

## Novel and Film

This is a study of five adaptations – four feature films, and a TV miniseries – of Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel *Quo Vadis?*, first serialized in Polish newspapers in 1895.<sup>1</sup> The first of the films under discussion, Guazzoni’s, appeared in 1912, and is sometimes said to have been the first feature film produced. Its importance in demonstrating the powerful effects epic cinema could achieve is fully recognized in the scholarship and among film critics and fans.<sup>2</sup> For example, a recent article in the Sunday *New York Times*, defending summer movies, says:

film spectacle works more or less the same now as it did in 1912 when the Italian epic “Quo Vadis” hit screens with a cast of literally thousands and extreme action in the form of a chariot race. That film’s pageantry, its gladiators and sacrificed Christians earned an enthusiastic thumbs-up from the sculptor Auguste Rodin, who declared it “a masterpiece.”<sup>3</sup>

The last, the most expensive Polish film ever produced, appeared in 2001. We are thus looking at a series of versions of this story from a period that roughly encompasses the twentieth century.

*Quo Vadis?* is a historical novel, set in the reign of Nero. Most of its action takes place in the years 62–64 CE, though the final chapters and epilogue continue the story until Nero’s death in 68 CE. At its center is the love story of two entirely fictional characters, the Roman noble Marcus Vinicius and the Christian hostage Lygia Callina. These fictional characters, however, are embedded in a milieu populated by historical figures. Much of the action takes place at the court of Nero and features characters relatively well known from Roman historians: Nero himself, his second wife Poppaea Sabina, and the praetorian prefect (that is, the commander of the only military force in the city of Rome) Tigellinus. Many other characters are historical figures about whom much less is known. The historians inform

us about the career of the general Aulus Plautius, for example, whom Sienkiewicz makes Lygia's foster father, but not about his personality. Thematically opposed to Nero's court in the novel are the Christians. Here also Peter and Paul, historically attested in Paul's letters and in the *Acts of the Apostles*, mix with a variety of invented lesser characters. The novel also incorporates the legend of Peter's vision of Christ and martyrdom in Rome first attested in the second century CE.<sup>4</sup>

Although textbooks and anthologies on adaptation in film have recently appeared at a rapid clip, the topic continues to be theoretically vexed.<sup>5</sup> It is not difficult to see why. From the beginnings of cinema, novels of high cultural value have been an important source for films claiming high cultural status. This quest to borrow prestige has led to difficulties on both sides of the novel/film divide. Inevitably, it prompts popular and journalistic attention to "fidelity" so that critics judge a film not on its own terms but on how well it has transferred to the new medium, whatever the critic values in the original text or, all too often, on how much of the original it has transferred. This approach has also affected academic studies of the relationship between film and literary text where it had the advantage of being methodologically straightforward and congenial for scholars whose training was literary. Yet it often became a defense of literary territory, of the high art of literature against the popular medium of film.<sup>6</sup> Even when there was no such agenda, in presenting the novel as primary and the film as secondary, it could make film seem derivative, not quite adequate. Furthermore, film adaptation requires that content be separated from form and this is exactly what literary scholarship (especially in New Criticism) has above all denied is possible. So, not surprisingly, a significant line of study in film has denied that adaptation is really possible. The leaders of the French New Wave, who were both critics and directors, argued that film is an entirely different medium from verbal narrative. This argument is closely linked to *auteur* theory in which the author of a film must work fully in the medium of film, using the camera to achieve his effects rather than voice-over, for example.<sup>7</sup> This approach can exaggerate the differences between the media and reduce cinema to image (ignoring dialogue, intertitles, and music), while denying language the ability to produce precise images.<sup>8</sup> A film can borrow the story or characters of a novel, but these are not the "organic novel." This approach also promotes the familiar claim that a great novel cannot become a great film because it is already at its best in language and translation into a different medium can only detract from it.

