem to some historians as falling outside the scope of their responsibilities, O'Connor's comparison of critical reading skills and critical viewing skills remains valid.

[3] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 24.

[4] Paul Fussell, "*Patton*" in *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, ed. Mark C. Carnes (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995; Owl Book Edition, 1996), 245.

An example of 'fact-checking' raised to a respectable form is *Past Imperfect:*
History According to the Movies.[5]   This book contains a series of essays written by

historians who are specialists in the era or events portrayed in the films they discuss.

While the authors do not solely engage in rudimentary nit-picking, almost every essay

contains an element of it. However, nit-picking aside, the search for accuracy of detail in

films by both academics and the general public (including film critics and commentators)

represents the mainstream notion of what is important in a history film.[6]

In some ways *Past Imperfect* is quite valuable[7] but it also represents something of

a wasted opportunity.   Daniel Walkowitz, who has worked extensively in film and

history,[8] best expresses this sentiment. Walkowitz sees the focus on factual accuracy as a

symptom that plagues academic historians, particularly as they apply the same standards

to film as to written texts. In a somewhat gentle criticism of the focus on factual

accuracy by historians when they consider films, he states:

> It is hardly surprising that the Society of American Historians produces as
> its contribution to media history a volume by some of our most able
> craftpersons that simply evaluates the factual accuracy or thematic value

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[5] Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (New York: Henry Holt and
Company, 1995; Owl Book Edition, 1996). This book is frequently cited by www.teachwithmovies.org as
a reference on accuracy. It was Richard Marius's article, "*A Man for All Seasons*", on Thomas More, in
Carnes, 70-73, that nearly led the site to dissuade the use of *A Man for All Seasons*. See note 15 above in
Chapter One.

[6] Sumiko Higashi, "*Walker* and *Mississippi Burning*: Postmodernism versus Illusionist Narrative" in
Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past, ed. Robert A. Rosenstone, (Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1995), 188-201. Higashi discusses the way in which *Mississippi Burning*
generated controversy among the public and the press. He points out that the major concerns expressed in
the commentary revolved around issues of accuracy rather than the nature of the history portrayed in the
film. Higashi's conclusion is that mainstream appreciation of history films revolves around traditional
notions of history and that the public has not yet embraced the postmodernist approach to history. See
below for more discussion of *Walker*.

[7] I have used it extensively as a reference for this project.

[8] As Project Director, Walkowitz supervised the 90-minute docudrama, *Molders of Troy* (PBS, 1980),
which was based on his book, *Worker City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton Worker Protest in Troy and
Cohoes, New York, 1855-1884* (Illinois, 1978).
http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/history/daniel_walkowitz.htm

of some of Hollywood's classic American historical films (*Patton, Gandhi, JFK, A Man for all Seasons*, etc.)[9]

Walkowitz's proposed solution to this problem is to forget the line between fact and fiction in film and "focus on the argument in the assemblage"[10] of the film itself. It is there that the true measure of a film's value as history should be taken. Moreover, films will allow historians, should they become actively engaged in their creation, to communicate with a public from which it is increasingly isolated.[11]

Among scholars prepared to think of film in a serious fashion, differences of opinion are essentially over the most effective role historians can play regarding film. On the one hand we have Robert A. Rosenstone and Daniel Walkowitz's vision of the historian/filmmaker; on the other hand we have John O'Connor and Pierre Sorlin who are prepared to make the best of commercial productions, recognizing their overwhelming numerical superiority and, consequently, the need to view them with a critical eye. Natalie Zemon Davis sits in the middle of this debate, having played a significant role in the making of a history film, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983),[12] as have Rosenstone and Walkowitz; like O'Connor, she has also acknowledged the strong potential that commercial productions have for the teaching of history, in *Slaves on Screen*.[13]

A reaction to the increased importance of visual media as a source of historical knowledge, common to all of these scholars, has been to embrace the change. Rather than simply point out factual flaws in history films, they argue historians should take

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[9] Walkowitz, "Re-screening the Past: Subversion Narratives and the Politics of History," 51.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Walkowitz, "Re-screening the Past: Subversion Narratives and the Politics of History," 59. See also O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 24, where he asks: "Once [students have] finished with their high school or college courses, how many are likely to read a history textbook or subscribe to the *American Historical Review*?"
[12] Directed by Daniel Vigne.
[13] Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, Chapter 1, passim.

measures to use film as a way of communicating history. Robert A. Rosenstone advocates an approach to film that treats it as a legitimate medium of historical expression, one that can stand alone and be judged according to criteria that reflect its specific nature. He worked as a consultant both on the feature film *Reds* (1982),[14] that tells the story of the last five years in the life of John Reed, an American journalist and revolutionary in the early twentieth century, and on the documentary *The Good Fight* (1984), about American volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War. His experiences in filmmaking demonstrated, as far as he was concerned, the shortcomings of history films and also provoked a serious reflection on the nature of such films.[15] For Rosenstone, what is important, and troubling, to him is "the way each [film—*Reds* and *The Good Fight*] compresses the past to a closed world by telling a single, linear story with, essentially, a single interpretation. Such a narrative strategy obviously denies historical alternatives, does away with complexities of motivation or causation, and banishes all subtlety from the world of history."[16]

Such a comment might indicate Rosenstone despairs of ever being able to use film as a medium to portray serious history. Instead he offers a solution to this difficulty by proposing a type of film that consciously avoids the pitfalls of the linear narrative. An example of this type of film is *Walker* (1987),[17] to which Rosenstone devotes an essay.[18] *Walker* is a film about William Walker, an American from the mid-nineteenth century

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[14] Directed by and starring Warren Beatty.

[15] Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", paragraph 4.

[16] Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", paragraph 5.

[17] Directed by Alex Cox.

[18] Robert A. Rosenstone, "*Walker*: The Dramatic Film as (Postmodern) History," in *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, ed. Robert A. Rosenstone, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 202-213.

who, among other things, briefly reigned as the president of Nicaragua.[19] The importance of the film, for this discussion, is the method by which the historical 'story' is presented. *Walker* uses farce, anachronisms, apocryphal events, invention and alteration to produce what Rosenstone calls "metaphoric or symbolic historical truths."[20] To him, these types of truth are no less useful than those constructed on the written page and they represent the possibilities for film as history. Any inventions of the type found in *Walker* can be excused because they symbolically portray the ideas that would be expressed in long prose passages in a book. A film attempting to communicate historical data in the same fashion as a book would be "so inefficient that the (dramatic) structure of the work would be impaired."[21]

Rosenstone acknowledges the most significant shortcoming that faces any historical film the scantiness of traditional data.[22] However, he counters this objection by offering three examples of traditional historical works on Alfred Dreyfus, the falsely accused Jewish officer in the French army of the late nineteenth century, that are of considerably different lengths. The comparative lack of data in the shorter works does

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[19] A more complete summary of the film can be found in Rosenstone, "*Walker*". I will not dwell on the details about William Walker, as they are not central to the project.

[20] Rosenstone, "*Walker*", 209. This approach did not prove popular with mainstream critics or audiences. Roger Ebert gave the film zero stars and had this to say: "Some bad movies are in no hurry to announce themselves, but *Walker* declares its badness from the opening titles...a pointless and increasingly obnoxious exercise in satire...this movie's poverty of imagination has to be seen to be believed." at www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1987/12/266975.html Desson Howe describes "*Walker* [as] a perplexing fusion of cartoon and docudrama. The cartooning is joyless, the docudrama unenlightening. We aren't watching a story of Walker—or even the obvious parable of U.S. intervention—so much as a probing of the manic director's mind. And that's a CAT scan most of us can do without." at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/walkerrhowe_a0b13e.html Rita Kempley wrote "Director Alex Cox pursues a disastrously anachronistic course in *Walker*, a surreally silly biography of an American adventurer in 19th century Nicaragua. Cox finally undermines himself completely by rolling the credits over poignant news clips from Nicaragua—90 seconds of TV realism that prove a thousand times more compelling than 90 minutes of self-important muck." www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/walkerrkempley_a0ca3.html It would seem that Rosenstone's fondness for alternative historical films would fail to meet mainstream expectations of realism. See Seixas, discussed below, for more on realism and historical films.

[21] Rosenstone, "*Walker*", 209. Parenthesis is in original.

[22] Essentially this means that a film typically does not contain as much information as a book.

not make them less historical than the longer ones. Moreover, film provides a different set of data not available to traditional print media. It is the specificity of this data that makes it imperative, according to Rosenstone, that films be judged by their own standards.[23]

Ultimately, Rosenstone would like to see history films that can convey the complexities, ambiguities and uncertainties that surround historical 'truth'. Moreover, citing *Walker* as an example, he asserts "The screen cannot be a window onto the past...the history it delivers is not to be taken as reality and suggests that the literal reconstruction of the past is not at stake in this (or perhaps in any other) project of historical understanding."[24] For Rosenstone, no form of historical expression is without some type of fictive construct and thus film can be as valid a medium for historical presentation as any other. The challenge of film, for the historian, is "to acknowledge the authenticity of the visual...[and] accept a new relationship to the word itself."[25]

Supporting Rosenstone's vision of history films are Robert Brent Toplin and Daniel J. Walkowitz. Each of them makes explicit what Rosenstone implies about the role that filmmakers play in the presentation of history; filmmakers must be recognized as historians and academic historians must be much more active in the process of filmmaking. According to Toplin, "Very few historians are significantly involved in the making of historical films, and very few filmmakers are themselves impressively literate

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[23] Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", passim in the second half. References to Dreyfus in paragraph 20.
[24] Rosenstone, "*Walker*", 213.
[25] Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film", paragraph 37.

in the scholarship on subjects they address in film."[26] His criticism of traditional history

films echoes that of Rosenstone.

> Frequently, producers and directors...[think] that scrupulous attention to
> small details constitutes, in itself, good visual history. But the goal is not
> simply getting the clothing and the furniture right. It is not just re-
> shooting a scene for *The Blue and the Gray* to make sure the actor playing
> General Ulysses S. Grant signs a dispatch with his right hand, not his left,
> and it is not simply calling on military advisers to get the precise
> measurement of a twelve-pounder (cannon) for the BBC's production of
> *Tolstoy's War and Peace*.[27]

There are more important considerations than appearances and Toplin turns to *The Return*

of Martin Guerre (1983) as an example. Whereas Rosenstone, with some disdain,

labelled this film 'historical romance,'[28] Toplin is more sympathetic, noting that it

received an "impressive scholarly and commercial reception" and the "film is well

appreciated in the historical profession, not for its sophistication alone but also because of

the [important] role of an academic historian [Natalie Zemon Davis] in its making."[29]

While Davis herself acknowledges the compromises with historical accuracy that were

made by the filmmakers,[30] Toplin seems ready to accept them. Walkowitz would likely

accept the compromises as well; as Toplin points out, "particular details may be

negotiated in a historical drama 'so long as the overriding conceptual framework remains

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[26] Robert Brent Toplin, "The Filmmaker as Historian," American Historical Review 93, no. 5 (December 1988): 1226.

[27] Toplin, "The Filmmaker as Historian": 1223. O'Connor makes a similar point in *Image as Artifact* where he describes the conceptual difference between a filmmaker's understanding of the word 'research' and an historian's understanding of the same word. Filmmakers privilege sets, costumes and props over "nuances of language and expression". O'Connor, 1990, 34.

[28] Rosenstone, "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film," paragraph 18.

[29] Toplin, "The Filmmaker as Historian": 1224.

[30] "The Basque background of the Guerres was sacrificed; rural Protestantism was ignored; and especially the double game of the wife and the judge's inner contradictions were softened." Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), viii.

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inviolate.'"[31] Where Rosenstone would like to see more films in the vein of *Walker*,

Toplin goes beyond this and also suggests:

> If filmed history is to receive greater public attention in the years ahead, historians will want to place its products under greater scrutiny. The profession lacks a broad dialogue about the criteria for judging the media's perspectives, an extensive discussion of what is expected from film as well as what is not.[32]

Barring an increased involvement on the part of academic historians in actual

filmmaking, Toplin asserts there will have to be, at the very least, a greater engagement

by the profession in the judgment of filmmakers as historians, otherwise "they will leave

much of the field of popular interpretation, by default, to people who operate free of the

pressures that monitor scholarship."[33] Without the monitoring of academics, the

likelihood of making innovative, respectable history films greatly diminishes.

The message from Walkowitz can be summed up as a summons to "Get with the

programme!" Film and visual media are here to stay, they will increase in volume and

influence and so the responsible historian will accommodate this fact and seek ways to

work productively with this media. In an essay in Tony Barta's *Screening the Past:* Film

and the Representation of History[34], Walkowitz examines Nixon (1995), the controversial

feature film from Oliver Stone, within the context of public displays and applications of

history. He examines the controversy over the Enola Gay Exhibition at the Smithsonian

and the National Standards for U.S. History from the National Center for History in the

Schools and uses the film to illustrate how feature films can make useful contributions to

[31] Toplin, "The Filmmaker as Historian," 1224, citing Daniel J. Walkowitz, "Visual History: The Craft of the Historian-Filmmaker," *Public Historian*, 7 (Winter 1985): 60.

[32] Toplin, "The Filmmaker as Historian": 1227.

[33] Ibid. It seems the profession agrees with Toplin as *The Journal of American History* and *The American Historical Review*, among others, have been reviewing films for several years.

[34] Walkowitz, "Re-screening the Past: Subversion Narratives and the Politics of History".

history. Walkowitz cites the opening 'disclaimer' from Nixon and chooses to interpret it as "the metacommentary on sources historians typically place in footnotes and an introduction" He considers the film's wide distribution a valid justification for Stone's desire to have his film taken seriously as a work of history.[35] This distribution makes the film an important part of the public debate over Nixon and any factual shortcomings it may have are subsumed to the overarching influence it has exercised on media discussions of the former American president.

While Toplin, Walkowitz and, indeed, almost every scholar interested in history and film, are sympathetic to Rosenstone's vision of how a history film can be made to satisfy multiple interpretations and complexities contained within a given topic, there is at least one voice of dissent. David Herlihy disputes the assertion that film can portray the kinds of complexity and diversity of interpretations described by Rosenstone and the others, raising some legitimate concerns about the limitations of film as a medium for presenting history.[36] For Herlihy, the core problem with film as a medium is that it requires one to suspend disbelief, whereas it is the in the nature of historical inquiry to question, to be sceptical, in effect, to disbelieve unless there is a compelling reason. One of his primary concerns is that films cannot show footnotes, and "the information they provide and cautions they express cannot easily be visually conveyed."[37] He raises this concern based on his experience as a consultant on a film about a shepherd revolt in 1250 France. Despite his participation in the making of the film (and his assurances that every effort was made to ensure authenticity), Herlihy concludes that "the film will not serve as

[35] Walkowitz, "Re-screening the Past: Subversion Narratives and the Politics of History." 49-50.
[36] David Herlihy, "Am I a Camera? Other Reflections on Films and History," *American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (December 1988): 1186-1192 passim.
[37] Herlihy, "Am I a Camera?": 1188.

a means of developing critical modes of thought; it will not show very well what historians do."[38] He is unwilling to accept that history films can make "independent statements regarding the past." They should be used as a method of inciting interest in history, but they must be accompanied with some sort of commentary. For Herlihy, it seems, there can be no other satisfactory resolution to the problem of suspending disbelief.[39]

Despite his misgivings, Herlihy is not entirely opposed to the use of history films as a pedagogical tool (provided his caveats are respected). Indeed, in some ways, his position on the use of history films is broader than most, as he has no difficulties with using mainstream commercial films *in* history, i.e. as a form of advertisement or as a cultural document indicative of the time and place it was made (rather than *as* history in the manner Rosenstone and others suggest). In fact, most of the historians with an interest in film and history seek to accommodate a number, if not all, of mainstream history films within the broad parameters of this discussion (albeit to varying degrees). If one of the goals to be met by history films is that of communication with a broader audience, as Walkowitz suggests, then commercial success becomes part of the equation. The films that Rosenstone calls 'historical romances' are at the heart of this issue. Natalie Zemon Davis' work on *The Return of Martin Guerre* demonstrates how mainstream films can be made with a large dose of historical scholarship to inform them, as Toplin's comments about it indicate. In *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision*, Davis examines several films that portray resistance to slavery. At least three of the five films she discusses were widely released and drew large audiences: Stanley Kubrick's

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[38] Herlihy, "Am I a Camera?": 1188-1189.
[39] Herlihy, "Am I a Camera?": 1192.

Spartacus (1960), Steven Spielberg's *Amistad* (1997) and Jonathan Demme's *Beloved* (1998). Although Rosenstone would likely criticize these films on the same grounds that he criticizes *Reds*, Davis is able to extract meaningful observations about the history of slavery from them, as well as make some informative points about the changing nature of cinema's portrayal of a common historical theme.[40] Her opening chapter makes an especially powerful argument for the relevance of history films, particularly feature films, to the discipline. Davis spells out a characteristic of films too often ignored by historical critics; films are a collaborative effort on a scale unmatched by traditional texts.[41] Moreover, she states that history films have a different standard about the nature of historical truth, thereby echoing Rosenstone's sentiments on this particular issue.[42]

The importance of the commercial element of history and film is well illustrated by briefly returning to *Walker*. Sumiko Higashi examines *Walker* as a post-modern narrative and compares it to *Mississippi Burning* (1988), a controversial[43], yet highly traditional history film about the civil rights movement in early 1960's America. Higashi clearly favours the approach taken by the makers of *Walker*, describing the film as "an

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[40] Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, passim.

[41] Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 12. This collaborative nature necessarily engenders compromises not usually found in traditional history media like books and articles. Moreover, most of the collaborators are motivated by non-historiographical interests.

[42] Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 12-13.

