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"History Corrects Itself: Early Cinema, the Brighton Project, and the Film-Historical Canon"

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Abstract

The construction and dissemination of film histories are complex processes involving the participation and intervention of numerous agents—processes which have been in effect virtually as long as cinema itself has existed. One institutional agent which plays a vital yet largely unsung role in these processes is the film archive. This thesis undertakes to illustrate the discursive relationship between the evolving preserve of the archive and the construction of film history as it developed throughout the twentieth century, from the moment in which the first film archives were established in the United States and Europe. The thesis begins by examining the roles played by historians, theorists, and in particular, early film archivists—including Henri Langlois, Ernest Lindgren, and Iris Barry—in reproducing a particular interpretation of film history, described throughout as the 'film-historical canon,' which minimized the significance of early cinema prior to the emergence of D. W. Griffith, designating it as evolutionarily 'primitive' and devoid of artistic value. The thesis then casts its focus on a case study which further demonstrates the dynamic nature of the relationship between the archive and the construction of history, emphasizing the ways in which the archive can be 'activated' towards the revision of the canon. Our case study—the 34th Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives, also known as the 'Brighton Project'—reveals the role of the archive not only in the construction and reproduction of history, but by turn, in the continual expansion of its horizons.

Keywords: film history, film archiving, early cinema, Brighton Project

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Also, please find the abstract of the thesis attached.

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Introduction

One of the most oft-repeated anecdotes concerning the recovery of a lost film goes as follows: in 1981, at a Norwegian mental institution, a number of film canisters were found in a broom closet, whereupon the canisters and their contents were sent to the Norwegian Film Institute (Drum and Drum 2000, 144). Once opened, the canisters revealed an astonishing, if improbable, discovery: an original print of Carl Theodor Dreyer's silent classic *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, long thought lost, in surprisingly pristine condition (Janus Films 2018).

This was an improbable development indeed, as the film had, up until that point, suffered a tragic and ill-fated existence. Between its first showing in Copenhagen in April 1928 and its premiere in Paris later that year, eight minutes had been cut from the film by its producers over concerns regarding early criticism of its content (Drum and Drum 2000, 143). Meanwhile, the original negative was sent to Berlin to be printed at the facilities of the German film company UFA, where it was destroyed in a laboratory fire in December. Fortunately, Dreyer was able to fashion another negative from outtakes, but this, too, would be presumed destroyed the following year in a fire at the French facility where it was stored. So the matter stood until 1951, when French film historian Jean-Marie Lo Duca managed to track down the negative of the second version, which had evidently survived the fire, and used it to make his own: adding music from Vivaldi and Bach, replacing the original intertitles with subtitles where possible, and otherwise, creating new titles superimposed on images of "stained glass windows and carved church pews" (ibid.). For the following few decades, the film, which in the meantime had already emerged as a mainstay of the Western film canon, would continue to circulate most frequently in Lo Duca's version, now viewed as a severely compromised representation of the original work (Knight 1957, 99-100; Rotha 1930, 331; Potamkin 1979, 118-121; Janus Films 2018).

The interim canonization of *Jeanne d'Arc*, even absent the original version, as well as the extraordinary circumstances surrounding its rediscovery, raise a number of questions, particularly about the ways in which film canons—and, by extension, our shared understanding of film history—have taken shape historically. Moreover, considering the details of the original's return to cinema screens, as well as archival collections the world over, more questions arise regarding the role played by historians and archivists, as well as the institutions they represent, in the canonization of film works and the construction and dissemination of film histories.

This thesis aims to address these questions by examining the relationship between film archiving and film history. Specifically, we will consider how the film archive, from its origins in the 1930s, variously worked both to construct and reproduce a particular film history, and how it has since been mobilized towards 'rewriting' and expanding the scope of that history. The first chapter closely examines the formation of a canonical film history conceived as a linear trajectory towards 'film art,' and which thus systematically minimized the significance of the first decades of cinema, dismissing the work of this period as little more than "'primitive' attempts at later forms" (Gunning 2006, 34). In the course of tracing this process, we will locate instances in which

this canonical history was delimited, by design, according to a chronological or periodic dimension—that is, through the elevation of later periods of film practice which were framed as representing the culmination of film art, to the exclusion of earlier developments in the medium.

Crucially, this thesis does not presuppose the existence of a permanent and immutable record of canonical films. Unlike the biblical canon, a film canon is not "fixed and closed," but is rather "open to changes and exchanges" (Assmann 2008, 101). Building on Jan-Christopher Horak's conceptualization of the construction of film history, the first chapter attempts to grapple with what we call the 'film-historical canon' (2020). That is, not only the gradual formation of a canonical corpus of film works and auteurs throughout the twentieth century, but that of the concomitant historiographic metanarrative which serves to legitimate the corpus, thus splitting the difference between what is typically signified by the terms 'history' and 'canon.' In other words, the 'film-historical canon' cited throughout this thesis does not strictly refer to a specific set of films or filmmakers, but more broadly, to a particular conception of film history which gained currency within twentieth century film-historical discourse. Framing this still widely held view of film history in these terms will prove helpful in that, beyond simply scrutinizing the specific films and filmmakers which may be embedded within it, it allows us to interrogate the historiographic assumptions underlying it—what Horak describes as the "'greatest hits' view" of film history (1985, 94). As will soon become evident, what we refer to as the film-historical canon is directly comparable, perhaps even synonymous, with what certain historians have taken to describing in different terms, such as David Bordwell's "Basic Story" of film history, and Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery's "aesthetic film history" (Bordwell 2018; Allen and Gomery 1985). We will ultimately argue that the strands of film-historical discourse which constitute our canon took root concurrently, in the form of what Horak calls a "symbiotic relationship" between the burgeoning fields of film archiving and scholarship (2020, 31). As such, these discursive currents were reflected in both early historiographic texts and archival collections and shaped the contours of film history for a generation of scholars.

The first chapter further serves to establish the stakes of this project by revealing the extent to which early cinema was relegated "to the margin" of the twentieth-century canon-building project, while later—and ostensibly more aesthetically 'mature'—examples of the medium were moved "to the center of [critical and academic] attention" (Staiger 1985, 8). The second chapter introduces a watershed development in the field of film archiving and historiography which upended this trend: the 1978 Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in Brighton, England. This case study suggests that film archiving has, by turn, been "activated" as an agent of "historiographic revisionism," throwing light on important historical developments in the medium which had previously been consigned to the peripheries of the film-historical canon (Paalman, Fossati, and Masson 2021, 17).

At the outset, it is critical that we parse, for present purposes, some of the terminology employed throughout this thesis. Karen F. Gracy, in her 2007 publication *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Use, Value and Practice*, comments extensively on what she calls the "elusive and mutable" meaning of the term "preservation" within the context of the field of film

archiving (161-167). Paolo Cherchi Usai likewise suggests that "there is no consensus on the very definition of preservation, restoration, and conservation among moving image specialists," a fact which has only been further complicated by the advent of digital technologies, which have become instrumental in modern day film-archival practice (2019, 13). This thesis employs the following tentative definitions proposed by Cherchi Usai: namely "film preservation," which he describes as "the overall complex of principles, procedures, techniques, and practices necessary for safeguarding the material evidence, restoring the content, and organizing the intellectual experience of cinema on a permanent basis," and "film restoration," defined as "the set of technical, editorial, and intellectual procedures aimed at compensating for the partial loss or degradation of motion picture film, with the aspirational goal of bringing it back to a state identical to its original condition" (2019, 274-275). Meanwhile, the term "film archiving" is used to refer to the broad professional field which has emerged to encompass the aforementioned concerns in addition to many others—including, but not limited to, acquisition and selection, cataloguing, and documentation—and now constitutes the institutional remit of the film archive (Kuiper 1980, 9).

As the complex relationships between film history, the canon, and the archive have not been subject to a great deal of research up to the present, an elucidation of the significance of this project is in order. Aleida Assmann ascribes a "strategy" to the act of canonization whereby a text (or, otherwise, a cultural product more generally) is "invested with existential meaning," "framed with an aura," and treated with "emphatic reverence," while Andrea Gelardi argues in his doctoral thesis that this strategy possesses a "necessarily reductive drive since it is based on exclusion in terms of gender, culture, race, and class" (Assmann 2008, 102; Gelardi 2022, 40). Janet Staiger further contends that the construction and dissemination of dominant film canons, specifically, is a ramifying process generally undergirded by a politics of inequality and marginalization (1985). In other words, canonization itself, particularly at the institutional level, is a process which necessarily privileges and legitimates the consecration of certain works to the exclusion of others. As we will soon see, the privileging of canonized works within the context of film-archival practice—the crux of the exchange between the canon and the archive—has led to real-world consequences in terms of the preservation of global film heritage. For instance, while well-funded archives in the Global North have focused preservation efforts on their own national cinematic output, the "value and potential of collections in Southern archives remains undisclosed—both to the communities they represent and to scholars worldwide" (Paalman, Fossati and Masson 2021, 3).

Meanwhile, Horak suggests that early archivists curated their collections according to an established view of film history, by means of which certain canonized films were situated within a "linear film-historical narrative" interpreted by its propagators as an "upwardly-mobile spiral" (2020, 31). According to this trajectory, "film language" evolved towards "an ever-more sophisticated technological […] form of aesthetic expression" (ibid.). Horak continues:

> The milestones along this highway were: D. W. Griffith and Charles Chaplin in America in the 1910s, German Expressionism and Soviet revolutionary cinema in the 1920s, French Poetic Realism and classical

> Hollywood cinema in the 1930s, Italian Neo-Realism and Japanese cinema in the post-World War II 1940s, Swedish cinema in the 1950s, French New Wave in the 1960s, etc.
>
> (ibid.)

As we will demonstrate in the following pages, the 'highway' detailed above, which developed within film-historical discourse throughout the early-to-mid twentieth century, would ultimately serve to reinforce to the aforementioned chronological delimitation of the film-historical canon.

Assmann further points to a tension between the canon and the archive as institutions of cultural memory, whereby the former consists of "actively circulated memory that keeps the past present" and the latter amounts to "passively stored memory that preserves the past past" (2008, 98). This thesis contends that, in the case of film history, this tension is finally resolved, so that, at different points and with varying degrees of activity and passivity, the archive has energized and furthered the remit of the canon, and vice versa. Our ultimate goal is to illustrate the dynamic nature of this relationship: first, to demonstrate the ways in which the canon has molded the archive in order to produce (and continually reproduce) a particular interpretation of film history, and then to shed light on the ways in which the archive has been utilized as a means not only of revising the canon, but disputing the basis of its construction.

Consequently, this thesis argues that the film-historical canon established in the twentieth century reflects a circumscribed, albeit widely embraced and reproduced, metanarrative of the development of cinema which, by virtue of the very nature of its construction, systematically relegated certain significant periods of filmmaking to the periphery of film history. However, it is important to point out that the canon which was constructed throughout the twentieth century is rife with glaring representational gaps which lie beyond the scope of this thesis. In terms of more or less specific categories of film production, these would include, but are necessarily not limited to, short films, avant-garde and experimental films, the works of women and LGBTQ+ filmmakers, the works of Third World filmmakers, the works of diasporic communities of color, and the works of 'small' national cinemas situated within otherwise major regions of production, such as those which may be found throughout Eastern Europe. While these gaps cannot go unacknowledged, our aim, by refining the scope of this project and directing our focus towards a single notable case of the "contraction of cultural memory and its expansion," is to construct a general mapping of the institutional mechanisms underlying the formation of film canons and the construction of film histories, and to provide a point of departure for further academic inquiry into other areas of omission which may be found throughout canonical film histories (Assmann 2008, 102).

