

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the study

According to Oxford dictionary, history is the study of past events. Which is focused on human activity and leading up to the present day. The word history itself is derived from a Latin word *Histor* meaning learned man (Encarta Dictionary). Some people consider history as something no longer important. On the other hand, others think that history has a big role in shaping someone or a nation's future. "History does nothing, possesses no enormous wealth, and fights no battles. It is rather man, the real, living man, who does everything, possesses, fights. It is not history, as if she were a person apart, who uses men as a means to work out her purposes, but history itself is nothing but the activity of men pursuing their purposes"(Marx, online).

Nowadays history cannot only be read from books or literary texts, but also can be watched from films which give more visual appearances. Film itself is an art form that encompasses individual motion pictures. Films are produced by recording actual people and objects with cameras, or by creating images using animation techniques or special effects.

There are number of movies, which are made based on the history. Most of them are recording the life story of memorable event or person that happened or lived in the past, for example, Antoine Fuqua's *King Arthur (2004)*, Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven (2005)*, or even Oliver Stone's *Alexander (2004)*. The

representation of historical events or people in the film may arise controversion. It is because the so-called history that is represented in these historical fictions are often disbelieved since these movies are classified only as historical action drama movies. For example, when Oliver Stone represents the life of Alexander The Great, people tend to keep a question in their mind, “does the film tell the true history of Alexander in the past ?”

Traditional historian and new historicists are quite different in reading account of history and interpreting literature. It is because history is based on very different views of what history is and how we can understand it. For most traditional historians, history is a series of events that have a linear and causal relationship, they believe we are perfectly capable, through objective analysis, of revealing the facts about historical events, and those facts can sometimes reveal the spirit of the age, that is, the world view held by the culture to which those facts refer (Tyson 278). For the new historicists history is like a fiction, is a form of fictive invention. By and large, this invention changes widely to be a factual truth when the fictive aspect can be naturalized and accepted as normal things. On other hand, literature, which is supposed to every fictional thing, is often used to articulate a certain ideology and shape another version of truth about the world (Budiman 6). Consequently, there is nothing fact in this world, because the so called fact is obviously the matter of interpretation (Tyson 279).

Tyson further states that by and large we know history is only in its textual from of the documents, written statistics, legal codes, letters, speeches, tracts, and the like in which are recorded the attitudes, policies, procedures, and

events that occurred in a given time and place. These sources are considered as primary sources. These sources often shape our interpretation towards certain events in history out of our consciousness. Moreover, other sources concerning history can be provided through artworks and literature which look at history from another perspective. These sources are considered as secondary sources. In addition, historical accounts and secondary sources, written during the period in question or at later date, can be analyzed in the same manner (283).

At this point, *Braveheart* (1995), a controversial movie directed by Mel Gibson and produced by Paramount Pictures and 20th Century Fox, exposes the complexity of interpreting things as explained above. It illustrates how a certain fact is interpreted through a very different way and finally engendered a different interpretation. *Braveheart* offers something different because of its interpretation of authentic materials from Scottish history that is represented in the main theme. It is about the history of a Scottish national freedom fighter hero, William Wallace (1270 -1305) who fights for the freedom of Scotland from the England Tyranny.

It was stated by Lin Anderson on her back cover book *Braveheart from Hollywood to Holyhood* (2005) that *Braveheart* was the best movie of 1995; it won 5 Oscars and re-established the historical epic as a film genre, paved the way for the following successes of *Gladiator* (2000) and *Lord of the Rings* (2001). *Braveheart* reached a global audience with its powerful re-telling of the almost forgotten story of William Wallace and his struggle defending Scotland's freedom. It made the movie as the most politically influential movie of the 20th century; it

also had a part to play in the political change that swept Scotland in mobilizing public opinion to aid the return of a Scottish Parliament after a gap of 300 years.

