

RE-SCREENING THE PAST: MULTI-TIERED REFRAMING IN DUBBING HISTORY FILMS

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the ways in which translation dynamically reshapes the past, offering new insights into the reframing practices that emerge through the dubbing of history films. It conceptualizes renarration of historical reality as a multi-tiered hermeneutic movement from the intralingual rewriting of the past, to the intersemiotic cinematic screening of the historical narrative, and ultimately to re-screening historical reality in cross-cultural contexts via interlingual dubbing. Drawing on critical historiography and narrative constructivism, the study analyzes four Persian-dubbed Hollywood history films and demonstrates that dubbing, as the third reframing tier, recurrently attenuates or omits explicit sexuality, romantic betrayal, religious specificity, and politically sensitive motives, while adjusting character relations and moral evaluations to align with dominant cultural norms in the target context. The article thus suggests that dubbing functions not only as a linguistic transfer but as a culturally embedded mediation of historical narrative, where the past is reimagined, and re-historicized.

KEYWORDS: Dubbing, History Film, Renarration, Reframing, Critical Historiography, Narrative Constructivism

1. Introduction

“History is written by the victors.” (Unknown)

Having become so popular, this storied quote implies that history is less neutral than a story. Even more, the very history of the quote itself is indicative. It is frequently attributed to figures such as Walter Benjamin or Winston Churchill, yet its authorship remains imprecise. So, history is indeed not an absolute repository of facts but a narrative believed, repeated, and reshaped over time.

Seen in this light, if history is not a transparent window onto the past, then it could be understood as a translation of it (White, 1990; Munslow, 2006, 2012; Jenkins, 2003; Burke, 2005; Vidal Claramonte, 2018, 2025), a translation that implies every act of historical representation is shaped by the cultural, ideological and epistemological forces. Much like any act of translation that selects, reframes and narrativizes fragments of events to construct coherent stories (Baker, 2018, 2007, 2014), history reframes the past to make it fit the concerns, values and imaginaries of the present. To clarify the conceptual distinction between the past and history, Munslow (2012, p. 7) argues that “the ontological category of the past can be defined as what once was but is no more, whereas history exists in the category of a narrative that we construct [...] about the past”. From this postmodern constructivist perspective, history is never the past itself but a mediated emplotment informed by the historian’s narrative choices and interpretive sensibilities (White, 1987). Vidal Claramonte (2025, p. 1), following Hayden White’s critical historiography of the 1960s, similarly argues that the historical text is “one narrative of facts among many other

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possible narratives". Therefore, historical writing does not precede interpretation but is constituted by it. Meaning is not extracted from the past but assembled through narrative strategies that render selected traces intelligible, coherent, and culturally resonant in the present.

The constructive and interpretive nature of history, then, becomes especially pronounced when it is mediated through cinema. Rosenstone (2013, p. 86) observes that cinema "inject[s] image, sound, and color to our histories, connecting a sense of the past with the present, and providing us with a richer, more textured sense of human experience". History films are considered as distinct forms of historical emplotment, having "unique powers of representation" (Rosenstone, 1988, p. 1185). Their multimodal composition provides a greater latitude for representing and reinterpreting the past on screen. "History on the screen" is not merely a visual depiction of the past but, just as "history on the page", dynamic constructions that blend fact with narrative, and visual and auditory elements with historical events (Rosenstone, 2023, pp. 1–2). This conception foregrounds the filmmaker as a historian whose choices in emplotment and representation endow the past with meaning (White, 1990; Toplin, 1988).

This construction of the past becomes even more complex when history films travel across linguistic and cultural boundaries through translation, particularly dubbing. Dubbing introduces an additional layer of transformation that "depends not only on linguistic symmetries between languages but also on fundamental decisions based on power, dominance and ideology" of the cultural context in which the past unfolds (Díaz Cintas, 2012, p. 279). As Cronin (2009, p. 13) observes "for the film to make social sense it must be taken out of its original language context and translated into or recontextualized in the language of the film spectators". Furthermore, the multimodal nature of dubbing amplifies its influence on the sensory and emotional transmission of historical content. Visual elements such as costumes and settings are combined with audio cues like voice modulation and background scores to create a cohesive historical experience (Krebs, 2014). However, these interventions may also introduce biases or distortions, thereby constructing the audience's perception of the past.

Despite substantial scholarship on the narrative construction of history (White, 1987; Munslow, 2012, 2019) and extensive work on cinematic representations of the past (Rosenstone, 1995; Toplin, 2002; Hughes-Warrington, 2007), the intersection of history, cinema, and translation remains significantly underexplored. Similarly, audiovisual translation (AVT) research has examined ideological manipulation and cultural adaptation (Díaz Cintas, 2012; Zanotti, 2016), yet focused analyses of how dubbing reframes historical narratives for new audiences remain scarce.

