

Arcadia Falcone

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INF 385T: Politics of Preservation

Prof. Caroline Frick

The Way We Watch Now: Discourses of “Authenticity” in Contemporary Exhibition and Restoration Practices for Silent Film

These fragments I have shored against my ruins.

— *T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land*

True art transcends time.

—*The motto of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival*

I. Introduction

“True art transcends time,” the motto of the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, encapsulates an essential contradiction in presenting silent film to contemporary audiences. On the one hand, it asserts that the art of the silent film is timeless, and therefore the chronological distance between the historical moment of its creation and the present moment of spectatorship does not diminish its impact. On the other hand, it is patently untrue. More often than not, time marks, mutilates, crops, warps, decays, and sometimes explodes the film artifact and the image it records. Restoration practices seek to repair this damage, to substitute for what has been irrevocably lost, and to otherwise prepare the film to be once more exhibited to audiences. Both

restoration and exhibition, however, face this same tension between transcendence and time. Does erasing the effects of time's passage on the film image restore it to what it once was, or elide its history as an artifact? Does reconstructing the sequence of shots using all resources at one's disposal, including intertitles and still images, allow a more complete understanding of the film, or disrupt the audience's emotional engagement with it? Does screening the film with a modern score help the audiences bridge the gap between past and present, or fracture the film's integrity?

The answer to all these questions may be "yes." The fragments shored against the ruins of early American cinema permit multiple responses to their multifarious incompleteness. In examining the discourses through which particular restoration problems and practices are proposed, denied, and defended, I identify certain common structures that emerge to illuminate the terms of this debate. At their most polemic, one side prides itself on being the defenders of historical fidelity and a unified art object, while the other takes joy in an exuberantly reproductive film heritage that each new generation may bring to life by adopting and adapting it as its own. A more measured approach suggests that the conflict of principle stems from a concern with restoring the film as artifact, versus recreating the film as an experience of spectatorship. Each side invokes artistic integrity and the archival record in support of its interpretation of what constitutes both the "authentic" silent film artifact and the "authentic" silent film experience. In examining these discourses of "authenticity," I will show how they converge and diverge, both with each other and the principles they invoke, to construct contemporary relations to the silent film as an intellectual and imaginative object.

II. Restoration: objects and objectives

What is commonly called “restoration” encompasses a constellation of restorative, reconstructive, synthetic, compensatory, and additive activities. In *Silent Cinema*, Paolo Cherchi Usai distinguishes practices of *restoration* (“the set of technical, editorial, and intellectual procedures aimed at compensating for the loss or degradation of the moving image artifact, thus bringing it back to a state as close as possible to its original condition”), *reconstruction* (“the editorial process through which a print whose appearance is as close as possible to a desired version, considered as authoritative, is created by interpolating, replacing, or reassembling segments within the copy and with footage retrieved from other copies”), and *recreation* (“a strategy aimed at presenting an imaginary account of what the film would have been if some or all of its missing parts had survived” (Usai 66-67). Gillian Anderson offers a more general definition of restoration as “to bring something back to a former condition; to rebuild as before” (Anderson 19). According to the National Film Preservation Foundation’s *Film Preservation Guide*, restoration “attempts to reconstruct a specific version of a film [by] comparing all known surviving source materials, piecing together footage from these disparate sources into the order suggested by production records and exhibition history, and in some cases, enhancing image and sound to compensate for past damage” (NFPF, 4). Together these definitions inscribe a tension between “original” and “imaginary,” “authoritative” and “desired,” “rebuilding” and “creating,” “bringing something back” and “making something new.” At the balancing point between these conflicting impulses, restoration practitioners use historical evidence, contextual knowledge, and aesthetic judgment to construct a particular idea of the film, and then manipulate the available artifacts and technologies to produce a representation of that idea.

