importance of pyrodramas and toga plays and kindly showed me the materials he had collected from the Pain archive. The historians of silent Italian cinema, Vittorio Martinelli and Riccardo Redi, corrected some of my filmographic errors, generously loaned me a large number of visual materials from their private collections, and told me some wonderful anecdotes about silent film production.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to express my thanks to my nephew Henry, for neatly timing his birth to provide many very happy moments during the last stages of writing this book, and to David Oswell, without whom I would probably have finished this book sooner but have had less fun.

1

Ancient Rome, Cinema, and History

Classics and Cinema

Even before Gore Vidal first visited the surviving ruins of ancient Rome, it was already a place and a time he knew very well. In *Screening History* (1993), the American writer recalls his adolescent encounter with the city in 1939:

> Despite the heat of Rome in August, I was ecstatic. At last I was where I belonged. I haunted the Forum and the Palatine. In addition to all the Roman movies that I had seen, the first grown-up book that I ever read was a Victorian edition of *Stories from Livy*. I was steeped in Rome. I also lived in a city whose marble columns were a self-conscious duplicate of the old capital of the world. Of course Washington then lacked six of the seven hills and a contiguous world empire. Later, we got the empire but not the hills. (58)

For Vidal, his childhood in 1930s Washington opened many doors onto the Roman past—through his schoolbooks, through the public architecture of his home town and, most vividly, through Hollywood's representations of Roman history.[1] (illustration 1.1)

The title of Vidal's book of reminiscences draws specific attention to the great imaginative power of cinema to shape our perceptions of the past, and his account of watching the Depression musical *Roman Scandals* further demonstrates the extent to which cinematic representations of history have also addressed the concerns of the present:

> Although *Roman Scandals* was a comedy, starring the vaudevillian Eddie Cantor, I was told not to see it. I now realize why the movie, which I saw anyway, had been proscribed. The year of release was 1933. The country was

1.1 Neoclassical auditorium of the Tivoli cinema in Washington. [Courtesy of BFI Stills, Posters and Designs.]

> in an economic depression. Drought was turning to dust the heart of the country's farm land, and at the heart of the heart of the dust bowl was my grandfather's state of Oklahoma.... At the beginning of *Roman Scandals* we see the jobless in Oklahoma. One of them is Eddie Cantor, who is knocked on the head and transported to ancient Rome, much as Dorothy was taken by whirlwind from Kansas to Oz; thus, a grim Oklahoma is metamorphosed into a comic-strip Rome. (21)

The young Vidal, who was later to contribute to Hollywood's production of Roman histories, saw *Roman Scandals* in a city that still displayed architectural monuments to the Founding Fathers' deployment of the Roman republic as an analogy for the civic virtues of the new nation. Yet, in the course of the Depression film's narrative, a dispossessed citizen of the Oklahoma city West Rome comes to recognize the corruption of present-day politicians through his bizarre encounter with a tyrannical Roman emperor. Vidal's grandfather (a senator from Oklahoma) clearly recognized in the Hollywood musical an unwelcome message of social protest which suggested, however comically, that America was now beginning to imitate the cruelties of the Roman empire in its treatment of the poor and unemployed.[2]

In *Screening History*, Gore Vidal describes his first tour of Rome's ruins as charged by a childhood already suffused with images of the ancient city. Similarly, Federico Fellini's film *Roma* (1972) shows the arrival in Rome in

the late 1930s of the pseudo-autobiographical hero and treats his encounter with the capital as infected by a distant childhood acquaintance with a half-fantastic city. In the first part of *Roma* the child, who lives in the provincial Italian city of Rimini, is provided with access to the history of the capital through an array of ludicrous Fascist refractions: a school trip that bathetically reenacts Julius Caesar's crossing of the river Rubicon, a local's cynical comments on the supposedly Fascist significance of a decaying statue of Julius Caesar in the town square, a bombastic performance of the play *Julius Caesar*, a ranting school lecture on glorious moments from Roman history, a disrupted slide show on the splendors of Roman architecture. The climax of the sequence occurs when, in the town's packed cinema, a Roman historical film is screened juxtaposed with newsreel footage of young Italian athletes who are pompously described in the documentary's voice-over as "the sons of the she-wolf."[3]

Within Fellini's *Roma*, it is the screening of the historical film that constitutes the most immediate, personal, and authentic experience of ancient Rome. The film-within-the-film's narration of romantic love fatally destroyed by the opposition of a lustful empress has the greatest impact on the watching child and on his assimilation of the Roman past to the Italian present. For the fascinated boy turns from the cinematic representation of imperial Rome to stare at the dentist's wife in the auditorium, while a voice-over describes her sexual voracity as worse than that of Messalina. The sequence then cuts away from the dentist's wife to a vision of her outside the cinema literally transformed into the insatiable empress dancing in an open convertible as a number of men in ancient Roman attire await their turn to be serviced by her. (illustration 1.2) Thus the representations of imperial depravity in Fellini's invented historical film are made to intersect with and shape the erotic fantasies which the boy's growing sexual awareness calls forth.[4]

