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**Reshaping the Past: The Oscillation of Memories of  
Slavery between Past and Present as Represented in the  
Original American Miniseries *Roots* (1977) and its  
Remake in 2016**

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctorate in Civilization

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## **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

I, **Saadia OULDYEROU**, hereby, certify that this thesis, which is entitled “Reshaping the Past: The Oscillation of Memories of Slavery between Past and Present as Represented in the Original American Miniseries *Roots* (1977) and its Remake in 2016,” represents my own work and has not been taken from others’, or previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this university or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications, except where otherwise stated.

**25/10/2020**

**Miss. Saadia OULDYEROU**

*To my parents, Hadja, Khaled and Ahlem*

*To Prof. Habib YAHIAOUI: the constant fuel to the latent flames*

*To the memories of Alex Haley's ancestors*

*To Kunta Kinte*

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## ABSTRACT

Representing an atrocious side of the U.S. (United States) history, slavery has always been a sensitive issue whose discussion was steered clear by the Americans. Hollywood, for instance, as an American film industry, treated Blacks as pariahs and eschewed from giving their experience in America its due on the screen for a long time. In fact, anti-Black racism harks back to the period that extends from 1619 to 1865 when Blacks were slaves under the subjugation of the Whites. Once they got their freedom in 1865, they fought heart and soul to be fully integrated into the American society, and they succeeded after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1964 and 1965, respectively. Blacks' positions in the American motion picture, hence, changed as well. In 1977, Alex Haley's *Roots: the Saga of an American Family* (1976) was adapted into the miniseries *Roots* that became a smash hit. In 2016, its remake was produced to address the modern generation of the Black Lives Matter era. In this regard, this thesis explores twofold aspects: the production and the reception of the remake. On the one hand, it focuses on the way the new miniseries was modernized with reference to the context. On the other hand, it investigates how the audience received the remake. To this aim, the encoding/decoding model of Stuart Hall and the content analysis method were used not only to extract the embedded messages of the remake through a close look at some aspects of the adopted cinematographic and *mise-en-scène* techniques but also to analyze the stances of the audience. The results reveal that the producers availed themselves of diverse methods to speed the circulation of the remake that diverges in many instances from its original. Going in tandem with the surrounding racial happenings, the producers implemented intensive violent images, relied on more accurate information than in the original miniseries, and omitted the White's benevolent side to point up Blacks' staunch resistance to survive and to be accepted as part of the whole but not losing their African heritage, identity and dignity. The susceptibility of the audience to feed his memory by embracing and preserving the past –however horrific it was –to define and understand the present was clearly laid bare as well.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF MAPS	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	2

## **PART I** **LITERATURE REVIEW**

<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>Slavery in America: a Conceptual and Historical Background up to 1865</b>	
1.1.Introduction		9
1.2.Slavery: the Old Institution		9
1.2.1. The Etymological Stance		10
1.2.2. The Historical Stance		15
1.3.The Beginning of Slavery in America		20
1.4.Life under Slavery in America		33
1.5.The End of Slavery in America		43
1.6.Conclusion		48
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>Blacks and the American Motion Picture</b>	
2.1. Introduction		51
2.2.The Motion Picture: the New Literature		51
2.2.1. Hollywood		58
2.2.2. The Filmmaking Process		63
2.2.2.1.Development		65
2.2.2.2. Pre-production		70
2.2.2.3. Production		73
2.2.2.4. Post-production		74
2.2.2.5. Distribution		76
2.2.3. Film versus Series		78
2.3. Inching Towards Equality: the Representation of Blacks and Slavery in the American		

Motion Picture	85
2.4. Alex Haley's <i>Roots</i> (1976): from the Novel to the Miniseries	91
2.5. Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory of Communication	98
2.6. Conclusion	104
<b>PART II</b>	<b>ROOTS UNDER THE LENS OF STUART HALL'S THEORY</b>
<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>Encoding <i>Roots</i> 2016</b>
3.1. Introduction	108
3.2. Developing the Idea	109
3.3. The Summary of <i>Roots</i>	114
3.4. <i>Miser-en-scène</i> and Cinematography	115
3.5. Retelling the History of Slavery on Screen	119
3.5.1. Resistance	120
3.5.2. Identity and Adherence to African Traditions and Culture	144
3.6. Discussion	152
3.7. Conclusion	157
<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>Circulating and Decoding <i>Roots</i> 2016</b>
4.1. Introduction	160
4.2. Circulating <i>Roots</i> 2016	161
4.2.1. The Implementation of the Cast-related Method	163
4.2.2. The Implementation of the Streaming-related Method	167
4.3. Decoding <i>Roots</i> 2016	174
4.3.1. The Content Analysis Method	177
4.3.2. The Analysis of the Audience's Comments on Instagram	178
4.3.3. The Analysis of the Audience's Comments on Facebook and YouTube	187
4.3.4. Analyzing Responses on the Rotten Tomatoes Website	191
4.4. Embracing the Past to Define the Present	195
4.5. Conclusion	197
GENERAL CONCLUSION	200
LIST OF BIBLIOHRAPHY	205
APPENDIXES	
Appendix A: Key Dates in the History of Slavery in America	229
Appendix B: Pictures of Emile Reynaud's Praxinoscope, Edison's Kinetoscope and <i>Cinématographe</i> of 1895	231



Appendix C: Alex Haley's Biography	233
Appendix D: the Main Crew of <i>Roots</i> 1977	234
Appendix E: the Main Crew of <i>Roots</i> 2016	236

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	American Broadcasting Company
BLM	Black Lives Matter
IMDb	Internet Movie Database
CSM	Common Sense Media
DVD	Digital Video Disc
MGM	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
MPAA	The Motion Picture Association of America
MPPC	The Motion Picture Patents Company
RAC	The Royal African Company
TV	Television
U.S.	The Unites States

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1.</b> The Etymology of the Word Slave .....	13
<b>Figure 2.</b> Announcing the Sale of Slaves and Stock in the 1852 Auction of Property.....	37
<b>Figure 3.</b> Diagram of the Main Filmmaking Steps.....	65
<b>Figure 4.</b> Black Snyder’s Basic Film Paradigm .....	67
<b>Figure 5.</b> Film Pre-production Workflow .....	73
<b>Figure 6.</b> Film Distribution Flow.....	78
<b>Figure 7.</b> Lipscomb and Kendall’s (1994) Film Music Paradigm.....	84
<b>Figure 8.</b> The White American Film Star Al Jolson (1886-1950) Wearing His Famous ‘Black-and White Minstrel’ Make-up .....	88
<b>Figure 9.</b> Shannon and Weaver’s Model of Communication.....	99
<b>Figure 10.</b> Stuart Hall’s Process of Communication .....	101
<b>Figure 11.</b> Stuart Hall’s Reading Positions .....	102
<b>Figure 12.</b> Scene from the Family Guy Sitcom .....	104
<b>Figure 13.</b> The Different Shots of the Camera .....	118
<b>Figure 14.</b> Variety of Camera Angles.....	119
<b>Figure 15.</b> The Opening Scenes from the First Episode of <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	121
<b>Figure 16.</b> Kunta under Water.....	122
<b>Figure 17.</b> Kunta is Forced to Eat.....	123
<b>Figure 18.</b> Omoro in <i>Roots</i> 1977 .....	124
<b>Figure 19.</b> Omoro in <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	125
<b>Figure 20.</b> <i>Roots</i> 2016’s Jinna before and after Enslavement .....	126
<b>Figure 21.</b> <i>Roots</i> 1977’s Fanta before and after Enslavement.....	127
<b>Figure 22.</b> Fanta and Kunta after Nine Years .....	128

<b>Figure 23.</b> Fiddler’s Fight with Connelly in the First Episode of <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	129
<b>Figure 24.</b> Kunta’s Attempt to Walk.....	130
<b>Figure 25.</b> Kizzy of <i>Roots</i> 2016 .....	132
<b>Figure 26.</b> Kizzy of <i>Roots</i> 1977 .....	133
<b>Figure 27.</b> Carleton in <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	134
<b>Figure 28.</b> The Scenes of Whipping in <i>Roots</i> 1977.....	135
<b>Figure 29.</b> The Scenes of whipping in <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	136
<b>Figure 30.</b> Kunta’s Foot is Cut in <i>Roots</i> 1977.....	137
<b>Figure 31.</b> Kunta’s Foot is Cut in <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	138
<b>Figure 32.</b> Killing Black Soldiers During the Fort Pillow Battle .....	139
<b>Figure 33.</b> Noah’s Mother in <i>Roots</i> 2016 .....	140
<b>Figure 34.</b> Killing Silla and Frightening Kunta in <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	141
<b>Figure 35.</b> Captain Davies in <i>Roots</i> 1977 .....	142
<b>Figure 36.</b> Naming in <i>Roots</i> 2016 .....	145
<b>Figure 37.</b> Fiddler’s Original Name in <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	148
<b>Figure 38.</b> Prayer of Omoro and Kunta .....	150
<b>Figure 39.</b> Throwing Dirt after One’s Departure .....	152
<b>Figure 40.</b> Kunta’s Gaze of Dignity .....	155
<b>Figure 41.</b> The Four Directors of <i>Roots</i> 2016 .....	166
<b>Figure 42.</b> Rating <i>Roots</i> 2016 on Amazon Prime Video Platform.....	169
<b>Figure 43.</b> The Instagram Account of the History Channel.....	170
<b>Figure 44.</b> Circulating <i>Roots</i> 2016 on Instagram (01).....	171
<b>Figure 45.</b> Circulating <i>Roots</i> 2016 on Instagram (02).....	172
<b>Figure 46.</b> Posters of <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	173
<b>Figure 47.</b> The Reception of <i>Roots</i> (2016) on IMDb .....	176

**Figure 48.** The Reception of *Roots* (2016) on the Common Sense ..... 176

**Figure 49.** The Reception of *Roots* (2016) on the Rotten Tomatoes Website..... 191

**Figure50.** Emile Reynaud's Praxinoscope Moving Image Viewer .....233

**Figure 51.** Edison's Kinetoscope ..... 233

**Figure 52.** The *Cinématographe* of 1895..... 234

**Figure 53.** Alex Haley Memorial in Annapolis, Maryland.....235

## LIST OF MAPS

<b>Map 1.</b> The Location of Ghana, Mali and Songhay.....	23
<b>Map 2.</b> The Triangle Trade.....	29
<b>Map 3.</b> The Louisiana Purchase Territory of 1803 .....	45

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1.</b> Free Black Population in 1860 .....	34
<b>Table 2.</b> The Difference Between Printed and Visual Materials.....	53
<b>Table 3.</b> Hollywood Movie Eras.....	62
<b>Table 4.</b> Comments on Fiddler’s Scene from the First Episode.....	179
<b>Table 5.</b> Categorizing the Comments of the First Post on Instagram.....	181
<b>Table 6.</b> Comments on the Scene of Kizzy and George from the Third Episode .....	182
<b>Table 7.</b> Categorizing the Comments on the Second Post on Instagram.....	183
<b>Table 8.</b> Comments on the Third Post on Instagram .....	184
<b>Table 9.</b> Categorizing the Comments on the Third Post on Instagram.....	186
<b>Table 10.</b> Comments on the Trailer on Facebook .....	188
<b>Table 11.</b> Categorizing the Comments on the Video on Facebook.....	189
<b>Table 12.</b> Comments on the Trailer on YouTube.....	189
<b>Table 13.</b> Categorizing the Comments on the Trailer on YouTube .....	190
<b>Table 14.</b> Comments about <i>Roots</i> (2016) on the the Rotten Tomatoes Website .....	192
<b>Table 15.</b> Categorizing the comments about <i>Roots</i> (2016) on the the Rotten Tomatoes Website .....	194
<b>Table 16.</b> Comparing Results .....	195

# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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Slavery in America has always been a thorn in most Americans' conscience. It is a subject hard to be approached yet important not to be neglected. Indeed, slavery was subject to constant alteration answering powerful nations' will. Eventually, it became a social-economic system where slaves were deprived of all their rights as human beings. Nonetheless, coercing free souls into slavery is and remains an inhuman practice that no one can easily bear, and so did Blacks in America for more than two centuries.

In fact, from 1619 until 1865, African slaves in America were nothing more than mere properties and if they ever vied the system, gruesome punishment was the ultimate answer. Notwithstanding, they were not that submissive; they did their utmost to smash the shackles of slavery and to improve their lives. Whether by escaping, rebelling, starving to death or killing their masters, they kept expressing their refusal to the status quo until 1865 when the American president Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) issued a proclamation that freed them.

Upon their freedom, Blacks aspired for a better life where they could eventually relish what they missed or what they were prevented from for a very long period. However, tenacious bigoted Southerners did not acquiesce in the new conditions.; they adamantly refused to be in equal positions with those who were one day their 'properties'. Soon, laws based on racial discrimination were passed to keep Blacks in the margin; segregation was everywhere, even in public toilets. Blacks were not allowed to access places Whites visited, including schools, libraries, restaurants, cinemas, to list but few. If Blacks dared to change the laws, they were either imprisoned or killed. It was until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that Blacks' status changed when the Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Acts were passed in 1964 and 1965, respectively.

When it comes to the American motion picture, one does not need to ponder scrupulously over the matter to fetch for the answer. It can be lucidly surmised that Blacks' situation went in tandem with the happenings. When they were slaves, certainly, they were not allowed to be part

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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of the filmmaking crew, and the filmmakers needed to keep the Africans inferior, so even their representation on screen depicted them as weak, stupid, and bad people. When the American Civil War ended in 1865, Blacks' status did not alter. Whites adopted the blackface technique by darkening their skins to depict black roles that were often negative. However, when Hollywood companies were about to go into bankruptcy in the 1970's, the stance towards Blacks changed; instead of being neglected or replaced, they were exploited to revolutionize the American motion picture industry. Eventually, Blacks seized the opportunity and could contribute in a great deal to the revival of Hollywood.

In the same vein, even the depiction of slavery was subject to constant change. Seldom had Hollywood approached this topic in details to reveal its cruel atrocities. After all, it is an 'American' industry that has a tremendous ability to permeate every house nationally and internationally and therefore possessing the ability to create, disseminate and perpetuate ideas, beliefs and stereotypes. However, recently, there has been a conspicuous shift regarding the matter. A considerable number of films and series were produced that treat slavery differently with each revealing one of this institution's aspects. One of these productions is the mini-series *Roots* 2016 which is the remake of the 1977 miniseries with the same name.

Interestingly, the African American writer Alex Haley had long longed for transmitting the stories he kept hearing from his grandmother about his African ancestors to the world. When he grew up, he decided to conduct a long journey to Africa and England to gather as much as he could primary sources to enrich the stories he learnt when he was a boy. Eventually, after 12 years of thorough research, he came up with his successful masterpiece *Roots: Saga of an American Family* (1976) that was soon adapted into the 1977 miniseries wherein Haley traced his ancestry back to Africa and covered different generations from slavery to freedom, starting from his ancestor, Kunta Kinte.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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The book along with the miniseries represented quest for identity; they ignited the spirit of self-discovery. Upon the success they attained, many Africans began proudly questioning their origins. Thirty-nine years later, a remake was produced with the aim of achieving the same monumental success. Its producers were driven by the desire of retelling the same stories differently to captivate the modern generation that is witnessing the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) against racial discrimination, police brutality and unfair justice. This movement emerged in 2013 after the 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed by the police officer George Zimmerman who was never indicted by the Court.

Accordingly, the kernel of this thesis revolves around twofold aims. On the one hand, it explores the modern aspect that makes the remake different from the original miniseries. On the other hand, it dissects the national and international reactions this series received with the aim of accentuating the degree to which attitudes towards the legacy of slavery and racial equality in America changed. Therefore, the questions that this thesis tries to answer are as follows:

1. To which extent did the racial tensions of the twenty-first century contribute to the modernization of the remake?
2. How was the remake modernized?
3. What is the reaction of the audience upon receiving the remake?

In this respect, the following hypotheses are put forward:

1. The production of *Roots* 2016 was shaped by the racial tensions that were taking place at that time and worked as a tool to help resurrect and maintain the past to define the present.
2. The emphasis on the cinematographic and *mise-en-scène* techniques enhanced the modernization of the remake.
3. The remake sparked conversations about racism in the United States with reference to the past.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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To get to the heart of the question, the Stuart Hall theory of communication that was developed in 1973 was adopted. This theory revolutionized the field of communication by empowering the role of the receiver who was a passive element in the theories that preceded Hall's. According to Hall, the communication process is comprised of the following moments: encoding, circulation, distribution and decoding. He also suggests that the receivers – according to their knowledge, background, attitudes and beliefs – read the same message differently and accordingly they reproduce their messages that can be either dominant, or negotiated, or oppositional. This means that if the audience's reading is dominant, he will not question the messages that the producer purposefully embeds in the product; and if the response is negotiated, he will add his input; but if it is oppositional, he will completely reject the message and will reproduce his counter one.

Consequently, the messages that the remake includes were extracted with an emphasis on some aspects of the cinematographic and the *mise-en-scène* techniques. The “fotojet” website was harnessed as well. It helped organize the scenes the way they are displayed in the thesis. Furthermore, the content analysis method was used to dissect the comments of the audience on the remake with the aim of revealing the stances they took.

It is worth mentioning that the significance of this study lies in the fact that it treats the miniseries as a mirror to the racial tensions in America rather than as a means of entertainment. When Blacks thought that their fight towards equality was over chiefly after the presidency of the first African American Barack Obama in 2008, the reality proved the opposite after incidents of police brutality against black people took place from 2013. Hence, debate over racism was stirred up, questioning the position of Blacks in America. Subsequently, the production of *Roots* in the mid of hot racial tensions not only reveals that the Blacks' fight is far from over but also sheds light on the role media plays in boosting conversations towards specific place. Therefore, albeit it

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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is challenging to tackle such a topic in an environment where neither experts in the field of film studies are available nor sources are easy to be accessed, the initiative is worth the efforts.

In this regard, this thesis is compartmentalized into two parts with each covering two chapters. The first part is theoretical and sets the stage for the second practical part.

The first chapter treats slavery in general from conceptual and historical points of view. Then, it delves into the history of slavery in America. This chapter is crucial for it helps pave the way for a better understanding of the situation the Africans were compelled to undergo as slaves, and of the concept that underlies the construction of the miniseries under scrutiny.

The second chapter offers a bird's-eye view of the history of the motion picture in general and the American in particular for it is substantial to be familiarized with this medium as a preliminary to a good grasp of the gist of this thesis. Then it delves into the representation of Blacks and slavery on the American screen. It also sheds light on the Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976), the making of the miniseries in 1977, and the Stuart Hall's theory of communication.

The third and the fourth chapters are tightly intertwined for they focus on the analysis of the remake under the lenses of Stuart Hall's theory of communication. While the third chapter explores the production of the miniseries, the fourth examines its reception. It is through this part that discussion is made and the purport of this thesis is addressed.

**PART I**  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **Chapter One**

### **Slavery in America: a Conceptual and Historical Background up to 1865**

Introduction.....	9
Slavery: the Old Institution.....	9
The Etymological Stance .....	10
The Historical Stance .....	15
The Beginning of Slavery in America.....	20
Life under Slavery in America.....	33
The End of Slavery in America.....	43
Conclusion.....	48

## **Introduction**

Against all the odds, Blacks in America carved freedom out for themselves for nearly three centuries. From 1619 until 1865, they were in dire straits; they were constrained to endure a life laden with physical and psychological torture, from being ruthlessly kidnapped from their homelands to being forcefully exploited to perform a tough plantation work.

In fact, by the time Blacks were enslaved, slavery established itself as a complex institution that was practiced by many powerful countries in the world. Therefore, enslaving Blacks came as no surprise; however, it was the most horrific practice throughout history.

In this regard, this chapter aims at providing a comprehensive straightforward exploration of slavery conceptually and historically. Then, it traces the African American journey from the first moment Blacks were slaves until the end of the American Civil War in 1865.

## **Slavery: the Old Institution**

Since the whole thesis orbits around slavery as its pivotal axis, trying to ponder scrupulously over it as an important concept on its own is crucial. Actually, a better understanding of any particular fact requires mastering the concepts that underlie it as asserted by Elizabeth G. Sturtevant et al., “An understanding of ideas and concepts assists in constructing meanings.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, if we focus on grasping a specific concept, we will not be the slaves of a given book or authors’ ideas and perceptions. However, we will acquire the ability of not only to create meanings by ourselves but also to criticize and discuss those constructed by others.

In his book *Think Conceptually, Act Procedurally: Understanding the difference between thinking and Learning Concepts and Procedures* (2001), author Jerry Carney confirms the same point by providing an example from history to accentuate the crystal role that concepts

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth G. Sturtevant et al., *Principled Practices for Adolescent Literacy: A Framework for Instruction and Policy* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, Inc., 2006), 58.



and ideas play in broadening one's horizons and in easing the task of relating the past to the present. He states:

In order to [understand ] and apply ...history to the present and future, people must understand the concepts and ideas that had shaped history and the concepts and ideas that apply in the present...The lessons of history to be learned are not the dates and facts but the ideas and the concepts. If people only learn the dates and battles of Revolutionary and Civil War, then they will miss the ideas and concepts that can help them with the present.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, with the 'Age of Instant Information',<sup>2</sup> one is required to process every piece of new information he acquires critically. Rather than acquiescing in the situation of being bound head and foot to memorization, grasping the concepts will be better to avoid regurgitating the information we receive as they are, and to synthesize them appropriately. Thus, premised on what have been said, slavery – as a concept – will be elucidated etymologically and historically in the following lines.

### **The Etymological Stance**

Lying at the root of different debatable discussions among historians, the etymology of the words 'slave' and 'slavery' could not reach an absolute consensus.<sup>3</sup> Broadly defined, slavery refers to the ownership, buying and selling of human beings or is deemed to be an act practiced by the richest and strongest people against the poorest and weakest ones. It is a kind of exploitation that is exercised purposefully as the labor would be unpaid, securing the rise of incomes over the expenditures, i.e., slaves are considered as luxurious economic creatures.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry Carney, *Think Conceptually, Act Procedurally: Understanding the difference between thinking and Learning Concepts and Procedures* (Lincoln: Writers Club press, 2001), 1.

<sup>2</sup> It is also known as the Information Age, the Computer Age, Digital Age or the New Media Age which refers to a historical period in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is characterized by the advent of technology and the ubiquitous use of digital stuff to get instant information by a mere click. Cambridge Dictionary Online, s.v. "[digital age](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/digital-age)," <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/digital-age> (accessed February 1, 2017) and Wikipedia Encyclopaedia Online, s.v. "digital age," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_Age) (accessed February 1, 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery, Volume 1; Volume 7* (California: ABC-CLIO, 1997), xiii.

The historian Junius P. Rodriguez indicates, “[Slave’s] production was worth considering than his identity.”<sup>1</sup> This means that when slavery was practiced, a slave was nothing more than a property and his work mattered more than his life. For instance, the laws of Louisiana and South Carolina in America during the 17<sup>th</sup> century affirmed that a slave was only a chattel personal whose master had the total right to control his life and to curb every shred of his actions.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, authors Gad and Trevor concur that slavery is an institution where “the slave [hovers] uncertainly between the contradictory positions of being both a piece of property and also a person.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, slavery is most of the time associated with the idea of being a maleficent act on the grounds that it involves not only owning human beings as mere properties, but also inflicting certain physical and psychological bullying on them.

The Jamaican historian and cultural sociologist Orlando Patterson subsumes all types of hardships that the slave might have endured throughout history under one term: the social death.<sup>4</sup> He explains that the concept of slavery encapsulates a submissive slave controlled by a powerful dominating master who manifests his power over the former socially by threat and violence; physiologically, by coercing the slave to put up with the situation and by altering his perceptions and identity; and culturally, by imprinting the idea that force is a right and obedience is a duty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Rodriguez, xiii.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution of the American Anti-slavery society: with the declaration of the National Anti-slavery Convention at Philadelphia 1833, and the Address to the Public, issued by the Executive Committee of the society, in September, 1835* (New York: the American Anti-slavery Society, 1838).  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/l1st.052/?st=gallery> (accessed February 7, 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard, *The Routledge History of Slavery* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Marlene Calvin, *Diasporic Lives: Alienation and Violence as Themes in African American and Jamaican Cultural Texts* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Calvin, 27.

Yet, the English religious “tractarian”<sup>1</sup> and writer Esther Copley claims that “no word has travelled to a sense so perfectly opposite to its original meaning [as the word slave did]. Simply put, the word ‘slavery’ went through different phases to reach its actual meaning.”<sup>2</sup> Harking back to history, ‘slave’ had its origin in the word ‘Slav’. Albeit scarcely documented, the ‘Slavs’ were believed to be “the barbarian enemies of Rome years ago during the Iron Age (1200 BC – 600 BC).”<sup>3</sup> They inhabited a large part of Eastern Europe, encapsulating who are nowadays known as Bulgarias, Bohemians (Czechs), Moravians, Slovaks, Servians, Croatians, Wends, Poles and Russians.<sup>4</sup>

However, etymologically speaking, the word ‘Slav’ –surprisingly– in the Slavic language meant “resplendent” and “magnificent”.<sup>5</sup> Later, it shifted to signify “a person who is the chattel or property of another”<sup>6</sup> since the Slavs themselves became chattels; whereas their conquerors called themselves ‘Francs’ or “free people”.<sup>7</sup> The figure below indicates the evolution of the word “slave” to reach the meaning we know today.

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<sup>1</sup> Tractarian refers to people who believed in the absolute doctrinal authority of the Catholic Church during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and accordingly they published their ideas and beliefs in 90 *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41). Tractarians like John Henry Newman (1801–90) and Richard Hurrell Froude (1803–36) advocated that the English Church should be Catholic. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Tractarian,” <https://www.britannica.com/event/Oxford-movement#ref841965>. (accessed February 6, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Esther Copley, *A History of Slavery and its Abolition* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1839), 69.

<sup>3</sup> Cristian Violatti, *Slavs*, 2014. <https://www.ancient.eu/Slavs/> (accessed February 7, 2017)

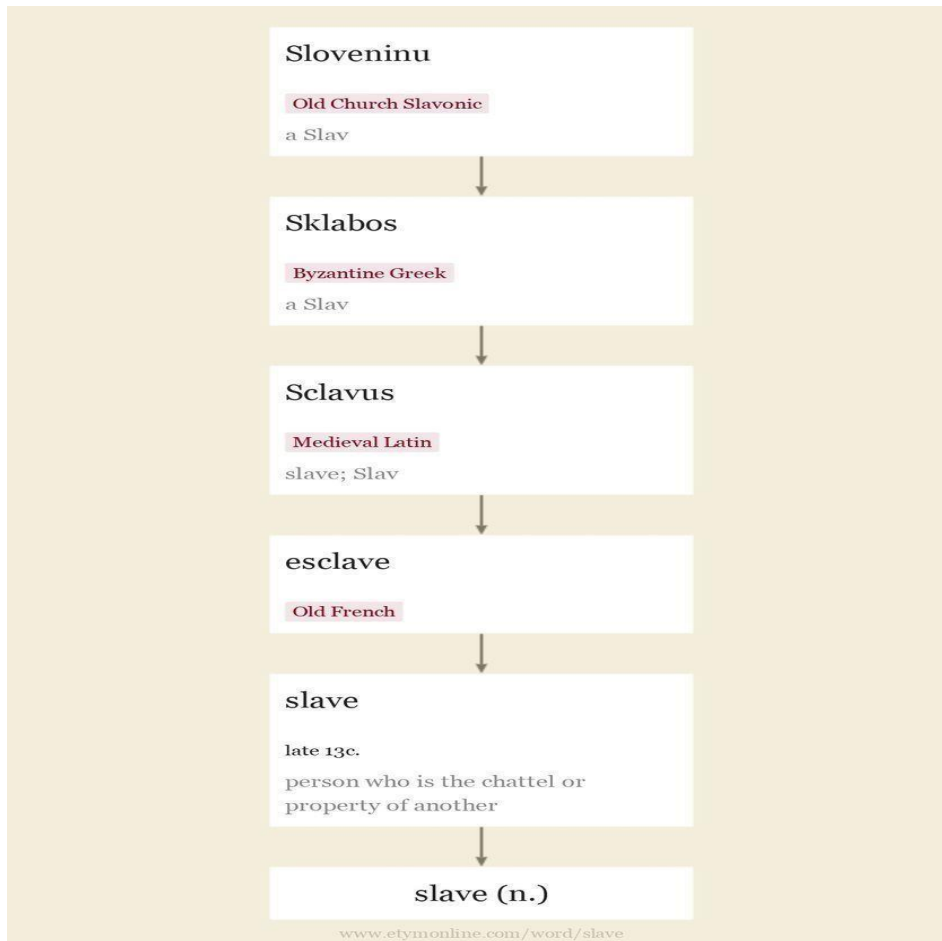
<sup>4</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Vol IV, Medieval Christianity: from Gregory I to Gregory VII A.D. 590-1073* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Dharendra Verma, *Word Origins: an Exhaustive compilation of familiar words and phrases* (New Delhi: Sterling Paperbacks, 1998), 319

<sup>6</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. “Slave,” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/slave> (accessed February 5, 2017)

<sup>7</sup> Verma, 319.

Figure 1. The Etymology of the Word Slave



Source: Online Etymology Dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/slave> (accessed February 5, 2017)

Actually, estimated to be about 80,000,000 inhabitants, ‘Slavs’ had a subordinate status in history mainly during the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>, causing them to be reduced to servitude under the German masters.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, the words *sclavus*, and *esclave* emerged from Latin and French languages, respectively, to describe the many ‘Slavs’ who were captured and sold as properties to other owners, chiefly during the reign of Otto the Great (912-973).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> It refers to the period between the decline of the Roman Civilization in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the Renaissance Period in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Middle Ages,” <https://www.britannica.com/event/Middle-Ages> (accessed January 2, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Schaff, 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> Otto the Great (912-973), known also as Otto I or in German as Otto Der Grosse was the duke of Saxony (936-961), the German King from 936, and the Holy Roman Emperor from 962 till 973. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Otto I,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Otto-I> (accessed January 2, 2017)

the concept of ‘slave trading’, i.e. the buying and selling of humans reached its climax during the Roman Empire when slaves were sold and bought and became later known as gladiators.<sup>1</sup>

In the same vein, according to the single-volume Catholic dictionary of the Bible written by the Catholic Biblical scholar John L. McKenzie, the word ‘slave’ –unlike in the other languages- meant “foreigner” to the Sumerians<sup>2</sup>, implying that a slave could either be a prisoner of wars as the most valuable form of booty, or the outcome of piracy and brigandage.<sup>3</sup> While years ago, it had a totally different meaning: glorious race<sup>4</sup> or glory, which is still used in the Russian language: *Slava Russia*, i.e. Glory of Russia.”<sup>5</sup>

Overall, the word ‘slave’ has been shaped by different instants in history. Markedly, it was not the one we perceive today, but it could be as the outcome of delving deeply into what happened in the past. Thus, not by any manner of means shall slavery be attributed and associated to Africans solely. The Indian-born American academic Srinivas Aravamudan makes this point clear:

The Etymology of slavery [does not refer only] to the history of the commodification and enforced transportation of Africans [which] may be suggested by some, is the proper and natural signification of slavery. In this case, the proper and natural signification is itself the result of having forgotten an earlier ethnography.<sup>6</sup>

Subsequently, the historical side of slavery cannot be overlooked as it offers insights into the nature of the regime and lays the ground for a better understanding of its inception and practice. Hence, the upcoming section endeavors to give an informative insightful bird’s-eye view of slavery from a historical stance.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Magbaily Fyle, *Introduction to the History of African Civilization: Precolonial Africa* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), 122.

<sup>2</sup> Sumer refers to the people who settled in what is now known as Southern Iraq, from around Baghdad to the Persian Gulf between 4500 and 4000 BCE. They represent, as well, the site of the earliest known civilization- Sumerian- that was located in the southernmost part of Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in the area that later became Babylonia. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Sumer,” <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sumer>. (accessed February 6, 2017)

<sup>3</sup> John L. McKenzie, *The Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: the Macmillan Publishing Company, 1995), 823.

<sup>4</sup> Sárka B. Hrbkova, *The Slavs of Austria-Hungary* (Nebraska: Ripol Classic Publishing House, 1918), 8

<sup>5</sup> Copley, 69.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine, *Hemispheric American Studies* (New Jersey: Rutgers University press, 2008), 171.

### The Historical Stance

In fact, the start of slavery cannot be precisely determined. Nevertheless, the institution itself –undoubtedly– existed and is still practiced, though differently,<sup>1</sup> from the dawn of civilization until the modern age. Backdated writing, the existence of slavery was substantiated in almost all cultures and continents. Author Owen Aubrey Sherrard avers, “The idea of slavery was deeply ingrained that no one questioned its propriety. All nations either endured or enjoyed it.”<sup>2</sup> Romans enslaved Greeks; Vikings, Europeans; Muslims, Christians, English, Scottish and Irish, to name but few.<sup>3</sup>

Actually, it is referred to more than once in the most recognized religious texts in the world: Judaism, Islam and Christianity; certifying that slavery is not something new to be tackled or specific issue ascribed to a specific nation. For instance, slavery is mentioned<sup>4</sup> in at least twenty-nine verses of the Quran to ascertain its existence years ago when Islam appeared in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, the antecedents of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, validated the same point in the Bible and Torah, respectively. To illustrate, the verse from the Bible which reads, “knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord,

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<sup>1</sup> Alternatively practiced, slavery nowadays is taking another form. Million people are sold and forced to work for their employers. Women and children from Eastern Europe and Asia are trafficked and coerced into practicing prostitution, pornography, debt bondage, compelled labor, unlawful recruitment for armed conflict, and other illicit activities. For example, in South Asia it is estimated that there are millions of trafficking victims working to pay off their ancestors’ debts. The Anti-slavery movement, withal, is trying to abolish the modern-day slavery. In Brazier, 164 and U.S Department of State: Diplomacy in Action, *Modern Slavery*, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/tip/what/index.htm> (accessed December 10, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Kennedy, Walter D., *Myths of American Slavery* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2003), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Walter D., 16.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, the phrase “what your right hand possesses” which is used in numerous Quranic verses, refers to the slaves mainly women. In addition to that, the word “*amah*” refers to the female slave, and the singular word “*abd*” refers to the male slave.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.islamicity.org/14269/misreading-slavery-and-polygamy-in-the-quran/> (accessed March 10, 2017)

whether he be bond or free,”<sup>1</sup> contains the words ‘bond’ and ‘free’ that confirm the existence of slavery in the past, “

The English Historian John Keegan attests that slavery permeated throughout the ancient world as an indispensable part of the social order of communities and escalated with the advent of war chariots in the second millennium BCE.<sup>2</sup> The Greek Philosopher Aristotle called slaves “human instruments”<sup>3</sup> considering them as mere tools owned by others, while the fifth-century Anglo-Saxons named them “Welshmen.”<sup>4</sup>

Earliest records such as the Code of Hammurabi<sup>5</sup> in Mesopotamia, today’s Iraq, compiled a set of laws to regulate the regime of slavery and the relationship between the slave and his master.<sup>6</sup> Greeks, likewise, espoused the legacy of slavery as being one of the vital “necessities of life”, endorsed by the Greek historian Polybius<sup>7</sup>. Condoning the institution, prominent Greek philosophers extenuated its practice as being a natural action. On the one hand, Aristotle – as an illustration – admitted, “It is clear...that by nature some are free, others are slaves, and that for these it is both right and expedient that they should serve as slaves”.<sup>8</sup> The philosopher Plato echoed the same assumption, “A man should own the best and most docile slaves he can get...virtually everything you say to a slave should be an order, and you should never become familiar with them...we should certainly punish slaves if they deserve.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians , 6:8 in BBC World Service

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/9chapter1.shtml> (accessed December 20, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Mark D.Welton, “International Law and Slavery”, *Military Review* (January-February 2008): 57-65.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Brazier, *Brief Histories of Almost Anything: 50 Savvy Slices of our Global Past* (Cornwall: New Internationalist, 2008), 164

<sup>4</sup> Brazier, 164.

<sup>5</sup> Hammurabi was the sixth King of the first known Dynasty Babylon. He reigned for approximately fifty years (2030- 2088 BC) and is deemed to be one of the most successful rulers history has ever known. The bunch of laws he set were inscribed on a diorite and found later by an expedition sent by the French Government in 1901. The Code represents a number of laws to regulate the system of government at that time. In Percy Handcock, *The Code of Hammurabi* (New York: the Macmillan Publishing Company, 1920), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Handcock, 40-41.

<sup>7</sup> P. Rodriguez, xv.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin Jane and Priscilla Wood, *Ancient Greece* (Ireland, Folens Limited, 2006), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Jane, 25.

On the other hand, The Greek tragic dramatist Euripides seemed to hold another view, yet he affirmed the presence of slavery in ancient Greece. His words condemned the practice as he asserted, “slavery, that thing of evil by its nature evil, forcing the submission from man to what No man should yield to”<sup>1</sup>. By the same token, it was indicated by some historians that the state of Athens had more than twenty thousand slaves by 413 BC,<sup>2</sup> while in Sparta (ancient capital of the Laconia district of the south-eastern Peloponnese, south-western Greece) for one free man there were three slaves.<sup>3</sup>

In the same vein, when Rome conquered Greece around 146 BC, thousands of the most salient educated and highly cultured Greek citizens were enslaved, taking part in developing Rome.<sup>4</sup> Scholars who studied the demography and history of Rome like Lo Casio believe that slaves made up between 10 and 20 percent of the population of Italy in the second century BC.<sup>5</sup> Brunt, alike, reckoned that the number of slaves increased from 500000 in 225 BC to 3 million in 28 BC<sup>6</sup> as Rome took the lion’s heart in the slave trading business.

Satisfying every whim, the Romans used and trained slaves for different functions like for entertainment or for work. For example, gladiators were asked to fight to death in order to entertain their masters, and other slaves were trained in mining for gold and silver or for doing the plantation work. Indeed, the uprising that the gladiator Spartacus led in 73-71 BC certifies the existence of slavery and its atrocities that were manifested in the death of

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<sup>1</sup> Jane, 25.

<sup>2</sup>Walter D., 13 and Brazier, 161.

<sup>3</sup> W.O.Blake, *History of Slavery and the Slave Trade, Ancient and Modern. The Forms of Slavery that prevailed in Ancient Nations, particulary in Greece and Rome. The African Slave Trade and the Political History of Slavery in the United States* (Ohio: H. Miller, 1801), 24.

<sup>4</sup> (Walter D.,14)

<sup>5</sup> Luuke de Ligt, *Peasants, Citizens and Soldiers: Studies in the Demographic History of Roman Italy 225 BC-AD 100* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9.

<sup>6</sup> De Ligt, 7.



6000 slaves who were crucified and a dire punishment was inflicted upon even the innocent slaves.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the Roman law dictated in a series of decrees that the institution of slavery was morally wrong as cited by the Roman Byzantine Emperor Justinian (527 C.E-565 C.E), “Captivity and servitude are both contrary to the law of nature; for by that law all men are born free.”<sup>2</sup> Conversely and surprisingly, it was considered as a natural phenomenon and Europe’s population was classified accordingly, engendering the class of serfs and slaves.<sup>3</sup>

To illustrate, between the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the 16<sup>th</sup> century states of Ghana, Mali and Songhai engaged in what is known as the Trans-Saharan trade with Europe, North Africa and the Persian Gulf where slaves –including women– were exchanged as part of the commodities of the trade.<sup>4</sup> Besides, during the Middle Ages and both in the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, slavery was not prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church and was harnessed–instead– as a form of punishment against all those who held different beliefs and doctrines.

Popes like Clement V (r.1305-1314), Gregory XI (r.1370-1378), Sixtus IV (r.1471-1484), and Julius II (r.1503-1515) edicted that disobedient enemies should be sold into slavery.<sup>5</sup> Nicholas V (r.1447-1455), joining the same tide, supported Portugal to engage in the enslavement of the Africans in 1442.<sup>6</sup> Last but not the least; Pope Paul III (r.1534-1549) commanded the enslavement of all the Englishmen who backed up King Henry VIII’s (r.1509-1547) break up with the Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brazier, 161

<sup>2</sup> E. Christopher Reyes, *In His Name* (Indiana: Author House, 2010), 120.

<sup>3</sup> Patterson.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchel Joffe Hunter, *The Trans-Saharan trade played a key role in preparing West Africa to participate in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade*. 1 [https://www.academia.edu/9456887/The\\_relationship\\_between\\_the\\_Trans-Saharan\\_trade\\_and\\_the\\_Trans-Atlantic\\_Slave\\_Trade](https://www.academia.edu/9456887/The_relationship_between_the_Trans-Saharan_trade_and_the_Trans-Atlantic_Slave_Trade) (accessed February 4, 2018) and P. Rodriguez, xvii.

<sup>5</sup> Reyes, 120.

<sup>6</sup> Reyes, 120.

<sup>7</sup> Reyes, 120.

Ironically, the Church's stance towards the same issue altered when Christians were enslaved, and the slaveholders were considered as infidels.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the demand for slaves grew intensively because of the Black Death<sup>2</sup> and its outcome in the mid-1300s as affirmed by the author R. David Johnson, "A resurgence of the slave trade occurred in the Mediterranean, especially in Italy, where the female slave from Asia or Africa entered domestic service in the city and the male slave toiled in the countryside."<sup>3</sup>

In the Middle East alike, slavery in the Ottoman Empire was legal and constituted an essential part of the empire's economy and society. Slaves, indeed, were either the descendants of other slaves or non-Muslim captives of wars because a Muslim could not enslave another Muslim.<sup>4</sup> They also served in the military service and some of them were considered as the elite slave army of the Ottoman Empire in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, like the Janissary Corps.

All in all, slavery has never been a mere concept or a new issue to be addressed. Both its nature and practice were the subject of constant alterations from the first moment human beings set their foot on Earth. As time progressed, slavery was legitimized and became private ownership since it proved to be an unaffordable luxury. Notwithstanding, the reasons were different and until the mid of the 15<sup>th</sup> century race and ethnicity were not taken into consideration as a criterion upon which enslavement occurred.

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<sup>1</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 100.

<sup>2</sup> It is a serious pandemic that stroke Europe between 1347 and 1351, taking life of many people. It was believed to be the result of being infected with with the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Black Death," <https://www.britannica.com/event/Black-Death> (accessed February 3rd 2017).

<sup>3</sup> R. David Johnson MBA, *An Introductory To Economics: Key Concept Summaries and Topics in Microeconomics and Macroeconomics* (Morrisville: Lulu.com, 2017), 50.

<sup>4</sup> D.Welton, 59.

Eric Williams in his book *Capitalism* (1944) notes, “Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery.”<sup>1</sup> When the European navigators, mainly the Portuguese, explored the West African coast, starting in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, trade flourished and Africans were transported to be sold into slavery. As their enslavement was beneficial, Africans magnetized the interest of the European powers who were intensely competing each other over dominance and power. Thus, as it was highlighted by the author Rodriguez, “What began as a trickle soon became a veritable torrent;”<sup>2</sup> Africans’ labor was highly needed, and they became the only sought after treasure. Hence, when the New World was being inhabited, African slaves were forcefully taken there to embark on a new journey in a new world far from their homelands.

### **The Beginning of Slavery in America**

As the year 1492 marked the Spanish discovery of a new land, it also signified an alarm to the Africans who were about to embark on an unexpected and unwanted journey and life from being free in their homelands to mere Europeans’ properties although the first Blacks who came to America were not slaves. <sup>3</sup>In fact, the idea of enslaving Blacks did not come out of the blue; as it was mentioned earlier, the institution of slavery in itself was neither a novel idea nor purely Europeans.’

The Africans themselves were adopting the system of slavery long before the Europeans got engaged with them in the slave trade; powerful tribes usually captured members of the weakest and either sold them or kept them. Some slaves even served as human sacrifices in royal religious ceremonies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sherrow O. Pinder, *The Politics of Race and Ethnicity in the United States: Americanization, De-Americanization, and Racialized Ethnic Groups* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan., 2013), 43.

<sup>2</sup> P. Rodriguez, xix.

<sup>3</sup> Ronda Racha Penrice, *African American History for Dummies* (Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2017), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Penrice,26.

However, when Africa was invaded by the Muslims, purchasing slaves became more common wherein women were taken for the Muslims' harems and men were coerced into serving in the military services<sup>1</sup>. Notwithstanding, slavery in the Americas is reported to be the harshest in history.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, archeologists found carved African images, gigantic stone heads of 40 tons, signs of African ceremonies, and graveyards with skeletons in Central America.<sup>3</sup> They argued, therefore, that fleets of Africans travelled across the Atlantic Ocean as early as 1400 BC. <sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a number of evidences proved that African Muslims explorers and traders under the leadership of Mansa Abubakari Muhammed, king of Mali (r.1312-1337) preceded Columbus years ago. They not only explored parts of the Americas including the United States but they also settled there for a long period of time, bringing their animals, even organizing their trading system and contributing culturally to the New World.<sup>5</sup>

Along the same line, when Christopher Columbus sailed across the ocean in 1492, it is believed that at least one of the men aboard ship was of African heritage.<sup>6</sup> For instance, Pedro Alonzo Niño was not a slave but a free man whose role was to pilot and help navigate, or keep the ship on course.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, some scholars claim that when Columbus reached the New World, he found Africans and not only native Americans, and that there were clear similarities between the language patterns of early Americans and Africans.<sup>8</sup>

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal was the most powerful country, followed by Spain. Leading the trade and craving for more power and dominance, Portugal was always drawn

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<sup>1</sup> Penrice, 27.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Grigg, *British Colonial America: People and Perspectives* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 101-102.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy I. Sanders, *A kid's Guide to African American History* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Sanders, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History* (Maryland: Writers Inc., 1995), 32.

<sup>6</sup> C. Centae Richards, "Africans and Creoles," in *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society, Volume 1*, ed. Richard T. Schaefer (California: Sage, 2008), 411.

<sup>7</sup> Richards, 411.