Braveheart is a historical epic story about William Wallace, the legendary Scots warrior who led his nation into battle against the English in the years around 1300. The story is drawn from history, but the film itself is not a documentary history but a fictionalized and romanticized account that some critics see as generally faithful to history while others see it as something too far from the real story. Many of the characters portrayed in the film, among them are William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, Edward I, Princess Isabella, Prince Edward, and the Sheriff of Lanark, are historical figures. *Braveheart* is not a really accurate retelling of Wallace's story. But it does an excellent job of capturing the spirit of a man who fought, not for personal gain or renown, but for his people and an ideal. The *Braveheart* is criticized mostly for its liberties with the facts. Wallace's family is not as common as showed on the film. Details of his battles are simplified and dramatized for the screen. In my opinion, the controversial version of the image of Wallace makes this movie to be more interesting. Later, through Gibson's version of William Wallace, this movie is more fascinating to be interpreted (Rogerebert, online).

Another example how Gibson interprets the so-called facts differently is shown through the representation of Robert the Bruce. It is particularly interesting portrait of Robert the Bruce, who has always been something of a hero of Scottish history, but comes out of the film looking like a bit of a wimp. Along with William Wallace, Robert the Bruce is one of the Scotland's greatest historical

heroes. His reputation as a determined and courageous man who endured immense hardship before winning the great battle at Bannockburn is a deserved one. However, for many, his reputation is affected by his ceaseless maneuvering and changing loyalties. His victory at Bannockburn, re-establishing Scotland's independence, was a monumental event due to his dedication, perseverance and military skill. However, he is not regarded by all Scots with the unquestioning respect and admiration that is shown to William Wallace (Baronage, online).

The history of William Wallace has been written by many historians on their books. This particular event is told by many historians as a fact. As a matter of fact, as Lois Tyson in *Critical Theory Today* suggests, new historicists believe that traditional historians may know about some events of history, but their “understanding of what such facts mean,” is “a matter of interpretation, not fact”. This implies, what kind of story that will be told is determined by how historians select and deem which ones are important to report and which ones are not (279). Therefore we need to examine the history from various perspectives and not only from an official history.

Movie, undoubtedly, can give a brand new viewpoint of seeing history. The movie itself captured William Wallace struggle in freeing Scotland from England tyranny. *Braveheart* by Mel Gibson is an example of a fiction that represents William Wallace. Here, we are given the opportunity to see the picture of William Wallace apart from the prejudice. In this movie Mel Gibson depicts William Wallace as patriot, romantic person, fighting for freedom of his country

not for his nobility. Mel Gibson gives a whole new representation of William Wallace and his struggle in freeing his country.

Over all, it cannot be denied that what thrills many readers are Gibson's courage in revealing the different facts by overturning and challenging the official history. Sometimes, a historical movie which is added with fictionalized and romanticized can bring the movement to the history itself, for example; William Wallace becomes an aspiration hero at the time when Scottish needs heroes, whether it is myth or reality.

Mel Gibson is the director of *The Man without a Face* (1993), *Braveheart* (1995), *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), *Complete Savages* (TV episodes, 2004); *The Man without a Ball, Tutoring and Pilot, Apocalypto* (2006). Mel Columcille Gerard Gibson was born January 3rd, 1956. Gibson was graduated from the *National Institute of Dramatic Art* in Sydney in 1977. His acting career began in Australia with appearances in television series, *The Sullivans, Cop Shop* and *Punishment*. Gibson's first film was *Summer City*. Gibson was still a student when he filmed *Summer City* and it didn't take long before he had found work playing supporting roles for the South Australia Theatre Company after his graduation. Many people assume that Gibson is originally Australian but, the fact is he was born in Peekskill, New York.

Braveheart is one of interesting movies I have ever seen. This movie is interesting because it exposes William Wallace's struggle in freeing Scotland from England tyranny. The fact is the film represented the story of the events and character different compared to official historical account, especially in William

Wallace's representation. I am more interested to analyze the new identity of William Wallace that represented in the *Braveheart* movie. The movie itself is based on Blind's Harry poems. William Wallace in Blind's Harry poems represent as someone with a passion who struggles to reach his freedom from English tyranny, he ready to sacrifice his live to reach that.