Addressing this gap, the present study first reviews the layered construction of historical meaning across historiographical narration, cinematic representation, and cross-cultural dubbing, proposing that the translation of history films constitutes a multi-tiered process of narrative manipulation. It then conducts a multimodal and narratological analysis of four Persian-dubbed Hollywood history films to investigate how processes of

selection, emplotment, and narrative accrual culminate in the cross-cultural construction of the past for contemporary audiences. This study therefore investigates how Persian dubbing through the deployment of reframing strategies such as temporal and spatial framing, repositioning of participants, selective appropriation, and labelling, may contribute to the reconfiguration of narrative representation in dubbed history films. The aim of the study is to examine how these interventions operate within Baker's (2018, 2014) framework of narrative constructivism and to explore the extent to which dubbing contributes to the reframing of historical narratives for Iranian audiences. To this end, the study employs critical historiography and constructive narrative approach for examining how narratives shape understandings of historical events. This approach enables a systematic account of how historical meaning is negotiated and transformed in interlingual translation. In doing so, the study advances a deeper understanding of translation's mediatory role across cultures and positions dubbing as an active historiographical practice within the broader hermeneutic movement from the past to the present, where historical knowledge is ideologically rearticulated for new audiences.

2. Rewriting the past

The relationship between history and translation has gained remarkable scholarly prominence in the last two decades, resulting in a series of field-defining special issues—*Meta* (2004, 2005), *Translation Studies* (2012), *Methis* (2012), *MonTI* (2013), *The Translator* (2014), *Przekładaniec* (2019), and *Translation & Interpreting* (2019), which collectively signal the emergence of a distinct field of 'translation history'. As Rundle (2022, xviii) observes, "historical perspectives have always played an important part in translation studies, but it was only around the beginning of the twenty-first century that translation history began to emerge as a specific field." This evolution mirrors critical historiography's epistemological shift toward understanding history as a form of translation (White, 1990; Munslow, 2006, 2012; Burke, 2005; Jenkins, 2003; Vidal Claramonte, 2025). Rather than a monolithic record, history operates as a multiplicity of texts that "intralingually" rewrite reality (Vidal Claramonte, 2018, p. 2). Consequently, historical meaning emerges through the continuous negotiation, selection, and reinterpretation of prior accounts (Jenkins, 2003). Through this lens, 'historying', defined by Munslow (2010) as the transformation of the remains of the past into narrative, becomes an act of translation. Hermans (2022, p. 125) argues that translation itself is "a form of reported speech", an act of retelling what others once said; similarly, history retells what happened through layers of interpretive mediation. Therefore, as Baker (2014, p. 159) argues translation does not merely report past events, it is understood as "a form of (re)narration that *constructs* rather than *represents* the events and characters it re-narrates" according to the cultural, ideological, and epistemological frameworks of the present.

This recognition dismantles positivist and empiricist assumptions of neutrality. For Bandia (2006), postmodern developments foreground a deconstructionist approach that emphasizes interpretation, textuality, and the impossibility of unmediated access to the

past. Consequently, history becomes an act of intervention, not only reflecting dominant discourses but contributing to them. Hermans insists that translations “feed into” discourses and “are designed to act on the world around them” (2022, p. 125), a claim equally applicable to historical writing.

The implications for history writing are profound. As Burke (2005, p. 3) observes, “if the past is a foreign country [...], then historians may be regarded as translators between past and present”. This implies that if translation renarrates meaning across languages and cultures, historical writing renarrates meaning across temporal divides. Both practices are selective and inherently ideological. As Saramago (2010, p. 180) notes, history is “always selective, and discriminatory too, selecting from life only what society deems to be historical and scorning the rest”. Rosenstone (2013, p. 71) similarly argues that historians select certain aspects of the past as meaningful for that mode of thought we call ‘history’.

Munslow concludes that historical narratives are not discovered but invented, each a re-inscription shaped by “troping and/or emplotment” (2010, p. 8). This does not imply relativism; rather, as Munslow (2012) clarifies, acknowledging that history is narrative construction does not negate justified belief about the past. Instead, it situates history within “a literary, cultural practice” (Munslow, 2006, p. 18) that continuously reshapes the past.

Thus, to understand history as translation is to recognize the historian as translator, an agent whose textual interventions, narrative decisions, and ideological positions mediate the past into culturally resonant meaning. This view not only connects historiography and translation studies but also grounds the interpretive frameworks necessary for analyzing mediated histories in contemporary media.

3. Screening the past

The study of history through film has emerged as a major field of inquiry, particularly through the recognition that moving images constitute a distinct mode of historical narration. In one of the most influential claims in the field, Rosenstone asserts that “the visual media are a legitimate way of doing history—of representing, interpreting, thinking about, and making meaning from the traces of the past”, and that the history film screens the past “with its own rules of representation” (1995, p. 3). These rules differ from those governing written historiography because film expands the concept of ‘text’ into a fully multimodal assemblage.

Pinto (2024) articulates this shift as a move from monosemiotic to multisemiotic text. While written history relies on linguistic structure, history films integrate a wide array of meaning-making resources. These include gesture, sound, image, color, and layout, all of which, as Adami (2017) argues, are historically and socially developed semiotic resources that communicate ideology and power. The multimodal nature of history films thus significantly broadens the representational affordances of the past. Costumes, sets, props, and landscapes acquire a uniquely cinematic ‘thingness’, echoing Ankersmit’s (1994) claim

that material details contribute to historical meaning beyond what textual history typically foregrounds.

