

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: 29 Classics		
Title of case study: Classical Antiquity in Cinema: Curation, restoration & exhibition, performance, appreciation and curriculum development		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2007-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Maria Wyke	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Latin	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: From 01/09/2005
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 – 31 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Wyke's research focuses on the representation of classical antiquity on film and has had an impact in the UK, Europe, Australia, and the USA on the curation, restoration, exhibition, and appreciation of films set in classical antiquity. Her research has benefitted four national film archives and the Library of Congress through its improvements to cataloguing and its stimulation of the restoration of fragile prints. It has informed the exhibition of rare films by programmers for cinemas, museums, universities, and film festivals, while musicians have expanded their expertise accompanying her guided screenings with new compositions or improvised performances. Audiences (totalling approximately 1,550 people) drawn from a broad constituency have gained access to, and profoundly enriched their understanding of, unfamiliar representations of the ancient world in cinema. For university teachers and students in the UK, Australia and the USA, her research has provoked expansion of the traditional curriculum to embrace antiquity on film.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Wyke's research focuses on the representation of classical antiquity on film, in which area she is recognised as a world-leader having stimulated the establishment of ancient Greece and Rome on Film as a sub-discipline of classical studies. Wyke shows that fascination with antiquity constituted a distinctive feature of cinema from its emergence in 1896. After joining UCL in 2005, her investigations into the reception of Julius Caesar in western culture (funded by the AHRC in 2007) led to a monograph within which she discussed Caesar's circulation in silent Italian and Cold War Hollywood cinema (R1). Funded by the British Academy (2009-11), she then collaborated with Pantelis Michelakis (University of Bristol) to produce a collection of essays in the introduction to which she jointly articulated pioneering methodologies for the study of classical antiquity on screen in the silent era (R2). Her most recent findings on early French experimentation (R3), antiquity films of the 1910s and 20s (R4), and silent Italian features (R5 & R6) are based on further substantial investigations in international archives funded by the British Academy (2016-19). In collaboration with Monika Woźniak (Sapienza University of Rome), Wyke has edited a collection of essays, in the introduction to which she jointly advocates recognising the importance of classical antiquity's circulation in popular culture and applying interdisciplinary methodologies to the analysis of its distinctiveness (R5).</p> <p>Hundreds of silent films set in antiquity survive in archives around the world, alongside screenplays, publicity, reviews and other paratexts. Probing such materials in robustly interdisciplinary terms (esp. R2 and R5), Wyke reveals how cinema provided antiquity with a pathway to enter modernity and antiquity provided cinema with a platform on which to build claims to cultural value. She demonstrates that silent antiquity films were aesthetically experimental, intensely affective, ideologically complex and technologically innovative (esp. R3 and R4), and that they formed competitive interrelations with other representations of the ancient world in painting, sculpture, theatre, opera and the novel (esp. R6). While cinema gave antiquity immediacy (embodiment, movement, colour and music), antiquity enabled cinema both to claim legitimation as the tenth Muse encompassing all others and to play out in extremis contemporary issues of national identity, politics, religion, class, race, gender and sexuality (e.g. R4). Her work on sound film demonstrates how silent cinema established a set of conventions for the creation of ancient worlds that were then adapted to suit new aesthetic, social, technical and economic contexts (R1).</p>		

Cinema has made a profound intervention in the global circulation of knowledge of antiquity. Wyke's interdisciplinary engagement with theatre and art history, race and gender studies, and film, media and adaptation studies (theorised in **R2**) offers an enriched understanding of the iconographic, narrative and ideological choices made in film. She re-contextualises cinema's representations of antiquity as a set of complex interrelations between high and popular culture – a global conversation about a privileged 'originary' past played out through moving images. Her detailed archival studies evaluate cinema (both silent and sound) as a distinctive, democratic, transnational and hugely influential use of the classical past, and cinematic antiquity as – paradoxically – an important means for understanding the modern world. Wyke's research on classical antiquity in cinema therefore makes a vital contribution to understanding popular receptions of the ancient world - from Julius Caesar (**R1**) to Elagabalus (**R3**), Cleopatra (**R4**), Nero (**R4 & R5**) and the city of Pompeii (**R6**) – and explores the processes of their subjective consumption by millions worldwide.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1. Wyke, *Caesar in the USA* (University of California Press, 2012). Peer reviewed monograph. Submitted to REF 2014. Silent & sound film and television discussed in four chapters. Sample review *Bryn Mawr* (2013): 'the book significantly enriches our growing understanding of the important role of the classical world, and particularly of Rome, in shaping the culture of the United States'.

