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## **The Battle of Thermopylae from History to the Hollywoodian 300**

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## **Dedication**

To my dearest parents, and my beloved brothers.

To my patient husband, and my little daughter.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

Since the early times, the Greek mythology has inspired many aspects of people's cultures, which emerged from one generation into another. It is full of myths and legends that described the antique Greek lifestyle. Among all those periods, the Greek mythology is still alive and influencing the contemporary filmmakers or screenwriters. This research examines the process of adapting a historical battle into screen based on an analytical and comparative approach. It defines the concept of mythology in general and the Greek mythology in particular. The first chapter gives an overview about the Greek world in the fifth century, highlighting the lifestyle of the Spartans and the major characters of their city. Then, it presents the story of the battle of Thermopylae from the historical side, and it shows the process of adaptation from one medium into another. In the second chapter starts with the feature film *300*, the director, the cast, and then a summary about the movie. This thesis sheds light on the main differences and similarities between the battle of Thermopylae and its adaptation to screen *300*. Each movie contains messages in which this dissertation tends to discover. So, the last part of this work tries to depict the attraction of people towards cinematography in the contemporary era portraying two sides, the controversial and the appealing.

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# General Introduction

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

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Greek mythology has existed since centuries it had affected the development of the modern society in many ways. As mythological tales have stimulated people with their diverse ideas and concepts, and have made it known worldwide. Yet, those narratives have been adapted in different ways mainly in cinema.

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cinema has become the most popular art and medium of narration, while it can be considered as one of the biggest industries in the world. So watching movies become part of the daily life and the culture of each society.

In the recent decades, there were a lot of movies adapted from history, and then they become famous in Hollywood. These adapted movies can give the audience the opportunity to search about the primary source. So, because of their curiosity they will be surprised by the differences from watching the movie adaptation.

The fictional movie *300* directed by Zack Snyder in 2007 is one of the most famous fantasy historical fiction movies. It refreshed the original story of Greco – Persian war in particular, the famous battle of Thermopylae, when the 300 Spartan fought thousands of Persian conquerors, this is according to the legend. The process of adaptation is very important in these decades, despite the changes that the filmmakers make it, to suit the new audience and the art of cinematography.

This research analyses those modulations, what was added to the real history or deleted from it, this work tries to mark out the hidden messages that should the audience know more about it.

Through an analytical and comparative approach, this study raises some questions that the following research attempts to answer, which are:

- What did really happen in the battle of Thermopylae?
- How can the process of adaptation give birth to the original medium?

To answer these research questions, this work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter sheds light on the process of film adaptation, then the concept of mythology and in particular the Greek mythology. In addition to this, an overview about the Greek

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

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world in the fifth century, ending with the famous battle of Thermopylae that happened in this era.

The second chapter, however, introduces the cast, the director and the screenwriter. This chapter attempts to examine the similarities and differences between the two mediums, history and cinema to show what was added and deleted from the original story. Then, it studies the hidden messages. Finally, the chapter intends to identify the attraction of cinematography in both sides the appeal and controversy ones, it in the contemporary era.

# Chapter One

## An Overview

of Greek

Mythology

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# **Chapter One: An Overview of Greek Mythology**

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## **1.1 Introduction**

Several distinct mythologies have emerged since the early times, the Greek mythology as an example has inspired various historians and filmmakers in all over the world, producing great amount of graphic novels and cinematic adaptations.

The first chapter deals with the process of film adaptation, then the concept of Greek mythology and its different types while highlighting the most famous historians of the Greek world. Besides, this chapter provides a historical background about the Greek empire in the fifth century and the major event that took place in that era, the battle of Thermopylae.

## **1.2. Film Adaptation**

Viewing of particular film many transmit basic elements and shape ideas about history and historicity, ignoring the debate concerning true and false history considering films as records of the past, presented in a far entertaining way. And films of the twentieth century have enriched historiography with pieces of historical imaginations.

The contemporary movies can be a good way to understand the history and culture of the ancient classics. These movies can be called the classics on screen; Blanchard and Shahabudin indicate that “Cinematic output can be ... an important vehicle for discussing the values, history, and cultural politics of the classical past” (Stafford 8).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary the verb to adapt means “make suitable for a new use or purpose, to alter or modify, adjust one thing to another or, to become adjust to new conditions”. Besides, Sanders Claims that “adaptation can be a transposition practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of revision in itself” (17). It is a way in which the oldest or the original source will be simplified and of course with additional elements for specific purpose, to attract the new audiences or the new generations, also to make it more understandable for then through the new formations and techniques. The classic novels are the most adapted one into movies and cinema, like the works of Shakespeare (Sanders 18).

In another words, Rahmoun argues that “adaptation is any endeavor originating in one medium having been translated into other medium using specific instruments that

## **Chapter One: An Overview of Greek Mythology**

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result in new creation" (36). He says that there are different appropriations and interpretations of the original text that give another reading to the audience, Belton claims that film adaptation "offers an opportunity for filmmakers to reread a narrative from another age through the lens of their own time and to project onto that narrative their own sense of the world"(Cited in Rahmoun 37) .

So, film adaptation gives more than a simplification for the original source because it depends on the screenwriter, his readings and interpretations which cause a new result with another standpoint (Rahmoun 37). Yet, film adaptation can be called as the cinematic interpretations of the old novels and classics.

### **1.3. The concept of Mythology**

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the concept of mythology appeared in the early 15<sup>th</sup> C, which means "The exposition of myths," the investigation and interpretation of myths". Etymologically speaking the word "mythology" comes from, "late Latin mythologia", and from "Greek mythologia" which means in English "legendary lore, a telling of mythic legends, a legend, story, tale".

Myths are traditional and narrative stories. They are found in each culture, and they are imported and retold in different versions rather than one form, meanwhile they can be changed in the process of telling and retelling, this idea is overtly supported by Clark, when he points out that "a story is not traditional the first time it is told, on the second or the third, and so a story is not a myth until it becomes accepted as a myth by the tradition, that is, by generations of telling and retellings"(3). These myths express ideas and problems that have an importance in the society where they are told (Clark 13).

The stories usually connect the foundation of the universe and its aftertime demolition. They detect how men were formed by gods; moreover they depict how gods and men are surrounded by each other. Also, these stories deal with the heroes as the model for a society. Thus, the most concern is the important being's features of real human and mythical being, this fact is supported by Weigel, he says:

The simplest and most direct way to approach mythology is to look at its subject matter. In the broadest terms myths are traditional stories about gods,

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kings and heroes. Myths relate the creation of the world and sometimes its future destruction as well. They tell how gods created men. They depict the relationships between various gods and men. They provide a moral code by which to live. And myths treat the lives of heroes who represent the ideals of a society. In short, myths largely deal with the significant aspects of human and superhuman existence (Cited in Chami4).

Myths, as it was said before, are traditional, thus they are told and retold, in the light of this, they can change in the process of telling and retelling, Clark says, "A story is not traditional the first time it is told, on the second or the third, and so a story is not a myth until it becomes accepted as a myth by the tradition, that is, by generations of telling and retellings"(3). He explains that in this process , there will be lot modifications in the shape of the story, elements added or removed, "it is almost possible to say that a myth is a story that has escaped from its author"(Clark 4).

