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Projecting Ancient Rome

Invented Traditions

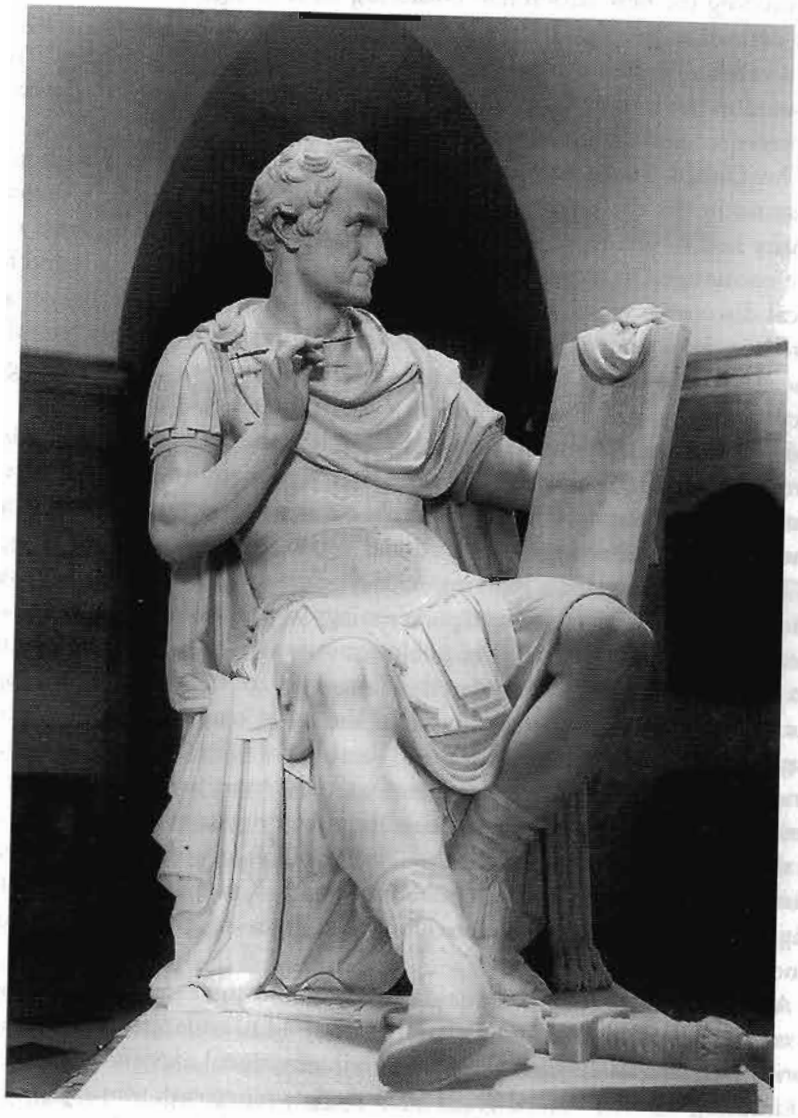
If historical films set in ancient Rome have now become a legitimate object of study for both classicists and historians, then what work needs to be done to write a history of such films? According to the terms recently set for cinema's own strategies for screening history, these films form part of an integrated regime of historical representation that constitutes the historical capital of twentieth=century cultures, and the reference period selected for projection ceases to be arbitrary and instead generates historical meaning through its relationship with other, extra-cinematic discourses about the past. Knowledge of those intertexts facilitates the exploration of how historical films function within a culture.[1] The reminiscences of cinema-going in the 1930s offered by Gore Vidal and Federico Fellini, their respective recollections of the neoclassical public architecture of Washington or the various Fascist celebrations of ancient Rome, suggest one important set of intertexts for the production and consumption of films about Roman history—namely the deployment of ancient Rome in the formation of the national identities of the United States and Italy.

The two nations which have been most prolific in their manufacture of cinematic histories of ancient Rome also assiduously created a whole array of "invented traditions" to connect themselves with the Roman past. I use "invented traditions" (a term taken from the historian Eric Hobsbawm) to refer to those discursive practices that, from the mid-eighteenth century, attempted to establish for a modern community a continuity with a suitable historical past. The purpose of these traditions was to cement group cohesion and legitimate action through the use of history, and the communities whose institutions, policies, and social relations were being established, symbolized, or legitimated historically were more often than not the newly formed nation-states. The awareness of an historical continuity, the creation of a cultural patrimony, served to enhance a sense of communal identity,

legitimating the new nation and bolstering its sovereignty in the eyes 0f its own and other peoples. By tracing its origins back into the past, a nation could validate its claims to power, property, and international prestige. And, if rooted in the remotest antiquity, a nation could make claims to the earliest precedent and the greatest dignity.[2]

The United States had constant recourse to an invented tradition of *romanitas* in the early years of the nation's foundation. American national identity had to be forged out of a mass of heterogeneous immigrants who were encouraged to accept and participate in a whole host of rituals and historical discourses which commemorated the history of the new nation and rooted it in a more remote past. Classical antiquity readily supplied America with a usable past—instant, communal history and cultural legitimacy in the eyes of Europe. America was thus created according to the model of an ideally conceived Roman republic. Roman republican ideals of liberty, civic virtue, and mixed government were densely evoked as precedent for and validation of the new republic during the struggle for independence and the subsequent constitutional debates of 1787–1788. In August 1777, for example, when replying to the peace offer made by the British general John Burgoyne, George Washington claimed: "The associated armies in America act from the noblest motives, liberty. The same principles actuated the arms of Rome in the days of her glory; and the same object was the reward of Roman valour." In the early national period, George Washington in particular became a focal point of efforts to Romanize American history. In pictures and statues and victory arches, he was to be seen draped in a Roman toga or attired in military costume. [illustration 2.1] In the literature of the period, the "father of his country" was hailed as another heroic symbol of the republican virtues of patriotism, self-sacrifice, frugality, and military acumen along the lines of the Roman leaders Cincinnatus, Cato, or Fabius.[3]