Finally, this thesis contends that rather than aiding in the reproduction of canonical histories, the film archive can help historians to push their inquiries "beyond established frontiers," thereby "broadening the scope of their enterprise" and allowing them to "continually [refine] their historical methods and perspectives" (Klinger 1997, 109). In short, the archive can enable the pursuit of what Barbara Klinger calls a "total history" of cinema—what may well be an "impossible enterprise," but is no less worth pursuing for it (ibid., 127).

I. Building Up the Canon: History, Theory, Criticism, and the First Generation of Film Archivists

In the first instance, it bears noting that questions of canonization and historical construction, in any medium, are exceedingly complex rather than straightforward. In briefly considering the nature and purpose of something like a film canon, let us first turn to perhaps the nearest analogue. In the case of literary canons, Herbert Grabes observes that "changes in the hierarchy of values" which undergirds them inevitably leads to their shifting over time (2008, 311). However, Grabes permits a caveat, pointing to the paradoxical logic of the canon alluded to by Assmann: namely, that canons are constructed, even within art-oriented discourse, with a view to resilience, and that "the history of canon formation shows that, against all odds, they quite often possess an extraordinary degree of longevity," a trait which he attributes to their "central importance for the shaping and sustenance of cultural memory" (Assmann 2008; Grabes 2008, 311). Moreover, in the case of cinema, perhaps more so than the erection of a canon of great works, Gomery notes the difficulty of the "creation of a theory and method" to orient the history which undergirds it (1976, 40).

Thus, in this chapter, we set out to locate the intersection of these two objects—the cross-pollination of canon and history—by tracing the formation of what we call the 'film-historical canon.' Throughout, we will chart its historical development by identifying some of its key milestones, sites of formation, and the value-based assumptions underlying it; uncovering the latent connections among these factors; and, ultimately, demonstrating its longevity throughout the twentieth century and beyond. This chapter will constitute a vital first step towards the contextualization of the formative event in film archiving covered in the second chapter, as well as the full apprehension of its discursive relationship with—and contributions to the broadening of—the film-historical canon.

As Staiger argues in her seminal essay "The Politics of Film Canons," the formation of film canons can be "located in a variety of projects":

> In film criticism, whether popular or academic, some films will be chosen for extensive discussion and analysis; others will be ignored. In theoretical writing, arguments are buttressed by films cited as examples of points. In histories, films are marked as worth mentioning for one reason or another (e.g., influence, aesthetic significance, typicality).
>
> (1985, 4)

Indeed, some of the earliest attempts at establishing film canons dovetailed with the emergence of film theory, history, and criticism as discrete disciplines, as well as formative efforts to preserve film itself, with practitioners from each field contributing markedly to the ongoing enterprise of film canon-making (Siewert 2020, 21). Moreover, film canons—whether found in the pages of the

theoretical, historiographic, or critical text, or in the form of an archival collection—have always been defined by "a system of inclusion and exclusion" (Frick 2011, 12-13; Staiger 1985, 18).

Beginning with Ricciotto Canudo's seminal manifesto "The Birth of the Sixth Art" (1911), one of the chief tendencies underlying this process of selectivity was a belief among pioneering historians, theorists, critics, and archivists in the medium's putative status as a newly emergent art form, and not merely a novel form of entertainment (Fossati 2009, 123; Frick 2011, 10, 34; Myrent and Langlois 1995, 15). In other words, the most widely accepted and oft-repeated history of cinema, as Bordwell argues, amounts to "a narrative that traces the emergence of film as a distinct art," what Bordwell calls the "Basic Story" (2018, 13). According to this historical narrative, only a relative few early filmmakers are worth noting for their artistic distinction, their historical significance, and especially their "creative use of the camera's potential," and as such, they are consistently singled out as milestones within cinema's art-bound ontological trajectory (ibid.). These names include, and in many cases are limited to, Auguste and Louis Lumière for their actuality films, Georges Méliès for his trick films, Edwin S. Porter for his pioneering editing techniques, and D. W. Griffith for "inventing or perfecting elements of 'cinematic syntax'" such as cross-cutting and analytical editing (ibid.). Accordingly, the Basic Story suggests that it was not until the 1910s and 1920s that "particular film techniques were elaborated that made cinema less a pure recording medium than a distinct means of artistic expression" (ibid.).

Similarly, Allen and Gomery brand this teleological, art-centered historiographic approach "aesthetic film history," whereby "the great cinematic art works of the past" are singled out for special attention, while other aspects of film history—economic, technological, cultural—become subordinate to "the establishment of a canon of enduring cinematic classics" (1985, 67-68). From its introduction in the early twentieth century, this broadly defined principle—the film as art—would directly inform not only the prescriptive tone of seminal texts in the field of film theory, but also the "evaluative aesthetic criticism" which would become part and parcel of film canon-making and historiography for decades to come (Horak 2020, 31; Lupo 2011, 231). Bordwell goes so far as to liken the historiographic approach of the major proponents of (and contributors to) the Basic Story to that of art historians, pointing, for example, to their shared subscription to the "commonplace neo-Hegelian belief that in art a nation's spirit (*Volksgeist*) expresses itself" (2018, 20). Further, Bordwell contends that much of the work of early film writers and historians "conceived of film history along lines parallel to current conceptions of modern painting," suggesting that rubrics drawn from art history such as Parisian Cubism, German Expressionism, and Soviet Constructivism "found their counterparts in film historians' outline of cinema as a succession of national movements" (ibid., 20-21).

Take, for instance, Rudolph Arnheim's groundbreaking theoretical work *Film as Art*, originally published in 1932, which begins by analogizing cinema to painting before proclaiming that film is a medium which "may, but need not, be used to produce artistic results" (1957, 8). Arnheim's stated aim is to challenge the argument that "film is nothing but the mechanical reproduction of nature and therefore not art" (127). Under the guise of developing an aesthetics of proper, artistically accomplished filmmaking which aligns itself squarely with the theoretical

tradition of formalism, Arnheim first sets out to delineate what he views as the peculiar formal qualities of contemporary cinematography: for example, the projection and framing of the film image, and its manipulation of space-time through editing (9-34). Arnheim takes great pains to demonstrate what he designates as the "artistic uses" of the aforementioned qualities, citing specific examples in the process. For instance, where Arnheim extols the formal virtues of the work of Chaplin and Sergei Eisenstein, he criticizes *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* for its over-reliance on dialogue scenes, which he calls an "unfruitful theme for the camera," and treats *Diary of a Lost Girl* (dir. G. W. Pabst, 1929) disparagingly for a scene in which he argues a superfluous change in camera angles occurs (40, 49). Arnheim develops a theory marked entirely by this sort of evaluative approach, which he often expresses in categorical prescriptive terms—for example, he claims that "every good film shot is satisfying in a purely formal sense as a linear composition" (58). In the course of this development, he ends up fashioning a canon of his own: beyond variously singling out specific titles for evaluation, he reserves particular praise for the American and Soviet cinemas, while seeming to dismiss the German and French outright (41, 68, 70).

In 1932, six years before *Film as Art* would appear on shelves, British film critic, historian, archivist, and curator Iris Barry made her own case for film to be considered an art form in her volume *Let's Go to the Pictures* (later retitled *Let's Go to the Movies* for the U.S. edition). In one instance, Barry mounts an argument which, in many ways, reads as strikingly similar to that of Arnheim, comparing cinematography—particularly the "orchestra of tones" evident in black-and-white films—to the paintings of the Old Masters, while roundly dismissing the artistic potential of color film (Arnheim 1957, 155; Barry 1972, 38-42, 44). Later, in one of her many prescient gestures towards the "politique des auteurs" of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Barry contends that the director of a film is "the man of destiny" and "the one supremely important person" in its development (1972, 197). Barry surveys the contemporary landscape of film production, casting value judgements aimed at production studios ("Second to [United Artists] on their high Olympus, I place Famous Players"), national or regional cinemas ("The average Continental output is abysmally bad"), and directors ("Joseph von Sternberg [*sic*] came up like the Evening Star and went down like a meteor"). In the process, she creates a de facto canon, separating wheat from ostensible chaff, the "serious artist" from the "popular favorite" (ibid., 199-200, 214, 230). At one point, Barry goes so far as to describe the collective works of United Artists, together with those of Dorothy and Lillian Gish, as no less than "the history of the cinema as we non-participants know it" (ibid., 200).

Though it has not garnered a great deal of academic attention since it was first published, Barry's *Pictures* appears to have served as a model for later canons, such as that devised by the American auteurist critic Andrew Sarris. Sarris was a devoted acolyte of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the French film journal best known for employing the polemical critics-turned-filmmakers of the *Nouvelle Vague* and propounding their "politique des auteurs," beginning with the 1954 publication of François Truffaut's article "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" (Bordwell 2018, 81; Bickerton 2009, 21-22). The "politique" dictated that:

> Unlike a mere director, an auteur was a filmmaker with a vision of the world enunciated with his mise-en-scène: it was not the particular subject the way the author chose to treat it that was important; in the hands of a master, the flimsiest detective story could become a great work.
>
> (Bickerton 2009, 21-22)

The elevation of the film director to the putative status of single-minded artist was central to a critical and theoretical framework which would come to be known as auteurism, one which Allen and Gomery claim was the "the first self-conscious and fully articulated theory of film history," and which, by contrast, Peter Wollen calls the "last major and explicit attempt to rewrite the film canon" (Allen and Gomery 1985, 71; Wollen 2002, 217). This framework, along with the radical reframing of the canon which would follow, has its roots in a dialectic which emerged between the so-called "Young Turks" at *Cahiers*—the aforementioned group of critics-turned-filmmakers which included such future staples of the canon as Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard—and their ostensible mentor, as well as the journal's co-founder, André Bazin (Bickerton 2009, 21-22; Bordwell 2018, 76). The publication of Truffaut's article signaled a break with the past, taking on the air of a manifesto: where Bazin championed the essential "realism" of a cinematic old guard whose reputation he had helped to establish as a young critic, and which consisted of the likes of *Citizen Kane* (dir. Orson Welles, 1941) and the work of Italian neorealists such as Roberto Rossellini, the younger generation of critics pursued the elevation of the *film maudit*, formulating an "alternative canon" of its own in the process (Andrew 2013, 211; Bickerton 2009, xvii; Bordwell 2018, 71; Brody 2020). Bordwell summarizes their impact as follows:

> The Young Turks delighted in elevating commercial directors and creating a new canon. Now [Alfred] Hitchcock, [Howard] Hawks, [Otto] Preminger, and Nicholas Ray were held superior to Pabst, [René] Clair, even [John] Ford. Now the great [F. W.] Murnau films were *Tabu* (1931) and *Sunrise* (1927) rather than *Nosferatu* (1922) and *The Last Laugh* (1924); [Fritz] Lang's American films, such as *The Big Heat* (1953), were preferred to *M* (1931) and other German classics.
>
> (2018, 76-77)

Consequently—perhaps as a result of the nature of their dialectic and the historical interest it has generated in the years since, as well as the prominence of all involved—their rift had the twofold effect of the canonical reinforcement of the works which had been championed by Bazin's generation and the consecration of the auteurs favored by his younger colleagues (Andrew 1985, 55; Bickerton 2009, xvii; Bordwell 2018, 69; Brody 2020). Meanwhile, Sarris—who is often credited with introducing the auteur theory to American film criticism with his essay "Notes on the Auteur Theory, 1962"—would further develop the framework with his 1968 publication *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968*, a volume whose influence is such that critic and programmer Kent Jones describes it as carrying "the monumentally timeless authority of an originary text" (Ebert 2012; Brody 2012; Jones 2005, 48). Sarris' exercise in personal canon-

making—whereby he arranges dozens of sound-era American directors into tiered categories, descending in rank-order of the perceived quality of their oeuvres and bearing titles such as "Pantheon Directors," "Lightly Likeable," and "Miscellany"—contains definite echoes of Barry's, formulated over three decades prior, as well as that of Paul Rotha, whose work will be covered later in this chapter (Sarris 1996). Sarris provides not only a complete filmography (where possible) for every entry—each corresponding to a different director—but he italicizes "works of special interest" within a given body of work, separating major from minor works even as he separates major from minor filmmakers (1996, 39).