According to Sir G.L Gomme, myth has a purpose "is to explain matters in the science of a pre-scientific age"(Cited in Clark 4). Moreover, myths tell the creation of men, animals and the world, they tell the different operations of the natural phenomena.

Historians claim that in the present day, mythology should have a recollection, since it "was the religion of the ancient past"(Clark 153). The tales which build up the core of the ancient society served the same aim as the stories from the Holy Book do for people: the importance of solidarity, explained the unclear things and coalescence. What is certain is that the mythical traditions express the thoughts or ideas of a society not just a person, and it is found in groups of related stories (Clark 153).

### **1.4. Types of Myths**

Scholar Joseph Campbell describes the way mythology forms the basic structure of every civilization and uphold people's consciousness and how it provides meaning and empowers coming civilizations (Mark); through time, diverse types of Myths have existed, but the most important can be traced into three groups.

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### **1.4.1. Etiological Myths**

From the Greek action meaning, reason. It demonstrates the originality or the cause of something. This type of myth can give details about how or why the world is it like that, like the Pandora myth that clarifies how evil was suffering, and was released into the world. Pandora was the first woman created by Hephaestus (Greek God); she opened a jar that was translated after as “Pandora’s Box” liberating all the evils of the world. Then in the contemporary era there are idioms inspired from this myth such as “a present which seems valuable but which in reality is a curse” (Mark).

### **1.4.2. Historical Myths**

It narrates again an event from the past but with a great exaggeration than the real actions (if it exists). Thus, the famed historical myth in the west is Homer’s epic 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE tale the Iliad which tells the story of the siege and fall of the city of Troy, it may be based on a real war or not, that is why the use of myth as a source for historical research is somehow suspicious and unsure. Even though, myths represent the ancient cultures and aspects of a certain community which they have a great value (Clark 138).

### **1.4.3. Psychological Myths**

Psychological myth can be a journey to self-identity by a hero and heroine whom are the usual features of a mythical story. Plus this, a psychological myth is a shift from what is known to what is not, then, it creates a balance between external and internal consciousness in order to provide people with the cultural values. As an example of this type, is that of Oedipus, the prince who killed his father and marrying his mother, which was a disaster in their society, and actually there are others like Perseus and Theseus (Mark).

## **1.5. The Greek Mythology**

The Greek myths were not just amusing stories, still they were means for investigating several situations or problems in the Greek thoughts. Claude Levi-Strauss said that myths were "good to think with" (cited in Clark139). From these investigations it can be found different results and meanings by different writers to the same myths.

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Thus, myths are not an argument unlike philosophy which represents arguments; myths represent ideas in the form of narratives (Clark 140).

Myths were connected to religion in the Greek world in order to explain the origins of gods, humanity, about death ... it talked about heroes too. Furthermore, myths were used to retell the previous historical events, their fights and the places that they discovered. Although, myths in the modern world has no reliability but what is sure is that they were familiar in the ancient Greek society. Despite this, Greek mythology was passed from one generation into the next one, and of course with a lot of changes, since they were described in art and as paintings in vases (Clark 142).

What Clark said is that the mythic stories do not disappear but they are always present in drama, epic, visual art ... and the Greek myths were taken up by Latin writers first, then it inspired the western culture. In addition, modern scholars try to shed lights on the religious and political institutions of ancient Greece to understand the nature of myth itself (167).

### **1.5.1. Homer**

The majority of the traditional myths are with an unknown author or without a precise source because they are from the pre-writing era; though there are others with a source (Stanton, et al 10) .Homer is a famous poet, he is considered as the first one who talked about the Greek mythology in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; in these works he portrayed several information and tales from the old myths, I this Fritz Graf says:

Our first witness to Greek mythology is Homer. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* we encounter, for the first time in the history of Greek literature, the gods and heroes that constituted myth as the Greeks themselves knew it, and as we know it now. Since homer's day, Achilles and Hector, Paris and Helen, Zeus, Hera, Poseidon and Athena .... (Cited in Chami 4).

### **1.5.2. Herodotus**

The majority of the old information that are about the Greco – Persian wars, can be traced back to a Dorian Greek historian called Herodotus, who lived from 484 BC to 425 BC(the fifth century) and whose writings succeeded three surviving generations

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(Rhodes 8). He talked in his collection of writings about the struggles that were between Greece and Persia, they called him as the "father of history" since he was so active and collected a lot of information about the ancient history; and there are other historians who talked about the Spartans and the Persians, to describe Herodotus Cawkwell notes:

Foremost amongst Greek writers is, of course, Herodotus. He survives in full, and furnishes a great deal of information about Persia, and so inevitably dominates any discussion about Greek knowledge and understanding of that Great power (2).

### **1.6. The Greek world in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC**

During the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Greek was divided into over a thousand small states, each state independent and has its self-control. The Greeks were always looking for another lands and sustenance where ever their ships went. They conquered a huge space in all over the world; in the light of this Ray argues that “the Greeks outposts soon lay scattered from Asia minor to what is now southern Spain and from the North African coast to the fertile plains above the Black Sea”(7), and these settlements have its self-government. The residents of these small cities or “polies in Greek were, beyond all else, members of the local community. Indeed, their very survival was bound to its fate” (Ray 8). This period was an era of wars and conflicts first between the Greeks and Persians, then between the Athenians and Spartans. Ultimately, the social, economic and political rise of the Greeks in the fifth century reflected the development of a famous and important civilization in the world, which was the birth of consolidation of the constitution and democracy (Ray 8).

#### **1.6.1. Greek Political Situation**

Freedom and democracy were the basic elements in the Greek world, as Sophokles put it “free men have free tongues” (Cited in Fields 91). It is well known that, the Greeks stood for their democracy, free speech and freedom.

In regard of an article in title *Ancient Greek Government* written by Mark Cartwright, one of the most essential aspects focused on in the Greek governmental scheme which was diverse is the issue of whom is to rule, weather it is “law” or rather

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the “Constitution”, thus, does leadership lies in the governmental officials or the public. As a result of the many enquiries concerning this issue, the Greeks took various steps in order to reach an agreeable solution for its many cities and along, long periods of time.

Back in the days, to rule was a responsibility of one unique person or in many man, where by their most essential value is democracy which is thought out as “ the Greeks greatest contribution to civilization” (Cartwright).

He also with that being said, Greece’s political strategy was rich following four different systems. The first and mostly acknowledge is “Democracy”, since it allows citizens to rule, yet only male ones. Followed by “Monarchy”, which is to lead by heritage. While “Oligarchy”, is for a chosen group to take the lead. Moreover, the most rejected one is “Tyranny” because it is to take the thrown by force and not by law. In respect of such details the author also mentions the sources reporting that they have been taken from *“The Constitution of the Athenians*, one written by Aristotle or one of his pupils and the other attributed (by some) to Xenophon (Cartwright).

In that era, there were several personalities who expressed their intellectual and political ideas in a free atmosphere, which made it as a point of reference for the western world in all the courses (Pomeroy, et al 160).

Although, The Greeks did not hesitate to use anything for more imperial states or to enforce their power over it. It was the most powerful and famous empire in the Greek history, through their navy and legacy they achieved and preserved their goals, power, and prosperity (Fields92).

