OVID ON SCREEN

This book presents the first systematic appreciation of Ovid's extensive influence on, and affinity with, modern visual culture. Some topics are directly related to Ovid; others exhibit features, characters, or themes analogous to those in his works. The book demonstrates the wide-ranging ramifications that Ovidian archetypes, especially from the *Metamorphoses*, have provoked in a modern artistic medium that did not exist in Ovid's time. It ranges from the earliest days of film history (Georges Méliès's discovery of screen metamorphosis) and theory (Gabriele D'Annunzio's fascination with the metamorphosis of Daphne; Sergei Eisenstein's concept of *film sense*) through silent films, classic sound films, commercial cinema, art-house and independent films to modernism and the CGI era. Films by well-known directors, including Ingmar Bergman, Walerian Borowczyk, Jean Cocteau, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Fritz Lang, Max Ophüls, Alain Resnais, and various others, are analyzed in detail.

MARTIN M. WINKLER is University Professor and Professor of Classics at George Mason University. His publications include *The Persona in Three Satires of Juvenal* (1983), *Der lateinische Eulenspiegel des Ioannes Nemius* (1995), *Cinema and Classical Texts: Apollo's New Light* (Cambridge, 2009), *The Roman Salute: Cinema, History, Ideology* (2009), *Arminius The Liberator: Myth and Ideology* (2015), and *Classical Literature on Screen: Affinities of Imagination* (Cambridge, 2017). He has edited the Penguin Classics anthology *Juvenal in English* (2001) and the essay collections *Classics and Cinema* (1991), *Classical Myth and Culture in the Cinema* (2001), Gladiator*: Film and History* (2004), Troy: *From Homer's* Iliad *to Hollywood Epic* (2006), Spartacus*: Film and History* (2007), The Fall of the Roman Empire*: Film and History* (2009), and *Return to* Troy*: New Essays on the Hollywood Epic* (2015).

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A Montage of Attractions

MARTIN M. WINKLER

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Friderico Ahl

P. Ovidii Nasonis verborvm lvsoris
optimo explicatori
Martini litterarvm Romanarvm tironis
mentori et primo et constanti

officivm nec te fallit, amice, tvvm

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Images are either screenshots or from the Jerry Murbach Collection or the author's collection. High-resolution reproductions of all illustrations may be found online under the Resources tab at www.cambridge.org/9781108485401.

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I acknowledge four profound debts separately in Ovid's language. The first, above, constitutes my book's dedication. The three that appear below express my appreciation of, and gratitude to, great artists whose works have been my constant companions over several decades. The quotations by filmmakers and theoreticians of cinema that follow them are meant to illuminate, as if with spotlights, certain memorable aspects of my topic. As is appropriate, however, the first of these is taken from Ovid.

D M

P. Ovidii Nasonis

vatis metamorphoseon praeclari

praeceptoris amorvm periti

Sergii Michaelis f. Ferrisilicis

artis cinematographicae

cvm avctoris tvm explicatoris praestantissimi

Ioannis Coctonis

litterarvm pictvrarvm imaginvmqve moventivm

artificis Orphici maximi

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Adages

Credulous fool, why do you long . . . to seize such elusive phantom images? . . . What you see is the shadow of a reflected image: it has no substance of its own

—Ovid, *Met.* 3.432–435

What there is on the screen is nothing but shadows. Something even more dead than words

—Orson Welles

A film is a phantasm. It is not life

—Manoel de Oliveira

The cinema . . . is, in short, an admirable vehicle for poetry

—Jean Cocteau in *The Testament of Orpheus*

The principle of poetry is to transform, to convert

—Sergei M. Eisenstein

A mechanical metamorphosis of the spectacle of shadow and light

—Edgar Morin on the cinema

Fiction and filmmaking do not engage in mutual imitation; they only adopt common purposes, they fulfill the same aims, without copying each other

—André Bazin

Cinema is the heir of all artistic cultures

—Sergei M. Eisenstein

The "seventh art" has a mysterious way of illuminating human heights and depths

—Gabriele D'Annunzio on the cinema

"Ladies and gentlemen, my latest invention: The Metamorphosis!"

—Harry Houdini (Tony Curtis) in *Houdini* (1953)

"she read a book, and then came the transformation . . .: The heat is on!"
—Sadie Thompson (Rita Hayworth) in *Miss Sadie Thompson* (1953)

"Ovid's always been my favorite poet."
—Elwood P. Dowd (James Stewart) in *Harvey* (1950)

Fade-In: Prooemium

This book attempts a first systematic, although not exhaustive, appreciation of Ovid's pervasive importance for the cinema. While I include television and digital media, my primary attention is to their predecessor. Some of my topics are directly related to Ovid: films based, more or less freely, on his works, especially the *Metamorphoses*. Many others among my subjects exhibit features, characters, or themes that are analogous to those found in Ovid. In addition, Ovid provides us with a valuable opportunity to evaluate the close ties between verbal and visual narratives even across millennia. A characteristic feature of ancient literature, both Greek and Roman, is its inherently visual quality.[1] Ovid's poems are especially noteworthy in this regard.

