

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
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FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
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SECTION OF ENGLISH



**How did the American Cinema Portray the Life of
Historical Figures? A Study of Spielberg's "Abraham Lincoln"
movie**

Case study of 2nd Year LMD Student at Dr. Taher Moulay University

A dissertation submitted to the Department of English for the Requirement
of Degree of Master

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2015/2016

To my family, teachers, and friends

Acknowledgments

First and for most, praise to Allah who granted me patience and will to achieve this research work.

Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. BERREZOUH Hannae for her help and guidance through the whole research process.

Abstract

This dissertation presents general analyses of Spielberg 2012 movie *Lincoln* with a focus on Abraham Lincoln's character played by Daniel Day Lewis. The purpose of this work is to show how can cinema present a historical figure and tell his story, and also show that even the most realistic portrait of a historical figure cannot escape from some realities of cinema and art in general, there are always interpretations of a the director, the necessary artistic exaggerations, limitations of budget, and the manipulations that no film can escape. The motivation to choose this topic came from a personal fascination for the history of United States of America coupled to a strong interest in Cinema, so it is a subject which can give me the opportunity to match these two passions in my project of graduation. In order to analyze the character of Abraham Lincoln proposed by Steven Spielberg in his movie *Lincoln*, the procedure was to separate the film into its 19 scenes and analyze each scene separately, focusing on the important scenes where there is a presentation of a personality trait of the President. Then we will compare the personality traits found in the film with the known personality traits of the President Lincoln. Finally a comparison between the *Lincoln* Spielberg film and three other films will be proposed in order to see how other filmmakers proceeded with the same character. Within the thesis will also be presented a brief history of the American Film Industry Hollywood, and how it became one of the strongest symbols of the American Pop Culture through the world. A short biography of Abraham Lincoln will also be presented, with the main events that marked his life. And naturally the thesis will deal with some technical details of cinema productions and the decisive role that played the great Irish actor Daniel Day Lewis when taking the President's role.

The results of this work show that the Spielberg film is probably the best movie ever made about Lincoln, and one of the best historical movies in the history of cinema itself. Lincoln's portrait is very successful both in physical appearance or the acting, the most important known personality traits of President were shown as well as many historical facts of the period between January and April 1865. But as any artistic work the portrait is not perfect, and there were a few historical facts not presented particularly the role of black in the process of voting for the amendment that has been very limited during the film, and some traits of personality that have not been presented as the friendship that was created between Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward after the assassination attempt which he was subject to.

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General Introduction

When a big movie is produced, millions of dollars are spent, millions of dollars are expected in return, hundreds of technicians are working on it directly or indirectly, the community of art and Medias is involved, and of course millions of people will watch it. So a movie is a lot more than just entertainment. The Motion Picture Association of America found that over two-thirds of the population (68%) – or 227.8 million people – of the U.S. and Canada went to the movies at least once in 2013. The United States of America is a technological world leader, and is naturally well placed when it concerns the filmmaking industry, Hollywood is with no possible doubt the leader of all film industries in the world, and has produced hundreds of Biopics of famous American people generating billions of dollars. What is the influence of Hollywood on the society? What is the impact of an important movie on people? Can movie production escape from what all art forms have known: the impact of money and the risk of manipulation? The Godfather, Psycho, Star Wars, Gladiator, The Silence of the Lambs, Titanic, Saving Private Ryan, are movies who had impact on their generations, not only by being art masterpieces but by the message they transmit, the ideal that they sell, and the general image they draw of a specific subject or an idea. Roger Ebert in his book *Great Movies III* said: *'I believe good movies are a civilizing force. They allow us to empathize with those whose lives are different from our own. I like to say they open windows in our box of space and time'*. (Great Movies III, 15)

From all historical figures of America, Abraham Lincoln is one of the most influential if not the most, as a President and as a leader. Lincoln's achievements are to put in the very big historical decisive events that changed the United States history like nothing else. According to Smithsonian Magazine list of the most significant people in United States history, Lincoln is the most important president of all the presidents that the USA has

known. This dissertation will discuss 2013 Spielberg's film *Lincoln* and try to highlight the aspects that are important in the character of the president played by Daniel Day Lewis. Being the president of the United States the most popular, and most influential in history, it is normal that Abraham Lincoln had an impressive number of literary works which were dedicated to him in addition to the Spielberg film, for comparison it was considered necessary to talk about three recent films that were dedicated to the President: Adrian Moat's *Killing Lincoln* (2013), Timur Bekmambetov's *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012), and Salvador Litvak's *Saving Lincoln* (2013).

Killing Lincoln talks about the killer of Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth who was preparing a conspiracy with his group to kill the President, the Vice President Andrew Johnson, and the Secretary of State William H. Steward. Based on the Bill O'Reilly & Martin Dugard's book, it is a lower production compared to that of Spielberg and produced by National Geographic. Adrian Moat used the star Tom Hanks as the narrator of the film. *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is a film from a completely different note, in fact it is fiction, pure fiction where President Lincoln is fighting vampires, and the vampires of course represent the South confederate and Lincoln the savior hero. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov, the idea of the movie was to mix history with horror fantasy when telling the story of the President. The film is a bit too fictional and the bloody fighting fantasy scenes are too many for a historical tale. *Saving Lincoln* is another Lower budget film made about Abraham Lincoln, which means no big names in the cast. The interesting fact of this movie is in the technical side, indeed Salvador Litvak took the risk of using of a new film technique called "Cine Collage" which literally means that to turn real photographs from the Civil War into set pieces as if the actors were right there during the era.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to Hollywood and Spielberg's Lincoln

1.1 Introduction:

This chapter will provide a brief historical view of Hollywood and the American movie industry in general in order to give an idea of how it all started and what are the real impacts of film productions industry on the American society. It will also be dealing with Abraham Lincoln as a brilliant leader, as president, and a family man. Moreover, it will present *Lincoln* the movie directed by Steven Spielberg and the important role played by the great actor Daniel Lewis performing the president's character.

1.2 Hollywood the Symbol of American Pop Culture:

1.2.1 Historical View on Hollywood:

Hollywood is the name given for the American film industry in general; it refers especially to the southern Californian region Hollywood in the west coast but, it can refer to all movies produced by American production companies inside or outside the United States territory. The US entertainment industry revolving around the following six major companies that are part of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA): Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, Universal City Studios, and Warner Bros. Surprisingly the story of the giant west Coast industry started in the east, in New York and New Jersey, more than one hundred years ago. Indeed, after a succession of inventions like *The Kinetograph*, *The Kinetoscope*, *The Cinematograph*, and then Edison's *Vitascope* in April

1896, the cinema has began to know its form of social and entertainment activity as we know it nowadays in the famous *Nickelodeons*.