### **1.6.2. Fifth Century Greek Economic**

In the fifth century BC, the agriculture was the source of living in all over the world and Greeks too. The Greek soil was not suitable for the growth of many crops, however olive trees and grape vines were able to be produced, yet thanks to their colonial position they ensured an equal supply. In addition, farming was for nobles and rich people and scorned other workers. Moreover, aristocrats owned most land, this as consequences created tension between them and farmers. In the same line of thought Pomeroy, et al argue that:

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Unlike farming, to which a certain nobility was always attached, manual work performed indoors was despised by many wealthier Greeks and known by the name "banausic" labor, which means literally work performed over a hot furnace, and distinctions between skilled and unskilled labor were often ignored (161).

The Greeks were exporting their products between their cities and other countries. In the light of this, trade was the vivid field in Greece at that time; it united the far cities by exportation through seas, because it was less expensive than land traffic and this led to the exchange of ideas and cultures. Since Greece was divided into city-states, this led to the diversity of its products and made the process of exportation and importation necessary, their exportations relief on wine, olives, metalwork and pottery, while peasants often traded their own crafts (Pomeroy, et al 162).

There were jobs for men and others for women, each of them had his field of work, and generally the slaves work on the craft industries. According to Pomeroy, et al “men were in factories working swords, shields, furniture, pottery and other things; however women worked in textile industries” (161). From another side, there were others whose economic and social situation was somehow better, they had the choice in works, and they believed that most craft fields for slaves, they considered such kind of lives, was humiliating to a free man.

From another side, in the ancient Greek there was no heavy taxation, it was just on the wealth of the rich, and the ones collected went for the support of public work. After, The Greeks developed the taxation system though not in all the cities. Houses, slaves, flocks, and herds were all submit to taxation (Mark).

### **1.6.3. Social Situation**

A crucial element in the advancement of any state in ancient Greece was ideology, unlike other societies, they have focused on ideas which referred and clarified the status of man in the universe. Sociological concepts like the status of wealth within a community was one of the many controversial topics then especially the fact that all men were seen as equals made wealth an unimportant criteria to classify men. The

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bourgeoisie class in ancient Greek civilization believed that they could take advantage of their bond with the gods in order to get richer, yet the public did not accept such ideas instead they set themselves apart from their divinities. As a matter of fact they have taken speech and discussion among societies as their foundation. In the ancient times the Greek people tended to resort into a rule by oligarchies, whereby they believed that intellectual groups of men are the best to rule, however the public still had their own saying against any decision unlike in "Egypt or the Near East", were such acts would have been looked at as outrageous. Such a fact made those oligarchies seem weak with time they have been transformed into "an assembly of all male citizens" even though this step fostered equality among men it still resulted into some other inequality issues such as "gender inequality and large sale chattel slaver" (Morris 731).

In this era, the life in Greek was too harsh and each person should had self-confidence and the power to be alive. The citizens' life was combined to the health of the polis, as far as if it was good they would prosper, still , if it was failure they would be two results if slavery or death. So, this led the Greeks to make relations or formed unions with outsiders to avoid wars and live in a peace, however they were living in isolation before this era (Ray 6).

War was important in their lives, "a key element of their political and social organization", all the citizens must be warriors, even the poets, architects..., and each person would have the ability to fight in war, for his image and position in society. Besides, "warfare lay at the heart of classical Greek society, then it would be fair to say that the armored spearman or hoplite was its soul"(Ray 8).

Despite this, the Greeks viewed outsiders as barbarians "barbaroi", Ray says about these outsiders "aliens whose utterances sounded like "bar-bar", equivalent to blanch-blanch in modern English"(Ray 8), but at the same time they shared some cultural elements. There was a freedom in communication and religion with minor differences between citizens in order to make a strong and a powerful community, although they shared various cultural traditions and customs that make it unique in its lifestyle and system (Ray 7). From another side, the growth of the largest Greek was based on the imperial expansion and administration, as Morris says that "the fifth century transition

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allowed a few cities to capture imperial revenues, allowing them to grow well beyond the carrying capacity of their immediate hinterlands"(22).

The Greeks shared stories or tales called myths and legends about Gods, heroes, in which they believed, and they used these myths to explain natural phenomena that could not be explained by science, these myths become the center Interest of many historians and artists, because it is part of the Western civilization that has influenced other civilizations.

Although this era witnessed diverse alternating wars; however, it gave birth to two of the most famous historical figures “Plato” and “Aristotle”, who have established groundlaying ideals of liberty and equality, letting behind a collection of valuable historical works that influenced many generations after (Pomeroy, et al 7).

Furthermore, architecture and art also flourished at the time with a shift from the idealistic to the realistic elements. Pieces of art which identify Greece such as “The Parthenon <sup>1</sup>Marbles”, belonged to such a period , even though they represented immortal beings they still focused on “human emotion, beauty, and accomplishment in a more vivid and realistic manner. Such developments in arts were the products of Athens ascension to the throne, after defeating the Persian Empire in 480 BC. Mainly, because this period was followed by amity and opulence providing a more stable and rich conditions for cultures to prosper. Besides that, Athens also climbed the ladder of power with its powerful navy it could control the movements of other nations and even constituted alliances in order to keep watch on the Persian forces (Mark).

### **1.7. Sparta and Spartans**

Sparta during the classical era was the most powerful city in the Greek world, and it was always as the center interest of many historians, philosophers and political scientists. Sparta was somehow unique, always trying to achieve its goals in any way to succeed. Pomeroy, et al say that "the intrusion of the state into the lives of individuals was substantial in all Greek states, no state surpassed Sparta in the invasive role it played

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<sup>1</sup> The magnificent temple on the Acropolis, “it was constructed to house the new cult statue of goddess by Pheidias and to proclaim to the world the success of Athens as leader of the coalition of Greek forces” (Cartwright).

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in daily life"(91) .So, it has been thought of more generally as a popular model of how to live.

The Spartans had a lot of common things with the other Greeks, "their society was patriarchal and polytheistic, servile labor played a key role, agriculture formed the basis of the economy, law was revered and material valor prized" (Pomeroy, et al 91). The Spartans were proud by their polis, and the others were "impressed by the patriotism and selflessness of the Spartan system entailed" (Pomeroy, et al 92). The Spartans considered themselves as warriors and noblemen, their job was war and only war, while, who was not a soldier, he would be considered as a person from the lower class.

According to Fields the Spartans "fought of their own free will but in obedience to their laws or customs... they fought hand to hand" (85). Pomeroy, et al pinpoint that "the idea of Sparta was a vision of an egalitarian and orderly society characterized by patriotism, courage in battle, and tolerance for deprivation"(91). Like the battle of Thermopylae, which is the symbol of freedom and power, in this respect Richard Glover asserts in his epic poem:

Rehearse, O Muse, the deeds and  
glorious death  
of that fam'd Spartan, who  
withstood the pow'r  
of Xerxes near Thermopylae, as fell  
to save his country... (Stafford 9).

The Spartans were well organized in the wars, they fought in the phalanx formation, so their discipline and constant military drilling made them the skilled army in Greek in all its history. They fought in a unit group and there was no difference between the soldiers, they were all warriors, both Spartan and hoplite wore a large bronze helmet, breastplate and ankle guards, and carried a round shield made of bronze and wood, a long spear and sword (Stafford 10).