History films screen the past through multimodal emplotment. Filmmakers select historical events and transform them through camera work, *mise-en-scène*, performance, and sound into compelling narratives that shape collective memory. Rosenstone (2013, p. 72) observes that history films reconfigure the past in terms of current beliefs, conflicts, and questions, reinforcing Saramago's (2010) insistence on the selectivity inherent in all historical representation. Thus, this multimodal translation of the past is not neutral. The renarration of historical events into film involves transposing meaning from archival traces into visual dramatization, thus reframing historical knowledge (Toplin, 2002). This creative dimension allows film not only to depict but also to construct historical meaning, offering audiences interpretive frameworks that may compete with or reinforce written histories.

Through this mediation, history films profoundly shape popular understandings of the past. Their sensory immediacy renders abstract historical processes tangible, embedding historical narratives into cultural memory. As Rosenstone (2023, p. 17) suggests, history films do not merely illustrate history; they "rethink history on the screen", negotiate it, and make it emotionally accessible. They thus establish themselves as potent historical agents, functioning not as transparent windows to the past but as multimodal constructions of it.

By understanding history film as a multimodal historical text, scholars can situate audiovisual (AV) representation within the broader landscape of historical translation, bridging the conceptual terrain between historiography, semiotics, and AV media. This sets the stage for examining how translation practices, particularly dubbing, further reshape cinematic histories across languages and cultures.

4. Re-screening the past

The intersection of history, film, and translation reveals a complex triadic relationship wherein AVT functions as both mediator and constructor of historical meaning. Translation within cinema, especially dubbing, does not merely transfer linguistic content; it actively constructs the multimodal narrative for the new cultural and ideological context (Díaz Cintas, 2012). Baker conceptualizes this phenomenon as "reframing" and defines it as "an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality" (2018, p. 106). Although Baker mainly deals with linguistic resources, the same state of affairs is true in the case of nonlinguistic resources in AVT, particularly dubbing (Ghomi and Farahzad, 2020).

Díaz Cintas (2012) underscores the capacity of AVT to operate as a powerful platform for manipulation, where the audio and visual semiotic resources converge to reinforce certain interpretive trajectories and shape viewers' perceptions. Within this multimodal environment, dubbing emerges as especially susceptible to reframing practices. As Zanotti (2016, p. 355) notes, dubbing often becomes "the most invisible and subtle form of censorship", precisely because its interventions remain concealed beneath the seamless

illusion of naturalized speech. Danan (1991, p. 161) similarly identifies dubbing as “an ideological tool” strategically employed by nation-states to regulate external cultural influences. In this sense, the dubbing of foreign films serves not only to enhance cultural acceptability but also to fulfil broader ideological objectives.

When applied to history films, such ideological manipulations carry amplified consequences. While historical narratives already involve selective interpretation of the past (Rosenstone, 2013); dubbing introduces an additional layer of reinterpretation. Changes introduced through dubbing reverberate across the multimodal composition of the film. Such modifications affect not only linguistic content but also plot coherence, historical agency, and ideological direction. Dubbing may soften national conflicts, reconfigure power dynamics, or omit politically sensitive references, rewriting history in accordance with cultural norms.

Given the multimodal, politically charged nature of history films, dubbing amplifies the translator’s agency. In this sense, dubbing history films reveals translation as a historical act with its own narrative consequences. Through synchronization constraints, and ideological pressure, dubbing reshapes the cinematic archive of history, participating in the ongoing process of historical rewriting. This dynamic foregrounds the need for a constructivist narrative framework capable of accounting for the layered processes through which the past is translated across media, languages, and cultures.

5. Methodology

5.1. Theoretical framework: constructive historiography

Bringing the above underlying theories together, this study develops a constructive historiographical approach towards dubbing that synthesizes the multiple layers through which the past is transformed into history, mediated into film, and translated across languages. This approach, drawing heavily on critical historiography and narrative constructivism, reconceptualizes history as a set of interlinked practices of intralingual, intersemiotic, and interlingual translation. It provides a comprehensive theoretical lens for analyzing how historical narratives evolve through processes of selection, narrative accrual, and emplotment.

At its core, constructive historiography asserts that history is not the past but a narrative constructed about the past. This narrative shaping is the first translational process: intralingual translation of the past into history. As Vidal Claramonte (2018) notes, history rewrites and translates reality within the same language, through profoundly interpretive means. The historian operates like a translator who renders the silent remains of the past into culturally intelligible discourse, guided by ideology, positionality, and contemporary concerns. Munslow’s (2010) concept of ‘historying’ captures this transformation.

The second translational process involves intersemiotic translation, where historical accounts are adapted into multimodal form. History films exemplify this transformation and the shift from ‘historiography’ to ‘historiophoty’, as White (1988) calls it, which entails

translating historical meaning into visual, auditory, and affective modes. Through costumes, *mise-en-scène*, soundtracks, and camera movement, films refigure the past, generating meaning inaccessible to written histories but also producing new layers of narrative distortion (Rosenstone, 2013). Film, situated in contemporary sociopolitical contexts, reanimates past events through presenting aesthetic strategies.

