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ARTICLE (PEER-REVIEWED)

Popular Imagination vs Historical Reality: HBO's Rome and the Practice of History

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Historical films have been subject to controversy and criticism within the discipline of history in recent decades, particularly as film began to influence popular imagination on historical events.¹ The release of Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* in 2000 instigated a flood of literature and public interest in antiquity and the historical 'epic' that had remained dormant for thirty-six years. The last successful historical epic about ancient Rome was Anthony Mann's *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).² Historians noted that the sudden return of the epic began to shape conceptions of history whilst debate regarding the usefulness and validity of film in representing history emerged. Thus, the ability of film to attract a wide range of audiences and influence public perceptions of historical events intimidated most historians, as *Gladiator* set the tone for historical films and shows in the decades following its release.³

Historians and filmmakers have sparred over the representation of history, with both attempting to defend their way of writing and presenting history to the public. Historians claim that filmmakers distort history by presenting an often inaccurate, fictionalised and sensationalised view that fails to align with *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.⁴ Likewise, filmmakers criticise historians for writing history that does not take into consideration popular imagination and contemporary issues. For filmmakers, the history presented by historians is restrictive, dense and provides no room for a proper visualisation of historical events. Often based around historical reality and popular imagination, this tension intensifies the more society turns to film for historical information instead of academic historical literature.

If historians and filmmakers demand recognition for the way they disseminate historical information they must acknowledge that both shape historical consciousness and are authors of history. While historians tend to disseminate history through scholarly literature, directors disseminate historical narratives through film and storytelling. Both may employ different techniques, methodologies, approaches and target different audiences. But their role remains the same: they interpret, revise and produce a selective history that aligns with contemporary imagination. It is this similarity that has enabled a partial reconciliation between the two

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to emerge; filmmakers aim to teach history by employing historical consultants to ensure historical ‘accuracy’, while historians turn to film to view, teach and learn about history and its representation. This intertwining has led to an increase of scholarly journals and public magazines focusing on film which have devoted issues and reviews toward its study – also known as reception studies.⁵

This article is as much about history and popular imagination as it is about historical films. It is not historical accuracy or film as historical evidence that matters, but the historical questions and debates that film raises for its audience and the historical profession regarding the past it presents and its implication on history. Such questions and debates base themselves around the extent to which filmmakers are able to interpret history through images and what kind of historical understandings it hopes to achieve. To analyse film as both an art and text provides insight into the popular imagination of society toward historical events as film, a form of public history, and ‘offers the opportunity to reach different audiences and see scholarship represented in different ways’.⁶

In the first section of this article I will explore these imaginations by conducting a comparative study of reviews on five online message boards relating to HBO’s television series *Rome* (2005-7). Next, I will delve into the impact of popular imagination on the representation of history by looking at the tensions that arise between historical consultants and filmmakers alike. I have used the term ‘filmmakers’ to refer to individuals or a particular group that attempt to present the construction of historical events or individuals in film and television shows, including scriptwriters, directors and producers. Finally, I will examine the way popular imagination has changed the communication of historical facts and how the representation of history has been impacted as a result. I show that history through film offers a kind of complexity that produces historical knowledge that an academic historian would recognise as adding value to the study of history.

HBO’s *Rome* (2005-2007) and Popular Imagination

In his preface to *The History of Rome*, Livy (c64 BC-12 AD) observed that the composition of history can take one of two forms: the historian can compile evidence and provide an authentic account or excel in the writing of history through personal style and storytelling.⁷ Most often than not, it is the second form that takes precedence in the making of historical films and influences popular imagination of historical happenings, particularly as filmmakers sensationalise history for mass entertainment.

The purposeful act of sensationalising history for mass entertainment to appeal to popular imagination falls under an emerging field of history, called public history, whereby ‘representation[s] of the past [are] provided for and/or by people who are not universally based historians’.⁸ Public history takes an interest in new forms of historical representation that engages with the public, either through media forms and television, historical novels, museums, television history and so on. Public history not only demonstrates ‘the ways that the study of history is popularly imagined by various audiences’; it redefines and redistributes intellectual authority, whereby ‘historical artefacts, texts and discourses demand a hybrid approach’ when studied so that they may be ‘shared more broadly in historical research’ to promote historical consciousness.⁹ Public history, thus, encourages broader participation in debates about history, which includes the kinds of responses ordinary people post and the discussions they engage in on online platforms.