Of course, narrators and cameras can do different things. A writer must usually pause the action to describe scenes or characters, and must decide whether it is important what things look like; a camera does not need to pause for this purpose (although, of course, it can, and the establishing shot is familiar) but it also cannot avoid making everything look a particular way.<sup>9</sup> While film and novel can sometimes perform each others' tricks, different things are easy and hard for each. Sarah Caudwell's amusing series of detective novels (*Thus Was Adonis Murdered* and its sequels) uses a first-person narrative whose sex is never identified; it would be very hard to do this unobtrusively in a movie.

Amid all this theoretical dismay, novels continue to be made into films and viewers continue to discuss their "fidelity" to the source – the practice is inevitable. Comparing film and novel can be helpful but the debate has shown how much caution is required. Films can use novels in a variety of ways and none is inherently better than another. Deconstruction has taught us not to assume that originals are better than copies. Paradigms such as "translation," "reading," or "imitation" (in a neo-Aristotelian sense, not as copying, but as creative reworking) are not perfect, but they can work: a good adaptation takes some aspects of a literary text and uses them in the process of creating a new, independent work. Films often use more than plot elements; even as they compress, change, add, and distort plot material, they may powerfully convey atmosphere, affect, and social commentary.

One recent essay by a leading theorist proposes a model of "dialogism" and points to the ability of film adaptations to "take an activist stance toward their source novels, inserting them into a much broader intertextual dialogism."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, many readers of novels who love the movies have had the experience of recognizing a new possible understanding of a novel because a film made it more salient, or of realizing for the first time what value they placed on some moment in a novel because a film omitted it.

Historical novels present certain issues that make "fidelity" an especially interesting, because complex, category.<sup>11</sup> While scholars have examined how films treat history, they have not given much close attention to the particular issues raised by historical novels.<sup>12</sup> The historical novel is itself an adaptation of historical sources. So the issue arises not just of the novelist's fidelity but also of the novelist's judgment in the use of sources: insofar as a historical novelist takes on the role of a historian, the novelist can legitimately be judged as one. The novelist selects from the historical

material available to him or her, and we expect a historian not to be blindly faithful to sources, but to be careful and critical. In Sienkiewicz's case, we can easily identify most of the acknowledged sources: Tacitus and Suetonius for the events of Nero's reign; Juvenal, Martial, and Petronius for Roman life of the early Imperial period; inspection of Roman monuments and art. An important secondary source was Renan's *The Antichrist*. But we then have yet a further problem of fidelity, since the sources themselves are artful literary narratives and politically motivated.<sup>13</sup> They are not true primary sources and are not even contemporary with Nero (Tacitus is the earliest, and he was a child during Nero's reign); they depend on earlier histories. The sources of Tacitus and Suetonius were compositions of the elite senatorial class, which loathed Nero, a loathing Tacitus and Suetonius share and transmit.<sup>14</sup> Sienkiewicz is generally faithful to Tacitus but he is not critical. He ignores Tacitus' loathing for the Christians (*Ann.* 15.44) and gives his Christians no characteristics that could explain Tacitus' belief that Christians hated the human race but his mistrust of Tacitus' judgment on them does not lead him to mistrust him elsewhere. And he does distort his sources. The evidence suggests that Nero was not untalented as a poet and performer; Sienkiewicz makes him appallingly bad, and Peter Ustinov took lessons in singing badly to prepare for the role.<sup>15</sup>

So before we even consider one of the *Quo Vadis* films, we face a whole chain of mediators between the past and the novelistic text: the lost authors used by Tacitus and Suetonius; Tacitus and Suetonius themselves; the modern historians. There were other significant influences on Sienkiewicz's vision of ancient Rome, such as earlier historical novels (he was much influenced by *Ben-Hur*) and historical paintings; and Sienkiewicz's own filtering concerns. Yet the historical novel, as a genre, implicitly makes claims that are remarkably similar to those of Hollywood film. Although its access to information about the past is mediated, in Sienkiewicz's case by several stages, the historical novel promises its readers that the author's imagination and narrative skill compensate for the distance of the past and permit immediate access. The historical novel offers the possibility of vicariously experiencing life in the past.