Very quickly, businesses flourished around these movie theatres, producers, screenwriters, and filmmakers have multiplied, and production companies have emerged, creating a climate of competition but also of monopoly and clans. In order to escape the stifling atmosphere that has been created in New York, the producers and filmmakers began moving to west coast to search for better opportunities of work, more freedom and also better weather conditions. And it is in Hollywood in the early 1910s and during all the decade that American cinema has known its real structuring and development, and then consolidated its position of worldwide leader when France and Italy (two other countries that have had important cinema production at the time) were suffering from war. Decade after decade, producers were making more money, and the general environment was beginning to professionalize more and more, filmmakers have perfected their techniques in line with technological development that categorically transformed cinema and took it to the next level. Of these technological aspects we can cite the introduction of sound into films in the 1930', the beginning of color use in the 1940', the introduction of Television in the 1950', the advent of VHS video in the 1970', the introduction of CD-ROM's and DVD in the 1990', and of course the internet and the streaming services in the 2000's.

It is worth mentioning that the general environment and the topics of Hollywood productions have evolved according to political, economic and social context of the time, and the impact of those productions was sometimes essential for safeguarding the unity of American society. For example during the Vietnam War, the two world wars or terrorist attacks of September 11, American cinema has produced hundreds of patriotic films and pro US propaganda for serving the cause of the country.

Here is an interesting quote of David J. Schow stressing the point:

The Government set the stage economically by informing everyone that we were in a depression period, with very pointed allusions to the 1930's. The period just prior to our last 'good' war.... Boiled down, our objective was to make killing and military life seem like adventurous fun, so for our inspiration we went back to the Thirties as well....It turned out that audiences in the 1970's were more receptive to the sort of things they scoffed at as juvenilia in the 1930's. Our drugs conditioned them to repeat viewings, simultaneously serving the ends of profit and positive reinforcement. The movie we came up with stroked all the correct psychological triggers. The fact that it grossed more money than any film in history at the time proved how on target our approach was. (*Seeing Red*, n.pag)

In 1898, during the Spanish-American war, American audiences led by the patriotic fibers were searching to see anything related to the conflict, and film producers have responded to that by making films that dealt with the subject. In 1915, D. W. Griffith's racist but great *Birth of a Nation* was a masterpiece which has boosted the *Ku Klux Klan* and gave a new breath to anti black movements in the South. In 1947, during the Cold War against the communists, the U.S. House of Representatives created the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to track communists in the entertainment industry in what was known as *The Hollywood Blacklist*. Kirk Douglas commented on an interview to Interview Magazine: '*When I first came to Hollywood, the blacklist was just starting and they were having hearings in Washington. What most people don't know is the judge of these hearings was later convicted of misappropriation Spartacus helped break the blacklist, because Spartacus was a real character. He was a slave who rose to greatness in the arenas of the Roman Empire.*' (Kirk, Douglas. Interview Magazine. 11 June. 2012.)

In 1934, William Hays, head of the MPPDA later known as MPAA, stated that: *'no medium has contributed more greatly than the film to the maintenance of the national morale during a period featured by revolution, riot and political turmoil in other countries. It has been the mission of the screen, without ignoring the serious problems of the day, to reflect aspirations, optimism, and kindly humor in its entertainment'* (American Photography and the American Dream, 105)

1.2.2 How did Hollywood become a symbol of American pop culture in the world?

From a historical point of view, the World War I was very beneficial for Hollywood and prepared the ground so that American cinema would be world leader in the century following. Not only the war had weakened as mentioned earlier the two major competitors France and Italy, but has positioned America as the number one economic power in the world exceeding United Kingdom, which means more money, better studios, better equipment, better distribution, better investments in the industry in general. With a different context but with the same positive impact, World War II was beneficial to American economy and therefore American cinema. Hollywood is nowadays one of the most important aspects of modern America as a lucrative industry but also as a cultural symbol, it is undoubtedly one of the biggest and most dominant features of the American cultural identity worldwide. On the precedent point a brief historical view of how Hollywood became the giant industry that it is nowadays was presented, but it is an obligation to mention that the art no matter its type and origin cannot be dominant in a world scale without belonging to a country or an organization powerful enough to assume the financial and technical aspects of it on a global scale. If the American cinema is today as dominant as it is in the world, and almost impossible to compete with, it is because of historical and economic reasons. The United States as country dominates the world

military and technologically, and the industry film has total support of the government of Washington and politics, which opened the market doors of the whole world to Hollywood. It is very difficult for any other country to provide this level of funding, marketing, merchandising, and freedom in business in general around a movie industry. Allen J. Scott stated:

From the early years of the twentieth century, right down to the present, the United States has been the world's major commercial producer of motion pictures. According to the US Economic Census, motion picture and video production in the United States as a whole, generated revenues of \$20.15 billion in 1997, with Hollywood alone, being responsible for close to 60% of this total. The long-standing success of Hollywood can be accounted for in terms of the competitive advantages generated by its unrivalled technical and organizational capacities. (Hollywood in the Era of Globalization. Yale Global. 29 November. 2002)

This is probably the American capitalist system, but also the desire to dominate the world culturally that motivates Americans to lead this wonderful adventure that has lasted for over a century, and which continues to go beyond the limits by reinventing itself continuously each year. Hollywood continues to sell the dream to the world and to present America as the ultimate model of success; the famous "American dream". As said John Houston: *"Hollywood had always been a cage...a cage to catch our dreams"*. (Hollywood Drive, 279)

1.2.3 The actual Hollywood:

As it has been said on many occasions before, the film industry in America is primarily a business, the ultimate goal of producers is to earn the much money possible, either by the

direct selling of DVD's, television, merchandising, national and international tours, and of course the attendance in theaters and cinemas. And the least we can say is that it works. There were approximately 300 movies released in Hollywood in 2015, and according to the Motion Picture Association of America, the average seems to be around 600 movies created in the US every year, which means billions of dollars which will be invested in the entertainment industry. If there is one place in the world where film people have work, it is in Hollywood: hundreds of producers and film studios, thousands of filmmakers and actors, casting of all kinds and various levels, gather every year in the most famous Californian region in the world. If there is indeed a Mecca of cinema, it is probably in Hollywood. Let's take a glance at some statistics of the industry taken from *statistica.com*...

From 2001 to 2015, America and Canada sold at least 1200 million tickets for movies each year, with a record on 2002 with more than 1500 million tickets.