While *Gladiator* inspired the return of the epic both in cinema and among historians, HBO's television series *Rome* shook preconceived popular conceptions of ancient Rome derived from the standard historical genre. Executive producer and writer Bruno Heller stated that the primary aim of the series was to 'deliver something fresh', namely a historically stimulating and entertaining show that did not 'take a kind of pastiche approach' and allowed the audience to engage.¹⁰ Christopher Lockett, historian of film and popular culture, argued that *Rome* accounted for popular conceptions of history by deviating from standard depictions to incorporate a series of 'accidental histories' whereupon the history of Rome is determined by unintended consequences, events and circumstances that, both thematically and narratively, worked toward 'subtle dislocations of unitary and monolithic power and historical agency' often found within individual actors like Julius Caesar.¹¹ In doing so, the series is just as much about Rome during Caesar's rule as it is about contemporary conceptions of popular culture and history.

In order to analyse this interplay of history and imagination, I conducted a comparative study of reviews on four online message boards – IMDB, Amazon, Tv.com and Metacritic – to explore popular debate on Rome. Reviewers who gave the show ten out of ten stars did so based on its ability to be both historically accurate and entertaining. The general public admired the series' ability to incorporate both 'popular and intelligent entertainment and scholarship' by interweaving 'historical authenticity' and 'quality storytelling' appropriate for television.¹² This duality admits a 'far more thrilling, sexual and entertaining' tale that allows a historical exploration of 'the culture, political agendas, economic standing, battles, enigmas and many other details' of ancient Rome, deemed impossible through academic literature.¹³ While many recognised that Rome failed in some respects to achieve historical accuracy, they asserted that history itself was an act of storytelling, a 'piece of art' that can ideally be moulded to suit the entertaining nature of television.¹⁴ As a result, reviewers tended to conclude that by playing around with historical facts, the series was able to be appropriately dramatic whereupon 'fiction helped the story flow' enough to 'feel at Rome during Caesar's day'.¹⁵ By drawing together film as a form of art with history as storytelling, the reviewers emphasise the vitality of the filmmaker's creative freedom in order to attract and educate the audience.

It comes of no surprise, then, that *Rome* attempts to use its creative license to incorporate 'historically marginalised and historically invisible actants' such as Titus Pullo and Lucius Vorenus – the former a legionary and the latter a centurion – in order to demonstrate how unintentional consequences can shape the course of Roman history.¹⁶ One reviewer extensively commented on the series' unique interplay of history and fiction stating:

What *Rome* does most successfully, I think, is to make the two least historical characters the most memorable. While Lucius Vorenus and Titus Pullo are mentioned only in passing in Caesar's Gallic Wars, here they dominate the storyline, offering a credible backdrop for the main 'historical' events and characters whose exploits and fame are well known to the history books. How fitting was it that in the series finale the coldly calculating Octavian, the future Augustus and first emperor of Rome, shakes the hand of lowly plebe Titus Pullo, his only true friend in the world. Brilliant.¹⁷

For classicist Monica S. Cyrino it is precisely this interplay that enables *Rome* to 'invite the audience into the grand historical account' and offer viewers 'a close-up of how history is made'.¹⁸ By creating a personalised account of these two characters in the retelling of historical events, audiences were able to connect with the events and characters despite the boundaries of time. A reviewer reflected that by incorporating the characters of Pullo and Vorenus, the series

was able to ‘remind us [the audience] that these figures were people in all the complexity of motivation that we experience in people today’ – an account that would not have been possible had the perspectives been through aristocratic personalities like Caesar.¹⁹ The audience’s interest in history is piqued by the ability of filmmakers to invite the audience into the world of Rome, thus changing the perception of history from that of fate to caprice and luck.²⁰