<sup>8</sup> Penrice, 9.

into constant quest for more resources whether in Africa or Asia. When tales of Africans' enormous riches spread, Portugal's greed was ignited. Not only this, but also Portugal needed a shorter and safer way to Asia since Muslims at that time were controlling different parts in northern Africa, hindering the trade, thereby. As a result, at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) sponsored several voyages to explore the west of Africa. In 1441, his explorers infiltrated the continent, seizing 12 Africans near the coast of northern Mauritania.<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that around 240 Africans were sold in Lisbon in 1444, and within ten years, Portugal imported nearly 1,000 Africans to meet the need for domestic and agricultural workers.<sup>2</sup> The papal approval helped ease and escalate the shipment of slaves, making it a mission for God by converting the infidels.<sup>3</sup> By 1460, more than 700 Africans were shipped to Portugal every year.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the influx of slaves rose tremendously and slave trade slowly became a key part of the commercial revolution.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the *Mercado de Escravos* (the Slave Market) was established in Lagos, in the Faro District of Portugal which is considered as the official birthplace of the European colonialism and Transatlantic Slavery.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth mentioning, though, that during those early trips, the captives were not doomed to lifetime enslavement unlike what would happen in the years that followed. After Spain could hold grip of some lands in the Americas with the other European countries like France following suit, the demand for force labor grew gradually. The first African slaves arrived to the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean in 1502, and their flow was subject to constant

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<sup>1</sup> Penrice, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Penrice, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Penrice, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Kachur, *The Slave Trade* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 22.

<sup>5</sup> It is a term used to refer to the great increase in commerce in Europe that began in the late Middle Ages that was triggered and developed by the voyages of exploration undertaken by England, Spain, and other nations to Africa, Asia, and the New World, leading to the appearance of the chartered company, the adoption of mercantilism...etc. It had also set the stage for the Industrial Revolution. From Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Commercial Revolution," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Commercial-Revolution> (accessed December 20, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Penrice, 32.

increment ever since the cultivation of sugar began. In 1513, the Spanish explorer and conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa brought thirty enslaved Africans to the Americas; and Hernán Cortés, 300 slaves to Mexico in 1519.<sup>1</sup>

Portugal served as the primary suppliers of Africans, and established its own colonies in the Americas, mainly after signing the Treaty of Alcáçovas in 1479.<sup>2</sup> It did not take so long to institute slavery in the New World. By 1620, about 300,000 Africans were shipped to the Americas with an estimated 130,000 went to Brazil alone and at least 80,000 slaves to Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of the enslaved Africans hailed from Ghana, Mali, Songhay, and their surroundings. The map below shows the location of the regions in the African continent.

**Map 1.** The Location of Ghana, Mali and Songhay



*Source:* Penrice, 26.

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Clinton, *The Black Soldier: 1492 to the Present* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcour, 2000), 1.

<sup>2</sup> It refers to the treaties signed by the Spanish and the Portuguese crowns in 1479 to end the war of succession over Isabella's ascension to the throne of Castile. It also led Spain to concede the slave trade to Portugal in addition to allowing Portugal to supply her with slaves. This treaty gave Portugal the chance to expand its dominion over the slave trade; one example of this expansion was the construction of the fort Elmina Castle in 1482 in what is now Ghana. From P. Rodriguez, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Penrice, 33.

At first, the Portuguese espoused the system of pillages by attacking lands on the African coast and capturing slaves. However, after 1450, they soon witnessed the schism within the African tribes. Africans, indeed, were all the time fighting each other, and the victorious took as much as he could captives to either imprison them or exchange them for their own people who were once arrested by their enemies. The Portuguese and the other European countries later seized the opportunity and seduced the Africans to take part in the slave trade. Driven by their avarice, hence, the Africans began taking captives from their enemies' villages to the Europeans in exchange for goods like guns. The wealth obtained from the trade was so alluring that the West African kingdom Dahomey who vowed once not to take part in it became a key trading center.<sup>1</sup> The African abolitionist Ottobah Cugano was sold into slavery in the mid of 1700s. He complained:

Thus seeing my miserable companions and countrymen in this pitiful, distressed, and horrible situation, with all the brutish baseness and barbarity attending it, could not but fill my little mind horror and indignation. But I must own, to the shame of my own countrymen, that I was first kidnapped and betrayed by some of my own complexion, who were the first cause of my exile, and slavery; but if there were no buyers there would be no sellers.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Venture Smith, who was an African slave born in Dunkandarra, Guinea in 1729 was eight years old when he was captured. He recounted:

A message was brought... to my father, that...a numerous army...instigated by some white nation...the whole army was encamped not far out of his dominions, and would invade the territory and deprive his people of their liberties and rights...the shocking scene is to this day fresh in my mind and I have often overcome thinking about it.<sup>3</sup>

Even if the African tribes refused to participate, Europeans forcefully repelled them.<sup>4</sup>Easing the trade, small posts or factories were founded along the African coast such as the Arguin Island near Cape Blanco where the first African fort was built in 1448 to organize

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<sup>1</sup> Penrice, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent Carretta, *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 150.

<sup>3</sup> James Alan Marten, *Children in Colonial America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 63-65.

<sup>4</sup> Penrice, 34.

the exchange of goods between the local rulers and the European traders who preferred not to go inland and let the Africans do.<sup>1</sup>

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, England joined the tide for power with the African voyages of John Hawkins (1532-1595). Then, it became major in the trade after the establishment of the Royal African Company (RAC) in 1672 to organize and monopolize the slave trade with West Africa to import and export gold, silver and slaves. From 1680 to 1686, the RAC shipped an average of 5,000 slaves per year to the colonies in the Caribbean and Virginia.<sup>2</sup> In 1698, however, England opened the trade to private merchants who smuggled Africans into the British colonies.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the involvement of England in the trade reached its summit in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Treaty of Utrecht (1713)<sup>4</sup> was signed. Historians reported that 1619 marked the arrival of the first 20 African slaves in in the *White Lion* ship which flew a Dutch flag to the British colonies, more precisely in Jamestown though it is believed that those Africans were not meant to be slave for life but only indentured servants.<sup>5</sup>

When the European nations including, England, Portugal, Spain, France, and the Netherlands raced competitively towards the creation of permanent settlement in the New World which appeared to be more lucrative with the resources it provided, they soon found themselves in front of a notable shortage of labor force. Explorer John Rolfe (1585-1622), for instance, discovered tobacco in Virginia. Soon this crop became the source of high profits and the need to plant it grew higher.

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Murrin et al., *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People* (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Pruitt, "What was the Royal African Company?" *HISTORY* (August 22, 2018), <https://www.history.com/news/what-was-the-royal-african-company> (accessed August 18, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Kachur, 36.

<sup>4</sup> The treaty was signed in the Dutch city of Utrecht in March and April 1713 between various European states to help end the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713). One of its provisions ceded Gibraltar and Minorca to Great Britain and gave the British the Asiento, a valuable monopoly slave-trading contract. From: New World Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Treaty of Utrecht," [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Treaty\\_of\\_Utrecht](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Treaty_of_Utrecht) (accessed November 20, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Sanders, 19.



Other crops had the same status as well, such as rice, cotton, and indigo. However, as they brought high prices, their production was labor intensive which explained the incredible need for workers. Attempts to enslave the indigenous population went awry for they were well acquainted with the land and therefore they could easily escape. Besides, the pathogens that the Europeans brought with them were of a serious ordeal to the Native Americans who could not resist the situation. In one part of Hispaniola, the native population decreased from one million to only a few thousand in two decades because of diseases such as measles and smallpox.<sup>1</sup>

For this purpose, the solution was to adopt the system of indentured servitude which involved the signing of a contract to work for a specific period of time before obtaining freedom and land. The indentured servants were often orphaned children, prisoners, and impoverished people who lived terrible conditions in England and other European countries. They came across the ocean to the New World to be bought by the person who paid the highest price for their contract.

The indentured servants did not embrace the Whites only but also the Africans. A case in point is that of Anthony Johnson's. This latter became the first African to own a property and slaves himself in Northampton County in the northeastern section of the U.S. state of Pennsylvania. He came to the New World as an indentured servant, worked out the contract terms between 1625 and 1640, got his freedom and then married Mary who was a free black woman.<sup>2</sup> History provides cases similar to Johnson's. For example, in 1638 the *Desire* ship arrived to Massachusetts carrying Africans as indentured servants; in 1673 and complying with the contract, the court in Virginia obliged the African Andrew Moore's master to set

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<sup>1</sup> Penrice, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Paul R. Wanning, *Colonial American History Journal - Book 2: A Year of American History Stories* (Indiana: Mossy Feet Books, 2018), 91.

him free; in 1644 eleven Blacks successfully filed a petition for their freedom.<sup>1</sup> Historical records indicate that by 1651, many of the Africans who landed, chiefly, in Jamestown fulfilled the terms of the contract, got their own property and even had indentured servants themselves.<sup>2</sup>

This solution proved to be perfect but only for a short period. Suffering from scarcity in work force along with the need to increase productivity made the system less effective because once the indentured servants were set free, they would stop working for their masters and ask for their own workers instead. Furthermore, the conditions of employment opportunities and wages in England shifted to be better than they were,<sup>3</sup> and poor people, thereupon, were not coerced into leaving their country to risk their lives for tempting chances in the New World. As a result, less indentured servants signed contracts. Hence, their prices proliferated and, thus, profits decreased concurrently.

The inability to subdue the Native Americans into captivity and slavery along with the shortage of the indentured servants led the Europeans to start considering another option. As the other options were of no avail, enslaving Africans for life seemed alluring because they not only proved their capacity to withstand working in the hot tropical sun but also could be easily caught if they ever thought about fleeing due to the dark color of their skin.

By the time Britain needed slaves, the slave trade was already in operation in various parts of the world. In fact, the tremendous need for labor force led to the beginning of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This latter refers to the trade that took place across the Atlantic Ocean from about the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, constraining an average of 50,000 Africans to leave their homelands each year in a demeaning way to the New World.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Penrice, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, 71.

<sup>3</sup> David Edwin Harrell, et al., *Unto a Good Land: A History of the American People* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 104.

<sup>4</sup> Kachur, 13-14.

This trade flourished drastically since it provided considerable benefits in return although it was risky as it took about 16 months for a ship to reach its destination, and expensive because of the need to supply a ship, hire the crew and gather the needed goods.<sup>1</sup> In 1810, out of 7.2 million people, 1.2 million were slaves in the United States where even the words of the Declaration of Independence “that all men are created equal” did not protect them from not falling in the trap of slavery.<sup>2</sup>

The slave trade is often remembered as being a series of triangles, involving different parts. One of them included Europe, Africa and the Caribbean; another, between the Caribbean, America and Africa (see map 2). It was named as such because the route, which could take a very long time to complete, formed a triangle on a map. On the one hand, from 1677 until 1687, the British ship *Arthur* brought slaves from Africa in exchange for cloth, pieces of brass and cowry shells, then sold them in the Caribbean for sugar that was sent back to England.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Americans imported molasses from West Indies and imported rum that would be shipped to Africa for slaves to be taken to the Caribbean. The map below demonstrates the different routes that made the Triangle Trade.

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<sup>1</sup> Kachur, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Bryn O’Callaghan, *An Illustrated History of the USA* (England: Pearson Education Limited, 1990), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Kachur, 65.

Map 2. The Triangle trade



Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/cortezushistory/triangular-trade-53174199> (accessed June 4, 2019)

Slavery became the backbone of the Europeans' economy mainly the Americans.' This fact doomed the African continent to chaos, and lifetime ruthless enslavement. Protecting themselves from sudden invasions, African rulers purchased guns as much as they could. By 1730, 180,000 guns were exported to Western African.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the captured Africans were often compelled to march miles to the forts by the ocean where the slave ship and the slave traders of the factors who were representing their countries were waiting. Slaves were tightly tied with chains like animals, forming groups

<sup>1</sup> Stanley B. Alpern, "What Africans Got for Their Slaves: A Master List of European Trade," *History in Africa* Vol. 22 (1995), under Cambridge University Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3171906> (accessed April 3, 2020), 19-20.

known as coffles.<sup>1</sup> They were described by an observer, who witnessed the happening, as being “walking skeletons covered over *with a piece of tanned leather...a resurrection of skin and bones.*”<sup>2</sup>

Before the ships set sail, the Africans were usually kept naked in dark dungeons or open slave pens known as ‘barracoons’ to be thoroughly checked by doctors.<sup>3</sup> While the selected slaves were branded by hot iron on the back, or the breast with the buyer’s mark, the rejected, were killed.<sup>4</sup> Once finished, slaves were tightly loaded and packed onto the slave ships to cross the Atlantic Ocean to their destined new life in a trip called the Middle Passage because it was the middle of the whole journey that the slave ship took. The abolitionist Ottobah Cugoano reported, “The slave holes of the English castles lining the west coast of Africa were and are horrifying...There was nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow men.”<sup>5</sup>

Once the ship made it to its final destination whether in the Caribbean or in America, the cargo of slaves would be sold at auctions. Healthier slaves secured higher prices. Often, slaves were prepared to increase their selling price by letting them wash themselves, shave their heads and breads and then by rubbing their skin with palm oil to appear healthier and younger.<sup>6</sup>

The process of selling the captives took, in fact, one of these two methods: either the auction or the scramble.<sup>7</sup> During the former, slaves were sold individually or in groups to the highest bidder, whereas, the latter meant that slaves would be kept together in an enclosure,

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<sup>1</sup> Kachur, 51.

<sup>2</sup> L. H. Ofosu-Appiah , *People in Bondage: African Slavery in the Modern Era* ( Minnesota: Lerner Publications Compa ny, 1971), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Kachur, 52.

<sup>4</sup> Kachur, 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> Louis P. Nelson, “Architectures of West African Enslavement”, *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture* Vol. 21 (Spring 2014), under University of Minnesota Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/buildand.21.1.0088> (accessed April 3, 2020), 88.

<sup>6</sup> Kachur, 56.

<sup>7</sup> BBC , “The triangular trade: selling slave,” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqv7hyc/revision/10> (accessed June 1, 2019)

and once the buyers paid the captain a fixed sum, buyers raced to grab the slaves they wanted, causing the slaves to undergo a terrifying experience.<sup>1</sup> Slaves who resisted were killed, and the left behind— known as ‘refuse’ —were sold cheaply to anyone who would buy them.<sup>2</sup>

In 1793, the cotton gin was invented by Eli Whitney, and because every 100 acres of cotton required about 10 to 20 slaves,<sup>3</sup> more slaves were highly required to perform the labor-intensive work of cultivating cotton. Similarly, the inventor Jean Etienne de Bore contributed to the increase demand for slaves by launching a successful sugar mill in Louisiana in 1794.

Given the fact that most of the lucrative crops were planted and cultivated in the South, Southerners were in need of slaves more than did the Northerners. Subsequently, even the laws that governed slaves’ lives were harsher in the South; slaves enjoyed some of their civil rights in the North unlike in the South.<sup>4</sup>

In 1662, the Virginian legislature declared that slavery was an “inheritable status according to the condition of the mother,”<sup>5</sup>and, hence, cutting any hope for the slaves to be free one day. In the same vein, the same state was the first to establish Blacks as “uniquely non-qualified for naturalization into free citizens as they were classified as heretical non-human beings and were to be considered as property in the eyes of the law.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, slavery shifted from being an economic practice to a way of life that could not be relinquished easily.

Slaveholders often strove to color the ugly truth that slavery is unfair human deed by resorting to religion in the first place. They usually argued that it was morally acceptable to enslave the Africans and their descendants because they were naturally inferior to the

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<sup>1</sup> BBC. “The triangular trade: selling slave.”

<sup>2</sup> BBC. “The triangular trade: selling slave.”

<sup>3</sup> Penrice.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty: An American History* (New York: Norton & Company, Inc., 2008), 141-142.

<sup>5</sup> Kachur, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Cavin Robinson, “Social Contract Theory, African American Slave Narratives, and the Reconstruction of Early Modern Conceptions of Political Freedom” (PhD thesis, DePaul University, 2011), 109.

Europeans.<sup>1</sup> The American senator John Caldwell Calhoun from South Carolina<sup>2</sup> admitted, “Many in the South once believed that slavery was a moral and political evil; that folly and delusion are gone; we see it now in its true light, and regard it as the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world.”<sup>3</sup> For him Blacks were not fit to freedom because they were uncivilized and since “liberty and equality are prizes to be won,”<sup>4</sup> Blacks should be always kept in the inferior zone. Denouncing Jefferson’s words of the Declaration of Independence, he stated, “These words are the most false and dangerous of all political errors.”<sup>5</sup> Such declaration reveals the attitudes of most of the slaveholders towards their slaves; even the kindest ones, their kindness was a decent harshness.

Adhering tightly to the slavery regime resulted in the increase number of the slave population. By the onset of the Civil War (1861-1865), the slave population reached approximately four million.<sup>6</sup> Even when the international slave trade ended in 1808, a massive trade in slaves flourished within the United States wherein between 1820 and 1860, over 2 million slaves were sold.<sup>7</sup> In his *Race in North America: Origins and Evolution of Worldview* (1993), Audrey Smedley offers a profound description of the nature of the institution of slavery in America and the position it enjoyed as being the backbone upon which the economy was built. He accentuates:

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<sup>1</sup> Deborah H. DeFord, *Slavery in the Americas: African Americans during the Civil War* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 6.

<sup>2</sup> He was the seventh vice president of the United States from 1825 to 1832.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Jenks et al., *The Christian Examiner and General Review* (Boston: James Munroe and company, 1839), 253.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas L. Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln: Defending the Politics of Our Greatest President* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2008), 168-169

<sup>5</sup> Harry V. Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 407.

<sup>6</sup> DeFord, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Foner, 395.

Slavery in America... was an important economic institution. It was profitable for both the traders and for those whose wealth was acquired from the labor of slaves... colonies...did not seek to maintain slavery for merely economic reasons. It became predominantly a social institution, a mechanism integral to the structuring of the colonies' social system. It evolved simultaneously as a relationship of dominance and power and as a form of conspicuous consumption for the socially ambitious...Even if the economic efficiency of slavery declined or was subject to question at times, the structural relationships and social functions persisted and strengthened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, slavery became an important aspect of life in America, mainly in the South. If it benefited the slave owners, it was an ordeal for the slaves who most of them were sustaining the worst moments in their lives. Undoubtedly, it is hard for one to be suddenly hit by the system of slavery after enjoying a free life in their homelands, which is different from being born a slave and never having the ability to taste freedom.

### **Life under Slavery in America**

By 1860, slaves' population increased drastically in the United States. The table below demonstrates the number of free and enslaved Blacks in comparison with the Whites' in the United States in 1860. It not only offers us the opportunity to compare between the different statistics but also signifies the importance of this regime to the Southerners who availed themselves to all kinds of methods to get more slaves and then to keep them under their control.

For instance, there were no slaves in the New England region (like New Hampshire and Rhode Island states), but a great number lived in the southern states, in both the Upper and the Lower regions (like Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia) and less slaves in the other regions. Around 4 million slaves were living in the United States by 1860, and nearly all of them were in the South.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Kenneth N. Addison, *"We Hold These Truths to be Self-evident-- ": An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Roots of Racism and Slavery in America* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2009), 239.



**Table1.** Black and White Population, 1860

Regions	Whites		Free Black		Slaves		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>New England</b>	3,110, 480	99,2%	24,711	0,8%	0	0,0%	3,135,191	100%
<b>Mid-Atlantic</b>	7,327,548	98,2%	131,272	1,8%	18	0,0%	7,458,838	100%
<b>Midwest</b>	7,833,904	99,2%	65,719	0,8%	17	0,0%	7,899,640	100%
<b>Upper South</b>	4,463,501	76,4%	183,369	3,1%	1,195,985	20,5%	5,842,855	100%
<b>Lower South</b>	3,573,199	55,9%	67,418	1,1%	2,754,526	43,1%	6,395,143	100%
<b>Far West</b>	382,149	98,9%	4,259	1,1%	0	0,0%	386,408	100%
<b>United States</b>	26,690,781	85,8%	476,748	1,5%	3,950,546	12,7%	31,118,075	100%

*Source:* <https://www.bowdoin.edu/~prael/lesson/tables.htm> (accessed April 3, 2017)

Life under slavery was very harsh and unbearable for the slaves who experienced all kinds of hardships beginning with the fact of being considered nothing more than part of their masters' properties. Slaveholders had the total right over their lives and even over their bodies, beliefs and customs. Whatever the status that the Africans had in their homes, upon their arrival to the New World, they were treated like cattle, taking no account of their personal identity or feelings. Their sole expected role was to submit to their masters' will and pleasure.

Though slaves did not passively accept their situation, most of them could not escape their fate easily. Even after the end of the American Revolution (1775-1783), slaves' status quo did not improve and the principles of liberty and equality passed them by. Ironically, Thomas Jefferson himself owned slaves. Although while drafting the Declaration of Independence, he condemned slavery and blamed George III (r.1760 -1801) for taking part in such a humiliating trade, but the passage was totally omitted because knowing that slavery was the pillar upon which their prosperity hinged on, John Adams, who was the second president of the United States (p.1797-1801), took an opposing stance. The passage read:

[George III] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is warfare of the Christian king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative [veto] for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting these very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom *he* also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another<sup>1</sup>.

It was obvious that the United States was not ready to concede that the institution was inhuman and morally unacceptable, and even if it did, it was not openly admitted. Indeed, once slaves set their foot in the New World, they were susceptible to mistreatment and disregard, and their names were the first thing the Europeans' strict laws stripped off from them. African slaves received other names as a signal to the loss of their identity to the Europeans' will. Names like Fernando, Juan, Ricardo, and José for men and Mariá, Louisa, and Ana for women were common, and seldom had slaves received surname.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to realize that it was not easy at all to withstand the horrifying journey from Africa to America. Death often claimed lives of 20 percent of the slaves because of the conditions in the ship and the climate change. Blacks were shackled with no room or space to move for a voyage that could last from six to ten or more weeks, and women were coerced into sex.<sup>3</sup>

Being born black became synonymous with slavery. Although the atrocities of this institution differed from one region to another in America, freedom was the common denominator that could not be waived. In her book, *And Not Afraid To Dare: the Stories of Ten African American women* (1988), Tonya Bolden describes the journey of the African

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Parker, *Jefferson's Masterpiece: The Story of the Declaration of Independence for Young Readers* (Oklahoma: Dennis Parker, 2010), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Penrice.

<sup>3</sup> Paul S. Boyer et al., *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People, Volume 1: To 1877* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018), 93.

Americans in America as one full of struggle, stamina and perseverance. She insists, “[Blacks’ history] is a history of climbing, stretching [and] striving.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, in spite of this, she continues, “They were invisible, rejected, shut out [and] ignored.”<sup>2</sup>

She proceeds by offering a clear impactful depiction of the situation slaves were compelled to endure, “To be a slave was to be regarded as a thing: to be worked from dawn to dusk beyond way past weary; to live under constant threat of beatings. Even if the treatment was not the most severe, could that make up for being owned, totally and forever?”<sup>3</sup> She, therefore, not only took us to the world of slaves, but also accentuated the fact that even if the slaves’ destiny was to be held tightly in the grip of bigoted racists, still they had the right to rise above their conditions by being free citizens. Similarly, Susie King Taylor who was born into bondage on August 6, 1848 on a Georgia plantation in a time when slavery reached its highest peak in the South asserted:

In this ‘land of the free’ we are burned, tortured, and denied a fair trial, murdered for any imaginary wrong conceived in the brain of the negro-hating white man. There is no redress for us from a government which promised to protect all under its flag...I do not uphold my race when they do wrong. They ought to be punished, but the innocent are made to suffer as the guilty.<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneously, hardly did slave families remain intact; if they were not separated while kidnapped in Africa, they would be, at any moment once they reached the New World, either in the auction or when a slaveholder died or went into bankruptcy. A group of Blacks from Boston petitioned the Massachusetts legislature in 1774, revealing one of the negative ruthless effect of this practice. Part of their petition read: “Our children are taken from us by force...and sent many miles from us where we seldom or ever see them again, there to be made slaves of for life which sometimes is very short by reason of being dragged from their

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<sup>1</sup> Tonya Bolden, *And Not Afraid To Dare: the Stories of Ten African American women* (New York, Scholastic Inc., 1988), v.

<sup>2</sup> Bolden, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Bolden, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Frederick Finseth, *The American Civil War: An Anthology of Essential Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 217.

mother’s breast.”<sup>1</sup>The threat of sale kept haunting slaves’ lives mainly with the growth and expansion of the interstate slave trade. The figure below shows the announcement of the 1852 auction to buy all the properties of a Georgian planter after his death.

Figure 2. Announcing the Sale of Slaves and Stock in the 1852 Auction of Property

**Sale of Slaves and Stock.**

*The Negroes and Stock listed below, are a Prime Lot, and belong to the ESTATE OF THE LATE LUTHER MCGOWAN, and will be sold on Monday, Sept. 22nd, 1852, at the Fair Grounds, in Savannah, Georgia, at 1:00 P. M. The Negroes will be taken on the grounds two days previous to the Sale, so that they may be inspected by prospective buyers.*

*On account of the low prices listed below, they will be sold for cash only, and must be taken into custody within two hours after sale.*

No.	Name	Age	Remarks	Price
1	Lanesta	27	Prime Rice Planter.	\$1,275.00
2	Violet	36	Housework and Nursemaid.	900.00
3	Lizzie	30	Rice, Unsound.	300.00
4	Minda	27	Cotton, Prime Woman.	1,200.00
5	Adam	28	Cotton, Prime Young Man.	1,100.00
6	Abel	41	Rice Hand, E, eight Poor.	675.00
7	Tanney	22	Prime Cotton Hand.	950.00
8	Fleming	39	Good Cook, Stiff Knees.	400.00
9	Lansy	54	Prime Cotton Man.	1,000.00
10	Sally	10	Handy in Kitchen.	675.00
11	Maccubey	35	Prime Man, Fair Carpenter.	980.00
12	Dorcas Judy	25	seamstress, Handy in House.	800.00
13	Happy	60	Blacksmith.	575.00
14	Mowden	15	Prime Cotton Boy.	700.00
15	Bills	21	Handy with Mules.	900.00
16	Theopolis	39	Rice Hand, Gets Fits.	575.00
17	Coolidge	29	Rice Hand and Blacksmith.	1,275.00
18	Bessie	69	Infirm, Sews.	250.00
19	Infant	1	Strong Likely Boy	400.00
20	Samson	41	Prime Man, Good with Stock.	975.00
21	Callie May	27	Prime Woman, Rice.	1,000.00
22	Honey	14	Prime Girl, Hearing Poor.	850.00
23	Angelina	36	Prime Girl, House or Field.	1,000.00
24	Virgil	21	Prime Field Hand.	1,100.00
25	Tom	40	Rice Hand, Lame Leg.	750.00
26	Noble	11	Handy Boy.	900.00
27	Judge Lesh	55	Prime Blacksmith.	800.00
28	Booster	43	Fair Mason, Unsound.	600.00
29	Big Kate	37	Housekeeper and Nurse.	950.00
30	Melle Ann	19	Housework, Smart Yellow Girl.	1,250.00
31	Deacon	26	Prime Rice Hand.	1,000.00
32	Coming	19	Prime Cotton Hand.	1,000.00
33	Mabel	47	Prime Cotton Hand.	800.00
34	Uncle Tim	60	Fair Hand with Mules.	600.00
35	Abe	27	Prime Cotton Hand.	1,000.00
36	Tennes	29	Prime Rice Hand and Cochman.	1,250.00

*There will also be offered at this sale, twenty head of Horses and Mules with harness, along with thirty head of Prime Cattle. Slaves will be sold separate, or in lots, as best suits the purchaser. Sale will be held rain or shine.*

Source: Foner, 415.

The announcement in the above figure enumerated thirty-six individuals ranging from an infant to a sixty-nine-year old woman and ended with the statement, “Slaves will be sold separate, or in lots, as best suits the purchaser.”<sup>2</sup> Another similar case of Abream Scriven who was a slave from Georgia. He was sold by his master in 1858 to a New Orleans slave trader.

<sup>1</sup> David Edwin Harrell, et al., *Unto a Good Land: A History of the American People* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 103.

<sup>2</sup> Foner, 415.

The sad condition he was obliged to undergo is reflected in a letter to his wife, wherein he bemoaned:

My dear wife I take the pleasure of writing you these few [lines] with much regret to inform you that I am sold to a man by the name of Peterson. and Stays in New Orleans. I am here yet I expect to go before long...My dear ... Give my love to my father and mother and tell them good bye for me, and if we shall not meet in this world I hope to meet in heaven. My dear wife for you and my children my pen cannot express the [grief] I feel to be parted from you all.<sup>1</sup>

Equally important were the conditions of working that slaves were supposed to bear. Slaves' labor started from dawn to dusk with very short break for meals, chiefly in large plantations in which slaves performed different types of works, including farmers, butlers, waitresses, nurses, dairymaids, gardeners, carpenters, shoemakers, engineers, blacksmiths, weavers, and domestic workers from cooks to coachmen.<sup>2</sup> No only this, but also some owners fed their slaves the same way they did with their animals, and those who prepared their own food, waited for the leftovers to mix them with few rice, peas and corn.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, scarcely had slaves worn clothes of good quality; they were provided with clothes of rough material twice a year.<sup>4</sup> In like manner, to do the plantations work of rice, tobacco, sugar and cotton, either the task system or the gang system was adopted. To put it in another way, slaves either were required to perform specific tasks and duties like clearing the land and harvesting or were ordered to work in groups supervised by overseers who were white men, or by drivers who were Blacks.<sup>5</sup> Excerpts of slaves' firsthand stories divulged:

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Jennifer L. Goloboy and Peter C. Mancall , *Industrial Revolution: People and Perspectives* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Foner, 412.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert C. Covey and Dwight Eisanach, *What the Slaves Ate: Recollections of African American Foods and Foodways from the Slave Narratives* (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 69.

<sup>4</sup> Sanders, 64.

<sup>5</sup> Penrice, 40.

I then began to have hard tasks imposed on me. Some of these were to pound four bushels of ears of corn every night in a barrel for the poultry, or be rigorously punished. At other seasons of the year, I had to card wool until a very late hour. These tasks I had to perform when only about nine years old.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation reveals the harsh conditions slaves sustained. Not only the work was hard but also the punishment was ruthless. This fact is confirmed by another slave who stated:

I used to have to pick cotton and sometime I pick 300 pound and tote it a mile to de cotton house. Some pick 300 to 800 pound cotton and have to tote de bag de whole mile to de gin. Iffen dey didn't do dey work, dey git whip till dey have blister on 'em ... I never git whip, cause I allus git my 300 pound.<sup>2</sup>

Markedly, slaves were not supposed to cope with the ruthless conditions of work only; they fell prey to the white women's jealousy as well. For instance, being the illegal daughter of Mr. Smith, the African American Ellen Craft was impelled to endure Mrs. Smith's ill-treatment which was a fate worse than death for Ellen since she meant nothing to her father, but, a scar of betrayal and infidelity to Mrs. Smith.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that there were some kind and sympathetic masters who treated their slaves in a less cruel way. They taught them reading and writing, and allowed them to enjoy some privileges like social gatherings, hunting and fishing.<sup>4</sup> Others, however, were wiser believing that if they wanted to control their slaves, they needed to be more moderate in their treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Probably, slaves would not endure such circumstances if all those who were engaged in the system were not upheld legally. Even in the North, though slavery was not as apparent as it

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<sup>1</sup> Chandler B. Saint, George A. Krinsky, and James O. Horton, *Making Freedom: The Extraordinary Life of Venture Smith* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 127.

<sup>2</sup> In Time, "Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives", <http://content.time.com/time/classroom/unchained/pdfs/student.pdf> (accessed January, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Bolden, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Foner, 406.

<sup>5</sup> Foner, 406.

was in the South, cruel treatment was.<sup>1</sup>Constant laws were passed to maintain slaves' obedience, and every state created and enforced its own codes of laws known as the Slave Codes. For instance, Virginia passed its Codes in 1705 and, Louisiana in 1824. Albeit provisions were not the same, the target was. As an illustration is the provision that stated that "all that a slave possesses belongs to his master; he possesses nothing of his own, except his *peculium*, that is to say the sum of money which his master chooses he should possess."<sup>2</sup>

In the same vein, Bennet barrow who was the owner of about 200 slaves on his cotton plantation in Louisiana explained how he set his own rules maintain his dominance over his slaves.<sup>3</sup>He prevented them from leaving the place without his permission, prohibited them from getting married except when he decided, and listed other rules to limit their freedom.<sup>4</sup>

The Codes prevented slaves from carrying weapons, owning property, travelling without permission, reading and writing, testifying against Whites, or even getting married without the master's consent. Conspicuously, slave's lives were strictly and highly restricted, and if they ever thought about violating them, they were heinously punished by branding, whipping or hanging, to mention but few.<sup>5</sup> Slave patrols were hired to enforce the laws and to return any slave who was caught escaping, mainly with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Laws in 1793 and 1850 that made it illegal to help runaway slaves.<sup>6</sup>

A famous case in hand is the one of John Punch who escaped with two whites in 1640 from their master in Virginia. Albeit all of them were indentured servants, when they escaped

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<sup>1</sup> Rocky M. Mirza, *The Rise and Fall of the American Empire: A Re-Interpretation of History, Economics and Philosophy: 1492-2006* (Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2007), 135.

<sup>2</sup> Willie Lee Nichols Rose, *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 175-177

<sup>3</sup> Alan Galloway, *Voices of the Old South: Eyewitness Accounts, 1528-1861* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 358.

<sup>4</sup> Galloway, 358-359.

<sup>5</sup> Larry E Sullivan, *Encyclopaedia of Law Enforcement, Volume 3* (California: SAGE, 2005), 396.

<sup>6</sup> Penrice, 41.

a lucid discrepancy was noticed in the sentences they received over the same deed. The Court pronounced:

One called Victor, a Dutchman, the other a Scotchman called called James Gregory, shall first serve out their times with their master according to their Indentures, and one whole year apiece after the time of their service is expired...and after that service... to serve the colony for three whole years apiece, and that the third being a negro named John Punch shall serve his said master or his assigns for the time of his natural life here or elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The decision was shocking, yet it clearly demonstrated that it was not only about the need to have workers but also about the refusal of the other ‘race’. In 1855, the Missouri court ruled against Celia who killed her master because she refused his sexual assault. Women at that time were forgiven if it was proved that the case was a self-defense. However, Celia was considered as a killer that must be punished and accordingly she was sentenced to death because she was ‘only’ a slave although the execution was delayed because she was pregnant and the child was her owners’ property.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, even free Blacks could not escape the ill-treatment inflicted upon them. Rarely could slaves become free except if they run away, purchased their freedom or their owners decided to set them free. They were always in need of Whites to do much of their business or to testify for them. Furthermore, they were always in need of carrying with them special documents called the emancipation papers to prove that they were free in case caught by the slave patrols.<sup>3</sup>

From 1773 to 1773 four slaves made petitions in Massachusetts against slavery, but their request was totally ignored, though they appealed to the colonists’ religious conscience. The

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<sup>1</sup>A. Leon Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process. The Colonial Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Wilma King, ““Mad” Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and Southern Courts,” *The Journal of African American History* Vol. 92, No. 1 (Winter, 2007), under “The University of Chicago Press on behalf of Association for the Study of African American Life and History,” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20064153> (accessed June 11, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, 105.



last petition unraveled the degree of disappointment and the robust colonists' adherence to the institution of slavery. It read:

We expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their fellow-men to enslave them. We ... wish and hope Sir, that you will have the same grand object, we mean civil and religious liberty...The divine spirit of freedom...Even the Spaniards, who have not those sublime ideas of freedom that English men have, are conscious that they have no right to all the service of their fellow-men, we mean the Africans.<sup>1</sup>

When the American Revolution (1775 -1783) broke out against the British crown, most of slaves considered it as an excellent opportunity not to be missed to gain their freedom. In Charleston, South Carolina, in 1765, while people in the colony were marching reiterating “Liberty and no Stamps”, slaves were shouting “Liberty! Liberty!”<sup>2</sup> It may seem that the slaves were supporting the Americans' cause, but in fact, they were yielding for their own liberty. In July 1775, the first president of America George Washington (p.1789-1797) sent an order to recruit officers but he refused to enlist black soldiers.<sup>3</sup> However, the need for manpower and the fear that slaves would fight for the British led Washington to mull over his decision. Besides, Thomas Kench who served in the army sent his letter that stressed:

And what I refer to is negroes...their ambition would entirely be to outdo the white men in every measure that the fortune of war calls a soldier to endure. And I could rely with dependence upon them in the field of battle, or to any post that I was sent to defend with them; and they would think themselves happy could they gain their freedom by bearing a part of subduing the enemy that is invading our land, and clear a peaceful inheritance for their masters, and posterity yet to come, that they are now slaves to.<sup>4</sup>

The words of his letter assert that Blacks constituted an essential part of the American life at that time. Furthermore, they not only reveal the fervent desire of Blacks to get their

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, *Voices of a People's History of the United States* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), 55,

<sup>2</sup> Murrin, 170.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), 75-76

<sup>4</sup> George W. Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880: Volume I, Volume 1* (Germany: Outlook, 2018), 349

freedom but also accentuate the Whites' awareness of this fact, and that is why they tried to use it to serve the cause of the war.

Consequently, on February 25, 1778, the first three Blacks were enlisted in Rhode Island and then at least 44 more slaves were enlisted between June 12 and October 13, 1778<sup>1</sup>. Driven by the desire to obtain their own freedom, Blacks showed great courage. Following Rhode Island, Massachusetts formed its *Bucks of America* that embraced Blacks under the leadership of George Middleton. Nevertheless, as the president of the Continental Congress John Hancock noted, the Bucks had done much to win the "American Revolution...but no one felt it was important to write the history of their part in the war."<sup>2</sup> Blacks' role and sacrifices were soon overlooked once America got its independence. Though they had also participated in the War of 1812 against Britain,<sup>3</sup> their status remained the same; it was impossible to squeeze blood from a stone.

Despite all of the robust obstacles that slaves encountered, their hope for a free better life was never extinguished. They kept fighting to force the government to put an end to slavery. As the United States kept developing, controversial discussions about slavery grew intensively; the desire to abolish slavery was looming, dividing America into two parts.

### **The End of Slavery in America**

Opposition to slavery took different forms and emerged the moment the practice of the regime was launched. Revolts and all types of resistance were so common on the ship that carried slaves from their homelands and in the colonies. Some slaves starved themselves to death; others killed their masters, escaped or rebelled.<sup>4</sup> In 1739, 1800, 1822 and 1831 four famous rebellions took place: the Stono Rebellion, the Gabriel's Rebellion, Denmark Vesey's

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<sup>1</sup> Neimeyer, 75-76.

<sup>2</sup> Burke Davis, *Black Heroes of the American Revolution* (Harcourt, Inc., 1976), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Miriam Greenblatt and John Stewart Bowman, *War of 1812* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2003), v.

<sup>4</sup> Penrice, 56.

Uprising, and the Nat Turner's Rebellion, respectively. Whatever the methods they adopted were, they were all driven by the lust for freedom.

In the same vein, as slavery reached its peak in the United States, its atrocities did, and the Underground Railroad was established. It was not in fact a concrete road. This term refers to a complex system of tactics, routes, secret agents and safe houses that slaves started to follow in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Slaves were helped by conductors, including white abolitionists and former slaves mainly Harriet Tubman who made 19 trips into the southern states and led more than 300 men, women, and children to freedom in the North where slavery had been already abolished.<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that around 30,000 slaves could make it to the North via this road between 1810 and 1850.<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia was one of the most states where slaves found their solace and peace. Abolitionists Robert Purvis and William Still operated there, helping fugitives to settle down. William still kept detailed recounts of these men, women, and children who fled the terrors of slavery in his book *The Underground Railroad* (1872), transmitting letters, authentic narratives, and records of firsthand stories about the struggle of taking the road to freedom through the secret network.<sup>3</sup>

After the end of the American Revolution in 1783, it was obvious that the Southerners would not slough off slavery without a hitch as the Northerners did. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, abolishing slavery became the crux of hot debate and discussions. The number of the freed slaves in the North and the increased industrialization did not only led to the decline of slavery there but also helped speed the efforts of the abolitionists whose work started to intensify to stop slavery.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Callaghan, 49.

<sup>2</sup> Penrice, 57.

<sup>3</sup> William Still, *The Underground Railroad: The True Story of Hundreds of Slaves Who Escaped Through the Secret Network Formed by Abolitionists and Former Slaves: Narratives, Recorded Testimonies & Letters* (E-Books: Madison & Adams press, 1872).

After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 that settled the conflict between France and the United States, the Louisiana territory was offered to America from Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains (see map 3) in return for 15,000,000 dollars,<sup>1</sup> heating debate arouse between the slave and the free states about whether slavery would be allowed in the new territories or not. Eventually, a compromise was made, permitting slavery in the Missouri and Arkansas territories but banning it in lands to the west and north of Missouri and the same issue arouse whenever American acquired new territories.<sup>2</sup> The map below demonstrates the Louisiana territory.

**Map 3.** The Louisiana Purchase Territory of 1803



**Source:** <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/map-louisiana-purchase> (accessed September 10, 2020).

<sup>1</sup> Sol Holt, *The Dictionary of American History* (Chicago: Central Typesetting & Electrotyping, 1963), s.v. "Louisiana Purchase," 227.

<sup>2</sup> O'Callaghan, 45.

On the one hand, proslavery supporters fiercely defended their stance by emphasizing that slavery was religiously, economically and humanely right. One of them explained sturdily the importance of slavery to the development of any country, “Slavery has ever been the stepping ladder by which countries have passed from barbarism to civilization.”<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically speaking, supporters of slavery boosted the practice asserting that Africans’ role is indispensable to the growth of the society, while at the same viewed them as being biologically and socially inferior.<sup>2</sup>

Literarily used,<sup>3</sup> verses from the Bible were purposefully selected to disguise the gruesome side of slavery. For, instance, they believed that God has decreed slavery through the Curse of Cain who killed his brother and the Curse of Ham, Noah’s son who –according to the Bible– when he saw his father sleeping nakedly, divulged the scene instead of covering him like his two brothers did.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, antislavery advocates refuted all the justifications. They religiously pointed the notion of brotherhood up and emphasized that slavery contravened the American values that the Americans stood for against Britain. Equally significant, they brought attention to the intimidation and mayhem brought up by the slaves’ rebellions mostly Nat Turner’s in 1831. In his *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion: Including the 1831 "Confessions"* (2006), the American historian Herbert Aptheker reports:

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<sup>1</sup> Eli Ginzberg and Alfred S. Eichner, *Troublesome Presence: Democracy and Black Americans* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 84.

<sup>2</sup> John Ralph Willis, *Slaves and Slavery in Africa: Volume One: Islam and the Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 47.

<sup>3</sup> Larry R. Morrison, “The Religious Defense of American Slavery Before 1830,” <https://www.kingscollege.net/gbrodie/The%20religious%20justification%20of%20slavery%20before%201830.pdf> (accessed September 5, 2018), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Morrison, 17.

Panic flashed through Virginia accompanied by a reign of terror. The uprising was infectious and slaves everywhere became restless, or, it was feared that they had or might become restless, so the panic...spread up to Delaware and down to Florida, across to Louisiana and up again into Kentucky.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, efforts to end slavery became more noticeable. Though there have been prior attempts for this target like the creation of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in 1775 and the New York Manumission Society in 1785, more organizations were founded to take the cause into another level, including the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832 and the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Newspapers, books, pamphlets and slave narratives were produced and spread to voice the voiceless. To illustrate, the black abolitionist David Walker's *Appeal* (1829) terrified the Southerners that immediately upon its release, they placed a price on Walker's head, "\$1,000 dead or \$10,000 alive"<sup>2</sup>.

Ironically, Whites were identified with the struggle as well, not only Blacks. For example, in 1774, when the spirit of independence pervaded the colonists, John Adam's wife Abigail expressed her disgust at what she believed to be the 'hypocrite democracy', "It always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me to fight ourselves for what we're daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have."<sup>3</sup> In the same line of thought, Anthony Benezet and William Lloyd Garrison were among the most famous white abolitionists, whose roles were remarkably salient either by delivering speeches, publishing pamphlets or by producing newspapers to condemn slavery and its proponents.<sup>4</sup>

Other abolitionists, however, espoused violence to push the case further. John Brown and seven others, including his sons, killed several slaveholders in Osawatimie, Kansas in 1856

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion: Including the 1831 "Confessions"* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006), 57.

<sup>2</sup> Amechi Okolo, *The State of the American Mind: Stupor and Pathetic Docility: Volume One* (Bloomington: Xlibris Corporation, 2001), 443

<sup>3</sup> James Oliver Horton, "Alexander Hamilton: slavery and race in a revolutionary generation," *The New-York Journal of American History*, [http://www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/about/Horton%20-%20Hamiltonsvery\\_Race.pdf](http://www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org/about/Horton%20-%20Hamiltonsvery_Race.pdf) (accessed August 3, 2018), 21.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Jackson, *Let this Voice be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 29.

and then escaped to Maryland.<sup>1</sup> However, when he wanted to replicate the victorious moment in Virginia, he was captured and then hanged on December 2, 1859. Yet, before hearing his sentence, John Brown addressed the court confirming that he did not regret his deeds, and he would do same thing to secure justice for all. He said:

I never did intend murder or treason...I have done in behalf of [God's] despised poor...Now, if it be deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children, and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit: so let it be done.<sup>2</sup>

By 1860, debate about slavery was at its highest summit, and when the Republican Abraham Lincoln (p.1861-1865) won the presidential election against Stephen Douglas, tension escalated. Eleven states seceded from the Union, forming their Confederate, throwing the nation into an anarchy that resulted in the American Civil War (1861-1865) that would later be the final huge blow to the institution of slavery.<sup>3</sup> Although at the beginning, Lincoln did not take a firm stance towards slavery, he ended up issuing the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863.<sup>4</sup> As a result, slavery was abolished and slaves sighed with relief: they were freed at last.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, from the dawn of civilizations, slavery existed. Albeit practiced differently, it intimidated the lives of many people long before even history started to be recorded. As nations around the world advanced, so did their thirst for power and dominance, leading to the subservience of the weakest part to the most powerful one. The African Americans were of no exception. Their history tells the story of more than three centuries of pain, agony, lynching,

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<sup>1</sup> Frank E. Vandiver, *Blood Brothers: A Short History of the Civil War* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph R. Conlin, *The American Past: A Survey of American History, Enhanced Edition* (California: Cengage Learning, 2009), 372.