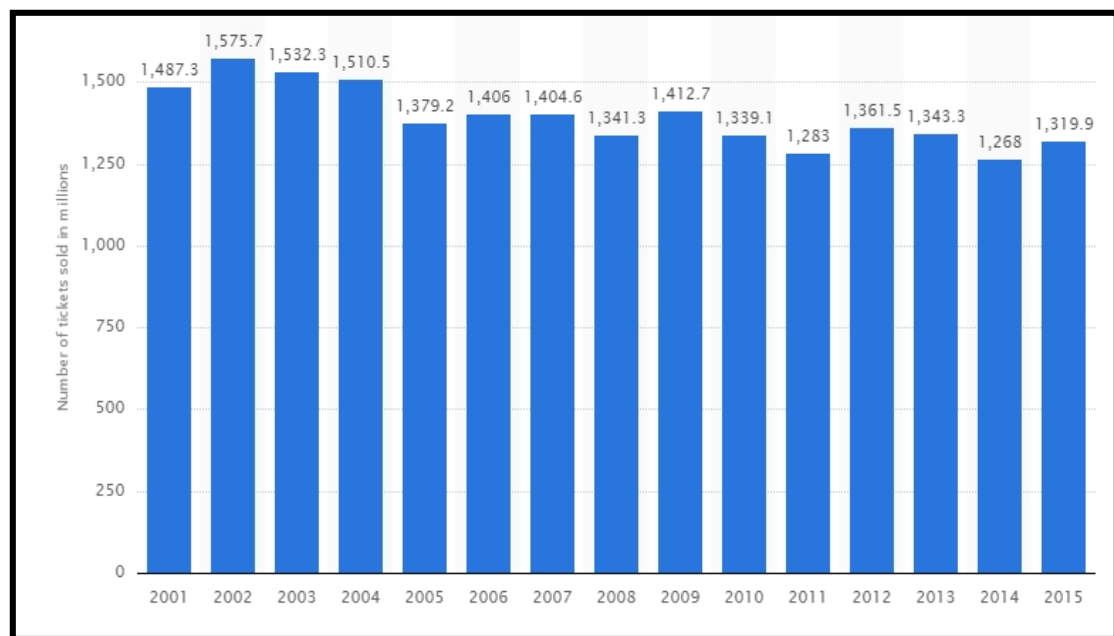


Fig1. Number of tickets sold in the United States and Canada from 2001 to 2015. (in millions)

The year 2015 recorded box office revenue of nearly 40 billions of dollars and the estimation of specialists tends to say that this number will increase by 10 billions of dollars in the four next years.

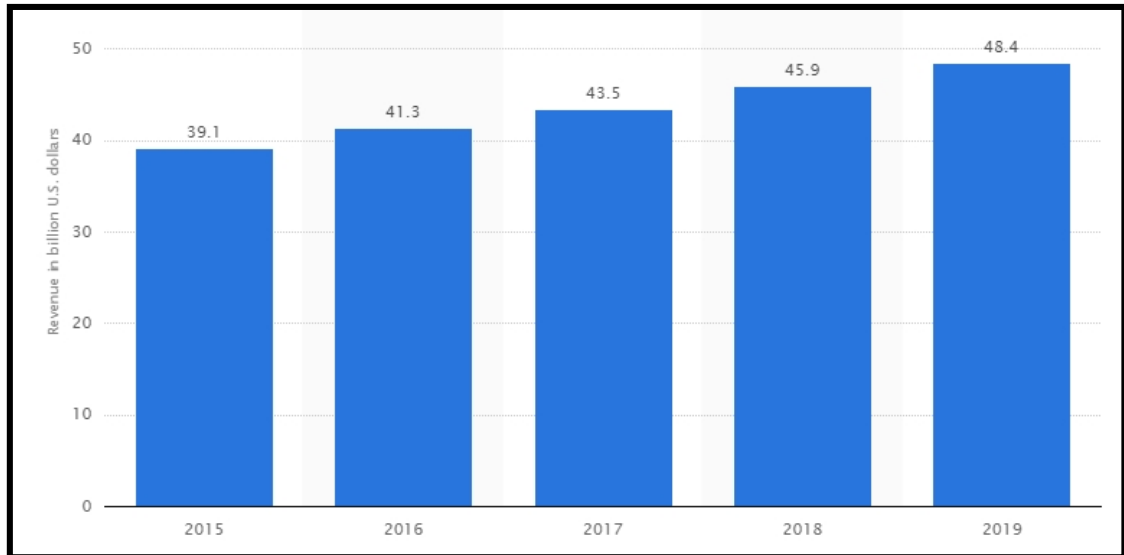


Fig.2 Global box office revenue from 2015 to 2019 (in billion U.S. dollars)

But that can lead people to think that the film industry in America is only a matter of money and that the artistic side is left behind, which is of course false. Masterpieces that have come out of Hollywood and that made unanimity among critics; this is not what is missing. We can cite: Francis Coppola's *The Godfather*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, and Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. The list can be very long. Although it is certain that the money factor weighs on the balance as everywhere in United States, America remains a country with great capitalist character, and sometimes the business side prevails over the rest. It is certain that this stands as one of the major flaws of Hollywood. The quality versus quantity is a debate that will always exist, and no matter the arguments presented, one thing is sure concerning Hollywood: the offer is so big that all kinds of tastes are served; it might be that after all the purpose of

cinema : entertaining people. Critics should not forget that cinema is an entertainment at the first place!

1.3 A Presentation of Abraham Lincoln:

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of United States, born on February 12, 1809 in Kentucky and assassinated on April 15, 1865 by John Wilkes Booth. As president he was the leader of the anti slavery movement, he led the country through the civil war and succeeded in a complicated environment to pass the 13th amendment to end the slavery in America, a historical turning point which continues to mark the country until today. Having lost his mother when he was 9 years old, he was not very close to his father. Growing in Kentucky, the young Abraham was a wise and intelligent child, he preferred reading to hunting or fishing, he believed in God and was a Christian. Later on in Illinois, the young man started his political career by going for the Illinois general assembly of 1832 and lost, and after that decided to become a lawyer and studied law by himself. When officially a lawyer, he served for four consecutive terms on the House of Representatives of Illinois. During the 1830's, Lincoln gained in fame and popularity, and this is how he was elected in 1846 to the national House of Representatives and served for two years. But it is in the 1850's that the real beginning of his political career started, between 1850 and 1855 he publicly displayed against slavery, and then played an important role to create the new Republican Party and became it's vice president in 1856. He was elected President of the United States four years later and was inaugurated in March 1861.

The beginning of his presidency was marked by the strong opposition of the southern states that wanted secession in response to his anti slavery positions, one month later, South Carolina led a movement of secession and separated from the country, South Carolina was followed by 6 other states and they created "the confederacy". Lincoln called

for an army from the North to ‘maintain the union’, and it is like this that the civil war started. During 4 years, Lincoln managed to hold the country together. It is in the first of January 1863 that Lincoln issued the emancipation proclamation; it prepared the way for the 13th amendment. Lincoln died like a hero of the nation; he was shot in the head when attending the play ‘Our American Cousin’ in Ford Theater five days after the surrender of Confederate Army of North Virginia. As a family man, Lincoln had 4 sons with his wife Mary Todd but only one lived over 18 years: Robert. Robert studied law in Harvard but interrupted his studies to serve as a captain in the union army. After his father died, he moved with his mother to Chicago and lived there for two years where he continued to study law and become a lawyer. Lincoln had known two women before marrying Mary Todd on November 1842. Mary Todd grew up in a rich family in Kentucky; she also lost her mother when she was 6. She was well educated and studied in a local academy and then attended boarding school. Even if her family supported the South she was faithful to her husband’s positions and was a fervent supporter of union. She was present when President Lincoln was assassinated; actually she was sitting next to him in the theatre.