The third translational process is interlingual translation, which occurs when history films cross linguistic and cultural borders. Dubbing, in particular, introduces a new narrative layer that renarrates the cinematized past. As Hermans (2022, p. 125) characterizes translation as “intervention”, dubbing actively reshapes historical meaning in culturally significant ways.

Thus, the constructive historiography in dubbing reveals historical meaning as the product of three major cumulative translations. Each stage encompasses several minor inter-related reframings that amplify the multi-tiered nature of reframing in history films. To ensure analytical manageability, the study focuses exclusively on the third tier of multi-layered reframing and its associated subcategories.

5.2. Research design and procedure

The corpus of the study comprises four major Hollywood history films including *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), and *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), together with their Persian-dubbed counterparts produced by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). These four films form a coherent corpus in several respects. All are big-budget Hollywood epics that dramatize well-known historical or pseudo-historical events, and all have been repeatedly broadcast in Persian-dubbed versions by IRIB, making them highly visible sites for the mediated construction of the past in Iran. The films also share thematic and narrative features (martial conflict, imperial power, heroic masculinity, romantic or sexual transgression, and contested religious or political authority) that are likely to intersect with sensitive moral and ideological norms in the target context. This combination of shared genre, visibility, and thematic comparability makes them an appropriate, focused sample for exploring how dubbing reframes historical narratives.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, all sequences containing (a) explicit or implied sexuality and romantic relationships, (b) religious or ritual practices, and (c) politically sensitive motivations or representations of power were identified and time-coded in the source versions. Second, the corresponding dubbed sequences were transcribed in Persian and aligned with the English source dialogue. This corpus of aligned scenes provided the basis for detailed comparison at the level of verbal and nonverbal manipulations, such as omissions/additions, and changes in character interaction.

Third, the aligned data were coded inductively and then interpreted through Baker’s (2018) constructive narrative framework, which outlines four principal types of reframing, including temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation, labelling, and repositioning of participants. Since Baker notes that these categories are not exhaustive

and calls for further empirical research to refine and expand the typology, each instance of change was first categorized descriptively (e.g., ‘deletion of kissing scene’, ‘neutralization of religious reference’) and then analytically mapped onto one or more reframing strategies. Temporal and spatial framing refers to “selecting a particular text and embedding it in a temporal and spatial context that accentuates the narrative it depicts” (Baker, 2018, p. 112), thereby situating the translated narrative within new temporal-spatial coordinates that foreground specific meanings. Selective appropriation encompasses “patterns of omission and addition designed to suppress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text” (Baker, 2018, p. 114). Framing by labelling involves “using a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or any other key element in a narrative” (Baker, 2018, p. 122), including through euphemistic or evaluative terminology. Finally, repositioning of participants concerns “the way in which participants in any interaction are positioned, or position themselves, in relation to each other and to those outside the immediate event” (Baker, 2018, p. 132), with shifts at this level altering both the local and broader narrative structures in which characters or groups are embedded.

6. Data analysis

This section examines the interlingual reframing of four Persian-dubbed history films through the lens of Baker’s (2018) four main interrelated reframing strategies, including temporal and spatial framing, selective appropriation, labelling, and repositioning of participants. Following the multilayered conception of reframing as a constructive narrative activity, the analysis suggests how dubbing participates in a broader hermeneutic movement that successively reframes historical narratives across languages, modes, and cultures. By structuring the analysis around reframing types rather than film-by-film description, the study reveals the patterned, cross-film regularities through which Persian dubbing reshapes the past for contemporary Iranian audiences.

6.1. Temporal and spatial framing

Temporal and spatial framing involves embedding a narrative within a recontextualizing configuration of time, space, and cultural proximity (Baker, 2018). Across all four films, the Persian dubbing frequently relocates the stories into a sanitized moral temporality and a culturally de-Christianized spatial frame, while simultaneously drawing them closer to a cultural horizon acceptable within Iranian sociopolitical norms.

A consistent strategy across *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995) and *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018) is the neutralization of medieval Christian ritual space. Scenes depicting Christian wedding rites, clerical blessings, or sacramental acts, such as Bruce’s bedroom ritual in *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018) and Wallace’s clandestine Catholic marriage in *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), are removed or drastically shortened. These deletions reposition the narrative into a less denominational, more culturally neutral spiritual space, shifting historical Scotland’s Catholic religiosity out of focus.

In *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), religious and mythological terms are either substituted with neutral terms as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 or omitted as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 1. Example of spatial framing in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Of all the <u>warlords</u> loved by the gods, I hate him the most.	در میان جنگ سالاران محبوب از او بیش از همه نفرت دارم.	Among the favored <u>warriors</u> , I hate him the most.

As Table 1 illustrates, references to Greek gods are changed to secular lines and the term ‘warlord’ is substituted with ‘warrior’.

Table 2. Example of spatial framing in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
May the <u>gods</u> be with you.	خداوند پشت و پناهت باشه.	May <u>God</u> protect you.