[43] Directed by Alan Parker. The controversy surrounding this film chiefly focuses on the marginalization of the role of black Americans in the civil rights movement, as portrayed in the story, and the film's suggestion that the FBI played a significantly positive role in that same movement. William H. Chafe, "*Mississippi Burning*" in Carnes, ed., *Past Imperfect*, writes, in a searing indictment of the film "As Mississippi Burning would have it, the only thing happening in that state during the summer of 1964 was, on the one hand, a fight between local white racists and, on the other, heroic FBI agents sent to the rescue of submissive, illiterate, quaking black people unable and unwilling to stand up for themselves." 276. However, the same film critics (Ebert and Kempley) who were so dismissive of Walker give Mississippi Burning positive, not to say, glowing reviews. For Ebert see www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1988/12/328325.html and for Kempley see www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/mississippiburningrkempley.html

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innovative postmodernist form."[44] *Mississippi Burning*, however, suffers from its traditional form, and thus fails to provoke any discussion about "either history itself or the ideological function of history...[whereas] *Walker* does provoke thought about the nature of historical representation as a construct."[45] Nevertheless, he points out, that, of the two, *Mississippi Burning* is the film that garnered much more favourable reviews and earned millions at the box office.[46] Like it or not, popular mainstream films like *Mississippi Burning* are the ones that do communicate with the public. This fact may be disquieting to some scholars, but it is the reality.

Teaching History Through Film

O'Connor agrees with Rosenstone's desire to see historical films that are of better quality. However, O'Connor is ready to concede that mainstream popular historical films are, and will continue to be, the dominant form of history on film. It is therefore necessary to train history students in visual literacy.

> It would be foolish indeed to try to study the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen" in the original text with students who cannot read French, yet we regularly show them moving image documents without addressing the language of images. This adds complications because unlike the frustrated readers who don't know French, passive viewers unconsciously assume that they have in fact fully comprehended the visual document.[47]

He goes on to discuss various elements of film—sound and dialogue, storyboards, editing, shot selection, point of view—and how an understanding of these components is

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[44] Higashi, "*Walker* and *Mississippi Burning*," 194.

[45] Ibid, 200.

[46] Ibid, 201. For critics' response to *Mississippi Burning*, see note 44. Evidence of the critical response to *Walker* can be found in note 20 above.

[47] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 12. One of the elements of this project is to test the validity of O'Connor's observation about passive viewers.

essential to proper use of visual media in the classroom.[48] Closely related to these

elements is the emphasis that O'Connor places on the collaborative nature of the

filmmaking process.[49]

Visual literacy is needed for students to make meaningful assessments of films as

evidence—in cultural history, for example—and to give them insight into the ways films

communicate with their audiences. Two of O'Connor's major works deal with these

issues. In *American History/American Film*[50] he, with co-editor Martin A. Jackson,

addresses the fact that films have long been overlooked as legitimate documents for

historical study. O'Connor and Jackson argue that films (in this particular case, feature

films designed primarily for entertainment) should be treated as popular novels, thereby

making them a legitimate set of cultural documents.[51] Moreover, they make the case

specifically for history films, noting that while a film may lack credibility on the surface,

its very flaws can be quite revealing of the culture that produced it.[52] The rest of the

volume contains a number of essays that analyze films as documents reflecting the time

and cultural values of their day.[53]

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[48] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 11-17. These film elements, as well as the specifics of visual literacy, are
addressed in a later section.

[49] Ibid, 17. See also Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 12.

[50] John E. O'Connor and Martin A. Jackson, ed., *American History/American Film: Interpreting the
Hollywood Image* (New York: Ungar Publishing Company, 1979, 1988).

[51] O'Connor and Jackson, *American History/American Film*, xxi.

[52] Ibid, xxii. The film to which they refer is *Mission to Moscow* (1943), described as a film "so full of
falsehoods and misrepresentations that no part of the film can be trusted to present a factual picture of what
life was like in Soviet Russia in the late 1930's. ...it speaks volumes about what the Warner Brothers and,
through them, the Roosevelt administration wanted the American people to think about Russia in 1943
when the film was released." The exercise I did with my Grade 10 students with *The Patriot* supports this
position. See Appendix C.

[53] Lawrence Suid, "The Pentagon and Hollywood: *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying
and Love the Bomb* (1964)" in *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image*, ed.
John E. O'Connor and Martin A. Jackson (New York: Ungar Publishing Company, 1979, 1988). This
essay is a particularly good model for demonstrating the use films can have in helping us understand the
eras in which they are made. It gives a detailed analysis of how changes in American social attitudes
during the Cold War (attitudes that became less reverential) are paralleled by a changing approach to the
military by Hollywood, particularly among independent filmmakers.

The other major work by O'Connor is *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television*.[54] In this book, O'Connor, as well as his fellow contributors, addresses the same issue as in *American Film/American History* but he goes beyond treating films as cultural documents. He does not wish to offer guidance to the historian/filmmaker; rather he wants to establish a framework for providing students with the necessary skills to understand existing visual media in an historical context. As stated in the preface:

> It is our starting premise that, important as it may be for interested scholars to be able to influence what gets produced, it is equally important for historians in general to learn to use film and television in critical ways, and to train future generations to view everything they see more critically[55]

The scope of *Image as Artifact* is very broad, encompassing film analysis on a number of levels, each more demanding than the last. O'Connor explores the breadth of popular, mainstream history films, their influence on public historical consciousness and acknowledges the concern shared by most historians that these films "never point out where dramatic license was taken, nor do they acknowledge that there may be very different but equally defensible interpretations of the issues and events portrayed."[56] This is the same complaint that Rosenstone has about mainstream commercial history films but while he, along with Toplin, Walkowitz and others, pushes for the creation of a different type of film altogether, O'Connor essentially finds such an approach limited at best. He argues that mainstream historical features are here to stay and it is incumbent upon those responsible for the formation of future historians to help them deal with these films.

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[54] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*. There is a companion video that accompanies this book.
[55] Ibid, ix.
[56] Ibid, 2.

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O'Connor seeks to apply the traditional skills of the historical profession to the analysis of film and other visual media. The title of his book, *Image as Artifact*, has a very specific meaning. "In this book, the term 'moving image artifact' (or "moving image document") is used to refer to any form of the motion picture technology first developed in the 1890's"[57] Analyses of these 'artifacts' are subject to the same rigour as any other more traditional historical evidence. What is different about visual media—and what frequently poses a difficulty for historians, according to O'Connor—is that a proper analysis of it requires knowledge of a technical nature that is not necessarily easily acquired.[58] One problem for scholars is that there can be several versions of the same film. They are edited for foreign distribution or television broadcast; this can sometimes result in a substantially different version than the one originally made. Editing can be done for reasons of censorship (usually to tone down sex, language and violence for public broadcast or more restrictive ratings codes in foreign markets) or for the technical purpose of re-cropping the image that appears on the television screen.[59] While these

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[57] Ibid, 4.

[58] Ibid, 4-5.

[59] Traditionally, since the 1950's, films shown in cinema houses are projected in a rectangular fashion where the width can exceed twice the height. A standard television screen is only 33% wider than it is tall and the resultant image is much closer to a square than the one at the cinema (Prior to the advent of television, almost all films were made and projected in the same ratio as a television screen. Widescreen presentations were created in response to television—it was seen as a way to draw the viewer to the cinema.). In order to fill the television screen, the image of the original film is cropped to the ratio of the television screen. At first, this simply involved cutting the left and right edges of the original image. This type of cropping sometimes has unfortunate results. I recall watching an early video print of *Jaws* (1975) that had been cropped in this manner. This led to a scene where two people, sitting across a kitchen table from one another, carried on a conversation and all I saw was each person's hands. I have since seen the film in its original form and the entire actor could be seen on either side of the table. Since the 1980's, a technique known as 'Pan and Scan' has been used to alleviate this problem. Using a special camera, the studios make a film of the original film, scanning across the wider image to capture all of it. After this filming, the images are edited in such a way as to include more of the original information while preserving the television screen ratio. Using this method for *Jaws*, you would see the first person talking, a cut to the person responding, and then back to the first person and so on. While this technology is an improvement on the old indiscriminant cropping, it does not provide you with the original image as intended by the filmmaker. The recent popularity of the DVD video format is making widescreen presentations available to more homes and may one day allow a majority of people to watch films in their intended visual form.

issues can be of critical importance to the historian who wishes to authenticate a particular film as an historical document, they pose less of a problem for historians wishing to use a video version of a film in a classroom.

In order to make proper use of visual media in historical studies, O'Connor proposes a number of categories, each subdivided. While these various categories are worthy of study, the ones most germane to this project are "The Moving Image as Representation of History" and "The Moving Image as Evidence for Social and Cultural History."[60] In these areas, Pierre Sorlin discusses film as documentary evidence, with a focus on European films.[61] Daniel Leab examines American films in a similar vein as Sorlin, spending a good deal of time on television docudramas and documentary series. Patricia-Ann Lee, in an essay entitled *Teaching Film and Television as Interpreters of History*, provides some general suggestions for material that could be incorporated into a history class. She does not, however, provide a specific blueprint or approach to the inclusion of film in a history class. Indeed, of all the essayists in *Image as Artifact*, the one who offers the most detailed practical approach for teaching history with film is Carlos E. Cortés.[62] His essay, however, suggests a number of films that are not

Further details about this particular issue can be found in Monaco as well as Costanzo. From an historical perspective, this issue of film prints is of particular concern to Pierre Sorlin (1980).

[60] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 6-9.

[61] Sorlin, "Historical Films as Tools for Historians," 42-68. See also Sorlin, *The Film in History*, where he discusses at some length the difficulties film researchers can experience with equipment, accessibility and prints (though the availability of videocassettes and DVDs have obviated some of those difficulties) as well as the role that film can play as evidence in socio-cultural history. His essay in *Screening the Past* discusses the effects that television specifically, as a medium of communication, has on audience reception of film and the different quality of history on television as opposed to history on film. Pierre Sorlin, "Television and Our Understanding of History: A Distant Conversation" in *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History*, ed. Tony Bartha (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 203-220. This last point is interesting but it is beyond the scope of this project.

[62] Carlos E. Cortés, "Challenges of Using Film and Television as Socio-Cultural Documents to Teach History" in *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television*, ed. John E. O'Connor (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1990), 156-168.

necessarily history films and is therefore more in keeping with Sorlin's discussion noted above, as well as the ideas expressed in *American Film/American History*.

Any attempt to evaluate the effects of films on students must include some analysis of audience reception. O'Connor mentions some of the difficulties of audience research and points to recent scholarship on "reception analysis", a theory that emphasizes the active role that a viewer has in the construction of any meaning that emerges from visual media. This theory has largely replaced the traditional notion of passive viewers who simply absorbed the illusion of reality presented to them.[63] O'Connor also notes the changing nature of "reception characteristics" over time[64] as well as the differences in behaviour exhibited by audiences watching television (or a movie on a VCR) and that displayed by audiences in a cinema (where audiences tend to be a bit more courteous—though the increased viewing of films at home seems to have blurred the line of behaviour somewhat).[65]

Overall, *Image as Artifact* encompasses a wide range of analysis, with a number of subcategories that make it adaptable to various levels of teaching. The main characteristic that distinguishes the viewpoint expressed in this work from those of Rosenstone, Toplin, Walkowitz et al. is its insistence on preparing people to become more skilled as viewers of historical visual media rather than pushing for the creation of a

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[63] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 20. For further discussion of audience research, see section on audience below.

[64] This aspect of reception made itself evident when my class viewed *A Man for All Seasons* (1966) and *Elizabeth* (1998). Although each film portrayed Tudor England, some of my students noted the marked differences in production values, acting styles as well as the pacing of the editing and the camera placement between the two films.

[65] One of my students revealed the conditioning of watching films at home on tape or television when she commented, "It was frustrating we couldn't talk because conversing during movies (about the movies) helps my understanding." Response number 1, question 10. (See Chapter Three for a complete discussion of responses to questionnaires in the case studies.) The students were instructed not to talk during the screening in class and to behave as would be expected of them in a cinema.

different type of media altogether. O'Connor and his colleagues acknowledge, quite reverentially at times,[66] the work of Walkowitz and Toplin in particular. However, O'Connor and the others express a willingness to work with mainstream, commercial films, made for television docudramas and other forms of visual media that Rosenstone and company would not.

The literature of historians on films, while rich in ideas, provides little in the way of concrete plans to incorporate films into a history class or for the creation of visual media literacy courses with a specific bent towards history. A perusal of the pedagogical literature reveals individual efforts at incorporating film into history classes, and it is to these efforts that our attention turns.

There are two journals largely devoted to the **teaching of history** that contained some practical information: *The History Teacher* and *The History and Social Science Teacher*. [67] In one article, Ron Briley, a high school history teacher at Sandia Preparatory School in New Mexico, describes a course using film to teach American history. It is offered as a senior elective course and it covers 1932 to 1972.[68] His course uses films as cultural documents and often they are not historical feature films.[69] Echoing O'Connor's

[66] See Daniel Leab, "The Moving Image as Interpreter of History—Telling the Dancer from the Dance" in *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television*, ed. John E. O'Connor (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1990), 81-82 and Patricia-Ann Lee "Teaching Film and Television as Interpreters of History" in *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television*, ed. John E. O'Connor (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1990), 102-103 especially.

[67] I emphasize this point because I want the distinction to be clear. Several academic history journals have published a significant number of articles on history and film (I have cited a number of them). However, unlike the two specified journals, they do not concentrate on practical teaching issues. As this project concerns the application of historical feature films in the classroom, I turned to the journals most concerned with practical classroom matters. *The History Teacher* addresses issues for both secondary and post-secondary institutions whereas *The History and Social Science Teacher* is mostly aimed at secondary school teachers. The latter journal is Canadian while the former is American.

[68] Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, As Viewed Through the Lens of Hollywood," 215-236.

[69] For example, Briley uses Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) to examine "the ambiguous relationship between the common people and a man of power who claims to speak for them" He also uses this film to

remarks about the Declaration of the Rights of Man[70], Briley argues that: "Teaching the grand military strategy of the Civil War without investigating any specific battles would hardly be a satisfactory approach for a history teacher. Accordingly, it is unacceptable for the film historian to study only the ideology of a film while ignoring its visual components."[71] Briley's course includes lessons on a variety of film concepts, as well as in-class screenings of a number of films that are designed to illustrate various historical events within the delineated time period. He argues eloquently about the need to inculcate visual literacy skills but, apart from listing a few concepts, he offers no explanation of how to teach these skills. The bulk of his article, in fact, consists of his film choices and the criteria behind their selection. I believe that his class would be very interesting and engaging for students, as well as insightful historically, but I would be more comfortable teaching such a class if the students had a more thorough training in visual literacy.

An article by Peter Seixas,[72] a curriculum studies professor at the University of British Columbia, describes a study similar to my own, though it had a narrower focus. He wanted to gauge the effect of historical feature films on students' understanding of Amerindian-White relations. Seixas postulated a danger in using historical feature films, namely that: "Students are likely to be swept quite completely into the 'historical' world as presented on film, but unlikely to exercise critical judgements of the filmic depiction

examine democracy in America and as fine example of innovative film techniques. Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, As Viewed Through the Lens of Hollywood," 223.

[70] see above note 48.

[71] Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, As Viewed Through the Lens of Hollywood," 217.

[72] Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations."

of the past."[73] He conducted his study of a group of British Columbia Grade Ten students, in a similar fashion to my own, with questionnaires, using a small-sized qualitative approach.[74] He compared two films on the same subject, Amerindian-White relations; one made in 1990 (*Dances With Wolves*)[75] and one made in 1956 (*The Searchers*)[76]. He found the older film to be less compelling to the students. It did not reflect their cultural norms and was therefore less 'realistic' in the students' eyes. Seixas discovered that less 'realistic' meant less accurate as far as the students were concerned. He concluded that the older film, by being less engaging, actually provoked more discussion and scepticism from the students. The newer film, conversely, was accepted by the students far more readily and engendered much less discussion.[77] Although Seixas's findings demonstrate the need to teach visual literacy, his article, like Briley's, does not propose any specific methods for doing so.

A more recent study on the effects of film on students' historical perception was carried out by Michael Sturma and Judy MacCallum in Australia. They used a combination of questionnaires and interviews to examine the influence of Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991) on a group of 47 students enrolled in a survey of twentieth century American history at Murdock University. They consider film an important component of study of American history and culture because: "Australian images of the United States are largely

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[73] Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," 352. Several comments made by students during my exercise support this idea. See Chapter Three for more details.

[74] For more on this approach see discussion of Ien Ang 's *Watching Dallas* below.

[75] Directed by Kevin Costner.

[76] Directed by John Ford.

[77] My own experience supports this conclusion. See Chapter Three for details. See Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," 364-365, for details of his conclusion.

mediated by Hollywood."[78] Unlike Seixas, Sturma and MacCallum assigned background readings to provide students with some historical context for viewing the film. But significantly, the readings did not seem to have an appreciable effect on the students' view of the historical events described in the film, for the responses observed by Sturma and MacCallum are strikingly similar to what Seixas describes. According to the Australian questionnaire results, the students found Oliver Stone's film very convincing and were quite influenced by its interpretation of the Kennedy assassination. In other words, despite the reality of national cultural difference the Australian students proved to be as receptive to the contemporary cultural perspective of *JFK* as Seixas's Canadian students were to *Dances with Wolves*.[79]

The only article that does suggest specific ways of teaching visual literacy is by Ken Smith in *The History and Social Science Teacher*.[80] Smith, a high school teacher in Ontario, provides a brief (one page) description of his goal, which is to help students become 'film analysts'.[81] The balance of the article includes samples of various worksheets used in his course throughout the year. Although Smith's course is focused on documentary films the structure of the worksheets could be adapted to historical feature films fairly easily. There is no hint in his presentation that he considers feature films especially useful. Actually, Smith's work addresses feature films only to establish how documentaries differ from them. Thus we must turn to works written about film theory and techniques in order to find some guidance on becoming visually literate.

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[78] Michael Sturma and Judy MacCallum, "JFK in the Classroom," *The Social Studies*, 91, no. 3, (May/June 2000): 101.

[79] Sturma and MacCallum, "JFK in the Classroom", 105 and 108.

[80] Ken Smith, "History and the Moving Image: The Historical Documentary," *The History and Social Science Teacher*, 4. no. 24, (Summer 1989): 194-203. This particular issue is devoted to the theme of Media Literacy, which encompasses film, television, newspapers, rock concerts and billboards, among other things. This is well beyond the scope of my project and the only relevant article is Smith's.

[81] Smith, "History and the Moving Image: The Historical Documentary," 194.

