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A COMPANION TO ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME ON SCREEN

EDITED BY
ARTHUR J. POMEROY

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Contents

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and religion in epic films: The fifties' advocate for Christian conversion and today's pillar of paganism?" in F. Carlà and I. Berti (eds.), *Ancient Magic and the Supernatural in the Modern Visual and Performing Arts.* (Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 225–240.

Maria Wyke is Professor of Latin at University College London. In *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* (Routledge, 1997), *The Roman Mistress: Ancient and Modern Representations* (Oxford University Press, 2002), and *Caesar in the USA* (University of California Press, 2012) she explored cinematic reconstructions of ancient Rome in the film traditions of Italy and Hollywood. Following on from the collection she co-edited with Pantelis Michelakis, *The Ancient World in Silent Cinema* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), she is currently writing a book on ancient Rome in silent film.

Introduction

Arthur J. Pomeroy

As far back as we can trace, the stories that were transmitted in the Greek-speaking communities in the Mediterranean changed in focus and form in each generation. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are simply two outstanding examples of a series of narratives associated with the Trojan War, which themselves borrowed elements from Near Eastern stories in addition to legends that may have originated with the Indo-European ancestors of the Bronze Age Greeks. Other arts developed and, most importantly, came to be preserved. Versions of the earlier tales were depicted in the visual arts, in statuary and on Greek vases. They were also presented in dramatic form, particularly in classical Athenian tragedy, which, unfortunately, like a lost silent film, can only be reconstructed from the surviving scripts and a smattering of other evidence. For instance, we know something about the stage, but the *mise-en-scène* remains open to speculation, and the music and dancing that accompanied performance is almost entirely lost. The conquests of Alexander the Great spread Hellenistic culture further east, while Rome's conquest of Greece meant the absorption of Greek stories and style into a new empire. The Romans also created self-conscious imitations of earlier Greek stories, most notably in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the story of a defeated Trojan who defied all odds in creating a home for his people in Italy and so became the Romans' ancestor. Christianity, an off-shoot of Judaic traditions, in its desire to encompass all ethnic groups, found that it often had to absorb or be absorbed within Greco-Roman culture. In the West, Christianity preserved much from

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the classical past and added the tales of the peoples of northern Europe. In the East, Islam became dominant, but stories of earlier times, such as the Alexander Romance, continued to thrive. It would take too long to describe the multiple receptions of the Greek and Roman worlds since the Renaissance: painting and sculpture, drama and opera, poetry and novels all offered new modes for serving up material from the past. In brief: adoption and adaptation, a process that continues to the present day as new media are explored and used in turn to explore tradition.

We tend to regard the display of moving images on film as a comparatively recent invention, but prior to the work of the Lumière brothers there were devices that displayed pictures (either photographs or drawings) sequentially to give the impression of continuous motion. Initially the viewer looked at a sequence of cards, but by the mid-nineteenth century machines had been invented to project the images on a screen. Such devices could entertain large numbers of viewers and so were in line with the development of public entertainment that followed the industrial revolution. These entertainments could wondrously recreate traditional stories. Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) popularized the results of excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum, while drawing its immediate inspiration from Karl Briulov's recently completed painting depicting the destruction of the Roman city. While the rise of the railway and the lengthy journeys associated with this means of travel contributed to the success of romantic novels, the development of traveling shows by entrepreneurs such as Barnum and Bailey also pointed the way to extensive fireworks displays, culminating in the regular performance of pyrodramas involving the eruption of Vesuvius. The popularity of Lew Wallace's novel, *Ben-Hur* (1880), led to a Broadway stage version in 1899, employing live horses on treadmills to recreate the famous chariot race. This, in turn, inspired the Kalem company to film an unauthorized version of the story in 1907. This was accomplished using the Coney Island site and props that Pain's Fireworks Company had used for pyrodramas and recreation of Roman chariot races. Add in music (John Philip Sousa, for instance, published his *Last Days of Pompeii* suite in 1912), and most of the elements of modern film are ready.

