

*XXVIII Le Giornate del Cinema Muto*  
*The Collegium Papers (unedited)*  
*2009*

## COLLEGIUM PAPERS - An introduction

David Robinson

*In the early years of the Collegium, the annual papers were published in hard-copy book form, which gave them a sense of permanence which some (if not all of them, perhaps) certainly deserved. Sadly, the changing situation of cultural economies no longer permits us this traditional style of record, and we now reluctantly acknowledge that the only mode or publication for the immediate future is on-line.*

*We look for the positive side in every necessity. The formality of book production required that the papers underwent a formal process of editing, to transform them into conventional, correct English. It made for easier reading, but we were also conscious that often we lost a certain freshness and vitality in the very errors of people battling to express themselves in a language not native to them (and moreover we had occasional complaints that our editing was too opinionated!).*

*The internet heartens informality and is a welcoming host to orthographic eccentricity. Now, then, we feel justified in publishing the papers in their original form – errors and enthusiasm unchecked. We are proud – even amazed by the best of them; disappointed in those that have not turned out so well. But they are all new voices, worth hearing.*

## The collegium “rule”

The Collegium is an unconventional experiment in the technique of study. It is designed to utilise the unique conditions of the “Le Giornate del Cinema Muto” festival - a very concentrated one-week event; the possibility to see an extensive collection of rare archival films; the presence in one place and at one time of many (perhaps most) of the world’s best qualified experts in film history - scholars, historians, archivists, collectors, critics, academics and just plain enthusiasts.

The aim of the Collegium is to excite a new generation in the idea of cinema history and heritage, and to infiltrate these newcomers into the very special community that has evolved around the Giornate during its years. We want the participants in the Collegium to feel themselves members of that community, not to be awed and intimidated by the age, experience, authority or scholarship of the people they meet in Pordenone.

From past years’ experience we recognise that we derive the maximum advantage from the special conditions of this short week of concentrated activity by returning to a fundamental, classical concept of study, in which the impetus is the students’ curiosity and inquiry rather than the imposition of a formal teaching programme. Hence instead of formal lectures and panels, the daily sessions of the Collegium take the form of a series of “Dialogues”, in the Platonic sense, in which the collegians sit down with groups of experts in different aspects of the Giornate programme or in various fields of the study and techniques of film history and conservation.

The object of these Dialogues is not only to elicit information and instruction, but to establish personal, social connection between collegians and Pordenone habitues, so that the former will have no inhibitions about approaching the latter, in the course of the week, for supplementary discussion. Naturally collegians are required to see as much of the festival programme as possible.

To focus their inquiry, the members of the Collegium are each required to write, retrospectively, a paper or essay on some theme emerging from or inspired by the experiences of the Giornate. This may be done in collaboration with one of the "mentors" - veterans of the previous year's Collegium who return to support and assist the newcomers. The principal sources of information for the publication are likely to be interrogation of the appropriate experts present at the Giornate or study of particular aspects of the programme. THE OVERALL CRITERION FOR PAPERS IS THAT THEY COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN WRITTEN AS A RESULT OF THE GIORNATE EXPERIENCE. There are no limits - beyond readable literacy - on the style and form of the essays. The aim is that these papers will not just be a student exercise, but will provide generally useful reading even for the experts from whose experience and advice they derive, who may discover insights which may not have struck them before.

In general, selecting the applicants for the collegium, we do not look for formal academic or age qualifications in collegians. The qualities we look for in the twelve young people invited each year are enthusiasm, energy and above all curiosity: prospective applicants in the first instance simply write a

letter explaining (1) who they are, (2) what is their special interest in film history, (3) what is their experience of silent films and (4) why they feel they are suited to be members of the Collegium, which involves integrating socially with the other collegians and mentors, and making positive contacts with the Pordenone population of film history experts.

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## Behind the Bulb: Projecting Silent Film, One Frame at a Time

Vito Adriaenssens

The projection of film is an aspect of cinema that has garnered little attention in film studies, yet it fully determines the way in which audiences experience a film. If one thing is certain, it is that the projection of a silent film is not a clear-cut task at all, for it engenders difficulties both practical and ethical. Each silent film is rooted in its own specific historical context when it comes to the circumstances of its recording, release and projection, and these factors determine the manner in which we should approach the contemporary projection of a silent film. Or do they? One could argue that, since historical accuracy is virtually unattainable, we might as well adapt silent film projection - and film speed in particular - to our own present day standards. For if we give historical accuracy the benefit of the doubt, might this not stand between the modern viewer and the silent image? These questions were very much alive at the 2009 Giornate del Cinema Muto, where they fueled the fire of many a debate.

### The projectionist

“A person who makes the projection of motion pictures his or her profession, trade or business. More particularly the title is applied to ambitious, energetic men of recognized ability in both practical projection and in technical knowledge as applied thereto.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1922, author and projectionist F.H. Richardson identified motion picture projectionists as a rare breed of men and women, skilled to breathe life into the silver screen. Projectionists functioned, and function, as important gatekeepers between the filmmakers and the public. Visitors of the Giornate del Cinema Muto are generally a spoiled bunch, because they get to see the best prints, projected under the best possible conditions, by a crack team of projectionists. They have, therefore, also become extra critical when it comes to the screening of silent films, even though

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<sup>1</sup> Richardson, F.H. *Richardson's Handbook of Projection: for Theatre Managers and Motion Picture Projectionists (Fourth Edition)*. New York: Chalmers Publishing Company, 1922, p.39.

the task at hand is not always an easy one. Veteran moviegoers know that one's experience of a film is wholly dependent upon the conditions in which the film is shown. Even though comfortable chairs and a decent size screen go a long way, they are not the only factors that come into the equation. When it comes to watching silent films, our enjoyment of the material can easily be disrupted by factors such as fuzzy projection, a high flicker rate, misframed projection<sup>2</sup>, sloppy reel changes, inappropriate musical accompaniment and, the scourge of the screen, improper projection speed. This goes to show that you can't always blame a bad movie experience on rowdy teenagers, slurping on soda's and munching on Mars bars. D.W. Griffith himself is credited with stating that the projectionist is largely "compelled to redirect the photoplay."<sup>3</sup>

By 'compelled', Griffith not only implied that projectionists, whether they like it or not, are in effect redirecting the picture each time they project it, but also that they were actually compelled to do so by theatre owners. Projectionists were bound to airtight schedules by theatre owners, but the latter did not always want to pay for the necessary preparatory work – checking the incoming reels for the proper projection speed and the resulting projection time – so that projection often had to be sped up in order to squeeze all the features into a theatre show. Academy Award winning<sup>4</sup> cinematographer and former projectionist Victor Milner remembered that, in the days when he still hand-cranked projection, he had direct orders to run 1000 feet in 12 minutes (22 fps)<sup>5</sup> for an eight o'clock show with lead actor Maurice Costello, but for an afternoon show the same film would feature Costello crossing the set very slowly, in order to add minutes to the program.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to the slipping of the celluloid passing through the projector, causing one to see a decentered image, but also to the use of the wrong projection mask, causing the film to be boxed off too much, or not enough, resulting in an improper image ratio.

<sup>3</sup> D.W. Griffith as quoted in Richardson, F.H. Ibid., p.214.

<sup>4</sup> Milner (1893-1972) was nominated an astonishing nine times in his career, but only won the Oscar once, for *Cleopatra* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1934).

<sup>5</sup> Wonderful conversion tables can be found in Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *Silent Cinema: an Introduction*. London: British Film Institute, 2003, pp.170-174.

<sup>6</sup> Milner, Victor. 'Speed of Projection' in *The American Cinematographer* (July 1923), p.6.



Before going into the highly problematic issue of projection speed, however, I would like to introduce the man in charge of one of the most important and underrated aspects of the Giornate del Cinema Muto. The man behind the bulb is chief projectionist and scenographer Mr. Carlo Montanaro.<sup>7</sup> When the film cans start to arrive in Pordenone at the dawn of the Giornate, he and his team go to work. Every film that arrives has to be checked to see if its properties (such as format and condition) correspond with the ones given by the archives, and then every can is repacked, labeled and stocked. The preparatory work alone takes a team of six people two to three days, but is highly necessary in order to pull off the screening intensity for a festival such as the Giornate. It being a silent film festival complicates matters, and it is obvious that nothing is left to chance. Each projection has to be monitored closely by someone in the cabin, and because of the type of projectors required for the booth in the Teatro Verdi (those that were used on ships), this has to be done sitting on the floor. The task at hand is not an easy one, but someone has got to do it.

For despite their best professional efforts, criticism is never far away. At the 2009 Giornate, one of the more overtly voiced complaints involved the changes between reels, which spectators described to be on the slow side, causing one reel to end rather abruptly. Where reels are normally taped together, however, international guidelines<sup>8</sup> regarding the use of archive prints state that the fragile celluloid should be spared as much as possible, and this includes manipulating it in that way. Therefore, the team at the Giornate works with two projectors, but the reel changes still have to be applied manually. This means keeping an eye out for cue marks on the print (the black or white dots in the upper right corner), which are not always visibly there, or can be positioned in the wrong place. Some archive cinemas working two projectors with the reel-by-reel change system place a piece of aluminum foil at the end of the reel, which can automatically trigger the start of the next projector through sensors, but this is against the advice of FIAF, and it is therefore not employed at the Giornate. Marking the prints at the end of the reel is something projectionists used to do in case these were missing, but it goes without saying that this is no

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<sup>7</sup> All information gained by interviewing Mr. Montanaro on 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Sætervadet, Torkell. *The Advanced Projection Manual: Presenting Classic Films in a Modern Projection Environment*. Oslo & Brussels: The Norwegian Film Institute & FIAF, 2006, p.59.

longer supposed to be done to archive prints. The abruptness at the end of a reel can also be attributed to the state of the celluloid. Fragile prints are at their most vulnerable towards the end of a reel, causing them to snap now and then. Those who thought that the projectionists were being plain lazy, might just want to reconsider that idea. Mr. Montanaro says his team is so good at what they do, that the Pordenone audience will not even forgive them for small mistakes that are statistically inevitable.

### **The need for speed**

The responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the silent film projectionist is doubled by the issue of film speed. One of the main reasons silent films are still being mocked by a contemporary audience, is because of the idea that they always feature funny men and women walking too fast. This idea has been rigorously set in people's minds by popular television, which, if it features silent films at all, usually shows them in poor quality and at sound speed, meaning 24 frames per second, or faster. Silent films were, however, said to be shot at an average speed of 16 frames per second, though it was more complicated than that. Prior to the standardization to a rate of 24 frames per second that heralded the age of the talkies, for reasons of sound synchronization, film speed was a different story altogether.

The truth is that there was no standard film speed in the silent era and, as Kevin Brownlow notes, this "placed responsibility on the projectionist in a way the sound film never did."<sup>9</sup> Silent film speed varied from scene to scene, as cameramen not only hand-cranked the camera, but also adjusted their shooting speed to fit the mood of a particular scene. Scenes that featured action or comedy were often under-cranked, or shot at a lower frame rate, so that they would come out faster than the other scenes in projection. This was done to add more pep and/or humor to those scenes, cinematic tricks to make the action seem more intense than it really is. Since scenes were shot at different speeds, ranging anywhere between 14 and 24 frames per second throughout the silent era, this had to be taken into account by the projectionists as well.

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<sup>9</sup> Brownlow, Kevin. 'Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?' in *Sight and Sound* (Summer 1980), pp.164-167.

Torkell Sætervadet quite rightly states that the lack of a standard silent film speed is “a nightmare for projectionists and archivists alike,”<sup>10</sup> and so it does not surprise this writer that the debate on the proper projection speed was already in full swing by the early 1910s, with F.H. Richardson as one of the chief proponents of a proper projection speed. Silent film projectors were equipped with speed control devices fairly quickly, so that the speed could be adjusted while projecting, but the guidelines for this were just as varied as the shooting speed. Projecting under 16 frames per second is not recommended due to the flicker rate and the heat exposure to the celluloid, especially when dealing with nitrate film, but in some cases this might be historically justified; D.W. Griffith is said to have shot some of his films under 16 fps, in order to get the extensive content in, even though he must have known that they were most likely going to end up oversped in projection.<sup>11</sup> In the 1920s, cameramen started to take into account the higher projection speeds at the theatres by cranking their cameras at higher speeds, usually between 20 and 24 fps. Strangely enough, however, few were willing to admit this, stating that they adhered to a so-called “standard” speed of 16 fps, even though this was obviously not the case.

Historically speaking, a lot of films – especially those of the 1920s – were meant to be shown at higher speeds than 16 fps, which one can deduce from shooting scripts, musical cue sheets and studio correspondence. The extensive cue sheet research of silent film historian James Card failed to turn up a single instance indicating a film should be projected at 16 fps.<sup>12</sup> Card quotes the published projection speed of the 1916 Douglas Fairbanks vehicle *The Americano*, directed by John Emerson, as being between 18 and 20 fps. Buster Keaton’s delightfully hilarious *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), and Erich von Stroheim’s epic romance *The Merry Widow* (1925) – to provide the reader with a marked contrast in genre – are both indicated at 24 fps. We must keep in mind, however, that if one were to project the latter at 16 fps, this would seriously increase its already lengthy running time, most likely causing a lot of viewers to cringe in their seats. At the 2009 Giornate, *The Merry Widow* was shown at 22 fps, and a look at some of the prior catalogues more or less confirms the trend of a chronological increase in film speed. The films shown at 16 fps are usually

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<sup>10</sup> Sætervadet, Torkell. Ibid., p.66.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.68 & Brownlow, Kevin. Ibid. The latter notes that certain scenes in Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) were so under-cranked that they need to be shown at 12 fps.

<sup>12</sup> Card, James. ‘Silent Film Speed’ in *Image* (October 1955), p.55-56.

the ones around or before the year 1910. After that, 18 fps seems to be more common. Every film still has its own specific context, however, and as F.H. Richardson once noted, “the correct speed of projection is the speed at which each individual scene was taken [...] One of the highest functions of projection is to watch the screen and regulate the speed of projection to synchronize with the speed of taking[sic: *talking*].”<sup>13</sup>

In spite of his good intentions, Richardson’s guidelines were not always realistic. As was mentioned before, projectionists did not always have a choice. Theatre owners dictated their schedules in such a way that over-speeding was almost inevitable. Furthermore, as both James Card and Kevin Brownlow have indicated, studio cue sheets indicated that films should be shown at a frame rate consistently higher than the original camera speed. Given the work load of projectionists, it was, and still is, also quite unthinkable that they should change projection speed from scene to scene. Richardson’s immense aversion to over-speeding – describing it to be a “cardinal sin”<sup>14</sup> - is very understandable, especially from a present-day point of view, but, as a contemporary of Richardson noted, over-speeding had become so universal that it “ceased to be a ‘fault’.”<sup>15</sup> The fact that Richardson’s contemporary puts the word ‘fault’ between quotation marks is also a good indication of how problematic the issue of a “correct” projection speed was.

### **Putting the audience first**

The contemporary programmer of silent film is therefore put in quite a predicament. If historical accuracy is the goal, then there are a number of elements that have to be taken into account, some of which will contradict one another. The filmmaker’s intentions - if these are voiced at all - might go against studio guidelines, musical cue sheets, and projection trends. In addition, some of the published speeds were just ridiculously fast. So which piece of information is most important for the silent film programmer? The best kind of advice that one can find in projection manuals, from 1910 to 2010, is also the most simple: keep your eyes on the screen. Programmers constantly run

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<sup>13</sup> Richardson, F.H. Ibid., p.217.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.216.

<sup>15</sup> Bennett, Colin N. *A Guide to Kinematography (Projection Section): For Managers, Manager Operators, and Operators of Kinema Theatres*. London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1923, p.164.

the risk of over- or under-speeding<sup>16</sup> the projection of a silent film, but this does not have to involve any form of judgment, or any strict adherence to historical accuracy. The intention of the programmer is still to show the films to an audience.

It seems, then, that it is not a matter of right or wrong, of accurate or inaccurate. The projection might be over- or under-spiced if the movements of the actors look more realistic that way. For silent film historian and member of the Giornate del Cinema Muto's directive committee, Paolo Cherchi Usai, this is exactly what the Giornate stands for: "our goal is to bring the audience closer to the film, and vice versa."<sup>17</sup> The festival organizers try their best to strike a compromise between the available historical data, gathered from archives by international experts, and audience appreciation. It are also the archives that provide the Giornate with the proper projection speeds. At the end of the day, however, it is still the audience that counts, as chief projectionist Mr. Montanaro explains:

"What counts is not the theory, but the spectacle. When the lights go out, we go back in time, [...] and we have to show the audience emotions that cannot always be found in history books, but we still have to reproduce them in the cinema. So sometimes it happens that we do not follow the instructions, in order to provide the audience with an experience that they can truly enjoy."

At the 2009 Giornate del Cinema Muto, the recently restored film *J'Accuse!* (Abel Gance, 1919) was at the heart of this discussion. The restoration of this film was done by the Nederlands Filmmuseum, who provided the print with the instruction to run it at 18 fps. Upon viewing the film before the festival, however, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Giornate director David Robinson and silent film expert Kevin Brownlow decided that perhaps screening the film at 16 fps would be more suited for a contemporary audience. Silent film pianist Stephen Horne, who had accompanied the film at 18 fps when it was screened in London, backed them up by stating that he had also found it

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<sup>16</sup> Under-speeding projection was common practice in film circles after the silent era, when it was believed that 16 fps was in fact a standard speed, causing some films to drag immensely. For more information see Brownlow, Kevin. Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> All information gained by interviewing Mr. Cherchi Usai on 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2009.

too fast.<sup>18</sup> At one of the Collegium sessions concerning the *J'Accuse!* restoration case, the Nederlands Filmmuseum team nevertheless vocally stood by their decision to screen the film at 18 fps. The Giornate team had also considered the option to screen the first part of the film at 16 fps, and the second at 18 fps, but they eventually went for a uniform frame rate. F.H. Richardson claimed to have often changed film speed “half a dozen times on one film of 1000 feet,”<sup>19</sup> but this was never very manageable in reality, so the Giornate experts only do this on rare occasions, after careful consideration.

There is more than meets the eye to the projection of a silent film. Heavy historical baggage and ethical dilemmas are part and parcel of this type of entertainment, and then one still has an audience to please. The approach of the Giornate del Cinema Muto is one that takes all the aforementioned difficulties in its stride, and then puts the audience first. The concern should not only be what is historically “right” or “wrong,” but what the purpose of the festival is, and that purpose is presenting silent films to a contemporary audience in the best possible circumstances. As Paolo Cherchi Usai said, “There is no point in achieving accuracy if this is obtained at the expense of emotional involvement with, and aesthetic appreciation of, the film.” For what is a silent film, without an audience.

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<sup>18</sup> The proper silent film speed is often decided upon in collaboration with the musician(s) accompanying the film, for the speed of the film also influences its rhythm and, thus, that of the music.

<sup>19</sup> F.H. Richardson as quoted in Card, James. Ibid.

## Looking forward, looking back: Memory, methods, and models for the future of silent cinema

Meredith A. Bak

“Every generation creates a new version of history, and therefore film history is rewritten from a new approach by each generation.”

-- Eileen Bowser<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of *Le Quinzième Prélude de Chopin* (1922), Monsieur Monet sets up a motion picture projector in his parlor and screens a Charlie Chaplin movie for his delighted young son Paul. The pleasure of this idyllic scene, in which a father shares the magic of the movies to his son, is short-lived in the context of the film. However, it is an exceptional metaphor for the Collegium at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, in which veterans of the silent film community introduce novice members to the rich world of the art form as it exists today. This unique convergence of communities, a network of scholars, archivists, preservationists, and collectors, offers great potential to the future of silent film, but also presents a substantial challenge. As technological changes enable more parties to collaborate on restoration projects, and digitization redefines the nature of an artifact, increased attention must be paid not only to the films, but to documenting the process of how the films are treated in archival settings. Understanding the motivations of those involved in preservation and restoration is essential to scholars, audiences, and future archive professionals who hope to understand the film. By highlighting several case studies discussed in the 2009 Collegium dialogues, this paper explores the acute need for thorough project documentation in restoration projects, and outlines the main constituencies that would benefit from such materials.

Restoration projects often involve collaboration across a variety of interested communities, from archivists and students to collectors and technology experts. United by a goal of preserving a

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald S. Magliozzi. “Film Archiving as a Profession: An Interview with Eileen Bowser. In *The Moving Image*. Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2003 pp. 132-146.

cultural or historical artifact, these groups cooperate to rescue films from the ravages of time, and importantly, make them available to a wider audience (often in a variety of ways that acknowledge changing modes of spectatorship). While the ultimate objective for these projects is often preservation and wider access for silent films, the preservation process itself also becomes a part of the film's history. However, this aspect can easily be overlooked. As preservation and restoration methods continue to change, and as restored silent films move from celluloid to the digital realm, the need for thorough documentation is increasingly important.

In a conversation with Edith Kramer, this year's Jonathan Dennis Memorial Lecturer, she expressed her reluctance to venture into the wholly new territory of digital technology. "I can't learn that world. Leave it to the next generation."<sup>2</sup> In part, the Collegium is designed to help bridge this generational gap that often becomes apparent in discussions of technology. The Collegium enables younger professionals to infiltrate the existing silent film community, to learn from the rich resources that experienced professionals can offer, and in turn, contribute their own insights about the current and future state of silent cinema. Implicit throughout this year's Collegium, however, was the potential for a second gap. Instead of being between generations, this gap is between the different participants involved in preserving, restoring, and disseminating silent films.

Film "restoration" means different things in different contexts. Unlike preservation, which primarily emphasizes the stabilization of material, saving it from vanishing, restoration implies changing the material in question. Restoration might involve constructing a particular cut of a film (a theatrical cut or a director's cut, for example). It might involve assembling all known footage of a film, even if the resulting film was never shown in such length before. Restoration may involve cleaning up an image or heightening the colors, a process that Uli Reudel and Daniela Currò's Collegium dialogue demonstrated is always contingent upon innumerable historical factors.<sup>3</sup> The complexity of defining restoration and understanding each project's unique aims is nothing new.

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<sup>2</sup> Edith Kramer, Interview with the author, 9 October 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Daniela Currò and Uli Ruedel. Collegium Dialogue: Il restauro del colore, 7 October 2009.



However, particularly as collaborative projects involve multiple agencies and employ different technologies, documenting the motivations, rationales for decision-making, and each participant's role becomes crucial to understanding the film, both for contemporary professionals and audiences, as well as for future generations.

Each group involved in a restoration project brings a unique set of concerns, priorities, and perspectives to bear on the final product. The basic process is relatively familiar: Scholars often work to unearth historical context and original documents related to a film; those working in the archives help negotiate access to these materials; and collectors can aid in locating materials. In the labs, much discussion revolves around the precise processes by which the film will be preserved or restored, and technical consultants are brought in to make the film accessible in different formats, such as online as a streaming video. While this is a gross simplification of each participant's role, such a list begins to sketch the boundaries of each group's expectations and the scope of their expertise.

Though they may share the same aim, these different groups go about their work in different "languages," ranging from the tone of academic writing, the legal and ethical discourse guiding the archivist, the scientific details of preservation methods, and the programming language of computer code that prepares data for Internet viewing. Collaborative projects can take advantage of each participant's unique skills, but they also must be carefully documented themselves. A plea for the importance of a professional or institutional history is nothing new. However, changes in communication technologies have dramatically aided collaboration across geographical and cultural expanses, and further, these conversations increasingly involve multiple parties with very different interests and perspectives, ranging from universities, technology firms, and state archives. Such initiatives can overcome many boundaries. Archivists often joke about the difficulty of transporting film across borders, bemoaning the difficulty of customs categories and recounting times when films were most safely stored in their own luggage. The next generation of silent film enthusiasts will face these same challenges, and further, they must think also about the virtual borders that data and other non-physical records must traverse. Aside from being a philosophical issue, it becomes a deeply pragmatic one as well. Documenting the methodology and logistics of these collaborative partnerships is crucial to this process.

Carefully chronicling the methods and procedures of these projects can be as important as the finished project itself, much like the metadata attached to a library catalog record. Doing so benefits three primary constituencies. First, it is helpful to the contemporary professional community, from colleague institutions who learn from one another's methods, to scholars, who can discuss the implications and effects of a film's life from its original creation to its restoration in the archive. Secondly, project documentation can benefit the audience. Although it is unreasonable to assume that each audience will desire the full back story of a film, making such information available enables a richer understanding of the film, as well as an appreciation of the work done to bring it to life for contemporary theatergoers. Third, focused records articulating the relationships between participants in restoration projects will help clarify the intricacies of the process to future generations of the silent film community, which will be charged of making sense of these materials and what we have done with them.

The first community to benefit from a standardized form of project documentation is the professional network of institutions that work with silent films. These parties include cultural institutions like archives and museums, academic programs, and increasingly involve private firms, which offer technological expertise and other resources. Such collaborations involve complex exchanges among all of these groups, and the communication does not always occur across even terrain. A state-funded archive collaborating with a private university and a technology company that takes them on as clients all have different motivations, and different stakes in the finished product. Particularly when a project is tremendously successful, (or tremendously unsuccessful), records documenting how these parties work together, but from different vantage points, could be invaluable for institutions embarking on similar endeavors.

One area in which the potential gap in documenting methods seems acutely apparent is in projects that utilize new media and employ experimental infrastructures. Groundbreaking and innovative uses of technology are especially important to document and track, because they tend to be replicated and used as blueprints for subsequent projects. *The Rose of Rhodesia* (1918) project, a collaboration among institutions in four countries, including the Nederlands Filmmuseum (EYE), Latrobe University, and a US web partner, Thought Equity Motion, is such an example. *The Rose of Rhodesia* project culminated with the film available for viewing online, an issue of *Screening the*

*Past* dedicated to its history and restoration, and a usable online archive of original historical documents related to the film.

*The Rose of Rhodesia* project serves as a valuable example for other institutions considering trying to make content available online. When asked what criteria were used in selecting *The Rose of Rhodesia* for this project, Vreni Hockenjos explained that “this film just got lucky.”<sup>4</sup> In discussing what sorts of models and previous initiatives this project was based on, she noted that the infrastructure of the Filmmuseum’s existing digital initiatives, such as the Images for the Future project, was essential to making this project possible. As more universities, archives, and museums attempt web initiatives, it is increasingly necessary to document and understand best practices for technical specifications, elements of web design, and the kinds of accessibility that these projects enable.

Hockenjos’ suggestion that this particular film “got lucky” underscores an important element of the whole process—that many of these discoveries and collaborations are serendipitous. Sometimes funding, personnel, and other opportunities align, and those conditions cannot simply be standardized and replicated. That is part of the excitement involved in the process of historical discovery and archival work. Still, especially as the lives of silent films continue in other forms—on DVDs and the Internet—the importance of tracking and understanding their movements becomes more important than ever. Speaking about such web projects, Edith Kramer pointed out that many websites have very short life spans. The Internet is ephemeral, and she suggested that institutions often launch sites without long-term structures in place for continued funding and the inevitably required upgrades.<sup>5</sup> Some web initiatives, such as Bruce Sterling’s oft-cited Dead Media Project, eventually go inactive.<sup>6</sup> The Internet can be an invaluable tool to share and disseminate information, though careful planning and design of a project, are essential, as are advanced measures to keep it alive even as technology changes and the project’s scope shift. Colleague

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<sup>4</sup> Vreni Hockenjos, Special Collegium Session: *The Rose of Rhodesia* and *The Wheels of Chance*, 8 October 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Edith Kramer, Interview with the author, 9 October 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Sterling, *The Dead Media Project*. <http://www.deadmedia.org/>

institutions can learn from one another in these regards, to understand certain requirements for successful, long-term plans.

The second community that benefits from knowledge of the preservation and restoration process is the ever-expanding audience of silent films. Among the core constituencies of such multi-faceted audiences are film students, who ought to take a keen interest in understanding how silent films are restored and preserved. Here too, the fact that participants in a restoration project approach their work from a variety of perspectives can be important for students and scholars in forming their analytical frameworks. While discussing her restoration work on Abel Gance's *J'Accuse* (1919), Annike Kross explained that the process became so time consuming and implausible for one person to complete that half of the film's work was outsourced to a company based in India.<sup>7</sup> A chief benefit of outsourcing, Kross explained, was that the job could be completed much faster, because the Indian firm could staff the process around the clock. This detail of the project raised a number of questions in the Collegium session. Many Collegium participants were curious about the archival standards employed by the external firm, and inquired about the potential difference in archival training and perspective. Others were interested in the way that outsourcing the labor in India changed the flow of global capital. All of these details become a part of the film's history, and are important elements to consider in future analyses and treatments of the film. Close documentation of the working relationship between the parties involved might address this spectrum of inquiries and shed light on how each participant shaped the resulting version of the film.