Film and Visual Literacy Literature

If the pool of literature by historians on film and history is vast, the amount of literature devoted to film and visual literacy is even bigger. It is not my intent to navigate such an immense expanse. What is important for this project is establishing a reasonable definition of visual literacy and the skills such literacy requires. Additionally, it would be desirable to identify a model for a primer on how to apply films in a classroom setting. Beyond these two modest goals lies a region well outside the scope of this project.

What is visual literacy? It has been defined as "the ability to construct meaning from visual images."[82] In many ways visual literacy resembles traditional literacy. In other words, it is the ability to 'read' visual media (for our purposes, film) actively. One educator wrote: "It has always been the point of English Lit that you don't read a book passively. Educated readers should be able to analyze, criticize, interpret, and compare what they read."[83] Visual literacy means bringing these same skills to bear on moving images. It means recognizing the interactive relationship between viewer and film. It means being aware of contemporary cultural norms and the influence they have on filmmaking and viewer attitudes. Visual literacy means understanding the difference between realistic and accurate. It means having a basic grasp of a few technical concepts,

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[82] Cyndi Giorgis, Nancy J Johnson, Annamarie Bonomo, Chrissie Colbert, et al., "Visual Literacy," *The Reading Teacher*, 53. no. 2, (October 1999): 146.

[83] Christopher Moore, "Introduction: Media Literacy," *The History and Social Science Teacher*, 4. no. 24, (Summer 1989): 185. In my extensive reading of the literature I have found numerous references to the importance of visual literacy but I have not found a working definition as it relates to history. I have, therefore, provided one of my own. Chapter V in *Image as Artifact* provides a good discussion of the concepts historians should familiarize themselves with to better cope with visual media.

like mise-en-scène, montage, convention, jump-cuts, and storyboarding.[84]   Most

importantly, visual literacy means being an active viewer.

One of the difficulties of arriving at a working definition of visual literacy is the

fact that the term is sometimes used interchangeably with, or subsumed within, media

literacy. Media literacy encompasses far more than films and other moving images. It

applies to radio, newspapers, advertisements, Internet and computer software, among

other things.[85]   Media literacy is largely the domain of English Language Arts

programmes and that is where much of the literature on the subject resides. For example,

Barrie Barrell, a professor in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University

(Newfoundland and Labrador), observed that: "Reading expands beyond books to include

a variety of complex electronic and visual texts and images" in Atlantic Canada's

curriculum of English Language Arts.[86]   Moreover, media literacy, an established field of

study in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom for decades, is a relatively new field

in the United States, one that is not universally appreciated as a serious area of study.[87]

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[84] A glossary of these and a few other terms appears in Appendix C. A detailed discussion of these terms is not necessary for this project but these concepts would be included in my proposed course on film and history.

[85] Media literacy considers the production of various media by students an integral part of its mandate. I do not think that one must necessarily make a film in order to understand one, though I do see the appeal of media production as a teaching tool. For more on the importance of student media production in media literacy programmes, see Sara Bragg, "Wrestling in woolly gloves: Not just being critically media literate," *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 30, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 41-51, and Robert Ferguson, "The mass media and the education of students in a democracy: Some issues to consider," *The Social Studies*, 90, no. 6 (November/December 1999): 257-261.

[86] Barrie Barrell, "Technology and change in Atlantic Canada's new secondary English language arts curriculum," *English Education*, 31, no. 3 (April 1999): 231. See also James Flood and Diane Lapp, "Broadening conceptualizations of literacy: The visual and communicative arts," *The Reading Teacher*, 51, no. 4, (December 1997/January 1998): 342-344, as well as Giorgis, Johnson, Bonomo, Colbert, et al., "Visual Literacy," and James Flood and Diane Lapp, "Intermediality: How the use of multiple media enhances learning," *The Reading Teacher*, 52, no. 7, (April 1999): 776-780. The latter three articles are aimed primarily at elementary school teachers.

[87] David M. Considine, "Media Literacy: National Developments and International Origins", *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 30, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 7-15, and Naomi R. Rockler, "Overcoming 'It's Just Entertainment': Perspective by Incongruity as Strategy for Media Literacy," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 30, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 16-22. For more on media literacy programmes in the United Kingdom

Owing to this lack of appreciation, access to practical information for integrating films and videos in the classroom is haphazard. James Flood and Diane Lapp, professors at the School of Teacher Education, San Diego State University, have noted: "despite the influx of available videotapes, no widely disseminated framework is available in the professional literature to help teachers assist students in learning information from what they see and hear."[88] At the university level, meaningful discussion of practical uses for film and other visual media in history also lacks focus. In a roundtable discussion about teaching American history survey courses in *The Journal of American History*, thirteen scholars present various opinions on, among other things, the "Pedagogy of the Survey". It is worth noting that in this section, while a number of the scholars indicate that they consider films, both feature and documentary, as integral parts of their courses, they do not discuss any pedagogical issues relating to their use, except to note that their students are "more visual than ever."[89] They offer few practical insights on integrating films into their classes.

However, while the field of media literacy is undoubtedly important, I have chosen to focus upon visual literacy and construe it in a narrow sense. Although in pedagogical literature, visual literacy applies to static images,[90] I have used the term in reference to moving images, as John O'Connor did in *Image as Artifact*.

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see also Ferguson, "The mass media and the education of students in a democracy: Some issues to consider," 257-258.

[88] James Flood and Diane Lapp, "Viewing: The neglected communication process or "when what you see isn't what you get"," *The Reading Teacher*, 52, no. 3, (November 1998): 300. It is somewhat ironic that the country that produces, by far, the greatest amount of visual media seems to disdain its serious study.

[89] Gary Kornblith and Carol Lasser, "Teaching the American History Survey at the Opening of the Twenty-First Century: A Round Table Discussion," *The Journal of American History*, 87, no. 4 (March 2001): 1409-1441. The remark about students and their predilection for visual media was made by William B. Scott of Kenyon College, Ohio.

[90] Giorgis, Johnson, Bonomo, Colbert, et al., "Visual Literacy," 146-153. See Flood and Lapp, "Broadening conceptualizations of literacy: The visual and communicative arts," passim.

Film reference books were the most useful type of literature for the preparation of this project. Of these, I selected three for consideration: *Reading the Movies: Twelve Great Films on Video and How to Teach Them* by William V. Costanzo; *Understanding Movies (Canadian Edition)* by Louis Giannetti and Jim Leach; *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia* by James Monaco. Costanzo's book is the closest example to the type of primer on film and teaching that is lacking for history. Its format is very practical. The book is divided in two parts, "Reading the Movies" and "Twelve Great Films on Video". The chapters in the first part provide a clear, straightforward introduction to film art, the language of film, film technology, the history of film and theories of film.[91] These chapters are by no means comprehensive but they are an excellent starting point for anyone wanting to understand how films work. The chapters in the second part consist of short essays on select films, bibliographies related to each film and a number of assignments on various aspects of each film. Among the films are *Citizen Kane*, *On the Waterfront*, *The Graduate*, *Modern Times* and *The Birds*. The assignments are varied and include comparisons between novels and films (where appropriate), films with other films as well as film analysis and investigations into the thoughts and lives of the filmmakers.[92] Costanzo's list is biased toward films from the mid-20th century but his approach can nonetheless be applied to films on any era.

The other two books, by Giannetti and Leach, as well as by Monaco, are more in the vein of a typical reference book. "*Understanding Movies* is designed to progress from the basic principles of film language and technique to broader issues of ideology and theory...The chapters are fairly self-contained and can be read in different sequences to

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[91] Costanzo, *Reading the Movies*, v. This page lists the contents of the book.
[92] Costanzo, *Reading the Movies*. See Part II, passim.

meet the needs of specific courses."[93] The chapter titles are a list of the basic concepts of film: Photography; Mise en Scene; Movement; Editing; Sound; Story; Acting; Drama and Literature; Nonfiction Films; Ideology; Theory.[94] Each chapter discusses its topic in a straightforward, textbook style, with many examples and definitions of key terms. The book is well laid-out and offers a wealth of information in an accessible fashion. It is an appropriate reader for post-secondary students and could be used in a history film course. It is, however, somewhat advanced for secondary students.

Monaco's *How to Read a Film* is similar to *Understanding Movies* but goes into far more detail. Moreover, he goes beyond film and discusses other forms of visual media, especially those relating to computers and multimedia applications. He includes an extensive bibliography on a wide range of film topics. His chapter on film history[95] is quite comprehensive, covering the evolution of technology and various schools of filmmaking (genre, auteur, New Wave, expressionism, to name a few). In the chapter on film history, Monaco argues that the "'sociopolitics' of film describes how it reflects and is integrated with human experience in general. Film's 'psychopolitics' attempts to explain how we relate to it personally and specifically. Because film is such a widespread popular phenomenon, it plays a very important part in modern culture, *socio*politically. Because it provides such a powerful and convincing representation of reality, film also has a profound effect on members of its audience, *psycho*politically."[96] Despite his propensity for neologisms, Monaco makes a critical point that is especially

[93] Giannetti and Leach, *Understanding Movies*, viii. Leach adapted Giannetti's textbook for a Canadian audience by adding a chapter on Canadian Cinema, expanding the discussion of nonfiction films and including stills from Canadian films. p. vii.
[94] Giannetti and Leach, *Understanding Movies*, v-vi table of contents
[95] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, "The Shape of Film History," 228-387.
[96] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 261.

relevant to historical feature films. As Peter Seixas observed, when the audience is presented with recognizable cultural norms in a film (Monaco's sociopolitics), it tends to accept the representation of reality provided by the film (Monaco's psychopolitics). The impact of films on a society and its individuals, as postulated by Monaco, is reflected in the results of Seixas's experiment. Thus the tendency, by viewers, to accept that which is culturally familiar in a feature film, in general (as Monaco asserts), translates into a skewed perception of historical accuracy, as seen in Seixas' experiment. This is a point that we as teachers of history must make clear to our students. Overall, Monaco's book is very informative, but it is too advanced for secondary students (and perhaps first year undergraduates as well). I would recommend it as a reference for teachers interested in teaching with film, though *How to Read a Film*, like *Understanding Movies*, offers no practical suggestions on how to do so.

Audience Research

Audience analysis is not a traditional activity in history. However, as one of the goals of this project is to establish a visual media literacy course, it would be remiss to ignore the audience component. The literature on audience research and mass media reveals a number of issues that have a direct impact on the form of the exercise carried out with my students as well as the shape of my proposed media course.

Mass media, of which film is a part, cannot be discussed without reference to mass communication. Ross Eaman has observed that mass communication requires large numbers and anonymity.[97] Research into mass communication generally, and audiences

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[97] Ross A. Eaman, *The Media Society: Basic Issues and Controversies* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1987), 16.

specifically (which will be the focus of this discussion), therefore tends to be quantitative in nature. Furthermore, this research is largely theory-driven and much of the literature is devoted to proposing or refining various theoretical models. The most important change in the fundamentals of these models occurred when the traditional image of an audience as a passive receiver of mass media content was replaced with the currently accepted view of an audience as an active participant in mass communication.[98] Assigning an active role to audiences generated a number of theoretical models to explain their behaviour.

One model that seems to have gained ascendancy is known as the 'uses and gratification model'.[99] In this model, audiences consciously select the kind of mass media and the level of interaction they choose to have with that form of media. The selection does not occur in a random fashion nor, much to the regret of the media providers, is it imposed upon the viewers. In essence, the use of media is a social act and audiences expect gratification from their use of media; otherwise, they will simply select another source.

Media providers, naturally, conduct research and attempt to categorize their potential audiences, in order that they might be successful distributors of media. Both Denis McQuail and Ien Ang address the most common image of audience held by researchers, the audience as marketing target. They note that such a research approach to audiences is almost exclusively external; that is it rarely takes the point of view of the

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[98] Karsten Renckstorf and Denis McQuail, "Social Action Perspectives in Mass Communication Research: An Introduction" in *Media Use as Social Action: A European Approach to Audience Studies*, ed. Karsten Renckstorf, Denis McQuail and Nicholas Jankowski (London: John Libbey and Company Limited, 1996), 1-2. Also see Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Cantor, ed. *Media, Audience, and Social Structure*, (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 17. O'Connor alludes to this theory. See note 64 above.
[99] Renckstorf and McQuail, "Social Action Perspectives in Mass Communication Research: An Introduction," 3 and Denis McQuail, *Communication* 2nd edition (Essex, England: Longman Group Limited,1984), 193.

audience into account.[100] Audiences are treated as amorphous, undifferentiated masses[101] for which mass media are created. This results in multiple audience images, which can have important consequences for the process of mass media creation. The most relevant type of mass media in this project is film, for which the issue of audience image is quite important. As most films have a commercial agenda, filmmakers often see audiences as marketing targets.[102] Within some filmmakers' camps, however, there is frequently a split in audience image perception. Many directors like to think of their films as art, to be enjoyed (or not) by the audience on its own merits, while most producers think of films as products that should generate wide appeal. Robert Kapsis describes two instances where directors and producers clashed over the nature of their films and the divergent expectations about the audiences for those films.[103] In each case, the producer's audience image held sway and affected the final form of the film. The relationship between audience images held by filmmakers and the idea of audience as marketing target is almost symbiotic. McQuail cites Herbert Gans, who wrote that: "The audience participates in the making of a movie through the audience image held by the creator." McQuail further observes that these images are shaped by the personal experiences and self-interest of that creator.[104] The actual audience is rarely, if ever, consulted.

[100] Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1983), 151 and 153, McQuail, *Communication*, 190, and Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991), 4 and 29.

[101] Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, 6.

[102] Robert Kapsis, "Hollywood Filmmaking and Audience Image" in *Media, Audience and Social Structure*, ed. Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Muriel G. Cantor (London: Sage Publications, 1986), 162 and 169.

[103] Kapsis, "Hollywood Filmmaking and Audience Image," 161-173. The films discussed are *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951) and *Halloween II* (1981).

[104] McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, 170, citing H. J. Gans, "The Creator-Audience Relationship in the Mass Media", in *Mass Culture*, ed. B. Rosenberg and D. M. White (New York: Free Press, 1957), 318.

Complicating the issue of audience reception research is the nature of mass communication research in general. As previously noted, studies on the effects of mass media on society and the ways in which mass communication functions rely on large sample sizes and quantitative analysis. However, such large studies pose difficulties for gauging audience reception. The trend in this area has been to move to smaller, qualitative and interpretative methods. There is "a strong preference for small-scale, in-depth, ethnographic, holistic and interpretative forms of enquiry...[and]...a concentration on popular forms of narrative and entertainment"[105] This trend has not evolved without resistance. Renckstorf and McQuail point out that: "The main opposition is now between an alleged 'dominant paradigm'...which is behaviouristic and quantitative in its research demands and a cultural-critical alternative which is interpretative and qualitative in approach and devoted to exploring the minutiae of media meanings and experience."[106] According to Thomas R. Lindlof, of the Department of Telecommunications, University of Kentucky and Timothy P. Meyer of the College of Communication, University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, the advantages of the small-scale qualitative approach lie principally in its ability to assess, through direct observation by researchers, the interaction of individuals with various media, something not easily accomplished in large-scale quantitative studies. Lindlof and Meyer refer to this interaction as "mediated communication."[107] Germane to this project is their justification for qualitative research into: "How individuals make use of the forms and content of media for making decisions

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[105] Renckstorf and McQuail, "Social Action Perspectives in Mass Communication Research: An Introduction," 12.

[106] Renckstorf and McQuail, "Social Action Perspectives in Mass Communication Research: An Introduction," 16.

[107] Thomas R. Lindlof and Timothy P. Meyer, "Mediated Communication as Ways of Seeing, Acting and Constructing Culture: The Tools and Foundations of Qualitative Research," in *Natural Audiences: Qualitative Research of Media Uses and Effects*, ed. Thomas R. Lindlof (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Company, 1987), 2.

or inferences about the nature of their world...Among the specific areas subsumed here are the reality status of media characters, events and stories."[108] There are potential difficulties with a qualitative approach, notably the tendency of the observed to "try to act differently than usual" while being monitored and the phenomenon of answering questions with an eye to pleasing the researcher rather than answering honestly. However, these difficulties can be overcome by having the researcher spend a significant amount of time with the group being studied.[109]

A clear example of the interpretative and qualitative approach in audience research is the work of Ien Ang in *Watching Dallas*.[110] In this book, Ang attempts to explain the reasons for the enormous popularity that the American television programme, *Dallas*, enjoyed in the Netherlands. The scope of this effort is quite broad, encompassing cultural studies, audience reception, analyses of programme content, the ideology of mass culture, feminism and more. The methodology of Ang's project conforms to the interpretative and qualitative trend in audience reception research. The following excerpt illustrates the nature of her project:

> In order to obtain information on the way in which people experience watching *Dallas*, I placed a small advertisement in a Dutch women's magazine called *Viva*...
>
> I had forty-two replies to [the] advertisement...
>
> These letters form the empirical material on the basis of which I shall be trying in the following chapters to say something about what it can mean to watch *Dallas*...Interest in this study, however, is based not so much on the quantitative demographic distribution of the different ways the

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[108] Ibid, 13. In the case of my project, it is the history of "the nature of their world" that is under examination. The "reality status of media characters, events and stories" is also central to my study.

[109] Ibid, 15-16.

[110] Ien Ang, *Het Geval Dallas* (Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination) (London; New York: Methuen, 1985). Will be referred to as *Watching Dallas* throughout this paper.

programme is received. Rather the central question is *how* [italics in original] these letter-writers experience *Dallas*...[111]

Ang's *Watching Dallas* has played a major role in establishing the legitimacy of a small sample-sized qualitative study in the field of audience reception research.[112]

An important caveat regarding the literature on audience research must be stated. Television far outweighs film as a concern for mass media and communication studies. McQuail offers a plausible explanation for this phenomenon. "Television clearly took away a large part of the film-viewing public, especially the general family audience, leaving a much smaller and younger audience."[113] In effect, with the advent of television, film became more of a niche product than it had been before, with a diminished influence on the masses.[114] However, we should be careful not to overemphasize the weight of television in mass media studies. While television audiences are far more massive than film, thus providing more research possibilities in mass media, that same research has identified young people as the primary market for films.[115] As well, Ang's qualitative approach in *Watching Dallas* provides a solid reference for small audience evaluations, which is a central element of this project. Moreover, the 'active participant' theory of audience behaviour is just as valid for film

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[111] Ang, *Watching Dallas*, 10-11.