The most important feature of cinema is not, then, the moving image, but the possibility of mass reproduction. The bodybuilder, Eugen Sandow, travelled the world displaying his physique (one based on Greek and Roman sculpture) and popularizing physical culture. While the possibility of becoming a global phenomenon owes much to modern transport, not to mention the opening of the world via European colonialism, Edison Studios' series of short films on Sandow in 1894 made it possible for audiences to view his display of muscle flexing anywhere and at any time. This ability to constantly

reproduce could also work against the new medium: it was often viewed as a form for mass consumption, linked to the vaudeville halls and travelling shows where early films were often shown and considered to be entertainment for the masses, while live theatre and concerts were the preserve of the élite. The corporate nature of film-making, unlike the individual authorship of the novel,[1] also challenged the common ideal of the singular artist. Others, however, might praise cinema as embodying the spirit of modern industrial development (Benjamin 1936) or as an essential instrument of education for the general populace that supported the growing democracies of the Western world.

Whether we consider the streams of "realism," the documentary form visible in George Méliès' *Arrival of a Train at Vincennes Station* (1896), or fantasy and magic, as in Méliès' *The Vanishing Lady* of the same year, it is important that we take into consideration the investment in any film and its appeal to an audience in order to recoup its cost. While productions may have targeted audiences according to age or gender, for instance, from the beginning there was a wish to attract as large a group of viewers as possible. Cinematic "tie-ins" via product placement or marketing in conjunction with feature films begin quite early. The comparatively recent discipline of film studies has indicated the importance of understanding such features as the length of a film (is it a short, a television episode segmented by advertising breaks, or a full-length blockbuster, for instance). Technical matters also need careful consideration, such as the style of the camera work, the scenography, film stocks and picture ratios (including black and white, tinted, and color styles), sound (both accompanying music and sound effects or Foley), and a range of imaginary effects (double exposure of negatives, editing cuts, the use of Claymation or CGI). Then there are more general questions about the attitude of film-makers and audience ("the gaze"), expectations of actors and cultural biases (such as discussed in Richard Dyer's studies of Hollywood stars and of racial stereotypes (1979, 1997)). Story types become complicated when considered as cinematic genres. Science fiction may remain identifiable when it changes medium, as may detective stories, but Film Noir and Expressionism are descriptions of visual phenomena and have no clear analogies in written form.

I have stressed the complexity of understanding film, because it is not uncommon for scholars of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds and filmmakers to talk past one another. The first can be seen in studies that describe depictions of the past as "un-historical." Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000) is no more a documentary about the reign of Commodus than was its immediate inspiration, Anthony Mann's *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) (cf. the essays in Winkler 2004). In turn, classicists can sometimes feel that they

are only consulted by film-makers for minor details, rather than "authenticity" in the overall depiction (Coleman 2004; Milnor 2008).

Classical themes, such as the depiction of characters from Greek mythology (Méliès' *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1898) or epic (Méliès' *Ulysses and the Giant Polyphemus*, 1905) or from Roman history (Georges Hatot's *Nero Testing Poison on Slaves*, 1897), appeared at the very birth of the film industry. However, scholarly interest from classicists in the depiction of their area of research on the screen is comparatively recent. Jon Solomon's *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (1978, revised edition 2001) began the serious scholarly treatment of such material and remains a basic reference. Marianne McDonald's *Euripides in Cinema* (1983) indicated that it was possible to devote a monograph to the reproduction of drama in film. Yet perhaps the most significant advance in the cinematic reception of the past came in Maria Wyke's *Projecting Rome: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* (1997) which combined film history and gender studies to examine the depiction of the ancient world. Since then Martin Winkler has been especially prolific in editing or authoring a remarkable number of volumes on the classical world in the cinema and on television in general or on individual films (e.g., 2001, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009) that are repeatedly cited in this volume. The ever-increasing number of monographs, chapters, and articles appearing every year indicates the topical nature of investigation of the depiction of ancient Greece and Rome.