B. Statements of the Problems

Based on the background of the study above, there are three points that are about to be disclosed within the analysis as followed:

1. How does the official history represent William Wallace?
2. How does *Braveheart* construct another alternative representation of William Wallace?
3. From New Historicism, what do the differences in representation mean?

C. Objective of the Study

Regarding the statement of the problems, the aims of this thesis analysis will be:

1. To illustrate how the official text represents William Wallace.
2. To portray the representation of William Wallace in *Braveheart*.
3. To find the representation of William Wallace based on New Historicism perspective.

D. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study is based on the significance of developing a new historical perspective within the history itself. It will take more discussions on the different representation of William Wallace including his history which is portrayed in *Braveheart* movie. In this case, the representation of William Wallace will be compared to the historical account in order to find the meaning of the differences and also to discover the new identity of the representation of William Wallace seen from New Historicism perspective.

The study will not judge the truth either official history or non-official history in representing the history of William Wallace. Its means that it will not contribute the encouragement for giving a voice between pro and contra to the so called authentic in this movie.

E. Significance of the Study

This study is purposed to give an essential significance in developing knowledge about New Historicism perspective, since life at present as well as in the future certainly influenced by past. By viewing the history in new perspective we expect to be more open minded in regarding a particular event in history which is not only by viewing the history on one source.

The next expectation of this study is to share a valuable experience to other students, especially the student of English Department Airlangga University, who are also interested in New Historicism reading. This method is not as many to be found as any other readings in other literary theories.

F. Theoretical Approach

This study applies the theory of New Historicism by Stephen Greenblatt. A simple meaning of New Historicism is that it is a way of interpreting based on parallel reading of literary and non literary texts, usually of the same historical period. It refuses, or at least ostensibly, to 'privilege' the literary text, instead of a literary 'foreground' and a historical 'background', hence, both literary and non literary texts are given equal weight and constantly inform or interrogate each other (Bary 172).

For new historicist, the understanding of what some facts mean is a matter of interpretation, not fact. Further, the so-called 'fact' is not the absolute sense but of discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth. There are many ways to produce the truth through discourses. Foucault argues that this process might be done through the procedures of selecting and divorcing, which one is relevant over the others; by operating the segregation to certain kinds of discourses and making the differences to what might be called true or false, accurate or inaccurate, etc. in addition, new historicism is used to unveil the histories of marginalized people (Budianta 48-49).

G. Method of the Study

The method that will be used is the library research and the main source that will be used is the movie itself, *Braveheart*. The study will use the procedures of the technique of data collections on the movie, which are done by watching the movie, making data classification, and determining the data based on the criteria.

In addition, the criterion data that are used to determine the data analysis are the data that contain the representation of William Wallace. In addition, information is also got from any particular books dealing with literary theories, articles, approaches, and other books containing the history of William Wallace. The data are also collected from official sites of the director of the movie, Mel Gibson and some site sources from internet.

On the other hand, in analyzing the data, this study applies the descriptive research method as well. This method is preferred to be applied in order to gain a descriptive explanation of the problem through the events and the action of the story. Next, the analysis is done through juxtaposing both literary and non-literary texts, what is meant by literary text is the William Wallace movie titled *Braveheart*; and non-literary texts are the texts which contain the information of William Wallace from the official history.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Discourse : language and practices that construct the topic. It governs the idea that an idea can be meaningfully talked about when it is put into practices and used to regulate the conduct of others.

Representation : describing, illustrating, things in a particular way. For Foucault, representation is as a source for the production of knowledge, connected in more intimate ways with social practices and question of power.

- Identity : the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others.
- New identity : the new characteristic of people that construct by new representation.
- Ordinary Man : a man who born with no nobility title.