### 1.8. The Battle of Thermopylae

Today the Battle of Thermopylae is celebrated as an example of heroic persistence where Leonidas, the Spartan king (a descendant of lion slaying Heracles) and 300 men chosen to fight against seemingly impossible odds (Fields 7).

In 480 BC, the Persian Empire took its forces under the control of king Xerxes in order to conquer Greece and subjugate its citizens, Xerxes took with him almost two million men as Herodotus said at the same time, Leonidas the king of Sparta went to the pass of Thermopylae with a force of three hundred Spartans and their allies, with the hope of winning the war against the two million Persian warriors (Pressfield 1).

Despite this, Leonidas and Spartan forces knew before that it is a hard mission or somehow impossible, but they went, that is why this battle was the symbol of heroism, it was a victory rather than a defeat. The king Leonidas took the first step for fighting in order to show the other allies the firmness of the Spartans.

#### 1.8.1. Tactics of the Opposing Armies during the Battle

The battle of Thermopylae based on two military systems which were representative of the classical warfare, the heavily – armored hoplites<sup>2</sup> for the Greeks and the long – range for the Persians, with simple weapons such as: spears, arrows, axes ... In this vein Fields argues that:

When the art of classical warfare is reduced to its simplest elements, we find that there are only two methods by which the enemy could be defeated on the field of the battle .... And so battlefield weapons took on the characteristics that still define them: Shock weapons like the stalking spear, sword or axe, and projectile weapons such as stone, bow and arrow or throwing spear. Thermopylae would be a contest between two military systems, the close quarter fighter (Greek hoplite) versus the long – range fighter (Persian bowmen) (21).

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<sup>2</sup> - Hoplite, (from ta hoopla meaning tool or equipment) was the most common type of heavily armed foot – soldier in ancient Greece from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (Cartwright).

## **Chapter One: An Overview of Greek Mythology**

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From one part, the Greeks used the hoplites arranged in Phalanx formation, means each men took with him a bronze shield and fighting at close quarters using spears and swords, this formation should be in a rectangular shape in order to block the others from getting in and they marched forward as one entity crushing opponents. Yet, Fields claims that "in hoplite warfare, therefore, the Phalanx itself was the tactic"(24). Admittedly, the Spartans were famous by their well-organized army, while they had a set of songs for the war and slogans too at the same time, Fields argues that:

The skillful Spartans, according to the impressed Thucydides, were noted for their slow and ordered advance, marching in step the whole way to the rhythm of flute players and singing war songs, which contrasted with that of the enemy "full of sound and fury (24).

From another part, the Persians used archers followed up with cavalry charge and foot soldiers. The Persian army joined the Immortals too in the war; they are an elite force of 10.000 conscripts with shields and spears. The foot soldiers must be in the center surrounded by the cavalry with the support of other troops, there was always a chief who control the war lines and directed the army, and then they waited the order from the chief in order to take the action (Fields 44).

These tactics were good with other armies unlike the Greek forces, in which the spears were stopped by the shields of the hoplites because they were as one entity, hand – to – hand (45). Although the huge number of the arrows that were sent by the Persians made the sun hidden, despite this, the Greeks did not care, and what Dienece says: "The Spartans would have the pleasure of fighting in the shade"(Cited in Fields 45).

Finally, The Phalanx was a good strategy for the Greeks, plus this they prepared and studied each step they went forward, what make it more easier for them, is the pass of Thermopylae, since it was too narrow for the Persian however good for the Greeks which accurate their formation (Fields 46).

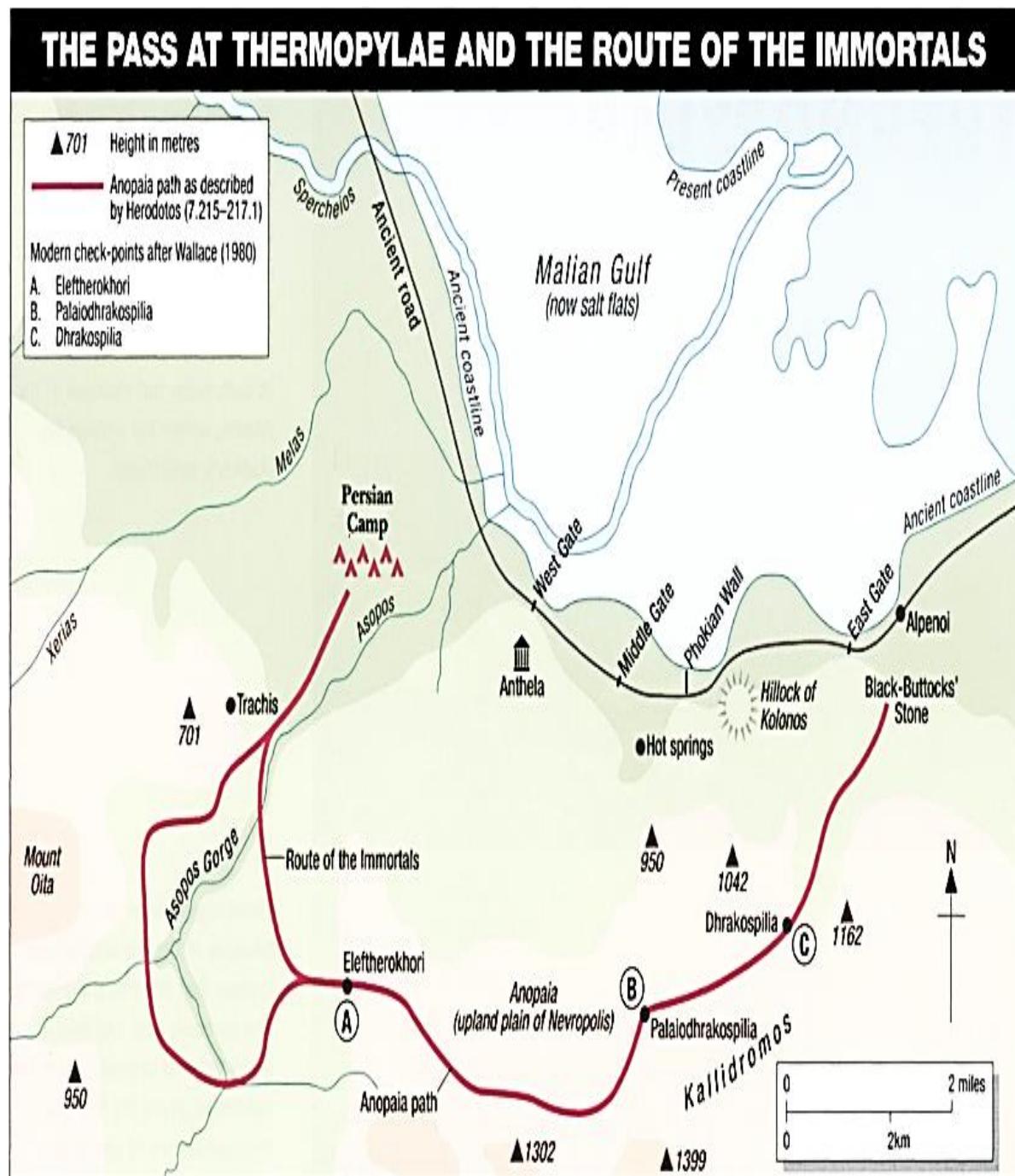
### **1.8.2. The pass of Thermopylae**

Thermopylae is a narrow pass on the east coast of central Greece between the kallidhromon massif and the Gulf of Malian about 85 miles (136 km) northwest of Athens, and close to the sea. There were three gates in this pass, the East, the West and the middle gate. However, Leonidas chose the middle gate “for a slightly wider front, but one where his vulnerable left flank was protected by a sheer wall of rock towering nearly 1,000 m over the middle gate” (Fields 62), and the other gates were incline. In addition to this, there was a wall in the middle gate built by the Phokians<sup>3</sup> in the past to be protected from their enemies, the Thessalians<sup>4</sup>. Its name meaning "Hot Gates", because it is derived from its nearby hot suffer springs (Fields 62).