The result is a kind of history that is not driven but ridden. Rather than a planned teleology devised by great men, the history of Rome is an accident, comprised of unforeseen circumstances that can be attributed to the problem of antiquity. Classicist Mary Beard’s analysis of the study of ancient history perfectly aligns with the methodology employed by the creators of Rome:

At the heart of what I have written is a conviction that, at its best, the study of ancient history is as much about how we know as what we know. It involves an engagement with all the processes of selection, constructive blindness, revolutionary reinterpretation, and wilful misinterpretation that together produce the ‘facts’... out of the messy, confusing, and contradictory evidence that survives.²¹

While the series most certainly took advantage of the limitations surrounding antiquity to provide a perfect mix of historical accuracy and entertainment in an attempt to distinguish itself from its predecessors, it is precisely this deliberate restructuring of history that causes tensions between historians and filmmakers to emerge, with most historians increasingly growing sceptical of film in its ability to present history accurately.

History in Images and History in Words

Central to the debate surrounding the tensions between history and film is Robert A. Rosenstone, the leading historian in this area of contention. In 1989, Rosenstone created the first section in *The American Historical Review* devoted to the study of film and its implication on history.²² For Rosenstone, complaints surrounding the misuse of film are based upon two perceptions: that historical films are subject to the rules of historical practice as they are ‘written history transformed to the screen’ and that facts are facts and history is ‘little more than an organised compilation of such facts’.²³ As a result, historians have been quick to criticise historical films for their lack of historical accuracy. *Gladiator* has been subject to such criticism since its release, despite the involvement of Kathleen Coleman, an expert on Roman antiquity, as consultant to the production.

Rosenstone, however, argues that academic historians who criticise film for deviating away from historical reality fail to take into account that written history is just as much shaped by conventions of language and genre as film is by production and popular imagination, especially films representing the ancient past.²⁴ *Rome* attempts to connect to the audience through its unique medium of visual appeal; it has the advantage to cater to popular imaginations that no other medium can match in terms of depth and breadth of audience influence. *Rome*’s opening credits successfully offer a sense of familiarity by incorporating a mix of desire, spectacle and triumph with that of a tangible, believable and recognisable past that resonates with the values of the present.²⁵ This mix is illustrated through the vibrant colours of graffiti written on Roman walls to present an authentic feel to the Roman lifestyle, against the backdrop of markets bustling with people from different social backgrounds. From the outset, *Rome* encapsulates everyday life and its peculiarities. And so, as demonstrated in *Rome*’s dual aim

to educate and entertain, the art of filmmaking itself cannot be subject to the standards of academic history.

The debate for historical accuracy further becomes hazy when antiquity is in question. Like filmmakers and those historians studying film, scholars of antiquity have been known to incorporate historical reality and popular imagination in their literary works. Referred to as 'sensational historiography', ancient historians were convinced that historical amplification through the elaboration of historical events was a unique and distinguished practice as it generated 'pleasing effects' and in turn, stimulated and engaged audiences.²⁶ For example, ancient Greek historian Polybius (c200-118 BC) comments on how Phylarcus (c215 BC) wrote not to present facts, but to engage his readers, writing 'carelessly' and never missing 'an opportunity to emphasise the lurid details'.²⁷

Similarly, *Rome* has taken on historically marginalised ancient figures like mother of emperor Augustus, Atia Balba Caesonia (86-43 BC), and interwoven her in the series as Atia of the Julii. As little is known of the historical Atia, the makers of *Rome* were able to take liberty in her representation. While ancient historian Tacitus (c56-120 AD) describes her as a religiously pious and admired Roman matron, the Atia of *Rome* is canny, headstrong and sexually voracious.²⁸ The makers of *Rome* willingly deviated from historical records in an attempt to appeal to popular imagination. One reviewer described Atia as a 'voracious wonder... bad to her beautiful bones', with others admiring her portrayal as an 'ambitious political strategist'.²⁹ After all, it was fervent characters like Atia that drew in over three million viewers per episode.³⁰ However, criticism toward historical films that portray ancient figures becomes a double-edged sword: on one edge, the evidence that survive as 'facts' of history, whether objects or literary works, is fragmented, incomplete and contradictory; on the other, an imaginative engagement with historical 'facts' takes place by historians who seek to recreate the past.