[112] For other examples of small-sized, qualitative studies (specifically related to history, film and audience reception), see Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations" as well as Sturma and MacCallum, "JFK in the classroom," 101-109.

[113] McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, 24.

[114] It is somewhat ironic that in mass media studies, film is on the margins of research because its influence seems relatively minor in the face of television while in history, one of the major concerns about mainstream films is that they play a much larger role in the formation of public historical consciousness than does the work of academic historians (although, particularly in *Image as Artifact*, the role of history on television gets equal, if not more, attention than the feature film. Thus even within historical visual media studies, television is ascendant. A topic for future research, I am certain).

[115] Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, As Viewed Through the Lens of Hollywood," 215. "Certainly film is a subject which adolescents, **who comprise the most influential element of today's film audience** [my emphasis], understand."

audiences as for television audiences. Indeed, this theory can serve as a common thread for all three areas of research examined in this chapter.[116]

Conclusion

My review of the literature from the areas pertinent to this project reveals a rapidly increasing body of literature, full of intriguing and exciting possibilities. A broad, serious academic treatment of film by historians is firmly established, and this situation is far different from what Pierre Sorlin described in 1980.[117] Filmmakers increasingly rely on professional historians as advisors and consultants when making historical feature films (though there remains much room for improvement in this area). Our understanding of how people absorb information from film and other visual media grows as research into audiences continues. Researchers have established that small, qualitative studies in the field of audience research can be a valid alternative to large quantitative studies (often yielding results otherwise unattainable), thereby generating numerous opportunities for research. The very nature of the growth in the literature, especially by historians, demonstrates an acknowledgement of and a preoccupation with the vast amount of visual media that bombards the student population. Despite this growth, very little of a practical nature has emerged. A few individual efforts published in *The History*

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[116] As noted several times, Rosenstone would like to see non-traditional film structures in historical feature films and have them communicate a kind of truth that cannot be arrived through other means. Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 283, describes an approach, called dialectical film, which might fulfil Rosenstone's wishes. "This approach...involved reconceiving the entertaining consumer commodity as an intellectual tool, a forum for examination and discussion. This is a view of film that not only admits the relationship between film and observer but also hopes to capitalize on it to the viewer's benefit by bringing it out in the open. It is necessary, then, that the viewers participate intellectually in the experience of the film; they must work, in other words. Although it certainly doesn't guarantee an increase in market share, this approach, when properly understood, offers one of the more exciting possibilities for the future development in film." Without delving too deeply into theory, it is clear from Monaco's description that audiences have to be 'active participants' in order for this type of film to work.

[117] See preface in Sorlin, *The Film in History*.

Teacher notwithstanding, there is no primer or standard reference on how to incorporate film into the history class.[118] The closest example of such a primer is *Reading the Movies* by Costanzo, an English professor. The historical profession would greatly benefit from a similar work.

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[118] This is true from a North American perspective. However, a pamphlet published in the UK, British Film Institute, *Moving Images in the Classroom: A Secondary Teachers' Guide to using Film and Television*, (London: British Film Institute, 2000), is now (April 2002) available at www.bfi.org.uk/education. It is designed to correspond to the media literacy curriculum of England and contains a small section on film and history.

Chapter Three: The Road to Visual Literacy

Scope and Methodology

How do students 'read' films? Do they find them more or less convincing than

books on the same subject? Does history 'come alive' on screen? How can students

become more critical viewers of history films? In order to answer, if only partially, these

and other related questions, I devised an exercise that combined questionnaires and

various film presentation methods to gauge audience response and understanding. The

focus of this project was on high school students, but the basic goal and structure

developed for the project would be applicable at the university level as well. In an effort

to bridge the gap between the two levels of schooling, I chose to conduct the study on a

group of students registered in an Advanced Placement European History course for this

project. The Advanced Placement programme is the property of Educational Testing

Services. This is a company in the United States that creates a series of standardized tests

for a variety of purposes. The Advanced Placement exams measure the level of

understanding that a high school student may have of first year university level course

material across a broad spectrum of subjects. Students who obtain a sufficiently high

mark on a particular exam may be granted the equivalent of one semester's course credit

in that subject.[1] The European history exam covers material that one would find in a first

year survey course of European history from the Renaissance to the contemporary period.

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[1] Advanced Placement courses are offered in high schools across North America. They include courses in psychology, biology, French, calculus, United States history and European history among other subjects. These courses are given at a first year undergraduate university level of difficulty. College Board administers standardized examinations every May. The exam is scored on a scale of one to five, with five being the highest score. A score of three or better is recognized by the majority of universities in North America as proof of a satisfactory understanding of the material. See http://apcentral.collegeboard.com for more details.

Schools prepare students for these exams in a number of ways. At St. George's High School in Montreal, where I work, students are prepared in one of three ways. A student can do an independent study programme that resembles a graduate tutorial in structure, if not in workload. A small group of students can meet outside the regular schedule, during free periods, lunch hours and after school, and participate in a seminar style course. The other format is a regularly scheduled class, one that would resemble the typical first year university introductory course in structure, though not in class size. Regardless of the format, students preparing for an Advanced Placement exam are expected to master university level material in their chosen field of study.

The European history Advanced Placement students who participated in this exercise were in the scheduled class format. Classes were held five times a cycle and a cycle consisted of ten school days. The course objectives were to introduce the students to the major topics in European history since the Renaissance, to develop essay-writing skills appropriate to first year university history students and to provide a number of discussion sessions in which the students would express their understanding of the material. At the beginning of the year the students had to select and read a book from a list provided[2] and sit with me, one-on-one, for a thirty-minute discussion wherein I gauged their ability to comprehend primary readings. During the rest of the year, they were given regular reading assignments from a text,[3] attended lectures and wrote one short essay, one major paper and two exams. In addition, those who wished to earn

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[2] Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Thomas More's *Utopia* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

[3] J.M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of Europe*, (London: Penguin Publishing, 1997).

potential university credits wrote the externally set standardized Advanced Placement exam.[4]

Given the level of instruction for this course, and the freedom to design the course in whatever manner I saw fit, this group was the best choice among all the history classes I taught during the academic year 2000-2001. Sixteen students were enrolled in the Advanced Placement class, all of whom initially participated in the case studies. The structure of the study resembled those undertaken by Seixas, as well as Sturma and MacCallum. Moreover, despite the small number of respondents and the tendency of some students to behave differently because they were participating in a research project, the study has substantive value as a qualitative study for the reasons described by Lindlof and Meyer in Chapter Two. The Grade Ten Canadian history students, whom I also taught, followed a course of study much more rigidly defined by the Ministry of Education of Québec, unlike the optional Advanced Placement course, and were not suitable for this project. Moreover, the level of academic rigour in the Grade Ten programme was not sufficiently strong for the project as initially conceived. Nevertheless, I was able to perform a different exercise with the Grade Ten groups that proved useful in designing a history film studies course.[5]

In order to evaluate the influence and effectiveness of historical feature films on students, I generated two sets of questionnaires.[6] The questions were adapted from a list of pedagogical film-response questions[7] and were reviewed by three colleagues for their

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[4] The exam lasts approximately 3.5 hours and consists of 80 multiple-choice questions and three essays. One of the essays is based on a set of primary documentation and the student must answer an analysis question having to do with those documents.
[5] See Appendix C.
[6] These questionnaires can be found in Appendix A.
[7] Les Parsons, *Expanding Response Journals: In All Subject Areas* (Markham, Ontario: Pembroke Publishers Limited, 1994), 51-52.

suitability.[8] One set was completed by the students three times, immediately after viewing each film. Among the questions in this first set were; "What is the topic of this film?"; "What historical thesis is the film promoting? Is it clearly stated? How is it stated?"; "How did this film add to or clarify what you already knew or thought about this topic?"; "After viewing this film, what questions spring to mind that you would like answered about either the topic or issues or the way they were covered?"; and "Identify the cinematic elements in the film that helped you to understand the historical topic which it addresses." There were twelve questions in total and they were designed to elicit some idea about the role each film played in the advancement of the students' understanding of the topics presented therein.

The second set contained only three questions and they were meant to assess the more general question of whether or not historical feature film is a useful approach for the dissemination of historical knowledge, from the perspective of the students. Indeed, one of the questions addressed this point directly, "Do you consider feature films to be a worthy medium from which to learn about history? If so, why? If not, why not?" Taken together, the questionnaires generated raw data for my analysis and helped suggest a future course of action.

Along with the questionnaires, the method of presentation for each film was an important factor in the exercise. The conditions under which the films were screened were different each time. This was done deliberately in order to assess the impact such conditions might have on the students' understanding of both the film itself, as a film,

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[8] Jacques Desrochers, Head of the Social Sciences department and Jeff Deeprose, a Grade Eleven English teacher reviewed the finished product. Valerie Sabbah teaches in several departments at St. George's and has an extensive background in cognitive techniques. She provided me with the source of the baseline questions and helped adapt them to the project's requirements.

and of their understanding of the underlying historical material contained within it.[9] In other words, do students learn more from watching the film uninterrupted in the dark, as the filmmaker intended, or should there be interruptions to address specific issues? Should lights be on or off to create an effective learning environment?

The three presentation formats were as follows. Each film (plus questionnaire) spanned three or four seventy-five minute periods. The first film was screened as a "movie experience". The lights were turned out, the curtains drawn and, with the exception of the time constraints of a class period, the film was shown uninterrupted. Students were instructed to hold any questions until after the film had finished. In this way, the students' ability to critically assess an unmediated film experience could be analyzed. The second film was screened under different conditions. The classroom lights were left on and the students were allowed to ask questions immediately rather than at the end of the film. No interruptions or explanations were initiated by me. Finally, the third film was screened under the same conditions as the second, with the addition of instructor-initiated interruptions and explanations as well as student questions. Following each film, the students were directed to answer a copy of the first set of questionnaires. After the third and final film, an additional questionnaire was given to the students. All the questionnaires were answered under supervised classroom conditions. The students were given the minimum of assistance in interpreting the questions in order to avoid unduly influencing their responses. As one of the goals of the study was to assess the pre-existing critical skills of my students I did not assign them the specific background readings that would normally be part of any unit on the topics presented in the films.

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[9] The only other exposure to the topics presented in each film prior to viewing was in the assigned readings. I did not give any preparatory lectures because I wanted to see how the students questioned, if at all, what they saw on screen. A discussion of the results of this particular aspect of the exercise follows later.

Let us now turn to the films used in the project and the criteria whereby each was selected. Inevitably, the selection of films was partly determined by the requirements of the Advanced Placement course. The Renaissance is the starting point of the course. Therefore, to ensure that the films could be screened early enough to complete the project and still serve a practical purpose in the class, the following topics were chosen: the encounter of Europeans, in particular, Christopher Columbus, with aboriginal Americans, Christian Humanism and the case of Sir Thomas More, and the early Elizabethan age. Each of these topics has a popular, major historical feature film devoted to it, *1492: Conquest of Paradise, A Man for All Seasons* and *Elizabeth*.[10] Each film was originally given wide release in North American cinema houses and was intended to have broad commercial appeal.[11] Indeed, *1492: Conquest of Paradise* was released to coincide with the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Popular mainstream films were chosen as the focus of this project for two reasons. First, they are readily available for use in the classroom. But second, they are precisely the kind of film that mass audiences, including students, rely on as a primary source of information about historical topics.[12]

A brief word about procedure is warranted at this point. The analysis of the questionnaires proved unwieldy at first. I initially examined the questionnaires from all three films as a group but the connection between the films and the questionnaires

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[10] In the case of Christopher Columbus, two films were available, *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992) and *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery* (1992). I chose these three films not only for their relevance to the topics but because each is the most recent film on its topic. I believed that this would make the study more informative and engaging for the students. *A Man for All Seasons*, however, is significantly older than the other two films used in this study and its age led to some unexpected revelations within the study. This point is discussed later in this chapter.

[11] *A Man for All Seasons* (1966) won the Academy Award for Best Picture and *Elizabeth* (1998) was nominated for several Academy Awards.

[12] This is discussed in Chapter Two in greater detail.

became difficult to maintain with any coherence. The following format was adopted as the best way to maintain a link between the questionnaires and the films to which they refer. A summary of each film, coupled with some mainstream commentary from film critics, is provided along with pertinent citations from the questionnaires. The citations are meant to highlight certain patterns and observations about historical feature films in a class setting. After all three films are addressed in this manner; a general discussion of the results of the exercise is presented.

Case One: *1492: Conquest of Paradise*

The first historical feature film screened[13] was *1492: Conquest of Paradise*,[14] released in 1992, marking the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus' landing in the Western Hemisphere. In 1992, a number of exhibits and presentations were made to commemorate the quincentenary, though in contrast with 1892, when the anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Western Hemisphere was celebrated and his legend revived, 1992 saw a number of protests at various exhibits and a more subdued atmosphere dominated the ceremonies.[15] However, Hollywood could not resist the opportunity to profit from the publicity. Two films about Columbus were released in 1992, *1492: Conquest of Paradise* and *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery*. I chose *1492: Conquest of Paradise* because it covered a broader range of events. It starred Gerard

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[13] Screening conditions: lights out, curtains drawn, no questions allowed, no interruptions by me.

[14] *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, 1992, Director: Ridley Scott; Producer: Ridley Scott, Alain Goldman; Screenplay: Roselyne Bosch; Studio: Paramount; Video: Paramount; Running time: 140 minutes.

[15] There is a large literature on the Columbus commemoration. *The Public Historian* and *The William and Mary Quarterly* each devoted an entire issue to this topic. See *The Public Historian*, 14, no. 4 (Fall 1992) and *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XLIX, no. 2 (April 1992). See also James Axtell, "Columbian Encounters: 1992-1995." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, LII, no. 4 (October 1995).

Depardieu in the title role, Sigourney Weaver as Isabella and was directed by Ridley Scott.

The film begins with a scrolling caption that reads:

"500 YEARS AGO, SPAIN WAS A NATION GRIPPED BY FEAR AND SUPERSTITION, RULED BY THE CROWN AND A RUTHLESS INQUISITION THAT PERSECUTED MEN FOR DARING TO DREAM. ONE MAN CHALLENGED THIS POWER. DRIVEN BY HIS SENSE OF DESTINY, HE CROSSED THE SEA OF DARKNESS, IN SEARCH OF HONOR, GOLD, AND THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD."

This is followed by a voice-over by Hernando, Columbus' son.

Of all the words my father wrote, and there were many, I remember these the most, "Nothing that results from human progress is achieved by unanimous consent, and those who are enlightened before the others are condemned to pursue that light in spite of others." There was a time when the New World didn't exist. The sun set in the west, on an ocean where no man had dared to venture. And beyond that, infinity.[16]

These introductory words, written and spoken, clearly establish Columbus as the hero who faces ignorance and prejudice, particularly from the Catholic Church. Columbus is not an irreligious man. He spends time in a monastery in Seville where he gains support for his endeavour. It is through the monastery that he gains an audience with the royal council at the University of Salamanca. However, the church represents established authority, and thus, an obstacle to overcome.

At Salamanca, Columbus faces a panel of nameless officials who pepper him with questions regarding his project. These officials are educated, knowledgeable of Erasthotenes, and well aware that the earth is round. Moreover, the calculations that they deem correct are much more precise than those of Columbus. However, the film is not

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[16] The opening caption and voice-over set the tone of this film. This and all other transcriptions of film dialogue are done be me. The transcriptions were all made from the soundtracks of the videocassettes used in the case studies.

really about precision and correctness, but rather the struggle for freedom of thought and action in the face of a conservative institution and society. Thus the film presents the bold dreamer who dares to utter the following in an exchange with the chief clerical advisor:

> Cleric: If God intended our proximity to Asia, do you believe He would have waited for you to prove it?
> Columbus: He chose a carpenter's son to reveal Himself to the world.
> Cleric (*said with a tone of astonishment*): So you believe yourself to be the Chosen One?

This exchange is followed by a clamorous reaction by the council of clerics sitting in judgement. Of course, the proposal is rejected and Columbus is furious. However, unbeknownst to Columbus, the queen's chief financial advisor, Sanchez[17], has listened to Columbus' proposal with great interest. He is of the opinion that the cost would be minimal for the government while the potential rewards would be staggering. A meeting with the queen is arranged and, succumbing to Columbus' self-assured manner and the intensity of his purpose, she approves the expedition.

The ships are manned and provisioned and the expedition is set to depart when Columbus reveals, under the protection of the confessional, that he has misled everyone and that the distance to Asia is probably twice what he stated. The priest wants to reveal this but is bound by his oath of silence on matters of confession. The expedition sets sail and, for roughly twenty minutes, the viewer experiences something of the claustrophobia and isolation that the mariners of the late fifteenth century endured. Tension rises to near mutinous levels but this passes and finally, land is sighted. It is 12 October 1492; ten

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[17] Carla Rahn Phillips and William D. Phillips, Jr., "Christopher Columbus: Two Films" in *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, ed. Mark C. Carnes (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995; Owl Book Edition, 1996), 64. Sanchez is real figure of which little is known. He does figure prominently in the film.

weeks after the expedition left Palos, Spain on 3 August (incidentally, three weeks more than Columbus proposed to the council at Salamanca). With a brief solemn ceremony, Columbus claims the island for Spain and advances inland with his men. Soon, the inhabitants are encountered and, initially, things proceed exceptionally well. It is not long, however, before the search for gold and the baser instincts of the Europeans undermines their relationship with the aboriginal population. As Columbus prepares to return to Spain, the viewer senses that things will not be as cordial on his next visit to the New World.

Upon arriving in Spain, a triumphant Columbus is granted a high mass and parade with royalty but at the banquet, despite the exotic objects and people he has brought back with him, the nobles begin to give him a hard time. Even Sanchez, who wishes to ensure that this upstart immigrant does not rise above his station, makes sceptical commentary during the banquet and sows the seeds of discontent among the other nobles in attendance. This discontent is carried to the New World in the person of Moxica, the embodiment of the worst that European aristocratic culture has to offer. He is all too eager to raise the sword against the aboriginals when confronted with the slightest disobedience. His leering attitude toward the aboriginal women, his condescending tone with Columbus and the generally haughty nature of his behaviour are all meant to encapsulate Europe at its worst; this is particularly important so that Columbus can remain a heroic figure by comparison.