In addition to specific restoration cases as fruitful sites of analysis, the films made available through restoration projects also have longer-term impact on the silent film scholarship. One of the key points raised during the Collegium session on "The Canon Revisited" was that the canon of silent film masterpieces is maintained through the complex interplay of archival work, scholarship, and importantly, access to the films.<sup>8</sup> The films that are most visible within the

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<sup>7</sup> Annike Kross, Collegium Dialogue: Il caso del restauro di *J'accuse*, 8 October 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Paolo Cherchi Usai, Special Collegium Session: Il canone rivisitato, 5 October 2009.

archival and scholarly communities are also often those that are the most available to be used in teaching contexts. Here again, one of the most exciting elements of *The Rose of Rhodesia* project was the fact that the film, long considered lost, was available once again.

The proliferation of digital copies of films adds another element of complexity to restoration efforts. In the annual Jonathan Dennis Memorial Lecture, “Film Programming: Where we’ve been and where we’re going (Arguments with myself,)” Edith Kramer pointed out that digitization is not cheaper for archives and institutions (which often require substantial technical overhauls).<sup>9</sup> However, many teaching facilities are only equipped with digital capabilities. Thus, having a film available online or in a DVD format is ideal for many instructors for whom 35mm projection would not be possible (though this reality is certain to draw ire from many silent film purists). In many cases, restoration is not an issue of content migration, but rather the creation of additional copies, so that the same film may exist in multiple formats, each one of which has a distinct technological and exhibition history. In introducing films like *The Rose of Rhodesia* and a constellation of related scholarly writing and original documents to a potentially unlimited audience, these kinds of projects have the potential to further stabilize, add to, or even challenge the existing silent film canon. Part of the learning process for film students is to think critically about how the canon is formed and what efforts are undertaken to bring silent films to them. Thus, the ability to learn from project documentation in addition to the “archival” materials themselves is of tremendous utility. Every archive should have a “behind the scenes” component.

Other sectors of the audience, including the general public, can also benefit from knowing a silent film’s restoration history. Offering a film’s historical context—including both its initial theatrical reception as well as how it reached the contemporary screen—can play a valuable role in helping the audience develop connections with films. At the beginning of *L’heureuse mort* (1924), playwright Theodore Larue peeks through a hole in the stage scenery to observe the audience alternately yawning and growing infuriated at his new play. For Larue, watching the audience’s response is the best gauge of the play’s success. Over the course of the film, it is only after Larue’s

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<sup>9</sup> Edith Kramer, Annual Jonathan Dennis Lecture, “Film Programming: Where we’ve been and where we’re going (Arguments with myself),” 7 October 2009.

alleged drowning in the North Sea that his works acquire critical recognition. Even though they previously received poor reviews, when his plays become “posthumous” works, they miraculously transform into indispensable masterpieces with a place in the dramatic canon. Unfortunately, not every silent film has a team of advocates waiting to promote it. There are philosophical, financial, circumstantial, and other factors that lead to a particular film’s restoration. Audiences, as Edith Kramer suggested in her lecture, often have little idea of what the role of the archivist is in getting the film to the screen. The notion of restoration implies bringing the film to light again, presumably for the benefit of new audiences, which makes this gap in knowledge a particularly important one to address.

Just as Theodore Larue read the failure of his play on the faces of his bored audience, Kramer described countless nights standing at the back of the theatre at the Pacific Film Archive, where she attentively listened to filmgoers’ remarks. She took note of their reactions, observed their posture, and paid attention to the burgeoning discussions as people exited. She largely gauged the success of her film programs based on their cues. The role of the programmer, Kramer suggested, was to truly begin to understand and anticipate the audience’s needs. She made the evocative statement that a programmer has not fulfilled their role until they have achieved a kind of organic bond with their theatergoers: she said that a programmer must “breathe with the audience.”<sup>10</sup>

Part of making a silent film legible to a contemporary audience is a discussion of how it was preserved, the choices that were made in restoring its color, the way it was pieced together from many versions, and how the music was created. Understanding these attributes of a film help audiences recognize that even though it is a historical document, in many respects, it is a contemporary one as well. This is especially important for young film students, who may otherwise have difficulty “connecting” to silent film in their initial encounters. There is an affective dimension to this. Silent films do not merely shed light on historical conditions, but also tell stories and offer images that help us understand ourselves and move us. The choices made in restoring and exhibiting silent films—from frame rate, to color choice, to the intricacies of editing—all

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<sup>10</sup> Edith Kramer, Annual Jonathan Dennis Lecture, “Film Programming: Where we’ve been and where we’re going (Arguments with myself),” 7 October 2009.

contribute to the ways that audiences react. Knowledge of these choices is an essential tool for the audience to be able to recognize how and why a film moved them in a particular way.

Not only is project documentation a vital activity for the professional community and silent film audiences of today, but it is also of central importance to the professional community of the future. It is impossible to fully see beyond one's own time and to anticipate how technology, practices of spectatorship, and preservation priorities will change. The preparation for future silent film enthusiasts is speculative. Every archivist of their time is not entirely certain of what to save, and will invariably discard some item that will leave a future researcher with a compelling mystery. Such issues are what William Urrichio calls "problems of historical filtration."<sup>11</sup> These uncertainties notwithstanding, we have an obligation to leave a trail of our work that might subsequently be found. Many of the historical documents that current professionals work with were ubiquitous in their time. The newspapers and trade periodicals that scholars consult and the institutional handbooks and studio materials that archivists rely on were once commonplace materials, but now may prove difficult to find.

Similarly, the commonplace materials of our time will eventually become obsolete and disappear if not they are not consciously saved. Email exchanges between archives, and the Powerpoint presentations shown at professional conferences are all part of this contemporary knowledge. There are, of course, many forums and repositories attentive to chronicling the methods and procedures informing restoration projects. In varying levels of depth, publications about curatorial practice and liner notes accompanying DVDs, as well as professional conferences and festivals, such as the Giornate and (while not exclusively focused on silent film) the Orphan Film Symposium, all attempt to bring related communities together to share best practices, troubleshoot challenges, and forge new relationships. The Collegium dialogues are an exemplary model for sharing such knowledge, though the format of the dialogue is also heavily reliant upon the oral tradition.

The directive to document and to save introduces the tremendous problem of deciding what to keep and how to organize it. Invariably things will be lost, and future generations will be puzzled

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<sup>11</sup> William Urrichio, "Archives and Absences." *Film History*. Vol. 7, Issue 3. Autumn, 1995. pp. 256-253.

by the trail left to them. However conscious efforts to develop collections policies of these materials, saving certain records and noting the status of materials that have been discarded, is a valuable first set of steps. Keeping record of the methods and motivations of film preservation helps outline the professional procedures and priorities of our time. Such a demand is particularly pressing in an age where many “artifacts” are no longer in physical form.

Metaphors of the dangers of shortsightedness were prevalent during this year’s Giornate. When the gentleman in *J’ai perdu mon lorgnon* (1906) loses his glasses, the places he inhabits every day suddenly become unfamiliar and impossible to navigate. To comic effect, he trips over the charwoman, and over the neighborhood children’s jump rope. He mixes up his hat with another man’s, and requests a ride home in a woman’s wagon. Conversely, it is through a telescope—a method of seeing at a distance—that Rabbi Low spots danger for the Jews in *Der Golem, Wie er in die Welt Kam* (1920). Here, it is his ability to anticipate and predict that offers the possibility for preservation. Similarly, the silent film community has both a vested interest as well as an obligation to preserve their own records for posterity, avoiding the myopia of considering only the present.

People who work with silent films are already aware of the importance of historical documentation. However, a unique attribute of the current professional climate is the abundance of possibilities to collaborate among many different groups. The more participants there are, the greater the opportunity for a central and comprehensive record of the project to get lost in process. Those of us who love silent film understand the excitement of piecing together fragmented historical records to inform our understanding of the films today. Equally important is the documentation of such methods. These records can serve as examples for other institutions embarking on similar projects, help contemporary audiences make sense of what they see and how it got to the screen, and leave a trail for archivists in the future, who will work to understand what we have done.



## A place for music

Marco Bellano

It was October the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. “Music score by Michael Hoffman,” announced a title on screen, right under the slightly larger letters of the director’s name, Clarence Brown. However, in the main hall of Pordenone’s Teatro Verdi, the music that was being heard was not in fact a creation of Mr. Hoffman; instead, as explained in the catalogue produced by Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, the 1925 film *The Eagle* was being screened with the accompaniment of a score written in 1985 by the American composer and conductor Carl Davis.

The music was not being presented as it usually is during Le Giornate: that is to say, in a live performance given by a soloist or an ensemble, in keeping with the historical practice of silent film accompaniment. Instead, the music was pre-recorded and synchronized with the 35mm print.

It is reasonable to assume that the greater part of the audience was not overly bothered by these details. Film researchers, but also simple enthusiasts of Le Giornate, know quite well that today there are many plausible ways to arrange the musical presentation of a silent feature. History tells us that to give a particular silent film an all-new score is not a mistake, even if back in time, when the film was realized, a composer spent a lot of his creative energies to pen down some lines of music carefully synchronized with the work of the director. “[...]Music for the silent film was an independent, ever-changing accompaniment” (Marks, 1997: 6): from theatre to theatre, many different musicians would meet a single silent picture. As a result, each film could have a lot of different ‘scores’. Early cinema kept long alive a musical practice whereby the music that accompanied the show was not usually formed of original creations. Rather it relied on assemblages of popular pieces from every kind of repertoire, spanning from folk songs to classical concertos<sup>1</sup>, compiled before the screenings or – especially when a single player, such as a pianist, was involved - used as a basis for free improvisation as the images appeared on the screen. Even when original scores started to become more common (around 1908, Altman, 2004: 251-52), only

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<sup>1</sup> See Altman, 2004: 104, 225, 290-91

the big theatres in the most important cities in Europe or in the U. S. A were likely to benefit from that new music: the smaller towns (with lesser artistic resources) often preferring to continue with the compilation/improvisation practices (Simeon, 1995: 117).<sup>2</sup> So, it is likely that many spectators of 1925 read Michael Hoffman's name without listening to his music, just as it happened with the 2009 audience in the Teatro Verdi.

Anyway, the experience of 2009 was different: as already noticed, the performance was *recorded* and played through loudspeakers. The transition from the silent to the sound film was not only a matter of technology and synchronization. As from 1927 onwards "there's a fundamental difference between a concert hall, which is a space for production [...] and a movie theater which is a space for reproduction" (Holman in Lo Brutto, 1994: 204). Also the way in which spectators' bodies responded to film sounds changed, due to the physical differences between the acoustic emission of a loudspeaker compared to that of a musical instrument (Sergi, 2001: 125). Nevertheless, it has become common to accept the use of loudspeakers in contemporary presentations of silent films. This kind of 'compromise' is obviously not respectful of the true sound of the silents. However, this practice is justified by several practical advantages. A silent film with recorded music can be screened in any kind of cinema hall, with no accompanying musicians involved. And, of course, it can be transferred to VHS, DVD or even on Blu-ray Disc, and enjoyed and studied privately. Recorded music actually enhances the diffusion of silent films.

So, no one actually stood up and left the Teatro Verdi because of the fact that the music was not by the 'original' composer and that the new score was recorded and not played live. This, however, does not mean that the circumstances of this presentation do not deserve to be discussed at all. The instantaneous clash between many ages of film history (1925, 1985 and 2009), implicitly evoked for a few seconds by a single name in the main titles (and by the presence of the Verdi's loudspeakers), was too suggestive and meaningful to be ignored.

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<sup>2</sup> However, early 'original' scores were actually often conceived as a more refined kind of compilation, as they included fragments of staples from the film music repertoire. See Erdmann, Becce, Brav: 6, side note.

Carl Davis' score for *The Eagle* was brilliant and effective. But what was Michael Hoffman's music like? Would it have improved or worsened the impact of *The Eagle* on the 2009 Pordenone audience? These questions easily arose right after the screening, and found a certain number of the members of the 2009 Pordenone Collegium already wondering about this topic. The problem was not that the film was presented with a different music (and modern technology), but rather that it left us wondering: where is the original music? Is it possible to listen to it, or to read its score? Or has it been irremediably lost?

The scope of these questions goes beyond mere academic curiosity. In the silent age, cinema was undoubtedly an audiovisual experience. Even if there was not a one-to-one correspondence between films and pieces of music, as we have now in the age of the sound cinema, there surely was an aggregation of musical creations that existed *because of* cinema, and that was actually *a part* of cinema itself. It is not excessive to say that if the musical heritage of the silent film becomes lost, our perception of that era of the history of cinema would be much the poorer.

One of Le Giornate del Cinema Muto's main achievements is in the collaboration with the most important film archives, in order to encourage and sustain international projects of film preservation. It was natural, therefore, in the context of the Collegium, to assume that the Pordenone Festival would perhaps have also undertaken some relationship with the main international centres that are committed to the preservation of the music for the silents. This supposition was also based on empirical evidence: Le Giornate is not only a place where music is played along with films, but also a perennial workshop of composition and improvisation for silent cinema. Since its inception in 1982, the Festival required the presence of skilled pianists at the side of the big screen, to provide the film programs with musical comments. After a few editions, Le Giornate was able to support the composition and the performance of all new works for special presentations of silent films: this becoming evident in 1985, when, for instance, a creation for two-pianos by Ennio Morricone accompanied the screening of *Consuelita* (Roberto Roberti, 1925) in the presence of the son of the director of the film, Sergio Leone (Roberto Roberti was Vincenzo Leone's pen name). The growing centrality that Le Giornate gained in the international panorama of contemporary music for silent films led to the foundation of the Pordenone Masterclasses in 2007: a cycle of advanced lessons on silent film accompaniment for young pianists, held during the

Festival by the worldwide specialists and musicians that have become regular contributors to Le Giornate programs. So, in tandem with the preceding assumption about the possible contacts developed by Le Giornate with institutions devoted to silent film music preservation, it also seemed logical to the collegians to assume that the Festival would have kept track of the rich musical production of the resident composers and pianists, from the early Eighties to the present day, perhaps in the form of an archive of original scores. It has been quite a surprise therefore to discover that, in Pordenone, such an archive does not exist.

It seems reasonable to wonder why this archive was never constituted, and if such an archive could be useful for Le Giornate and for the research on silent films in general. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, when I first pointed out this issue at the end of a Collegium session, after a brief talk with some fellow collegians and Prof. Paolo Cherchi Usai, the 2009 Giornate still had almost an entire week left to run. Consequently, I decided to make the most of this time to try to understand if Le Giornate del Cinema Muto really needs such an archive, and if it would be possible to actually develop such a project. I decided to approach this task by starting in the most direct and empirical way, that is to say by interviewing the people that would be among the first to take advantage of such an archive, and who would also be amongst the main contributors to its contents: the musicians that play and teach in Pordenone during the festival.

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The response of the musicians to the general possibility of an archive containing music for the silents was unanimous. Approached, particularly right after the daily Pordenone Masterclasses, artists such as Günther Buchwald, John Sweeney, Donald Sosin and Neil Brand kindly agreed to take time to express their points of view about the topic. Everyone, independently, commented upon the idea of such a collection in a favourable way.

All the interviews involved discussing the possible aims and uses of an archive of music for the silents. I initially proposed a model restricted to the Pordenone production. However, during these dialogues the project slowly and spontaneously took the shape of an imaginary archive of all the music that was written to accompany silent features. Several opportunities could arise from such a

collection. Firstly, music students as well as professional composers might use it as a source for references and inspiration for contemporary silent film music practice. The presence of a library of music in Pordenone could also invite the musicians to reconsider more frequently the possibility of reconstructing music compilations based on cue sheets.

Cue sheets, in fact, started to be circulated around 1909 (Hoffman, 1970: 13) and deeply affected the musical routines in the main film theatres until the shift over to synchronized sound that began in earnest around 1927. During Le Giornate, however, there have been very few cases of performances based on original cue sheets until now. It is easy to understand why this has been so: as *silent film music specialist and conductor* Gillian Anderson reports, “cue sheets did have drawbacks. If a musician did not have a piece cited by the cue sheet, a substitution had to be made. An enormous library of incidental music was required.” (Anderson, 1988: xxxi). Nonetheless, “[w]ith such cue sheets and a vast library of incidental music [...] theater musicians could concoct the musical accompaniments specified by [...] the makers of cue sheets” (ibidem). Of course in the present age of global communication it could seem superfluous to rely on a single library, at least as far as the realization of cue sheets is concerned. The Internet could offer many more avenues of research, if a wanted document happened to be missing. Moreover, to meet the usual requirements of traditional cue sheets, this library could collect not only music for silent films, but also a large repertoire of classical music and popular tunes. A contemporary library of music for the silents should thus be able to harbour and manage many different kinds of musical texts, whilst also offering the possibility of easy connection and exchange of documents with other relevant music libraries worldwide.

Returning to the musical production specific to Le Giornate, it is quite clear that as it would have been made identifiable and accessible, it would become easier to gradually recognize it as a coherent whole: a kind of repertoire. This would reinforce the already evident tendency of Le Giornate towards the establishment of a ‘school of music’ for silent film, via a concentration of talents devoted to fostering a characteristic discipline in composition and improvisation. The availability of the music produced in Pordenone through an organized collection of scores (or other documents) would make much easier the task of critics and scholars wanting to describe the features and the development of this budding ‘school.’ As a consequence of this, while helping to

build a kind of 'self-awareness' for the Pordenone school, the archive could simultaneously become a good premise for a more careful consideration of silent film music (and of film music in general).

The archive would of course also address the needs of film music scholars. The single scores might be examined in their individuality, to analyze the way in which a composer interpreted the visual language of a certain silent film. But furthermore there would be room for comparative studies, as many of the scores written for Pordenone replaced previous musical works that were composed during the 'original' silent period. It would become easier to discover the differences between present-day musicians and their old-time colleagues, by looking at how they dealt with the same moving images. The Pordenone archive would thus offer to scholars an unprecedented amount of material to be used as a reference in the study of the evolution (or, better, of the transformation) of the audiovisual language.

To this panorama of hypotheses brought in to stimulate the discussion, the musicians answered with the weight of their professional experiences. A remark by John Sweeney was particularly thought-provoking: the pianist noticed how even if Le Giornate (and the other Festivals or institutions that work to preserve silent films) are constantly trying to revive an old practice of film music with the best accuracy, it cannot be forgotten that this practice is being brought on by contemporary musicians, with a contemporary musical education and a professional background that is completely different from that of their pioneering colleagues. The silent musicians of the present day, for example, are usually travelling artists: they go where their competences are required. This is a consequence of the fact that the jobs of the accompanist or of the composer for silent films are nowadays quite rare (the resident accompanists of the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique are one relevant exception) whereas in the golden age of the silents every big theatre (especially in the U. S. A.) had its resident pianist/organist, composer/conductor and orchestra. Le Giornate is thus only one of the main stops on a never-ending international tour. So, in order to be effectively used as a resource for compilations or for film presentations in general, the eventual archive of music of Pordenone should be a collection that could be fully accessible from outside its geographical confines. Again, it seems that the Internet needs to play a pivotal role in the management of an archive of this kind; not only in order to virtually expand the material

collection of documents by connecting with other libraries, but also to make the archive meet the needs of professionals at work in many different countries and cities.

Mr. Sweeney's advice about the need for the silent film musician to be properly considered as a *contemporary* musician compelled me to consider further the ideal contents of an archive of music for silents. A similar input came indirectly from another of the festival's musicians, Gabriel Thibaudeau. His lessons at the 2009 Masterclasses often brought out an important issue that is often forgotten by film historians or music experts. Simply put, the contemporary silent film accompanist has *much more music* to choose from than its colleagues from one hundred years ago. The musical discoveries of the twentieth century provide a rich playground to the invention of improvisers and composers. It would not be reasonable to ignore these expressive possibilities only because musicians of the silent era did not know of them or would not have been at ease in using them. Thibaudeau himself often experiments in using the piano in unorthodox ways, like directly hitting the metallic strings with his hand or knocking on the wood of the instrument, with effective results. These choices are not to be considered as a betrayal of the silent music practice, but as a necessary update of this practice to the modern sensibility: they result in being absolutely appropriate, if used with the 'traditional' purpose to construct a meaningful relation with the images and the story of a silent film. So, to let silent musicians (and especially students) explore the possibility of a whole century of music, an archive of music for the silents should also include an anthological collection of the music that was actually produced after the end of the silent era; or, at least, it should be able to guarantee the access (again, most practicably, via the Internet) to affiliated archives of contemporary music.

On this last topic – the kind of contents that would be suitable for the Pordenone archive - one of the interviews I had proved to be particularly enlightening. During an extended talk with Donald Sosin outside the Ridotto of the Teatro Verdi, I asked the musician what kind of musical materials would hypothetically find a place in the archives filed under his name. His answer generated new considerations concerning the archive problem. The list of materials that Mr. Sosin produced as a consequence of his work as film accompanist includes:

- a small amount of music printed on paper; it includes the 2001 score for Le Giornate screening of *East Side, West Side* (Allan Dwan, 1927), written for violin, cello, clarinet, piano, voice and percussions; and also the 2007 score for *Way Down East* (David Wark Griffith, 1920) for keyboard and voice;
- a large and unspecified amount of MIDI files, especially used to compose the scores for films on DVD;
- 100-120 recordings of improvised performances at Le Giornate; these recordings span from 1993 to the present day, and are in diverse formats (cassette, minidisc, mp3 files, QuickTime files, and some including video);
- hundreds of additional recordings made at other venues, including MoMA, Lincoln Center, Bologna, various film festivals, schools, libraries, etc.; again, these exist in a wide variety of formats;
- hundreds of personal cue sheets and sketches; as for Le Giornate production, the composer has sketches for about 50 films in two dozen notebooks, and a lesser amount of cue sheets (perhaps 30).

It is indeed very difficult to conceive an effective archival strategy to organize such a heterogeneous set of items. Consequently, it is necessary to consider whether Mr. Sosin's situation represents that of other contemporary 'silent' musicians. The answer is likely to be positive. Almost all the other musicians I talked with in Pordenone gave me comparable accounts. The only significant difference from Mr. Sosin's list concerns the recordings: with only a few exceptions (in cases of truly special performances) it seems that it is not usual for musicians to keep track of past improvisations. However, even if the artists did not preserve their performances in their private collections, there is still the possibility that recordings were made by other parties present at their performance. As a matter of fact, all the performances at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto since 1990 have been recorded and preserved by the Cineteca del Friuli, the film archive that contributes to the organization of the Festival. Livio Jacob, director of the Cineteca, confirmed that the audio/video recordings of improvisations and performances at Le Giornate are stored in Gemona del Friuli, in a collection that should be carefully studied to verify its grade of completeness and its actual organization.



Silent film music, nowadays, is indeed also *recorded* music. Many compositions are only available on DVD releases, and they cannot be excluded from the archive only because they do not correspond to the 'orthodox' practice of silent films. As I said before, no one walked out of the Verdi because of the loudspeakers: the contemporary archivist of silent film music must have a positive disposition towards the 'mutations' that technology has brought to the experience of silent films.

All the archival problems related to such a chaotic situation become even more complex when considering that, as already said when talking about the 'travelling musicians,' the contemporary stage for silent music is an international one. The musicians are from all over the world, and so they are their works. The situation of the historical musical production for silents is not so different. Martin Marks stated that "for the most part scripts, cue sheets, scores and recordings are scattered in private collections, libraries, and film studios, often uncatalogued" (Marks, 1997: 7) and it is reasonable to assume that this is still valid in 2010. *Scattered* is the keyword: after all, film music (not only for silents) is "the most widely dispersed repertoire being performed today" (Odegard, 1976: 155). In 2010, silent film music has many shapes (much more than it had before 1927) and many places, but a clear path to walk through this confusion of inestimable value is as yet nowhere to be found.

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Any path needs a starting point. At the end of the interviews with the musicians in Pordenone, the initial idea of an archive limited only to the production at Le Giornate (momentarily put aside to discover all the opportunities of a fully comprehensive archive) resurfaced. Before that, however, a series of events gave to the archive hypothesis a whole new perspective...

The day before the official end of the Festival, a series of conversations I had with David Robinson, Livio Jacob and Paolo Cherchi Usai led to a press release that was published on Le Giornate's website on October the 10<sup>th</sup>. That short text was a formal announcement regarding the foundation

of an archive of music for silent films in Pordenone.<sup>3</sup> It is clear from this announcement that the organization of Le Giornate wishes to sustain the creation of an archive that goes beyond the sole classification of the musical productions of the Festival.

After the festival's conclusion, further developments came from the Department of History of Visual Arts and Music of the University of Padova. The University, through Prof. Alberto Zotti, guaranteed full support to this enterprise, especially on the technical side. The CMELA (University Multimedia and E-Learning Center) is at present already working on a survey relating to the strategies that could lead to a fruitful implementation of the latest computer technologies within the structure of the archive. Finally, Prof. Zotti suggested taking advantage of my current Ph. D. research about music for silent films to study an opportune archival strategy, while putting the creation of this archive in context with the studies and the concrete cases that, until now, have faced similar problems of preservation of musical materials.

Following on from these developments, it is obvious that the archive project is no longer pure speculation, but rather a realistic possibility with concrete foundations. That said, it would have not been possible to think of dealing with such a complex venture without the perspective of a long period of research and study ahead. The development of a dedicated Ph. D. thesis would allow for such an effort. The combined support of both the University of Padova and Le Giornate del Cinema Muto for this project could also encourage communication with other institutions whose cooperation in this venture would be of central importance. The possibility of a dialogue with the FIAF, International Federation of Film Archives, has already been considered in Padova, with other important interlocutors for this project being any of the film archives or museums that have already tried to preserve music for silent films.

A Pordenone archive with its projected archival methodology should not be conceived without considering all the experiences in film music preservation that have already been made. Even if a comprehensive archive devoted exclusively to film music does not yet exist, there are many

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<sup>3</sup> The press release is available at the address:  
[http://www.cinetecadelfriuli.org/gcm/giornate/comunicati/comunicati\\_2009.html#10ottobre2009\\_27](http://www.cinetecadelfriuli.org/gcm/giornate/comunicati/comunicati_2009.html#10ottobre2009_27)

examples of partial collections. Most of these are situated in the U. S. A.: the leading institutions in this field being the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Library of Congress. On the West Coast, mention must be made of the library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science in Los Angeles, and the libraries of various Californian Universities, such as the University of California at Los Angeles, the California State University at Long Beach and the University of Southern California.

As a matter of fact, Le Giornate has already had contacts with some of these institutions in the past. Le Giornate has communicated with the MOMA and the Library of Congress through silent film music specialist Gillian B. Anderson, who has on more than one occasion supervised and conducted musical accompaniments for screenings at Le Giornate. Ms. Anderson's contribution is especially pertinent to the topic of the present paper, as she is the author of one of the very few catalogues of music for the silents – *Music for Silent Films 1894-1929: A Guide*. Her catalogue covers the collections of both the MOMA and the Library of Congress, and is based on a microfilm transfer of the materials that dates back to 1988.

Ms. Anderson's *Guide* remains as an indispensable bibliographic reference, a starting point for anyone who works on silent film music archives today. However, its structure no longer meets the requirements of a present day archive. The *Guide* is in fact an alphabetical list based on film titles. Every item is accurately identified by a maximum of 20 parameters (Anderson, 1988: x) that include also details of instrumentation and copyright registrations: however, the list does not divide printed scores from sketches or cue sheets. Such an organization can surely be effective for a collection of relatively moderate dimensions (the *Guide* has 1047 voices), but can present many drawbacks if used to organize larger amounts of items.

Nonetheless, in order to begin on the sort of archive that has been discussed above, it is logical (and realistic) to firstly concentrate on reducing the problem to a more manageable level. Given the complicated situation of the silent film music repertoire, and the sparseness of the materials, it seems reasonable to inaugurate work on this project by starting from a smaller collection that could nevertheless represent a good model for the whole archive in the future. Here is where my initial idea of an archive restricted in the first place to the music for Le Giornate resurfaces.

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Reviewing all of the considerations that emerged from my interviews with the musicians and from an initial survey of the literature and ‘case studies’ pertinent to this topic, the first steps on the path towards making Le Giornate’s musical archive a reality begin to emerge, and can be summarized as follows:

- To collect relevant documents connected with music for silent films; this needs to be done through direct contacts with the legal owners of these items (musicians, archives, museums etc.);
- To organize this collection in a simple but effective way, assigning every item to an opportune category (printed scores, hand written scores, cue sheets, audio recordings, audio/video recordings, etc.);
- To create an electronic database version of the catalogue of the collection, accessible through a search engine with advanced search options;
- To create a digital copy of every item of the archive, and make it accessible online;
- To give accessibility to other digital music archives in the world, also considering the possibility to create a ‘meta-search’ engine able to browse through multiple collections at once.