The inherent problem of antiquity also contributes to rising tensions between historical consultants and filmmakers. Without a 'universally agreed factual basis for film', filmmakers are left with no alternative but to succumb to imagination to tell stories of the ancient past.³¹ If historians are consulted to provide advice on the representation of historical material, they are often called upon only after a script is written or when filming has begun. They rarely have direct involvement in historical filmmaking. Rosenstone contends that this tension primarily arises as a result of lack of understanding: few filmmakers are trained historians and few historians are trained filmmakers.³² And so, historians find themselves, both metaphorically and literally, on the edges of the filmmaking process. This relationship becomes difficult for historical consultants such as Coleman who discovered that preference for artistic innovation saw her historical advice be pushed aside in the making of *Gladiator*. This, for her, was an attitude indicative of the assumption that audiences take no interest in debates concerning historical authenticity in film.³³

For *Rome's* historical consultant, Jonathan Stamp, it is the filmmakers' obligation to entertain the audience by telling stories. It is not for the historical consultant to say what did not happen, but to find ways of presenting an authentic past. To be authentic is to 'get the details right' through costumes, architectures, colours, movements, gestures, hairdos and dynamism of interactions.³⁴ Only then can a historian generate debate among the audience as to the representation of history in film.³⁵ Indeed, David Eldridge has observed, upon an assessment of over three hundred films, that when producing an interpretation of the past, 'the filmmaker has interacted with professional historiography, public attitudes, political utilisation of history and the conventions of the historical film genre to craft a narrative and style that

convey a perspective on the past through cinematic means'.³⁶ Both the historical consultant and filmmaker produce an interpretation of the past that aligns just enough with historical reality as it does with popular imagination.

While Coleman expressed concerns that filmmakers disregard popular interest in historical authenticity, Natalie Zemon Davis, historian of the early modern period, asserts that audiences do not succumb to the filmmaker's representation of the past automatically. Instead, 'they ask about it, argue about it, and write letters of protest about it'.³⁷ It is for this reason that *Rome* has been the subject of popular contention, both for its appeal – storytelling, excellent writing and authentic historical detail – and repulsiveness – excessive sex, anachronism and soap opera tendencies.

Ultimately, the representation of history has been shaped and constructed by historians and filmmakers alike over the years. Before the advent of television, history was assembled by historians whose conclusions of the past were borne out of the political, economic and social context of their time, their own personal views and their own understandings of what history is. When film became an object of popular interest, filmmakers began writing history on their own terms, educating and entertaining audiences through the appeal of visual media. Makers of historical epics, like *Rome*, are equally subject to the constraints of history that historians face. Lack of evidence means that connecting to the past is only possible through the language, purpose, methodology and distortions imposed by the writer and producer of a particular historical period.

The Challenge of the Visual

As noted earlier, history and film often tend to be placed on opposite ends of the spectrum: history on one end for being restrictive, dense and providing no room for a proper visualisation of historical events; film on the other for offering an inaccurate, fictionalised and sensationalised view that fails to align with historical reality. Seldom are they grouped together as unique individual mediums of historical representation. Ken Burns, a documentary filmmaker, proclaimed that scholars tend to 'speak only to themselves' when they present a past that is dense with historical facts, leading to a rising disinterest toward historical studies from the public as history becomes too 'anti-narrative'.³⁸ Alternatively, historians such as Robert Brent Toplin assert that while academic history can be 'anti-narrative', it exposes its readers to historiographical debates and multiple perspectives in a way that film cannot.³⁹ He concludes that films 'rarely give audiences a sense of the challenges in historical representation' as they 'imply that the study of history is a tidy operation'.⁴⁰ It is precisely this perspective of film that *Rome* challenges.