America's rhetoric of *romanitas* became more complex and ambiguous as its expansion southward and westward appeared to endanger its republican institutions and its Christian ethics. The international expositions and fairs held throughout the United States from the late nineteenth century until the end of the First World War celebrated the success of America's recent quest for empire through their use of pseudo-Roman imperial architecture, as did similarly designed state capitols, court houses, museums, universities, libraries, and railroad stations. Imperial Rome, however, had supplied the Founding Fathers with a striking anti-model for the social organization and government of the new nation. During the Revolutionary period, British politicians had been regularly clothed in the vices and villainy of the Roman emperors, and British colonial policy had been compared to the tyranny



2.1 Statue of George Washington in Roman military attire, from original by Antonio Canova, commissioned in 1815. [North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.]

which Rome had supposedly exercised over her provinces. As America's own empire grew from the mid-nineteenth century, so such earlier critiques of imperialism were turned against America itself. By the beginning of the twentieth century, critics were warning apocalyptically that, having forsaken Christianity and fallen into decadence, the nation was heading toward Armageddon. According to Henry Adams, the great-grandson of the Founding Father John Adams, when he looked out of his hotel window at New York in 1905 he "felt himself in Rome, under Diocletian, witnessing the anarchy, with no Constantine the Great in sight."[4]

Scholars, politicians, and intellectuals, ever since, have looked to the decline of the Roman empire to provide support for their dire predictions of America's coming fall. Perpetuated in the public architecture of the United States, allusions to Rome could thus assume a contradictory quality. Nonetheless, parallels between ancient Rome and modern America continued to surface and circulated widely in the popular representational forms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in classical-subject paintings and pyrodramas, toga plays and historical novels.[5] Most notably, General Lew Wallace's religious novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* constructs a stirring narrative in which the fictive Judaean's resistance to Roman rule and his conversion to Christianity effectively cast America as a new Holy Land capable of driving out its imperial rulers and establishing peace through the embrace of Christ. The novel was first published in 1880 and stayed on the bestseller lists for some fifty years. It was spectacularly staged from 1899, was adapted for the screen in 1907, 1925, and again in 1959, and even gave its hero's name to a town in Texas.[6]

American formulations of its relationship to ancient Rome, however, have always been less intimate and ultimately less pressing than the Italian conception of *romanità*. A certain confusion reigned over the relevance of both republican and imperial Rome to America because America's place within history, unlike that of European nations, was not clearly demarcated. Material remains of the classical past did not litter America's landscape as they did Italy's.[7] The surviving monuments and iconography of ancient Rome were frequently deployed in Italy during the course of the nineteenth century as political symbols in a struggle for power between the Papacy and the *risorgimento* revolutionaries. The Colosseum was pitted against the Roman forum, the Christian cross against the republican *fasces*. While the Church exploited archaeology as proof of the ultimate triumph of the Christian martyrs over the cruel persecutions of imperial Rome, the emerging nationalist movement sought out and paraded a precedent for a unified, secular Italy that was rooted in an earlier republican tradition of civic rather than religious virtue, of triumvirs and consuls, not tyrants. Thus when

Giuseppe Garibaldi was elected to the Constituent Assembly of 1849, he declared (if somewhat prematurely): "I believe profoundly that, now the papal system of government is at an end, what we need in Rome is a republic. . . . Can it be that the descendants of the ancient Romans are not fit to constitute a Republic? As some people in this body evidently take offence at this word, I reiterate 'Long live the republic!'"[8]

After the unification of Italy in 1861, the problem of assimilating its disparate peoples into a single nation was summarized by Massimo d'Azeglio thus: "We have made Italy: now we must make Italians."[9] Needing to justify itself historically, and in the face of continued opposition from the Vatican, the new secular body politic was able to find a major, and apparently self-evident, justification in the ancient civic virtues and military glories of the Roman republic and empire. The invented tradition of *romanità* gave to the heterogeneous Italians a piece of common national history, and, in an epidemic of literary production from unification into the first decade of the twentieth century, historical fictions such as Pietro Cossa's Roman tragedies or Raffaello Giovagnoli's Roman novels attempted to supply a unifying popular culture in which the grand figures of Roman history "get off their pedestals of togaed rhetoric" and speak simply and with a quotidian *verismo* of sacrifices for or betrayals of their country.[10]

Until the 1910s, however, narratives of imperial Rome were often vulnerable to appropriation by religious opponents of Italy's liberal government as gruesome analogies for the state repression of Catholic organizations and as ominous warnings of the Church's certain victory in the continuing struggle to reclaim her temporal power. But by the time the fiftieth year of Italian unity was grandly celebrated in 1911, both state and Church were finding common cause in imperial Rome as historical legitimation for Italy's colonial aspirations in the Mediterranean. In a speech to open an archaeological exhibition held at the Baths of Diocletian during the Great Exhibition of 1911, the Christian archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani expressed clearly the pressing imperial agenda that now lay behind such Italian displays of its Roman past. According to Lanciani, the *mostra archeologica* ought to form the basis of a future museum of the Roman empire "where Italian youth may seek inspiration for all those virtues which rendered Rome, morally as well as materially, the mistress of the world." On the eve of Italy's war against Turkey to wrest the colonies Tripolitania and Cyrenaica from the Ottoman empire, and despite the reservations of some critics, imperial Rome was everywhere invoked as the model of and reason for a new Italian empire. And, after victory in Africa, the discourse of historical continuity between ancient and modern imperialism continued to circulate widely, as a postcard reproduced in the English magazine *The Sphere* towards the end

