

**the  
collegium  
papers VII**

**the pordenone  
silent film festival  
sacile 2005**



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## **preface**

A fascinating characteristic of the Collegium Papers – of which this is the seventh collection - is that each year's anthology is quite different in character from the rest. The factors that condition this variety are obvious – a different group of people, establishing (or not establishing) different inter-relationships; different qualities of stimulation from the festival programme; the extent (or absence) of preliminary group discussion on content and approach. The 2004-5 edition mostly consisted of cool, objective research: without exaggeration we asserted that the group of essays on Dziga Vertov instantly merit a place in the essential Vertov literature.

This year by contrast the majority of the essays are much more subjective and reflective – personal impressions of first encounters with the Giornate experience. This may give them a more ephemeral quality – but that in itself has its value in capturing the spirit and preoccupations of a particular historical moment. In the essays in the sections "Conservation" and "Presentation" there is a significant confluence of concerns. The Collegians, as new initiates in the silent film community, have sensed and absorbed the overwhelming anxieties that currently preoccupy archivists and everyone else concerned with film history and culture and with the arts in general: the opportunities and peril of the digital onrush; the ethics of culture in societies overtaken by monetarism. Their impressions and views may not be imbued with years of knowledge and experience, but they are often invigorating with their fresh, unprejudiced, original responses to problems that have become too familiar to the rest of us. Above all, they are concerned. Sacile has made its impression.

There are other, more specific reactions to the programme, ranging from Ramin Sadegh Khajani's fascinating dissertation on one of the "outsider" films of the 2005 festival, whose exceptional interest might otherwise have been overlooked, to Özcan Süzer's poetic, moving and revealing "Talking to a Ghost". But we sincerely commend the whole volume - as a good read and a revelation of new minds at work on old concerns.

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özcan süzer

## talking to a ghost: d. w. griffith – a dream sequence

At least I could sleep. During one week, I had been sitting in the dark for hours, watching old movies, letting myself be hypnotized by the shadows on the screen. During one week, I slept only a few hours, trying to watch as many movies as possible and talking about silent movies with experts, enthusiasts and my fellow collegians between the screenings.

Now, on my way back to Germany, 30000 feet high in the sky, I could not keep my eyes open. I had so many different impressions in my mind, I had seen so many, talked to so many interesting people, I was overwhelmed and exhausted.

"I have not been in Germany for ages. It must have changed a lot?"

I had closed my eyes only for a second when I heard this question. Sitting next to me was a tall man of uncertain age in an elegant, but somehow strange suit with a high starched collar, high-buttoned shoes and a slouch fedora hat. A quiet unusual outfit. He did not seem to belong here. Not in this place, not in this time. Nevertheless, he looked familiar to me. He took a gulp of his drink, smiling at me.

"That was more than 80 years ago, I think. The summer of 1924. Germany was in a terrible condition then. I was working on the exterior filming out there in the streets of Berlin...Unfortunately, the audience did not reward our efforts....*Isn't Life Wonderful* - I never liked the title, but it was still better than the first idea: *Wronged Receipt*."

He finished his sentence with a twinkle in his eyes still smiling. A man of uncertain age, but somehow familiar. I suddenly remembered a photograph of him: He was wearing the same suit, the same hat. Next to him were Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin was sitting at a table signing the agreement to set up United Artists. The picture was taken in February 1919. He was next to Chaplin, with the same smile in his face, looking into the camera the same as he was looking at me right now. It was D. W. Griffith.

Just two days ago, I had seen *Broken Blossoms*, the movie I like the most of all his work I know so far.

"It is also one of my favorites", he says, somehow reading my thoughts. I remember the famous sentence of Cecil B. De Mille: Griffith "taught us how to photograph thoughts". No wonder that he could read mine.

"I actually like it much more than *Intolerance*", I reply, "I somehow had the feeling that all you tried to say with *Intolerance*, you achieved with *Broken Blossoms* in an economic, elegant way. It is a rather simple story, but your way of telling it gives it a unity and density, which..."

"Nonsense. *Intolerance* is something very different. It has not much in common with *Broken Blossoms*. And by the way, what you call a simple story cost in the end more than *Birth of a Nation*."

"But you got your money back?"

"Oh yes, it cost about \$90.000 and within a couple of years it had earned a profit of over \$700.000. Although almost everybody told me not to make this picture, but I was convinced that the audience would enjoy it."

"A tragic love story between a girl and a boy of different races, that was then quite controversial, I guess."

"Controversial? Miscegenation in the movies was a taboo. The funny thing is, they called me a racist after *The Birth of a Nation* and after *Broken Blossoms* they put me on the opposite side. Anyway, Zukor was not very happy about it. He said: 'You bring me a picture like this and want money for it? You may as well put your hand in my pocket and steal it! Everybody in it dies!' He did not think it

was commercial. He was wrong."

Suddenly I was interviewing one of the great geniuses of the silent era. Was I talking to a ghost? Was I already hallucinating after one exhausting week spent in the dark with the shadows of the dead? Imagine you could talk to D. W. Griffith. What would you ask him? If you only had a dream-long time to talk to him, what would you ask?

He interrupted my somnambulistic brooding with laughter, (did he again read my thoughts?) and then *he* asked me instead, "What do you think of Lillian's performance? Did you like it?"

"I loved it", I said, trying to cover up my uneasiness with exaggerated enthusiasm, "her fragility, her stooped posture, her delicate gestures, her 'tear-aged face', as one intertitle says. She seemed to embody suffering itself. I have read that in the story on which the movie is based the girl actually is a 12-year-old child, but..."

"Well, I think in the movie we made her a 15-year-old. You know, Miss Gish at that time was already 25; but I never thought of casting somebody else for that role. She begged me to do so; she did not want to play it. She thought she was too old, but I did not believe that an inexperienced little girl would be capable of doing the emotional scenes. She even offered to coach any little girl I might choose and prepare every scene with her. Well, I had to persuade her. And I still think I was right."

"What makes her fragility so outstanding is a very carefully constructed character constellation. Her father – Battling Burrows – is constructed as the greatest contrast possible. He is a strong, brutal man, who could easily crush her. That menace is evident in every scene in which they are together."

"Crush her like a little flower, exactly."

"That metaphor is beautifully carried through the whole picture. Flowers, blossoms, branches. When Lucy wakes up in the Chinese man's house, the intertitle is, 'The spirit of beauty breaks her blossoms all about his chamber', whereas a crosscutting shows us her father saying to his agent, 'Wot yer expect me to do – pick violets?' He is again set in contrast to her. The girl is linked with floral elements, while her father is called the 'gorilla of the jungle of East-London', who fights against 'The Limehouse Tiger'."

"Well, characterization is a net of contrasts and correspondences. The ordinary spectator may not recognize everything consciously, but he feels it, he reacts to it emotionally."

"The correspondences are quiet obvious. The Chinese smokes a 'liliated pipe', buys Lucy the flowers she is aching for and finally gives her a love name: 'White Blossoms'. He forms a total opposite to her father."

"She finds gentleness and peace in the yellow man's house. But of course, that can only be temporary."

"For a fleeting moment they form a pseudo-family. The Chinese even buys her a doll as if he would like to underline that."

"Anyway, you mustn't forget that his love to her remains a pure and holy thing. He is a surrogate father, not a lover."

"I would rather say that his desire for her is displaced. He treats her like an object, he fetishizes her, while her real father's incestuous desire is repressed and only expresses itself in the form of violence."

Griffith was shaking his Victorian head and lighted another cigarette: "Now, you are showing off. Didn't they forbid you to use such bragging words?"

Maybe he never thought of one his movies in such categories and I was so arrogant as to think that I could tell him something about his movies he did not know before. Or did I just want to impress him by showing him how closely I have studied his film?

I tried to go on with the conversation. "The desire for her is the only thing these two characters have in common. What defines them is their attitude towards violence. Battling Burrows is a boxer and a brutal tyrant at home. His whole life is dominated by violence, whereas the Chinese has left his home as a missionary, who wants to dedicate his life to bringing people a message of peace and..."

"...and violence destroys them both. Once the chain of events is started, the end is inevitable. Actually, there are more correspondences than you have mentioned so far."

"Its astonishing that you portray the Asian culture as morally superior to the western. All the representatives of the western culture seem to have the same attitude towards violence as Battling Burrows. In of the first scenes we see American sailors starting a fight just for the fun of it. Later you show us two missionaries shortly before leaving for China. The book they give the Chinese has the title: "Hell". They do not bring a message of peace, but the threat of eternal damnation."

"Don't forget the circumstances. We shot *Broken Blossoms* in the winter of 1918. The Great War was just over. You must not forget the impact that the Great Slaughter had upon us all. Western culture was morally bankrupt."

"In *Broken Blossoms* one of the policemen casually reads out of the newspaper: 'Better than last week. Only 40.000 casualties.'"

"Yes, Europe was a slaughterhouse. How could anyone still believe in the superiority of western culture?"

Suddenly I hear the flight attendant's voice informing us that we are going to land. Fasten your seat belts; put your seat in an upright position. This strange thing about dreams mingling everything with everything: David Robinson whispers in my ear, "First of all, shut down your mobile phones, that's the most important thing."

"We have not much time anymore", Griffith says, "You will wake up soon."

But how could I finish yet? I had no ending.

Griffith ordered another drink. As he turned his head towards me, he smiled mischievously. "Is that the way you imagine me? As an old man, who drinks one gin after the other? An old drunkard, who tells anecdotes of a life he had long ago, so long ago, that it is almost a lie? Have you read this in a book? That I spent my last years in a dark house wearing a bathrobe and drinking gin, embittered by my unemployment, resigned and knowing that I will never shoot a movie in this town again? Is that really the way you imagine me?"

He got me. When I thought of Griffith's last years I thought of it as one of these Hollywood tragedies. The man who is claimed to be the founder of Hollywood, after 1931 was ignored by the film industry. The only thing he wanted was to shoot a movie again, to be a director again, but he was almost forgotten. 17 years condemned to wait, without being able to avoid hoping, that maybe one day...But that day never came. Instead, he witnessed how his former assistants achieved fame: Walsh, von Stroheim, even Van Dyke and Browning. The one they learned everything from, is only invited to the studios (if he is invited) as a guest.

"I like your sense for melodrama", he says smiling again, "but you should try to evade these pompous clichés."

David Wark Griffith is scolding me. "I never took myself so seriously. As concerns my movies, I never thought that one of them, any one, would survive, would be still interesting, would be remembered. Movies are written in sand: applauded today, forgotten tomorrow. The same happens to their directors".

He interrupted himself, frowning. Then he burst into laughter. "You are putting these silly sentences into my mouth. I never would say that. Moreover, of course, I would not speak with that terrible German accent you are lending me. Anyway, I must go now", he says.

"Wait! There is one last thing I would like to ask you." I do not know why this is suddenly so important to me: "I remember that Jean-Luc Godard once wrote that in heaven, there are no movies, because there they are unnecessary. The comfort they offer, we only need here on earth. I wonder if you would agree."

Again that smile. "I think you have an end now", he says, "Its time to wake up."

I would like to thank Tom Gunning for kindly enduring my questions about D. W. Griffith and *Broken Blossoms*. The works of Robert M. Henderson, Robert Lang and Karl Brown may have influenced this dream.

ramin sadegh khajani

## railroad drama, japanese style

For me, the surprise of the 24<sup>th</sup> Giornate was *Tokkyu Sanbyaku Mairu* a film made by an unknown (at least to foreign spectators) Japanese filmmaker, Genjiro Saegusa. Noticing its title on the program for the first time, I didn't feel very eager to watch it, even when I found out that the screening would be accompanied by a live orchestra. Only reading its synopsis in the festival catalogue persuaded me to watch this Japanese-style love triangle. However, after watching it, I felt very lucky not to miss this strange film. *Tokkyu* showed us another face of the Japanese cinema, using Western techniques and at the same time creating a truly Japanese work of art. After watching it, I remembered what David Mingay had told me about Naruse's *Street without end*; to him it seemed too Western. So I couldn't imagine what he might say about *Tokkyu*, as Saegusa's film seems even more Westernized in appearance. However, as I will try to describe, the traces of Japanese culture, and reflections of Japanese society at the time the film was made, are apparent throughout the film. Here I should emphasise that a resemblance to Western films should not be regarded as a negative aspect in analyzing a film, as adopting foreign styles and adjusting them to the native culture is not an easy task, even when the result looks like the foreign original. As I come from a country whose film industry for years used to imitate not only Western, but also Indian and Egyptian films in its commercial branch, and this imitation, devoid of any creativity, just resulted in ridiculous copies without even a basic competence, I should acknowledge the skill of Japanese filmmakers. Unfortunately, I felt that this film was undeservedly overlooked, as it had been shown in "Internationale Stummfilmtage - Bonner Sommerkino" once before, but my search for possible feedback on its showing was to no avail. This in part stems from the anonymity of its director among non-Japanese critics. The auteur theory still rules! Just remember how many of Giornate spectators (among them, myself!) were so curious to watch the remaining fragments of a film which was co-directed by Mizoguchi, which, after watching, I felt did not deserve so much enthusiasm. Meanwhile, Saegusa's name didn't arouse that sort of enthusiasm. Another issue is the attitude of most foreigners toward Japanese films. Most admirers of Japanese films, especially those who belong to an older generation, appreciate aspects of this cinema which are alternatives to a Western style. I think one of the reasons for the overwhelming admiration for Ozu or Mizoguchi, for example, is that their unique styles introduce a kind of Japanese aesthetic which is different from a Western one. Of course, I do not mean to question their unrivalled position in film history. But these great directors have shaped the expectations of foreign spectators so that they assume that every great Japanese film should be different in style from Western films; this leads to a sort of exoticism that unfortunately sometimes even dominates evaluation of the films. This is not just the case with Japanese cinema, but also with films from other eastern countries. I have witnessed such reactions from abroad toward films from my country, Iran, so this makes me react strongly to similar responses to Japanese films. In fact, Japanese cinema – like any other national cinema – has shown a wide range of reactions to the influence of foreign cinema, from complete imitation to melting the imported style with native culture and innovating a new style. We can even find strange examples in Japanese cinema like vampire films, which completely follow a Western tradition, without any relation to the Japanese tradition of horror films (which generally deal with ghost stories). As an example we can take a look at *Lake of Dracula* (1971) in which no effort has been made to adapt the film's appearance to Japanese culture. Even in such cases, we should not undervalue a film just because of its imitative appearance, as sometimes it's possible to find aspects of native culture or social structure under this borrowed guise. As an instance, again, I refer to Iranian cinema; *Lead*

(*Masoud Kimiai*- 1988) could be an example which imitates the settings and visual style, if not the characterizations and pacing, of a Western gangster film, but this intentional imitation happens only on the surface, and the ideas expressed by the film are original. In Japanese cinema we can find good examples of this kind: Noburo Nakagawa, who made several cinematic versions of Japanese ghost stories, in *Lady Vampire* (1959) imitates the manner of vampire films too, but there is a great difference between his imitation and what happens in *Lake of Dracula*. In my opinion, *Tokkyu* stands somewhere between these two extreme points; i.e. total imitation and innovation. Although in terms of appearance, it may seem not to contain the strongly perceived Japanese flavour of films such as Ozu's, it does not lack native flavour completely, and succeeds in imbuing its story (which belongs to Western melodramatic trend) with a Japanese atmosphere. In this sense, it may resemble some of Kinugasa's pictures (like *A page of madness*, or *Jujiro*). Unfortunately I haven't seen these films yet, but judging on what I read about them, they resemble *Tokkyu* in adapting Western techniques and stories and at the same time adding a Japanese flavour to them.