So the historicity of historical novels matters. We could even try to establish membership in the genre, strictly defined, by trying to imagine an updated adaptation. The plot of Sienkiewicz's novel could not happen in another historical period and, if anyone could transfer the outlines of the story to a different setting, it is hard to see what value they could add.

The same is surely true of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels – the setting is a central source, perhaps the most important source, of narrative engagement. So from this point of view, the historical novel is one intervention in the ongoing process of interpreting and adapting the past, an intervention that can influence how that process continues but cannot entirely control even revisions of itself.

Historical film carries the “reality effect” of the historical novel further. Cinematic epics once advertised “See!” and “You are there!” (the latter was the title of a television series about historical events that ran from 1953–7). Early screenings sometimes provoked spontaneous reactions from spectators (an extreme case is the Argentinian spectator who shot at Judas in a screening of *The Life of Christ*).<sup>16</sup> This ability to make the past seem present gives both the historical novel and the historical film a special function as works of history. Indeed, postmodern historians have explored the value of dramatic film as history. Even though characters and plot may be invented, film's vividness can make the actual “pastness” of the past real, bring out the contingency of historical events and rescue them from apparent inevitability. As Rosenstone's discussion of Holocaust films reveals, the experience of the best films offers a form of genuine historical insight.<sup>17</sup> Film cannot do everything historical writing can do; it is poorly suited to the analysis of long-term developments or distant causes. (The novel can engage directly in historical discussion, as, for example, *War and Peace* does; but *Quo Vadis?* does not). Yet by juxtaposing large-scale spectacle with medium shots and close-ups of individuals, film can convey the entanglement of individuals in historical events with unique power. Both feature films and novels, despite their fictional plots, can present thoughtful interpretations of the past.<sup>18</sup>

Both historical novel and film, if successful, preserve past views of the past longer and more powerfully than conventional history. The relationships among successful historical novels, their films, and changing views of the past are variable. *Gone with the Wind* is still read, sequels appear, and the film is firmly placed in the Hollywood canon, but its historical assumptions about slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction are a painful embarrassment. That the holders of the novel's copyright sued to stop publication of a novel by Alice Randall, *The Wind Done Gone*, that re-imagines the story from a slave's perspective, shows the anxiety that surrounds these issues.<sup>19</sup> This suit was surely not inspired by a fear that the novels could be confused but by an awareness of the vulnerability of *Gone with the Wind* to historical



“QUO VADIS” A FIRST NATIONAL PICTURE

**Plate 1.1** Nero attempts to rape Lygia. Source: 1925. Producer: Arturo Ambrosio, Unione cinematografica Italiana; Eastman House

criticism. There is unlikely to be a remake of the film *Gone with the Wind*. Because the historical issues are so important, the canonical standing of the film does not guarantee that those who see it will accept its view of American history.

In contrast, however historians may rethink Roman history, Rome does not have the immediate political relevance that the Civil War still has in the United States or the Nazi period has in Germany. Nero was already a figure for decadence and corruption before Sienkiewicz. The 1925 film offered Emil Jannings as an extravagantly wicked Nero who is an object of horrified fascination (see Plate 1.1, for example) and Charles Laughton varied the same theme in Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Sign of the Cross* in 1937. The 1951 *Quo Vadis* was originally conceived as MGM’s attempt to outdo *The Sign of the Cross*, although the film was not finally made until much later.<sup>20</sup> In this film, Peter Ustinov’s famous Nero develops what Jannings and Laughton had already done.<sup>21</sup> Although different

versions will configure Nero's evil differently, the differences are likely to remain within limits because the movies have taught audiences what Nero should be and there is no powerful motive for any historical revision to influence popular culture. The stakes are not very high. So the historical assumptions of *Quo Vadis?* can continue to influence popular perceptions of the period.