Both Vidal's and Fellini's recollections of their childhood experiences of ancient Rome in the early 1930s serve to remind us that, in the twentieth century, cinema has been crucial to the formation and wide dissemination of an historical consciousness of ancient Rome and that cinema has operated in tandem with, and sometimes in opposition to, more direct access to the surviving monuments and literary texts of antiquity to resurrect a vivid past intimately connected with present interests. Knowledges of "Rome" have become effects of its reconstruction in moving images. Is historical film, therefore, a proper object of study for classicists? And should cinema have a place in the investigation of antiquity's reception?

Constantly at play in twentieth-century interpretations of classics and the classical tradition have been notions of "high culture" and "the classic." In the introduction to *The Classical Tradition* (1949)—Gilbert Highet's compre-

1.2 "Messalina" and her lovers, from Fellini's *Roma* (1972). [Courtesy of BFI Stills, Posters and Designs.]

hensive study of the reception of classical literature—the Professor of Latin declared that

> Our modern world is in many ways a continuation of the world of Greece and Rome. Not in all ways—particularly not in medicine, music, industry, and applied science. But in most of our intellectual and spiritual activities we are the grandsons of the Romans, and the great-grandsons of the Greeks. Other influences joined to make us what we are; but the Greco-Roman strain was one of the strongest and the richest. Without it, our civilization would not merely be different. It would be much thinner, more fragmentary, less thoughtful, more materialistic—in fact, whatever wealth it might have accumulated, whatever wars it might have fought, whatever inventions it might have made, it would be less worthy to be called a civilisation, because its spiritual achievements would be less great. (1)

Similarly, according to the notable address delivered by T.S. Eliot to the Virgil Society in 1944, *What is a Classic?*, the *Aeneid* was destined to set the standard for subsequent European literatures and unite them in a common

cultural heritage because it is a unique "classic"—that is, for Eliot, a work that evinces the moral and stylistic qualities of universality and timelessness, maturity and amplitude.[5] In such definitions of literary classicism, tradition is viewed as a sacred process of handing down formally complex, morally rich, critically insightful themes and genres to a present viewed as a passive recipient of the texts of the past. The value of studying "antiquity itself" would thus seem to be comfortably secured and the exploration of the modern manifestations of Greco-Roman culture can then operate as a reverential celebration of that culture's vitality and worth.[6]

Cinema, however, has long been kept at a distance from such notions of high culture and the classic. Soon after the development of the new medium, supporters of the older arts such as theatre, opera, painting, and the novel raged against attempts to call it "the tenth Muse"—in, for example, Germany's "Kinodebatte" of the first few decades of this century. For later critical theorists such as Walter Benjamin in his essay on "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction," cinema is not only discontinuous with tradition but also potentially inimical to it. The mechanical process of film's reproduction, in Benjamin's view, challenges the "aura" of cultural texts, their sense of authenticity, authority, autonomy, and distance. The technique of reproduction detaches film from the reverential rituals of tradition and can bestow on the modern medium a positive social significance in "the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage." For Benjamin, perhaps, there should be cinema *instead* of classics.[7]

Benjamin's high hopes for cinema (and popular culture more generally) constitute the deepest fears of many classical scholars. In his 1980 address to the American Philological Association, Bernard Knox—described on the dust-jacket of a recent collection of such addresses, reviews, and essays as "classicist, historian, literary critic, and defender of the humanities"—warned that the humanities were now suffering a significant loss of interest as an academic pursuit. More disturbingly still, according to Knox,

> it is only logical that in such a situation our discipline should take heavy punishment. Our texts *are* the humanities, the original humanities, the humanities in their most concentrated and genuine form. Without the two languages and literatures which are our province the humanities are hardly conceivable.... And it is only to be expected that in this age of cultural dilution, of plastic substitutes, of mindless television shows, not to mention television dinners and instant coffee, the genuine article is no longer valued.[8]