An archive with such features seems, at present, to be the best solution to meet the requirements of all the potential users: musicians, students, scholars or simple *aficionados*. The access to the more advanced functions, and in particular to the full digitalized collections, should be granted only to ‘professional’ users, who use the archive for their work. The use of the possibilities of the Internet could really be the only way to go over the problem of the ‘sparseness’ of the repertoire: as Marks already said in 1997,

[g]iven the costs of acquiring, cataloguing, and maintaining such collections, for many years to come the only feasible approach may be to strive for a “web” archive: a cooperative network of studios and institutions [...]. The idea may seem far-fetched, but it is not inconceivable, given the loose bonds which already link the American Film Institute to the Library of Congress, and the world’s archives into an International Federation (Marks, 1997: 7-8).

The dialogue between Le Giornate and of the University of Padova with archives and similar institutions will, of course, be crucial. However, as the vital starting point for this project, Pordenone must begin by developing and maintaining a collection of music for silent films. After all, the issue of accessibility is purely 'academic' if the material is not there to support it. The music must first of all be preserved.

Solving the problems of reconstructing Le Giornate's musical history by building a collection of all the materials produced by composers and players since 1982, will lead to at least three potential first results:

- In terms of the theoretical backbone of the archive, and thus for my Ph. D. thesis, it will provide a defined gateway to access the vaster issue of silent film music preservation.
- At a more practical level, it will lead to the development of problem-solving routines related to the acquisition and management of the materials; these routines, tested on a smaller archive, could be essential when the number of items will substantially increase.
- Finally, the 'smaller' Pordenone collection will benefit by putting in perspective the development of an archive for the silents at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto.

On that final point, the music that this project is going to preserve exists *because of* cinema, as I said before; however, there is an amount of this music that actually exists because of cinema *and* Le Giornate del Cinema Muto. Via the foundation of an archive of music for silent film, the Festival will be able to reconstruct its own musical history whilst simultaneously providing 'training' in film music preservation. After this first step, it will become less daunting to try to apply the acquired knowledge to an expanded repertoire, going beyond the boundaries of the Festival itself. From all that I have learned about the Festival, it seems natural for Pordenone to become the place where to start an enterprise of this kind. It deserves to confirm, once more, that a place for cinema cannot be complete without a place for music.

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## Silent Cinema from abroad: how the Giornate experience can be seen from distant eyes

Lila Silva Foster

For the past three years *Cinemateca Brasileira* (São Paulo, Brazil) has organized what I consider to be one of the most important events of the Brazilian film calendar: the *Jornada Brasileira de Cinema Silencioso*. Since *Le Giornate* is a direct inspiration for *Jornada*, the past two editions also screened a special Pordenone program (selected by Paolo Cherchi Usai, Livio Jacob and David Robinson) bringing these events even closer together. The program included films like *Lucky Star* (Frank Borzage, 1929), *Exit Smiling* (Sam Taylor, 1926), *The Sentimental Bloke* (Raymond Longford, 1919), *Back to God's Country* (Nell Shipman, 1919), among others. The variety of films from different countries and time periods projected during the *Jornada* made my idea of silent cinema shift from the safe road of the canonical films to the surprising diversity of styles and themes of silent period cinema. The discovery of new aspects of this wide universe is also an experience that resembles the initial and the ongoing drive of *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto*.

The *Jornada* is an outstanding opportunity for the Brazilian audience, both young and old, to have films screened in the best way possible: good copies from a diversity of international archives with challenging contemporary musical accompaniment. It is also a once in a lifetime chance of actually seeing these movies in a theatrical context. Films need to travel a long and expensive way to arrive in São Paulo making the access to international silent films complicated. *Jornada* is our “big celluloid chance”. The “developing country factor” is also surrounded by cultural and economical consequences giving the foreign spectator, apart from the North-American and European context, a special outlook on the *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* experience. The idea of physical distance will be used here as a starting point to discuss films, some of the Collegium debates and the days spent at the Riddotto and Teatro Verdi.

## The foreign spectator: crossing oceanic distances

It takes almost a day and a half, two planes and one train to get from São Paulo to Pordenone. The time spent in travelling and the total change of scenery is only a small portion of what it means to arrive at the “center”. For Brazilians, North-American and European cinematic culture has always been a strong component of our imagery and culture. Paulo Emilio Sales Gomes – film critic and historian, one of the founders and maintainers *Cinematca Brasileira* in its early years – had a great “formula” to describe such a condition: “*Nada nos é estrangeiro pois tudo o é*” meaning “Nothing is foreign to us since everything is”. “Old world” culture—literature, art, politics and science and cinema—is then very present but at the same time remote. It acts as a sort of ideal impossible to achieve but this impossibility doesn’t necessarily mean pure negativity.

Brazilian culture is surrounded by a sense of displacement and precariousness, a force that moves us to adapt, rearrange and subvert traditions, something that defines us and can be exemplified in countless ways. A growing attention to Brazilian silent cinema, part of a global valorization of silent films, has been of extreme importance but our losses were enormous especially considering our already small fictional production. Brazilian pioneer filmmakers were adapting imported equipments and techniques—many projectors were turned into cameras and imported film stock reacted differently to the intense light of the tropics—but they did not participate on the technological innovation and invention of the period<sup>1</sup>. The musical accompaniment at *Jornada* has a much more contemporary grip since we never had a strong tradition of musical accompaniment for silent films: in this case, experimentation sets the tone. In our film schools we read large amounts of English and French historians, the Brazilian silent period has gained more strength in “Academia”, but it is still a very restricted field of interest. Maybe that is why I was so surprised when Richard Abel sat beside me during one of the many screenings during the *Giornate*. Being close to very important references was a strong point of the week.

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning photography, the historian and photographer Boris Kossoy did prove the isolated discovery of the photographic process by the French-Brazilian illustrator Hercules Florence in Campinas, Brazil in 1833. KOSSOY, Boris. *Hercules Florence - 1833 - a descoberta isolada da fotografia no Brasil (2ª ed.)*. São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1980.



As a spectator there was also a great anxiety involved, the fact that you are submersed in daylong projection of many rare titles, which I felt impossible to miss, combined with the time needed for jet-lag and language adaptation. This would be a matter of mere subjectivity and wouldn't have much importance if I couldn't compare these feelings to the unsettledness some film critics of *Cinearte*, a very important and influential film magazine published between 1926 and 1942. They also suffered from a "cultural jet lag" because of the time it took for films to be released at the local movie theaters. Their close contact with the promotional materials sent by North-American studios probably made the longing sensation even more intense and when the films ended up not being distributed in Brazil they still haunted their imaginations.

The Brazilian contemporary viewer is still under the same spell (something that the overwhelming availability of films on the internet provided the Brazilian *cinephilia* with new viewing possibilities) and the *Giornate* was a great opportunity for "filling in the gaps" and making discoveries. Watching the classic *The Ten Commandments* (C.B. De Mille, 1923) was just as surprising as the recently discovered *Monkey's Moon* (Kenneth Macpherson, 1929). In this sense, not only the fact of being from a younger generation of cinema *aficionados* but also from "abroad" made me a perfect spectator for The Canon Revisited series.

As an avid reader of *Cinearte*, one of the other strong points of the *Giornate* was also being able to watch some films with actors and directors that had a large repercussion when they were screened in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1920s and early 1930s. *The Eagle* and *The Merry Widow*, both of them released in the US in 1925 and screened in Rio de Janeiro in 1926, filled the pages of the magazine with pictures of Rudolph Valentino, Mae Murray and John Gilbert. The same picture of Mae Murray that was used in *Giornate's* catalogue was used as model for the illustration of the cover of *Cinearte's* edition n.45 of 1927, bringing a close resemblance to the catalogue itself.

The appreciation of the foreign films and stars was not only restricted to the magazine staff though. A special ad announced that luxury pillows could be embroidered with Valentino's features at *Casas Almeida, Rua Sete de Setembro, 178, Rio de Janeiro*; the "best of" poll of 1926, according to the readers, had Rudolph Valentino (116.695 votes) and John Gilbert (99.344) in second and third place as best artists; *The Merry Widow* (91.902 votes) in third place as best

picture and Cecil B. De Mille (127.337) and Ernest Lubitsch (96.350) in first and third place as best directors. The couple Mae Murray and Valentino from *The Eagle* got special attention in the article about the best kisses of the year. American and European stars dominated the period's cinema imagery.

In the pages of *Cinearte*, appraisal of North-American and European cinema also gave place to many comparisons regarding Brazilian production. American cinema was the model-image for the very unstable Brazilian silent cinema and for the ambitions of the few fictional filmmakers scattered around the country, many of them also active followers of *Cinearte*. The columns written by critics such as Adhemar Gonzaga and Pedro Lima were filled with a thorough knowledge of America cinema—the production structure of the studios, the importance of the screenplay, a careful cinematography and the maintenance of a star-system—and they campaigned for a Brazilian cinema inspired by this external model. These columns were very influential and worked as an incentive for many directors of the period to shoot fictional pieces since most of the professional filmmakers lived from non-fictional production, usually hired by governments and the elite.

Even though *Cinearte* acted as a catalyst for many artists, the ambitions of Brazilian filmmakers and critics was not enough to establish a continuous production or even to surpass the economical difficulties of a cinematographic production that could not withstand the quality and dominance of the foreign product. Also from the reading of *Cinearte* it is easy to notice that during this period the distribution of North-American (Paramount, United Artists, Fox) and European (UFA) companies had already been massively installed in Brazil leaving the Brazilian product in great disadvantage.

As an example of the distribution structure that was settled, the copy of *Die Geliebte Roswolsky* (Quem da mais?) (Felix Basch, 1921), screened in the Divas program and starring Asta Nielsen, had Portuguese intertitles and was made for distribution in Brazil by “Brasil & America Films” that had offices in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Baurú and Porto Alegre. The logo of the company brings images of the Brazilian and the North-American flag standing side by side and announces the importation of independent films. This copy belonged to *Cinematheca Brasileira* and as stated in the

*Giornate's* catalogue: "the original material for *Die Geliebte Roswolsky* is one of the few surviving colour positives of a Nielsen film, and was given to the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv in 1989 by the *Cinemateca Brasileira*". The copy was probably found when, in the late 1980s, films collected by staff members of *Cinemateca Brasileira* from old distributors were identified as "lost films" and were repatriated to their original countries. Some titles included the early Fritz Lang *Das Wandernde Bild* (1919) and *Kämpfende Herzen*, (1921). *Cinemateca* received in exchange copies of *Der Student Von Prag* (Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener, 1913), *Harakiri* (Fritz Lang, 1919) and *Der Gang in Die Nacht* (F.W. Murnau, 1921). These films were screened in a program dedicated to Early German Cinema during the first *Jornada Brasileira de Cinema Silencioso*.

Many other references to the films, directors, studios and actors can be mentioned. Urania was the distributor of UFA films and an advertisement shows the UFA-Eagle spread through many cities, covering the country from North to South: Manaus, Belém, Recife, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, Pelotas and Porto Alegre. The review for *La Cible* (Serge Nadejdine, 1924), from Albatros, brings a big picture of Rimsky in one of his funny poses. In a page dedicated to "cinema gossip" together with a big picture of Pola Negri there is this revealing comment: "Ivan Mosjoukine está filmando as Aventuras de Casanova...Notícias para os que dizem que só tratamos dos Americanos..." ("Ivan Mosjoukine is shooting the Adventures of Casanova...News for those who think we only write about the Americans...").

*Cinearte* has always been a great resource for Brazilian filmographies as well as a fundamental component in the understanding of late Brazilian silent cinema. Not surprisingly, the magazine is mostly filled with pictures of international movie stars and the pages dedicated to the Brazilian production give us a clear "mimicking" sensation. But the distance regarding the ideal is not only a characteristic of peripheral cultures. The idea of distance can also be addressed by other matters that were directly and indirectly debated during the Collegium Sessions. Archival and preservation practices such as the creation of indexation terms for new filmographies, the restoration of color, the complete access to a film and restoration projects are also guided by an ideal in its essence impossible to achieve.

## **Filling the gaps of historical distance: filmographies, restorations and canonical thinking**

In the beginning of the documentary *Our Inflammable Film Heritage* (Mark-Paul Meyer, 1994, produced by the Nederland Filmmuseum) excerpts of films from exotic Africa and Asia register the “discovery” by European audiences and filmmakers of the “far lands”. Cinema played a huge role as its testimony and shortened the distance between people, places and audiences from different parts of the world and, as we experience it now, from different time periods. At some point the narration links these discoveries to the historical thinking itself: the past is thus a remote continent. Regarding this distance, Paolo Cherchi Usai’s words also express the utopia (the double idea of a ‘no place’ or a state impossible to achieve), surrounding film history:

The subject of film history being the destruction of the moving image, its primary goal is to recapture the experience of its first viewers, an empirical impossibility. If put into practice such reconstruction would lead to the obliteration of film history. Its objectives are thus as abstract as any political utopia: neither would have any interest whatsoever if their goals were realized (The death of cinema, p.25).

The silent period is this remote continent we try to approach and film history attempts to shorten the distance between present and past. This effort can be described as a “gap-filling” experience and this is what also guided the Collegium sessions. If there is a desire in film history of reconstruction of the silent films and its ambiance (that was definitely extremely varied), preservationists, archivists and film historians are obliged to find in the material evidence—preserved films, traditional printing and coloring techniques, research in primary and secondary sources, archaeometry—ways of filling the gaps of historical distance.

In general terms, this is what approximated all of the Collegium debates. The investigative and scientific nature of film preservation, for example, was put into place with the discussion about color restoration where not only the research in old guides for tinting and toning, but also recent technology, were used to identify, in order to better reproduce, the chemical components of the dyes used in the past. But practices from the past are not easily adapted for the contemporary reproduction techniques and the reconstruction of colors still relies on the now traditional Desmet

Method which gives the best approximate result regarding the color in the original nitrate copies. Even if it is not possible to reproduce in a large scale the old methods of tinting and toning, the research still provides us with a better understanding of the past.

Another important keyword for shortening the distance with the past is contextualization. Projects like the launching of Harold Shaw's *The Rose of Rodhesia* on the *Screening the Past* website, accompanied by a critical anthology with several articles, press clippings and historical research, makes it clear that watching films from the beginning of the century is only one, even though major, part of the understanding of cinema. Access to film must also rely on access to information and research. And just as international as Harold Shaw seemed, the maintenance of the website, with the digital archive of the film being hosted in different places, requires a joint international effort that also guarantees international access.

Contextualization also provides film preservation practices with problems especially when the subject matter has not been a central issue within the historical debate. This is the case, for example, of the amateur production and its cataloguing process. The Collegium session "Building a Filmography: context, method, aim", centered on the cataloguing of the amateur production of the region of Lausanne, denoted the fragility of standard indexing terms when accessing cultural productions that are "deviations" from the rule. Terms used to describe fictional and documentary films were not fit for the description of amateur films. The cataloguing of local amateur production relied on the creation of new indexing terms to better describe content and to provide proper contextualization and access. The contact with films often makes it clear how classifications, film theory and history operate with generalities that are often put into question when in contact with "off the route" productions. When you get a closer look at this kind of production the "remote continent" is somehow enriched with other settings.

The inquiries of "The Canon Revisited" program and debate, which intended to reconsider certain dogmas and revisit a series of acclaimed films, also makes clear how history operates with a set of traditions that must be constantly rearranged and "displaced". And the Canon series not only presented classic canons such as *J'accuse* (Abel Gance, 1919), *Der Golem* (Paul Wegener, 1920) and *The Ten Commandments* (C.B. De Mille, 1923) but deviations within certain ways a film can be

canonical. *Dom na Trubnoi* (Boris Barnet, 1928) is canonical for its unique features within other canonical Soviet films because of the humorous way of dealing with Communist bureaucracy and power structure. *Du Skal Aere Din Hustru* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1925) is a different film when compared to Dreyer's well known masterpieces like *La Passion de Jeanne D'arc* (1928) and *Vampyr* (1932). *Rotaie* (Mario Camerini, 1929) is an Italian canon, not particularly well known, but that somehow belongs to the pre-history of the Italian Neo-realism, movement that outreached the National context and was extremely influential for many other cinematographies.

Film reception also plays a very important role in the canonical debate. My enchantment with the modernity of *Rotaie*, even though it had a strong fascist iconography in the ending, was questioned by an Italian friend that gave me the background discussion involving the film. There is always more than just the film appreciation, but ROTAIE was definitely a strong point of the *Giornate's* program. It is also very interesting to think how National canons, such as one of the most important Brazilian silent films and probably the most famous Brazilian silent film, LIMITE (Mário Peixoto, 1930), would almost certainly be a candidate for a program centered in discoveries rather than The Canon Revisited.

From the Collegium debates we can tell that the "reliving" of the past is but an ideal. The content of the historic, scientific and film preservation debate makes it clear how grounded we are in the present and to geographical settings. Historical thinking is guided, in reality, by problem solving, by an intense debate regarding historiography, old and new practices, consolidated notions about film history. On one side, Teatro Verdi is a space devoted to silent cinema, not only because of its architecture and warmth, but also for the clear commitment of guaranteeing the best spectacle with the best copies, the adequate projection speed, a rich catalogue and a good musical accompaniment.

The Collegium debates that took place in the Ridotto, on the other hand, bring to light the hard work and the complications involved in the quest for a desired integrity. The everyday life of archives and restoration projects are made of rough hard work—finding copies, repairing originals, creating inventory records, cataloguing, organizing documents, maintaining databases—but with great historical implications. Small actions show the way the past is addressed, how

access to silent cinema can benefit from historical research and the effects in the future of current restoration practices. The combination of these two “orders”, the movement between Teatro Verdi and Il Ridotto is also what makes the Pordenone Festival so rich. The films projected at the Verdi are a direct result of the efforts debated during the Collegium Sessions at the Ridotto. The same movement also makes it inevitable to question: while we are searching for the best methods of reproducing color, while we are seated in a crowded movie theater watching films from over 80 years ago or working to grant access to film and research, what exactly are we longing for? What other distances are we trying to overcome?

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## **Restoring intertitles or intertitling restorations? Possibilities in the restoration, reconstruction and (re)creation of intertitles in the context of Pordenone**

Sebastian Haller

### **1. Preliminary thoughts**

#### **An introduction to a *shift of concerns***

After having several conversations with experienced scholars, archivists and restorers in Pordenone on the very subject, I intended to initiate a comparative survey, displaying the different approaches to restoring intertitles; beginning with the oversimplified question: 'Which of the following solutions [see section 2] do you prefer, if the intertitles were not preserved in their entirety'. The (obvious) answer in most of the cases was that the restoration process, which is defined through the changing parameters of (1) the preserved film materials (2) the preservation situation of secondary sources and (3) the aim of the restoration, depends on too many individual factors to consider only one single tendency in the whole work of restoration. Therefore, this paper is not going to be concerned with national and institutional tendencies in restoration, but with the possibilities that can be traced through the (empirical) method of structuring the different choices; choices that concern the relation between input (source materials) and output (copy for projection purposes). Furthermore, advantages as well as disadvantages of the diverse decisions are exemplified and commented on by professionals that are (mostly) related to the *Giornate del Cinema Muto* either through their institutions' restorations (presented at the festival) or through their presence and kind advices in Pordenone and via mail in the subsequent weeks.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Indications on the historical Production and Preservation**

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<sup>1</sup> I was glad to receive input from Kevin Brownlow, Giovanna Fossati, Thomas Christensen, Barbara Schütz, Martin Koerber, Annike Kross, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Markus Wessolovski, Casper Tybjerg and Bryony Dixon.



The intertitles (photo-mechanical) mode of production was imminently different to that of picture material: As there was no negative intertitle material the title cards existed solely as positives. The titles, mainly distributed through (three) single frames called *flash titles*, were added to the camera negative on the intended position (or at least their position was indicated with title numbers) and reproduced separately 'by stopping the flash frames in the printer gate, and running off as much positive as he needed'<sup>2</sup> for the final projection length positioned once again within the positive film, produced for – then – projection purposes<sup>3</sup>. Or as Kevin Brownlow puts it with an ironic sidekick on the silent era audience – seemingly not silent at all: 'The titles had been cut into the actual print (snapped splices often leading to a holdup in projection, and the stamping of feet and whistling in the less elegant halls!)'<sup>4</sup>

This (here: rather exemplary and shortened) practice shows that the historical production of intertitles was not running perfectly parallel to that of the picture material, because it was – also considering that silent films were produced to be assembled as positive-cut films – always a process alternately controlled by different individuals (disconnected with the creatives) in different phases even if it only concerned the calculation of the intertitles' length. Therefore, titles – compared to picture material – were less fixed parts of a film, in all possible aspects. This higher chance of variability is increased by the distribution of silent films to foreign countries: The high standard in translating intertitles nowadays, led by the standards of philology, was not a common practice during the silent era:

The international distribution did not always include intertitles in the needed language, so local and anonymous translators were needed in order to adapt the language for the local market; for obvious reasons without connection to the responsible creatives that produced the film. Hence, film restorers still struggle with preserved intertitles (as the only source material) that show a translation not fitting to the originally intended concept. Brownlow summarized the problem in a

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<sup>2</sup> Brownlow, Kevin: *The parade's gone by*. London: Knopf, 1968. p. 299

<sup>3</sup> See Mazzanti/Farinelli: *Il restauro delle didascalie*. In: *Scrittura e Immagine*. Ed. By Quaresima/Pitassio. Udine: Forum, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Brownlow, mail to the author [16.10.2009]

lecture – with the paradigmatic title ‘Those maddening intertitles’ – held at the *Cinematheque Francaise*:

‘The same problem faced those who translated the subtitles for American silent films – intertitles as we now call them to distinguish them from the subtitles given to foreign language films. Those with the job of translation faced a great responsibility; they had to preserve the spirit if not the exact meaning of the original. But it must have been tempting to play around a little, to become creative, and to try few improvements.’

And furthermore,

‘Where the titles survived it was easy to see that as far as translation was concerned, it was open season. No one was going to compare the original with the new version, so the translator could do what he liked.’<sup>5</sup>

Restoring intertitles means taking account of those historical indications as they may have been the reason of a film’s unfortunate variability, which leads to another material specific fact that not only causes variability but a complete loss: Deterioration.

During the course of film preservation, intertitles have been cut down to three frames to save material and space (the same practice as with *flash titles* for international distribution) in order to be able to reproduce the original in case of a needed projection copy. But – following William K. Everson – the laboratories put less effort into the production, i.e. the processing did not have to be supervised as attentively as with picture material. The intertitle material, therefore, was not properly cleaned from the chemicals. This inappropriate treatment led to a faster decay than with picture material, which contributed to the deterioration of the intertitle material. With this in mind ‘removing the intertitles was an extremely wise course. The films thus pruned have survived in far better condition than the majority of prints that were not so treated.’<sup>6</sup> It is occasionally mentioned that Henri Langlois, the often cited founder of the *Cinematheque Francaise*, was unaware of the art value of intertitles: he, as a matter of fact, just like many other film curators in

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<sup>5</sup> Brownlow, Kevin: Those Maddening Intertitles. Draft (Feb 23) for talk at Cinematheque Francaise on Mar 26 1999 by Kevin Brownlow

<sup>6</sup> William K. Everson: American Silent Film. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. P.126

the 50s/60s, could not afford to restore silent movies with intertitles in a legible length, so films were projected with the flash titles. Therefore consciousness for intertitles could not be established, until they had been projected and preserved in a proper way (Belgians Noel Desmet is noted to be the first one to enforce an awareness of the importance of intertitles!), even though Langlois' pragmatic claim: 'To show is to preserve'.

These historical modes of production and preservation do have an effect on the concept of the original:

### **Problems of the Original – compared with picture material**

When talking about the restoration of intertitles, it becomes apparent to find a definition of the original. The common sense in declaring the original (with picture material) was to set the camera negative; for the obvious reason that it marks the first generation of film material, the (seemingly) closest to the directors' intentions and the only material with *physical relation* to the scene.

As I have already said, intertitles did not exist in the form of a negative, which generated problems when transmitting the definition of the original deriving from picture material. The solution (that leads to a multiplicity of originals) remains to consider every (positive) fragment an original, at best one that is (maybe preserved as *flash titles*) locally related to the camera negative, as it was common to put the originals inside the negative in their supposed position. So the only possible idea of the original derives, in this context, from the following idea, verbalized by Paolo Cherchi Usai, which gives every artifact the status of an original: 'The original version of a film is a multiple object fragmented into a number of different entities equal to the number of surviving copies'<sup>7</sup>.

### **Digital and analogue restoration**

The issue of digital restoration concerning its influence on intertitles is not too imminent in this context: The changes that have evolved through digital restoration, or rather its new possibilities as well as its threats cannot be overrated, but in this paper the analytic (and documenting) focus concentrates on the *human mediation*, as 'restoring a film implies making a copy of an authentic

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<sup>7</sup> Usai, Paolo Cherchi: Silent Cinema. London: BFI publishing, 2000. p.160

film artifact: the authenticity of the new restored copy depends completely on how this copy is made, and the way the copy is made depends, in turn, on how the restorer instructs the process, whatever the process. Whether it is photographic, analog duplication or a digitization, in this perspective is irrelevant for the authenticity of the result. [...] There is still continuity between analog and digital with the accent lying, not on the photographic or digital process, but on the human mediation that executes it.’<sup>8</sup>

Martin Körber (FHTW, Berlin), involved in the restoration of e.g. *Metropolis*, claims the following, illustrating this very thought in other terms: ‘Whether the restoration is undertaken by analogue or digital means is not of importance. Important is the result – it has to look faithful und must be well-founded.’<sup>9</sup> (Translation by the author)

### **The (underestimated) concept of Ontology with intertitles**

A rather simple fact reveals the multiple possibilities (see section 2) for the restoration, reconstruction or (re)creation of intertitles: If analyzed from an ontological (or realistic) perspective, it becomes obvious that intertitles do not depict anything from the outside world<sup>10</sup> – in Barthes’ realism-related terms: there is no *referent* whatsoever. The intertitles main appearance carries the form of a text that can possibly be transcribed. On the contrary, picture material (always) depicts something from reality (a *referent*) that cannot be re-enacted or transcribed in a genuine filmic or cinematic way, because it would convey a change of media structure. Hence, intertitles, apart from considering them as an intrinsical part of the ‘film as material’ as well as an object of aesthetic and narrative importance, do not imply this relation, even when taking into consideration that intertitles, generated in the silent era, have been shot with a camera as well. However, William F. Wert implies this ontological split as a semiotic difference when he refers to the dialectic between picture material (a more appropriate term than visuals, because intertitles are perceived visually as well) and intertitles:

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<sup>8</sup> Fossati, Giovanna: *From Grain to Pixel*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009. p. 120

<sup>9</sup> Martin Körber, mail to the author [21.01.2009]

<sup>10</sup> There are (of course) exclusions, e.g. (1) *artttitles* that interpenetrated text and picture material (2) animations and (3) inserts that are clearly part of the diegesis.

‘This view of complete freedom in applying non-codified intertitles to the more codified visuals implies a kind of spectator anarchy, however is belied the filmmakers most conscious their craft, whose structural use of the intertitles was both diverse and specific.’<sup>11</sup>

This simplifying statement conveys two important implications: The (non-codified) intertitles are, in matters of interpretation, more flexible, because of their (semiotic) status as a text, than pictures, which work as indices, meaning they depict something related to the world.

Cutting this excursion short:

It is exactly this ontological fact that gives the restorer the opportunity of creating new intertitles (Wert would call it ‘a kind of *restorer anarchy*’) without harming the narrative structure<sup>12</sup>: therefore it is possible to convey the artworks integrity – not in whole but – as an imaginative relation, even though the authenticity and (anyways vague) relation of the restoration output to the original is diffused and undermined one step further.

Apparently no spectator would confuse the textual substitution of a picture with original picture material. So, e.g. *substitution* and *simulation* (see section 2) are genuine restoration modes of restoring intertitles without a change of media.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. *Practical possibilities: restoring, reconstructing and (re)creating intertitles - exemplified on restorations presented in Pordenone***

‘If restorer and programmer act as historians, they can resurrect a film in a genuine, truthful way. If they don’t, they may give the film a youthful ‘make-up’ (“new splendor to old movies” as last week’s German TV broadcast on

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<sup>11</sup> von Wert, William F.: Intertitles. In: Sight and Sound Vol. 49, No. 2 (Spring 1980). p. 98

<sup>12</sup> This of course shortens the implicit narrative potential of the intertitles graphics e.g. the infamous handmade intertitles of the *German Expressionism*, connected to the narrative of a whole film (Nosferatu, Caligari, Der Golem etc.).

<sup>13</sup> Note: This excursion to film theory shouldn’t be related to the ethics of film restoration in any sense neither should it convey any hierarchy between intertitles and picture material; it’s just supposed to be an (introductory) thought on the basic ontological difference between picture material and intertitles and its possible consequences.

Photoplay's activities was called), so that it may dance like the old man in *Le Masque* [...] before he breaks down.'<sup>14</sup>

Three basic indications have to be taken into account that constitute all phases from the preliminary work to the final result, i.e. a print for presentation purposes: (1) The quantity and quality of the preserved film materials, (2) the quantity and quality of secondary sources and (3) the aim of the restoration.