To no small extent, this corresponds with didactic requirements. Courses in reception studies or film have become a regular part of the syllabus in the English-speaking world. As was the case with Greek mythology from the 1970s onwards, it is often hoped that this will attract sufficient student numbers to compensate for reduced enrolments in Greek and Latin language courses. There are excellent textbooks to assist here (Cyrino 2005; Blanshard and Shahabudin 2011). However, as with mythology, mere retelling of the material will not be sufficient to stimulate students and certainly will not provide any basis for theoretical analysis of the subject matter. Given that many classicists have come to the area through reception or adaptation studies, one trend is to analyze the depiction of the ancient world in a literary fashion, in accord with the literal translation of photo-graphy as "writing with light." Cinema becomes drama, epic, or novel in a different medium, just as war, according to Clausewitz, was the continuation of politics by other means. For classicists, this also offers a reassuring priority to their area of expertise, historically and sometimes in status as well. However, the influence of reception studies means that there should not only be a comparison between the classical source and its later treatment, but also an attempt to explain why the two are not identical. Change may be the result of historical

circumstances (both political and economic), or the necessity to adapt to a different medium, or social and cultural differences. Such investigations have been particularly fruitful in revealing gender politics or racial and colonialist ideologies. At the same time, reactions to classical material bring into stark contrast aspects of the original. Analyzing a film from the 1950s requires both sensitivity to the differences between creations of that time and those contemporaneous with the modern audience, and also reflection on prior receptions and the earliest sources. The constant iteration of a figure such as Hercules makes the 1958 *Hercules* (*Le fatiche di Ercole*, "*The Labors of Hercules*") much more interesting than a simple analysis of the adventure might suggest. In addition, film (and television) studies, through their emphasis on the technical means of creating and distributing a moving picture, offer wider insights into classical material on screen, in the same way that theater studies have deepened our understanding of classical drama.

Bearing in mind that the field is in comparative infancy (and that new films and television series continue to appear every year), this volume is intended to give an outline of what has already been achieved in many areas to assist researchers and students in the field. It also, in my opinion, presents considerably more new research than would normally be seen in survey volumes. It is structured to offer an outline of the development of the presentation of the Greek and Roman worlds from the beginning of cinema to the present day (Parts I and II), followed by discussions of cinematic techniques associated with this material (Part III); while the final chapters in Part IV consider some of the thematic issues that present themselves to researchers in the field. The subject area is restricted to ancient Greece and Rome: this excludes, for instance, films about ancient Egypt or productions associated with the Bible. The latter are so numerous and so entwined with other considerations as to require a separate volume. Where the Roman world and Christianity cross paths, as most notably in the film versions of *Ben-Hur*, but also in tales of persecution as Christianity develops (a staple of 1950s Hollywood cinema, as the Coen Brothers have recently reminded us with their 2016 film, *Hail! Caesar*), and in the world of late antiquity, that material is included.

Not everything has been discussed. I am conscious that there is a gap between the investigation of post-First World War silent films and that of the great Hollywood epics of the 1950s. A number of contributors do, however, consider the work of Cecil B. DeMille, whose *The Sign of the Cross* (1932; re-released 1944) may be seen as the link between this period and the 1950 version of *Quo Vadis*. A study of films of the fascist era, in particular Carmine Gallone's *Scipio Africanus* (1937), is forthcoming (Pomeroy 2017). *Cleopatra* (1963) and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) are short-changed. However, Martin Winkler's edited volume (2009) on the latter

should satisfy most readers. A full study of the Burton–Taylor film is highly desirable – in the meantime, the 2001 documentary by Kevin Burns and Brent Zachy, *Cleopatra: The Film that Changed Hollywood*, is a good introduction. A number of films of the post-2000 era (e.g., *Gladiator, Troy* and *Alexander*) have already had individual volumes devoted to them (Winkler 2004, 2007a; Cartledge and Greenland 2010) and so can be treated in passing in this volume. Non-English language productions may have been short-changed: the Romanian films from the 1960s involving the Romans and the Dacians (Elley 2013: 58–59) are sadly omitted, while it would be a truly Herculean effort to track down all classical references in Japanese animated films (*anime*). Still, Jarman's *Sebastiane* (in Latin) receives its due. Television has not been fully discussed (no *Xena* or *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* – next time, perhaps …). I am also conscious that there is much more that can be said about the techniques of creating films and television series, but the chapters in this volume should encourage others to continue this work. And while there is no piece specifically devoted to the important topic of gender studies, a number of the contributions show the importance of feminism, queer and masculinity studies as explanatory tools in this field.