My purpose is not an appraisal of Ovid as poet but a demonstration of his extensive affinity with modern culture in one hitherto neglected area. His influence and affinity result, on the one hand, from the canonical shape that he gave to numerous myths and their characters. On the other hand they derive from the visual nature of Ovidian narrative, which can be regarded as inherently cinematic. My ultimate goal, then, is to convince today's readers of Ovid that there is much more to his art and *Nachleben* than has been granted him so far. My book is meant to show the wide-ranging ramifications that Ovidian archetypes, and related archetypes in their Ovidian form, have been capable of provoking in a modern medium that did not exist at his time.

[1] Here are a few representative examples of scholarship in this area from various theoretical (and other) perspectives, some of them including the cinema; all contain extensive further references. On Homer: Winkler 2007b, Clay 2011, Tsagalis 2012. On Roman epic before and after Ovid: R. A. Smith 2005, Leigh 1997. On epic in general: Lovatt and Vout 2013. On Roman prose around the time of Ovid: Feldherr 1998. On Ovid, the visual, and feminist theory: Salzman-Mitchell 2005a. The essays collected in Gildenhard and Zissos 2013 illustrate, by examples, the pervasiveness of the idea of metamorphosis. This book's title and content also reveal the impossibility of treating the topic comprehensively in a single volume.

Ovid's Daedalus designs a "complicated building" (*Met.* 8.158), in which "he leads one's gaze astray with twisted curves of different mysteriously winding passages" (160–161). "In this way Daedalus fills countless pathways with intricate deception" (166–167). Deception is the labyrinth's *raison d'être*. Unlike Daedalus, of course, I do not intend to deceive my readers or lead them astray. Still, the subject of Ovid and cinema is complicated, too, and encompasses countless paths and intricate ramifications. Readers who may come to fear that they are getting lost in the textual labyrinth of this book can, however, easily escape simply by closing it or skipping a particular topic. But I hope that, unlike Daedalus, I have put up enough signposts or, to adduce a related analogy, provided enough of a narrative thread to enable them to stay on the right path. For this reason Chapter 1 includes a brief guide through the pages of my book.

As will soon become evident, the topics included in this book are all close to its author's heart. This, in turn, implies a subjective selection of material for inclusion or exclusion. (More on this in Chapter 1.) Those readers skeptical about my decisions – *di meliora!* – I can only attempt to placate by referring them to a vivid little scene in Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* (*Stoic Paradoxes*). There an art lover waxes ecstatic when looking at a painting or statue. Since he is entirely in thrall to the delight of seeing, a rather severe Stoic philosopher condemns him for being a fool and a slave to his visual pleasure. "But aren't these things wonderful [*festiva*]?" the art lover asks in self-defense. The interlocutor grants this, to him, minor point and rather grandiosely asserts his own erudition: "We, too, have learned eyes."[2] So even an intellectual can appreciate, perhaps even fall under the spell of, a work of art. Those among my readers whose eyes are not yet fully accustomed to the intellectual and emotional delights of the screen will, I hope, receive a measure of training (and persuasion) from the pages to follow. Ideally, my book is for three kinds of readers: lovers of Ovid and classical literature, lovers of cinema, and, best of all, lovers of both. The first two categories already encompass large numbers; the third is quite small. But I am confident that my chapters will help bring about one particular metamorphosis: to turn at least some members of the first two categories into members of the third. *Di, coeptis adspirate meis!*

A brief note on terminology may be apropos here. The subtitle of my book points to the range of possible ramifications of Ovid's connections with the cinema. The concept of a *montage of attractions* I borrow from

[2] Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 5.37–38: *nos quoque oculos eruditos habemus*. The translation "learned eyes" is from Barchiesi 2005.

Sergei Eisenstein, as explained in Chapter 1, but I employ it in both general and filmic senses. The word *cinemetamorphosis*, introduced in the same chapter, simultaneously is and is not my coinage. It is because – *mirabile dictu* – I thought of it myself; it is not because someone had done so even before I was born. The author of an unsigned article of film reviews told his readers in 1942 that the protagonist of Busby Berkeley's dramatic musical *For Me and My Gal* undergoes a "cinemetamorphosis" in the course of the film.[3] The word appears to have been *en vogue* along with the less attractive portmanteau words *musicomedy*, *cinemactors* (as distinct from stage actors), and *cinemaddicts*, all of which have fallen into well-deserved desuetude. Once they may have been hip. The meaning of *cinemetamorphosis* as I will use it is, however, rather different.

With a few obvious exceptions, I refer to films not made in English by their English release titles for readers' easier orientation. Occasionally I add a literal translation of a foreign film's title (in parenthesis and quotation marks) if the English release title deviates significantly from the original. All foreign texts are translated. Such translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Here, too, there are a few exceptions, such as the short interjections above and my *sphragis* at the end of this book. They are intended for readers who know Latin (and it would be pointless to translate them). These occurrences do not, however, impede other readers' understanding.

[3] "CINEMA: The New Pictures," *TIME* (November 16, 1942), 98–100.