<sup>3</sup> DeFord, 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Mason I. Lowance and Mason Lowance, *A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776-1865* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), xv.

and most importantly resistance. Their strength, courage, and skills not only enticed the Europeans' greed but also doomed their lives to a rigid system of slavery that took them years of fights before they got their freedom in 1865.

This period in their history would affect their lives even after freedom. When they were freed, they longed for being totally integrated in every sphere of the American society, and the motion picture was no exception. The next chapter sheds light on both the presence and the representation of Blacks in the American motion picture industry.



## **Chapter Two                    Blacks and the American Motion Picture**

Introduction .....	51
The Motion Picture: the New Literature .....	51
Hollywood.....	58
The Filmmaking Process .....	63
Development .....	65
Pre-production .....	70
Production .....	73
Post-production.....	74
Distribution .....	76
Films versus series .....	78
Inching Towards Equality: the Representation of Blacks and Slavery in the American Motion Picture.....	85
Alex Haley's <i>Roots</i> (1976): from the Novel to the Miniseries.....	91
Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory of Communication .....	98
Conclusion .....	104

### **Introduction**

Laying the ground for the practical side, this chapter is of a crucial significance for there is no practice without theory as the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx advocates, “Practice without theory is blind.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the following points are shed light on: the mechanism of both films and series, the presence of Blacks in Hollywood, the depiction of Blacks and slavery by the American film industry, and the Stuart Hall’s theory of communication.

Indeed, understanding how films and series are brought to the screen facilitates the process of their analysis and provides one with the opportunity of relating the surroundings to the production of the material in hand. With respect to the kernel of this thesis, it is vital to go through this point before shifting to the history of Blacks and slavery in the American motion picture industry.

In the same vein, watching films or series means conducting communication wherein there is a sender with a message and a receiver with a feedback. Consequently, Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model of communication has been opted for in the practical part and is dealt with in the final section of this chapter for it is the one that helps treat the crux of the matter in this thesis.

### **The Motion Picture: the New Literature**

Living in the age of instant information, we highly need to go in tandem with the different happenings, and to keep track of the latest developments. Years ago, the only medium that helped people either entertain themselves or get informed was printed, including the press, novels, and magazines. Nowadays, however, there has been a lucid shift to visual entertainment where with a simple click, one can quench his/her thirst in any field they are interested in. Therefore, the requisite need to have a clear-cut idea about the use and the

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<sup>1</sup> Zoran Vojinovic and Michael B. Abbott, *Flood Risk and Social Justice* (London: IWA Publishing, 2012), 98.

impact of any visual medium led to the emergence of film studies and media studies as separate fields, with each having its own experts, elements, needs, rules, principles and theories. Author Paul Smith emphasizes, “Film production not only needs to be justified on academic grounds but will have to pay its way through sales of the resultant films...thus providing adequate funds for new historical studies in film.”<sup>1</sup>

This significance is manifested in the fact that film, series, and all kinds of visual programs not only entertain millions, but also influence them through the dissemination of diverse ideas, beliefs, and values. Robert Velarde confirms, “My contention is that film and television are the new literature;”<sup>2</sup> rarely do people read thoroughly and then discuss the content of the material later, but instead, the perspective of “Have you seen?” has replaced the mentality of “Have you read?”<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, watching a film for amusement and studying it are totally distinct actions that require different approaches because being driven by a specific academic purpose necessitates efforts, concentration, knowledge and a profound understanding of the mechanism of producing images that encompass codes and ideas. In an attempt to present the importance of this literature and its complex nature, Robert Velarde offers a brief comparison between the printed and the visual materials as it is displayed in the table below.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Smith, *The Historian and Film* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 136.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Velarde, " Television as the new Literature: Understanding and Evaluating the Medium," *Christian Research Journal* volume 33 (2010), <http://www.equip.org/christian-research-journal/> (accessed February 6, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Velarde.

**Table 2.** The Difference Between Printed and Visual Materials

	<b>Printed Material</b>	<b>Films and Television</b>
01	Linear Ideas	Non-linear ideas
02	Usually requires concentrated thought	Requires little concentrated thought
03	Can build rational arguments	Favours entertainment over rational discourse
04	Requires literacy	Does not require literacy
05	Usually a quiet endeavour	Usually a noisy endeavour
06	Records the great ideas of human history	Mostly Transient, fleeting
07	active	Passive

*Source:* Velarde.

The table above sheds light on the basic seven differences between printed and visual sources that need to be grasped.

1. While the process of dealing with any printed material is linear and conceptual, it is the opposite with the visual elements. When we read, we usually get engaged in a linear communication with the author; we strive to get the message that this author is trying to dispatch through his words. Television or films, however, do not allow us to adopt the same way because we get exposed to multiple images and when we are focusing on one, we abruptly receive another that may take us to a different setting with different characters and messages. This, definitely, does not mean that when we watch a film, we are not supposed to dissect the hidden messages, but we seldom do that if we are watching for entertainment. If it is not the case, we will need to watch the material more than once with a predetermined goal. In his book *African Film: Looking Back and Looking Forward* (2014) Foluke Ogunleye regards films as not only mere tools for entertainment but also as methods to indoctrinate citizens for they

are cultural artefacts that are created by specific cultures to reflect those cultures and at the same time impose their effects.<sup>1</sup>He proceeds, “The visual elements give motion pictures a universal power of communication. However, making films, reviewing them, studying and theorizing them are hard work.”<sup>2</sup>

2. Analyzing and comprehending a printed material is harder when compared to visual one. Sometimes not being able to understand a single word may hinder the process of understanding the whole passage. Hence, more considerable efforts are needed to reach this aim even if we are reading only for entertainment but still we cannot enjoy what we are reading if it is intricate. Obviously, the matter is different while we are watching a film because even if the speech is difficult to be comprehended, images can do the job and we can grasp the overall message. In an interview conducted with Canadians, the interviewees confessed that “television required much less ‘concentration of energy’ than newspapers.”<sup>3</sup>
3. Printed materials are usually constructed following a rational argument that is usually known to the reader who is meant to follow it in order to receive the intended message. Films, for instance, are not based on the same premise: they can build simple argument but focus more on entertainment rather than rational discourse.<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that visual materials do not follow a specific argumentation or are produced arbitrarily, but their mechanism differs, making them more complex to be analyzed. In his article “Visual Arguments in Film” (2018) Jesús Alcolea-Banegas explains, “Film as (visual) argumentation must be addressed to spectators who hold informed beliefs about the theme watched on the screen and the medium’s constraints and

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<sup>1</sup> Foluke Ogunleye, *African Film: Looking Back and Looking Forward* (Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ogunleye, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Rutherford, *When Television was Young: Primetime Canada 1952-1967* (Toronto :University of Toronto Press, 1990), 450.

<sup>4</sup> Velarde.

conventions.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, if one is not cognizant of the nature of the visual material he/she is watching, they will not be able to go deeper beyond its images.

4. Undoubtedly, print materials require literacy for one cannot read any material even if it is simple if he/she is illiterate. When it comes to films, however, it is enough for one to sit in front of TV following the sequence of images to understand the story of the film. This case is palpable with children who do not know how to read and write but can spend hours watching TV.<sup>2</sup>
5. Unlike printed materials, films provide viewers with multiple images that are accompanied with different sounds for different purposes. We cannot imagine a scary movie without screams or an action movie without sounds of cars, gunfire and loud music. Notwithstanding, the noise in films is part of its overall plot. Dirck Halstead, a digital video pioneer whose workshops train photojournalists explains, “The images enhance the story, but it is the sound that is vital to understanding.”<sup>3</sup> This makes the process of reading a film more complex if it is meant to be studied. Printed materials, however, require a quiet contemplation to be comprehended which is the case in libraries where any kind of noise is prohibited.
6. Robert Velarde believes that films and television are mostly transient and fleeting which means that they are enjoyed the moment one is watching them and soon forgotten once the movie or series or program being watched finishes. He also thinks that one cannot take them seriously if they are looking for reliable sources about history but at the same time, they cannot neglect them as being mirror of the period they were produced in or they are trying to represent. “Film is understood as a complex cultural artefact whose form and content are the outcome of many processes

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<sup>1</sup>Jesús Alcolea-Banegas, “Visual Arguments in Film,” *Argumentation* Volume 23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-008-9124-9> (accessed February 20, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Velarde.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Kobré, *Videojournalism: Multimedia Storytelling* (Burlington: Foca Press, 2012), 104.

–ideological, industrial, economic, technological, social, aesthetic– that shape the final product.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, films even if they are fictional, can tell a lot about history or at least trigger viewers to conduct a systematic research about a specific period.

7. Printed materials are active because reading them engages us in an intellectual process. As it is mentioned above, unlike in the visuals, literacy is required when it comes to the printed staff. In his book *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (2009), Carl Plantinga accentuates, “Film gains its particular power from its direct appeal to sight and hearing...[they] are primarily apprehended through non-linguistic channels of communication. They are viewed and listened to.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, he explains that there is a difference between reading a film and interpreting it; if the first one is passive, the second is active because most of films hold hidden meanings that go beyond what is obvious.<sup>3</sup>In the same vein, Christian Metz states, in his *Film Language* (2007), that “a film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand. The image impresses itself on us, blocking everything that is not itself.”<sup>4</sup> This means that to interpret any film, we need to be able to extract the relationship between what the images present and what they do not present.

The seven characteristics that Robert Velarde enlists clearly demonstrate the complex nature of what he reckons to be the new literature. Though it may seem that printed materials are more intricate for analysis, films and series are not that less, and their analysis requires the comprehension of their mechanism.

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<sup>1</sup> James Chapman, *Film and History* (New York: Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013), 30.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (California: University of California Press, 2009), 112.

<sup>3</sup> Plantinga, 112.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (New York: University of New York Press, 2007), 70.

Indeed, the art of films started with the first pictorial expressions carved and painted on cave walls. Static though, they would later inspire the idea of creating the moving pictures to magnetize the audience and engage them in a vivid experience. In 1887, the French inventor Charles Emile Reynaud (1844-1918) succeeded in inventing the praxinoscope (see Appendix B) which is an animation device (type of magic lanterns) that introduced the idea of projecting images for public entertainment.

Other inventors began to follow suit by improving the quality of the light source and by devising new tools. In 1891, the America inventor and businessman Thomas Edison (1847-1931) and his Scottish assistant William Dickson (1860-1935) created the kinetograph which is a movie camera. Soon later, they developed it into the kinetoscope (see Appendix B) which gained a salient success as a new viewing machine.<sup>1</sup>

The innovations galvanized other inventors into thinking about other ways to project the moving images onto larger screens. In 1895, the manufacturers of photographic materials in Lyon, France Auguste and Louis Lumière developed a new machine which was a lightweight film projector that functioned as a camera and a printer. They named it the *cinématographe* (see Appendix B), from which the word ‘cinema’ was derived. In December 1895, the Lumières projected the world’s first commercial film screening that was in form of a sequence of about 10 short scenes, including the *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, a segment lasting less than a minute and depicting workers leaving the family’s photographic instrument factory at the end of the day.<sup>2</sup>

Competing the Lumière Company, countries such as the United States and Great Britain offered their own moving pictures acts. Over the years, the industry flourished leading to the

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<sup>1</sup> J V Vilanilam, *Mass Communication In India: A Sociological Perspective* (New Delhi : Sage, 2005), 121.

<sup>2</sup> Libraries, <https://open.lib.umn.edu/app/uploads/sites/9/2015/11/8.2.0.jpg> (accessed March 5, 2018)



emergence of one of the most famous film industries in the late nineteenth century:

Hollywood.

### **Hollywood**

Known also as Tinseltown, Hollywood is a district within the city of Los Angeles, California, U.S. For the rest of the world, Hollywood is not a mere place; it is seen as the centre of the best films that have been released over the years, and an ‘American Dream’ to those who aspire to stamp their names as famous actors, filmmakers, screenwriters, directors or producers. In their *Hollywood's Chosen People: The Jewish Experience in American Cinema* (2007), Daniel Bernardi, Murray Pomerance and Hava-Tirosh Samuelson insist, “Hollywood has helped create, define and promote the mythology of the American dream and has itself become an integral part of that national fantasy.”<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, Tony Blake reveals, “Even the marginally successful [worker in Hollywood] can live comfortably without having to work a second job.”<sup>2</sup>

It is of no doubt, then, that this industry possesses a staunch power to appeal to different audiences through the translation of social viewpoints into pictorial representation, manipulating, thereby, individuals’ beliefs and values. For the past fifty years, European cinema strove vainly to maintain its dominance over the film industry, but from *the American Black Maria*, Thomas Edison’s first film production studio in West Orange, New Jersey in 1893, Hollywood traced its way to absorb all the fame and the success. In *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (2005), Thomas Elsaesser confirms that Hollywood not only topped the other industries but also divided the Europeans among themselves.<sup>3</sup> A number of

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bernardi, Murray Pomerance and Hava-Tirosh Samuelson, *Hollywood's Chosen People: The Jewish Experience in American Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Blake, *Writing for the Hollywood \$\$\$: How to Navigate the Precarious Road to Success in Tv and Film* (Indiana: Xlibris Corporation, 2007), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 13.

countries, like Germany and England started imposing quotas on the importation of Hollywood films, leading the American Congress to pass the Web-Pomerance Act in 1918 that permitted Hollywood and other countries to work together overseas.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, as noted by Bernardi Pomerance and Samuelson, “[The] American movies [can] form a valuable index to any historical period’s deepest thoughts and fears, its predominant beliefs and feelings, its aspirations and defeats, its dreams and its nightmares.”<sup>2</sup>

Hollywood’s first beginnings were on the East Coast, in New York and New Jersey in the late nineteenth century. Then it moved to California as the best place that offers better conditions for production and photographing, including its weather and wide variety of landscapes<sup>3</sup>. Prior to the 1910’s, the film industry was dominated by the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), also known as the Movie Trust, Edison Trust, or the Trust.<sup>4</sup> Films were exhibited primarily in nickelodeons,<sup>5</sup> and they were short, around fifteen minutes.<sup>6</sup> During that period, people had the tendency to watch French-produced films because France was the leader in the field and the American industry was still toddling to create itself.<sup>7</sup>

By 1908, with the invention of modern studio systems and the advancement of cinematic technology, French film releases, led by the Pathé Company swept the world including 70%

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Decherney, *Hollywood: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Bernardi, Pomerance and Samuelson, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Walter C. Metz, “Hollywood Cinema,” *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture* (2006), under Cambridge: Cambridge Up, [https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1055&context=cp\\_articles](https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1055&context=cp_articles) (accessed June 7, 2018).

<sup>4</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “the Motion Picture Patents Company,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Motion-Picture-Patents-Company> (accessed January 12, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Nickelodeons are early motion picture theatres where one- and two-reel films of about fifteen minutes to one hour were shown and accompanied by a piano. They were named as such because admission at that time cost a nickel. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “nickelodeon,” <https://www.britannica.com/art/nickelodeon-motion-picture-theatre> (accessed January 12, 2019).

<sup>6</sup>Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research, “American Cinema in the 1910s,” <https://wcftr.commarts.wisc.edu/exhibits/harry-roy-aitken-papers/american-cinema-1910s> (accessed January 1, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Metz, 1.

of the American market.<sup>1</sup> However, during and after the end of the First World War (1914-1919) and the emergence of the United States as the new superpower, dominance over the industry was no longer French; Hollywood had the opportunity to hold the grip of power.

In 1915 the American directors Thomas Harper Ince, D.W. Griffith and the Canadian Mack Sennett formed the Triangle Pictures Production Company at Inceville where the production techniques were revolutionized into a more disciplined system of filmmaking. The staff was divided into units with each unit under the control of a production manager who supervised the filming form to be approved later by Ince<sup>2</sup>. This change led to the release of the Ince's first film *Civilization* (1916). Slowly but gradually, with ups and downs, system of oligopoly was adopted wherein varied American companies flourished, competing each other to monopolize the industry, making Hollywood's hegemony unquestionable, and its movies, thereby, the widely seen ones.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, with the increase of companies' number, the non-profit trade organization the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) was established in 1922 as a response to the government censorship of films. In fact, the Supreme Court's decision in *Mutual Film Crop.v. Industrial Commision of Ohio* (1915)<sup>4</sup> severely restricted the freedom of the filmmakers due to a considerable number of public complaints, chiefly from the part of religious organizations, against the indecency on the screen and various scandals involving some

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Grantham, "America the Menace: France's Feud with Hollywood," *World Policy Journal* Vol. 15 (Summer 1998), under Duke University Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209584> (accessed April 20, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Thomas Harper Ince," <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-H-Ince> (accessed April 10, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Jens Ulf-Møller and Jens Ulf-Møller, *Hollywood's Film Wars with France: Film-trade Diplomacy and the Emergence of the French Film Quota Policy* (New York: University Rochester Press, 2001), 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> During the Porgressive Era in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, state of Ohio developed its own censorship board against films, levying a licensing fee to film distributors The Mutual Film Corporation of Detroit considered it as unfair decision since the fees would limit the interstate commerce, so it sought an injunction against this censorship The Court, however ruled in favour of the state and denied movies their freedom of speech for 37 years. Bob Pondillo, "Mutual Film Crop.v. Industrial Commision of Ohio (1915)", *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/358/mutual-film-corp-v-industrial-commission-of-ohio> (accessed, February 27, 2019).

celebrities.<sup>1</sup> The MPAA, thus, enacted a Code in 1930 that entailed the necessity of rating films in terms of their morality ( presence of erotic sex, violence and strong language) and whether they suited the audience or not. Prior to their release, hence, films would get a certificate from the MPAA, allowing them to be exhibited although the rating system was liable to constant changes from the first moment it was made.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, the rating system is as follows: G, for general audiences; PG, parental guidance suggested because some material may not be suited for children; PG-13, parents strongly cautioned, because film contains material inappropriate for children under 13; R, restricted to adults and to children under 17 accompanied by parent or guardian; and NC-17, no children under 17 admitted.<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning, though, that the rating system does not signify whether the movie is good or bad but only to guide the audience and at the same time to protect them. It is the job of critics, however, to evaluate and analyze movies. Additionally, the process of rating shifted from being compulsory, i.e., forced by law to voluntary which explains why we do still come across movies that hold a great deal of ‘indecenty’, but it is up to the audience to decide whether to watch the material or not.

All in all, the American movie industry went through distinct eras. From its dawn to the present moment, it changed drastically, producing a myriad of movies, each different from the other. The following table presents and summarizes the Hollywood movie eras:

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Chapman and James Ciment, *Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints and Voices* (London: Routledge, 2014), 436-437, and Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Motion Picture Association in of America,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Motion-Picture-Association-of-America> (accessed January 12, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Chapman, 436.

<sup>3</sup> Regal, “MPAA Ratings,” <https://www.regmovies.com/static/en/us/mpaa-ratings> (accessed March 20, 2019), and Federal Trade Commission, *Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children: A Review of Self-Regulation and Industry Practices in the Motion Picture, Music Recording & Electronic Game Industries* (2002), [https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/marketing-violent-entertainment-children/vioreport\\_0.pdf](https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/marketing-violent-entertainment-children/vioreport_0.pdf) (accessed March 20, 2019).

Table 3. Hollywood movie eras

Movies Eras	Period	Characteristics
<b>The Pioneer Era</b>	1895-1910	The creation of short film reels and trick films Eg, Edwin Porter's <i>The Life of an American Fireman</i> (1903), and Porter's <i>The Great Train Robbery</i> (1903)
<b>The Silent Era</b>	1911-1926	Longer films- no dialogue –slightly edited –minimal sound effect – emphasis on narrative dramas, comedies and romance Eg, D. W. Griffith's <i>The Birth of a Nation</i> (1915), and <u>Daniel Frohman</u> and <u>Adolph Zukor</u> 's <i>the Aftermath</i> (1914)
<b>The Sound Era</b>	1927-1940	Length-sound movies – advancement in effects and music tracks
<b>The Golden Era</b>	1941- 1954	The spread of over 19 thousands theatres in the US, better production, better tools and technology, few since fiction offerings and the audience started enjoying more types of movies like gangster films
<b>The Spread of Television</b>	1955 -1976	The wide spread of television presented a serious threat that triggered cinemas to fight for more productions and Hollywood started treating mature themes. It also worked to improve the quality of colour in films because television broadcasting in the 1950s was all in black and white.
<b>Modern Hollywood</b>	1977-1990	The he arrival of “blockbuster” films, using radio and TV for more advertisement to increase profits, embracing the wide-release method of movie distribution instead of selecting theatres in major cities to exhibit movies and then gradually to mass audience <i>Eg, Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i> (1977), <i>Star Wars</i> (1977), and <i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i> (1981)
<b>New Millennium</b>	From the 1990s and beyond	Focusing on the worldwide market, the rise technically spectacular blockbuster with special, computer-generated effects movies and the independent, low-budget film. <i>Eg, Terminator 2: Judgment Day</i> (1991), <i>Jurassic Park</i> (1993), <i>Independence Day</i> (1996), <i>Titanic</i> (1997), and <i>The Matrix</i> (1999)

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Movies eras,” <http://www.historyoffilm.net/movie-eras/history-of-cinema/> (accessed January 5, 2019)

Hollywood's dominance over the other film industries is a double-edge sword; as it can entertain the audience, it can also purposefully extend views, values and beliefs, whatever they are. In his article “A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Iranians in a Western Movie ‘Not Without my Daughter’,” (2017) Ali Rahimi from the University of Bangkok reached a conclusion that this American movie not only dehumanized the Iranians and depicted them as terrorists but also distorted the image of Islam and presented it as the

religion that promotes patriarchy and encourages the subjugation of women.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when it comes to the history of slavery in America, Hollywood will be stuck in front of a very sensitive subject that struck the core of the American history and ideology. The representation of either Blacks or slavery by the Americans themselves is directly related to a long fight towards equality that traces its roots to the three centuries Africans lived in America as slaves and extends to the present time.

### **The Filmmaking Process**

In his book *Film Studies* (1998), Warren Buckland asserts the vital importance of not underestimating the study of films because the dominant status that films occupies in societies makes it a popular medium that if taken seriously and studied academically will be as legitimate for studies as Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* and Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*<sup>2</sup> are. Throughout the years, films have been studied from different perspectives although the literature related to the field changed drastically from the release of books once a year to once a month.<sup>3</sup> Charles Altman identified different approaches to the study of films, including the followings<sup>4</sup>:

1. A film can be studied in relation to the different technological innovations such as the development of new sounds, colors or editing equipment.
2. The study can focus on the implemented techniques and their effects on the overall message of the material under scrutiny like the use of the close-up technique where the frame of the shot is filled primarily by the subject's face, with little focus or not at all on the background (see Chapter three).

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Rahimi, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Iranians in a Western Movie 'Not Without my Daughter'," *ResearchGate* (March 2017), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315486013> (accessed May 4, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Warren Buckland, *Film Studies* (London: Holder & Stoughton, 1998), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Charles F. Altman, "Towards a Historiography of American Film," *Cinema Journal* Vol. 16 (Spring, 1977), under University of Texas Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1225381> (accessed May 3, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Buckland, 7-8.

3. The study of the characters.
4. Relating different arts to the study of films such as theatre and novels
5. The study of Films in relation to society, context and historical events.
6. The study of films in terms of its directors.
7. The Study of genres

Nevertheless, studying a medium entails understanding its nature first. A movie is the outcome of a careful creative design which is based on making choices about story structure, visual design, camerawork, editing and sound; and analyzing it requires looking closely at these elements.

Known for her considerable work in cinema and media studies, the associate Professor of Film Studies at Cornell University, USA Amy Villarejo offers a definition to the word cinema that unveils one of its remarkable aspects: which is the ability to be intertwined with different fields. She clarifies:

Cinema's dynamism, its capacity to arrange and rearrange time and motion, thus reveals its dimensions that are deeply social, historical, industrial, technological, philosophical, political, aesthetic, psychological, personal, and so forth. The aggregate of these multiple dimensions indeed is cinema.<sup>1</sup>

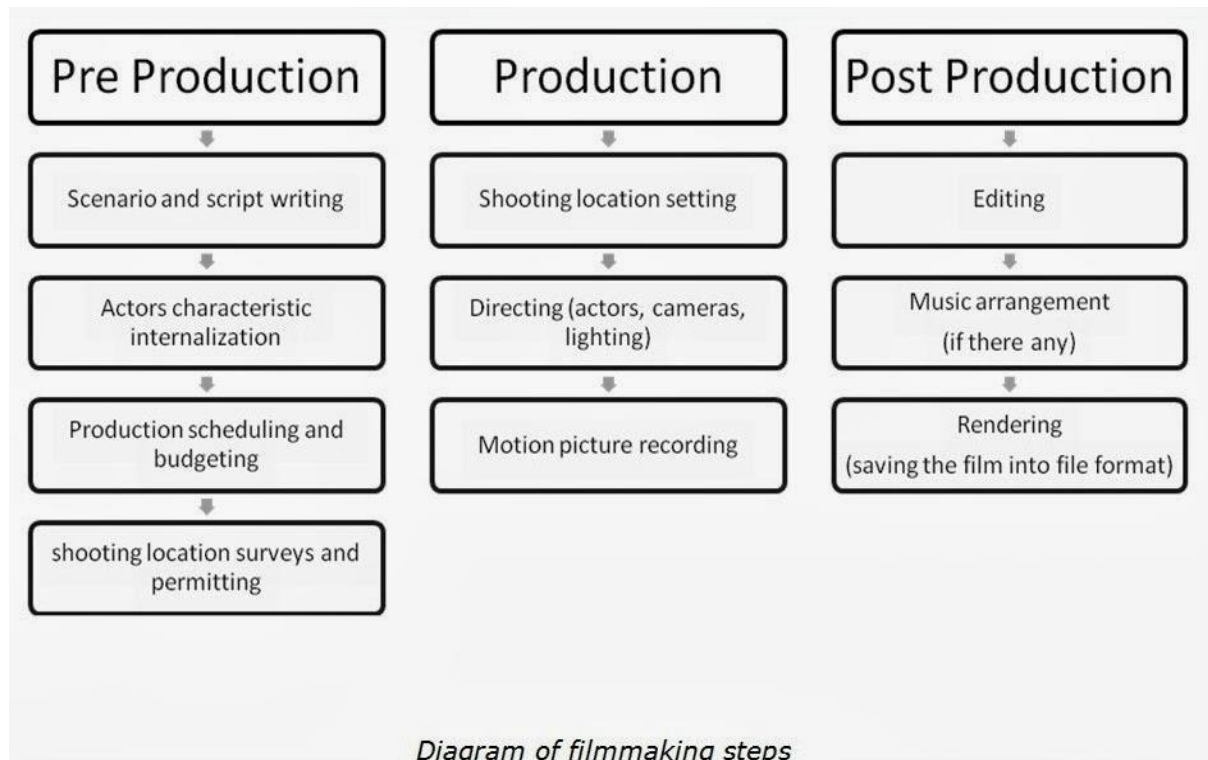
Hence, cinema presents history and feeds itself from it; it mirrors conditions of the surroundings and is itself affected by them, making it a must not to study films in isolation. For instance, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) was adapted numerous times into movies and series: *Pride and Prejudice* (1952), starring Daphne Slater and Peter Cushing; *Pride and Prejudice* (1958), Jane Downs and Alan Badel; *Pride and Prejudice* (1967), Celia Bannerman and Lewis Fiander; *Pride and Prejudice* (1980), Elizabeth Garvie and David Rintoul; *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen; *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2016), Lily James, Matt Smith, Charles Dance, Jack Huston and

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<sup>1</sup> Amy Villarejo, *Film Studies: the Basics* (London: Routledge, 2007), 9.

Lena Headey, to cite but few.<sup>1</sup> The production of multiple movies about the same story, in itself, triggers one's curiosity to look for the whys and the wherefores. Nonetheless, the process of creating a movie remains the same whatsoever: development, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution as it is illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 3.** Diagram of the Main Filmmaking Steps



**Source:** The Admaker Blog: story behind the scenes', "Filmamaking Process: Stage 1," (October 27, 2016), <https://admakerblog.wordpress.com/2016/10/27/filmmaking-process/> (accessed June 5, 2019).

### Development

Every masterpiece, whatever its type is, starts with an idea and so do films. The first step to create a movie is to find an idea and then develop it into a script. The idea can be original, or extracted from a book, play, another film, news articles, true story, video game, fairy tale, comic book, to mention but few. This phase can be the hardest and the longest for it

<sup>1</sup> British Period Dramas, <http://britishperioddramas.com/lists/top-10-best-ever-pride-and-prejudice-adaptations/> (accessed March 15, 2019).



covers many areas and it is the one where everything is decided, including, the story plot, settings, characters, concepts, themes and the underlying message (s).<sup>1</sup>

If the development phase is not accomplished properly, it will certainly hinder the other stages of the filmmaking process. The American animator, film director, screenwriter, producer and voice actor John Lasseter has reiterated that “the three most important aspects of any film are the script, the script and the script.”<sup>2</sup>After defining all the needed elements, the producer works with the writers to elaborate the step outline which is the action of breaking down the story into sequences to ease the task of turning them into scenes with their own dialogues for the motion picture.

The American screenwriter Black Snyder, for instance, provided a good model, in his book *Save the Cat: the Last Book on Screenwriting you will ever need* (2005), of a beat sheet which is a plot structure template that can be used to generate a good idea and write an effective screenplay. Blake’s book serves everyone– from the novice to the practicing producers. Based on his experience in Hollywood, Snyder analysed hundreds of well-structured successful films and found 15 common patterns in the sequencing of events, naming them “beats.”<sup>3</sup> He classified each beat to guide writers to write and explain every stage of the plot.<sup>4</sup>His beat sheet compartmentalizes the three- act structure (see fig.4) into manageable sections:

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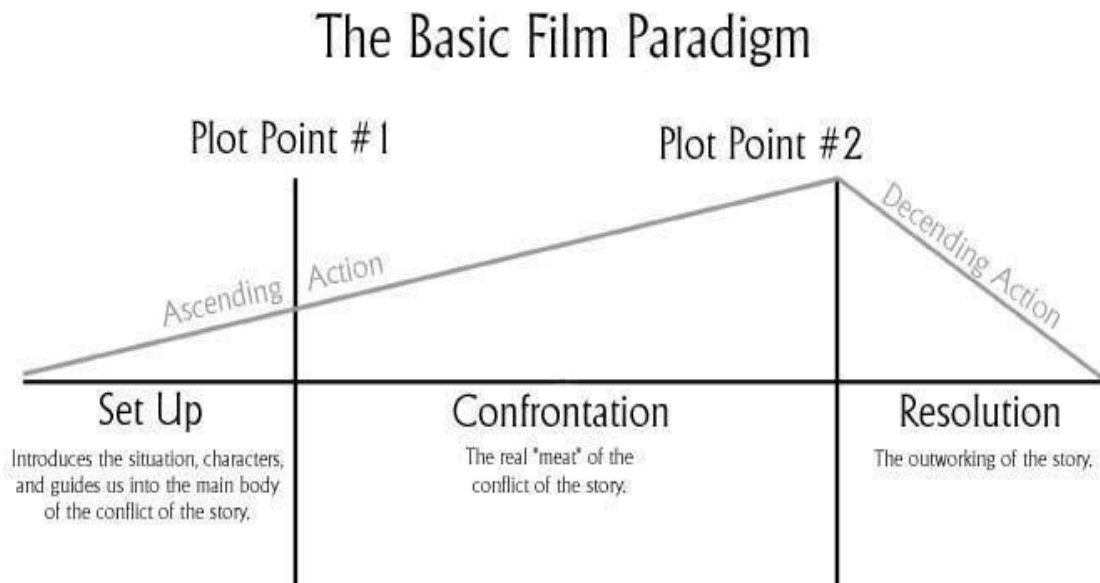
<sup>1</sup> Nick Willoughby, *Digital Filmmaking for Kids for Dummies* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Webster, *Action Analysis for Animators* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2012), 306.

<sup>3</sup> Gjoko Muratovski and Craig Vogel, *Philosophical Frameworks and Design Processes: Re:Research, Volume 2* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2019), 142, and Time Stout: Writer & Editor, “Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet,” <https://timstout.wordpress.com/story-structure/blake-snyders-beat-sheet/> (accessed April 28, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Muratovski, 142.

**Figure 4.** Black Snyder’s Basic Film Paradigm



**Source:** Film Vibe, “How to Make a Movie (PartI)- the Filmmaking Process- Script Structure (Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet),” June 28, 2016. YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBbJoOcM3Cg> (accessed May 20, 2019).

- **Opening Image:** It resembles the hook statement while writing an introduction for an essay. The first beat is visual and it represents the image that compels the audience and engages them. It sets the struggle and the tone of the story before the adventure begins. It gives viewers an idea about the movie they are about to watch: whether it is gothic, horror or a dark action film...etc.
- **Set-up:** This beat presents the character’s status quo, i.e. his main world, so that the audience will start inhabiting the story and looking at the world through the character’s eyes.
- **Theme Stated:** This beat usually comes across while refining the set-up. As its name implies it is the part where the main message and goal of the overall story are determined. Usually, it is revealed at the beginning to the audience (explicitly or implicitly) but not to the main character who is supposed to understand the truth after

having going through some personal experience to create a context that supports the theme.

- **Catalyst:** This beat refers to the moment where everything changes. “It is the telegram, the act of catching your loved-one cheating, allowing a monster onboard the ship, meeting the true love of your life, etc.”<sup>1</sup> This beat helps set in motion the central problem of the story which may differ from one movie to another.
- **Debate:** It is about the moments when the main character (s) mires into a dilemma of thoughts, hesitation and attempts to figure out what to do to face his problems.
- **Break Into Two:** In this beat, the adventure begins since the main character makes his choice to do so. “We leave the “Thesis” world and enter the upside-down, opposite world of Act Two,”<sup>2</sup>
- **B Story:** it is also known as the sub-plot. It is a secondary story that catches the interest of the audience as the events of the main story unfolds. It is commonly a love story or deals with some relationship issue.<sup>3</sup>
- **Fun and Games:** This is the part where excitement starts and the main character explores the new world. It is this one that can be at the center of a movie trailer.<sup>4</sup>
- **Midpoint:** This beat refers to the moment when the problem becomes more focused and serious, when things are at either their greatest up point or their greatest down point: reaching the pinnacle of success or the pinnacle of failure.

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<sup>1</sup> Time Stout: Writer & Editor, “Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet.” <https://timstout.wordpress.com/story-structure/blake-snyders-beat-sheet/> (accessed April 28, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Time Stout: Writer & Editor, “Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet.” <https://timstout.wordpress.com/story-structure/blake-snyders-beat-sheet/> (accessed April 28, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Film Vibe, “How to Make a Movie (PartI)- the Filmmaking Process- Script Structure (Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet),” June 28, 2016. YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBbJoOcM3Cg> (accessed May 20, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Also known as a preview or coming attraction which is a commercial advertisement for a feature film that will be exhibited in the future at a cinema. It is the result of a creative and technical work that consists of a series of selected shots from the film being advertised. Usually to get the intended message the excerpts should be the most exciting, enthralling and funniest ones. From VIDEOCIDE, “Trailer,” <https://videocide.com/glossary/trailer/> (accessed July 28, 2019).

- **Bad Guys Close In:** In this beat, it is not necessarily to have the ‘bad guy’ but there must be kind of evil forces that work to defeat the main character, be them emotions like doubts, jealousy, hatred; or bad people; or forces of nature, to name but few. The problem gets worse, and the main character’s fight gets tougher.
- **All is Lost:** It is the moment when the main character (s) seems to have no hope as he realizes that he is losing everything. As its name implies, this beat is synonymous with failure.
- **Dark Night of the Soul:** This beat is ‘dark’ as it is denoted in its title. It is when the main character recognizes his defeat and starts mourning the loss he is facing, being it a loss of a person, project, dream, the love of his life or emotions, i.e. “the main character hits bottom, and wallows in hopelessness.”<sup>1</sup>
- **Break Into Three:** This is the moment where the character stumbles upon a new fresh idea, sudden revelation or inspiration to his problem.
- **Finale:** It is the beat where the character puts his idea into motion to solve the problem he is facing.
- **Final Image:** It is the opposite of the opening image, which reveals that the whole world of the character is finally changing.
- **The End:** the story is over.

After the development of the idea and the script, producers should make sure to cover all the needed legal obligations. Furthermore, the film distributor should be contacted earlier to assess the market and the financial success of the film. Hollywood distributors usually take into consideration a couple of elements before embarking on the production of the film: the film genre, the target audience, the historical success of similar films, the actors and the

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<sup>1</sup> Time Stout: Writer & Editor. Time Stout: Writer & Editor, “Blake Snyder’s Beat Sheet.” <https://timstout.wordpress.com/story-structure/blake-snyders-beat-sheet/> (accessed April 28, 2019).

directors.<sup>1</sup> These factors increase the possibility of the success of the film and the number of seats during the theatrical release, and therefore the financial profits.

### **Pre-production**

This stage involves creating the storyboard production to prepare for the production phase. It encapsulates a group of people working together; with each one doing a specific job. In this phase, actors are cast for the roles, locations are determined according to the script— according to every scene in the movie —, and filming days are planned and scheduled.<sup>2</sup>(see fig.5) It is tangible that if this part is not done properly, the whole process will fall apart even if the script is salient in its nature.<sup>3</sup>

The main producer will hire the followings to establish the crew:

- **The director:** He controls the acting in the movie and all the creative elements that they are supposed to be exposed to the viewer. His job is hard but of a paramount importance. When interviewed, the American film director, screenwriter, producer, and actor Quentin Jerome Tarantino revealed, “I see the movie in my mind before I make the movie.”<sup>4</sup> It is clearly demonstrated, then, that the success of the movie rests upon the way the director makes sure the story unfolds in a way that enthralls the audience.
- **The assistant director:** as the title implies, the assistant director helps the director do his job. Moreover, he manages the shooting schedule, tracks daily progress, arranges logistics, checks the cast and the crew, and maintains order and discipline on the set.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolae Sfetcu, *The Art of Movies* (2014), 14

<sup>2</sup> Sfetcu, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Willoughby, 12.

<sup>4</sup> StudioBinder, “Quentin Tarantino Explains How to Write & Direct Movies, the Director’s Chair,” July 29, 2019, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V1Sm0WCtHU&feature=youtu.be> (accessed July 31, 2019).

- **The location manager:** he organizes and prepares the needed locations for each scene because usually a movie is not shot in the same place; there are scenes that require a house; others, a sea, a cemetery, or a church. Not only this, but he is also responsible for obtaining the needed governmental permits to use a specific location.
- **The production manager:** He manages to organize the production budget and schedule. He is supposed to make sure that the budget is spent properly and that everything is going smoothly all along the filmmaking process. He is also supposed to report on the progress or any kind of potential problems to the producer. Before the production begins, he is supposed to meet with the previous mentioned members to have an idea about the script in order to be able to program the budget, hire crews and contractors, negotiate rates of pay, and approve the booking of resources, equipment and suppliers.<sup>1</sup>
- **The director of photography:** also called the cinematographer who creates the photography of the film. He is the one who controls the movement of the camera and light on the crew who are working on the film. His role is very crucial for he is the one who can capture the mood of the film and director's vision on camera. If his job is done perfectly, he will add depth and magic to the film being made. Brian Hall who is an experienced practitioner and tutor in cinematography shares his own experience, "The cinematographer is second only to the director. There are a lot of others that take part that are very important...we're of all equal importance in the final product but they're not actually on the shooting unit with me."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Media Match: Film & TV Jobs in the USA, "Production Manager," <https://www.media-match.com/usa/media/jobtypes/production-manager-jobs-402759.php#:~:text=Production%20Managers%20organize%20the%20business,everything%20runs%20smoothly%20during%20filming.&text=You%20might%20also%20start%20as%20a%20trainee%20production%20accountant>. (accessed May 11, 2019).

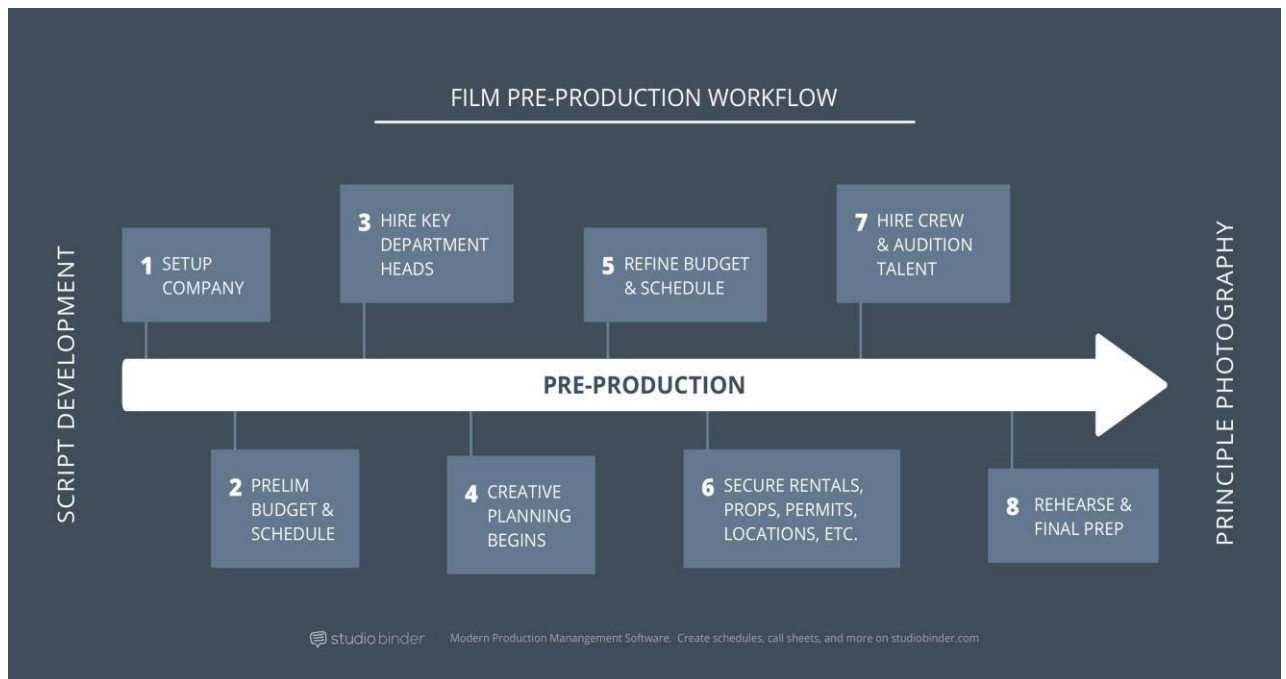
<sup>2</sup> Brian Hall, *Understanding Cinematography* (UK: The Crowood Press Ltd: 2015), 100.

- **The art director:** He manages the art department that provides costumes, makeup, and hairstyle. Along with the designer, they design sets and help determine the overall looks of the actors.
- **The production designer:** He is responsible for the visual concept of a film, television or theatre production by identifying the design style for sets, locations, graphics, props, lighting, camera angles and costumes.<sup>1</sup>
- **The sound director and the sound designer:** They are responsible for setting up the sound playback equipment and for the creating the needed sound effect.
- **The storyboard artist:** He helps in creating visual representation of the director's vision about the script. In other words, he draws visual storytellers that will be followed later to shoot the scenes accordingly. A great storyboard artist usually as the American art director and designer Geoffrey kater accentuates, " influences storytelling, cinematography ...each frame ...must be planned, anticipating every scene's contents, action, dialogue, and flow because what you see is what you get... literally."<sup>2</sup>
- **The composer:** His job is to create and organize all types of music that the film needs.
- **The choreographer:** He is responsible for devising and coordinating the movement of dancing. He also teaches the moves to the dancers and actors of the film being created.

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<sup>1</sup> PROSPECTS, " Production designer, theatre/television/film," [https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/production-designer-theatre-television-film#:~:text=Production%20designers%20are%20responsible%20for,with%20the%20director%20and%20produ\\_cer.](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/production-designer-theatre-television-film#:~:text=Production%20designers%20are%20responsible%20for,with%20the%20director%20and%20produ_cer.) (accessed June 8, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Kater, *Design First for 3D Artists* (Texas/ WordWare Publishing, Inc., 2005), 192.

**Figure 5.** Film Pre-production Workflow

**Source:** StudioBinder, “How to produce a Movie: The Pre-production process explained,” <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/the-complete-pre-production-process/> (accessed June 5, 2019).

## Production

As far as the production phase is concerned, it is very significant to the overall filmmaking process because it is the stage where the ideas are set into motion. The American producer Jon Favreau believes:

Production— is like *going to war*. *You're dealing with a group of people that's like the size of a platoon. Everybody knows what they have to do. You get in, you get out, you make home wherever it is. You have to deal with what the situation throws you, and it's very stressful, and you can't sleep at night. And the more involved you are with the outcome of it, the more twisted up you're inside.*<sup>1</sup>

Hence, likening production to the act of fighting reveals the significance and the difficulty of this phase because it is not enough to have all the needed elements to create a film; it is about mastering the know-how to-do technique for a better outcome, Yet, as it is impossible to set a house without pillars, production cannot be accomplished if the previous stages are neglected. A film cannot begin if the script is not well structured, actors are not chosen and

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Eden H. Wurmfeld and Nicole Laloggia, *IFP/Los Angeles Independent Filmmaker's Manual* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2004), 281.



prepared, or the location is not set. During this phase, actors start the rehearsal to learn their lines and develop their characters and then the shooting begins. The American producer Christine Vachon avers:

Well, if pre-production goes well, I am pretty much not very busy during production, and that is the ideal. Pre-production periods tend to be intensely geared toward organizing every single day as much as possible, all with an eye toward figuring if our days are that organized, we'll be able to have a little time left.<sup>1</sup>

The shooting takes place according to the set schedule and budget and while it is undertaken, the members of the storyboard production remain in constant communication with each other to solve any problem or concern that may arouse at any moment. It all starts with the arrival of the whole crew to the location by their call time. Then, actors prepare themselves and rehearse the script with the director, the cinematographer, and the sound. Finally, when everything is organized, actions are shot in many takes<sup>2</sup> under the supervision of the director. Sometimes the same scene may be shot in more than one take because actors and actresses may find it difficult to get their lines or perform the sought after action as the director wishes it to be, or there may be some problems of lightening.<sup>3</sup> In the movie of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007), the English filmmaker David Yates, for instance, coerced the actors to undertake 30 takes per scene to engender perfect scenes, but his attitude caused tension between him and the actress Emma Watson.<sup>4</sup>

### **Post-production**

This is the last step in taking the story from script to screen, when the movie finally comes to life by wrapping the whole work and putting together the different pieces of the puzzle.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Wurmfeld 213.