According to this formulation, the aim of restoration is to produce a version according to certain principles rather than to approximate an inaccessible “original.” Determining what constitutes the “original” of a film work is itself doubly fraught—not only through the epistemological difficulties of a fragmentary historical record, but also the ontological question of exactly what point in the film’s history of reproduction constitutes its “original” state. Even within the chronologically constrained moment of its initial release, a film may appear not only in different cuts for different audiences due to local censorship requirements, post-premiere editing, and the exigencies of exhibition, but also as prints with slightly different camera angles due to the common practice of shooting two camera negatives, one for domestic and one for international release prints. To identify only one of these variorum states as the “original” to which all restorations should aspire is an act of judgment, not an acknowledgment of fact, and one that is subject to change depending on the particular criteria informing that judgment. A restoration may take as its guide the historical evidence for a specific early state of the film, or it may seek to incorporate all available footage, or it may construct a composite that draws on the film’s history but which never previously existed in that form: each version may coexist with rather than replace the others, as each serves a different purpose. As Enno Patalas suggests, restorations of a work of art from the age of mechanical reproduction proceed by iteration, not supersession: “The restoration of a film should always be an open process, leaving time and space for further ‘versions’ that will not necessarily make the earlier ones obsolete. The objects we are dealing with are copies, but each one is different from its model. Each print is a kind of ‘original,’ and each performance is unique” (“On ‘Wild’” 38). Restoration does not erase the history of a set of film artifacts to return them to some prelapsarian “original” state, but rather marks a point of origin for a particular version that reflects a particular purpose.

While restoration takes film artifacts as its object, its ultimate objective is to present a restored version of the film to a viewing subject, producing not just a material representation, but also an experience of spectatorship. Enno Patalas quotes a question asked by Dominique Paini: “*Que restaure-t-on: une pellicule ou un spectacle, autrement dit, un objet ou une relation imaginaire?*” (“What are we restoring: film stock or a spectacle, in other words, a thing or an imaginary relation?”; “On ‘Wild’” 31). Patalas sides with the spectacle, with the experience over the artifact; so too does Gillian Anderson, though framed in very different terms: “[I]f we are really ‘restoring’ the original work, we must restore all of it, IF (and this is important) our purpose in restoring early films is to allow specialists and the general public to attempt to understand how the original work was and how it functioned, to understand how we got to the films of today” (Anderson 22). Anderson does not seek to restore the closest-possible equivalent of the “original” for the sake of the artifact itself, but rather for the experience of “understanding” it enables on the part of the audience. While both Patalas and Anderson ground their restoration principles in spectatorship, each conceives of the relation between the spectator and the film differently: for Patalas’s invocation of “*une relation imaginaire*,” Anderson might substitute “*une relation intellectuelle*.” Patalas invites his audience to participate imaginatively as an “accomplice” (“On ‘Wild’” 30) in the iterative process of restoration, and may even alter his restored prints according to the response they receive; Anderson expects her audience to gain intellectual understanding of the film’s “original” state from the concrete evidence that a “historically responsible” (Anderson 24) restoration offers, regardless of their reactions. Thus these different constructions of the spectator’s role may thus affect audience experience through their influence on exhibition practices, but may even shape the restored film as artifact.

In deprecating all versions of a film besides the lost “original” and the best modern reproduction of it, Anderson’s polemic undermines her stated purpose of understanding “how the original work was and how it functioned, [and] how we got to the films of today” (Anderson 22). Though presenting a version of the film judged to best represent the “original” may indeed enable some comprehension of “how the original work was,” and, in conjunction with knowledge of its historical context, “how it functioned,” such a restoration would only tell a small part of “how we got to the films of today.” For while concurrent or consecutive versions of the film may have departed from the “original” in more or less substantive ways, once a version appears before an audience, it enters into the cultural record in whatever form it currently finds itself. The story of “how we got to the films of today” entails not just production, but reception: the versions in which a film circulates most widely will likely have been more influential on past audiences (and the filmmakers within those audiences, and the films they went on to create) than an “original” that quickly disappeared from public view and did not reappear in a “restored” version until a century later. Whether imaginary or intellectual, the relation between audience and film above all should be historicized on both sides.