1.4 A Presentation of the Film

Directed by Steven Spielberg, Lincoln is a film of almost \$ 65 million; it was officially released in October 08, 2012 in New York Film Festival, and has gained a total of \$182 million in USA (more than \$250 million worldwide) with an opening weekend of \$21 million. With duration of 150 minutes, the film was released in 2012 in USA and in 2013 in the rest of the world. Based in part on Doris Kearns Goodwin’s *Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, the screenplay was written by Tony Kushner. The film saw the participation of more than 180 actors, can be cited Daniel Day Lewis in the role of President Lincoln, Sally Field in the role of the first lady Mary Todd Lincoln, David Strathairn as secretary of state William Seward, Joseph Gordon-Levitt as Robert Lincoln,

James Spader as W.N. Bilbo the American attorney one of the lobbyist that helped William Seward to pass the constitutional amendment to end slavery, Tommy Lee Jones as Thaddeus Stevens the powerful congressman. The entire film was shot in the state of Virginia on 19 different locations, filming took two months between October and December 2011. The movie starts in January 1865, four weeks before the vote of the House of Representatives for the 13th amendment in the end of January. The civil war is about to finish and President Lincoln freshly reelected, tries to put all his effort to pass the constitutional amendment to ban slavery into the House of Representatives before a peace agreement is signed with the South, he knows that if the amendment does not pass before the end of war, it will be impossible to turn it into a law after. Lincoln had to make a balance between the political powers and try to take the amendment to the House of Representatives and pass it before the South's surrender. The mission was to guarantee enough votes from the Democrats representatives in addition to the votes of Republicans to ensure the passage of the amendment, using lobbying, indirect bribery, or the promise of influential positions in the future for some Democrat politicians in exchange to voting yes. In a general climate where Democrats were downright against the end of slavery and some Republicans who wanted just the end of the war thinking that the idea of the 13th amendment may slow the peace process, it was a very complicated mission that the great President had succeeded to make.

The film ends with the assassination of the President on Ford Theatre by John Wilkes Booth who took advantage of the absence of the bodyguard of Lincoln to shoot him and run away. The last scene shows Lincoln lying on his deathbed the next morning after the shooting, surrounded by his family and cabinet members and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton who stated: *'Now he belongs to the ages.'* with an emotional flashback to Lincoln's famous Second Inaugural Address speech. In terms of rewards, the film has

received hundreds of consecrations, 12 nominations for the 2013 Academy Awards, including two wins (Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role for Daniel Day-Lewis, and Best Achievement in Production Design for Rick Carter and Jim Erickson), and 7 nominations in golden globes Including a victory (Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama for Daniel Day Lewis).

1.4.1 Facts about the Movie:

Steven Spielberg spent 12 years working on the final script, being himself a fan of President Lincoln from his childhood, he knew that in deciding to make this film, he would have a huge historical responsibility on his shoulders and that he had no room for error. Daniel Day Lewis took 6 years to say yes to Spielberg, and Spielberg was so convinced that the film cannot be made without the participation of the Irish actor that he had not let go of the case and insisted, it was said that the film would be realized with Day Lewis playing Lincoln or it would not be realized. It may seem hard to believe but, Daniel Day-Lewis was not very convinced by the idea of playing Lincoln, he kindly refused the request of Spielberg couple times and commented in a letter made public after:

Dear Steven. It was a real pleasure just to sit and talk with you. I listened very carefully to what you had to say about this compelling history... But I do know that I can only do this work if I feel almost as if there's no choice; that a subject coincides inexplicably with a very personal need and a very specific moment in time. In this case, as fascinated as I was by 'Abe,' it was the fascination of a grateful spectator who longed to see a story told rather than that of a participant...I wish you the strength for it and I send both my very best wishes and my sincere gratitude to you for having considered me. Daniel. (The Hollywood Reporter. Jordan Zakarin.8 January.2013)

Once he accepted he demanded one entire year to prepare the character and do his personal researches. Spielberg said after that the year was beneficial for everybody in a way that it gave him the time to perfect the script and get all the people he wanted for the cast in order to shoot the film. On an interview in 2012 to Time with Rick Stengel, Steven Spielberg commented on Day Lewis's performance:

When Daniel Day Lewis said yes, there was only one catch he wanted to wait a year, I was ready to shoot the movie in three months after he said yes but he wanted to wait a full year before starting. And it was a masterstroke, because within that year he had a year to do research, he had a year to do find the character in his own private process, he had a year to discover how Lincoln sounded and he found the voice. Within that year we became close friends Daniel and I, so by the time we had to reach by Virginia to start making Lincoln, we had already developed an intimate shorthand with each other, so I didn't had to pontificate as a director. He had Lincoln embedded in his psyche and soul, and his mind. I will come to work in the morning and Lincoln would sit behind his desk and we would begin! (Steven, Spielberg. Steven Spielberg Talks to TIME about 'Lincoln'. 26 October 2012)

The production thought to add a prologue at the beginning of the film in the international version that explains the context of the American Civil War and slavery for non American audiences. The aim of this maneuver was to enable the less initiated in American history to fully enjoy the film. During the three months of filming, Steven Spielberg addressed his actors by their roles names: Daniel Day Lewis "Mr. President" and Sally Field "Mrs. Lincoln".

1.5 The Role of Daniel Day Lewis in the Film

All major productions have a well-stocked cast of stars and well-known people in the business, but all the stars are not necessarily equal, Daniel Day-Lewis proved this with the Spielberg film Lincoln. Day Lewis is more than a great actor; he is a cinematic genius, five-time Oscar nominee and three-time winner, the 59 years old British actor received in total almost 100 consecrations during his career, it gives an idea of the success of the man. Known for his extreme methods to prepare a role and get to live it in the real sense, Daniel Day Lewis will do anything in his learning process of a character: spending two nights in a jail, going to medical clinic and live there as like a real patient during 15 days, getting isolated from his family for a while, etc. Describing his experience playing Abraham Lincoln in an interview for 60 minutes with Lesley Stahl, Daniel Day Lewis said: *'I never, ever felt that depth of love for another human being that I never met. And that's, I think, probably the effect that Lincoln has on most people that take the time to discover him... I wish he had stayed [with me] forever.'* (Daniel, Day Lewis. 60 minutes. 14 November 2012.)

Many historians specialized in the Lincoln era said that the Irish actor succeeded to reproduce the exact voice of Abraham Lincoln after months of practicing, he declared on an interview with Sophie Raworth for *The Andrew Marr Show* on the BBC TV:

Very few people have met him and didn't make some documented commentary about it, because he was such an extraordinary figure, and many people mentioned the quality of his voice, really just to say that it was extraordinary really high pitched, I suppose because of his size and stature, you would expect him to have a rich paratone and he didn't, so that's a clue it's not a very instructive one but at least it's a clue. At a given moment if I am lucky, as I begin to grow towards and understanding

I began to hear a voice I'm listening to it and I begin to hear a voice which I don't try to reproduce, it's the voice of the inner I suppose and then if I live with that for I while and that pleases me, then I set about the task of trying to get it outside of myself and reproduce it. (Daniel, Day Lewis. BBC News - Daniel Day-Lewis on finding Lincoln's voice. 27 January. 2013)

It is clear that the impact of Daniel Day Lewis on the success of the character of the American president and the success of the film in general is decisive, not only he managed to highlight the personality traits, voice, and body language of Lincoln but also helped the rest of the actors to raise their level of acting and live the exact context of the time.

CHAPTER TWO

Analyses of the movie

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide in the beginning the known personality traits of the President Lincoln taken from historic writings and biographies devoted to him, after that, the chapter will propose a technical presentation of the film, and an analysis of the main scenes of the film focusing on the scenes that show a personality trait of the president whether as a statesman or a family man. At the end of this Chapter there will be a description of the President's character as presented by Spielberg and a brief conclusion.