The significance of Sarris' canon in reinforcing the discursive tendency towards the conception of film as an art form, and to film canon-making in general, cannot be overstated. Beyond championing the auteur theory—which Fossati credits with "reinvigorating the 'film as art' argument" in its own right—Sarris has been credited with influencing a generation of critics and sending reverberations throughout the burgeoning field of film studies, particularly in the United States (Fossati 2009, 123; Rosenbaum 2004, xv). Together with the canon-building of the Young Turks, *American Cinema* would promulgate far-reaching critical reappraisals of filmmakers such as Hawks, Hitchcock, and Ray—names which now seem inextricable from any notion of a film canon (Allen and Gomery 1985, 75; Ebert 2012; Rosenbaum 2010, 331-336). It may in fact be argued that few critics, if any, have had an influence comparable to that exerted by Sarris, as well as his peers across the Atlantic, in cementing film criticism as one of the many "projects" involved in film canon-making, and on aesthetic film history (Allen and Gomery 1985, 71-73).

As observed, the tendency to view film as a discrete art form was central to the first few decades of film theory and criticism, as well as the concomitant formation of some of the seminal film canons. However, as Fossati notes, the resonance of the principle, in a broader sense, has gone on to prove profound in still other ways:

> From the 1970s, "film as art" has become an important argument also for scholars to promote the creation of film departments, and for film archivists to raise funds to support preservation and restoration programs, but also to affirm their *raison d'être* among other archives and museums.
>
> (2009, 123)

Fossati's claims take on a special relevance with regards to Barry, whose work as an archivist and curator would arguably prove even more influential on the film-historical canon than as a critic or scholar. Alongside Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque Française and Ernest Lindgren of the British National Film Archive (or NFA, initially known as the National Film Library and now known the BFI National Film and Television Archive, or NFTA), Barry is emblematic of the earliest institutional efforts not only to preserve films in dedicated repositories—film "libraries," or archives—but to curate them for the purpose of public exhibition, casting them in a canonical mold by touting their historical and artistic significance to audiences (Roud 1983; Sitton 2014; Wasson 2005).

In 1932, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City, Alfred H. Barr, published a statement in which he exalted the work of such "masters" as Chaplin, Eisenstein, and Clair, insisting that "the only great art peculiar to the 20th century" was "practically unknown to the American public," as well as the museum's board of trustees (quoted in Roud 1983, 33). Three years later, with Barr's encouragement, as well as a sizable grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, Barry would establish MoMA's Film Library, an institution which sought to "[make] possible for the first time a comprehensive study of the film as a living art" and to "[restore] vanished motion pictures to view" (Abbott and Barry [1935] 1995, 325; Barry 1939, 335; Roud 1983, 33). In addition to early criticism and the rare monograph such as that of Arnheim or Rotha, Bordwell identifies the work of such archivists as Barry, Lindgren, and Langlois—itself an outgrowth of a burgeoning movement of "metropolitan film societies," or ciné-clubs—as a foundational site for early canon-building and dissemination (2018, 21-23).

One of the most significant aspects of Barry's archival approach as curator of the Film Library, as opposed to that of Langlois, was its "highly selective" nature, with limiting factors such as the "vagaries of availability and notoriety" further shaping the institutional collection (Roud 1983, 23-24, 130; Bordwell 2018, 25). Under Barry's curatorship, the Film Library's acquisition and exhibition practices evinced a distinct focus on an array of "classics that had already been praised by historians," with pilot programs showcasing such "standard texts" as Méliès' *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902), Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), and Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) (Bordwell 2018, 25; Wasson 2005, 152, 155-156; Wasson 1998, 255). In a specialized volume which charts the history of the Film Library and its impact on film culture, Haidee Wasson suggests that Barry's relative marginalization of early cinema was part and parcel of the "new mode of film exhibition" she sought to articulate through her work with the institution (2005, 23). Far from a "cinema of attractions," as Tom Gunning and other post-Brighton scholars would later reconceive early cinema (a concept which will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter), or one of "distraction, urban wandering, pleasure, or displeasure," Barry sought to cast cinema as an object of "studious attention—a notably distinct idea about what cinema was and why one should watch it" (ibid.). In other words, Barry strove not only to frame cinema as an art form, but as one which was only then beginning to emerge from its crude and undistinguished origins, and as such, was finally worthy of serious scholarly consideration. This perspective is reflected in her broader aesthetics of cinema, as articulated in *Let's Go to the Movies*, which—like Arnheim's later *Film as Art*—focuses its praise and scrutiny virtually exclusively on cinematic production from the mid-1910s onwards.

In 1939, as part of a broadly conceived exhibition held on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of MoMA, as well as the museum's relocation to a new building, the Film Library ran a program titled "A Review of Film History in a Cycle of Seventy Films." As the Library's first program to be open to public admission, the series not only reveals the institution's curatorial slant at the time, but also serves to illustrate Barry's view of film history (Barry 1939, 335-344). Presented as a "survey of the main body of filmmaking from 1895 onwards," the program does in

fact highlight a small number of selections from cinema's early period, including the aforementioned works by Méliès and Porter, albeit only to the extent that they demonstrate the "development of [cinematic] narrative," an aspect of filmmaking which, it is implied, would only culminate with later entries in the canon (Barry 1939, 35; Museum of Modern Art 1939, 2). For instance, the program notably frames Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* as "the basis of modern [cinematic] technique," reserving a solitary position for the film under the same heading (ibid.). Barry admits to certain necessary omissions from the program—namely, the "later films" of Chaplin and Clair, and "Russian films" such as those of Eisenstein—but, crucially, neglects to account for the large gaps in the program's representation of early cinema (1939, 335-336).

While Barry, in her capacity as curator of the Film Library, generally registered an aversion to the preservation of films by major contemporary directors, Griffith was indeed a notable exception (Bordwell 2018, 26). Not only did the Film Library's "Review of Film History" present the director's *Birth of a Nation* as "the basis of modern technique," it also touted his *Intolerance*, *Broken Blossoms* (1919), and *Way Down East* (1920) as exemplars of the "sociological film," the "intimate photoplay," and the translation of "stage into screen," respectively, with each film similarly occupying a solitary position in its corresponding category (Museum of Modern Art 1939, 2). "For Barry," Bordwell writes, "creative editing began with *The Great Train Robbery* and culminated in *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*" (2018, 26). Barry's reverence for the director who came to be considered the "father of film technique" by later historians such as Arthur Knight was such that in 1940, she mounted the first major retrospective of his work, "D. W. Griffith: American Film Master," which also served as the basis for a "lasting and influential" monograph of the same name, penned by Barry herself (Barry 1940; Bordwell 2018, 26; Knight 1957, 23; Wasson 2005, 182).

While she was not alone among early archivists in her regard for Griffith—one of Langlois' first acquisitions for the collection at the Cinémathèque Française was *The Birth of a Nation*, while the earliest public screening held by Lindgren showed the film alongside *The Great Train Robbery*—Bordwell asserts that it was Barry's efforts in particular which served to "[lift] Griffith's reputation enormously" (Bordwell 2018, 24, 26; Roud 1983, 19). Although Griffith's significance to film history is well established, Allen and Gomery astutely observe that his lasting reputation as a pioneer must be viewed in light of the fact that—thanks to early preservation efforts such as those of the Film Library, the Cinémathèque Française, and the NFA—most of his early works survive into the present day, while the same cannot be said for the works of many of his peers and predecessors, thereby rendering a comprehensive comparative analysis of Griffith's work against that of his contemporaries virtually impossible (1985, 45).

As leading representatives of the first generation of film archivists, Langlois, Lindgren, and Barry's influence on the film-historical canon is immeasurable. Each of these figures, as a symbol of the early film-archival movement, might, from our present vantage, be considered to have embodied a unique discursive role with regards to the relationship between the archive and the construction of history. For instance, Claudy Op den Kamp argues that Lindgren, as what we will call the archivist-preservationist, "personified the idea of preservation for the sake of posterity

in its most polemical form, allowing no provision for access [to archival materials]," while Langlois—the "collector at heart," or archivist-exhibitionist—was devoted to "screening films, regardless of the need for preservation" (2018, 24). Meanwhile, Barry might be considered to have embodied the role of archivist-historian, seeking above all to situate the contents of the archive within an art-centered film-historical framework.

In order to better parse these roles, we might look to a complementary set of theoretical frameworks utilized by Fossati to delineate what she calls the "archival life of film," a term which "indicates the life of film once it has entered the archive, from selection to preservation, from restoration to exhibition" (2009, 123). Each framework is associated with a distinct view of film ontology and implies a unique approach to archival practice. Of the four frameworks postulated by Fossati, three are of particular relevance to our analysis: the aforementioned "film as art," which played an instrumental role in shaping the contours of the film-historical canon and served as the impetus of Barry's archival practices in particular; the "film as original," which concerns the "authenticity" of film as historical artifact; and the "film as *dispositif*," which draws on a concept introduced by film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry in the 1970s (ibid., 108, 117, 121, 126).

The "film as art" framework valorizes either of two specific aspects of film aesthetics, medium specificity and the auteur, and pursues the object of film preservation in alignment with one or both of these principles (ibid., 123-126). Considering her specific archival activities surrounding the work of Griffith and her wide-ranging discursive efforts towards the promotion of the medium as an art form, it is evident that this paradigm served as the impetus of Barry's approach. The "film as original" framework, best describing Lindgren's activities, denotes that in which the integrity of the film "artifact" is considered to be of central importance, whether the "original" itself is thought to constitute a "conceptual artifact" (for instance, a particular version of a film) or a "material artifact" (for example, the original camera negative) (ibid., 117). Meanwhile, the "film as *dispositif*" framework, contrary to that of the "film as original" paradigm, constitutes "reenactment" of the "original" (ibid., 73). That is, the activities of the archive revolve around the exhibition of film, be it with an emphasis on the preservation of the *dispositif*, or the (historical) apparatus, underlying said exhibition—for instance, in the broadest sense, the projection of film in a dark room—or the presentation of an altogether new *dispositif*, of which Fossati points to the viewing of a silent film on an iPod as one example (ibid., 175). This framework, particularly in terms of the preservation of historical *dispositifs* and the prioritization of film exhibition, is represented here by Langlois. Hence, each of these early archivists may be viewed as having embodied a distinct role—though, crucially, none necessarily mutually exclusive with any other—with regards to the "archival life of film," with each ultimately exerting a pronounced influence on the film-historical canon.

