

Cinema's Unstable Texts:
A Historical Analysis of Textual Variation in the Film Industry

By

Mikhail L. Skoptsov

B.A. New York University, 2010

M.A. University of Southern California, 2012

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Modern Culture and Media at Brown University

Providence, Rhode Island

May 2020

© Copyright 2020 by Mikhail Skoptsov

This dissertation by Mikhail L. Skoptsov is accepted in its present form
by the Department of Modern Culture and Media as satisfying the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date _____

Philip Rosen, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date _____

Lynne Joyrich, Reader

Date _____

Ariella Azoulay, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Andrew G. Campbell, Dean of the Graduate School

Curriculum Vitae

Mikhail Skoptsov graduated in 2010 from New York University with a B.A. in Cinema Studies with honors, a second major in the French language, and a minor in Producing. He subsequently graduated with an M.A. in Film Studies from the University of Southern California (USC) in 2012. His published academic works include a book chapter in *Bringing History to Life Through Film: The Art of Cinematic Storytelling* (2013), and articles in the online international journal *Series* (2015) and *Contexts* (Spring 2018), the official annual publication of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology. A forthcoming book chapter will appear in *The Hobbit in Film and Fiction: Essays on Peter Jackson's Hobbit Trilogy* (2020). As a former film critic, he has published multiple reviews in *Washington Square News* and *The Daily Trojan* newspapers.

Mikhail has teaching experience, having instructed his own course “Altered Cinema” in Spring 2016 at Brown University’s department of Modern Culture and Media. He has also worked there as a teaching assistant for multiple courses and received a teaching certificate from Brown’s Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning. Prior to that, he had worked as a teaching assistant at the USC School of Cinematic Arts. Additionally, he has experience as a volunteer GED tutor at Columbia University’s community impact program. In 2017-2018, he held an interdisciplinary research fellowship with the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, which led to his working as one of the project leads of an experimental 2018 exhibit called “#CrowdCurated.”

Preface and Acknowledgements

As authors of long-running fantasy works sometimes like to say, the tale grew in the telling. This dissertation changed considerably from its initial plans as it was being written. Its overall length consequently surpassed initial projections, as did the amount of time necessary to finish it. Despite the delays that occurred in the process, the members of my dissertation committee continued to offer invaluable advice and encouragement. Without the patience and commitment of Phil Rosen, Lynne Joyrich, and Ariella Azoulay, this work simply would not have been possible. They devoted much time to reading my work, helping me to gain better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses as well as refine its central ideas and arguments. I am especially grateful to my advisor Phil for tirelessly providing constructive criticism and honest feedback that helped steer me in the right direction. I'd also like to express my gratitude to many other professors who were not part of my committee, but who helped develop and shape my academic interests, including Wendy Chun, Ellen Rooney, Adi Ophir, and Gertrud Koch. I have learned much from them during my studies at Brown University, and there can be no doubt that the knowledge I've gained contributed to the writing of this project. A special thanks goes to professor Joan Copjec, who served as the director of grad studies, department manager Susan McNeil, and program coordinator Liza Hebert, all of whom consistently clarified my duties and reminded me of my day-to-day responsibilities as a PhD student. Finally, I am greatly indebted to my parents for all the emotional and psychological support they provided me with as I was working on this dissertation. I could not have done this without them.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Illustrations	vii
Introduction: Film History and Textual Variation	1
Chapter Outline	6
Chapter 1 – Sound On: The Standardization of Variation	13
Chapter 2 – Screen Size Matters: Broadcast Versions, Ratio Variation, and Widescreen	79
Chapter 3 – Art vs. Commerce: Alternate Cuts and the New Technologies of the 80s	144
Chapter 4 – Lost in (Digital) Transition: Modernization and Replacement of Versions	210
Conclusion	276
Bibliography	281

List of Tables and Illustrations

Figure 1.1 – Camera and Projection Speeds of Select Silent Films	30
Figure 1.2 – Dialogue Breakdown in <i>All Quiet on The Western Front</i>	40
Figure 1.3 – 1929 Early Talkie Films	51
Figure 1.4 – Multi-Version Films: Silent/Synch (Fall 1926-Summer 1928)	58
Figure 1.5 – Multi-Version Films: Silent/Talkie (Fall 1927-Summer 1928)	59
Figure 1.6 – Synch Reissues of silent films (1926-1931)	59
Figure 1.7 – Silent/Synch Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	63
Figure 1.8 – Warner Bros. Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	64
Figure 1.9 – First National Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	64
Figure 1.10 – Universal Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	64
Figure 1.11 – Paramount Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	65
Figure 1.12 – Fox Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	65
Figure 1.13 – MGM Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	66
Figure 1.14 – Columbia Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	66
Figure 1.15 – United Artists Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)	66
Figure 1.16 – Poster of <i>Wings</i> (1928)	68
Figure 1.17 – Warner Brothers Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	71
Figure 1.18 – First National Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	72
Figure 1.19 – Fox Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	72
Figure 1.20 – Fox Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	72
Figure 1.21 – MGM Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	73
Figure 1.22 – Paramount Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	73

Figure 1.23 – Universal Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)	74
Figure 2.1 – <i>Shane</i> Broadcast Version Summary	103
Figure 2.2 – Major Studios and Flat Widescreen Ratios (March-April 1953)	121
Figure 2.3 – 1953 Studio Backlogs Released in Flat Widescreen	123
Figure 2.4a – Critical Limits for Widescreen Composition in Film Image	128
Figure 2.4b – Critical Limits for Widescreen Composition in Camera	128
Figure 2.5 – Flat Widescreen Formats and New Multi-Ratio Titles (1954-1956)	130
Figure 2.6 – <i>Shane</i> Version Release Chart	137
Figure 3.1 – Pre-Ancillary Cuts On Cable and Video	168
Figure 3.2 – Authorial Revisions on Video I	172
Figure 3.3 – Authorial Revisions on Video II	172
Figure 3.4 – Authorial Revisions on Video III	173
Figure 3.5 – Archival Titles and Restored Versions	181
Figure 3.6 – R-Rated and Unrated Cuts I	188
Figure 3.7 – R-Rated and Unrated Cuts II	190
Figure 3.8 – <i>Manhunter</i> Versions	195
Figure 3.9 – Alternate Cuts by Michael Mann	196
Figure 4.1 – Films Reissued in CGR (1997-2017)	261

INTRODUCTION

Film History And Textual Variation

This dissertation focuses on the role of textual variation within the American film industry. Combining historical research with textual analysis, it examines why the same film texts circulate in different versions throughout their lifetimes in reaction to greater historical and cultural changes. In particular, it emphasizes how multiple versions emerge especially during periods of technological transition in the film industry, helping to instill new standards of production, distribution, or exhibition. In connection with this, it seeks to address many questions that arise from the very fact that a film can exist in multiple variations, such as: “How does the release of a new version impact a film’s reception and its status as a work of art? Who has the right – moral, legal, artistic, etc. – to create different versions of a picture and why? What does the existence of different versions signify for a film as a historical object?” In tackling these questions, *Unstable Texts* challenges the foundational conception of film as a stable and fixed text, which is often left unquestioned in academic, industrial, and cultural discourses. It does so in the hopes of inciting a redefinition of a film as an inherently variable text and so promotes a conception of American film history as a history of how and why film texts collectively change over time.

The inspiration for this work comes from my impression is that there is a general tendency in film and media scholarship to treat pictures produced within the American film industry as stable texts. Consider, for instance, how the scholarly citation of films does not require nearly as much accuracy as that of print texts. As Edmondson aptly puts it, citations “for books, articles, and dissertations routinely include sufficient details to identify the actual copy... by date, edition, publisher, page numbers and so on.... But in the case of an audiovisual work, it’s often just

the title.”¹ In this, there is an awareness of the fact that a printed text may circulate in different editions or under different publishing companies, and so have differences in content or page count. Providing detailed information is necessary as references based on one edition may be inaccurate in relation to another. But in the case of film, such acknowledgement is not the norm.

Its absence reflects the general perception of films as uniform products of mass reproduction. Arguably, one of the most influential proponents of this view is Walter Benjamin, who defined film as an art form “whose artistic character is entirely determined by its reproducibility” in his seminal thesis about the effects of reproductive technologies on the nature and reception of art within the 20th century.² He posits that acts of reproduction, as a rule, diminish an artwork’s authenticity and its “aura,” which one can understand to be its uniqueness in time and space, by making it accessible en masse. So, the copy can usually be differentiated from the original by these losses.³ But when it comes to film, there’s no distinction between an original work and its copies, for only the finished form of a film text, a “final cut,” is accessible to the masses.⁴ Unlike many other forms then, such as painting, film is able to naturally foster “simultaneous collective reception” by mass audiences.⁵ In that sense, there is no “original” or “authentic” version of a film text and, in turn, no variation. By this rationale, all mass-produced copies of a film then should be identical and simultaneously accessible.

1. Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*, 3rd ed. (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), 61.

2. I must note that my interpretation of Benjamin’s thesis is based on the 1936 version of his essay, which may contain some differences from the earlier published iteration known as “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (Second Version), in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol. 3, 1935-1938, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, transl. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 109.

3. Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” 103-105.

4. *Ibid.*, 109.

5. *Ibid.*, 116.

Such a perception of a film text, however, overlooks what scholar and archivist Paolo Cherchi Usai terms in his study of silent cinema as “the ‘internal history’ of the copy, that is to say, the alterations which the print has undergone over the years.”⁶ In contrast to the view of film texts being defined by pure reproduction, he suggests that every single copy constitutes a unique variation that is not identical to another and that transforms over time. As it circulates via physical carriers that can naturally decay, accumulate damage during exhibition, and undergo intentional alteration or outright destruction for commercial, political, and other reasons, the copy gives rise to new variations of the same picture. So, the existence of multiple versions attests to the changes a film text undergoes during its lifetime, as it is copied and transmitted across different time periods, cultural contexts, exhibition platforms, markets, and so forth. The normalized treatment of a motion picture as a stable text thus unconsciously effaces its internal history and so promotes the idea that films are never affected by the passage of time.

One could say that this adheres to what Usai terms as the “Model Image,” a cultural ideal, according to which films consist of moving images that are “immune from decay” and so “can have no history.”⁷ It is central to his claim in *The Death of Cinema* that “it is the destruction of moving images that makes film history possible.”⁸ The author points to how all celluloid films exist in a constant state of transformation, inevitably moving towards their destruction, and that the resulting loss evinces the passage of time, providing one with fragments on which to build a notion of the past. So, if films consisted of model images, meaning if they did not decay or be subject to variation, then there would be no film history as a whole. That is, there would be no

6. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema. An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 156.

7. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2001; Reprint, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 41.

8. Usai, *The Death of Cinema*, 18.

means of temporally distinguishing between cinema's past and its present.⁹ Usai's theorization of moving image destruction evidently approaches "film history" as being comprised of the internal histories of all film texts. Effacing the internal history of an individual text by ignoring the existence of different versions from this standpoint risks effacing film history as a whole.

Building on these ideas, I would claim that the proliferation of different versions of the same films can be seen as the natural result of the film industry constantly undergoing changes. As my work will show, the emergence of new technology in particular tends to directly prompt film variation, but this does not occur in isolation from various economic, political, and other factors. The variation of film texts in this regard signifies that the American film industry has a history and that films could only be stable texts if that industry itself remained stable and unchanging. In order to illustrate this, the four main chapters composing this dissertation all engage with established academic, industrial, and cultural discourses that are tied directly or indirectly to a specific historical period of the industry's technological change. Each chapter critiques and challenges these discourses by establishing a complex interrelationship between the diffusion of new technology and the production, distribution, and exhibition of multiple versions of the same film. In addition, each chapter also utilizes a specific film as a case study to help better illustrate the role technological change can play in a text's variability.

Such an approach will serve several purposes. For one thing, it will show how the notion that films constitute stable and perfectly reproducible texts directly informs and is informed in turn by not only the analysis and theorization, but also the reception and historicization of moving images. For another, it will offer an example of an alternative historical account that considers the role of textual variation in one major film industry's technological transitions.

9. Ibid., 6-21.

Versions, after all, are just as crucial to the standardization and acceptance of new technology, as the technology is to the circulation of versions. Finally, it will promote close comparative analysis between two or more versions of the same film by showing that textual differences between versions, particularly those separated by long temporal intervals, can reflect larger distinctions between the various contexts, historic periods, or markets through which they circulate.

A particular benefit of this research is the fact that different versions can have complex relationships fraught with ideological contradictions and tensions, especially as they can compete with one another for economic and cultural value. Altogether, these chapters will make a case for why it is necessary to recognize the film text as an inherently unstable or unfixed entity and retire its dominant perception as a perfectly reproducible and ahistorical model image. In this regard, this dissertation is analogous to works in the field of literary “textual scholarship” that advocate mass recognition of all texts across different media as fundamentally unstable entities that change over time.¹⁰ Showing that film variation is only natural will lead to better insight into both the past and present of cinema, as well as suggest possibilities of future developments for film as a medium and art form. But more than that, it may generate greater academic interest in the study of textual variation as a whole and so inspire more scholars to question long-held assumptions and beliefs about the historical stability of texts in film and other related media.

Naturally, this work carries certain limitations. Though it makes references to film scholarship, textual analysis, or film criticism, it does not attempt to conduct a systematic study of these fields. It would also be outside the scope of this dissertation to look at all of film history

10. Bryant’s examination of the “fluid text,” McGann’s theory of the “textual condition,” and Grigely’s study of “textuality” all position variation as a natural occurrence that can result from many different factors. This includes a text’s authorial, editorial, and other revisions, or its transmission in ever-changing social contexts. See John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (University of Michigan Press, 2002), 1-2; Joseph Grigely, *Textuality: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 1; Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 9-10.

and attempt to chronicle every single variation practice known to exist. Instead, it will attempt to hone in on a few key points in the history of the American film industry and the textual variation practices that emerged during them. Because of this specific emphasis, its findings will primarily apply to mainstream American feature films. Where relevant, however, the dissertation will also discuss the variation of non-mainstream and foreign titles in the course of their theatrical or non-theatrical distribution in the US. The third chapter in particular will examine such instances.