<sup>2</sup> It is a term used in film studies that refers to a single continuous recorded performance while shooting scenes. It can be single, long or multiple, from Film Glossary, <https://filmglossary.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/term/take/#:~:text=A%20take%20is%20one%20run,camera%2C%20recording%20a%20single%20shot.&text=The%20director%20tends%20to%20have,shot%20of%20a%20particular%20scene> (accessed May 10, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The Sheffield Institute for the Recording Arts, <https://www.sheffieldav.com/education/how-many-takes-does-it-take> (accessed July 15, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> The Sheffield Institute for the Recording Arts.

Following the end of the production process, the editing takes place. In this stage, different tasks are to be taken, including, cutting raw footages, assembling all the good footages that have been captured in the production to create one entity, trimming, color grading, and adding music, dubbing and sound effect.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, it embraces the followings:

- **Editing the footages:** It is when editors begin the process of cutting the footages of scenes that have been filmed using some famous editing systems like Avid Media Composer, the Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere, and taking into consideration the director's goal and vision. Crucial to the whole process of filmmaking is editing because making decision on what to leave and what to take will certainly affect the message that this films carries within. In his *World Politics on Screen: Understanding International Relations through Popular Culture* (2014) Mark A. Sachleben acknowledges:

The role of editing in film and television production is a very important process. If it is done right, most of us do not realize that editing has occurred. Creating a film is more than pointing a camera and just shooting film. Many of the most famous films achieved in history achieved their status because of editing...film is constructing a series of shots to mean something...[and] editing is the process of selecting, organizing, and arranging scenes,. In some cases it also includes emphasizing points, deleting scenes and, perhaps, even distortion.<sup>2</sup>

- **Sound edit and mix:** sounds help get the audience involved in the story. Sound editors and Foley artists (sound artist named after the sounds effects artist Jack Foley) work together to incorporate the needed sounds and to assemble the audio tracks of a

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<sup>1</sup>StudioBinder, "What's post-production? A Quick Rundown & Why Trust Matters," <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-post-production/> (accessed March 2, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Mark A. Sachleben, *World Politics on Screen: Understanding International Relations through Popular Culture* (University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 7.

film, synchronizing it to the picture. In addition to that, they try to make sure that the sound is neither too loud nor too low in order not to distract the audience.

- **Music edit:** Music editors work with the composer and sound editors to decide on the purpose of the music and accordingly create and select the most appropriate one that would intensify the emotional mood of the movie in specific instances.
- **Visual effects and color correction:** It is the process of adjusting the color levels of the image to match the flow of the image.
- **Adding graphics:** As its name entails, this step consists of adding the needed titles, and graphics if needed.
- **Trailer:** This is the last step in the process of editing, yet the most significant one for upon its release, it divulges whether the film may be a hit or not. Usually trailers are aired online on websites, like YouTube, months before the release of the movie to trigger the audience's curiosity and to get immediate feedback from them. For instance, the trailer of the Indian movie *Krrish 3* (2013) received 17 million hits, and the movie also turned to be a remarkable hit.<sup>1</sup> This does not mean, however, that if the trailer is successful, the movie will be as such. As an illustration, the Indian film *Boss* (2013) that received millions of hits, but the movie itself was a failure.<sup>2</sup>

### **Distribution**

This is the moment when the journey of filmmaking comes to its end. Simply put, it is the phase of finally releasing the movie and making it available to the audience. Usually, films are distributed to cinemas first and then on Digital Video Disc (DVD), online streaming services, and then to television; however, low-budget films appear first in film-festivals and

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<sup>1</sup> Kumar Arun and Meenakshi N., *Marketing Management, 3rd Edition* (India: Vikas Publishing House, 2016), 344.

<sup>2</sup> Arun and N., 344.

then on online sites.<sup>1</sup> It may seem simple, but in fact, it is intricate as it involves following a clever systematic marketing strategy, and conducting daunting tedious negotiations with the distributors to concur in the financial terms and ancillary rights.<sup>2</sup> It also harnesses as much as possible advertising materials like posters, and press kits to make sure that news about the film reach a great number of people. Film distributors often organize luck parties and press releases to officially speed the distribution of the movie widely.<sup>3</sup>

The figure below summarizes the process of distribution that starts once the filmmakers are done with the movie and this latter is ready to be transmitted to the audience. At first, the filmmakers make an agreement with a distribution company who in turn negotiate with the representatives of theatres to reach an agreement that is based on leasing and profit-sharing. Both parties are governed by the premise of making sufficient return on their investment; that's why, the choice of well-known directors and actors at the pre-production process is very crucial for their fame guarantees more profits, increases the chances of securing a good deal, and accelerates the distribution of the movie. When the theater shows the movie, the audience buys tickets to watch it and here the process starts over from the bottom while every part gets what it craves for: the audience longs for entertainment; theatre, money; distributor, money and fame; and filmmakers, success, money and fame.

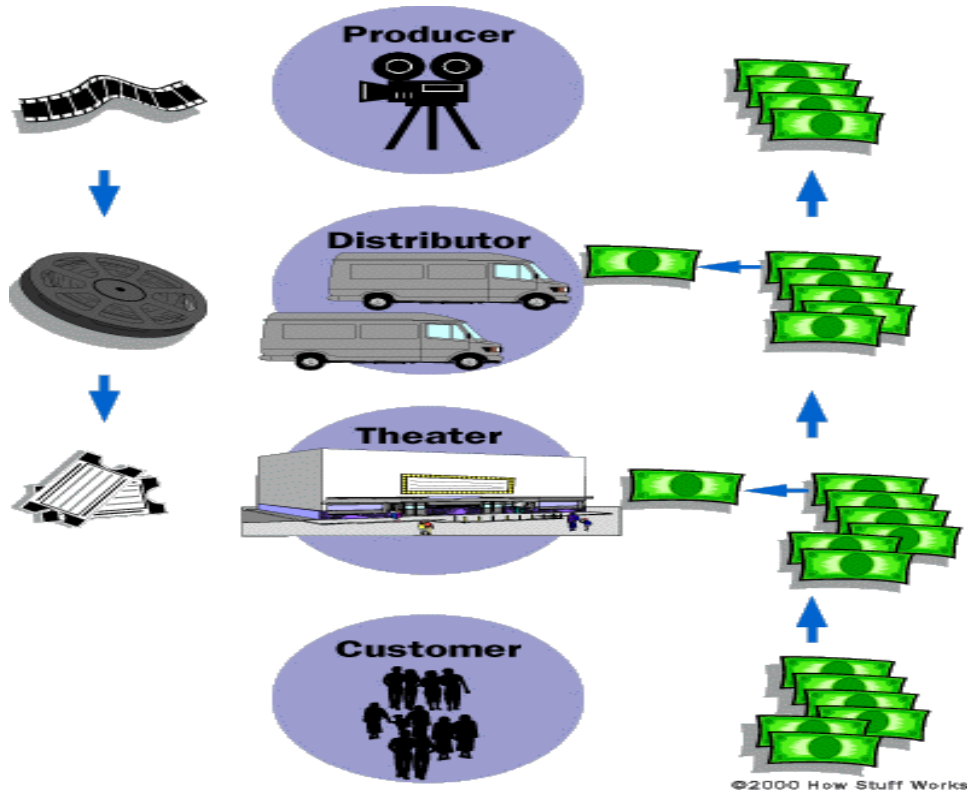
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<sup>1</sup> Willoughby, 13.

<sup>2</sup> They refer to all the rights that are related to the action of exploiting property differently from its original form, and usually the terms are found and listed on the purchase agreement. From upcounsel, "Ancillary rights: Everything you need to know,"

<https://www.upcounsel.com/ancillary-rights#:~:text=their%20original%20format,-,Ancillary%20rights%20refer%20to%20all%20rights%20that%20are%20related%20to,agreement%20or%20an%20option%20agreement>. (accessed July 1, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Freedman Doyle, *Make Your Movie: What You Need to Know about the Business and Politics of Filmmaking* (Oxford: Focal press, 2012), <https://books.google.dz/books>.

**Figure 6.** Film Distribution Flow

*Source:* Howstuffworks, “How Movie Distribution works,” <https://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/movie-distribution.htm> (accessed March 7, 2019).

### Films versus Series

The difference between films and series is related to the difference between television and cinema. Though both of them endow us with visual entertainment, still they come in different styles and formats. While the former produces live-action feature films, animated film, documentaries, short films and more; the latter produces miniseries, cartoons, sitcoms and episodic drama series.<sup>1</sup>

On what concerns producing series and films, the process of filmmaking is the same with some differences. The deputy Director of Film Commission in California asserts, “Working in television can be considerably more challenging than working on moderate- to high-budgeted

<sup>1</sup> Academy of Art University, “Film School: Differences between Films and Television Production,” (July 12, 2019), <https://blog.academyart.edu/film-school-differences-between-films-and-television-production/> (accessed September 4, 2019)

films...TV is its own three-ring circus, and churning out shows takes multitasking to a whole new level...it's a better place to perfect your craft."<sup>1</sup>In other words, working for series means practicing the same filmmaking process that has been mentioned in the previous lines several times according to the number of episodes that are supposed to be made and aired.

In fact, the most obvious difference is the number and content of each. Commonly known to all, films are shorter than series and they do treat one clear theme, while series do not. Though there may be an overall purpose to the series with one specific title, still it may tackle different themes within the distinct episodes it covers. Some series exceed 100 episodes while others, called miniseries, can contain about three to ten episodes.

Accordingly, the writing for both of them will certainly vary; a movie treats one story with lucid beginning, middle and end; whereas, series are episodic, involving multiple characters and different conclusions, "TV writers can take things slow, play with cliffhangers, and allow plots to develop over time."<sup>2</sup> This feature makes movies run about two to three hours which is not the case with series that does not have a time schedule and may run for years. As illustrations, the American fantasy adventure drama *Once upon a Time* series aired for seven different seasons on ABC<sup>3</sup> from October 23, 2011 to May 18, 2018; the British historical drama miniseries *the Gunpowder* was aired on October 21, 2017 for three weeks presenting three episodes only; the American historical romantic drama series *Reign* premiered on October 17, 2013, and was concluded after four seasons on June 16, 2017; to mention just a

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<sup>1</sup> Eve Light Honthaner, *The Complete Film Production Handbook* (Oxford: Elsevier, Inc., 2010), 395.

<sup>2</sup> Masterclass, "Lying at the heart of the American history, slavery has always been a sensitive issue to be broached. Hollywood, for instance, as an American film industry, has always eschewed from presenting Blacks on the screen," (October 2, 2020), <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/the-differences-between-writing-for-tv-versus-writing-for-film> (accessed October 10, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Known as the American Broadcasting Company, it refers to a famous American television a network that is a division of the Disney Company. Its headquarters are in New York City. Its history harks back to 1926 when the Radio Corporation of America (now RCA Corporation) and two other firms founded the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Due to changes throughout the years, ABC came to life, from Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "the American Broadcasting Company," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/American-Broadcasting-Company> (accessed January 5, 2019),

few. Not only this, long series are usually costly and require hiring more members to accomplish the work.

Another difference between television and cinema in general, and between series and films in particular lies in the phase of reception; while the first one is “family-centered”, the second is public,<sup>1</sup> which means that the success of each is revealed either immediately or after a while, respectively. On the one hand, if a movie is a hit, theatres will receive more eager audience after the first time the film is released, yet if it does not attain success, viewers will drop in number equally. On the other hand, series tell stories over an extended period of time, and their success cannot be determined promptly; as viewers we may get thrilled at the first episodes, bored with some and then disappointed at the end.

It is noteworthy to shed light on the elements that determine the success on of any movie or series. When asked about the different aspects that should be taken into consideration while making any movie, the Japanese film director and screenwriter Akira Kurosawa replied:

There are many aspects to a film: cultural, philosophical, musical, visual, and so on. But the most important thing is for these elements to come together and make a movie. When this is done well, it’s only then that the audience can perceive a truly beautiful film...it is quite difficult.<sup>2</sup>

If a movie meets these elements, it can mesmerize viewers, be them common people or professional critics. For the critics, the following factors are always evaluated and interpreted:

- **Directing:** a good director imagines the scene before embarking on filming.

Accordingly, he should always communicate his intentions to the crew mainly the actors and the cinematographer because it is through them that his ideas come lively on the screen. Usually the success of the product hinges upon his role because even

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<sup>1</sup> Gerould Daniel et al., *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama* (Wayne State University Press, 1991), 441.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Bert Cardullo, *World Directors in Dialogue: Conversations on Cinema* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 120.

if he is working with the most talented actors and crew, he reaches nothing if he fails in placing every element into its right place. In their *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing* (2016) Bethany Rooney, Mary Lou Belli believe:

[Directing] is a powerful, creative, and complicated job...[his] job is a multitasking one that requires many different skill sets, from knowing how to communicate with a actors, to understanding the physical requirements for accomplishing a shot, to editing the final perfect perfectly. So what is this “something” a true director has? It is an ability to both have a vision and lead others to help you create it...a director is a first and foremost a leader– Moses.<sup>1</sup>

A good director, hence, is creative and he knows when, where and what to include, to add and to omit. He interprets the script and knows how to avail himself of everything to tell the story with the camera.

- **Writing:** without a good script, neither the director nor the other crew can perform a good job. It is the ability of letting the viewer dissect and comprehend the structure of the story whether the one that falls in the norms (beginning, middle, and end), or the one that follows another structure. What matters is to create a good script that secures the engagement of the audience and helps the story unfold on screen.
- **Cinematography:** the cinematographer’s role is of a crucial importance either. He is the one who helps translates the director’s vision on screen with his camera. If one element is missing, the whole process will fall apart. Lightening the scene when it is necessary and controlling the direction of the camera are all actions that subsume in the cinematographer’s role, and the choice he makes help send the intended message.

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<sup>1</sup> Bethany Rooney and Mary Lou Belli, *Directors Tell the Story: Master the Craft of Television and Film Directing* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1. And Josh Becker and Bruce Campbell, *The Complete Guide to Low-Budget Feature Filmmaking* (Maryland: Wildside Press LLC, 2006), 92.



His effectiveness lies on the ability to “[work] as a visual storyteller’, [and to be] engaged in translating character and story in supportive and emotive images.”<sup>1</sup>

- **Editing:** without editing, there will be no meaning but only a bulk of footages that need to be assembled logically and purposefully to create the final product. “ The editor is the unsung hero of the production process”<sup>2</sup>; he is the one who selects meticulously and cautiously the best footages to be used when creating and refining the final version of the motion picture, be it a movie or episodes from series, fulfilling the director’s vision.
  
- **Acting:** audience usually remember actors more than anything else in films or series. They usually refer to the ability of the actors to incarnate the characters. When we watch movies, for instance, we sometimes cry, laugh, or simply zealously share with the character the same spirit, feelings, and dreams; if he is waiting for something or someone or an event to happen, we worry as much as he does and may not contain our excitements when he gets it. This can never happen if the actor is bad. In her *The Actress: Hollywood Acting and the Female Star* (2008) the Professor of English and Film Studies in the Department of Literature at the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern University, USA Karen Hollinger clarifies that there are different methods of acting, yet whatever the method is, the actor is supposed to give up his personality to become someone else, and if he/she prefers not to make such a sacrifice, the acting will be deemed poor.<sup>3</sup>
  
- **Production Design:** depicting Queen Victoria during the Victorian Era (1837-1901) certainly differs from depicting peasants during the Norman period (1066-1154) for

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Schaefer and Larry Salvato, *Masters of Light: Conversations with Contemporary Cinematographers* (California: University of California Press, 1984), xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Donald L. Diefenbach, *Video Production Techniques: Theory and Practice From Concept to Screen* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 60.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Hollinger, *The Actress: Hollywood Acting and the Female Star* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 48.

each lived in a specific period, wore differently, and dwelt in dissimilar houses. It is the job of the production designer to provide the needed aesthetic demands that serve the director's vision of the scenes and guide the audience towards a deeper understanding of the surroundings in particular and the film in general.<sup>1</sup>

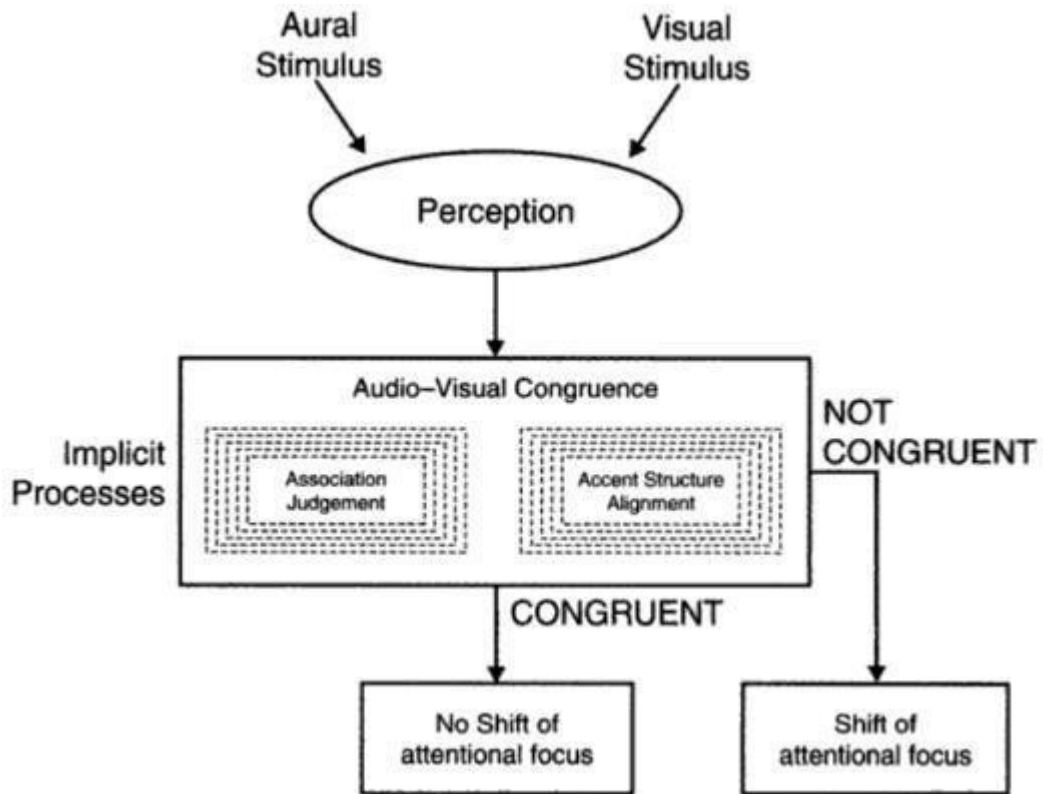
- **Sound:** The relation between sound and image in the cinematic context is so indispensable to be overlooked. Sound can be used in a variety of ways to add some dramatic effects. Both the implementation of soundtrack and its omission supplement, enhance and expand upon the meaning of the film's narrative.<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to investigate the relationship between the musical soundtrack and the visual images in motion pictures, the professors of music Scott D. Lipscomb and Kendall, Roger A. from the universities of Minnesota and Carolina respectively developed their model (see fig.7). This latter explains and emphasizes the importance of the use of music appropriately and in tandem with the image to create a meaningful message and to avoid the audience's distraction while watching.

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<sup>1</sup> Beverly Heisner, *Production Design in the Contemporary American Film: A Critical Study of 23 Movies and Their Designers* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company Publishers, Inc., 1997), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Miel, Raymond Mac Donald and David J. Hargreaves, *Musical Communication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 383 and Scott D. Lipscomb and David E. Tolchinsky, *The role of music communication in cinema* (February 14, 2004), [http://www.lipscomb.umn.edu/docs/FilmMusic\\_LipscombTolchinsky\\_final\\_asPublished.pdf](http://www.lipscomb.umn.edu/docs/FilmMusic_LipscombTolchinsky_final_asPublished.pdf) (accessed May 3, 2019).

**Figure 7.** Lipscomb and Kendall's (1994) Film Music Paradigm



*Source:* Miel, and Raymond Mac Donald and David J. Hargreaves, 385.

To exemplify, the famous American epic romance *Titanic* (1997) was released on December 19, 1997 and gained significant critical and commercial success. It would not reach this spot if the aforementioned elements were not present per excellence. James Cameron won the Academy award for best director; Russell Carpenter for best cinematographer; Deborah Lynn Scott, for best designer; Gary Rydstrom, Tom Johnson, Gary Summers, Mark Ulano, Tom Belfort, and Christopher Boyes for the creation of best sound; Conrad Buff IV, James Cameron, and Richard A. Harris for best editing; to name only a few.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IMDb, "Titanic 1997 Awards," <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120338/awards> (accessed March 11, 2019).

## **Inching Towards Equality: The Representation of Blacks and Slavery in the American Motion Picture**

When Blacks got their freedom in 1865, they aspired to a new comfortable life, but the reality struck them very hard. They were faced with all types of racist discrimination, including segregation in nearly every accommodation place, and lynching. If they ever tried to defend their new status, the answer was the same: you are the ‘colored other’. The African American civil rights activist William Edward Burghardt expressed it, “the very shout of the shout of emancipated Negroes was a threat [to white people].”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Whites who had always considered themselves as superior and acted accordingly could not relinquish their beliefs to accept their former slaves as equal American citizens. Blacks were prevented from voting, from having access to places where Whites went, and from even letting their children play with the Whites.’ The American president Theodore Roosevelt (p.1858-1919) claimed that “the African is a member of a perfect stupid race”<sup>2</sup>. Based on this premise, Blacks were treated as social pariahs. Colonel Samuel Thomas who was born in Georgia and was an official in the Freedman Bureau<sup>3</sup> admitted:

The whites esteem the blacks their property by natural right, and however much they may admit that the individual relations of masters and slaves have been destroyed by the war and the President’s emancipation proclamation, they still have an ingrained feeling that the blacks at large belong to the whites at large, and whenever opportunity serves they treat the colored people just as their profit, caprice or passion may dictate.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (New York: the Free Press, 1935), 132.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Coombs, *The Black Experience in America: the Immigrant Heritage of America* (North Charleston: BookSurge LLC, 2004), 156.

<sup>3</sup> Formally known as the Bureau of Refugees, it was established by the Congress in 1865. As its name implies, its aim was to help the former black slaves who had their freedom and the poor Whites in the south. It provided food, housing and medical aid. Furthermore, it established schools and offered legal assistance to those who needed it. From History, “Freedman’s Bureau”(October 3, 2018), <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/freedmens-bureau> (accessed January 15, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Paul Finkelman, *Milestone Documents in African American History: Exploring the Essential Primary Sources* (Dallas: Schlager Group Inc., 2010), 615.

Even magazines, literary works, cartoons and news articles depicted them as being worthless, lazy, superstitious, liars, and drunkards.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Blacks vied the new situation; instead of surrendering and acquiescing in Whites' control, they fought heart and soul to change their conditions to the best, and it took them years and sacrifices before attaining their aim. It was until the second half of the twentieth century that they could be considered as full American citizens after the passage the two most victorious Acts: the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. The former prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex or national origin, and the latter outlawed the discriminatory voting practices which were espoused by most of the bigoted racists in many southern states after the Civil War, including literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting<sup>2</sup>.

When it comes to the American motion picture, the situation was not different. Discriminatory acts were apparent not only in hampering Blacks from joining the crew of the industry but also in portraying them. The African American actress Amber Riley recalled the harsh words of a producer who told her that she and other actors of color were “a little more disposable, because that’s the way the world is.”<sup>3</sup> Blacks suffered from a “systematic exclusion”<sup>4</sup> from the production, distribution, and exhibition of films in Hollywood, and their negative portrayal had a racial political agenda. It served the interests of the dominant white class and advocated the notion of White’s superiority over Blacks’ inferiority. The African American production manager Grace Blake explains how the American industry has always precluded Blacks from the filmmaking crew:

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<sup>1</sup> Coombs, 153.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online , s.v. “Literacy Tests,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/literacy-test> (accessed April 20, 2019)

<sup>3</sup> Elaine Low and Angelique Jackson, “The Reckoning Over Representation: Black Hollywood Speaks Out, But Is the Industry Learning?,” (June 30, 2020) <https://variety.com/2020/biz/features/black-representation-hollywood-inclusion-diversity-entertainment-1234693219/> (accessed July 15, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Chris Miller, “The Representation of the Black Male in Film,” *Journal of African American Men* Vol. 3 (Winter 1998), under Springer, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41819338?seq=1> (accessed August 5, 2020).

The industry is so much of a family-oriented business. No- body really wants to teach anybody anything. You may find that all of the people in a particular category are blood related, specifically with grips and electricians. That's one of the ways we, as black people, have always been kept out of this business.<sup>1</sup>

In Hollywood's early beginnings, Blacks were always represented in a demeaning way as crude stereotypes, passive, hopeless and worthless creatures.<sup>2</sup> Film historian Donald Bogle identified the different roles Blacks were assigned to perform as follows: the "tom" character who was "socially accepted good Negro character... submissive, stoic, generous, selfless and oh-so-very kind,"<sup>3</sup> the "coon" character who was typically funny, lazy and unreliable, the big and fat "mammy" character; and the "tragic mulatto" character that referred to people of mixed black and white ancestry which was regarded as "deregatory feature."<sup>4</sup> Blacks, in fact, were not even allowed to portray their ethnic minority because having a black man as an actor on the screen was subject to racial treatment that was fought for as all the other aspects of segregation were. It all started with the blackface technique that depicted Blacks by the non-blacks during the Silent Era (1911-1926). White actors darkened their skins to conform with the character they were supposed to incarnate (see fig.8)

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Miller, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Silk and John Silk, *Racism and Anti-racism in American Popular Culture: Portrayals of African Americans in Fiction and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 131.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Stephanie Greco Larson, *Media and Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 27 and Camille R. Michaels, *African Americans in Films: Issues of Race in Hollywood* (New York: Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2018), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Larson, 27, and Michaels, 9.

**Figure 8.** The White American Film Star Al Jolson (1886-1950) Wearing His Famous ‘Black-and White Minstrel’ Make-up



**Source:** Gettyimages, <https://www.gettyimages.fr/photos/blackface?mediatype=photography&phrase=blackface&sort=mostpopular> (accessed July 15, 2020)

The American actor Al Jolson (1886-1950), for instance, starred in *Black and White* movie in the 1920s as a detective who puts on blackface to investigate a crime and save an accused man.<sup>1</sup> The role signifies that the blackface was not used negatively to depict Blacks but only as a method of disguise which is an idea that served the film narrative, but still it demonstrates the racial zeitgeist that permeated the film industry at that time.

D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) is a perfect example where the blackface technique was deployed. This film did not only despise Blacks but it was a “[blatant] racist attack on them, [where they were portrayed] as sexual threat to the purity of white women and

<sup>1</sup> Philip Fisher, *The New American Studies: Essays from Representations* (California: University of California Press, 1991), 379.

a biological threat to the purity of the white race.”<sup>1</sup> However, the practice started to vanish with the inclusion of sound in films, when people started demanding more realistic voices of Blacks that white actors could not imitate.<sup>2</sup>

Evident scarcity of positive black roles and non-race-based films remained the same until the 1960s when Hollywood encountered a remarkable recession that led black producers, performers and technicians to seize the opportunity of running their own films and stamping their names. *Sweet Sweetback’s Badaasssss Song* (1971) and *Shaft* (1971) were made by the African American filmmakers Melvin Van Peebles and Gordon Parks, respectively, and both of them grossed between 11 and 18 million dollars.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, black actors found themselves, eventually, offered roles in films for Hollywood realized the economic profits that would be gained from the black audiences.<sup>4</sup>

This period is dubbed as the Blaxploitation period since Blacks were only exploited to compensate for the bankruptcy that a number of industrial companies were facing like the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) that produced *Shaft* and *Shaft’s Big Score* (1972 ).<sup>5</sup> Both films featured Black actors – Richard Roundtree and Moses Gunn – in leading roles.

Indeed, the term Blaxploitation is a sub-category of the Exploitation films which exploit sensational happenings for story value; notoriety, for publicity value; and audience, for box office value.<sup>6</sup> Reinforced by the abandonment of the Production Code due to a series of federal court decisions between 1952 and 1958 to protect the rights of the motion picture industries<sup>7</sup>, filmmakers started tackling more controversial topics like interracial sex scenes

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Michaels, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Jackson, *Race and Racism: Essays in Social Geography* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 278.

<sup>4</sup> Jackson, 278.

<sup>5</sup> Linda Ruth Williams and Michael Hammond, *Contemporary American Cinema* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2006), 191.

<sup>6</sup> Williams and Michael Hammond, 189.

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “The threat of television,” <https://www.britannica.com/art/history-of-the-motion-picture/The-threat-of-television#ref508174> (accessed August 20, 2019)



and brutal violence and hired Blacks in the crew, creating, hence, the Blaxploitation type. From 1970 to 1975, about 100 films were released that featured chiefly black casts and Sidney Poitier was the first black man to be voted by theater owners onto the top-ten list of Hollywood's biggest stars after starring in three hit films in 1967.<sup>1</sup> The American film critic, author, publisher, and educator James Monaco points out in his *American Film Now: The People, the Power, the Money, the Movies* (1979), "The birth of Black film of the late sixties and early seventies- with Blacks, by Blacks, and for Blacks; written, directed, and acted by Blacks (and sometimes even produced and financed by Blacks) - was the major success of Hollywood renaissance of 1968-1970."<sup>2</sup>

However, although Blacks' presence in Hollywood revived it, still hot controversial debate and refusal arouse from the part of the black community. Black critics believed that these films served Whites' pockets and affected the self-image and behavior of black youth.<sup>3</sup> The African America professor S. Craig Watkins of media studies criticizes:

The association of the term exploitation with African Americans conjures up ideas of unfair, even racist treatment. In case of film, for example, the expression Blaxploitation was added to our critical vocabulary to refer to the wave of commercial films that... targeted black urban movie goers.<sup>4</sup>

*Super Fly* (1972), for instance, was one of the most controversial Blaxploitation crime dramas, affecting Blacks in a great deal. Directed by Gordon Park, it featured the African American Ron O'Neal as a cocaine dealer. The black journalist Nathan McCall revealed that as a young man he started dealing drugs because he was highly influenced by the film's main character.<sup>5</sup> In the same vein, Jesse Algeron Rhines notes in his *Black Film, White Money*

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<sup>1</sup> Williams and Michael Hammond, 189.

<sup>2</sup> James Monaco, *American Film Now: The People, the Power, the Money, the Movies* (New York: Zoetrope, 1979), 187.

<sup>3</sup> Williams and Michael Hammond, 191.

<sup>4</sup> S. Craig Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 172.

<sup>5</sup> Williams and Michael Hammond, 192.

(2000) that the “*Super Fly*’s cocaine dealer was a more romantic conflicted dealer figure whose slangs and clothes cut deeper than *Shaft* into the black community’s psyche.”<sup>1</sup>

Progressively, Blacks’ presence on the American screen altered mainly with the appearance of black directors like Spike Lee and Tyler Perry who cast many successful African American films in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the depiction of slavery became more apparent, and many films were released tackling the matter, including *the Littlest Rebel* (1935), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *Band of Angels* (1957), *the Defiant Ones* (1958), *Jefferson in Paris* (1994), *Amistad* (1997), *Beloved* (1998), *Django Unchained* (2012), *12 Years Slave* (2013), and *Birth of a Nation* (2016), to list but few.

It is worth mentioning, though, that even the portrayal of slavery itself went through changes from sentimentalizing it to condemning it by depicting Blacks as troublemakers or victims, respectively. In this regard, in 2016 the mini-series *Roots* was released with the aim of reviving the distant history of slavery. It is a remake of the 1977 miniseries with the same name, based on Alex Haley’s 1976 novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.

#### **Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1976): from the Novel to the Miniseries**

Alex Haley’s *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) is a story of different generations, of Haley’s ancestors. When Haley was a child, he used to sit with his maternal grandmother, Cynthia Palmer, and many other older women, enjoying listening to them as they were telling and re-telling stories of million slaves who were dragged from their homeland to the New World, including his great-great-great-great grandfather, Kunta Kinte. As a young boy, the fascinating tales had always mesmerized him, and the bewitchment grew within his soul as he, himself, grew older. Spending 12 years of research, Haley had always believed that God was leading him to dig deeper in his past and to unravel the remote world

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<sup>1</sup> Jesse Algeon Rhines, *Black Film, White Money* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Spike Lee,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Spike-Lee> (accessed April 30, 2019) and Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Tyler Perry,” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tyler-Perry> (accessed April 30, 2019).

and history of his ancestors, not only for him but also for the million slaves whose stories were not meant to be consigned to oblivion. He reckoned:

It is one of those things that God in His infinite wisdom and in his time and way decided should happen. I feel I'm a conduit through which this is happening. It was just something that was meant to be. I say this because there were so many things that had to happen over which I had no control. And if any one thing hadn't happened, then this could not have come together.<sup>1</sup>

Though he began his career as a steward in the Coast Guard, he dedicated his life to polish up his writing skills, so he would transmit what he learnt years ago to the whole world and to give his ancestors the credit they deserve for he believed that Blacks have historical and honorable "roots."<sup>2</sup> Whenever he sat in front of the sea, he kept reminding himself about the crowded slave ships that brought million Africans to a spot where the shackles of slavery bound them forever. He, thus, asserted:

My own ancestors would automatically also be a symbolic saga of all African-descent people—who are without exception the seeds of someone like Kunta who was born and grew up in some black African village, someone who was captured and chained down in one of those slave ships that sailed them across the same ocean, into some succession of plantations, and since then a struggle for freedom.<sup>3</sup>

His desire to learn every single detail to back up the accounts he heard propelled him to make more than one trip to African villages like *Juffure Village* in Gambia, Kunta Kinte's home, and England to gather as much as he could firsthand sources. He visited museums, libraries, and checked archives and records just to discover what was missed in the old women's stories that were filled with characters he could never forget, including Uncle Mingo, Massa Waller, Miss Kizzy, Tom, and their own grandfather, yet, the most enthralling

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<sup>1</sup> Robert G. McCreight, *The Psalms Were Made for Lent: Six Sermons and Worship Services* (Ohio: CSS Publishing, 1996), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Richard T. Stanley, *Disco Days: a Social History of the 1970'S* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2015), 43.

<sup>3</sup> David Shirley, *Black Americans of Achievement: Alex Haley* (China: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), 67.

tale that used to impress him whenever it was recounted was the ladies' Chicken George, who finally led the family to freedom.<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, when Haley felt confident that he had gathered the needed information, he began writing to engender one of the most successful pieces of writing: *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976). This latter chronicles the horrors of the slave trade, the Atlantic passage to the American colonies, and the slaves' lives there from 1750 until the end of the American Civil War in 1865. It first appeared in condensed form in the *Reader's Digest* magazine in 1974.<sup>2</sup> The book became the number-one national best-seller, sold in the millions, and was published as a paperback in 1977.<sup>3</sup>

The success that the book attained led the Americans to commemorate both Alex Haley and his ancestors by holding *The Kunta Kinte Heritage Festival* each year on September 29 on the Annapolis City Dock in Maryland where Kunta Kinte first arrived in 1767 aboard the slave ship *Lord Ligonier*. Besides, they built the Alex Haley Memorial in 1981 in Annapolis (see Appendix C) that depicts Haley holding an open book on his lap and speaking to several children of different ethnic backgrounds with the aim of preserving the African heritage and of teaching all the generations that education can bring racial healing.<sup>4</sup>

The book, indeed, provides a powerful gateway to an important period of history that if is disregarded, a part of the American identity would be, as well. Michael Eric Dyson who is a Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University remarks:

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<sup>1</sup> Shirley, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley,

<sup>3</sup> Lean'tin Bracks, *African American Almanac: 400 Years of Triumph, Courage and Excellence* (Canton: Visible Ink Press, 2012), 145.

<sup>4</sup> Shirley, 9.

Alex Haley's *Roots* tapped deeply into the black American hunger for an African ancestral home...it changed the way black folk thought about themselves and how America viewed them...[Haley] made it clear that black humanity is a shining beacon that miraculously endured slavery's brutal horrors...[He] brought Blacks out of the shadows of shame and ignorance...[and] helped us to resist that seductive lie with a tonic splash of colorful truth: that the nation had yet to successfully negotiate its perilous ties to an institution that built white prosperity while crushing black opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, *Roots* not only entrenched its place as a notable historical book and novel, but also led America to face one of its darkest hidden sides in its bicentennial celebration of independence: the one that boosted democracy and freedom but was itself the promoter of slavery. Magnetized with its both content and success, the American producer Stan Margulies wrote to the ABC's manager Lou Rudolph in 1975, "Haley has completed the manuscript for the book *Roots*. Now that you've got this, don't expect anything else in your Christmas stocking."<sup>2</sup>

By that time, Margulies and the screenwriter Bill Blinn had been working for a year to adapt the story for television. Blinn read the story and also attended Haley's lectures to be well informed about the subject.<sup>3</sup> Later he reminisced, "[Haley] was a fascinating storyteller. He talked quietly, he talked with almost no histrionics, no role playing...You could not look away, you could not listen to what he was saying. He was hypnotic."<sup>4</sup> Different versions have been written before reaching the final one because at the beginning they wanted to rely on the system of flashbacks wherein Haley could be featured as both a character and a narrator; yet, they recognized the importance of focusing on Kunta Kinte as the main character.<sup>5</sup>

Soon, the process of selecting the best actor to perform the leading role began. Diverse theatre programs were consulted because the producers "wanted the audience to completely

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<sup>1</sup> Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (Philadelphia: De Capo Press, 2007), xi-x.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew F. Delmont, *Making Roots: A Nation Captivated* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 103.

<sup>3</sup> Delmont, 103.

<sup>4</sup> Delmont, 104.

<sup>5</sup> Delmont, 104-105.

become involved with Kunta Kinte, as someone they did not know, a brand-new experience.”<sup>1</sup> The process was not easy but by the end, the choice rested upon the African Americans LeVar Burton and John Amos to perform the roles of the young and the old Kunta Kinte, respectively.

Furthermore, to secure the commercial success of the miniseries and to ensure that a large number of people would watch the series, the producers sought to hire stars to cast in the white roles. The producer David Wolper asserted, “If people perceive *Roots* to be a black history show—nobody is going to watch it.”<sup>2</sup> Although, at that time, Blacks’ fight had already culminated in being able to vote and to access all places as fully American citizens, the spirit of racial discrimination could not be eradicated for if the law could control bigoted racists’ deeds, it could not do with their beliefs, emotions and attitudes. The actress Leslie Uggams expressed her sincere delight of being part of the crew, she stated:

The way we had been depicted. We were just slaves on a plantation. No one knew where we came from and how did we get there. Alex wrote this story of people who were kings and queens and had a beautiful life...and were taken away to another country denied speaking their own language and, names.<sup>3</sup>

Once the cast was selected, filming the first episode started in April 1976 with the presence of Haley. Actor George Stanford Brown confessed, “We sat around Haley like children, he was our father<sup>4</sup>.”

In the same vein, the designers tried to avoid any kind of stereotyped images of Africa by relying on Haley’s findings. Their job was challenging as they aimed to design sets and costumes that made the scene appear realistic. The St. Simons Island, Georgia was picked as

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<sup>1</sup> Delmont, 106.

<sup>2</sup> Delmont, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Delmont, 111-112.

<sup>4</sup> Delmont, 114.

the most suitable location to create the connection between the black audience and the African culture and heritage.<sup>1</sup>

In January 1977, ABC-TV finally produced the twelve-hour miniseries *Roots*, sparking a black self-discovery phenomenon. The miniseries received 37 Primetime Emmy Award<sup>2</sup> nominations and could win nine<sup>3</sup> of them. Additionally, it won a Golden Globe<sup>4</sup> and Peabody Awards<sup>5</sup>, and unprecedented Nielsen<sup>6</sup> ratings for the finale, which still holds a record as the third highest rated episode for any type of television series, and the second most watched overall series finale in U.S. television history<sup>7</sup>.

In 1977, The *Time* magazine reported that when *Roots* was being aired, bartenders seized the opportunity by turning the channel selector at stations that showed the series to keep customers.<sup>8</sup> Besides, the miniseries was impressive to the point that parents named their children after its characters.<sup>9</sup> Though Alex Haley was accused of presenting false ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Delmont, 115.

<sup>2</sup> The Emmy Award is a trophy presented annually to the most successful achievements in the American television. The awards are made by the American National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences wherein only members of the academy vote for the awards, and every member votes for his own discipline. From Encyclopedia Britannica Online ,s.v. "Emmy Award," <https://www.britannica.com/art/Emmy-Award> (June 17, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> The Nation, Thailand, "Roots returns to the screen," (June 4, 2018), <https://www.nationthailand.com/movie/30346942> (accessed June 24, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> The Golden Globe Award refers to the award presented annually by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) to the most successful products in motion pictures and television during the previous year. From Encyclopedia Britannica Online ,s.v. "Golden Globe Award," <https://www.britannica.com/art/Golden-Globe-Award> (June 17, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> The Peabody Award or the George Foster Peabody Award refers to any of the awards presented annually by the University of Georgia's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication in recognition of outstanding public service and achievement in electronic media. From Encyclopedia Britannica Online ,s.v. "Peabody Award," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peabody-Award> (June 17, 2018)

<sup>6</sup> The Nielsen ratings are national ratings of the popularity of American television shows that was developed by A.C. Nielsen in 1950. From Encyclopedia Britannica Online ,s.v. "Nielsen ratings," <https://www.britannica.com/art/Nielsen-ratings> (June 17, 2018)

<sup>7</sup> The Nation, Thailand.

<sup>8</sup> Horace Newcomb, "Haley, Alex (1921-1992)", in *Encyclopedia of Television* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1051.

<sup>9</sup> Newcomb, 1051.

as being factual, his Kunta Kinte became an archetype of an African slave for million viewers inside and outside the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In 2016, the need to create a remake for the miniseries arose with the aim of retelling the history of slavery to the modern generation as the producer Mark Wolper indicated:

Every generation has an obligation to teach [history] to the next generation...Pretty much anyone under the age of 37 hasn't heard the story. Maybe they've heard of 'Roots' or heard of Kunta Kinte. Then you realize it's a story we have to keep telling over and over again<sup>2</sup>.

Mark Wolper, indeed, refused the idea of re-making *Roots* at the beginning, but he was convinced once his 16-year-old son responded to the original miniseries negatively by stating, "I understand why *Roots* is important, but, Dad, it is like your music; it does not speak to me."<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, in 2016 a remake, with the same name, was commissioned by the History channel and screened on the Memorial Day on May 30, 2016, while the trailer was released on February 11, 2016. Since, the original *Roots* was, as the Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan told the *Time* magazine back then, "the right time, the right story and the right form,"<sup>4</sup> the remake aspired for the same.

*Roots* 1977 offered insights onto what should follow the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s: Blacks' pride and that slavery is not only part of Blacks' history but also of the Whites.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the remake aimed to revive the same spirit during a time where a new Civil Rights Movement arose: the Black Lives Matter, igniting one's curiosity about

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<sup>1</sup> Elżbieta Rokosz-Piejko, "Adapting, Remaking, Re-visioning: Alex Haley's *Roots* in a Triangular Relationship with Its Two Television Adaptations," (2018), <https://search.proquest.com/openview/1d14e9f01e8e0d2466c0ed0064ba50ad/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=4510165> (accessed August 1, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Joe Otterson, "Roots' Producer Says Whipping Scene Made Star Malachi Kirby 'Collapse'," (May 31, 2016), <https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/roots-producer-says-whipping-scene-made-star-malachi-011312369.html> (accessed July 5, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> World Screen, "*Roots's* LeVar Burton, Anika Noni Rose & Mark Wolper" (2016, June 14), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SL\\_PHIRskQ4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SL_PHIRskQ4) (accessed May 23, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Lily Rothman, "The Roots of Roots", *Time* (May 19, 2016), <https://time.com/4341421/the-roots-of-roots/> (accessed August 12, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> Lily Rothman, "The Roots of Roots", *Time* (May 19, 2016), <https://time.com/4341421/the-roots-of-roots/> (accessed August 12, 2019)



whether the remake reached its aim, and if it did, what was the adopted way and what did it reveal? These questions are to be answered in the following chapters through the adoption of the Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory of Communication.

### **Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Theory of Communication**

Revolutionizing the field of communication studies, the Jamaican-born British leading cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall helped establishing the British School of Cultural Studies during the first half of the twentieth century, directed the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in England, and taught sociology at the Open University, London. His work stressed the issues of race, gender, African Diaspora and the media studies. The British journalist Martin Jacques described him as “one of the finest orators...and the best academic you ever heard,”<sup>1</sup> and the British newspaper *The Observer* Concurred, “[he] is one of the county's leading cultural theorists.”<sup>2</sup>

From 1973 until 1980, Hall elaborated his encoding/decoding model of communication that offers a profound explanation of the communication process and opposed the preceding model. His innovation was the turning point in his career. He ascertains that communication cannot be all the time linear, i.e. receiving messages is not a passive action. He, thereby, altered this misconception by endorsing the idea that the consumers of the information are at the same time producers.<sup>3</sup>

James Procter castigates, “Traditionally, the meaning of the media message was viewed as static, transparent and unchanging throughout the communication process.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the linear model, which was developed by the American scientists Shannon and Weaver in

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Helen Davis, *Understanding Stuart Hall* (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice, *Gender and Women's Studies: Critical Terrain* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2018), 262.