The different approaches to archival practice, as well as the subtly divergent views of film history, adopted by these archivists were often made manifest in their encounters with one another. In one such instance which reveals Barry's overt concern with preservation, particularly as a means of art-centered canonization, and Langlois' otherwise indiscriminate attitude towards the same end, Langlois biographer Richard Roud recounts the Cinémathèque curator's reaction to Barry's stated

aim of preserving only "'the best'": "How can I choose, asked Langlois, when a film like [Louis] Feuillade's *Barrabas* [1920] was considered for so long to be of no interest?" (1983, 24). Elsewhere, Caroline Frick cites former NFTA curator Clyde Jeavons' aphoristic account of an exchange between Langlois and Lindgren which encapsulates the tension between the former's investment in the "cinémathèque model," placing an emphasis on exhibition, and the latter's strict prioritization of preservation without access. During the exchange, the former proclaimed that "to show is to preserve," whereas the latter countered that "to preserve is to show" (2011, 88, 170). Though Lindgren, during the early phase of his tenure as curator of the NFA, was interested in screening films, his eventual position was that, above all, "the role of the archive was to ensure that the film was preserved" (Francis 2006, 37; Smither 2002, 248).

Despite Langlois' unorthodox methods—his misguided belief, for instance, that nitrate film benefits from continual projection—his indiscriminate archival practices have been credited with ensuring the survival of such canonical fixtures as *Napoleon* (dir. Abel Gance, 1927) and *Partie de campagne* (dir. Jean Renoir, 1946), among countless others (Roud 1983, 47-48, 131-132). Langlois' programming has also been widely acknowledged as instrumental in shaping the tastes of the Young Turks, who came to be known as the "Children of the Cinémathèque" (Roud 1983, 64-65; Bordwell 2018, 81-82; Smither 2002, 247). According to Annette Insdorf, it was the programming of Cinémathèque Française, under Langlois' curatorship, which familiarized the fledgling critics with the work of American directors such as Ford and Hawks, and enabled them to later "make a case for [the filmmakers'] artistry" in the pages of *Cahiers* (1979, 20). In Wollen's estimation, the "*Cahiers* revolution" could not have been possible without the archival activities of Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française, a sentiment which was once echoed in an unsigned *Cahiers* editorial (Wollen 2002, 221; Roud 1983, xxv).

Considering the famously idiosyncratic nature of his preservation ethics, Langlois' approach to early cinema is especially worthy of note. Though he apparently "refused to accept the judgment of film critics and historians about films of the past," Langlois' firm belief that "the cinema is an art in the same way that painting and music are" was nonetheless accompanied by a "rigid scale for assessing [the] artistic value" of a given film (Roud 1983, 24; Myrent and Langlois 1995, 19, 26). For instance, in an early proposal for a magazine article dating to 1935—one year before he would co-found the Cinémathèque Française with Georges Franju—Langlois writes:

> We have been able to observe that, yet again, the passing of time has led to a change in values. Certain famous films of incontestable historical importance—*J'accuse* [dir. Abel Gance, 1919], *La Fête espagnole* [dir. Germaine Dulac, 1920], *Eldorado* [dir. Marcel L'Herbier, 1921], *Fièvre* [dir. Louis Delluc, 1921], *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*—are altogether invisible today. Others, however, that had far less illustrious careers—some little known, even unknown: *Ménilmontant* [dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1926], *Brumes d'automne* [dir. Dimitri Kirsanoff, 1929], *Contes cruels* [dir. Gaston Modot, 1930], *Le mystère de la tour Eiffel* [dir. Julien Duvivier, 1928]—hold up beautifully for modern audiences.

(Myrent and Langlois 1995, 24)

It is interesting to note Langlois' comment on the mutability of the canon, which he attributes to the "[changes] of values" which accompany the "passing of time." More importantly, however, Langlois' remarks testify, at once, to both his preoccupation with the promotion of the Basic Story of French film history as it had been written up to that point in such seminal periodicals as *La Cinématographie française* and *La Revue du cinéma*—as evidenced by his emphasis on the "incontestable historical importance" of prominent Impressionists of the 1910s and 1920s including Gance, Dulac, and L'Herbier—as well as his early interest in shedding light on films which were otherwise considered marginal to the French canon (ibid., 140). These incongruous tendencies would persist well into Langlois' tenure as curator of the Cinémathèque. Writing in 1956, for instance, pioneering French historian Georges Sadoul highlights a great number of films preserved by the Cinémathèque which he regards as established "masterpieces" of the French canon, including the complete oeuvres of Delluc and Clair, as well as *Cœur fidèle* (dir. Jean Epstein, 1923) and Luis Buñuel's first two films (Roud 1983, 25). In addition, the Cinémathèque, by this point, had acquired a large number of what Sadoul considered the most "important" foreign films, including prints of *Intolerance* and *Way Down East*, as well as works by Murnau, Dreyer, Pabst, and Erich von Stroheim (ibid., 25-26). Elsewhere, Sadoul notably points to the Cinémathèque's conservation of "those strange pre-World War I works by Émile Cohl and Méliès" (quoted in ibid., 26).

In 1936, around the moment of the Cinémathèque's inception, Langlois indeed set out to acquire as many feature films and short subjects made between 1896 and 1930 as possible—a notably extensive period spanning almost the entire duration of the existence of cinema by that point, suggesting Langlois' relative disregard for the ostensible demarcation between the medium's so-called primitive origins and its flourishing as a bona fide art form (Myrent and Langlois 1995, 29). On the basis of these early acquisitions, Roud credits the archivist with a curatorial approach which made contemporary filmgoers aware of the canonical significance of French filmmakers such as Méliès (for whom Langlois held particular reverence, as Barry did Griffith), the Lumière brothers, and Feuillade, as well as American counterparts including Porter and "the early" Griffith (Roud 1983, 1-2; Myrent and Langlois 1995, 28). Further, Roud argues that Langlois' efforts helped to cement the widespread recognition that it was these early filmmakers' work in particular which not only influenced the "development of cinema," but also stood as "works of art in themselves," once again reflecting the archivist's alignment with what Horak calls the 'greatest hits' interpretation of film history and revealing a distinctly auteurist approach to his curation of early cinema (Roud 1983, 2; Horak 2020, 31; Siewert 2020, 21). In this respect, and in spite of his independent concern with the preservation and exhibition of neglected films, Langlois clearly contributed to the reproduction of the Basic Story not only of French film history, but of film history in general.

Standing in stark contrast to that of both Barry and Langlois, Lindgren's archival approach was notable in that he tended to place a noted emphasis on the preservation of film above all else, including exhibition, thus aligning him with the "film as original" framework (Fossati 2009, 97;

Smither 2002, 248). In one instance, when a Warner Bros.-Seven Arts executive approached Lindgren to request a loan of the negative of *Long Pants* (dir. Frank Capra, 1927) for the purpose of creating new elements, the NFA curator refused to volunteer the negative. According to Frick, Lindgren contended that the film could not be preserved "for posterity" unless "the negative was kept as intact, and unused, as possible" (2011, 171). In line with the "film as original" framework, Lindgren might have indeed agreed with Fossati's suggestion that "a newly recognized authenticity originates when a film enters the archive," that the accessioned film "becomes heritage" and "its copies museum artifacts" (2009, 118).

Thus, Lindgren's influence on the film-historical canon is made self-evident: it is likely due to his strict approach to preservation policy that many films which are now widely regarded as canonically significant, such as the original British adaptation of *Gaslight* (dir. Thorold Dickinson, 1940), might have survived (Jeavons 1981; Frick 2011, 94). As Fossati suggests, however, her proposed frameworks are not necessarily mutually opposed, as certain instances or modes of archival practice, or certain archival practitioners, may exhibit tendencies associated with more than one (2009, 170). As such, it is important to note that Lindgren also sought, in terms of both his curation and his writing, to frame film as a unique art form, pointing to his simultaneous affinity with the "film as art" framework. For instance, in a 1941 pamphlet, Lindgren argues for the necessity of an archival selection process, first and foremost, as a means of rendering "the collection representative of the art of the film" (quoted in Francis 2006, 32). A 1948 monograph by Lindgren, the aptly titled *The Art of the Film: An Introduction to Film Appreciation*, provides a wealth of insight into the archivist's perspective of film as an art form, and in particular, one which developed from crude, unformed origins.

In the book, Lindgren declares "the development of film technique" as tantamount to "the development of editing," a device which was "entirely unknown to the earliest filmmakers" (1948, 47). Lindgren posits a trajectory of the early development of film editing which can be directly compared, virtually to the point of exact correspondence, to Bordwell's description of the narrative underlying the Basic Story. Lindgren asserts that:

> The inventors of the first cinematograph cameras began by setting up their apparatus in the open air and taking moving snapshots of anything which appealed to their fancy: workers leaving a factory, a train coming into a station […] these were some of the subjects, for example, which appeared in the first programme shown by the Lumière brothers.
>
> (ibid.)

According to Lindgren's account, these early "films" (the quotation marks his own) are soon followed by "pre-arranged and rehearsed pieces of action being shown," as in the 1895 Lumière film *L'Arroseur arrosé* (ibid.). In turn, this ostensible development is followed around 1903—notably, the same year in which the Basic Story tends, achronologically, to place Porter's emergence—by "longer films […] produced by joining several such short rehearsed scenes together to tell a simple story" (ibid., 47-48). Regardless of the evolution in technique Lindgren

suggests took place during the first decade of the medium's existence, he offers up the categorical stipulation that "all of these early film scenes" were in fact produced "in the simplest possible way"—that is, by taking "one continuous shot, in one uninterrupted turning of the camera" (ibid., 48). One can easily compare this trajectory with that delineated by Bordwell in his description of the Basic Story:

> The saga begins with cinema as a record of everyday incidents, as in the *actualité* films of Louis Lumière. […] A decisive step away from recording was taken by [Méliès'] fantasy films. By stopping the camera and rearranging the figures and settings, Méliès created magical effects. […] [T]he early films of [Porter] mark the next advance in narrative technique. *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) is credited with creating a story out of separate pieces of film, or shots, combined in a coherent fashion. *The Great Train Robbery* was widely believed to press still further in this direction.
>
> (2018, 13)

Further scrutiny of Lindgren's *Art of the Film* only reinforces the archivist's subscription to and faithful reproduction of the principles of the Basic Story. For instance, Bordwell notes, as a core tenet of the metanarrative, that Griffith is "usually credited with perfecting the enduring artistic resources of the story film," as well as "inventing or perfecting elements of 'cinematic syntax,'" culminating in his *Birth of a Nation*, "cinema's first masterpiece" and the "consummation of all [of] Griffith's innovations" (ibid., 13, 15). Accordingly, Lindgren anoints Griffith as the filmmaker who "discovered and first used" such principles as continuity and analytical editing, arguing that no filmmaker "has had a greater influence on film technique" and singling out *The Birth of a Nation* as "the culmination of [Griffith's] career" (1948, 69). Interestingly, Lindgren seems to concede that some of the techniques he credits Griffith with having discovered may in fact predate the director's work, but in the same instance, he qualifies the suggestion by dismissing, for example, the occasional close-up as a "crude inset," and one among any number of "exceptional expedients" utilized "without any understanding of their potentialities" until Griffith's emergence (ibid.). By contrast, Lindgren suggests that Griffith's further development of these techniques "seems to have proceeded largely by intuition, by that inexplicable feeling for his medium which every good craftsman knows" (72). Positing Griffith as a watershed in the development of the medium's artistic capabilities, Lindgren later draws a direct line between the director's work and the films of Soviet formalists such as Eisenstein, whom he calls "the first [filmmakers] to understand the full significance of [creative editing] and exploit it," implying a lineage which, once again, directly corresponds to Bordwell's summation of the Basic Story (Lindgren 1948, 74; Bordwell 2018, 16-17).