Chapter Outline

The opening chapter, “Sound On: The Standardization of Variation,” revolves around cinema’s transition to sound (1926-1931), which is widely believed to have standardized film production, distribution, and exhibition, thereby bringing to an end the variability inherent to silent films. New synch sound technology ostensibly abolished the live performance elements of silent exhibition, such as live musical accompaniment, providing producers and distributors with full control over the film text and so allowing it to remain identical in the course of presentation. The chapter challenges these perspectives by drawing on the works of film scholars, such as Balio, Hoyt, and Hansen, as well as various archival trade publications, journals and articles to show that producer and distributors did not actually oppose nor seek to abolish film variation.

It first establishes the centrality of producers and distributors to variation during the silent era, as well that of live performance to the presentation of sound versions during the transition. Subsequently, it examines how the adoption of new synch sound technologies by studios and exhibitors initially increased the number of potential versions a film could be released in, allowing it to play within both silent theaters and those wired for sound. Because of this, it was common during 1926-1931 for the same picture to be distributed in a silent version, a sound

version with only synchronized music and effects, and finally one with synchronized music, effects, and dialogue in the domestic market alone. In order to accommodate this, studios had to adopt new production, distribution, and marketing practices, all of which influenced and in turn were influenced by the demands of exhibitor and audiences.

The chapter provides a brief comparison of two versions of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which was released in 1930 to help illustrate some of these points. Finally, it discusses how the “talkie” film that became dominant at the end of the transition remained variable for many years after the end of the silent cinema. Though the number of versions a film would now be released in became considerably smaller, variation did not completely vanish. Altogether, this will show that the coming of sound signaled not the film industry’s transition to reproduction but rather its standardization of variation. These are crucial points to consider in regard to film history, for even though silent and sound versions were released simultaneously within the transition-to-sound period, most of the former today are relegated to film archives, while the latter are reproduced by modern delivery technologies and so are given active circulation. In this sense, the centrality of variation to the transition period is essentially blocked from popular knowledge.

The second chapter, “Screen Size Matters: Broadcast Versions, Ratio Variation, and the Widescreen,” then shifts focus to the connection between theatrical ratio variation practices that emerged during the film industry’s transition to widescreen and the mass circulation of feature films on television in broadcast versions during the 1950s. Drawing extensively on archival newspapers, trade journals, and magazines, it provides a new historical account of the period that positions the latter event as a consequence of the former. It shows how the adoption of so-called “flat” widescreen processes, which allowed studios like Paramount Pictures to prepare a film for simultaneous exhibition in widescreen and traditional narrow-screen versions, led to a gradual

diminishment of the theatrical market for reissues of older narrow-screen titles. In addition to fostering new multi-ratio filmmaking practices, this prompted distributors to release their catalog titles en masse to TV stations, which were able to show them with little image alteration, as a receiver's aspect ratio was nearly equivalent to that of a narrow-screen picture. Because they facilitated the production of 1.33:1 broadcast versions, the flat formats and their related cinematographic techniques remained in use long after widescreen ratios had become standardized.

Showing that multi-ratio filmmaking originated in the theatrical cinema and that the small screen served as a replacement for the narrow-screen theatrical reissue market will evince that television in many ways took up after film and so became closer to it as a medium due to the widescreen transition. In the process, it disproves a popular yet erroneous historical narrative, according to which studios adopted "true" wide-screen formats like Cinerama to distinguish film from TV and flat formats to accommodate telecasting. Positioning multi-ratio filmmaking as a sign of film's subordination to the demands of the small screen, this account plays into the belief that television de-values film texts by subjecting them to alteration. In providing a more accurate understanding of how film had historically impacted television and vice versa, the chapter's alternate history of ratio variation will serve the greater purpose of challenging the dominant cultural perception that television constitutes a fundamentally inferior medium to film.

To further complicate the perceived cultural distinctions between the media, it will analyze how editorial and structural changes in broadcast versions, which are also regularly seen as symptomatic of film's devaluation, align a feature film with the standards and conventions of television exhibition. The analysis will illustrate how this redefines or re-contextualizes theatrical features as texts that display characteristics believed to be essential and unique to television as a medium, including liveness, segmentation, and flow. It will then locate these very elements wi-

thin the history of the theatrical cinema, evincing that the changes believed to distinguish broadcast versions from theatrical ones can be seen as re-aligning present features with past film conventions. An examination of the 1968 broadcast version of *Shane* (1953) will help illustrate how the release of films to television impacts them historically and culturally, and what such impact signifies for the relation between film and television as media and industries.

Chapter Three, “Art vs. Commerce: Alternate Cuts and the New Technologies of the 80s” will move on to reassess the historical and cultural impact of Cable TV and Home Video on the film industry between approximately 1983 and 1989. Studies suggest that the mass dissemination of films via the two technologies had similar effects to that of broadcast television in the 50s. Ostensibly, it resulted in the rampant commercialization of American cinema, which corresponded to an artistic devaluation of theatrical feature films by their cable and video reproductions. As the chapter makes evident, such an assessment is rather problematic, for it relies both on the false assumption of television as an inferior medium and the notion that cable TV and video strive for perfect reproduction of the theatrical film within the home. In the process, it completely disregards the role ancillary markets like cable and video played in the production and distribution of alternate cuts, such as the director’s cut, the unrated cut, and the restoration. Defined by their editorial differences from a theatrical “cut” of the same picture, these are arguably the most popular, well-known, and accessible types of film variations available today.

Despite this, they have been consistently excluded from industrial and cultural histories of 1980s cinema, popularizing the erroneous view that they did not exist until the emergence of DVD. Relying on magazine, journal, and newspaper articles, the chapter will chart a thorough account of when, how, and why video and cable came to distribute alternate cuts en masse in the 1980s, and so helped reshape the cultural perception of cinema. By shining a light on their

history, as well examining their complex cultural and economic relations, the chapter will make the case that ancillary markets actually helped artistically elevate films and re-establish them as works of art, as opposed to diminish them. Central to this is the idea that within the American cinema, a film's status as a work of art is closely associated with the control of its director over the editing of the picture, with possession of the right to "final cut" marking a film-maker as a given text's author or artist. Following a period in the 60s and 70s where they generally allotted filmmakers considerable creative freedom and so enabled the rise of auteurism, Hollywood studios largely took back editorial control over theatrical releases in the 80s

In a context, where theatrical cinema was dominated by commercial interests, Cable and Video emerged as outlets for filmmakers to release new versions of theatrical features that were truer to their intentions and free from durational, ideological, and other constraints. Alongside unrated, restored, and other alternate cuts, the director's cut helped legitimize video and cable as technologies of authenticity, anti-censorship, and auteurism. In the sense that they allowed a director to regain control over the editing and release a director's cut that was then recognized as more aesthetically and culturally legitimate than the theatrical releases, these ancillary markets reacted against the commercialization of cinema. And in doing so, they began to redefine an auteur as a filmmaker capable of releasing an authorial revision of a commercial film. By connecting these points, the chapter will then illustrate the connections between editorial control, authorship, and the ideological contradictions inherent to the Hollywood film text as a product of both art and commerce. A close study of director the revisions of *Manhunter* (1986), arguably the first film to be released on in a director's cut on a cable channel, will help establish how editorial control is linked to authorial status, as well as how DVD builds on cable and video.

The final chapter, “Lost in (Digital) Transition: Modernization and the Replacement of Film Versions” continues to focus on the video market, but links it to the topics of new media and digital preservation by examining the transition from analog to digital video between 1997 and 2005. During this time period, the production of new digitally modernized video versions contributed to the emergence of DVD as the new dominant home video platform. As a consequence, analog VHS tapes became obsolete, leading media producers and consumers alike to resell, recycle, or otherwise literally dispose of their video libraries en masse. The chapter positions such loss of analog video versions as a result of the emergence of new digital technologies in the migration process from celluloid film to video that occurred in the mid-to-late 80s. This led the film industry to begin utilizing a modernization practice called “digital remastering” around 1987 to continuously “improve” the audiovisual quality of new video versions, rendering already available ones technologically, qualitatively, and culturally obsolete.

Ongoing change in remastering technology, however, raises the thresholds of achievable video quality and so spurs ongoing modernization of films, which translates into continuous production of new versions and consequent loss of old ones. By detailing this process and providing an account of its history, the chapter intends to make visible how this form of digital modernization has long been a habitual, imperceptible activity that gradually redefined what passes for as an accurate video “reproduction” of the theatrical film. This means that the DVD, Blu-Ray, and other “copies” through which mass audiences predominantly access past celluloid films today are actually technological modernizations that make the cinematic past “new” and acceptable to a contemporary audience. A case study of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* will help illustrate how and why remastered versions are able to pass for reproductions by examining another digital modernization practice called “CGI Revision,” which accentuates its alteration of the film.

The implicit scenario postulated by remastering is that the more technologically up to date a video version is, the more closely it resembles the theatrical release. Imperceptibly modernizing a film then becomes necessary in order to “reproduce” and access it. Demonstrating that digital modernization can be intrinsic to access when it comes to film will help disprove the popular perception that digital technologies always perfectly reproduce theatrical films and so effectively immortalize moving images by allowing them to transcend the physical carriers used to store and transmit them. The chapter proposes that, on the contrary, films suffer the loss of versions corresponding to the loss of physical carriers, which aligns them with digital media objects. This is attributable to the idea that that interconnection between modernization and obsolescence can be considered a defining characteristic of new media. Not to mention, it fits the logic of digital preservation, which postulates that a digital media object must be constantly modernized in order to remain accessible. Showing that films are comparable to digital media objects will hopefully increase public recognition of the fact that film history is constructed through present-day technology and that one cannot access the cinematic past without tailoring it to the industrial, technological, and cultural standards of the present.

CHAPTER 1

Sound On: The Standardization Of Variation

Multiple film scholars position textual variation as a key characteristic that distinguishes early and silent pictures from the talkie film, which became the dominant product of the US film industry following the 1926-1931 transition to synchronized sound. Williams argues that the new technology eliminates differences that commonly existed between copies of the same film during the earlier periods. He emphasizes how a silent work “could exist in several different versions: black and white, or colored by one of several methods... accompanied by a large orchestra... or by a single drunk pianist.”¹ In the same vein, Vasey describes how silent movies were “inherently unstable” as texts and “never so precisely fixed as their talkie descendants.”² Bordwell asserts that talkies “created a concrete and inflexible tempo for the Hollywood film,” differentiating it from the silent picture, which had “a malleable, plastic duration.”³ Such views place the post-transition or sound film period in opposition to the pre-transition period, as though the technological change caused a shift in the industry from textual variation to reproduction.

Discourses surrounding standardization similarly assume this distinction. Hannah Lewis, for instance, points to how musicians of small theaters sometimes took deliberate liberties with a silent picture score that could “result in mocking or changing the meaning of a film.” Removing such potential appropriations by standardizing the music accompaniment was, according to her,

1. Alan Williams, “Historical and Theoretical Issues in the coming of recorded sound to the Cinema,” in *Sound Theory/sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 128.

2. Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 64.

3. David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 306.

one of the motivations for the industry's eventual conversion to synch sound.⁴ Neale also links the absence of variation to the standardization of the aural accompaniment via synch sound technologies.⁵ Standardization then is ostensibly aligned with mechanical reproduction.

Associating the pre-transition period with variation and the transition period conversely with standardization and pure reproduction suggests that the new synchronized playback and recording technologies enabled a text to remain consistent all throughout production, distribution, and exhibition. However, this reading of history does not hold up when one considers how American film producers and distributors created different versions of the same picture during the transition years. The Harold Lloyd comedy *Welcome Danger* (1929) is exemplary in this regard, having circulated domestically in a silent version alongside “the all-talking version (“suitable only for English-speaking countries”), and, for foreign markets, the silent version fitted with a music-and-effects track...”⁶ Defining such a picture specifically as a talkie film, or a silent film neglects the cumulative history of its multiple variants, along with the textual differences between them. Such differences are important to recognize, for they point to how the industry itself has shifted from a silent mode of production to a talkie mode of production.

Complicating the issue, however, is the fact historical accounts of the transition era tend to confuse and conflate silent versions with sound versions, in turn obfuscating the distinction between silent and sound films. Describing the industry in 1929 Harold Franklin notes that “practically every producer here is making a silent version of the dialogue picture for the foreign

4. Hannah Lewis, "The Realm of Serious Art": Henry Hadley's Involvement in Early Sound Film," *Journal Of The Society For American Music* 8, no. 3 (n.d.), 293.

5. Stephen Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 91-93.

6. Scott Eyman, *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution, 1926-1930* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 333.

market....”⁷ But he later adds that these versions “will include musical accompaniment and sound effects...” until “foreign producers become familiar with the use of sound recording equipment.”⁸ The author refers to “silent” versions as having synchronized sound effects and music, while distinguishing them from “sound versions” on the basis that the latter possess audible dialogue. By this logic, it would seem that synchronized effects or music don’t qualify as acoustical elements that can distinguish a silent and sound version, while dialogue does.

This ties into Mary Ann Doane’s observation that the silent film “is certainly understood, at least retrospectively and even (it is arguable) in its time, as incomplete, as lacking speech.”⁹ Such comprehension of the term is also evident in Nornes’ study of how the transition led to new translation practices after rendering the silent era translation largely obsolete.¹⁰ From this, one can infer that within contemporary academic discourses, a sound version/film is specifically distinguished from a silent version/film and so defined by the presence of audible dialogue. But this neglects how fluid terms like “silent film” and “sound film” have been throughout film history. As Crafton correctly points out, “sound film” in 1926 signified a picture that had music, rather than speech.¹¹ This is attributable to the fact that feature films with soundtracks containing audible dialogue did not arrive until the premiere of *The Jazz Singer* in 1927. For purposes of clarity then, it is necessary to adopt specific terms and categories when discussing this subject.