2.2 Known personality traits of the President

JF Kennedy was known as charming and charismatic, risk taker, and witty person. Georges W Bush was known as adventurous, outgoing, and impulsive person. What about President Lincoln? What were his personality traits? The first quality that comes to mind about Abraham Lincoln is certainly the honesty, Abraham Lincoln was honest, as attested by his campaign slogan for the Presidency 'Honest Abe' which became one of his nicknames for the rest of his life. Actually, in his daily life as a young store clerk, then as lawyer and after as a President, Abraham was a very honest person, in his book '*An Honest Calling: The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln*', Mark Steiner notes that:

In his law practice on the Wabash Circuit he was noted for unswerving honesty. People learned to love him ardently, devotedly, and juries listened intently, earnestly, receptively to the sad-faced, earnest man...I remember one case of his decided honest trait of character. It was a case in which he was for the defendant. Satisfied of his client's innocence, it depended mainly on one witness. That witness told on the

stand under oath what Abe knew to be a lie, and no one else knew. When he arose to plead the case, he said: ‘Gentlemen, I depended on this witness to clear my client. He has lied. I ask that no attention be paid to his testimony. Let his words be stricken out, if my case fails. I do not wish to win in this way’. (An Honest Calling: The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln, 160)

The second trait of the President is that he was ambitious but patient, in one of his most famous quotes, Lincoln said: ‘A man watches his pear tree day after day, impatient for the ripening of the fruit. Let him attempt to force the process, and he may spoil both fruit and tree. But let him patiently wait, and the ripe fruit at length falls into his lap.’ (Advice from the Presidents: The Student's Guide to Reaching the Top in Business and Politics, 49)

Lincoln was ambitious because from a small village where his family was from, Abraham went to Springfield in Illinois where he became a lawyer and then ran for Presidency; this is a path of a very ambitious man. Lincoln was patient, because he has lead of the United States during the war in a very turbulent period for the country, he succeeded to keep the union and to reconstruct the country around all visions. Lincoln was a great communicator, a talented storyteller who combines between pertinence and simplicity when he talks to people whatever their social level; his speeches were short and brief but great and historical. He was also a good listener; he listened to people problems, and listened even to his rivals and gave them the possibility to expose their disagreements. He knew that by listening to others he will understand them and would bring them to his cause more smoothly. Lincoln has confronted a very strong pressure during the civil war from variant sides but he remained brave and has confronted them, this is also one of his greatest qualities. During his entire career, Abraham Lincoln was accessible and modest,

the President was easily reachable for all categories of people, and he listened to everybody and made sure to communicate with the same level of attention with all people.

2.3 Technical view on the film

In total the film contains 19 scenes from the opening title till the final scene; it begins and ends with flashbacks, each scene contains from one to five parts. The music of the film was created by the great American composer John Williams who was nominated for Best Original Score award for this composition. Will be presented 14 scenes that are considered the main scenes with a technical analysis where it is needed.

Scene 1: Opening Titles

After a brief flashback to the Battle of Jenkins in April 13, 1864, The President is seated and is conversing with two black soldiers; they are joined by two other white soldiers. The conversation is convivial and the tone is friendly, Lincoln is conversing with them as their father and they are showing him a big consideration and respect. Technically, there is a zoom out combined to a high angle shot from 01:06 to 01:42 when the black soldier is talking to the President, and Lincoln appears from 01:28. After that, there is a sequence of high angle shot at 04:22 before that the black soldier walks away. The aim of this technique is to show the President in a high stature dominating the conversation.



Fig2.1 The President is seated and is conversing with two black soldiers

Scene 2: Lincoln's dream

Part 1:

The President is lying on his bed and is sharing with his wife his nightmare; they are discussing different subjects (the Amendment) and she reproaches him that he keeps the sensitive political subjects for himself. The President is impassive. This shows the familiar side of the man from the starting of the movie, a husband who shares his nightmares with his wife, and a wife who is reproaching her husband to not telling her all. Can be noticed a first trait of character, the President listens around him but continues to think by himself. When the President goes out, Elizabeth Keckley, the black maid asks him if he had told Mary Todd about the nightmare, and this shows that Keckley has known about the nightmare, and that the President was sharing even with her some personal things.



Fig2.2 Conversation between Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd

Part 2:

Lincoln finds his son in his White House office sleeping; he lies down near to him before taking him off to bed. This part shows the caring father side of the President.

These two parts show the familial side of President Lincoln, firstly as a husband and secondly as a father. It is important to start the film by emphasizing the idea of Lincoln the family man before dealing with his political side which is going to be dominant in the film, there is an intention to start by showing his familial side to transmit the idea that before being a great leader, Lincoln was a normal husband and a father.

Part 3:

Lincoln had a speech in a flagpole dedication, the speech is very brief and simple, the President is smiling and everybody is smiling too. Lincoln returns on a carriage ride and discusses with the Secretary of State Seward, as with Mary Todd, Seward reproaches the President to not listen to him and to do what he want, but as with his wife, the President is impassive, although he smiles when he affirms : 'I like our chances now.' This part shows

for the first time the beloved and sympathetic side of the President as a Political leader of the nation; in fact all the people seem to admire him and to appreciate him when he gave his short speech. The part of the discussion with Seward as with the early discussion with his wife confirms the idea that the president listens to everyone but generally decides by himself.

Scene 4: *War Powers*

Part 1:

There is a cabinet meeting about the attack of Fort Fisher Wilmington, NC and it turns quickly into a discussion about the proposed Thirteenth amendment, John Usher, the Secretary of Interior shows a strong disagree but the President controls the situation like a real master, brilliantly with calm and serenity. With a speech of five minutes, starting with a joke and finishing with another joke, Lincoln is the master of his cabinet and everybody listens with attention without interrupting him. Technically, a wide shot is taken of all the table, and a zoom in is done gradually as the President speaks, until there is only him and Seward, and then only him at the end. This cinematic technique shows that the President is a good speaker and that he catches the attention to himself when speaking.



Fig2.3 There is a cabinet meeting about the attack of Fort Fisher Wilmington

Part 2:

Lincoln and Seward try to intimidate Congressman James Ashley to get Thaddeus Stevens involved into the vote for the amendment, the President had an imposing and intimidating body language, and he not only holds him by the shoulder and shakes him, but he speaks in a harsh and firm tone. This scene shows another side of Lincoln, a side in which he can intimidate and force things if there is an obligation. Be it mentally or physically, the president can go hard.



Fig2.4 Lincoln and Seward try to intimidate Congressman James Ashley

Part 4:

The Secretary of State Seward meets lobbyists to whom he demands to work for the government in order to convince some democrat Representatives to vote yes and help pass the amendment. This is the first clear indication of lobbying in the film, Spielberg does not hesitate to go directly towards the goal and shows that there were bribes and lobbying to

pass the amendment, although it shows that the President do not directly mingled with it at first, and asked his relatives to do so in his place.