Such appeals to the purity, the authenticity and the primacy of Greco-Roman culture have taken on even more dramatic and strident form since classics and the classic have become key components in the educational

agenda mapped out by the American New Right. In his ultra-conservative bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), Allan Bloom maintained that American higher education was impoverishing "the souls of today's students" because the classic texts are no longer reverently read, and popular culture (and, especially, film) has usurped them in influence. Bloom advocated a return to the traditional canons of literature and traditional literary studies, and to the firm values, established truths, and intellectual discipline which they could supposedly inculcate. According to Bloom, moreover, the gratitude of students "at learning of Achilles or the categorical imperative is boundless."[9] For conservative educators like Bloom, the concept of the classics is polemically constructed as a term in a binary opposition where there are classics and the contemptible. He interprets the introduction of popular culture into the academy as symptomatic of profound political disorder, and seeks the policing of culture as a route to conserve social order and authority. Bloom would be likely to see the relationship between classics and cinema in Arnoldian terms—as a struggle between Culture and Anarchy.[10]

Evaluation of the merits of researching and teaching the classical tradition has not been unaffected by such conservative discourses as those which culminated in the publication of Bloom's book. For example, in 1984, in a foreword to Meyer Reinhold's *Classica Americana*, William Calder had already speculated that Reinhold's explorations of the Greek and Roman heritage in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America may have been motivated by the modest desire "to remind forgetful Americans how much they owed their classical past in a banausic age ignorant of that great legacy."[11] But ten years on, in Bernard Knox's foreword to his own collection *Backing into the Future: the Classical Tradition and its Renewal*, the author could speak in sinister and apocalyptic terms of a plan by multiculturalists, feminists, and the politically correct "to abolish the cultural tradition on which the West's sense of unity and identity is founded," a plan comparable (although, he concedes, not in scale) to the cultural "innovations" of the French Revolutionaries or the Russian Bolsheviks and as likely to lead to historic catastrophe.[12]

The interlinked concepts of "high culture," "the tradition," "the canon" of approved authors, and "the classic," however, have long since been contested both outside and within the discipline of classical studies. Their formation and deployment in literary studies have been seen as "one means whereby local ideological interests are given the status of eternal values, the gap between past and present is elided, and 'literature' is depoliticized by an occlusion of those constraints and cultural processes which determine the nature of its discourses."[13] Cultural theorists, such as Pierre Bourdieu or Stuart Hall, have argued that distinctions between the high and the popular,

between "ideal" and "substandard" culture, work to legitimate class distinctions and are principally sustained by an educational system in the continuity of which the elite have a major investment.[14] Specifically concerning classical scholarship and the classical tradition, in *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation* (1987 and 1991), Martin Bernal has drawn attention to the pressing ideological interests (the racism and anti-Semitism) that underlay the fabrication in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent persistence of a Greco-Roman model for Western Europe's cultural origins.[15] Disclosing the contemporary horizon of interest of those who deploy such terms as "the classic" and "the classical tradition" demonstrates that, far from being a sacred inheritance handed down from the past, classicism is "an active, open process intimately connected with the pursuit of particular interests in the present."[16] While T.S. Eliot, for example, appropriated Virgil's *Aeneid* in 1944 as the metaphoric bloodstream that might still pump some life into wounded, war-torn Europe and render it a whole living entity once more,[17] Gilbert Highet in contrast constructed his classical tradition four years after the end of the Second World War to demonstrate the cultural superiority of the victorious countries over a Germany portrayed as feeling "foreign and half-civilized in face of the Greek spirit."[18]

As classics and the classical tradition have been divested of their moral purity, political neutrality, and cultural primacy, so some classicists have been at pains to divest their academic discipline of the title "Classics" and to replace it with less charged descriptions such as "ancient Mediterranean studies" while concerning themselves more and more with disclosing rather than occluding the local ideological interests—the various misogynies, ethnocentricities, elitisms and imperialisms—of both antiquity and its subsequent appropriations. Nowadays when beginners are introduced to the subject in accessible works such as *Classics: A Very Short Introduction* (1995) by Mary Beard and John Henderson, they are informed that the aim of classics is not only to uncover the ancient world but also "to define and debate *our* relationship to that world."[19] For Beard and Henderson, classics concerns not high culture but whole cultures, and not just an elite response but a whole range of responses to them.[20] Classics thus newly conceived welcomes as its objects of study "the imaginative entertainments and instructive re-creations of Greece and Rome" which are to be found on the page, stage, and celluloid of popular cultural production.[21] Similarly, in Martin Winkler's edited collection *Classics and Cinema* (1991), both Mary-Kay Gamel (who analyzes the tragic structures of the film *Chinatown*) and Peter Rose (who explicates the use of films such as *Clash of the Titans* and *Superman* in his teaching of a classical mythology course) argue that a fundamental purpose of their comparative investigations of classics and cinema is to challenge the conventional definitions of classics and classicism that have

received so much support since the late 1980s. Confronting the neo-conservative revival of a distinction between high and popular culture, they seek to dissolve that distinction from the supposedly high ground of the classical scholar. In doing so, their essays might be thought responsive to postmodernist criticism, which has declared the collapse of any overarching Arnoldian metanarrative that lays claim to a categorical distinction between high and low in the field of cultural production.[22]