To return to Genjiro Saegusa, in the *Giornate Catalogue* his name is listed beside those of Mizoguchi, Uchida and Ito as one of the directors who established the golden age of Japanese silent cinema. However, it seems that he and his works have not been discussed in the main English-language resources. This in part might be due to their authors' preference for *auteurism* and Saegusa's probable lack of personal style. Another likely reason could be the main problem we encounter in studying prewar Japanese cinema, which is the loss of many films. Many of Saegusa's pictures are lost forever and this makes the evaluation of his career pretty hard. But one interesting fact about Saegusa is that he made an adaptation of the stories of Arsène Lupin, a fact which indicates that his interest in taking advantage of Western material was not just limited to *Tokkyu*. Of course he was not alone in this interest; Mizoguchi had the same concern during the first years of his career, before later shifting to use Japanese resources and Japonizing his style. However, in Saegusa's case, it is not clear, at least to me, if he changed his attitude later or not. Also I learned that Saegusa was educated in the *shingeki* style, not directly but through his master/pupil relationship with Kiyomatsu Hosoyama. According to Anderson and Richie, *shingeki* was a trend in Japanese theater introduced as a reaction against *shinpa*, and was related to the movement towards realism in drama that occurred in the west. This may show why Saegusa was influenced by Western forms.

*Tokkyu* was made in 1928. The previous year, 1927, was a key year for Japanese cinema, according to Hiroshi Komatsu. In this year, cinema was accepted as an art in Japan, and in the same year Japanese cinema began to adopt and integrate Western forms instead of merely imitating them. At first, the Japanese attitude to Western models of narration adopted two extreme positions: total acceptance or rejection. According to Anderson and Richie, it was generally believed that films which used new Western technical models belonged to Western people and that they were different from a truly Japanese national cinema. On the other hand, it seems that even the directors who used these new techniques believed in this dichotomy, as their behaviour proves. The best example is Henry Kotani, who even directed his cast and crew in English, and transliterated the scripts to English too.

Just hearing his Westernised pseudonym helps us to imagine all this). But the 1923 Kanto Earthquake put an end to this division, and here, Shochiku Company and its pictures played the main role. This company announced its aim to "introduce the true nature of our national life to foreign countries", and the best way to accomplish this was by adjusting its products to adopt universal techniques. That is exactly what Saegusa has succeeded in doing with *Tokkyu*: while using Western techniques and narrative models, he has been able to reflect the Japanese culture and Japanese society in his film. It is interesting to hear that the film was made by Nikkatsu, one of the most conservative film production companies in Japan at that era. When Japanese films were gradually starting to adopt a Western style, Nikkatsu largely ignored this movement; just few efforts of that kind were made by Eizo Tanaka. During the first years of 1920s, Nikkatsu was still producing old-fashioned films. By seeing that such a conservative company changed its attitude in just a few years and produced such a modern work for its time as *Tokkyu*, we see also how rapid was the rate of modernization in Japan at that time.

*Tokkyu* was apparently influenced by an Impressionist style. According to Komatsu, in the late twenties, Japanese cinema was under the influence of French and German cinema, and, as we know,

France was the birthplace of impressionism in cinema. *Tokkyu* is more influenced by French impressionism than by German expressionism. As we know, in impressionistic films, directors tried to convey the complete atmosphere of scenes to the spectators and to do so, they manipulated the world of the film through cinematic techniques such as editing, lighting and so on, not, as in Expressionist films, through using such theatrical devices as stage designs. As Riche and Anderson wrote: "distortions [...] take place in the artist's treatment and not in the material themselves". *Tokkyu* is full of such manipulations. In the runaway train sequence near the beginning of the film, we can see how the increasing pace of editing is used to express the frantic speed of train, so that in the final scenes of this sequence, when the train is at its utmost speed, the shots become blurred, and when Shigero (the hero of the film) finally manages to stop the train, the following cut has an effect on the viewer comparable to the shock caused by the sudden stopping of a train. This sequence can be compared with any action sequence of the modern cinema, in terms of its power. I must add here that, according to Komatsu, one of the important foreign films which had strongly influenced Japanese cinema at that era, was Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1922), which even had a powerful impact on *jidai-geki* films; the traces of this impact could be noticed in the condensed version of Ito's *Slashing Swords* shown in this year Giornate. It's interesting to know that *La Roue* – which is usually regarded as one of the summits of the French impressionist movement – is a railroad drama like *Tokkyu*. It should be noted that impressionist techniques are not limited to the sequence mentioned above. Subjective shots are used at several points of film, like the sequence during which Omiyo (the heroine) imagines the face of the ringmaster in the apple she has in her hand, or when Shigero imagines Omiyo's suicide after reading her farewell letter. The same can be said about the use of extreme close up to show the ringmaster's eyes, before cutting to the extreme close-up of Omiyo's lips, in order to express his lust for her. This use of extreme close-up is unique in the film, but nevertheless is of a piece with other impressionist devices used by Saegusa. This also led me to assume, that maybe the use and adoption of an impressionist style by Japanese cinema is due to its compatibility with Japanese culture. We know that in the work of great Japanese filmmakers, the atmosphere of the film is as important as the characters and sometimes even more important than them, and they have tried to capture and convey the sentiments summoned up by the atmosphere. As Richie and Anderson have noted in their book, Japanese films are mostly sentimental, granting small issues a great deal of emotional concern. Given such a cultural trend, the style which emphasizes the emotions and expresses them can be utilized by the native cinema. Of course this issue should be studied by Japanese researchers who know their native culture better than foreign writers. But in my opinion, while the style of *Tokkyu* is not originally Japanese, it is not in conflict with Japanese culture.

I should mention here that the power of runaway train sequence does not just result from the increasing pace of editing. Camera movements also complement the editing, as the final shots of this sequence employ rapid movements of the camera that sometimes resemble handheld camerawork. In some instances, two opposite movements cut to each other and the cumulative effect of these cuts helps this sequence to become more powerful (Such an effect is used again later in the film, where Shigero goes after Omiyo who has left him to commit suicide). Moreover the use of superimposed images increases the sense of chaos of this sequence. These effects make this sequence unforgettable.

*Tokkyu* apparently belongs to a classical narrative form (according to David Bordwell's categorization) and that might be a possible reason for its being ignored by most critics, especially those who are looking for innovation in foreign cinemas. They are more attracted by the parametric style of Ozu's films (again using Bordwell's terminology) rather than the classical style of Saegusa's. Apart from its opening and final sequences, which I would term its prologue and epilogue, and the brief flashbacks to events in Omiyo's earlier life, *Tokkyu's* narrative is linear: events follow each other successively and there is a cause-and-effect relationship between them. The heroes of the film pursue certain aims that justify their actions, and nothing remains ambiguous and unsolved by the end of the film. Though occasionally these rules are broken in the film, the divergence is not so great that it could not be labeled as belonging to the classical style. Since the film takes advantages of impressionist techniques, sometimes it steps into the realm of subjectivity, like the sequence in which Omiyo imagines the ringmaster attacking her. Or sometimes it uses shots which do not belong

to the classical style, like the shot in which the seductive woman is looking directly at the viewer, smoking a cigarette, as if she is looking at Shigero while merely thinking about him. Also I can mention the use of fast motion to indicate that the neighbour's kid is hurrying to catch Shigero. We note that the film is a melodrama and not a comedy, while fast motion in Hollywood was chiefly used in slapstick comedies. Besides, *Tokkyu* is a melodrama compatible with Richie and Anderson's description of Japanese Melodrama: stories of a young heroine who must confront familial, physical and emotional problems which endanger her love for a young man. Of course in this case, the film has a happy ending; an ending which looks a bit curious, especially for the non-Japanese viewer.

We'll discuss this again later.

Here I should mention the elaborate and symmetrical structure of the film. It is narrated in a flashback style, bracketed by its first and final sequences, its prologue and epilogue. Just after the prologue, there is the runaway train sequence. We find a comparable sequence just before the epilogue, I mean the sequence in which the train is about to collide and is intercut with the scene of the ringmaster attacking Omiyo. While these two sequences can be compared with each other in terms of their rhythm, there is another delicate relation between them. In the former sequence, it's Shigero who saves Omiyo's life, while in the latter, it's Omiyo who repays and rescues him by sending her spirit to warn him. There are also two sequences which play with the spectator and his expectations. In the middle of the film, Omiyo sees the ringmaster who enters her house and attacks her; at the end of this sequence we find out that all this has taken place in her imagination. Since, in this sequence, the film shifts from reality to imagination without any warning, the spectator is deceived and assumes this sequence is a part of reality. We observe the same effect in the penultimate sequence, when we see a close up of a dead body and Omiyo's ghost near the railroad, then we deduce that Omiyo has been killed by the ringmaster. But the subsequent sequence proves us to be wrong and shows we are deceived once more. To add to this, we can also note that the ringmaster attacks Omiyo twice, first in the middle of the film in the imaginative world and the second time near its end in the real world. Also, before the first attack sequence, we see Omiyo imagine the ringmaster's face on the apple and then stab it with a knife; this action is repeated near the end when Omiyo kills the ringmaster with a knife. This use of symmetry, repetition and variation on a theme – and the aforementioned play between imagination and reality – reveals the careful structure of the film.

If we take a closer look at the film's protagonists, we can find out that they reflect Japanese culture and society. Shigero is a typical Japanese hero: a resolute worker and a model for his colleagues, who puts his professional duties before his personal feelings – an acceptance of responsibility which the film applauds. Japanese film staff apparently insisted on completely and distinctly separating the two major film genres, *jidai-geki* and *gendai-geki*. However, here the border between the two genres blurs as Shigero, with such a great sense of responsibility, seems to come directly from a traditional *jidai-geki*. According to Richie and Anderson, one of the main themes of *jidai-geki* is the conflict between duties and personal feelings, which is usually caused by powers from the outside world over which the individual has little control. Incidentally, Shigero's strength is not as remarkable as his responsibility and bravery (he stops the runaway train almost single-handed), as he is beaten by his rival's men and even in the final sequence, it is Omiyo's soul (or ghost) who saves him and the passengers of his train. It seems that the *jidai-geki* hero who has been brought into modern era does not need to be necessarily a superhero and it is his interaction with the opposite sex which leads to final success, a kind of celebration of the institution of family which is one of the most essential values in Japanese culture. Another thing that makes Shigero a typical traditional Japanese hero is his morality. Contrary to his neighbour, Shigero pays no attention to the seductive woman and rejects her temptation (indeed, his loyalty to traditional ethical rules is shared with traditional *Jidai-geki* heroes too). Another important point about Shigero is his occupation. He is a locomotive driver, someone who deals with imported technology. Here, then, Western technology has been accepted as a beneficial Western cultural influence on Japan. But if this technology goes out of the control, the result will be a catastrophe, and that's why here a responsible Japanese hero's crucial role is emphasized. This is the sort of hero who can tame that wild Western creature, the locomotive. *Tokkyu* reflects an era when Japanese society finally accepted Western technology as an inescapable reality. Then it was time to train people who could use it in the national interest.

Shigero is the hero of his time who walks on the borderline between old and new worlds. He wears the Western-style uniform of locomotive drivers and at the same time prays to the spirits of his parents, fulfilling a Japanese tradition after receiving the medal. Of course, the exaltation of a technician can reveal another attribute of Japanese sensibilities, i.e. their fascination with machinery. Richie and Anderson indicate, for example, that during the first years of introduction of motion pictures to Japan, people were more interested in the projector and the way it worked than in the movie itself. Also it can be said that the hero of the film mirrors the film itself: Shigero is a locomotive driver and at the same time a true Japanese with a remarkable sense of responsibility; the film too, has a Western look in terms of its technique, but conveys a Japanese ideology.

Omiyo is similarly a model Japanese heroine. The interesting point is that, contrary to our expectations of Eastern societies, Japanese women in films, who in part must represent women in society, are not passive at all and possess values and capacities of equal importance to those of their male counterparts. Here, women should devote themselves to keeping the family institution safe, and of course this devotion will encourage male progress and success. As we see in *Tokkyu*, Omiyo defends herself against the rapist, and at the same time rescues Shigero. This devotion results in the establishment of a warm family institution. Consider the final shot of the film, when the supervisor talks about the ultimate happy ending of their story and their warm family. Before this, Omiyo was just a wife, but now she has attained the place of a mother, owing to her self-sacrifice. According to Richie and Anderson, in Japanese films the most important achievement of women is not to become a wife, but to become a mother. Now that Omiyo and Shigero have passed their examinations, they deserve to build the Japanese "holy circle" of the family. The shot showing their happy family seems as if they are in heaven; compare Shigero's sad looking face in the prologue with his cheerful face in this shot. The importance of family is emphasized again in Omiyo's flashback. Omiyo has been an abandoned and adopted child and all the bitterness of her destiny results from this fact. In order to gain happiness in her life, she must belong to a family. The same can be said about Shigero, though with less emphasis. He is alone too, but keeps relations with his parents by praying for their souls. Besides, his relation with his neighbours is so warm that he seems to be a member of their family. Close relationships between neighbours, of course, are another feature of Eastern cultures; we can see a similar example in Naruse's *Nightly Dreams*. From a feminist point of view, Omiyo's reaction to the ringmaster can be read as a rebellion against patriarchy. She is insulted and offended repeatedly by several men, from the man who has brought her up to the ringmaster, and so she finally attacks this masculinity with its own weapon. The knife, which could be interpreted as the symbol of offensive masculinity, is used by the ringmaster to impose his power and he might even have tormented the girl with it. I remember a scene from *What Made Her Do It?* by Shigeyoshi Suzuki in which the heroine, who is also tormented by a ringmaster, is bound to a wall and the ringmaster throw knives at her. The same might have happened to Omiyo before. By the way, what makes Omiyo's rebellion different from similar feminist rebellion in Western works, is its aim: Omiyo revolts not to gain independence, but to become more integrated into the family system.

The ringmaster, the villain of the film, is the counterpoint of Shigero. With his Western-style moustache, he combines all the features rejected by Japanese traditional culture. Apparently he is fascinated by West, capricious and unfaithful to his wife. He owns a circus in which friendly and familial relations characteristic of Japanese culture have been replaced with a slavery-like system. Like Shigero, his profession is in something imported from the west, i.e. the circus. But the circus is denounced as a symbol of the negative aspects of Western civilization. Saegusa's attitude is this: among Western phenomena, the technological innovations which can be used for advancement of society should be accepted and utilized for the people, while for other imported features, like the circus, which deal with pleasure and enjoyment, there should be no place in society. The circus is the symbol of entertainment imported from the West. But here we face an essential question: in which category should "film", as a Western feature, be put in, technology or entertainment? *Tokkyu* is not unique in this negative attitude toward the circus in Japanese cinema. In Suzuki's previously mentioned film, too, the circus is regarded as the place for unjust behaviour by a boss toward his staff. In *Tokkyu*, the director does not show us the different items of a circus show, but the shot

which shows the ringmaster with his employees is quite expressive; in this shot, ringmaster harshly puts his girls in a row and sends them to the stage, as if they are tamed animals.

The fourth protagonist of this drama, the temptress, is an opposite and an alternative to Omiyo. She might share a similar past with Omiyo; she might have been entrapped by ringmaster, but submitted to him and has not made any resistance. This fact has shaped her present situation. She too is alone, without any family, and the director relentlessly views her alongside the ringmaster in a negative light. Although resembling the vamps of American cinema, her character is apparently shaped by the negative attitudes of traditional Japanese towards women fascinated by the West.