Fig2.5 The Secretary of State Seward meets lobbyists

Scene 6: *Getting out the Vote*

Part 1:

Preston Blair and Lincoln have a discussion where the leader of the Republican Party insists on making peace when mentioning the people who have died and continue to die in the war, Lincoln reassures him and told him not to worry. Robert Lincoln returns after months of absence and enters the room and interrupts the discussion, The President after a brief salutation demands him to let him finish his important conversation with Blair. This scene shows that the President devotes his entire day to work and had during the Presidency no or very little time for his family. Indeed, after the death of Lincoln, Robert said that during the second four years of office he has hardly seen his father. Technically, there is a pan shot of the conversation when Robert Lincoln enters, followed by a long shot where the three men appear, then a zoom in to get back to the conversation of Blair and Lincoln. This is a technique used to show that the interest of the President was from

the beginning directed to his conversation with Blair, and after brief talk to his son he returns to the conversation.



Fig2.6 Preston Blair and Lincoln having a discussion

Part 2:

A succession of scenes shows the three lobbyists (Latham, Schell, and Bilbo) carrying out their task in different locations. Technically, slight violin music with a fast tempo accompanies the scenes; there is a desire to show the lobbyists as nice, friendly and amusing people. Indeed, even if lobbying is something that is supposed to be in the shadows away from the media and official bodies, in the case of the 13th Amendment, the lobbying was positive and allowed the Lincoln's cabinet to change dramatically the history of the united states, so Spielberg has used this background music technique to give the lobbying a pleasant and amusing tag.

Scene 7: *Seeds of Time*

Part 1:

Seward and Lincoln are discussing the progress of the lobbying and after a brief shift, the scene returns on an argument between the two men, indeed Seward is complaining and reproaches to Lincoln of not consulting him when he sent Blair into the peace discussions. Technically, a high angle shot shows Lincoln seated and silent, while Seward stands and raises his voice when he talks, but the another time the President is impassible, and has even a small smile. From this scene can be deduced another trait of personality of Lincoln, which is the complete belief in himself and his ideas, and that he can sometimes make low blows toward his close associates but with the intention to do well. Another trait is that Lincoln is very calm and confident and continues to believe in himself.

Part 3:

Robert Lincoln is asking for his father's permission to go to army, Lincoln listens, but does not give a big attention to this, Robert reproaches to him of always avoiding the talks and to delay things. After that, Lincoln joins his wife Mary Todd in Willy's room, he finds his wife crying in memory of their son, and he shares the pain and the memory with her and then kisses her hand. This scene shows another time the President as husband who cares for his wife, he is a protective and loving husband.

Scene 09: *Fallen at Wilmington*

Part 01:

In a climate of tension and anxiety in the telegraph office, the officials are discussing the assault on Fort Fisher; Lincoln is again the man of the situation who leads others when there is a complicated situation. He interrupts the discussion and starts as usual by telling a joke in order to ease tensions and this works, everybody is laughing. With a light spirit and a perfect mastery of the art of communication, Lincoln was a charismatic and good speaking President who knew how to capture the attention of the crowd. This scene shows

the leadership spirit of Lincoln that appears in all difficult situations, his tendency to protect his people when the situation is tense.

Part 4:

Bilbo the lobbyist demands to Clay Hawkins to respect his engagement and reassures him on the issue of the vote. Technically, another time the same background music is played when the lobbyists appear.

Scene 10: *No Sixteen-year-olds Left*

Part 03:

When the President Lincoln goes to the room of Nicolay and Hay in the White House, he treats them kindly as if they were his sons; he even discusses with them the pardon case. When one of them volunteered to accompany the President, Lincoln replied: 'In times like these, I'm best alone'. This scene shows Lincoln as a brave man who assumes his responsibilities and prefers to be the only one to make the decisive decisions.

Part 04:

After that the President asks the young man to write the telegram, he starts a discussion with the second about mathematics, the President says that even if he had not gone to school he knows the Euclid's law, which proves that the President is an intelligent autodidact who is interested in all the sciences. This scene shows the intelligent Lincoln, the man who without going to school had knowledge in the majority of sciences.

Scene 12: *Robert's Ambition*

Part 01:

In another argument with his father, Robert Lincoln insists on going to war, Lincoln gets angry and hits his son with a slap. This scene shows again Lincoln as a normal father who has to deal with tensions with his son, and which can go out of his mind and react violently. This scene is very interesting in the sense that it shows Lincoln as a normal father who can lose his cool and react in inappropriate manner even if his intention is to protect his beloved son. For the first time of the film the President seems to lose control and don't know what to do.



Fig2.7 Robert Lincoln insists on going to war

Part 02:

Lincoln finally decides to let his son go to the war and tries to explain this decision to his wife Mary Todd, this ends in an argument. For Mary there is no way that she accepts to let her son go to the war, she is not accepting it. In the continuity of the previous part, Spielberg is showing the normal side of the family man that Lincoln was, like any couple, the Lincolns are facing the fear of losing their son but have to deal with his decision to go to the war.

Scene 13: *Bipartisan Support*

Part 01:

Lincoln decides to talk to the lobbyists himself and asks them how to do with Thaddeus; this shows that when he sees that his intervention is necessary, he does not hesitate to intervene himself. The thing which can be deduced from this scene is a sense of responsibility and leadership, Lincoln does not fear to confront hard situations and take responsibility.

Part 03:

Thaddeus Stevens helps Lincoln to get the last votes using intimidation and the promise of influential positions. This scene shows the other side of the 13th amendment, in the shadows there was bribery in the process of getting the amendment.

Scene 14: *Fairness and Freedom*

Part 01:

Lincoln brings Yeaman to his office and tries to convince him to switch of his vote in favor of the amendment. Lincoln uses this time argumentation and persuasion techniques in order to convince the Congressman. This scene shows a President with a strong character, calmer, ready to argument to defend his ideas, and even to manipulate in order to arrive to his goal.

Part 02:

Same thing with the Congressman Hutton whom lost his brother who fought for the Union, Lincoln tries to convince him to vote for the amendment using this time a sympathetic and solidary tone.

Part 03:

This is one of the most important scenes of the film, Congressman Ashley objects to the secret peace talk, and Lincoln launches an incredible speech, everyone listens and is coaxed by his rage and his fury. This scene shows that Lincoln was someone very charismatic, and when he showed his nervousness, nothing resisted before him. The incredible performance of Daniel Day Lewis is to be mentioned in this stage, he dazzled everyone with his acting and presence.

Scene 15: *Morning of the Vote*

Part 02:

Lincoln denies that any Confederate envoys are in the city and succeeds brilliantly to avoid doing any false representations to the Congress, by this maneuver he succeeded to give time for Representatives who support him to get the vote. This scene shows the common sense, reason, confidence, and courage of the President in such sensitive moment. This demonstrates all the greatness of the leader that Lincoln was.

Scene 17: *Celebration*

Part 02:

Lincoln continues to lead his mission out now that the amendment is voted, he demands to confederate envoys to surrender or nothing will be done. This scene shows all the strategic and negotiator side of the man.

Scene 18: *Petersburg*

Part 01:

When having a discussion with General Grant in what is now union-occupied Petersburg, Lincoln does not want the pursuit of the Confederates leaders, he does not

search the revenge. This scene shows the tolerant side of Lincoln, who did not had grudge against anyone, he thinks primarily to the union of the American people and the after war. The scene shows also the large vision and the wisdom of the man.