Even more than printed material, film needs preservation. Film archives around the world are engaged in the recovery and restoration not only of much early material, but also of films from quite recent times whose stock has deteriorated with often frightening speed. These "texts" can also survive in multiple versions, depending on cuts and editing, and in various formats (most obviously in versions created for television, where wide-screen films have commonly been adapted to a standard 4 : 3 ratio, often by a process named "pan and scan," and often cut to fit better with advertising breaks). Accordingly, Pantelis Michelakis begins the volume by initially considering the question of the survival of ancient films and access to this material, before raising the important question of why the very modern form of continuous photography should be interested in the ancient world at all. Many explanations have been offered for this phenomenon: Michaelakis stresses in addition that the past can offer not merely escapism, but an imaginative response to the rapidly changing world at the turn of the twentieth century. As he indicates, early films reference not merely the Greek and Roman worlds, but also versions of them created over the centuries. The importance of the spectators must not be underestimated, nor the means of impressing them. While early cinema is often thought of as a world of black and white, in reality many films were tinted in sections and a considerable number carefully colored for maximum effect. A case can be made for the "development" of techniques, but, as Michaelakis indicates, many examples would call into question any treatment of film history as simply a steady progression of cinema to its most recent forms.

The particularly successful development of film-making in Italy is traced by Irmbert Schenk. The expansion of its studios and the increase in length and complexity of the films produced, culminating in 1914 with Giovanni Pastrone's *Cabiria*, illustrates a desire for a national cinema recalling the country's history, while also reflecting the process of industrialization in the peninsula. However, the increasing demand for investment could not be sustained after Italy's entry into the First World War: the United States, which had previously lagged behind in large-scale productions, came to dominate, with the rise of the major studios of Hollywood. As Maria Wyke demonstrates, post-war Italian efforts showed few artistic or technical developments. In the meantime, American films such as *Cleopatra*, starring Theda Bara (1917), or *Ben-Hur* (1925), with Ramon Novarro in the leading role, indicate the rise of the star system that accompanied other developments in the Hollywood studio system. The chariot race in the latter became the standard for technology in the service of audience excitement until the even more impressive remake of 1959. Still, national cinemas continued to thrive, as in Germany through Manfred Noa's spectacular *Helen of Troy* (*Helena*, 1924) that has only recently been restored and made available, and in France, where ancient-world stories, whether recounted in elegiac or comic mode, could allow reflection on the country's recent losses,

The Second World War might be expected to have further reinforced the dominance of Hollywood, but in fact the American studios faced internal competition from the new medium of television. Konstantinos Nikoloutsos shows how many of the features of modern popular cinema, such as widescreen photography and color film, developed in this era. "Blockbuster" movies showed all the features of studio film-making: lavish sets, international cast and crews, and often overseas locations, partially chosen for their exotic appeal, but also for financial reasons: for instance, to expend profits that could not be repatriated in countries where low-cost labor was readily available. The popularity of biblical stories (a staple of film-making from the beginning: Vander Stichele 2013) also encouraged screen versions of novels that showed the development of Christianity in the Roman World (for instance, *Quo Vadis, The Robe* or *Ben-Hur*), sometimes as updates of earlier Hollywood successes (*Ben-Hur, Cleopatra*). The competition with television and between studios also encouraged expenditure on an unheard-of scale, culminating in the financial crisis caused by the excesses of *Cleopatra* (1963). The internal machinations that accompanied these large productions are detailed in Fiona Radford's chapter, which provides a clear warning to those who would like to imply that there are specific intentions within these films. Even with considerable archival material at our disposal, it is often difficult to discover who made crucial decisions about plotlines and script. As is

shown very clearly with regard to *Spartacus* (1960), individuals may make their own contributions that can contradict or cancel the efforts of other members of the production team.

Hollywood's preeminence at the box-office internationally did not, however, preclude national cinemas. In my chapter I demonstrate how the peplum film was the love-child of traditional Italian entertainment films and Hollywood epic. Although it was a short-lived, if prolific, movement, the peplum was significant for the continuation of the film-making industry in Italy. It also had a long-lasting effect on the public imagination, especially in America, setting a pattern for the revival of the figure of Hercules on television thirty years later. Often mocked or reviled, the peplum has its own rules that, when recognized, help to explain the idiosyncrasies of this much-encompassing form.