7. Harold B. Franklin, *Sound Motion Pictures, From the Laboratory to Their Presentation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1929), 326.

8. Ibid., 334-335.

9. Mary Ann Doane, “The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space,” in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, eds. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, 162.

10. Abé Mark Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 123-127.

11. Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997), 88.

Within the context of this chapter, the term “silent version” refers to a non-synchronized version of a feature film that has live musical or sound accompaniment. A “synch version,” meanwhile, designates a synchronized version intended for wired theaters that have recorded sound effects and/or music scores, but no dialogue or voiceover. By contrast, “talkie version” means a synchronized version that has recorded dialogue or voiceover, either in part or in full, in addition to effects or music. All synch and talkie versions qualify as “sound versions.” By extension then, a “silent film” is one that has only ever circulated in silent version, while a “sound film” is conversely one that has never circulated in silent version. This will distinguish them from the multi-version silent/sound pictures that appeared during the transition years. Such distinctions are crucial to consider, because silent, synch, and talkie versions all possessed overlaps and differences in terms of the text, as well as production and distribution.

Primarily focusing on the domestic market, the chapter will largely refrain from examining versions related to sound film translation practices. For one thing, translation already has an extensive amount of academic coverage by scholars such as Nornes, Jarvinen, and Segrave, so it would be both redundant and outside the scope of this chapter to extensively delve into this subject. For another, translation studies tend to attribute the existence of multiple versions almost entirely to foreign markets, positioning it as the sole exception to the rule that synch sound shifted the industry to reproduction. In *The Coming of Sound*, for instance, Gomery very briefly mentions studios, such as RKO, releasing silent and sound versions domestically during 1928-1929.¹² But he provides a far more extensive look at subtitled, dubbed, and other translated versions in his chapter on the international diffusion of sound technology.¹³ The impression this

12. Douglas Gomery, *The Coming of Sound: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 88-89.

13. Ibid., 105-114.

gives is that a picture circulates in the US almost exclusively in either a silent or sound version, while other versions stem from the commercial demands of international distribution.

The fact that silent, synch, and talkie versions rarely factor into scholarly accounts of the transition period strengthens this impression considerably. The works of Gomery, Jarvinen, Segrave, Vasey, Nornes, Bordwell, and others virtually exclude any mention of transition-to-sound versions in the domestic market, effectively erasing them from film history. Of course, there are some exceptions to this. Comparative studies of silent and sound versions of films like *Blackmail* (1929) or *L'Atalante* (1934) provide insight into how new technology could transform a specific picture.¹⁴ Similarly, Scott Eyman's *The Speed of Sound* incorporates multiple versions into a historical account of the transition. Such examples show how the smaller circulation histories of specific titles connect to the macro-narrative of technological change.

Arguably, the biggest exception is Donald Crafton's *The Talkies*, the fourth volume of the *History of the American Cinema* series. The author aptly links the production of silent and sound versions of the same picture to distribution processes, showing how the gradual wiring of theaters for sound necessitated studios to "supply two sets of prints to silent and sound-equipped cinemas."¹⁵ Unfortunately, Crafton primarily focuses on the economic impact of transition-to-sound versions, positioning variation alongside remaking as one of Hollywood's "defensive strategies."¹⁶ Per this schema, all silent and sound versions are essentially identical copies from a commercial standpoint, and the differences between them are therefore negligible. Crafton's reading thus reaffirms the binary opposition between the pre-transition and transition periods and

14. John Belton, "Awkward Transitions: Hitchcock's 'Blackmail' and the Dynamics of Early Film Sound," *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (1999): 227-246. Charles Barr, "Blackmail: Silent and Sound," *Sight and Sound* 52, no. 2 (Spring, 1983), 122-126. Hannah Lewis, "'The Music has Something to Say': The Musical Revisions of *L'Atalante* (1934)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall, 2015): 559 – 603.

15. Donald Crafton, *The Talkies*, 165.

16. Ibid., 168-171.

upholds the dominant historical narrative that the transition shifted the American film industry from variation to reproduction. Doing so in turn portrays Hollywood producers and distributors as having sought to bring stability to the film text from the earliest days of cinema.

Rejecting this position, the first chapter aims to illustrate that textual variation has always been intrinsic to the American film industry, and so constitutes a point of continuity, rather than difference, between the pre-transition and transition periods. Its primary argument is that producers and distributors have been central to the circulation of the same picture in multiple versions before, during, and after the advent of synch sound. The opening section, “Performing Sound,” establishes how the dominant critical perspectives on the pre-transition period view textual variation as specifically a product of live performance of sound, projection, and other motion picture elements that occurred in the course of exhibition. Ostensibly then, sound versions were invariable due the conversion to synch sound annulling the need for live performance. Arguing against this, I will illustrate how sound versions during the transition also required live performance in the course of exhibition, and so could also differ from venue to venue like silent ones.

The next section, “Pre-Transition: Producer and Distributor Variation Practices in the Silent Era,” will further challenge the opposition by illustrating how producers could directly influence exhibitor practices, while distributors would create export versions for foreign markets in the pre-transition period.¹⁷ In addition to establishing that silent era variation wasn’t solely a product of exhibition, the section demonstrates that producers did not necessarily oppose exhibitor customizations but took them into account when crafting a motion picture. The third section, “In-Transition: Multi-version Silent/Sound Films” then focuses specifically on the emergence of new types of films with both silent and sound versions in the domestic market from 1926 through

17. The term “producer” in this case refers to producers, writers, directors, editors, etc., and other individuals who participate in the production of the film.

1931 as a result of studios adopting synch sound technologies, such as Vitaphone and Movietone. Among other things, it will detail specific textual differences between silent, synch, and talkie versions, delve into their production and distribution processes, as well as provide a historical account of their domestic circulation during the transition years.

In connection with this, it will show how studios used marketing materials and release strategies to influence the public perception and media discourse surrounding sound versions. Doing so contributed to the obsolescence of silent versions, helping producers and distributors gain full control over variation. Finally, “Post-transition” will provide a brief look at how variation practices pertaining to sound extend beyond the end of transition period, allowing for the generation of new versions post-1931 and the remediation of old ones on contemporary media. Showing that the post-transition talkie film itself is variable will directly contradict the binary opposition between the silent and sound periods, as well as confirm that producers and distributors have not brought about textual stability, nor have they ever intended to. Illustrating the existence of continuities and differences between the silent and sound film eras will ultimately show that variation was intrinsic to the film industry and did not oppose its standardization.

I. Performing Sound: Discourses on Exhibition and Variation

Film scholars commonly point out that, contrary to its categorization, the silent film was not necessarily devoid of sound elements, at least not in the course of its presentation to viewers. Nornes speaks of how the early cinema “was anything but silent. At the point of reception, exhibitors were adding live lecturers, music, and even elaborate sound effects.”¹⁸ Among other things, musicians regularly accompanied screenings, providing a score for the audience to listen to while viewing the images. Theater lecturers, meanwhile, could verbally explain the plot of a

18. Nornes, *Cinema Babel*, 93.

given picture, while behind-the-stage actors would voice the words spoken by the characters onscreen. Neale cites these elements in addition to projector noise and the audience itself to illustrate that “silent films were, in fact, rarely seen in conditions of silence.”¹⁹ Prior to 1926 then, a given picture could and often did circulate with sound accompaniment. However, it did not have the exact same accompaniment from one screening to the next, resulting in multiple versions of the same text distinguished by sound, music, and other acoustical elements.

Partially, this is attributable to the improvisation that occurred in the course of exhibition. Bowser’s research of Nickelodeon music shows that the distribution system of the American film industry after 1907 made it impractical and virtually impossible for a musician to have any preparation for what he was going to play, leading some film critics to recognize how music could affect one’s perception of a picture.²⁰ Meanwhile, Altman’s study of exhibition lecture practices from 1907-1910 finds that many nickelodeon lecturers invented their own material to foster the narrative links between scenes, characters, and events for spectators, rather than rigidly adhere to an official synopsis or description. Reportedly, there were many instances of lecturers narrating films they hadn’t seen or for which they did not yet have a synopsis, while fearing that the audience would notice potential contradictions between image and voice.²¹ One could characterize such improvisation as being unintentional, at least to some extent.

On the other hand, many historical accounts state that musicians improvised the accompaniment even when studio scores were available, meaning improvisation could also be a delibe-

19. Neale, *Cinema and Technology*, 91. Some of these practices would gradually lose popularity and be phased out of the film presentation over time. Japanese benshi were reported to be intrinsic to screenings until late into the 1930s. But in the US, lecturer actions were primarily replaced by intertitles during the 1910s.

20. Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915* (New York: Scribner, 1990), 13-15.

21. Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 140-143.

rate act.²² Whether or not sound accompanists improvised intentionally, their actions often serve to support the view that textual variation throughout the early and silent film periods was specifically the result of exhibitor practices. Musser, for instance, uses the presence of dialogue, narration, music, and effects in early cinema, as evidence that variation “was inevitable” because sound accompaniment “remained the responsibility of the exhibitors.”²³ By this logic, if sound accompaniment had not been the responsibility of exhibitors, then there would be no variation.

Bolstering this view are the discourses surrounding projectionists – exhibitors, whose main responsibility was to manually crank the projector during screenings. Equating films from the first decade of cinema to “semi-complete products that could be finished in exhibition,” Abel lists “variable projection speeds” and re-editing alongside aural accompaniment as actions that promoted “wide textual variance.”²⁴ As cameras and projectors were both manual devices at the time and so had no standard speed, projectionists would need to accurately reproduce the speed at which the cameraman had recorded the images to achieve natural motion during presentation. Over-cranking the projector made a film faster, shortening the runtime and rendering on-screen movement faster than normal, while under-cranking would result in slow motion and extended duration.²⁵ Projectionists of silent films were thus comparable to film editors, in that they were able to affect the duration, pace, tempo, etc. of a given picture during the screening.

22. Leo Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 104. James Buhler and Hannah Lewis, “Evolving Practices for Film Music and Sound, 1925-1935,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music*, ed. Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 8-9. Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, 67.

23. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 179.

24. Richard Abel, “Early and Pre-Sound Cinema,” in *The Cinema Book*, Third Edition, ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 4.

25. A hypothetical picture recorded at a consistent 16 frames-per-second (fps) would be 1.5 times faster in pace and shorter in duration when projected at 24. The opposite would be true for a picture recorded consistently at 24 fps when projected at 16.

In fact, a common assertion is that projectionists occasionally re-edited or over-cranked pictures and film programs at the behest of nickelodeon or picture palace managers that hoped to maximize profit by fitting more film screenings into a single day.²⁶ Alongside accompanists' modulation of sound, projectionists' manipulation of speed, duration, and related elements clearly contributes to a given picture's variability. This fact would seem to confirm that prior to the transition period multiple versions stemmed from exhibitor practices, which implies that a silent film remained stable during the preceding production and distribution stages. Essentially, such discourse defines silent film exhibition in opposition to production and distribution, linking the former with textual variation and the latter with pure reproduction and an absence of variation. Presumably then, had producers or distributors been in control of sound accompaniment, projection, and other exhibition elements at this time, films would circulate in identical copies.

All this indicates that the industry's overall shift from variation to reproduction occurred specifically via to the abolishment of the pre-transition period's exhibition practices. While this conclusion is historically inaccurate, as I will illustrate later, it is often held to be true within film studies, seemingly due to a preexisting bias against variation itself. According to James Lastra, for example, during the nickelodeon period (1907-1915) sound was "an arena wherein individual exhibitors could alter the public's relation to the film." This distinguished sound from other elements of a picture, over which producers had largely consolidated control. He cites stories of "overactive drummers" and "effects men" who could "destroy" a film images' "intended spatial hierarchies" by creating too many sound effects during the showing.²⁷ Usage of terms such as

26. Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 10; Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915-1928* (New York: Schribner, 1990), 56.

27. James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 104-105.

“alter” and “intended” clearly presumes the existence of a pre-existing producer version of a film, in relation to which the exhibitor versions are apparently inferior.

Essentially, the author posits that exhibitors affected pictures in a negative way by virtue of changing sound accompaniment. In the process, he perpetuates the myth that failure at reproduction qualitatively diminishes texts, and there’d be no such failure if presentation were under producer control. By this logic, all films during the pre-transition period had fundamentally incorrect presentations, never reaching audiences in their “intended” versions. Koszarski provides a similar perspective, using over-cranking and re-editing of silent films as examples of “intrusive operations” and “offenses” that “gradually disappeared with the coming of sound...” But while he supports the view of variation as inherently detrimental to a picture, he locates exhibitor variation specifically between 1915 and 1928, claiming that such “peculiar exhibition conditions... best characterize the era and separate it from what followed, and what had gone before.”²⁸ Per this schema, both before 1915 and after 1928 motion pictures were circulating in a singular version that remains true to producer intention, equating pre-transition and transition films.

Apparently then, synch sound elevated cinema by freeing it from the destabilizing silent exhibition practices and so returning it to a default state characterized by stability and pure reproduction. Conveniently, the author overlooks the existence of those same practices prior to 1915, which would suggest that stability was not truly the normal state. But while his historical account runs counter to the dominant view of variation being prominent throughout the entire pre-transition period, it is in line with the myth that synch sound removed all variation. Perpetuating this myth affirms and normalizes the cultural perception of variation as always an exception to the norm. In turn, this gives rise to a narrative, according to which producers had sought textual

28. Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, ix.

stability, standardization, and pure reproduction from the very beginning of the film industry, but could not achieve their goals until the conversion to synch sound had been completed.