Fig2.8 Lincoln is far in thought and appears tired and weak.

Scene 19: *Now he belongs to the Ages*

Part 03 and 04:

Spielberg chose to not show the assassination in a scene perhaps to respect the memory of Lincoln and to avoid showing the President in a degrading and bloody way. This is a manner to leave the spectator finish the film with a good and pleasant image of the great Abraham Lincoln.



Fig2.9 Lincoln walking through the hallway of the White House

2.3 Personality traits that the film presented

In total, Spielberg presents a really realistic portrait of Abraham Lincoln; and shows several facets of his personality either as a family man or a political leader. As a family man the movie presents Abraham Lincoln as a husband and a father. As a husband Lincoln discusses a lot with his wife Mary Todd but only in familial matters, the President lets the political subjects for himself. As a couple, the Lincolns suffer from problems like any normal couple but they support each other's and Abraham tries to be present even if he is take by work all day long and does not find a lot of time for Mary and the children. As a father, Lincoln tries to handle his eldest son Robert but this is not always easy, he ends by letting him go to the war even if he is not convinced by this. The president has a complicated relation with Robert, being absent the majority of the time but tries to be the protector father when there is a tension. In general Lincoln is an aware father who loves his family but like any big political leader do not has enough time to fully enjoy his family.

As a politic leader, Spielberg portrays Lincoln as a sympathetic, beloved and popular leader who assumes responsibility and confronts hard situations by himself. Very confident and brave, the President shows courage in sensitive moments. Lincoln is charismatic and when he shows his nervousness nothing resists before him. In strategic matters, Abraham Lincoln has a common sense and demonstrates a talent of negotiator and manipulator who can convince people only by talking. As a person Lincoln is drawn by the film as a good listener and a talented speaker, he can be hard sometimes and even be selfish in certain situations but only with good intentions. He believes in himself completely and considers himself the protector of the others and shows to be the man of the situation when there is a need to. Lincoln is an intelligent autodidact who has wisdom, he is reasonable and tolerant.

2.4 Conclusion

In this Chapter was presented a technical analyses of the main scenes of the film, and was sorted of the main personality traits of the President, in the third chapter will be presented a comparison between *Lincoln* and three other movies made about Abraham Lincoln.

CHAPTER THREE

Analyses of the movie

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present an introduction then a brief description of the three recent movies about Abraham Lincoln mentioned in the General Introduction *Killing Lincoln*, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, and *Saving Lincoln*. After that, a comparison between the characters of Lincoln in the three movies above and the one in Spielberg's *Lincoln* will be presented. The chapter will be concluded by a conclusion.

3.2 A brief presentation of the three movies

Killing Lincoln is a 2013 TV movie (docudrama) which means a smaller casts, and a limited range of scene settings and camera setups. The TV movie talks about the killer of President Lincoln John Wilkes Booth who leads a conspiracy with other people to kill the President Lincoln, the Vice President Andrew Johnson, and the Secretary of State William Steward. Based on the Bill O'Reilly & Martin Dugard's book *Killing Lincoln*, the movie is produced by National Geographic and the director Adrian Moat uses the Hollywood star Tom Hanks as the narrator of the film. The interesting fact of this movie (as the title does not indicate it) is that the film tells the story of the killer of Lincoln and not Lincoln himself, which means: the counter hero. The storytelling presents Wilkes Booth as a potential hero who goes downfall, indeed he is an educated theatre actor who reads Shakespeare who can easily make it to the top, but both his love for the South and his hate for Lincoln will transform him to one of the most famous killers of the history of United States, and the first killer of an American President.

Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter is a 2012 film from a completely different note, in fact it is fiction, pure fiction where President Lincoln fights vampires, and the vampires of course represent the South confederates and Lincoln the savior hero. Directed by Timur Bekmambetov, and inspired from Seth Grahame-Smith's book, the idea of the movie was to mix history with horror fiction when telling the story of the President Abraham Lincoln. The movie was a commercial success as evidenced by the official trailer launched on YouTube in February 2012 that got over 7 million views. Logical for a big budget film of 69 millions, which brings together the historical side of President Lincoln with a vampire story, people will be intrigued by this, and will go to the cinema to see the result; it was a risky but intelligent initiative.

Saving Lincoln is another Low budget film made about Abraham Lincoln in 2013, which means no big names in the cast and limited human resources for the production. The interesting fact of this movie is in the technical side, indeed Salvador Litvak the director took the risk of using of a new film technique called "Cine Collage" which literally means that to turn real photographs from the Civil War into set pieces as if the actors were right there during the era. The result was interesting to see but not impressive in term of quality because of the new technique which is not yet mastered and that demands a big budget and a huge work in editing in order to give a professional result compared to the standards of Hollywood. Anyway, from the beginning the goal of the film was not to challenge big budgets movies, but to offer something different to the viewer and to use this new technique of filming, and to see the result with a historical narrative as Lincoln's one.

3.3 Comparison between the different Lincoln's characters presented by the three different movies

In addition to Spielberg's *Lincoln*, three other films were produced between 2012 and 2013 in Hollywood about the 16th American President; Adrian Moat's *Killing Lincoln* (2013), Timur Bekmambetov's *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012), and Salvador Litvak's *Saving Lincoln* (2013). These three films are not similar, with different budgets, different scripts, and each one tells Lincoln with a different approach, it must be said from the beginning; next to *Lincoln* there is only *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* which is also a big budget film; *Killing Lincoln* and *Saving Lincoln* are films with a limited budget but are interesting in other registers, and *Killing Lincoln* is a TV film produced by National Geographic and is presented as a docudrama.

In *Killing Lincoln*, the President's character is played by Billy Campbell, and the performance of the American actor is acceptable but it is not to be compared to Daniel Day Lewis's performance that literally shadows any other acting performance of Honest Abe. The makeup design of Lincoln's face is not very convincing especially the nose, and technically the shots and effects are weak compared to Spielberg's movie.



Fig3.1 Billy Campbell as Abraham Lincoln on *Killing Lincoln*

Abraham Lincoln is portrayed as a Sympathetic leader, who is close to the population and accessible, there is very little scenes about Lincoln the family man even if there is Marry Todd and Robert and Tad who appear in the film. The specific thing about Lincoln's character in this movie is that it shows the President in close relationship with the Secretary of State Seward after he survived an attempt of assassination; a scene shows the President Lincoln visiting his friend and even sharing his bed with him and joking. This is a historical part that Spielberg did not show. There is also the assassination scene, *Killing Lincoln* proposes an assassination scene even if technically the scene is not very convincing, and there is a portrait of the dying President which is disgusting and not well played. The concept of telling the story from the other side is very interesting, it can give a different expertise and even though we cannot really understand the killer, we develop certain sympathy for him and his career: he was a theatre actor. Therefore, the initiative of telling story from the killer's point of view is original even if technically it is a small budget TV-film.