2.2 "Italy brandishes the sword of ancient Rome," postcard from 1910s celebrating Italian victory in North Africa. [From private collection of Peter Bondanella.]

of 1911 testifies. An Italian sailor triumphantly grasps the sword of empire from the skeleton of a Roman soldier partially buried in the African sands. The caption beneath declares "Italy brandishes the sword of ancient Rome."[11] [illustration 2.2]

Historians of silent Italian cinema, such as Gian Piero Brunetta, have long argued that the war in Africa gave a decisive push toward the meeting of Italian cinematic production and the imperial ambitions of the nation-state. The many grand historical films set in ancient Rome which were produced in the period leading up to the First World War (and which obtained enormous critical acclaim and box-office success both in Italy and abroad) held a crucial role in the formation, interrogation, and dissemination of the rhetoric of *romanità*. Such films were both *about* ancient Rome and *for* modern Italy.[12]

The recently established institutions of cinema changed the relationship between historical narration and its audiences. The practice of cinema-going brought huge numbers of Italian spectators out of their homes into a shared public space and thus rendered their experience of historical reconstruction a more collective event than the private reading of a novel. The technologies of cinema spectacle could also accommodate on screen huge masses of people before whom, or even for whom, the protagonists of the narrative acted. Through these crowds of extras, mass audiences were able to visualize on screen their own collectivity and gain a stake in historical action. Historical films, therefore, became ideal vehicles for addressing the nation's sense of its own identity.[13] In the years preceding the First World War, there was a substantial increase of capital investment in the production of Italian feature-length historical films. Bound to the dictates of high finance and to the bourgeois values of its financial backers, Italian historical films began to prosper as an instrument of cultural hegemony. In the logic of their producers, they came to be regarded as a new form of popular university, capable of shaping the historical consciousness of their mass, largely illiterate audience and transmitting to them the symbols of Italy's recently constituted national identity. Historical films set in ancient Rome became a privileged means for the production and consumption of an imperial *romanità*. The projection on screen of the imperial eagles and the *fasces*, Roman military rituals and parades supplied a concentrated repertoire of glorious precedents for present combative action.[14] Thus, soon after victory in Africa, the celebratory film *Cabiria* (1914) represented a unified Roman community under the leadership of the morally upright general Scipio triumphing over a decadent and disorganized Carthage.[15]

Similarly, despite the relative political independence of the Italian film industry during the early years of the Fascist regime, at the time of the

African campaigns of 1935–1936 the Fascist government helped procure considerable capital investment for the production of the spectacular historical film *Scipione l'Africano* (1937), in which the hero is seen to lead a unified, rural, and warlike Rome to victory in Africa. The cinematic construction of the Roman general's character rehearsed a model for the perfect Fascist citizen, and his designed analogy with Mussolini was both exploited by the *duce* himself and recognized by the film's contemporary audience. Even before the March on Rome in October 1922, Mussolini had begun to appropriate the militant rhetoric of *romanità* to establish historical legitimacy and popular support for Fascism. In a speech reproduced in his newspaper *Il popolo d'Italia* for 21 April 1922, he declared:

> We dream of a Roman Italy, that is to say wise, strong, disciplined, and imperial. Much of that which was the immortal spirit of Rome is reborn in Fascism: the Fasces are Roman; our organization of combat is Roman, our pride and our courage are Roman: *civis romanus sum*. Now, it is necessary that the history of tomorrow, the history we fervently wish to create, not represent a contrast or a parody of the history of yesterday. . . . Italy has been Roman for the first time in fifteen centuries in the War and in the Victory: now Italy must be Roman in peacetime: and this renewed and revived *romanità* bears these names: Discipline and Work.[16]

In the 1930s, Roman iconography, architecture and sculpture, political rhetoric, and military ritual were systematically exploited to justify historically the Fascist aspiration to a colonial empire in the Mediterranean.[17] And, under the impetus of events in Africa, with the conquest of Ethiopia and the ensuing proclamation of Empire on 9 May 1936, the production of the historical film *Scipione l'Africano* became a work of the regime, on which the Ministries of Popular Culture, Finance, Home Affairs, and War collaborated (the last supplying infantry and cavalry troops as extras for the battle sequences).[18]

Soon after shooting the film, the cinematographer Luigi Freddi (who had been appointed four years previously to run a new film directorate within the Ministry of Popular Culture) avowed that the cinematic representation of Scipio's conquest of Africa had been expressly undertaken to service Italy's renewed imperial project. Writing in *Il popolo d'Italia* for 6 April 1937, he announced that

> *Scipione* was conceived on the eve of the African undertaking and was begun soon after the victory. It was desired because no theme for translation into spectacle seemed more suited than this to symbolize the intimate union

> between the past grandeur of Rome and the bold accomplishment of our epoch. And it seemed also that no filmic representation was capable of showing and framing, in the august tradition of the race, before ourselves and the world, the African undertaking of today as a logical corollary of a glorious past and an ardent present's indisputable reason for living. Perhaps never, in the history of cinema, has a film initiative been so full of deep spiritual significance derived from active consideration of history.[19]

The film was presented at the Venice Film Festival of November 1937, where it won the Mussolini Cup. Its subsequent distribution was supported by an extensive publicity campaign in the Italian press and by admiring reviews. Its political effectiveness then appeared to be confirmed by interviews with schoolchildren, whose essays on their viewing of the film were printed in a special edition of the cinema journal *Bianco e Nero* for August 1939. According to the introduction furnished by Giuseppe Bottai, the Minister for National Education: "For the children, Scipio is not the Roman hero, it is Mussolini. Through a subconscious power of transposition, the actions of Scipio become the actions of Mussolini. The analogy becomes identity."[20]

The evident meeting between liberal Italy's geopolitical ambitions and the narrative structures of *Cabiria* (1914), the seemingly perfect propagandist match between the Fascist regime's combative discourse of *romanità* and the production, distribution, and consumption of *Scipione l'Africano* (1937), may suggest that films concerning Roman history can be read as effective instruments of ideological control which, through spectacular and engaging historical reconstructions, manipulate their audiences to assent to a celebratory model of national identity. Yet the independently produced *Cabiria* was a huge commercial success in Italy, the (uniquely) state-supported *Scipione* a failure. Furthermore, many successful Italian films of the 1910s and 1920s resurrected ancient Rome's imperial cruelties and Christian martyrdoms rather than its republican triumphs, while Hollywood histories of Rome have appropriated Fascist constructions of *romanità* to turn them back against the regime which produced them, and have constantly exploited the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the American national discourse of *romanitas* to address iniquities within the United States itself. Screening ancient Rome could supply equivocal history lessons for both Italians and Americans.