These arguments do not intend to denigrate or ignore the depth of research and breadth of historical and technical knowledge that many bring to the process of restoring films, or to devalue the impulse to produce a restoration firmly grounded in the evidentiary record. On the contrary, I wish to call attention to the acts of valuation that underlie all restoration decisions, of which “authentic representation of the original” is one of the most common. Privileging certain values over others as more suited to particular purposes is not necessarily problematic in itself, but benefits from a more explicit formulation of what those values are, where they come from,

and why they are significant. The next section of this paper will address discourses of “authenticity” as a value permeating restoration and exhibition practices.

III. Contemporary silent film authenticities

Constructing “authenticity” involves settling a number of issues beyond identifying and justifying what constitutes the film “original” for the purposes of a particular restoration, including mobilizing an often unwieldy, fragmented, and incomplete archive of supplemental documentation, and choosing how to compensate for unresolvable lacunae in the film artifact. This section will discuss some common discursive strategies invoked to manage these issues and portray a particular version of the film image as “authentic.” The following section will take up the myriad difficulties with establishing an “authentic” mode of musical scoring to accompany the film image.

The archive is the source of one major discursive strand. Presenting documentary evidence for the resemblance of the current version to a previous, privileged version both shows that one has done one’s research and reveals the apparatus for the viewer’s scrutiny. In “*Metropolis*, Scene 103,” Enno Patalas walks the reader through scene and intertitle cues from Gottfried Huppertz’s orchestral score, German censorship cards listing all intertitles, production stills, Huppertz’s copy of the script by Thea von Harbou, and the single page of Lang’s shooting script that has survived through its reproduction in an UFA promotional brochure—all to reconstruct a single sequence from the film (“*Metropolis*” 166-168). Richard Koszarski, in describing the restoration process for *Greed*, offers up additional corroboration in the form of a set photograph of von Stroheim and his secretary, who is holding the very script used “as a precise guide in assembling the reconstruction” (Koszarski 15), emphasizing the persistence of

this material artifact as a link between the moment of the film's creation and its recreation in the present day. In implicating the audience as his "accomplice," Patalas adds another approach for revealing the apparatus of restoration: "Some films we presented again and again, to the same audiences, as the versions evolved (with missing footage restored, German intertitles remade, original colors reproduced, an original score performed)" ("On 'Wild'" 30). While this method requires an unusually engaged audience, its longitudinal representation of the iterative process of restoration offers both "before" and "after," making visible the changes a particular restorative move has wrought upon the film experience. Invoking the archive, whether as supplemental documentation or the film's material history, simultaneously re-performs and justifies the process of restoration for the audience.

Another interpretation of this performance, however, is that the magician shows the lady sawn in half and then put back together, but distracts the audience from the crucial moment of suture. In the context of DVD restoration demonstrations, Nathan Carroll argues that such controlled revelations are all about imperceptibly directing the gaze of the audience: "Most demonstrations include split-screen comparisons with before and after shots, using film clips and frames as visual aids for the exposition. [...] Throughout, viewers are meant to be in awe of the invested effort and quality of the restored content. [...] In these tutorials we learn what counts as acceptable and unacceptable damage, shaping our aesthetic expectations as tech savvy consumers" (Carroll 19). In other words, this method of showing the restoration apparatus quietly hones the audience's judgment in particular ways, priming the audience to be impressed by the restoration it provides. According to Carroll, "DVD restoration demonstrations draw attention to the archiving apparatus, suturing our gaze into particular visions of film restoration,"

and thereby “legitimize appeals to archival authority” (Carroll 21). As in the strategies discussed above, the cultural capital of the archive underwrites assertions of authenticity.