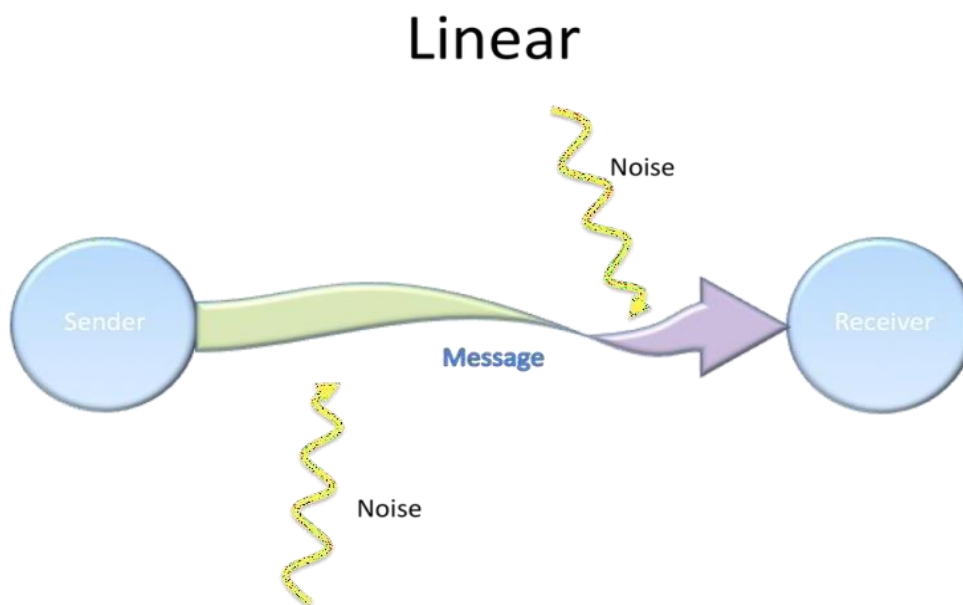
<sup>3</sup> Peter Dechemey and Katherine Sender, *Stuart Hall lives: cultural studies in an age of digital media* (London: Routledge, 2016), 20.

<sup>4</sup> James Procter, *Stuart Hall* (London: Routledge, 2004), 57.

1948, is a one-way, non-interactive communication that happens in a straight line (see fig.9). It starts by the sender and does not offer the receiver the chance to provide his immediate feedback. This means that once the meaning is created and determined by the sender, it will not be changed throughout the process of communication. It occurs as follows:

- The sender prepares and sends the message which is the information he wants to convey to a specific receiver.
- The message is encoded to fit the channel being used, like emails, radio, or television.
- The receiver receives and decodes the message.

**Figure 9.** Shannon and Weaver’s model of communication



**Source:** Amy M. Corey, “Introducing Communication,” *Open Library: PRESSBOOKS*, <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/evolutionhumancommunication/chapter/chapter-1/#:~:text=Originally%20developed%20by%20Shannon%20%26%20Weaver,the%20source%20of%20the%20message>. (accessed June 19, 2019)

Refuting this model, Hall argues that a recipient not only receives the message but also gives it a meaning according to his knowledge, cultural background, experiences and context.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the notions of ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ were both replaced by the term ‘communicator’ because both senders and receivers are engaged in an interactive

<sup>1</sup> Procter, 58.

communication wherein both of them send and receive messages. Besides, a receiver's understanding may not be as the sender expects it to be.

Hall's model was revolutionary because it brought up novelty to the field of communication as it rigorously approached the following points:

- The production of the message.
- The dissemination of the message.
- The reception of the message.

Communication, for Hall, starts with the encoding phase which refers to a “generative process whereby signs are endowed with meaning and structured into codes in the course of production of a specific text.”<sup>1</sup> It ends with the decoding stage where the message is received and interpreted. The whole process is produced through the articulation of different autonomous moments, as he called them: production, circulation, distribution, consumption, and reproduction.<sup>2</sup> This means that the reception of the message is not controlled by its coding; it is rather subject to any interpretation depending on the individual's background, and personal experiences; and the message is produced and then reproduced because the receiver is not a passive recipient.

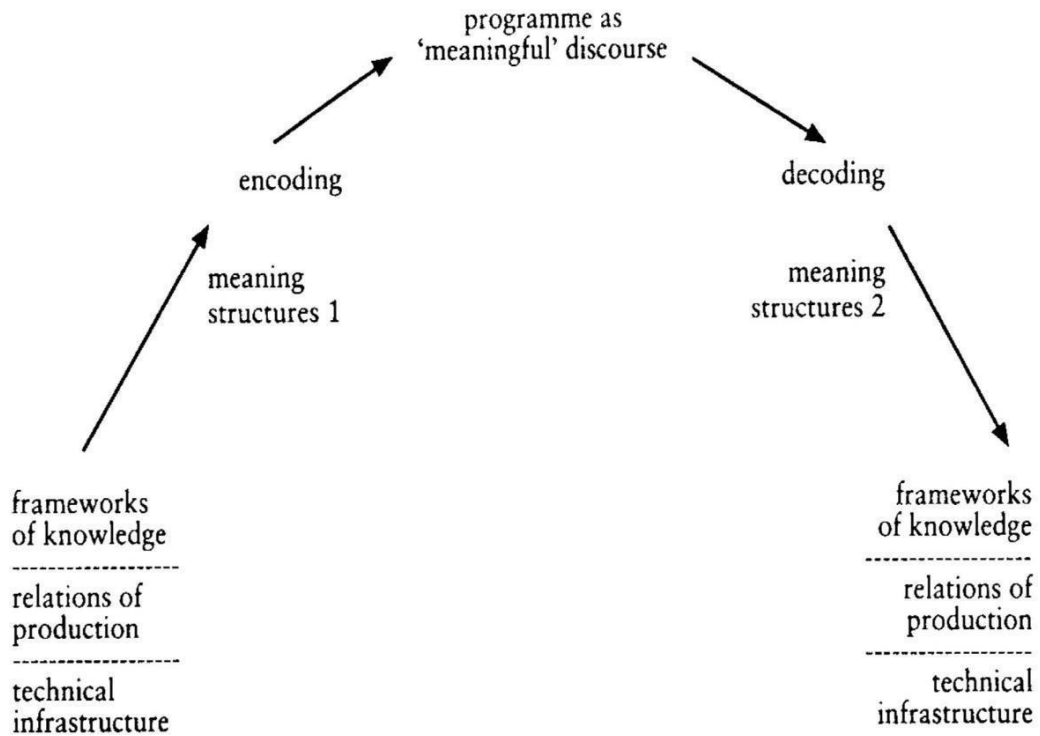
The figure below represents the different steps that a specific communication goes through according to Hall's theory. As explained above, it begins with the ‘encoding’ stage and ends with the ‘decoding’ phase. Meaningful discourse is created, disseminated and then decoded by the receiver who constructs his own meaning either.

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<sup>1</sup> Maja Mikula, *Key Concepts in Cultural Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 60.

<sup>2</sup> Mikula, 61.

**Figure 10.** Stuart Hall's Process of Communication



*Source:* Lrene Viviani, “Stuart Hall: The father of Communication and Cultural Studies” (May 9, 2017), <https://medium.com/brixenlabs/stuart-hall-7f75ce66a847> (accessed January 1, 2019).

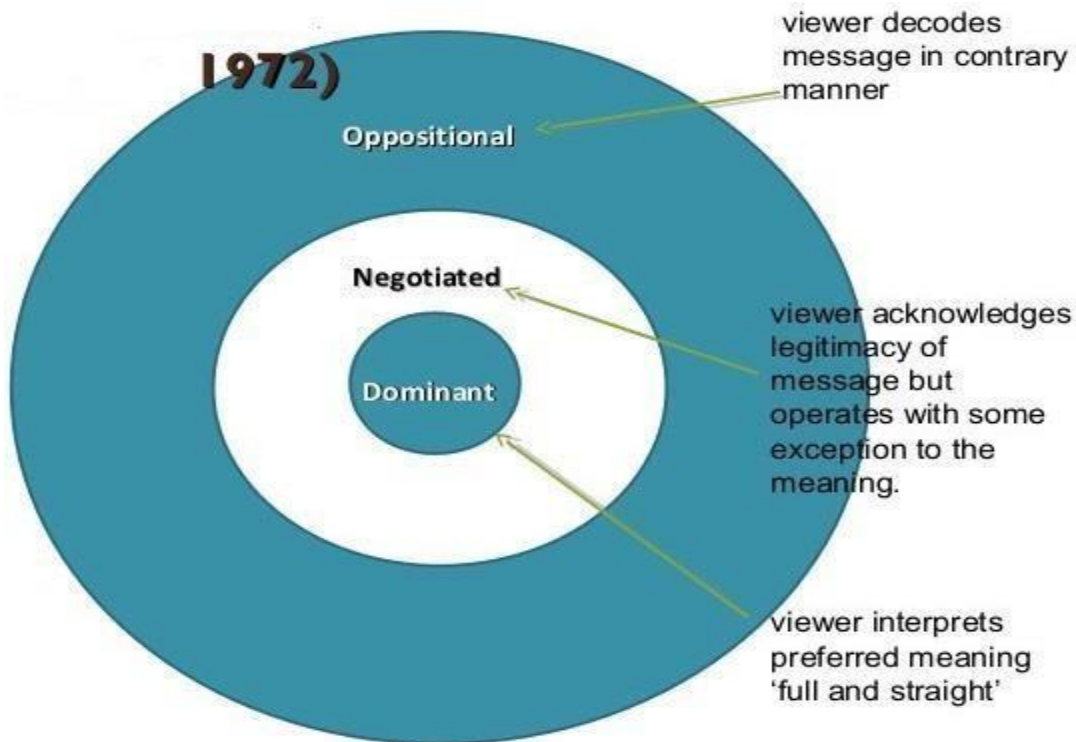
Hall proceeds by explaining that the response can be either dominant-hegemonic, when the receiver agrees with the sender’s message; negotiated, when the message is partly and broadly accepted; or oppositional, when the message is not agreed upon and a counter message is produced instead. <sup>1</sup>(see fig.11) In his *Stuart Hall* (2004), Procter exemplifies the idea by the news coverage of the 9/11 event. The American press reported the news with the aim of sending the message that the event was a terrorist attack on the civilized by Muslims. A dominant reading to the news upheld the message and acted accordingly, the negotiated reading condemned the terrorist attack but refused to attribute it to Muslim, while the

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<sup>1</sup> Procter, 69.

oppositional reading totally rebutted the message and considered it as a purposeful war against Islam.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 11.** Stuart Hall's Reading Positions



**Source:** Lrene Viviani, "Stuart Hall: The father of Communication and Cultural Studies" (May 9, 2017), <https://medium.com/brixenlabs/stuart-hall-7f75ce66a847> (accessed January 1, 2019).

Another illustration is the application of the model by Jon Rodrigues to analyse the American adult animated sitcom *Family Guy* that was created by the American actor, animator and director Seth Macfarlane.<sup>2</sup> The sitcom is about a family that consists of six members: Peter and Lois as the parents; Meg, Chris and Stewie, the children; and the family dog, Brian. Macfarlane used humour to approach today's sensitive issues such as racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination.

<sup>1</sup> Procter, 68-69.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Rodrigues, "Stuart Halls Encoding and Decoding Model" (May 31, 2017), <https://medium.com/@jonrodrigues/stuart-halls-encoding-and-decoding-model-1fc88bf9b59d> (March 20, 2019)

According to Hall, producers are the encoders who create a form of media which is based on their ideas, and the viewers are the decoders who receive the encoder's message and then reproduce theirs, a message that may not be necessarily the same as the original. In the light of Hall's model, Jon Rodrigues, argues that Macfarlane created the character of Peter with the aim of sending his message through the constant humorous unbelievable acts of mayhem that Peter keeps conducting to his friends, family and even to himself.<sup>1</sup>

Dominantly responding, the viewer, therefore, is expected to understand the content and chortle with excitement. Regarding the negotiated reading, it is manifested through the responses to the poke jokes about religion and peoples' religious beliefs that some characters make. Some viewers –contingent upon their background and beliefs– do experience the shrieks of laughter, but they soon shift to the state of anger, opposing the idea of using religion for humour. The third oppositional reading, however, entirely disagrees with the encoder's message.

The figure below, for instance, is about the character Peter who is hiding a terrorist with a bomb inside his truck. Then, suddenly, a police officer stops him. The figure features a shade of skin coloured chart at the hand of the officer, meaning that since Peter is a white man, he will not be arrested; but he will be, if he is black. This stereotype is offensive to 'the people of colour'.<sup>2</sup> who may not consider it a funny scene to be laughed about and thus opposing the encoder's message.

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Rodrigues, "Stuart Halls Encoding and Decoding Model" (May 31, 2017), <https://medium.com/@jonrodrigues/stuart-halls-encoding-and-decoding-model-1fc88bf9b59d> (March 20, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> Jon Rodrigues, "Stuart Halls Encoding and Decoding Model" (May 31, 2017), <https://medium.com/@jonrodrigues/stuart-halls-encoding-and-decoding-model-1fc88bf9b59d> (March 20, 2019)

Figure 12. Scene from the Family Guy Sitcom



Source: Jon Rodrigues, “Stuart Halls Encoding and Decoding Model” (May 31, 2017), <https://medium.com/@jonrodrigues/stuart-halls-encoding-and-decoding-model-1fc88bf9b59d> (March 20, 2019)

Decoding, thereby, endows the whole process of communication with meaning. Hall asserts that the previous model neglected this part, and that a message has no meaning if it is not decoded,<sup>1</sup> because following this stage, the receivers produce their messages and, hence, an overall insight about the matter being analyzed is revealed.

### Conclusion

The motion picture – be it film, series, or any TV show– is permeating our lives ubiquitously and so do their role. This is remarkably discernible in the increase of people’s consumption of the material. Hollywood, for instance, has gradually developed over generation to become the most successful film industry in the world, and the largest in terms of box office gross revenue, topping the Europeans’ motion picture industries. This in turn led to the escalation of in depth researches whose aim is to explore the narrative, artistic, cultural, economic, and political implications of any product in the fields of media, film and television studies.

<sup>1</sup> Procter, 68-69.

This chapter highlighted the importance of looking at films or series as one entity whose mechanism involves the cooperation of different people with everyone having his distinct job. Movies or episodes from a particular series are more than being artistic and enthralling stories running for a specific period; it takes them long time and efforts to appear the way the viewers see them.

Furthermore, the Blacks' fight to be equally integrated in the crew of the American film industry was foregrounded. Their roles changed from being substantiated by the Whites through the blackface technique, to being exploited for the benefits of Hollywood, to becoming prominent actors and directors. Hollywood's recruitment and representation of Blacks on the screen changed in tandem with the Civil Rights Movements' achievement against racial discrimination as well. Consequently, in 1977, the miniseries *Roots* about slavery and its atrocities was released. It did not only gain a considerable success but also engendered the phenomenon of black self-discovery. In 2016, its remake was produced to fit the modern generation, hoping that it would appeal to them the same way it did years ago.

This chapter concluded by shedding light on the Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model of communication which is of a great importance as it assists in understanding the mechanism of any media product and in dissecting it internally and externally for a better comprehension of its effects, whys and the wherefore. In this regard, the following part adopts this theory to analyse the remake.



**PART II**

***ROOTS 2016* UNDER THE LENS OF STUART  
HALL'S THEORY**

## Chapter Three

## Encoding *Roots* 2016

Introduction .....	108
Developing the Idea.....	109
The Summary of <i>Roots</i> .....	114
<i>Mise-en-scène</i> and Cinematography.....	115
Retelling the History of Slavery on Screen.....	119
Resistance.....	120
Identity and Adherence to African Traditions and Culture.....	144
Discussion .....	152
Conclusion .....	157

### Introduction

Initiating the communication cycle, encoding which covers the development, pre-production and production phases of film making is one of the most important elements of Hall's theory; if there is no embedded message, the remaining moments will lose their value. As it was explicated in the previous part, the creation of any movie cannot be accomplished overnight; it is the upshot of a long process that usually commences with the development of the idea that the filmmakers aim to dispatch their intended messages through. Once the idea is decided upon, the other elements are to be set accordingly.

Hence, encoding represents the inclusion of messages into specific product to be circulated and distributed later to an active audience who upon receiving them expresses his stance that can be either preferred or negotiated or oppositional. It is worth mentioning that encoding does not only focus on the message itself but also on the way this message should be presented to be appropriately read by the receptive audience. For instance, talking orally to a group of deaf people is useless, and using sign language with someone who does not master it will certainly distort the communication process.

Thus, contextualizing *Roots* (2016) within the racial tensions that were taking place at that time, this chapter, aims at extracting the encoded messages that this miniseries embraces while all along comparing their presence and depiction with their counterparts in *Roots* (1977). The focus will be on the content of the narrative storyline and on some aspects of the implemented *mise-en-scène* and cinematographic techniques that will be explained also.

The thorough analysis and interpretation of the encoding stage will help understand why it was requisite to remake the material, offering insights into the perception of the white-black relationship in the American society after the successful achievements that the Civil Rights Movement achieved nearly 50 years ago.

### **Developing the Idea**

*Roots* 2016’s makers did not want to create a new story about slavery but to retell the same story of the original miniseries differently. However, the idea was approached susceptibly at the beginning because if the story could be retold, would its success be duplicated? Mark Wolper confessed that adamant refusal was his first stance to the remake, but his opinion changed the instance he watched the miniseries with his son.<sup>1</sup> He expressed, “At that moment I realized that we had to do ‘Roots’ because it doesn’t mean anything to [my son’s] generation. Black or white, you do not really understand who you are until you understand where you came from. This is our collective memory.”<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, then, that the main aim was to feed the memory of the modern generation, the generation that the New York Times Newspaper dubbed as being the “Black Lives Matter generation.”<sup>3</sup> When the first *Roots* was aired, Blacks were for the first time experiencing new life as African American citizens, and the racial debate was still fresh. Hollywood’s representation of Blacks and slavery was racially directed either. This explains the ability of *Roots* 1977 to drastically stir up the audience’ emotions and grab his attention on both the national and the international levels. In 2016, Blacks were conducting another fight against racism, yielding that Blacks’ lives matter.

Born out of a social media post, the BLM Movement is one of the most remarkable movements that appeared in the twenty first century in the United States. It sparked discussion about race and inequality in a period wherein anti-black racism was thought to have ended with the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting rights Act, and

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<sup>1</sup> Lisa LeBlanc-Berry, “The Louisiana-shot Remake of “Roots” Premieres.” (February 5, 2016), <https://www.myneworleans.com/the-louisiana-shot-remake-of-roots-premieres/> (accessed January 13, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> LeBlanc-Berry.

<sup>3</sup> Melena Ryzik, “‘Roots,’ Remade for a New Era,” the New York Times (May 18, 2016), [\(https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/arts/television/roots-remade-for-a-new-era.html%20\(accessed%20July%2015,%202020\)\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/arts/television/roots-remade-for-a-new-era.html%20(accessed%20July%2015,%202020)) (accessed May 20, 2016).

other achievements African American could attain throughout the 1970's and 1980's.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, an unarmed 17-year-old African American Trayvon Martin was fatally shot by a local resident called George Zimmerman, yet this latter was acquitted igniting flames of anger, resentment and outrage among those who were impatiently and anxiously awaiting for the Court to decide a verdict of guilty. Expressing their refusal to the decision and empathizing with Martin's parents and supporters, the African American women Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi coined the phrase of 'Black Lives Matter' in different posts on social media. Garza recounted:

I remember feeling frightened most of the time. When it was announced that the jury had acquitted George Zimmerman of all charges, it actually felt like I got punched in the gut, so I went on social media to try to find words for what was happening, and what I wanted in that moment was some love for us and so I wrote a love letter to black people, "black people, I love I, I love us, we matter, our lives matter, black lives matter"<sup>2</sup>.

Soon the phrase was shared by many, but it did not spread as a social movement of its own until August 9, 2014 when Michael Brown was shot and killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Similar events noticed recurrences in different states in America, including the death of Eric Garner who was put in a chokehold in front of camera by a white officer in 2014 in Staten Island, New York; Dontre Hamilton who was shot in the same year and killed by the police officer Christopher manney at Red Arrow Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the shooting of John Crawford in Beavercreek, Ohio, near Dayton; to name but few.

As a consequence, the movement emerged and generated a rallying cry for change and equal treatment as Garza pointed, "The lives of black folks over the country have been unfairly targeted for demise. Sure that no longer will we live in a country where every 28

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<sup>1</sup> Penrice, 60.

<sup>2</sup> EmergingUS, "How a Hashtag Defined a Movement?" September 26, 2016, YouTube video, 2:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8-KZORIN3w> (accessed June 5, 2017).

hours a black person is murdered by police vigilantes or security guards.<sup>1</sup> Her words express the acrimony of the African Americans whose freedom was apparently still being violently encroached by racial discrimination. Thus, even though the movement’s primary cause was to condemn police brutality that addressed Blacks more than Whites in America, it shifted –according to its founders– to resonate internationally by revealing the real situation Blacks were compelled to endure.

When interviewed by the African American activist Mia Birdsong and asked about the significance of such movement, Patrisse Cullors explained that the BLM was a call to action and a tool to re-imagine the world because she believed that Blacks were still second-class citizens.<sup>2</sup> She proceeded, “I think our work ... is not just about our own visibility, but rather how do we make the whole visible?”<sup>3</sup> In the same vein, Opal Tometi emphasized, “I am because you are. You are because I am.”<sup>4</sup>

In this regard, the notions of unity and otherness have been accentuated, maintaining that Blacks are proud to be the ones they are but will never accept to be treated as the other just because they are ‘blacks’ in a country they consider to be theirs as well. To put it differently, Blacks have always existed as an active community that highly contributed and is still doing so to the prosperity of America. Therefore, they deserve to be visible to the whole world as American citizens, equally treated and not racially sanctioned in demeaning positions. Besides, the founders robustly reiterated that as the movement’s cause was to defy police

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<sup>1</sup> MSNBC, “What Are 'Black Lives Matter's' Demands?” August 11, 2015, YouTube video, 1:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UnBykVezRI> (accessed June 5, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> TED, “An interview with the founders of Black Lives Matter | Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi,” December 20, 2016, YouTube video, 0:22, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbicAmaXYtM> (accessed June 11, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> TED, 6:14.

<sup>4</sup> TED, 8:15.

brutality and to elevate Blacks' lives over others,' it was also to demand respect and dignity to every black person in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Coinciding with the movement, *Roots* was in its way to be remade. In 2013, Mark Wolper invited Levar Burton to be the executive producer of the new version. Being the original *Roots*' Kunta Kinte, Burton gladly accepted the offer for he wanted the story to be retold from the Blacks' lens rather than Whites'.<sup>2</sup> He had also shed light on the importance of airing *Roots* in such circumstances to give meaning to the BLM movement. He explained, "America today is directly related to America of the antebellum South and the slave trade. And that some of the issues that we still grapple with have their roots in slavery and its attendant legacy of racism."<sup>3</sup> This means that remembering slavery matters and to keep the memories of this regime alive, there must be a constant reminder, and *Roots*, for its makers, was a golden opportunity not to be missed because if slavery vanished years ago, its remnants did not, and Blacks do not want them to.

Subsequently, the belief that the stories of slaves are still narrated on the screen from the point of view of non-African American actors, producers and directors –though recently there is a gradual shift in the representation of slavery in the American motion picture – seemed for Wolper and Burton necessary to be addressed.<sup>4</sup> Besides, the history of slavery does not belong to Blacks only; it is part of the American culture. Burton viewed, "this is our common story. And whether you feel like it has any relevance or meaning to you, the real truth is that

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomberg Quicktake, "Black Lives Matter Co-Founder: Our Goal Is to Make All Lives Matter," August, 9, 2016, YouTube video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB\\_D1FbYh7M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB_D1FbYh7M) (accessed June 4, 2017), EmergingUS, and MSNBC.

<sup>2</sup> Marisa Guthrie, "Roots' Reborn: How a Slave Saga Was Remade for the Black Lives Matter Era," *The Hollywood Reporter* (May 25, 2016), <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/roots-reborn-how-a-slave-897055> (accessed April 15, 2017)

<sup>3</sup> W. Kamau Bell, "The Star of the Original 'Roots' Explains why the Remake is Must watch Television," *Mother Jones* (June, 2016), <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2016/05/history-roots-2016-remake-levar-burton-kamau-bell/> (accessed September 5, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Stephane Dunn, "Why the Roots Remake Is So Important," (MAY 29, 2016) *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/05/why-the-roots-remake-is-so-important/484661/> (accessed June 14, 2020).

it does. If you are part of the fabric of America, this is your story, too.”<sup>1</sup> This message is directed towards those who are not slaves’ descendants but are Americans; people who may believe that the history of slavery is not crucial to be told more than once but being an American means slavery is part of a past that should be embraced however cruel it may be or unacceptable it may seem.

As it was mentioned in the second chapter, the success of any motion picture production rests upon the choice of the whole crew. Thus, four directors were selected, more executive producers were hired, prominent actors were chosen and the rest of the team was picked meticulously.<sup>2</sup> Members of the staff (See Appendix E) were either nominated for salient awards or known for remarkable achievements in the motion picture industry.

Moreover, securing the distribution of *Roots*, a deal was made with the American multinational broadcasting company A&E Networks who sold the miniseries to more than 50 places worldwide, making it accessible to a large number of audience.<sup>3</sup> By doing so, the ability to make connection between past and present regarding the discussion about race and justice in America during the BLM era was empowered.

It is worth noting, though, that the executive officer of the A&E network Nancy Dubuc feared that they would gamble on the remake, when she stated that “everybody knows the risk of association,”<sup>4</sup> but she ended up signing the deal because as the director Will Packer stated, “[This *Roots*] ...[is] not just about the pain. It's really about courage and survival. It's inspirational, and it's aspirational, and those are the elements that I want to get our youth to

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<sup>1</sup> Bell.

<sup>2</sup> Dunn and Neal Justin, “‘Roots’ remake aims to reach a new generation,” *Detroit Free Press* (May 28, 2016), <https://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/television/2016/05/28/roots-miniseries-ae-history/85047698/> (accessed March 20, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Scott Roxborough, “‘Roots’ Remake Finds Favor with International Buyers,” *The Hollywood Reporter* (April 27, 2016), <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/international-buyers-hot-roots-remake-888399> (accessed February 15, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie.



embrace.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, in spite of the fact that the A&E Network was inclined towards presenting original stories, after thorough discussion, *Roots* appeared enticing to be recreated as a historical source and not only as an aesthetic entertaining production.

### **The Summary of *Roots***

Whether in the origin or in the remake, the gist of the story is the same: Kunta Kinte’s enslavement and the story of his descendants Kizzy, George and Tom. Every story represents part of the American history from colonial times in the eighteenth century until the Civil War (1861-1865). It starts from 1750 in West Africa in the village of Juffure where the young man Kunta, son of Omoro and Binta Kinte, lives freely with his family in the Mandinka tribe. At his youth, he receives training to become a man according to the African traditions, but when he is 17, he gets kidnapped and sold into slavery to find himself undergoing a terrifying journey to Annapolis, Maryland to be the slave of John Reynolds in the original miniseries and of John Waller in the remake.

As the story unfolds, Kunta is again sold to his master’s brother where he marries Bell, giving birth to Kizzy. This latter spends a happy and peaceful childhood with her master’s daughter Anne who treats her as a close friend and teaches her how to read and write. Harnessing this peculiarity, Kizzy forges a traveling pass for another slave Noah. Once Noah is caught, the secret is divulged, and the life of Kizzy becomes nightmarish. At the age of 16, she is sold away from her family to a drunken slaveholder and a philanderer whose name is Tom Moore in the original miniseries and Tom Lea in the remake.

Once she arrives, Tom rapes Kizzy, taking her innocence along with her virginity. She soon gives birth to George who is known as Chicken George because of his skill in cockfighting. Using his skill, he tries to earn money to buy his own freedom, but the cunning Tom, who is in debts and needs money, betrays George by selling him to the English man Sir

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<sup>1</sup> Dunn.

Eric Russell. George, who is married with Matilda and has six sons and two daughters, is forced to leave them for 20 years. Once he departs, Tom sells the rest of the family to the Murrays whose treatment of the slaves differs from the previous slaveholders.

Nevertheless, George's family still gets its own share of pain and suffering; thus, the blacksmith Tom who is one of George's sons tries to conspire with the Union against the Confederate using his skill for the cause. Shortly before the Civil War, George comes back and after the end of the war, the Murray owner suggests that that the freed slaves stay in the plantation as sharecroppers, i.e. using and working on the land in return for a share of the crops produced there. However, George's family decides to head to Tennessee to start a new life as free family.

From Kunta to Kizzy to George and then Tom, *Roots* takes us to a journey into the past. It offers information about the lives of Blacks versus Whites starting from the moment slavery was at its pinnacle to the instance the regime came to an end. Taking into consideration the fact that the *Roots* we are tackling in the present thesis is a visual product rather than written, the moving images are to be analysed because images play a vital role in providing the general public with visual interpretations of the periods they depict. Not only this, but they boost the audience's imagination also, and if made effectively, images can engender great effect that help entrench memories, create and alter perspectives.

### ***Mise-en-scène* and Cinematography**

The main challenge that the filmmakers encounter while creating their product is how to make the story meaningful and coherent to the audience through the moving images. To this end, *mise-en-scène* and cinematography are to be emphasized accurately because they help guide the viewers' attention to a specific determined direction.

Being a French theatrical term, *mise-en-scène* means “put into the scene”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the *mise-en-scène* refers to all what is placed purposefully on stage to appear in front of the camera, including the actors, costumes, makeup, hairstyle, lightening, setting and props. When we write, we do not collect a wide range of words and piece them together arbitrarily, but we need the skill of creating a coherent and cohesive piece of writing by focusing on a couple of elements, including grammar, punctuation marks, spelling, transitional words...etc. Creating meaningful images on the screen requires its own components as well.

For instance, the setting refers to the physical environment wherein specific actions take place. It can be constructed or a real location depending on the aim of the director and the situation of the characters in the story.<sup>2</sup> Besides, the props are all the used artifacts in the scene. Obviously, a poor character’s house will not be the same as the one of the rich character, and a scene in Queen Victoria’s castle will not resemble the one in the White House.

On what concerns the costumes along with the makeup and the hairstyle, if designed properly, they help build the needed character, including his personality, development through the story, social status and job. As illustrations, a warrior is not like a bridegroom, a young girl is not like an old woman, and a servant is not like the owner of the house, to name but few.

In the same vein, the whole product will certainly fail if the actors’ performance is poor or there is no kind of harmony between two or more actors in the same scene even if the setting is suitable and the costumes, makeup and hairstyle are designed carefully. If an actor appears with a sad face, the viewers will assume that something wrong and painful is happening, but what if the same scene requires another type of facial expression? Acting in general is an

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<sup>1</sup> Spadoni, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Spadoni, 73-74.

important extension of the design in relation to the plot of the story. To put it differently, a queen wearing costumes and putting makeup that reflect her status is supposed to act accordingly except if the scene requires from the actress to send another message like being obliged to disguise herself to hide the fact that the real queen has disappeared.

Similarly, once the set is designed and the actors are dressed and ready to start the performance, the scene must be lit according to the aim of the whole action in the same shot. Lighting can illuminate a shot either brightly or partially. It can also darken specific portion and put emphasis on others to direct the viewer's attention to a specific point in the frame. It is the role of the cinematographer to light the shots appropriately. As it has been mentioned in the second chapter, the cinematographer supports the director's vision of the product in general and the separate shots in particular.

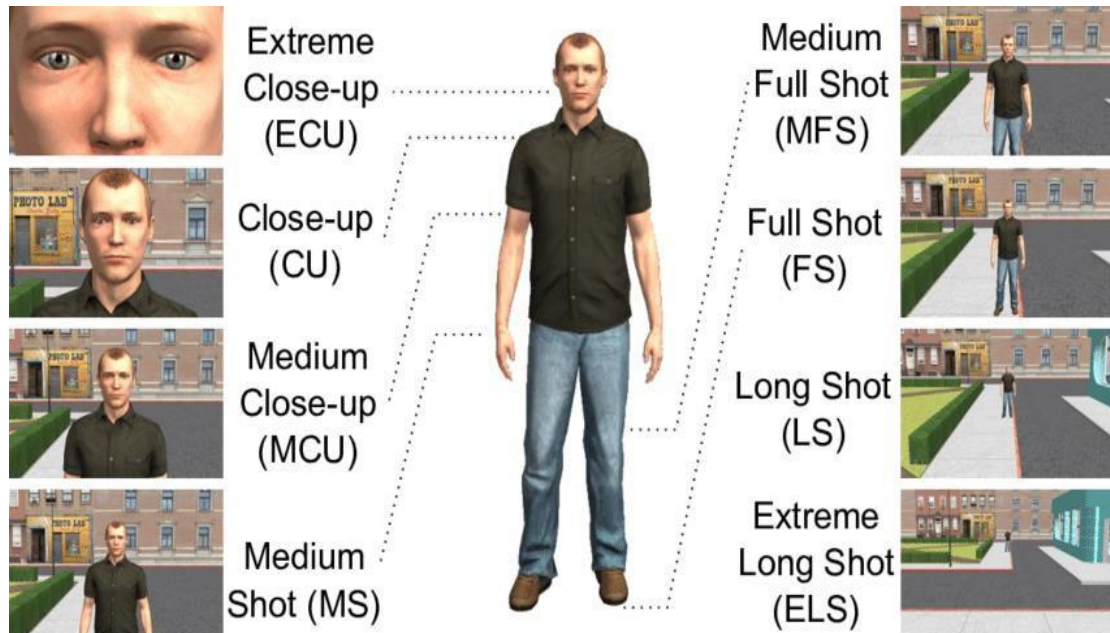
Besides, part of the cinematographer's work has to do with the camera shots, angle and movement. To explain, a camera can realize different shots and every shot relates to the whole message of the visual product. As it is indicated in the figure 13, there are eight different shots.

On the one hand, the extreme long shot differs from the long shot, the full shot and the medium full shot in the appearance of the subject as part of a whole. While the first features the character (s) as being very distant from the camera, the other three shots dissimilarly approach him from short distance. The frame, therefore, either emphasizes the location as part of the character's world or focuses more on the subject and specific parts of the setting.

On the other hand, when it comes to the medium shot, medium close-up, close-up and extreme close-up; details about the subject are more tangible. In his *Media and Society: A Critical Perspective* (2007), author Arthur Asa Burger insists, "Camera shots and movements... function as signs or cues to the viewers...that tell them what to think and

feel.”<sup>1</sup>This means that the viewer cannot inhabit the story if the work of the cinematographer is not done properly and the choices he makes are inaccurate.

**Figure 13.** The Different Shots of the Camera

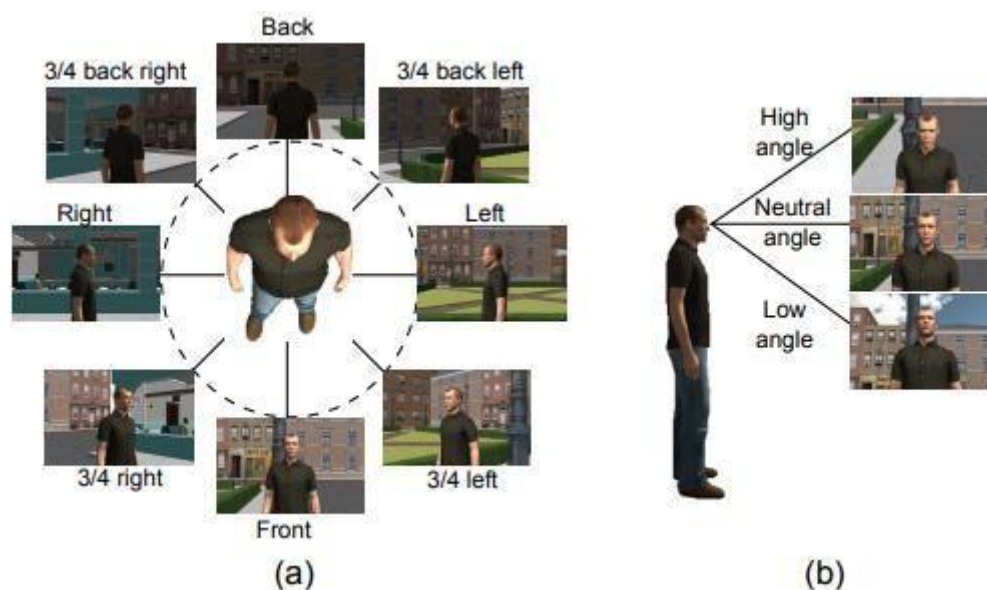


**Source:** Quentin Galvane, “Automatic Cinematography and Editing in Virtual Environments,” (PhD diss., University of Grenoble, 2015), 22.

Similarly, the way the viewer views and receives the action is guided by the camera angle. The figure below shows the different angles that a camera may take. To clarify, if the angle is high, the camera is looking down at the subject in the frame; and it is the opposite, if the angle is low. However, if the angle is neutral, the viewer and the subject are on the same level. Furthermore, whether the angles are high or low or neutral, the camera position can focus on different sides of the subject: back, front, right or left (see fig. 14)

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Asa Burger, *Media and Society: A Critical Perspective* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 43.

Figure 14. Variety of Camera Angles



Source: Galvane, 23.

It is obvious, then, that the camera work along with the design of the *mise-en-scène* help create and communicate meaning and emotions. The way viewers view the image shapes their perspective and opinions. Taking the *mise-en-scène* and the camera work, hence, into consideration, the main messages that are embedded in *Roots* 2016 will be extracted and analyzed.

### Retelling the History of Slavery on Screen

Born and raised in a period where technology and high-speed internet are ubiquitous, Generation Z<sup>1</sup> are accustomed to consume information instantly and quickly. Therefore, the main conspicuous difference between the original *Roots* and its remake lies in the screen duration though the gist of the story is the same as it was indicated earlier. To put it in another way, while *Roots* 1977 takes twelve hours to finish, the remake, eight hours. One's curiosity may be triggered to think about the things that have been kept and those that have been

<sup>1</sup> Unlike Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, the Generation Z refers to the people who were born between 1997 and 2012/15 and who are about 68 million in the United States. From: Stephen Nikitas, "Generation Y: Why they're Worth a Second Look," *ConsumerBankers.Com* (June 18, 2014), <https://www.kasasa.com/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z> (accessed July 3, 2019).

omitted so that *Roots* 2016 is shorter than its original, but the main inquiry is whether the remake's intended messages are strong enough to affect the new generation. According to the History Channel's Education Guide, the chief messages that the makers of the new *Roots* encoded are: identity, adherence to African culture and resistance.<sup>1</sup>

### **Resistance**

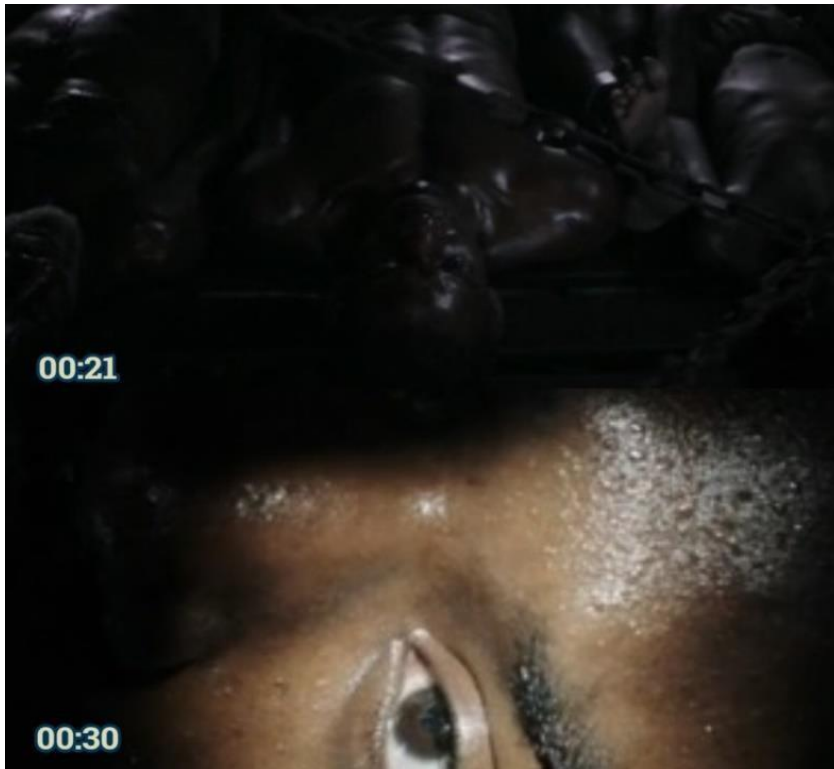
Resistance is apparent the first moment *Roots* begins. Unlike its original where the first episode starts with the birth of Kunta Kinte, the opening scene of the remake begins with Kunta being enchained in the bottom of the ship. Unable to accept his new situation, Kunta screams loudly, expressing both his staunch refusal to enslavement and his readiness for resistance. As it is showcased in the figure below, the high angle of the camera in the first scene depicts a medium shot of Kunta with three slaves lying on their backs in terrible conditions, and then in the second scene an extreme close-up shot focalizes Kunta's facial expressions that voice his feelings which are a mixture of anger, sadness and a sense of helplessness.

Another key point is the role of lightening that helps in a great deal create the mood of the scene. Darkening the first part and then later lightening Kunta's face send an important message. They do not only strike the viewers with the horrifying nature of slavery right from the beginning of the miniseries but also introduce to them the character of Kunta as being an obstinate young man whose gaze and attempt to break the chains unveil his personality and stir up the viewers' curiosity to question the happenings that precede this scene.

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<sup>1</sup> ADL FIGHTING HATE FOR GOOD, "Why the 'Roots' Remake Matters," (June 1, 2016), <https://www.adl.org/blog/why-the-roots-remake-matters> (accessed August 5, 2019).

**Figure 15.** The Opening Scenes from the First Episode of *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, opening scene.

Furthermore, when Kunta starts his manhood training in the first episode, one of the instructions assigned to him is to be able to run without being caught, “a man does not fall. Run like a warrior.”<sup>1</sup> The use of the word ‘warrior’ alone reflects strength and resistance. Besides, when he starts swimming to cross the river, he stumbles upon a dead corpse, and then he notices the arrival of African slavecatchers. Resistance is manifested the moment he tries to hide under water as it is shown in the figure below. The extreme close-up shot indicates that Kunta remains determinedly there for thirty five seconds holding his breath and resisting death just in order not to be caught and then sold to the Europeans as a slave. This scene is absent in the original miniseries, and its significance lies in the representation of Kunta’s strength, perseverance and adherence to freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> **Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 10:20.



**Figure 16.** Kunta under Water



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Similarly, in contrast to the original miniseries, Kunta exhibits his firm resistance when he is chained and stored with the other slaves on the floor beneath bunks. The captian and the slave guardians forcefully and violently propel the slaves to eat by pouring a liquid through their mouths. When Kunta adamantly refuses, the captain asks the guardians to secure Kunta's chin so that he can make him gulp the liquid down.

Figure 17 showcases four scenes that depict Kunta's resistance. In the first scene, the close-up shot with the dim light of the camera focuses on Kunta's face from the right angle to portray his disgust and his firm rejection to be subjugated. Besides, the inclusion of the mug in the scene is crucial to the overall message to get the viewer acquainted with the way slaves are ruthlessly humiliated and treated like animals.

In the second scene from the same figure, the camera shifts to focus on Kunta from a low angle. The medium close-up exhibits Kunta's tenacious hold on his stance and the horrific setting he is compelled to be in. This scene lays the ground for the other two scenes where extreme close-up shots emphasize the captian's cruel treatment and Kunta's sturdy resistance.

**Figure 17.** Kunta is Forced to Eat



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

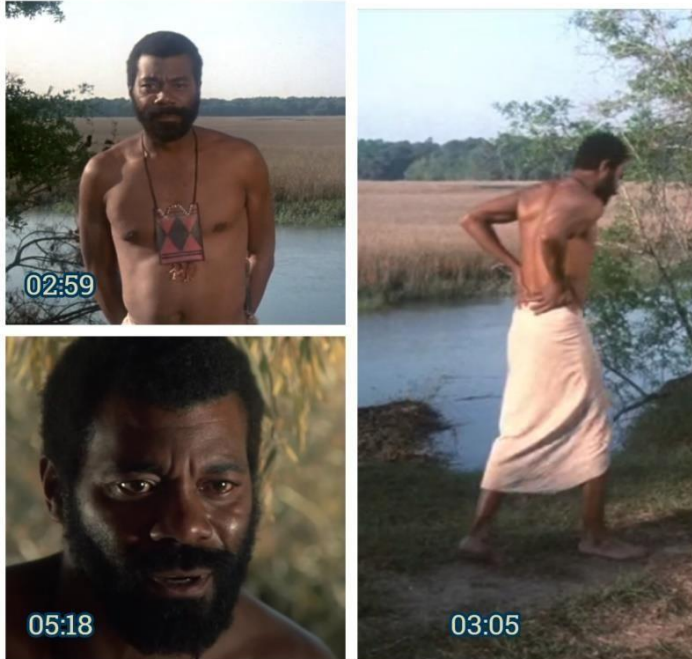
Moreover, when Kunta reaches the Waller's farm in Virginia, he stubbornly keeps his robust hold on freedom. Unlike, in *Roots* 1977, Kunta of the remake openly refuses to obey the orders of his master's wife when she asks him to take her horse to the stable.<sup>1</sup> Though he is cognizant of what might happen, but he prefers death and punishment than being subdued. This does not mean that Kunta of the original miniseries is weak and submissive, but his resistance is not tangible as it is in the remake.

Even Kunta's father Omoro is depicted as a strong man who is fighting and defying his rivals the Koros tribe to protect the Africans from being kidnapped. In the original miniseries, Omoro is a common African man waiting impatiently to have a boy to be proud of. Figure 18 embraces three scenes of Omoro. Through the medium shot of the first scene, the full shot of the second, and the close-up of the third, Omoro is portrayed as being stressed going back and forth while Binta is giving birth to Kunta. Comparing it to the Omoro in figure 19., it is clear that the *mise-en-scène* is totally different like in the presence of guns in the remake and

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:14:11.

their absence in the original miniseries. In other words, the spirit of resistance is totally missed in the original miniseries in the character of Omoro. It seems that his only mission is to have children and Kunta is amongst.