In the *New York Times* of 22 November 1959, the film critic Bosley Crowther heaped the highest praise on MGM's latest adaptation of the famous novel *Ben Hur* for the film's perceived pertinence and timeliness:

> Obviously, this story, with its personal conflicts based on religious and political differences, is more concrete to present generations, which have seen tyrants and persecutors at work than it could have been to most of the people who read it in the nineteenth century. And it is this paramount realization of the old story's present significance that properly has been foremost in the reasonings of Mr. Wyler and the man (or men) who prepared the script. It is indeed this realization that has justified a remake at this time.
>
> Now, in the hero's conversations with Messala, one can hear echoes of the horrible clash of interests in Nazi Germany. In the burgeoning of hatred in Ben-Hur one can sense the fierce passion for revenge that must have moved countless people in Poland and Hungary. And in the humble example of Jesus, most tastefully enacted in this film, one can feel genuine spiritual movement toward the ideal of the brotherhood of man.

As Michael Wood has observed in *America in the Movies* (1975), Hollywood epics of the Cold War era frequently cast British theater actors as villainous Egyptian pharaohs or Roman patricians, and American film stars as their virtuous Jewish or Christian opponents. Thus films like *Ben-Hur* replay in an ancient setting the glorious struggle of "the colonies against the mean mother country."[21] In New Testament epics, the United States takes on the sanctity of the Holy Land and receives the endorsement of God for all its past and present fights for freedom against tyrannical regimes (imperial Britain, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, or the Communist Soviet Union). In such narratives, a hyperbolically tyrannical Rome stands for the decadent European Other forever destined to be defeated by the vigorous Christian principles of democratic America.[22] Critics have also argued, however, that such film narratives sometimes exhibit an additional and contradictory analogy between the repressions of the Roman empire and those exercised *within* the United States. When in *The Robe* (1953), for example, the emperor Caligula demands that a Roman soldier infiltrate Christian subversives and name names, Bruce Babington and Peter Evans hear clear echoes of the directives of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which required those called before it to disclose the names of colleagues with Communist Party connections. *The Robe*, momentarily, offers a political critique of the surveillance, investigation, and police-state manoeuvres at work during the course of America's "Red Scare."[23]

If film scholarship has problematized the function of historical film as a national discourse, it often seems to utilize a form of discursive slippage between film and society which requires interrogation. Ever since the psychoanalytic readings of German cinema offered by Siegfried Kracauer in

his seminal book *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film* (1947), where Kracauer posited a relationship between Weimar films and Fascism, many film critics have justified reading the films of a particular nation as a manifestation of that nation's psycho-social disposition, as an expression of that society's subconscious fears and desires. Against the trends of auteur theory, films are regarded as the outcome not of an individual creativity, but of a team or social group. Since film needs a public, it addresses itself and appeals to a heterogeneous mass audience whose desires it must satisy. If filmmakers and their financial backers then seek to correspond to the beliefs and values of their audiences, films can be considered as reflections of the mentality of a nation. By means of this convenient critical shift from film to society, the historical film in particular can be viewed as a central component of the historical text that a society writes about itself, as a modern form of historiography that, if properly investigated, can disclose how a society conceives and exploits its past to construct its own present and future identities. The inadequacies of Kracauer's approach, however, are well documented. Such accounts of the relation between film and society tend to place most emphasis on the social and ideological contexts of film production and to overlook the specificities of the institution of cinema. But only a partial examination of the relation between film and society (or cinema and history) can be achieved if any sociological or psychoanalytic examination of film texts is separated from the study of the technical and economic conditions of their production, the formation and development of their representational conventions, and the process of constructing and consuming their aesthetic pleasures.[24]

The Pleasures of the Look

The cinematic reconstructions of Roman history produced by the Italian and Hollywood film industries have always exceeded in function any imperative to make proprietarial claim on classical virtues and victories (or to question those claims). In the 1910s, for example, they were also utilized to legitimate cinema as a new art form and win international cultural prestige for their country of origin, in the 1930s to showcase commodities, and in the 1950s to combat television's assault on film industry profits. In all these respects and more, the projection of ancient Rome on screen has often worked to place its spectators on the side of decadence and tyranny.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, a new generation of Italian entrepreneurs began to invest heavily in the production of films (as they had in the manufacture of automobiles and aeroplanes) in order to raise Italy to the ranks of the great industrial powers and to affirm for it a position of

commercial prestige on foreign markets. As a result of capital investment, industrial competition, and the economic and aesthetic need to increase the artistic status and range of motion pictures, Italian films rapidly increased in length; developed their own formal strategies of editing and camera movement, staging, set design and special effects; dealt with more ambitious themes; and often filled the screen with huge numbers of extras and expensively produced spectacles to rival and outdo theatrical shows and the narrative scale of the novel. Feature-length film narratives set in antiquity, such as *Quo Vadis?* (1913) and *Cabiria* (1914), formed part of a strategy to win over the bourgeoisie to the new cinematic art-form by bestowing on the modern medium a grandiose register and an educative justification. Such films borrowed from the whole spectrum of nineteenth-century modes of historical representation (literary, dramatic, and pictorial) in pursuit of authenticity and authority for cinema as a mode of high culture, and to guarantee mass, international audiences through the reconstruction in moving images of familiar and accessible events of Roman history.[25]