Rome proposes an alternative presentation of history. It attempts to shatter preconceived notions of the historical epic by offering an authentic retelling of Rome that challenges popular perceptions of history as being a linear sequence of events to one of unpredictability. Titus Pullo and Lucius Vorenus are considered to be constituent agents of change whereupon both their luck and misfortune becomes necessary in the events that transpire throughout Roman history in order to make it whole. In this way, *Rome* is able to cleverly fashion the relationship between everyday history and the history of big events and offer a new 'branding' of the historical epic.⁴¹ According to Stamp, the past helps filmmakers and historians alike to 'brand' stories in a way where the audience becomes familiar with a particular storyline or plot and thus rarely anticipate the end result. *Rome* has attempted to shift popular imagination away from the standard historical genre to 'offer something fresh'.⁴² The world of *Rome* is

therefore 'much more exotic, and strange, and unexpected, and slightly bizarre than the Rome we have been given all these years'.⁴³

While in the last episode of season one Caesar falls to his death – a historical event universally known – *Rome* at the same time shook preconceived notions of Caesar's death by making it appear as an accidental historical event.⁴⁴ Various historical accounts and literary works explain the multiple warnings Caesar received about Ides of March. In the Roman calendar, the 'Ides of March' refers to the fifteenth day of the third month. Ancient historians Plutarch (c46-120 AD) and Suetonius (c69-122 AD) wrote that Caesar set off to the Senate house after heavy persuasion from Brutus, surrounded by no other but his contemporaries.⁴⁵ In *Rome*, Caesar is accompanied by Lucius Vorenus, Marc Antony and surrounded by a few others. Though instructed by Caesar not to leave his side, Vorenus was pulled aside by Atia's slave who reported troubles at home. Vorenus' decision to leave the procession indirectly led to Caesar's inevitable downfall. In *Rome*, it is the coincidences of everyday circumstances that trigger major historical events. Through the displacement of hierarchies between fictional and historical actors, the coherence of conventional historiography is transformed to illustrate the contingency of historical action.

By intertwining the history of big events with the history of the everyday, *Rome* encapsulates the complexities of Roman history in an attempt to 'go through the portal of historical detail into an authentic archetypal world that resonates with people'.⁴⁶ Anthropologist and film historian, Edward Fischer, states that when a film is driven by the small yet significant historical details, it is able to 'show the human condition at work in history' for it is 'only through the human condition – man's hopes, fears, loves and strivings – that an audience finds identification' and thus a connection to history.⁴⁷ Of course, HBO's success with *Rome* lies in its ability to realistically portray historical characters in a human context, like that of Pullo and Vorenus. In fact, in an online history forum one reviewer praised *Rome* for taking this approach, writing that when films or shows are made about Rome, they almost always portray the 'glory' and 'achievements'. Rarely do they capture the 'down-and-dirty everyday urban life' of Rome.⁴⁸

Thus, *Rome* was able to shift popular conceptions of history away from just politics toward an intertwining with the social. But this shift is determined as much from the motivations of filmmakers as it is from the audience. Historical critic and classicist Joanna Paul noted that while film has the ability to shape history according to its will, it is the audience's expectations as well as their attitudes toward historical authenticity that characterises the historical genre.⁴⁹ As a result, the creators of *Rome* were able to motivate historical facts paradoxically through fiction.

Given the important impact of *Rome* on both history and popular imagination, it becomes clear that film can be a legitimate medium of historical investigation. Films and shows of the historical epic, like *Rome*, attempt to bridge the gap between academic history and the public by presenting a past that reflects both historical reality and popular imagination. Historian of modern media, Andrew B. R. Elliot, asserts that audiences of epic films are simultaneously poised 'to be pushed away from the film by impossible spectacle which they are aware is not real' while at the same time being 'drawn in to the narrative by that same spectacle's realistic portrayal of those fantastic worlds'.⁵⁰ This observation highlights the importance of the duality of both historical reality and popular imagination for both film and written history. Without one or the other, neither medium will deliver a comprehensive understanding of historical events.