**Figure 18.** Omoro in *Roots* 1977



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by David Greene, Wolper Productions, 1977.

For instance, while Binta is giving birth to Kunta, Omoro is engaged in a battle against the Koros to save the captives. Figure 19 shows the different scenes while Omoro is fighting until he hears the drums as a signal that his wife’s delivery is met with success. The close-up of the first scene demonstrates Omoro’s facial expressions that express his determined will to resist any kind of slavery chiefly with the use of the gun. Then, the position of the camera changes from the front to the back in order to capture the whole moment when Omoro takes hold of a member of the Koros tribe. Finally, the last scene follows Omoro as he runs to see his new born baby boy.

It is worth mentioning that Omoro does not leave the battle until the captured Blacks are freed. This emphasizes the value of freedom and the belief that pride is not only in having children but in standing on one’s dignity as well. Omoro tells the member of the Koros, “Do

not sacrifice your sons for your own greeds.”<sup>1</sup> For him, there is nothing precious than being free and protecting every free man in the tribe.

**Figure 19.** Omoro in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Resistance is also lucid in the character of Jinna who is different from Fanta in the original miniseries (see Figures 20 and 21). Jinna, on the one hand, is admired by Kunta who aspires to marry her to the despise and indignation of their rival, the Koros family. From the onset, Jinna is depicted as a clever girl and when she is kidnapped with Kunta, she does not relinquish easily to the captain’s will of raping her. She holds an ax she finds, trying to defend herself and then she tries to jump from the ship reiterating, “Death has more honor, let me die.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Kunta accidentally meets Fanta when he is trying to catch a bird as part of the manhood training he is conducting according to the traditions of his Mandinka tribe. Fanta is portrayed as a submissive woman who depends on her father to defend her. When she gets enslaved, she surrenders easily. When she is shown with Kunta who attempts to assuage

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 03:06.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 44:53.

and strengthen her (see fig. 21) she states, “Since we were taken from our homes, I have learned another lesson... I have learned to stay alive.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, while Jinna prefers death to humiliation, Fanta, favors life to torment.

Besides, comparing the two figures below, the *mise-en-scène* of both scenes in figure 20 reflects the drastic shift in Jinna’s situation from freedom to enslavement. The makeup, costumes, hairstyle, facial expression, lightening and the setting create a painful atmosphere. While Jina in the first scene is happily smiling, in the second, she is sadly crying. Her braids change to a messy hair mirroring the bad conditions that are inflicted upon her. Moreover, The camera is looking straight to the character from a neutral angle because for us, as viewers, we will not expect another reaction except agony as it is shown in Jinna’s face in the second scene through the close-up shots.

**Figure 20.** *Roots* 2016’s Jinna before and after Enslavement



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization et al., 2016.

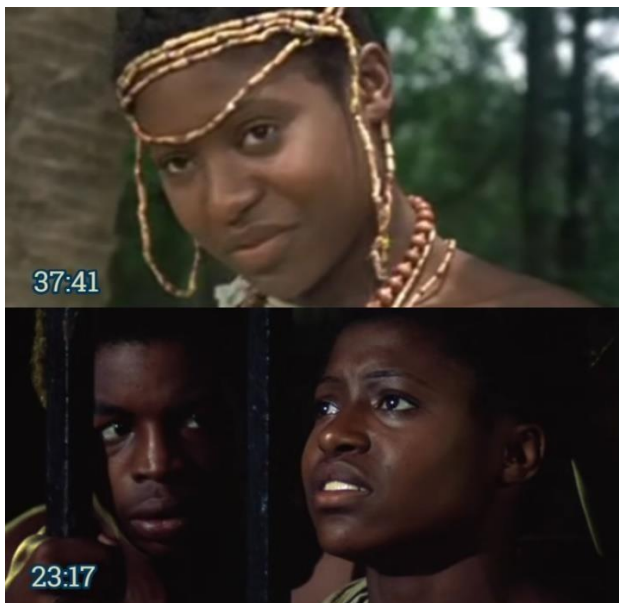
Figure 21 however, does not convey the same message. Going in tandem with the dialogue, the *mise-en-scène* of the second scene helps depict Kunta’ resistance versus Fanta’s passivity. Kunta’s facial expressions demonstrate his surprise and anger while Fanta’s, her

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977, 23:17.

compliant with with the new life she is about to have. In addition to that, the setting in the second scene indicates that Kunta is imprisoned physically and emotionally while Fanta is aspiring to a better life since she is looking up as a sign of looking forward to the future. In the same vein, holding the bars and looking at Fanta from behind the bars represent Kunta's denial to acquiesce in enslavement, unlike Fanta.

**Figure 21.** *Roots* 1977's Fanta before and after Enslavement



**Source:** *Roots: First and Second Episodes*, directed by David Greene and John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977.

Furthermore, after nine years, Kunta is played by another actor (See fig. 22) in the original *Roots* in the third episode to present the change and development of the character. When he strives to to escape for the last time, he accidentally meets Fanta who has also grown up, but her opinion does not alter. Kunta, again, asks her to flee with him, but her answer is negative because she still believes that being alive is more significant and its worth the sacrifice of remaining a slave.<sup>1</sup> The scene in figure 22 shows a close-up shot of Kunta from a neutral angle and a close-up shot of Fanta from a ¾ left to allow comparison between Kunta's reaction and Fanta's surrender. Such scenes have not been included in the remake, and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Third Episode*, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, Wolper Productions, 1977, 29:23.

series does not show Jinna after the last time she tries to escape. This means that the viewer is left with the impression of Jinna's strength to defy the Whites and the institution of slavery which is not the case in *Roots* 1977.

**Figure 22.** Fanta and Kunta after Nine Years



**Source:** *Roots: Third Episode*, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, Wolper Productions, 1977.

In fact, Fanta is not the only character, in the original miniseries, that represents slaves' compliance with the life of servitude; Fiddler is another illustration. This latter is an old slave in the Reynolds' plantation in Spotsylvania, Virginia, where Kunta is taken. He has been assigned by his master to teach Kunta English and to train him in the ways of servitude. Whenever Kunta expresses his will to escape, Fiddler prevents him insisting that Kunta should submit to his new status. In the second episode, he states, "Things start looking better once you stop being African. Start being nigger like the rest of us."<sup>1</sup> He even uses the word 'nigger' which is a kind of humiliation used by racists to call a black man. Later, in the third episode, he falls ill and dies while playing the fiddler.

In the remake, the character of Fiddler is depicted as a submissive slave as well. However, the presence of Kunta resurrects Fiddler's lust for freedom and nostalgia for his life in Africa.

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episodes*, directed by John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977, 47:30.

Even his death is portrayed differently; instead of dying out of an illness, Fiddler in the remake is murdered while fighting bravely to protect and to defend Kunta and his daughter. Moreover, when Kunta is caught while trying to escape, Fiddler courageously dares to confront the cruel overseer Connelly.

Figure 23 demonstrates Fiddler’s spirit of resistance that springs once the overseer Connelly tries to beat him. In the first part, Connelly is over Fiddler as a symbol of Blacks’ inferiority and Whites’ power, but soon there is a clear shift and Fiddler is over Connelly saying, “We are not the same ...I never want to be the same as you! Never want to be the same as you!”<sup>1</sup> These words reflect the latent desire of Fiddler to be free; though he tries to adapt to the status of being slave, this scene reveals that he has been always aware that his life is a mirage and that being subservient to masters will never earn him a degree of favor or maintain his dignity. He just needed a strong impetus to get out of his comfort zone and to express his hidden feelings and refusal to being humiliated.

**Figure 23.** Fiddler’s Fight with Connelly in the First Episode of *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization , 2016, 1:28:54.



Fiddler’s resistance is also manifested in his attempt to stergnthen Kunta whose right foot has been cut by the slavechatchers to prohibit him from running once more. When Bell (Kunta’s wife later) fails to get Kunta out of his depression, Fiddler forcefully takes Kunta out from his bed and leaves him alone to ride an angry horse. In a sharp tone, Fiddler says, “And no matter how much I may play my fiddle for them, they never ... tear me down. You right. I [am not] free, and I may never be, but I ... leave you right here, and you ... get your own self up. You [are going to] walk right on back to the house.”<sup>1</sup>

Figure 24 displays the impact Fiddler’s words have on Kunta. On the one hand, in the first scene, the medium shot shows Kunta’s sorrowful eyes as he is sadly lying on his bed. He is depressed not because his foot has been chopped off but because he thinks that he can never be able to escape again. On the other hand, a close-up shot of the second scene depicts the shift in Kunta’s feelings through the look of his eyes. The low angle of the camera reflects Kunta’s staunch desire to keep fighting for his freedom. It is apparent that Fiddler could ignite Kunta’s will to be free even if he risks being ruthlessly punished.

**Figure 24.** Kunta’s Attempt to Walk



**Source:** *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Thomas Carter, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 23:23.

Comparing it with the original miniseries, Kunta is propelled to walk by Bell instead of Fiddler. When he refuses to be helped, she throws the crutches and sarcastically mocks at his abilities to fight mightily like his Mandinka ancestors in Africa. As a result, he starts using the crutches just to prove her wrong.

This depiction as compared to the version of the remake makes both Kunta and Fiddler of *Roots* 1977 weaker than in *Roots* 2016. On the one hand, the remake centralizes the role of Fiddler who is not passive or submissive, as he may seem; and on the other hand, the ability of Kunta to ride the horse without the use of the crutches or any other kind of support in *Roots* 2016 accentuates Kunta's personality and might.

Attempting to escape slavery is also another sign of resistance. While in the original *Roots* Kunta tries to flee six times, in the remake, eight times. Moreover, Kunta's daughter Kizzy is for her father, in both versions, the last hope to realize the dream of freedom that has not been given up all along the episodes that show Kunta. Therefore, from the moment she is born, her father teaches her the African language, and keeps telling her stories about her ancestors and their traditions.

However, what is missed in the original miniseries is Kizzy's receipt of secret training by her father to learn how to ride the horse in order to escape. In the second episode from the remake, the screen duration of training runs for nearly three minutes. In the same way, Kunta's words to Kizzy are stronger than in the original. For instance, when Kizzy endeavours to ride the horse, she is wearing a dress that prevents her from reaching her aim. When she wonders how she can do it, Kunta mightily replies:

And how do you know what you'll be wearing? You must be prepared at all time [for running]...this horse was born free. Stop kissing [him] and ride him! ...Do not allow yourself to be defeated...They can put the chains on your body. Never let them put the chains on your mind, and anything within reach...is a weapon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization et al., 2016, 1:08:29..

These words not only teach Kizzy how to be stronger and braver but also indicate that Kunta's adherence to freedom is so robust to be wiped out easily. Thus, he strives to transmit the spirit of resistance to his daughter who in turn does the same thing with her son George later.

In figure 25, for instance, two scenes feature Kizzy as a vigorous woman. In the first scene, the close-up shot emphasizes Kizzy's facial expressions as a determined and an independent woman who is willing to fight heart and soul for her freedom. The second scene supports the first one since it is rare to find a female slave trying to pull a wagon. Kunta, again, is not only teaching her not to bow down to the Whites, but also trying to instill in her what he considers to be as a fact. When he asks her what east is, she replies that it is where the sun comes up; west, where the sun goes down; north, freedom; south, death; Binta, Grandmother; Omoro, grandfather; Belle, mother; and Kunta, father.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 25.** Kizzy of *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Thomas Carter, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:08:30.

Figure 26 below, however, displays Kizzy of the original miniseries. This scene is from the fourth episode, and it is the only one that features Kunta teaching his daughter about some African words in about twenty-eight seconds only.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious when comparing Figure 25 with 26 that the *Roots*1977's Kizzy seems more subvient than of the remake. While in the latter she is more energetic and powerful, in the original miniseries the medium close-up shot shows her weaker and more helpless mainly with the costumes she is wearing.

**Figure 26.** Kizzy of *Roots* 1977



**Source:** *Roots: Fourth Episode*, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, Wolper Productions, 1977.

In addition to that, when Kizzy is sold to Tom Lea in North Carolina, she shows fierce resistance in the remake than in the original miniseries. For instance, when he approaches her, she beats him and then attempts to burn the place. The scene lasts for one minute and twenty-five seconds. However, the same scene lasts for only thirty eight seconds in the first *Roots* with only one endeavour from the part of Kizzy to prevent Tom Moore from raping her.

Equally important is the portrayal of parts from the American Revolution and the American Civil War. In the remake, eleven minutes and twenty seconds of screen duration from the second episode are devoted to depict part from the Revolutionary War against the

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Fourth Episode*, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, Wolper Productions, 1977, 03:11-3:39.

British just to feature Kunta fighting fiercely not to free the Americans but to free himself.<sup>1</sup> His resistance along with the other slaves' are manifested in their ability to fight the armed enemies with pikes only to take and then secure the bridge that helps the British move peacefully. The scene is filmed at night while the weather is foggy to reinforce the belief that freedom is worth the sacrifice.

In figure 27, the character of Carleton whose role is secondary and appears only during the war of American Revolution is a symbol of resistance. Though, as it is shown in the first scene, one of his eyes is hurt, but he prefers not to surrender and he accompanies the others in the battle holding his pike until he gets ruthlessly killed by the British as the close-up shot of the camera exhibits in the third scene.

**Figure 27.** Carleton in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

In the same vein, Kizzy's son Chicken George of the remake reveals his resistance not only in playing the cockfighting game but also in taking part in one of the American Civil War battles, the Fort Pillow battle. This battle is not depicted in the original miniseries nor is

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Thomas Carter, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 3:52-15:12.

Geroge's participation. His desire to be free is manifested only in his attempt to win as much as he can games so that he can save money to buy freedom for himself and his family.

Important to realize that the noticeable presence of violence and ruthless Whites in the remake play a crucial role in giving meaning to resistance. A case in point is the scene of whipping where Kunta is ruthlessly whipped in order to accept his new name Toby. This scene is present in both miniseries, but the depiction and the number of whips are different.

Figure 28 displays the different scenes where Kunta is caught and then whipped. The medium shot of the camera captures Kunta from the front in the first scene, from the  $\frac{3}{4}$  right in the second scene, and from the back in the last scene. As it is shown, the scars of the whips are not that clear though the whips are clearly heard while watching. It is worth mentioning that the first whip is heard but not seen, and the whipping scene lasts two minutes and fifty five seconds.

**Figure 28.** The Scenes of Whipping in *Roots* 1977



**Source:** *Roots: Second Episodes*, directed by John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977.

Figure 29, however, covers five scenes that exhibit more violence. First of all, the screen duration of the whipping lasts for five minutes and fifty one seconds, from the first moment Kunta is caught and dragged like an animal. Then, the camera captures the scenes from different angles through varied shots. For instance, the first scene on the left is realized through a full shot from a neutral angle to show the way Kunta is brought. Next, once the whipping starts, viewers are struck with gruesome images through a full shot in the second scene to emphasize the setting and to show the other slaves who are watching in fear of their lives, medium shot in the third and fourth scenes, and a high angle in the last scene. Scars are more palpable and blood is scattered to intensify the emotional effect of the scene.

**Figure 29.** The Scenes of Whipping in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Another case in point is when Kunta's foot is cut as a punishment to his unstoppable endeavors to escape slavery. Figure 30 displays two scenes from the third episode in the original miniseries. In the first scene, the close-up shot shows the ax on the foot, but the whole action is not filmed; it is up to the viewer to deduce that the foot is cleaved. Then, in

the second scene, the cut foot is shown bandaged up with scars of blood on the strip of the cloth.

**Figure 30.** Kunta's Foot is Cut in *Roots* 1977



**Source:** *Roots: Third Episode*, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, Wolper Productions, 1977.

On the contrary, the remake narrates the action differently. Figure 31 below exhibits grisly images of the same event which has been filmed with no aim of making it moderately violent. When Kunta is caught by the slavecatchers who discover that he was supporting the Union during the Civil War, they decide to cut his foot without mercy. The first scene displays part of the action through the extreme close-up shot that focuses on both the chopped up foot and the resulted blood. Then, the second scene, the close-up shot shows clearly the cut foot without a bandage on to alleviate the effect of such image.



**Figure 31.** Kunta's foot is cut in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Following the same perspective, in the third episode of the remake the famous Nat Turner's rebellion of 1831 is depicted in more details than in the first *Roots*. The remake features scared Whites holding their guns in fear of any sudden reprisal from the part of their slaves. It is during this rebellion that George realizes that it is impossible to find a decent fair owner, and that freedom should be earned and not granted.<sup>1</sup>

By the same token, an additional illustration of violence against Blacks is lucid in the fourth episode during the battle of Fort Pillow. When the Union's army is defeated and is coerced to surrender, only black soldiers are ruthlessly killed. Figure 32 below includes four scenes. In the first one, the Union's army that embrace Whites and Blacks are raising their hands as a symbol of surrender. In the second scene, the medium shot of the camera from the left angle shows every soldier in the confederacy holding his gun. At first glance it seems that the soldiers will kill every member in the Union's army, but as the other two scenes show,

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Third Episode*, directed by Thomas Carter, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:08:50-1:2:52.

only Blacks are dead, showing the degree of grudge Southern Whites have against slaves in particular and Blacks in general.

**Figure 32.** Killing Black Soldiers During the Fort Pillow Battle



**Source:** *Roots: Fourth Episode*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

The characters of the slave Noah in America and the teacher Silla in Africa are also tangible examples of the representatoin of ruthless violence. On the one hand, Noah in the original minseries is depicted as an orphan slave whose mother does not appear in the episodes, but she is only alluded to. He is adopted by Belle, and when he grows up he fells in love with Kizzy who forges papers for him to escape. Once caught, he is bought by his master. In the remake, however, his mother appears as a pregnant woman in the second episode and is forced to work under harsh conditions until she dies while giving birth to him.

Figure 33 includes two scenes about Noah's mother. The high angle of the camera in the first scene captures Noha's mother in a medium full shot from the front to show her lying dead while she is bleeding. The light colour of the dress she is wearing helps put the blood up to create an emotionally intensive scene. Moreover, William Waller and Bell are captured from the back because their presence as compared to Noah's mother is less important. In addition to that, the camera foregrounds the dead mother by appraoching her through a

medium close up shot to show her pale sad face, victimizing her more. Moreover, when Noah's secret escape is discovered, he is not bought but he is shot ruthlessly to death.

**Figure 33.** Noah's Mother in *Roots* 2016



*Source:* *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

On the other hand, Silla in the original miniseries is depicted as a strong and brave teacher who appears during the manhood training scenes. Later, he is shot dead after participating in a mutiny aboard the ship that carries the captured slaves to America. In the remake, however, when the captain feels that the ship is no longer safe, he picks Silla as a victim to frighten the other slaves by cutting his hand. When the violent mutiny is halted later, Silla's head is cut and hanged with the other slaves' heads.

Figure 34 demonstrates the violently physical and emotional actions that both Silla and Kunta are compelled to bear. In the first scene, Kunta's head is fastened, so that he can witness Silla's hand being cut. The close-up shot points up his frightened look. In the second scene, the extreme close-up shot sharply focuses on Silla's hand being cut and firmly pinioned. It also displays the sword that is cleaving his hand. When Kunta beholds the whole

scene, he cannot contain his anger, agony and shock. The close-up shot in the third scene helps summarize the mixed feelings he has. Finally, the last scene clearly exhibits the hanged heads including Silla's in a medium close-up shot. The light in the scene along with the raining weather create a sad and an appalling scene.

**Figure 34.** Killing Silla and Frightening Kunta in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Furthermore, in the original miniseries, compassionate and benevolent Whites appear from time to time starting by the character of Captain Davies in the first and second episodes. Figure 35 displays the dilemma Davies is facing while being engaged in the slave trade for the first time in his life. When the voyage begins, captain Davies escapes to his cabinet. In the first scene, the camera captures him from the back to feature his reflection in the mirror through a medium close-up shot. In the second scene, Davies takes the wig off as a symbol of revealing the quandary he is in. His facial expressions and the way he is looking at himself in

the mirror unveil his disgust at the happenings. Though he is trying to convince himself that slavery improves the Africans' situation, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Davies, indeed, is aware of the fact that Christianity does not approve such deeds, and it is a state of hypocrisy to pretend that slavery is a decent institution. When these inner thoughts escalate, he rapidly extinguishes the candle as an attempt to halt their flow and to blur the maleficent version of himself in the mirror as it is shown in the third scene.

**Figure 35.** Captain Davies in *Roots* 1977



**Source:** *Roots: First and Second Episodes*, directed by David Greene and John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977.

In the same vein, the close-up shot of the fourth scene exhibits the deep feeling of remorse and agony Davies has. His face is illuminated while he is trying to write a letter to his wife, “dearest Elizabeth, if only you could know how much I regret haven taken this command.”<sup>1</sup> Besides, the last scene demonstrates his state through the close-up shot when the ship eventually reaches Annapolis, Maryland. When, he meets Mr.Carrington who is supposed to buy the slaves, he puts it plainly that being involved in such an institution is an act of shame. He states:

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<sup>1</sup>*Roots: First Episode*, directed by David Greene, Wolper Productions, 1977, 1:24:49.

Tell me, Mr. Carrington, do you ever wonder? ... As to whether or not we are just as much imprisoned as are those chained in the hold below? ... It sometimes feels that we do harm to ourselves by taking part in this endeavor...I doubt that you'd like to know, Mr.Carrington.I doubt that either of us would truly like to know.<sup>1</sup>

As the last scene of figure 35 showcases, Davies' pale face and the dark circles around his eyes reflect that he is dropping with physical and mental fatigue because he can neither prevent such actions from taking place nor cease to participate. This character, in fact, does not at all figure in the remake which is nearly devoid of the presence of such sensitive and pitying Whites except for two characters: a preacher and a female spy during the Civil War.

On the one hand, the preacher is shown in fourty one seconds of screen duration in the second episode. He represents the abolitionists, during the prosper of the abolitionist movement, who were against slavery and the slave trade. His speech depicts this denial wherein he declares:

The darkness of the night that you experience is deserved punishment for your disgraceful and iniquitous practice of keeping African slaves. This base custom, so evidently contrary to the laws of God, violates the natural and unalienable rights of mankind. For all those who prosper from slavery, hellfire will be your ultimate reward.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the spy Nancy represents those who worked against the Confederacy and supported the abolishment of slavery. With the help of Kizzy's grandson Tom who is a skilled blacksmith and her slave Jerusalem, she develops a plan to kill members of the Confederate army including her husband Frederick Murray. Unfortunately, the plan goes awry and she ends up being hanged with her slave by Frederick except for Tom whose involvement in the case is not divulged.

In the same vein, the wife of the first owner of Kunta is more sympathetic towards her slaves than in the remake. In the original miniseries, she expresses openly her desire to let the

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episodes*, directed by John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977, 17:22-18:02.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 56:45 -57:26.

slaves read and write when she says, “how can it be a crime to teach them to read?”<sup>1</sup> In the same way, she surprisingly reacts when she knows that Kunta is still in chains for four months.<sup>2</sup> These instances have been omitted in the remake that features the owner’s wife less merciful.

The last example of the inclusion of merciful Whites in the original miniseries but not in the remake is manifested in the relationship between Kizzy’s grandson Tom and George Johnson. Indeed, in the fifth episode, an impoverished and hungry white couple that includes George Johnson and his wife from South Carolina arrives suddenly at Tom’s house to ask for aid. Kizzy and Tom’s wife Matilda gladly help them and they soon develop a sincere friendship. Nonetheless, since George is white, he has privileges over the slaves; therefore, he is assigned by the owner to become the overseer, and he reluctantly accepts the offer. In three minutes and twenty-seven seconds of screen duration, Tom and his brother Louis attempt to teach George how to be a harsh overseer, but George refuses to be, “No! I cannot do that! I cannot whip Louis...Are you teaching me to be mean Tom?”<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Tom makes it clear that this is the norm otherwise; both of them will be killed.<sup>4</sup>

### **Identity and Adherence to African Traditions and Culture**

Adherence to identity is one of the salient features of the remake. It is obviously evident to us as viewers that the makers of the new *Roots* accentuated the importance of knowing who you are and tried to impart it to us through the moving pictures. Albeit the book itself was the outcome of Haley’s quest for identity, *Roots* 1977 seems less persistent in picturing this feature than its remake.

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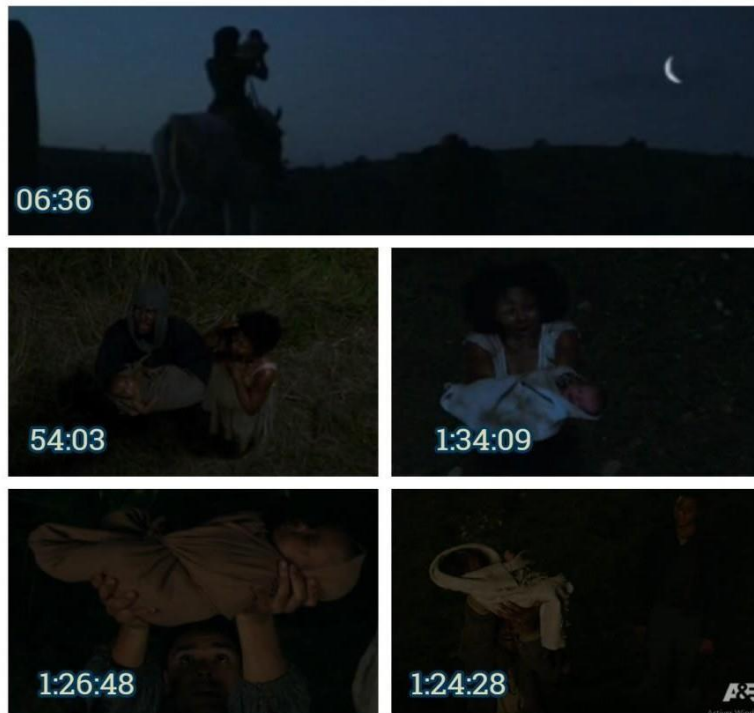
<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episodes*, directed by John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977, 17:22-18:02, 54:33.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: Second Episodes*, directed by John Erman, Wolper Productions, 1977, 17:22-18:02, 56:13.

<sup>3</sup> *Roots: Fifth Episodes*, directed by Gilbert Moses, Wolper Productions, 1977, 17:22-18:02, 1:15:54.

<sup>4</sup> *Roots: Fifth Episodes*, directed by Gilbert Moses, Wolper Productions, 1977, 17:22-18:02, 1:16:17.

**Figure 36.** Naming in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: First, Second Third and Fourth Episodes*, directed by Phillip Noyce, Mario Van Peebles, Thomas Carter, and Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Figure 36 above encompasses five scenes from three episodes. The common denominator between the scenes is not only the process of naming a new born baby, but also the gist of the words uttered by every character while holding his/her baby. For instance when Kunta is born, Omoro takes him at night to an empty place. He raises the boy saying, “You must hear your name first. You are Kunta Kinte, son of Omoro and Binta Kinte, grandson of Kairaba Kunta Kinte and Yaisa. You must always honor your ancestors... Your name is your spirit. Your name is your shield.”<sup>1</sup> These words are transmitted from one generation to another.

In the second scene, Kunta, who is accompanied by his wife Belle, is holding Kizzy lifting her higher and resolutely reiterating, “Your name is your spirit. Your name is your shield. And I will name you Kizzy which means stay put, but not stay a slave! Kizzy, you are the

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 05:57-06:24.



daughter of Kunta Kinte, the daughter of Belle, and though you will never know them, granddaughter of Omoro and Binta Kinte.”<sup>1</sup>

In the third scene, Kizzy is desperate and sad because she is like her father a warrior who believes in freedom and the necessity of preserving her family heritage and remaining connected to her African past, she maintains what she has always learnt from Kunta. Hence, the scene shows her holding her baby George. She says, “I do not know if this is the right kind of place. I do not even know all of the story; there wasn't enough time, but I've got to tell you about our people. My father is Kunta Kinte. He is a Mandinka warrior. You have got to know who he is so you can know who you are.”<sup>2</sup> She, by her turn, endeavours to teach her son the same thing, and the fourth scene confirms that even George is proud to have African ancestors.

The last scene from the same figure features George's son Tom. Although he has neither had the chance to meet Kunta Kinte nor to visit or to live in Africa, this scene shows him performing the same ritual of holding his baby and raising him in the air. This makes this scene the most important one of the four scenes in figure 36 because through it, chiefly, the ability of Kunta's descendants to maintain their African past is demonstrated. This is lucidly apparent when Tom utters his words:

I don't know if this is the right time, or I don't know if the sky looks the way it's supposed to be, but I know you my first baby not born a slave. First baby nobody can own. But that don't mean you don't have to be a warrior. Still gonna have to fight to stay free. ... And I can't keep this family together if I don't teach you where we come from, who we are if I don't remember who I am. So that's why I got to tell you this story so I can be the father I want to be.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth mentioning that in the original miniseries, the ritual is performed twice only, by Omoro when Kunta is born, and then by Kunta when Kizzy is born. Even while holding their

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 53:16-53:54.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:33:36-1:33:57.

<sup>3</sup> *Roots: Fourth Episode*, directed by Bruce Beresford, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:23:18-1:24:18.

babies, they do not utter the words pronounced by the characters in the remake. This makes the modern *Roots* more powerful regarding this matter.

In the same strain, during the Manhood training, Kunta and other adolescent boys undertake a secretive tribal rite to become men. This training includes moral lessons, wrestling, war-craft, hunting skills and circumcision. Although it is nearly the same in both miniseries, it differs when it comes to the last phase of circumcision. Before it starts in the original miniseries, their teacher uncle Silla explains that this step is important because if it is neglected, they will never become real men and can never marry and make families.<sup>1</sup> In the remake, Silla asks the boys about the warrior's first responsibility, and when they fail to provide him with the exact answer, he replies, "The first duty of a Mandinka warrior is to raise a family, to have children, to pass on our way of life."<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, Silla's words in the remake contrast with the ones in the original miniseries because he considers the boys as warriors referring to strength, resistance and braveness. In addition to that, he accentuates the crucial act of not only preserving the African heritage but also passing it from one generation to another. His words lingers in Kunta's heart as long as he lives transmitting them to his descendants.

The staunch adherence to identity is also palpable when Kunta is whipped to accept the new name his owner chooses for him. In the original miniseries, he is whipped ten times before he reluctantly pronounces the name Toby. However, in the remake, the number changes to be thirty atrocious whips as it has been shown earlier in the section of resistance.

Along the same line, the character of Fiddler, in an emotional moment, reveals his African name to Kunta, "I remember that's what [my mother] called me, Henry."<sup>3</sup> Besides, in another

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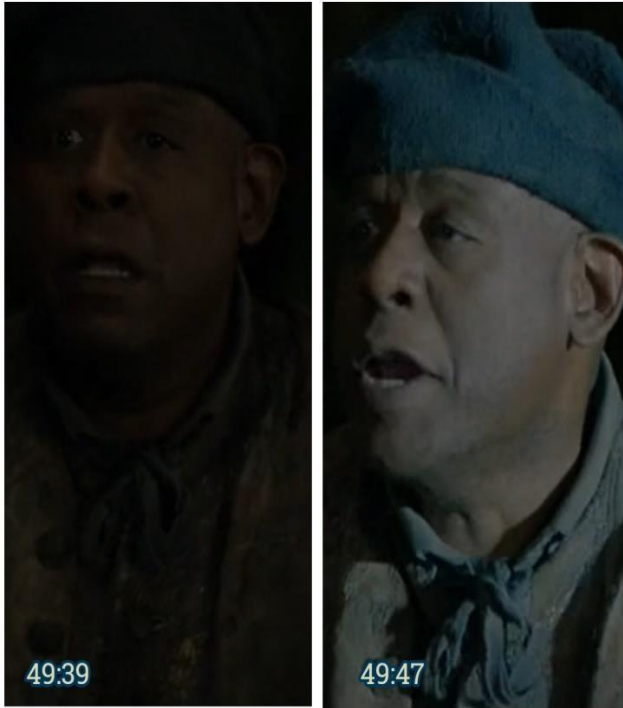
<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by David Greene, Wolper Productions, 1977, 45:59-47:54.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 21:00-22:09.

<sup>3</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:22:04.

instance in the first episode when Fiddler is trying to defend Kunta and Kizzy, he again mentions that his name is not Fiddler but Henry.

**Figure 37.** Fiddler's Original Name in *Roots* 2016



**Source:** *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

Figure 37 demonstrates the moment Fiddler is bravely screaming to insist that he has never forgotten his original name. He states, “You got it all wrong. You got it all wrong. My name ain't Uncle. My name ain't boy. My name ain't Fiddler. My name is Henry. So...call me Henry.”<sup>1</sup> Repeating his name twice signifies that unlike *Roots* 1977, Fiddler in the remake has never accepted to give up his African identity. Not only this, but also the emphasis is reinforced by illuminating his face as it is displayed in the second scene the moment he mentions his African name.

When it comes to the African traditions, the makers of the remake seem more prudent. For instance, Kunta's life before being kidnapped was filmed in West Africa in contrast with the original miniseries that was filmed in St. Simons Island, Georgia. Furthermore, in order to

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: Second Episode*, directed by Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 49:25-49:53.

catch the real spirit of the African society, a voiceover narration is heard at the beginning of the first episode accompanied with scenes from Africa. Laurence Fishburne who performs the voiceover sets the setting, “There was once a rich and sophisticated city named Juffure in a Mandinka kingdom in West Africa. It was located on the banks of the Kamby Bolongo, the Great River of the Gambia.”<sup>1</sup>In addition to that, he offers hints about the lives of Africans during the period when slave trade was prosperous. He explains that even Africans were engaged in the trade, and thus he laid the ground to a better understanding of the miniseries.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, different aspects of the African culture are included in the remake like the African language, which is translated through subtitles. In the first *Roots*, however, all the African talk is conducted in English. Furthermore, hints that Kunta’s religion is Islam are not only apparent but also preserved.

In this case, figure 38 shows two scenes of Omoro and Kunta beseeching Allah the way Muslims do. Both scenes revolve around the same point; Omoro and Kunta are waiting for their wives’ delivery. While Omoro is a free man in Africa, Kunta is a slave in America. Hence, this figure expresses the fact that in spite of all the troubles and punishments that Kunta is encountering, he never relinquishes one iota of his African heritage though the time span between the first scene and the second exceeds twenty years.

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 00:10-02:20.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 00:10-02:20.

**Figure 38.** Prayer of Omoro and Kunta



**Source:** *First and Second Episodes*, directed by Phillip Noyce and Mario Van Peebles, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

In the same context, what is missed in the original miniseries concerns slaves' celebrations which are aspects of their culture. A scene in the first episode pictures slaves dancing and then one of them drops his hat near Jinna's foot as a sign that he chooses her to be his wife.<sup>1</sup> Another scene, shows slaves having their own celebration in America during Christmas Eve.<sup>2</sup> These two scenes are not part of the original miniseries.

Another apparent difference is manifested in Kunta's marriage. In the first *Roots*, Kunta and Belle are asked to jump over a broom as a sign that they have accomplished the marriage rituals and become husband and wife. Kunta gladly accepts, and along with Belle, they happily jump.<sup>3</sup> In the remake, however, Kunta expresses his outright opposition. He says,

<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 8:59-09:10.

<sup>2</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:18:59-1:19:08.

<sup>3</sup> *Roots: Third Episode*, directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, Wolper Productions, 1977., 1:09:16-1:10:03.

“How does a broom make it official? ...Old ways from Europe must be passed down from master to slave. Belle, they are making fun of us. Won’t let us marry under their laws to remind us we belong to them, not each other.”<sup>1</sup> His stance implies that he will never stop clinging to his African identity.

Finally, figure 39 signifies that the African traditions have been successfully passed from one generation to another. The three scenes in the figure orbit around the same act of picking a handful of dirt and throwing it when someone is leaving. In the first scene, Omoro does it after Kunta’ s departure; in the second, Kunta, after selling Kizzy; while in the third, Kizzy, after the departure of the one she loves.

Every one of them represents a different generation in different places: the father Omoro is in Africa, the son Kunta is in Virginia, and the granddaughter kizzy is in Carolina. Despite of the long time span between the periods and the distinct places, the act as shown in the three scenes through the extreme close-up shots reveal does not change a proof that the adherence to the African culture and identity is so powerful to be obliterated easily.

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 41:14-41:40.

**Figure 39.** Throwing dirt when someone is leaving



**Source:** *Roots: First, Second and Third Episodes*, directed by Phillip Noyce, Mario Van Peebles, Thomas Carter, the Wolper Organization, 2016.

### Discussion

The encoded messages of the remake reveal that the makers of the miniseries tried to produce a more authentic account of the American slavery in general and of Kunta's story in particular. They neither embellished them nor strove to appease the White's conscience by the inclusion of merciful slaveowners.

Indeed, before embarking on the process of remaking *Roots*, the producers worked with prominent historians for more accurate results.<sup>1</sup> The associate professor at the University of Washington Stephanie Smallwood, who is an expert in the history of the Middle Passage is one of those who were counseled. She stresses:

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<sup>1</sup> Marisa Guthrie, "Roots' Reborn: How a Slave Saga Was Remade for the Black Lives Matter Era," *The Hollywood Reporter* (May 25, 2016), <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/features/roots-reborn-how-a-slave-897055> (accessed April 15, 2017)

[The slave trade] is not just the largest, but... the most complex migration in modern history...It doesn't rely solely on the symbolism of shackles. That's a very profound part of the experience, but I think we also think more in terms of the social violence of being separated from your entire genealogy in Africa<sup>1</sup>.

She, accordingly, clarifies that slavery goes beyond the apparent physical effect to deeper social impactful outcome. This explains the reason behind filming the remake in West Africa, putting more emphasis on the importance of preserving the African heritage, portraying Kunta as an educated young man from a brave family in a prosperous tribe and including parts from the American Revolution and the Civil War. This gives the viewer chance to associate features of the African culture with real settings. Besides, the depiction of Kunta's life and place of birth before being enslaved without being interrupted by scenes from Maryland like in the first *Roots* pushes the viewers to be emotionally moved and hooked with every brutal action he and his descendants receive be it physical, sexual or emotional by being able to compare his life in Africa with the one in America.

In the same context, the remake puts at the forefront the warrior's spirit by picturing Kunta's defiance whenever it is possible. Unlike its predecessor, the adherence of Kunta and his descendants to their African identity is more tangible. The focus, in fact, is pointed up by the projection of violence and heinous images unlike in the first *Roots*. For instance, slaves' aboard the ship are cut and hanged, Noah is shot in the back, Kunta's foot is ruthlessly cleaved, and the massacre of Fort Pillow where only Blacks are executed is included. Mario Van Peebles, the director of the second episode admitted, "There were days, honestly, where I had to go home and sometimes have a good cry and say, God, I am so blessed that these people found their way out of it."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Melena Ryzik, "'Roots,' Remade for a New Era," the New York Times (May 18, 2016), [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/arts/television/roots-remade-for-a-new-era.html%20\(accessed%20July%2015,%202020\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/arts/television/roots-remade-for-a-new-era.html%20(accessed%20July%2015,%202020)) (accessed May 20, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Melena Ryzik, "'Roots,' Remade for a New Era," the New York Times (May 18, 2016), [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/arts/television/roots-remade-for-a-new-era.html%20\(accessed%20July%2015,%202020\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/arts/television/roots-remade-for-a-new-era.html%20(accessed%20July%2015,%202020)) (accessed May 20, 2016).



In the same strain, it seems that the makers of the new *Roots* were driven by the race tensions that were taking place during the production of the miniseries. As it has been mentioned earlier, a number of shootings wherein Blacks were victims in America sparked the emergence of the BLM movement in 2013. While watching the remake, one can make connections to the cause of the movement that addressed violence against Blacks and pointed at the racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system. Moreover, the founders of the movement accentuated the notions of unity versus otherness, dignity and perseverance.

In fact, the feeling of being humiliated and not being honored propelled Blacks in America to rise because they did not want to be stripped of their own dignity. *Roots* is embedded with the notion of dignity. It took from Kunta thirty ruthless whips to reluctantly accept his new name, for he believes that being stripped of your name, is being stripped of your identity and therefore of your dignity.

As it has been displayed earlier, the whipping scene of the remake differs drastically from its predecessor in terms of the length of the scene, the number of the lashes Kunta takes, and the instances the harsh overseer keeps demanding Kunta to pronounce his slave name, Toby. LaVar Burton explained:

We live in a much more violent society, and that's certainly reflected in our storytelling. I think we can handle a more graphic representation of the reality that we are portraying...Cumulatively; they give us a much deeper sense of the actual brutality that the ancestors of black people survived.<sup>1</sup>

Burton wanted to insist that the scene was necessary to be made as such because what happened to the Blacks under the policemen was more brutal. Another palpable example from the first episode is the instance Kunta decides to take the horse of his master's wife to escape.

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<sup>1</sup> Nojan Aminoshari, "Roots Star LeVar Burton Explains Why the Remake Is So Necessary Today," (May 31, 2016), <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/tv/interviews/a45351/roots-levar-burton-interview/> (accessed June 20, 2018).

Fiddler mocks at him for the horse is accustomed to be ridden only by the master's wife and for Kunta to do it, he needs to be well-trained. Yet, Kunta replies, "do not ride like English lady. Ride like Mandinka warrior."<sup>1</sup> Not only the words he uses are strong, so is the way he pronounces them. His sharp tone and gaze (See fig. 40) demonstrates the extent he clings on all what defines his dignity.

**Figure 40.** Kunta's Gaze of Dignity



**Source:** *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:20:47.

Furthermore, through the intense violence, the remake depicts the process of enslaving Kunta from the first moment he is ambushed to the moment he reaches America and is coerced into slavery as a very challenging and grueling journey. Had the master not cut his toes, Kunta would never stop trying to escape slavery in search for dignity and freedom.

When it comes to unity versus otherness, both of them are conspicuously highlighted right from the first moment the producers of *Roots* were mulling over the idea of remaking the mini-series. Mark Wolper averred:

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<sup>1</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 1:20:47.

[*Roots*] prompted me to be interested in who I am...watching *Roots*...motivates us to be interested in who we are and if we understand who we are we will...realize that we are all connected, and if we are all connected, how can we go out in the street and shoot each other and throw things at each other and fight.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, he emphasized that making *Roots* will undoubtedly triggers one's curiosity to question his own roots and identity, and this in turn will engender a sense of belonging and acceptance between everyone. It is worth mentioning that Mark Wolper is a white American man who worked hand in hand with the black co-executive producer Levar Burton who played the role of Kunta Kinte in the original *Roots* of 1977. The combination of the two encouraged the acceptance of the other as part of the whole. When Wolper addressed his speech to Burton, he confirmed, "You and I are related... we realize that we are not separate different,"<sup>2</sup> and Burton assured, "We are related... We are all the same species."<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the miniseries itself, in the first episode, Blacks from different tribes are chained tightly inside the ship. Although they are speaking different languages; yet, they decide to unite to create a mutiny when one of them screams, "Come on! Brothers, I am Silla Ba Dibba from Juffure... we must help each other...brothers."<sup>4</sup> The BLM founders did the same when they first shared their emotions with every African American in America through social media. They did not only empathize with the victims, but also appealed to the benevolent conscience to remind them that Blacks are the unified other with the other.

In the same context, perseverance that the founders of the BLM movement insisted upon is what characterizes the remake most through different characters, mainly Kunta who never stops defying the Americans, and through Kizzy who stands still against all the troubles that

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<sup>1</sup> HISTORY, "Know Your Roots: Mark Wolpe 01," May 24, 2016, YouTube video, 01:05 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaYi11FVWaY> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> HISTORY, "Know Your Roots: Mark Wolpe 02," May 25, 2016, YouTube video, 00:38 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaYi11FVWaY> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> HISTORY, "Know Your Roots: Mark Wolpe 02," May 25, 2016, YouTube video, 01:22 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaYi11FVWaY> (accessed June 5, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> *Roots: First Episode*, directed by Phillip Noyce, the Wolper Organization, 2016, 38:21.

befall her instilling the same spirit in her son and grandsons. In the light of the BLM Movement, Garza maintained:

[This movement] is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.<sup>1</sup>

It is clearly noticed, then, the points that both *Roots* and the BLM Movement converge on. While slaves in *Roots* persist and fight to preserve their dignity and to be free, the founders and the supporters of the BLM movement were persistently trying to withstand and end police brutality and Court's bias in America against Blacks. On the one hand, Garza' use of 'affirmation' and 'resilience in the face of deadly oppression' expressions indicates that Blacks have always been and are still fighters against any kind of ill-treatment and cruelty. On the other hand, the remake could have been avoided or depicted differently, but its makers made sure that they are addressing a new generation and at the same time backing up the BLM's cause by unveiling that brutality against Blacks is not something anew, but it was born the moment slavery started in America.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the makers of the new *Roots* encoded their messages to address the new generation by the projection of intensive brutality, staunch perseverance, determined resistance and adamant adherence to the African heritage. Unlike its predecessor, the remake, in fact, does less work to alleviate the impactful guilt that the white audience might have. It focuses more on portraying the atrocities of slavery in a more historically accurate context. Through every main character in the miniseries, the same points are highlighted. Through the implementation of some aspects of the cinematographic and *mise-en-scène* techniques,

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<sup>1</sup> Dominique Thomans, "Black Lives Matter as Resistance to Systemic Anti-Black Violence," *Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis*, no 8(2019), 37.

dignity and Blacks' stamina to fight for themselves and their heritage were demonstrated and focused on.

Besides, when contextualizing the remake, it becomes clear that it has been affected by the racial tensions of the period, and is in itself creating clear connections between slavery in the past and the present racial discrimination in America. However, one cannot judge whether the remake succeeded in reaching its aim or not until delving into its reception. Therefore, the following chapter will tackle both the circulation and the reception of the miniseries in the light of Stuart Hall's theory.