R2. Wyke and Pantelis Michelakis eds, *The Ancient World in Silent Cinema* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). Co-edited collection containing co-authored introduction and a single-authored chapter by Wyke. Peer reviewed. Submitted to REF2014. Sample review *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* (2017): 'Michelakis and Wyke's volume is a significant step forward in the investigation of the ancient world in film. It is an essential introduction to the study of such productions in the silent era.' [DOI:10.1017/cbo9781139060073](https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139060073)

R3. Wyke, 'The pleasures and punishments of Roman error: Emperor Elagabalus at the court of early cinema', in ed. Basil Duffallo, *Roman Error: Transgressions and Receptions of Roman Antiquity* (OUP 2017). Chapter in edited collection. Peer reviewed. [DOI:10.1093/oso/9780198803034.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198803034.001.0001)

R4. Wyke, 'From 1916 to the arrival of sound: The systematization, expressivity and self-reflection of the feature film', in *A Companion to Ancient Greece and Rome on Screen*, ed. A. Pomeroy (Wiley-Blackwell, 2017). Chapter in an edited collection. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1534517/>

R5. Wyke, and Monika Woźniak eds, *The Novel of Neronian Rome and its Multimedial Transformations: Sienkiewicz's Quo vadis* (Oxford University Press, 2020). Co-edited collection containing co-authored introduction and a single-authored chapter by Wyke. Peer reviewed.

R6. Wyke, 'Mobilising Pompeii for Italian silent cinema', *Classical Receptions Journal* 11.4 (2019), 453–75. Peer reviewed. [DOI:10.1093/crj/clz015](https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/clz015)

Grants in support of research 1-6:

- AHRC Research Leave Award 'Caesar in the USA: Popular culture, Classical reception, American identity' (2007, GBP24,187 RL AN: 121276 / APN: 121146), final report graded satisfactory. Resulted in (**R1**).
- British Academy Small Research Grant 'The Ancient World of Silent Cinema' (2009-2011, GBP7,000 shared with co-I, SG-54637, final report satisfactory. Resulted in (**R2**).
- British Academy / Leverhulme Small Research Grant 'Ancient Rome in Silent Cinema', (2016-19, GBP6,143, SG-161885; final report satisfactory). Informed (**R3-R6**).

4. Details of the impact

Classical antiquity has become decentred from elite education and high culture. The media of popular culture, especially film and computer games, are now the dominant vehicles for its transmission and reimagining (esp. **R5**). Yet hundreds of antiquity films that contributed to this 'democratic' turn languish in archives across the world, and their strategies for reconstructing the classical past and making it speak to a national and transnational present are not yet properly understood or enjoyed (**R2**).

Enabling cataloguing and curation: Wyke's investigations have led directly to improvements in the cataloguing of silent films about ancient Greece and Rome, where prints were previously unidentified or incorrectly identified. In 2014 - 2019, she advised archivists at the Australian National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA), the British National Film Archive (NFA), the Pathé-Gaumont archive, the Cinémathèque française (CF), and the Library of Congress. For the NFA, Wyke identified the film *Slave of Phydias* (1916) as from the oeuvre of the celebrated French director Léonce Perret (**R4**). She organised screenings of it at the London Cinema Museum in 2015, the Bologna Ritrovato Festival in 2016, and the Bloomsbury Theatre in 2019 for which she provided programme notes and commentary (total audience 440). The NFA curator testifies that, in this way, Wyke's work added to curators' knowledge of such films, which is then shared with audiences and scholars and instigates restoration (see below): "in terms of public and educational impact and the beneficial cooperation of public institutions this has been, and I hope will continue to be, a model project" (**A**). Wyke also identified the source of a segment of film held by the NFSA (**R4**) with important implications for how silent films were censored and the expurgated segments put into private circulation, and provided a detailed plot summary for a damaged print at CF (**R4**), a key first step towards rebuilding the intertitles and restoring the film. In 2019, Wyke provided the Netherlands EYE Filmmuseum with reliable translations into English and Italian of the intertitles to their Dutch print of *Cajus Julius Caesar* (1914) to make their film, according to the EYE archivist "more accessible to an even wider audience" and to make their archival work "more widely known to the academic world" (**B**). Wyke organised a first guided screening of the translated version in Rome in May 2019 (audience 60) and a second for the 278-seater Bridges Theater in Los Angeles for April 2020 (now rescheduled due to COVID-19).