In their search for intertexts that would be familiar to bourgeois spectators, however, Italian filmmakers did not confine themselves to the domestic narratives of ancient Rome available in the novels of Rafaello Giovagnoli or the tragedies of Pietro Cossa, but repeatedly adapted to screen the historical fictions of religious persecution which had permeated the popular literary imagination of nineteenth-century Europe, such as Lord Bulwer Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola* (1854), or Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis?* (1895), although such fictions were now at odds with the secular *romanità* being promulgated by the liberal government. The commercial and critical success of such film adaptations, therefore, cannot be explained wholly in terms of nationalistic drives. Films like *Quo Vadis?* principally won domestic and international acclaim because they were capable of demonstrating the imaginative power of the cinematic mechanism at a time of virulent attack on the new medium. Putting into the present an exhibitionist spectacle of pomp and magnificence, of grand crowds and monumental architecture, of orgies, seductions, and sadistic martyrdoms, these extraordinarily costly historical reconstructions excited the voyeuristic look of their spectators and provoked the pleasure of gazing on the vividly realized vices and exoticisms of Rome's imperial villains.[26] Even the magnificently depicted scenes in *Cabiria* of child sacrifice in the gigantic Carthaginian temple of Moloch have been described as a double conquest—over the watching Romans within the film's narrative and over the film's external spectators. According to film critic Paolo Cherchi Usai:

> Heroes and enemies— . . . they may hesitate between the duty to defend their country and the temptation to yield to the impulses of luxury—but they are slaves to what they see: the power of the eye, in *Cabiria*, aspires to finality.
>
> The crucial theme of the film is, in this respect, the tragedy of the senses. The most fleeting of all, the look, makes palpable what cinema cannot offer to the touch: the perception of the dimensions of the royal palace's architecture, the movement of the armies beneath the gaze of the cinecamera-Moloch, the sway of the figures knelt before the altar of the eternal fire. Demoniacal music accompanies the bloody scenes, the aroma of incense carries onto the film the odours of the temple. . . . For the first time cinema pretends to a total, definitive, conquest of the sensible world.[27]

Early Italian cinematic histories of Rome such as *Quo Vadis?* and *Cabiria* had been released in the United States to critical acclaim, obtained substantial box-office success, and achieved a significant influence over American film production in the years preceding the First World War. After the war, however, Hollywood studios began to standardize both the production and the consumption of their feature-length films according to the formalized codes of a new cinematic representational system now known customarily as "the classical Hollywood style," while nonetheless differentiating their products in accompanying publicity as both original and unique. The classical Hollywood style for representing history departed substantially from the mechanisms for the visualization of the collective that had driven the historical narratives of Italian cinema in the 1910s. Whereas in the earlier aesthetics of Italian silent cinema its protagonists had merged visually in space with the community and its heroes had acted in a socially structured landscape, the protagonists of the classical Hollywood narrative were more frequently isolated from the collective through the use of medium, close, and point-of-view shots and through their positioning in the center of the film frame. Emphasis was now placed on individuals whose psychological motivations were seen to cause historical action. Detached from their surroundings, associated with the personae of the stars who played them, no longer located in a strongly specified historical moment or a socially structured community, they were transformed into characters endowed with traits and in search of private fulfillment. The development, in the late 1920s, of the technologies of synchronized sound also led to a preference for presentist or contemporary film narratives. The protagonists of American sound films in the late 1920s and early 1930s, whether they were housewives, gangsters, newspaper tycoons, Roman emperors, or Ptolemaic queens, spoke in a dialogue that was grounded in the idioms of contemporary America.[28]

Hollywood's classical film style, the development of film technology, and the economic imperatives of the American film industry, all contributed to the privileging of both the individual and the present in the film narratives of the 1920s and 1930s. In a consumer-oriented economy, Hollywood films became showcases for the display of commodities; and the film studios, on the release of their products, encouraged the organization of merchandising tie-ins with other consumer industries. Through their displays of fashions, furnishings, accessories, and cosmetics, the interconnected institutions of cinema and the department store could train the view and orient the material aspirations of their consuming subjects.[29] Pressure was accordingly brought to bear on the studios by their marketing and sales management to produce films with contemporary themes, such as the popular social comedies directed by Cecil B. DeMille in the 1920s. Even films of Roman history, such as DeMille's *Cleopatra* (1934), were subjected to such marketing strategies and commodified—for the Egyptian queen was sold to female spectators in the form of "Cleopatra" gowns, perfumes, hairstyles, soaps, and cigarettes.[30]

The commodification of the past and the solicitation of a consumer gaze frequently generated a conflict between the diegesis and the visual style of films set in antiquity. Thus *Roman Scandals* (1933), the musical comedy which Gore Vidal was forbidden to see, troped imperial Rome in two distinct and antithetical ways. The film's narrative drive abandons any satisfying equation between American society and the civic virtues of republican Rome to present instead an hyperbolic articulation of the Depression's socio-economic problems, where bankers become emperors and the poor dispossessed slaves. In a pointed, populist message, imperial Rome stands in for the corruption and injustice of 1930s America.[31] Yet embedded in this narrative of social protest is a musical sequence that is quite at odds with it. Directed by Busby Berkeley, the elaborate production number is set in the women's baths of the imperial court at Rome, where the hero Eddie (in order to keep up his disguise) is compelled to sing advice to the female slaves on how to "Keep Young and Beautiful." Through the similarity of the women's appearance, and through Berkeley's repetitive choreography and rigid editing, the dancing girls are dismembered into body parts—thighs, nails, lips, hair, and eyes—all of which require attentive cosmetic care, according to the song's lyrics, "if you want to be loved." For the consuming female spectators at this point, imperial Rome no longer stands for corruption and tyranny but for luxury, eroticism, and a glamor available for purchase at their local department store.[32]