Similarly, Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* offered a story of the principate as a melodrama of the Julio–Claudian family and the BBC television adaptation of 1976 helped establish the family romance as a popular way of understanding Roman history.<sup>22</sup> So *Gladiator* (2000) defines its hero and villain by their happy and miserable families and HBO's *Rome* (2005) manages to provide sexual or familial motives for almost every important event of the late Republic and early Augustan period. *Quo Vadis?* itself has continued to function as a model for other representations of the Roman world, as if it were a historical source.<sup>23</sup> Its most unfortunate effect is an inescapable function of its plot. It would be almost impossible to configure the story so that it would not understand the persecution of the Christians as the most important event of Nero's reign, or so that the decadence it sees in Rome does not explain the success of Christianity. Even though the novel and most of the films show Nero's persecution of the Christians as the outcome of a series of events, each of which could have happened otherwise, the novel, and the films, finally deny contingency to the rise of Christianity and do not fulfill this special potential of the cinematic treatment of the past. Lygia, Vinicius, and Petronius could have had very different lives but contingency is limited to detail. Novel and films give the impression that Roman culture and Christianity were such that events like these were inevitable. Authorial, authoritative comments, such as the epilogue in the novel, or the final image of Christ in the 1912 film and opening voice-over in that of 1951, contribute to this impression. Since a Christian audience believes that a divine plan lies behind the success of Christianity, historical possibility is severely limited.

Viewers of the *Quo Vadis* films are unlikely to have been aware how isolated Nero's persecution was, how long it was before Christianity became dominant in the empire, or how long the empire was to last after Nero. The tradition to which the novel and the films belong makes the decadence represented by Nero's court the cause of both Roman failure and Christianity's triumph. The audience, therefore, is not likely to resist the invitation to see the story's historical outline as inevitable.

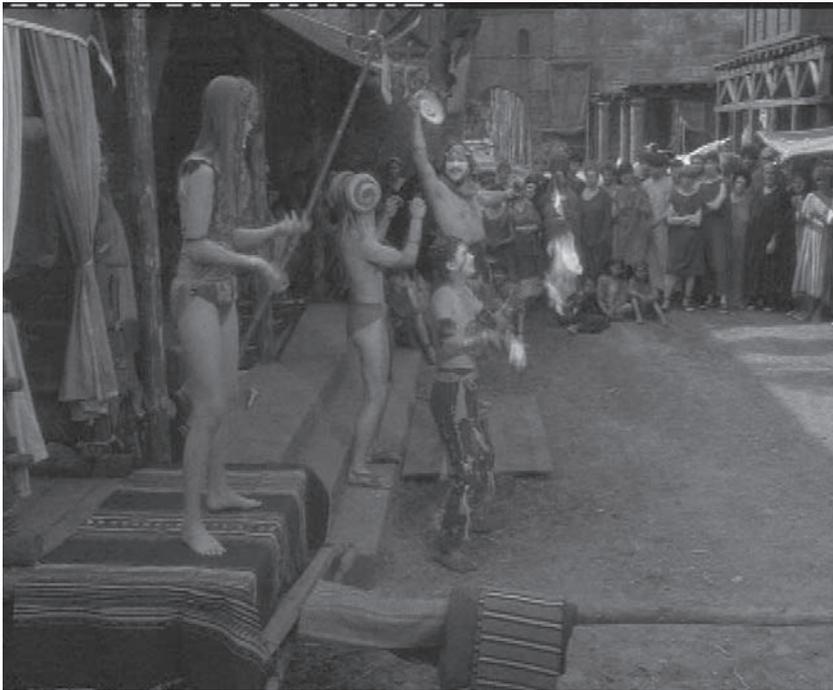
The reputation of *Quo Vadis?* has declined, probably at least in part because its great appeal lay precisely in its ability to evoke ancient Rome and cinema has taken away that function. When it was first translated into all the major European languages at the end of the nineteenth century, it was both a runaway bestseller and a serious claimant for literary status.<sup>24</sup> Although not all the reviews were favorable, there could be no doubt of its standing. Its author received the Nobel Prize in 1905. When Guazzoni chose it for filming in 1912, it united popularity with prestige. However, the novel, though still in print in many languages, is no longer as prestigious a text or as familiar as it was early in the twentieth century. It is distinctly old-fashioned; it is odd to consider that it is a near-contemporary of *What Maisie Knew*. Sienkiewicz has not had recent champions in the academy, and *Quo Vadis?* is no longer a standard on lists of recommended summer reading for students. The novel's uplifting Christian message has helped guarantee its survival – it is still a favorite of conservative Christians, both Catholic and Protestant – but has not won it favor in universities.<sup>25</sup> That there have been children's editions in various languages and other abridged versions has probably not helped its reputation.<sup>26</sup> It has, to a considerable extent, been replaced by its own film adaptations, particularly by the 1951 version. Vividly presenting long-ago and far-away places is a task for which film is peculiarly well suited.

