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3<sup>rd</sup> Year History Paper

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**Popular Imagination vs. Historical Reality:**  
What does HBO's *Rome* reveal about the practice of history?

By Mirela Kadrić

Historical films have been subject to controversy and criticism within the discipline of history in recent decades, particularly as film began to influence popular imagination on historical events. The release of Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000) instigated an overflow of literature and public interest in antiquity and the historical 'epic' that had remained dormant for thirty-six years – the last successful historical epic about ancient Rome was Anthony Mann's *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964).<sup>1</sup> Historians noted that the sudden return of the epic began to shape conceptions of history, whilst debate regarding the usefulness and validity of film in

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