Even the godly historical epics produced in the Cold War era, such as *Quo Vadis* (1951), *The Robe* (1953), *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (1954), and

Ben-Hur (1959), commodified their religious narratives. A substantial part of the enormous profit made by the MGM studio out of their second screen adaptation of General Lew Wallace's nineteenth-century novel, for example, came from the sale of associated "Ben-Hur" merchandise such as toy swords, helmets and armor, model chariots, wallpaper, jewelry, sandals, and even raincoats and umbrellas.[33] Part of the motivation for the production of such historical epics and their deliberate link with the pleasures of shopping lay in Hollywood's economic need to recoup the severe loss of earnings it had experienced in the early 1950s as a result of the competition of television for cinema's audiences. Hollywood's fight against television was conducted as "a duel of screens," in terms of the size of the budget and the size of the image.[34] The industry invested heavily in the technological novelties of Technicolor, widescreen, and stereophonic sound, which it considered necessary to recapture the market, and privileged for big-budget production genres such as the musical, the adventure film, the Western, and the historical epic as those whose narratives were most capable of accommodating and naturalizing the new emphasis on stylization and ostentatious spectacle.[35]

Grand enough to fill the screen, lavish historical films about the rise of Christianity played a decisive role in Hollywood's battle to reconquer a mass audience during the 1950s. Such epics, as the film theorist Stephen Neale has observed in his discussion of genre, readily supplied many opportunities for cinematic exhibitionism and spectatorial scopophilia.[36] Exotic locations, extravagant sets, colorful decor and costumes, spectacular action (chariot races, gladiatorial combats, Christian martyrdoms, military parades and battles), overwhelming visual effects, and conspicuous costs were all available to the astonished gaze of both the films' internal and external spectators.[37] The films' narratives were also thought capable of matching their spectacle in scale and appeal, offering subjects that were prestigious yet familiar, seemly uncontroversial, educational, spiritually uplifting, and of immense relevance to conservative America's self-portrayal during the Cold War era as the defender of the Faith against the godlessness of Communism.[38] Thus *The Robe* (1953), the first film to be launched in a widescreen format, was based on a vastly popular religious novel published in 1942 by the Congregational minister Lloyd C. Douglas. His account of the conversion of a Roman soldier to Christianity (after witnessing the Crucifixion and coming into contact with Christ's discarded robe) had been immediately bought up by the film producer Frank Ross for its strong market potential. According to an article in *The Tidings* of 27 January 1950, Ross had anticipated that a wartime adaptation to screen of a conflict between Roman decadence and Christian purity would present a parallel

with the persecutions currently being instigated by Hitler and Mussolini. Still unmade as a film in 1950, the critic of *The Tidings* suggested an even more pressing parallel now available to the novel's supposedly reluctant adaptors:

> It is easy to appreciate that Mr. Ross and his collaborators were brought to a complete stop when the lights later changed to red and one whom they had regarded as an ally of Democracy became the greatest modern despot of them all.
>
> If, however, there was anything to the idea of extending the Douglas novel into modern parallels, it would seem that the Hollywood dramatists now had more to go on than ever before. For at last the great struggle between Christ and anti-Christ had been joined, not merely upon political levels but upon the fundamental level of religion also.

When, however, the widescreen version of *The Robe* was finally released by 20th Century-Fox in 1953, in its production, distribution, and reception as much (if not more) attention was paid to its technical virtuosity as to its political parallels with the present. [illustration 2.3] The intense spectacle of CinemaScope threatened to eclipse the film's pious religious narrative in celebration of Hollywood's newly enlarged film frame. In particular, the opening sequence of *The Robe* has been described by Bruce Babington and Peter Evans in *Biblical Epics: Sacred Narrative in the Hollywood Cinema* (1993) as an ultra-dramatic rendering of this moment of technological history in which dark red curtains open in a slow movement to reveal an ever-increasing panoramic spectacle of ancient Rome to the astonished viewer.[39] The self-reflexive invitation of *The Robe* to enter into a newly extended screen space was met with extraordinary enthusiasm at the time of the film's release. A review in *Time* magazine for 28 September 1953, for example, stated admiringly that

> *The Robe* would have been a good movie in two-dimensional black and white. In CinemaScope, which uses a wide-angle lens to throw its picture on a curved screen nearly three times the normal width, it all but overpowers the eye with spectacular movie murals of slave markets, imperial cities, grandiose palaces and panoramic landscapes that are neither distorted nor require the use of polarized glasses. In CinemaScope closeups, the actors are so big that an average adult could stand erect in Victor Mature's ear, and its four-directional sound track often rises to a crescendo loud enough to make moviegoers feel as though they were locked in a bell tower during the Angelus. Obviously, Hollywood has finally found something louder, more

2.3 Poster advertising the widescreen technology of *The Robe* (1953). [Postcard from private collection of Maria Wyke.]

colorful and breathtakingly bigger than anything likely to be seen on a home TV screen for years to come.