My own experience [Scodel] is perhaps revealing. I have been a voracious reader of novels my entire life; I first read *Quo Vadis?* as an undergraduate at Berkeley. My best friend was enrolled in a survey class on Polish literature taught by a poet named Czesław Miłosz. One day, when the first quarter was almost over, he commented that they might be puzzled that they had read no fiction at all and explained: "If we read novels, we have to read Sienkiewicz – and I *hate* Sienkiewicz."<sup>27</sup> Curiosity about what the professor hated so much – he referred particularly to *Quo Vadis?* – led to a cursory read, especially since I was studying classics. My reading was cursory because I was bored and found the Christian message irritating. Sienkiewicz is no longer the outstanding representative of Polish literature for educated readers who do not know Polish. Miłosz himself won the Nobel Prize in 1980, and Wisława Szymborska in 1996. Sienkiewicz, though still part of the Polish canon (hence Miłosz's vehemence), elsewhere has slipped into a grey territory between literary and popular fiction. This ambiguous status is liberating for the student of the films since they adapt

the novel as a high literary text, but the critic feels no particular reverence for the source.

Visual “fidelity” is especially complex. Like the novelist, the makers of film have seen historical paintings and they have seen other movies, too. The **1912** version famously borrows the image of a gladiator from Gérôme’s *Police Verso* of 1872.<sup>28</sup> Whether or not Sienkiewicz ever saw this painting, whenever a moment in the film resembles a painting of the past from the lifetime of the author, the adaptation of the painting is a gesture of fidelity. Whatever the original intention behind the use of the image, it now successfully presents itself as a late nineteenth-century view of the Roman past. Similarly, the Kawalerowicz version of **2001** shows the influence of both Henryk Siemiradzki (in particular, his “Christian Dirce”) and Lawrence Alma-Tadema.<sup>29</sup> Whatever contemporary classicists and archaeologists may think of Alma-Tadema’s idealized paintings of the ancient world, he is in period for Sienkiewicz, and Siemiradzki and Sienkiewicz were friends.<sup>30</sup> The film thereby conveys a view of Neronian Rome as Sienkiewicz would have imagined it. This is faithfulness to the novel as a product of its own time. The **1951** *Quo Vadis* transforms Vinicius’ frantic ride back to the burning city of Rome into a chariot race. The way he rids himself of a pursuer is modeled on the famous chariot race in *Ben-Hur* which had been made into a film in 1925. Even the action-packed plot of *Quo Vadis* cannot escape its spectacular predecessor, just as Sienkiewicz had been influenced by *Ben-Hur*. On the other hand, composer Miklós Rózsa, who wrote the musical score for the **1951** film, made a serious attempt at reconstructing Roman music.<sup>31</sup> Sienkiewicz’s Nero performs and his Christian martyrs sing but this music took no material form. In a talkie, if someone sings, there must actually be singing. The film’s music is surely much closer to what one might have heard in antiquity than whatever Sienkiewicz would have imagined; it is fidelity of a different order.