Moxica leads a revolt against Columbus. He is defeated and killed, his followers punished. This does not meet with the approval of the nobles nor the clergy, one of whom takes it upon himself to report back to Spain with stories of mismanagement and

injustice regarding Columbus' rule over the colony. These reports are not entirely

inaccurate. Columbus' choice for the location of La Isabela was ill advised[18] and there

are several scenes where his incompetence as an administrator is demonstrated.

Columbus is eventually arrested, brought back to Spain and stripped of his

responsibilities and titles in connection with the New World. He is however, unbowed,

as the film draws to an end. The following exchange with Sanchez, who has just learned

that Isabel has authorized one final voyage for Columbus, illustrates this point.

> Sanchez (contemptuously): You're a dreamer.
> Columbus: Look out there. (Pause while Sanchez gazes out of the window) What do you see?
> Sanchez: (softly at first, then forcefully) I see towers, I see palaces, I see steeples, I see civilization. And I see spires that reach...TO THE SKY!
> Columbus: All of them built by people like me. No matter how long you live, there is something that will never change between us. I did it, you didn't.

In this scene, Columbus demonstrates the value of being a dreamer.

Critical response to this film was mixed. Roger Ebert, of the *Chicago Sun-Times*,

gave it a favourable review, declaring: "Ridley Scott's *1492: Conquest of Paradise* sees

Christopher Columbus as more complex and humane than in the other screen treatments

of the character." Ebert displayed some knowledge of history when he wrote, "The

theory that the world was round was held in intelligent circles long before Columbus was

born, and ships capable of sailing across the Atlantic had been available for a long time

(Europeans were already rounding Africa on their way to Asia, and the Vikings preceded

Columbus to North America by centuries)." He also observed that "the movie plays fast

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[18] Phillips and Phillips, Jr., "Christopher Columbus: Two Films," 63.

and loose with the facts" regarding Columbus and Vespucci.[19] He sums up his review in this manner: "Still, in its own way and up to a certain point, *1492* is a satisfactory film. Depardieu lends it gravity, the supporting performances are convincing, the locations are **realistic** (my emphasis)[20], and we are inspired to reflect that it did indeed take a certain nerve to sail off into nowhere just because an orange was round." Kathleen Maher, of the *Austin (TX) Chronicle*, wrote "Unfortunately, *1492* tries, but fails, to reconcile the admiration instilled in most of us since childhood for one man's vision and daring with the horrible consequences to whole races of peoples brought about by his ignorance and that of the people who followed him. It's probably an impossible task."[21] Her point illustrates one of the central difficulties of historical feature films and it could apply to any of the films used in this project.

Two reviewers from the *Washington Post*, far more negative in tone than those cited above, were particularly scathing in reference to Depardieu's performance. Desson Howe found Depardieu quite unconvincing, "He's simply unable to take command. He's just a guy with a funny accent dressed in even funnier clothes, trying to convince his near-mutinous men that land is at hand. 'De lan iz zere,' he insists. 'De lan iz cloze.' Where is the Monty Python crew when you really need them?" Hal Hinson had similar complaints. The film "stars Gerard Depardieu, who as pretty much everyone knows is French. And not just sorta (sic) French, either. He's French right down to the thickest of all possible French accents. Which means that, aside from looking like the Skipper on

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[19] Roger Ebert in www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1992/10/782280.html The film suggests that Vespucci set foot in South America before Columbus, which was not the case. The scene is meant to humiliate Columbus and make the viewer feel pity towards him. It works well in the film and is quite persuasive. This effect only reaffirms the necessity of making critical viewers of our students. All other references by Ebert to this film are from this source.

[20] The observation about 'realistic' locations is pertinent to Seixas's experience with his students.

[21] Kathleen Maher in www.auschron.com/film/pages/movies/1625.html

'Gilligan's Island', every time he opens his mouth some vaguely comprehensible howler springs out like a toad."[22]

While the students were not assigned the role of film critic specifically, there was an element of criticism in the exercise and the responses of the students partially mirrored those of the mainstream critics. A number of students found the accents difficult to follow or accept. One student complained that: "The language (Armand Assante) was strange because he had a french accent."[23] Another observed that the "accents of Europeans"[24] were distracting. Yet another student grumbled: "but if the dialogues aren't very clear or hard to understand, that made it hard to follow."[25] One more student complained about: "The fact that Gerard Depardieux had a french accent when he was supposed to be Italien."[26]

More germane to the exercise, however, were the students' observations on points of accuracy and realism.[27] The responses related to this issue appeared in a number of different questions as no one question directly asked "How accurate do you think the film is?". Some students seemed to accept information at face value. "I found it interesting to learn that Vespucci had already discovered the mainland, when Columbus was about

[22] Desson Howe at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/1492conquestofparadisepg13howe_a0af13.htm and Hal Hinson at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/1492conquestofparadisepg13hinson_a0a7b7.htm 9 October 1992.

[23] Response number 5, question 12. All citations from responses to the questionnaires, each of which is numbered, are transcribed as written by the students. I have made no corrections for spelling or grammar. Question 12 relates to cinematic elements of the film that caused difficulties. See Appendix A.

[24] Response number 6, question 12.

[25] Response number 7, question 8. Question 8 relates to confusing elements. All responses from number 1 to number 33 refer to the first questionnaire containing twelve questions. Responses from number 34 to number 46 refer to the second questionnaire containing three questions. See Appendix A.

[26] Response number 13, question 12.

[27] The confusion of accuracy and realism by students watching historical feature films is a major point in Seixas's study. This point, as it relates to my exercise, will be discussed more fully later.

to."[28] wrote one student while another stated: "What I knew is what Colon accomplished but not how he was as a man."[29] Another student was chagrined because "Columbus didn't get any credit, Amerigo Vespucci did (at the time)"[30] These comments suggested they found the film to be accurate on these points. Others indicated that the film properly portrayed the living conditions of the time: "I thought it was a pretty accurate depiction of regular day life. i.e.: The public executions were depicted accurately."[31] Another student observed that "the equipment/weapons of the Europeans were fairly accurate which helped as well."[32] The production values on this film were first rate with the result that the props and other physical sets looked convincing, to critics as well my students.[33] O'Connor notes that attention to such details is quite common in the production of historical feature films. Indeed, when filmmakers endeavour to be accurate, it is almost always in the physical sense.[34] However, the students were not in a position to judge the accuracy of the physical sets and props; they had insufficient background to make that determination. Nevertheless, this lack of information did not deter some of them from concluding that the film was accurate. On the other hand, a few students expressed a healthy dose of scepticism. For example, one student asked: "Which events in the film were 'creative liscence' and which actually happened? How do we know what kind of

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[28] Response number 1, question 6. Question 6 asked how the film added to what the student already knew or thought. See also note 21.

[29] Response number 11, question 6.

[30] Response number 12, question 3. Question 3 referred to the historical thesis promoted by the film. See note 64 below.

[31] Response number 2, question 11. Question referred to cinematic elements that made the topic easier to understand.

[32] Response number 5, question 11.

[33] See Ebert's review at note 19.

[34] O'Connor, *Image as Artifact*, 34.

person Columbus was?"[35] Another student wondered: "At the end when they were in the court and they were talking about the discovery of new land, and they said that it was Amerioco Vespucci. Did he take Columbuses fame, what happened?"[36] Yet another student wanted to know: "What was the common peoples view of the discovery of the new world as well as about Columbus himself."[37] These questions indicated that some students already had basic critical instincts. In general, though, the students did not question the film's interpretation of the topic. They found individual elements in the film difficult to understand (e.g. the accents) but no one questioned the portrayal of Columbus as a heroic figure. Class discussions revealed a sensitivity, on the part of the students, to the fact that Europeans appeared somewhat nicer in the film than what the students remembered from their readings in Canadian history during the previous year. My reading of the questionnaires, however, indicated an acceptance of the general message of the film: Columbus was a flawed but heroic figure who was both misunderstood and betrayed by the Spanish nobility.

Case Two: *A Man for All Seasons*

The next film screened[38] by the class was *A Man for All Seasons* (1966).[39] This film, based on the Robert Bolt play of the same name, starred Paul Scofield in the title role (reprising his stage performance), Robert Shaw as Henry VIII, Orson Welles as Cardinal Wolsley, Leo McKern as Thomas Cromwell and John Hurt as Richard Riche.

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[35] Response number 13, question 7. This question prompts the students to express any questions that might occur to them. See Appendix A.

[36] Response number 3, question 8.

[37] Response number 10, question 7.

[38] Screening conditions: Lights on, curtains drawn, questions allowed, no interruptions by me.

[39] *A Man for All Seasons*, 1966, Director: Fred Zinnemann; Producer: Fred Zinnemann; Screenplay: Robert Bolt; Studio: Columbia; Video: Columbia Tristar; Running time: 120 minutes.

Of these actors, only Welles could have been considered a 'star'. Indeed, the studio initially favoured Richard Burton or Peter O'Toole, more famous performers than Scofield, for the role of Thomas More.[40]

A Man for All Seasons is a well-crafted drama that emphasizes the essential nature of Thomas More's dispute with Henry VIII over the question of who can be the supreme head of the church. The film begins with a summons for More from Cardinal Wolsley, Chancellor of England. The exchange is somewhat difficult to follow, as it pre-supposes some knowledge of the times, but the basic conflict is clearly established. More is opposed to the dissolution of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, but he stands alone on the council in his opposition. It is clear that More realizes that his opposition can be dangerous and thus he makes every attempt to avoid discussion of his position. A visit by Henry to More's home, meant to sway More into acquiescence, is unsuccessful, though Henry promises to shield More from the issue at court. A morally suspect character, Richard Riche, attempts to win favour with More but is rebuked at several turns. More suspects that Riche would have difficulty resisting the temptations available at court. As the film progresses, Riche proves More is right. He sides with Thomas Cromwell, a political rival of More's at court. After the bishops capitulate and accept Henry as the "Supreme Head of the Church in England", More resigns his position as Chancellor of England, all the while refusing to pronounce his opinion on the matter. In this silence, More believes he has his salvation, for under English law, silence implies consent. In this belief, More is wrong.

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[40] Richard Marius, "*A Man for All Seasons*" in *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, ed. Mark C. Carnes (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995; Owl Book Edition, 1996), 71. Despite the lack of star power, the film managed to win Best Picture at the Academy Awards, along with Best Actor for Paul Scofield .

More is given the opportunity to give tacit approval by attending the wedding of

Henry to Anne Boleyn, but he declines. Soon thereafter, Cromwell presses rather

dubious charges upon More in an effort to pressure him into accepting Henry's position.

It would seem that Henry's earlier promise to keep him out of the matter did not hold.

Thus More begins to sever all ties with friends, symbolized by his deliberate quarrel with

Norfolk. More most certainly does not want to be responsible for anyone's suffering on

his behalf. To that end, he even implores his daughter to swear an oath of fealty that he

cannot bring himself to accept. The result is a nice room in the Tower of London.

Periodically, More is subjected to interrogations and his accommodations steadily decline

in quality and comfort, from a modestly comfortable room with a view to a dank, wet

dungeon. An attempt to use his family to coerce a change of position fails. More is then

put on trial before Parliament. The opening exchange of the trial sets the tone for the

climactic scene. Cromwell is asked to read the charge against More.

> Cromwell: That you did wilfully and maliciously deny and deprive our
> liege lord Henry of his undoubted, certain title—Supreme Head of the
> Church in England.
> More: But I have NEVER denied this title.
> Cromwell: At Westminster Hall, at Lambeth and again at Richmond, you
> stubbornly refused the oath. Was this no denial?
> More: No, this was silence, and for my silence I am punished with
> imprisonment. Why have I been called again?
> Judge: On the charge of high treason, Sir Thomas.
> Cromwell: For which the punishment is not imprisonment...
> More: (interjecting to finish the thought) Death, comes for us all, my
> lords.

The trial continues, with Cromwell arguing that More's silence is in fact a loud denial,

because public opinion construes it as such. More responds that silence, under the law,

implies consent (as Cromwell's example of the crowd that remains silent while

witnessing the preparation of a murderous attack had just so eloquently demonstrated) and therefore, the court must construe according to the law and not according to public opinion. Richard Riche reappears as a witness for Cromwell and offers perjured testimony to the effect that More did indeed deny the title. More is found guilty, and upon the pronouncement of the verdict, he finally announces his position on the matter of Henry's title as Supreme Head of the Church in England and, more to the point, on the question of the marriage. He states, quite strongly, that Parliament has no authority to make Henry Supreme Head of the Church and that he believes that his sentence has more to do with his opposition to the marriage than with his refusal to take the oath.

The historical More differed somewhat from the one portrayed on screen. His virulent anti-Protestantism does not exist on film, nor does the equivocal treatment he gave the marriage issue. As happens in many historical feature films, More has been rendered a less complex man than he was in reality. This makes it simpler for film audiences to see him, or anyone in like position, as a hero or villain and one must presume that the filmmaker's intentions in A Man for All Seasons was to give the viewer a clearly identifiable hero. This is a point lamented by historians.[41] It is not a specific criticism of A Man for All Seasons, but rather applies to the other two films in this project—as well as many other historical feature films—equally well.

Critical opinion of A Man for All Seasons reflects the time in which it was written, for the most part. The film won several important Academy Awards[42] and was acclaimed across America.[43] However, more contemporary reviews are less kind. Impatient with its pacing, they are more cynical and less willing to accept More's deep faith. Film critic

[41] Marius, "A Man for All Seasons," 73.
[42] Best Picture, Best Director and Best Actor being the most important.
[43] Marius, "A Man for All Seasons," 70.

MaryAnn Johanson observed: "*A Man for All Seasons* is a handsome production. In other words, it is staid, stern, plodding, and precise, with about as much passion as your 11th-grade history textbook." Another reviewer wrote, "the movie itself is a long-winded bore; this is the kind of film that gives historical pictures a bad name."[44] These comments are indicative of the phenomenon that Peter Seixas observed in his exercise with students regarding historical feature films. He concluded that modern viewers are more comfortable with modern productions because they reflect the cultural values of those viewers (in his case students). He argued that this identification with contemporary values led his students to accept the more modern film in his exercise much more easily than the older film. The new one felt more 'realistic' and the old one was correspondingly less convincing. However, the students had no objective evidence on which to base their judgement. Seixas' reasoning holds true for contemporary critical commentary. Johanson also wrote, "But the real problem is that I never really believed More's deep faith in his religion, which led him ultimately to the chopping block. Perhaps that's my problem, and not the film's. As a non-believer, maybe I just can't accept that someone would abandon his family and condemn himself to death over a fear of being damned to hell."[45] This comment points to the difficulty of identifying with a mindset so far removed in time (which, incidentally, does not only apply to films).

Some of my students also had difficulty with this idea of faith. One student complained that: "His line of thinking didn't make all that much sense. Why would it bother him if the king disrespected god. Why was it any of his buissness, and for such a

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44 MaryAnn Johanson at www.flickphilosopher.com/oscars/bestpix/manallseasons.shtml and Colin Jacobson at www.dvdmg.com/manforallseasons.shtml
45 Johanson at same website.

smart guy, you'd think he'd respect other peoples wishes."[46] Another student "found it hard to comprehend why he spent so long in jail? I also found it odd why he didn't go into hiding."[47] As More's behaviour did not conform to the students' cultural norms, the film seemed less convincing, less realistic than *1492* or *Elizabeth*. Other scenes in the film were described as unrealistic. One student noted: "More's beheading seemed a little too quick, but that is b/c in other movies, executions are dragged on and dramatized."[48] Another student found it hard to believe: "When the king jumped in the mud he wouldn't really laugh about it, he would be upset."[49] And another student observed that: "The filming was weird in my personal opinion, but of course, it is an old film."[50] The lack of realism here, from the students' perspective, largely stemmed from generational differences in production values and acting styles.[51] Despite the relatively unfamiliar production values and actors, the students were largely able to understand the main ideas of the film. However, the questionnaires indicate that the students found the film much less engaging than the others and they were more willing to challenge the film's basic assumptions. The attitudes displayed by the students towards *A Man for All Seasons* supported Seixas's theory.

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[46] Response number 15, question 8.

[47] Response number 16, question 8.

[48] Response number 18, question 8. An example of the type of scene to which the student is referring can be found at the end of *Braveheart* (1995), where William Wallace is executed in a long, excruciating and graphic manner.

[49] Response number 20, question 12.

[50] Response number 19, question 12.

[51] Any perusal of films made in different eras would reveal, to the most untrained eye, considerable differences in acting style, camera work and set design. It was Seixas's observation, and it appears that my study supports this, that such differences make it difficult for students (as well as general audiences) to accept as realistic (which in their minds is often equivalent to accurate) anything about a film that falls outside the expected cultural norms. Certainly, student reaction to *Elizabeth* lends credence to Seixas's line of thinking.

Case Three: *Elizabeth*

The third film screened[52] for the exercise was *Elizabeth* (1998).[53] It starred Cate Blanchett as Elizabeth I, Joseph Fiennes as Robert Dudley, Sir Richard Attenborough as Sir William Cecil, Geoffrey Rush as Walsingham and John Gielgud as Pope Pius VII. While each of these performers was relatively well-known at the time the film was made, they were not 'stars' in the Hollywood sense.

The film opens with scrolling text that places the viewer, roughly, in the appropriate historical context. The text informs the viewer that England is in turmoil, Henry VIII is dead, his daughter Mary, childless, sits on the throne and Catholics all fear one thing, the rise of Elizabeth to the throne. The first scene is one of Protestant heretics being burned at the stake. This is quickly followed by a hasty consultation with Catholic nobles, among them Norfolk, the most powerful noble in England. These nobles, save one, urge that Elizabeth be executed to forestall any attempts at a Protestant coup. It is clear, within three minutes, who most of the villains are. When the viewer encounters Elizabeth, she is a young woman, playing with her ladies-in-waiting at a country estate, awaiting the arrival of her paramour, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The contrast between the gloomy hall of Mary's castle and the sunny fields of Elizabeth's country home could not be starker. The idyllic existence of the Lady Elizabeth (as was her title) does not last, however. She is brought to an interrogation in the Tower of London and accused of treason. She faces a death sentence but her half-sister, who mistakenly believes herself to be pregnant, does not have her executed, but rather summons

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[52] Screening conditions: Lights on, curtains drawn, questions allowed, interruptions by me to provide context and clarify points of confusion.