The Roman historical epics of the 1950s provided a site for the display of the new technologies developed by the Hollywood film industry to rival and outdo television in the pleasure of the look, but what excited that look and drew spectators back into cinemas was as much the widescreen wickedness of the Romans as the piety of their Christian victims. As Michael Wood has argued, despite casting Christians as the diegetic heroes, such Cold War films visually celebrated their Roman oppressors:

> All these stories invite our sympathy for the oppressed, of course—all the more so because we know that by generously backing these losers we shall find we have backed winners in the end. But then the movies, themselves, as costly studio productions, plainly take the other side. They root for George III against the founding fathers, they are all for tyranny and Rome, more imperialist than the emperor. The great scenes in these films, the reasons for our being in the cinema at all—the orgies, the triumphs, the gladiatorial games—all belong to the oppressors. The palaces, the costumes, the pomp . . . are all theirs. It is the Romans who provide the circuses, who give us a Rome to be gaudily burned. It is Nero and the Pharaohs who throw the parties with all the dancing girls.[40]

The pleasures of looking were accentuated by CinemaScope, while the money and labor invested in the manufacture of those pleasures were self-consciously paraded within the widescreen epics and in the extra-cinematic discourses generated around the films' production and exhibition. Unprecedented press, radio, and television coverage, for example, constantly attended the making of *The Robe* and its extravagant worldwide premieres. Its initial screening at the Roxy in New York, on 16 September 1953, was held in a carnival atmosphere, while king-sized searchlights played over the arrival of huge numbers of invited guests and the vast crowds assembled to catch a glimpse of them.[41] Both on and off screen, Hollywood celebrated its capacities to duplicate the splendors of the past. Thus, again in the words of Michael Wood, Hollywood's histories of Rome became "a huge, many-faceted metaphor for Hollywood itself."[42] The reconstruction on screen and exhibition of ancient Rome came to stand for Hollywood's own fantastic excess—its technological and aesthetic innovations, its grandeur and glamour, its ostentation, and the lavishness of its expenditure and consumption. And spectators of Hollywood's widescreen epics were invited to position

themselves not only as pure Christians but also as Romans luxuriating in a surrender to the splendors of film spectacle itself.[43]

The Case Studies

The projection of ancient Rome on screen has functioned not only as a mechanism for the display or interrogation of national identities but also, and often in contradiction, as a mechanism for the display of cinema itself—its technical capacities and its cultural value. One way, therefore, to interrogate films about ancient Rome is to examine their intersection with the national, political, economic, and cultural identities of the communities in which they are produced while, at the same time, exploring the ways such films reformulate those identities in specifically cinematic terms, building up their own historiographic conventions of style, address, and aesthetic pleasure.[44]

Broad surveys of the huge numbers of cinematic representations of ancient Rome made in the United States, Italy, France, Great Britain, and elsewhere, are already conveniently available in such works as Jon Solomon's *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (1978) or Derek Elley's *The Epic Film: Myth and History* (1984). *Projecting the Past* will proceed, instead, by exploring in depth four case studies—specific segments of Roman history that have been repeatedly resurrected on screen by both the Italian and the Hollywood film industries from the 1910s up to the early 1960s. This strategy accounts for the absence of attention to films centered around the fictive hero Ben-Hur which are all exclusively products of the United States, or films centered around the African victories of the Roman general Scipio, which are characteristic of the Italian film industry. There is, nonetheless, a certain arbitrary quality to my choice as case studies of the rebellion of Spartacus, the affairs of Cleopatra, the persecutions of Nero, and the destruction of Pompeii. The assassination of Julius Caesar or the intrigues of the empress Messalina, for example, have also been frequent objects of both Italian and American cinematic recreations, and I propose to explore their use in future publications.

There are also inevitable evidentiary limits to my analyses. For example, more Italian films set in ancient Rome have survived from the silent era than American ones, and the former are accordingly better documented, while prints, production records, or press reviews for Hollywood historical films of the sound era are often more readily accessible than for Italian historical films of the same period. Furthermore, there are many textual variations to the individual films here investigated. Prints have been mutilated, shortened, or sometimes reedited for distribution at different times or to different markets.[45] *Projecting the Past*, therefore, makes no claims to comprehensiveness either in the choice of case studies or in the selection of films for detailed analysis within each case study. Instead, this book constitutes an assembly of disparate histories of the social, ideological, formal, technological, and economic determinants of a limited number of films set in ancient Rome, which histories are then juggled to form a variety of configurations and hierarchies. No attempt is made to recuperate such heterogeneity into a project that might narrate the "total history" of ancient Rome on screen.[46]

According to the historian David Lowenthal:

> The past remains integral to us all, individually and collectively. We must concede the ancients their place. . . . But their place is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country; it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present.[47]

The aim of this book is to explore, through the consideration of some notable cinematic representations of ancient Rome, the place of antiquity in twentieth-century mass culture. It will become clear from the subsequent case studies that, within the institutions of cinema, ancient Rome performs its own specific operations and that those operations are not uniform. The Roman films so frequently manufactured in the United States and Italy demonstrate a considerable variety and discontinuity in their narrations of Roman history, in the rapport they establish between the Roman past and the present moment of its cinematic reconstruction, in the cultural competences on which the films draw, and in the aesthetic pleasures of historical reconstruction which they offer their disparate audiences. Ancient Rome has been constantly reinvented to suit new technologies for its cinematic narration and new historical contexts for the interpretation of the Roman past in the present. *Projecting the Past* thus aims to disclose the rich variety of functions Roman historical films have had in twentieth-century culture and the diversity of readings of ancient Rome they have offered their millions of spectators.

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.

34. Wood (1975), 169.

35. Neale (1983), 34–6; Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (1985), 353–64; Belton (1992), esp. 183–210.

36. Neale (1983), 35. Cf. dall'Asta (1992), 31–2.

37. Houston and Gillett (1963); Wood (1975), 165–80; Sklar (1975), 294–6; Hirsch (1978), 29; Rondolino (1980), 65; Neale (1983), 34–6; Belton (1992); Babington and Evans (1993), 6–8.

38. Cf. on the Cold War rhetoric of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* (1956), Whitfield (1991), 218–9; Nadel (1993); Higashi (1994), 202–3.