While *Rome* may never have had ‘regular orgies, saluted its emperors with raised arms, or condemned gladiators to die with a downward point of the thumb’, it is film that has allowed these representations of historical events to become ‘absolute mainstays of popular conceptions about Roman culture’.⁵¹ For this reason, historians need to recognise the increasing ability of film to attract a wide range of audiences due to its ability to appeal to, and shape, popular imagination of historical events. That is not to say that historians have been oblivious to this. The wide range of scholarship available on film, popular culture and history is testament to the changing nature of historical representation. Most certainly, due to the immense impact of film on popular imagination and history, public institutions such as the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney have commissioned a series of LEGO constructions of popular ancient monuments such as the Colosseum in Rome, the Acropolis in Greece and the sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum. With an increase of twenty-five thousand people visiting the museum, it becomes clear that popular imagination is driven by new ways of engaging with history.⁵²

Conclusion

Historical films have been subject to controversy and criticism within the discipline of history given the rise of popular interest in new and innovative forms of historical representation. The five to seven years between *Gladiator* (2000) and *Rome* (2005–7) saw an upsurge of historical films focusing on the ‘epic’ – the spectacular, monumental and immersive periods of history that exude a mix of historical reality and speculative fiction. As a result, history became a popular interest as fans from all over the world wrote reviews on online forums and movie content sites expressing their opinion on the representation of the past. As illustrated with *Rome*, audiences admired the intertwining of historical reality with popular imagination. A good historical epic, for them, incorporated both fact and fiction that both educated and entertained. HBO’s *Rome* was chosen as a case study precisely for its ability to cater to popular imagination, and in the process, shape standard perceptions of historical events derived from previous depictions of the ancient world in film.

Rome was unique in its ability to ignite historiographical debate by presenting history as an accident, thus allowing audiences to question the outcome of historical events. The history of Rome was one based not on fate, but caprice and luck. However, this shaping of historical events was only made possible due to the inherent problem of antiquity: lack of evidence meant that filmmakers had to resort to imagination in order to present a coherent narrative of history. While some historians criticised film for distorting the past, various others highlighted that academic history itself was constructed, revised and interpreted by historians who utilised both historical evidence and imagination to present a coherent analysis of the past. It is important to acknowledge film and academic history as an art and text, prone to presenting a distorted past. As film continues to grow into a sophisticated and popular medium, historians ought to embrace it as a new mode of historical investigation that has the ability to consider and intertwine popular imagination with historical reality.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, Alison Landsberg, *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015, pp61–110, <https://doi.org/10.7312/land16574>.
2. Steve Neale defines the historical epic as ‘films with historical, especially ancient world settings; and large-scale films of all kinds which uses new technologies, high production values and special modes of distribution and exhibition...’ See Neal, *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, London, 2000, p85.
3. Films that emerged since *Gladiator*, directed by Ridley Scott, Universal Pictures, USA, 2000, include: *Troy*, directed by Wolfgang Peterson, Warner Bros Pictures, USA, 2004; *King Arthur*, directed by Antoine

Fuqua, Buena Vista Pictures, USA, 2004; *Kingdom of Heaven*, directed by Ridley Scott, Twentieth Century Fox, UK, 2005; *Red Cliff*, directed by John Woo, Magnolia Pictures, China, 2008; *Pompeii*, directed by Paul W. S. Anderson, TriStar Pictures, USA, 2014; and, recently, the remake of *Ben-Hur*, directed by Timur Bekmambetov, LightWorkers Media, USA, 2016. At the same time, television shows gained popular traction, the most notable being: *Rome*, produced by Bruno Heller, William J. MacDonald and John Milius, Home Box Office, USA, 2005-7; *Empire*, directed by John Gray and Kim Manners, ABC, USA, 2005; *Tudors*, produced by Michael Hirst, Sony Pictures, Ireland-Canada, 2007-10; *Vikings*, produced by Michael Hirst, History Channel, Ireland-Canada, 2013-; and, recently, *Knightfall*, created by Don Handfield and Richard Rayner, History, USA, 2017-.

4. Leopold von Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans Roger Wines, Fordham University Press, New York, 1981, pp56-59. For debate between historians and filmmakers, see, for example, Anny Gray and Erin Bell, *History on Television*, Routledge, London, 2013.