Meanwhile, it was as a result of Barry's exhibition practices that selections from MoMA's collection came to define the silent cinema for generations of Americans, including many future critics and scholars (Bordwell 2018, 26). Under Barry's guidance, the Film Library also played a

crucial role in canon dissemination of a different and perhaps more consequential sort: facilitating the emergence of the field of film studies by circulating its programs to public libraries, museums, and college campuses, a resource which proved invaluable to researchers at a time when many archives were not open to the public (Bordwell 2018, 26; Wasson 2005, 25). Among the Film Library's many institutional activities, Dana Polan calls its circulation of a "series of historic films," offering educational institutions "a set of supposedly canonical works around which courses could be organized," its most consequential contribution "to the growing awareness of film and its history" (2007, 15). By late 1936, one year after the Library's founding, this circulating series had already been shown in such reputable institutions as Cornell, Dartmouth, Princeton, Bryn Mawr, and New York University (ibid., 16-17).

MoMA's circulating film series may be considered to have served as a dress rehearsal for a course titled "The History, Aesthetic, and Technique of the Motion Picture," introduced to the Columbia University curriculum in 1937 and conducted by Abbott and Barry with assistance by Rotha (Polan 2007, 17; Museum of Modern Art 1937). While far from the first course of its kind in the American collegiate context, what set it apart was the direct support of an institution as influential as MoMA, undergirded by what was then presented as "*the* canon of a contemporary art form" (Polan 2007, 17, emphasis in original). As Polan argues, MoMA's efforts regarding film education "provided for a solidified canon that could offer the regularity and systematicity that had been lacking in haphazard earlier ventures" (ibid., 19). Thus, an entire generation of scholars—many of whom would go on to participate directly in the inauguration of the study of film as a discrete academic discipline—would base their research almost exclusively on film history as "recast by the MoMA Film Library," the "standard patterns" of which would still be in place when universities began to introduce film curricula more systematically in the 1960s (Bordwell 2018, 26; Polan 2007, 16).

Two such scholars, the aforementioned Rotha and Knight, merit further attention, as each would go on to author a standard reference text which, at once, bears the unmistakable precepts of the film-historical canon as constructed through its time of publication, and serves to further reinforce them. Rotha's *The Film Till Now: A Survey of the Cinema*, first published in 1930—with an expanded edition published in 1949 and co-authored by Richard Griffith, then assistant to Iris Barry and future curator of the Film Library—has been acknowledged as "the most ambitious and influential English-language film history of [its] era" (Bordwell 2018, 21). According to Bordwell, it is in Rotha's book that all of the assumptions underlying the Basic Story find their most "compact expression" (2018, 21).

Arranged in a "basic art-historical" scheme, from "nation to creator to individual work," Rotha's survey begins by dismissing the majority of film works produced during the "birth and early years of the cinema" as "neither interesting nor particularly brilliant in aesthetic achievement" (Bordwell 2018, 21; Rotha 1930, 21). A number of early films are given passing mention, including Méliès' *Le voyage dans la lune*, before being disregarded as "'primitive[s]'" and "novelties" (Rotha 1930, 24). At one point, Rotha characterizes the "child-film" (i.e. the motion picture in its infancy) as having been "nursed by a company of 'fur-dealers, clothes-

spongers, and grocers,'" quoting early film historian Rudolph Messel, "in whose hands it could hardly have been expected to rise above the lowest form of entertainment" (ibid., 38). Like Barry and Lindgren, Rotha conceives of the development of cinema as an evolutionary teleology, placing Griffith at the line of demarcation between the film's emergence as a novelty entertainment and its maturation as an art form, and elsewhere, emphasizing the importance of the "function of editing" as the "intrinsic essence of filmic creation" (ibid., 25, 43).

The expanded edition of Rotha's volume, conceptualized during a research visit to MoMA's Film Library which took place between 1937 and 1938, is notable in that it does little to broaden the canon-bound perspective already evident in the first edition, and goes even further in characterizing early cinema as unworthy of serious scholarly attention (Rotha and Griffith 1967, 17; Gelardi 2022, 61). Unsurprisingly, Rotha's canonical listing of "outstanding films," which first appears in the appendix of the earlier edition, does not feature a single film made before 1915 (313-339). In the 1949 edition, an updated version of the list appears which accounts for films released in the interim and arranges the entries into the categories of fiction, documentary, and experimental films. Even in this thoroughly revised and much longer list, finalized almost two decades after the first, the earliest film to appear is *Birth of a Nation*, and there is once again not a single pre-Griffith film featured (1967, 621-690). In fact, the updated list expressly omits "the primitives of Méliès, Porter, and Griffith," despite the fact that none of these "primitives" actually appears in the first iteration of the list, and neither Méliès nor Porter features in it at all (ibid.).

Meanwhile, Knight's *The Liveliest Art*, published in 1957 as its own "film history written out of the [MoMA] collection," pays little regard to films made before the appearance of the best-known works by Méliès and Porter, except to comment on their "crude" and "rudimentary" nature (Bordwell 2018, 2; Knight 1957, 13). In keeping with the trajectory set out by the Basic Story, Knight places these two early filmmakers at the "dawn of the narrative film," lauding Méliès as "the movies' first creative artist" and crediting Porter's *Great Train Robbery* with "[revealing] for the first time the function and power of the cut in telling a story on the screen" (16). Even so, Knight later brands Porter's "unpretentious little Western" as "primitive" (17-18, 22). Later, Méliès is criticized, "like so many of his contemporaries," for having "remained chained to the traditions of the theater" and for failing to grasp "the whole art of film editing" (15, 17). Following further along the course of the Basic Story, Knight lavishes rhapsodic praise on Griffith, whom he calls "the father of film technique" and credits with the totally unaided development of the techniques first employed by Méliès and especially Porter (1957, 24). Similarly to Rotha's, Knight's account of the early development of cinema, punctuated by his florid designation of Griffith as singlehanded creator of the "art of the film," emerges as a near exact reproduction of the Basic Story.

Throughout the preceding pages, we have sought to trace the interdisciplinary formation of what we call the film-historical canon: the historical metanarrative of the evolution of cinema into a discrete art form, along with the concomitant set of texts which were systematically selected both to represent and to support the assumptions of that metanarrative. We have also managed to isolate some of its most consequential developments, texts, and sites of formation—as well as the

value-based assumptions underlying its construction—with particular attention paid to the role played by the nascent field of film archiving in its development and dissemination. Considering the spatial constraints involved in the present undertaking, it must be noted that the historical overview outlined throughout this chapter is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it serves to illustrate the extent to which the evolutionary trajectory onto which the canon was mapped systematically marginalized much of the 'primitive' work of the early years of filmmaking. As Horak argues, whether we consult Rotha, Knight, or virtually any of their major contemporaries—by way of example, he refers to Sadoul's *Histoire du Cinema mondial* (1959), René Jeanne and Charles Ford's *Histoire encyclopedigue du cinema* (1947), and Uldrich Gregor and Enno Patalas' *Geschischte des Films 1895-1960* (1962)—makes little difference, as each of these figures served in their way to reproduce what Bordwell calls the Basic Story of film history (Horak 1985, 93). Consequently, Horak suggests that the first generation of film archivists, whose efforts aided immensely in the preservation and dissemination of the canon, were doing "nothing more than following the lead of the major film historians of the period, who had set the standards" of artistic worth in cinema (2020, 31).

By the same token, we have managed to establish the dynamic nature of film-historical discourse as it evolved throughout the twentieth century. According to our findings, it is evident that where historians set standards and archivists followed by preserving certain films accordingly, the latter, by ensuring the survival of these works, directly enabled later historians, writers, and critics to perpetuate a historiographic orthodoxy which "became determinant for the field and [which] most film scholars from then on came to adopt dogmatically" (Polan 2007, 265). Describing this process in still stronger terms, Horak avers that the interpretation of film history which was gradually constructed along these lines gained credence through "self-reproduction," by means of which "accumulated myths [were] passed on from one generation to the next, until these myths [became] historical truths through mere repetition" (1985, 93).

Though the film-historical canon continues to exert widespread influence, constituting the "substance of most film history textbooks, most archives' repertory programming, [and] most video releases of silent classics," it has been subject to challenge in countless instances throughout the ensuing decades (Bordwell 2018, 12). In the next chapter, we will closely examine once such instance of challenge effected through the combined efforts of the archival and academic communities, and which sought to redress the decades-long lack of scholarly attention paid to early cinema. In fact, the scholars and archivists who gathered for a conference in Brighton, England in 1978 set out not only to countervail the art-centered canon of classics, but to grapple with the "assumptions about the nature of film, its artistic potential, the specificity of art, and the causes of historical change" underlying it (ibid.).

II. Breaking with the Canon: The Brighton Project and the Archival Recovery of Early Cinema

In the previous chapter, we traced a trajectory of canon-making throughout the early-to-mid twentieth century across the fluid terrains of film theory, criticism, history, and archiving, uncovering a significant tendency which developed in the process: namely, the construction and reproduction of a teleological metanarrative whereby film was framed as an art arising from 'primitive' origins. Further, we demonstrated that the development of the nascent field of film studies was impeded from the outset by this periodic delimitation. As Thomas Elsaesser writes, the "Old Film History" which directly informed early archival practice in the twentieth century developed as "a history of films following each other in orderly progression," one of "filmmakers passing on the torch of innovation" (1986, 247). Consequently, the curatorial practices of early archivists such as Barry, Langlois, and Lindgren helped to institutionalize a film-historical scholarship predicated on "a continuous evolution towards film art" and, naturally, accompanied by a "highly selective canon of early cinema" (Horak 2020, 32; Cherchi Usai 2012, 529). By the early 1970s, the New York University (NYU) student hoping to consult primary sources on early cinema had only recourse to the MoMA collection, which had then largely consisted of films by the Lumière brothers, Méliès, and Porter (Musser 2011, 1).

This canonical interpretation of film history roundly dismissed many of the so-called primitive examples of early cinema as undeserving of academic attention, categorically branding most films made before 1915 as 'primitive' and, therefore, unworthy of preservation (Horak 2020, 31-32). Horak underlines the discursive relationship between archive and canon by noting that, as film history is "a function of the archive," and early archival priorities were established in accordance with the "classical texts of film history," it stands to reason that film history could only be revised "if film archives [made] available materials that [were] not known as a part of the canon" (ibid., 31-32).