The overall look of the **1985** RAI version would be hard to imagine without Fellini’s *Satyricon* and this visual echoing functions as an authenticating gesture in a way that further demonstrates the complexity of fidelity in film. Fellini very freely adapted the novel by Petronius, the *Satyricon*, and he freely borrowed from other works of Roman literature also.<sup>32</sup> The famous tagline of the film celebrates its freedom from conventional fidelity: “Rome. Before Christ. After Fellini.” (The novel actually takes place after the life of Christ, but Christianity is not yet influential in its world, so the tagline is meaningful.) Yet this film offers a model



**Plate 1.2** Street performers. Source: 1985. Producer: Elio Scardamaglia/Francesco Scardamaglia, Leone Film s.r.l

for a “Petronian” vision that is fully cinematic, available and familiar in its very orientalism. The grotesque images permit the TV series to substitute exotic sights for the grandiose spectacles that the small screen and its budget do not accommodate (for example, the street scene in Plate 1.2). This emphasis on the street life of Rome and the bizarre appearance of the court of Nero is also grounded in Sienkiewicz who, like Fellini, was influenced by Juvenal’s depiction of Rome as mobbed with foreigners, hyperactive, noisy, and by Petronius’ pictures of unrestrained vulgarity. Since Petronius is at the center of *Quo Vadis?*, and frequently serves as focalizer or as an internal narrator, the echoes of Fellini function as echoes of Petronius.

The 1985 RAI version, which as a TV miniseries had far more time to fill and less ability to use impressive spectacle than a feature film, expands the novel’s plot systematically by mining the history of the Neronian

period. Its screenplay is based not just on Sienkiewicz but on his sources, particularly Tacitus, so that it incorporates Sienkiewicz's story within a larger story about the Pisonian conspiracy. It also includes the murder of Pedanius Secundus, an investigation into his death, and the controversy over the execution of his slaves. Much of this new material is invented, mostly by imagining how events known only in outline might have happened; but the miniseries also has the conspirators actually attack Nero, which they never did. And time must be compressed so that Pedanius' murder and the executions, events of 61, take place shortly before the fire and persecution of 64. Nonetheless, the miniseries fundamentally rejects the novel's particular selection of events and re-inserts its fictions into a broader historical context. In the novel, there is no meaningful opposition to Nero and the only political struggle is between Petronius and Tigellinus. In the miniseries, more historical information produces a more complex political world. Infidelity to the novel is fidelity to history.

Historical fidelity is also at issue in an area that is more significant and much riskier. The novel and its adaptations deal not only with Nero and his court, where small differences from what the audience expects are unlikely to provoke controversy (while the inertia of tradition opposes major ones). They also depict early Christianity and the apostles Peter and Paul. Here the stakes could hardly be higher. The novel's Catholicism was controversial from its first publication. Some critics found its pagans too attractive, its approval of erotic love excessive.<sup>33</sup> Yet, as we will show in detail below, where the novel is profoundly unfaithful to its sources, it idealizes early Christianity, since it suppresses the evidence for disagreements between Peter and Paul found in the New Testament itself. No film attempts a substantially revisionist account of early Christianity, and it is hardly to be expected that any would.<sup>34</sup> The **1985** version comes closest, expanding the novel by using other sources to include the writing of Mark's gospel. It conforms to modern scholarship by making Mark's the oldest of the gospels (tradition made Matthew older) but cheats on chronology (since the gospel is surely later than the dramatic date of 64–5, though there is disagreement whether it preceded or followed the fall of Jerusalem in 70), and follows various Christian traditions, particularly in making Peter Mark's main source.<sup>35</sup> It shows a plausible process for the composition, as the Christians painstakingly collect and compare memories of Jesus, and its Christians, especially Max von Sydow's Peter, are more vivid and believable than they are in the novel or other films. Still, in the end, the series avoids suggesting that the gospel could be

anything other than a word-by-word account of the events, uninfluenced by the context of its composition. The memories of Peter and others seem to be a transparent window onto the life of Jesus; despite all the effort the compilation requires, the “historical Jesus” is not really a problem. Similarly, Lygia makes a mosaic of the nativity that combines elements from Mark and Luke just as a nativity play does so that the problems of reconciling different accounts are elided. In the series, once Mark’s work is complete, it is copied for the widest possible dissemination. Scholars disagree about whether the gospels were composed “for all Christians” or for local communities, so the series does not contradict contemporary scholarship on this point – but it chooses the easier alternative, the story that demands the least effort from the viewer who wants the canonical gospels to have authority.<sup>36</sup> The series stops being rigorously honest where the history really matters.