In this example, Greek ‘gods’ are replaced with Islamic monotheistic ‘God’.

Table 3. Example of spatial framing in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
<u>Apollo</u> watches over us.	این قلعه بسیار مستحکمه.	This castle is very strong.

In this example, the mythological term ‘Apollo’ is omitted entirely in the dubbed version.

As Table 4 illustrates, in *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), Maximus’ prayer to his ancestors is reframed into an Islamic-leaning monotheistic familiar cultural register. ‘Ancestors’, ‘blessed mother’ and ‘gods’ are re-labelled as monotheistic prayers.

Table 4. Example of spatial framing in *Gladiator*

English Original	Persian Dubbed	Backtranslation
<u>Ancestors</u> , I ask for your guidance. <u>Blessed mother</u> , come to me with the <u>gods</u> ’ desire for my future. <u>Blessed father</u> , watch over my wife and son with a ready sword.	پروردگارا هدایت من کن به دست توئه راهنمای آینده ی من باش. از تو می خواهم محافظ همسر و فرزندم باشی.	<u>Lord</u> , guide me. My destiny is in Your hands. Be the guide of my future. I ask You to protect my wife and my child.

In *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), as Table 5 illustrates, the Christian ritual of baptism is omitted in the dubbed version.

Table 5. Example of spatial framing in *Outlaw King*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
I know this young man. I <u>baptized</u> him.	من این جوان رو می شناسم. خانوادش رو هم می شناسم.	I know this young man. I know his family as well.

These strategies of omission and substitution not only avoid cultural dissonance but also ideologically realign the films' historical worlds with Iranian ethical, religious, and political spaces.

Temporal reframing occurs through the heavy use of archaic, formal Persian diction in all four history films, which elevates the translated dialogue into a stylized classical register, thereby signaling historical distance and epic gravitas. This stylization moves the films further away from the immediacy of colloquial, character-specific registers and instead places them in a generalized, idealized historical past aligned with Persian literary heritage rather than Greco-Roman or Scottish antiquity.

6.2. Selective appropriation

Selective appropriation, including omissions, additions, reductions, and expansions (Baker, 2018) is the most pervasive reframing strategy across all four dubbed history films. The Persian versions demonstrate systematic patterns of attenuating sexuality, minimizing graphic violence, suppressing alcohol consumption, and removing morally or politically sensitive elements.

In *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), Achilles' opening scene in bed with two women is excised; all scenes of lovemaking, nudity, kissing, or sensuality involving Paris and Helen are removed, along with scenes that portray Helen's adultery explicitly. Similarly, *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000) removes intimate exchanges between Commodus and his sister, erasing one of the film's central psychological tensions. In *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), the rape of Murron, the biting of the perpetrator's face, and the marital intimacy between Wallace and Murron are removed or heavily cropped. *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018) similarly deletes the sexual intimacy between Bruce and Elizabeth.

In *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), as Table 6 illustrates, the rumor about Longshanks ambiguous relationship with the princess and conceiving the marriage is deleted entirely in the dubbed version.

Table 6. Example of selective appropriation in *Braveheart*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
It was widely whispered for the princess to conceive; Longshanks would have to do the honor himself.	شایعه بود که پادراز پرنسس را به عقد پسر خود درآورده تا بتواند با کمک پادشاه فرانسه به ستم گریهایش بیافزاید.	It was rumored that Longshanks had married the princess to his own son so that he could intensify his tyranny with the help of the French monarch.

All four films undergo systematic minimization of gore. In *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), torture scenes, throat-slitting, and dismemberment are reduced or omitted entirely. In *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), Wallace's quartered body is not shown; battle scenes are cropped to avoid bloodshed. In *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), graphic battlefield sequences and

crucifixion imagery are reduced. In *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), violent close-ups during combat are attenuated, and certain kills are removed.

Scenes depicting wine rituals, drinking, dancing, and communal feasting, key components of historical sociability, are removed across all four films. For example, the Spartan banquet in *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), the reunion drinking scene in *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), and the Scottish victory gatherings in *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995) are omitted entirely or backgrounded by changing the shot type from long or medium shot into close-up which places the wine glass in the background.

In *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), as Table 7 illustrates, the term ‘beer’ is replaced with ‘celebration’ in the dubbed version.

Table 7. Example of selective appropriation in *Outlaw King*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Music, <u>beer</u> , peace!	موسیقی، صلح، جشن!	Music, peace, <u>celebration</u> !

Morally or gender-specific sensitive elements are removed. As Table 8 illustrates, in *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), lines such as *May the gods keep the women in our beds* are deleted entirely, avoiding morally discomfoting patriarchal labelling present in the source.

Table 8. Example of selective appropriation in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
May the gods keep the wolves in the hills and the women in our beds.	امیدوارم کشورمان از شر دشمنان محفوظ بماند.	I hope our country remains safe from its enemies.

Similarly, in examples illustrated in Tables 9 and 10, gender-specific sensitive elements such as *wives are for breeding, peace is for the women and the weak* are either completely omitted or attenuated in the dubbed version.