In *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* the character of Abraham Lincoln is played by Benjamin Walker, the film is a bit too fictional and the bloody fighting fantasy scenes are too many for a non-fan of the genre. The film starts in Indiana in 1818 when Abraham is a child aged 9 which works with his parents at a plantation and his mother is killed by a Vampire, so he grows up wanting the revenge and his aim now is to kill all vampires. In this film also, the makeup design of Lincoln's face is not very convincing, it seems to be amateurish at a first sight but the aim of the director was to tell a vampire story and in this kind of horror fiction movies, the historical accuracy is not the objective.



Fig 3.2 Benjamin Walker as Abraham Lincoln on *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*

Technically, the sets and camera shots are of a very high cinematic level, and there is a large utilization of special effects which is a standard in the films of fantasies. The movie presents Abraham Lincoln as a young man who likes challenges and who is ready to take risks in order to make it to the top, the storytelling shows Lincoln grow from a child to a young man who studies law by himself in order to become a lawyer, and the first presentation of Abraham Lincoln as a political leader in the civil war context starts after one hour of the movie. The movie does not concentrate on the civil war period like the other films, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* ends when the President goes with his wife to the theater so there is no assassination scene. The Lincoln of this movie is a very courageous and talented man, who challenges everybody in order to kill Vampires and save the nation, there is a strong notion of the President as a family-man, as a father and as a husband.

The film *Saving Lincoln* is also a low budget film which tells the story of the 16th President of the United States, the character of Abraham Lincoln is played by Tom

Amandes and the makeup design of Lincoln's face is not very successful but nothing more normal for a movie with that kind of budget.



Fig 3.3 Tom Amandes as Abraham Lincoln on *Saving Lincoln*

The film starts few years before Lincoln became President and it ends in Ford Theatre when the President is seating near to his wife Mary Todd but it ends without showing the assassination. The character of Lincoln is presented a as a man who has many friends, who laugh a lot, and is loved by roughly everyone. Technically Salvador Litvak used *Cine Collage* technique which literally means that to turn real photographs from the Civil War into set pieces but the result is not very convincing, the film generally looks amateurish even if the initiative is original. The storytelling emphasizes the political leadership of Lincoln in the White house and also his family role, his wife Mary Todd is regularly present.

For comparison, here are two photos of Daniel Day-Lewis in the process of playing the role of President Lincoln during *Lincoln*, the first photo is in the beginning of the film and the second towards the end when the President speaks with General Grant in Petersburg, it can be noticed that the Lincoln facial expressions changed and that makeup has been modified to illustrate the fact that after the thirteenth amendment Lincoln was so tired that

he seemed to have taken 10 years in a few weeks. Lois Burwell the award-winner makeup artist of the film has succeeded in achieving an almost perfect makeup that fully contributed to the success of the performance of Daniel Day-Lewis.



Fig3.4 Daniel Day Lewis as Abraham Lincoln on Spielberg's Lincoln – beginning of the film



Fig3.5 Daniel Day Lewis as Abraham Lincoln on Spielberg's Lincoln – end of the film

3.4 Comparison with Spielberg's Lincoln

The character of Abraham Lincoln in the Spielberg movie is by far the most accurate and successful of all, it presents a really realistic portrait of the President as a husband and a father with his family, and as a political leader as the President, so Spielberg's *Lincoln* is for sure the best ever made movie of President Abraham Lincoln be it through the budget, the technical side, the script, or the acting, this film is a pure masterpiece that will be remembered and will be subject to discussions for a considerable time. But this does not make of that film a perfect one, some important historical fact are not being treated, some aspects of the personality of the President are absent, and of course the film treats only the last 4 months of the life of American hero that are certainly the most decisive but the entire life of Abraham Lincoln is interesting and other movies can be made about him in the future. *Killing Lincoln* shows the assassination scene on Ford Theatre and treats the close relationship of the President with his Secretary of State Seward. *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* takes the story of President Lincoln and shows it in a whole new universe of vampires and horror, this initiative offers a new perspective of telling a historical tale and the amateurs of horror movie will appreciate, in addition, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* tells the story of Lincoln from his childhood. The film *Saving Lincoln* even if the least successful of all, brings a new technique of filming that can provide ideas for future projects. To sum up, it can be said that even if the three films are not of the same level of production, each film brings something new either in the scenario, in the technical side, or historical evidence, and each film has its place and adds a positive impact to cinema and to literary works about Lincoln.

3.5 Can the Cinema be Trusted when it tells Stories of Historical Figures?

After analyzing Spielberg's *Lincoln* and three other films, it can be noticed that to tell the same story the possibilities are endless, not just in the dialogues, but in all aspects of film production whether the techniques of shooting, the makeup, the actor's talent...Etc. The obvious conclusion is that cinema can not only tell the story but gives it shapes and colors defined by the director and the production, and those shapes and colors cannot always be 100 % faithful to the real historical events. There are also other factors which deflect the films from the historical accuracy like the limits of the budget, the political and the social context, the personal beliefs of the filmmakers, and other numerous factors that can weigh in the balance, and whatever these factors the conclusion is the same: the absolute veracity does not exist. This is not necessarily a problem but just the nature of art, art always wants to draw attention to him and wants to transmit messages in a specific way and films are a form of art which cannot escape from this reality, so it to the consumer to keep a critical mind when he watches a movie, the consumer must know that this is a film that was produced by people who have their opinions in a well defined context and for a well defined commercial or cultural purposes, and things will always be like that. The concept of manipulation remains difficult to unseal because almost impossible to prove, there will always be conspiracy theories that will say that this project has been done to advance certain ideas through cinema, or to support certain ideas on other, but again this is the law of the market and it is to the viewer to protect himself.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has proposed a brief presentation of the three movies *Killing Lincoln*, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, and *Saving Lincoln* with a comparison between the different Lincoln's characters presented by the three movies and then a comparison with Spielberg's Lincoln character. The chapter finishes with a reflection about the aim of the cinema as an art and then a conclusion.

General Conclusion

At the end of this thesis it can be said that cinema like any other art form offers content that has its limits and cannot serve as absolute historical truth, the role of the film is to present a story with an artistic way and interpretation is open to the public. The process of producing a film being conditioned by several factors, the films are always subjective works that treat subjects from a well defined perspective drawn by the script but also the artistic will of the director, the actors' performance and the technical level of production, and this creates a specific context from which the film deals with the historical events. The aim of this dissertation was to discuss 2013 Spielberg's film *Lincoln* and try to highlight the aspects that are important in the character of the president played by Daniel Day Lewis, and the analysis of this movie and three other movies about Lincoln showed that the portrait of President Lincoln drafted by Spielberg on this movie is by far the best ever made. The performance of Daniel Day-Lewis is to be put in the top in history of cinema, the film will be a reference that will be studied and taught in schools and universities, and will be the subject of discussions around several historical American subjects as slavery, the thirteenth amendment, President Lincoln and the civil war. But the analysis showed also that there are some historical facts that Spielberg did not show and that the portrait of Abraham Lincoln is not perfect and lacks of some personality traits of the President.

This study may be included in the researches on American cinema or the researches on the American historical figures, it concerns only one movie because of the limitations of time and the lack of resources, other thesis can pursue the same path but analyze several biopics of American Political leaders, and the analyses can be more technically targeted and more detailed.

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