The purpose of my own book is to explore part of the cycle of cinematic reconstructions of Roman history to which Gore Vidal and Federico Fellini have drawn such vivid attention. The ensuing case studies of films about Spartacus, Cleopatra, Nero, and the city of Pompeii demonstrate that such historical films, whether produced by the Italian or the Hollywood film industries, belong within a broadly conceived classical tradition and deserve the attention of classicists because they constitute a pervasive and engaging set of modern knowledges of ancient Rome. Drawing on a whole constellation of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiographic genres, cinema has long provided its own distinctive historiography of ancient Rome that has vividly resurrected the ancient world and reformulated it in the light of present needs. Cinema's historical narratives of antiquity have worked to interpellate spectators into their reconstructions of ancient Rome and have left their traces even on the subjectivities of those fascinated spectators. In turn, spectators have read their "direct" contacts with the surviving fragments of ancient Rome as texts in dialogue with cinematic reconstructions of antiquity and other contemporary discursive formations of the Greco-Roman past. This book operates, therefore, as a challenge to such recent definitions of classics and classicism as would bolster the discipline with the timeless, universal values of the classic against the seemingly temporal, local, and trivial interests of popular culture. Denaturalizing the distinctions between high and popular culture allows for both a more complex and a richer relationship between ancient and modern cultures, and a process of productive exchange between scholarship on classical culture and cultural theories of the popular.

Cinema and History

Projecting the Past not only contributes to recent debates about definitions of classics and the classical tradition, but also provides a useful point of entry into and interaction with current debates about the nature of history and the relationship between cinema and history.[23] Although films about Nero, for example, center on the same historical figure and are set in the same historical time and place, they evince interesting ruptures and discontinuities in their portrayal of the emperor's persecutions and pyromania. An exploration of the changing mode of their historical reconstructions and the changing cultural force of their narratives within and between the countries of their production engages with a number of pertinent concerns about history in cinema and cinema in history.

Film is a medium that initially located itself as an extension of nineteenth-century representational forms. The new technology of the moving image could be seen as a further development of a nineteenth-century technical progression through engraving, lithography, and photography towards ever more refined "realistic" representations, whether of the present or of the past. Such technological developments further abetted the nineteenth-century historical sensibility that sought to make the past live again in the present. Thus one of the most fascinating attractions which the new medium soon claimed to offer was the possibility of reconstructing the past with a precision and a vivacity superior to that of documentary sources or the nineteenth-century historical fictions of painting, theater, and the novel.[24] In the same year as the release of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), a monumentally successful epic film that recreated the American Civil War, its director D. W. Griffith wrote in utopian terms of the medium's newly disclosed and unique capacity to narrate history. He declared that cinema was not just a cold instrument for the recording of reality, as in documentary films, but also and above all a powerful mode of historical writing which could better transmit an historical consciousness to the public than months of study. For Griffith, cinema taught history in lightning and would soon usurp the educative value of conventional history books.[25] A year earlier, in Italy, audiences and film reviewers had certainly responded with extraordinary enthusiasm to Giovanni Pastrone's film *Cabiria* (1914), which recreated on screen the ancient conflict between the territorial ambitions of Rome and Carthage:

> An intense emotion grasped the entire audience, the emotion of the incomparable spectacle which, through a set-designer's tenacious effort, revived the people of the third century [B.C.] and flung them into tremendous struggles before the steep walls of a city, into the burning waves of a flaming sea, at the feet of a idol crimson with fire. . . . On their feet, on all sides of the theatre, the crowd shouted with enthusiasm and joy. A genuine, sincere, unrestrainable frenzy accompanied the majestic film from beginning to end. . . . *Cabiria* is something that will last. It will last because at that instant the vulgar art of cinema ceases and history succeeds, true history.[26]

For their early promoters and for many of their consumers, historical films were true histories. Cinema could supply a new mode of historiography of

lasting value for the immediacy with which it reconstructed the past and for the intimacy with that past which it gave to its enthusiastic spectators. But the constant claims to truth, accuracy, and pedagogic value which have also been made for historical films throughout the twentieth century by their makers and distributors are, in a sense, a masquerade. Whatever the attention paid to accurate reconstruction in an historical film's surface texture—the antiquarian aesthetic, for example, manifest in the set designs, costumes, and props of epics set in the classical world—all such films partake of fiction.[27] Most notably, no historical film (in the terms of Stephen Heath) escapes the obligation of a narration. According to the "classical" narrative strategies of historical epics to which films about ancient Rome largely conform, romance is the point of the historical discourse—very often pagan boy meets Christian girl. History is contained within domestic conflict and provided with the perfection of a story and an end in the rescue or the death of the loving couple.[28]