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<sup>3</sup> - The Phokians are residents of Phocis which was an ancient region in the central part of ancient Greece.

<sup>4</sup> - The habitants of Thessaly. It was one of the traditional regions of Ancient Greece.



(The Pass of Thermopylae and the Route of The Immortals, cited in Fields 63).

# Chapter One: An Overview of Greek Mythology



(Xerxes' March to Thermopylae, 480 BC, cited in Fields 58).

### 1.8.3. Before the Battle

Before the battle, Xerxes sent a messenger to Sparta to give up or to waiver their armory and let their lands, however it was not the case. Then, Leonidas answered: "come and get them" (cited in Fields 65). Xerxes waited four days before the battle started expecting that the Greek army turn around because of its large army with panic. Yet, from here the war started between the two forces, it was over the course of three days, and it was the second Persian invasion of Greece.

### 1.8.4. The first day

On the first day Xerxes ordered his Median and Kissian to attack the Greek, but they could not get through the pass since the Greek army was fighting in a Phalanx formation, that worked and showed the force of the Greeks' army and their professional strategy. In the same vein, Fields claims that "The Spartans, representing the only force in Greece approaching what we moderns would call a professional army, brought the tactical development of the hoplite phalanx to its highest degree" (65).

### 1.8.5. The second day

The second day was somehow similar to the first one, with the failure of the Persian and less men for the Greeks. After, the events turn around, a traitor made it positive for the invaders. Ephialtes, son of Eurydemos, from Trachis<sup>5</sup>, came for a reward from the Persian King, he told him about another route the Anopaia path, and then he guided them to there. Fields mentions that "Leonidas had stationed the local Phokian contingent to guard it"(76), then the Immortals attacked the other Greek army.

### 1.8.6. The Last stand

On the third and the last day, Leonidas united his small troop from 300 Spartan, 700 thespians and 400 Thebans in order to defend to the last stand without losing the hope, "in order to allow the rest of the Greek force to retread or also possibly to wait relief from larger Greek force"(Cartwright). This time the Persian Army can attack from both front and rear, the Immortals were behind the Greeks but they arrived late. Then Leonidas went with his forces to the widest part of the pass to struggle all at once, and during this, he was killed (the Spartan King) but his group fought to recover his body. Meantime, the Immortals arrived at the Greek rear; they blocked the last Greek men through the East Gate. "The Thebans break away from the rest of the Greeks, and run toward the enemy, throwing down their Weapons" (Fields 82), some of them killed and others taken prisoner. After the battle The King Xerxes required that Leonidas' head should put on a stake and displayed at the battlefield (Cartwright).

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<sup>5</sup> - It was a region in ancient Greece, populated, by the Malians.

## **Chapter One: An Overview of Greek Mythology**

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The battle of Thermopylae can be considered as the symbol of sacrifice because of what the Spartan did, and "their role acquired mythical status amongst the Greeks"(Cartwright). Additionally, Spartans fought until the last stand against the Persian forces. Like Simoneds' epitaph where the battle was taken the place:

Go tell the Spartans, Stanger passing by,  
that here obedient to their laws we lie (Pressfield 1).

In addition to this, Herodotus said that at the last stand, the Greeks had no spears, he said too that they were fighting "with their Swords, if they had them, and, if not, with their hands and teeth"(Fields 84). Yet, this battle is famous because of the gallantry Of the Greek forces that remained to fight when they knew they were doomed.

### **1.9. Conclusion**

Mythology incarnates various stories and beliefs, Myths were transformed from one generation into another differently, among the famous authors of Greek Myth were Homer and Herodotus. In the fifth century, the Greek empire flourished in all its fields which led the entire world inspired by its policy and lifestyle.

The Greek military was known by his war's strategies and tactics. The Battle of Thermopylae is one of the glorious battles that were between Greece and Persia. This battle attracted a lot of historians and filmmakers, which made it portrayed in movies through the process of film adaptation.

# Chapter Two

## From

## Thermopylae

## into 300

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### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter makes an introduction to the movie *300*, its crew and cast. In addition to, providing synopsis of the film with a comparison that present both points similarities and differences between the battle of Thermopylae and its cinematic adaptation thus, detailing what makes a cinematic rendering of historical happenings attracting in the modern era.

### **2.2. The movie 300**

*300* is a 2007 historical fantasy directed by Zack Snyder and Written by Michael B. Gordon, and Zack Snyder. It is produced by Gianni Nunnari, Mark Canton, Bernie Goldman, and Jeffery Silver. The film is an adaptation of Frank Miller's fictional graphic novel, retelling the ancient Battle of Thermopylae (480 BC), the war between Persia and Greek forces (One of the famous epic movies). The story is narrated by the voice of the Spartan soldier Dilios, and through this narrative technique various fantastical elements are shown and make it with the historical fantasy genre.

The movie was almost shot on studios using the technique of chroma key (green screen and visual effects), which gave the producers the flexibility to shoot where and when they wanted, it is a good way to create a professional quality. Moreover, Snyder uses slow motion in his film to give an importance and more emphasis to the scene where he uses this technique. There are a lot of famous scenes, or quotes from the movie that become memorable and widely heard in all over the world, among them, when Leonidas said: "This is Sparta!" (12:44).



Figure 1 : Sparta's reply

300 have several themes, and it is full of hidden messages, political or philosophical one, that make it very popular and controversial at the same time.

### 2.2.1. Presentation of the Director/Screenwriter

Zack Snyder, the director of 300 he is an American director, producer and screenwriter, he is more specialized on superhero films, like Watchmen (2009), Man of steel (2013) and Aquaman (2018). Most of his movies were adapted from comic books.

In an MTV interview broadcasted in 2007, Snyder was asked about the accuracy of 300, he replies that the events are 90 percent accurate, just the visualization that is crazy, and when he asked the historians about his movie, they said to him that it is accurate and amazing, he did some changes to the historical event to make it accurate with the cinematographic art, and he said that this movie is an opera not a documentary<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> It was in an MTV interview broadcasted in 2007 by Josh Horowitz.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070324023240/https://www.mtv.com/movies/news/articles/1554534/20070313/story.jhtml>

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### **2.2.2. The Cast**

The movie contained several famous actors. Gerard Butler stars as Leonidas, the protagonist of the film, known for other films like Last Call (2016) and Hunter Killer (2018). He said that when he heard the title *300*, he knew that it will be different and something new. In some interviews, he mentioned the fact when he met Zack Snyder; he watched his intelligence and production capacities (Levy).