[53] *Elizabeth*, 1998, Director: Shekar Kapur; Producer: Alison Owen, Eric Feller, Tim Bevan; Screenplay: Michael Hirst; Studio: Polygram; Video: Polygram; Running time: 124 minutes.

Elizabeth to hear her out. The following exchange illustrates the relationship that Mary and Elizabeth have in the film.

> Elizabeth: (kneeling and bowing) I am Your Majesty's most humble servant.
> Mary: Come here. Closer, so I might see your face. (Elizabeth approaches) When I look at you, I see nothing of the King, only that whore, your mother. *My* (italics mine) father never did anything so well as to cut off her head.
> Elizabeth: Your Majesty forgets, he was also my father.
> Mary: Why will you not confess your crimes against me?
> Elizabeth: Because, Your Majesty, I have committed none.
> Mary: You speak with such sincerity. I see you are still a consummate actress. My husband[54] is gone, they have poisoned my child, they say it is a tumour.
> Elizabeth: Madam, you are not well.
> Mary: They say this cancer will make you queen, but they are wrong. Look there, it is your death warrant, all I need do is sign it.
> Elizabeth: Mary, if you sign that paper, you will be murdering your own sister.
> Mary: You will promise me something? (Elizabeth nods in approval) When I am gone, you will do everything in your power to uphold the Catholic faith. Do not take away from the people the consolations of the Blessed Virgin, their Holy Mother.
> Elizabeth: When I am queen, I promise to…act as my conscience dictates.
> Mary: Well do not think to be queen at all. You may return to your own house at Hatfield but you will remain there under arrest until I am recovered.

This conversation presents the viewer with the two pivotal issues in the film. The inherent instability of a system of succession by birth—Henry VIII would likely have been dismayed to see two of his daughters struggling for the throne, considering all the efforts he made to secure a male heir—and the importance of the Holy Virgin as a powerful symbol.

The viewer is next introduced to Walsingham, a mysterious, Machiavellian figure who figures prominently in the second half of the film. Indeed, there are moments in the

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[54] Philip II of Spain.

film when he seems to be the embodiment of Machiavelli. Sir William Cecil, a royal advisor to Elizabeth who is also an amiable old man, emerges early on as her most powerful minister of state. A splendid coronation ceremony marks the beginning of Elizabeth's reign and it is not long before the Protestants, marginalized and persecuted under Mary, resurface and the struggle for the English throne begins in earnest. Sir William gives her a most disturbing account of England's state of affairs; penniless, defenceless, surrounded by threatening powers (Spain and France) and facing internal dissent that could topple the new queen within weeks or months. Sir William counsels marriage as the only way to resolve these intractable problems. Elizabeth proceeds to entertain a variety of marriage proposals, from Philip II of Spain[55] to the Duke of Anjou, brother of the French king, to a semi-serious one from Lord Robert. Various crises and assassination attempts, including one sanctioned by the Vatican, ensue as Elizabeth completes the transformation from neophyte queen to Virgin Queen. She faces a challenge from Mary de Guise, regent of Scotland. The Catholic nobles urge a war that they know England cannot win, as the bishops oppose the raising of an army. Those who do fight are woefully unprepared and easily slaughtered by superior French forces garrisoned in Scotland. After the disastrous defeat, Walsingham, having been made her bodyguard, explains to Elizabeth that the effort was doomed from the start as the bishops were arrayed against her. She comes to rely on his counsel more and more as the film progresses.

Walsingham eliminates one threat after another and helps solidify Elizabeth's hold on the throne. He uncovers the Vatican plot, disposes of Mary de Guise and topples Norfolk. Meanwhile, Sir William is dismissed and retired as Lord Burghley. Various

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[55] Such a marriage would have had ironic parallels with her father's situation with Catherine of Aragon.

conspirators are exposed, including Lord Robert. When the threat of the conspiracy is eliminated, Elizabeth assumes the mantle of the Virgin Queen. The following exchange illustrates the importance of the symbol of the Holy Virgin and brings the viewer back to the scene with Mary Tudor outlined above. Elizabeth and Walsingham are in a chapel.

> Elizabeth: I have rid England of her enemies. What do I do now? Am I to be made of stone? Must I be touched by nothing?
> Walsingham: Aye, Madam. All men need something greater than themselves to look up to and worship. They must be able to touch the divine, here on Earth.
> Elizabeth: (looking up at a statue of the Virgin Mary) She holds such power over men's hearts. They died for her.
> Walsingham: They have found nothing to replace her.

In the next scene, Elizabeth is shown undergoing the physical transformation into the Virgin Queen. Her long luxuriant hair is cut quite short, replaced by a wig. A pasty, white make-up is applied on her exposed skin, making her look less human. "I have become a virgin," she says, looking into a mirror. She later emerges into the hall with her new look, regal and divine in appearance and says to Sir William, "Observe, Lord Burghley, I am married...to England." The crowd begins to touch her raiment, seeking to touch the divine, as Walsingham had put it earlier. The film ends with scrolled text that tells the viewer Elizabeth reigned for another forty years, England was the most powerful country in Europe at the end of her reign and Walsingham remained her most loyal and trusted advisor all that time.

It would take far too much space to relate all the deviations from the record found in the film *Elizabeth*. It should suffice to name a few important points.[56] While many of the events, conspiracies and policies portrayed in the film did occur, they were spread out over thirty to forty years, not the four that the film suggests. Walsingham was an

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[56] John Guy, "The Tudor Age (1485-1603)" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, ed. Kenneth O. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 264-285.

important advisor to Elizabeth but the most important and long serving was William Cecil, Lord Burghley. He did not retire soon after Elizabeth took the throne, but rather served as the most powerful minister of state in her government for over thirty years. There was a papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth and advocating her removal from the throne but it came in 1570, not 1559, nor is there any direct evidence that Pius VII sanctioned her assassination (though it is unlikely he would have shed any tears over her death). The time-compression aspect of the film creates a great dramatic effect, but it leaves the viewer with the impression that the first five years of Elizabeth's reign were as tumultuous as a James Bond movie. Ultimately there are many factual errors in the film, but it is not the purpose of this exercise to list every deviation from the historical record. *Elizabeth*'s chief contribution is as an example of a film advancing a clear historical thesis. The filmmakers clearly argue that Elizabeth consciously chose to adopt the persona of the Virgin Queen in order to replace the Virgin Mary in the eyes and hearts of her subjects. Experts in Elizabethan history can debate the merits of this idea[57] but for the purposes of this study, the fact that the thesis is proposed by the film is what is important.

Critical reaction to *Elizabeth* was generally positive. One interesting aspect of the commentary lay in its preoccupation with contemporary social and cultural issues. Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* wrote, "This is indeed historical drama for anyone whose idea of history is back issues of *Vogue*, but *Elizabeth* wants more. What with the religious conflicts raging around her, the Virgin Mary as an ultimate role model and the burden of keeping so many scheming advisors at bay, this Elizabeth is presented as a

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[57] As I am not such an expert, I will not attempt to choose sides. I do think it a worthy debating point, however.

glamorously stressed-out modern woman who must cope with a super-intense case of having it all."[58] The title of the review in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "'Elizabeth' a Modern Woman—Blanchett's queen strong, independent", displayed the same preoccupation.[59] One critic considered this preoccupation with the modern world problematic. "Period movies inevitably reflect more about the period in which they're made than the period of their subject[60], and rarely has that been more evident—or more distracting—than it is with Indian director Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth*. Virginity, illegitimacy, politics, conspiracy. How could those elements go through the filters of a storyteller working at the end of the millennium and not emerge as an allegorical blend of sex, dysfunction, feminism and melodrama?"[61] Critics also pointed out that *Elizabeth* has a less than firm grasp on the facts,[62] much like *1492: Conquest of Paradise*. These critics, therefore, demonstrated some respect for history as a discipline.[63]

Some students picked up on the contemporary themes in the film. One student noted that: "It was very pro-woman, yep, a woman takes over and does an incredible job. All along Elizabeth is innocent, noble, all those wonderful things. It makes Elizabeth look like a "God". I think that was the point of the movie, to make Elizabeth look as

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[58] Janet Maslin at www.nytimes.com/library/film/110698elizabeth-film-review.html
[59] Mick Lasalle at http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/1998/11/20/DD37026.DTL&type=movies
[60] One could make this observation about history books as well.
[61] Jack Mathews at http://calendarlive.com/top/1,1419,L-LATimes-Print-X!ArticleDetail-4995,00.html?
[62] Maslin at www.nytimes.com/library/film/110698elizabeth-film-review.html and also Roger Ebert at http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1998/11/112003.html. The *American Historical Review* published a review of *Elizabeth* by Rosemary Sweet of the University of Leicester. Her review greatly resembles the short essays in *Past Imperfect*, consisting mostly of fact-checking and commentary on accuracy (or lack thereof). Rosemary Sweet, "Review of *Elizabeth*," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 1 (February 1999): 297-298. Film reviews were not a regular part of academic journals when the other two films were produced. For those films, I have relied on *Past Imperfect* as a source of academic reviews.
[63] There did not seem to be such diligence on the part of contemporary critics of *A Man for All Seasons*.

great as possible."[64] Another student observed that: "It proves her strength of character when she chooses not to marry (to promote England's independence)."[65] Still another student pointed out that: "There was sometimes humor in the film that made it more enjoyable however took away from the believability of the historical context. ex: the Gay French duke: funny but strange."[66]

Again the notion of realism is bound with physical sets and costumes. A student, commenting on the realistic nature of the film, wrote: "The costumes, and the language. They also made the setting look really wicked. I truly felt it was the in the 1500's."[67] Another student found that: "The costumes were wicked"[68] and this made the film seem more realistic. Identifying aspects of the film that seemed authentic, a student pointed to: "Costume, accents, location, names...etc."[69] Another student observed: "Also, it was very vivid and realistic due to costumes and makeup which made the characters and the gore look all the more believable."[70] Moreover, the modern production values made an impression, as one student noted that: "The film was very realistic as the cinematic elements were very advanced. The cinematographers used lighting and creative shooting to set both an eerie and mysterious mood therefore the audience [this individual student] was very easily pulled into the movie."[71] Some others were not entirely impressed with modern techniques. One student explained: "I feel that one of the cinematic elements that interfered with my ability to understand the topic was when the man (the messenger

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[64] Response number 24, questions 3 and 4. These questions concerned the thesis of the film. They proved problematic and will be addressed later in more detail.
[65] Response number 29, question 4.
[66] Response number 30, question 12. The duke to whom this response refers is the Duke of Anjou, whose antics were mentioned in almost all the reviews of the film that I read.
[67] Response number 24, question 11.
[68] Response number 26, question 11.
[69] Response number 29, question 11.
[70] Response number 30, question 11.
[71] Response number 30, question 11.

from the pope) was hanging upside down. I didn't realise he was being tortured until he started shouting and screaming."[72] Another student complained about: "When the guy is hanging upside down and the camera is going around, it messed me up a bit, but I eventually got what was going on."[73] It is a valid complaint on the part of the students. The scene in question is a stylized presentation of an unpleasant interrogation in *Elizabeth* (the prisoner is chained from the ceiling upside-down, with a fiery torch applied to his bare back—this is not immediately apparent as the camera itself is shooting upside-down. The effect is jarring and tends to jolt the viewers, drawing them out of the film and making it quite evident that the scene is contrived.)

On the whole, the students found *Elizabeth* to be the most compelling of the three films. The plot moves far more swiftly than those found in the other two films and there is a very strong female character whose decisions and actions mirror those of powerful women in modern society.[74] Judging from the questionnaires, *Elizabeth* is exactly the kind of film that might seduce a student audience that is not equipped with critical viewing skills.

Comparative Summary

A number of the questions from the first questionnaire,[75] which were designed to address pedagogical concerns, revealed issues that are best addressed as a whole, rather than relating them to each film individually. In particular, the third and fourth questions

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[72] Response number 25, question 12.
[73] Response number 26, question 12.
[74] An in-depth gender breakdown of the reactions to each of the films might make an interesting project. However, a much larger audience would be needed to generate meaningful data on this issue.
[75] See Appendix A.

need to be analyzed as a unit. Question Three and Question Four generated the most confused set of answers. Question Three asked, "What historical thesis is the film promoting? Is it clearly stated? How is it stated?" Question Four asked, "Does the presentation of information in the film support its thesis? If so, why? If not, why not? How does the film accomplish this task?" In response to Question Three as it concerned *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, one student answered, "the discovery of the New World causes many problems in the short term."[76], while another wrote, "The discovery of the New World was made possible by the fact that it was the Renaissance, a time when new navigational instruments were invented, when trade was cut off from Asia, and when kings sought new lands and riches."[77] Neither of these statements is wrong when one considers the broad elements of European exploration in the late fifteenth century but they do not resemble the observation, made by a third student, that most closely captures the thesis of the film: "The historical thesis of this film is that Columbus was an innocent with a dream, who was take advantage of. The picture of Columbus is one of a 'good' man, who is thrust into sudden power."[78] No other student came close to providing a similarly accurate response. The answers to Question Four did a fair job of linking evidence to the theses proposed by the students. The problem with those answers was that the proposed theses, with the one noted exception, did not correspond to the film.

The responses to the next film demonstrated no improvement. In fact, the situation deteriorated. The theme of religion was present in all the responses to Question Three concerning *A Man For All Seasons* but they ranged from the particular, "That Thomas Moore strongly believed in guarding his conscience as well as his personal

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[76] Response number 4.
[77] Response number 1.
[78] Response number 13.

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belief"[79], to the general, "That Catholics and the Protestants could not find enough common ground to live in harmony with each other."[80] The most accurate response given to the thesis question was, "The thesis that the film promotes is how you need to stand up for what you believe in"[81], and as a thesis, it is not particularly historical. The answers to Question Four suffered from bouts of circular reasoning[82] as well as providing support for theses that do not correspond to the film, much like the responses about *1492*.

For *Elizabeth*, the two questions garnered results similar to the preceding films. However, the split in the responses here must be considered in light of the following. The filmmakers clearly advance the thesis that Elizabeth I consciously and deliberately adopted the persona of the Virgin Queen and she did so to usurp the symbolism of the Virgin Mary. As this thesis requires an emphasis on religious strife in sixteenth century England, the filmmakers also promote the idea that religion played a central role in the functioning of the monarchy in Renaissance England. This constitutes a second thesis, one that is almost as important to the film as the first. The first thesis may or may not be valid or tenable, that is for experts to decide, and the second may be painfully obvious to professional historians, though perhaps not to the general public, but, in any case, they are both arguable ideas and the students did a much better job identifying one or the other of them (the more obvious of the two being the most identified). One student clearly identified the Virgin Queen thesis by noting: "The requirement of having a strong queen. Elizabeth also believes that the people need someone to believe in, which could replace

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[79] Response number 15.
[80] Response number 17.
[81] Response number 20
[82] "Yes (the film supports its thesis), because that is what the film is about." Response number 18. "Yes, because it illustrated and proved their point." Response number 15. "Yes it does, because the film explains fully Thomas Moore opinion and shows the king's power. The film accomplishes this task by showing many scenes that explain the thesis." Response number 19.

the Virgin Mary (b/c protestants do not believe in her.) so Elizabeth takes on that role."[83], while providing a reasonable rationale in her response to Question Four. The other students who managed to identify the more general thesis about religion and the monarchy also provided somewhat satisfactory answers to Question Four. There were, however, a number of answers that cited plot developments, assassination conspiracies being the most popular, as theses.

The disappointing nature of the responses to Questions Three and Four suggests that some modifications to the questionnaires would be necessary. It would be essential to make sure the students have a much clearer understanding of the nature of a thesis, particularly when it applies to history. The importance of a clear thesis and the ability to identify one are skills that are part of the English curriculum in high school. Furthermore, these skills are reinforced in the Grade Ten history programme. By and large, Advanced Placement students are generally assumed to have mastered a number of skills that might need repetition in other levels. However, this study clearly indicated that this particular group of students had not yet generally developed the ability to retain and transfer the skills learned in English classes and previous history classes.[84] In addition, this exercise demonstrated that identifying the thesis of a film is not the same as identifying one in a printed source. These difficulties would need to be addressed in a course on history and film.

I anticipated that Question Nine might be the most difficult for the students to grasp and answer meaningfully. It asked, "When you consider the ideas presented, the

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[83] Response number 29.
[84] More data would be needed to determine the extent to which this lack of ability is a problem in the general Grade Eleven student population. My own experience suggests that this problem is not limited to the students involved in the case study.

arguments, and the point of view, what do you strongly agree or disagree with in this film? Explain." This question was meant to assess whether the argument presented in the film corresponded to the students' prior knowledge and I was correct in anticipating problems. A number of students understood the nature of the question and answered accordingly. Responding to *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, one student wrote: "It doesn't present an un-biased view as to what happened. There was not much of the slaughtering and disease the Europeans brought." Another stated: "I disagreed with their display of Indians on the boat. The indians were generally caged." Yet another student took exception to what he saw on film when he declared: "I do not agree with the portrayal of the Spanish council or with the portrayal of the natives. They were both portrayed as un-believably evil."[85] However, some students misinterpreted the question and took it to mean: "Do you agree with the actions, behaviours, statements, decisions, etc., carried out by people in the film?" Those students took exception to the manner in which certain characters behaved, not because the behaviour seemed unlikely, but rather because the behaviour was reprehensible, in the case of the Europeans in the New World, or incomprehensible, in the case of Thomas More's silence and his resulting imprisonment. A few examples should illustrate this point. One student asserted: "I strongly disagreed with the way Columbus' crew treated the indians, as if they were better than them." Meanwhile another student declared: "I disagree with Thomas More not bullshitting the king. He should have agreed with the king to save his life and because his family needed him."[86] These students were, in effect, disagreeing with history. Others took 'point of view' literally. This response to *A Man for All Seasons* was typical of that perspective: "I

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[85] Response numbers 1, 2 and 4 respectively.
[86] See Response number 3 for the critical view of European behaviour, Response number 18 regarding Thomas More.

also feel that by using the "third person" view, we were able to comprehend everyone's point of view."[87] I was forced to conclude that the question as worded was too confusing and did not lead enough students to answer according to its intended meaning.