Although cinema's historical fictions provided a door to the past for the young Gore Vidal, until recently they were scarcely considered by professional historians and other critics as a mechanism for constructing the past that might have a legitimacy of its own. From the beginnings of cinema, many intellectuals had expressed disquiet at the public's apparently debased taste for the representation of historical romance on screen. By the time the neo-realist movement was initiated in the late 1930s, the historical films which had previously dominated Italian film production (and so excited the youthful hero of Fellini's *Roma*) were savagely castigated by Luchino Visconti as a "cinema of corpses":

> They live blissfully unaware that times have changed, in the reflection of things long extinct, in that unreal world of theirs where one could blissfully tread on false floors of coloured chalk and paper, where backdrops wobbled at the rush of air from a suddenly opened door, where tissue paper roses bloomed perpetually, where styles and epochs blended in a generous confusion, where, to drive the point home, bewigged Cleopatras, "Liberty" style and clutching their whips, vamped morose and brawny Mark Anthonies in whalebone corsets.[29]

Such films, according to the historian Guido Fink, produced a double masquerade in which producers adapted and distorted the Roman past to the dictates of a Fascist propaganda, which was itself inspired by the remote and rhetorical heroes of a distorted Rome. For Fink, the subsequent production of Visconti's *Ossessione* (1943) and other neo-realist works constituted a healthy and refreshing reaction against the pompous farce of the

Italian historical films of earlier decades. The new neorealist style of film production represented "a pent-up thirst for truth, a need to discover the real Italy that the cautious and guilty artificiality of Fascist cinema had concealed for so many years."[30]

After the United States came to dominate the international market in historical films in the 1930s and again in the 1950s, Hollywood's film histories were frequently dismissed as garish, vulgar, and sensational spectacles and derided as standardized studio products.[31] Here too criticism of these films intensified as their market value began to decline. In one of the many appraisals of Hollywood's historical "blockbusters" to be published in the film journals of the early 1960s, Penelope Houston and John Gillett wrote in *Sight and Sound* of the blockbusters' stylistic and moral conservatism necessitated by the studios' huge financial investment in such products:

> When in doubt, use a well-tried formula. For producers seeking inspiration in a time of crisis, the familiar Hollywood dictum could mean only one thing. The religious spectacle, whether inspired directly by the Bible or by the highly exploitable conflicts of Romans and Christians, is as old as the cinema itself. Hollywood carried on from where the silent Italians left off, and Cecil B. DeMille converted the formula into his own personal (and profitable) mixture of would-be eroticism and biblical tub-thumping. With wider screens and greater facilities, there seemed no reason why even his grandiose flights of fancy should not be surpassed. And the audience was ready-made, waiting to respond with the proper degree of self-satisfaction to the overwhelming righteousness of it all.[32]

Similarly, in an issue of *Films and Filming* of the same period, Raymond Durgnat denigrated the Hollywood penchant for presenting history in a contemporary and provincial mode:

> It's a pity that by sheer weight of budget the epic has come to be thought of as an American speciality, for the Americans are rather bad at them.... Even the sophisticated Aldrich's *Sodom and Gomorrah* boringly opposes the virtuous, hard-working, patriarchal Hebrews and the rich, corrupt, Lesbian-dominated Sodomians. Stewart Granger tries to get the Israelites to control Sodom by means of their virtual salt-monopoly, and the ethical dilemmas of fighting capitalist greed by capitalist means are honestly stated. Aldrich's film is vitiated however by its stilted style and by the Israel-Sodom antithesis, based as it is on the contrast too often made by old-fashioned American puritans, between rural America (hardworking, frugal, virtuous) and the big city (rich, pleasure-ridden, corrupt).[33]

In more recent years, however, film scholarship has elaborated a variety of productive critical strategies for interpreting the relationship between cinema and history.[34] According to the account of Marc Ferro in *Cinéma et histoire. Le cinéma, agent et source de l'histoire* (1977), cinema has much to offer the historian. Documentary films should be of interest as sources of contemporary history and propaganda films (such as those produced with the assistance or in the interests of the Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet regimes) as agents of history. But historical fiction films are only allocated a limited role by Ferro as secondary source material for an analysis of the present period of their production. Even if it speaks about the past, film is for Ferro always and only a narrative in the present tense. "True" historical reality, then, resides not in the represented past, but in the present so represented. The medieval Russia, for example, of Sergei Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966) becomes a kind of historical veneer which can be chipped away to reveal the contemporary Soviet Union lying beneath its surface.[35] But if, in that paradoxical sense, the historical film is always contemporary, it would scarcely seem to matter which historical period has been chosen for cinematic reconstruction. The cinematic representations of the slave rebellion of Spartacus, for example, would have no common bond at all but be grounded entirely in the specific moment of their production, each operating independently as a pretext for narratives about the present.