This kind of negative attitude is expressed through her smoking, a habit which is still frowned upon in some traditional societies even now. Her submission to Western cultural temptations leaves her with no place in the traditional hero's heart. Moreover she also represents the glamorous surface of

Western civilization which Shigero resists. The sequence in which he rescues Omiyo can be interpreted through this metaphor. Shigero rejects the seductive woman and her temptations as the symbol of an enticing but destructive Western culture, and saves Omiyo, who is near to death, just like traditional Japanese values. Unfortunately this woman's personality is not well developed in the film: we don't know anything about her past, and the film suddenly abandons her, so she is treated no more than as a symbol or stereotype (of course this problem also exists with the characterization of the ringmaster, but not so much as with this woman, since at least film shows his destruction).

Her relationship with Shigero is reminiscent of "*street films*" made during the Weimar era, and we should remember that both Japan and Germany fell into the hands of fascism after a decade of democratic government. It seems that this film, along with Weimar "*street films*", acknowledge the unhealthiness of the society and its need for a pure hero who does not submit to its temptations and wants to purge the society. Hence, they unconsciously predict their societies moving toward the acceptance of a dictatorship in the following decade. Also the temptress and her behaviour reminded me of the young energetic daughter in Minoru Murata's *Souls on the road*, with her Western-style clothes and her naughtiness, who is apparently influenced by the West and at the same time has a positive role in the drama. By comparing these two characters, we can see how the attitude toward the West and acceptance of its cultural features had changed during such a short period of time.

Not only the characters, but also the whole film, carries the atmosphere of its era. *Tokkyu* was made two years after Hirohito's accession and the beginning of Showa Period. At this time, two main socially active groups could be observed in Japan which, according to Noel Burch, were a consequence of the Kanto earthquake and economical depression. The first group consisted of middle-class people who were in favor of Westernization, and the second was composed of extreme traditionalists. The film somehow mirrors both groups and their ideas. In one hand, it favours the first group in using a modern structure and being influenced by the modern European cinema. On the other hand, it recognizes the other group through its characters and the point of view it conveys.

It is as if the director has tried to make a balance between those two group and two opposite opinions. In the thirties, it was the rightist group who would take power and lead Japan to World War II. This nationalist government encouraged filmmakers to direct films that, according to Anderson and Richie, took as their main themes the spirit of sacrifice and loyalty. Patriotism too was emphasized in them. *Tokkyu* predicts the production of such material ahead of its time. Here Shigero leaves his wife to do his duties. So he is comparable with soldiers who are sent to the front and leave their families behind, while Omiyo is in a situation similar to their women who defend their family during their husbands' absence.

As I wrote before, the company that produced this picture, Nikkatsu, was one of the most conservative companies in the twenties. Its rapid change in manner could have been due to social changes. According to Burch: "...sudden, wholesale adaptation has always be linked with the need of a ruling or rising class to reject traditional values to increase its power." In this case, the rising class was the liberal middle class, specifically intellectuals who had united with a rapidly growing proletariat. *Tokkyu* demonstrates and celebrates this union, as the hero belongs to the proletariat, while the fine look of the film satisfies the aesthetic needs of intellectuals. Besides, *Tokkyu* was made just one year after the economic crisis in Japan in 1927. Solving this crisis required the development of Japanese industries in order to produce economic growth and employment, so the authorities might have seen it as desirable for films to encourage industrial development. As I was

informed by Alexander Jacoby, the railroad had a major role in the life of Japanese people and the development of their society (partly because of the poor condition, before the war, of Japanese roads). That's why the Ministry of Railroads supported the production of *Tokkyu*, since its hero could be a model for other workers and encourage them to work harder and with more responsibility. This may justify the happy ending of the film, which initially seems incongruous. Furthermore, the film was produced in a crisis era and as Anderson and Richie wrote, this made directors choose between two different paths. Some decided to escape from reality in their films by ignoring it, while others turned to making "tendency films". As this film is a melodrama, we can categorize it in the first division; however on a closer look we can find traces of social criticism in it, such as in the relations between the ringmaster and his employees, which finally lead to Omiyo's rebellion. By the way, if we compare *Tokkyu* with, for example, Suzuki's *What Made Her Do It?* (which is clearly a tendency film), the social criticism is pretty vague. In particular, Suzuki's film has a sad ending which makes its social criticism more effective, while Saegusa's ends with a happy ending that invites the spectator to fantasize. It's interesting to know that after the production of "tendency films" became fashionable, both Saegusa and Nikkatsu began to make films that drew on the conventions of this genre.

In terms of production standards, *Tokkyu* is not inferior to Western films of that era. There is no sign of what Burch named as exaggeration in the use of imported techniques by Japanese filmmakers, the phenomenon he has defined as a "typical Japanese process of transformation and radicalization".

In this film, fast and dynamic editing is used to serve the narrative line instead of hindering it, as happens in Soviet films. However there are points in the film which reveal the influence of native Japanese aesthetics. This is especially obvious in the use of poetic shots and dissolves. As an example, consider a close up of Omiyo's face covered with water drops. Or when a shot showing Shigero's friends around his bed dissolves to the similar shot that shows just Omiyo beside him. But the best example of this influence is two sequences, in both of which dissolves are used to create an emotionally intense atmosphere. The first instance is in the sequence that Shigero prays for his parents after receiving the medal. Here, the multiple dissolves create a sense of spirituality and a cumulative effect which builds up to the last shot, in which Shigero bursts into tears. It is as if these dissolves have intensified the emotional weight of every single shot so the whole sensation spills over in the final shot. The second example is where Shigero finds Omiyo, who has decided to commit suicide again, near the pool. Here three shots of Omiyo and Shigero dissolve to each other to create that lyrical sense. Richie and Anderson have described the lyricism of Japanese films and the resemblance of moments in them to the methods of haiku. That's exactly the sense created during this set of dissolves, especially because there are three shots here, the same number as the verses of a haiku. Besides, the shots are a bit static, especially owing to the rather fast pace of previous sequences that have shown Shigero in search of Omiyo. Thus, the tranquility of this shot is more prominent. The effect is not identical to that of haiku, since each of the three haiku verses shows a different component of a whole and their conjunction shapes a general feeling; here all three shots belong to a similar subject. Again according to Richie and Anderson, this lyricism of Japanese films usually manifests itself through an escape to nature, and this is precisely the case here, as this sequence happens in the country and during a silent night. Of course, Western-style symbolism is utilized in *Tokkyu* too; in the sequence which shows Shigero and Omiyo in their home, just starting their mutual life, we see them keeping two birds in a cage, like a symbol of their matrimonial life.

This use of birds as a symbol reminded me of Stroheim's *Greed*.

Another issue which differentiates *Tokkyu* from similar non-Japanese works is the way that Shigero is rescued. It seems to be a tradition of Eastern culture that a wife's soul appears to her husband as a ghost and rescues him from a real threat. Particularly in Japanese culture, ghosts are not always wicked, and only in cases like a husband's infidelity do they choose to seek revenge. But in *Tokkyu* the most interesting point is that the wife's soul (or ghost) comes to help Shigero while she is still alive. For me as a non-Japanese viewer, this was a bit hard to digest; in my own national culture, I have not encountered such a case, and I am not sure if this strange occurrence is rooted in Japanese culture and literature or not. Alexander Jacoby suggested to me that it was possible that the film had a different ending and originally ended with Omiyo's sacrifice and death, but later, for

commercial reasons, the producers decided to change it. I am very eager to hear Japanese critics' opinions about this matter too.

The other issue that gives *Tokkyu* a Japanese look is its use of super-inscriptions, i.e. intertitles which are superimposed on the pictures. Among silent films I have seen, this technique is mostly used in Japanese films and it appears to have been a routine technique during the silent era in Japanese cinema. Burch relates this kind of intertitles to a Japanese tradition which stretched from the "...sutra inscribed mirrors of the Fujiwara period to the 'painting poems' of later eras". However, in my opinion, it has been just a change to create visual variety. In *Tokkyu*, especially, these super-inscriptions are sometimes in motion, and so have a positive impact on intensifying the rhythm of the action sequences, an effect which could be compared with the moving or size-changing intertitles of Soviet silent cinema.

I think that the film ending deserves some discussion here. As I indicated before, the whole film is narrated as a flashback for the railway inspector. This could remind us of the similar narrative forms in silent cinema, and one of the most famous of them: *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. But unlike that film, where the epilogue reverse the sane and insane characterization, and unlike other similar examples, here in *Tokkyu* the prologue and epilogue do not play a crucial role in the narrative. In fact, they even seem to be redundant, since nothing remarkable happens in these sequences unless we assume that they have been designed to shift the story towards a happy ending, as mentioned before. The uselessness of this sequence in terms of its narrative function partly reveals the difference between Japanese and, for example, Hollywoodian narrative systems. According to Noel Burch, in the Hollywoodian system, every component is at the service of narration, while in the Japanese system, there are parts without important narrative functions (the sequence where Shigero cries is one of these parts). This feature, of course, is rooted in other Japanese art forms. At the same time, this framing story may have been intended satisfy the ministry which supported the film, as this sequences shows how much authorities support and care for their hard-working and disciplined workers and their problems. By the way, the commentary style of this sequence could be related to the Japanese "culture of commentary". As Donald Richie told us in the last *Collegium* session of this year, Japanese people are used to comment continuously about every issue, so this sequence, which shows the supervisor and inspector talking about this story, may testify to this feature of Japanese culture. A similar approach is used in *Souls on the road*; however, in the latter film flash forwards are used to create this commentary. In addition to all these, this final sequence, in which the whole story is related by the supervisor, can be regarded as a form of tribute to the institution of the *benshi*. As Burch wrote in his book, the *benshi*'s job was to make the film story completely clear to the spectators and remove its ambiguities. That is why using avant-garde techniques by Japanese filmmakers in a way that caused tempo-spatial ambiguity never confused Japanese spectators, as there was always a *benshi* to guide them. In the final sequence, the supervisor tells us the end of the story and makes clear how the ringmaster and Omiyo's fighting ended. While *Tokkyu* had lessened the need for an interpreter in the extremely visual first sequence of the runaway train, at the end it implicitly acclaims the *benshi*'s role. Indeed, it could have provided an opportunity for the *benshi* to interpret the whole story for the open-mouthed viewer, just like the supervisor in the film, and the use of just one single shot of Shigero's happy family strengthens this assumption.

Watching a film just once cannot be sufficient to evaluate it thoroughly. This is especially the case if the film was made in a country like Japan where, as Donald Richie told us, in order to fully comprehend its films, it is essential to live there and among its people. However, I hope that this short paper can persuade others to watch and re-evaluate this film. In a world which is in the process of changing to a "Global village", and in which, native cultures are gradually going to disappear, *Tokkyu* could be regarded as an inspiration for infusing native culture into mainstream cinema. In that light, it was wonderfully appropriate that the film was co-presented by a Japanese and a non-Japanese, to wit, Yoneo Ota and the German Gunther Buchwald.

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## **epstein vs. antoine: the crossroads of pictorialist naturalism and cinematic impressionism in *la belle nivernaise***

Giornate 2005's retrospective of French Realism provided a priceless opportunity for a rediscovery of André Antoine's films. Philippe Esnault regretfully points out that younger directors (and many critics) of the time had nothing but disdain for Antoine's work: "apart from Louis Delluc, the younger generation of the 1920s – Gance, Epstein, L'Herbier, et al. – were concerned with modernism and continuous innovations; they put up a wall against the filmmaking of their elders, and considered the film work of this old theater giant retrograde and even wrong-headed"(1). Even Delluc criticized Antoine's films for their unnaturally exaggerated theatrical acting ("actors...still remember their Conservatory training"(2), especially indicating that overwrought acting becomes even more evident in "scenes of exterior life, producing "the mushy smell of theatre." Another line of attack was Antoine's predilection for choosing literary stories that were often deemed too convoluted and "unwieldy in structure"(3). However, despite all critical dissent, Antoine became the sole architect of what came to be known as the pictorialist naturalist trend, which occupied the middle ground between cinematic impressionism and the ordinary commercial productions during the postwar era (4).

Antoine was born in 1858 into a petty bourgeois family (his father was a railroad company clerk). However, because his family's financial situation was quite strained he was not able to attend the prestigious Lyceé Charlemagne in spite of being awarded a scholarship. Instead he worked as a clerk and served 5 years in the army, where his health was severely damaged. At the age of 27 he joined an amateur theatrical club in Montmartre as an actor. He quickly moved up and eventually opened his own theatre, called the Théâtre-Libre in 1887. While Théâtre-Libre won fame and popularity due to Antoine's many innovations, financial misfortunes forced him to close the theatre, leaving him hopelessly in debt. Luckily, in 1914 Pathé offered Antoine a film contract that was promptly accepted, thus marking the beginning of his career as a film director.

Antoine's film philosophy was centered on the concept of visual authenticity (achieved through location shooting) as well as on the extreme importance he attributed to the careful composition of the mise-en-scène. As early as 1917, he argued that "cinema should make real progress if it abandoned the studios to work in nature just as the Impressionist did. Instead of improvising an artificial milieu for the camera, we should transport the cameraman and his instruments into real buildings and interiors, as well as develop mobile electric generators for lighting" (5). Also, Antoine believed that cinema cannot be a medium for the expression of the subjective interior life of a character (6) and instead should present the external behavior of the character in three-dimensional space as prescribed by the original literary source. As a result of these convictions, Antoine generally relied on sparse editing (with drawn-out takes in long shots), while paying close attention to beautifully constructed mises-en-scène. Oftentimes, these create a feeling of constriction by limiting the possibility of dynamic development.

By consistently shying away from close-ups and avoiding the symbolic use of props (beyond their functional purposes), Antoine forced his actors into an impossible conundrum: on one hand,

realistic, oftentimes outdoor setting demanded a natural style of acting. On the other hand, the absence of subjective cinematic devices forced actors to rely solely on their acting powers when conveying their characters' emotions. For example, courtroom scenes in *Le Coupable* (1917) present an overwrought acting style throughout the prosecutor's unexpected confession: the actor stares into the camera, wrings his hands in despair, rolls his eyes around in an attempt to portray deep shame and guilt. These scenes seem especially convoluted and strained because of cross-cutting with flashbacks in which the streets of Paris tell a story of their own much more naturalistically and effortlessly. However, even in *Le Coupable* one can find a scene that appears to go against the grain of Antoine's stylistic conventions; it depicts the protagonist as a young boy indulging himself (with the encouragement of his friend) by smoking a prohibited cigarette. As the action unfolds, it becomes clear that this transgression is not a simple act of disobedience, but the beginning of the protagonist's downfall into crime. The surprising aspect of the episode is that instead of forcing the character to tell the story, Antoine relies on an activity (smoking) centered on an object (cigarette) to convey the implications.

Yet another fascinating observation can be made about Antoine's unfinished *L'Hirondelle et la mésange*, which was not assembled into a film until a recent restoration. (Antoine's son explained that the directors of Pathé-Consortium were dissatisfied with the film; there are also claims that because of unfortunate shooting conditions Antoine himself did not want to release it.) In one of the early scenes, an old sailor is interacting with his "crew" (the crew consisting of one helpmate). In the first shot, both the sailor and his helpmate are captured in a medium shot from the waist down, essentially limiting our view of them to their legs. The helpmate's legs are lazily stretched across the deck (their owner obviously enjoying an idle break), but the sailor's foot kicks the helpmate out of his rest and into action (in a more closely framed shot). The slapstick-like interaction between the feet of the two characters culminates in an uncharacteristically dynamic and effortless resolution. However, we have to keep in mind that while this footage was doubtlessly shot by Antoine, it is quite unclear whether (and in what manner) he was intending to use it, since he never finished the film.