Stimulating restoration and exhibition: Wyke's research on silent films set in classical antiquity assist in promoting their restoration and exhibition as she identifies them as an aesthetically and ideologically significant (but vulnerable) part of a European and American cinematic heritage (**R2, R4, R5**). Wyke was instrumental in establishing from 2013 an annual strand of antiquity screenings at the Bologna Film Festival, *Il Cinema Ritrovato*. This is the largest international festival of archival films, attracting historians of film, archivists, cinema managers, and film fans (in 2016, there were 3,500 delegates from over 50 countries, and 100,000 attendees overall). For the antiquity screenings, archives specifically restored a number of films; CF restored the key early short *Quo vadis* (**C**), (shown subsequently at the Polish Academy in Rome) and the feature *Caligula* (screened subsequently by CF in Paris and then by Wyke in London). In 2014 and 2016, the Co-Director of the Festival organised two days of screenings of antiquity films (total audience 520), and Wyke co-organised the associated workshops (total participants 120). Wyke contributed advice and comment on the selection of films and the themes that tied them together, provided entries in the festival catalogues, led the organisation of the workshops, and co-led the discussion with festival audiences. In 2017, Wyke also contributed to a festival workshop on the intersections with the 'high' arts of the film *Caligula* (1917). The Co-Director of the Bologna Festival testifies that "for the festival and indeed the studies of silent cinema [Wyke's] research and interpretations are very important, making clear connections between different medias and cultural productions, bringing new audiences with different ways of access and interest to the films" (**C**) including classics students from the University of Bologna.

Generating guided performances: Based on her research (esp. **R1, R3** and **R6**) and with benefits for cultural participation and public understanding, Wyke regularly arranges guided screenings of rare examples of silent cinema's antiquity films, with live musical accompaniment in a variety of venues nationally and internationally. In total, she has screened 46 films through 16 events held in the academic institutions, museums, cinemas or theatres of 11 cities across 8 countries and 4 continents: London, Oxford, Exeter, Rome, Olomouc, Victoria, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Sydney, Juiz de Fora and Oslo (**D**). One additional event in Los Angeles scheduled for April 2020 was postponed because of COVID-19. Approximately 1,550 people have attended in total, comprising the general public, silent film fans, school children and teachers, students and academics. 12 of the 16 events were organised by Wyke alone and comprised a selection of films set in ancient Rome, the four

London-based events also included films set in ancient Greece and involved the collaboration of Michelakis. Funding to support the public events (upwards of GBP20,000) was won from UCL, the University of London festival *Being Human*, the Fédération internationale des associations d'études classiques and the Classical Association, or they were covered by the host institution. Such performances support the cultural outreach of universities and museums; Wyke's academic host in Sydney called the Nicolson Museum screening in 2014 "a great occasion for developing the museum's distinctive profile" as a place for novel and thought-provoking experiences (total audience 200) (E). The programmes of independent cinemas are enriched, assisting them in meeting their strategic aims, as these events (that include introductory explanations, programme notes and sometimes follow up Q&As) bring otherwise inaccessible treasures out of the archive, enhance public understanding of them, and attract new audiences. The Head of Cinemateket Oslo wrote that, "this event proved to be a valuable addition to Cinemateket's programme, and Prof. Maria Wyke provided insights and perspectives of great interest to our audience, and perfectly in line with Cinemateket's general mission to stimulate the interest in film history and film art. We were also pleased to see that the event attracted visitors from outside of Cinemateket's core audience" (E).

Audience feedback gathered after six of the screenings (F) attests to how these live events render viewers more active participants in the cinematic imagining of the classical past. Audience members stated that the guided performances "enriched my knowledge and appreciation of the symbiosis between the art of film and the classics" and led to behavioural change ("I will never watch a film in a passive way again but as an active participant in the art"). Some attendees described how the screenings developed their historical insight into a previous age of film ("[I] learned about the evolution of music, dialogue + cinematic effects + the place of Rome in the cinematic imagination"), while others noted the immediacy with which Wyke's research enriched the film viewing experience: "I also really liked seeing a moment in the lecture – the depth of the set – come to life on the screen just a couple of minutes after [Wyke] mentioned it".

The events also expanded the skills of graduate students of music who were unfamiliar with the techniques of improvisation (Sydney and Chicago) and advanced the career of a professional musician who composed original scores for two separate screenings in Rome (E and G). In 2019, Wyke provided academic guidance (R1) for the composition of a new score for the silent feature *Julius Caesar*. The musician testifies to the creative value of this collaboration: "The suggestions you gave me at the beginning of my work on composing the score were absolutely precious. Your explanations about the different parts and moods of the plot helped me so much" (G). After the performance, he received three standing ovations, and audiences remarked in their feedback that his distinctive accompaniment had changed and enriched their understanding of the role of music in film (F). These opportunities and a television interview about how and why he composes to accompany such historical silent films raised his public profile in Italy (RAI programme; 840 hits on YouTube). Wyke has since arranged for Sganga to perform his Caesar score in the USA, where he has never previously performed (which is being rescheduled due to COVID-19).