We are classicists, and the issue behind this book is how the Roman world and its history are represented in film. So for us the novel is a particular event, an influential intervention in reception. It builds on earlier views of the Roman world and crystallizes them in a popular story which then directs, but does not entirely determine, how the films that adapt it show that world. Modern imaginings of Neronian Rome show certain constants, such as the fascination with decadence, and variations, and the *Quo Vadis* films offer a self-limiting field in which we can see those variations at work. Gaffes and anachronisms are important only as they reflect the filmmakers’ interest or lack of interest in how the past looked, or as symptoms of more significant distortions. We concern ourselves with the way in which the different versions reflect the shifting historical situations and ideological concerns of their own times. Just as we are not particular admirers of the novel – to which we cannot do justice in any case, since we do not read Polish, and Sienkiewicz is celebrated for his style – we are not fans of any of the films but each has moments one or both of us has found beautiful, touching, charming, or funny.

We often suggest that the political backgrounds of a particular film are complex and that different elements suggest contradictory interpretations. Most of the versions lack a clear author or *auteur*. In the case of the 1951 *Quo Vadis*, Irving Thalberg bought the rights in 1936, and the treatment emphasized the love story. A team of screenwriters, especially Sam Behrman, worked on it in 1942 and 1943. Sonya Levien reworked it in 1948, bringing it closer to the novel and trying to bring more feeling to the romance. She felt inspired by the anti-totalitarian message of the



film. John Huston was going to direct, and he, with the help of the classical consultant, Hugh Gray, worked to reduce the Christian scenes and emphasize Nero. There was tension between Huston and Louis Mayer, the head of the studio, who wanted an edifying epic. In the end, both director and producer were replaced by Sam Zimbalist and Mervyn LeRoy, and John Mahin was brought in for yet another round of rewriting, this time especially to add spectacle.<sup>37</sup> This is an especially messy history but the construction of films is rarely completely tidy. A film is, as Salman Rushdie has put it, “as near as dammit to that will-o’-the-wisp of modern critical theory, the authorless text” – or, perhaps more precisely, a text with so many authors that we cannot be surprised if its possible meanings fly in various directions.<sup>38</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Throughout this book, *Quo Vadis?*, with the interrogative, refers to Sienkiewicz’s novel. Without the interrogative it refers to the story more broadly, whether to the legend or the adaptations. Citations of the novel follow the translation of Jeremy Curtin in the 1897 edition published in Boston by Little, Brown.
- 2 Naremore in Naremore 2000: 4; Sinyard 1990: 23. An earlier filming of some scenes, directed by L. Nonguet and F. Zecca, does not seem to be extant.
- 3 Manohyla Dargis, “Defending Goliath: Hollywood and the Art of the Blockbuster,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 2007, 2A 27.
- 4 The *Quo Vadis?* scene is attested (with minor variants) in several apocryphal texts: *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 6, *Acta Petri and Pauli* 82, Ps. Linus 6, in a letter of St Ambrose (*epistula* 75a [21], fourth century CE), in Ps. Abadias 19 (fourth century CE), Hegesippus 3.2.1 (fourth century CE), and the *Passio Processi et Martiniani* 1 (sixth century CE). All imply that Christ is going to suffer in Peter when he is crucified. Sienkiewicz, however, bases the eponymous scene on the assumption that Christ would replace Peter if he chose to flee from Rome. See Starowieyski 1997.
- 5 Cahir 2006; Desmond and Hawkes 2006; Stam and Raengo 2004; Cartmell and Whelehan 1999; Corrigan 1998.
- 6 Ray 2000.
- 7 Truffaut 1954. Summary in Cahir 2006: 86–7.
- 8 On the hybridity of cinema, see Elliott 2003.
- 9 Chatman 1990.
- 10 Stam 2000.