There are many issues with this perception of film history. To begin with, it overlooks the fact that silent film presentation always combined recorded images with live performances, each reflecting a performer's in-the-moment decisions that differentiated it from another. According to Roud, for example, variation is integral to most definitions of folk song "because the songs are passed on informally in live performance... No singer can exactly replicate the performance of the person from whom they learned a song; indeed, no singer can sing the same song exactly the same each time."²⁹ Similarly, Becker states that because "the work is never a sufficient guide to how it should be performed, every performance varies..." He links this to the notion of authorial intention, arguing that, because a variation is not true to intention, every performance "changes what the original maker intended, and changes the work."³⁰ All this is applicable to sound accompanists, projectionists, and other silent film exhibitors.

From one screening to the next, a lecturer couldn't provide the exact same commentary even if he read an identical script, nor could a projectionist match the specific rhythms at which the images appeared before an audience. In the process, they transform a given picture from what its producers had intended. Each and every screening of the same film could have its own particularities in terms of sound accompaniment, duration, and pace among other aspects, resulting in a distinct exhibitor version. In this sense, rather than an exception, variation in the pre-transition period was the rule and an inherent aspect of film exhibition. In large part then, a silent picture

29. Steve Roud, "Introduction," in *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America: The Interface between Print and Oral Traditions*, ed. David Atkinson and Steve Roud (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 13.

30. Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008), 175.

consistently circulated in numerous versions, because film exhibitors could not replicate their performances. So, even if producers did have control over exhibition during the pre-transition period, they would not be able to achieve pure reproduction and consistency.

One could argue that this doesn't necessarily contradict the established narrative of how synch sound helped producers achieve pure reproduction. After all, the introduction of the Vitaphone sound-on-disc system in 1926 prompted the standardization of taking and projection rates at 90 feet per minute or 24 fps. In conjunction with this, cameras and projectors adopted electric motors, enabling mechanical reproduction of both sound and image.³¹ Theoretically, this should have removed any trace of live performance from exhibition in wired-for-sound theaters, ensuring a consistency of accompaniment, pace, duration, etc. between screenings. In reality, synch sound merely changed the nature of live performance. Installation of new sound reproduction equipment in theaters prompted a reorganization and reconstruction of projection rooms, which became the control centers of a synchronized picture's sound volume.³² Projectionists then became responsible for maintaining proper volume levels during screenings.

As Steve Wurtzler's research illustrates, this could require making on-the-fly volume adjustments, so as to "compensate for deficiencies in the recorded soundtrack and introduce acoustic effects." For instance, if the sound were too loud in a specific venue, dialogue could become inaudible, ruining the intended acoustic effect.³³ What constituted the appropriate volume level, however, was relative to the specificities of a picture and its venue, and so up to theater manager or projectionist to decide. A shift in audience size during a screening could also prompt adjust-

31. Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 112. Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology*, 50-52.

32. H. Rubin, "Some Problems in the Projection of Sound Movies," in *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, vol. 12, no. 35, Sept. 1928, 867-868.

33. Steve J Wurtzler, *Electric Sounds: Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 160.

ments to the volume.³⁴ So, the transition era projectionist had to continuously alter the sound accompaniment of a film as it was playing, in a manner reminiscent of silent film exhibitors.

In this sense, the author correctly argues, the transition “transformed the motion picture projectionist into a performer of sound” and “...exacerbated the possibility of local variation in motion picture presentation.”³⁵ Over time, refinements to synch sound technologies and practices apparently removed the need for the active performances of the projectionists.³⁶ When precisely this occurred is difficult to say, but one can make inferences from a May 1929 article by Coke Flannagan of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE). Discussing the faults of sound projection, Flannagan compares equipment operation to “showmanship,” stating that two “are so closely related as to be inseparable.”³⁷ At least until May 1929 then, projectionists were active showmen and performers. So, on a venue-by-venue basis and screening-by-screening basis, the same scenes in a sound version could have different volume levels or acoustic effects.

Unfortunately, the existence of the resulting sound exhibitor versions has rarely received acknowledgement within academic discourses or historical accounts. Their exclusion upholds the false binary opposition between silent and sound pictures, while erasing textual variation from film history. Making them visible allows for the construction of an alternative account of film history that re-reads variation as a point of continuity between the silent and talkie film periods. Furthering this line of thought, the next section will challenge the dominant view that producers and distributors were opponents of variation. First it will show that filmmakers often designed

34. Ibid., 161-162.

35. Ibid., 154.

36. Ibid., 165.

37. Coke Flannagan, "Servicing Sound Picture Projection Equipment in Theatres," in *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, vol. 13, no. 38 (May 1929): 294.

pictures with the foreknowledge of their presentation. Then, it will it will illuminate several other types of versions that came into being before the stage of exhibition.

II. Pre-Transition: Producer and Distributor Variation Practices in the Silent Era

Filmmaker Influence on Exhibitor Versions

The notion that projectionists destabilized film texts by not accurately reproducing a picture's original taking speed relies on two erroneous assumptions. The first is that the cameraman always shot a picture at a stable and consistent rate. The second is that equivalence between projection and taking speeds should ensure textual stability. Both likely stem from the popular misconception that all silent films were filmed at a rate of 16 fps. Historian Kevin Brownlow has demonstrated that this is attributable to the proliferation of film projectors in the latter half of the 20th century equipped with a "silent" speed option of about 16-18 fps and a "sound" speed option of 24 fps. In fact, taking speed was variable and could differ from film to film in the pre-transition period.³⁸ The reason for this is the cameraman, like the projectionist, was a live performer. The rate at which he cranked the camera could depend on various factors, including "the quality of the lighting on the scene, the film's sensitivity, the kind of action the camera had to record."³⁹ As variation was inherent to the live performance of the cameraman then, even the most accurate reproduction by the projectionist would still retain instability of speed.

A clear illustration of this can be seen in the fact that many silent pictures use multiple taking speeds. In *Nosferatu* (1922, dir. Murnau), for example, the taking rate of some scenes is 18 fps, while that of others is 20 fps. Salt references this inconsistency in his argument that silent

38. Kevin Brownlow, "SILENT FILMS WHAT WAS THE RIGHT SPEED?" *Sight and Sound* 49, no. 3 (Summer, 1980): 164.

39. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema. An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 9.

films today “can only be properly shown with a projector with continuously variable speed...”⁴⁰

In such a case, constantly varying the cranking rate of the projector in accordance with changes in the taking speed becomes necessary to ensure accurate reproduction of onscreen action and movement. Meanwhile, consistent projection at either rate means certain segments play at normal speed, while others appear in slow or fast motion, resulting in a variant distinct from the intended one. *Nosferatu* demonstrates that, in contrast to the dominant rhetoric, a standard and consistent projection rate wouldn't necessarily ensure textual stability, while an unstable projection rate wouldn't always result in an alternate version of the picture.

One could view the inherent instability of hand cranking as evidence that the presence of different taking speeds in the same picture was never intentional. However, this runs counter to the evidence that filmmakers expressively utilized motion to generate or heighten the effects of comedic, dramatic, and action sequences.⁴¹ Stylized and unnatural movement has been seen as a filmmaking convention of silent slapstick comedies in particular. Kracauer describes fast and slow motion effects as “technical tricks” silent comedies use to transform reality into fantasy by “exaggerating natural movements.”⁴² Similarly, Rob King states that synch sound led to “a regularization of tempo that mitigated against many of the undercranking effects on which silent comedy had depended.”⁴³ Both authors clearly position silent comedy's fantastic speed as deliberately created by the producers, with neither referencing the agency or role of exhibitors.

40. Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 2009), 175.

41. Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology*, 50.

42. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 88.

43. Rob King, “The American Slapstick Short and the Coming of Sound,” in *Companion to Film Comedy*, eds. Andrew Horton and Joanna E. Rapf (Somerset: Wiley, 2012), 68.

Partially addressing this omission is Walter Kerr's book *The Silent Clowns*, which argues against the notion that silent films in general should move at a "natural" rhythm, as a degree of accelerated motion "was used in *all* silent film and was accepted as normal for the form."⁴⁴ Filmmakers like Keaton and Chaplin apparently realized that accelerated motion could benefit their pictures in eliciting audience laughter, inspiring them to intentionally shoot their films below the expected projection rate. Key to this was the use of musical cue sheets, which would feature instructions for projectionists regarding what speed to utilize for a given scene or sequence.⁴⁵ Slapstick comedies thus exemplify how "silent film *chose*, by control of the camera and through instructions to projectionists, to move at an unreal, stylized, in effect fantasized rate."⁴⁶ In this sense, silent film exhibitors could actually fulfill filmmaker intention. Studies of musical cue sheets by film preservationist James Card and historian Kevin Brownlow strongly support Kerr's conclusions about accelerated motion being normalized.

Both authors argue that there was no stable projection speed, with a given title's correct rate often exceeding 16 fps.⁴⁷ Card cites multiple cue sheets by Triangle Company for various 1916 pictures, including *Stranded*, *The Captive God*, and *The Half-Breed*, to illustrate this.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, he does not provide a comparison with the taking speeds of the titles he references. Brownlow, by contrast, does provide taking speeds, which he has estimated by running multiple pictures from 1918 through 1928 through a variable speed telecine machine called a Polygon. He

44. Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 35.

45. *Ibid.*, 36.

46. *Ibid.*, 37.

47. One should note that both Card and Brownlow presume that "proper" projection speed is always equal to the taking speed of a given silent film, whereas Kerr questions the notion of what "proper" or "correct" projection speed actually is. Thus, they both support the notion that silent film motion should be natural, which Kerr staunchly opposes. Ironically, their study of cue sheets corroborates Kerr's argument.

48. James Card, *Seductive Cinema: The Art of Silent Film* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 54-55.

then provides a chart comparing “probable” taking speeds with the recommended projection speeds in each title’s respective cue sheet.⁴⁹ Figure 1.1 compiles some of Brownlow’s data in a short table to show the difference between taking and projection speeds. As this data illustrates, producers regularly intended and encouraged faster-than-natural motion during exhibition. In this sense, they supported and enabled variation, rather than accurate reproduction.

Figure 1.1 – Camera and Projection Speeds of Select Silent Films

Title	Director	Year	Camera	Projection
<i>Foolish Wives</i>	Erich von Stroheim	1922	16	18
<i>The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</i>	Rex Ingram	1921	20	21
<i>Robin Hood</i>	Allan Dwan	1922	19	22
<i>Scaramouche</i>	Rex Ingram	1923	19	22
<i>Monsieur Beaucaire</i>	Sidney Olcott	1924	18	24
<i>Ben-Hur</i>	Fred Niblo	1925	19	22
<i>The General</i>	Charlie Chaplin	1926	24	24
<i>What Price Glory?</i>	Raoul Walsh	1926	22	24
<i>Love</i>	Edmund Goulding	1927	20	24
<i>Lilac Time</i>	George Fitzmaurice	1928	20	24

Sources: Data adapted from Brownlow, *Sight and Sound*, 166.

Crucially, neither Card nor Brownlow provide any evidence that projectionists actually followed the cue sheet instructions they reference as providing the actual theatrical projection speeds. Indeed, given the lack of standardization, producers had no way of guaranteeing a projectionist would abide by the instructions. So, there could be both correspondences and differences between the speed(s) at which a silent film was shot, at which the producers wanted to show it, and at which the projectionists actually screened it. Examining the numerous ways that a producer could influence the projection speed of a given picture reveals that filmmakers could have just as much, if not more, authorial control over a specific exhibition version of a silent film than

49. Brownlow, *Sight and Sound*, 165-166.

managers, sound performers, etc. Live performances then did not make exhibitors the sole causes of textual instability, as the text was already fluid at the production and distribution stages.

Certainly, instances of accelerated or slow motion could result from managers attempting to gain more screenings per day. But they could also stem from the cameraman varying his shooting speed, the director desiring to produce a comic effect, the cue sheet instructions, etc. The fact that producers and distributors sometimes supported an exhibitor alteration of a text proves they did not necessarily oppose textual variation. Further research, in fact, evinces that they regularly developed multiple silent film variants for overseas markets, meaning variation occurred prior to the stage of exhibition. Rather than a singular pre-exhibition version then, there were actually multiple base or master prints, from which managers, musicians, projectionists, etc. could derive a unique variant for a given screening.

Production and Distribution of Versions for Export

Even though it rarely carries this status in media studies, translation is arguably the most prominent variation practice in the American film industry, as it is intrinsic to the process of global distribution. Securing commercial exploitation in a predominantly non-English-speaking territory, such as France or Germany, has always required translating a motion picture into the language of the target market. The pre-transition period is no exception to this rule. However, what is unique about the period is that it initially required the editorial assemblage of “another original negative for foreign markets.”⁵⁰ Key to this was the use of a second camera during the filming of a scene to record alternate camera angles of the same shot of every single scene. Angles of the first camera composed the version for domestic distribution, whereas those of the second com-

50. Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, 134.

posed the one for export.⁵¹ Alternatively, in lieu of alternate angles, the export version had different takes of the same scene.⁵² Either way, accommodating translation and global distribution required shooting enough footage for two different versions of the same picture.

Kristin Thompson traced the origin of this approach to the Vitagraph company's establishing foreign subsidiaries for distribution in Britain and France during 1907-1908. Vitagraph was initially unique, in that it used "two lenses and sets of magazines in the same body, making two negatives simultaneously." In 1909, other producers began similarly "shooting a second negative for European printing; typically, however, they were to use two cameras side by side."

⁵³ A potential reason for creating second negatives was that film duplication technology had considerable limitations. Continuous production of prints led to the negative's gradual physical deterioration and so a reduction in image quality of the prints produced from it.⁵⁴ Essentially, the more prints one made, the worse the quality of the print and the state of the negative itself. Creating multiple negatives would initially resolve this issue.