Enhancing contextual appreciation of antiquity films: Wyke has also sought out other avenues to enhance public appreciation of antiquity films more broadly, including those of the sound era. She utilised her analysis of how the influential Italian film *Quo vadis* draws on a Polish historical novel of the same name (R5) in a chapter entry for the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Polish Academy at Rome from November 2016 to January 2017. The exhibition organiser from Sapienza University of Rome testifies that: "The material provided by Maria regarding the Guazzoni's film, screened at the opening night of the event, proved to be very useful. The exhibition was visited by about 400 people and was also reviewed in the media (radio and newspapers, Rai Cultura television network)" (H). Wyke collaborated with the exhibition organiser at Sapienza University of Rome to organise a series of public colloquia, film screenings and practical workshops in Rome on the theme of *Audio / Visual Romans* (with awards totalling GBP12,650 from the UCL Cities Partnership Programme). The first event in 2018 explored how image and sound interact in the audio-visual recreation of Nero (R4 and R5), the second in 2019 considered the figure of Julius Caesar (R1). A further set of events in Rome arranged for May 2020 with Sapienza, Roma Tre, and the BSR is being rescheduled due

to COVID-19. The cross-disciplinary workshops for postgraduate students (in Classics, History, Film, Comparative Literature and Translation Studies) enhance their understanding of the aural dimension of antiquity films and improve their film literacy by engaging them collaboratively in the exercise of audio-description (20 students in 2018; 26 were envisaged for 2020). The exhibition organiser at Sapienza University of Rome testifies, “all shared a very positive opinion on the usefulness of the activity carried out for their understanding of film and its representation of Roman history” (H). A UK student who went to Rome, says: it “has really highlighted to me the importance of the aural contribution to the communication of Roman power [in film]” (H).

Wyke has engaged museum and festival visitors, cinema audiences, film societies, teachers and school students, adult learners, and students and staff at academic institutions, through c. 34 talks about Rome on film (esp. R2 and R6), including for: universities in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway, Brazil, the USA, Canada and Australia (I); academies in Rome (I); the British and Petrie Museums (F); Festivals of Culture; charities concerned with education in classics; classical associations; schools and colleges. Indicative feedback from lifelong learners at the London-based adult education college CityLit asserted: Wyke’s talk has “deepened [my] understanding of film artistry” and “made it more likely that I would watch a silent film” (I).

Expanding university curricula: Wyke’s research within this period had a significant impact on the content and approach of courses concerning ‘antiquity on film’ or ‘classical reception’ both in the UK and abroad. At the University of Illinois, silent films have been included in a course on the Classical Tradition “much thanks to [Wyke’s] pioneering efforts”, having “created new horizons both for me and my students” (J). At the University of Cambridge, a module on *Ancient Rome in Film, TV and Popular Culture* “while owing a debt to Wyke in terms of content ... is crucially inspired by her method” (J). At the University of Queensland, “her works are the ‘go-to’ resources for curriculum design and production of teaching materials on the topic of the reception of Greece and Rome in cinema” across five modules attracting 450–560 students per year; her method is “important for the way it trains students’ minds to think and analyse not only films, but all moments of classical reception” (J).

Wyke’s collaborative work with film archives, festivals, cinemas and museums has enabled these organisations to appreciate and share significant films, while her research has also enhanced learning about and through such films via university curricula, public talks, widening participation activities, and life-long learning.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. Testimonial from Curator of Silent Film at the British Film Institute National Film Archive.
- B. Emails from the EYE Filmmuseum archive and the access officer at NFSA; on the Phydias identification, exchange of emails between NFA, Pathé-Gaumont and the festival programmer.
- C. Email on *Quo vadis* restoration motivated by Blom & Wyke; festival catalogues (2014: pp.41-4) and (2016: pp.73-5 and p.83). Testimonial from the programmer for the Bologna *Cinema Ritrovato* film festival. For scale of the festival, ICO report on 2016 (figures supplied on p2.)
- D. Full list of guided performances.
- E. Emails from hosts of screenings: the Sydney University Classics department & the Director of its museum; a cinema manager in Ann Arbor (USA); the organiser of the silent film society Oxford; the Professor-in-charge at the American Academy (Rome); the organiser of the Brazilian Congress; and the manager of a key Norwegian cinema.
- F. Feedback forms (263) from audiences of film screenings (Birkbeck Cinema; British Museum; Cinema Museum; British School at Rome x 2; Bloomsbury Theatre).
- G. Email from pianist in Chicago and email about pianist in Sydney. Emails from the composer for Rome in 2018 and 2019 (and the postponed event in Los Angeles of 2020), and link to his television interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr8w8nc67Qk>.
- H. Statement from Wyke’s collaborator at Sapienza; student feedback on workshops.
- I. Review of talks at American Academy in Italian online magazine *Cinemaecineamatografi* (18 April 2015) and feedback from CityLit students.
- J. Testimonials on curriculum development: University of Cambridge; University of Illinois; University of Queensland.