As Richard Abel points out, although footage shot by Antoine for *L'Hirondelle et la mésange* was not realized into film, "several years later, a number of films more or less fulfilled Antoine's ambitions" (7). One of the films was Jean Epstein's *La Belle Nivernaise*. Even though Epstein is often referred to as cinematic impressionist, the range of his artistic endeavors cannot be easily contained within a single cinematic movement. Jean Epstein was born in 1897 in Warsaw. After the death of his father, the family moved to Switzerland; having graduating from school, Epstein attended the University of Lyon in order to obtain a degree in medicine, but dropped out after two years. After becoming friends with the poet Blaise Cendrars, Epstein established a number of friendships in Paris which, together with his keen interest in cinema, eventually led him to direct *Coeur fidèle* in 1923. The film was inspired by Gance's *La Roue* (Abel Gance was a significant impressionist director of the time) and it is appropriate that in this film, Epstein experimented extensively with rapid editing, put together in regular rhythmic patterns (8). *Coeur fidèle* was a huge success. By 1924, however, Epstein moved on to direct a very different film: *La Belle Nivernaise*.

The film is a simple and somewhat naïve story (adapted from Alphonse Daudet's popular novel) about a river barge owner, Louveau, who adopts a little homeless boy into his family. The boy (Victor) grows up into a young man and becomes Louveau's right hand (to the unabating envy of Louveau's helpmate); Victor is also falling in love with Louveau's daughter, Clara, but the relationship is presented as swaying somewhat ambiguously between fraternal affection and youthful love. Matters get more complicated when Louveau learns that Victor is the lost son of a charcoal shipper, Maugendre. While Louveau is away arranging for Victor's return to his father, his helpmate attacks Victor, attempts to rape Clara, and nearly causes the barge to crash into a lock. Maugendre sends Victor off to a lycée in hopes of educating him, but quickly realizes that Victor does not belong there, and that his heart and his mind are preoccupied with life on the river. In the

end, Victor and Clara are reunited as a couple on a new barge of their own called "La Nouvelle Nivernaise," that is presented to them by Maugendre.

Some of the critics who initially praised the film were impressed by "the rhythmic fluidity generated by its landscape and mediated by Epstein's camera; they compared it favorably to the early masterworks of the Swedish cinema" (9). Similarly, Richard Abel devotes much of his discussion of the film to the way in which it refines the conventions of realist films by privileging description over narrative. Abel also points out the fluid quality of editing, as well as drawing attention to film's ambiguities, noting that "as in Jean Renoir's films, the lovely, seductive rhythm of the river sometimes carries with it an ominous undercurrent" (10). However, by and large, the film was not well received by the critics of its time, mostly because many were expecting another film with the multiple sequences of rapid cutting that were Epstein's trademark. Richard Abel also notes that the film suffers from a number of shortcomings: for example, the sequence in the second part, where the barge has drifted dangerously close to the lock while Victor is fighting the barge mate not only does not achieve much emotional effect with its rapid editing, but also demonstrates obvious mismatches in the barge's position (11). Abel's reservations seem appropriate, since when Epstein himself re-screened the film several years after its release, he felt that it gave "an impression of slowness and attenuated rhythm" (12); and with some disappointment wrote it off as outdated.

As a spectator with a first-hand experience of watching *La Belle Nivernaise*, I have to respectfully disagree with those who dismiss the film as archaic. For all of the film's imperfections, *La Belle Nivernaise* is surprisingly accessible even today. Its particularly brilliant moments possess an almost contemporary sensibility, despite the naiveté and sentimentality of the story. I suspect that the reason for the film's endurance lies in Epstein's light touch, which can be characterized by his reliance on the power of irony and his use of subtle self-referential allusions. The presence of irony in particular serves to protect the film from becoming an outdated camp spectacle (which, it seems, is the fate of many silent films). For example, let us examine the scene early in the film, when a little boy is found on the street, abandoned and helpless, clutching a lamp post. While Epstein does not shy away from using varied types of shots (long, medium, close-ups) and a good amount of editing (I counted 25 cuts in 3 minutes), the scene not only serves to advance the story, but manifests the essence of his light touch. The case in point is his depiction of the *boulangier*, who is among the crowd of bystanders gathered around the boy. In shot #4 (counting from the beginning of the scene) he is picking his nose; he is still doing it when he is shown again in panning shot # 21, which creates an impression of continuous action. Not only does the man's comically inappropriate behavior add a humorous dimension to the scene; it can also be read as a meta-comment on the very experience of watching a movie. While the *boulangier* is witnessing someone else's drama, he is quite absorbed by the scene and at the same time clearly has no desire to intervene. His benign, detached interest is akin to the feelings of many film-goers: the drama unfolding on-screen makes it impossible to turn away, and yet does not constitute a call to action. Such is the voyeuristic pleasure of film: on one hand the suffering seems real, yet on the other hand, the spectator bears no responsibility to act.

Epstein's professed love for the close-up is apparent in his essay "Magnification:" "the close-up is the soul of the cinema... I have never understood motionless close-ups. They sacrifice their essence, which is movement" (13). For example, in the beginning of the film, a grown-up Clara is presented not by a shot of her face; instead, we first see her restless feet in a close-up, which perfectly conveys her cheerful character. In another instance, the exclusion of the helpmate from the Louveau family is portrayed through a close-up of an empty glass as the rest of them toast.

Yet another interesting aspect of *La Belle Nivernaise* is Epstein's masterful use of games and other activities (frequently structured around objects) to tell a story. In a pivotal moment during the first part of the film where Louveau brings the little Victor home and his wife is violently opposed to adopting the child, but allows him to stay for "just this night," the shot of Clara and Victor playing the children's hand game foretells that the boy will be accepted into the family. Similarly, when Victor is sent away to the lycée, Clara's style of playing checkers with Louveau (how indifferent she

is to winning or losing and how she sweeps the pieces off the board) convey her loneliness without the need for overwrought acting. In yet another scene, Victor is in the school yard: in a tracking medium shot he is seen trying to work his way through a group of other boys playing soccer, but he is not joining in. Similarly, when Victor falls ill, his hallucinations are centered on the drawing of Mary that is hanging above his bed: in the sequence the image of Mary blends into Clara's face. All these examples point to the ways in which Epstein not merely realized the pictorialist traditions of Antoine, but took them a step further by combining impressionism's emphasis on editing and on the psychology of the characters with the pictorialist naturalist's desire for visual authenticity. Curiously, by mixing these two distinct trends, Epstein was able not only to produce an original work of art in line with Antoine's aspirations, but successfully to incorporate elements that were entirely antithetical to Antoine's philosophy of cinema.

- (1) Le Giornate del cinema muto 2005 catalogue, p. 55
- (2) Louis Delluc, "Antoine at Work" (from Antoine travaille, *Le Film*, 75 (20 August 1917), 5-7) Translated by Richard Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*,
- (3) Richard Abel. *French Film Theory and Criticism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 105
- (4) Alan Williams. *Republic of Images: A history of French Filmmaking*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 113.
- (5) Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The first wave 1915-1929*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 95-96
- (6) Richard Abel. *French Film Theory and Criticism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 106
- (7) Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The first wave 1915-1929*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 114
- (8) Alan Williams. *Republic of Images: A history of French Filmmaking*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 120-122.
- (9) Ibid, p. 116
- (10) Ibid, p. 117
- (11) Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The first wave 1915-1929*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 115.
- (12) Jean Epstein, "Fragments of Sky". In: Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The first wave 1915-1929*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 422
- (13) Richard Abel. *French Film Theory and Criticism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 235-240.

andrew legge

## **pastiche, parody or homage? silent film for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

"Pastiche" is an adjective commonly used by film critics when describing films that they deem unoriginal and full of references to other films. The word is usually used in a derogatory manner. For example, in the past, the likes of Stephen Spielberg and Tim Burton have had their work denigrated as "pastiche". Spielberg's *Munich* was described as a "James Bond pastiche" by one film critic. This is because much of their work contains references to 1950s and 1960s TV movies.

On the other hand films such as *Pulp Fiction* which is famously filled with movie allusions and scenes lifted from other films was celebrated by the critics as "post modern" and Quentin Tarantino was hailed as the most outstanding film director of the 1990s. Many of Woody Allen's films have references to the films of Allen's favorite director Ingram Bergman, but Allen is never labeled a director of "pastiche". Some of the films of Joel and Ethan Coen such as *The Hudsucker Proxy* been given another label - "homage". This essay is a personal attempt to examine these distinctions established by critics, drawing on my own somewhat limited experience as a maker of films, particularly in attempting to adapt the feeling and aesthetic of silent cinema to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

When I attended Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Sacile last October as a member of the collegium I was fortunate also to have a short film that I had made earlier that year showing in the festival. The film, entitled *The Unusual Inventions of Henry Cavendish*, was made as a silent film using only a specially written musical score as its sound track. The response generated by the film both at Sacile and other film festivals was very positive, primarily I suspect because the film sets out to entertain and (I hope and believe) succeeds in doing this. Some people at Sacile were curious to know why someone in his twenties from Ireland would go off and make a silent film. Discussing the film with people in Sacile and also reading the response of some Irish film critics who saw the film at the Cork Film Festival, was interesting. The response from people at Sacile was very positive. People were curious not only as to why I made the film, but also about certain styles and techniques I had used. However back home Michael Dwyer wrote about *Henry Cavendish* in *The Irish Times* calling it "a witty pastiche" while his colleague Donald Clarke, in the same newspaper, described the film as "an ingenious silent film parody". Now while both critics obviously liked the film the use of the words "parody" and "pastiche" for me brought a negative element into the criticism. Let's define the word "pastiche".

Pastiche n. 1. a melody, esp. a picture or a musical composition, made up from or imitating various sources.

2. a literary or other work of art composed in the style of a well known author

And even worse:

Parody n.1 a humorous exaggerated imitation of an author, literary work, style etc.

2 a feeble imitation; a travesty.

Obviously the critics used such words to describe the film because it was made very consciously in a genre 75 years out of date. They therefore saw the film as purely derivative. But how can film or any piece of art not be derivative? The pioneers of cinema had no cinema tradition to draw on. So they often turned to the theatre as reference, as their work often shows. A majority of fiction films up the early 1900s take the form of one take of a couple of characters acting out on a stage. The early film-makers also drew on literature. D.W. Griffith is said to have got his idea of intercutting

different subplots in *The Birth of a Nation* from reading Charles Dickens. All the film makers after him looked to Griffith. Murnau used beautiful tracking shots in *Sunrise* and so did everyone after him (with the exception of a few years in the late 1920s when they invented sound films and had to lock the camera in an immovable blimp.) After *Citizen Kane* everyone started experimenting with crazy angles, wide angle lenses and infinite depth of field. And so it still goes. Filmmakers today are lucky to draw their inspiration from 100 years of cinema history. It would be absurd to pretend that filmmakers don't derive at least some of their ideas and inspiration from other films. So if all films are to an extent derivative, what is the dividing line where derivation becomes parody or pastiche?

Films can of course be pure and deliberate parody or pastiche. I've seen loads – most commonly done as bad TV commercials. But I would argue that *The Unusual Inventions of Henry Cavendish* is not parody or pastiche. Though it is very intentionally made in the style of a silent film, the intention was always to make it with respect to silent films not in any way to make fun out of them. I would go even further and say that those parodies on silent films one often sees are made by people who have seen very few actual silent films and probably dislike the genre. I on the contrary was grateful to use the excellent tools passed on to me by the makers of silent cinema.

When I sat down with the main actor for my film, Hugh O'Connor, to discuss acting style it became very clear to us both that the only way he could pull off the performance was to play the role with complete seriousness, as an actor who had to express himself within the constraints of the genre (black and white lighting, no dialogue). And that was how he treated it. I think if he had mimicked people's perception of silent film actors by flailing his arms in the air, contorting his face and throwing his body violently around we could justifiably be accused of making a parody. Again we were careful how we composed the music. The composer while very much referencing both 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic music and early 20<sup>th</sup> century musical styles, was concerned that his own music show total respect to his influences.

Then we turn to the critics' use of the term "homage". This adjective is generally used much more positively.

Homage *n.* 1. acknowledge of superiority, dutiful reference.

2. *hist.* Formal public acknowledgement of feudal allegiance.

It is generally used where the references within the work are used very deliberately. Thus some of the work of Joel and Ethan Coen has been described as "homage". *The Hudsucker Proxy* is a comedy set in a corporation building in the 1950s. Extremely stylized, it makes very successful use of many references to earlier cinema - most evidently the films of Frank Capra. It is in no way parody: watching the film, it is obvious that the Coen brothers love the films to which they are alluding, and do it with great affection and respect. They are acknowledging their allegiance to the original film maker.

This perhaps is what makes the difference between a film as homage and a film as parody. The maker of a homage demonstrates love for the original. The maker of a parody/ pastiche may show little understanding and perhaps even contempt.

I would like to think that when I made *The Unusual Inventions of Henry Cavendish* I did it to express my love for silent cinema and its makers.

I took note of the criticisms of Professor Tom Gunning, who pointed out that my film "used too many modern techniques in the cinematography." "Silent framing rarely moves casually (never is hand held and rarely reframes). When it moves, it is very powerful. I may be wrong, but I found your framing more modern and casual, not the heavy frame of silent cinema." I must of course absolutely agree with him. My film is full of shots that are entirely modern in style. Though his analysis is absolutely correct, I would suggest that in other respects Professor Gunning is slightly missing the point. He is actually *looking* for pastiche, and I had not given it to him.

When I made *The Unusual Inventions of Henry Cavendish* I was not trying to make a film completely in the style of the silent films of the 1920s. I was drawing inspiration from them and 'borrowing' a lot of ideas and techniques; but I equally 'borrowed' ideas from many of my favourite modern films -

*E.T.* and *Back to the Future* to name but two. I wanted to acknowledge some of my favorite film makers whilst hoping to create something new.

*travis bird*

## **an empty frame is a piece of art: reflections and projections on archiving and restoration**

The 2005 Giornate exposed me to a number of issues revolving around the delicate task of film archiving and preservation. As someone only dimly aware of this world, I sat in a small conference room, trying to piece together what everyone was talking about by jotting down phrases like "increased access vs. decreased quality" and "access, content, user," which I subsequently abbreviated into "ACU." I listened as archivists and scholars deplored how archives are now based on financing. They are influenced by cultural politicians, and stay alive because they comply with the rhetoric of ACU, downtrodden and bereft of any gains. I heard about the differences between museums and archives, and then about how there are no differences between museums and archives. We want to avoid the "dusty shelves" problem, to compete with the open age of information brought on by the Internet. Archivists wondered aloud if discussing the future of restoration was simply a way for them to worry about the futures of their own careers. When the talk was over, everyone slowly left the room. Some seemed distant, their shoulders looked laden with a heavy weight of responsibility. But I myself walked out in a haze, wondering what exactly we had been talking about for the last 90 minutes.

I was deeply struck by the fractured nature of our talks on archiving, and was left simply wanting to piece together the issue. But I realized that, from the way we talked about restoration, this is impossible. I bobbed in a sea of thoughts on an issue that seemed to have no end in sight. Looking for more information, I came to the website of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), which referred to cinema as "the Twentieth Century's own medium." While this description stirringly reflects the importance of cinema around the world as an art form, it points to a crucial detail - it's no longer the twentieth century. Whatever the new century develops as its own medium, it almost certainly won't be film. So as we wonder how to turn the tables away from digital dryness, there needs to be some focus on how new technologies can be used. Of course, there is plenty of important work to be done with restoring and archiving in the digital age. And it seems clearly beneficial to resist the "us versus them" impulse and instead to use the digital age to get silent films seen and to have restoration work continued, recognized, and funded.

Our fractured talk brought to mind the task of early cinema proponents, who sought to convince sceptics that cinema was indeed an art form and not merely a passing novelty. In an inverse sort of way, this is true of us today who feel panicked by the idea of digital technology taking over production, distribution, and exhibition modes. We have to defend the unique place of film as its own medium, albeit divorced from new media, not old. A piece of film cannot simply be a "motion picture" anymore. Digital technology shares this distinction as well, and often has the advantage of being cheaper and more readily available. To lump film and digital together would obviously be a gross error for our purposes, and yet at times it seems like this might be happening.