For decades, scholars like Ferro privileged the documentary over other modes of filmic discourse as the most direct and objective cinematic instrument for historical analysis. But others have questioned the appropriateness of such a strict separation between history and fiction, or between cinema as a "trace of the real" and a "machine of dreams."[36] As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has observed, soon after the invention of cinema it inserted itself into "the problematic of the historical record" and itself interrogated the supposed distinctions between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood in history, for its photographic dimension also became the essence of its capacity for illusion.[37] Moreover, since the 1970s, a new self-consciousness about traditional conceptions of history and the rhetorical conventions for its presentation have collapsed the formerly clear boundaries between history and fiction. *All* historical discourses, according to this mode of analysis, are a form of fiction. All history involves storytelling and a plot, troping and figurality. Such "metahistory," as defined by Hayden White, has drawn attention to the overlapping codes and conventions of nineteenth-century historical representation, whether those of "professional" history, museum displays, or historical novels, paintings, plays, and (eventually) films. These interconnected structures of historical narration have, it is argued, made possible the emergence over the last two centuries of an integrated regime of historical representation in which modern societies have made meanings out of the remains of their past and, thereby, addressed their present.[38]

For the film historian Pierre Sorlin, in his influential works *Sociologie du cinéma* (1977) and *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (1980), history as used in film is a useful device to speak of the present time while also being a discourse about the past. For Sorlin, the historical dimension of an historical film lies not only in its relationship to the period of its production, but also in its utilization of a more or less rigorously constituted past in which its audience is disposed to take an interest. The analysis of historical film then opens up two possible sectors of research for historians: the study of contemporary society through cinematic rereadings of a selectively represented past, and the study of the modern transmission of historical consciousness. Historians should try to understand not whether a particular cinematic account of history is true or disinterested, but what the logic of that account may be, asking why it emphasizes this question, that event, rather than others. The address to the past may embrace an appeal to authority, an escape into nostalgia, or a search for origins; the selection of a particular historical episode or reference period may carry particular political allegiances or have a specific bearing on current social conflicts in a given community. As a powerful new mode of historiography emerging from nineteenth-century representational forms, historical films should be examined not only in terms of their stylistic conventions for representing the past in the present, but also in terms of their economic and technological strategies for the creation of a consciousness of history that far exceed those of historical scholarship in range and impact.[39]

Thus according to the productive approach initiated by Pierre Sorlin, historical film is a discourse about the past as well as the present and, echoing the much earlier rhetoric of the director D. W. Griffith, such film constitutes an imaginative historiography, one distinctive and significant component of a modern culture's historical capital. The cinematic representations of Roman history then are fictions, but fictions thatshare the usage of a well-defined and limited historical period that calls up a constellation of specific meanings for its mass audiences. And the cinematic resurrection of ancient Rome operates not as a mere substitute for a narrative of present times, but as one of the chief transmitters of twentieth-century historical knowledge of the Roman world.

For Fellini then, a certain kind of cinema can be truer to the present fragmented condition of classical antiquity than more conventional historical scholarship. Cinema can offer a visual archaeology of the past and, moreover, bring it to vivid life before the eyes of its fascinated spectators:

> Another very tempting aspect of this cinematic procedure is one of evoking this world not through the fruit of bookish, scholastic documentation, a literal fidelity to the text, but rather in the way an archeologist reconstructs something alluding to the form of an amphora or a statue from a few potsherds. Our film, through the fragmentary recurrence of its episodes, should restore the image of a vanished world without completing it, as if those characters, those habits, those milieux were summoned for us in a trance, recalled from their silence by the mystic ritual of a séance.
>
> What is important, it seems to us, is not descriptive precision, historical fidelity, the complacently erudite anecdote, or elegant narrative construction, but that the characters and their adventures live before our eyes as though caught unawares.[25]

The question, for Fellini, would not be *whether* cinema should have a place in the classical tradition but *what else* could best capture the mysterious, obscure and ethereal quality of the ancient world today.

Notes

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Cf. Winkler (1995), 140–2.

2. For *Roman Scandals* as a film of social protest, see Thompson and Routt (1987).

3. On this opening sequence of *Roma,* see Bondanella (1987), 246–7, and (1992), 193–205; Foreman (1993); Verdone (1994), 84–8.