Focusing on intertitles, this general presetting, that corresponds to the restoration of moving pictures in general, must be expanded by considering – following Mazzanti/Farinelli<sup>15</sup> – another four important technical, as well as material aspects:

1. The position in which the intertitles were cut in the original film

(Mazzanti/Farinelli are proposing two possibilities: (1) Different copies and their positioning of intertitles can be compared in projection, following – if they differ – one of the possibilities or (2) studying the material characteristics, especially systems that indicate the position with an 'X'. In case (2) it is of philological importance to read those indications with a critical claim, in order to prevent mistakes in positioning the intertitles.)

2. The length
3. The graphic style, e.g. lettering
4. The text

Those parameters play a crucial role in the output, because most professionals – concerning my research – do not prefer a single choice (see possibilities), which is owed to the material source constituting the working path. Every decision remains individual, even though it includes a discussion inside a group/institution; taking Annike Kross (NFM, now *eye Film Institute*) as a

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<sup>14</sup> Patalas, Enno: On Wild Film Restoration. In: *Journal of Film Preservation*/56/1998. p.28

<sup>15</sup> See Mazzanti/Farinelli: *Il restauro delle didascalie*. In: *Scrittura ed immagine*. Edited by Pittasio/Quaresima. Udine: Forum, 1998.

representative example: 'The path is always influenced by the restoration case – there is no general answer'<sup>16</sup>.

The combination of those parameters is leading to the following, enlisted solutions (The four parameters are of course taken in account and discussed according to the concrete solution). The terms at the end of every single point try to convey the relationship between (1) the restored or newly generated intertitles (output) and (2) the original intertitles (possible input):

- a.* Original intertitles, preserved in their entirety and transferred through digital/analogue techniques – i.e. ***transference***
- b.* Original lettering generated through digital software/analogue techniques, with genuine text from diverse secondary sources (censor card, production company) – i.e. ***simulation***
- c.* Completely new lettering with the genuine text from secondary sources (see b) – i.e. ***substitution***
- d.* Original intertitles from different copies, which (usually) means different lettering – i.e. ***eclectic combination*** without newly generated intertitles
- e.* Selective combination of possibilities a, b, c and d (see above) or combination of all the possibilities a, b and c – i.e. ***eclectic combination***
- f.* Entirely new intertitles concerning lettering and content – i.e. ***arbitrary selection***

As Brownlow points out 'all these approaches have points in their favor'<sup>17</sup>, so they do not just objectively reflect on the source materials, i.e. the originally preserved intertitles, they also convey ideas (or even ideologies) of presenting historical film material:

Ad a.) ***Transference***

*Transference*, i.e. exclusively using the original intertitles that have been preserved in their entirety, obviously remains the ideal situation for a restoration. A good example – in the context

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<sup>16</sup> Annike Kross, mail to author [25.01.2009]

<sup>17</sup> Kevin Brownlow, mail to the author [21.10.2009]

of Pordenone – would be the restoration of ‘The Merry Widow’: The intertitles were completely preserved, so no other choice than *transference* had to be taken in account, as Markus Wessolovski (*Österreichisches Filmmuseum, Vienna*) assured me<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, the Austrian archivist emphasized the often problematic preservation situation of intertitles that predetermines *any* decision. Personally – citing Wessolovski – he (and his institution) would combine different intertitle materials, but the decision should take the quantitative relation between new and old intertitles into account as well.

This restoration practice raises the same *ethical questions* as the restoration of picture material (e.g. to what extent should the original artifact be influenced in a restored version etc.), as ethically well-founded treatments of original intertitles always implicate that ‘intertitles are parts of the film; no other ethical principles should be applied than with other parts of the film.’<sup>19</sup> (Translation by the author) A practical approach that is of course lead by the idea of ‘film as an original’ - even in the process of restoration.

It is of course a matter of philology (or knowledge of historical film material and its physics) to recognize the authenticity of original intertitles, even if they are entirely preserved, as in the case of ‘The Eagle’, restored by Kevin Brownlow (*Photoplay*) and projected in Pordenone. Here ‘we had all the content of the titles, but in a very 1930s typeface. We decided to reproduce the typeface used for UA [United Artists] films at the time’<sup>20</sup>. One might have thought about dealing with an *original* in this case, but it turned out to be a generation further, maybe a re-issue – this proves to be a good example for the *contingence* of the film material caused through a ‘significant variation’ (see Joseph Garncarz: *Filmfassungen*) in its graphical appearance.

### ***Coloring Intertitles***

Another question - that is not only related to transference - is the use of colored intertitles: Coloring intertitles may be considered, if a copy or at least a fragment is preserved that can be

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<sup>18</sup> Interview Wessolovski [07.10.2009]

<sup>19</sup> Martin Koerber, mail to the author [20.01.2010]

<sup>20</sup> Brownlow [20.01.2010]



used as a comparison for the restoration. But even if colored material is available, it must be read critically, because ‘even a preserved colored fragment can be wrong or against the authors intention, if they are even any clues [about his/her intention]’<sup>21</sup>. (Translation by the author) Especially with digital techniques it became easier to restore colored prints, as Ulrich Ruedel (*Haghefilm*) emphasized in the *Collegiums* sessions. Nevertheless, a slight qualitative difference between analogue, i.e. photomechanical, and digital restoration persists.

Kevin Brownlow referred to a singular exclusion in coloring titles, worth mentioning: ‘I have a news reel from 1911 in which the titles alone are tinted red. The image is b and w. Very odd. The item was sensational – THE SIEGE OF SIDNEY STREET – so perhaps Gaumont felt they should give the subject a dramatic boost.’<sup>22</sup>

*All the other possibilities are chosen if there is – unfortunately – not the entirety of intertitles preserved:*

#### Ad b.) **Simulation**

*Simulation*, as the term implies, means simulating the original lettering and graphics by – nowadays – scanning and reproducing it with the help of the preserved, authentic text from secondary sources like:

(1) the *censorship card* – in Germany and Austria the main source, but also depending on the historical period as censorship did vary and, as Koerber points out ‘they [the censorship cards] have to be read in a critical manner, because they do have spelling mistakes and some details, like quotation marks, aren’t included’<sup>23</sup> (Translation by the author), (2) the *Production company*, which – referring to Thomas Christensen (*Danish Film Institute*) – is the main source in Denmark<sup>24</sup>, (3) the *script* or the *literary text* (as Jan-Christopher Horak reports on the restoration of ‘Die freudlose Gasse’), even though it has to be read and used very carefully, and furthermore (4) other sources that would guarantee a faithful text like translations of international releases. (*Problems with the*

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<sup>21</sup> Koerber [21.01.2010]

<sup>22</sup> Brownlow [16.10.2009]

<sup>23</sup> Koerber [21.01.2010]

<sup>24</sup> Interview Thomas Christensen [09.10.2009]

*authenticity of translations in internationally released copies have been mentioned earlier in section 1.)*

The advantages are quite obvious: It ensures that the result offers - through the newly generated intertitles - continuity in the lettering style and furthermore an increased legibility as the frame line remains fixed and the color/grade (may it be b/w or colored in some way as tinted/toned etc.) is, of course, stable.

This practice appears to be the *modus operandi* for a lot of professionals and institutions: Bryony Dixon<sup>25</sup> (*British Film Institute*), told me about the necessary software, capable of generating new intertitles with the original lettering<sup>26</sup>. Barbara Schütz (*Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv*) and Giovanna Fossati (*eye Film Institute*) use a similar device, just as a lot of other professionals. Paolo Cherchi Usai<sup>27</sup> considers it the best way of presenting a newly made restoration that struggled with severe losses of original material.

The *simulation* makes it important to have a reliable source like (1) flashtitles, which were added to the film with just three frames in order to save film material, mainly when distributed internationally to pay less portage, or (2) artifacts of intertitles.

According to Mark-Paul Meyer, there is a flaw in the aesthetic of reception with the *simulation* (i.e. newly generated intertitles in general): The Problem of the 'flawless' intertitle. 'The effect of a frozen slide is quite difficult to avoid'<sup>28</sup>. (We will encounter this problem again with the substitution, even more intense, because they do not even have this 'glimpse' of the original through scanning the graphics.)

Furthermore, Annike Kross raises ethical questions: 'I don't really consider scanning the typeface ethical correct. I create something new, which wasn't part of the Original. It's the same in other

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<sup>25</sup> Interview Bryony Dixon [07.10.2009]

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Interview Paolo Cherchi Usai [08.10.2010]

<sup>28</sup> Meyer, Mark-Paul: *Restoration of Motion Picture Film*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000. p.73

restoration fields (paintings, ceramics, paper, photography...). In those fields it is called a neutral retouch.' (Translation by the author)

A superb example – in the context of Pordenone – was the restoration of 'Le Chant de L'Amour Triomphant' done by the *Cinematheque Francaise*. The redone, and therefore simulated intertitles, showed the genuine and effectfull design (a frame displaying the outlines of a castle) that appeared in the original.

#### Ad c.) ***Substitution***

The main differences of a *substitution* in relation to a *simulation* is (1) the missing adaption (scanning) of the original intertitle and (2) the creation of new intertitles, with *no relation to the original intertitle* whatsoever. This practice might be the result of (1) a missing a flash title or fragment to compare/scan or (2) a conscious (and yet individual) aesthetic choice, because e.g. a number of different intertitle materials have been preserved and therefore the restorer attempts to avoid a restoration combining inconsistent graphic styles.

As with the *simulation*, it is important to be in the position of having a reliable – but critically read – secondary source (censorship cards, files from the Production Company etc.).

Similar to the *simulation*, the *substitution* offers the possibility of continuity and legibility, but the authenticity and relation to the original is thereby obfuscated and the aspired continuity between the two is disrupted. But – remembering what Kross said about the problem of simulating a certain lettering – it can be a solution, if the simulation and its 'pretending-to-be' raises an ethical problem that is also related to the aesthetics of reception, for the restorer (as an individual).

*Two different modes* of using substituted original intertitles can be discussed through two representative examples, taken from the context of Pordenone:

(1) The DFI (Danish Film Institute) follows the practice of substituting original intertitles, which are preserved in a bad quality as well as quantity, as Thomas Christensen<sup>29</sup> assured me, through *substituting new intertitles with a neutral lettering/design* that does not convey any relation to the

<sup>29</sup>

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Christensen [09.10.2009]

original intertitles. This restoration practice has regularly been performed by the DFI in recent years and one of their contributions in Pordenone ('Die Gezeichneten') made use of this very strategy as well. Their substantial secondary source is 'the title books from Nordisk Films Kompagni [which] survived and are an invaluable source to the wording of the original intertitles.'<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the copy of 'Die Gezeichneten' showed – in a very genuine practice – in just one frame the English translation as well as the Danish intertitles; Casper Tybjerg on the restoration case:

'We were not able to find any German censorship cards, but the archive of the Swedish film censorship board had a complete list of the titles for the Swedish release of the film. In addition, we had Dreyer's shooting script, which contained some title indications, and promotional materials from the Danish premiere of the film, which contained a plot summary with numerous wordings very close to the Swedish censorship list. On the basis of these materials, with the Swedish list as primary source, we created a new title list in Danish and English. In nearly all cases, we were able to find brief jumps in the image where dialogue titles had been left out in the Russian version, giving us considerable confidence in the reliability of the Swedish list.'<sup>31</sup>

A major advantage with this bilingual presentation is – apart from the obvious legibility and continuity in lettering/graphics – the possibility of presenting a 35mm copy in foreign countries without any projected electronical subtitles. (Finish Curator Antti Alanen mentioned the electronical subtitles used in Pordenone: 'For the second year, there [Pordenone] were electronic subtitles in English and Italian to all the films at Teatro Verdi. They greatly help make (sic) sense of films which are often incomplete and hard to understand'<sup>32</sup>.) Hence, English and Danish intertitles combined in just one frame provide the opportunity to present the restoration internationally without the mentioned electronic subtitling device, but – quoting Brownlow – 'we [still] must find a way to make the films accessible to people who only speak one language'. A task

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<sup>30</sup> Christensen, Thomas: Restoring a Danish silent film – Nedtbrudte Nerver. In: Preserve than show. Edited by Nissen/Larsen. Copenhagen: DFI, 2002. p. 142

<sup>31</sup> Caspar Tybjerg, mail to the author [15.06.2010]

<sup>32</sup> See [anttialanenfilmdiary.blogspot.com/2009\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://anttialanenfilmdiary.blogspot.com/2009_10_01_archive.html)

that is hard to accomplish but bilingual intertitles can do something in favor of an international presentation.

(2) 'The Eagle', a contribution to Pordenone that was restored by *Photoplay*, represents the second choice in substituting intertitles: Instead of creating a new a-historical lettering/graphic, Photoplays responsables decided on *substituting the originals by historically adequate intertitles* or like Brownlow describes the process and decision, as cited earlier: 'We had all the content of the titles, but in a very 1930s typeface. We decided to reproduce the typeface used for UA [United Artists] films at the time.'<sup>33</sup> So here the intertitles do not serve as a direct reference to the film as an original (as with the simulation that conveys through scanning its explicit connection to the original, preserved as an artifact/flashtitle) but to its historical and (contemporary) aesthetical context.

Either way, i.e. substituted intertitles with neutral lettering or historically adequate lettering/graphic, it is (ethically) important to inform the spectator about the interventions by providing the relevant information, e.g. in the leader or at the end of the film. (Although a lot of restorers insisted on an adequate amount of information that doesn't overwhelm the spectator.)

#### Ad d.) e.) ***Eclectic Combination***

The *eclectic combination* is either (1) a *selective combination* or (2) a *combination of all the possibilities discussed* above. This choice is mainly, apart from pragmatic reasons that would rather lead to a *substitution* or a *simulation*, connected to the (restoration) framework of 'film as an original'. Even if it is not intended to be a 'reflection on the different sources'<sup>34</sup>, as Thomas Christensen supposed in view of 'J'accuse', it does implicitly show the material's historical variability from a contemporary standpoint. (At this point it is important to mention that every restoration should be considered as a contemporary product, as it is common within the archive community!)

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<sup>33</sup> Brownlow [20.01.2009]

<sup>34</sup> Christensen [09.10.2009]

It is a practice that can obviously be used– as one of the choices besides *substitution* and *simulation* – when a (huge) diversity of intertitles was preserved without one continuous (and original) style. In relation to the *simulation* and *substitution* it offers the possibility - in such a difficult material situation – to be as close to the (*multiple*) *originals* as possible, as Annike Kross, responsible restorer of the latest restoration of ‘J’accuse’, points out.

Annikе Kross on the restoration case of ‘J’accuse’:

‘The different intertitle styles resulted from the (already) different title styles in the source materials. Inside as well as between the copies have been different styles! I tried to use – whenever possible – the predominant style that derived from the three different nitrate copies (but not exclusively as well). Because no source material was preserved in its entirety, a mix of styles was obvious, which is a normal problem in reconstructing films. In the old ‘reconstruction’ of 1957 [there have been three reconstructions of ‘J’accuse’ that preceded Kross’ work] different materials have been combined (but there are no written records dealing with the number and of source of materials used. [...] I think, in general, the restorer should use – if possible – just a single intertitle style, because it is historically more faithful. To combine different styles from different copies just because of presentational reasons is wrong romanticizing.’<sup>35</sup> (Translation by the author)

In the case of ‘J’accuse’ the *eclectic combination* was chosen because of two reasons: (1) None of the multiple source materials preserved the intertitles in their entirety, so the decision, facing this quite common problem, was a pragmatic (and not ‘romanticized’) one, aiming to reconstruct the filmic text in its qualitative and quantitative best possible shape and (2) the use of (multiple) original materials comes closest to the idea of the original, with the possibility of displaying its variability (and at least the variability and contingency of a filmic text in general!).

Two points of critique have been verbalized that concern this practice: (1) Different restorers tend to avoid this solution because it is missing a certain continuity in graphics and lettering which – in the critics perspective – interrupts the visual pleasure, especially in view of an audience outside the circle of professionals in filmhistory etc. and (2) it is believed to be an ethical problem: ‘The current trend recognizes the substantial impossibility of an interpenetration of the different

versions, for the purpose of preserving a formal 'unity' of the film, which would be overturned by putting together images, shots and intertitles that have never coexisted on the screen.'<sup>36</sup> This ethical criticism might be appropriate, but displaying a reconstructed version with the goal of being the most complete so far, necessitates a consideration of ethical implications: Remembering Vincent Pinels' dichotomic terms (*restaurateur archeologue* - *restaurateur artistique*), referring to the restorer's aim, 'J'accuse' can be described as the work of a (modern) *restaurateur archeologue*.

#### Ad f.) **Arbitrary Selection**

The last - and ethically the least justifiable - possibility is an *arbitrary selection* that is rarely performed, but if so, it is mainly the practice of commercial restoration projects, which do not consider the ethical implications of their intervention, justified with regard to the spectator.

Aside from those possibilities there are other concerns that have to be considered during the restoration process, namely *Signs* and *Length*:

#### *Signs/Labels for newly generated intertitles*

Another problem comes into play, especially when original and new intertitles are combined: Should a sign indicate the newly generated intertitles as an intervention made by the restorer or institution? And how, if no sign is used, should the newly generated intertitles be distinguishable from the original ones? Basically there are two possibilities with signs:

(1) An (institutional) sign on all the new intertitles: Paolo Cherchi Usai proposed this solution referring to the restorations of the George Eastman House. It ensures that the spectator, who has no access to the restorations metadata, is always informed of the interventions made by the restorer; on the other hand, critics consider it an interference in the visual pleasure. Barbara Schütz thinks that entirely new generated intertitles do not need to be 'labeled', if there are no original intertitles (or different sources in general) at all, because visual logic would imply the intervention anyways. But – still quoting Mrs. Schütz – if the restoration is combining different

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<sup>36</sup> Mazzanti, Nicola: Footnotes. In: *Restauro, Conservazione e Distruzione dei Film*. Milano: Ed. di Castoro Milano, 2001. p.29

sources, intertitles generated by the restorer should have a label or at least an introduction that provides the relevant information<sup>37</sup>.

(2) No sign, but graphical indications instead: Martin Koerber, representing the main thought: 'I think a sign isn't necessary, if the typeface and the design suggest that they have been newly generated. You can provide this fact with an obligatory editorial note at the header. Then you won't need any signs/labels that would intervene with the work.'<sup>38</sup> (Translation by author) This view is shared by a lot of other professionals: bryony Dixon (BFI) points out that her institution clearly shows the new titles by style and João de Oliveiras' practice is to use a slightly different color for the new intertitles<sup>39</sup>.

To conclude: As newly generated intertitles are always split from the historical gap in terms of the graphics, they (mostly!) explicitly show their newly created intervention while the metadata records relevant intervention. Furthermore, important information at the head of the film should be provided anyways (Before metadata was common sense, intertitles from restored versions have been incomprehensible, concerning their status as originals or newly generated, e.g. the reconstruction of 'J'accuse' done in 1957 did not imply the different sources that have been combined.)

### *Length*

The number of frames per intertitle constitutes the screening speed of the (restored) copy. If the number of  $x$  frames is (in its length) optimized for a projection speed  $x_1$  (e.g. 20 f/s) a screening speed of  $> x_1$  will make them unreadable (too fast), a projection speed  $< x_1$  will influence the rhythm of a scene in a negative way (too slow). This shows the importance of handling and calculating the length of intertitles.

In the silent era it was common to calculate a second per word (number of frames would have been more precise due to the different projection speeds) plus five seconds added to the whole

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<sup>37</sup> Interview Barbara Schütz [09.10.2009]

<sup>38</sup> Körber [21.01.2010]

<sup>39</sup> see Busche, Andreas: Ethics in Moving Image Restoration, MA Dissertation. p.71



projection time in respect of the slower readers<sup>40</sup>. Restorers nowadays have quite similar guidelines. E.g. Kross: 'One rule of thumb is per line 2 (sec) times 18. As 18 frames/second is our default screening speed for silent film. If the line is very short (little words/big font), I confirm the before mentioned calculation by reading the text in my head and timing the time I need to do so. Something in between is mostly right for those intertitles.'<sup>41</sup>

The decision on the length of intertitles, even if the original ones are preserved, is not always led from a historical, but rather from a modern standpoint, which focuses on the current spectator: As I have already said, the length is of great importance for the whole rhythm of a film. Considering that modern viewers of silent cinema do have a higher education than the average historical audiences (there is no empirical survey on this question but the thought is apparent) it becomes clear that in today's restorations the intertitles are supposed to be shorter (in the projection time). This poses to be an interesting exception in restoration, when considering that even restorers with high philological standards are supporting this solution, which is facing a conscious historical shift in audiences.

### 3. Conclusion

'Que restaure-t-on: une pellicule ou un spectacle, autrement dit, un objet ou une relation imaginaire?'<sup>42</sup>

The first part, my *preliminary thoughts*, tried to point out the possible variability of intertitles during the (historical) mode of production, such as the fact that intertitles did not exist as negatives or the problems deriving from arbitrary translations. In the second part questions about the possibilities of restoring, reconstructing and (re)creating intertitles, as well as their ethical implications were raised.

In focusing on those two perspectives – the historical and the modern – I tried to reveal the difficulties and the consequences for the restoration of intertitles. The results of the different

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<sup>40</sup> William K. Everson: *American Silent Film*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. p.126

<sup>41</sup> Kross [25.01.2010]

<sup>42</sup> Patalas, Enno: *On Wild Film Restoration*. In: *Journal of Film Preservation* nr.56, 1998. p.26

possibilities, as presented in the list, cannot be distinguished by just relating them to – as the paraphrase says – the ‘object’ or the ‘imaginary relation’. These two terms convey ideas in their favor, but it is always an in-between. The topic of reconstruction, restoration and (re)creation of intertitles is of huge complexity, especially when they are not preserved in their entirety; and even if so – their text or positioning can be incorrect – philological intentions should always underlie every decision, making it an obligation ‘that I shall never proceed differently than in a way, that would allow my hypotheses (maxim) to become generally applicable precepts.’<sup>43</sup> (Translation by the author).

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Kant, after: Herrlinde Pauer-Studer: Einführung in die Ethik. Wien: UTB, 2003. p.12

## What remains of glory? Looking for the stars on the silent screen of Pordenone

Myriam Juan

“We didn’t need dialogue. We had faces!”

– Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson), *Sunset Boulevard*, 1950

For most film festivals, the coming of stars represents a very important event which has great influence on the fame of the manifestation. But during the Giornate del cinema muto in Pordenone, you would wait in vain for the stars in the streets of the city or for their parade on the red carpet in front of the Verdi Theater. With the exception of the astonishing Jean Darling who was a child in the twenties, all the stars of the silent period have now disappeared for a long time. Many of them are also completely unknown but to silent cinema experts. And yet, even these people often meet those stars reading old fan magazines or seeing movies either on viewing tables or on DVD. Therefore, by showing a full week of silent films, often recently restored, on a big screen and accompanied live by musicians, the Giornate offer a unique opportunity to see the magnificence of the first movie stars again. But what remains of such glory? What does the festival tell us about silent stardom and what does a twenty first century audience feel seeing those former celebrities?

The Giornate helped me to understand better stardom and to have a better knowledge of silent stars beyond the few names that have lived through the time. They also showed the very powerful impact silent stars had and still have on their films, but at the same time, they revealed to me that seeing them today is quite a different experience that it must have been eighty or ninety years before. Who were the silent stars and are we still able to identify them? There is a remarkable paradox about stardom: it is both a highlight fact (every star should be recognized as one almost by definition) and yet is anything but easy to define. However, the festival reminded us that basically, beyond scientific essays and esthetical judgments, a star is an artist whose presence is supposed to attract the audience. The material used for promotion proves it: posters, pictures and fan magazines are using stars since the 1910s to get people go to the movie theatres. No wonder that, after Mary Pickford last year, the Giornate chose a star again for its 28th edition poster [ill. 1]. With her sophisticated dress and jewels, her eyelids half-lowered, her mouth half-opened and held

out to the spectator, Mae Murray, surrounded by feathers like a peacock, still retains our attention. Of course it is an exception, for the actress is unknown by most of people nowadays and her name is not mentioned on the poster. In fact, she appears almost like a symbol of stardom in the roaring twenties. Yet, her power of fascination on the audience seems intact. Moreover, there were a lot of original film posters at the book market during the Giornate del cinema muto, and old pictures and magazines too. They did not only show how stars were used for promotion but also how they became a kind of product themselves. For instance, one stand at the convent San Francesco sold sets of post cards related to various films of Francesca Bertini: on the main side was a coloured picture of the movie, always showing Bertini; on the other side was a presentation of the film giving its title, its credits and the name of the brand of chocolate giving to its clients the precious cards to collect – by buying chocolate of course.



**III. 1: The poster of the 28th edition of the festival**

Anyway, stars are used for promoting pictures first. This was exemplified in the festival selection by a peculiar document entitled *The Letter from Hollywood* (c. 1926). It was made of trailers strung together, giving the impression of visiting Hollywood studios. Many names of famous actors are mentioned during this advertisement (Jackie Coogan, Betty Bronson, Bessie Love, Richard Dix...) and actors themselves are almost the only ones present on the screen. Asking for the artists they like, it is the audience who makes stars. In return, stars often become addicted to their audience. Leatrice Gilbert Fountain reminded me so when she called up the happy old days of her mother. Early retired from the movies, dame Leatrice lived in Greenwich, Connecticut: “she was quite a celebrity, said her daughter. She would walk up and down the streets, go to her little shops to tell people funny stories. She had happy declining years because she had her audience. It was what she needed more, more than family: her audience.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leatrice Gilbert Fountain, interview given on Wednesday October the 7<sup>th</sup>.

So stars are a kind of “pull products” whose names and faces appeal. Furthermore if they were no ilm posters at the front of the Verdi Theatre neither at the entrance of the Ridotto, we could guess the way movies emphasized the stars from their credits. The credits confirm that the main actors almost always held a greater importance for the audience than any other personality. The fact that the credits started to become regular only in the 1910s also reminds us that stars did not exist at the beginning of the film industry. Indeed the first real movie stars appeared around fifteen years after the invention of the cinema<sup>2</sup> and the star system itself was not organized and powerful until – at least – the end of the 1910s. All these external signs of stardom, especially the credits, tell us that they were different degrees in silent stardom and different types of stars. Let’s take for example the opening credits of *The Eagle* (1925) [ill. 2].

“Rudolph Valentino” is by far the biggest name on the screen; it is placed just after the name of the producer (Emil C. Jensen) and just before the title. Under the latter, the audience can read Valentino is “supported by Vilma Banky & Louise Dresser”. Even a novice who has never heard of Valentino could guess from such an introduction that he was a super-star at that time, whereas Vilma Banky and Louise Dresser were only his “leading ladies”. The same thing happens in *The Merry Widow* (1925): on the cast list, Mae Murray’s name is on the first line, double sized compared to all of her partners’. So the names order, their place on the screen (before or after the title, on the same frame or not), at last the size of the letters are clues to guess the rank of the stars at the time the movie came out.

Ill. 2: The opening credits of *The Eagle* (1925) by Clarence Brown



In fact, the “super-star” is only one kind of stars. Some actors could be considered as stars in several movies and only as leading men or women in others, for they were then playing with stars bigger than them. Moreover they were artists regarded as stars only in one country. Some may say

<sup>2</sup> Some experts say the first movie star is Florence Laurence (the “Biograph Girl”) whose disappearance in April 1910 caused a huge emotion in the United States and led to the revelation of her name; others consider that Asta Nilsen in *Afgrunden* (*The Woman Always Pays*) is the first one, also in 1910. This paper is not the place to settle this delicate question. Anyway, the period is the same.

they were not stars for stars should always be international. It can be discussed and anyway, we cannot ignore the fact that French magazines of the twenties, for example, reflecting the French audience opinion of the time, considered that Nathalie Kovanko and Jean Angelo, two main actors of *le Chant de l'amour triomphant* (1923), were real stars. Such stars were not the only commercial asset of a movie however, only one between others. It was also the case of Nicolas Rimsky who appeared in four films in Pordenone this year. In *la Dame masquée*, he had only a secondary role (those of the Chinese villain), whereas the same year in 1924, in *Ce cochon de Morin* and *l'Heureuse mort*, and three years latter in *le Chasseur de chez Maxim's*, he played the leading role. Besides he was the scriptwriter of the two latter films from 1924 and he finally directed the 1927 movie with Roger Lion. Therefore, in *le Chasseur de chez Maxim's*, his presence on both sides of the camera was definitely supposed to attract the French audience. So we had the opportunity to see the rise of this completely forgotten star of the twenties, who also casts doubt on the common idea that a star should be sexy and glamorous: many comics became great stars during the silent era and none of them pretended to be handsome – apart from Max Linder, the French dandy.