In this sense, the idea of shifting the rhetoric of archiving is quite relevant. Some spoke of turning against the "content, access, user" paradigm, but in favor of what? The unique features of celluloid have to be re-emphasized--its plasticity, its richness of color, the wonderfully precise methods

needed to expose it correctly. Unfortunately, although archivists appreciate these features on a daily basis, most others do not. I don't think I even grasped the essence of this idea until I saw the filmmaker Peter Kubelka speak last year. He took what seemed like a very long time to physically unspool the 35mm print of one of his films and wind it up and down the rows of the audience. He had people play with the film and look at it frame by frame. It was only through this direct exposure that I was able to grasp this. But the tangibility of celluloid, ironically enough, seems almost intangible to grasp. You either appreciate this sort of thing or you don't. So how can the rhetoric be changed? If it's not a motion picture, then what is it?

Clearly, archivists and restoration experts can go a long way in, if not defining film, at least preserving space for it. They're the ones who work with museums and other funding sources, and who have the capabilities to physically save a given piece. But consider another group, whose presence is an integral part of the Giornate itself--professors. They screen many films in their courses each term, which are sometimes quite rare and valuable. Unfortunately, many of these films have to be shown on digital formats like DVD (or worse), and although many professors I've talked to lament this situation, very few of them have the ability to change it and more or less demand works to be shown on their original formats. But this brings up another odd issue in the debate. Is there a similarity between showing a film work on DVD and showing a film like *Singin' In the Rain* or *Playtime* on an old 16mm print? Where do we draw the line of "not doing a film justice" when we show it? It seems that we can expand our notion of exhibition in response to the digital age. Because, when we get down to it, why do we want to archive and restore films in the first place? To be seen, so that future audiences can experience the story being told. A professor showing a film on DVD has deemed it too important to see - even if not in its original format - because the story needs to be seen. I think this is what archivists work for as well--certainly, they want films to be seen in optimal conditions, but they would object to not seeing them at all simply because the conditions are not perfect. We young people need even less convincing, especially in the digital age. This might seem obvious, but it didn't seem so during our discussion.

At times, even in our discussions, I got the impression that things aren't as bad as they seem. We heard a number of presentations on restoration and archival work that is happening right now, with fascinating and unique films from the collection of Joseph Joie and others being saved, catalogued, and studied. Students and cinephiles continue to drool over Criterion DVD releases, eating up bonus documentaries that touch on the painstaking restorations that have preserved and even transformed certain films. The University of California at Los Angeles now has a graduate program in "moving image archive studies," which it claims is the first of its kind, although archives do fantastic work in this line. Certainly, the development of such a program as UCLA's, at this point, must be considered a response to the continued demand for archiving and restoration of early, lost, and neglected films as much as anything.

But silents, of course, are a particularly odd group, so many having been *extraordinarily* early, lost, and neglected. And they demand different responses from both the viewer and the exhibitor--music, variable speed projectors, reading the screen differently, more patience, and the like. Silents present a paradox that is particularly apparent at the Giornate, at which we are perched between loving the unique features of silent cinema and lamenting how marginalized these features have made it. In another breath, I might say that this secures the place of silent cinema, because there will always be a minority of die-hard purists to defend it against falling into total oblivion. But in the Giornate there is also a strong sense of historicity, the urge among scholars and students to *connect* silents to all sorts of greater ideas. This impulse seemed muted during the seminars. We wondered how to make silent cinema, and particular restoration projects, seem cool and interesting, but we need to wonder more loudly and insistently. DVDs provide us with one visible example of success. For example, the inclusion of René Clair's short film *Paris Qui Dort* with the DVD of *Sous les Toits de Paris* not only provided insight into the style and production of Clair's first feature film, but it also exposed viewers to a rarely-seen, silently charming film. This arrangement, of course, is far from optimal. I was fortunate to see *Paris Qui Dort* in the Musée d'Orsay in a gorgeous print with

evocative and progressive live music, which certainly eclipsed anything a DVD could provide. I have to assume that there will continue to be screenings at festivals, museums, and universities that have the ability to magically transform the films that are shown. The problem of cinema as the Twentieth Century's own medium is that it has always been married more than any other art form to money, and it's hard to entice exhibitors, especially major ones with power and control, to take risks that might not pay off (although they do seem to, given the caliber of films they often show). But there might be a number of ways to get silents shown. Using documentaries, even short ones on restorations. Showing short films before features, as the recent *Wallace and Gromit* movie did. We know the opportunities are there, but maybe this just requires the same entrepreneurial spark that early silent screenings had, combining the "anything goes" attitude of variety shows with what we call the schizophrenic, fragmented media consumption of our time.

The experts at the Giornate struck me as true philosophers in the world of cinema. They were hyperaware of so many paradoxes and complications orbiting the reality of this world, their brows furrowed as they searched for words to describe something so tangible as celluloid. Maybe they, like most of us at the Giornate, don't particularly want to give up on this awareness, just as philosophers seem to revel at times in existential peril. Digital transfers can be done at four times the detail of a film print. Suppose someone finally gets the color right, or adds a flicker effect through some magical effect? For the purposes of most viewers, who already can't tell the difference between (and often don't care about) digital and film projections, is this what we want? The look, the feel, both? I'm not sure everyone in the discussion could agree on it, or if their consciences could ignore it. Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that the illusions of reality that most of us cling to are actually quite useful--they keep us from being overwhelmed by everything. Perhaps a small bit of acceptance of the sullied digital age might come in handy, if only to allow us to talk about using it for our own. The incredible restoration and archival work will continue to be done for the time being, but the continued evolution of cinema and celluloid should be on all of our minds. Judging from last year's talk, it will take some cooperation on some quite specific issues. I think we want these films to be seen--correctly if possible, but for a film to be seen is the goal of a restorer, a professor, a student filmmaker. And should this view prove hopelessly naive, it would be great to know why.

evelyn echle

## the work of art in the age of digital reproduction

Leaving the first session of the Collegium Sacilense 2005, I recalled the historic genius of the art market, Lord Duveen, and how he failed to sell even one painting out of a choice of 100 to Henry Ford – though he did manage to off-load a book on him. In 1920 a consortium of five dealers laid siege to Ford, the richest American without an art collection. They published a magnificent scholarly catalogue of their best wares, calling it *The hundred greatest paintings in the world*. They delivered it ceremoniously to Ford's home, and waited to take his order for the contents. And Ford said: "But, gentlemen, what would I want with the original pictures when the ones right here in these books are so beautiful?"

One and a half hour before, I was wondering about the Collegium Dialogue which was announced as "Market vs. Museum? – 'The knowledge industry'". Having little experience in museum work, I was looking forward to a vivid discussion, and my expectation was justified. Soon after it began, two opposing perspectives became evident: the crossroad in (film) museum politics between "old school treatment" and archival film digitisation. The short session offered a state-of-the-art survey of different research areas and of course of different philosophies. Current technologies and techniques were evaluated, while advocates pleaded for the use of emulsion-coated transparent plastic-base film and new ethical standards. In other words, the debate illuminated the impact that the advent and constant evolution of digital technologies is having on film and other media production and of course on its transfer, restoration and preservation – topics, that were discussed not only during this Collegium Dialogue but during the whole week of the Silent Film Festival.

The controversy went beyond merely *Digital vs. Film*, I was engaged in another question: *What is film, what is an "original" artefact?* Walter Benjamin came to my mind, he would have fitted well on the podium and I am sure he would have had an answer. Unfortunately, reality is not as easy as fiction, otherwise I would have borrowed Andrew Legge's Time Machine – which did a good job in his silent film *The Unusual Inventions of Henry Cavendish* (2005) – to bring Benjamin to Sacile. Obviously, I imagined what Benjamin might have said, and I guess he would have quoted himself:

"In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artefacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity [...] One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced"(1).

Actually, if Benjamin would have joined the session, I'm sure, some archivists and curators would have asked questions like: Isn't a work, as soon as it becomes part of a national collection, an "original" and shouldn't it be treated with all the care necessary to ensure its survival for future generations? And what about the force of manipulation within the visual publicity?

I decided to talk to another, a present person in Sacile, hoping to find some more answers to the questions *What is an "original" artefact? What is the museum?* Because of the question-mark, I began to ask myself: what is a museum? Definitely more than just a building, where visitors step in, look around and get transformed into something like a cultural citizen. A museum coped for different interests: those of scholars and researchers, of money-givers and of course those of visitors. The concerns and expectations of these groups differ in many points – but does the museum becomes in this sense a sort of melting pot?

I asked Alexander Horwath, director of the **Oesterreichisches** Filmmuseum (Vienna), about a definition. I was keen to learn about his experience, his work and of course his curatorial values. I know that he had given a statement on this issue not only during the first session of the Collegium Sacilense, but also during the "Open Forum"-session at FIAF-Congress in Ljubljana 2005, when his views raised some controversy. So I requested a personal interview on what he has called his "dystopian vision". In this vision the terms "content", "access" and "user" "are being employed by the promoters to install a market logic at the cost of the critical and political functions of the museum"(2).

Enlarging on the notion of the critical and political functions of the museum, Alexander Horwath told me: "For me, the museum is primarily a place where the public comes to terms with itself, a place of education".

As he told the FIAF members, a museum in Horwath's view "is a critical, ethical and political tool which stands in direct opposition to whatever social mood or climate or ideology is hegemonic at a given time" (3). But how does this critical, ethical and political tool reach the citizens? For some directors and curators, simply increasing numbers of visitors is the indicator of success, but not necessarily for Horwath: "One has to define what a museum should stand for. In my mind, this institution is not just a service to politics. It should rather aim to *partner* with politics, with self-confidence and of course with a fundamental competence. The museum has never meant to be a place of consensus. The deformation of the critical function of the museum is what I criticize".

In this sense, the definition of a curator would change as a result of this deformation. I suggested to Alexander Horwath, that in my opinion a museum should be something like an intellectual bridge between the past and the future. For me as interested citizen, the curator therefore functions as a "translator" and "mediator", as a person of faith who should be guided by proven values and not by market forces.

At this point, a discussion came to my mind which I overheard the in the Café near the Teatro Zancanaro. A young man borrowed a book from a fellow-guest with the words: "I have to learn the fundraising-lesson soon, otherwise our next project will not come true." The book's title was: "How to write successful fundraising letters" by Mal Warwick.

For Alexander Horwath, the current shift towards a privatisation of the museum is "something we should absolutely be aware of – and wary of". And he warned, as he did in Ljubljana, of a certain rhetoric that builds on a dualistic model: "Any supporter of the museum as an ethical or critical tool is swiftly deemed to be 'conservative' or 'naïve'. By painting the dusty old museum as conservative and as an obstacle to the New Archives' swift conversion into the servers of the world, and by painting dusty old film as an obstacle to the digital regime, the neo-liberal rhetoric functions exactly the same way as it does in the social and political arenas: Whatever rules and regulations the social state has implemented to protect the rights of workers and employees, or the solidarity between the generations, or the fair access to health services, and so on – all these rights and regulations and the groups which represent them (such as unions) are now being painted as 'backwards', 'conservative', 'defensive' and 'naïve', as obstacles to the free reign of the so-called market forces which one is supposed to join offensively. As an ideological tool of Cultural Darwinism, the current use of the term *Digital* in a certain cultural context mirrors the use of *The Market Forces* as a tool of

Social Darwinism. The *free flow* which is invoked by both terms attempts to separate itself from – and get rid of – the material objects and material relations from which they both derive” (4).

I asked myself if the impact of Digital Technologies actually threatens the Film Heritage. During the Giornate I talked to a lot of people about this, and about the possible outcome of the process. The answers were very varied but unanimous on one point: Film is an artistic testimony and the preservation of our common cultural heritage is the concern of all people.

Though now I know what the “dystopian vision” was about, I estimate mostly its utopian potential. When a museum can be seen as an intellectual bridge, why shouldn’t it be possible to build it on a strong foundation, where the digital access is only an added value and not a substitute?

Thanks to Alexander Horwath, Jörg Schweinitz and Gösta Werner.

(1) Benjamin, Walter: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

(2) Journal of Film Preservation; November 2005

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

*rix t jonkman*

## **being surrounded by images of the past while talking about how to preserve them**

Now, several months after Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone, I am sitting behind my computer and thinking back to that week. My strongest impression of the experience was that by seeing all those films, it was as if I was able to get a glimpse of the past, of a world that has now disappeared. Not only the 'real' world that has changed with time, but also the world of the silent film, with its dramas in which no-one speaks out loud, which rely on images and music and where colours are used very differently from in modern films. Being together with so many other people, it was also possible to get an idea of how it might have been to watch these films in a sold-out theatre, with a lot of other people wholly absorbed in them.

It was not my first Giornate: I had my Pordenone "baptism" in 2004. This influenced my experience of the festival since I already knew what to expect from a week of silent film. I also knew some people and had the "hello again, how was your year and what are you doing now?" experience, which seems ubiquitous during the festival. Being a Collegian also changes the way you look at the films. Before going I tried to prepare myself, more than I did last year. I decided to focus on the main topics of the festival, so I read a book about André Antoine (nine chapters about his theatre work and one short one on his films), some on Japanese cinema, one of Donald Richie's books and one of the standard works - too formalistic-analytic for my taste but interesting in showing how someone else looks at these films (1). But it is hard to prepare, as there are so many films. During the festival while looking at the films the anxiety was constantly in the back of my mind, that I will have to write something about them. In the end I saw a new topic everywhere. On the one hand this is stimulating, as you concentrate on the topic you are thinking about and start to notice links between all the films. Going through my notes I see that I became interested in intertitles - in how they look, how many there are in a film and how they tell the story. This can be in the third person or as the dialogue of the characters. The third person can be a storyteller that leads us through the story or he can simply state the facts. I got that far, and then realised it is a topic that would need closer attention and more structured research, not something I could do for this essay. I also discarded the idea of writing about 'The difference between the way women are portrayed and act in the Japanese and the French films'. I thought it would become too theoretical and too academic to go into such topics. Instead I decided quite simply to describe my impression of the things I saw, the topics that were touched upon during that week, and my own experience of them.

### Fascinating images

What I asked myself while watching, is why I enjoy seeing these films. I have experience with viewing a lot of contemporary films at a festival, having worked for several years as a volunteer at the Rotterdam Film festival. It was during my fourth year working at the festival when I realised I had chosen to see more old films than new releases. Why did I like watching the old films more than the new ones? What attracts me in them? Maybe I could get an answer while watching films during the Giornate week.

Special features of this year's festival were Japanese cinema, based around the anniversaries of the Sochiku studio's and the director Naruse, and André Antoine and the French realist movement. Furthermore there were films with special musical accompaniment, two more years of Griffith's

production, several new restorations, more Baby Peggy films - and more. Having read some books about Antoine and Japan, and I had decided I would focus on those two programmes, and just see what I else I would be able to see. In the end I had seen most of the films from both programmes and started to recognise resemblances and differences.

## André Antoine

André Antoine was already a well-known and respected theatre artist long before he started making films. In 1887 he had founded the Theatre Libre, which brought a revolutionary concept in to the theatre: reality. The sets had to be real, which meant real doors on stage, real tables, and real food. Also the clothing had to be something that the characters could wear in reality. This meant for instance that the clothes of a poor workman, besides being something that workmen in reality would wear, had to be dirty and well worn. Besides this he also tried to change the acting style. He wanted his actors to play with emotion and with their body. They also had to act as if there was no audience: the so-called 'fourth wall'. An example is sitting around a table with four people. Naturally each will occupy one side of the table. In the theatre this must mean that one person will sit with his back to the audience. This was something that had not been done before Antoine. His plays were often either newly written, or newly adapted from novels from writers writing in the realistic or naturalistic style, such as Emile Zola, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas or Herman Heyermans. His methods proved successful, and, despite ups and downs, brought him fame. Other theatres in Europe copied his innovative style. He was also an influence on such filmmakers and actors as Albert Capellani or Henry Krauss - now retrospectively known as the French realists and included in the program.