Lena Heady plays as Gorgo the Queen of Sparta. She appeared in several productions such as the series Game of Thrones (2011 – 2019) and the Broken (2008). She brought incredible Charisma and a fire seen to the Queen. She has a strong character in the movie, she can be called the heart of Sparta because of her strength and right decisions while the absence of Leonidas during the war (her husband).

Rodrigo Santoro stars as the king Xerxes, he describes the Brazilian actor who portrays the role of a God – King, who wants to conquer all the territories of the world and continues what his father started. One of his works is Rio 2096: A story of Love and Fury (2013) (He was called King of Kings in the movie or the god-king).

Ephialtes of Trachis played by Andrew Tiernan, is a deformed hunchback in exile whose parents ran away from Sparta and he wanted to rescue his father's honor. He was so weak to become a soldier so Leonidas rejects him. What makes him mad and angry in which he betrays his own country to Xerxes about another route (Anopaea) for wealth, women and a position in his army.

Dominic West took the role of Theron, represents a new kind of Spartan; he wanted negotiation more than fighting for freedom, he is not an honest politician

David Wenham plays the role of Dilios, the Spartan warrior and strong storyteller; he plays in the Lord of the Ring trilogy. He said that he loves telling stories, so to have the opportunity to be a story teller is a gift.

Vincent Regan stars as the Captain. Three leaders in the Spartan army are, Leonidas, Dilios and the captain played by Vincent Regan. Among his works Troy (2004).

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Tom Wisdom in the role of Astinos, the eldest son of the Captain, a faithful soldier to his king and city he sacrifices his life for their freedom, he said that he shares the same characteristics as Astinos, plays on different movies like Romeo et Juliette (2013) and Hannibal (2015).

Michael Fassbender acts Stelios the friend of Astinos, as a soldier. He represents the enthusiasm of the young Spartan warrior; he wants to prove himself and shows his power and strength in this movie so it was the accurate chance for him. He acts in Jane Eyre (2011), X-men: Days of Future Past (2011), and Twelve Years a Slave (2013).

### **2.2.3. Summary of 300**

The Film started with a narration describing the integrity, dispassion of the Greek Warriors (Spartans) and the stage that Leonidas pass through it when he was a young boy "Agogi". Which is a Spartan Custom, each young boy pass it in order to become a soldier and a strong Spartan, this allowed Leonidas to become a strong Warrior then the King of his state.

The King Xerxes send a messenger to Sparta demanding "earth and water" to be a part for his King, however, Leonidas throw him in a deep well. After this, Leonidas negotiates with Ephors (whom are the leaders of Sparta) for a good strategy to win the war against Xerxes and his vast army, by building a wall to center the Persians in the narrow pass "Hot Gates" at Thermopylae. Then the Ephors ask the Oracle (religious Cast), but they were against the war during the Carneia<sup>7</sup>, that is what make Leonidas Angry and take his own decision to go to the war with 300 Spartan, then the Arcadians<sup>8</sup> joined him while the Spartans were in their way to Thermopylae.

After their arrival to the pass, they build the wall with stones and Persian murders in order to make the envoy Persian anger and tell his king, and then Spartans send a warning with him to Xerxes.

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<sup>7</sup> - Was one of the most important festivals in Sparta, for the honor of Apollo Carneus.

<sup>8</sup> - It is one of the city states of Greece.

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Ephialtes is a Spartan whose parents fled Sparta, then he wants to clear his father's name by asking Leonidas to join with him to the war, this former warning him about the second route that can the Persian know about it. However, Leonidas refuses him because Ephialtes was physically deformed, which led him to become angry.

When the Battle stars, Xerxes demands from the Spartans to give up, but they do not put their arms. So, they fight without fear using the Phalanx formation, they defend wave after wave the Persians. At a moment, when the Battle stops, Xerxes and Leonidas meet face to face. Xerxes offers the last one the wealth and power, but it is not the case, Leonidas refuses and mocks him. Then, Xerxes send the Immortals, but Spartans manage it with few losses from their force with a help from Arcadians.

On the second day, Xerxes send a new force with war elephants thinking that it will be the last stand for Spartans, but Leonidas and his army still struggling. Then, Ephialtes go to Xerxes and tell him about the second pass for a reward from the Persian King. When the Arcadians know about Ephialtes traitor they want to leave before they die, unlike Leonidas wants to stay until the last with 300 Spartan, he orders Dilios to return to Sparta and "tell them a tale of Victory" (Fields 55).

In Sparta, the Queen Gorgo attempts to persuade the Spartans Council to send other forces to help the other Spartans in the war. Theron, a bad politician that he thinks that he is the owner of the Council, then she refuses his demand for sex, he disgraces her between people what makes her out of her mind and kills him, a bag of Xerxes gold revealing from him. Yet, because of this the Council accepts to send reinforcements.

On the last day which is the third one, the Persians go by the second path led by the traitor. Xerxes asks Spartans their submission. Leonidas makes an action like he is submitting; he makes that to allow Stelios to jump over him and kills the general. Then the Persian King orders his forces to attack. Leonidas shots his spear over Xerxes but he misses him. The Spartans still fighting until the last stand when they were killed all of them by the Persians.

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Now Dilios back to Sparta narrates the story of Leonidas and the Spartans, their heroism, self-sacrifice and faith. After one year, 3000 Soldier from Greece led by a huge number of Spartans. They celebrate at the last because of the great work of the 300 Spartans, it was a victory rather than a defeat, Dilios become the head of Spartans, and leads them to the war of Plataea.

### **2.3. Comparison Between the movie and the battle of Thermopylae**

The Battle of Thermopylae has inspired the Western world, especially Hollywood. After a lot of years, *300* depicting the events of this Battle, even though this film is based on real facts, but the story differs, there is a glorification to the events and a lot of additional elements which make it a historical and fictional movie at the same time.

The movie of *300* had been criticized a lot because there was a lot of exaggeration; it focused solely on entertainment and visual effects. Yet, such kind of adapted movies should be evaluated separately from history or the social context, especially when this movie is based on a graphic novel, Frank Miller declared about his graphic novel:

I went to Greece and researched the story as much as I could - walked the battlefield and all of that – and just put it all down. It took a lot of distillation of the genuine history and I'm taking an awful lot of liberties with everything, but that is my job. If you want reality, catch a documentary<sup>9</sup>.

Since the Director Zack Snyder considers his film as fictional movie and historically credible at the same time. Thus, during the Analysis of the relation between film and history, it is essential to ask whether some historical issues have been accurately represented in their adaptation or not.

#### **2.3.1. Main Differences**

In the real history, the Spartans were almost 7000 rather than 300 and there were the Athens with them and other warriors. Besides, it was already marked in the audiences'

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<sup>9</sup> This quote is cited in an article titled by *300* (2007)  
<http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/300spartans.php>

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mind that the Spartans were the most powerful state to engage in such wars against the vast Persian army. Even though, the Athenian led various naval battles against the Persian fleets to save the Greece. Then, Sparta and Athens worked together for a unified country rather than small warring city-states as they were before. After this battle there was another Persian invasion with a huge ground and naval.

Ephialtes, was a real traitor and a spy for the Persians, in the movie was like a monster, the director exaggerated while he made this role. Then we have Xerxes, was not that much taller as in the movie 9 feet and full of Jewelry, in history he was a normal man, wanted to finish what his father started, invading the Greece.