The reign of Hollywood blockbusters set in the ancient world came to an end in 1965, only to be revived by Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* in 2000, and the Italian production of peplums also ceased around the same time. This does not mean that other cinemas and film genres were not interested in Greece and Rome: these and the new form of television are surveyed in Part II of this volume. In modern Greece, Michael Cacoyannis was equally successful with modern-day tales (*Stella*, 1995; *Zorba the Greek*, 1964) and versions of Euripidean tragedy. Anastasia Bakogianni traces the development of Cacoyannis's style, originally owing much to the theater but adopting many of the features of commercial cinema as time passed. Although, perhaps, Cacoyannis is not as "Art House" as his Italian contemporary, Pasolini, he clearly regarded his films as artistic productions and reached an international audience while stressing the continuity between ancient and modern Greece. By contrast, Meredith Safran details efforts to retain the theatrical in film versions of Greek tragedy as staged by the likes of Tyrone Guthrie, Martha Graham, Julie Taymor and Steven Berkoff. She also analyzes the relationship between theater and television, from a period where public television saw one of its duties to be the education of its viewers, to more recent times where commercial imperatives have come to the fore. The odd standing of Greek tragedy, which appears to be a special-interest art form but can be readily repositioned to raise contemporary social questions, is highlighted throughout.

Not that the ancient world need always be a serious topic, as Lisa Maurice brings out in her survey of comic treatments of the past. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* has been a major inspiration through to Spike Lee's recent *Chi-Raq* (2015), while the characters of Greek mythology have also been a steady source of mirth, particularly Hercules, whose colossal strength was already depicted in classical times as accompanied by astounding appetites. In

general, the Roman world receives more attention than the Greek, in part because the Plautine figure of the crafty slave has become part of Western theater, in part because Roman grandeur and imperial ambitions lend themselves to mockery. Monty Python's famous question, "What have the Romans done for us?", both acknowledges and mocks the importance of classical culture.

The answer, as Jerry Pierce indicates, is to provide us with vicarious enjoyment of decadence. The luxurious lifestyles of the rich and powerful that were one of the attractions for viewers of the 1917 *Cleopatra* return with a vengeance in *Gladiator* (2000), *Alexander* (2004), and *300* (2006). Still, in the age of the Kardashians, excess needs to be truly excessive. Joaquin Phoenix's Commodus is not simply bisexual, as Olivier's Crassus is depicted in *Spartacus*, but incestuous and a potential pedophile as well. Sexuality becomes a major driver in the narrative of series such as *Rome*, apparently reaching a climax in the STARZ network's *Spartacus*. To misquote Lord Acton, following Alistair Cooke, the voice of culture to America, "Power corrupts. Absolute power is absolutely delicious!" (Cooke 1998).

The significance of television as transmitter of the image of the past is examined in the next three studies. I analyze the "quality drama" that Franco Rossi produced for RAI (Radiotelevisione italiana), particularly underlining the director's desire to avoid the clichés associated with the recreation of classical literature and the portrayal of the ancient world. The foreignness of the past thus depicted allows the viewer to dwell on other universal themes, such as Odysseus's nostalgia for his home, Aeneas's concern for the survivors of the Trojan race, or the concern for the poor and powerless of early Christianity. BBC Television also produced a remarkable adaptation of Robert Graves' novel, *I, Claudius*. Juliette Harrisson shows how the series fitted into the tradition of "classic serial," but was distinguished by its success in ambivalently depicting empire and class, which sets it apart from soap opera in a foreign setting. Its impact can be traced in both the films of the new millennium (it is no accident that Derek Jacoby plays the role of Senator Gracchus in *Gladiator*) and its television (in *Rome*, in general, and the character of a much younger Livia, in particular). The last study of small-screen drama is contributed by Monica Cyrino, the editor of several collections of essays on HBO–BBC *Rome* and STARZ *Spartacus* (Cyrino 2008, 2015; Augoustakis and Cyrino 2016). Rightly noting the commercial imperatives of such series (*Rome* was concluded in two seasons because of the excessive costs of production, while the lower-cost *Spartacus* could even add a prequel season in response to the lead actor's illness), she stresses that despite an interest in archaeological correctness, Rome has become not an historical site but a locus for fantasy, a predecessor to the medieval England of *Game of Thrones*.