Question Ten was designed to assess the students' own impression of the validity of the exercise. It asked, "Explain how the way this film was presented in class affected your learning experience. Give examples." It yielded some expected and unexpected results. As described earlier, the presentation format for each film varied somewhat. The most immediately visible difference was in the lighting in the classroom. For the first presentation, the lights were turned off, creating a more cinematic atmosphere, whereas the two other presentations were made with the lights on, thereby creating a more formal atmosphere. The other significant change in presentation concerned interruptions. For *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, none were allowed, except where warranted by time constraints. *A Man for All Seasons* was interrupted only if a student posed a pertinent question that required more than a one or two word answer. *Elizabeth* was interrupted for the same reason as well as for explanations by me, at my discretion. The reaction of the students to having two presentations with the lights on was predictable. One after another complained, both in writing and orally, about the distracting nature of watching a film with lights on and the implicit lack of entertainment this engendered. One student summed it up like this: "I would of liked more comfortable chairs and maybe some popcorn. It would of made me more relaxed and maybe enjoyed more the movie."[88] The reaction to the interruptions, or lack thereof, however, was surprising. Past experience in

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[87] Response number 19.
[88] This complaint is lodged in the vast majority of Questionnaires 1-33. Several students chose to make the complaint in several places throughout the questionnaire, in order to ensure that I was aware of their displeasure. The quotation is from Response number 11.

using films, albeit not in such an intense fashion, led to a litany of complaints against any interruptions, as they usually served to remind the students that I was attempting to have them submit to a learning experience rather than simply providing them with entertainment. However, a perusal of the students' responses indicated that when it is established up front that the films are to be part of a learning experience, rather than complain about the interruptions, the students actually seek them out—though it is best to be judicious with them, lest one reduce the effectiveness of films as a tool. To balance the need to interrupt with maintaining an adequately engaging flow to the experience, it is normally helpful to provide a substantial framework as a lesson before viewing. This was not done with the A.P. students, as one of the goals was to assess their ability to assimilate information from films without a lot of guidance, thereby setting the parameters for future case studies of this nature. However, having conducted the exercise, I concluded that their abilities in this area were, on the whole, quite limited. This suggests that more background material and guidance would be needed before screening a film.

The second set of questionnaires, which dealt with feature films as a medium for studying history, did not pose many difficulties for the students. Question One, "Does having recognizable actors portraying historical characters affect your impression of that character? In what ways?" led to an overwhelming response of "Yes." Moreover, the impression was considered almost entirely negative,[89] particularly in the case of Gerard Depardieu as Christopher Columbus. For one student the quality of a performance played a role in determining the effect of recognition as she noted: "If an actor (like

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[89] Response numbers 34-46, especially 35, 39, 43 and 46. In 41 and 42, Joseph Fiennes is mentioned as someone who played a hero in another film, *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), and this fact made it difficult to see him as a villain in *Elizabeth*.

Geoffrey Rush) can change his character so well from movie to movie, there is no reason to assume his personality will impact on the movie".[90] However, the general consensus of my students was that the more recognizable the actor and the character, the more difficult it was to accept that actor as the character. For the exercise, the difficulties that recognizable actors might have posed were mitigated by the fact that the students recognized no one from *A Man For All Seasons* and only a few actors from the other two films.

Question Two provided straightforward responses. It asked, "Do you consider feature films to be a worthy medium from which to learn about history? If so, why? If not, why not?" Eleven of thirteen students responded yes, films are a worthy medium from which to learn about history. Seven of the eleven affirmative responses qualified their answers by indicating that prior background preparation along with judicious explanations during the film would be essential. One student's answer showed that no matter how compelling films can be, preparation is still necessary: "Yes, the films put the facts to reality. They show you how everything you've learnt really happened. However I think it is necessary to learn the facts first and then explore them by movies."[91] Another student felt that films personalized history, though they need to be put into context: "By watching feature/historical films, it is more easy to find something personal in history. People will remember an individual story much more than a list of facts. It is important...to add relevant information about the figures in the movies and the times."[92] A different student found films useful but expressed a preference for modern productions when she stated: "Old films often cause me to become bored because they

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[90] Response number 39.
[91] Response number 38.
[92] Response number 39.

lack the cinematic elements that invigourate the imagination and grab my interest."[93]

Three students felt that films did not prove to be a worthy medium and expressed a desire

to concentrate more on lectures and traditional history books.[94] One student was

categorical in his preference for books: "Films twist the historical facts and I find that it is

much better to read historical books."[95]

Question Three was "Do you consider feature films to be: a) Inferior to more

traditional historical tools (books and documents), b) Superior to those tools or c) An

additional tool. Choose one and explain your answer." Ten students selected c), two

chose b) and one selected a). Typically, the students who selected c) as their answer

qualified their selection with a comment like this one: "Without background facts the

movies wouldn't make as much sense and wouldn't be very relevant."[96] Another student

noted: "I don't think we should base our entire view of history on Hollywood, but there

are some movies that are very well made. Like it or not, movies are a very important part

of our culture, and should be respected as such."[97] A different student wrote: "Visual

learning is very beneficial to many people and feature films can provide an additional

tool if the inaccurate points are discussed and dealt with during or after the film."[98]

Unquestionably, this particular group of students saw feature films as a supplement to,

not a replacement for, traditional historical methods and sources.[99] Historians should

take some comfort in this as it is often lamented in staff meetings that today's students

are only interested in entertainment and visual presentations and they lack the ability to

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[93] Response number 41.
[94] Response numbers 44, 45 and 46.
[95] Response number 45.
[96] Response number 38.
[97] Response number 39.
[98] Response number 40.
[99] Sturma and MacCallum observed a similar reaction to films in the classroom. See Sturma and MacCallum, "JFK in the Classroom," 104.

critically assess what they see on a screen. Moreover, this case study suggested that students may sometimes be aware that filmmakers take liberties when creating historical feature films even when they are not knowledgeable about the specifics.

Having conducted the case study as outlined above, a number of unforeseen problems emerged alongside the specific difficulties that arose with the questionnaires. While these problems did not invalidate the exercise, they did expose areas for improvement and refinement. A surprising difficulty was with the questionnaires themselves. Despite careful review of the questionnaires by four experienced teachers,[100] questions were not always properly understood by students. Moreover, several difficulties arose from the institutional character of St. George's. The cycle of classes at St. George's is one of rotation through ten days. The individual class sessions were not equally spaced out within the cycle and this caused continuity problems.[101] A.P. European History met on Days Two, Four, Five, Seven and Nine. Owing to schedule disruptions such as professional development days, school holidays, parent-teacher interview days, early dismissals and other miscellaneous interruptions (of which there are many at St. George's), it was not unusual for the class to go five to seven (in some extreme cases, nine) days without meeting. Thus a constant flow and focus was difficult to maintain.

Compounding the scheduling problem was a higher than expected rate of absenteeism on the part of the students. As the questionnaires were to be completed in a supervised classroom setting, immediately upon finishing the film—so as to keep the film

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[100] My colleagues mentioned above and myself. See note 8 above.

[101] Briley had similar continuity problems when he screened films over several periods. His solution was to arrange for film labs to block several periods together. This would be ideal but it is not necessarily feasible. Briley, "Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, As Viewed Through the Lens of Hollywood," 216.

fresh in each student's mind—absent students could not fill out a questionnaire, either because they had been absent on the day of the questionnaire or because they had missed a substantial portion of the film, or both. By itself, absenteeism would not necessarily have posed a significant problem but the small size of the class—as noted earlier—made absenteeism a more serious issue.

Another factor that had not been anticipated was the final composition of the class. Originally, A.P. European History was to be restricted to those who both met the criteria and expressed a desire for selection into the class. Unfortunately, owing to conditions beyond my control, almost forty percent of the students placed in the class did not fit the parameters established for acceptance. As a result, an uncooperative and undisciplined atmosphere was created by some of the students.[102] This hampered the collection of useful data and compromised the timeframe allotted for the exercise, pushing the exercise into the December exam period.

Non-institutional factors also generated some difficulties. The volume of information that needed to be covered in A.P. European History, given the number of teaching periods lost to various school activities, required some compression of certain aspects of the exercise. Moreover, having only one section of A.P. European History available as a sample meant that a trial run of the exercise could not be done. It is likely that such a trial run would have greatly reduced the impact of the aforementioned difficulties. Despite these difficulties, the exercise remains valid. Indeed, the entire exercise should be considered a preliminary test run that can be refined, expanded and ameliorated.

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[102] When I asked one student why she had not filled out her questionnaires, she replied: "I don't care about your stupid research project." Another student was removed from the class for the duration as she was too disruptive.

When I began this project, I was convinced that students needed formal guidance in the development of critical viewing skills. Now that the results of my case study are in, I am certain that they need such guidance. My students did not blindly accept everything they watched. They were knowledgeable viewers, with some good instincts. However, they demonstrated the same assumptions that Seixas found in his study, namely, that the more 'realistic' something looks, the more accurate it must be. The questionnaires provide examples of this idea and class discussions frequently added to those examples. There was a marked difference in the students' response to *A Man for All Seasons* when compared to the two other films. I find myself agreeing with Seixas about the relative utility of newer versus older films. His experiment showed that older films, by seeming less 'realistic' to his students, provoked more meaningful discussions.[103] My reading of the questionnaires, as well as the class discussions conducted with my students, reveal similar tendencies. They are not as pronounced as those found by Seixas, as my goals and methods were different. Our investigations were related in spirit, if not in form, however, and parallel observations emerged. One example of this tendency to consider older films less realistic can be found in the students' reactions to Thomas More's actions and motives about keeping silent on the issue of Henry's marriage and title as head of the church.[104] Considerable and meaningful discussions revolved around this point, in a manner not engendered by the other films in the exercise. The students simply could not understand how religious conviction could outweigh personal safety. I would wager a

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[103] Seixas, "Popular Film and Young People's Understanding of the History of Native American-White Relations," 364.

[104] Refer to the responses in notes 47 and 48, as well as the critical commentary in attached to notes 44 and 45.

considerable sum that if a film about Thomas More were made today, the emphasis of the story would weigh far more heavily on the notion of freedom of speech and other individual rights while the references to Catholic doctrine and religious conviction would be minimal. The production would be far less stage-like and the pacing would be much swifter.[105] This would be a Thomas More that today's audience would recognize. Consequently, the audience (my students) would be less inclined to question the underlying premise of the film and meaningful discussion would be diminished.

An additional concern raised by my case study is the general inability of my students to identify the thesis of the films. While a portion of my students' difficulty with this issue stemmed from their inability to transfer skills acquired in English classes to history classes[106], it is also true that a different set of skills is involved in 'reading' a film. As one of the goals of my project was to determine if the students could 'read' a film effectively, I did not teach them those skills prior to the case study. It would have been impossible to set a baseline for future comparisons.

The remedy to these concerns is a course, or at least a unit within a course, on film and history. Briley's course, with its use of films as cultural documents, is one approach.[107] However, Briley reserves his course as an elective for the most senior students at his high school. The approach I have in mind would apply to a broader audience. The results of my case study have suggested that in order to arrive at a level where Briley's approach can be most effective, a student must first have acquired some

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[105] It would quite likely resemble *Elizabeth* a great deal. No doubt a duel or assassination plot would be a key story point.

[106] The lamentable quality of my students' writing is more proof of this. Moreover, it is not simply an inability but a lack of desire on the part of the students to apply the skills taught in one area to another. The groans and expressions of incredulity that greet my announcements on the importance of proper grammar in a history class attest to this point.

[107] See the discussion of Briley's course in Chapter Two.

basic visual media literacy skills. Guided by the experience with my students, I have designed a course to help students develop visual literacy skills within the context of history. In the event that a school cannot offer a dedicated course on film and history, the first unit in that course can be incorporated as a stand-alone unit within a regular history course. The bulk of the course focuses on historical films, both feature films and documentaries. There is, however, one unit on non-historically themed films and television programmes to illustrate how a film can be used as raw evidence as well as an interpretive source of information, much like the difference between a diary and a textbook. The course is intended as a semester course in Grade Ten or Eleven, while the stand-alone unit can be incorporated within the existing Grade Ten history curriculum in Québec.[108]

The course explores the following themes, among others: realism versus accuracy; education versus entertainment; re-creation versus dramatization and the compromises they engender; time-compression and its effects on historical accuracy (*Elizabeth* provides an excellent example of this phenomenon). Finally, I ask: Can "bad" films teach anything of value? (I believe they can. *The Patriot* is a prime example.) Units are arranged around a central topic. Prior to viewing, a number of readings are assigned to provide background and context on the topic for the students. The first unit also includes readings from a primer on film techniques and terminology.[109] Unit One focuses on a single topic and a single film (e.g. The American Revolution and *The Patriot*). Unit Two examines a single topic by comparing and contrasting two films (e.g.

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[108] A significant curriculum reform is currently underway in Québec so the final placement of the course in the Social Sciences department at St. George's has not been determined.

[109] Costanzo's *Reading the Movies* and Giannetti and Leach's *Understanding Movies* would be good sources. The information in these readings would apply to all of the subsequent units in the course.

Jesuit missions in the Americas, *The Mission* and *Black Robe*). Unit Three examines

historical television series (e.g. *Canada: A People's History* by the CBC or *The Civil War*

by Ken Burns). Unit Four is on popular culture and film as a cultural document (e.g. the

Cold War and *Dr. Strangelove: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*).

The units are designed to allow for different films and topics chosen at the instructor's

discretion while maintaining an overall structure.

Although the course will include all of the aforementioned units, what this project

has allowed me to create is the feature film component of my visual literacy course. This

component covers the first two units in the course. Unit One also represents the stand-

alone unit incorporated into a regular history course. The following is a sample of Unit

One. The class will see *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, as an introduction to Renaissance

Europe's era of exploration. The goal of this unit is to expose students to this important

period in history and to demonstrate the utility, as well as the limitations, of an historical

feature film as an interpretive source of history. To prepare for this unit the students will

participate in several activities. They will be assigned excerpts from relevant texts on

Columbus and European voyages of exploration[110], as well as from a primer on basic film

techniques,[111] which will expose them to a number of basic technical film concepts

relating to visual literacy.[112] There will be a lecture to clarify the readings and provide

further context for the film. Moreover, this lecture will address the mechanics of critical

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[110] For Columbus, excerpts from Samuel Eliot Morison, *Christopher Columbus, Mariner* (Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1955) and Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990) would provide distinct points of view. (For example, Morison admires Columbus's seamanship while Sale holds Columbus's navigational abilities in rather low regard.) A chapter from a standard European survey text, e.g. Joseph R. Strayer and Hans W. Gatzke, *The Mainstreams of Civilization* 4th edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), would present the necessary background on European exploration in the late 15th century.
[111] Part I of Costanzo's *Reading the Movies* contains very useful information.
[112] See Appendix C for a glossary of technical terms. See Chapter Two for the definition of visual literacy and the concepts related thereto.

viewing as applied to historical feature films, drawing upon the lessons learned from the exercise conducted with the A.P. European History class, as well as the film primer. Approximately three class periods will be devoted to viewing the film. As it is the first film of the course, there will be a significant number of interruptions for explanations by the instructor. The students will be provided with a worksheet that guides them during their film viewing, also ensuring that they have notes to consult during the subsequent class discussion of the film. The lights will remain off, thereby minimizing student complaints.[113]

Following the film and discussion, each student will be assigned a short essay of 500 to 750 words on one of the following topics:

1. Compare and contrast Columbus's treatment of the native population presented within the film and the assigned readings.
2. Attention to detail, as well as accuracy, in matters of sets, props and costumes are very important to makers of historical feature films. Despite such an attitude, the filmmakers chose a woman who bears no resemblance to the actual queen to play the role of Queen Isabel. Give three reasons that might explain this discrepancy.
3. What is the main thesis of the film? Would Morison or Sale be more inclined to support the film's perspective? Give examples from your readings to support your answer.

There are, of course, a number of details[114] that are also part of this unit but the above description provides an appropriate summary. A sample of Unit Two, which follows,

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[113] My preference would be to have a rheostat to dim the lights. This would reduce glare on the screen while maintaining enough of a formal atmosphere in the class. Full lights, however, simply cause too many student complaints and any sense of 'fun' (a useful commodity in a classroom) is lost.

[114] For example, I would likely have to use excerpts of other films to illustrate key concepts before screening the main film. Also, I would attempt to secure a block of periods for screening films in their entirety, as Briley suggests. See Chapter Three for a discussion of the difficulties posed by a tumbling ten-day cycle.

further demonstrates the practical value of the case studies outlined in Chapter Three.[115]

The topic of this unit is Jesuit missionaries in the Americas and the films to be screened are *The Mission* and *Black Robe*. The goal of this unit is to demonstrate the diverse and difficult conditions facing these missionaries, the variety of indigenous cultures encountered by them and to assess the comparative quality, from an historical perspective, of two screen treatments of this topic. The structure of this unit is very similar to the one described in Chapter Four, with a special emphasis placed on point of view. Point of view will be discussed as it applied within each film, e.g. Amerindian versus European, and as a comparative framework to analyze the two films together. Background readings will be assigned[116] and a lecture to establish context will be given. Particular attention is given to the similarities and differences of the missionaries' goals, the Spanish/French distinction and the common theme of man versus the elements, albeit very different elements. Five to six classes will be used to view the films and conduct class discussions. A worksheet emphasizing the comparative nature of the unit will accompany the film. As before, a follow-up essay of 500 to 750 words will be assigned on the following topics:

1. Which film places a greater emphasis on the Jesuit point of view? Why?
2. Compare and contrast the native cultures portrayed in the films. How do the portrayals compare with the assigned readings?
3. How does the film's treatment (you may choose one or both films) of the Jesuits and their mission reflect the modern era in which they were made? Make reference to your readings in your answer.

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[115] Units Three and Four, while closely related to One and Two, are not directly influenced by the case studies in this thesis and so are not described in detail.

[116] To be determined.