The Persian army did not use elephants or rhinos in the Battle of Thermopylae, they used horses in wars, these animals were sent by Xerxes in the second day of the battle (1:09:41-1:12:42). The elephants are additional elements of fantasy in Frank Miller's novel and in Zack Snyder's movie to make it more fictional and bizarre at same time.

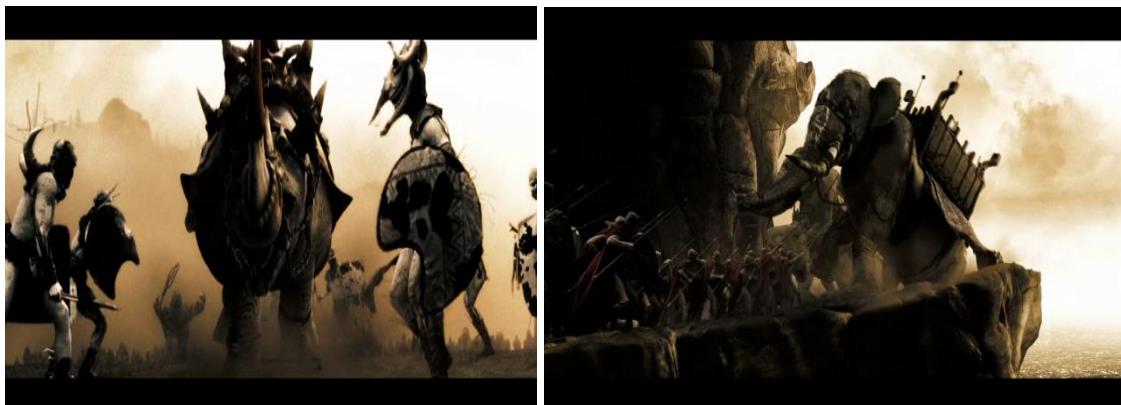


Figure 2 : Numbers count for nothing

The real Spartans wear body armor which was very important for each soldier, but in the movie they were almost naked, in an Entertainment Weekly interview Frank Miller said: "I took those chest plates and leather skirts off of them for a reason. I wanted these guys to move and I wanted' em to look good ... Spartans, in full regalia, were almost indistinguishable except at a very close angle".

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The Immortals, yes they were the bodyguards of Xerxes, an elite soldiers unit, they wear shiny masks in the movie to hide their horrible faces, although in reality they covered their faces in cloth. They were called the immortals because when one of them was killed in the war, he will be replaced immediately by another one.

### **2.3.2. Main Similarities**

The famous American classicist and military historian Victor Davis Hanson said that the movie has a resemblance with what Herodotus said about the ancient Sparta and Thermopylae "as a clash of Civilization", and what Simonides, Aeschylus viewed this as a battle "against Eastern Centralism and collective serfdom" which opposed "the idea of the freedom". For him, there was additional things to the film for entertainment, shock, and to attract the audience.

It is real that the young boys at the age of seven years old should leave their family to educate, train and become a strong Spartan; it is called "Agoge", as it is shown in the film. Young boys were living in groups under the loyalty of one between them, this stage contains military training, hunting ... the real meaning of Agoge is "raising". The sons of the King were not concern with the Agoge.

The Queen Gorgo was mentioned before by Herodotus in his historical collection. When she was eight or nine years old, she advises her father about Aristagoras to go away from him, then there was a second appearance for her in Herodotus' Histories. In this respect, Herodotus showed that the queen had a strong personality since her early ages. From the other side, in the movie the role of the queen Gorgo is important in the Spartan society, she is independent and a strong lady, she can express her point of view freely (outspoken), and the film's depiction of the Spartan women is accurate. The empowerment and strong personality of their women made them unique unlike the other Greek women. Aristotle talked about Spartan women since he was admired by the Spartan's lifestyle, he claimed "that Sparta was ruled by women" (Pomeroy, et al 98). At one point in the movie, the reply of the queen Gorgo when she has insulted by the Persian messenger after her input in the political discussion:

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Persian: What makes this woman think she can speak among men?

Gorgo: Because only Spartan women give birth to real men. (09:43)



Figure 3: Messenger from Persia

Ancient Greece was divided into city – states, and Sparta was the dominant city in the military power. Admittedly, the major interest of the Spartans was training for wars, so they were professional soldiers. Therefore, this Spartans' characteristic is portrayed in a good way in *300*; it is clearer when Leonidas asks Arcadian soldiers about their professions, then he turns to his soldiers repeating the same question:

Leonidas: Spartans, what is your profession?

Spartans:Owu,Owu...(28:23-28-32).



Figure 4 : More soldiers than you

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### **2.4. The Hidden Messages**

The kind of films like *300* always demand a lot of viewings and a deep criticism in order to understand the hidden meanings, because they are too complex and each part or idea requires an attention, the viewer should not be fooled while watching the movie or just captivating by the picture.

Most of them have a hidden target rather than entertainment. These movies are made for people who are more interested with details and knowing the real meanings and targets, they are specific audience in which they want to open discussions about several interpretations about what they watched, and in every use of film, the image is necessary but not sufficient since the more the researcher knows, the better he is able to determine the real facts.

The movie *300* demonstrates the differences between two civilizations, the Western represented by ancient Greece and the Eastern represented by the Persian Empire, and then it shows the principles of western civilization based on democracy, freedom and consultation in the senate/Council. Also *300* portrays the reverence and magnanimity of the Persian to their king, however, the Greeks lived in a collective society, they have the word "demos" means people, "Kratia" means power, so the people is the ruler of his states (Democracy/Demokratia) ( Mark).

Accordingly, the movie shows a battle between a small group of European freedom fighters and a huge army of Iranian slaves. So, the audience relates comparisons between the movie and the accurate conflicts that are happening in the new world. In the same inquiry, Zack Snyder argued that:

Someone asked me, “Is George Bush Leonidas or Xerxes?” I said, “That is an awesome question”. The fact they asked tells me that this movie can mean one thing to one person and something totally different to another. I clearly did not mean either. I was trying to get Frank’s book made into movie<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> This quote was cited in <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/300spartans.php>

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The notion of sacrifice is present in the movie. The Spartans have the spirit of sacrifice for the nation and to be union against the enemies, each soldier in the war protect the other one and they are all equal. However, the Persian fought for their king as slaves (obedient) not for their freedom, as an example from the movie when the queen demands from Leonidas the victory or death, not losing the war:

Gorgo: Spartan!

King Leonidas: Yes my lady!

Gorgo: Come back with your shield, or on it.

King Leonidas: Yes my lady (25:37-26:19).



**Figure 5: With or on your shield**

Consecutively, the movie shows that the Spartans since they were kids, started to train for wars and the “Agoge” stage to become a strong and free man and they were applying their laws which is important and very essential in battle, unlike the Persians in the movie shown just as warriors in wars even though they were numerous (Without strategies for the war).

At last but not least, in the movie there is an emphasis on the importance of honesty and loyalty for the national cause and being prudent of disloyalty. Additionally, the movie presents another idea is showing to the world that the common enemy is responsible for creating the differences between Greek cities, especially Sparta and Athena, but the Persian invasion for their country contributed in allying their forces.