Table 9. Example of selective appropriation in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Wives are for breeding. You understand, for making little princes.	---	---

Table 10. Example of selective appropriation in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Peace is for the women and the weak.	تو ضعف نشان دادی اشتباه کردی.	You showed weakness; you made a mistake.

In a similar example in *Braveheart*, as illustrated in Table 11, the sexuality is attenuated that is consistent with the previous reframing.

Table 10. Example of selective appropriation in *Braveheart*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
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For any common girl inhabiting their land is married, our nobles should have sexual rights on the night of her wedding. If we can't get them out, we'll breed.	هر مالکی که صاحب جسم و مال رعیت خود است، حق دارد آنها را بکشد، شکنجه کند، ببخشد یا به بردگی بکشاند. هر نجیب زاده ای که به اینجا بیاید مالک رعایا خواهد بود. آری ما چنین نجیبی را برای اسکاتلند می خواهیم.	Any landowner who possesses the body and property of their serf has the right to kill them, torture them, pardon them, or enslave them. Any nobleman who comes here will become the master of the serfs. Yes, these are the kinds of nobles we want for Scotland
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Selective appropriation therefore reshapes the narrative's moral universe, removing narratively integral elements in favor of cultural acceptability and ideological alignment.

6.3. Framing by labelling

Labelling refers to the choice of lexical markers that classify people, actions, and institutions in ways that advance particular narrative positions (Baker, 2018). The Persian dubs frequently employ labelling to soften, redirect, or moralize the historical representations.

Terms related to sexuality are frequently euphemized. As Table 12 illustrates, the infamous 'primaes noctis' in *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), that is, the right of sexual access on a woman's wedding night, is reframed into 'full ownership'.

Table 11. Example of labelling in *Braveheart*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Grant them <u>primaes noctis</u> , first night.	تملک کامل رعایا را به آنها اعطا کنید.	Grant them <u>full ownership</u> of the peasants.

This shifts a gendered sexual violence narrative into a narrative about feudal oppression, thereby recasting English tyranny as political rather than sexual domination.

In another example in *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), as illustrated in Table 13, 'Holy Jesus' is replaced with 'God' in the dubbed version.

Table 12. Example of labelling in *Braveheart*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
<u>Holy Jesus</u> !	اوه خدای بزرگ!	Oh <u>my God</u> !

In the dubbed version of *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), as Table 14 illustrates, Wallace is labelled not as a 'martyr' (as in the source) but as a 'hero', shifting his meaning from religious martyrdom to secular nationalist valor.

Table 13. Example of labelling in *Outlaw King*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Some consider him a <u>martyr</u> .	بعضی ها اونو یک قهرمان می دونن.	Some consider him a <u>hero</u> .

The dubbed version of *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), as it is illustrated in Table 15, erases Christian-Islamic geopolitical references and recasts the space as generic.

Table 14. Example of labelling in *Outlaw King*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Great warrior who saved my life in the <u>Holy Land</u> .	جنگجوی بزرگی که جان منو در سرزمین با اهمیت نجات داد.	A great warrior who saved my life in a <u>land of great importance</u> .

Such labelling choices rewrite the historical world into a lexicon that aligns with Iranian sociocultural norms, thereby moralizing and culturally reframing the narrative.

6.4. Repositioning of participants

Repositioning concerns shifts in relational roles, agency, or narrative alignment (Baker, 2018). Across the corpus, this form of reframing is the most structurally consequential, producing major alterations in plot logic and character motivation.

Gender and sexual relationships are repositioned when inappropriate in the target ideology and culture. As illustrated in Tables 16 and 17, in *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), Helen is explicitly reframed as Menelaus's daughter instead of his wife. This relational shift removes the adultery storyline and transforms Helen's departure with Paris into an act of filial defiance rather than romantic betrayal. As a result, the causal chain leading to the Trojan War is softened and partially reframed. This is one of the most extreme examples of reframing identified in the corpus.

Table 15. Example of repositioning of participants in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Princes of Troy, on our last night together, <u>Queen Helen</u> and I salute you.	شاهزادگان تروا، در آخرین شبی که با هم هستیم، به همراه دخترم هیلن به شما خوش آمد می گویم.	Princes of Troy, on this last night that we are together, I welcome you along with <u>my daughter, Helen</u> .

Table 17. Example of repositioning of participants in *Troy*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
I always thought <u>my brother's wife</u> was a foolish woman.	همیشه فکر می کردم <u>دختر برادرم</u> دختر ابلهی است.	I always thought my <u>niece</u> was a foolish girl.

In *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), the attraction between Wallace and Princess Isabella is erased, preventing any implication of extramarital intimacy. Correspondingly, as Table 18 illustrates, the final revelation that Isabella is pregnant with Wallace's child is replaced by the line eliminating the child's paternity and preserving the princess's moral integrity.

Table 16. Example of repositioning of participants in *Braveheart*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Your blood dies with. A child who is not of your line grows in my belly.	نسلت با تو منقرض میشه چون من هرگز بچه دار نخواهم شد که نسلت بمونه.	Your lineage will die out with you, because I will never have children for your bloodline to continue.