4. See Bondanella (1992), 195, and Foreman (1993), 156. Cf. McBride (1978) on a similar reminiscence of childhood film-going in the earlier television documentary, *Fellini: A Director's Notebook.*

5. On Eliot's address in particular, see Ziolkowski (1993), 129–34, and Kennedy (1995).

6. See Gamel (1991), 220; Kennedy (1995), 74–7. Note that Highet (1949), 3, refers to the survival of the Latin language as "one more proof that classical culture is an essential and active part of our civilization."

7. Benjamin (1973), 223. For which, see Elsaesser (1984), 77, and Storey (1993), 108–9.

8. Knox (1994), 305.

9. Bloom (1987), 344 and cf. 64 and 304–12. On Bloom, see Taplin (1989), 186–8 and 196; Hawkins (1990), 109–10; Rose (1991), 18.

10. On Arnold's distinction between Culture and Anarchy, see Turner (1981), 17–36; Prickett (1989); Storey (1993), 21–7.

11. Calder in Reinhold (1984), 10.

12. Knox (1994), 12–4.

13. Martindale (1993), 24, remarking on the work of Terry Eagleton.

14. See, for example, Storey (1993) for a survey of cultural theory and its analysis of high/popular distinctions. Cf., more briefly, MacCabe (1986).

15. For the importance and the impact of this aspect of Bernal's otherwise highly contentious work, see for example Edith Hall (1991).

16. Kennedy (1995), 75. On disclosing "the contemporary horizon of interest" of the interpreter who investigates the classical tradition, see Gamel (1991), 220, who quotes the work of the reception theorist Hans Robert Jauss.

17. See Griffin (1992), 141, and Ziolkowski (1993), 129–34.

18. Highet (1949), 389. I am indebted to Max Schaeffer for drawing my attention to this passage in his undergraduate dissertation.

19. Beard and Henderson (1995), 6.

20. Beard and Henderson (1995), 107.

21. Beard and Henderson (1995), 105–6.

22. Storey (1993), 15, 155, and 160.

23. The following two sections, at various points, draw on and extend material first discussed in Wyke (1996).

24. See Bann (1984), 138; Costa (1989), 3; Williams (1990), 4; Nowell-Smith (1990), 163; Belton (1992), 30–1; Lant (1992), 88–9.

25. See Grindon (1994), 3–4, and Gori (1994), 12, on Griffith's comments in, for example, *Motography* for January 1915. Cf. Higashi (1994), 27, on the views of Cecil B. DeMille.

26. From the review of *Cabiria* in the Naples journal *Film,* 23 April 1914, quoted in Martinelli (1992), 75. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

27. See, generally, the discussions of historical film in Sorlin (1980); Ferro (1988); Ortoleva (1991); Gori (1994); Grindon (1994).

28. Heath (1977), 37–43, on which see Rosen (1984), 17–34. Cf. Sorlin (1980), 21–2; Grindon (1994), 5–16.

29. *Cinema* 6.119 (1941) quoted and translated in Fink (1974).

30. Fink (1974), 119–20.

31. Hirsch (1978), 12 and 29–32; Babington and Evans (1993), 1–3; Rosenstone (1995), 3–4.

32. Houston and Gillett (1963), 69.

33. Durgnat (1963), 11–12.

34. Major contributions to the cinema/history debate are conveniently collated in Gori (1994), and the debate's development is surveyed in Ortoleva (1991).

35. See Ferro (1988), 84, discussed in Gori (1988), 9–10 and (1994), 13–15, and Rondolino (1994), 164–5.

36. As Ortoleva (1991), 80–4.

37. Nowell-Smith (1977). Cf. Rosen (1984) and Ortoleva (1991), 80–3.

38. White (1973); Bann (1984) and (1990). Cf. Martindale and Martindale (1990), 141; Martindale (1993), 18–23; Rosenstone (1995), 3–4.

39. On the importance of Sorlin's work to the cinema/history debate, see Williams (1990); Ortoleva (1991), 37–42; Fledelius (1994), 118–20; Rondolino (1994), 165–6 and 177–9; Grindon (1994), 1–26; Rosenstone (1995), 3–13.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Cf. Pearson and Uricchio (1990), 243–4.

2. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). They locate the proliferation of such "invented traditions" specifically in the period between 1870 and 1914. Cf. Lowenthal (1985), 35–73.

3. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), 279–80; Reinhold (1984); Bondanella (1987), 115–50; Vance (1989), esp. 1–42; Richard (1994), 12–84.

4. Kennedy postscript in Reinhold (1984); Vance (1984); Bondanella (1987), 152–71; Galinsky (1992), esp. 53–73; Richard (1994), 85–122.