5. The following scholarly journals are not specifically devoted to history and film but have covered issues relating to history and film on numerous occasions, these include: the *American Historical Review* by the American Historical Association, *The Public Historian*, *Public History Review*, and the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. Prominent public magazines include *The Monthly Review*, *Newsweek* and *The New Yorker*. The *American Historical Review* vol 93, no 5, 1988, pp1173-1210 offers a broad, yet comprehensive, discussion on the topic of history and film. Thereafter, one issue a year was devoted to film with film historian Robert A. Rosenstone as the editor-in-chief. Two prominent reception studies journals include the *Classical Receptions Journal* and *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History*.

6. Gray and Bell, op cit, p22.

7. Titus Livius, *The History of Rome*, vol I, trans George Baker, Peter A. Mesier, New York, 1823, ebooks@Adelaide.

8. Gray and Bell, op cit, p6.

9. Jereome De Groot, introduction to *Public and Popular History*, Routledge, London, 2012, p2 and Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1990, pxx.

10. Cited in Gary Devore, 'Now We are Rome: Ancient Roman Torture on Film, and Modern American Torture in the News', *The Awl*, 13 December 2014, <http://www.theawl.com/2014/12/now-we-are-rome> [accessed 16 June 2017].

11. Christopher Lockett, 'Accidental History: Mass Culture and HBO's *Rome*', in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* vol 38, no 3, 2010, p104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956050903449632> and Andrew B. R. Elliot, 'Rewriting European History: National and Transnational Identities in *Rome*', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* vol 33, no 4, 2013, p578, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2013.847653>.

12. Clemontine, Quality Historical Epic, TV.com, review posted on 25 February 2009, <http://www.tv.com/m/shows/rome/reviews/> [Accessed 17 June 2017] and R. A. Favlo, History Brought Alive, Amazon, review posted on 13 October 2010, http://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/cr/rR9V90JPQW3QIN/ref=aw_cr_i_40 [accessed 17 June 2017].

13. Yamidude, Rome: Season One, Metacritic, review posted on 19 July 2011, <http://www.metacritic.com/tv/rome/user-reviews?dist=positive> [accessed 17 June 2017].

14. Daria84, A Masterpiece, IMDB, review posted on 24 March 2012, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384766/reviews?start=30> [accessed 17 June 2017].

15. Jenny, Rome Series 1: Gladiator has Met its Match, IMDB, review posted on 14 April 2007, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384766/reviews?start=10> [accessed 17 June 2017] and Bmoore-13, Worthwhile, Fun History Lesson, IMDB, review posted on 17 January 2007, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384766/reviews?start=150> [accessed on 17 June 2017].

16. Lockett, op cit, p111.

17. LordVishnu, Vale Roma!, IMDB, review posted on 26 March 2007, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384766/reviews?start=70> [accessed 18 June 2017].

18. Monica S. Cyrino, introduction to *Rome, Season One: History Makes Television*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008, p6 and Elliot, op cit, p583.

19. NardiViews, 'Phenomenal! Best Depiction Ever!', Amazon, review posted on 25 November 2009, http://www.amazon.com/gp/aw/cr/rR1SKFQHCM4KJ3R/ref=aw_cr_i_1 [accessed 18 June 2017].

20. Lockett, op cit, p105.

21. Emphasis original, Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p5, <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674020597>.

22. See, for example, note 5 above.

23. Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p121.
24. *ibid*, pp34-5.
25. Holly Haynes, 'Rome's Opening Titles: Triumph, Spectacle and Desire', in Monica S. Cyrino (ed), *Rome, Season One: History Makes Television*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008, pp49-50, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444301540.ch4>.
26. W. Jeffrey Tatum, 'Making History in Rome: Ancient vs. Modern Perspectives', in Monica S. Cyrino (ed), *Rome, Season One: History Makes Television*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008, p33 and Martin M. Winkler, 'Gladiator and the Traditions of Historical Cinema', in Martin M. Winkler (ed), *Gladiator: Film and History*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2005, p17.
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