Another circumstance that forcefully lays bare the restoration apparatus is the representation of absence: how a restored version identifies gaps in the film record, such as sequences or intertitles for which evidence, but not footage, exists. Enno Patalas summarizes the issue: “It is [...] an important task for future film restoration, to develop an ‘art of quoting,’ of citing, in order to deal with *lacunae*, to indicate what’s missing and expose what we know about it, without doing harm to the stylistic integrity of a film or concealing the *lacuna*” (“On ‘Wild’” 35). Patalas proposes marking these gaps without “arrest[ing] the flow of the moving picture” (“On ‘Wild’” 35) through interpolated production stills or lengthy explanatory intertitles, instead preferring a brief description of what is missing, or even a few black frames simply to mark the gap when no significant content is deemed to have been lost. At the other end of the spectrum, Rick Schmidlin’s 1999 reconstruction of Erich von Stroheim’s 24-reel final cut of *Greed* adds an hour and a half to the film’s running time in intertitles and stills, representing scenes depicted in the final shooting script but absent from the studio’s 10-reel release version of the film, and still falls well short of the 42-reel rough cut that Stroheim famously screened for an audience of twelve.

Each of these approaches takes artistic integrity as its polestar, even as it leads them in different directions. For Patalas, preserving integrity is literally an act of omission, avoiding the disruption of the film experience by introducing distracting elements in the guise of replacing what is absent. He is primarily concerned with *stylistic* integrity, going so far as to “fake” (his word) the graphic design of missing intertitles and “to reproduce and reshoot the titles frame by frame, so that the grain would change and vibrate as it does in the original film” (“On ‘Wild’ 34).

While absences are marked, everything that is present will appear part of the same integral whole. Paolo Cherchi Usai presents a similar argument for combining, if at all possible, footage in similar physical condition and frame size, so that the exhibited film produces the illusion of a single entity, even if it incorporates sequences of varying provenance. For Schmidlin, and Koszarski, restoring *Greed*'s integrity requires undoing the violence wrought upon the artifact by studio cuts, taking instead von Stroheim's final cut as its most integral state. Representing that version involves removing later excrescences (such as the studio's intertitles) and reconstituting lost elements based on their documentation in other media (text and still image) selected from the archive.¹ Integrity here is a matter of adherence to *authorial intention*, as manifest in the 24-reel "director's cut" of the film. As aspects of a unified artistic expression, each element signifies in relation to the whole, and so restoring the narrative continuity, for example, causes the expressionistic qualities of the selective colorization of gold objects throughout the film to reappear. Patalas's approach promises a film experience of visual integrity, while Schmidlin's presents an artifact with narrative and thematic integrity.

While *Greed*'s unique production history perhaps makes it a special case, the contrast between these two attitudes towards lacunae and their relation to artistic integrity nonetheless illustrates a general conflict of principle. Paolo Cherchi Usai frames the quandary in vivid terms: "The paradox of a mutilated integrity is at the core of the principle of conservative restoration: we leave the film as it is, in the hope that its incomplete evidence will be appreciated as such by the educated viewer," but "The opposite paradox—of a fictional completeness made out of a

¹ A *Greed*-related anecdote illustrating the effects of a new restoration superseding previous versions: in Dorothy L. Sayers's 1937 novel *Busman's Honeymoon*, one character refers to "going to sit on the sewer like the lovers in that von Stroheim film." Having only seen the Schmidlin restoration, which replaces the release version's intertitles with those given in the shooting script, I thought Sayers might have made an uncharacteristic error and meant Frank Borzage's *Seventh Heaven*, in which lovers and a sewer also figure prominently. It wasn't until I came across Trina's line "Let's go over and sit on the sewer" as an example of an intertitle removed from the restoration that the allusion made sense.

patchwork of ruins—is no less problematic, as it is the sign of a surrender to the authoritarian demands of the viewing pleasure and the market imperatives which exploit it” (Usai 64). The alignment here is uncertain: conversely, one could easily argue that Patalas’s adherence to a “mutilated integrity” is more conducive to “viewing pleasure” than Schmidlin’s completism, and few would contend that the four-hour reconstruction of *Greed* is a sop to marketability.

Regardless of the distribution of examples, the opposition is a familiar one: on the one hand, the film maintained within its historical context as an artifact for “evidence” and education; on the other, the film re-imagined to promote an experience of “viewing pleasure.”