Antoine brought these principles with him when asked by S.C.A.G.L. to make films. He directed his first film, *Les Frères Corses* (S.C.A.G.L. Fr.), in 1915. It was received as an artwork and was successful. Often his films were based on realistic novels or were stories that he already had brought to the stage (like *La Terre*). After several successful films, in 1920 he started work on *L'Hirondelle et la Mésange*, unusually, a film from an original script. The film was shot, but never finished and released. Pathé, the production company, thought the story too realistic and shot in a too 'documentary' style. The company was afraid that theatre managers would not want to take the risk of programming it. He shot his last film in, *l'Arlesienne*, in 1922. Disappointed by the film world he returned to the theatre.

With this background what can be said about the realism in these films? Antoine put much effort into finding appropriate costumes and buildings and into directing his actors to behave naturally. It is known that they filmed on location (*L'Arlesienne* was shot near Arles for instance), using the available houses and attributes, and often only using natural light. This acting style, these sets and the development of the plots are different from other films from that period. They are more to our modern taste as they strike us as more realistic - by which I mean in the sense that we can believe the people in the film could be real people living a real life. Sometimes real life is actually caught by the film. In one film (is it *L'Hirondelle et la Mésange* or Capellani's *Germinal*?) (2) there is a scene in which the main characters visit a fair in a town. Here the fair and the people around the actors are probably 'real', meaning that they happened to be there when the director was shooting this scene. The people that were filmed 'accidentally' look into the camera and at the actors, watching curiously what they are doing. An everyday event actually happening at that moment, captured forever in a fiction film.

One of my favourite films of the festival was *Germinal*, which positively amazed me. I had never before seen a film from that that period (1913/1914) that I had found genuinely engaging and gripping. The films I had seen might be 'interesting' and 'nice' or 'funny', but most ly I had found the acting style and the stories too distant to be engaging enough to make me forget I am watching a film (I do not want to suggest that being engaging is *the* criterion for liking a film, but it is at least one of the criteria). But with this film I was caught the whole film by the story, helped by the convincing acting of the actors and the reality of the settings.

## The Japanese cinema

The other main program was centred around the 110 year old Sochiku Motion Picture Co which is one of the oldest studios still producing films. At the Rotterdam film festival I had seen numbers of Japanese films, from more or less famous and talented directors, including the masters Ozu and Kurosawa. So as the modern Japanese (film) world was not entirely new I was to me I was really looking forward to this part of the program. Most of the films shown were from the late twenties and early thirties and from one genre, the gendai-geki. These films treat topics set in a fairly realistic middle class background. There is often a disrupted family situation in which the man (husband, brother or fiancée) is weaker than the woman (sister, wife or lover). But in the end she will sacrifice herself for his wellbeing. Most of the plots were based on well-known stories originating from the theatre (3). The style as well is partly based on the Japanese theatre, but directors had also absorbed the American and European film styles. My attention was particularly engaged by the role of the women in these films which differed from their usual role in most Western stories from that period. In the Japanese stories the woman is stronger than the man but still she will sacrifice herself to save him.

There were also some documentaries in the program. In *Koshu Saho Tokyo Kenbutsu* (1925) we were taken on a touristy trip through Tokyo. This 'real' Tokyo looked just like the Tokyo we had seen in the fiction films - in housing, clothing, the way the streets looked, the way the people behaved. I assumed that there was a lot of 'reality' in these fiction films, and this was later confirmed at a Collegium Dialogue about the Japanese cinema. The film thus can clearly give us an accurate idea of how Japan was in that time. Or maybe it is safer to say, it gives us an idea of what a Japanese filmmaker thought what was a trustworthy realistic background for his scripts.

The overall connection of the films:  
glimpses of a world long gone

With both the French realists and the Japanese filmmakers using everyday reality as a background for their stories, I started to be more and more fascinated by this idea of the 'real' world getting to us through these fiction films: films as a way to take a look into a world that has disappeared.

These thoughts took a more concrete form while watching the programme of films from the Joye collection, providing at least part of the answer to the source of my personal fascination with these films. In *Le Beurre en Normandie* (Pathé Frères, F, 1910) a young woman shows how butter is made traditionally. She stands at a table in the open air, and while she is making the butter she laughs and looks into the camera. Several questions surfaced as I watched: Did she usually make her butter outside? It doesn't sound logical. But then was the scene created like this for the film? This is something you are not allowed to do in a documentary, according to modern principles. And when there is 'fiction' in 'documentaries', what about 'documentary' in the 'fiction' films? How much reality is there in fiction films? Apparently a lot. I already noticed that even D.W. Griffith stressed the 'reality' more than once in his mega-studio-produced film *Intolerance* (USA, 1918). In the Babylon sequence he introduces the city with an intertitle in which he stresses the authenticity of the set. He states that the reproduced walls of Babylon on the set are the same size as the original walls. The walls are so big that a cart can drive along them. Again, when showing a Jewish ceremony he states that the ceremony is exactly as written down by a Jewish scholar. Why this stress on authenticity? Might it be to just impress his audience, or does he want to heighten the credibility of the story by stressing the reality of the sets? While searching for some contemporary reviews of the films I had seen I came across one that was very interesting in this context. It was a review of *Das Weib der Pharao* from the Dutch newspaper *Het Vaderland* (14-2-1925). This review starts with the remark that everyone who has some interest in ancient Egypt should see this film. Even though we already know a lot about this period and have books and museums, a reconstruction like this was no doubt is without precedent. The film shows the flowering of dynasties on a true scale and gives an impression of the times and morals as no other means than a film could do. So in 1925 this film was

praised for its realism. Realism meaning here the film's ability to make the spectator feel how it was to live in ancient Egypt. This idea of realism connects with my idea. Even though you know it is a fiction film, it can make you feel as if you were really there. And very often the filmmaker has tried to copy this reality as precise as possible.

So I found there are (at least) two ideas of realities that are both fascinating. The one is the real world caught in the fiction film, as seen in the French realist films – the cair, the views of the boats on the canals in *L'Hirondelle et le Messange*, or the farmhouses in *L'Arlesienne*. The other reality is the deliberately constructed reality – seen in the Japanese films or in *Intolerance* or *Das Wein des Pharao*.

Above all this, whether the film is documentary or a fiction film, shot on location or in a studio, the people (acting or not) in on the film are real. And they are moving and doing things. Most of them are dead now (not all of course: Diana Serra Cary, full of life, is still watching her films together with us) and yet these realities can give us a glimpse in a long-gone world. And it is this glimpse of a world long gone, but frozen in time, which strikes me most.

### The film experience

A total reconstruction of the original experience is impossible. Even when an exact copy of the screening is recreated (in the same theatre with the same music) it will not have the same effect on us, as we are different from the people who saw it then. I could never relive the original experience because I am living in a different time and have different fascinations and interests in the films from the people who saw the films when they were new. But of course there is also a connection. Then and now the audience went to a place to see the film, had expectations about it, and more or less enjoyed it. An interesting example where I experienced that the audience reaction to these films can be the same then and now was with *Beyond the Rocks* (Sam Wood, USA, 1922). This film was visited by a broader modern audience than are usually interested in silent film. In the contemporary reviews the film was received not very well and it was mentioned that the audience laughed when Gloria Swanson fell clumsily into the water and off the cardboard Alps. And behold: the 2005 audience did the same! Neither they nor we were deceived by the bad, cheaply made set design. Maybe the time gap is not so big. Often a film is so engaging that I completely forget that that it was made about eighty years ago, in a different era, and the time gap is closed. While looking at the films I feel connected to the people who saw that film as a contemporary feature. Where did they see the film and in what kind of theatre? What music accompanied it? What reasons had they to choose that film and what lives did they live outside the movie theatre. Did they enjoy the film? How was it reviewed? Well or not?

The answer to these questions starts with finding out where and when the films were shown in any country, if shown at all. What kind of cinema was it where the film was screened? Was it a luxurious theatre or a working class hall? What other films were screened before and after it. In the Netherlands there is a project called Cinema in Context that tries to answer this question with data. The project was started by Karel Dibbets of the University of Amsterdam. They are building a database of all the films that were screened in the Netherlands, and working to establish information about the actual screenings. It is a work still in progress: but the programming of main cinemas in the bigger cities is already in the database (4). To see if the films I had seen at the festival had been released in the Netherlands, I did some research with this database and also in a contemporary film magazine, *Kunst en Amusement*, and some contemporary newspapers (5).

Most of the French realist films were released in Holland. Some were shown for several consecutive weeks in different cinemas in different cities – generally each week in a different cinema. Their release date was often one or two years after the production date (6). Some of the films were re-released several years after their original release. *Germinal* for instance was first screened on 17-10-1913 and thereafter shown again in 1915, 1916, 1918, 1920 and 1921. Likewise, *Le Chemineau* was released in 1917 (nine screenings), and thereafter in 1921 (three screenings), 1928 and 1929 (one each). This re-releasing was not uncommon (7).

I found several reviews of the films in *Kunst en Amusement*. *L'Arlesienne* is praised for the extraordinary camerawork, the sober playing and good direction. The viewer praises the film makers for having put a lot of piety in the film and striven to keep the pure naïve simplicity of the characters. The actors are gifted character players and the natural exterior decors are picturesque (8). In a review of *La Belle Nivernaise* again the playing of the actors is praised (9). Both reviews are equally positive about the natural acting and realistic setting of the films – precisely the same qualities that are still praised today in modern criticism.

*Crainquebille* was also re-released several times. The database records eleven screenings. It was first shown in May 1922, then again in 1923 (five screenings), in 1925 and in 1927. De Filmliga, an association for artistic films showed the film in their programme in 1930 and again in 1931. The last recorded screening is in May 1931. The newspaper *Het Vaderland* of 1925 contains a very positive review of *Crainquebille*. The critic says that “he never saw such a deep humanity and a tender compassion”. He describes the film, and particularly the ending in which *Crainquebille* is helped up by the boy, who gives him food and a cigarette, and *Crainquebille* tenderly strokes the head of the boy. The critic continues, “And that is everything, no big thrill, no sweet lesson, no “they get each other in the end”, no stunts, things that are in fact poorer than the poverty of *Crainquebille*. The acting in this is beautiful and also the film technique is very good.” Thus *Crainquebille* was already perceived by this critic as something special - an opinion still shared by the today's film historians.

I could find none of the Japanese films in the database, confirming the statement in the *Giornate* catalogue that most of the films shown in *Sacile* were never screened outside Japan. This is certainly true for Netherlands. I found a record of only one silent Japanese film: *Jujiro* (1928), shown in 1930 and 1933, with two screenings in each of those years. An advertisement for the film in *Kunst en Amusement* (April 1930), quotes very positive German reviews of *Jujiro*.

### Some thoughts on preserving these materials

Directly after the festival I began an internship at the Nederlands Filmmuseum working with the nitrate collection. This was part of my study “Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image” at the University of Amsterdam. My task was to register and identify nitrate films (silent and sound). The materials I saw here could be the basis for film programmes like the *Giornate*. But often the pieces of film I had in my hands were still a long way from screening. Sometimes the state of the material itself was very bad and another huge problem was the incompleteness of many films. Sometimes there was only one scene of a fiction film, or several unrelated newsreel items glued together. While looking at these films the festival was often in my mind. A lot of what I see at the table is very beautiful, or a hint of an intriguing story or a fragment of history, but it will probably never be seen by anyone (or hardly anyone) else. Often they are mere fragments from unknown films that will stay in the can in the vault waiting – perhaps permanently – for completion. It can also be the kind of material for which it is hard to find an audience: short non-fiction items, newsreels, films that are incomplete and therefore difficult to program. I noticed though that very often the material itself is very beautiful. A nitrate film frame coloured by tinting and toning can be so beautiful, with colours so bright. I often wished I could show the people around me what I was seeing. It doesn't even really matter what the image was: the colours make the frame itself worth viewing. So I often thought it should belong in a museum, displayed as an artefact, but I realised that this is almost never done. A frame is not perceived to have any value.

### Films that never existed

Interesting was that at the *Giornate* there were films that never existed at the time the images were shot. *L'Hirondelle et la Mesange* was never finished in its time and had its premier in 1981. The restored, long version of *Das Weib der Pharao* screened at the festival was never shown in the theatres in this form. The film was censored, shortened and only then released. For this new version, every splinter of film that could be found was used, and missing scenes replaced with title

cards that explained what happened and (set) photos. It is a version never seen by contemporary audiences. The Collegium session on the restoration of *Beyond the Rocks* (Sam Wood, USA 1922) stimulated energetic discussion on the subject of contemporary versions. *Beyond the Rocks* was re-assembled from scattered cans found in the collections of a deceased Dutch collector and was digitally restored by the Nederlands Filmmuseum. They chose this form of restoration because parts of the film were too heavily damaged for 'normal' restoration. Some parts were degraded (strangely the deterioration has its own beauty and actually adds something to the film, a kind of aura of something old, nearly gone but saved just in time). The Museum had made three alternative versions on film. A silent version of the film that can be projected at the original speed of 18 frames per second, with English intertitles (the original English title-cards had been recreated) and made the titles using these cards) conforms FIAF preservation standards. An alternative version was "stretched" to run at 24 frames per second, with a sound track, which was itself in two versions, one with the Dutch intertitles that were on the rediscovered film and the other with the recreated English intertitles.

It was this last version that was shown at the Giornate. The "classic" silent version had been screened at the Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, a few months earlier, and the Giornate programmers wished to give guests the chance to see this more controversial rendering of the film. Many participants in the Dialogue complained that they would rather have seen the "classic" restoration. They did not like the stretching nor the soundtrack which used sound effects, that never could have been the intention if the director. But then, what is the original version? The version found in the archive had Dutch intertitles, cuts, and when first released had been accompanied by Dutch musicians. In the silent version they made for preservation the English titles were recreated, and although these were true to the original script, it was not the version that had been survived. Variant versions of course already existed at the time the films were made. The practice of making different endings for different markets is well known - a happy ending for America, a sad ending (often resulting in the death of the leading character) for the Russian and some other European markets. Although I also did not like everything they had done with the film - such as the replacement of the Dutch titlecards, that were integral to the film as found, even though the English text was authentic - in the end I agreed with Elif Rongen who led the restoration in the Nederlands Filmmuseum. The film shown is the 2005 version of this 1922 film. The stretching, the music, but also the quality of the pictures, the decompositions effects in some scenes is from 2005. It is a contemporary version for a modern audience. The film found in the archive is also preserved according to all the best preservation standards and will be available for future versions.

All this tells something about preservation practices. Films are (mostly) not preserved as an artefacts, as found, but are reconstructed. Often there is an attempt to recreate the original version or use all the material available to make and the longest version possible. The result can be a version such as was never released. While seeing the films we will have to realise that these preservations are a contemporary version of the film, not a preservation of the artefact. This urge to show complete films (in itself creditable enough) can influence on the fragments still lying in the vaults. Unless material is found to complete them, they will hardly ever leave their cans.