In *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), as Tables 19 and 20 illustrate, the incestuous undertone between Commodus and his sister, Lucilla, is fully removed, changing the psychological profile of Commodus and significantly reducing the film's depiction of imperial depravity.

Table 17. Example of repositioning of participants in *Gladiator*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
Kiss?	خواهر؟	Sister?

Table 18. Example of repositioning of participants in *Gladiator*

English original	Persian dubbed	Back translation
- Stay with me tonight? - You know I won't. - Then, kiss me. - Sleep, brother.	- کنارم می مونی؟ - نگرانیت بیمورده. - تا فردا.	- Will you stay by my side? - Your worry is unnecessary. - Until tomorrow.

In all four films, accents and dialects, which are powerful markers of class, ethnicity, and political identity, are neutralized. This shifts characters (e.g., Scottish peasants, Roman slaves, Trojan princes) from socially diverse participants into linguistically homogenized actors, flattening the sociopolitical landscape.

In *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), William Wallace's brief exchanges in multiple languages, such as French and Italian, serve an important characterization function, portraying him as unexpectedly educated, linguistically skilled, and socially versatile. In the Persian dubbed version, however, these multilingual moments are rendered into standard Persian, eliminating the linguistic shifts that mark Wallace as an intellectually agile figure. This neutralization not only alters his individual characterization but also repositions him within the narrative, recasting him as a more conventional, monolingual national hero. By removing the multilingual cues that distinguish Wallace from those around him, the dubbing process reshapes his relational position vis-à-vis other characters and reduces the socio-cultural complexity originally encoded in his portrayal.

Scottish and Northern English accents in *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995) and *Outlaw King* (Mackenzie, 2018), and the multilingual code-switching in *Troy* (Petersen, 2004) and *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), are rendered into uniform Standard Persian. This erases social stratification and ethnic identity markers encoded in the original linguistic texture. In *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), there are several scenes in which Princess Isabella code-switches between French and English that are neutralized in dubbed Persian.

In *Troy* (Petersen, 2004) and *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), protagonists are reframed as morally purified figures. Achilles' promiscuity is erased; Maximus's prayer is monotheized; and Paris, Helen, and Bruce's morally ambiguous behaviors are softened or removed. This results in ideologically sanitized protagonists more compatible with dominant cultural norms in the target context.

Across all films, the Persian dubs enact a systematic, multi-tiered reframing that transforms the AV narratives into culturally aligned histories. The reframings work

cumulatively. Temporal-spatial framing situates the films within culturally acceptable moral-temporal horizons, selective appropriation removes ideologically sensitive or culturally discordant material, labelling recontextualizes identity and agency through moralized lexical choices, and repositioning of participants reshapes character relations and narrative causality. Together, these strategies illustrate how dubbing participates in the ongoing reconstruction of the past and how history films become sites of mediated historiography.

7. Discussion

The analysis of four Hollywood history films and their Persian dubbed versions by IRIB shows that the reframing strategies described by Baker (2018) are not isolated interventions but operate cumulatively across different layers. Taken together, they produce a multi-tiered transformation of the past, where each layer compounds the interpretive shifts introduced by the previous one. These findings suggest that reframing operates not simply as a linguistic transfer, but rather as a broader set of narrative reconfigurations that may influence how aspects of historical causality, moral evaluation, and character agency can be constructed and represented within culturally situated frameworks.

Across all cases, four interrelated reframing strategies work in concert. Selective appropriation produces new moral universes that reposition the films' historical conflicts in line with Iranian cultural and broadcasting norms. Labelling functions as a powerful and subtle vehicle for ideological reframing. The Persian dubbed versions frequently replace sexually explicit, religiously sensitive, or politically problematic terms with neutral, abstract, or euphemistic alternatives. Repositioning of participants is the most narratively consequential form of reframing, profoundly altering character identities and interpersonal dynamics.

What these interventions collectively reveal is that the dubbed versions participate in the same narrative logic that governs historical writing itself. History, as discussed at the beginning, is not the past but a constructed narrative about the past. Just as historians 'translate' remnants of past events into intelligible accounts shaped by present ideologies, dubbing translates and reshapes the cinematic past into forms compatible with contemporary cultural norms. The dubbed versions demonstrate this dynamic vividly: they do not simply transfer pre-existing historical meaning but actively rebuild it through choices of omission, substitution, and moral reframing. The multimodal nature of film amplifies this reconstructive process. Rosenstone (1995, 2013, 2023) highlights that history films work through image, sound, gesture, material details, and emotional immersion; therefore, modifying even one semiotic layer can reshape how viewers perceive the past. The Persian corpus intervenes precisely at these multimodal levels: muting violent sound cues, erasing erotic gestures, such as kissing and lovemaking, cutting ritual scenes, and revoicing prayers into monotheistic invocations. On their own, such cuts may not necessarily entail a renarration of historical meaning. However, in several cases they co-occur with changes in

dialogue or character repositioning that alter how relationships, agency, or moral transgression are framed, thereby contributing to a more substantive reframing of the historical narrative. These interventions confirm the idea that film reconfigures the past rather than simply captures it (Rosenstone, 1988), and that changing the AV fabric of a film fundamentally alters its historical meanings.