IV. Sound arguments

Perhaps the most contentious aspect of contemporary silent film restoration and exhibition is sound. Silent film accompaniment practices are (and have always been) many and varied, but two distinct attitudes shape the general terms of the debate. In one camp are traditionalists, who, like Gillian Anderson, believe that “one does not have the art form, in fact, until the original image and musical accompaniment are presented to an audience” (Anderson 20). In the other are reformers, such as Paolo Cherchi Usai, who assert that “the original score is not always the best score” and that anachronistic accompaniments can “bring the film closer to us while letting it speak for itself” (Kizirian 14-15). Each perspective invokes the familiar tropes of authenticity, artistic integrity, and audience experience. For traditionalists, a contemporaneous score, ideally expressing the director’s recorded intentions, is an integral part of the film as an art work; an inappropriate score renders the film experience incomplete. Reformers counter that audience engagement with the emotional narrative of the film is sometimes better supported by accompaniment that feels immediate rather than archaic. In

addition, part of the pleasure of live accompaniment is its ability to surprise, an effect which holding to a single score would obviate. This debate is not new, and forms of many of its arguments were already apparent during the silent era. Both then and now, tensions emerge regarding not only which accompaniment practices best complement both the film and the audience experience, but also what the audience's relation to the film should be, and how the sound should collude with the image to manage that relation.

While substantial archival documentation of historical silent film accompaniment exists, practices were so diverse that any evaluation of contemporary approaches depends heavily on the circumstances of the particular criteria selected for comparison. Silent film sound varied dramatically over its span of chronology (1890s to 1920s), geography (urban to rural), and class (wealth, education, taste). Traditionalists tend to construct a hierarchy of aural authenticity, from contemporaneous scores composed directly for the film, to composite scores based on cue sheets suggesting the kind of music to be played for each scene, to composite scores based on the arranger's interpretation of the film, to a newly-composed pastiche score in the style of the period. Embedded in this hierarchy are a particular set of values. The first order of authenticity is the performance of a score specifically associated with the particular film, often with the director's stamp of approval. Authenticity in this case rests on reproducing a documented historical event in the film's past (*this* score was played with *this* film upon its initial release) and respecting artistic integrity (the director intended audiences to see *this* film with *this* score, it is an integral component of the film as art work). The second and third orders of authenticity rely on the practice, common in the silent era, of constructing scores from sheet music libraries, which often included popular tunes, classical themes, and original pieces, organized by the kind

of scene they suit.² While the resulting composite score may never have been played with that film before, it is nonetheless the *type* of score that *could have* formed its accompaniment. Finally, the composition of a new pastiche score resembles the first order (a score intended for *this* film), but without support from appeals to the historical record or to artistic integrity; the score conforms to expectations of what silent film music should sound *like*. While such a score does not overtly reproduce past content or practice, neither does it draw attention to itself as anachronistic. As with judgments on the authenticity of the film image that privilege an idea of the “original,” traditionalist approaches to silent film accompaniment draw on particular constructions of fidelity to the historical record, as well as stylistic and artistic integrity.

While the reformist view does not suggest a hierarchy of form, practice, or style, it does tend to privilege certain effects over others. The traditionalists’ single-minded focus on producing an effect of authenticity here is of little to no import; instead, reformists consider the effects music has on the audience experience more broadly. For these scores, any instrument or style available to modern musicians is fair game, including objects not usually considered for their musical possibilities. For example, Vincent Spinelli’s improvised electric guitar score for *Sunrise* at the 2011 San Francisco Silent Film Festival included effects from an electric razor, a pilot driver, and a milk frother. Spinelli used these not to represent diegetic sounds for activities enacted on screen, but rather to create a kind of foley of the mind, interpreting the emotional tumult of the characters through off-kilter sound. Matti Bye, whose ensemble played at the same festival, concurs: “A lot of objects around us have sound possibilities that can be very effective