## Digitisation

The discussion topic of this year was digitisation. Digitisation is not only used more and more for the screening of newly made films, but also for preservation practices. Especially nitrate films, as their original carrier cannot be used for projection anymore, will have to be copied on something that can be shown. Until now old nitrate films were copied onto acetate or polyester film. The latest way of reviving these images is with digital techniques. It looks as if the digital format will eventually be the main one for carrying films. But will celluloid disappear? And does it matter? Is something lost if this happens? These were some of the questions asked and discussed in several collegium meetings, one of which was led by Alexander Horvath and David Francis. In this discussion they raised several points. One was centred on the huge interest in access of the images through digitisation. The industry, as well as private and governmental subsidy givers are very enthusiastic about digital

access. The result is that most attention (and money) is going to projects focused on the content of the material, and that there is hardly any attention (and money) for the preservation of the original material and experience. The distinction is between digital access to the content of the material and conserving the original artefact. In discussions the choice is often made facile as films are often not seen as artefacts in the same way that museum pieces are. Often the content is valued more than the original material, which is then regarded as easily discarded of. The digitisation process has far-reaching implications, since the digital and analogue media are very different.

These digitisation projects often come from areas outside the archive world which operate with a different kind of language: the digital rhetoric. There is an aura created around the digital. The metaphors used are, light, clean, fast. At the same time there is a parallel mystique created around the film, as if the film in itself is not interesting. It is the mystique of crazy collectors, rusty cans and dusty shelves with rotting films. These negative connotations with film material have also become an important factor in the discussion. Digital is often seen as modern and better, a preference for film is reactionary and unprogressive, a prodigality with time. A shift in the language that is used in the digital world is needed in order to change something in this mentality. As the use of digital means is inevitable, the archival world has to keep up with and infiltrate this debate. It is important is that we define our standards, and introduce them and our terminology into the digital world. The first step of digitisation is to get the best image from the analogue materials. This is often forgotten in the digital rhetoric of the access projects. It is still a fact that film material has a far better image quality, since available digital images still have a far lower resolution than celluloid. The archives have to say what quality they expect, even if this is something that is not yet possible. Another factor is that film is still more reliable than digital media for preservation purposes and there is the continuing problem of rapid format (and hardware) changes. Again, standards have to be established now, even if they are not yet achievable.

A lot of the argumentation revolved around materiality. Is a film still the same film if it is not on film anymore, but digitally projected? And does this change really matter? This was a very interesting thought. Already silent films are not shown on their original material: nitrate, and with the original projectors working with carbon arc lamps, that were much brighter than the later lamps. So the acetate we see with modern equipment is already a reproduction, mimic of the original material. But still, the change from analogue to digital will have another influence on the images that the change from nitrate to acetate did not have. It is an entirely different way of projecting images. With digital projection the images come in a continuous flow instead of the separate 24 frames per second with a black line between every frame of the celluloid. It is not known what the exact difference is while watching, but there must be a difference. (It would be interesting to research this on a neurological level, for instance with a scan. I once saw a documentary about research into the difference between watching television, with emitted light, or film, with reflected light). Different parts of the brain were stimulated, resulting in different emotional states in the spectator (*Le Tube*, Peter Entell, Belgium/Switzerland, 2001).

A part of this materiality is the lack of artefact status accorded to the film material. A single film frame can be very beautiful, it can be an object that might be displayed and enjoyed. Especially in the case of nitrate material it could be compared with painting. Tinting and toning is a painting process. And it was done uniquely with every copy that was made. This counts even more for hand coloured or stencilled films. You can see the ink on top of the frame. I think this aspect should also become part of the discussion and be one of the reasons never to discard any of the original materials, but instead to display them. These original films should not just be seen as something that could be moving, but also as artefacts that can be beautiful even when they are still.

During the discussion it was suggested that in order to create awareness in the audience of the material of which a film is made, we should promote a film on celluloid as a performative act; an exhibition of the artefact. We should show the audience where this copy of the film came from. Show the road from film can to projector so that they will become more aware of the history of the print and of the preservation process, and thereby make them care about the film as artefact. In this way we can make the audience more aware of the archive behind the museum. At home they will see the content from a DVD, but at the film museum they will see the film.

## Problems with reaching new audiences

Having a festival in a little town in Italy where the audience mainly consists of people who deal professionally with silent film and like (more or less) seeing them is of course nice for those people. But are historical value and the select group that appreciates these films enough to justify the expenses involved in preservation (we all think it should, but that is not how today's capitalistic economy works). An important question nowadays is how to interest a broader audience in them? Preservation should also involve the film being seen, living in the minds of spectators. Among my friends I have seen that people that are not professionally engaged with these films can also enjoy them. But they would most likely never have seen them if I hadn't convinced them to go. Often the popular idea of silent films is that they are slow, childish and immature films with overacting actors performing in melodramas with swooning women; or alternately that they are (too) arty and deal with difficult subjects.

Again, *Beyond the Rocks* provides an interesting example. Never before was there so much publicity for a rediscovered silent film. When it was found, there was media attention from all over the world, and articles and interviews in all Dutch media. The rediscovery of the film was said to be important because it was the only film in which Rudolph Valentino and Gloria Swanson played together. They were both very famous in their time and even now a lot of people have heard of their legendary fame. Nothing was said about the quality of the film itself. Everyone was excited that this film was rediscovered and was going to be restored. All the publicity attracted a generous sponsor for the project. When the film was released however, the newspaper critics were not positive. They were very disappointed that the film was not a masterpiece; or even 'good'. No-one had ever claimed it was a masterpiece, but apparently that is what the critics expected. More than eighty years before, the film's first reviewers complained about the cardboard Alps and lack of psychological depth of the players. But today's critics expected a "rediscovered" film to be a masterpiece. The displeasure re-emerged in the Collegium Dialogue. One view was that this film should not have been released with such publicity. Because it is a film in which the acting, sets and story are not very sophisticated, it is bad publicity for 'the silent film'. Now the public will be convinced that silent cinema was as bad as this, and will never want to try the experience again. The response was that it has the opposite effect. It is true that this film can be considered as a very mediocre film, a star vehicle, but it is one that represents 80 percent of the films that were made (and are still made). The film lured a lot of people who would never go to see a silent movie before. People can see that it is not a masterpiece, but it is not boring: it is still entertaining enough in its story-telling (and now just as then entertainment is all that most people hope for in a film). They might try even another silent. Besides it has created an overwhelming attention, not just for this one phenomenon, but also for the problems of preserving these films.

## Conclusion

So after all these thoughts what can be the conclusion? That in every film in one way another we can always see is a glimpse of a world that has disappeared. That the Giornate is an important platform to think about the future of film preservation. New developments can be discussed with people from different specialisations and backgrounds. These discussions start mostly around the Collegium Dialogues, but it might be an idea to organise more meetings (with more time) around such important topics as the digitisation process. That film stock should be seen as an artefact because a digital reproduction can never be as beautiful as a film frame.

But above all that a lot of, funny, touching, interesting, entertaining, boring, stupid and beautiful films have been made.

(1) Jean Chothia, *André Antoine*, Cambridge University Press, 1991. Noel Burch, *To the distant observer : form and meaning in the Japanese cinema*, revised and edited by Annette Michelson, Scolar Press 1979. Donald Richie, *Japanese cinema*, Secker and Warburg, 1971.

(2) I thought it was a scene from *L' Hirondelle et la Mesange*, but in my notes it is underneath a paragraph about *Germinal*. I am very sorry I do not know whether was indeed Antoine or Capellani some years earlier that made this scene. It is a lesson in taking better notes.

(3) An interesting link between the French and Japanese films I will not go into is that in both genres we find a strong link to the theatre. Antoine was originally a theatre man, and made a lot of the plays he directed into films, and the stories of the Japanese films came form the theatre tradition. This is of course this is true of a lot of early cinema. In the Netherlands, the film producers and actors were theatre people either stage plays of variety.

(4) This database will be probably be available online from may 2006.

(5) *Kunst en Amusement* was a magazine for the industry. The distributors advertised their films and contained information about the business and also reviews.

(6) *La Terre* (1919-1921), *Travailleurs de la mer* (1917), *Mademoiselle de la Seigliere* (1920), *Quatre-vingt-treize* (1920), *L'Arlesienne* (1921), *Les Grands* (1918).

(7) *La Belle Nivernaise* (screened in 1924, 1925, 1927, 1928, 1931), *Les Frères Corses* (screened in 1917 and 1921), *Le Chemineau* (screened in 1917, 1921, 1928 and 1929), *Broken Blossoms* ( 1921, 1925 and 1926).

(8) *Kunst en Amusement* no. 23, 1924.

(9) *Kunst en Amusement* no. 30, 1924.

kerstin neuroth

## presenting silent cinema

Of course, silent cinema will never get huge audiences again. Silent films are not contemporary, they do not have their place in everyday discussion, the stars are dead and the fact that the pictures are largely black and white and have no voices and sounds might be tiring for anyone not used to it... But silent cinema deserves take its place in cinemas, and most certainly, as a special event, can work with almost any audience. Presentations with live musical accompaniment offer a communication between film, musicians and audience that does not exist in a similar way in sound pictures. Similar aesthetics to those of the silent era are used in some recent art films. With *Der die Tollkirsche ausgräbt* (Franka Potente, Germany, 2005) a new silent film even appeared at the 2006 International Film Festival in Berlin. At the same time, presentations of silent films maintain silent cinema as a living art form – in consciousness as well as in its concrete material. Therefore this essay is about how to present silent cinema: about films, prints and presentations.

Often, the first impression you get while watching silent cinema is the feeling of observing the past, seeing how the towns, the clothes, all manner of things looked, to open a window in time. It is striking how established certain habits and attitudes of a bygone time appear from today's vantage point. An example of this at the Giornate del Cinema Muto were the recurrent scenes of corporal violence against women in the films of French realism, for example in *Germinal* (Albert Capellani, F 1913) or in *La Brière* (Léon Poirier, F 1925). Does the fact that similar scenes reappeared in various films indicate that conjugal violence was current in France at the beginning of the 20th century? Did the filmmakers include them as a taboo to increase the impression of reality? Or do they rather show the idea that filmmakers had about the rough life in the countryside and among the lower classes? Is it possible, after all, to get to know the past through films? Maybe they can help us at least as much to understand the present. For instance if corporal violence is no longer tolerated today, what are the mechanisms of substitution? The distance of time and space allows us to see mechanisms whose equivalents are more difficult to discern in the present.

In this sense, of course, every film is worth watching. It offers a source of information for different kinds of research, that might be historical, sociological or whatever. But the question is which films should be chosen to attract audiences, to provide them attractive, convincing approach to silent cinema, to make them come back. The surest way to get huge audiences is, of course, to screen well known titles like *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, D 1927). As it has become a "must", it enables expensive presentations with orchestra accompaniment in theatres that have to be specially equipped with projectors capable of varying speeds, reel-to-reel projection and appropriate three-blade shutters. Not only in smaller towns do these requirements pose a problem. At the same time, it seems that the common misconception of silent cinema is precisely that it was merely been the predecessor of "real" cinema, with the exception of some rare, famous titles worth watching. To counteract this misconception, it is important to give audiences an opportunity to pass from the well-known titles to others less familiar. If silent film gets integrated into normal contemporary film programmes, it becomes evident that they deal, just like any other arts and media, with different

subjects and aesthetics and respond individually to the questions of their time. For example, the cinematic interpretation of the First World War began already in 1919 with Abel Gance's *J'accuse* and in time continued with *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, USA 1925) and *Heimkehr* (Joe May, D 1928) as well as with a number of sound films in the following decades. Film series can trace the influences on silent films of common cinematic aesthetics or themes. *Metropolis* and its quotations in various successors, especially in science fiction pictures like *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, USA 1982) is a ready example.

An inconvenience of introducing silent films into thematic film series might be the difficulty to promote them. They tend to be overlooked if other titles are better known. At the same time audiences who are not used to silent cinema may be attracted because of the subject. Therefore, in programming a limited number of pictures on a particular theme, it could be possible to include some that provide an easy and convincing approach to silent cinema in general. Silent film festivals of course have the possibility to create specific interest and to give a large approach to the great variety of silent cinema. Once the audiences get used to the different modes of perception, they appreciate the chance to discover different aspects of silent cinema, and begin to draw comparisons between films, and to shape their own understanding. It is evident, that besides the choice of the films, two major determinant factors in reaching audiences are the promotion of the event and its presentation.

First, the basis of any presentation is the right film print. Since cinema in many countries is only just starting to be accepted as an art form, as cultural heritage and as an object of scientific research, film is far from being considered a sensitive material. Very different from paintings for instance: Regularly, expensive exhibitions assemble in one place paintings that have been transported from museums in other parts of the world. It is common sense to go there, to watch the original of a picture whose reproduction you may have in your own apartment. Similarly, festivals and film series screen film prints transported at great cost from archives all over the world. The difference is that audience is rarely aware of all this effort or suspects that this may often be their single chance to experience the film on a cinema screen. Recent films are ordinarily released in a large number of cinemas in several countries at the same time. They seem to be available without limits. As the number of productions available on the market grows and as the times they are screened in the cinemas diminishes constantly, prints nowadays tend to quit cinemas before wear and tear becomes evident. Does anyone take care to see a film in the first week of release to be sure the print is still good? As films reappear regularly on TV, few people are aware that even from big productions hardly any prints remain available once they cease ordinary distribution. As it is not profitable for the distributors to store prints, and even less to produce new copies, the small number of prints which remain available are generally in poor condition. Hardly any silent films, of course, are available through commercial distributors.

Presentations of silent cinema depend on both - on theatres whose technical equipment enables the projection of silent films and which have the possibilities for musical accompaniment; and on archives that are in a position to make available the films they preserve through exhibition prints, and to undertake restorations regularly. As prints are physically strained by each projection, the concern of the archives is to have them projected only with the utmost care. The age of a print reveals itself through scratches and loss of frames. But a modern audience, accustomed to the pristine images of commercial cinemas, might have problems in watching the screening of a worn print and associated damaged images, with antiquated contents. Therefore it is important to secure the best possible prints to introduce audiences to silent cinema, even if the transience of the material is itself a part of film and its atmosphere. At the same time, the existence of a negative and an archival print of the film must be ensured for further conservation. It seems problematic, that the exchange of information about existing prints and about preservation projects still takes place on an individual basis, with the exception of restoration projects presented at festivals. With regard to the common interest in film heritage and the fact that it is no longer difficult to justify the possession of a print, it is useful to look for better networks. Little by little, archives start to publish their titles on the internet to stimulate research and to give inspirations for cinema programming. At the same

time, showing that specific films exist in specific archives, makes the archival work more comprehensible for the public, in particular if additional emphasis is put on the presentation of restoration projects and on the history of individual prints. What still is needed missing are common databases for several archives. There are first attempts such as in the German [www.filmportal.de](http://www.filmportal.de), to unite print information to general filmographic information about a particular picture. Based on growing networks, there could be more programming stimulated by restorations or more restorations stimulated by programming, as well as cooperations between museums in the realisation of demanding and expensive film series and in their large-scale promotion.

Once the silent film reaches the theatre, the main factor influencing presentation is the musical accompaniment. It is precisely the live music that is characteristic of the silent cinema experience. In Sacile we realise constantly how beautiful cinema becomes when supported by great music. Every presentation with orchestra and every creative and excellent accompaniment is fascinating. Of course, the controversy about the way to accompany film is as old as cinema itself, but this is precisely why it is important to support experiments. It is interesting to see silent films accompanied by music such as might have accompanied them originally, and even more so if their original accompaniment was specially commissioned and the score still exists. At the same time, a purely personal approach by the musicians - even a spontaneous invention - may enhance the live performance. Taking into account that much of the new audiences may consist in people in their mid-twenties it can also be appropriate to accompany silent film with contemporary music. Anyhow, uniformity does not fit with the variety of silent cinema.