Moreover, thanks to the Diva program, the festival reminded us that, at the very beginning of the movie star system, super-stars succeeded in emerging far from Hollywood in Europe. But the career of the youngest diva, Pola Negri, who came to the United States in 1923 after having become a star in Germany, also confirmed that in the twenties Hollywood became the world centre of the star system, appealing to America every ambitious foreign actor and actress. Most of the stars we still know nowadays came to Hollywood one day or another, sometimes to shoot only one film, like Ivan Mosjoukine did in 1927. From that point of view, we can say that a journey in California in the 1920s helped (without being an absolute condition) to enter the “Canon” – that is to say the few names that have passed through the time.

The impact of this “Canon” today was evident during the festival. For instance, most people came to the Diva's screenings only to see the actresses: they didn't care if the films were good or not, they didn't even care to watch them from beginning to end as long as Bertini, Nielsen or Negri were here. This was particularly striking for Asta Nielsen's session which included a short clothes parade, a very brief fragment of a 1920 movie (only two minutes) and longer pieces of a 1921

performance. The “Canon” even affects a film restoration process. In the second Collegium dialogue, giving a commentary on the work accomplished on *Beyond the Rocks* (1922) Giovanna Fossati explained to us that the film had been chosen among many others because of the presence of two main silent stars, Gloria Swanson and Rudolph Valentino. According to her, the film isn’t very good and the money could have been worthily spent on another title, but it is easier to gather money for restoration when they are stars in the credits. However, the “Canon” covers only a small part of silent stars galaxy. Moreover its selection has been made for years: it should be discussed and change. In my opinion, it is one of the main Giornate interests to replace these long lasting famous names among their coevals. It sometimes brings us to rediscoveries as it happened this year with Raquel Meller: the Spanish diva isn’t well-known today but I noticed she made a very strong impression on the people I spoke with, not only in Feyder’s *Carmen* (1926) but also in *Nocturne*, a short by Marcel Silver made the same year.

One of the direction choices which make *Nocturne* so remarkable is the use of many close-ups on the actors’ faces. As such a shot is usually considered as a typical “star shot” this leads us to focus on the way silent stars influenced the conception of their movies and to question their impact on the screen.

Indeed, even if the audience doesn’t actually know who the stars are before the show, anyone should be able to recognize them during the screening. First of all, the stars always play the leading role of their movies. It is almost a condition of stardom in silent area: being the most important character in the story. So you may enjoy the cynical Roy D’Arcy in *The Merry Widow*, it is clear that the actor wasn’t a star at that time (in fact, he never became one really) first of all because his character is a supporting one. Moreover D’Arcy is the villain Prince Mirko, a part which would not easily has been played by a star in Hollywood during the twenties. In these conditions, no wonder that his name doesn’t occur on the film posters [ill. 3]. Besides, silent stars did not need to be good actors or actresses: some were (like the great Asta Nielsen) and some were not (as Mae Murray according to many people I spoke with during the festival). But all of them had fascination and attraction faculties back in their times.



### III. 3: One of Erich von Stroheim's *Merry Widow*

So stars almost always play heroes. Their films are based upon the characters they play: they are the ones who act and who further the story. It is obvious for super-stars such as Valentino in *The Eagle* or Coogan in *Daddy* (1923), but it is also true sometimes for less important stars like Nicolas Rimsky in *Le chasseur de chez Maxim's*. As a result, from *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) to *Carmen*, stars' characters often give the films their titles. The presence of a super-star even often determinates the whole conception of a movie, from the writing of the script to the film direction. This is what we usually call a "vehicle": a movie made expressly for a specific star to get the best out of him or her, and to please the audience. One of the most striking examples of vehicle we saw in Pordenone this year was definitely *Daddy*. Indeed, Coogan's character in this film is almost the same he played in *The Kid* (1921) which made him a child star loved all over the world: he is a poor but brave little boy, helped by a man in the fringe of society; at the end, he finally finds happiness and meets his real parents again. Even his clothes are the same and some scenes seem to be taken directly from Chaplin's master piece (the dinner for instance). In 1923 in fact, the identification between the star and his character is complete: *Daddy's* little hero is even called "Jackie" as if he was Coogan himself. Last but not least concerning the influence of stars upon the conception of their films, it occurs – rarely – that a very big star becomes a character of the story. It is the case in *Mariute* (1918) where Francesca Bertini plays with a lot of humour "la Diva Bertini". No doubt this transformation of the actress into a fiction figure is a sign of supreme stardom.



Furthermore, the importance of stars in the script results in specific shooting and direction. First of all, the star is more present than any other actor on the screen. Every film which has been named before could illustrate that fact, but the beginning of *The Playhouse* (1921) by Keaton uses it with wittiness. Indeed, Keaton plays every part: the conductor, the orchestra, the dancers, the stagehand and of course the audience. He even plays a black man and a woman! He is literally invading the screen. A spectator (played by Keaton like all the rest) gives a look to the program and notices: « This fellow Keaton seems to be the whole show. ». A sentence that sounds like a humorous “mise en abîme” of what a star – unless a super-star – is: a smashing and pervasive presence, a “whole show”.

Beyond their time of appearance on the screen, stars are not shot like other actors. The use of close-up has been mentioned before and it is certainly the most emblematic practice linked to stardom. Close-ups are not exclusively used for stars but they remain mostly a star privilege. Some of them have even become famous in cinema history, like the final shot of *Queen Christina* (1934) on Greta Garbo. In my eyes, the last close-up on Asta Nielsen’s half-lighted face at the end of *Die Geliebte Roswolskys* (1921) was almost as memorable. Close-ups had a tremendous impact on the first movie-goers. It is hard to figure it nowadays because we have become quite used to them (even if they are still moving and powerful). These shots created a close relation between the actors and the audience, as if the formers were baring their feelings to the latter. Thus, actors were both dominating (by their size on the screen) and vulnerable (by the fact they exposed something very intimate). Of course close-ups haven’t disappeared with talking pictures, but they became rarely as intense as they were during the silent area. Looking at one of her old films Norma Desmond, the creepy character of *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), declares proudly in front of her proper young face in close-up: “We didn’t need dialogue. We had faces!” In fact, no doubt silence increased the fascination power of movie stars. But today, the bad condition of the copies and the poor size of the screens we are often compelled to watch them are not fare to their beauty and talent. On that account, the Giornate are an extraordinary occasion to restore them.

If Asta Nielsen’s close-up which so much impressed me was at the end of the movie, the moments when stars appear are often even more revealing of their stardom. The festival gave us great examples of these key-moments. It showed different ways to make the appearance of a star memorable. First, the choice of the scene in the film where the star appears: some stars show up

since the very beginning. For example, Valentino in *The Eagle* is straightaway in the action (rescuing a beautiful young lady under the concupiscent eyes of the Russian queen). Others feed the audience expectation, like Coogan in *Daddy* where a prologue defers the arrival of the little boy. *Mariute* plays with this image of the star as someone who knows how to make oneself desired, in a film but also in a studio. It shows Francesca Bertini called all the day long by her collaborators who cannot begin the shooting without her. At last, whereas everybody's hope seems to be gone, we attend "L'arrivo della Diva": Bertini makes a spectacular entrance on the set, as if she was on a stage. At last, some films multiply the appearance moments, usually for big stars. For instance, Mae Murray's character in *The Merry Widow* makes three outstanding entrances: as an Irish dancer in the middle of her band; as a seducing widow, all black-dressed; as a sensual lover, in a white evening dress at Maxim's.

Mae Murray's entrances are memorable above all because of the way Stroheim plays with the frame, the editing, the costumes, the set, and the presence of the other actors and the extras. Raquel Meller's first appearance in *Carmen* is also unforgettable thanks to Feyder's wonderful directing. The camera gets closer to the Spanish diva through several fades in and fades out, whereas the actress is looking straight in its direction that is to say straight in the audience direction. Later in the movie, Raquel Meller makes two other remarkable entrances: she is sitting under a ray of light in an inn; she emerges on the contrary from darkness to join and ruin Don José. In Pordenone, these visual ideas often sparked off sound effects. We could almost guess what happened on the screen without seeing it, for at the very moment the stars were appearing, the musicians changed the tune, the rhythm or the intensity of music. It reinforced the dramatic tension here (like in *Carmen*), a comic effect there (the entrance of the diva Bertini for instance). Every time live accompaniment made the images more powerful and the apparitions more striking.

Therefore, the Giornate del cinema muto tend to restore the magnificence of silent stars again. Nevertheless, seeing them nowadays it is certainly not the same experience it was in their time. Indeed, knowing the following of their stories definitely change our look on silent stars. When we look at them, we know their whole career and our mind is often full of memories of their performances, even the ones they hadn't made at that time. During the festival, I sometimes

waited for actors and actresses whose careers were only beginning as if they were already stars. In fact, they are three main moments in stardom: the rise, the peak and – in most cases – the decline. Jean Darling, who was a child star in the twenties and who gave up cinema in the early thirties, reminded us of this fact during her audience: “When you come to the top, there is nothing you can do except decline”. And it is extremely moving to see in all their splendour stars who had a miserable end. 1925, for example, was the beginning of John Gilbert’s great years: *The Merry Widow* and *The Big Parade*, a few months latter, made him one of Hollywood male super-stars. However his glorious days quickly passed away and in 1936, Gilbert died after his career had collapsed. Seeing him in Stroheim’s film, as a young 28 years old actor ignorant of his future, is all the more moving. Although he never knew decline, the sight of Valentino in *The Eagle* also brings to melancholy for it was one of the very last films the star made before he died, at the age of only 31.

On that score, the festival makes us feel acutely the vanity of glory. As we said before, all the silent stars have now disappeared. Not only are they dead, but a lot of them, as famous as they may have been in their time, are completely forgotten by most of people. Who remembers Mae Murray, for example? When I came back from Pordenone with my bag reproducing the festival poster, everyone of my relatives asked me who this woman was. Even experts are sometimes defeated by a face they cannot identify, like this actress shot in colour in the Kodachrome tests shown at the Verdi Theatre. Unlike the other women in the tests (Mae Murray, Hope Hampton and Mary Eaton from the Ziegfeld Follies – all of them unknown but to experts nowadays), maybe this woman wasn’t a star? Perhaps she was, for a very little time, and came back soon to anonymity. Oddly, colour made all these beautiful faces more present and fainting – almost unreal – at the same time.

No doubt the fact that a lot of silent films disappeared has contributed to forgetfulness. In the case of Max Linder, it has certainly prevented the critics to give to the great French comic the place he deserved in the history of cinema. So it has been the main purpose of his daughter, Maud Linder, to find as many films of her father as possible, to restore them and to show them. Thanks to her work (for which she received the Jean Mitry award this year) Max Linder is no longer forgotten. Nevertheless, most of his films are still missing. Indeed, even great stars have sometimes left us only pieces of their work, such as the ones shown in Asta Nielsen’s session this year. Are silent

stars even present in our mind through their cinematographic performances? As Louise Brooks noticed:

When you think of it, what people remember of those stars is not from films, but *one* essential photograph: Dietrich – heavy-lidded, sucked-in cheeks / Keaton – sad little boy / Crawford – staring self-admiration / Gable – smiling, darling.<sup>3</sup>

Strangely, still frames and single shots frequently fill our memory more than moving pictures. It is particularly true for silent stars, whose movies are so rarely available, either because they have disappeared or because they are no longer shown. Indeed, I know better many silent stars through their pictures in magazines than through their films.

Moreover, the very few survivors and direct heirs of silent area bring to consciousness the passing of time. It was a real choc for me to discover the old Jean Darling I only knew from her pictures as a child in the twenties. As an extract of one of her movies was shown, I tried in vain to recognize the little girl in the white-haired woman on the stage. The day after this audience, I had the opportunity to interview Leatrice Gilbert Fountain. And while she spoke, I couldn't help myself seeking for the features of her parents in those, still beautiful, of the old woman, just like the journalist Louella O. Parsons did in the *Waterloo Daily Courier* judging that: "Leatrice Joy Gilbert [...] has the same intense manner and flashing black eyes of her father Jack (John) Gilbert – plus the charm of Leatrice Sr."<sup>4</sup>. Except Louella O. Parsons wrote at the beginning of the forties, when Leatrice Gilbert was not already 18. She is now 85.

This nostalgia caused by silent stars is all the deeper that on the screen, they seem to be wonderfully and eternally young. From that point of view, not only the Giornate contribute in a way to perpetuate the myth of movie stars immortality, they also pass on a living memory of silent films. Indeed, Pordenone conditions of screening are excellent, even better than many people had in the past (copies were sometimes worn, the pianists were bad, the theatres noisy). So the festival

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted by KOBAL (John), *The Art of The Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers*, New-York, Toronto, Alfred A. Knopf, Random House of Canada Limited, 1980, p. 122 (stressed in the book).

<sup>4</sup> *Waterloo Daily Courier*, Waterloo, Iowa, U.S., Tuesday, March 24, 1942, p. 13. Thanks to Claudio Marchi who reported this quotation to me.

fully restores the stars magnificence, giving the impression that the individuals may die, the stars will always live on the screen. It is a weird feeling. For the relatives of the stars, the experience is especially deeply moving. When I asked Leatrice Gilbert Fountain whether on the screen she saw John Gilbert as her father or simply as an actor, she exclaimed: "He is my 'caro papa'. Oh dear!... It's always as if he looks at me." Besides she confided she never saw her father in a film when he was still living: "I was too young. The first time I saw my father (one of the first times) was when I saw *The Merry Widow* at the Museum of Modern Art where I went in the 1970s. I was about 47 years old. And then, I can tell you how he was, his young and beautiful face and expressions I remember, his beautiful hands. It was like being with him again. I was close to tears."

After that screening it occurred to her the idea of writing a book about her father<sup>5</sup> for, according to her, "in those days [...] nobody knew who he was: it was as if he had never been". Fortunately, times were mature for such a project and her essay, published in 1985, "came pretty well actually because at that time people like Kevin Brownlow, David Robinson and others had looked through the studios myths, and they were showing the old films and discovering actors and actresses who had been forgotten: 'Who are they? Who's John Gilbert? Interesting man! What did he do?'". Such remarks underline how important is the work of the community of silent film lovers: researchers, archivists, curators, students and everyone in the audience who make an event like the *Giornate del cinema muto* possible. Besides, it is the essential purpose of the festival to work to the restoration and appreciation of silent films. It is also the only way to shake the official history up. For instance, as Leatrice Gilbert Fountain notices, thanks to the work accomplished in thirty years, the formerly completely forgotten John Gilbert is now "very, very much back: he is part of the Hollywood canon". He is regarded again as one of the main Hollywood male stars of the twenties, just as Valentino has always been. Therefore, screening the films and debating about them is the only way to keep them alive and the only way to enable their stars to dazzle us over and over again.

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<sup>5</sup> GILBERT FOUNTAIN (Leatrice), *Dark Star. The Untold Story of the Meteoric Rise and Fall of Legendary Silent Screen Star John Gilbert*, New-York, Saint Martin Press, 1985, 287 p.

As a student working on stardom between the two World Wars, I spend my days reading about silent actors and actresses. I see their pictures in magazines, I study their interviews, I examine the enthusiasm of the audience for them from testimonies and letters. Still, never before did I have the opportunity to see them in so many films, in such good conditions, in such a short time. What remains of their glory, I asked myself before the festival started? Will I be able to appreciate them and to understand the fervour they aroused at their time?

The quality of the copies, the live accompaniment and the size of the screen: these three essential conditions were gathered in Pordenone to bring back to life the greatness of silent stars, the well-known as well as the forgotten ones. The Giornate del cinema muto convinced me that their power was intact, but at the same time they showed me the gap between then and nowadays. It seems to me that a mystery remains above all, a fascination specific to silent stardom and silent era. The looks and expressions are more vivid, the way the stars are put in the spotlight is slightly different, due to the absence of dialogues and the quest of a complete visual language. Of course, sounds and talkies didn't put an end to stardom, on the contrary. But they made stars literally closer to us – which doesn't mean they started to look like us. Furthermore, if filming silent stars was somehow different, to watch them now is not the same experience it was back then either, as film codes have deeply changed and actors are long gone. There is something strange and nostalgic at the same time, when one watches silent stars nowadays, although fortunately for us, to watch a silent film is far from being just a nostalgic experience. To conclude, I would say that looking for the stars on the silent screen of Pordenone, I definitely met them – among many other exciting and moving discoveries.

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I wish to thank all the people who make the Giornate del cinema muto possible, in particular those in charge of the Collegium, which is a wonderful idea and structure. Special thanks to Peter Walsh who carefully read and commented on my first notes, to Karolina Kendall-Bush who interviewed Leatrice Gilbert Fountain with me, and to Claudio Marchi who not only made the recording of the interview possible, but also reread my final paper with great attention.

## Looking for London: Locating *Sherlock Holmes and Beyond*

Karolina Kendall-Bush

‘Too Much London.’ So concluded the *Kinematograph Weekly*’s May 1923 article on the Stoll production of the Sherlock Holmes story, *The Sign of Four*.<sup>1</sup> As I watched the films of the *Sherlock and Beyond: The British Detective in Silent Cinema* programme at 2009’s *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto*, however, I could have concluded that there was *not enough* London. I expected to find films bursting with London locations or at least its studio incarnations; but to my surprise, while the films in the programme featured ‘the British Detective,’ they were not necessarily British productions. Films that exploited London locations by the British company Stoll Picture Productions, such as *The Sign of Four* (1923), *The Mystery Of Fu-Manchu: The Clue of the Pigtail* (1923), and *The Last Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Final Problem* (1923), were programmed alongside Czech, German, Danish, Dutch and Italian productions. The juxtaposition of British and non-British productions, and British and non-British locations, provokes a number of questions. First, considering the films included in the *Sherlock and Beyond* programme, how essential are British locations to British detective films? Second, when watching these films, to what extent am I, and by extension other viewers, not so much looking for the plots and characterisations of Conan Doyle’s stories, but looking for London?

Identifiable by his silhouette alone, Sherlock Holmes is an iconic character.<sup>2</sup> His deerstalker, pipe, and magnifying glass,<sup>3</sup> as well as his cool temperament and powers of deductive reasoning have been adopted as what *Sherlock and Beyond* programmer Jay Weissberg calls an ‘international

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<sup>1</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 May 1923.

<sup>2</sup> In his study of Sherlock Holmes on Screen, Alan Barnes describes Holmes as ‘the first popular icon of the modern age. Instantly identifiable by his silhouette alone, even the slightest of visual prompts lead to the Great Detective’. Alan Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes On Screen: The Complete Film and TV History* (London: Reynolds and Hearn Ltd., 2002), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Features that do not come so much from Conan Doyle’s stories but from Sidney Paget’s illustrations for *The Strand* magazine.

trope'<sup>4</sup> of the British detective. Holmes, Weissberg tells us, defined a certain type of 'Englishness' in the silent era that was associated with notions of 'English political and cultural might,... the aristocracy and the stereotypical English trait of gentlemanly behaviour coupled with wry understatement.'<sup>5</sup> No surprise, therefore, that the international productions included in the *Sherlock and Beyond* programme featured an array of detectives whose British identity was contingent on their either being—or resembling—Sherlock Holmes. International producers depended on the dress and character traits of Doyle's protagonists, rather than on the substance and settings of the Sherlock Holmes stories, to denote a certain kind of 'Englishness'.

Between 1910 and 1920, fifty Sherlock Holmes films appeared in Europe and beyond. The majority of these, however, were not based on Conan Doyle's stories but placed the character of Holmes in various incongruous situations.<sup>6</sup> The German production *Der Hund Von Baskerville* (1914) is, for example, not a film adaptation of *Hound of the Baskervilles*, but an adaptation of a play written by Ferdinand Bonn relocates Doyle's story to the highlands, adding a new sub-plot about the buried treasure of Bonnie Prince Billy.<sup>7</sup> Although Bonn's play moves the action to Scotland, *Der Hund Von Baskervilles* confuses a Scottish and Devon setting. Intertitles announce the Baskerville estate to be in Devon, while the local populace dress in kilts. Consequently the film divorces the story from either an English or Scottish location, relying only on Holmes's extreme gentlemanly calm to convey a sense of 'Englishness'. In the Czech *Únos Bankéře Fux* (1923), the central protagonist is 'Holmes II', a comedic figure with an over-sized deerstalker, pipe, magnifying glass, and a garish tweed suit. These German and Czech productions thus reduce 'Englishness' to a set of stereotypical national characteristics and a caricaturised costume.

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<sup>4</sup>Jay Weissberg, 'Sherlock and Beyond: The British Detective in Silent Cinema,' in *Le giornate del cinema muto: catalogo 2009*, 30

<sup>5</sup> Jay Weissberg, 'Sherlock and Beyond: The British Detective in Silent Cinema,' in *Le giornate del cinema muto: catalogo 2009*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Nathalie Morris, 'An Eminent British series: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and the Stoll Company 1921-23,' *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 4,1 (2007), 19

<sup>7</sup>Alan Barnes, *Sherlock Holmes On Screen: The Complete Film and TV History* (London: Reynolds and Hearn Ltd., 2002), 75.



According to the *Kinematograph Weekly's* 1921 article entitled 'The "Book" Film', exhibitors were 'unanimously' against adaptations that were a 'a title and little else.'<sup>8</sup> *Der Hund Von Baskervilles* and the Danish *Sherlock Holmes I Bondefangerklør* (1910) took the titles and/or the characters of the Holmes stories to denote the 'Britishness' of their detective films, but evoked little else that was British. As the exhibitor's unanimous agreement demonstrates, however, adaptations that took titles and characters alone could not satisfy an audience in search of their literary heroes. A populist understanding of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories associates them with more than the peculiarities of Holmes's clothes and character. He is popularly linked to the places he inhabits and moves through: the streets of Victorian and Edwardian London and especially 221b Baker Street. The character Holmes is as English as his surroundings. Englishness, cultural historian Ian Baucom argues, has in the past hundred and fifty years been consistently 'defined through appeals to the identity-enduring properties of place.'<sup>9</sup> The potency of Holmes as an almost 'historic figure'<sup>10</sup> who encapsulates a certain kind of Englishness is thus tied to places.

Stoll moved into production in 1920. In an article published in the *Kinematograph Weekly* announced its goal of making films that would show people from around the world 'what the heart of the great English people responds to': 'fine, wholesome stories, set in the perfect beauties of English scenery, or in the appropriate settings to which they belong in every part of Europe.'<sup>11</sup> Stoll thus not only asserted the importance of 'appropriate settings', but of the importance of the 'English scenery' to telling 'English' stories. Doyle sold the rights to his stories to Stoll in 1920, having bought them back at great expense from the French production company Éclair. <sup>12</sup> Although Éclair's films of the teens were largely made at Bexhill-on-Sea on England's southeast

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<sup>8</sup>*Kinematograph Weekly* (6 January 1921), 91.

<sup>9</sup> Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>10</sup> The 1921 *Kinematograph Weekly's* review of Stoll's series of *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* tells us Sherlock Holmes is 'almost a historic figure, and it is pleasant to see him moving through his well-known adventures.'*Kinematograph Weekly* (12 May 1921), 60.

<sup>11</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly* (1 January 1920), 45.

<sup>12</sup> Conan Doyle sold the rights to his stories to Éclair in 1911. Éclair made 8 Franco-British productions based on his stories, while the Samuelson company produced two British films *A Study in Scarlet* (1914), and *The Valley of Fear* (1916). Stoll were the first, however, to embark on a dedicated and extended programme of adaptations with regular release patterns and performers. Morris, 'An Eminent British series,'19.

coast, Stoll was the first company to place Holmes and the detective firmly in British, and more often than not, London settings.

Stoll produced its Sherlock Holmes films as a series with regular releases patterns and performers. This series was part of another called 'Eminent Authors' that systematically brought popular literary works to the screen.<sup>13</sup> These literary adaptations could be described as 'heritage cinema' that according to film historians Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon focused on the 'reproduction of literary texts, artefacts and landscapes.'<sup>14</sup> Heritage cinema, they argue, has been 'deeply implicated in the ideological construction of the nation and the national past'.<sup>15</sup> Stoll prided itself on bringing English stories and landscapes to cinema patrons. The *Kinematograph Weekly* repeatedly praised Stoll's Sherlock Holmes adaptations for the 'picturesqueness' of their settings,<sup>16</sup> while simultaneously criticising the films for concentrating 'Too much' on them.<sup>17</sup> The trade paper thus recognised that Stoll's productions privileged the scenic potential of the detective stories over the complexities of plot. Stoll's literary adaptations were constructing an idea of nation that allied popular literature and place and therefore promoted an idea of 'Englishness' that looked beyond a cool demeanour and a tweed suit.

The Stoll version of the Sherlock Holmes story *The Final Problem* (1923), changes the location of Holmes's final showdown with Moriarty from Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland, to the far less glamorous Cheddar Gorge in the South-West of England. Many considerations, including budget, may have affected this decision. However, instead of hiding the fact that this is Cheddar, and not Switzerland, the film seemingly celebrates this change in location. In a shot of Moriarty standing outside a shop full of tourist paraphernalia, for instance, posters for Cheddar's caves and local

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<sup>13</sup> Morris, 'An Eminent British series,' 19.

<sup>14</sup> Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon, 'Introduction', in *Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema Before 1930*, edited by Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon (Exeter: The Exeter Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Porter and Dixon, 'Introduction', 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly* (10 March 1921), 81.

<sup>17</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly* criticises *The Sign of Four* for including 'Too much London'. *Kinematograph Weekly* (3 May 1923)

attractions are clearly visible behind him. Swapping Switzerland for Cheddar, and making it plain to see, seems to assert that Holmes is an exclusively English, or British, figure not to be found on foreign shores. His Englishness is asserted by his moving through and inhabiting English places. He is Holmes of Baker Street, London—in order to portray him, Stoll's films thus portray where he comes from.

The majority of Doyle's stories revolve around London's West End and rural settings in the Home Counties. Despite this, when literary critic Franco Moretti conducted a poll among friends and colleagues about Holmes's city the answers 'were all very firm: fog, the East End, blind alleys, the Docks, the Thames, the Tower.'<sup>18</sup> In his study of Holmes's London, Andrew Smith describes how, despite the stories' often rural settings, Holmes comes to personify the city.<sup>19</sup> He points to Watson's assertion in 'The Resident Patient' that Holmes 'loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime.'<sup>20</sup> Watson here imagines Holmes as being physically part of, and joined with, the city and its inhabitants—his is a metropolitan imagination. Whether or not Doyle's stories actually moves through London is thus irrelevant to readers. London is essential to the Holmes stories because the city grounds the characterisation of Holmes. No surprise, therefore, that putting Holmes on the screen, Stoll put London there too.

In addition to Stoll's Sherlock Holmes adventures, the *Sherlock and Beyond* programme included Stoll's adaptations of the Sax Rohmer's series, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*. This series predominantly uses London locations. The stories' central protagonists, gentleman detective Nayland Smith and his assistant Dr. Petrie pursue their nemesis, Chinese crime overlord Dr. Fu-

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<sup>18</sup> Franco Moretti, *The Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998), 134

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Smith, 'Displacing Urban Man: Sherlock Holmes's London,' in *London Eyes: Reflections in Text and Image*, edited by Gail Cunningham and Stephen Barber (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 56.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, 'Displacing Urban Man,' 56/ 'He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of Nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother in the country.' Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Resident Patient', in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: The Folio Society, 1993), 161.

Manchu, through a number of foggy, dank locations predominantly situated in Limehouse, the East End, and along the Thames. *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* series seemingly takes the most sensational and memorable settings later critics associate with the Holmes tales—‘the East End, blind alleys, the Docks, the Thames, the Tower’—and puts them centre stage. Stoll’s productions of Sax Rohmer’s stories thus makes their central protagonists identifiably ‘British detectives’ not so much by mimicking the clothes and character of Holmes and Watson (although Smith’s cool temperament and deductive abilities mirror those of Holmes), but by moving them through the most iconic spaces associated with Conan Doyle’s characters.

*Sherlock and Beyond* programmer Nathalie Morris describes how Conan-Doyle’s stories provided a ‘cross-class travelogue that [...] spanning locations as diverse as dockside opium dens, country manors, working-class pubs, gentleman’s clubs and the corridors of Whitehall, evidently exercised a strong fascination for middle-class readers commuting to work from their comfortable suburban homes.’<sup>21</sup> British detective stories granted readers entry to illicit or inaccessible spaces. Literary critic William Stowe describes how it is ‘possible to travel alone, or even to travel incognito, but it is not possible to move one’s body through space with the freedom and impunity one enjoys as a reader or a writer in the privacy of the boudoir or the study, confined only by the bounds of the individual imagination.’<sup>22</sup> The pleasure of reading is therefore a touristic one in which the reader is able to travel, experiencing places imaginatively. The settings of British detective stories could thus attract readers as much as intricate plotting and characterisation. No surprise, therefore, that the foggy back alleys and opium dens of the Docklands and East should leave such a lasting impression on a middle-class readership. Readers had become virtual tourists exploring London’s streets.