Ultimately, the purpose of this unit is to demonstrate that all history, not only feature films about history, has multiple points of view that reflect a particular understanding of a topic and the cultural influences that shape those points of view. These two films provide an excellent example of these points and this unit, if one were restricted to a single example, best encapsulates the manner in which historical feature films can teach valuable lessons in history.

While the course I have designed would be a good start for acquiring visual literacy skills, it would not be sufficient. Visual literacy, like its print counterpart, can only become truly proficient through extensive practice. Teachers and professors, in many fields, might enhance the learning experience of their students by taking the time to include at least some of the ideas proposed here in their classes.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

I think it safe to conclude that historical feature films have become part of the mainstream of historical research.[1] As seen in Chapter Two, a vast body of literature by historians has been dedicated to film and history (and I have only scratched the surface of that literature). Nevertheless, with the notable exception of O'Connor's work,[2] there is a demonstrable lack of discussion about how to integrate films into the classroom, whether that classroom is a university lecture hall or a high school teacher's room. This lacuna might seem strange at first glance, but the incongruity is not really that mysterious. The question of how to integrate films into the teaching of history is essentially one of pedagogy. Media literacy (beyond that which applies to elementary schools), and its subset, visual literacy, is studied principally outside the United States, and largely within the purview of English Language Arts curricula. By contrast, the majority of historians concerned with film and history are American. Without the established tradition of media literacy programmes such as those in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada to rely upon, it is not altogether surprising that American historians spend relatively little time examining the application of films in their teaching. This lack is something my project has tried to redress.

As I consider this project, I would like to make a few observations and recommendations for anyone else wishing to examine film, history, teaching and visual

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[1] A number of academic history journals have devoted part or all of an issue to film and history, usually with a strong dose of discussion of commercial films. See the June 2001 issue of *The American Historical Review* and its discussion of *Saving Private Ryan* as an example of this phenomenon.

[2] Although *Image as Artifact* is a serious and thorough discussion of film and history, as a teacher, I found its focus on what to include in a classroom regarding film and history far outweighed how to include such material. This imbalance might have been addressed in one or two more chapters. However, I do not wish to impugn this book as it remains an excellent treatise on film and history.

literacy. First, find a supportive school or school board. I cannot imagine successfully completing this project without the understanding and support of my employers and students. Second, if possible, do a trial run. Circumstances did not afford me the opportunity to conduct a dry run of my exercise. While it is impossible to anticipate every problem, a number of nagging difficulties could have been avoided. Third, allow plenty of time for conducting a study. No matter how much time you think you might have, you will need twice as much. And last, though certainly not least, ask a good question. This project started when I asked the following question: Why should we care what Hollywood films have to say about history? Ultimately, I found the answer to be: Because they leave lasting impressions. A whole generation of people in their twenties will perceive the Vietnam War, without messy moral ambiguities, through the eyes of Mel Gibson in *We Were Soldiers* (2002).[3] Meanwhile, my generation sees that conflict through the angry vision of Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986) or that of Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978), perhaps the ultimate dehumanizing, anti-Vietnamese film. My thoughts about the Holocaust and D-Day are forever coloured by Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). Should we, as historians, leave films alone and allow them to form lasting impressions on our collective historical perceptions? Do we have a responsibility in this matter? My answer to these questions is, I hope, quite clear.

While historians are charged with pursuing and acquiring knowledge of the past and examining its truth (singular or plural, subjective or objective), they are also charged with disseminating that knowledge and teaching others the skills necessary to make informed judgements about that knowledge. History has long privileged the written word

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[3] Directed by Randall Wallace.

as its primary medium of expression. Throughout the twentieth century, however, still and moving pictures have competed mightily with the written word in this regard. At the start of a new century, it appears that pictures are gaining the upper hand, at least with the general public. The number of feature films, documentaries and television programmes, not to mention entire networks, devoted to history continues to grow at an accelerating pace. Whether for good or ill, this situation exists and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. It therefore becomes imperative that historians at all levels, from post-graduate supervisors to high school teachers, first acquire and then teach critical viewing skills to their students. To teach such skills effectively requires a methodology grounded in practical experience as well as informed by theory. Although the nature of this study necessarily renders its conclusions quite tentative, and much more work needs to be done, this project nonetheless provides a possible avenue of approach for establishing a methodology for the integration of films into the history classroom. Whatever form that methodology takes, I believe it needs to become part of the basic tools of the modern practicing historian.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for Film Research Project

1. What is the topic of this film?

2. If you were going to show this film to someone else, what would you tell him or her to look for?

3. What historical thesis is the film promoting? Is it clearly stated? How is it stated?

4. Does the presentation of information in the film support its thesis? If so, why? If not, why not? How does the film accomplish this task?

5. When you think about this film, what comes to mind? What web of associations can you develop in regards to the Renaissance?

6. How did this film add to or clarify what you already knew or thought about this topic?

7. After viewing this film, what questions spring to mind that you would like answered about either the topic or issues or the way they were covered?

8. What facts, issues, or sections seemed confusing or difficult to understand right away? What would you like clarified?

9. When you consider the ideas presented, the arguments, and the point of view, what do you strongly agree or disagree with in this film? Explain.

10. Explain how the way this film was presented in class affected your learning experience. Give examples.

11. Identify the cinematic elements in the film that helped you to understand the historical topic which it addresses.

12. Identify the cinematic elements in the film that interfered with your ability to understand the historical topic which it addresses.

These questions were answered three times, immediately after each film.

Second Questionnaire for Film Research Project

1. Does having recognizable actors portraying historical characters affect your impression of that character? In what ways?

2. Do you consider feature films to be a worthy medium from which to learn about history? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. Do you consider feature films to be: a) Inferior to more traditional historical tools (books and documents), b) Superior to those tools or c) An additional tool. Choose one and explain your answer.

These questions were answered once, after all three films had been seen.

Appendix B: Grade Ten Case Study

Having conducted the case study with the Grade Eleven A.P. history class, I decided to try a somewhat different exercise with the Grade Ten Canadian history classes. There is a unit on the American Revolution in the Grade Ten History of Quebec and Canada course. *The Patriot*,[1] a recent film on the subject, was available for screening. I felt that it could be used to examine a number of issues regarding film and history, in particular American history.

The Patriot suggests, though not deliberately, that American society has difficulty confronting the moral ambiguity of its origins. The Declaration of Independence speaks of "all men...created equal" and yet slavery was a defining, and divisive, characteristic of American society. Two centuries later, slavery is held to be universally repugnant, as it should be; yet some of the most ardent warriors who sought independence (including the author of the famous words cited above) were slave-owners. None of this is in dispute, nor is it news. However, slavery is problematic for the creators of an historical feature film about the American Revolution, or its central characters particularly when they are attempting to weave a new myth about the southern rebels into the fabric of the national story.

Jefferson in Paris (1995) portrays a "founding father's" alleged relationship with a house-slave. The goal here seems to be either to generate prurient interest in a scandalous affair or the de-mythologizing of an American icon or both. The makers of *The Patriot*, on the other hand, seek to create a heroic epic, but one loosely (very loosely)

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[1] *The Patriot*, 2000, Director: Roland Emmerich; Producer: Dean Devlin, Mark Gordon, Gary Levinsohn; Screenplay: Robert Rodat; Studio: Columbia; Video: Columbia Tristar; Running Time: 165 minutes.

based on a Southerner. In an effort to avoid offending modern sensibilities, the filmmakers chose to sacrifice historical authenticity and make the central figure a South Carolina plantation owner who has no slaves. It is this kind of ahistorical situation (one of many to be found in *The Patriot*) that usually generates the scorn often reserved for historical feature films. "It's bad history!" goes the refrain.

Let us turn to a brief summary of the film. *The Patriot* opens with a voice over by the main character, Benjamin Martin[2], in which he expresses a fear that a heinous act from his, as yet, mysterious past will catch up with him and cause him grief. Scenes of an idyllic farm, peopled with angelic children, immediately offset this ominous opening. Further bolstering the contrast is a comic moment in which the main character builds a flawed rocking chair, one that collapses into broken pieces, not for the first time. It is then established that the setting is South Carolina, 1776. Other early scenes, including one in the legislature, quickly create tension between a father, who does not wish to fight again (his ominous past is the source of his reluctance) and his eldest son, who wants nothing more than to fight for freedom from tyranny. Events progress and despite his best intentions, Benjamin Martin finds himself in the war, albeit for personal reasons, not political ones. Once involved, Martin uses all of his considerable skills to become a thorn in the side of Cornwallis' forces, drawing the ire of a particularly cruel British officer.[3] The war becomes personal for them. As the outcome of the war is not in doubt, this personal battle is the device used to build up suspense. There is, of course, an epic confrontation near the end of the film, and naturally, Martin emerges the ultimate victor.

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[2] William Ross St. George Jr., "Movie Review of *The Patriot*," *Journal of American History* 87, no. 3 (December 2000) at www.historycoop.org/journals/jah/87.3/mr_2.html. Martin is loosely based on Francis Marion, a militia officer in South Carolina.

[3] St. George Jr, "Movie Review of *The Patriot*" Colonel Tavington is loosely based on Colonel Banastre Tarleton.

In the Grade Ten exercise for this film, the students and I picked apart various scenes and discussed a number of historical and cinematic issues raised in the section on the structure for the proposed media literacy course. The following scenes illustrate the nature of the exercise.

There is a scene in which the Green Dragoons arrive at the Martin plantation (in red jackets with green trim, rather than the green jackets of the Dragoons—likely because the filmmakers believed that the American audience would more readily identify the Dragoons as British if they wore "redcoats") and their leader, Colonel Tavington, announces that by standing order of His Majesty, all slaves who fight for the British will be granted their freedom at the war's conclusion. It is here that we learn that Martin's plantation does not have slaves, but rather a large cadre of free, African-American workers. With each class, a discussion ensued regarding the historical unlikelihood of anyone in South Carolina in 1778 (the year in which this scene takes place) owning a plantation without slaves. In particular, the discussions were centred on the possible motivations the filmmakers might have for portraying such an unlikely situation. It took very little time for the students to decide, collectively, that a plantation owner with slaves would have appeared less heroic in the eyes of the audience. Other issues raised by this scene involved the economic realities of large budget Hollywood films. In order to recover the sizeable investment of having Mel Gibson as the star, as well as maintaining his reputation as a hero, the filmmakers could ill afford, in the opinion of the students, to make it difficult to support him as the hero.

In the next relevant scene, Benjamin Martin's eldest son, Gabriel, who enlisted without his father's approbation, finds himself serving under his father, who has recently

joined the war effort. He is recruiting men for the militia and enters a church in a village during a service. He makes a speech that has little effect on the men gathered there. However, a young woman, whose crippled father is an ardent supporter of independence, stands up and shames the townsmen into volunteering with an impassioned plea on behalf of the cause. So effective is she that even the parson joins the effort. Quite apart from the notion that "Even God is on the Americans' side!" as one of the students so aptly put it, the scene illustrates another example of modern sensibilities overriding historical accuracy. While it was certainly not impossible for a woman to have expressed herself so eloquently in the 1770's, it seems unlikely that such a young woman would have enjoyed the kind of influence that the scene implies. However, a modern audience expects to see strong female characters in mainstream films, and the filmmakers obliged. Unlike the example of the plantation devoid of slaves, where the students identified the modern constraints that bind the situation, the anachronistic nature of the young woman's statements and influence was very difficult for the students to grasp and accept.

The next scene to consider occurs when Martin, now involved in the war, is recruiting men for the militia among an unsavoury group. One man steps forward and expresses a desire to fight, but he is physically unable to do so. The dialogue is worth noting.

> Old Man: They hanged my brother down at [unintelligible]. Every damn one of them Redcoats deserves to die.
> Martin: Sign on then.
> Old Man: With all my ailments, I wouldn't make through the first skirmish, no sir. But you can have my Negro. He'll fight in my stead. [name], get over here. He ain't overly smart, but he's strong as a bull.
> Martin: Can you write?
> Slave: (stuttering) No, no, no sir.
> Martin: Well then, make your mark.
> Old Man: Why?! I just signed him over to you.

Martin: If you're willing, I'd like you to make your mark.
The slave nods and makes his mark.
Martin: That'll do.[4]

There are a few points in this scene that were discussed by the class. The first point concerned the language referring to the slave. The old man clearly says Negro, rather the more derogatory and inflammatory nigger.[5] When asked, the students generally concluded that the word nigger would have detracted from the overall effort to establish a heroic story and a few students pointed out that it would generate negative feelings about the American side in the Revolution, something that the filmmakers were at pains to avoid. Moreover, in keeping with the benevolent character of Benjamin Martin (the plantation owner with no slaves), the slave is asked whether or not he wishes to join the militia.

There are two scenes that underscore the running theme of redemption in *The Patriot*. Martin, who is held in high regard by his men, recounts to his son Gabriel the reason they hold him in such high esteem. During the French and Indian War, Martin participated in a series of battles, and, as his story unfolds, atrocities, that were decisive—in the film's version of history—in the British victory. The atrocities were perpetrated upon French and Amerindian forces inside a French fort, ostensibly to avenge a prior bad act. These are the "sins of my past" referred to in the opening voice over and they are the reason why Martin initially refused to fight. However, Martin is now obliged to work with a French officer, one who is well aware of Martin's actions in the earlier conflict. As the film progresses, their mutual distrust evolves into grudging respect and,

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[4] This dialogue was transcribed from the videocassette version of the film.
[5] I do not know if the word nigger was in use in the 1770s but, perhaps conditioned by other films, both the students and myself expected the word to be used in the film.

eventually, genuine friendship. A similar progression occurs as the aforementioned slave confronts bigotry within the militia, chiefly in the person of a recruit from the church. This token bigot, as we see very little other evidence of slavery or bigotry, has his life saved by the heroic actions of the slave and, of course, by the end of the film, the two are fast friends. The notion of redemption runs deep and is a necessary component of this film, given its aim of creating a heroic epic. The American Revolution, for the filmmakers, was an absolutely just cause and thus the protagonists much evolve beyond reproach. By choosing this course, the filmmakers have avoided an opportunity to examine the American Revolution in a manner that would increase the audience's understanding of the moral complexities and the paradoxical nature of a revolution that sought freedom while simultaneously allowing slavery. Moreover, an early scene establishing the existence of the Loyalists is wasted and the meagre references to them that follow only serve to paint them as sycophants and idiots. Rather than thoughtfulness, the viewers are given the "good guys vs. bad guys" at a level that a comic book might find embarrassingly undemanding.

The moment in the film that best defines this simplicity is one that has generated commentary and controversy in the media, particularly in Great Britain.[6] The aforementioned town with the church is invaded by the infamous Green Dragoons. Tavington, having already been established as a caricature of evil, orders the townspeople rounded up into the church, the locking of the exits and the burning of the structure, killing everyone inside in an especially brutal fashion. This atrocity establishes beyond all doubt, if any remained, that the British are evil. Such an atrocity did occur, at

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[6] Kim Campbell, "Brits take brunt as Hollywood rewrites history", at http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/2000/07/14/fp1s4-csm.shtml

Oradour sur Glane in German occupied France, in 1944—not in South Carolina in 1779.[7]

To reduce the conflict to such a simple level is insulting to the audience, a point not lost on many of the students who screened this film.

With *The Patriot*, the students received a lot of guidance. While some moments where students adroitly analyzed specific issues have been noted, discussions were very often teacher-directed. However, the next time such an exercise was attempted, with excerpts from *Amistad*, the value of the initial exercise was apparent. The students were able to identify various points regarding modern sensibilities and the difficulties of creating an accurate portrayal of history with much less guidance than the first time. One student observed that precision and accuracy might not be that important as a film could be better used to establish a tone or flavour for the period being studied. More conventional historical sources, she thought, would properly supplement what was presented to the class on film.

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[7] Scott Cummings at http://www.patriotresource.com/factfiction/events/page9.html and Jonathan Freedman "The Nazis, er, the Redcoats are Coming" at http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/feature/2000/07/03/patriot/print.html The first site is devoted to films about American History (with a heavy slant towards patriotic themes). It contains a number of web pages that point out factual errors in the film. Several resources are linked to the site and it seems well documented. I also referred to a review by Jonathan Freedman (film critic for the New York Post) to corroborate the Oradour reference.

Appendix C

Glossary of terms for film course

convention:	An implied agreement between the viewer and artist to accept certain artificialities as real in a work of art. In movies, editing (or the juxtaposition of shots) is accepted as "logical" even though a viewer's perception of reality is continuous and unfragmented.
cutting to continuity:	A type of editing in which the shots are arranged to preserve the fluidity of an action without showing all of it. An unobtrusive condensation of a continuous action.
dominant contrast:	That area of the film image that compels the viewer's most immediate attention, usually because of a prominent visual contrast.
establishing shot:	Usually an *extreme long* or *long shot* offered at the beginning of a scene, providing the viewer with the context of the subsequent closer shots.
extreme long shot:	A panoramic view of an exterior location, photographed from a great distance, often as far as four hundred metres away.
handheld shot:	A shot taken with a moving camera that is often deliberately shaky to suggest documentary footage in an uncontrolled setting.
jump cut:	An abrupt transition between shots, sometimes deliberate, which is disorienting in terms of the continuity of space and time.
long shot:	A shot that includes an area within the image that roughly corresponds to the audience's view of the area within the proscenium arch in the live theatre.
mise en scène:	The arrangement of visual weights and movements within a given space. In the live theatre, the space is usually defined by the proscenium arch; in movies, it is defined by the frame that encloses the images. Cinematic mise en scène encompasses both the staging of the action and the way that it's photographed.
montage:	Transitional sequences of rapidly edited images, used to suggest the lapse of time or the passing of events. Often uses dissolves and multiple exposures. In Europe, montage means the art of editing.

motif:	Any unobtrusive technique, object, or thematic idea that's systematically repeated throughout a film.
scene:	An imprecise unit of film, composed of a number of interrelated *shots*, unified usually by a central concern—a location, an incident, or a minor dramatic climax.
shot:	Those images that are recorded continuously from the time the camera starts to the time it stops. That is, an unedited strip of film.
storyboard:	A previsualization technique in which shots are sketched in advance and in sequence, like a comic strip, thus allowing the filmmaker to outline the *mise en scène* and construct the editing continuity before production begins.

All definitions are taken from Louis Giannetti and James Leach, *Understanding Movies: Canadian Edition* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon Canada, 1998)