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Eventually, 300 is not only a fictional movie, it is full of deep political meanings and issues.

### **2.5. The Attraction of Cinematography**

Cinema has developed and became one of the most famous artistic mediums in the recent years and it can be considered as the new art of narration, presenting various literal and historical stories through the big screen, while appealing to some and it considered as a failure for others.

#### **2.5.1. The Appeal of film Adaptation**

In the last decades, the audience turned lazy rather than searching in the deep, ancient history, movie goers prefer to dive in the visual experience that provide more facilities. Both history and films tend to transfer a roller-coaster of emotions, however movies bring more entertainment and imagination, as Sterm describes the experience, he asserts that during a film “we are focused on a screen … and we feel, we hear, we see in can all encompassing tangle of emotions and senses which no other art from demands” (Cited in Rahmoun38).

The main aim of cinema is to generate empathy towards the characters and the story brought to life by the screenwriter, thus providing the audience with a safe haven “and a virtual experience from another world via the spectacle of film” (Rahmoun38).

Furthermore, adaptation presents stories in a more vivid manner than reading about history and makes viewers travel to that specific era, because the sound and moving pictures add to its value and attractiveness, as Flavin said “making the unseen visible” (cited in Rahmoun 39); however it did not prevent others from having opponent views.

#### **2.5.2. Controversy**

Multiple debates were raised about the idea of cinematographic adaptations of historical stories; the main problematic was the unfaithfulness towards the primary source, generally caused by propaganda and political biases as the screenwriter does not adhere to the objective point of view for the purpose of achieving specific aims, and therefore distorting the authenticity of the original material.

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In some cases, criticism points the issue of expectation as frequently characters and stories portrayed in movie adaptations do not meet the audiences' expectations, deeming it as inferior to the initial as many critics view the exaggeration in the dramatization of a historical event ought to be destructive.

Considering that history is a basic cultural aspect, a distorted adaptation can raise various cross – cultural, controversies, for example the adaptation of *300* brought disagreement from Iranian population, judging the movie disrespectful to the status of ancient Persia. Despite these claims, the film industry has proven to be an efficient intermediate between antiquity and the new generations.

### **2.6. Conclusion**

Adapting scripts from the Greek myths for the new generation or the new era become somehow done frequently today, through the visual art. Through history productions and adaptation of Thermopylae's battle that have been prevalent, it will stay in the minds of each person read it or watch.

After analysis of both the famous Battle of the Greek mythology called Thermopylae and its visual adaptation, it was noticed that the movie carry a lot of graphic exaggeration but still based on authentic events that portray the roots of the real story, in an attempt to meet the expectations of the viewers.

# **General Conclusion**

## **General Conclusion**

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Greek myths and legends were connected to religion, about gods and heroes of the ancient Greek people. They were means for investigating several situations, about the origins of the world and they show to the new world how the Greeks were in the ancient times. The Greek mythology was passed from one generation into another in different versions; these versions were either with sources or without. Today, people study Greek myths from its ancient literature and history, among them are the works of Homer and Herodotus.

Herodotus wrote in his book about the legendary battle of Thermopylae, which was between the Persian Empire and Greece .This battle has been considered as the symbol of freedom and sacrifice. The Spartans were the leaders of this battle, there were Athens with them too and other warriors. They were the strongest soldiers among the Greeks. Furthermore, they were known by their powerful army and its good strategies. Thus, Sparta has often been the ideal state because of its unique lifestyle. In the light of this, the Greek mythology has influenced almost all the fields of the West, in particular the battle of Thermopylae that has always been the center interest of many other historians whom have glorified it into a famous battle, which attracted recently moviemakers because of its historical importance.

The movie *300* can be considered as a successful adaptation, although there were different modifications but still accurate with the real events of the battle of Thermopylae, so historically credible, though is a fictional movie. In fact, there was an emphasis on entertainment and visual effects. Finally, the movie contains hidden messages especially political ones.

*300* portrays the Persians, whom are the Easterners like aliens from space since they look evil, the director Snyder focused on the physical appearance ugliness and sexuality. However, he also gave good images about the Spartans or Westerners, as the ideal warriors who sacrifice their lives for their freedom and country. This contrast shows to the audience or movie viewers the inferiority of the Easterners and the superiority of the Westerners .It is shown that the Westerners in wars unify between them and make strategies and good planning for each step they go forward. Snyder makes his audience disgusted of the Spartans' enemies only through a movie based on the green screen.

## **General Conclusion**

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Although history is more insightful than its visual adaptations, however, films seem to attract more audience due to their modernized and entertaining way. In addition, movies are more pleasing to watch, and at the same time they are effortless .Even though, movies ought to be accurately portrayed from the original source not much of exaggeration and modification.

Adapted movies from history should not be considered as the primary source or the relevant one for the researcher even if the feature film is accurate with the real story and the credible historical events, but it is still edited by the screenwriter and the director in order to please the modern audience. Moreover, adaptations are made by directors who have already views about history; means there will certainly be a bias. Nevertheless, all these elements make the movie among the best fictional movies if not the best one in the last era.

In a nutshell, even though the Greek mythology has inspired the filmmakers, still cinema and history can be considered as two independent mediums. In fact, each one of them could exist without the other, since cinema is based on creativity and invention, and the other one is based on reality and accuracy. Additionally, historical movies do not replace history itself, nor supplements it but stand adjacent to history like a visual memory.

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## الملخص:

يعتمد هذا العمل البحثي على دراسة المعركة الشهيرة Thermopylae واقتباسها المرئي الفيلم 300 من إخراج زاك سنايدر ، الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة الاختلافات والتشابهات الرئيسية بين المعركة السابقة واقتباسها للشاشة. ثم ألقينا الضوء على الرسائل الخفية للفيلم 300 ومعانيها الحقيقية. الهدف النهائي هو تسلیط الضوء على انجذاب الناس نحو السينما في العصر الحديث الذي يصور الجانبين، المثير للجدل والجاذبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأساطير اليونانية، الأفلام المقتبسة، معركة Thermopylae، فيلم 300، جاذبية.

## Résumé

Ce travail de recherche est basé sur l'étude de la célèbre bataille des Thermopyles et sur son adaptation visuelle du film 300 réalisé par Zack Snyder. Le but de cette étude est de déterminer les principales différences et similitudes entre la bataille précédente et son adaptation à l'écran. Nous avons ensuite mis en lumière les principaux messages cachés du film 300 et ses vraies significations. L'objectif ultime est de mettre en lumière l'attrait des gens pour la cinématographie à l'époque contemporaine, qui présente deux visages : le controversé et le séduisant.

**Mots clés :** Mythologie Grecque, film adaptation, la bataille des Thermopyles, le film 300, attraction.

## Summary

The present research work is based on the study of the famous battle of Thermopylae and its visual adaptation the movie 300 directed by Zack Snyder. The purpose of this study is to find out the main differences and similarities between the previous battle and its adaptation to screen. Then we shed light on the major hidden messages of the movie 300 and its real meanings. The ultimate objective is to highlight the attraction of people towards cinematography in the contemporary era portraying two sides, the controversy and the appealing.

**Key words :** Greek mythology, film adaptation, the battle of Thermopylae, the movie 300, attraction.