But after 1918, the beginning of the industry's vertical integration created the impetus to circulate the same picture in a large number of venues. In turn, this "necessitated the technology to produce hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of release prints from a single original camera negative." The existing "continuous contact printing" process at the time made it possible to only create "a few tens of prints" before the film accumulated too much physical damage to make any

51. William B. Parrill, *European Silent Films on Video: A Critical Guide* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 6. Salt, *Film Style and Technology*, 198.

52. According to Brownlow and Gill, this occurred when a production utilized a single camera, as opposed to two, and so lacked alternate angle coverage. See Kevin Brownlow and David Gill, "Thames Silents Become Channel Four Silents," program notes for *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, London Film Festival, 1993, quoted in Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, 64. Vasey herself argues that their claims are open to debate.

53. Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907-34* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 3.

54. Salt, *Film Style and Technology*, 198.

more.⁵⁵ All this ultimately led to Eastman Kodak's creation of a special positive intermediate duplicating film stock in 1926. Using it as a base made it viable to mass-produce and distribute film prints, which now came with little reduction in image definition and contrast from the original negative.⁵⁶ Multi-camera filming would actually continue to be a prominent filmmaking technique 1928-1931, providing the editor with a greater degree of coverage for assembling cuts.⁵⁷ But the systematic creation of an alternate export cut came to an end.

Between 1907 and 1926 then, editors of a given silent film systematically assembled an export version with distinct editing from the domestic US version. Subsequently, this export version served as the master or source copy, from which all translations or "foreign versions" of the picture would be created. These foreign versions then gained additional differences from the domestic version via the translation process, which in the pre-transition period entailed the replacement of a film's initial English intertitles with those of the target language.⁵⁸ Intertitles commonly served to influence a viewer's reading or interpretation of a picture by designating the change from one scene to the next, providing expository narrative information for the audience, or communicating the dialogue characters were ostensibly speaking.⁵⁹ Moreover, intertitles constituted a part of a film's assemblage, linking disparate shots together and so contributing to a picture's

55. Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology*, 14.

56. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

57. David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 305.

58. Nornes, *Cinema Babel*, 91-97.

59. Brad Chisholm, "Reading Intertitles," in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 15, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 137; Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 140-143.

overall pace and duration.⁶⁰ Changing them essentially meant re-editing the picture and potentially revising its narrative, dialogue, and characterization.

A couple of different translation strategies that arose during the first two decades of 20th century came into prominent use by producers in the 1920s. The first placed responsibility for the foreign intertitles primarily on the American producer, who supplied his foreign distributors with a list of intertitles to translate and send back to the US. He would then use this translation to create a complete print with foreign titles before shipping it to the distributors for circulation. Conversely, the second made intertitles primarily the concern of the foreign distributors. In this case, the producer supplied the distributors with a print that featured “flash titles,” which were temporary English titles that were only a frame or two long. The distributors themselves would subsequently shoot and insert new translated titles into the print in place of the flash titles. This constituted a comparatively cheaper method of creating a foreign version, as it required purchasing, developing, and shipping less film stock to another country.⁶¹ Foreign intertitles, in that sense, resulted from the interplay between producers and distributors.

The title-related decisions of both producers and distributors, however, often depended on cultural, political, and other values of the territory the foreign version was to circulate in. As Vasey states, translation theoretically “allowed anything inappropriate or potentially offensive to be changed.”⁶² By tailoring pictures to the moral standards of other countries like Australia and New Zealand, producers and distributors promoted the universal appeal of an American picture

60. André Gaudreault in particular highlights the connection between the intertitle and assemblage. Indeed, for him, the definition of an intertitle lies in the notion that it must specifically connect disparate images together. See André Gaudreault and Timothy Barnard, “Titles, Subtitles, and Intertitles: Factors of Autonomy, Factors of Concatenation,” *Film History: An International Journal* 25, no. 1 (2013): 90-92.

61. Nornes, *Cinema Babel*, 97-99. The author suggests William Sellig was one of the possible pioneers.

62. Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, 68.

and removed its cultural specificity.⁶³ In that sense, the commercial interests of producers and distributors could intertwine with another country's historical, political, and cultural contexts. From this perspective, foreign versions are a natural result of producers' and distributors' interest in penetrating foreign film markets. Illustrative of this is Serna's examination of how *Her Husband's Trademark* (1922, dir. Sam Wood) transformed after the Mexican government threatened to embargo the picture when Mexicans found the picture's domestic version offensive.

Famous Players-Lasky subsequently altered nineteen dialogue and expository intertitles for the Spanish-language version to remove any direct allusions to the picture's setting. Among other things, Mexico became a fictional location in South America called "Cristobana," a four-day train ride to the location turned into a two-week trip by steamer, and "Rio Blanco" replaced references to Rio Grande. Serna highlights how, despite this, the revision retains visual referents to Mexico, such as costumes and sets, creating a disjunction between the onscreen images and the text.⁶⁴ This is central to her argument that intertitles "were more than just a strategy for appealing to far-flung audiences" and that translation "demonstrates the ways in which filmic texts intersected with other discourses such as those on national identity, class, or cultural imperialism."⁶⁵ Differences between domestic and foreign versions therefore reflect how the cultural, political, and other contexts of a foreign market can affect an American motion picture.

Evidently, the relations between variation, production, distribution, and exhibition in the pre-transition period are considerably more complicated than the dominant discourses suggest. Fluidity was the normal state of a film text, whereas stability was the exception. Attesting to the

63. Ibid., 69-72.

64. Laura Isabel Serna, "Translations and Transportation: Toward a Transnational History of the Intertitle," in *Silent Cinema and the Politics of Space*, eds. Bean Jennifer M., Kapse Anupama, and Horak Laura (Indiana University Press, 2014), 132-135.

65. Ibid., 132.

fact that a film couldn't possibly circulate worldwide without some degree of change, producers and distributors were directly responsible for the circulation of the same picture in multiple versions before exhibition. Taking this into consideration with how exhibitor versions could align with producer intention illustrates that they weren't staunch supporters of textual stability that aimed to achieve pure textual reproduction from the very beginning of cinema. In turn, this allows for a reinterpretation of the transition-to-sound period as not leading to the end of variation, but to producer and distributors strengthening their control over it. The following section will prove this by illustrating how new synch sound technologies considerably expanded the roster of version categories that emerged at the production and distribution stages.

III. In-Transition: Multi-Version Silent/Sound Films (1926-1931)

By the logic that synch sound replaced silent film variation with pure reproduction, *Don Juan* should've premiered in New York on August 6, 1926 without any of the venue-to-venue variations inherent to the silent period, be it in terms of sound accompaniment, projection speed, etc. In reality, the synchronized soundtrack courtesy of the Vitaphone sound-on-disc system only contributed to the picture's textual variability. While its August 6 premiere had commercial success, it received a mixed critical reception, convincing distributor Warner Bros. to cut the film down by about 2000 feet and alter the ending.⁶⁶ A week later "the New York Philharmonic was called back yet again to rerecord reels 2, 3, and 4." With an altered soundtrack and assemblage, the new version would then play in a number of wired-for-sound theaters approximately from late August until April 1927.⁶⁷ More significant, however, is the fact that *Don Juan* did not circulate exclusively as a talkie in wired domestic theaters.

66. Crafton, *The Talkies*, 81.

67. Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 96.

Among other venues, the picture appeared without Vitaphone accompaniment in the new Regent, Toronto theater on December 25 1926⁶⁸ and the Los Angeles Grauman Egyptian theater from approximately August 21 until approximately October 27, 1926. It customized the presentation by, among other things, including a live stage prologue called “A Venetian Festival” before the feature proper.⁶⁹ Eschewing the fact that the silent version would appear differently depending on the venue, this means the picture had at least three different versions during the transition period, a direct byproduct of the new synch sound technology. In essence, the release of *Don Juan* signaled the arrival of films with multiple transition-to-sound versions, and thus multiple bases or standards for exhibitor customization. Prior to this, the silent version was the base version in the domestic market, meaning there were no variants differentiated by the presence of a synchronized soundtrack. From this perspective, all films were silent films before *Don Juan*.

But after, they became divisible into silent films, multi-version films, and sound films. Silent and sound films circulated exclusively in one type of version, while multi-version pictures appeared in three general combinations of versions: silent/synch, silent/talkie, and occasionally silent/synch/talkie. Their circulation attests to the fact studios had developed new practices and strategies for producing and distributing sound versions, as well as integrated them with the pre-existing strategies pertaining to silent versions. In addition to the textual overlaps and differences between silent and sound versions of the same film, all this occurred as a result of the industry’s adoption of synch sound technologies. In order to properly account for their historical impact on film variation, it is then necessary to outline how studios produced and released multi-version pictures. Prior to this, however, it is crucial to explain what the overlaps and differences were between the three main version types, as well as how a text could change from one to another.

68. *Film Daily*, 13 January 1927, 2.

69. *Variety*, 25 August 1926, 24. Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 103.

Textual Overlaps and Differences between Transition-Era Versions

In general, silent and talkie versions are defined in terms of opposition. A silent version lacks synchronization and so features a live musical or sound accompaniment. In turn, this signifies a lack of stable filming and projection rates, as well as a variable on-screen duration. By contrast, a talkie version possesses a synchronized soundtrack that includes recorded dialogue or voiceover, either in part or in full, in addition to sound effects and music. Unlike a silent version, it also carries a stable speed of 24 frames/sec, allowing for a consistent duration from screening to screening. But the fundamental difference lies in how they communicate speech to the audience. Silent versions use intertitles to visualize what characters within the diegesis are saying. Usually, a scene depicts a character speaking, cuts to the dialogue title, then back to the character. Each title functions as a separate shot that takes up a certain portion of screen time, contributing to a version's assemblage. Meanwhile, talkie versions present scenes with audible recorded dialogue that is part of the shot, in which characters speak.

In this case audiences must listen to rather than read what the characters are saying. However, there can also exist multiple points of overlap between the two. For one thing, the same conversation scene could appear in inter-titled and audible variations respectively. In such cases, the dialogue titles rarely matched the texts of the audible dialogue, summarizing what characters say in a direct and economic manner. For another, scenes of a picture's silent version could also appear unaltered in its talkie version. In fact, early talkies had only a few select audible dialogue scenes out of a majority of silent ones, which they shared with the silent version. As a rule, the more dialogue a given talkie version featured, the bigger its discrepancies with the silent. So, differences between silent and talkie versions were initially not too pronounced but grew more extensive as the number of the audible scenes in a given film's talkie version increased.

Towards the end of 1928, the industry introduced talkie versions completely devoid of silent scenes.⁷⁰ Unlike their predecessors, so-called “all-talkies” would have a minimal amount of footage overlap with corresponding silent versions, resulting in some radical differences in terms of duration and editing, as well as narrative and characterization. The synch version occupied a middle ground. While it had a synchronized soundtrack with recorded effects or music, along with consistent speeds and running times, it also retained the dialogue intertitles of silent versions, along with their associated storytelling techniques and established method of translation for foreign markets, in lieu of audible dialogue. A comparison of a scene between the talkie and synch versions of the historical drama *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) should help illustrate these points.⁷¹ Set during World War I, the picture focuses on a group of idealistic young German soldiers that sign up to fight for their country, only to discover the horrors of war.

Early on, a conversation scene takes place during a military parade between the postman Himmelstoss, a soldier named Peter, and Meyer, a minor character who appears in this one scene as a store-owner. The talkie version presents the conversation in a manner akin to a stage play. By toning down the other acoustic elements, including the sound of the parade, and featuring no music, the talkie version’s soundtrack foregrounds and accentuates viewer attention on the verbal conversation. By contrast, the synch version presents it more in line with silent filmmaking, with a parade-appropriate musical accompaniment playing during the entire conversation. As the fol-

70. Gomery, *The Coming of Sound*, 88.

71. There are a couple of caveats. First of all, the synch version of *All Quiet* was only released in foreign markets. Second, these examples are actually restorations of the 1930 synch and talkie versions, and so may be distinct in some ways from the initial releases. For the purposes of this comparison, I will assume that they are accurate representations of the synch and talkie versions of the picture that appeared in 1930.

lowing table shows, the talkie version has much more dialogue than the synch version, which prioritizes music above other acoustical elements.⁷²

Figure 1.2 – Dialogue Breakdown in *All Quiet on The Western Front*

Line	Audible Dialogue (Talkie)	Intertitled dialogue (Synch)
1	M: “Mr. Postman. War is war and schnapps is schnapps, so business must go on. You didn’t leave the mail yet this morning.”	-
2	H: “Ah, I’m sorry Mr. Meyer.”	-
3	P: “Hello, Himmelstoss. Anything for us today?”	“Hello, Himmelstoss – “
4	H: No, no, master Peter.	
5	P: Oh, there must be.	
6	H: “Here, here you go, young lad.” (Laughs.)	
7	H: “There, this is the last mail I deliver anyhow.”	“This is my last delivery – I’m Sergeant in the Reserves, you know.”
8	M: What?	
9	H: “Tomorrow I change uniform.”	
10	M: “You’re going in the army?”	
11	H: “Yes, I was called. I’m a sergeant in the reserves, you know?”	
12	M: “I’ll be called myself if it doesn’t end in a few months. It will, though.”	“I’m not too old to be called myself - - if it lasts much longer.”
13	H: “I’m sure you’re right, Mr. Meyer.”	

Sources: *All Quiet On the Western Front* Blu-Ray disc, 2011, Universal Pictures Home Entertainment.

Specifically, the scene has about 13 lines of dialogue in the talkie version, which begins with Meyer hailing Himmelstoss, who is watching the parade. The synch version cuts this introduction, opening in the middle of the conversation, with the footage corresponding to the point, where Himmelstoss says: “Ah, I’m sorry, Mr. Meyer.” But this instance is not intertitled in the synch version, so the viewer does not know what the man says. Only a scant three intertitles then appear in lieu of the remaining 11 lines of audible dialogue. Moreover, these titles correspond to only a total of four lines of the talkie. The first intertitle corresponds to line 3, the second to lines

72. Figure 1.2 uses the following abbreviations: M=Meyer; H=Himmelstoss; P=Peter.

7 and 11, and the third – line 12. In effect then, the synch version of the scene is shorter by 9 lines of dialogue. The intertitled lines also can differ substantially from the audible. The second half of Peter's line is absent in the synch version, meaning that Peter does not ask Himmelstoss, whether or not he has any mail for him in this iteration of the story.