This chapter explores one such intervention which was jointly undertaken by the archival and academic communities: namely, the 1978 FIAF Congress in Brighton, England, an event which signaled a break with the prevailing canonical logic, sending reverberations throughout the burgeoning field of film studies and stimulating the emancipation of traditional film history from its periodic constraints. What should become clear in the following sections is not only the historical (and historiographic) significance of the Congress itself, but its exemplification of the role of the film archive as a vital part of a wider "recuperative historical project," recovering previously neglected aspects of film history and filling the corresponding lacunae in the film-historical canon (Groo 2019, 12).

i. The Road to Brighton: Against a Frustrated Film History

In addition to the roles played by Barry, Langlois, and Lindgren in helping to shape the film-historical canon, the first generation of film archivists is also notable for directly participating in the founding of FIAF in 1938 (Dupin 2013, 43). As the first global professional association of film archives, FIAF quickly emerged as an institutional standard-bearer of audiovisual archival practice, helping to establish lasting standards and policy for the field and to push preservation to the forefront of archival discourse, particularly through its annual agenda-setting conference known as the FIAF Congress ("About FIAF Congresses," n.d.; Frick 2011, 10, 88).

Although many such conferences had been held globally since the organization's inception, none has been regarded as more significant in effecting the revision of the film-historical canon and inaugurating a set of new approaches to the construction of film history than the 34th edition, held in 1978 in Brighton, England. There, a large number of archivists and academics gathered to view and discuss nearly 600 fiction films made between 1900 and 1906, many of which had been recently rediscovered and were presented in newly struck viewing prints (Abel 2005, lxi; Ingravalle 2023, 27-28). The setting chosen for the conference was notable, as Brighton had been home to the so-called "Brighton School," a loose-knit group of pioneering British filmmakers active in Brighton and the surrounding area around the turn of the twentieth century, and whose surviving films have been noted for their early incorporation of techniques such as close-ups and tracking shots (Bordwell 2018, 41; Francis cited in Horak, Lacasse, and Cherchi Usai 1991, 280).

André Gaudreault, who presented a pair of papers at the conference, suggests that the accompanying screening sessions constituted "a genuine premiere in the history of cinema," as it had never previously been possible to view such a large selection of films from the period in so condensed a time frame and in a single location (1982, 9). Jon Gartenberg, who was also in attendance, corroborates Gaudreault's characterization of the proceedings, writing that "[never] before had such a comprehensive and intensive viewing of a given period of film history taken place" (1984, 5). Elsewhere, Wanda Strauven credits the "extensive and systematic viewing process" which took place in Brighton with the radical alteration of the film-historical canon (2006, 15). Indeed, the conference has been acknowledged as a watershed event in film historiography, initiating what Fossati calls "something of a Renaissance in film studies and archival practice" and, according to Horak, a shift in "the way we look at early cinema," with those in attendance agitating for greater research into the pre-Griffith era of cinematic production (Fossati 2009, 15; Horak 2018; Robinson 2005, 344; Elsaesser 1990, 2; Musser 2004, 101).

Organized under the heading "Cinema: 1900-1906," the 1978 FIAF Congress and Symposium—held in conjunction with one another, and hereinafter referred to collectively as 'the conference'—also sought to reinvigorate archival interest in a crucial period of film history which, for decades, had been all but dismissed by historians as "primitive, unformed, and incoherent" (Gaudreault 1982b, 9; Musser 2004, 101). The conference took place at a juncture in the development of film historiography when the early history of the medium, "from its beginnings in the mid-1890s to the period preceding World War I," was still a largely "unwritten chapter" (Horak 1985, 93). For instance, Gaudreault notes the irony inherent in the fact that, by the time the conference was held, virtually nothing was known about the films produced by the French Pathé

Frères company, an enterprise which "dominated the whole of the world's cinema" in the first decade of the twentieth century, when in fact, France itself was "the only country to have produced so many [early film] historians" as it did (1982, 10).

This, of course, is just one example of many necessary consequences of the neglect to which early cinema had been subjected by major historians throughout the first half of the last century. In an article which surveys the revised interpretations of film history which flourished following the conference, Horak outlines the traits which broadly characterized the Old Film History:

1. Firstly, Horak identifies the dominant tendency to regard early cinema, "at least until the advent of [Griffith]," as "primitive." This was due to its ostensible adherence to theatrical tradition, with putative deficiencies such as the stationary camera, painted backdrops, and simple cutting cited by historians as evidence of cinema's formal immaturity and overt affinity with the stage in its early development (1985, 93).
2. Secondly, Horak points to the presupposition of "traditional film historians" that the history of cinema constitutes "a chronological movement towards film art, towards an inherent cinematic language and away from primitive, non-cinematic forms." Further, Horak identifies some of the key texts which were consistently singled out as "milestones" on the trajectory "towards [cinema's] aesthetic maturity," from the Lumières' *L'Arroseur arrosé* through to Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (94).
3. Finally, Horak notes the artificial division taken for granted between "fictional and documentary forms, expressionism and realism," which he argues was typically substantiated by pointing to the difference between the works of Méliès and the Lumières, respectively. Where the latter "began by photographing street scenes, everyday events, 'real life as it was,'" thereby establishing a "realist tradition," the former "created his stories on a stage, where camera tricks made everything possible," thus emerging as the "father of expressionist tradition." From this initial point of divergence forward, all of film history is interpreted as having "oscillated between these two poles" (95).

As discussed in chapter I, these same tendencies directly informed the historiographic orientation of most seminal film-historical texts of the twentieth century. At one time or another, many scholars whose early research preceded the occasion of the conference, including Elsaesser, Horak, and Charles Musser, registered their own frustration, and that of the field generally, with the dearth of valuable contemporary or historical information available on early cinema (Elsaesser 1986; Horak 1985; Musser 2004). Musser, for instance, writes that during his time as a graduate student in the mid-to-late 1970s, he had found that the available literature did not satisfactorily address issues such as the early development of film editing (2004, 101). Similarly, Elsaesser comments on the growing dissatisfaction of the scholarly community at the time with the "surveys and overviews, the tales of pioneers and adventurers that for too long passed as film histories" (1986, 246).

Further, in their essay "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," Gaudreault and Tom Gunning argue that the previous generation of historians had mistakenly judged early cinema "on the basis of not yet extant forms, of the only kind of cinema worthy, in their eyes, of the label 'specifically cinematic quality'" ([1986] 2006, 369). Consequently, Gunning reasons that the history of early cinema, like film history as a whole, had up to that point been "written and theorized […] under the hegemony of narrative films," with the works of early canonical mainstays such as the Lumières, Méliès, and Porter having been scrutinized "primarily from the viewpoint of their contribution to film as a storytelling medium, particularly the evolution of narrative editing" (2006, 381). Gomery points to still other historiographic deficiencies in early histories, such as a lack of consultation of primary sources, of citations for authorial claims, and of overall methodological transparency in the research presented (1976, 41). In line with Gomery, Horak makes the compelling case that prior generations of film historians typically took the claims of such "authorities" as Sadoul, Rotha, and Knight for granted, basing their analysis on these practitioners' evaluation of early cinema "without ever looking at the films themselves" (1985, 93). Moreover, according to David Francis, one of the organizers of the conference, this ambivalence towards early cinema had, by turn, extended into the archival community, as the majority of FIAF-affiliated archives up to that point had taken relatively little interest in films produced around the turn of the century. "When [archivists] talked at FIAF Congresses," he suggests, the prevailing perspective was that "the cinema began with the silent feature" (Francis quoted in Horak, Lacasse, and Cherchi Usai 1991, 280).

It was out of this growing cross-disciplinary sense of frustration that the so-called "Brighton Project" was born (Gartenberg 1984). It is important to note, however, that as an act of historiographic intervention, the Brighton Project did not occur in a vacuum. In the years leading up to the conference, the canonical marginalization and lack of methodological rigor inherent in prior treatment of early cinema had been challenged in numerous, albeit sporadic, instances, of which we can only offer a brief glimpse here. These cases not only encapsulate the revisionist impulses which would later find their full expression at Brighton, but also helped bring early cinema closer to the center of scholarly attention.

The first pre-Brighton instantiation of the conference's revisionist agenda was a pair of specialized volumes on early cinema by Kemp R. Niver, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection 1894-1912* and *D. W. Griffith: His Biograph Films in Perspective*, which appeared in 1967 and 1974, respectively. The latter text addresses the already familiar subject of Griffith, but in doing so, seeks to introduce a "more realistic method of research" to its indexing and analysis of his body of work (i). This is achieved through careful formal scrutiny of Griffith's work for the Biograph Company, as well as the inclusion of information on dates of production and copyright, production location, cameraman, cast, and film length for each entry. While he readily acknowledges Griffith's skill and facility with the medium throughout, Niver also seeks to dispel some of the historical myths which have arisen around certain purported instances of innovation long attributed to the director, such as that which indicates the existence of a pioneering cut in *For Love of Gold* (1908)—repeated, for instance, by

Lewis Jacobs in *The Rise of the American Film*—where, in fact, no such cut can be discerned by examining the film itself (Niver 1974, 7; Jacobs 1939, 102). Attending to the problems which had plagued earlier, more superficial surveys of Griffith's work, such as Barry's *D. W. Griffith: American Film Master*, Niver's treatment of the director thus aids in bringing about the proper contextualization of his achievements through meticulous analysis of the films themselves.

The former publication is especially notable for presenting a thoroughly researched analytical survey of the contents of the so-called 'paper print' collection, consisting of over three thousand early American motion pictures deposited with the Library of Congress (LoC) and widely regarded as "one of the most important collections in motion picture history" (Frick 2011, 41). Around the turn of the twentieth century, motion pictures were not yet legally recognized as subject to copyright protection in the United States (Niver 1964, 249). As a result, starting in 1894, producers hoping to guard their works against theft registered them with the Copyright Office of the LoC, which then went about the work of migrating the films, frame by frame, onto rolls of light-sensitive bromide paper, thereby effectively offering the films copyright protection as photographs (Frick 2011, 186; Niver 1964, 249; Niver [1967] 2020, vii-viii). Niver was tasked with migrating the paper print collection back onto film in 1952, with financing initially provided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (Mercer 1971, 71). Following more than a decade of restoration, indexing, and research, he presented his findings to the public in the form of *Motion Pictures*, structured as a "cross-indexed subject list, with synopses, lengths, descriptions of the condition of the prints, and cast where possible" (Niver [1967] 2020, ix; Mercer 1971, 71). The paper print collection—and in particular, the film prints converted by Niver—would later prove a vital resource for the organizers in Brighton, as the LoC would supply the largest number of films of any institution for the purpose of screening at the conference (Bowser 1982, 3).

Another significant factor which would pave the way for the Brighton conference was a series of NYU seminars on Griffith's Biograph tenure led by historian Jay Leyda in the early 1970s, which made use of dozens of surviving examples of the director's work which had been deposited in the paper print collection (Bowser cited in Dimitriu 2009, 41; Gunning cited in Hagener and van den Oever 2022, 154). William Uricchio credits Leyda's lectures with raising "a generation of early film scholars," one among whom was Gunning, who would later emerge as one of the leading post-Brighton experts of early cinema (Uricchio 2003, 37; Hagener and van den Oever 2022, 154). Crucially, these lectures made possible the "systematic viewing" of a pivotal period in Griffith's oeuvre through chronological screenings and collective study of the films themselves—that is, by facilitating consultation of the primary sources without the necessity for recourse to traditional historiographic texts (Bowser cited in Dimitriu 2009, 41; Gunning cited in Hagener and van den Oever 2022, 154; Musser 2011, 2). Notably, as a direct result of Leyda's coursework, Eileen Bowser, then archivist at MoMA, states that many of his students had begun regularly utilizing the museum's collection in order to further their research, pointing to the new dynamics which were beginning to emerge between the scholarly and archival communities (cited in Dimitriu 2009, 41). As we have observed with regards to Niver's work over the prior two decades, Leyda's lectures exemplify the "confrontation with documents" and the "reconceptualization of early cinema,"

particularly in the university setting, which would characterize post-Brighton film scholarship (Gaudreault, Dulac, and Hidalgo 2012, 3).