- 11 Adaptation studies have barely considered this issue. Stam and Raengo 2005: 43–4, distinguishes novels that were originally period pieces from those that become period pieces through the passage of time, but does not examine the sources or reliability of the period piece. Grace 2004 looks at adaptations of the Gospels as unreliable sources.
- 12 See the essays in Landy 2001. Neither Davis 2000 nor the essays in Winkler 2006, in examining *Spartacus*, quite address this question.
- 13 Paulsen 2007 discusses the novel and the film in relation to the sources' depiction of Nero but is not critical of Tacitus.
- 14 On the sources, see Champlin 2003: 37–52.
- 15 Paulsen 2007: 224.
- 16 Breakwell and Hammond 1990: 39 (Daniel Moyano tells the anecdote as an eyewitness).
- 17 Rosenstone 2006: 134–53.
- 18 Grindon 1994 analyses how both the narratives and the visual effects of historical films convey historical interpretation.
- 19 Suntrust Bank, as Trustee of the Stephens Mitchell trusts vs. Houghton Mifflin Company (2001) 136 F. Supp. 2d 1357; and Suntrust Bank, as Trustee of the Stephens Mitchell trusts vs. Houghton Mifflin Company (2001) US Appeal Lexis 21690.
- 20 Wyke 1997: 138–9.
- 21 Krebs 2003: 118 may overstate the importance of Ustinov's performance.
- 22 Joshel 2001: 120–1. But the family is also more prominent in cinematic Romes thereafter.
- 23 In Eos' miniseries "Imperium: Nerone" of 2004 (directed by Robert Marcus), the relationship between Nero and Acte is obviously based on that of Vinicius and Lygia.
- 24 Kosko 1935 and 1960 on the novel's popularity and the hostility of French critics; Giergielewicz 1968: 42 and 163–5; Barron 2005: 1–11.
- 25 According to Mansour 2000: 679 (reviewing a recent translation in *The Slavic and East European Journal*), the novel is a recurring topic in Christian chat rooms.
- 26 For example, Moody Publishers, a branch of the Moody Bible Institute, published a version abridged by James Bell in 1992.
- 27 Miłosz is more guarded in print but is hardly admiring: "[S] did a good job of enlivening all the historical clichés, but his Rome was somewhat too lacking in complexity" (Miłosz 1983: 313).
- 28 Gérôme is also very influential on the appearance of Rome in *Gladiator*.
- 29 Junkelmann 2004: 79, 85 (with illustrations).
- 30 For Alma-Tadema, see Swanson 1977, Barrow 2001.
- 31 Solomon 2001: 220–1.
- 32 See Sullivan 2001.

- 33 Giergielewicz 1968: 135. On the website of the Universität Mannheim there is a transcription (Lindner 2005) of an article of 1899 from *Stimmen aus Maria Laach*, a conservative Catholic journal, that translates an article from an American Catholic journal *The Review*, solemnly warning Catholics against the book.
- 34 One might compare the controversy over Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. The controversy emphasized Gibson's choice of sources (the visions of Sister Emmerick); although the reliability of his main sources, the Gospels, was clearly an important issue, most critics avoided confronting it directly. The film makes exceptional claims to historical authenticity, particularly in using ancient languages (the Latin, however, is not historically pronounced, and there is no Greek).
- 35 For the issues surrounding the identity of Mark and the composition of his gospel, see Markus 2000: 17–39 (in the Anchor Bible series).
- 36 Bauckham 1998 has influentially argued against the view that the Gospels were composed for local communities. Mitchell 2005 cites Patristic evidence on the other side.
- 37 Ceplair 1996: 112–13.
- 38 Rushdie 1992: 16.