Moreover, the synch version emphasizes different narrative information. Out of three intertitled lines, Himmelstoss has the longest by far. The first intertitle introduces him by name, while the second has him explain that he will be a sergeant in the reserves. All this accentuates viewer attention specifically on Himmelstoss' character and positions him the most important one of the three to the film's narrative. Due to the presence of the intertitles, the scene also has different editing. In the talkie version, the scene consists of three shots and lasts 39 seconds. The first shot corresponds to the first two lines of dialogue, the second shot is a cutaway to the parade, while the third corresponds to the remaining lines, proceeding in an uninterrupted long take until the end of the scene. By contrast, in the synch version, the scene consists of 9 shots, counting the intertitles, and lasts about 37 seconds, resulting in faster editing from shot-to-shot.

In comparison to the still and immobile approach of the talkie, the synch version presents the scene with a more dynamic sense of motion via the faster editing of shots. All these differences demonstrate how a synch version stylistically has more in common with a silent film than a talkie, despite possessing synchronized sound elements. But in a larger sense, they show that, much like a silent film, a synchronized sound pictures could also have multiple versions differentiated by its accompaniment. In fact, this should be obvious when we consider how often contemporary home video presentations of post-1931 talkie films feature multiple soundtrack and language options. In this sense, the talkie picture is not at all as stable or reproducible a text as

most media historians lead us to believe. The film industry's conversion to synch sound in that sense did not guarantee that a picture would always have the exact same accompaniment.

Variation and New Production Practices

The transition had a visible impact on industrial film production. First and foremost, three new production practices intrinsic to the creation of synch and talkie versions emerged between 1926 and 1931. Chronologically, the first was “post-synchronization,” the recording and linking acoustic elements to images after filming had concluded. Initially, this required “projecting the section of the film in question, and recording the musicians and effects-makers performing to match the action in the film on a recorder synchronized with the projector.” *Don Juan* (1926) was reportedly the first picture to combine an orchestral score with silent footage in this manner.⁷³ Over time, further developments in sound and post-production technologies made it possible to produce talkies via post-synchronization as well. With that, the term took on a meaning similar to “dubbing”, which means to add or alter audible dialogue in post-production. Given the limitations of early sound-recording equipment, it was a convenient means of version production.

For one thing, it enabled shooting new in-development titles within pre-existing norms of silent filmmaking and then releasing them as “sound” pictures. For another, it facilitated reissues that modernized older silent classics via a synch soundtrack for a new audience. In this sense, post-synchronization retroactively converted silent films, such as *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) or *Phantom of the Opera* (1925), into multi-version pictures. Finally, compared to the other practice at least, it was relatively inexpensive. As Kozloff points out in her examination of how filmmakers approached non-dialogue sound in newsreels, documentaries, or short films, the cheapest means of filming exteriors was “to shoot the exteriors silent, and add narration, effects, and

73. Salt, *Film Style and Technology*, 208.

music later.”⁷⁴ All this promoted synch sound as a supplement to the silent picture, suggesting that new technology could renew the cinematic past without disrupting its foundations.

In contrast to this, the second practice, which involved recording acoustic elements, while simultaneously shooting the images they were connected to, applied only to new titles and significantly departed from pre-existing norms of filmmaking. As this practice doesn’t really have a name, I will refer to it as “pro-synchronization” to emphasize its connection to production, rather than post-production. In the beginning, similarly to dialogue, effects and music “were generally recorded as the action was being filmed.” Another approach was to play back prerecorded effects and music on set during filming, though this was not typically utilized, as it diminished sound quality.⁷⁵ Gradually, producers came to realize that they did not need to record everything that occurred on set, largely shifting sound effects and music from to post-production.⁷⁶ But audible dialogue remained primarily tied to the shooting stage. Consequently, post-synchronization became the primary source of music and effects, while pro-synchronization – dialogue.

Accommodating on-set recording of acoustical elements led to numerous changes in the production process. Among other things, studios created new sets for filming sound sequences, micro-phones needed to be on set at strategic locations to record sound without appearing on-screen, and filmmakers had to initially isolate the camera from the set in sound-proof booths to avoid recording its mechanical noises on the soundtrack, restricting the mobility of the camera.⁷⁷ While freedom of movement would return as filmmakers found ways of circumventing or

74. Sarah Kozloff, *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration In American Fiction Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 28.

75. Kathryn Kalinak, "Classical Hollywood, 1928-1946," in *Sound: Dialogue, Music, and Effects*, ed. Kathryn Kalinak (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 45.

76. Crafton, *The Talkies*, 235-236. Kalinak, *Sound: Dialogue, Music, and Effects*, 48.

77. Gene D. Phillips, *Major Film Directors of the American and British Cinema* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1999), 77.

reducing noise, such as by introducing new soundproof “blimps” for cameras in 1930, the camera in early talkie versions could not make the same mobile shots that were possible in the silent era.⁷⁸ The stillness went in hand with a new emphasis on audible dialogue.

In addition to the new technology, the demands of dialogue required new crewmembers, such as dialogue writers to pen conversations and dialogue coaches to help actors perform vocally. Notably, however, early talkie versions actually increased the amount of work for existing writers of silent intertitles. Producers assigned dialogue sequences to them, believing they would be a better fit for a motion picture than stage writers.⁷⁹ Arguably, the most significant change was the addition of dialogue directors, such as Irving Rapper and Rouben Mamoulian, who had backgrounds in theater, to productions with a film director that had little to no experience with audible dialogue. Because *All Quiet* was the first “sound” film for picture director Lewis Milestone, George Cukor, who would become a prominent Hollywood picture director in his own right after the end of the transition, worked as dialogue director on the talkie version.

Such an arrangement resulted in a division of labor, wherein the picture director directed visual action, while dialogue directors were “in charge of all aspects of dialogue, from preparation to delivery on set...”⁸⁰ During 1928-29, this contributed to a growing perception in the industry that all-talkie and silent versions had grown so radically different, as to qualify as two separate works. A 1928 article by *Motion Picture News*, for instance, compares the same scenes from the silent and all-talkie versions of *Interference* and then states that the “silent version was

78. Arthur Knight, “The Movies Learn to Talk: Ernst Lubitsch, Rene Clair, and Rouben Mamoulian,” in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 215.

79. *Motion Picture News*, 24 November, 1594.

80. Kalinak, “Classical Hollywood, 1928-1946,” 52.

directed by Lothar Mendez and the talking version by Roy Pomeroy.”⁸¹ The article overtly positions the dialogue director as the director of the talkie version and the film director – the director of the silent. By inference then, its two versions had minimal amount of textual overlap and visible differences reflecting fundamentally distinct aesthetic approaches, production processes, and talents that went in their making.

Giving further credence to this are the plans of director Sam Taylor for *Coquette* (1929). Reportedly, Taylor viewed the “talkie technique” as distinct from that of the silent picture. So rather than combine the two, he in-tended to make two distinct pictures. That is, he’d direct the talkie version of *Coquette*, and then the silent “just as if no talkie version had been made at all.”⁸² This way, the production of the talkie version would ostensibly in no way influence that of the silent one.⁸³ At the same time, the very idea that Taylor wanted to direct both versions implies that, regardless of the differences between them, silent and talkie versions were not fundamentally different works. Indeed, it was not uncommon for some filmmakers to direct both silent and talkie versions of the same picture in their entirety. E. Mason Hopper, for example, directed the both versions of *The Carnation Kid* (1929).⁸⁴ Furthermore, the notion that producers could post-synchronize a silent into a talkie, evinces that the two could indeed be the same work. Corroborating this further is the development of an inverse practice towards the beginning of 1929.

As studios began increasingly releasing all-talkie versions for multi-version pictures, producers began to retroactively derive silent versions from talkies by removing acoustical elements from its soundtrack and making related editorial alterations to the picture. By repurposing the

81. *Motion Picture News*, 13 Oct. 1928, 1138.

82. *Ibid.*, 8 September 1928, 777-786. These plans ultimately fell through, with the silent version being cancelled, for reasons I will discuss later on.

84. *Ibid.*, 13 Oct. 1928, 1153.

majority of a talkie version's footage for the silent variant in this manner, studios saved productions considerable time and money. Little additional or alternate footage was then necessary to complete a silent version. Such a process of "de-synchronization," as I refer to it, effectively positioned the talkie version as the dominant variant, while making the silent derivative. Aside from being a means of cheaply creating silent versions from talkies for unwired domestic theaters, de-synchronization was also a relatively inexpensive and efficient means of translation. By cutting the dialog sequences from the soundtrack of a talkie and adding intertitles where necessary, one could create a synch version that could circulate in wired foreign theaters.

As Segrave's research shows, this was a prominent way of translating talkie versions of American films for Germany, Italy, Poland, and Egypt throughout 1929-1930. The derived synch versions were accepted over translated or non-translated dialogue versions.⁸⁵ Producers and distributors could thus have pictures circulate abroad as "sound films," while circumventing the technical, economical, cultural, political, or other issues pertaining to the translation of audible dialogue.⁸⁶ This was necessary at the time, for until 1931 there was no established standard method of translating audible English dialogue sequences into foreign languages. MGM and Fox aimed to continue shooting silent and talkie versions separately, rather than recut a talkie version and remove its sound elements. But most studios began shifting towards de-synchronization as a primary means of constructing silent versions around March 1929, including First National, RKO, Pathe, Paramount and Universal.⁸⁷ While there were obviously multiple reasons for this, the primary cause were ballooning production schedules and budgets of multi-version pictures.

85. Kerry Segrave, *American Films Abroad: Hollywood's Domination of the World's Movie Screens* from the 1890s to the Present (Jefferson: McFarland, 1997), 76-78.

86. The aforementioned synch version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a primary example of this. While technically appearing with synchronized sound both in the US and in France, it was not always a talkie.

87. *Motion Picture News*, 9 March 1929, 751-752.

Multi-version Production Orders and Schedules

In order to explain this, it is first necessary to establish that the coming of sound versions resulted in studios adopting cumulative multi-version production schedules. Producers had to develop sound and silent versions of the same film as quickly and economically as possible, which led to the standardization of a sequential production order. According to this order, filmmakers only worked on one version at a time before moving on to the next. From approximately 1926 until the beginning of 1929, studios first produced the silent version of a new title before beginning work on its sound version. The synch version of *Don Juan*, for example, was created by retroactively adding to the silent version “a score and loosely synchronized sound effects.”⁸⁸ Similarly, in the case of silent/talkie pictures, such as *The Jazz Singer* (1927), producers would first have to finish filming the silent sequences before proceeding to the talkie sequences.⁸⁹ Both post-synchronized and pro-synchronized new titles adhered to the sequential production order.

Post-synchronized sound reissues were the results of sequential production as well. However, there exist much larger gaps between the production and release of their silent and sound versions, than between those of new multi-version titles. In such cases, filmmakers produced material for the new version some time after the initial making and release of the silent version. *Phantom of the Opera* (dir. Rupert Julian), for example, initially came out in October 1925 in a silent version. In December 1929, the picture was reissued with “dialogue scenes added, some of it by retakes, and some by dubbing.” Direction of new “supplementary sequences” and “sound

88. Ibid., 11.

89. Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 136.

sequences” was credited to Edward Segwick and Edward Laemmele respectively.⁹⁰ From the position of scheduling then, sound elements were initially supplementary to the silent ones.

Their presence meant that on average a multi-version picture required a longer production schedule than a silent film or a talkie film. Additional shooting days or post-production time was often necessary to accommodate enough footage for multiple versions and/or finalize the editing, score, and other film elements prior to release. The more dialogue sequences a talkie version had, the longer the shooting schedule for it was and the more expensive it was to make. Naturally, as the amount of dialogue in talkie versions grew between 1927 and the end of 1928, so did their average schedules. And the more expensive and time-consuming a talkie version became, the more expensive and time-consuming a multi-version picture it was part of became in turn. By this rationale, multi-version productions became most expensive when studios made all-talkie or “100% talkie” versions, which had to have dialogue in virtually every scene by definition. This translated into minimal textual overlap with the silent version, as well as a much larger budget and schedule than a part-talkie containing a sequence or two of audible speech.

A 1929 *Boston Globe* article on the sequential order process notes how a “feature talkie recently issued had the dialogue part made in 16 days by a talkie director after the picture director had completed the story in silent form.”⁹¹ In fact, the average production of an all-talkie was reportedly about 14-21 shooting days, not counting the silent version. All this inspired the proliferation of a policy of “complete rehearsals,” meaning producers would extensively rehearse a talkie version for 2-3 weeks before shooting, which helped cut down on production time and

90. *Motion Picture News*, 15 February 1930, 40.

91. Mollie Merrick, “NOW THE ‘PLASTICS’.” *Daily Boston Globe*, Jan 06, 1929.

cost significantly.⁹² In effect, by early 1929, sequentially filming a multi-version picture had become comparable to the production of two separate features. Within this context, it is not surprising that many studios would turn to de-synchronization. By producing the talkie version first and then deriving the silent from it in post-production, they could considerably cut down on time and expense, as well as take advantage of the growing commercial successes of talkies.