## Chapter Four

## Circulating and Decoding *Roots* 2016

Introduction .....	160
Circulating <i>Roots</i> 2016 .....	161
The Implementation of the Cast-Related Method .....	163
4.2.2 The Implementation of the Streaming-related method .....	167
Decoding <i>Roots</i> 2016.....	174
The Content Analysis Method.....	177
The Analysis of the Audience’s Comments on Instagram.....	178
The Analysis of the Audience’s Comments on Facebook and YouTube.....	187
Analyzing Responses on the Rotten Tomatoes Website.....	191
Embracing the Past to Define the Present.....	195
Conclusion .....	197

### **Introduction**

Any moving picture product is devised to be consumed according to its makers' intentions. Be it a film, a documentary, an animation or series, its reception by the audience is of a paramount significance. To put it differently, it is through the response of the audience that the success of any visual product is weighed, so the makers can either relish the moment of achieving a smash hit, or lament the efforts, time, money and sacrifices made for the cause. Besides, the reception does not only help see a specific issue from different existing perspectives, but also serves as a catalyst to the positive evolvement of a particular moving picture industry.

In this respect, Hall's theory – vis-à-vis its precursors – crystalizes the crucial role of the audience as an active receiver. Besides receiving the sender's message, the audience through his response actively reproduces his own message. As it has been indicated in the second chapter, Hall argues that if a specific product is encoded in a particular way, it does not mean that the audience will concur with the sender's view or will eschew from expressing his own perspective. Hall believes that the receiver's message either conforms to the sender's, or radically diverges from it, or takes a middle course. Whatever the stance is, the receiver's position gives meaning to the communication cycle in general and to the encoded messages in particular.

With reference to *Roots* 2016, the results of the preceding chapter evinced that the makers of the miniseries encoded their messages to address the modern generation that was and is still witnessing new Civil Rights Movement against racial discrimination in America. Through the use of some aspects of the cinematographic and *mise-en-scène* techniques, messages of perseverance, dignity, unity were included and manifested – unlike in the original miniseries 1977 – in the projection of intensive violent images of resistance to live

freely and of resistance to preserve the African identity. Hence, this chapter explores how the remake was circulated and decoded after being produced and its messages were encoded.

### **Circulating *Roots* 2016**

Circulation is one of the most important moments that Hall underlines. Its importance lies in the fact that it creates a linking thread between the encoding and the decoding phases. In other words, it helps take the message out from its hidden burrow to be exposed the way its producers want it to be, and to do this, the circulation step must be done in a way that entices the audience and triggers his curiosity to have a look on the whole product. Therefore, if it is not accomplished properly, the audience will not consume the product, and thus the decoding stage will be eliminated distorting the whole communication cycle.

In the same vein, one of the things that are worth shedding light on is the fact that a moving picture product is circulated differently than a movement. For instance, a particular movement may share its message with its target audience using a number of methods, including going outside for marches as the supporters of the BLM movement did during the Fergusson unrest.<sup>1</sup> Others can share and spread their messages using word of mouth or by authoring books or pamphlets like the *Common Sense* in 1776 by the English-born political activist Thomas Paine (1737-1809)<sup>2</sup> during the American War of Independence (1775-1783). In the same context, some people may disseminate their messages by printing them on shirts, posters, and even flyers like the ones the U.S. citizens usually witness during the presidential campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> This rest refers to the protests that took place in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 following Michael Brown's death by a white police officer in August 2014. BBC, "Ferguson unrest: From shooting to nationwide protests," (August 10, 2015), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30193354> (accessed January 20, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine who immigrated to American in 1774 is known as being the voice of revolution. In 1776, he wrote his brilliant pamphlet *The Common Sense* that helped convince the Americans that separating from Britain is a requisite act. He later issues another successful pamphlet the *Crisis* between 1776 and 1783. From O'Callaghan, 30.



When it comes to the moving pictures products, one cannot march or write a pamphlet to circulate his work because propelling the audience to wait impatiently for a specific movie to be released, or to choose a specific channel over many because a particular miniseries is worth watching is a demanding task. Simply put, if a miniseries is not worth watching, then it will be consigned to negligence, making the main purpose behind creating it pointless.

Thus, since *Roots* of 2016 is a remake of a very successful miniseries, one wonders how it was circulated because people tend to approach new stuff, chiefly when it comes to an atrocious period like the American slavery. In fact, in a country which is supposed to be democratic and to have passed over racism and the issue of slavery for so long, it would seem useless to recreate the same product. Anika Noni Rose who played the role of Kizzy in the remake, and she is one of those who represent the modern generation expounds on the same point:

When people bring up slavery, very often the next thing is ‘Ugh, do we have to hear about it again?’ ... this is America’s second Holocaust and needs to be told and heard and repeated. I hope they see in this woman (Kizzy) not just an enslaved woman, but the story of survival and the strength it takes every day to be told you’re not human, in spite of coming from something so grand and undefinable...It’s really important for people to remember we are all connected. Not just as African-Americans but as Americans, and our world. The slave ships didn’t just stop in America.<sup>1</sup>

Rose points up a very important point that though discussion about slavery is likely to be eschewed by the modern generation, still it is indispensable not to overlook the subject because it is an essential part of the world history in general and the American history in particular. Consequently, since the makers of the new *Roots* had their own perspectives and were heading towards a specific aim, it was necessary for them to mull over implementing effective methods to assure that the viewers are enthralled enough to devote their time

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Tartaglione, “*Roots*’ World Premiere: Cast & Producers Talk Relevance To Today At Emotional MIPTV Screening,” *Deadline* (April 4, 2016), <https://deadline.com/2016/04/roots-world-premiere-screening-miptv-cast-crew-1201731758/> (accessed September 5, 2020).

watching *Roots* instead of what might be aired at the same time. Besides, the remake was broadcasted by The History Channel, Lifetime and A&E networks for the first time on the Memorial Day on May 30, 2016, and it was necessary to circulate the miniseries before, during and after its first release.

### **The Implementation of the Cast-related Method**

Thinking about how to disseminate the remake to a great number of viewers, and to coerce them into watching it started even before the process of filming began. As it has been elucidated earlier in the previous chapters, during the pre-production phase, the producers hire the crew of the work.

For instance, actors represent the core of any real or televisual performance. From plays, to movies, to series and miniseries, actors are the gem that will either reflect a product's light or will diminish it. Moreover, they are the focal point of the show, and the first element that the viewer is concerned with. As a result, selecting them is uppermost in the list to enhance the circulation of the work more effectively.

In their book *Why Are We Bad at Picking Good Leaders? A Better Way to Evaluate Leadership Potential* (2011), the American professors Jeffrey Cohn and Jay Moran point, "Vision, is without doubt, an important element of a successful film. But every bit as important is judgment ...what use is great vision without an ability to translate that vision to the big screen?"<sup>1</sup>To explain, by tacit agreement, both authors confirm that however amazing and original the director's vision is, if it is not well presented on screen, it will certainly lose its glamour, and to be well translated, the actors should be well selected because not only their performance matters, but also their fame and reputation do. While the former hooks the

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Cohn and Jay Moran, *Why Are We Bad at Picking Good Leaders? A Better Way to Evaluate Leadership Potential* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 134.

viewer to watch even more of the miniseries, the latter either mesmerises him at the very beginning or stirs up his sheer boredom.

The English actor Malachi Kirby, for instance, confessed that he had never expected to be chosen for the role of Kunta Kinte,<sup>1</sup> but the executive producer LeVar Burton revealed that he visited and scanned several continents over several months to find the right actor in Malachi.<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that Burton is the one who played the role of Kunta in the original miniseries; thus, he knew better than anyone else how emotional and physical this role is demanding. Besides, since he could successfully create an iconic role, the fact that he was responsible for selecting the new Kunta was in itself a strong impetus for triggering the audience's interest to watch the remake.

Moreover, another element that contributes to the success of the circulation phase is relevance which— in this context —represents the point of whether the actor's physical nature fits the needed role and fulfils its requirements or not. For instance, the main protagonist is a black man and so is Malachi Kirby who appeared on most of the promotional posters.

In addition to that, Kunta Kinta is a Mandinka strong warrior with a strong physical appearance. Consequently, for the remake to reach a wide range of mass audience, the actor must hold the same characteristics. Kirby was an athlete who used to train six days per week in preparation for the 400m<sup>3</sup>, and this feature contributed massively to the circulation of the new miniseries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alissa Wilkinson, "Just a Vessel: Actor Malachi Kirby on 'Roots,' Kunta Kinte, and God," *Christianity Today* (May 24, 2016), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/may-web-only/just-vessel-actor-malachi-kirby-on-roots-kunta-kinte-and-go.html> (accessed August 15, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Nancy Tartaglione, "Roots' World Premiere: Cast & Producers Talk Relevance To Today At Emotional MIPTV Screening," *Deadline* (April 4, 2016), <https://deadline.com/2016/04/roots-world-premiere-screening-miptv-cast-crew-1201731758/> (accessed September 5, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> TV Guide, "Malachi Kirby," <https://www.tvguide.com/celebrities/malachi-kirby/bio/905653/> (accessed June 17, 2020)

<sup>4</sup> Ellen E. Jones, "Malachi Kirby: 'Playing Kunta Kinte in Roots reboot allowed me to find my own roots'," *Evening and Standard* (February 9, 2017), <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/tvfilm/malachi-kirby-playing-kunta-kinte-in-roots-reboot-allowed-me-to-find-my-own-roots-a3456536.html> (accessed September 3, 2020).

In the same vein, a point worth shedding light on is the fact that the producers chose actors with a decent degree of fame for it helped in a great deal to circulate the miniseries. To illustrate, Malachi Kirby's role in the Mogadishu<sup>1</sup> play (2011) by the British playwright Vivienne Franzmann earned him the Evening Standard Theatre Awards in the same year as an outstanding newcomer.<sup>2</sup> In addition to that, he was named by the Screen International<sup>3</sup> as a U.K. Screen Star of Tomorrow.<sup>4</sup>

In the same context, Anika Noni Rose won the 2004 Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical for *Caroline, or Change*.<sup>5</sup> Forest Whitaker who played the role of Fiddler won diverse awards as well. In 2006 he earned the title of best actor by the Cannes Film Festival, Washington D.C. Film Critics Association, Toronto Film Critics Association, Southeastern Film Critics Association, Screen Actors Guild, Phoenix Film Critics Association, Online Film Critics Association, Oklahoma Film Critics Circle, New York Film Critics Society, New York Film Critics Online, to name but few.<sup>6</sup>

In the same line of thought, what made the choice of the cast effective was the role played by media. This latter upon filming the remake it started to circulate parts of it by focusing more on some scenes of the main prominent actors including Malachi Kirby, Forest Whitaker, Laurence Fishburne who performed the voiceover narration and appeared at the end as Alex Haley, Anika Noni Rose, to name but few. This, in fact, facilitated the process of dispatching

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<sup>1</sup> The play contains two acts, and it tells the story of a white teacher Amanda who tries to protect her black student Jason after he pushes her to the ground. She does not want him to be excluded, but she soon finds herself being dragged in a life full of threats and uncertainty. Drama online, "Mogadishu," <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/playtext-overview?docid=do-9781784601737&tocid=do-9781784601737-div-00000004> (accessed June 3, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> TV Guide, "Malachi Kirby," <https://www.tvguide.com/celebrities/malachi-kirby/bio/905653/> (accessed June 17, 2020)

<sup>3</sup> The Screen International is a British film magazine that tackles the international film business.

<sup>4</sup> TV Guide, "Malachi Kirby," <https://www.tvguide.com/celebrities/malachi-kirby/bio/905653/> (accessed June 17, 2020)

<sup>5</sup> Broadwayworld, <https://www.broadwayworld.com/tonyawardspersoninfo.php?nomname=Anika%20Noni%20Rose> (accessed June 17, 2020)

<sup>6</sup> Forest Whitaker Awards, <https://www.fandango.com/people/forest-whitaker-718036/awards> (accessed August 11, 2020).

news about the remake easily, and of propelling the audience to wait impatiently for the miniseries to be aired.

Similarly, besides selecting actors who have the mesmerizing power to attract the audience, the four directors who directed the different four episodes were not chosen randomly. Significant to remember that through the director's vision and perspectives the overall message is made and the actors' performance is controlled. A good director pushes the actors to reveal more than what they believe to have as a gift. Thus, if a director is racist, his racist attitudes would certainly be manifested through the decisions he makes regarding the actors' performance, appearance and the overall contents of a particular scenes. Consequently, a work that tackles a sensitive issue like the American slavery and is supposed to be addressed to all the American audience and people worldwide, must take into consideration the need to pick its directors meticulously not only in terms of talent and proficiency, but also in terms of skin colour.

Figure 41 shows the four directors of the remake. As it is lucid, there are two white directors: Phillip Noycer (first episode) and Bruce Beresford (fourth episode) and two black ones: Mario Van Peebles (second episode) and Thomas Carter (third episode).

**Figure 41.** The Four Directors of *Roots* 2016



*Source:* Google Images, <https://www.google.com/imghp?hl=fr> (accessed August 5, 2020).

Every one of them is known for his successful achievements in the field like Peebles' father who directed one of the most famous first Blaxploitation films *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971); Thomas Carter's *the White Shadow* (1978), Phillip Noycer's *the Qieut American* (2002), and Bruce Beresford's *Peace, Love & Misunderstanding* (2001). However, what matters most for the circulation was the diversity that has been created behind the camera, securing the balance between two different races to address both sections of the audience and to create a sense of unity. If it were not done so, the work probably would have been thought as being a racially- directed product whether by Blacks or by Whites, and thus losing a significant segment of viewers.

Actually, choosing every member of the crew from the directors to the actors to the designers, and the cinematographer constitutes the cast-related method that is part of the initial phase only of the circulation step. It is vital because it sets the stage for the implementation of the next method: the streaming-related method. If the best choices are made in the first phase, the next one will certainly appeal to the viewer's attention.

#### **4.2.2 The Implementation of the Streaming-related Method**

Streaming platforms are extremely requisite in the circulation phase because when the product is finished, it needs to be spread, and it is through these platforms that this aim is attained. If viewers have no idea about the creation of a new product, how will they then watch it? There must be a kind of preliminary phase wherein the viewers are acquainted with the product and are precipitated into watching it.

It is worth mentioning that whether the streaming platform works for free like YouTube and some TV channels, or must be paid like Netflix<sup>1</sup>, Hulu<sup>1</sup> and other cable channels, the

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<sup>1</sup> It is one of the most famous American streaming media platforms. It was founded in 1997 by the American entrepreneurs Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph, and it is headquartered in Los Gatos, California. Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Netflix," <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Netflix-Inc> (accessed January 1, 2020).

fundamental purpose of using it does not alter. The producers, indeed, use it to reach out great number of people who in turn— as explained in the second chapter —will fill the makers’ pockets with money and compensate for the budget spent to produce the material.

In the case of the new *Roots*, the producers – in contrast with the original miniseries – chose a number of online and non-online streaming platforms to distribute their message. Uncertainly, this was not possible in 1977 because there were no options to circulate and share a particular cinematic work using internet-related streaming platforms.

Subsequently, *Roots* 2016 is found available on Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, Microsoft Store, and A&E Network. While the first three represent the biggest and most famous online streaming platforms with a respective share of the streaming marketplace on the internet, the fifth one is a TV channel that *Roots* producers have used to stream their miniseries on (see chapter 3).

For instance, according to the “10 under \$100” website,<sup>2</sup> the Amazon Prime recorded an average of over 206 million global monthly visits.<sup>3</sup> This makes this platform a very important spot where the miniseries can be circulated easily and rapidly, mainly that the visitors are also exposed to a set of recommendations, reviews and ratings that confirm if the product is considered as a well-done work or not.

To illustrate, the figure below demonstrates how the remake is shared and presented on Amazon Prime Video Platform. As the figure shows, the miniseries is described as being “a historical portrait of one family’s journey through American slavery and their will to survive

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<sup>1</sup> Hulu is an online video-on-demand service which is controlled by The Walt Disney Company through one of its business segments: Walt Disney Direct-to-Consumer & International. Fandom, <https://ficreation.fandom.com/wiki/Hulu> (accessed June 5, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> It is an online source for unbiased product reviews, information and advice from experienced product testers. 10 under \$100, <https://10under100.com/about/> (accessed April 15, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> “20 Eye Opening Amazon Statistics & Facts for 2020,” *10 under \$100* (August 21, 2020), <https://10under100.com/amazon-statistics-facts/#:~:text=Every%20month%2C%20over%20206%20Million,55%20Million%20Visitors%20per%20month> (accessed September 1, 2020)

and preserve their legacy in the face of unimaginable hardships.”<sup>1</sup> The use of words like ‘survive’, ‘preserve’, an ‘unimaginable’ is used to boost the process of circulation. Besides, the figure displays the viewers’ rating for the miniseries which is obviously positive (87%) enough to propel other viewers to watch it.

**Figure 42.** Rating *Roots* 2016 on Amazon Prime Video Platform



**Source:** Amazon Prime Video, <https://www.amazon.com/Roots-Season-1/dp/B01F1WO6W4> (accessed August 13, 2020).

The same thing can be said for the Apple website with an average of 2.5 million daily visitors.<sup>2</sup> As for the Microsoft store, this app comes built-in on the windows 10 operating system which is operated by over 1 billion users according to the Microsoft website.<sup>3</sup> This means that the miniseries has been possibly exposed to these users since the store is available to them on their laptops, desktop computers, and even smartphones which operate through the windows phone system.

<sup>1</sup> Amazon Prime Video, <https://www.amazon.com/Roots-Season-1/dp/B01F1WO6W4> (accessed August 13, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Jim Dalrymple, “Apple.com the 5th most visited retail site on Cyber Monday,” Macworld (December 5, 2008), <https://www.macworld.com/article/1137346/monday.html#:~:text=Apple's%20Web%20site%20was%20the,2.5%20million%20daily%20unique%20visitors> (accessed April 25, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Microsoft, <https://news.microsoft.com/bythenumbers/en/windowsdevices> (accessed June 5, 2020).



Instagram platform helped in a great deal circulate the message as well. Being the channel where the remake was premiered, the History Channel harnessed its website and instagram account to share the miniseries with its followers. Concerning the Instagram, the Channel, as it is indicated in the figure below, has more than six million followers. This feature increases the chance of spreading the remake to a wide range of people.

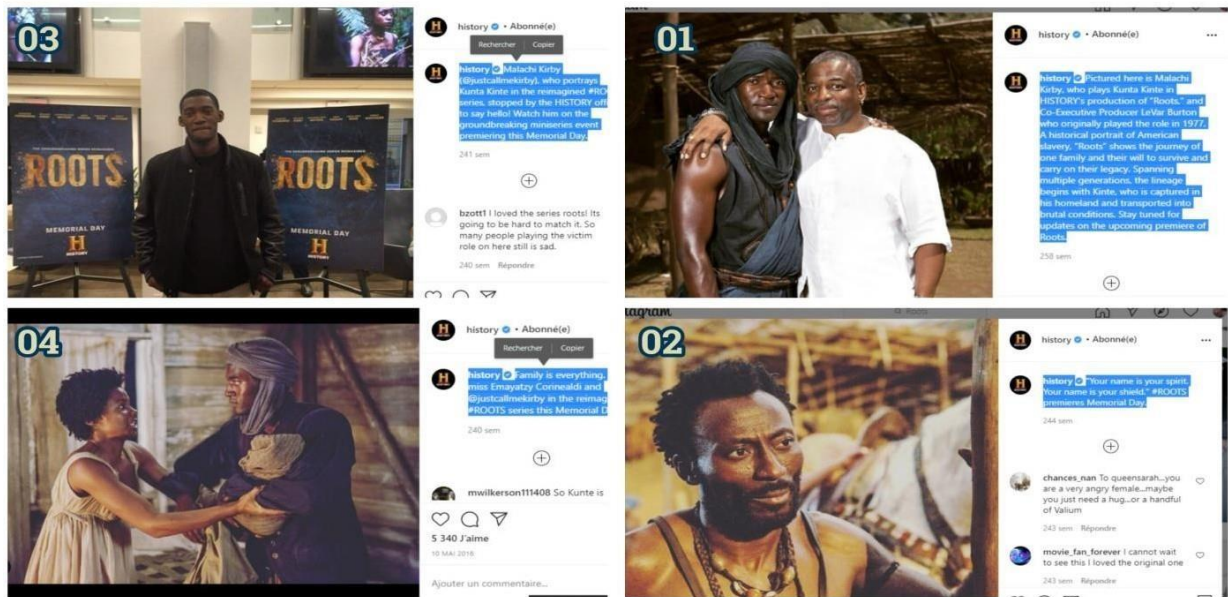
**Figure 43.** The Instagram Account of the History Channel



*Source:* HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/history/?hl=fr> (accessed July 20, 2020).

Accordingly, on January 8, 2016 the first message was shared on Instagram that features LeVar Burton with Malachi Kirby who is wearing the costumes that the character of Kunta Kinte demands (see fig. 44). Intriguing the audience, the post asks them to stay tuned for further information about the miniseries.

**Figure 44.** Circulating *Roots* 2016 on Instagram (01)



Source: HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/history/?hl=fr> (accessed July 20, 2020).

The second post from the same figure above shows the Nigerian actor Babs Olusanmoku who played the role of Kunta’s father Omoro in the first episode. This post was shared on April 14, 2016, and it includes the most repeated sentences in the miniseries, “Your name is your shield, your name is your power.”<sup>1</sup>

The third post features Malchi Kirby who is surrounded by posters that cover the title of the remake and the logo of the History Channel. Through this post, the audience is encouraged and asked to wait impatiently for the “groundbreaking miniseries,”<sup>2</sup> and it has been announced also that the Memorial Day would be the date to premier the miniseries.

Finally, the fourth post from the same figure was shared on May 10, 2016, and as it is displayed in the figure, the post features a scene from the second episode where Belle is requesting Kunta to stay and to take care of their newborn baby, Kizzy. The post emphasizes, “Family is everything”<sup>3</sup> and reminds the audience about the date of the miniseries’ release.

<sup>1</sup> HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/history/?hl=fr> (accessed July 20, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/history/?hl=fr> (accessed July 20, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/history/?hl=fr> (accessed July 20, 2020).

It is obvious that the Channel attempted to circulate the remake to a great number of people via its account by adopting three techniques. The first one focuses on showing the main actors whose presence would enthrall a remarkable number of people like the photo that captured Kirby with Burton, representing two different generations. Then, the second one is about the use of the exact words and sentences to captivate the attention of the readers like ‘groundbreaking,’ ‘family is everything,’ and ‘your name is your shield.’ Finally, the interval between the four posts reminds the audience of the miniseries and helps keep them hooked for a long time.

In the same context, figure 45 displays two other important posts that were shared by the same Channel. What is interesting in the figure is the presence of the senior adviser of Barack Obama Valerie Jarrett who is accompanying Kirby and Burton at the White House. It is a powerful technique to intrigue people and propel them to watch the remake.

**Figure 45.** Circulating *Roots* 2016 on Instagram (02)



Source: HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/history/?hl=fr> (accessed July 20, 2020).

In the same vein, the producers of the remake circulated the miniseries through the creation of enthralling and multiple trailers for their miniseries that have been shared by the History Channel on its Instagram account, and were also distributed to different platforms including YouTube.<sup>1</sup> The multiple versions of the trailers were in the form of different clips from all the episodes that were showcased in order to attract the attention of multiple viewers.<sup>2</sup>

In the same strain, the makers of the remake resorted to another technique to circulate the miniseries. They shared posters wherein a close up-shot of the actors' faces were displayed along with their character name in the miniseries (see fig. 46).

**Figure 46.** Posters of *Roots* 2016



*Source:* <https://www.google.com/search?q=roots+2016> (accessed August 22, 2020).

In fact, using the posters above not only served as a promotional method that increased the circulation of the miniseries even more, but also enticed the viewers into watching the

<sup>1</sup> HISTORY, "Roots: the Journey begins with a name," (April, 21, 2016), YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxmw4gccqnA> (accessed February 4, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Jablo Streaming & TV trailers, "Roots official Trailer (HD) Lauren Fishburne," YouTube, (February 12, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzIpxmvIEj4> (accessed February 4, 2020).

remake by displaying faces of famous actors whose presence in the remake is associated with the fame and success they have already managed to create in previous works.

Articles from prominent newspapers helped the process of circulation as well. As an illustration, after the release of the miniseries, the journalist Natalie Jarvey wrote her article on June 14, 2016 which is entitled “ ‘Roots’ to Stream Exclusively on Hulu,” in *The Hollywood Reporter*. This article highlights the success of the remake and reveals that around 5.3 million viewers were drawn when the remake premiered on May 30, 2016, and the number reached 14.4 million viewers during the first week; thus the Hulu streaming platform purchased the remake from the A+E Networks.<sup>1</sup>

Another example is the article which is entitled “ ‘Roots’ re-imagining grippingly conveys history in a tale of family devotion and perseverance.” It was written by Mary Mcnamara in *the Angeles Times* on May 30, 2016 in which she described it as “a celebration of resistance through survival.”<sup>2</sup> She also insisted upon the fact that this story is worth retelling.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, when the message is circulated successfully, this means that the audience has received it. Yet, what is significant is the reaction the audience exhibits after consuming the message which is for Hall known as the decoding part.

### **Decoding *Roots* 2016**

Decoding for Hall is about the receipt of the sender’s message which is in this case the message of the remake’s makers that has been elucidated in the third chapter. According to Hall, it is not enough to receive the message, but it is necessary to express your stance after the receipt. In addition to that, Hall reckons that an active audience reproduces his own

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<sup>1</sup> Natalie Jarvey, “ ‘Roots’ to Stream Exclusively on Hulu,” *The Hollywood Reporter* (June 14, 2016), <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/roots-stream-exclusively-hulu-902519> (accessed July 29, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Mcnamara, “ ‘Roots’ re-imagining grippingly conveys history in a tale of family devotion and perseverance,” *the Angeles Times* (May 30, 2016), <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-roots-remake-review-20160526-snap-story.html> (accessed July 31, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Mcnamara, “ ‘Roots’ re-imagining grippingly conveys history in a tale of family devotion and perseverance,” *the Angeles Times* (May 30, 2016), <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/tv/la-et-st-roots-remake-review-20160526-snap-story.html> (accessed July 31, 2020).

message after receiving the sender's. This message is, in fact, the result of one of the three stances the receiver may take: the preferred reading, the negotiated reading or the oppositional reading. Before examining how the remake was received, it is worth shedding light on the reception of the original miniseries in 1977.

A very crucial point to be remembered is the fact that the original *Roots* was released twelve years after the passage of the victorious Voting Rights Act in 1965. Race relations between Whites and Blacks, therefore, were in the process of reconciliation. During this period, it was not common for Blacks to dominate the American motion picture without being stereotyped as drug dealers, violent heroes and sexual perverts. Subsequently, it came at a striking surprise to have a miniseries of eight episodes that treat slavery the way *Roots* of that time did.

It is estimated that a record of 140 million Americans remained tuned in when the miniseries was being aired.<sup>1</sup> Burton confirmed, “‘Roots’ was a seminal event in our nation's history... It rocked us. It tore the blinders off. We could not go back to the way we were before.”<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, the final episode was the most-watched single episode in the history of the American television.<sup>3</sup> Besides, since the book itself was the outcome of Haley's quest for identity, and so did the adaptation, we can consider the stance taken by the audience after watching it as being preferred reading because upon watching it, many people were

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<sup>1</sup> Byron Pitts, Benn Newman and Alexa Valiente, “‘Roots’ Cast Reveals the Challenges of Remaking the Iconic Miniseries,” abcNews (May 27, 2016), <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/roots-cast-reveals-challenges-remaking-iconic-miniseries/story?id=39410986> (accessed August 15, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Byron Pitts, Benn Newman and Alexa Valiente, “‘Roots’ Cast Reveals the Challenges of Remaking the Iconic Miniseries,” abcNews (May 27, 2016), <https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/roots-cast-reveals-challenges-remaking-iconic-miniseries/story?id=39410986> (accessed August 15, 2020)

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, “Roots: The most important TV show ever?” *BBC Culture* (June 2, 2016), [https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160602-roots-the-most-important-tv-show-ever#:~:text=The%20eight-night%20run%20culminated,\\*H%20finale%20in%201983](https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160602-roots-the-most-important-tv-show-ever#:~:text=The%20eight-night%20run%20culminated,*H%20finale%20in%201983) (accessed August 20, 2020).

compelled to investigate their own families and histories.<sup>1</sup> The question that pops into one’s head, hence, is whether the remake could attain the same achievement or not.

According to the most three famous American film and review aggregation websites: the Rotten Tomatoes<sup>2</sup>, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb)<sup>3</sup>, and the Common Sense Media (CSM),<sup>4</sup> the remake achieved a salient success as it is displayed in the figures below.

**Figure 47.** The Reception of *Roots* (2016) on IMDb



Source: IMDb, “Racines,” <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3315386/> (accessed September 9, 2020).

**Figure 48.** The Reception of *Roots* (2016) on the Common Sense



Source: the Common Sense, “Roots 2016,” <https://www.common Sense Media.org/movie-reviews/roots-2016> (accessed September 9, 2020).

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Keishin Armstrong, “Roots: The most important TV show ever?” *BBC Culture* (June 2, 2016), [https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160602-roots-the-most-important-tv-show-ever#:~:text=The%20eight-night%20run%20culminated,\\*H%20finale%20in%201983](https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160602-roots-the-most-important-tv-show-ever#:~:text=The%20eight-night%20run%20culminated,*H%20finale%20in%201983) (accessed August 20, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> For further information visit their website <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/about>

<sup>3</sup> For further information visit their website [https://www.imdb.com/?ref\\_=nv\\_home](https://www.imdb.com/?ref_=nv_home)

<sup>4</sup> For further information visit their website <https://www.common Sense Media.org/about-us/our-mission>

With reference to the IMDb website, the remake received about eight stars out of 10 (see fig.47), which is a remarkable rate a motion picture product can have. In the same strain, the remake received five stars in the Common Sense website (see fig.48). It is also obvious in figure 48 that the modern *Roots* is considered as a violent miniseries that treats sensible issues; therefore, it is deemed inappropriate for children under 14, as the same figure shows. This means that the critics have a preferred reading to the remake since the makers of the new miniseries purposefully embedded the message of violence in the work.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the viewers accepted the makers' messages. One may admire specific features of a particular film, but refuses or negotiates its messages. Hence, to discover the stance taken by the audience, the content analysis method has been selected to analyse the viewers' comments on the miniseries.

### **The Content Analysis Method**

As its name implies, the content analysis method is a systematic method of analysing content of visual, audio or written materials that aim to communicate a message. It enables researchers, as highlighted by Fraenkel and Wallen, "to study human behaviors in an indirect way through an analysis of their communication."<sup>1</sup> To put it differently, this method examines data via the system of categorization and the extraction of themes to be compared paving the way for a better understanding of human beings' attitudes, beliefs and stances regarding diverse subjects and in different contexts. Whether it is quantitative or qualitative, it strives to read between lines, by making the implicit meaning explicit.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, based on prior knowledge or a specific theory, the content analysis method starts by determining a number of categories that are relevant to the objective of the study. Then, codes in form of either words or phrases or sentences are to be extracted under the set

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<sup>1</sup> Jack R. Fraenkel and Norman E. Wallen, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009), 472.

<sup>2</sup> Fraenkel and Norman, 472.



categories. It is worth mentioning that codes of the same category must be contextually related in meaning. In addition to that, a researcher can code either or both the explicit and the implicit content of a communication; however, for valid and reliable results, it is preferable if one uses both of them.<sup>1</sup> As for the analysis of data, it is accomplished through counting the frequency of each code in every sample to be compared later.

As for the present work, the objective is to extract the stance of the audience on the remake. Thus, comments on the posts shared by the History Channel on its Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts were taken as samples. Since the user's real identity in these platforms is most of the time not revealed and if it is, it is unreliable; it was impossible to recognize whether those who commented are Americans or not, except when the first singular and plural personal pronouns were used, I could then guess that they were either white Americans or African Americans or people who associated themselves with either part. As a result, the analysis of the reception in this case was seen from an international level, mainly that the makers of the remake aimed to address their message to the whole world which is a fact markedly manifested in the circulation phase.

Along the same lines, reviews and responses were extracted from the most three famous American film and review aggregation website the Rotten Tomatoes.<sup>2</sup> This website does not only provide readers with access to the review section but also demonstrates the percentage a given product receives from prominent critics, revealing the degree of success it attains.

### **The Analysis of the Audience's Comments on Instagram**

To analyze the reception of the audience through their comments on the posts shared by the History Channel on its Instagram account, three random posts were selected to avoid subjectivity. Table 4 covers twenty-one randomly chosen comments out of ninety-one

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<sup>1</sup> Fraenkel and Norman, 478.

<sup>2</sup> For further information visit their website <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/about>

comments. The post was shared one day after the first episode was released, i.e. on May 31, 2016, and it features the character of Fiddler only. It is indispensable to note that the comments were copied without a shred of change in them. Besides, for ethical issues, users' names were replaced by ellipsis, in case they were tagged in. Furthermore, as it is indicated in the table, there are capitalized words, phrases and sentences highlighted in bold. They, indeed, represent the selected coding plan that is used to extract the direction of the viewers' stances on the remake.

**Table 4.** Comments on Fiddler's Scene from the First Episode

N°	Comments
01	I <b>LIKED</b> the original miniseries better. <b>STRONGER</b> cast back then.
02	I totally <b>AGREE</b> . It's a ignorant world. That's why I responded to that dude. <b>THIS IS AMERICA</b> . It's time to <b>STOP BEING RACIST</b> and uneducated. It's time to get over what happened 152 years ago
03	<b>IT'S TIME TO GET OVER WHAT HAPPENED..</b> Except, it didn't end 152 years ago. Slavery may have ended but the <b>OPPRESSION</b> didn't ever really end, and do you think the mindset of the masters went away just because a law changed? Blacks people were treated just as low as slaves for almost 100 years after slavery ended. We remember 9/11, we get outraged over a damn gorilla, hell we remember the Alamo, but black people should just forget about slavery. Every time someone says that I just want to gouge their eyes out
04	I would never say forget. We need to learn and <b>MOVE ON</b> and we can't do that with hatred in our hearts
05	I [...] did you really say that's when ignorance was bliss? So white people beat the shit out of slaves and <b>CHOPPED</b> off limbs and masters <b>RAPED</b> women out of "ignorance"? Did you really just minimize that? And such a small part of the enslavement of Africans in America has to do win other Africans... So the white people who brought them over on shops and treated them as plain cargo had no responsibility? Typical minimizing. I'm so sick of hearing about what Africans were doing to Africans in Africa. Let's talk about the scumbags who carried out American slavery. Jesus Christ.
06	<b>GET OVER</b> it as in stop the hatred <b>NOT FORGET</b>
07	Long live <b>OUR SPIRIT</b>
08	Get over it? How do we get over something that is <b>STILL OCCURRING ON A DAILY BASIS</b> . Spoken like a oppressor
09	<b>Love</b> this
10	<b>Great</b> show
11	I got <b>cancer</b> reading these comments.
12	<b>Excellent</b> series

13	It's people like you [...] that takes something people comment on and makes it an issue out of it!!!! I <b>TRULY LOVED</b> the movie I watched it all for night and I <b>FELT VERY SORRY</b> for what we done to them but that was back in a day and a time where people was ignorant and greedy I love all race they're <b>ALL EQUAL IN MY EYES</b> unless they still chill or hurt innocent children other than that I have no issues with anybody so you can read into it however you want to and say whatever you want to but <b>THIS IS AMERICA</b> and you can speak your mind and I will speak mine that is history at its best and it is there to remind us not to go backwards
14	This movie (based on Alex Haley's ancestry) is very <b>GOOD BUT VERY HARD</b> to watch at times. The actors in this are very good. ... I will be watching all 4 nights.
15	I just want all <b>THE HATE</b> to stop
16	<b>HENREY!!!</b>
17	[...] and how can u say that u doubt that [...] is <b>OPPRESSED</b> when yo <b>PRIVILEGED</b> ass is white
18	Omg! I love him .. <a href="#">#Forest</a> is an Amazing actor .. <b>MY HEART BROKE.</b>
19	[...] Yes there is a black history month. <b>EVERY NATIONALITY</b> should have their own month then.. Every single one of them. I am Scottish, German, Polish, and Spanish. I am a American. We need to get away from the hatred and stereotypes
20	But there's some truth to the quote "look to the past to determine the future" or "history repeats itself"... <b>TRUMP SEEMS TO BE SUPPORTIVE</b> of forms of modern day slavery, so it is still here and now [...]
21	I hate when people call the <b>RACISM</b> card and then differentiate between races... Does that not strike anyone else as hypocritical. Now fine people... We are humans before we are colors. So, you really wanna tell your current stories, get up, get out and get something, instead of sitting back playing hypocritical "cards" against one another, calling one person one name only to make yourself guilty of that same wrong. That's ignorance all across the board, no matter the race... <b>LOVE YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER.</b> Now does anyone else have a problem that history channel posted a clip of musicians but the video has no sound. Wtf history channel.

Source: HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BGFIGw0zM0v/> (accessed August 2, 2020)

Table 5 covers the results of the analysis of the above comments. Codes that convey the same message according to the context are grouped together to create one category. As it has been spelt out earlier, categories should be set according to prior knowledge or a specific theory. In the case under scrutiny, it is obvious that the categories are extracted from the messages encoded in the remake and that have been revealed in the third chapter. The themes, however, are taken from the stances Hall suggests in the decoding phase. The results of the analysis show that most of the stances the viewers took were preferred reading while few of them accepted the messages but negotiated that it is time to forget what happened. It is

tangible, also, that no viewer expressed his opposition. Thus, the third reading does not feature in the table.

**Table 5.** Categorizing the Comments of the First Post on Instagram

<b>Coding Plan</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>FO</b>	<b>Themes</b>	
Liked Agree Love Great Excellent Truly loved	Agree and Like	6	Preferred Reading (26)	
stronger	strength	1		
Every nationality	Identify	1		
This is America (2) Stop being racist Still occurring on a daily basis Cancer Felt very sorry The hate Privileged Trump seems to be supportive Racism	Racism	11		
Oppression Chopped Raped Oppressed My heart broke	Violence	5		
Our spirit	Dignity	1		
All equal in my eyes Love your brother and sister	Unity	2		
It's time to get over what happened Move on Get over Not forget Very good but very hard	Agree...but	7		Negotiated Reading (7)

FO= Frequency of Occurrences

Table 6 embraces twenty-one randomly selected comments out of sixty-three comments on the second episode that the History Channel shared on June 1, 2016. The post is about Kizzy and her son George. It is taken from the third episode of the remake. Following the same procedure, the selected codes are highlighted and capitalized.

Table 6. Comments on the Scene of Kizzy and George from the Third Episode

N°	Comments
01	[...] oh so they can't learn (or won't learn) about horrible human rights history without there being 2016 cinematography involved? Interesting reasoning, ok. I just think the psychological effect is not good and I don't see the point. <b>PRESENT AND FUTURE MATTER</b> , not the past
02	<a href="#">@history</a> this is <b>AMAZING!!!</b> Watching this with my son each night and its <b>SPARKED GREAT CONVERSATIONS</b> . The cast so far has done a <b>FANTASTIC</b> job! I am so <b>PROUD</b> of my ancestors and <b>WILL NEVER FORGET</b> their <b>STRUGGLES AND SACRIFICES</b>
03	<b>GREAT</b> Series. Way better then Watching Empire. Its about what <b>OUR AFRICAN HERITAGE</b> in America endorsed. On Point! Appreciate what you Have Earned. Ard back to show
04	<b>AMAZING</b> honestly <b>AMAZING</b>
05	Rege is <b>AMAZING</b> and <b>BREATH TAKING!!! TOUCHING</b> performance so sad so triumphant!! Bravo!
06	This is such an <b>AMAZING</b> movie so much better than original. More about the history <b>MORE INTENSE</b>
07	I love that they remade Roots. it <b>SPARKED THE CURIOSITY</b> and attention of this <b>NEW GENERATION</b> of young people. We live in a country that <b>WANTS TO IGNORE</b> this <b>PART OF AMERICAN HISTORY</b> . Hundreds of years and it gets 3 pages in textbooks and one question on standardized tests. It also gave families to watch together and have <b>HONEST CONVERSATIONS</b> about our history.
08	This is <b>MY</b> history, there can be a thousand version, I'll watch them all, it <b>SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN</b> , last night i cried those slaves masters are the <b>DEVIL</b> himself and the scary thing is that there are generation curses "There are a lot of <b>DEVILS</b> out there"
09	Mankind has enslave all those who lose wars or are just in the wrong place at the wrong time! This world is a <b>CRUEL</b> place an all of us need to grow spiritually. May God forgive are greed
10	I completely <b>AGREE</b> with you about learning from the past. But remember that although you've had the opportunity to watch these slavery movies, there are younger generations out there who have not watched due to outdated cinematography
11	I cried noah was <b>GUNNED DOWN</b> , he and kizzy would have made a cute couple! Cant wait to watch the third installment!
12	I think American TV <b>SHOULD STOP REGURGITATING SLAVERY MOVIES</b> and mini series, at this point they just doing it for the <b>MONEY</b> not for the people.
13	Lovely <b>RAGE</b> you have there
14	Yes, that's my reasoning because I personally know some teenagers who won't watch any movies from the "1900's" and yes some of them call it the 1900's, believe it or not. You can't advance as a culture without <b>UNDERSTANDING THE PAST</b>
15	Humanity <b>CANNOT FORWARD</b> because it holds on to the past with a death grip.
16	It's rude for me to assume that you're not part of the younger generation...lol. If you are part of the younger generation, then kudos to you for being <b>ADVANCED ON HISTORY</b>
17	<b>WOW</b>

<b>18</b>	I LOVE the slave movies
<b>19</b>	[...] holy crap ive been <b>WAITING</b> for this for so long omg
<b>20</b>	But yet you're following The History Channel. If you're really interested in history, you have to take the good with the bad. You can technically pick and choose what you want to watch and learn about, but there are still people out there that would <b>BENEFIT FROM WATCHING.</b>
<b>21</b>	[...] you clearly missed my entire point and the psychology behind living in the past vs learning from the past. there is already many many slavery shows/movies out there already, this one is for the Benjamins more than the lessons. You don't have to keep repeating and focusing on the bad even though it's human nature to want to it's not the mentally healthy route. <b>LIVE FREE OF YOUR PAST</b> , there's many better things to watch. You can't change the past only the future

*Source:* HISTORY, [https://www.instagram.com/p/BGHob7NTM\\_B/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BGHob7NTM_B/) (accessed August 2, 2020)

As it is displayed in table 7, the preferred reading tops the oppositional one whereas the negotiated reading is missed. Few viewers disagreed with the necessity of remaking the same miniseries and of retelling the same stories about slavery. Those who concurred with the remake’s makers agreed that the past should be preserved and should be retold to the new generation because the African heritage is worth being maintained.

**Table 7.** Categorizing the comments on the Second Post on Instagram

Coding Plan	Categories	FO	Themes
Amazing (4)	Agree and Like	14	Preferred Reading (31)
Fantastic			
Great			
Breathtaking			
touching			
agree			
wow			
Love			
Waiting			
Proud	Dignity and Pride	1	
Struggle sacrifices	Resistance	2	
More Intense Devil (2) Cruel Gunned down	Violence	5	
rage	racism	1	
Sparked great conversation Sparked the curiosity New generation Honest Conversation	Appealing to the new generation		

Will never forget Wants to ignore Part of American History Should not be forgotten Benefit from watching Understanding the past	Embrace the past	6	
Advanced on history	accuracy	1	
Our African Heritage My	Identity	1	
Present and future matter should stop regurgitating slavery movies cannot forward Live free of your past	Oppose	4	Oppositional Reading (4)

FO= Frequency of Occurrences

Table 8 below includes twenty-one comments out of one hundred and six comments on the post that the History Channel shared to announce the last episode on June 2, 2016. The post is followed by an emphasis on the importance of honoring our ancestors. As it has been done with the previous posts, this table shows the coding plan capitalized and written in bold.

