less distracting than is the excessive tendency toward abstraction, academic jargon, and the German equivalent of Franglais, which some of the authors consider necessary.

One of the greatest modern hypertexts of the *Odyssey* is Jean-Luc Godard's film *Contempt*, which the editors briefly discuss. Its plot hinges on filming the *Odyssey* for the big screen, an undertaking that turns out to be as good as impossible. Nevertheless it is the cinema and its offshoot, television, that today keep the Homeric epics before the eyes of millions worldwide, if often in rather loose adaptations. But can we ever make the *Odyssey* our own? Or does its Protean nature as an archetypal narrative resist us, while simultaneously inspiring us to new endeavors, to creations of new hypertexts? From this perspective, Theodoros Angelopoulos's recent film *Ulysses' Gaze* may be the most haunting example of such a hypertext, a profound meditation on the *Odyssey*, its significance today, and the origins of artistic creation itself. It is the achievement of Godard and Angelopoulos that their films leave anyone contemplating such questions with a sense of melancholy.

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GLADIATOR

M. M. WINKLER (ed.): Gladiator*: Film and History*. Pp. xii + 215, map, ills. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Paper, £15.99, US$24.95 (Cased, £50, US$59.95). ISBN: 1-4051-1042-2 (1-4051-1043-0 hbk).

This collection on Ridley Scott's film *Gladiator* (2000) provides ample evidence of how successfully—and fruitfully—the study of classics and cinema has asserted itself as a leader in the field of reception studies. It also demonstrates the impact of this one film, which has proved to be of considerable significance not only as a wake-up call to Hollywood executives who had thought that the ancient-world epic was dead, but also as a catalyst for new and invigorating scholarly discussions of antiquity's continued influence on popular culture. Indeed, it is this sense of *Gladiator* as a self-consciously 'new' film, yet one that still 'reaches back to hallowed antiquity' through both its subject matter and its allegiances with the oldest of cinematic traditions, that provides a unifying thread throughout the collection. Though there is no sustained discussion of this theme in any one article, it informs many of them, from the editor's own appraisal of the 'Ambiguities of Spectacle' in the film's CGI Colosseum to Monica Cyrino on the 'astonishing updates of genre conventions' (p. 134) provided by the film's characterizations.

Perhaps the most important unifying thread, though, is the debate over historical authenticity in this kind of film (and, by implication, in any encounter between popular culture and the ancient world). It is also the most welcome contribution of the collection as a whole; though the body of literature on cinema and antiquity is growing, there has been little considered engagement with the questions of how we judge the historical accuracy of these films and (more importantly, to my mind) why we might make such judgements at all. These are contentious questions, and this volume does not disappoint in providing a fascinating array of conflicting

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approaches. The article that will be anathema to many scholars of reception is Allen M. Ward's '*Gladiator* in Historical Perspective'. For the most part, this consists of a dry catalogue of the film's inaccuracies, from the large-scale distortions of Commodus' reign to the apparently minor anachronism of having a German Shepherd dog accompany Maximus in battle. (That Jon Solomon's informative '*Gladiator* from Screenplay to Screen' convincingly argues, on the basis of earlier script drafts, that this animal actually represents the Roman she-wolf only serves to further undermine Ward's quibbles.) Many will no doubt argue that there is nothing wrong in taking a film to task for errors, large or small, but Ward is mistaken in treating factual accuracy as a default objective; the purist ought not assume that it is necessarily desired by film-makers, audiences, or indeed all scholars. It is left to Kathleen M. Coleman to argue why accuracy should in fact be the goal, in 'The Pedant Goes to Hollywood: The Role of the Academic Consultant'. This brief article should be required reading for all those who wish to gain an insight into the collision between Hollywood and the academy. Coleman's experience of working on *Gladiator* is now notorious, and though she mentions the film by name only once, a somewhat bitter taste is felt throughout. Despite (or because of) this personal experience, her arguments for 'sophisticated collaboration between film director and historical consultant' (p. 52) are powerful, and her belief in the need to strive for factual accuracy convincing. Still, it is not the whole story. As she notes in passing, film-makers often distort history not through 'ignorance or arrogance', but more likely as a result of 'conscious decisions based upon esthetics, pragmatism, or an estimation of the public appetite' (p. 51). An understanding of these 'conscious decisions' is vital to our understanding of these films and their place within academic study, and Martin M. Winkler's assessment of the case (in '*Gladiator* and the Traditions of Historical Cinema') is the best argument against slavish worship at the shrine of historical accuracy that I have yet seen.

Also highly recommended is Cyrino's piece on '*Gladiator* and Contemporary American Society', a lively and wide-ranging article which addresses the film's engagement with American culture—for example, through its depiction of the rôle of the family, imperialist ideologies, and spectacle. The specifically American slant of this article is informative for non-American audiences who, for example, may not have realized the extent to which *Gladiator* drew on the visual iconography and signature camera-angles of televised sport in the USA. Cyrino's article is also notable for its topicality, as seen in a surprisingly fruitful comparison of George W. Bush and Commodus. (Modern political resonances in the film are also discussed in a complex but rewarding article by Peter W. Rose.) But this topicality also sets a trap, as when Cyrino discusses Maximus' lack of political engagement in conjunction with contemporary political 'alienation' in the USA. Her description of low voter turnout and lack of interest in American politics now rings hollow, after the presidential elections of 2004.

Gladiator: Film and History clearly seeks to appeal to a wide, non-specialist audience. Two articles on the film's historical background (Arthur M. Eckstein on Commodus' imperial government and David S. Potter on Roman 'blood sport') are supplemented by a chronology, suggestions for further reading, and, most usefully, an anthology of major historical sources on Commodus. A selection of black-and-white illustrations also provides further material, though it must be said that the twenty-six pictures are not adequately integrated with the text, leaving many readers in danger of failing to make the necessary, and important, connections between essay and image. Arthur J. Pomeroy's discussion of 'The Vision of a Fascist Rome in *Gladiator*' would,

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for example, benefit from better illustration. The fact remains, though, that there is much to welcome, and enjoy, in this book. Despite its single-film focus, many of the articles successfully crystallize those issues which we are increasingly recognizing as vital to our study of the reception of classical antiquity.

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