The world of late antiquity in contrast to the period of early Christianity has tended to be the preserve of European cinema. This may be a sign of unwillingness in Hollywood to depict organized religion with its sectarian overtones. Still, as Filippo Carlà-Uhink demonstrates, there had been a reluctance even in predominantly Catholic countries such as Italy and Spain to portray state-sponsored religion post-Constantine the Great. From the 1970s, however, the crisis of the Roman Empire became a screen metaphor for the modern world, whether this be a crisis in faith, as in Roberto Rosselini's *Agostino d'Ippona* (1972), or the sexual politics of homosexuality (Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane*, 1976). Rising above a number of small-scale depictions of the late Roman world, Alejandro Amenábar's epic story of Hypatia in fourth-century Alexandria, *Agora* (2009), is particularly striking for its criticism of irrational religious belief when associated with power. That the film was not very successful at the box office indicates that successful cinema tends to reflect the conservative audience values of the time (cf. the uncontroversial *Gladiator* which earned much more at the box office than Oliver Stone's *Alexander*).

Moving further afield, Anja Wieber's study of the Indian film, *Sikandar*, Osamu Tezuka's Japanese animated *Cleopatra*, and the Japanese–Korean television anime, *Reign: The Conqueror*, highlights the question of the degree to which the classical world is a signifier of Western cultural dominance. If the history of Greece and Rome may have been placed in the service of imperialism, it is also possible for outsiders to use the same material to critique colonialism or to suggest that syntheses of occidental and oriental ideas are also significant in social development in both East and West.

Part III is a brief reminder that film is not merely a photo-play (as earlier cinema was sometimes called), but the combination of various artistic skills. Perhaps most significant is the role of sound, a theme that classicists working from printed texts are most likely to overlook. There were, of course, musical accompaniments to drama and pantomimes in the ancient world, but that material is almost completely lost. "Silent" cinema was rarely silent, since musical accompaniments were regular from early on, and might be distinctly loud (a full orchestra played Pizzetti's Fire Symphony at the premiere of *Cabiria* in Turin, April 18, 1914). The style of music also offered valuable clues as to the nature of events portrayed: in Chapter 16, Stephan Prock shows that the score to the 1925 version of *Ben-Hur* was deliberately reverential because of the religious sub-text of "A Tale of the Christ." By contrast, Miklós Rózsa's score for the 1959 remake not only sexualizes the power relationship between the Roman Empire and conquered Judaea, but also stresses the masculinity of the film's hero in line with contemporary expectations. As Prock indicates, however, this approach may also underline

questions about the relationships between the male leads, avoided in the 1925 film. At the same time, the triumphant "Christ" music plays a more pronounced role, since the figure of the Savior is notably silent in this modern "talkie."

Alongside the music (and sound effects), the staging and costuming create an image within which the actors can perform and the cinematographers perform their magic. Although often overlooked, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presently awards Oscars for original scores, sound editing and sound mixing, visual effects, production design, makeup and hairstyle, and costume design. The visual design of Michael Cacoyannis's *Electra* (1962) is obviously quite different from that of Pietro Francisci's *Hercules* (1958). As Alejandro Valverde García demonstrates, this is to no small degree the work of the different art directors in reflecting the style of each production. It is impossible to cover the wide range of possibilities for depictions of the ancient world, but by discussing the films of Michael Cacoyannis, Valverde reveals how important art direction is in creating meaning within the cooperative enterprise that is realized in the final film print.

Most of the contributors to this volume would probably describe themselves generically as classicists (a sociologist and a musicologist are also among the participants): this refers both to the subject matter they study and the programs in which they are employed. Genre, however, may mean something else in film studies, as film historian Harriet Margolis shows. None would describe themselves as makers of ancient-world films, which has had the unfortunate effect of hiding a whole genre in film history from its specialists. The dangers of compartmentalizing in academic disciplines are here clearly indicated.