² George W. Beynon offers one such categorization scheme: “Agitation, Anguish, Barcaroles, Battles, Brightness, Chasing, Children, Complacency, Characteristic, Daintiness, Dancing, Death, Despair, Dramatic, Dramatic (semi), Dramatic tension, Excitement, Fear, Fights, Fires, Foreboding, Forgiveness, Galloping, Gladness, Grief, Grotesque, Hunting, Hymns, Jealousy, Joy, Lamentation, Love, Lullabies, Military, Mystery, Neutral, Pastoral, Pathos, Pathetic (semi), Pleading, Prayer, Religion, Remembrance, Sorrow, Triumph, Tumult, Vivacity, Witchery, Weddings” (Altman 368). A cataloger would despair at the mixture of emotions (“anguish,” “joy”) with actions (“dancing,” “hunting”) and genres (“barcaroles,” “hymns”).

and poetic in film. I'm constantly looking for new-sounding objects [...] The object is not only what it is meant to be but also its possibility, as in *musique concrète*" (Bye 59). While traditionalists seek to bring the past into the present moment by imitating the old, reformists pursue the same goal by creating something new. In Bye's words, "As an ensemble playing for a silent, we want nothing less than to erase the time gap between our era and the silent era—to make these beautiful moving images rise out of the past and come alive in front of us" (Bye 59). Similarly, Spinelli suggests that *Sunrise*'s original recorded score actually damages the audience's experience of the film: "The type of music in the Movietone score can make it seem antiquated. This film is groundbreaking. New music can help it transcend any period" (Kizirian 15). According to these formulations, the effect of the music has altered over time in a different way from that of the image. In order to restore the *relation imaginaire* between the audience and the film, the sound element must be re-invented to interpellate the audience successfully into the emotional imaginary of the image.

Re-scoring to account for shifts in audience response is, however, itself a practice with historical precedent during the silent era. Rick Altman quotes Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel, who in 1921 revived *The Birth of a Nation* with a new score substituting for Joseph Carl Breil's original composition that had accompanied the film upon its initial release in 1915: "A score is nothing more or less than a musical adaptation or interpretation of the dramatic values of the picture. The art of the musical presentation has progressed so markedly during the seven years since *The Birth of a Nation* was first produced, that different standards and methods of adaptation have educated the public to new musical values" (Altman 318). Rothafel continues by stating that the original score "would have seemed inadequate and misrepresentative. [...] it was thought in better taste to utilize the airs which are contemporaries with the period of history covered by this

American screen classic” (Altman 319). The new here is actually an older old: in Rothafel’s formulation, the styles of 1914 seem more outdated than those of the 1860s, which, like the film, have the patina of a (highly problematic!) nostalgia to evoke an idealized past. In a broader sense, Rothafel reforms the film score to be more traditional than it was initially.

Rothafel’s perspective also raises the issue of the extent to which the era of the film’s creation, versus that of its setting should govern its accompaniment. In this case Rothafel argues that having music characteristic of a discernibly different past period from that of the film is more disconcerting through the layering of different periods. One could make a corresponding argument that pairing contemporary exhibitions of films with a futuristic setting, such as *Metropolis*, or an avant-garde sensibility, such as *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, with music characteristic of the 1920s produces a similar sense of discontinuity between music and image. About the same time as his revival of *The Birth of the Nation*, Rothafel opened *Caligari* at his Capitol Theatre, accompanied by a “daring score” (Altman 315) that he had compiled in collaboration with Erno Rapee. The pair purposely sought out “difficult music, never before heard on Broadway or in any other American moving picture theater”: in addition to somewhat familiar, yet still relatively new, selections from Richard Strauss, Claude Debussy, Modest Mussorgsky, and Sergei Prokofiev, they also incorporated completely unknown (to film audiences) pieces by Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky. While Schoenberg may still strike the modern ear as strange, the rest of these composers have firmly achieved “classical” status. Playing their music today simply does not evoke the same audience response as it would have in 1921.³ The score signifies not only through its musical content, but also through the context of its production and performance.