The ideological dimension of dubbing intensifies this effect. Scholars such as Díaz Cintas (2012) and Zanotti (2016) point out that AVT often operates as a platform for manipulation, subtly enforcing ideological or moral boundaries through ostensibly technical choices. Hermans (2022, p. 125) similarly emphasizes that translation is never neutral but an act of intervention designed to “act on the world around [it]”. These claims are clearly reflected in the Persian versions: sexuality is frequently erased; Christian rituals are neutralized; politically sensitive motivations are softened; and female autonomy is repeatedly diminished. Such patterns demonstrate that dubbing performs a regulatory function, embedding foreign narratives into domestic moral and ideological frameworks.

The cumulative reframings also reflect the broader understanding of translation as a multi-layered, constructive process. Baker’s (2018, 2014) notion of reframing shows that translations shape reality through selective appropriation, labelling, temporal-spatial framing, and repositioning of participants. All four strategies are pervasive in the corpus. But beyond this, the dubbed films exemplify a deeper hermeneutic movement: history is first reframed by the historian (intralingual translation), then by the filmmaker (intersemiotic translation), and finally by the translator (interlingual translation). Each stage reconstructs the past anew, confirming Ankersmit’s (1994) and Saramago’s (2010) insistence that all historical representation is selective, partial, and deeply cultural.

8. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that historical meaning does not simply travel intact across media and languages; rather, it undergoes a multi-tiered hermeneutic transformation shaped by the narrative practices of historiography, cinema, and dubbing. Each stage of mediation adds a new narrative layer that aligns the past with the ideological, moral, and aesthetic expectations of its receiving environment. Following constructive historiography, the analysis shows that historical representation in dubbed films emerges through a cumulative process of transformation rather than direct transmission.

The study has revealed a multi-layered construction of the past. Dubbed history films orchestrate a coherent pattern of reframing that transforms the historical narratives at every hermeneutic stage: 1. Intralingual stage: written history already dramatizes, fictionalizes, or romanticizes the historical record. 2. Intersemiotic stage: Cinematic techniques intensify certain narratives while minimizing others. 3. Interlingual stage: Dubbing produces culturally situated renarrations that reshape characters, events, motivations, and worldviews. Together, these layers demonstrate that history, when mediated through film and translation, undergoes continuous reconstruction,

accumulating interpretive shifts that ultimately produce a culturally domesticated historical narrative distinct from both the historical record and the source film.

The empirical findings from four Hollywood history films and their Persian dubbed versions suggest that this third stage of mediation, dubbing, does not merely transfer linguistic content but at times actively reshapes the representation of the past. Recurrent patterns of selective appropriation, temporal and spatial framing, labelling, and repositioning of participants demonstrate how dubbing actively reframes historical meaning. Erotic and sexually explicit content, religious specificity, violent affect, and politically sensitive motivations are frequently attenuated or removed, while character relations and moral evaluations are adjusted.

These interventions, whether accidental or not, are indicative of a coherent narrative with harmonized representations of history and prevailing cultural norms. Many of the observed interventions can be understood primarily as routine forms of manipulation. However, in several cases, when examined cumulatively and in relation to their effects on narrative development and plot structure, these interventions may also contribute to shifts in character relations and narrative emphasis. It is in these cases that dubbing contributes not merely to linguistic transfer but to a more substantive mediation of the narrative that reframes moral codes, alters relationships, and redefines narrative causality, contributing to a reconfiguration of how historical events are narratively framed.

In this sense, dubbed history films constitute new historical narratives in their own right, rather than derivative or secondary texts. The cumulative effect across the four history films suggests a consistent pattern: historical narratives become less transgressive, less embodied, less violent, and more ideologically coherent when mediated through Persian dubbing conventions. This appears to confirm the study's central claim that AVT, particularly dubbing, participates in the construction and regulation of collective memory, reinforcing certain moral orders while constraining others. By situating dubbing within a multi-tiered model of historical translation, the article reframes AVT as an integral component of mediated historiography rather than a peripheral technical practice. Then, triangulating insights from historiography, translation studies, and film studies contributes to a deeper understanding of how mediated histories circulate across cultural boundaries and how translation operates as a powerful agent in shaping the narrative intelligibility of the past.

Yet it is important to mention that the analysis is limited in several respects. It is based on a small set of widely circulating epics broadcast by a single institution, and it focuses primarily on verbal changes in the dubbed dialogue rather than on image editing, paratexts, or audience reception. Moreover, the study cannot reliably determine the intentions of translators, censors, or broadcasters behind specific interventions. Its claims are therefore restricted to observable patterns in the data and to the interpretive frameworks employed.

Future research could extend this approach to a larger and more varied corpus of dubbed history films, including productions from different source cultures and

broadcasting contexts, and could incorporate audience-based and production-side perspectives to investigate how these mediated histories are negotiated, received, and contested. Comparative work across dubbing, subtitling, and remakes would further clarify the specific role of each modality in shaping narrative understandings of the past. Ultimately, this study underscores that translating history is never neutral: it is an act of narrative world-building with profound implications for how societies imagine and remember the past.

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