Watching films, spectators also become tourists. A 1920 *Kinematograph Weekly* article, ‘Are There Too Many Interiors’ argues that in neglecting the exterior scene, the British producer ignores

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<sup>21</sup>Morris, ‘An Eminent British series,’ 28.

<sup>22</sup> William Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 16.

cinema's great advantage over the stage: 'to bring the world before its patrons'.<sup>23</sup> Cinema is able to open out what film theorist Mary Ann Doane calls 'another space—a new or "other" place' that takes the spectator somewhere he/she has never been before'.<sup>24</sup> Just as Conan Doyle's stories opened out inaccessible spaces to a middle-class readership, films present viewers with spaces they can travel in their minds. Presupposing that imaginative travel is an essential function of both cinema and literature, then surely one might conclude that films adapted from stories so closely associated with particular settings attracted viewers coming not for the 'stories' *but for the spaces of the stories*, opened out to them via the screen.

The climactic scenes of *The Sign of Four* tour London. As images of the capital's famous landmarks flash before the viewer, so do descriptive title cards, informing viewers that they are looking at Kew Bridge, or the Bank of England. The film ends with a chase along the Thames. Shots track alongside a speeding boat that passes under every major bridge over the Thames. The sequence is criticised by the *Kinematograph Weekly* for its 'guide-book references' that slow down the plot.<sup>25</sup> I would argue, however, that by ignoring the exigencies of plot in favour of 'guidebook references', this sequence makes explicit the implicit function of the film—to take the viewer through the spaces of the story. Whatever their genre, Doane argues, films produce a pleasure 'akin to that of the travelogue'.<sup>26</sup> *The Sign of Four's* last sequence is a travelogue.<sup>27</sup> Cutting between a series of shots of picture-postcard locations, the final sequence mirrors the travelogue film's disjunctive editing between landscapes, inter-titles, and people. It follows what film historian Jennifer Lyn

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<sup>23</sup>On the use of exteriors: 'first, because the public demands it; second, because the scenic resources of the this beautiful land are practically unexploited and are strongly coveted by the foreign producer; third, because the natural exterior is the biggest "talking point" which the kinema has against the legitimate stage, and for that reason alone should be cultivated...The claim of the kinema to bring the world before its patrons cannot be justified if we are content to specialise on the artificial resources of the studio.' *Kinematograph Weekly* (18 March 1920), 92.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Ann Doane, ' "...when the direction of the force acting on the body is changed."': The Moving Image', *Wide Angle* 7, 1 & 2, 42.

<sup>25</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly* (3 May 1923).

<sup>26</sup> Doane, ' "...when the direction of the force acting on the body is changed,"' 42.

<sup>27</sup> The term travelogue was purportedly coined by the well-known travel lecturer Burton Holmes in 1908 to describe the short travel lecture with lantern slides presented between reels at motion picture shows. Richard M. Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History, Revised and Expanded* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1973), 42.

Peterson calls a 'logic of collection,' in which the film 'preserves the integrity of each shot rather than making connections between shots using continuous space or matching an action.'<sup>28</sup> In its most climactic sequence, the film thus eschews a narrative logic in favour of a 'logic of collection,' making explicit the all-important touristic function of the film

Stoll's adaptations, time and again, put the scenic potential of setting before the demands of plot. In *The Final Problem*, languid panoramic shots across the gorge diffuse the tension of the climactic struggle between Holmes and Moriarty as they scale the cliffs of Cheddar. These shots do little to set up the dramatic fall that will follow, but do succeed in showing off the scenery of a popular west country resort. What's more, the touristic subtext of the film has been previously hinted at in the occasional appearances of posters for various tourist spots. Visible behind Holmes's head as he sits in his railway compartment bound for Cheddar is a poster advertising 'Places of Interest in London' including pictures of famous sights (some of which we see in the climax of *The Sign of Four*). The Stoll productions thus not only act like travelogues, showing viewers the sights, rather than the action—but articulate their own relationship with the tourist industry.

From the romantic period on, readers had increasingly visited places associated with particular books. This developed into a commercially significant practice in the late nineteenth century and gave birth to a whole genre—literary geography—that crossed the boundaries between biography, travel writing, guidebook and history to map literary associations.<sup>29</sup> Works of literary geography functioned like travelogues, editing together scenic highlights for entertainment. Stoll's adaptations of British detective stories do the same thing: they edit together the picturesque settings of Conan Doyle's stories for the enjoyment of spectator-tourists in the cinema. By privileging scenery over plot, Stoll's productions seemingly acknowledge the draw of literary places as well as literary characters and stories. Stoll's films thus work as pieces of literary geography that allow viewers to visit literary sights made famous by their favourite books.

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<sup>28</sup> Jennifer Lyn Peterson, 'Travelogues and Early Non-fiction Film: Education in the School of Dreams', in *American Cinema's Transition Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, edited by Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 197.

<sup>29</sup> Andrea Zengulys, *Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18.

The programming of Stoll's domestic productions next to non-British productions at Pordenone thus highlighted for me the importance of 'real' locations to early British adaptations of literary and popular classics. It also highlighted how important these 'real' locations might be to viewers who watch literary adaptation not just to see the characters and plots of their favourite stories on screen, but to sate their own literary touristic desires. As I watched the films featured in the *Sherlock Holmes and Beyond* programme, I therefore became aware of how I, as a British viewer, was conditioned by years of film and television adaptations of Holmes tales that feature the 'real'—or at least realistic—settings of the stories. As the programme confounded and confused my search for real settings, I realised that when watching adaptations of Doyle's tales, I was not so much looking for Holmes, but looking for London.

## Le mythe et le retour....

Ioana Salagean

‘On ne parle de moi que sur hier, rarement sur aujourd’hui, jamais sur demain’ –

*Abel Gance.*

*J'accuse myself more than any other living being.*

There is something prophetic in losing one's notes, especially since I might start to think it is a sign of an unfinished ritual. Silence only knows the incommensurable dedication of *J'accuses* I've brought towards myself, denoting instances of perpetual and cowardly serene flagellations. However, this misbehaving presents an intriguing set of meditative questionings. Writing, at least eight months after the 'event' which was for me the extraordinary screening of *J'accuse* (Abel Gance, 1919) forces me to reflect upon the very function of remembering or better yet, inventing History. Even if, I will advice future Collegians to preserve their notes and capture their own feelings with fervour and immediacy, I am not afraid. I know now, that a particular emotion is kept, however transformed, in time. Surely, it may not be the same in its concrete unfolding but beauty and its miraculous effects on a young soul can be effectively preserved, in essence. Curiously enough I seem to use the word preservation in its double entendre. In fact, I came to realise, that distanciation is a perfect tool for judging essences. I smile, thinking this is such an intimately Abel Gancean thing to say and I am not surprised. Learning has nothing to do with memorising facts but with expressing knowledge, passion and any troublesome metamorphosis one is subjected to, along his or hers path.

*In the beginning was the silent...*

I remember perfectly well my first Pordenone edition in 2008. I was walking on the streets like a narcotic Homunculus...searching, scribbling and trying to find as much as I could about the dances, drawings and magician tricks performed by master *Alexander Shiryayev*. Losing, re-finding, losing again, notes, drafts and all there is to it. One could say, in the same line with the beautiful,



serene logistics of Paolo Cherchi Usai that any true Model Image of History is something to be re-  
'created' or re-remembered. ( endnote see the death of cinema but also burning passions or silent  
film an introduction). On the other hand, it would be fair to accept this careless behaviour as  
indicative of a form of personality vice; a larger problem of rigour; perhaps, this much is true.

Nonetheless, this more or less controlled or self-conscious [lack of] discipline bears an altogether  
different trademark: Pordenone, is in many ways, my only regenerating dacha, a place where I  
don't know myself and nothing is clear or exact but that is as close as one could ever get to issues  
of 'truth' and 'knowing'...

*Years dissolve in states...*

What I seem to remember the most from the 2009 edition, soon after being assigned the dutiful  
role of curious Collegian, is love; but surely not a naive, awfully sweet or tedious kind of love; but  
one of a different kind. A solid, mature love not artificial...A love which expects, demands. The  
event, or rather, the challenging series of events, all seemed to be deeply camouflaged in this  
mission to expiate, probe, question or consolidate such love.

*If there is a myth there is a retour....*

It is in this sense that I want to refer to the idea of the myth of the eternal rebirth, understood in  
its deep Eliadean implications (see Mircea Eliade book with the same title) as a possibility for  
History to be shown its reverberating essence and for man or woman to witness an epiphany, of  
sorts. That epiphanic moment was for me seeing *this J'accuse*, in *this* particular pordenonian  
context, for the first time, a gift to the novice. It is *this* re-mastered, re-stored, re-created *J'accuse*  
that I will always keep in mind and cherish in my heart, as a secret initiation, as a gift to the gods  
and not the subsequent representations I saw few months later (Stephen Horne's hands played  
once more for my enchanted ears both at the Barbican and at the NFT in London yet from that  
feeling of unperturbed intimacy there was something missing; in my view, they could not compete  
or echo with the particular joys of *this* Pordenone premiere, the one, which, miraculously, as I try  
to explain, got stuck, permanently stuck in time, immortalised).

*Don't be afraid to be anti-nostalgic...but remember to respect the melancholy of the living*

It is important for me to admit that the title of this paper owns everything to the ever so brief but forever titillating discussion with Paolo about Eliade and his repartition of mythologies... it sounds so inevitably pompous, yet this rapprochement owns so little to elitist debates. As young collegians we are encouraged to approach people, scholars, savants, archivists. It felt so strange, so illuminating and so bizarre to want to meet exactly the Pordenone founders (Mr. Robinson, Paolo, Riccardo, Carlo Montanaro etc.) and not accidentally, Kevin Brownlow. Such exciting encounters shape somebody's life forever. I write this also thinking of the care and respect for those who are no longer with us. Every time I attend *Le Giornate* I come to think of its fragility, of the fragility of life and of people, in general. It is now, clear to me, why *J'accuse* so aptly filled this delicate spot – as an indictment against war and general anti-humanist tendencies, or as manifestation of a revolt against human misery and misconceptions, a visceral plea, a reconfiguration of pacifist ideals, making it, thus, so infinitely actual....

*The anti-nostalgic manifesto must be written in invisible ink...*

The main lesson to be learned from this is that an empty sentimentalist trend and any tumultuous sedimentation of unhealthy nostalgia must be declined, abruptly rejected. Our love for silent cinema must exist in its entirety, freed from fable projections. In short, silent cinema is not a Pandora's box of 'back then', it is not a place to redirect personal anguish. Silent films are alive, very much alive, and differently alive from 'back then'. We shouldn't proclaim as necessity the re-creation of time we should get to it, like children, almost by mistake. We should preserve not only cans of nitrate, tons of nerves, disposition, ambition and patience but the spirit and the nature of our particular encounters. Our humanity.

Any access to 'back then' is not a matter of empirical, de facto strategies. Our 'back then' is confounded with our 'back now' and 'back future' especially when such a/historical themes (the rise of the dead in *J'accuse*) are presented on screen. There is nothing 'silent' about silent cinema, not simply in terms of musical accompaniment but in terms of essence, of art. Silent cinema

communicates in full. It does not form a distant, vitiated alpha language. Also, as Gance so often proclaimed, it is for the people [!], it is tempting; open, not in a populist sense but in a humanist sense. I can't imagine sharing the same amount of enthusiasm at a 9 am screening of French forgotten Albatros discoveries – without the feeling of community, of proper theatrical setting which gives to our experience a certain dimension, a particular viewing mode – in effect, all of this – is ultimately, a matter of sharing. If I've learned something accessible in words in Pordenone is the fact that culture itself is transmissible, contagious and transient.

### *Thinking of Paolo*

I have many reasons to be thinking of Paolo and remember his function of bridging the world of film scholarship to that of the archival milieu. It is an unstable but ever so priceless position to be in. In his Introduction to *Burning Passions*, Paolo so correctly identifies the problem by stating:

I have always been dissatisfied with any discipline whose aim does not go beyond its own fulfillment, and wished that knowledge in one area could become a catalyst for enthusiasm, curiosity and the impulse of discovery in other aspects of life. As far as I'm concerned, looking at silent films makes sense only as long as it encourages and develops the art of seeing in itself, regardless of its forms and manifestations. (p.viii)

This idea of an almost mystical response to film preservation, albeit without losing its impeccable rationale is outlined by Mr. Robinson in his Preface for the same book. As both Paolo and Mr. Robinson conclude there is nothing less elusive in the confrontational character of silent cinema when compared to the reminiscences of any other art. The type of commitment silent cinema entails is not simply related to a willingness to perform a kind of time-cultural abandon, to an effort of imagination. Silent cinema viewing involves a more serene approach at times, a less fatalistic vision. Not simply because having an inoculated idea of an 'original' print is questionable or sympathetically dangerous from the outset but also because we might lose the part of needing an event, the *eventful* part of watching silent cinema, in good company. Understandably, good company is a must! In Paolo's words and ever so magnificently this relationship is not just flammable but explosive. It is as if we are discussing a matter of impact, an instance of high seismic risk. It is my contention, that this particularity of staging, this orchestration, sometimes with

greater minute precision and attention to detail than those of ballet or opera is what transforms or radiates silent film and turns it into an event, a representation and presentation all at once. For me, this philosophy is prioritised by the good title of the documentary about Gance, *The Charm of dynamite...*

### *Looking at Kevin...*

Here's an instant memory from that night. It probably popped up generated by the wave of tension and release from my previous paragraphs. It is true, I remember as it was yesterday, Kevin Brownlow's expression during the break. How we all stood outside, inhaling fresh air and with our faces red, our bodies tensed. Kevin had his irreplaceable pink jacket on. He looked so dignified, so relieved – I must have thought. *This* is something irreplaceable. We all came back for the last and most majestic part of the film with that feeling of 'red carpet'. But certainly not as they do in Cannes or Venice, not a red carpet in a dress code sense, but a red carpet in an emotional sense, red faces and red carpets, everywhere. Excitement, murmurs, exactly 192 minutes - minus the time for ovations, partly for Stephen, partly for restorers – partly for Gance and partly for us, in our preliminary understanding of what just happened....An understanding, that for me, personally, only later [now, actually] finds its clearest form of appreciation. Researching about Gance has been an option, a privilege and not an imposition. Reading through French, Italian and English monographs and collections I found myself lost in minor details, in Romanesque adventures, in master-disciple fables, precisely as I had imagined *then* that it would be. Also, encompassing the range of feelings I'm experiencing in this context, the baby steps of a silent enthusiasm bursting here and there – I can't help noticing the somewhat fatidic nuance of *this* particular evening as a promise for the future.

### *But what a promise it was...*

To give an example of a standard Pordenonian atmosphere it is worth mentioning my unconventional meetings, in circumstances which turned up to be favourable and triggered future, unofficial guiding tours. Sometime around *this* projection of *J'accuse* and considerable time after Brownlow's astute presentation at the Barbican of one of my favourite miss-interpretations/jokes,

Jack Huse instead of *J'accuse* (the troublesome, yet amusing, wrong deciphering of an English speaking audience is still at the heart of the matter, so to speak) – Mr. Brownlow took me on a special, 'private' London tour in which I could see, through his eyes, what London looked like way before *The Fires were Started*... Surely, it is not the place here, to describe Kevin's generosity and kindness, but as he took me on those streets, the streets that I know so well, having studied in Strand for exactly three years – I realised that we don't really know things, with our hearts, absorbing their profound resonance. And this is what struck me after this encounter. Not a word on Gance, not a word on *J'accuse* and yet it was exactly the same emotion for me, part of something gradual, quasi-religious (indeed, when reflecting back to Eliade's field of research). In sum, the epiphany is there, ready to be re-orchestrated, to stimulate my Gancean fascination, to attest my unattributed Latinity, to confess my weakness towards French liberalist ideals, and to prove my chance of re-experiencing enlightenment. This phenomenon is a breakthrough in its purest substance, a moment vivant, tout court.

#### *A constellation...*

Significantly, *J'accuse* was not a lonely diamond on a desert theatre... there were many more films that moved me, somewhat gravitating au tour as part of an improvised constellation; but as with the inexhaustible findings about Shiryaev, that I am bound to keep with me ever since – what I will preserve from this eloquent 2009 – is the grandiosity of an absent orchestra. The *silenzioso maestoso*. A grandiosity, not in terms of a career prospectus but a wholeheartedly experienced idea upon the state of the world. Obviously, not the 'forgotten', 'ancient' world of the past, on the contrary, a meditation and mediation of our world, of the world of today.

#### *The species informed by Nostradamus....*

Arrestingly, Gance saw everything that was there to come from the mid twenties [!] As I sit, in the garden, surrounded by bibliographic material, I am shocked. Gance's manifestos of 'The cinema of tomorrow' or his very insistence that the cinema is tomorrow seem like a series of regenerative memoirs pertaining to a Nostradamus of film culture! He anticipates not only colour, sound but tri-dimensionality, an era when the screen shall no longer be a dividing wall. How could anyone be

reading such lines thinking of the past? (see p. 168 sophie daria s study). The idea of suppressing crepuscles is only one amongst many other exalting points Gance kept repeating to the audience. (see p.33 same study sophie daria).

Again, mysticism, conclusions about the insubordinate human nature, all preoccupied Gance ever since he started working with film. It is well known that his experience of the First World War left him with a pronounced civic sense. He kept addressing cinema like a luminous symphony, both physical and spiritual at the same time. (see, same study).

Such predispositions are detectable also in his poetry:

'Mon avenir est incertain  
Mon avenir est incertain  
Jusqu'a la fin; de mort suivie  
Que feront le roi, l'aigrefin?  
Tous feront meme comedie.  
La gurre ruine toutes mes esperance'. (+translation)

It is also highly informative that upon the succession of the Second World War, Gance worked on a re-released version of *J'accuse*. He generally regarded this film as une 'oeuvre humaine', not designed for commercial exploitation. My film is 'an acte de foi' (exercise or act of faith) he would often say.

Roger Icart's study sheds light on Gance's meditations on sacrifice and fratricide (p.34 -38 new study + translation)

J'accuse la guerre d'hier d'avoir prepare l Europe d'aujourd'hui et l' Europe d'aujourd'hui de preparer la guerre de demain, qui serait l'aneantissement total de l' Europe... j'aime mon pays et j'estime qu on n'a pas le droit d'assister en temoin muet a la methodique organisation des massacres de demain. Au lendemain de la guerre, on parlait des etas-unis d'Europe.

L'Europe d'aujourd'hui est divisée en blocs rivaux. Nous respirons un air empoisonné et nous dormons sur des milliers de tonnes d'explosifs....comme le livre. Le cinéma a sa mission à remplir et mon film n'aura pas été inutile si, comme je l'espère, il incite le spectateur à faire un retour sur lui-même...

Je dédie ce film aux morts de la guerre de demain qui, sans doute, le regarderont avec scepticisme, sans y reconnaître leur image,

C'est pour que j'accuse soit encore plus vrai, plus expressif; pour qu'il donne à tous ceux qui le verront l'épouvante de cette chose affreuse qui fait de vous ce que vous êtes! – Abel Gance

(For further edifications read also the Post-face of this study written by Kevin Brownlow on pages 272 to 274).

All in all, I feel particularly inclined to sustain Jean Arroy's opinion about Gance 'I love him in his silent suffering, the meaning and the beauty of his suffering'. (see p.18 in Norman King's study on Abel Gance).

*Una passione infiammabile, is omnipresent in Italian too, facilitated by Enrico Groppali.*

Gance's proclamations also betray his poetry, his vision of life, and his animistic concerns. Cinema is not just a mirror to the world, it is rather the world transformed. His rejection of the wall as the screen conveys his greater programmatic interest; his idea of an all engulfing cinema, spectacular. The focus lies on the experience, on the spectator and on the act of communicating about things that matter. A proclamation of and for the being. Indeed, his exalted glorification of a unique, tangible memory seems to highlight the order of thinking at the time. To respect his films would be to believe in these eventful mechanisms behind it; to absorb the freshness, the extraordinary innovative input of his artistry. His films are like a symphonic fugue, what you don't know or didn't have enough time to explore matters just as much as what you see and hear and seem able to isolate into a meaningful experience. Effectively, it is a question of magnitude or in Luis Delluc's words in relation to Gance, 'of never ceasing to think big...' (p.101 book *Abel Gance prométhée foudroyé*). In my view, such enthusiasm and aspirant, catapulted enthusiasm can only be matched by few of Claude Mauriac's writings, in his diary. Such phrases bear the imprint of visual proofs,

they start documenting a whole era. Gance did not think of such issue in abstract terms, on the contrary his inflections bear the trademark of anti-conformism reflected by what he calls, insightfully, 'the secret of the spiral'. As Gance insists:

All my life, all my work turns not according to the wheel but according to the spiral.

Or the circular factum of the spiral line serves considerably to enlighten our ideas about historical matters, and to explain the true spirit of periods of 'return to the antique'. (new study P52)

Reassembling some of my earlier obsessions with the musical accompaniment for silents, the detectable philosophy of rhythms as proclaimed by an old text signed by Jacques Dalcroze, Nelly Kaplan's wonderful study about *Napoleon* secures the theoretical framework needed to get around Gance's filmic experimentations:

Relying on a text dating as early as 1250, Gance already observes that

'the composition of images is a spirit in a body...As for images, the sages call them Thelgam or Tetzavi, which may be interpreted as violators, for everything the image does, it does by violence and in order to vanquish everything for which it is composed'. (Kaplan, p.18)

Even more significant is Gance's appropriation of Novalis's text from 1810:

Visible music, properly speaking, is images, arabesques, models, ornaments...visible objects are the expression of feelings...All matter is close to light, all action is close to seeing and every organ is close to the eye ...Every image is an incantation. A spirit summoned is a spirit appearing.'

For Gance, cinema was not in any way different, as he concludes:

There are two sorts of music, the music of sound and the music of light which is none other than cinema itself; and it's the music of light which stands higher in the scale of vibrations... There is noise and there is music.



There is cinema and there is the art of cinema which has not yet created its neologism...Already, however, several Christopher Columbuses of light have emerged...All is or becomes possible. A drop of water, a drop of star ...Cinema becomes an art of the alchemist from which we can expect the transmutation of all other arts if we can only touch its heart: the heart, the metronome of cinema...Our Art requires a harsh law, demanding, rejecting what is pleasant or original at any price, neglecting virtuosity and the facile transposition of pictures...

Another thing: reality is not enough'. (Kaplan, p.20)

### *The absent diary*

Initially, I saw this paper as a miss-interpretation of a diary. Later on, I realised that the days are lost and worse, that they have managed to exist mutually infected, like pouring emulsions describing conflicting tonalities. In this sense, I should better refrain from any over-emphatic tendency. Clearly, there is a most revelatory relationship between silent film and death, between cinema and death, in particular. I feel, I have learned from Paolo's books a certain philosophical detachment and perhaps a shyness regarding these matters. I wonder if death could truly be 'a creation of the mind' as Paolo refers to the mutated object, the nitrate entity suffering changes. (see all paolo's books). Accepting my time accompanying the silents I feel I am under the auspices of a greater Time and whatever I will do or whoever I am meant to become I must learn to cherish the importance of this 'talking time' ahead of me, of the future and past Giornate presences.

### *Not only time, but also unknown spaces*

*La vie merveilleuse de Paris* or *beautifully sung Parigi* was an event which enabled me to commute geographically. Believe it or not, I have never been to Paris. Imagine my joy to see the old rails on the screen...In this context, Richard Abel's remark that 'music is the *matter* of film' (34 silent film) could not be more adequate. Alchemy and mystical reactions. I wrote on a note, 'I give the day to The Albastros inspection of *Harmonies*, to the Paris I never got to visit but always dreamt of, to the carousels and the locomotives spinning more vividly than in Ruthman, to Patrick's voice and Touve's hands and to the ecstatic kiss on the cheek I gave them afterwards.'

And, on another note:

'I can't think of a more exquisite moment than seeing Touve perform whilst remembering his masterclass and shy jokes from last year. The sense of belonging somewhere in tune with the true harmonies... that's it...I remember perfectly well singing to myself in the dead of the night, waking up some unworthy mortals, with my recollection of 'Parigi...Parigi...'

*Ma nuit chez Maud, about an imaginary encounter*

Besides, *J'accuse*, and still on the French territory, another mesmerising plunge was made... straight into the life of Max Linder. It is not a coincidence, nothing is. My findings include a brief description of the collaboration between Linder and Gance on the comedy *Au Secours*. Loving Linder for so long, this was a time of meeting his vigilant daughter. Here is what I kept on a second slippery note:

This is an invisible rapport of an evening that never took place, with Linder's chapeau at his Institute in Bordeaux. Or was it perhaps descending from the singing/previous locomotives straight on the streets of Paris – struggling to identify his chapeau de paille [en Italie?]. This is a visit in my dreams, a vivisection of all the films Linder made and I will never know or have the chance to see... It is also an homage to the woman left with tears in her eyes and interrupting us from crying in the middle of projection. It is a projection of a projection and seeing Max tactfully taking a bath in public in a moment of sheer extravagance...an instant of liberating joy and fantasy... It is crying without a reason and laughing out loud for many. *This* is the experience which defines *Le Giornate* and which no matter how hard I try I can't really explain to the fullest...

And also:

I have all reasons to believe that such magical moments may have never occurred; that I am now, still walking, talking, writing in a dream.

*Asta, the only woman like Hamlet.*

The festival had the nurturing purpose of feeding my obsession with Asta Nielsen in extremely compelling, yet very simple terms. I remember carrying Paolo's book as if it were a secret artefact. Walking along in jubilation, pretending to read German and generally bragging to anyone; obliging friends to gaze at the magnificent photos with the same stupor as I did. And rightly so – Asta is the most adoring and adorable, sublime Hamlet on screen I've ever had the chance to see.

### *Jean, Darling*

It turned out, that Asta was not the only woman that would trigger such magnetic responses. The second-concerto with Jean Darling is part of those moments one never knows how to express or if one should address them in the first place. The problem is not one of connoisseurship but of realising one cannot compete with Jean, Darling's contagious sense of humour. Or, as I've used Kevin Brownlow's preface to Paolo *'the information is there, the art has gone...'*

In the case of Jean Darling, the information is there and the art is plenty!

Or, as I reflected earlier:

Neither the extraordinary Kurotegumi Sukeroku by Fuyushima nor the Divas and their complicated relationship with snakes or tigers (Bertini and Negri) could have prepared the audience for meeting Jean Darling. '

I was more than right. Like Linder, like Chaplin beforehand, it never seemed more obvious that comedy is tragedy – but with a tragic that never puts things down for good. I will always remember, Jean, walking out of the Auditorium accompanied by her young escort, a boyish gentleman. Seeing her, I said in a half teasing, half jealous manner 'When will I have a boy like that?' to which she promptly replied 'Wait till you're eighty!' I went to the next screening still wearing that witty smile on my face. I hope to have the same energy, when I am forty.

### *La Danse pas de deux or another kind of dancing*

I find here my old commentary in full:

‘Chopin’s prelude – is a good starter for Edith Kramer’s advice in her Jonathan Dennis Lecture. I felt at home hearing sentences like, ‘film is alive’, ‘let the audience breathe the film’, cinemateques instead of empty churches...the idea of taking your public on a journey, that is precisely what she did with her heart-warming speech. What does it mean to restore colour and to be taken on a mirage similar with the rediscovery of Camerini’s *Rotaie* ? This danse continued at the meeting of women and film history. Not to undermine the *Golem*, but for me *Le Danse du Flambeau* and the *Pas de deux et soli* and the pleasantly detectable sound of John Sweeney took me back in time, one year ago... where the whole film theory movement came to life inside me, when I said ‘cinema is movement, is dance’....

### *Le tour du monde d'une policier*

Paolo’s recommendation, this flaming celluloid romance of time travelling and adventure works hand in hand with any vision of myth and return/rebirth. Dreaming, or waking up into dream, this is the closest description of the colouristic effects of this short piece. Even back then, I had a glimpse of its impenetrable function...It is no other but the untranslatable logic of the mythe in its purity, I said to myself. As if a concrete (yes, material, tonal, visual) realisation of the nitrate’s ‘internal history’ – could speak about the print’s avoiding of decay and this abrupt confession could satisfy my insatiable wish for romantic transcendence and idealism. This memory fulfilled is what gave me the sparkle for the Gancean trajectories to inhabit, now, at the time of writing.

### *Apropos de (ve)nice reflections on a vaporetto without ticket*

Such line appears last on my forgotten notes. It reads as if I could meditate upon my innate Eastern-European predilection towards Spiritualism, Dadaism and good old superstition since my final epitaph, without even envisaging such atrocious misbehaving, unmercifully predicts:

‘A discussion of last year’s melted into present...a propos de nice anticipating my zero de conduite.’

What is more telling than a zero or a commendable conduite is the fact that more important than the mythe is only, the return. Pordenone is my home and the greatest pleasure for any prodigious daughter is the liberating joy of forgiveness, the sheer pleasure of coming back and not surprisingly making the same mistakes as the year before, but no matter what, keeping and treasuring that particular flavour. As Gance so often proclaimed – ‘There is no great cinema, without enthusiasm!’