39. Babington and Evans (1993), 207. Cf. Belton (1992), 190–1.

40. Wood (1975), 184–5. Cf. Belton (1992), 194–5; dall'Asta (1992), 31–2.

41. See, for example, *Variety* and the *Los Angeles Times* for 17 September 1953.

42. Wood (1975), 173.

43. Houston and Gillett (1963); Wood (1975), 168–73; Neale (1983), 34–6; dall'Asta (1992), 31–2; Belton (1992), 210.

44. Cf. Higson (1989), 42–3, on strategies for the analysis of "national" cinema, and Pearson and Uricchio (1990), 243–4, on strategies for the analysis of Shakespeare on screen.

45. On the numerous evidentiary problems faced when researching film history see, for example, Sorlin (1980), 22–4, and Allen and Gomery (1985), 28–36.

46. On the methodological problems of writing film history see, for example, Nowell-Smith (1977); Rosen (1984); Elsaesser (1984); Beck (1985); Allen and Gomery (1985), 25–42; de Cordova (1988); Allen (1990); Straw (1991). Cf. Wyke (1996), 152–3.

47. Lowenthal (1985), 412.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. For a history of the rebellion led by Spartacus, and for the following analysis of the ancient sources, see Bradley (1989), esp. 136–9.

2. Florus 2.8.20. The translation is that of Yavetz (1988), 101.

3. See, for example, Bradley (1989), xi–xiii; Vogt (1974), 61.

4. Rubinsohn (1987), 1.

5. For Benjamin's views on the cult of republican antiquity instigated during the French Revolution, see Norman Vance (forthcoming).

6. Highet (1949), 390–9, and Bondanella (1987), 130–1.

7. Bondanella (1987), 143.

8. Saurin in Petitot (1803), 211–9.

9. Bradley (1989), xi; Yavetz (1988), 118.

10. Vogt (1974), 172; Finley (1983), 12–7. See also Canfora (1980), 23–30, for the slavery debates in France and America.

11. Calendoli (1967), 68–70; de Vincenti (1988), 12.

12. Lopez-Celly (1939), 10 and 14; Russo (1956), 75–6.

13. Page references are to the seventh edition of Giovagnoli's novel, published in Milan by Paolo Carrara in 1916.

14. On this passage, compare Russo (1956), 76–7.

15. Lovett (1982), 28.

16. Bondanella (1987), 137–41; Norman Vance (forthcoming).

17. Springer (1987), esp. 65–74.

18. Lovett (1982), 56; Treves (1962), 91; Bondanella (1987), 158–65.

19. Lopez-Celly (1939), 51–2.

20. Russo (1956), 74–5.

21. On Garibaldi's letter, see also Russo (1956), 77.

22. Analysis of the Latium film *Spartaco* of 1909 is precluded by the apparent lack of primary material concerning the film. Brunetta (1993), 154, remarks only that the film was based on Giovagnoli's novel. To my knowledge, no copy of the film survives.

23. Bernardini and Gili (1986); Bernardini (1991b); Brunetta (1991b); dall'Asta (1992), 19–20; and see chapter 2 above.

24. Cagnetta (1979), 15–34; Bondanella (1987), 165–6; Visser (1992), 7–8; Moatti (1993), 128.

25. Cardillo (1987), 25–37; Brunetta (1991a), 64–5; dall'Asta (1992), 31; Brunetta (1993), 143–6. See also chapter 2 above.

26. Brunetta (1993), 52–3.

27. Prolo (1951), 54.

28. Giovagnoli (1907), 28.

29. Giovagnoli (1916), plates on pages 353, 385, and 449. Giovagnoli had also bestowed Spartacus's armies with the iconography of modern revolutionary movements within the narrative proper (346). For the use of "liberty trees" in the rituals of the *risorgimento*, see Springer (1987), 68.

30. Webster (1960), 14–6.

31. See chapter 5.

32. See chapter 6.

33. My analysis of *Spartaco* (1913) is based on examination of the footage which survives in the George Kleine collection in the Library of Congress. Although few of the film's English intertitles remain, and one whole reel as well as parts of others are missing, it has been possible to piece together the plot of the film from the summary available in the publicity distributed by Kleine, and that provided by *Illustrated Films Monthly* 2 (1914), 97–104.

34. dall'Asta (1992), 27–9.

35. Compare dall'Asta (1992), 36–9, on the camera's voyeuristic play on the muscled body of Maciste in *Cabiria* (1914).

36. Farassino (1983), 42–4.

37. Martinelli (1983), 13. Perhaps some of the paintings Guaita brought to life included such famous gladiatorial scenes as Gérôme's *Ave Caesar, Morituri Te Salutant* (1859) and *Pollice Verso* (1874), both of which provided a recognizable iconography for the arena set designs in many early historical films.

38. This and other reviews are quoted in Martinelli (1993), 261–4, who also notes that *La vita cinematografica* dedicated several pages to photographs of Guaita and comments about him after he exhibited his muscular physique at the film's opening in Budapest.

39. On screen bodies as metaphors for the Italian body politic, see Dalle Vacche (1992), 27–52, on *Cabiria* (1914) and *Scipione l'Africano* (1937).

40. My description of the scene follows Brunetta (1993), 167–8.

41. This sequence of *Spartaco* does not survive in the copy at the Library of Congress, but is referred to in *Illustrated Films Monthly* and, more briefly, in the Kleine publicity.

42. Here the plot draws on that of Vidali's earlier film *Ione* or *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompeii*, where Glaucus is falsely accused of murder and thrown to the lions. The credibility of incorporating the historical figure of Spartacus into such a fantastical plot is perhaps sustained for film audiences by the repetition of the earlier film's narrative drive.

43. Crassus's daughter is called Emily in the summary provided by *Illustrated Films Monthly*. According to Martinelli (1993), 261–2, she is named Elena in the version of the film exhibited in Italy. Martinelli's summary of the plot does not include the final,

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