5. Vance (1989), esp. 30–67; Ziolkowski (1993), 146–93; Mayer (1994), 1–20.

6. See Mayer (1994), 189–290, which includes a script of the play. Cf. Solomon (1978), 126–34; Hirsch (1978), 105–12; Elley (1984), 130–5; Smith (1991), 22–7; Babington and Evans (1993), esp. 177–205.

7. Lowenthal (1985), 112–6.

8. Lovett (1982), 20; Springer (1987), esp. 65–74 and 136–57; Bondanella (1987), 158–65.

9. Quoted in Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), 267.

10. As Lopez-Celly (1939), 212–6. Cf. Croce (1914), 152–7; Calendoli (1967), 70–4; de Tommaso (1975), 110; Ghigi (1977), 733; de Vincenti (1988), 12–4; Brunetta (1993), 151–7; Parigi (1994), 67–9.

11. Bondanella (1987), 165–6, discusses the significance of the postcard. See, more generally, on pre-Fascist *romanità*, Cubberley (1988), xii; Cagnetta (1979), 15–34; Canfora (1980), 39–40; Visser (1992), 7–8; Moatti (1993), 128; Wyke (1994), 16.

12. See, for example, Brunetta (1986), 57; (1990), 123; (1991a), 64–5; (1993), 143–6.

13. Hay (1987), 12–3 and 151–2. Cf. more generally on the social function of early American cinema, Belton (1992), 31–2; Pearson and Uricchio (1990), 260–1; Higashi (1994), 28.

14. Brunetta (1991a), 64–5, and (1991b), 13–16; Bernardini (1982), 34, and (1986), 34–40; Cardillo (1987), 25–37; dall'Asta (1992), 19–20. Cf. Wyke (1996), 143 and (1997).

15. Paolella (1956), 166–70; Calendoli (1967); Cary (1974), 7–9; Elley (1984), 81–4; Usai (1985); Bondanella (1987), 207–8; Leprohon (1972), 30; dall'Asta (1992), 20–32; Dalle Vacche (1992), 27–52; Mayer (1994), 312–4. Contrast Parigi (1994), 69, who argues that *Cabiria* is not designed to express a colonialist nationalism.

16. Quoted and translated in Bondanella (1987), 176.

17. Cagnetta (1979); Canfora (1980), 76–146; Bondanella (1987), 181–206; Braun (1990); Visser (1992); Ziolkowski (1993), 15–7; Moatti (1993), 130–40; Benton (1995); Fraquelli (1995).

18. Cardillo (1987), 158–62; Bondanella (1987), 210–3; Gori (1988), 16–25; Gili (1990); Dalle Vacche (1992), 27–52; Quartermaine (1995); Becker (1995).

19. See Gili (1990), 94–7, and Quartermaine (1995), 205–6.

20. Cardillo (1987), 153; Gili (1990), 99; Quartermaine (1995), 206–7.

21. Wood (1975), 184.

22. Cf. Higashi (1994), 202–3, and Nadel (1993) on Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956). On the parallels with the present at work in *Ben-Hur* (1959), especially regarding the foundation of Israel, see Babington and Evans (1993), 201–2.

23. Babington and Evans (1993), 210–3.

24. For discussion of Kracauer's work, see Bergman (1971), xiii–xvi; Arcand (1974), 22; Sorlin (1980), 25–6; Elsaesser (1984); Allen and Gomery (1985), 159–67; Christensen (1987), 6–7; Ortoleva (1991), 43–53, and (1994), 319–28.

25. Lindgren (1963), 14–17; Calendoli (1967), 70–4; Solomon (1978), 15–6; Bernardini (1986), 35–40; de Vincenti (1988), 8–10; Brunetta (1991b), 14–5; dall'Asta (1992), 19–20. On the comparative development of American feature-length films see, for example, Gevinson (1988), 146–50; Pearson and Uricchio (1990); Higashi (1994), 1–33.

26. dall'Asta (1992), 31–2; Parigi (1994), 67–9.

27. Usai (1985), 54–5.

28. On the classical Hollywood style see, for example, Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (1985), esp. 1–308; Staiger (1986); Izod (1988), 53–7 and 86–7; Salt (1991), 49–54; Grindon (1994), 16–22.

29. Eckert (1978); Allen (1980); Doane (1989); Gaines (1989); Gaines and Herzog (1990); Stacey (1994), 176–223.

30. May (1980), 200–36; Izod (1988), 64–7 and 101–4; Hamer (1993), 118 and 121–2; Higashi (1994), esp. 142–78.

31. Thompson and Routt (1987), 35–6.

32. Thompson and Routt (1987), 36–43.

33. Solomon (1978), 134. Sample advertisements for such "Ben Hur" products are to be found in MGM's campaign books which were sent to theater managers to supply ideas for selling the film.

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