The final section looks at some of the siblings of ancient world films and television series, ranging from the lowly regarded to the Art House, from the insertion of classical themes and mythology in science fiction to serious documentaries. As always, the audience must be taken into consideration. Alastair Blanshard identifies accessibility (Hercules and gladiators are universally recognized, while Virgil is not) as the initial attraction of stories set in the past for film-makers. However, it is the excess of the past, whether it be the opulence of Nero's court or the efforts of a demi-god, that appeals to the audience. The Roman side usually won out over Greek simplicity, but the "muscle-man" film, from Bartolomeo Pagano to Steve Reeves and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, has thrived from the silent period to the present day.

Science fiction series on television derive their appeal from a fantasy version of science. Otta Wenskus's chapter makes clear that an equally imaginary treatment of the ancient past is thus a relatively simple insertion in the genre.

Particularly striking is the use of classical material to give an "intellectual" depth to the stories, a relic of the high versus low culture debate that has still not been settled. At the level of "Art House" cinema, Anastasia Bakogianni shows that the figure of Electra can still inform modern narratives. In Italy, Luchino Visconti (*Sandra*, 1965), in Hungary, Miklós Janscó (*Electra, My Love*, 1974) and in Greece, Theo Angelopoulos (*The Travelling Players*, 1975), used the character from Greek tragedy to inform their depictions of their countries' tragic past. But Electra is also reincarnated in Frank Miller's Elektra, the heroine of DC Comics and two films and is adumbrated in the female Count of Monte Cristo of television's *Revenge*. Reception may call into question traditional aesthetic judgements as much as support them.

Since the ancient world precedes the invention of photography, there are obviously no contemporary film records. Yet, as the attraction of film is the moving image, still images of Greek and Roman art and archaeology are insufficient. The dramatic aspects of documentary are highlighted by the inclusion of fictional segments or modern features, such as the voice of the newsreader, anachronistically applied to the past. Fiona Hobden shows the importance of the stress on authority in the narrative voices, how the documentary becomes an old-style classroom lesson where knowledge is imparted, but the audience is unable to question what they have learnt. We may feel that we are making a tour with an agreeable companion, but the power of academia abides. An alternative approach, of adapting the past to modern narrative genres, can be seen in *Cleopatra: Portrait of a Killer* (2009), drawing on modern crime fiction. The docudrama straddles both worlds: it may enable the viewer to gain a personal appreciation of the ancient world; its reflection can also be seen in the figure of the herald in the television series *Rome*. As Hobden notes, the re-use of Ian McNeice, the actor who played that character, to portray Cassius Dio, the historian, in *Portrait of a Killer* lends an odd authenticity from fictional repetition.

The audience is also important to Martin Lindner, who considers a particular sub-genre of features set in ancient Greece and Rome, films or television series specifically designed to attract youthful viewers. As he rightly notes, the actual audience may be much larger, including adults enjoying such productions and the parents who may be accompanying the youngsters (or at least sharing the room where the television is located). Disney's *Hercules* (1997) is typical with a moral message for the young and ironic meanings for older viewers. That such films do not faithfully follow the traditional narrative is not a fault, but an indication of adjustments for children in the present day. Entertainment, not didacticism, is the prime mover. Still, the differences between East and West German versions of Odysseus, for instance, are interesting reflections of each community. Similar comments

can be made about the Korean, Japanese and Australian versions. To repeat the author's conclusion, after an extensive account of other young persons' films and television series, "for children" is not the same as "childish."

The range of studies in this volume, with contributors from numerous countries, is indicative of the resonance and vibrancy of studies of ancient Greece and Rome at present. Of course, each year results in not only new or revived receptions (as I write, *Ben-Hur* 2016 is the most recent release), but also better appreciation of material from earlier years. My thanks to my collaborators for their efforts. And my encouragement for those who will be writing on these topics in the years to come!

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NOTE

1. It may be noted that some authors had already experimented with the mass production model. For instance, Alexandre Dumas could be both prolific and fully enjoy the rewards of his work by entrusting others (most notably Jules Maquet) to develop the outlines that he rapidly sketched.

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