One studio, however, attempted to introduce a potential alternative to de-synchronization that would be in line with the general principle of film studios to approach production in an economic a manner as possible. Universal Pictures initiated a concurrent filming plan, which meant shooting inaudible and audible dialogue variations of the same sequences on successive days. Filming the silent version of a scene would come first, with actors performing the silent scenes while speaking the lines from the talkie version, essentially making it a rehearsal for the next day's talkie scenes.⁹³ A *Universal Weekly* article specifically underlines how the new concurrent production order would overall require less expense and a shorter schedule than a sequential one, as completing the silent version first "resulted in extra rehearsals, delays and lost time..." The new approach's combination of rehearsal time with filming of the silent version, it proclaims, "is regarded in the motion picture industry as one of the most important steps taken in studio technique since the advent of talking pictures."⁹⁴ The first picture to alternate between the silent and talkie version production would be the big-budget musical *Broadway*.

Based on a play of the same name, it had an estimated budget of about \$1.15 million, with the silent version costing approximately 850,000 and the talkie version \$300,000 on top of that. Reportedly, however, the picture came under time and budget, which was partially attribu-

92. *Motion Picture News*, 16 March 1929, 839.

93. *Ibid.*, 26 Jan 1929, 254.

94. *The Universal Weekly*, 26 Jan 1929, 8.

ted to producer Laemmle's use of the concurrent production strategy and so "making the silent version a sort of dress-rehearsal in which the players speak their lines although no mike is listening in."⁹⁵ How successful or impactful this strategy was, however, is difficult to say. A January 17, 1929 *Film Daily* article suggests this was to become a common strategy for Universal, but it misattributes the introduction of the alternating schedule technique to *Show Boat*, contradicting a press release from a few days later, as Crafton points out.⁹⁶ Reportedly, another film to use the concurrent production order was called *Melody Lane* (dir. Robert Hill), whose all-talkie version similarly had musical sequences.⁹⁷ One way or the other, Universal would have stopped utilizing the concurrent order some time in 1931. By the end of this year, virtually all studios had arrived at the exclusive production of talkie versions in the domestic market.

A direct precursor to the complete removal of silent versions was the production and distribution of talkies that had no silent versions at all, which began in 1929. *Coquette*, the first "all-talkie" film to star Mary Pickford, is an illustrative example of such an early talkie film. As already mentioned, director Sam Taylor was set to direct both a talkie version and then a silent version of the film. Joseph M. Schenk, president of United Artists, reiterated the plan a few weeks after an initial announcement in September 1928.⁹⁸ On February 28, however, news broke that the production of the silent version had been cancelled in a "last minute decision made by Mary Pickford and her associates on the day shooting was supposed to start..." Among other reasons, United Artists apparently believed that "no silent version could possibly come up to the

95. Herbert Cruikshank, "Shooting His Million," *Universal Weekly* 29 No. 25, July 27, 1929: 32.

96. *The Film Daily*, 17 January 1929, 14. Ibid., 22 January 1929, 1-3.

97. *The Universal Weekly*, 1 June 1929, 8.

98. *Motion Picture News*, 29 September 1928, 981.

standard of the dialogued version.”⁹⁹ A few days later, more information appeared regarding the cancellation, which turned out to have an economic rationale.

Pickford and United Artists officials reportedly “considered the loss on foreign markets, and the number of possible un-wired houses which they would lose by such action. They figured it too small to go to the trouble of making a complete silent version.”¹⁰⁰ Pickford reiterated this position in April, claiming she and her associates felt a silent version was unnecessary, as the talkie version “seems to have taken hold tremendously at the United Artists' Theater, and there are enough theaters wired theaters for talking now to take care of all moviegoers.”¹⁰¹ Evidently, the market changed between the feature’s announcement and the completion of the talkie version’s filming. The following table should help corroborate this idea. As one can see, *Coquette* was not an exception for its time, even though 1929 was a pinnacle year for multi-version releases. By the end of 1928, silent versions were still largely perceived to be indispensable to a picture’s commercial success. But at the beginning of 1929, this wasn’t necessarily the case. Such a case is illustrative of how multi-version production could be directly impacted by commercial demand, expenditures, and the availability of screening venues.

Figure 1.3 – 1929 Early Talkie Films

Title	Director	Studio	Talkie Version	
			Date	Feet
<i>The Doctor's Secret</i>	William C. deMille	Paramount	01/28/1929	5832
<i>The Dummy</i>	Robert Milton	Paramount	03/09/1929	5354
<i>The River of Romance</i>	Richard Wallace	Paramount	05/25/1929	7 reels
<i>The Rainbow Man</i>	Fred Newmeyer	Paramount	05/18/1929	8630
<i>A Dangerous Woman</i>	Rowland V. Lee	Paramount	05/18/1929	6643

99. Ibid., 2 March 1929, 616.

100. Ibid., 9 March 1929, 751.

101. “Star Renounces Silent Version,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 12, 1929.

<i>Coquette</i>	Sam Taylor	UA	04/12/1929	8767
<i>On With the Show</i>	Alan Crosland	WB	07/13/1929	9592
<i>Desert Song, The</i>	Roy Del Ruth	WB	05/11/1929	11,034

Sources: Data adapted from *Motion Picture News*, 28 September 1929, 1164-1170.

Multi-Version Film Distribution

At the outset of the transition period, sound versions were commercially untested variations that could only be screened in theaters that had the equipment to play back and project a picture with a prerecorded soundtrack. Out of a total of approximately 20,500 US cinemas, only 12 such “wired-for-sound” theaters were available by the end of 1926.¹⁰² Silent versions, on the other hand, were proven moneymakers that could circulate in all other theaters. Even a wired theater could show a picture in silent form, but many exhibitors generally refrained from this, as there was little financial incentive for managers of wired houses to show silent versions.¹⁰³ As silent versions greatly surpassed sound versions in terms of potential box office revenue for quite some time, studios in 1926-28 could afford to produce a picture exclusively in a silent version, yet could not afford to produce one exclusively in a sound version. These conditions effectively guaranteed the emergence of multi-version silent/sound pictures.

Gradually, in connection with the commercial and critical successes of early synch and talkie versions, more unwired theaters converted to sound, increasing the number of venues that showed sound versions.¹⁰⁴ The more theaters a sound version circulated in, the larger its potential box office. And the more successful it was, the more incentive studios had to produce them and

102. *The Film Year Book 1927*, ed. Maurice Kann, 3. Crafton, *The Talkies*, 155.

103. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 1992, 220-225. In September 1930, however, Loew’s was planning an experiment by “using silent features along with talkers under a double bill in various out of town houses.” See “Pictures: Loew’s may use Talker and Silent as Double Experimental Bill,” *Variety* 100, no. 8 (Sep 03, 1930): 24.

104. This, of course, is not counting houses that either showed silent versions or sound versions exclusively, those that have shut down over time, new ones that have risen up, etc.

exhibitors had to convert to sound. By the end of 1928, the number of wired theaters expanded to 4000, a major leap from 157 at the end of the previous year. Such major leaps continued over the next two years, as the majority of existing US cinemas gradually went from being incapable of showing sound versions to being incapable of screening silent versions.¹⁰⁵ In tandem with this, studios initially greatly increased the number of multi-version pictures they were producing.

However, after 1929, multi-version production began to decline, reaching its end in 1931. While there were multiple factors leading to this, the main reason is that the market in 1929 had reached a point where producers and distributors could afford to release a picture in a sound version, specifically a talkie version, without a corresponding silent version. So, over the next two years they gradually phased out synch and silent versions from the domestic market, leaving the talkie version as the only sound-related variant left in active circulation and so effectively spelling the end for new multi-version pictures. While this schema provides a general sense of the distribution history of multi-version pictures, it doesn't describe the relations between transition-to-sound versions that occurred in the course of their circulation. Between 1926 and 1931, silent and sound versions of the same text competed with one another for the same exhibition venues, audiences, box office, and arguably even historical recognition.

All this impacted the industry's dominant policies towards silent and sound versions, and in turn affected the media discourses surrounding sound-related variation. Based on policy shifts, one can divide the transition period into roughly three intervals. In 1926-28, studios producing multi-version films largely tried to conceal variation by downplaying the existence of silent versions. Key to this was the use of a sequential release order, which meant premiering a film in one version before releasing the other. In 1928-1929, the majority of studios began adhering to a policy of visibility, acknowledging the fact that sound and silent versions of the same picture

105. Crafton, *The Talkies*, 155.

existed by utilizing a concurrent release order in conjunction with new marketing campaigns. In 1930-1931, they gradually returned to a policy of concealment by devaluating non-talkie versions and removing them from domestic release. Considering this history will illustrate how the advent of synch sound truly affected variation in the American film industry.

1926-1928: Concealment of Variation

Warner Bros. was undoubtedly the industry trendsetter and leader in the production and distribution of multi-version silent/sound pictures during the transition. The earliest feature films to receive synch versions, including *Don Juan*, *The Better 'Ole*, *When a Man Loves*, and *Old San Francisco*, would be released in 1926-27 courtesy of Warner with Vitaphone accompaniment. Consequently, Warner determined the industry's dominant policy of concealment between 1926 and 1928 towards sound-related film variation. While Warner could not afford to release a sound version without a corresponding silent version, it could pretend that the silent version did not exist, as though all screenings of its Vitaphone films played with synchronized sound. Key to this was the sequential release order. Despite producing the silent versions of pictures like *Don Juan* and *The Better 'Ole* first, the company issued them second. Consequently, the critical reception and media coverage of Vitaphone pictures, including reviews, articles, advertisements, etc., was based almost exclusively on the sound versions.

Newspapers and film-centric periodicals consequently seldom provide information about the silent versions, outside of reports about release venues. Sources at the time differentiated between versions by specifying, whether or not a picture appears with Vitaphone accompaniment, rather than utilize the term "version." For example, a 1927 article in *Motion Picture News* refers to a screening of *Don Juan* in Baltimore, stating: "The policy of picture exhibition at the Embassy Theatre will be changed again beginning with Monday, March 28, when John Barrymore in

"Don Juan" will be shown there without the Vitaphone."¹⁰⁶ The *Film Year Book* of 1927 similarly lists "Don Juan" separately from "Don Juan and Vitaphone" in its box-office listings. Neither provides details about the version's duration, textual distinctions from the synch version, etc. While there is evidence of the silent version's existence then, it is virtually buried among the plethora of information surrounding the synch version, making it practically invisible.

Further evidence of this is that Warner Bros. announced towards the end of 1926 that *The Better 'Ole* and *Don Juan* were approaching \$1 million dollars in receipts, yet omitted the fact that the gross must've been a cumulative total of the picture's silent and synch versions.¹⁰⁷ Conflating the grosses renders the silent version's contribution to a Vitaphone picture's overall box office gross imperceptible. *Don Juan*, for instance, earned approximately \$220,000 at the Grauman Egyptian from August 21 through October 30, 1926. This was a considerable sum at the time and comparable to the three-month grosses of the synch version at McVickers, Chicago and Warners, New York.¹⁰⁸ Crafton even states that a "disturbing trend (from Warners' perspective) emerged. In many houses, the silent prints made more money than the audio versions."¹⁰⁹ Warner wanted to project the impression that the synch versions were more popular than they actually were by obscuring the fact that silent versions of *Don Juan* and other Vitaphone pictures played in unwired theaters throughout the country.

Much like the release of *Don Juan* exemplifies Warner's policy towards new silent/synch pictures, the release of *The Jazz Singer* illustrates its policy towards new silent/talkie pictures. The talkie version premiered in wired theatres on October 27 of 1927. Reviews, including those

106. *Motion Picture News*, 25 March 1927, 1067.

107. *Film Daily*, 21 December 1926, 2-6.

108. The *Film Year Book* 1927, 851-862.

109. Crafton, *The Talkies*, 87.

by *Hollywood Citizen*, *Evening Herald*, and *Illustrated News*, all praised the film for opening up the possibilities of Vitaphone, evincing that Warner Bros. had again released the talkie version prior to the silent, ensuring that initial impressions would perceive the picture specifically as a sound film.¹¹⁰ Once again, I've found no reviews of and few records pertaining to the silent version.¹¹¹ The absence of any reference to it in the film's marketing is also completely in line with the studio's attempts at concealing variation. A Spring 1928 *Motion Picture News* advertisement features *The Jazz Singer* alongside *Tenderloin* (1928), *The Lion and The Mouse* (1928), and *Glorious Betsy* (1928) with the tagline "Talking Pictures Talk Profits."¹¹² The clear implication is that talking pictures are more profitable because, in contrast to silent films, they have dialogue.

The ad thus promotes a distinction between silent pictures and talking pictures, strategically making no mention of the four 'talking pictures' having silent versions in unwired theaters. Occluding the existence of silent versions within media discourses, and so minimizing audience awareness of silent versions in this manner culturally legitimated such pictures as "sound films" that circulated only in a singular and invariable version. While this potentially boosted the cultural and economic values of sound versions, it occurred via the devaluation the silent versions. In turn then, the status of titles like *Don Juan* and *The Jazz Singer* as "sound films" and their recognition as important transitional texts partially stems from the invisibility of their silent versions. Warner, however, wasn't the only distributor releasing sound versions before 1928. On February 24, 1927, Fox Films held a demonstration of its Movietone recording and playback

110. *Motion Picture News*, 28 January 1928, 302.

111. *The Film Daily Year Book* of 1928, for example, indicates that the silent version played for two weeks in Warner's Theater in New York City. See *The Film Daily Year Book* 1928, 849.

112. *Motion Picture News*, 21 March 1928.

device, subsequently announcing that it was “ready for the market.”¹¹³ *Sunrise*, its first new multi-version picture, would premiere in a synch version later in September.¹¹⁴ But this was not the first feature Fox had synchronized.

Prior to this, the studio had reissued *What Price Glory* (1926) and *Seventh Heaven* (1927) both of which had already circulated for some time as traditional silent films, with Movietone accompaniment. Afterwards, neither qualified as a “silent film” anymore, retroactively gaining the status of a multi-version picture. The silent version of *Glory* premiered in theaters sometime in November of 1926 and was still playing as late as August 21 of 1927. Its synch version apparently premiered during the first or second week of September 1927, when it was reportedly playing at two of three Fox-owned theaters equipped with Movietone.¹¹⁵ Almost a year then separated the releases of its two versions. *Seventh Heaven* had a shorter but still noticeable gap of about four months. The silent version premiered on May 7, 1927 at the Cathay Circle in Los Angeles. The synch version seemingly came out around the same time as that of *Glory*, playing at a theater in Philadelphia during the week of September 12. Multiple other theaters in New York were slated to play the synch versions of both films and so introduce Movietone by the end of the month.¹¹⁶ Because of these gaps, the circulation of a sound reissue then evinces that producers and distributors could transform past film texts with new technology.