**Table 8.** Comments on the Third Post on Instagram

N°	Comments
01	Lol what an immature brat you are. Grow up. Anyone who uses the term "stir the pot" is usually a racist or someone who doesn't believe <b>RACISM EXISTS</b> and wants blacks people to stop speaking up for themselves. Get out of here. You were just dying to respond to someone the way you jumped on the response. Go to summer school.
02	[...] Are you blind? They're's hundreds a shows, movies, songs and documentaries about this period and about slaves. But, like I said, there's <b>LITTLE EMPHASIS</b> being made on black success. It's literally like black people just want to see how they suffered in the past because of sadistic fetish.
03	Loved the behind the scenes tonight!!! It was cool to see some of went on during the making. And all the actors and producers had <b>POWERFUL THINGS</b> to share! Thank you <a href="#">@history</a> !!!!
04	This scene breaks my heart, but is sooo <b>BEAUTIFULLY DONE!</b>
05	<b>GREAT</b> movie very <b>TOUCHING.</b>
06	I rushed home every night to watch Roots- <b>GREAT</b> job !
07	Absolutely <b>BEAUTIFULLY DONE!!!!</b> Thank you to the network, the actors/actresses, the writers, to everyone who was a part of this- even the damn filters were absolutely <b>PERFECT!!!!</b> I <b>WAS MOVED</b> in sooo many ways, more than anyone will ever understand!!! Thank you again! <a href="#">@history</a>
08	[...] what creates racism, watching roots? <b>THE SHIT WAS THERE</b> long before roofs

	ever came along. And there are plenty of movies about the holocaust, world war 2, etc... Should they stop making those too?
09	I <b>LOVE</b> the original roots, so i was excited for the re-make the first episode was promising <b>BUT</b> after that this was a huge <b>DISAPPOINTMENT</b>
10	Really am <b>HAPPY</b> about the remake/vision, <b>BEST CHOICE</b> ever to have seen both old and new movies, definitely one for my collection. It makes me want <b>TO KNOW MY OWN ROOTS</b> . Always have but <b>MORE DRIVEN</b> now then ever
11	There will be some people that think that way and a lot of people that won't. Now complaining on social media about black history playing on TV is adding more seperation than unification. It comes across as white people <b>NOT WANTING BLACK PEOPLE TO EMBRACE AND UNDERSTAND THEIR HISTORY</b> . This show played <b>HOMAGE TO AFRICAN AMERICANS' AFRICAN ROOTS...</b> it's not only about racism [...]
12	The original Roots was extremely popular when it first came out. I think this reimagined version is <b>MODERNIZED</b> for the <b>CURRENT GENERATION TO EXPERIENCE</b> . If certain people use this series as an excuse to hate, it is a true testament to their character. Likewise, if historic truth offends certain others, it is a testament to their character as well. Locking history away in a box and throwing away the key, will do nothing to stop those who make a choice to be <b>RACIST</b> . After all, that is what it is - a choice. While this reimagined series is <b>EXTREMELY SAD</b> , I choose to see so many good reminders spread throughout the story as well. I see reminders to develop <b>A FIGHTER'S SPIRIT, BE STRONG, KNOW WHO YOU ARE</b> and <b>NEVER FORGET IT, KNOW WHERE YOU COME FROM</b> , cherish real love, <b>PROTECT YOUR FAMILY</b> and uplift them, value education, and remember those who lost their lives <b>FIGHTING</b> and those who died without the opportunity to experience the lives we have now. There are many hidden gems in this series. Look beyond the obvious and see the layers. It is not just a "slave movie". Roots is about very <b>STRONG PEOPLE</b> who lived, breathed, <b>SUFFERED, MANAGED TO MAINTAIN THEIR SANITY</b> , and find some joy in between. In sum: it's a chance to learn from flesh and blood human beings who had stories to tell, important stories that <b>SHOULD NEVER BE FORGOTTEN</b> .
13	This was one of <b>THE BEST</b> , if not <b>THE BEST</b> , series I've ever watched. Thanks for allowing me to dive <b>INTO AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF AMERICAN HISTORY</b> , as well as some African history, The ending of this last piece was cause for me to bawl, but it was <b>BEAUTIFUL</b> .
14	For the white folks who spoke crap during this 4 days series , just maybe you are ancestors of a few of these " <b>MASTERS</b> ", there are generation curses, for the once that watched and had some compassion for <b>OUR STRUGGLE</b> "thank you
15	I <b>LOVE</b> the mini sires and thank you for the little facts you put in and all the rolls were <b>AMAZING</b>
16	<b>INCREDIBLE</b> ending to an <b>AMAZING</b> series.. Thank you!
17	<b>GOOD</b> and equally <b>INFORMATIVE</b> movie!
18	[...] why I decided not to watch the remake. Just knew it would be an Obama era <b>DIVIDING</b> show
19	<b>AMAZING</b> Production... congratulations History Channel and Roots Production
20	Fucking history channel, Snoop Dog was right when he said y'all not making series about black success. Instead, you make series about black struggle, <b>BRILLIANT</b>



<b>HITLER CHANNEL</b>
<b>21</b> I take twice a year and do a celebration of <b>MY ANCESTORS</b> . As well as add them into my prayers. As for the series, <b>HEART WRENCHING TO TEARS</b>

*Source:* HISTORY, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BGKhHNgzM6B/> (accessed August 5, 2020)

As it is showcased in table 9, the three stances are apparent with the preferred reading exceeding all of them in number. The viewers who totally accepted the makers’ messages were not only spellbound by the remake but also spotlighted and reproduced the same messages, including the existence of racism, the palpable features of resistance and strength. They insisted upon embracing the past because it is part of the identity. This reveals that the remake could appeal to their attention as the makers wanted in the first place.

Concerning the rest of the viewers, they either totally opposed the content of the remake or negotiated it. The former considered the modern miniseries as a flagrant attack on the white community, dubbing the History Channel as being the Hitler Channel because it aired the remake. The latter expressed their admiration for the remake, but also, their disappointment.

**Table 9.** Categorizing the comments on the Third Post on Instagram

Coding Plan	Categories	FO	Themes
Racism Little emphasis The shit was there Racist Masters	Racism	5	Preferred Reading (47)
Beautifully Done (3) Great (2) Perfect Touching Powerful Things Was moved Happy Best (3) More Driven Extremely Sad Love Amazing (3) Incredible Good Heart Wrenching to Tears	Agree and Like	22	
Modernized			

Current Generation to experience Informative	Appealing to the new generation	3	
Be strong Fighter's spirit Fighting Strong people Managed to maintain their sanity Suffered Our struggle	Strength and Resistance	7	
My ancestors To know my own Roots Homage to African Americans' African roots Know who you are Know where you come from Protect your family	Identity	6	
Not wanting black people to embrace and understand their history Should not be forgotten Never Forget it into an important piece of American history	Embrace the past	4	
Dividing Brilliant Hitler Channel	Oppose	1	Oppositional Reading (1)
Love...But...Disappointment	Like...but	1	Negotiated Reading (1)

FO= Frequency of Occurrences

### The Analysis of the Audience's Comments on Facebook and YouTube

In this section, to avoid subjectivity, the choice randomly fell upon two videos from Facebook and YouTube accounts of the History Channel. The former was shared on August 28, 2017, and the latter, on February 12, 2017. Following the same procedure, table 10 presents eleven comments on the video of Facebook. It is important to mention that the number of comments differs in this case because they were the only available ones albeit the video scored ninety-eight likes and more than ten thousands views, unlike the comments on Instagram where I was obliged to use the random sampling for selection.

Table 10. Comments on the Trailer on Facebook

N°	Comments
01	<b>BETTER</b> than original
02	I cant watch this as I loved the original which was brilliant. <b>THIS WOUDNT BE THE SAME</b> even the trailer theres <b>SOMETHING NOT QUITE RIGHT</b>
03	please tell me they dont have white people invading african villages and taking them, when it was actually group leaders that sold their enemies to the slave owners. They had <b>THE RIVAL TRIBE</b> selling the enemy tribe members to the whites dont worry
04	This looks <b>GOOD</b> , i like history, i think i will enjoy this.
05	<b>HOPE THEY DO</b> a second and third season's
06	Is this a remake of the 1980s one ??? It's too obvious Hollywood is running out of ideas and is in <b>NEED OF DEFINITE HELP !</b>
07	nah they just want to drag up the past to keep the flame of facial tension alive, <b>RACISM WAS DYING</b> but the left and the media moguls keep it on life support
08	It's a remake, on its own its a <b>DECENT DRAMA BUT IT DOSENT COMPARE</b> to the original unfortunately
09	Each to their own, I just felt <b>IT LACKED SOMETHING, BUT AGREE</b> very hard to watch at times
10	thought it was <b>TERRIFIC</b> . I liked the original as well
11	looks <b>NAUGHTY</b> this. Got some <b>RIGHT ACTORS</b> in

Source: HISTORY, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155008361145885> (accessed August 23, 2020)

Table 11 indicates that most of the viewers adopted the preferred reading. They liked the remake and believed that it is providing accurate information unlike the original. The ones whose stance was oppositional pointed that the original miniseries is much better than its remake, and that this remake is promoting racism which is thought to be over long years ago. Concerning the last stance, the viewers liked the remake, agreed with its content but for them the original is still much better.

**Table 11.** Categorizing the Comments on the on the Video on Facebook

<b>Coding Plan</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>FO</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Better Good Hope they do Right actors	Racism	4	Preferred Reading (7)
The rival tribe	Accuracy	1	
Terrific Naughty	Violence	2	
This wouldn't be the same Something not quite right Need of Definite help Racism was dying	Oppose	4	Oppositional Reading (4)
Decent drama but it doesn't compare It lacked something, but agree	Like...But	2	Negotiated Reading (2)

FO= Frequency of Occurrences

Table 12 includes comments of users on the trailer of the remake which was shared on YouTube one year after the remake was aired. As it is exhibited in the table there are twenty-one comments that were chosen randomly to avoid subjectivity, and the coding plan is the same like it has been done with the previous comments.

**Table 12.** Comments on the Trailer on YouTube

<b>N°</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>01</b>	The make the <b>SCARS</b> and burns look so <b>REAL</b>
<b>02</b>	I think the <b>TRUTH IS FAR WORSE</b> than presented in the movie. I read that 75% of the slaves died during the 4 months travel by ship from Africa to New York because they were left chained the whole trip in the basement with no hygiene and food was thrown to them on the floor. So they had to eat where they shit, literally.
<b>03</b>	<b>MY ANCESTORS SUFFERED</b> so much crossing the Atlantic, when will the tu'bab own up to his sins.
<b>04</b>	In reality kunta kinte passed away after his daughter and wife been sold, He died for heartbroken. How <b>CRUEL</b> white folks can be. My God punish them those who <b>ABUSED</b> him.
<b>05</b>	God <b>BLESS THE AFRO AMERICAN</b> people!!!!
<b>06</b>	"Roots" is a <b>DEEP</b> movie to explain so much about the ancestors.
<b>07</b>	in <b>LOVE</b> with it
<b>08</b>	What i say i don't have any word <b>FABULOUS. EYE OPENING</b>
<b>09</b>	<b>YOUR NAME</b> is your spirit <b>YOUR NAME</b> is a shield
<b>10</b>	I like this one <b>BETTER</b> than the original

<b>11</b>	<b>WHAT'S THE POINT</b> in the remake?
<b>12</b>	This was <b>THE REAL FACE OF THE WHITE PEOPLE</b> of that time
<b>13</b>	And unfortunately the real face of white people of today. Many of them are <b>RACIST</b> to the core
<b>14</b>	Poor little girl <a href="#">1:48</a> . I <b>FEEL PITY</b> for her!
<b>15</b>	Why did they <b>DO THIS TO US...</b> how can we sing a new song in a foreign land.
<b>16</b>	i still <b>LIKE THE ORIGINAL</b> better
<b>17</b>	They <b>NEED TO MAKE</b> the reeal movie about Nat Turner.
<b>18</b>	its so <b>SAD</b>
<b>19</b>	I have the impression that <b>THE ORIGINAL ONE IS MORE NUANCED</b> than this one.
<b>20</b>	<b>WAKANDA FOREVER!!!!</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>I WOULDNT RECOMMEND. ALL</b> Thumbs DOWN!

Source: HISTORY, “Roots: Official Trailer (February 12, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzIpxmvlEj4&t=13s> (accessed August 23, 2020)

Table 13 shows the results of analyzing the above table. It is clearly conspicuous that there is a drastic difference between the preferred reading and the oppositional reading while the negotiated reading does not figure in the table. The majority of the viewers received the messages and reproduced the same as the makers’; whereas the rest opposed the makers’ by considering it pointless to recreate the same miniseries.

**Table 13.** Categorizing the Comments on the on the Trailer on YouTube

Coding Plan	Categories	FO	Themes
Scars Cruel Abused Feel pity Sad suffered	Violence	6	Preferred Reading (21)
Truth is far worse The real face of white people Racist Do this to us	Racism	4	
Real Deep Fabulous Eye opening Love Need to make better	Like and agree	7	
My ancestors Your name	Identity	3	

Wakanda			
Bless Afro-American	Pride	1	
What's the point? Like the original The Original One Is More Nuanced I Wouldn't Recommend.	Oppose	4	Oppositional Reading (4)

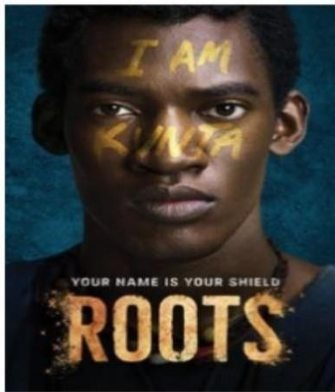
FO= Frequency of Occurrences

**Analyzing Responses on the Rotten Tomatoes Website**

The Rotten Tomatoes provides its visitors with the overall reception of any motion picture products. For instance, as it is presented in figure 49, the remake received a remarkable positive percentage from the part of both the critics (96%) and the audience (76%).

**Figure 49.** The Reception of *Roots* (2016) on the Rotten Tomatoes website

**ROOTS: MINISERIES** (2016)




WANT TO SEE


EPISODE LIST

**MINISERIES**  
**ROOTS**

**Critics Consensus**  
A powerfully impressive – and still relevant – update on a television classic, *Roots* boasts remarkable performances, deep emotion, and occasionally jarring beauty.



**96%**  
**TOMATOMETER**  
Critic Ratings: 46



**76%**  
**AUDIENCE SCORE**  
User Ratings: 413

SEE SCORE DETAILS

*Source:*Rotten Tomatoes, “Roots: Miniseries 2016,” <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/roots/s01> (accessed August 31, 2020).

The critics, for instance, described the remake as being” powerfully impressive-and still relevant- update on a teliviosn classic.”<sup>1</sup> They have also pointed that the performances were

<sup>1</sup> Rotten Tomatoes, “Roots: Miniseries 2016,” <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/roots/s01> (accessed August 31, 2020).

remarkable, evoking deep emotions.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is obviously lucid that the majority of the critics adopted the preferred reading.

Regarding the audience’s stance, table 14 contains twenty-one of the comments they shared on the Rotten Tomatoes website. Adopting the same procedure, the coding plan embraces the capitalized words, phrases and sentences in the table, and that are related in a way or another to the messages of the remake.

**Table 14.** Comments about *Roots* (2016) on the the Rotten Tomatoes Website

N°	Comments
01	a <b>SUPERB</b> production and I believe this to <b>STAND EQUAL TO THE ORIGINAL</b>
02	<b>GREAT</b> movie , <b>LOVED</b> every minute of it
03	The moment it came on TV I was hooked. Absolutely <b>AMAZING!</b>
04	Now more than ever people should watch <i>Roots</i> and <b>THINK ABOUT EQUALITY AND FREEDOM. WONDERFUL</b> show, extremely <b>POIGNANT LESSONS.</b>
05	One of the most <b>POWERFUL</b> and <b>DISTURBING</b> mini-series I have watched recently, <i>Roots</i> is based on Alex Haley's book of the same name about his family's <b>DISTURBING</b> past
06	The show is drawing people into spending \$199 for <b>A DNA TEST</b> mainly. I may have been much younger watching the first version, but I liked that version a whole lot better. At least they in the first version where not trying too hard.
07	<b>EXCELLENT.</b> Rivals the original series. <b>VERY INTENSE. IMPORTANT HISTORY LESSON.</b>
08	So <b>EXCRUCIATINGLY BORING</b> , I couldn't watch it.
09	<b>TERRIBLE</b> and should have <b>NEVER REMADE IT</b>
10	Not bad. <b>RETOLD DIFFERENTLY</b> from 1977 edition though.
11	So critics have become so spineless that anything "black" has to get a great score now?? Barbershop 3 a 92% !!!?? and this a 100% !!!?? seriously?? bunch of cowards..... this was <b>NO WHERE NEAR AS GOOD AS THE ORIGINAL.</b> Didn't have the impact the first one did. <b>ITS NOT BAD, BUT ITS NOT GREAT</b> , its ok. But as usual , all things "black" are perfect now and if you show any resistance to anything black, you're <b>RACIST</b> . This country is pathetic. And hey critics... quit your jobs, you sold out your ethical code of critique to cowardice ... shame
12	<b>LIKED</b> the original better <b>BUT</b> thought the casting was perfect as was the acting.
13	Its definitely <b>GOOD</b> series and a <b>GOOD</b> history lesson
14	Exponentially better than I thought it would be. A <b>BRILLIANT</b> cast,

<sup>1</sup> Rotten Tomatoes, “*Roots: Miniseries 2016*,” <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/roots/s01> (accessed August 31, 2020).

	<b>BEAUTIFUL</b> cinematography, <b>FANTASTIC</b> acting and <b>WONDERFUL</b> writing. Absolutely <b>FANTASTIC!</b>
<b>15</b>	This is a <b>MASTERPIECE</b> , pure and simple. The acting is <b>IMPECCABLE</b> , and the story is <b>GUT-WRENCHINGLY POWERFUL AND AFFECTING</b> . After watching it, I had such a deeper appreciation of the heartbreak, fragmentation, <b>STRENGTH</b> , and <b>DIGNITY</b> at the core of the African-American journey. A <b>MUST-SEE!!</b>
<b>16</b>	I was looking forward to an excellent remake - but this isn't it, by a long shot. <b>POOR</b> writing, acting and directing saddled by a plodding plotline makes this some of the most <b>DISAPPOINTING</b> TV in quite some time. Sometime it's best to <b>NOT</b> do the remake.
<b>17</b>	<b>WOW!!! POWERFUL</b> performances across the board from the <b>BRAVE BLACKS</b> to the cowardly whites. <b>PROUD</b> to be American but knowing there's a serious debt owed to America's Blacks!
<b>18</b>	A boatload of <b>GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>ORIGINAL</b> was much better.
<b>20</b>	<b>NOT</b> in any way historically <b>ACCURATE</b> .
<b>21</b>	<b>NOT ENTERTAINING</b> at all... should have just re-aired the first version

*Source:* Rotten Tomatoes, "Roots: Miniseries 2016," <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/roots/s01> (accessed August 31, 2020).

Table 15 displays the outcome of analyzing the above table. As it is shown in the table below, the three stances are present with the preferred reading on the top. Most of the viewers liked the remake and considered it as being informative. They could also extract the messages of resistance, pride, dignity, strength, and the importance of knowing who you are. Besides, the violent images caught their attention.

Regarding the second stance in the table, the viewers described the remake as being inaccurate, terrible and disappointing for they thought that remaking the original miniseries is useless and the original is much better. Concerning the third stance, the viewers did like the remake, but they had some reservations about it. They agreed that the original remains the best, but the cast and the performance of the new remake's actors are better.



**Table 15.** Categorizing the Comments about *Roots* (2016) on the the Rotten Tomatoes Website

<b>Coding Plan</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>FO</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Superb Wow!!! Stand Equal to The Original Great Loved Amazing! Powerful 2 Excellent Retold Differently Good 2 Brilliant Beautiful Fantastic 2 Wonderful Masterpiece Impeccable gut-wrenchingly powerful and affecting Must-see!!	Agree and Like	21	Preferred Reading (30)
Disturbing 2 Very intense Gratuitous violence	Violence	3	
Strength	Strength	1	
Proud Dignity	Dignity and Pride	2	
Important history lesson A DNA test	Identity	1	
Brave Blacks	Resistance	1	
Racist	Racism	1	
excruciatingly boring Terrible never remade it NO WHERE near as good as the original Disappointing Poor Original Not...accurate not entertaining	Oppose (10)	10	Oppositional Reading (10)
Its not bad, but its not great Like...but	Like...but	2	Negotiated Reading (2)

FO= Frequency of Occurrences

**Embracing the Past to Define the Present**

After the description of the results, it is important to synthesize them for discussion to extract the conclusion. Table 16 collects the results of the previous analyses. It is comprised of the frequencies of occurrences related to the three readings that Hall refers to in his encoding/decoding theory of communication in the light of *Roots* 2016’s reception by the audience. As it is showcased in the table, the remake was met with mixed readings, yet the preferred reading drastically surpassed the others.

**Table 16.** Comparing Results

	<b>Preferred Reading</b>	<b>Negotiated Reading</b>	<b>Oppositional Reading</b>
Table 5	26	7	0
Table 7	31	0	4
Table 9	47	1	1
Table 11	7	2	4
Table 13	21	0	4
Table 15	30	2	10
	<b>162</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>

It can be said that having the preferred reading on the top of the list reveals that the audience in a way or another is relating the past to the present. If they were not, they would have not accepted the messages that were embedded in the remake which was highly esteemed by the majority of them. Most of the comments, indeed, expressed their admiration for the new miniseries. Moreover, they victimized Blacks and glorified their resistance, strength, heritage, and the necessity of keeping the past revived.

Maurie Halwachs (1877-1945), who is the widely known for founding the social memory studies, explains that we might think that our attitudes and opinions towards a specific phenomenon are the result of our proper thoughts, ideas, feelings and passion; but the real truth is something else.<sup>1</sup>He accentuates that “we are an echo” of what we keep receiving from

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 140.

the surroundings every day from the first moment we were born, and that is what constructs our memories.<sup>1</sup>

In the same line of thought, it is believed that oral and written accounts of history that are passed from one generation to another help shape our memories indirectly, creating what is known as the social memory.<sup>2</sup> In their book *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (2002) Jacob J. Climo and Maria G. Cattel tackle the relationship between social and individual memories and the way in which memory reconstructs the past and constructs the present accordingly. They provide the following definition:

Social memory is the means by which information is transmitted among individuals and groups and from one generation to another. Not necessarily aware that they are doing so, individuals pass on their behaviours and attitudes to others in various contexts but especially through emotional and practical ties and in relationships among generations.<sup>3</sup>

Besides the oral and written transmission of information, Jacob J. Climo and Maria G. Cattel argue that the transmission can be through visual products, performative expressions (e.g. dance), building monuments and public memorials, to name but few.<sup>4</sup> Thus, memories are susceptible to change from generation to another. This point is emphasized by the German scholar Jan Assmann who claimed that the social memory of any event will alter if no one is alive to recount its happenings from his own experience, or from stories he was told about by others.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the case under study, albeit it was impossible to recognize the real identities of the viewers, their comments demonstrate that the remake worked as a commemoration of their past memories for slavery. In other words, it is unclear how they created their individual

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<sup>1</sup> Olick and Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, 140.

<sup>2</sup> Luca Anderlini, Dino Gerardi and Roger Lagunoff, “Social Memory, Evidence, and Conflict,” <http://sites.carloalberto.org/gerardi/Social-Memory-Evidence-and-Conflict.pdf> (accessed September 11, 2020), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob J. Climo and Maria G. Cattel, *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2002), 39-40.

<sup>4</sup> Climo and Maria G. Cattel, 40.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.

memories for the history of the Africans in America, but, it is lucid that the majority of them vibrated in unison to reiterate the same messages the makers of the modern *Roots* aimed to convey.

In fact, if history represents the study of past events, memory is the repository of knowledge about these events.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, the stances on the new miseries do not only express that the remake could appeal to the modern generation but also highlight the viewers' susceptibility to embrace the past and then to relate it to the present for a better understanding of the current event. This is markedly presented in their explicit and implicit acceptance of messages like intense violence and the absence of sympathetic masters.

When taking into consideration the BLM movement, the modern generation, chiefly the white community, may not accept to associate the happenings with anti-Black racism. However, receiving the remake with a remarkable common consent demonstrates the opposite. There is a tangible tendency towards not considering slavery as a separate section of history but as an essential part of the American history, however atrocious it was.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, retelling the same story of *Roots* 1977 was a risky initiative to be taken. Thus, it was requisite for the makers to secure a successful circulation of the remake otherwise all the efforts would go awry. It is worth remembering that it is pointless to create a motion picture product if it will not be received because it is through the reception, perspectives are revealed, mistakes are corrected, and involvement is secured. The makers of the remake, in fact, seized the helpful features that technology and social media possess to circulate their product.

Similarly, when connecting the phase of circulation to the decoding stage, it becomes evident that the social memory was being – intentionally and unintentionally – fed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Pollmann, 13.

same messages. Both the senders and the receivers agreed that Blacks sill have a long way to achieve totally equity. Few viewers expressed the opposite or negotiated the content of the remake.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

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The zeitgeist of the twenty-first century in America seems to have great effect on the production of *Roots* 2016. When the police officer George Zimmerman fatally shot the African American Trayvon Martin in 2013, Blacks waited impatiently for fair trial, but they were soon hit by the Court's decision that acquitted the culprit. The verdict struck a blow against the principles of equality and justice that are laid down by the American Constitution. As a result, the BLM movement emerged in 2013 and continued the following years to condemn police brutality against Blacks in the first place, and to foreground Blacks' dignity and unity.

In these circumstances, hence, it sounded pivotal to remake the miniseries *Roots* 1977 that recounts the African American slavery through the story of Kunta Kinte and his descendants. While the original was for the generation of the 70's, the remake was for the modern generation. Thus, adopting the Stuart Hall's theory of communication, this thesis endeavored to explore how the remake was modernized to appeal to a new generation and the extent to which conversations about racism contributed to its production. Furthermore, it conducted an in depth investigation using the content analysis method to discover the stances that the audience took on the modern miniseries.

Through the production, circulation and reception of *Roots* 2016, it became clear that the modern aspect of this miniseries is apparent from the first moment when the remake was reduced to four episodes rather than eight episodes to suit the generation of the Instant Information Age. Moreover, social media and modern technology markedly enhanced the dissemination of the miniseries. Trailers along with posters were created, and articles from prominent newspapers were written to be rapidly shared on social media platforms, igniting people's curiosity to watch the remake.

In addition to that, apparent emphasis was made on the choice of the crew who was meticulously selected to secure the interaction and involvement of the audience, chiefly that

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

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many would not be interested in watching a work that was already dealt with. This proves the fervent desire to create the remake that through its embedded messages a bridge between the past and the present has been created.

Via the different shots and angles of the camera and the *mise-en-scène* techniques, violent images were presented and focused on, unlike in the original miniseries. Viewers could connect the depicted violence to the issues raised by the BLM movement specifically violence against the African Americans and the racial discrimination in the criminal justice system. Dignity and sturdy adherence to the African heritage were highlighted as well by depicting the main characters as robust slaves who never acquiesced in the conditions they were forced to bear. This was empowered by the absence of merciful Whites throughout the four episodes except for the appearance of an abolitionist and a Union spy for a short screen duration as compared to the depiction of ruthless Whites in the same miniseries. Thus, resistance and perseverance were at the forefront of the remake.

In the same context, extra information about the African culture in general and the Mandinka way of life in particular were added. This served the historical accuracy that the remake aimed to reach in contrast with the original miniseries. For instance, Kunta's place of birth, Jufureh, was not filmed as a remote village but as a rich well-known place in West Africa, whereas in the first *Roots* it was not. This feature not only provides the viewers with an accurate view of Africa but also serves the message of dignity by glorifying this place and not treating it as being uncivilized. Accuracy is also lucid in the depiction of the Africans' involvement in the slave trade and the contribution of slaves in both the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and the Civil war (1861-1865). Hence, the darkest side of the American history was intensively represented by depicting Blacks as victims whose adherence to freedom has never been relinquished.



## GENERAL CONCLUSION

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Following the same line of thought, the analysis and interpretation of the process of decoding demonstrated that the three different stances that Stuart Hall provides are present but the preferred reading was the most prominent one. Accepting the encoders' messages positively reflects the racial tension that is still embedding the nation though it has been thought that the fight against racism ended years ago with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Besides, the remake sparked a global conversation about the history of slavery, its atrocities and its resulting innate racism towards the black community. The audience could relate the past to the present with a clear inclination towards embracing the past to reconstruct his memory and to define the present.

If the original miniseries influenced the previous generations profoundly, the remake paved the way for a better understanding of the American slavery mainly that it was not directed by Blacks only, but also by Whites. This means, that perspectives about slavery and racism were implemented from both contradicting sides, and this feature reduces the degree of bias that would have affected the product it was directed by only one specific side. Besides, however different they are, both the original miniseries and its remake were produced amid fights against inequality. Nevertheless, the remake was more audacious for its main aim was to remind the modern generation about the necessity to honour identity, and this is clearly represented by the horrifying and bloody fights slaves endure to preserve their identity in the miniseries. Memories about slavery, indeed, oscillated between past and present, between Kunta of the 70's and Kunta of the twenty-first century to reflect the fact the distant past is still echoing in the present, and that slavery was not and is not consigned to oblivion.

Regardless, future research can continue to explore the same matter from another angle by the use of the critical discourse analysis like the adoption of the three dimensional approach of the British linguist Norman Fairclough. Another suggestion may consider one to conduct a









## GENERAL CONCLUSION

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comparison between *Roots* 2016 and other similar production like the series *Underground* (2016-2017).

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
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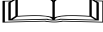


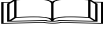












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# **APPENDIXES**

## Appendix A

### Key Dates in the History of Slavery in America

<b>August 1619</b>	Twenty Africans were carried to Jamestown, Virginia. They were classified as indentured servants.
<b>1629</b>	The Dutch West India Company imported 11 black male slaves into the New Netherlands.
<b>July 9, 1640</b>	John Punch was the first black man to be sentenced to servitude for life in Virginia after a failed attempt to escape with two white men.
<b>1640</b>	New Netherlands law forbade residents from harboring or feeding runaway slaves.
<b>1641</b>	Massachusetts became the first North American colony to recognize slavery as a legal institution.
<b>1643</b>	The New England Confederation of Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven adopted a fugitive slave law.
<b>1650</b>	Connecticut legalized slavery.
<b>1652</b>	Rhode Island passed laws restricting slavery and forbidding enslavement for more than 10 years
<b>1657</b>	Virginia passed a fugitive slave law
<b>1662</b>	Virginia passed a law that determined the status of a black child according to the one of his mother.
<b>1663</b>	In Gloucester County, Virginia the first documented slave rebellion in the colonies took place. Maryland legalized slavery.
<b>1664</b>	New York and New Jersey legalized slavery. The State of Maryland mandated lifelong servitude for all black slaves. New York, New Jersey, the Carolinas, and Virginia all passed similar laws.
<b>1666</b>	Maryland passed a fugitive slave law.
<b>1668</b>	New Jersey passed a fugitive slave law.
<b>1676</b>	Bacon's rebellion unified Blacks and Whites for the first time and led the government to hasten its grip on black slavery.
<b>February 18, 1688</b>	The adoption of the first formal anti-slavery resolution in American history by Pennsylvania Quakers
<b>1691</b>	South Carolina passed the first Slave Codes.
<b>1700</b>	Pennsylvania legalized slavery.
<b>1705</b>	The emergence of the first Virginian Slave Code
<b>April 1712</b>	A slave revolt in New York City that led to increased restrictions on slaves.
<b>1715</b>	Rhode Island legalized slavery.
<b>1717</b>	New York enacted a fugitive slave law.
<b>1739</b>	Slaves in Stono, South Carolina rebelled.
<b>March 5, 1770</b>	Crispus Attucks was the first black man to be shot and killed during the Boston Massacre.
<b>April 14, 1775</b>	The establishment of The Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery
<b>December 30, 1775</b>	General George Washington ordered officers to accept blacks in the

	American Army.
<b>February 12, 1793</b>	Congress passed the first Fugitive Slave Act.
<b>January 1, 1800</b>	Laws banning the African slave trade went into effect in the United States and in all British colonies.
<b>April 9, 1816</b>	The establishment of the first African Methodist Episcopal Church whose first bishop was Richard Allen
<b>December 28, 1816</b>	The establishment of the American Colonization Society to transport freeborn blacks and emancipated slaves to Africa.
<b>March 3, 1820</b>	Missouri was admitted to the Union as a slave state and Maine as a free state. Slavery was prohibited in western territories north of Missouri's southern border.
<b>1831 August 21-22</b>	The most brutal slave rebellion led by Nat Turner during which about 60 Whites were killed.
<b>1850</b>	The Compromise of 1850 brought California into the United States as a free state, but a harsher new fugitive slave law was passed.
<b>1852</b>	The anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom's Cabin was published. It sold 300,000 copies within a year of publication.
<b>1854</b>	Kansas-Nebraska Act Setting aside the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Congress gave the two new territories the opportunity to choose whether to allow slavery or not.
<b>1857</b>	The Dred Scott Decision in the United States ruled that Blacks were not citizens of the United States and prevented the Congress from outlawing slavery in any territory.
<b>1860 -1861</b>	Abraham Lincoln of Illinois became the first Republican to win the United States Presidency, southern states seceded, and the Civil War began.
<b>1863</b>	President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves.
<b>1865</b>	The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified to outlaw slavery.

*Source:* Retrieved from <https://sharondraper.com/timeline.pdf> (accessed September 5, 2020), and Ferris State University, "Slavery in America," <https://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/timeline/slavery.htm> (accessed September 6, 2020)

## Appendix B

### Pictures of Emile Reynaud's Praxinoscope, Edison's Kinetoscope and the *Cinématographe* of 1895

**Figure 50.** Emile Reynaud's Praxinoscope Moving Image Viewer



**Source:** Gettyimages, <https://www.gettyimages.fr/photos/emilereynaud?mediatype=photography&phrase=emile%20reynaud&sort=mostpopular#> (accessed March 5, 2018)

**Figure 51.** Edison's Kinetoscope



**Source:** Libraries, <https://open.lib.umn.edu/app/uploads/sites/9/2015/11/8.2.0.jpg> (accessed March 5, 2018)



**Figure 52.** The *Cinématographe* of 1895



*Source:* Caméras aux Poings, [https://www.lyceelecorbusier.eu/cameras-aux-poings/?page\\_id=23](https://www.lyceelecorbusier.eu/cameras-aux-poings/?page_id=23) (accessed April 9, 2018)

## Appendix C

### Alex Haley's Biography



His full name is Alexander Palmer Haley. He was born on August 11, 1921 in Ithaca, New York, and died on February 10, 1992 in Seattle, Washington. He grew up in an African American family in the South and began his career as a seaman in the Coast Guard (1939-1959). During his 20-year service, he seized the opportunity to refine his writing skill while travelling.

He worked for the *Playboy* magazine and made a lot of interviews with people such as jazz legend Miles Davis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., George Lincoln Rockwell or Cassius Clay who changed his name to Muhammad Ali. His interviews with Malcolm X resulted in his first literary work *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) followed by *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976). In 1977, he won a special Pulitzer Prize though his book was subject to a plagiarism suit that he settled out of court.<sup>1</sup>

In 1972, he created the Kinte Foundation to save the records that help in tracing black genealogy. Honoring Haley, his boyhood home in Henning, Tennessee, north of Memphis was opened to public in 1978, the Alex Haley Interpretive Center was constructed in 2010 to educate people in genealogical methodology, and a memorial (see fig. 54) of him was built on June 12, 2002 in Annapolis, Maryland.

**Figure 53.** Alex Haley Memorial in Annapolis, Maryland



**Source:** Bracks, 145.

<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Alex Haley," <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alex-Haley> (accessed September 10, 2020).

## Appendix E

### The Main Crew of *Roots* 1977

Role	Name	
<b>Directed by</b>	Marvin J. Chomsky John Erman David Greene Gilbert Moses	
<b>Screenplay written by</b>	William Blinn M. Charles Cohen Alex Haley Ernest Kinoy James Lee	
<b>Produced by</b>	Stan Margulies Donald A. Ramsey Malcolm Alper William Beaudine Jr. David L. Wolper	
<b>Music by</b>	Gerald Fried Quincy Jones	
<b>Cinematography by</b>	Joseph M. Wilcots Stevan Lerner	
<b>Editing by</b>	James T. Heckert Peter Kirby Neil Travis	
<b>Casting by</b>	Lynn Stalmaster	
<b>Art Direction by</b>	Joseph R. Jennings Jan Scott	
<b>Set Direction by</b>	Charles C. Bennett Solomon Brewer	
<b>Costume Design by</b>	Jack Martell	
<b>Actors</b>	<b>Names</b>	<b>Characters</b>
	LeVar Burton	The Young Kunta Kinte
	John Amos	The Older Kunta Kinte
	Cicely Tison	Binta Kinte
	Thalmus Rasulala	Omor
	Moses Gunn	Kintango
	Ji-Tu Cumbuka	Wrestler
	Renn Woods	Fanta
	Louis Gossett Jr.	Fiddler
	Madge Sinclair	Belle (Kunta's wife)
	Leslie Uggams	Kizzy (Kunta's daughter)
	Ben Vereen	Chicken George (Kizzy's Son)
	Georg Stanford Brown	Tom (Chicken George's son)
	Robert Reed	Dr. William Reynolds
	Lynda Day George	Mrs. Reynolds
Olivia Cole	Matilda (Chicken George's wife)	
Chuck Connors	Tom Moore	

	Lorne Greene	John Reynolds
	Sandy Duncan	Missy Anne Reynolds
	Edward Asner	Captain Thomas Davies
	Hilly Hicks	Louis (Chicken George's son)
	Lynne Moody	Irene (Tom's wife)
	Richard Roundtree	Sam Bennett
	Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs	Noah

*Source:* IMDb, "Roots 1977: Full Cast & Crew," <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075572/fullcredits> accessed (September 5, 2020)

## Appendix F

### The Main Crew of *Roots* 2016

Role	Name	
<b>Directed by</b>	Bruce Beresford Thomas Carter Phillip Noyce Mario Van Peebles	
<b>Screenplay written by</b>	Lawrence Konner Alex Haley Mark Rosenthal Alison McDonald Charles Murray	
<b>Produced by</b>	Mark Wolper LeVar Burton Alissa M. Kantrow Karen Mayeda Vranek Will Packer Mike Stiller Marc Toberoff Korin Williams Ann Kindberg Cheryl Eatock Barry Jossen Lawrence Konner Mark Rosenthal	
<b>Music by</b>	Philip Miller Alex Heffes	
<b>Cinematography by</b>	Peter Menzies Jr. Sharone Meir	
<b>Editing by</b>	Greg Babor David Beatty Neil Mandelberg Martin Nicholson James Wilcox	
<b>Casting by</b>	Meagan Lewis Victoria Thomas Leo Davis Lissy Holm	
<b>Art Direction by</b>	Kelly Curley Catherine Gaum Sara Hartinger	
<b>Set Direction by</b>	Alice Baker Jo Stuart Fox Melinda Launspach	
<b>Costume Design by</b>	Ruth E. Carter Diana Cilliers	
	<b>Names</b>	<b>Characters</b>
	Malachi Kirby	Kunta Kinte
	Laurence Fishburne	Alex Haley the voiceover

<b>Actors</b>		narrator
	Nokuthula Ledwaba	Binta Kinte
	Babs Olusanmokun	Omoró
	Chris Obi	Kintango
	Simona Brown	Jinna
	Forest Whitaker	Fiddler
	Emayatzy Corinealdi	Belle (Kunta's wife)
	Emyri Crutchfield	The younger Kizzy (Kunta's daughter)
	Anika Noni Rose	The older Kizzy (Kunta's daughter)
	Regé-Jean Page	Chicken George (Kizzy's Son)
	Sedale Threatt Jr.	Tom (Chicken George's son)
	James Purefoy	John Waller
	Katie McGuinness	Elizabeth Waller
	Erica Tazel	Matilda (Chicken George's wife)
	Jonathan Rhys Meyers	Tom Lea
	Matthew Goode	Dr. William Waller
	G Hannelius	Missy Waller
	Tony Curran	The overseer Connelly
	Lane Garrison	Frederick Murray
	Carlacia Grant	Irene (Tom's wife)
Anna Paquin	Nancy Holt the spy	
Mandela Van Peebles	Noah	
Adam Fergus	Sir Eric Russell	

*Source:* IMDb, "Roots 1977: Full Cast & Crew," <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3315386/fullcredits> accessed (September 5, 202

## Abstract

Representing an atrocious side of the U.S. (United States) history, slavery has always been a sensitive issue whose discussion was steered clear by the Americans. Hollywood, for instance, as an American film industry, treated Blacks as pariahs and eschewed from giving their experience in America its due on the screen for a long time. In fact, anti-Black racism harks back to the period that extends from 1619 to 1865 when Blacks were slaves under the subjugation of the Whites. Once they got their freedom in 1865, they fought heart and soul to be fully integrated into the American society, and they succeeded after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1964 and 1965, respectively. Blacks' positions in the American motion picture, hence, changed as well. In 1977, Alex Haley's *Roots: the Saga of an American Family* (1976) was adapted into the miniseries *Roots* that became a smash hit. In 2016, its remake was produced to address the modern generation of the Black Lives Matter era. In this regard, this thesis explores twofold aspects: the production and the reception of the remake. On the one hand, it focuses on the way the new miniseries was modernized with reference to the context. On the other hand, it investigates how the audience received the remake. To this aim, the encoding/decoding model of Stuart Hall and the content analysis method were used not only to extract the embedded messages of the remake through a close look at some aspects of the adopted cinematographic and *mise-en-scène* techniques but also to analyze the stances of the audience. The results reveal that the producers availed themselves of diverse methods to speed the circulation of the remake that diverges in many instances from its original. Going in tandem with the surrounding racial happenings, the producers implemented intensive violent images, relied on more accurate information than in the original miniseries, and omitted the White's benevolent side to point up Blacks' staunch resistance to survive and to be accepted as part of the whole but not losing their African heritage, identity and dignity. The susceptibility of the audience to feed his memory by embracing and preserving the past –however horrific it was –to define and understand the present was clearly laid bare as well.

**Key words:** Alex Haley –Blacks - Black Lives Matter - Content Analysis Theory – Memory - *Roots* – Slavery –Stuart Hall

## ملخص

يعتبر موضوع العبودية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية موضوعاً جدلاً حساساً لطالما حيزب الأمريكيون منازعته. وهو يعود إلى سبيل العنصرية، باعتبارها صراحةً العالم الأمريكي، استلقت البرود من المشاركة في أعمالها العنصرية، ونزعت تناولاً لضربة العبودية لفترة طويلة. وفي واقع الأمر، يعود السبيل العنصري ضد السود إلى الفترة الممتدة من 1619 إلى 1865، حيث تم استبعاد السود من طرف البيض. وبعد زلزالهم الحرة في عام 1865، حارب السود نأياً وبأياً لتزويد حيزوهم كموالطين أمريكيين، وقد تكالفت جهودهم بالنجاح بعد أن تمت المصادقة على كل من قانوني الحقوق المدنية سنة 1964 وحق التصويت سنة 1965. وعلى إثر ذلك، تم عرض العبودية في هوليوود، الذي

ن

س

1977 تم إنتاج المسلسل التلفزيوني "جذور" والمسند من رواية أليس هالي "جذور: ملحمة عائلة أمريكية" (1974)، والذي ألقى رواجاً كبيراً. وعلى إثر إنتاج نسخته الثانية

من المسلسل والتي تحمل نفس الاسم سنة 2016 وهي موجهة خصيصاً للجيل الجديد: جيل "حركة البرود ممة". وفي هذا الصدد تطرق هذه الدراسة إلى جانبين وهما

إنتاج المسلسل ولذا ينبغي إيضاحه من طرف الجمهور. فمن ناحية، تركز هذه الدراسة على الطريقة التي تمت بها عصرنة هذه النسخة الجديدة من المسلسل لتتناسب مع

الوضع الحالي، ومن ناحية أخرى، تتضح آراء الجمهور المخنفة حول هذا العمل. وعلى غرار ذلك، تم الاعتماد على كل من نظرية سنيوارت حول العبودية والتأثير/

التأثير ونظرية تحليل المضمون اللذان ساهما في استخراج الرسائل التي يتضمنها هذا المسلسل التلفزيوني وكذلك في الكشف عن مواقف الجمهور. وقد أسفرت النتائج أن

المصنعة قد لجأت إلى طرق مخنفة لضمان سرعة انتشار المسلسل الذي يتلف عن النسخة الأصلية في جوانب شتى وذلك بهدف حوالة الأحداث الأخيرة في أمريكا. كما تم الكشف عن

اعتماد المصنعة على إبراز صور عنيفة، اضفاء معلومات أكثر دقة، وحذف شخصيات البيض الطيبة من النسخة الجديدة للمسلسل وذلك من أجل تلبية الفرض على معالجة البرود و

مقاومتهم لشدة أي سبيل من أجل ضمان حياة عنيفة ولكن ليتم تبليغهم كجزء النتاج من المجتمع من دون التخلي عن أرواحهم العنصرية، موباهم

وكرامتهم. وكذلك تبين من خلال هذه الدراسة قابلية الجمهور لتقبل الماضي وكذا الحفاظ على ممة - ممة كان شذويع - وذلك من أجل بناء ونم الحاضر.

العلامات المصنعة: أليس هالي - البرود - العبودية - حركة البرود ممة - سنيوارت حول - نظرية تحليل المضمون - مسلسل جذور

## Résumé

Aux États-Unis, l'esclavage est considéré comme un sujet très sensible que les Américains évitent toujours de débattre. En guise d'exemple, Hollywood, en tant que producteur de films Américains, a exclu les Noirs de participer à ses œuvres artistiques et a évité pendant longtemps d'aborder la question de l'esclavage. En fait, la discrimination raciale contre les Noirs, réduits à l'esclavage par les Blancs, remonte à la période qui va de 1619 à 1865. Après l'abolition de l'esclavage en 1865, les Noirs se sont battus cœur et âme pour arracher leurs droits en tant que citoyens Américains, et leurs efforts ont été couronnés de succès après la ratification des lois sur les droits civils en 1964 et le droit de vote en 1965. De ce fait, la situation des Noirs à Hollywood s'est améliorée vu qu'en 1977 la série courte "Racines", adaptée d'après le roman d'Alex Haley *Racines* (titre original : *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*) (1974), a été produite et a connu un grand succès. Ainsi, une seconde version de la série, qui porte le même nom, a été produite en 2016 et est destinée à la nouvelle génération: la génération «La vie des Noirs compte». À ce propos, cette étude traite de deux volets : la production de la série et la façon dont elle est reçue par le public. D'un côté, cette étude se focalise sur la manière dont cette nouvelle version de la série a été modernisée pour se conformer à la situation actuelle, et d'un autre côté, elle examine les différentes opinions du public sur cette œuvre. Pour cela, nous avons utilisé la théorie du codage et du décodage de Stewart Hall et la théorie de l'analyse de contenu qui ont contribué à extraire les messages contenus dans cette courte série, ainsi que la révélation des positions du public. Les résultats de l'étude ont montré que les producteurs ont eu recours à différentes méthodes pour garantir une rapide diffusion de la série qui se distingue de la version originale sous divers aspects, afin d'être en phase avec les événements récents aux États-Unis. Par ailleurs, l'étude a révélé que les producteurs se basaient sur la présentation d'images violentes, l'ajout d'informations plus précises ainsi que la suppression des personnages blancs incarnant la bonté de la nouvelle version de la série, afin de mettre en exergue la souffrance des noirs et leur grande résistance non seulement pour s'assurer une vie décente, mais pour être acceptés en tant que partie intégrante de la société sans délaisser leur héritage africain, leur identité et leur dignité. L'étude a également montré la susceptibilité du public à accepter et préserver de son passé - aussi terrible soit-il - afin de construire et de comprendre le présent.

**Mots Clé :** Alex Haley - Esclavage – La vie des Noirs compte - Noirs – Racines - Stewart Hall - théorie de l'analyse de conte