³ Of course, neither do the film images of *Metropolis* or *Caligari*. But while music signifies in relation to a shared cultural history, these films, and perhaps all films, seem to have a double signification, existing both in the time of

The common practice throughout the silent era was to incorporate music from popular and classical sources into composite and even composed scores. (For example, Carli Elinor's score for D. W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World* incorporates a number of popular tunes while, as he puts it, "compositions by the illustrious Rossini, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Chopin, Wagner supplied the proper atmosphere for the remainder of my score" [Altman 315]). Quoting music already in circulation could offer added value to its use as film accompaniment: the audience's exegetic knowledge of a tune's lyrical content would inform their understanding of a scene's diegetic content. For the frequent filmgoer, the reliance on sheet music libraries meant that she did not even have to be familiar with the source to learn the code, much as Looney Tunes would teach later generations of children the musical cues for morning, love, and death, regardless of their awareness of Grieg, Tchaikovsky, or Chopin. Recreating this signification in a contemporary context requires, in the case of a traditionalist score, an audience that either comes to a silent film understanding the common musical vocabulary of the silent era, or has attended enough films to have learned it through hearing it in practice, or else some kind of explanatory apparatus to fill in the missing context. The reformist approach would choose not to bring the audience to the music but rather the music to the audience, translating as best as possible the cues of the time into something that would have a similar effect for the contemporary spectator, recreating not the aural artifact of the sound itself, but instead the audience experience of its emotional impact.⁴

their creation and in the time they create within themselves, which does not participate in history in the same way. I do not wish to de-historicize the film image, but the consistent assumption on both sides of the silent film sound debate that sound ages in a way the film does not implies that there is some intriguing difference between the historicization of the image and the historicization of sound within a larger media narrative of culture. (Perhaps if I were a media studies scholar rather than an archivist, I would have a more illuminating theoretical context for this issue.)

⁴ This translation differs from most scores making use of contemporary popular songs, in that it draws on a deep understanding of how the silent-era songs functioned in their cultural context. Projects such as Giorgio Moroder's infamous rock-soundtracked *Metropolis* or the San Francisco International Film Festival's recent practice of inviting indie songwriters, such as Stephin Merritt of the Magnetic Fields and John Darnielle of the Mountain Goats, to

Such an endeavor would, of course, require the composer or musician to take an interpretative stance on the emotional content in a particular scene and how to represent it musically. But that, too, is nothing new; to adapt Samuel Rothafel as quoted above, *any* score is “nothing more or less than a musical adaptation or interpretation of the dramatic values of the picture” (Altman 318). According to a 1920 guide to moving picture accompaniment by Edith Lang and George West, “The prime function of the music that accompanies moving pictures is to reflect the mood of the scene in the hearer’s mind, and rouse more readily and more intensely in the spectator the changing emotions of the pictured story” (Altman 368). Altman adds, “Each film would thus be subjected to scene-by-scene analysis by cue sheet compilers, musical directors, and even lone pianists” to evaluate its emotional content (Altman 368). Musical accompaniment not only interpreted the film for the audience, it also determined the audience’s own interpretative stance *vis à vis* the film image. Unlike the nickelodeon, where “musicians were configured as viewers commenting musically on what they saw,” for an audience who “remained exterior to the film, judging it from the ironic distance established by the accompaniment,” later narrative cinema used “music’s emotional content to induce the audience to identify with the film’s characters, [drawing] spectators into the film rather than keeping them outside” (Altman 370). The evolution of accompaniment practices over the course of the silent-era musical practices tended towards maintaining this illusion of absorption by eliding the boundary between the emotion represented on the screen and the emotion experienced by the audience. In the contemporary context, deciding whether artifact or experience should govern restoration or exhibition practices could be framed as the question of what to do with this boundary, whether to privilege the *relation intellectuelle* or the *relation imaginaire*.

create accompaniments for silent films, aim to produce something entirely new rather than a modern equivalent of a previous score.

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