The Collegium discussions concluded that it was important to offer a variety of presentations, and as part of the process of presentation to provide as much background information as possible - not just credits and content, but data about the print and its provenance and about the musicians and the projectionist. Not merely to screen the film, but to provide this kind of background information transforms the spectator into an insider.

Information about the content or the historical context of the production affords a larger understanding of a picture. As an example, at the 2005 Giornate del Cinema Muto, the provision of information about Japanese society in the 1930s allowed better understanding of recurrent subjects in the films. For instance, the tension between tradition and modern work which was a constant topic of the stories of geishas who sacrifice their honour, yet regain it through their self-sacrifice. Some Japanese silent films are quite difficult to understand when you are not used to their conventions of montage. For example it proved very useful to discuss beforehand the extent to which film language may be influenced by cultural conventions such as the fact that Japanese writing goes from right to left. *Orizuro Osen/Woman of Tokyo* (Yasujiro Ozu, 1933), for instance, starts with the image of a man standing at a train station. He is filmed from his right side, so that his view is turned to the right side of the screen. The next shot is revealed, in the course of the film, as a flashback while according to the conventions of western cinema it appeared as a minor ellipsis of time leading over to the next day. It is impressive to put one's own conventions of seeing into perspective by discovering other possibilities of the creation of sense.

At the same time, silent cinema might heighten consciousness of film as an artefact, and for the need physically to care for it: Through the lack of sound and colour - that normally seem perfectly obvious - and by the way the film deals with these lacks, - by replacing voices by facial play and intertitles, for instance - the construction of the images is much more evident, and through this, the materiality of film becomes more tangible than in sound and coloured films.

This impression can be guided by information about film restoration and preservation. It is remarkable to see how wide a spectrum the angles of approach cover if the scholar or spectator is not just focussing on content and aesthetics but also on the material and its history. Silent cinema in itself creates awareness of its material, even though details are unknown to the audiences. Especially, as the materiality of moving images becomes more and more abstract in the context of digitisation, it is interesting to see that the preservation of the artefact remains the foremost concern. However the digital restoration of film may evolve and whatever its place in film

preservation might eventually be, any transfer to digital forms needs as source material that will preferably consist of an original release print or an edited camera negative. Any restoration effort is based ideally on a selection of undamaged material, as close to the original version as possible. Why not inform audiences about the choices that have to be made during the restoration; about how much it is necessary or possible to interfere to make possible a pleasant presentation without destroying the integrity and the ambiance of the film; and in short to give some ideas about restoration techniques? At the 2005s Giornate, it was possible to compare the restorations of *Das Weib des Pharao* (Ernst Lubitsch, Germany 1922) and of *Beyond the Rocks* (Sam Wood, USA 1922). In the first picture, missing settings were replaced by stills taken from intact images of similar scenes; into which the moving main actors were copied. As movement can only be calculated if there are only very few pictures missing, images in longer replaced sections remain static. This permits the continuous progression of the action but gives an artificial appearance. The technique has to be explicit in order to avoid giving a wrong idea of the original film. In the second example, areas damaged by deterioration were kept in the film. This is very unfamiliar to an inexperienced audience and interrupts the action of the film. The vulnerability of film to chemical degeneration should be explained, to avoid puzzling and annoying the audience and to give an understanding of the material. The pleasure of watching *Beyond the Rocks* can even be enhanced by that deepened understanding, especially as this film is rather 'kitschy' thereby inviting to an ironical approach.

In Sacile, the mixture of different informative presentations, catalogue information, discussions, screenings made silent cinema exceptionally vivid. In the same way every projection of silent cinema could be an invitation to approach the films on different levels, and stimulate reflection about past, present and representation, on the issue of prints and their history and - in the first place of course - invite richer enjoyment of the variety of silent cinema.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed knowledge, experiences and ideas.

In April 2004, the Nederlands Filmmuseum found 1,812 meters of almost undamaged amber tinted nitrate positive film. The proved to be Sam Wood's 1922 melodrama *Beyond the Rocks*, starring Gloria Swanson and Rudolph Valentino, which for many decades had been considered a 'lost film'. The restored print of the film was premiered at the Pathé Tuschinski theatre in Amsterdam in April 2005 as part of the Filmmuseum's Biennale.

In October the same year, as part of the Giornate del Cinema Muto, *Beyond the Rocks* was screened at the Teatro Zancanaro theatre with a recorded soundtrack by Dutch composer Henry Vrienten which included extensive use of sound effects. The following reflections on the presentation – and particularly the musical accompaniment – of silent film were initiated by that screening.

#### Toying with the Silent Curtain

When I first watched silent cinema, I would concentrate on the film itself in great detail – concepts of framing, the engagement of the director, his style in not only controlling the camera and everything in front of it, but also the communication between him and the audience. I still do look at films like this. But soon after I became a regular of silent film screenings, I began to realise that another major contribution to this communication between film and audience is the use of the music which accompanies a film.

Although the musical accompaniment can, to some extent, be seen as a secondary medium of a story, it is essential that the musician work with the director to portray the emotion and interpret the images to help the audience to understand the film fully. The musicians does not always succeed, of course, whether due to the performance of the pianist or the way the music works with the audience. A particular scene or even a shot could be misread by a pianist so that the music used does not convey to the audience the interpretation the Director had intended.

Relaxing in the café beside the Teatro Zancanaro I reflected on the previous night's screening – the pre-opening event of the 2005 festival, Julien Duvivier's *Au Bonheur Des Dames* (1930) a film from the transitional period between silent and sound – and a wonderful introduction to my first time at the Giornate. Though initially taken aback by the French intertitles, I quickly grasped the main outline of the plot and the roles of the characters. The orchestral accompaniment, composed and conducted by Gabriel Thibaudeau was exceptional. Not only did the music capture and support the overall spirit of the film, but it also complemented the wonderful expressivity of the faces of Dita Parlo and Ginette Maddie and established an extraordinary atmosphere entirely at one with Duvivier's.

Thibaudeau's comments on his score in the catalogue were brief, but it expressed his objectives and his sense of what the music should contribute to the film. One phrase seemed to sum it up and stayed with me: "It all flows in one stream, the rhythm of a constantly moving city: Paris!" At first reading this might mean little; but matching it with the experience of the performance and atmosphere, it explains the whole movement and tempo both of the camera and of the relationship of the characters and the city itself within the film.

My café-table thoughts were interrupted by a voice at a neighbouring table: two of the other Giornate musicians were discussing Thibaudeau's score. They too were unqualified in their enthusiasm, and recognizing my interest, included me in the conversation, reiterating the feelings

about the interation of Thibaudeau's music and Duvivier's images. I asked them about the relationship between the cinema screen and the pianist, and the importance of the way the music is played out. "We always need to illuminate a scene and its themes, and then direct it towards the audience. Otherwise I feel that I have failed at what I am trying to achieve."

"The film could be presented silent" said the other sitting next to me, "with no music accompaniment at all. But what is the point. True, the audience would get some reading of the scene via what they see on the screen. But with the music - when it is right - you have the added bonus of the development of an element that can not only dramatically bring out the themes of the scene but also a far clearer and greater feeling of the whole of the film. We are the extra contact between the images on the screen and the audience." I asked them about their thoughts about the use of modern techniques of musical accompaniment, such as electric guitars, and more modern musical idioms; I cited Giorgio Moroder's soundtrack for *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) as an example.

"I know a lot of people who hate that soundtrack, but I think what they miss is that it made the film far more popular, in particular with normal cinemagoers..."

The other musician interrupted, "the problem is that the film was already well known. Queen used it on one of their music videos years before Moroder released that version... it was the same with *Nosferatu* (Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, 1922), Queen used that too in a music video, and it made the film known and popular. I really don't like that [Moroder's soundtrack to *Metropolis*] - in particular the use of vocals throughout. It just didn't work with the images. The music should have thrilled the audience. I just found it dull and stale" I suggested that although the music could possibly have introduced audiences of 1984 to *Metropolis* and silent cinema back in 1984; it is highly unlikely that it would have the same effect today. They agreed: "That is the other problem with using contemporary music for soundtracks for silent films: they have a short life span. When you are using classical music, or a piano, you are still in a contemporary world, but placed in a timeless space."

#### A Timeless Screening of Music and Image

So the use of artists like Adam Ant and Freddie Mercury on Moroder's soundtrack fixes it in time. The soundtrack stays while the world moves on culturally and musically. Classical music on the contrary gives proof against dating. In contrast to Moroder, we can watch *Metropolis* with the original 1927 orchestral score by Gottfried Huppertz, performed at the film's premiere at the UFA Palast am Zoo, Berlin on 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1927. Many describe this soundtrack as an extension of the wonderful 'visual symphony' that *Metropolis* remains today. After eighty years, it is still fresh and can still convey the emotion of the 1927 film to audiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thanks to the use of the classical musical form.

So with a classical score, we can feel that nothing has really changed, whether the audience are watching a silent film in the 20s or today. Of course the cultures of two eras can be made to clash for positive effect. An example is a performance in 2005 of Buster Keaton's *The Cameraman* (Edward Sedgwick, 1928) at the Barbican Theatre, London. Buster tries to impress the girl he loves (Marceline Day) by diving off the board into the swimming pool. Not only does Buster fail in a precision dive, but in the process, loses his oversized swimming costume. In search of a solution to his predicament, he spots a large lady in an elaborate Edwardian-style swimming suit, and sets off in determined pursuit of a chance to save his embarrassment. Neil Brand, accompanying the film, cut in a quotation from John Williams' theme from *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975). The audience expressed delighted approval of a joke which positively depended on anachronism.

#### Sound Effects of Silence

To return to *Beyond the Rocks*, which was screened at the Giornate on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at the Teatro Zancanaro. In order to permit a sound track, the film, originally projected at 16-16 frames per second, had been "stretched" so that it could run at the conventional sound speed of 24 frames

per second. The sound track consisted of a specially commissioned score by the Dutch composer Henry Vrieten, who had also arranged an effect track, which continued throughout the film with the sounds of seagulls; gravel underfoot; rustling newspapers, slit-open envelopes, car doors slamming and motorised machinery, including cars and trains. The intention of the sound is a conscious attempt to reflect the atmosphere of the world surrounding the non-speaking characters played by Valentino and Swanson.

As early as 1912, Fredrick A. Talbot commented, 'Opinion appears to be divided about this practice [the use of sound effects with silent cinema]. Some more cultivated motion photography lovers are opposed to it, on the grounds that unless every motion is given its distinctive sound, none at all should be audible; others contend that sound imports an additional realism to the scene' [1912]. In either case, the use of sound effects cannot convey atmospheric realism. However exactly all the detail of sound effects is achieved, the sense of reality collapses when we, the audience, realize that the characters cannot speak and interact aurally with the rest of their cinematic world.

Of course there are ways in which sound effects can be used with positive effect. An example is the scene in Charles Chaplin's *Sunnyside* (1919) when Farm Handyman (Charlie) tries his hand at playing the piano with the Village Belle (Edna Purviance). While doing this, without their knowledge, a baby goat enters the room and hides behind the piano. The moment Charlie starts to playing, the kid bursts into song. Charlie tries the offending note again, and all is normal. As he continues, though, the kid joins in again. Meanwhile the kid's place behind the piano has been taken by an adult goat. When Charlie resumes his playing the effect is even more startling. He gets up, looks behind the piano and finds the explanation of the mystery as the goat peeks up at him.

The film was, of course, originally silent, and the joke would work without sound effects. But the sound effects – the kid's bleat and the goat's much deeper tones - greatly enrich the comic effect, as did Neil Brand's use of William's *Jaws* theme.

In an earlier scene found in *Sunnyside*, Charlie's character is roughly awakened and forced out of bed by his boss (Tom Wilson) who thereupon promptly returns to his own bed. Charlie also returns to his pillow a few seconds later. Hearing no footsteps, the boss yells at Charlie through the wall. In response, Charlie grabs a boot and starts banging it on the floorboards and then rattles a jug and bowl on the wash-stand. Satisfied, the boss goes back to sleep. Seeing the film silent, the audience had to imagine the sounds. The sound effects again help point up the joke.

### A Soundtrack with No Audience?

An early scene in *Beyond the Rocks* shows a car waiting outside a cottage, with a path leading from the cottage to the car. The sound effects are already heard, with the background noise of the sea and seagulls; and to establish that we are seeing a car in front of us we have the added sound of a motor vehicle's engine. The cottage door opens, and at the same time as we see it opening and closing, we hear the appropriate sounds. As people stroll down the garden path, we hear the pebbles crunching underfoot; and the sound of laughter and voices. Sound accompanies the opening and closing of the garden gate, the opening of the car door, and the creak as the car leans to one side. Finally the car moves off, with the accompanying sound.

In this sequence, lasting no more than 40 seconds, we have two primary (background and atmospheric) sounds (the sea and the seagulls) and no less than twelve secondary (incidental) sounds. As the film continues, we notice that the track, with its incidental sounds, is actually distancing the viewer, who is distracted by trying to identify the source of each particular imposed sound from the action on the screen. Above all, the presence of so much sound emphasizes, as an anomaly, the fact that the protagonists, played by Swanson and Valentino, lack voices. This sound treatment of *Beyond the Rocks* (which has happily also been restored in a conventional sound version) fails its audience. We are asked to interpret the images from 1922 and also the sound dating from eighty years later. Inevitably the response is, "Well, if we can hear everything around them, why cannot we hear the characters talk? What is wrong with them?" This is an attempt to use a sound-track to make a silent film accessible to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century audience, which fails both to find an audience of to respect the idiom of silent cinema.

At the subsequent Collegium "Dialogue" on the film and its sound track, it was surprising to learn from the representative of the Nederlands Filmmuseum that the restoration team themselves were not sure of the rationale of the track: they had left the outcome of the score and soundtrack entirely to the composer; and in the outcome were as surprised as everyone else that Henry Vrienten had added in a sound effect track.

To my own question, "Didn't you discuss with the composer at all about the soundtrack? Not even to ask him why he had added sound effects?" I received the simple answer, "No". The Museum were happy with the score (with which I could agree) and the sound effects (with which I could not) as they found it a very successful attempt to introduce new audiences to silent cinema. Other speakers in the Dialogue questioned whether the film itself even merited so much trouble and expense, pointing out that *Beyond the Rocks* – adapted from a novel by the best-selling early 20<sup>th</sup> century novelist Elinor Glyn, is a rather inferior melodrama, with inferior performances by Swanson and Valentino – a view with which I would strongly disagree.

Back at my ruminative café table, I speculated on the effect of this presentation on an audience unaccustomed to silent cinema. Even though they might enjoy the screening, for the novelty, the story, and the exotic players, it would give them a false impression of how silent films looked – and sounded. While some silent films have been given sound tracks with the occasional sound effect – the Moroder *Metropolis* and Chaplin's *Sunnyside* – they are not as heavy-handed, incessant and *literal* as this treatment of *Beyond the Rocks*.

At the same time, as the Giornate reaction suggested, people accustomed to watching silent cinema may well have a negative response to the method. So we might conclude that soundtrack used for *Beyond the Rocks* is a soundtrack without an audience. With its heavy use of sound effects, Vrienten's soundtrack is either going to mislead a new audience or alienate the veterans. The right music as we have seen provides a unique three-way relationship of image, sound and viewer: the wrong sound effects can intrude upon this precious relationship and prejudice our love and respect for one of cinema's most golden ages.

Many thanks to David Robinson and everyone at the Pordenone Silent Film Festival as it was a fantastic experience and a great opportunity to see some great films. My thanks also goes to Mark Fuller and David Wyatt for their support; and finally, I would like to thank Chris Daniels and everyone at Bristol Silents as without them I would not have been able to start this great adventure in the history of cinema.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGIUM 2007:

3 JUNE 2007.

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