Perhaps the most compelling expression of pre-Brighton revisionism occurred when, between late 1977 and early 1978, a small group of North American scholars—led by Bowser, co-organizer of the Brighton Project alongside Francis—gathered to prescreen and study nearly 700 early films sourced from the LoC, MoMA, and George Eastman House collections, 189 of which were later selected for the Brighton screenings (Gartenberg 1984, 5; Gunning 2006, 34). Building on the groundwork laid by the likes of Niver and Leyda—for instance, in terms of their "archive-driven" research and their recourse to the LoC and MoMA collections—these screenings would serve as a prelude to the conference, and like Leyda's lectures, as a reflection in miniature of the following year's encounter between the scholarly and archival spheres (Bowser cited in Dimitriu 2009, 41; Gunning 2006, 34; Hagener and van den Oever 2022, 56). As we will soon see, the shifts which would take place as a result of these encounters were not only discursive but also practical, with wide-ranging effects which would resonate across the fields of film historiography, theory, and archival practice.

ii. The Brighton Project: "Cinema: 1900-1906"

In his article "The New Film History," Elsaesser identifies "two types of pressure" which gave way to major upheaval in film-historical practice around the time of the Brighton conference. In addition to the pervasive sense of "polemical dissatisfaction" already outlined, he points to "preservation and restoration projects by the world's archives" as a catalyst, which he credits with making "much more material" available for study, particularly on the early silent period (1986, 246). Although he does not mention Brighton by name, he clearly alludes to it, the conference now widely considered to have constituted a "starting gun" for an essential movement within what Elsaesser calls the New Film History—namely, the "new generation of scholars" who had "set themselves the task of re-examining from top to bottom the period of cinema's emergence" (Gaudreault 2006, 85).

To this end, over the course of five days in May 1978, Bowser and Francis arranged screenings of 548 films produced between 1900 and 1906 for a group including Musser, Gaudreault, Gunning, Horak, and dozens more of their colleagues—scholars, archivists, and historians alike—hailing from over thirty countries globally (Francis 1982, 1, 363-365). The screenings, which were made possible with the use of hundreds of prints contributed by eighteen FIAF-affiliated or member archives, represented an extensive cross-section of the major production centers of the period under consideration, with films shown from the United States, Great Britain, France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Belgium (Gaudreault 1982b, 9; Gartenberg 1984, 5). Some of the most widely renowned distribution and production companies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Biograph, the Edison Manufacturing Company, and Pathé, were represented, alongside lesser-known producers whose output would prove, in many cases, no less significant to those in attendance (FIAF 1982b, 17). The arrangement of the

screenings in chronological order allowed the attendees to closely examine, in a remarkably brief span, years of compounding development during a time of "rapid, fundamental change" for the medium (Francis cited in Horak, Lacasse, and Cherchi Usai 1991, 280; Musser 2004, 104).

The five-day screening period which initiated the proceedings, along with the symposium which would take place over the following week, would prove momentous for several reasons. In the first place, the Brighton Project is considered to have constituted a unique and seminal instance of cooperation between the academic and archival communities, bringing them together for the first time "around a common purpose" (Gartenberg 1984, 6; Elsaesser 1990, 2). Though there had been historical precedent for intersection between the disciplines of film archiving and scholarship—such as we have observed in the cases of MoMA's circulating film program and Jay Leyda's NYU seminars, for instance—the otherwise unprecedented scope of the Brighton Project throws their convergence into stark relief. Gartenberg also notes that, in the decades leading to the conference, tensions had often arisen between film scholars and archivists—largely due to the former's indifference towards the delicate "workings of the film archive" and the latter's dissatisfaction with archivists' customary reticence, often of legal necessity, regarding their holdings—in light of which their "groundbreaking collaborative venture" in Brighton becomes all the more notable (Gartenberg 1984, 6; Op den Kamp 2018, 138). As a site of mutual exchange between scholar and archivist, the conference would exert a profound influence on the future practice of both disciplines, signaling the emergence of "a new integration of academic and archive-based history" (Musser 2004, 101).

The Brighton Project has also been noted for exemplifying a "highly *documented* approach" to the study not only of the period of film history in question, but of film history generally—indeed, the particular sort of approach which Gomery had argued for earlier in the decade, and which Niver and Leyda had previously undertaken on a smaller scale (Gaudreault 2006, 85, emphasis in original). As Roger Odin suggests, the conference thus foregrounded a sense of empiricist urgency, particularly among the present representatives of the scholarly community, to whom he attributes the following:

> … a desire to go beyond the approximations of the first written film histories by means of direct recourse to the films themselves; systematic archival work; the establishment or reestablishment of facts, dates, and the chronology of events; the preparation of long-awaited accurate and precise filmographies; the compiling of company catalogues (Pathé, Gaumont); and the use of sources that in earlier times were seen as secondary (trade journals, posters, patents, paper prints, etc.): in short, […] recourse to historical method and the indispensable inventories it creates.
>
> (2012, 224)

This "new approach to history," based on "actually *watching* the films" in question, transformed the scholarly conception of the film archive "from *terra incognita* to a repository of historical artefacts and filmic source material" (Op den Kamp 2018, 138, emphasis in original). While this

urge to "return to the archive" grew in the years following the conference, ultimately leading to a significant reorientation of "theoretical commitments" for the field of film history, the results of this archive-driven approach to historical research were indeed immediate (Bernardi et al. 2020, 3; Groo 2019, 11). Perhaps the best example of this to emerge from the conference itself is the two-volume FIAF publication *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, published in 1982. The first volume collects "introductory material, transcripts of the conference proceedings, and 22 papers relating directly to early cinema, and prepared for the symposium" (Gartenberg 1984, 5). The second is the result of a joint effort between thirty scholars and archivists from across four countries, produced under the supervision of Gaudreault, and presents a detailed filmography of all 548 films screened at Brighton (Gaudreault 1982b, 9). The most comprehensive *catalogue raisonné* of early cinema to be published by that point, the second volume of *Cinema 1900-1906* was produced with a view to "an in-depth scrutiny of individual prints" (Cherchi Usai 2019, 237). It not only lists such information as original copyright number or date, production year and company, length of film and number of shots, and archival source for each entry, but also includes extensive annotations on "salient technical, stylistic, and production characteristics," resulting in an indispensable, unique, and, indeed, prescient resource which anticipates the "revolution" in early cinema studies to follow (Peterson 2012, 277; Francis 1982, 2).

The importance of the conference lie not only in the rarity of the source material presented for the purpose of advancing the research of early cinema, but in its sheer volume, an "avalanche of films" thought to have represented a considerable share of all early films known to be held in FIAF-affiliated archives at that point (Cherchi Usai 2012, 528). Due in no small part to the number of surviving films from the period which were shown in rapid succession, it may be argued that "no other major period of film history [had] been subjected to so systematic a revision based on the available filmic source material" (Op den Kamp 2018, 138). Cherchi Usai suggests that, while early cinema had been subject to scholarly inquiry in years prior, the conference went further in exposing "a critical mass of primary evidence whose size, breadth, and diversity could no longer be ignored" (2012, 528).

Although Brighton has typically been highlighted as an important "determining factor" for later developments in the incipient field of early cinema studies, the findings of the conference were groundbreaking in their own right, spurring profound reassessments of many of the assumptions underlying the film-historical canon (Fossati 2009, 104; Gartenberg 1984, 10). Due to spatial limitations, it merits placing our summary of some of the major conclusions drawn from the conference—each distinct, yet all interconnected—in direct correspondence with Horak's aforementioned outline of the historiographic traits which characterized the Old Film History.

Firstly, recall that Horak points to the term "primitive cinema," which casts the pre-Griffith period as one of "lack […] in relation to later evolution" (Horak 1985, 93; Gunning 1990b, 96). This was based largely on superficial evaluations of early cinema intended to establish its adherence to theatrical tradition, and usually pointing to the "relative absence of editing" as evidence of its so-called primitive nature (Gunning 1990b, 96). In point of fact, the Brighton conference, and the theoretical developments to which it gave way, indicated that the designation

of cinema before the emergence of Griffith as primitive necessarily proceeded from false premises. In the first place, the screenings revealed dozens of instances of filmic devices such as close-ups, point-of-view shots, high and low angle shots, slow motion, reverse motion, match cuts, and cut-ins occurring as early as 1900, years before Griffith's maiden directorial effort (FIAF 1982b). Moreover, a "draft outline" found in the first volume of *Cinema: 1900-1906* reveals that some 177 of the 548 films screened are composed of multiple shots, with many examples employing techniques such as panning, dissolves, and real exteriors (17-28). The paper prepared by Gartenberg for the conference delves deeper still, surveying and analyzing specific instances of camera movement in Edison and Biograph films of the period and concluding that by 1906, camera movements, in fact, tended to be "fully integrated into the narrative" (1982, 179).

More broadly, the Brighton participants were inclined to reject the designation of early cinema as primitive on the grounds that it is only nominally accurate in terms of the strict teleological view of earlier historians (Musser [1994] 2006, 389). Rather than framing film history simply as a "history of films" along a predetermined path towards the consummation of an ideal art or narrativity, the research which emerged from the conference employs a synchronic approach, casting its focus on hitherto neglected aspects of early cinema including spatial relationships within the frame, the expression of temporality, and the economic conditions governing invention, production, and distribution (Op den Kamp 2018, 144; Fell 1982; Gaudreault 1982c; Chanan 1982). Approaches such as these not only contributed to the reanimation of the study of early cinema, but allowed scholars to recast it in a new light, transposing it from its former position as a primitive phase in an evolutionary trajectory to a paradigm marked by peculiarities and worth studying on its own terms (Musser [1994] 2006, 389). No less important was the notion that films made before the arrival of Griffith and the integration of narrative as a standard industry practice had "their own style and associations, their own concept of space and time" (Bowser 1982, 5).

One of the more influential frameworks to emerge from this historiographic turn was Gunning and Gaudreault's "cinema of attractions," a theoretical concept they first formulated in 1985 and which Gunning argues served as the dominant paradigm of early cinema "until about 1906-1907" ([1986] 2006, 382). As opposed to earlier narrative-centric models, this new conception of early cinema reinterpreted it as an "exhibitionist" paradigm—often addressing spectators directly—the aesthetic sensibilities of which could be located in "various proto-cinematic ancestors" and entertainment forms such as magic lantern shows and vaudeville (Gunning [1986] 2006, 382; Ingravalle 2023, 28). Gunning suggests that under this rubric, even early deployments of cinematic devices such as the close-up differ from their later uses in that they do not serve narrative functions, but rather, register as "attraction[s] in [their] own right" ([1986] 2006, 383-384). By foregrounding early cinema's affinity with earlier forms, both proto-cinematic and non-cinematic, and emphasizing the unique relationship it embodied between spectator and film—markedly different from that which would accompany what Gunning calls "the cinema of narrative integration"—the framework thus encapsulates the chief intellectual concerns of post-Brighton scholarship (Gunning [1986] 2006, 382-383, 385; Elsaesser 1990, 4).