## The Canon Revisited –A chance to meet old friends (or enemies) and to make new ones

Stefanie Tieste

“Certainly we can trace highlights and trends, follow the careers of directors and stars, acknowledge the masterpieces and failures, and perhaps shatter a few myths. But while the history of the world is relatively safe from the sudden discovery of evidence that will cast new light on the achievement of Hammurabi or Alexander the Great, the much younger history of the film is always liable to reassessment through the reappearance of a single print.” (William K. Everson)<sup>1</sup>

Factories, railroad tracks, wheels of trains carrying people to far away destinations, fade out, some last notes from the pit, applause. Then the lights turn on and the controversies start: “How amazing!”, “Just great!”, “Did you see ... ?” but also “What a boring picture – I didn’t get the sense...”

As you already might have guessed, I’m speaking of *Rotaie* by Mario Camerini, but the reactions of the audience were about the same after every screening of the new “The Canon Revisited” series the Giornate del Cinema Muto introduced in its 28th year.

Like every October silent film lovers from all over the world pilgrimage to Pordenone to enjoy a week filled with rarities of the silent era presented under ideal conditions, i.e. best available print, correct projection speed (although this is also a frequently discussed subject) and of course live musical accompaniment by some of the most renowned specialists for the subject matter. But this year the festival guests are facing a novelty: silent “warhorses” screened not only during special events but listed in the regular schedule, marked as “canonical” films.

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<sup>1</sup> William K. Everson: *American Silent Film* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), p. 15.

As you will see, the various reactions to these screenings of silent film classics in a new context will be the main subject of this essay, but as many discussions during the festival week have shown, it is necessary to give a (very short) definition of the term “canon” first.

Going back to biblical ages, establishing a canon has a long tradition. In its antique sense the canon mainly gives rules for the (religious) life by deciding which texts should become part of the Bible, in the Late Classic Period only the works of certain canonical names were taught and therefore survived while texts of many non-canonical authors are lost forever. In literature and other arts a canon was established at the latest in the 18th century as a selection of works that were considered important, norm-giving and timeless, i.e. “classical” works of art and authors that are considered the fundamental basis of a good education. Furthermore establishing a canon can endow a group with identity and (ethical) values, giving it subjects under discussion and hence a differentiation from other groups.

As soon as film was considered an art, it therefore had to face an issue that had already been an ‘old hat’ for literature, music and fine arts, at the same time developing and questioning a canon of its own.

Documents of this process are many polls and lists of “best films”, which have been set up since the days of the silent era until today, e.g. “Griffith picks fifty finest all-time films for N.Y. Evening Post”<sup>2</sup> and the various “AFI’s 100 Years...” lists, just to name two examples. While Griffith’s list shows the filmmaker’s and the artist’s point of view (choosing in all modesty six films of his own) the AFI lists reflect the taste of a certain audience at a time, giving no guarantee for the artistic quality of a film. Therefore it is pleasing that at least five (or six, if you’re counting *Modern Times*) silent films made it onto the list “AFI’s 100 Years... 100 Movies – 10th Anniversary Edition”. The newcomers *The General*, *Intolerance* and *Sunrise* show, that films that have been in the “silent” canon for a long time are now being recognized by the general public not only as important films but also as very entertaining films.

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<sup>2</sup> See: Paolo Cherchi Usai (ed.): *The Griffith Project*. Volume 11 (London: BFI Publishing, 2007), p. 186f.

But speaking of a “silent” canon, how do Pordenone visitors define “The Canon” and which films would they vote in?

**“My definition of the canon? – The films I would take to a lonely island.” (Marco Hassmann)**

In addition to the criteria I provided before, Kristina Köhler (Collegium member) defines a “good” film (using this attribute with some careful irony) as a film that pleases and that is being considered important by many people, even after a long time, a film that gives the input for an interesting analysis and a film that has (had) some influence on later pictures. Therefore such a film can be accepted as a good piece of work even if it does not appeal to someone’s personal taste.

Mark Fuller understands “The Canon” to be “those films that have, by a mixture of circumstances - early availability, early writings on cinema for instance - become Sacred Cows, unassailable in reputation, whether or not they necessarily deserve it from our perspective, as possibly more films from the era have since become available to view.” Myriam Juan (Collegium member) agrees with this point of view by saying that “the ‘Canon’ gathers all films considered by the specialists of cinema as ‘inescapable’ for aesthetical and moreover for historical reasons which are usually old and not often discussed. They are films whose titles are well-known by every film lover – and furthermore –, that everyone who pretends to be interested in cinema is able to locate in the history of the 7th art and ‘should’ have seen at least once – even if it is not always the case.”

**“Up to now, classics have largely selected themselves by reason of their availability”  
(Kevin Brownlow)**

But by communicating with people from other culture groups one crucial point was made: however a canon is defined or set up, you must always consider your personal and cultural background, even in adjoining countries. Being used to the fact that in Germany the mere existence of a canon of any kind is being questioned and that there are many competing canons for literature, art, music etc., I always had a relatively wide perspective on the subject matter. Therefore I was surprised when Michal Večeřa, also a Collegium member, pointed out that in the



Czech Republic there was only one official canon in the form of a TOP10 movies list of “the best movies ever made”, competing with his personal list of favourite films. As people only wanted to see “these ten movies and nothing else”, he told me that there are “almost no available films except titles such as *Nosferatu* or *The Battleship Potemkin*.” Building up a canon of his own, consisting of movies that are important for him, Michal names titles like Pabst’s *Abwege* (1928) or Tourjansky’s *Michel Strogoff* (1926), but he also stresses: “I do not say that I don’t like the best known films, but these not so famous titles are sometimes more interesting than the others. And I have to say, that in my personal canon are some Czech movies which are of poor quality, but they’re closer to me than movies made anywhere else.”

Lila Foster, a Collegium member from Brazil, couches the problem of building up a canon in more general terms by saying that “the definition of a canon can be an enormous matter that relies on so many aspects - Nationalities, access to films, determined periods in film history, the set of ‘rules’ determined by each group that contributes to the construction of canons (it can be historians, film historians, critics, directors, old and new generations, all of them with similar or different standpoints). Canons are by definition a result of a social and collective effort, both in intellectual terms (film theory, academic debate) and practical terms (film preservation, research and programming).”

**“A canon, like a cannon, is a machine to smash the walls of overall production in an attempt to create a single line of thought.” (Hugo Rios-Cordero)**

But there are also votes against the establishment of a canon. Josef Jünger (Karlsruher Stummfilmtage - Karlsruhe Silent Film Days) refuses to accept the idea of generally acknowledged works with a timeless validity, because “strictly speaking, there are no such things as works with a timeless validity.” As life and thus art changes, the reception of works of art also changes. So we have to think over the status of every single film again and again. If there was such thing as an all-time canon, we wouldn’t have to reflect it. That would be too easy.

And Hugo Rios-Cordero (Collegium member) uses the homophony of 'canon' and 'cannon' to indicate that the construction of a canon can be dangerous and useful at the same time: "Dangerous because it has been used for reactionary purposes and to foster colonialism but useful because it identifies a set of beliefs that then could be discussed."

Dealing with these different perceptions and expectations relating to a canon and therefore to the "The Canon Revisited" series, (of course) I had to ask Paolo Cherchi Usai, curator of this programme, which criteria he had established for the series. As expected, he told me that there are multiple criteria for the series as there are multiple definitions of a canon. Mainly the programme refers to films that have been considered important by the founding fathers of film historiography and by the audience of the time. Additionally to these important film titles there are canonical authors like Dreyer, John Ford or Hitchcock, or even canonical actors which have made more than one important film and hence are virtually identified with the canon of cinema. "But this is only the beginning of the story, because then we have to relate the canon to the practicality of the festival and the history of the festival and the history of other festivals where silent films are being shown." This gives priority to those films that have never been shown at the Giornate or at other festivals or to films that have been shown at the Giornate but only such a long time ago that the younger audience does not remember them. For the selection of 2009, the films chosen belong to all these categories, as e.g. *Rotaie*, *Gunnar Hedes Saga* or *The Ten Commandments* had never been screened at the Giornate. The selection of the Stiller film *Gunnar Hedes Saga*, for example, resulted from the fact that Georges Sadoul considers this film in his *Dictionary of Films* as Stiller's "best film"<sup>3</sup>, even if it might not be his most famous film. This shows that the series allows itself a certain degree of flexibility, so that in the future there could be titles included which were considered canonical once but maybe are no longer today, or vice versa.

**"\*Gasp!\* Haven't the Pordenone folks heard that if they run more than one or two 'warhorses', no one will attend the festival?" (Chris Snowden on Nitrateville)**

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<sup>3</sup> Georges Sadoul: *Dictionary of Films*. Translated, edited, and updated by Peter Morris (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), p. 141.

As the Pordenone Film Festival initially was born to “break the spell of the canon” (Paolo Cherchi Usai), there was some fear that people would not come to see the films because they are too well known and widely available on DVD, but it turned out to be exactly the opposite. With the silent Hitchcock retrospective in Sacile in 1999 the Giornate had a similar experience: Paolo Cherchi Usai remembers that before organizing the retrospective they were very afraid that no one would come because the Hitchcock films were already widely available, but the series turned out to be a huge success. “People loved it, because watching [those films] on the big screen was a new experience”, for some it even was as if they were watching the films for the first time. This proves that somehow the big screen experience contributes to the development of a critical discourse – also to a critical discourse on the canon.

**“I was very unhappy with the score of *Der Golem*.” (Jasmin Sille)**

But it is not only the big screen experience; the music also plays an often underestimated part. How important the musical accompaniment can be for the reception of a film and therefore also for its status within the canon can be seen in the example of *Der Golem – wie er in die Welt kam* by Paul Wegener (1920). Undoubtedly the “most canonical” of this year’s canon films, the reactions could not have differed more. Having seen this film before, once actually on the big screen, accompanied by a good and solid cinema organ score, I was looking forward to watching this film in the best available print with a score that is, according to the Giornate catalogue, “music for film in the best sense of the term”. So I expected the music to help develop the sometimes problematic narrative and to underline the “marvellous moments that summon up what cinematic Expressionism could be”.<sup>4</sup>

I would not have expected that this would be the first time I found this movie physically exhausting. The story had never been so hard to follow, the weaknesses of the production had never carried so much weight before, because the music didn’t allow me to get into the film. It was virtually standing between the screen and me, always calling for my attention, not only because it was there in a very loud and for me unpleasant way (maybe also because I was sitting fairly in

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<sup>4</sup> Kristin Thompson on *Der Golem – wie er in die Welt kam*, *Giornate Catalogue 2009*, p. 98.

front) but also because it wasn't there at all in moments where I would have needed some background music. – Maybe at this point I should stress that I am not at all criticising the performance of the ensemble. – And most of the members of the audience I spoke to after the screening agreed with me. Especially the seemingly unmotivated moments of silence were problematic because they made highly dramatic sequences appear ridiculous.

And vice versa people named titles like *The Merry Widow* or *J'accuse* as their favourite (canonical) films of this year's festival, "not only because they are great films but also because the musical performances were absolutely astonishing during the screenings." (Myriam Juan)

**"I found it funny that some people left the film when they realized that the 'peplum' part was over!" (Paolo Cherchi Usai on the *Ten Commandments* screening)**

Besides *Der Golem – wie er in die Welt kam* (Paul Wegener, 1920) the following titles were officially part of the first instalment of the "The Canon Revisited" series: *J'accuse* (Abel Gance, 1919), *Gunnar Hedes Saga* (Mauritz Stiller, 1923), *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1923), *Du Skal Aere Din Hustru* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1925), *Dom na Trubnoi* (Boris Barnet, 1928) and *Rotaie* (Mario Camerini, 1929).

With *The Ten Commandments* the canon series had a significant start: whoever wants to get this silent film on DVD will have to buy the "3 Disc Collector's Edition" together with the 1956 version, for this title is widely known only for its remake [it is the same with *Ben Hur* from 1925 / 1959]. And even then the 1923 version is available only in black and white with some faded colour footage of the Exodus and Parting of the Red Sea sequence as special feature. So I was really thrilled to get a chance to see a tinted and toned print and – of course – especially the Handschiegl sequences, also because getting as far as possible to the original screening conditions of a film always helps me to understand why a film could be so successful. Or as Kevin Brownlow put it: "It was a good idea to include old warhorses like *The Ten Commandments*, because their success tells you much about audiences of the time. I think De Mille made far better films – from *The Cheat* to *The Godless Girl* – but that was the one that drew people in their millions." But without intending it the Pordenone screening also told me something about today's reception of the film, as some

people left the cinema when the biblical part of the story was over, because the 1956 version does not contain a modern part and is in fact “all-peplum”.

**“However the true ultimate experience for me can only be *J'accuse*.” (Ioanna Salagean, Collegium member)**

The discussion on the correct projection speed of *J'accuse* in the Collegium session the day before the screening showed that the variable “live” conditions under which a silent film is shown (print quality, appropriate music, correct projection speeds and aperture plates) may be much more important for the canonical status of a silent film than for a (modern) sound film. It is hardly imaginable that *J'accuse* would have been rightfully considered canonical when shown at sound speed (as Kevin Brownlow was forced to do in his 1968 documentary *Abel Gance – The charm of dynamite*).

After the screening I didn't meet anyone who wasn't enthusiastic about this film. Obviously the restorer Annike Kross was right in deciding that the film should be shown at 16 fps, because “the audience has to be convinced of the film, which means speedwise that 18 fps would be a bit too fast, 16 fps would be convincing.” And the audience was convinced: “My favourite canonical movie was surely *J'accuse* of Abel Gance. First of all I was afraid of its length and the screening of it in the evening, but I was really surprised and enjoyed it.” (Michal Večeřa).

**“Although I enjoyed these films - especially *Du Skal Aere Din Hustru* – I think they aren't so well-known to be considered ‘canonical’.” (Myriam Juan)**

Personally, I think every film was fascinating in its own and often very different way but, of course, not every film of the series could be expected to generate the same amount of feedback. While *Du Skal Aere Din Hustru* was enjoyed by many because it is funny and surprising “although it is carrying an unambiguous message” (Jasmin Sille), I didn't get any uncalled response for *Gunnar Hedes Saga* (except for the “confession” that people skipped that film). As Georges Sadoul seems to

have based his judgement of this being Stiller's best film on the viewing of the complete version which he might have seen at the time of the film's original release rather than the surviving fragmentary version, it is hard - if not impossible - to reappraise today's canonical status of this film. So I and the persons I talked to afterwards appreciated the power of the pictures and blamed the difficulties in understanding the story here and there on the incomplete print as well as the late screening hour.

***"The House on Trubnaya Square for the film itself, is extremely funny, high spirited and critical in a very interesting way." (Lila Foster)***

One of the unexpected highpoints of the series was *Dom na Trubnoi*. The film starts with a familiar way of storytelling, a young woman from the countryside enters the city and everything goes wrong, but then the picture freezes and the whole audience holds its breath for a moment, when the pictures rewind and start to tell the story at the very beginning. Asking someone about *Dom na Trubnoi* this sequence is most likely the first that is remembered. Being amazing and intriguing in its storytelling as well as in its visual language, the film even allowed us to forget that the surviving print was missing a reel. By screening this film, the Giornate enabled those who didn't know the film before to get a wider perspective on Russian cinema and showed us how fragile canon formations can be, "because the very fact that it was unknown and unexpectedly funny turned the whole idea of classics on its head." (Kevin Brownlow)

***"Rotaie was a fascinating film that takes the image of epic from Italian cinema." (Hugo Rios-Cordero)***

The only film that could outrank *Dom na Trubnoi* as most favoured film of the canon series was *Rotaie*. Being very impressed with this film I stopped feeling "guilty" on the fact that I had never heard of it when I discovered that Kevin Brownlow and Russell Merritt were also unfamiliar with it or couldn't tell why it was canonical. Anticipating tendencies of modern cinema, "*Rotaie* surprised me because it seemed like a very modern film, tense and with a wonderful opening sequence. And as a film on the frontier of the silent and sound movies, the direction, the acting and

the ambiance makes the addition of sound almost like an obvious next step in film grammar.” (Lila Foster)

And although I and many others found this to be “definitely a film that has earned its place in the canon” (Kristina Köhler), there were also critical voices, regarding the happy ending of the story or the development of the story itself: “Those two young people left everything ‘old’ behind and were facing an uncertain future. But then the story developed into a narrative of the young man’s compulsive gambling and therefore reached a lower level.” (Josef Jünger)

But however one’s personal reception of a film might be, at this point the series showed us that every country has a canon of its own that could be, once communicated, shared by many others:

“People are enthusiastic about *Rotaie* and can’t understand why this film was ‘canonical’ only in Italy. I think *Rotaie* will receive extensive attention abroad from now on.” (Paolo Cherchi Usai)

“Has the Giornate made a difference in our judgments of canonical work, or – in the best tradition of a maverick form – has it exploded the idea of the canon?” (Russell Merritt)

Asking visitors for their favourite canonical film of this year, I got not only those “official” titles I mentioned before as an answer but also other titles screened like *The Merry Widow*, *Carmen*, and *Die Gezeichneten* or even *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* and *The Sinking of the Lusitania*. This shows that the canon debate went further than only considering the films included in the series. Especially with *Carmen* being not only a canonical film for its story but also for its author Jacques Feyder, for some weeks I was convinced it had been in the canon series before I had to realize that it had been part of the “Albatros” programme. So maybe for the future of the series – to avoid such confusion or, even better, to put the films and the whole series in a bigger context – there could be some sort of double-labelling, if a definitely canonical film is part of another programme.

As for the programming of the series itself, on the one hand the wish emerged that there should be more screenings of well-known classics and enshrined films, on the other hand the argumentation was that – as these well known films are widely spread – it would be better to screen some less

known movies. So I think with this year's programme the Giornate found a good compromise between these two positions and should go on like this. In the Collegium session about "The Canon Revisited", *Caligari* was mentioned a few times as paradigm of a well known and widespread film and still there is no decent DVD release available in its land of production, Germany, so I would greet a screening of the best available print with live accompaniment, since some films "have become 'famous for being famous', and quite often the films are no longer seen; because there is an emphasis at Festivals for new discoveries, new restorations, and retrospectives... [And even worse:] if the film in question, like *Dom na Trubnoi*, doesn't have a famous star or director, who would show it?? And so us newcomers don't see them..." (Mark Fuller)

But however different the opinions about the selection of the films are, there is one congruence: the motivation for the selection of the films should be exposed in a few words, so that the films can be put into context "in order to open the canon." (Hugo Rios-Cordero)

**"I think the Pordenone 'canon' will prove very important for film history." (Kevin Brownlow)**

Being part of the younger generation that the series is primarily aimed at, the selection of the films was a pleasant surprise, because I found myself being confronted with (and convinced by) films I hadn't had a chance to see before but also facing classics in a new and sometimes not easy-going presentation. The "Canon Revisited" series shows that there are many reasons why a film can be canonical and it provides the possibility of "taking those films from their pedestals and confronting them with modern viewing habits enabling us to discuss what makes a 'good' film and what were the circumstances of the development of the canon in the first instance." (Kristina Köhler).

So it is my wish that the series shall be continued with the same fortunate mixture of 1. films being considered "too well-known" (and often widely available on DVD) and therefore not being shown theatrically (e.g. *Der Golem*), 2. films everybody has read about but never actually seen, at least in their entirety (e.g. *The Ten Commandments*) and 3. films few people have heard about let alone seen (e.g. *Dom na Trubnoi*).



But for the final words of this essay I will stand back as these shall belong to members of the Giornate community giving additional ideas for the future instalments of “The Canon Revisited”.

“I’m glad the Canon Revisited strand has been created; so many great films have been shown at the Giornate in the 22 years I wasn’t able to make the trip; it would be nice for me and the younger delegates to see some of them!!” (Mark Fuller)

“I am delighted the Giornate has chosen the topic because it helps rationalize the inclusion of classics to offset the Festival’s natural inclination to favor the new and arcane. But I’m hoping that in years to come the Giornate will choose basic classic titles that will be the occasion for re-evaluating the oft-repeated claims made for the film, and stimulate fresh analyses.” (Russell Merritt)

“All in all the canon revisited is a good, provocative, speculative - enticing idea – Paolo is very right with the whole thing about not 'accepting things for granted' [...] and so I see 'the idea of revisited' as something - provocative as well, something that you re-visit means that you allow yourself to be transformed to change your preconceived ideas etc... to know to learn to find out... [...] for me the series - were wonderful... [...] - however I hope the 2010 series to be even more surprising and/or provocative.” (Ioanna Salagean)

I personally could not sum up the experience of the first “The Canon Revisited” series better than Kevin Brownlow so the very last word shall be his:

“Any list of classics is invariably full of tired and stereotyped titles. Pordenone showed that it could be full of surprises and delights designed to make us think again about those films we have always accepted as the greatest.”

With many thanks to all those who have so patiently answered my questions and who helped me writing this essay.

## Detectives and criminals of the silent cinema

Michal Večeřa

It was not the famous author of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who invented criminal stories. Their roots extend to the beginnings of people's history. They can be traced to stories from the Bible, to Cain and Abel, or to King Solomon, who with the help of his wisdom solved many contentions between his dependants. Because of the use of reasoning he became something like an ancient predecessor of Sherlock Holmes. In later times, there could be found many other examples as Voltaire's *Zadig*, which is probably inspired by old stories from the Orient and it is set to the ancient Babylonian empire. Main character is accused of stealing queen's spaniel and palfrey from royal stables, just because he deduced what had happened only thanks to a small amount of cues. Similar stories also existed among native people in the North America and if anybody focused more on this matter, he would probably find much more of them everywhere in the world. The popularity of such stories caused that they became to be adapted for the silver screen very soon and stayed popular from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present times.

The film retrospective *Sherlock and Beyond: The British Detective in Silent Cinema* didn't include only movies with Sherlock Holmes as the main character, but it went further and proved, by showing movies from different countries, that this type of movies is a worldwide phenomenon. In general, the last note about detective and crime movies is that this category became so wide and diverse that trying to fulfill intentions mentioned before in eight screenings can't present all trends and types of this part of cinematography. The great width of this topic is partly the reason, why there were some detective and criminal movies, which haven't been included in the Sherlock Holmes cycle.

### How literature gave birth to the genre patterns

The first man, who is usually connected with the first use of a detective as a character of a solving a crime with inductive methods, was Edgar Allan Poe with his short story trilogy *Murders in the*

*rue Morgue*, *The Purloined letter* and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. He found inspiration in Vidocq, a former French convict and later a head of police in Paris in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Memoirs of Vidocq* are considered to be the first literary work where detective is described as a hero. The Vidocq's using of deduction foreshadows there detective novels of the future. Poe's main character in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Arthur Chevalier Dupin, was using deductive methods, but by contrast to Vidocq he was "only" a non-professional scientific investigator and in this sense of professionalism A. C. Dupin was similar to his ancestor Sherlock Holmes, the most iconic detective of all times.

According to these statements it is obvious, that we can find two elementary types of investigating characters. The first one is an amateur, usually an intelligent upper class man investigating just for his personal interest, and the second type is a professional, man from the middle class, who is, in particular, rather relentless than ingenious. And these two types of characters can be seen in crime and detective movies too, mainly because of the fact that a lot of them were taken from literary texts. Although this pattern works in most of the movies. For example when the spectator doesn't know any details about detective.

To categorize criminals in a similar way as detectives and to find if there is any established pattern, we would need to analyze many other movies. But at least it seems obvious that a detective from lower class combating a wealthy thief is rather exceptional when. And when such a situation occurred, the impression it had might be called, in the way of understanding the social classes order, a little bit perverse. In cinematography these relations allowed filmmakers to transform such a disruption to a spectacle and the social order was usually reinforced by the end of the movie. Despite the fact that it is not possible to identify the a pattern connecting criminals, similarities can be noted between them and detectives. The best known example is Arthur J. Raffles, World war I veteran and a cricket champion, created by E. W. Hornung during 1890s. He reminds us of the character of Bulldog Drummond except the fact that he didn't retain his money and his "fighting" on the bad side of the law. Raffles has also an assistant named Harry "Bunny" Manders. Their relationship is based on similar principles as that between Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson.

Next interesting aspect of the crime and detective stories was that readers and cinemagoers in many cases felt strongly the difference between real life and fiction presented in books or films. And it didn't matter if it was the literature in the half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the wave of gangster movies in early thirties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most frequently mentioned fact was that in real life it was much more difficult to solve crimes successfully, which also meant that in many cases criminals weren't caught. Real policemen usually haven't been as ingenious as their literary and film colleagues, their investigations were limited by laws, they only had small number of cues etc.. From reactions of critics, readers, spectators and even criminals themselves it was obvious that crime investigation in real life didn't have much in common with the fictional.

The movies screened within the Sherlock Holmes cycle were obviously chosen with few basic criterions. The first of them was to cover the silent era as completely as it possible, so the programme consisted of screenings were performed films from all the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Second criterion can be described as an intention to break the reputation of Sherlock Holmes as the canonical icon and introduce the public to some movies from different countries with different heroes, who are not considered as well-known but without them the cinematography wouldn't be so diverse.

### **Crime old as the celluloid itself**

Two oldest movies screened in Pordenone were both made in 1909. The first, *Bobby the Boy Scout*, stands on a border between two different cinematic styles. The movie itself is by its structure similar to the famous *Rescued by Rover*, and we might assume that this similarity stems from former collaboration of *Bobby the Boy Scout*'s director Percy Stow and *Rescued by Rover*'s producer Cecil Hepworth. But this film goes a little bit further than Hepworth's movie. It contains situations that we might call humorous and that give the movie its grotesque feeling: for example the Boy Scout, while he is chasing villains, jumping over the wall. This is combined with unobtrusive scout propaganda – the boy scout solved the crime in place of the police. In the outcome bringing together these two styles creates for the spectator of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the uncertainty about how much a spectator is supposed to take the film seriously, but we can only hardly imagine how the impact on public when it was released for the first time.

*The Peril of the Fleet*, which is the second film made in 1909, showed that there was significant influence of policy on cinema from its beginnings. Spy story about plans of destroying the royal ship must be seen in historical and political context of its production. It was mainly Great Britain's fear of Germany's rising political and military strength. This fear raised a kind of rivalry between Germany and Great Britain which also appeared in the cinematography. This could partly be seen as the reason why the detective wasn't the most important character here and why we might consider the film to be a spy movie with marks of contemporary propaganda, rather than pure detective or criminal story.

In the end of the first and at the beginning of the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, detective movies moved closer to specific characters. This change worked on principles analogical to the rules of a star system. A well-known character, similarly to a film star, was one of the aspects that might attract the public to movies. This intention becomes evident in serial films which emerged in the first half of the second decade. We can see examples in French series *Fantomas*, *Les Vampires* and *Judex* directed by Louis Feuillade.

Also in the U. S. there were similar series, and the most famous one was *The Perils of Pauline* with actress Pearl White who became the prototype of a modern woman and she continued her career in other serial films. The fifth part of *The Perils of Pauline*, *The Aerial Wire*, can be considered an example of how this serial looked like. Its structure was restricted to solving an important problem and it usually ends with a dramatic situation. This type of serial was rather an action movie than a story about ingenious detective using sophisticated inductive methods. Although we might use the word criminal while describing serial films, it is necessary to note that they are mainly based on action and thrilling situations.

*Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1900) which I mentioned before is considered to be the earliest known movie featuring the famous hero. In Denmark the first Sherlock Holmes film was made in 1906. Plans for making a cycle came just two years later, in 1908. Six of them were directed Viggo Larsen before his moving to Germany. After that, during 1911, Nordisk produced six more movies with Sherlock Holmes. Nordisk's *Sherlock Holmes i Bondefangerklør* (1910) was the oldest movie using Sherlock Holmes' name screened in Pordenone. Next series was produced by French company

Éclair that bought rights from Arthur Conan Doyle in 1911 and the very same year they started production of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. It is not easy to say whether this series is French or British, as it was shot in Great Britain and almost all of the cast were British, but the data about a production company vary dependent on the source of information.

Crime and detective movies were produced in other parts of Europe too, and we might mention Germany, Italy and Czechoslovakia. Italian example *La Mano Accusatrice* made in 1913 was a simple crime story where the criminal was found guilty thanks to the faked signature. The detective was an exemplary type of a middle class professional police investigator, who even isn't the main character.