Secondly, Horak notes the preconception of a linear, teleological evolution—towards a "film art" marked by an "inherent cinematic language," and away from "primitive, non-cinematic forms"—which was taken for granted by earlier film-historical models (1985, 94). As evidenced, this quasi-historical trajectory was typically substantiated through the identification of "milestones on the path towards [cinema's] aesthetic maturity" (ibid.). One of the most prominently featured milestones was Porter's *Life of an American Fireman*, typically credited with pioneering the editing technique of narrative cross-cutting, such as we may observe, once again, in Jacobs' *American Film* (37-42). In this case, the cutting occurs between interior and exterior shots depicting the simultaneous action of a woman and her child trapped inside of a burning building, and the company of firemen endeavoring to rescue them, respectively (Gartenberg 1984, 11).

As late as 1970, Porter's film had been acknowledged as an evolutionary linchpin of the film-historical canon for its purported invention of this constituent part of a germinal 'cinematic syntax' (Musser 1982a, 261). Based on prior research by Musser, however, the Brighton proceedings established that the most widely circulated print of the film, on which analysis of its content had long been based—a copy which had been held at MoMA—was "at some undetermined point updated and modernized, probably for reissue after 1910," and indeed prior to its acquisition by the Museum (Musser 2011, 1-2; Gartenberg 1984, 11). The copyright print shown in Brighton, which had been deposited in the paper print collection around the time of the film's release, shows the same rescue twice, in succession and from two different points of view, resulting in instances of "overlapping action," whereas the widely circulated MoMA print demonstrates a highly innovative example of simultaneous action within the same sequence, with the shots intercut (Musser 1982b, 53; Gaudreault 1982a, 181). The authenticity of the LoC print was corroborated by the discovery of a corresponding pre-1910 print in Maine, and further supported by the fact that the MoMA-held print of another Porter film, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903), did not match its original description in a contemporary Edison film catalogue (Musser 1982b, 53; Gartenberg 1984, 11).

This historiographic breakthrough not only settled a longstanding controversy over how the film was structured on release, but it also managed to upend one of the foundational myths of the film-historical canon—that *Life of an American Fireman* constitutes the "first" instance of narrative cross-cutting—thereby disrupting the canon's evolutionary logic (Burch 1982, 101; Gaudreault 1982a, 181; Musser 2004, 102). What is perhaps even more consequential, however, is the way in which such breakthroughs actually facilitated the proper historical contextualization of technical and aesthetic developments in early cinema. As Musser argues in his paper "The Early Cinema of Edwin Porter," *Life of an American Fireman*, like "many 'landmark films,'" had been systematically "extracted from its historical/cultural context" (262). Accordingly, several other scholars who presented papers at Brighton, including Gunning, Gaudreault, and Noël Burch, sought to reconstruct different aspects of this context. For instance, John Hagan's paper observes different forms of simultaneous action which may be found throughout a wide array of films from the period, including instances of simultaneity within a single shot (1982).

Perhaps most significantly, Gunning, in his paper "The Non-Continuous Style of Early Film," tentatively identifies an editing style peculiar to early cinema, the "non-continuous," which

"maintains the separateness of its component parts, instead of absorbing them into the illusion of a continuous narrative flow" (1982, 220). Years later, he would expand this definition by specifying that the "continuous" style consists in "multi-shot narratives in which the discontinuity caused by cuts is de-emphasized by being bridged through continuity of [diegetic] action," while suggesting that these "styles" may, in fact, constitute early "ciné-genres" (1990a, 89). By going beyond the teleology of earlier historical models which privileged the finality of a particular "inherent cinematic language," and situating the copyright version of *Life of an American Fireman* within this theoretical framework—positing it as one of several contemporary films which represent the "intersection" of the two styles—Gunning manages to dislodge the film as merely a primitive example of continuity editing and thus gesture towards a potential means of apprehending its true historical significance (Gaudreault and Gunning [1986] 2006, 369; Gunning 1982, 223-224).

Finally, Horak avers that the Old Film History tended to emphasize an "artificial division" within early cinema between a "realist tradition" and an "expressionist tradition" (1985, 95). As Gunning notes, the "expressionist tradition" had also long been discursively linked to the later standardization and total integration of cinematic narrative ([1986] 2006, 381-382). The Brighton screenings threw this "false aesthetic dichotomy" into starkest relief, testifying not only to the sheer diversity of film practice evident in early cinema, but also to the fact that the "fiction film" during the period under consideration is "very difficult to define" (Horak 1985, 95; Bowser 1982, 4). Bowser and Francis have both spoken to the difficulties they experienced in attempting to distinguish between the fiction and the non-fiction film during their preparations for Brighton, with Bowser openly deliberating, for instance, how one might categorize a film which is "essentially a recording of a vaudeville act" (Bowser 1982, 4; Francis cited in Horak, Lacasse, and Cherchi Usai 1991, 280). Elsewhere, Gunning points to one of the films shown at the conference, *The Bride Retires* (dir. unknown, 1904), as an example of a work which frustrates the dichotomy by embodying a "fundamental conflict between [the] exhibitionistic tendency of early film and the creation of a fictional diegesis" ([1986] 2006, 383). He summarizes the film as follows:

> A woman undresses for bed as her new husband peers at her from behind a screen. However, it is to the camera and the audience that the bride addresses her erotic striptease, winking at us as she faces us, smiling in erotic display.
>
> (ibid.)

Surprisingly, systematic viewing of the films led to the recognition that the actuality film, in the "realist tradition" symbolized by the Lumières, seems to have exerted a greater influence on the standardized film narrative than, for instance, the work of Méliès and other practitioners in the "expressionist tradition," whose films had previously been exclusively credited with anticipating the "cinema of narrative integration" (Francis cited in Horak, Lacasse, and Cherchi Usai 1991, 280). Gunning cites Méliès himself—who states that his scenarios had "*no importance*" and merely served as a pretext for "'stage effects,' the 'trick,' or for a nicely arranged tableau"—in arguing that the director's trick films amounted to a "series of displays, of magical attractions,

rather than [primitive sketches] of narrative continuity" ([1986] 2006, 383, emphasis in original). On the other hand, the aforementioned *Life of an American Fireman*, which had long been credited with advancing narrative technique, not only broadly conforms to the "realist tradition," but in fact, employs a "synthesis of actuality footage and staging" (Levy 1982, 244).

In his paper "Reconstituted Newsreels, Re-enactments, and the American Narrative Film," David Levy carefully traces the paradoxical phenomenon whereby elements of what he calls the "staged actuality" or "reconstituted newsreel"—that is, the "topical narrative" involving re-enactment or reconstruction of actual events—appear to have been systematically "absorbed into the style" of the narrative film, often to the exclusion of elements borrowed from more unambiguously fictional styles (243, 245, 246). For instance, in a remarkable upending of one of the more specific claims underlying the film-historical canon, Levy argues that the editing techniques found in both *Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery* had actually been put into practice in actuality narratives as early as 1899 (245). Levy further suggests that by 1903, the year in which Porter's films were released, the "application of newsreel styles to staged topical narratives"—and by extension, the "joining together of separate strips of action footage to construct fluid if relatively brief actuality narrative"—had already emerged as a standard industry practice (ibid.).

Thus, it becomes clear that the Brighton Project actually opened the aperture of film history by helping to "extend [its] periodization" (Ingravalle 2023, 28). Crucially, the conference's recovery and reassessment of early cinema and its "spirit of cooperation" between archivists and scholars did not cease with the conference (Francis 1982, 1; Elsaesser 1990, 2). In addition to the research which emerged from the conference itself, the Brighton Project would set the stage for the founding, in 1985, of Domitor, an organization concerned with advancing new methods of historical research into early cinema and fostering ties between the scholarly and archival communities (Bernardi et al. 2020, 1, 3). According to a bibliography compiled by the organization in 1987 and expanded in 1995, 181 articles and essays were published on early cinema between 1949 and 1978; in the years between 1979 and 1994, this number rose to 1,313, and has continued to grow since (Cherchi Usai 2012, 528). Brighton hence remains one of the most significant instances in which the "archival film community helped shape historiographic agendas," which, in turn, led to "long-term efforts to collect, preserve, and restore as much as possible of what early film has survived" (Ingravalle 2023, 27; Abel 2005, lxi). As a result, Fossati suggests that Brighton marks the moment in which "archival films, especially silent films, started to cross archival thresholds, and reach specialized festivals" such as Il Cinema Ritrovato and Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, further enabling their reevaluation by the wider public (2009, 95). Above all, it is the "return to the archive" which spurred the historiographic paradigm shift with which Brighton is so often associated, and which ultimately may be credited with facilitating still more revision of the film-historical canon, and rectification of its lacunae, into the present and beyond (Op den Kamp 2018, 143-145).

Conclusion

To paraphrase Boris Eichenbaum, by way of Gaudreault and Gunning: the aim of this thesis has not been polemical ([1986] 2006, 365). Our aims were not to minimize the putative achievements of the Lumières, Méliès, Porter, or Griffith—nor to discredit the strides made by Barry, Langlois, and Lindgren in helping to shape the theory and practice of film archiving. Rather, our goals were to demonstrate the ways in which the archivist "writes [film] history through preservation," and in doing so, to advocate for the archive itself as a vital and transformative source of the very material which constitutes history and facilitates its construction (Horak 2020, 32). Each of the subjects of the preceding chapters—the formation of the film-historical canon and the Brighton Project—epitomizes the dynamic nature of the relationship between the archive and the canon as it developed throughout the twentieth century and, in fact, continues to develop into the present. In the former case, the canon—and the interpretation of film history which served to uphold it—shaped the preserve of the archive, leading to continual reproduction, over generations, of this same history. Our focus throughout the first chapter's overview of the formation of the film-historical canon was on its designation of early cinema as a largely 'primitive' and insignificant phase in the 'evolution' of filmmaking as an 'art form,' a judgment which was often repeated without direct consultation of the films themselves. We find this interpretation of history is problematic, not least due to the fact that in the construction of a film history as "the history of films," as in the case of our canon—especially with a view to a "critical understanding of the more aesthetic side of the story, such as the development of (continuity) editing, the study of film form, or the evolution of storytelling"—it is the films which must "play a key role" (Op den Kamp 2018, 137).

By contrast, the Brighton Project signals the upending of these historiographic tendencies, with archivists "intervening in film history" by offering scholars and historians the opportunity of recourse to hundreds of long unexamined early films, thereby allowing them to "draw new conclusions" not only about early cinema, but about the field at large (Op den Kamp 2018, 144). Whereas the first case demonstrates the canon shaping the contours of the archive, the second reveals that "elements of the archive may be recovered and reclaimed for the canon" (Assmann 2008, 104). Ultimately, the Brighton Project's greatest point of significance is that it was stimulated by the realization that "film history is composed of archival lacunae," and thus led "film archives to open their doors to film historians," further cementing their "symbiotic relationship" (Op den Kamp 2018, 140; Fossati 2009, 15; Horak 2020, 31). What this teaches us about the relationship between the fields can perhaps best be described in terms which capture what may be their greatest affinity: that film history, like the work of the film archive, is never done.

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