Three movies from Germany were screened in Pordenone. All of them show producers' intentions to heighten the moral value of their movies and to anticipate problems with censorship by trying to leave the pulp literature and to become more sophisticated. Stuart Webbs-Film Company's *Der Gestreifte Domino* (1915) tried to find balance between thrilling situations and sophisticated problem solving with inductive methods like it was in Sherlock Holmes's case. Except Also Rudolf Meinert adapted Sherlock Holmes stories. In 1914 he worked with one of the best known A.C. Doyle's novels, *Der Hund von Baskerville*. However, the adaptation didn't follow the same plot as the novel, being simplified, with some changed parts and some even abandoned. In a way its structure was very similar to the film mentioned previously. Simplifications were useful for combining the action with crime investigation and again, the action is the main attraction, so the difficult relationships between individual characters were given minor importance. This is evident from the movie's beginning, where the villain is shown, unlike in the book, where we do not discover him until the end of the story. The third German movie, *William Voss, der Milliondieb* (1916), was significantly similar to the older *Der Hund von Baskerville* by the linearity of the plot, simplicity of the main characters and many other aspects.

### **When animals strike or how Rover caught the kidnapper**

Animal heroes played special role in cinema. Before the World War II they were very popular, especially when they acted like human or were performing tasks, which are usually done by human. These animal characters were present in cinema from its beginnings. The most famous one was Cecil Hepworth's Rover from *Rescued by Rover* (1905), but it wasn't the only one. We might name films like Gaumont's British *The Dog Detective* (1906), Pathé's *Les Chien Policiers* (1907), Solax's *The Detective's Dog* (1912). These and many others can be more or less considered as *Rescued by Rover's* spin-offs, because their structure and style were similar. *A Canine Sherlock Holmes*, only considering the title, surely belongs to this tradition, and we might observe it in other genre too: for example in western movies like those with Rin Tin Tin.

Animals also acted as main characters of cartoons quite often, probably because it was easy to animate pictures of anything what a cartoon-film maker wanted. For instance there were series about Krazy Kat, Felix the Cat or, in the case of Sherlock Holmes cycle, the series about a dog called Bonzo. From my not so well informed point of view, it's difficult to make judgment about the exceptionality of this cartoon, so I can only suppose, based on the big number of other cartoons, that there were more animated detective movies, and to consider the one screened as an exemplary case. Thanks to the imagination and creativity of artists involved, movies of this type were usually grotesque comedies using some characteristics of other genres. In the case of *Detective Bonzo and the Black Hand Gang* it was mainly the criminal motive mixed with grotesque animation.

### **The hegemony of Stoll Film Company movies**

Films of the Stoll Film Company screened during 28<sup>th</sup> Pordenone festival, made an impression, that the Company was the leader of the British market in detective movies. The core of their crime genre production can be seen in two film series – Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Fu-Manchu. After the success of the first *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (15 episodes), 1922 brought *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and in 1923 the *Last Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* followed. These series were complemented by two feature-length movies *The Sign of Four* (1923) and *The Hound of Baskervilles* (1921). Their Sherlock Holmes is quite an iconic character, almost like transferred directly from the literature to the silver screen. As judged in the context of the Pordenone

screenings, he is the purest representation of a detective from the upper class. Stoll films followed Arthur Conan Doyle's novels closely and by doing so they created the atmosphere which got nearer to the legendary reputation of the Sherlock Holmes's stories. In this series, the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson was established again. . Watson's character looks like being created for comparison with his ingenious colleague. Despite the fact that Watson was actually a clever person, he didn't developed analytical and deductive way of thinking quite as deep, and he partly serves as a translator of his colleague's deductions. Because of this and in comparison, Sherlock Holmes looks much smarter and ingenious. And this crystallization of Holmes's typical characteristics can be also seen as the particular reason an iconic detective. It was the Stoll film production, which blessed the character with deeper psychological depiction, by uncovering some parts of his past and by already mentioned relationship with Doctor Watson.

This series may be seen in contrast with Stoll film's *Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* and *Further mysteries of Dr. Fu Manchu*, whose character first appeared in Sax Rohmer's novel [titul] in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The capacity of a main character is divided between criminal villain, Fu Manchu, and two detectives, Sir Denis Nayland Smith and Doctor Petrie. Fu Manchu's Asian descent probably was not accidental. Although the number of immigrants originally from Asia in Great Britain didn't grow rapidly, it caused a fear in the British conservative society one we might call xenophobic today. The two detectives are quite similar to Holmes and Watson. Smith was more like Holmes, using his deductive abilities, and Dr. Petrie played the more action role.

Aside of those series about characters of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Fu Manchu and the whole Sherlock Holmes cycle, stands a movie called *The Four Just Men*. This adaptation of Edgar Wallace's novel is about several wealthy men who are in the position which could be called "terrorist – cavalier". Their main aim is to force the Foreign Secretary, Sir Philip Ramon, not to pass Aliens Extradition Bill (that allowed to deport the „undesirable“ people including people seeking political asylum). In opposite contrast to other films mentioned above, this one was based mainly on depicting wealthy criminals as ingenious men using cunning methods for terrorizing. Thus, this film constitutes an exemplary case where the rule which doesn't allow detectives from lower classes to fight with wealthy criminals is broken. Policemen are almost always few steps behind



their opponents in this movie. Such situations make sometime really spectacular effect when combined with their really effective suspension methods.

### **Sherlock Holmes parodies and banker Fux breaking the pattern**

In addition to all the “serious” movies mentioned above, the Sherlock Holmes retrospective offered a lot of comedies. These were produced since the first crime movies appeared on the silver screen. Some comical elements were evident in already mentioned *Bobby, the Boy Scout*. A large number consisted of parodies of Sherlock Holmes character, belonging more to the slapstick or comedy genre. It was movies like *The Mystery of Leaping Fish* (1916) or Buster Keaton’s *Sherlock, Jr.* or *The Sleuth*, which was the part of the Sherlock Holmes cycle. It was made in 1925 and the main character is played by Stan Laurel. In his role of detective he isn’t as successful with investigating as with making gags and funny effects. On the other hand, the movie’s structure is quite similar to the classical detective movie and humorous effects were made mainly by awkwardness of detective’s character.

In Czechoslovakia most movies were based on novels or plays of czech writers, which were of really provincial kind and their artistic value is doubtful. It's necessary to see *Únos bankéře Fuxe* in the context of all czech movies. Obviously Czechoslovak filmmakers had to know foreign movies, because Czechoslovak cinematography was strongly dependant on the import of foreign movies through the whole silent era, and this dependence was most evident in the second decade of 20th century, when there was not any established cinematographic industry. This situation caused that czechoslovak filmmakers knew very well films from other countries and consequently inspired themselves by methods widely developed abroad, which they could see almost in every cinema. But it is very difficult to apply general patterns on *Únos bankéře Fuxe* in their full means. They have often been changed, used only partly and in every pattern used, something, even a little thing is changed. Although *Únos bankéře Fuxe* fits into the category of Sherlock Holmes parodies too, its structure is a little bit different. It was directed by Karel Anton and featured Anny Ondra and Karel Lamač. This movie wasn’t the only one of this style in Czechoslovakia, and the interesting fact is, that Anny Ondra, Karel Lamač or Jan S. Kolár participated on the production of the more treasured Czechoslovak movies.

The first czechoslovak film, which could be categorized in detective genre, *Dáma s malou nožkou*, was directed by Přemysl Pražský in 1919. It presents a story of looking for a young lady while knowing only the size of her foot, so no real crime is present at all. Characters have English names, a sign of inspiration by models from English-speaking countries. The second main feature, after the names, is the absence of criminal principal villain. In 1921 a movie called *Otrávené světlo* was made, as a pure criminal movie inspired by models from foreign movies. It had characters like detective and his enemy, young woman and wealthy man, the story was about mysterious murders and its sudden reversions of the plot.

Finally, *Únos bankéře Fuxe* follows. Originally it belonged with the lost movie called *Tu ten kámen* (1923) to the so called "Anton-comedies" cycle. Only one year later Karel Lamač directed movie *Chyt'te ho*, which is similar to *Únos bankéře Fuxe*, with himself, Anny Ondra and Theodor Pištěk in as main characters. This film was, in its style, the most similar contemporary Czechoslovak movie to the previous one. In comparison with some other contemporary czech movies its production was much more expensive and it is much more cosmopolite than the most of other contemporary czechoslovak movies.

The story of *Únos bankéře Fuxe* follows a banker and his creditor, Tom Darey, who both want to get married. Banker's daughter Daisy puts an advertisement in the newspaper, because she wants her father to meet Maud, her friend. She also meets Darey, who hires a detective to follow her. After many mistakes are made by all the characters all end well.

If one should compare *Únos bankéře Fuxe* with other Pordenone movies, the most similar would be *The Sleuth* with Stan Laurel. But only when it comes to their slapstick style, almost everything else looks different. From the short synopses above it is clear that detective's role here is only supporting. His name is Sherlock Holmes II., and we can suppose that he belongs to middle class, although it isn't openly said in the movie. The only problem with his professionalism is his a little bit absurd behavior and mistakes he makes. But it is the essential part of the slapstick humor in this movie. In comparison with Laurel's detective, Czech Sherlock isn't as awkward, his mistakes are caused just accidentally, as almost all of the plot reversions in the movie. Finally, a detective usually stands on the side of law and doesn't do things which would break it. Although our

detective is introduced with properties typical for original Sherlock Holmes – clothes and pipe - he is just a private eye who was, willing to kidnap a person. Actor Eman Fiala was called “Czech Chaplin” by the contemporary press, because of his Sherlock Holmes performance. Next difference from other Pordenone movies is similarly, as in the case of *Dáma s malou nožkou*, the fact that there is no real crime present. The sole villain, count Pommery played by Theodor Pištěk, is Darey’s rival in courting Daisy, and his illegal activities haven’t influenced the plot. Pommery’s ascendants are wealthy aristocrats, but they lost their money and now he is a swindler with aristocratic manners. In this way it moves his character from one class to another which wouldn’t be probably so easily acceptable in societies which are more conservative in these matters. In Czechoslovakia, such a “social transfer” can be also connected to the political situation after World War I, when old Austrian-Hungarian Empire fell and new democratic republic was established. This kind of revolution was also accompanied by the abolition of all aristocratic titles, because of their dividing of society into classes became inadmissible in democratic country.

The movie also presents its viewer with an enormous amount of absurd situations, from Tom Darey hiding in a closet with an aquarium, over the introduction of count Pommery as an aristocrat and showing his not entirely legal job, to the crazy situation with kidnapping the banker instead of his daughter. In this way it mixed the slapstick elements with absurd crazy comedy typical for the beginnings of sound era. This feeling comes mainly from the changes of characters and their identity, the detective becomes criminal, swindler becomes detective etc. and none of them is really positive character. The way how main female character Daisy behaves can be seen as presenting the cultural and social climate in society of 20's. Her person is at the beginning of movie depicted as very materialistic – she says, that she bankrupted, but she and her friend Maud is almost lost in piles of clothes. This kind of materialism can be connected to their sexuality, because it creates the feeling of their perversion. Similar to them was Daisy's father banker Fux who was depicted as extravagant dandy and there could be found other examples of it in the movie. In general this feeling of decadence and eccentricity was supposed to be congruent with the taste of the audience.

## Conclusion

Crime and detective movies emerged from literary tradition, which is as long as the history of human civilization. In fact, cinema just took patterns of characters and then developed them further. Repeating of some signs creates patterns, which are then often broken or changed by other new movies. The easiest pattern to recognize is a detective identified mainly by the style of his work and the social class he belongs to. As for the criminals, it now seems that there is no established pattern but at least, as I mentioned above, combats between criminals and detectives usually depend on rules of relationships between social classes. Although patterns should work in majority of cases, none of them can be applied successfully on all examples. This is proved by *Únos bankéře Fuxe*. Although it can be called as criminal genre movie, it is more parody on this type of movies than anything else. In none of screened movies were typical signs of characters so much exaggerated. But the question is why it was made so? At this point we can only speculate on it. Fredrick Jameson said in his study on postmodernism and imitation, the good parodist must have hidden likings in the "original". His statement partly describes *Únos bankéře Fuxe*. There was surely really strong influence of foreign movies but without knowing precise titles it can't be surely said which movies influenced Karel Anton, Karel Lamač and their other Czech colleagues. Maybe traditions of detective genre was mixed with Czech popular humour, which is often really ironic and sarcastic. This movie can be considered as an example of detective movie which was influenced by local circumstances and plays the role of something strange and different in its way of its genre.

Differences between individual movies are most visible when some carefully chosen group of movies is screened during a short period of time, such as a festival retrospective, as the Sherlock Holmes cycle was. Such a grouping creates the best way to make these films easily available for public. It's obvious that everybody knows Sherlock Holmes but what about the others? Certainly less people know Doctor Fu Manchu and ever fewer know Czechoslovak movie *Únos bankéře Fuxe*. In my opinion the main purpose of a retrospective with a concrete topic is to present the topic in as complex unit as it is possible. Only in this, we may note an analogy between, for instance, Sherlock Holmes and the Cannon revisited programmes. Thanks to this the spectator is allowed to see movies from various decades and countries and compare them with each other. So it is not

only about watching movies but about seeing how they were changing in relation to the time and place where they were made in. Watching this process of changing is important if we want to understand how diverse cinema was and still is.

## Ballets Russes and the Silent Cinema

Jennifer Zale

Throughout the history of Russian ballet many choreographers have attempted to create systems of notation in order to preserve choreography for future generations. Unfortunately, none of these proposed systems have succeeded in becoming a universal standard used on a wide scale. As a result, choreography has been passed down from generation to generation almost exclusively by word of mouth, causing works not consistently included in the repertoire to disappear into oblivion. Many ballets produced in Imperial Russia have succumbed to this fate due to the Imperial Theatres' administration's strong dislike for the cinema. The administration adamantly refused to allow its artists to be filmed and created a rule forbidding them to do so. Failure to adhere to the administration's wishes could lead to expulsion from the Imperial Theatres. (However, it should be noted that certain ballet stars, such as Vera Karalli, were excused from this rule, due to their vast popularity.) In prerevolutionary Russia the cinema was considered to be taboo, a dangerous rival to theatre and books, and a novelty belonging to the lower classes.

It is regrettable that the administration regarded the cinema in such a negative light since the moving pictures could have served as a tool of dance preservation and notation. It is painful for dance scholars and choreographers to think of how many works could have been saved if film was allowed to be used in the Imperial Theatres during these early years. In making this statement it is important to point out the complicated relationship between dance and film in the opinion of ballet artists. Most dancers and ballet masters do not feel that film is an ideal way to preserve choreography as it is extremely difficult to learn balletic movement from the screen. Ballet steps are made up of tiny details and these details are often lost onscreen. The camera films dance as a whole in order to capture the picture that is seen by the audience. A ballet master, on the other hand, is more interested in analyzing individual movements of the fingers, torso, neck and so on. It is nearly impossible to capture all of these tiny movements simultaneously on film when the goal is to capture the dance as whole. However, if the ballets created in Imperial Russia had been filmed, future choreographers would have had something to go by during the restoration process.

While film is not the most ideal way in which to learn choreography, professionally trained dancers would be able to look at the overall dance in order to fairly accurately restore a work. The general movement style and costumes would give choreographers a peek into the ballet of the past, making restoration feasible. The Bolshoi Ballet dancer Vasiliy Tikhomirov (footage of him dancing with his prima ballerina wife was shown at the 2008 Le Giornate) was of this opinion. In a 1912 interview Tikhomirov admits that film should not be used as a general system of notation for ballet due to the reasons stated above. Nevertheless, he felt that dance should be filmed in order to be preserved for future generations, if only to be able to witness performances of the great dancers. He expressed regret that dance generally has not been filmed, giving the example of Maria Taglioni and what future artists would have gained if they had been able to glimpse her dance. (Cine-fono 15)

Tikhomirov was not the only dancer of the time to share his opinion about the cinema. In a 1914 interview Anna Pavlova clearly expressed her dislike of the cinema. She almost never allowed herself to be filmed because she considered her dancing image on screen to be unflattering. The important details of her dance were lost according to her. The few times she allowed herself to be filmed she was very particular about the process, allowing herself to be filmed only from certain angles. Onscreen she would only perform smooth movements that were relatively stagnant and did not travel. In Imperial Russian film journals only a few statements regarding Pavlova's interaction with the cinema can be found. In 1914 she made a film of Rubinstein's ballet, *Night*, for the Berlin Literary Society that most likely has never been found. It probably was rarely shown to begin with, due to stipulations put on it by Pavlova herself. When she made the film, the contract stated that the footage could be shown only occasionally under very particular circumstances. (Vestnik kinematografa 23) In a 1916 publication there is a small advertisement consisting of only a few sentences about a future appearance of Pavlova onscreen. (Zhivoy ekran 31) However, what exactly Pavlova was to dance was not stated and further information about this event is yet to be found. The Pavlova films presented at Le Giornate 2008 and 2009 were filmed in 1924 in America on the set of Douglas Fairbanks' *The Thief of Baghdad*. This is the only known existing footage of Pavlova's dancing. However spellbinding these variations may be, it is important to remember that they were not filmed at the prime of her career. Her early 20<sup>th</sup> century performances are left to our imagination as well as to photographs.

The relationship between film and ballet is certainly a fascinating one. Both the 2008 and 2009 seasons of Le Giornate have served as a scholarly setting for further exploring this intriguing topic so important to both film and dance history. The 2008 festival's showcase include Alexander Shiryaev's early footage of dancers of the Russian Imperial Ballet and animation, Bolshoi Ballet stars Vasiliy Tikhomirov and Ekaterina Geltser, the 1924 Pavlova films, and Vera Karalli's performance of Mikhail Fokine's *Dying Swan* in Evgeniy Bauer's 1917 film of the same name. (It is interesting to note that Karalli's variation in this film significantly differs from Fokine's original choreography. Stylistic traits unique to Alexandre Gorsky, with whom Karalli studied, can be found in her performance.) This showcase continued in 2009 with the festival's Ballets Russes program which included footage of Tamara Karsavina, Alexandra Baldina, Fedyor Kozlov and Anna Pavlova.

Each of these dancers in some capacity participated in Sergei Diaghilev's first Russian Seasons ballet program in Paris in 1909. However, Diaghilev's dancers can also be found outside of the festival's Ballets Russes program. Vera Karalli can be found in the Albatros program as a star of the 1919 French film *La Nuit Du 11 Septembre*. By the time this movie was made, Karalli was already an established film star, but in 1909 she danced in Diaghilev's troupe in the lead role of the ballet *Pavilion d'Armide*. She shared this role with Tamara Karsavina.

The discovery and restoration of these rare films raise questions in the minds of dance historians. As is often the case in silent film, scholars must use the few clues they have in order to make accurate assumptions about music and origins of the dances. When the recovered information is limited, the scholar is forced to make the difficult choice of presenting the dance in the incomplete form it was found or to use one's intuition in order to make the remnants of the dance into a theatrically presentable production. This is an ethical question that arises in both film and dance restoration to which there is no easy answer. Also, this question must be considered differently depending on the discipline. When talking about silent film, it can be very beneficial to restore and present an incomplete film for the benefit of the study of film scholars. When it comes to ballet, however, it would be very difficult to recruit audiences (other than ballet scholars) to sit through incomplete ballets for the sake of staying true to the original. There have been successful attempts of restoring Diaghilev's early ballets even if the choreography strayed from the original. For



example, in the 1980's American dance scholar Millicent Hodson completed a dissertation at Berkeley in which she thoroughly researched Vaslav Nizhinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Her dissertation was the basis for the Joffrey Ballet's revival of the production. Hodson analyzed everything from costume sketches to choreographic sequences notated on paper. (Garafola 66-67) While she gathered the best information to resurrect this ballet, there were naturally still many pieces of the puzzle missing. To think that the Joffrey's production was more than a variation on a theme of Nizhinsky's 1912 original production would be unreasonable. In fact, Nizhinsky's original choreography was performed only a few times in comparison with the numerous revivals of the ballet that occurred throughout the years.

The 1909 films of Tamara Karsavina, Fyodor Kozlov and Alexandra Baldina are certainly treasures of ballet history and have the potential to aid dance historians and ballet masters in resurrecting the lost ballets of the past. The short film of Karsavina, *La Danse du Flambeau*, is especially interesting because it gives ballet historians a glimpse of Diaghilev's legendary prima ballerina early in her career. It is arguable that Diaghilev considered Karsavina to be his favorite female dancer who remained a constant in his troupe for a significant period of time. In her Russian language memoirs, Karsavina describes her relationship with Diaghilev as paternal, with Diaghilev often catering to her whims and chastising others for offending her. (Kasavina 219) Other film footage of Karsavina does exist but it was filmed much later in her career, dating back to the 1920's. These films are fairly widespread in Russia and they show the dancer performing barre and center work in the classroom.

In *La Danse du Flambeau* Karsavina dances an allegro in which she often marches bouree style en pointes. In the opinion of a former ballet dancer, I would have to say that the Karsavina's dance movement in the film did not completely coincide with the chosen music from Anton Arensky's "*Egyptian Nights*." When dancers watch ballet they naturally follow the steps in a way that is impossible for the viewer without ballet training. This is probably similar to the way in which a musician would listen to a symphony versus a spectator without a musically trained ear. When I watched Karsavina's brief variation, the flow of the steps seemed to be broken by the music, interfering with my concentration in following the choreography. There are a few reasons why this phenomenon could have occurred. To the best of my ability and memory, I described

Karsavina's variation and my opinion about the music to former Maliy Ballet Theatre (St. Petersburg, Russia) soloist Zhanna Dubrovskaya. Dubrovskaya, who trained at the same school as Karsavina (The Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg was later renamed the Vaganova School), felt that my feeling regarding the music could be due to nothing more than the speed of the film which does not exactly coincide with the way the variation would have been performed in the theatre. However, it is impossible to make a completely accurate observation of this film without seeing it firsthand. It is important to remember that *Egyptian Nights* was actually the precursor to Mikhail Fokine's later ballet *Cleopatra*. The ballet was revamped and renamed *Cleopatra* for the 1909 Ballets Russes season. (Garafola 43) For this reason it would be interesting to learn the opinions of Russian ballet masters who might have inside information about the similarities and differences between these two ballets, and in turn clues about the origins of Karsavina's variation. While the fact that Leon Bakst's original design for Karsavina's costume still exists, it should be kept in mind that the costume could have been used for either of these two ballets as well as for other divertissements on a similar theme. Furthermore, in Karsavina's memoirs, she makes no mention of performing this variation at a party as has been thought. Throughout her memoirs she carefully describes such events and even writes about an outdoor party given by Madame Maurice Ephrussi at the end of the 1909 season in the dancer's honor. In the film Karsavina is clearly dancing indoors; therefore, it is improbable that the variation was recorded at this event. (Karsavina 218, 304)

This being said, it is imperative that ballet masters and dancers are given the opportunity to analyze these recently discovered films. The grave error of mistakenly using Tchaikovsky's music from *Swan Lake* instead of Saint-Saëns score during Vera Karalli's variation in Evgeniy Bauer's film *The Dying Swan* clearly illustrates the need for this kind of cooperation. Besides the music, dance specialists would be in an opportune position to make observations about the choreography, dance style and ballet technique that only a professional dancer could make. Also, dance professionals would be interested in elements probably not as important to film scholars such as details that would allow them to restore a ballet or make them rethink assumptions made about technique at the time. For example, when watching the films of Karsavina, Kozlov, Baladina, Pavlova, Geltzer and Tikhomirov, it is interesting to follow the transformation of ballet technique throughout the years. Even though Karsavina and Geltser were prima ballerinas of their time, their

technique could in no way rival the technique of present day Mariinsky and Bolshoi ballerinas. In comparison their steps are choppier, extensions not fully developed, turn out weaker, and their dancing sometimes comes across as more athletic than graceful. The physical appearance of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian ballet dancers is also very different from today's dancers. They are often quite large by today's standards and possess stocky muscles, resulting from training under a system of imperfective technique. While Karsavina does not fit this description, Geltzer, arguably the most revered dancer of her day, (with the exception of only Pavlova), most definitely does.

After making the above statements about the evolution of ballet technique recorded on film, it is important to point out that Pavlova was an exception to this observation. Her technique in *The Dying Swan*, *Oriental Dance*, *La Rose Mourante*, *Columbine* variation and *Fairy Doll* is much closer to modern technique than that of her contemporaries. She possesses solid technique and the long limbs associated with Vaganova technique well before it was established as the Russian school of technique in the 1930's. Before Agrippina Vaganova created her system of pedagogy, ballet technique in Russia was a melting pot of different styles, schools and techniques. Therefore, ballet technique was greatly improved and revolutionized after the Vaganova Method was established. As shown by the Pavlova films, the ballerina possessed a natural gift for dance that allowed her to move gracefully as if it were second-nature.

The second piece of the 2009 Le Giornate program, *Pas de deux et Soli*, consisted of the *pas de deux*, *Valse Caprice*, performed by Fyodor Kozlov and Alexandra Baldina. While Kozlov was a dancer from a prominent Moscow ballet family who went on to make a film career in Hollywood, Baldina is a forgotten Imperial ballerina. In chronicles of ballet history written in the West, Baldina's name is almost always omitted. Even in works written in Russia, Baldina is usually not listed with the most prominent Imperial ballerinas such as Pavlova, Geltzer, Preobrozhenska, Karsavina, Balashova, Kshesinska and Lopokova. It is probable that her status had more to do with her marriage to Kozlov than talent. Despite this supposition, it is nevertheless very interesting to have the opportunity to witness the ballerina on film. While it is difficult to judge a dancer based on one *pas de deux*, I feel it would be fair to say that she possessed solid technique in comparison to other dancers of her time, even if her dancing did lack the spark present in that of Pavlova and Geltzer.

Another reason why Baldina was forgotten by Soviet critics and historians is due to her immigration to America. It was common practice in the Soviet Union for critics to write negatively about artists who had defected or to omit them altogether. Another example of this tendency occurred with Vera Karalli who also immigrated before the fall of the Russian empire. She is usually not considered to be of the caliber of other leading ballerinas of her time, and her technique has been criticized by Tamara Karsavina (Karsavina 206) and the prestigious Soviet ballet critic Vera Krasovskaya (Krasovskaya 182) (who could not have seen the ballerina dance other than in Bauer's film *The Dying Swan*). This harsh criticism of Karalli's technique simply does not coincide with Alexander Gorsky's decision to cast her in leading roles at a very young age and her success and popularity with the Bolshoi Theatre. After all, it was her achievement in ballet that paved the way for her to become one of the most popular Russian silent film stars. The first book ever written about Karalli, *Vera Karalli Legend of the Russian Ballet* by Gennady Kagan, was published in 2009 in the Russian language.

As noted earlier, Kozlov made the transition from the dancing world of Imperial Russia to an acting career in Hollywood. While his film career was short lived due to the introduction of sound, his performance onscreen earned him a decent reputation as a film actor in Russia. A 1925 article from a Soviet film magazine, *Soviet Screen*, commends Kozlov for his plasticity in films and his influence on dance and movement in Hollywood films. (Abramov 38) Also, Alla Nazimova's performance in the film *Solome* may indirectly have been influenced by Kozlov. Nazimova worked with and was greatly influenced by Natasha Rambova (born Winifred Shaughnessy) who worked with Kozlov during the period of their four year-long affair. In Soviet film periodicals it has been mentioned that Nazimova's performance seems to be under the influence of modern ballet tendencies that were developed in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia. (Abramov 38) The styles of Fokine and Kasian Goleizovsky, another innovative ballet master who challenged the classical academic standard, most likely were present in Nazimova's work due to Kozlov's influence.

In *Valse Caprice*, which was composed by Anton Rubinstein and choreographed by Nikolai Legat, Kozlov and Baldina dance a pas de deux which appears to be incomplete. A pas de deux always consists of the following elements: prologue (both dancers onstage), two solos (one for each dancer), and the coda (both dancers on stage.) In the film the coda is absent and the film ends with the solos. Another problem exists in the fact that the solos have not yet been identified. If the

entire pas de deux has already been identified as *Valse Caprice*, then naturally the two solos should belong to this same pas de deux. Of course, ballet masters have been known to incorporate choreography from one ballet into another. For example, the same Cupid and Yellow Canary variations appear in both *Sleeping Beauty* and *Don Quixote*. Besides ballet masters playing around with the choreography, it is also possible that different variations were put together specifically for this film. Again, this film illustrates the need for film scholars and ballet masters to work together in order to make the most accurate conclusions about dance preserved on film.

The relationship between silent film and the Russian Imperial ballet is as mysterious as it is interesting. Film not only served as a way to preserve the artistry of legendary dancers and choreographers, but also allowed some ballet dancers, for instance Karalli and Kozlov, to make the transition from ballet into a completely new medium. Artists like Karalli brought their ballet skill to the cinema in order to help create the first acting style of the Russian silent cinema. In addition to being valuable documents to film historians, early dance films have the potential to aid ballet masters in the restoration of lost ballets. They also are important for helping dance historians to better understand the dance styles and traditions of the past, along with their transitions. The complete value of these films will be realized only when film scholars and dance specialists come together to draw conclusions that could not be drawn by scholars in only one field. It is my hope that more dance films of this period will be discovered in the future, and that the study of this topic will bring together scholars from these two remarkable art forms of the past.

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