One can only speculate, as to why Fox chose synch reissues for its first Movietone releases. A possibility is that reissues presented comparatively less financial risk than new synchronized and post-synchronized pictures, as they had a built-in audience and a pre-existing gross,

113. *The Film Daily*, 25 February 1927, 1.

114. *Ibid.*, 15 September 1927, 4.

115. Eyman, *Speed of Sound*, 113; *The Film Daily*, 21 August 1927, 1. *Ibid.*, 12 September 1927, 1.

116. *Ibid.*, 8 May 1927, 1. *Ibid.*, 12 September 1927, 1.

Whatever the case is, in contrast to Warner, Fox did not attempt to obscure the existence of silent versions. Reissuing silent films in either synch or talkie versions modernized the cinematic past and made variation visible. In the process, Fox introduced a new variation practice that would remain in use even after the end of the transition period. Multiple classic silent pictures like *Birth of a Nation* would subsequently receive a post-synchronized sound reissue with newly recorded music, effects, or even dialogue in domestic theaters. The number of sound reissues, however, generally paled in comparison to that of new titles.

As a result, reissuing did not significantly affect the visibility of variation throughout the three sub-periods of the transition, allowing Warner's policy to remain dominant until the 1928-29 film season. Nonetheless, it certainly contributed to the number of multi-version pictures appearing during the transition-to-sound years. The following three tables should provide some information regarding the releases of early multi-version pictures and reissues. Figures 1.4 and 1.5 cover new silent/synch and silent/talkie titles during the 1926-27 and 1927-28 film seasons respectively.¹¹⁷ Figure 1.6 illustrates more broadly the reissuing of films in synch reissues during the transition period. While I've not been able to locate release and duration information about the silent versions of the new titles, I have found much of this information for the reissues.

Figure 1.4 – Multi-Version Films: Silent/Synch (Fall 1926-Summer 1928)

Title	Director	Synch Version	
		Date	Feet
<i>Don Juan</i>	Alan Crosland	08/06/1926	10,018
<i>The Better 'Ole</i>	Charles Reisner	10/07/1926	9481
<i>When a Man Loves</i>	Alan Crosland	02/03/1927	10,409
<i>Old San Francisco</i>	Alan Crosland	06/21/1927	7961
<i>The First Auto</i>	Roy Del Ruth	8/14/1927	6767

117. In Figure 1.4, Warner Bros. distributed first five pictures listed. Fox distributed the last four.

<i>Sunrise</i>	F.W. Murnau	09/16/1927	8729
<i>Fazil</i>	Howard Hawks	06/04/1928	7217
<i>Four Sons</i>	John Ford	02/13/1928	9412
<i>Mother Machree</i>	John Ford	03/05/1928	6863
<i>The Red Dance</i>	Raoul Walsh	06/25/1928	9250

Sources: *The Film Daily 1928 Year Book*, 35-67; *The Film Daily*, 14 February 1927, 2.; *Motion Picture News*, 29 September 1928, 1014.

Figure 1.5 – Multi-Version Films: Silent/Talkie (Fall 1927-Summer 1928)

Title	Director	Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet
<i>The Jazz Singer</i>	Alan Crosland	10/06/1927	8117
<i>Tenderloin</i>	Michael Curtiz	03/14/1928	7782
<i>Lion and the Mouse</i>	Lloyd Bacon	06/15/1928	6352
<i>Glorious Betsy</i>	Alan Crosland	04/26/1928	7091

Sources: *The Film Daily 1928 Year Book*, 35-67; *The Film Daily 1929 Year Book*, 35-89.

Figure 1.6 – Synch Reissues of silent films (1926-1931)

Title	Director	Synch Version		Silent Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>The Birth of a Nation</i>	D.W. Griffith	1930	?	1915	?
<i>Civilization</i>	Thomas Ince	1928/29	7 reels	1916	10 reels
<i>Nosferatu</i>	F.W. Murnau	1930	?	1922	?
<i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i>	Wallace Worsley	1928	?	1923	12 reels
<i>The Big Parade</i>	King Vidor	1931	?	1925	11,519 ft
<i>The King of Kings</i>	Cecil B. Demille	09/30/1928	?	04/19/1927	13,500 ft
<i>White Shadows in the South Seas</i>	W.S. Van Dyke	1928	7,968	1928	?? 7,968 ft
<i>What Price Glory</i>	Raoul Walsh	06/1927	11,400 ft	11/10/1926	11 reels
<i>Seventh Heaven</i>	Frank Borzage	09/1927	8500 ft	05/07/1927	12 reels
<i>The Godless Girl</i>	Cecil B. Demille	03/1929	9328 ft	08/1928	9019 ft

Sources: Data adapted from Eric Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault*, 74-105; Crafton, *The Talkies*, 165-180; Eyman, *The Speed of Sound*, 96-121; *The Film Daily 1929 Year Book*, 35-89.

1928-1929: From Concealment to Visibility

From approximately the second half of 1928 until the end of 1929, the majority of film studios adopted a general policy of visibility towards film variation. In large part, this was a natural result of the commercial successes of Vitaphone and Movietone multi-version productions. Inspired by Warner Bros. and Fox, numerous other distributors signed up with Western Electric to develop sound versions via the various available devices. By the summer, both majors and independents had developed plans for releasing multi-version pictures. Based on early announcements, *Motion Picture News* estimated at least 200 features appearing with sound in one form or another in the new 1928-29 film season. Paramount had plans for about 25-30 multi-version releases, Universal intended 18 pictures to receive synchronization, Fox planned 22, Pathe had 10, Warner – at least 25. The earliest they could release their multi-version films was late summer-early fall of 1928.¹¹⁸ Whatever the actual number of released multi-version pictures would turn out to be, it would clearly exceed that of the previous two years combined.

The majority of them would be new titles that adhered to the silent/talkie type, likely as producers wanted to catch up to the latest sound developments, which was audible dialogue. And as the volume and exposure of multi-version film releases expanded considerably, so did their public exposure. Bolstering this exposure further was the introduction of new release strategies. According to available records, most studios, including Universal, United Artists, Fox, Columbia, MGM, and Paramount, subscribed to the concurrent release model in 1928-29, meaning they issued silent and sound versions of the same picture simultaneously. A potential reason for this was to compare the popularity of a talkie version to that of a silent version. Doing so could help decide, whether or not the sound market was viable enough to produce sound versions exclusive-ly or to continue multi-version productions. Illustrating this is the release of *Broadway* by Uni-

118. *Motion Picture News*, 23 June 1928, 2104. Ibid., 30 June 1928, 2173.

versal. Much like the musical served as a test case for a new con-current mode of production, so would it function as an experiment with distribution.

The silent and talkie version would premiere simultaneously in New York in adjacent theaters, allowing for producers to gauge, which version audiences would prefer over the other. The studio would receive daily reports comparing the two versions' box office grosses.¹¹⁹ The version that will have sold more tickets would determine the studio's future policy towards silent and talkie versions, as well as silent films and talkie films. Moreover, executive Carl Laemmle hoped to compare the versions on a qualitative level and requested that MPPDA chairman Will Hays create a committee of critics to view both versions and provide comparative evaluations. Hays praised the multi-version release and agreed to appoint a committee on January 22.¹²⁰ Laemmle clearly recognized that variation then could be crucial to gauging audience interest and so determining the viability of the new synch sound technologies.

Broadway premiered domestically in New York on May 27, 1929.¹²¹ Posters touted that it had "Two negatives: one SILENT, one with DIALOG."¹²² The film even received a third version for foreign distribution, specifically an inter-titled synch version derived from the talkie for international wired theaters. This would guarantee that the film reached the widest possible audience worldwide.¹²³ However, I've found no evidence that, following the picture's release, the plans to run the silent and talkie versions at adjacent theaters and have them evaluated by committee actually took place. The original release plan may possibly have fallen apart. How-

119. "Unique Experiment," *The Times of India (1861-Current)*, Mar 15, 1929.

120. *Motion Picture News*, 16 January 1929, 240. *Exhibitor's Herald World*, 26 January 1929, 15.

121. *The Film Daily*, 14 May 1929, 1. *Exhibitor's Herald World*, 13 April 1929, 28.

122. *The Film Daily*, 14 April 1929, cover.

123. *The Film Daily*, 4 April 1929, 7. *Motion Picture News*, 20 April 1929, 1253.

ever, even if this did occur, it doesn't discount the notion that concurrent releases of silent and sound versions allowed for comparison of their critical and commercial receptions.

Given that studios regularly compared how much talkie films have made commercially, with that of silent films, doing this with different versions of the same picture would make logical sense. Universal arguably did not need to place the two versions in adjacent theaters and form a committee to evaluate them in order to compare the performances of the two. In any case, the studio's intentions reflect how producers and distributors could promote and capitalize on textual variation during the transition years, especially in the 1928-29 period. Releasing a new title in this manner coded it explicitly as a multi-version picture, rather than either a sound film or silent film from a historical and cultural perspective. Both versions now had simultaneous opportunities to gain recognition among critics and audiences, making variation more visible than before.

Two notable exceptions to the concurrent release strategy included Warner Bros. and First National. Warner Bros. was continuing its already established sequential release strategy, and likely did not want to change it due to it having becoming standard practice. First National, initially an independent film company, became a subsidiary of Warner in October 1928.¹²⁴ In other words, First National's sequential release strategy may reflect its new ownership. However, this is complicated by the fact that many of the initial multi-version releases are silent versions, rather than sound versions. This would suggest that the sequential release approach in this case is due to the silent versions being ready in advance. But it is difficult to draw any conclusions without locating any internal studio documents. The number of overall sequential releases being clearly lower than that of concurrent ones indicates the concurrent release strategy is dominant. To illustrate all this, I have compiled a series of release charts focusing on specific distributors.

124. *Motion Picture News*, 13 October 1928, 1141.

Of course, there were far more distributors participating in the releases of multi-version films during the period than listed here, such as RKO. However, the following charts should provide a general idea of how the production and distribution of multiple silent/sound versions was virtually a standard industrial practice between the second half of 1928 and the end of 1929, and how release strategies were now shifting away from concurrent distribution.¹²⁵

Figure 1.7 – Silent/Synch Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Synch Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Submarine</i>	Frank Capra	11/12/1928	?	11/12/1928	8192
<i>Trial Marriage</i>	Erle C. Kenton	03/10/1929	6506	03/10/1929	6639
<i>Naughty Baby</i>	Mervyn LeRoy	?	6406	12/16/1928	6360
<i>Seven Footprints to Satan</i>	Benjamin Christensen	01/27/1929	5238	02/17/1929	5405
<i>Children of the Ritz</i>	John Francis Dillon	02/17/1929	6296	03/03/1929	6426
<i>Love and the Devil</i>	Alexander Korda	02/24/1929	6370	03/24/1929	6431/6592
<i>Saturday's Children</i>	Gregory La Cava	03/10/1929	6727	04/14/1929	7950
<i>Dry Martini</i>	H. D'Abbadie D'Arrast	10/07/1928	6822	10/07/1928	7176
<i>Riley the Cop</i>	John Ford	11/25/1928	5993	11/25/1928	6132
<i>Blindfold</i>	Charles Klein	12/09/1928	5598	12/09/1928	?
<i>Desert Nights</i>	William Nigh	03/09/1929	6177	03/09/1929	6177
<i>Loves of an Actress</i>	Rowland Lee	08/18/1928	7159	08/18/1928	7434
<i>Redskin</i>	Victor Schertzinger	02/23/1929	7402	02/23/1929	7643
<i>The Betrayal</i>	Lewis Milestone	05/11/1929	6614	05/11/1929	6492
<i>Ned McCobb's Daughter</i>	William Cowen	12/02/1928	6070	01/12/1929	6015
<i>The Rescue</i>	Herbert Brenon	01/12/1929	7910	01/12/1929	7980

125. Data for Figures 1.7 through 1.15 was primarily adapted from *Motion Picture News* Volumes 38-40 and *Exhibitor Herald's World* Volume 95. Additional information came from Donald Crafton's *The Talkies*, *The 1929 Film Daily Year Book*, 35-89 and *The 1930 Film Daily Year Book*, 67-160. Information between these sources is not always consistent. Release dates in particular can be a source of contention, as film premieres have been known to occur earlier than general releases. In most cases, I listed the earliest release date available for a given picture. When possible, I also mention multiple runtimes, which can depend on whether a sound version utilizes the sound-on-film or sound-on-disc system, though I do not divide sound versions into "sound-on-film" and "sound-on-disc" categories. Bold text highlights instances, when one version premieres earlier than the other.

<i>Eternal Love</i>	Ernst Lubitsch	05/11/1929	6318	05/11/1929	6498
<i>Man, Woman and Wife</i>	Edward Laemmle	01/13/1929	6674	01/13/1929	6589

Figure 1.8 – Warner Bros. Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>The Terror</i>	Roy Del Ruth	10/20/1928	5443	09/08/1928	7654
<i>The Singing Fool</i>	Lloyd Bacon	01/01/1929	7444	09/29/1928	9557
<i>Land of the Silver Fox</i>	Ray Enright	11/10/1928	5079	10/13/1928	5179
<i>Beware of Bachelors</i>	Roy Del Ruth	12/01/1928	5278	10/27/1928	5778
<i>My Man</i>	Archie Mayo	01/12/1929	6136	12/15/1928	9247
<i>The Million Dollar Collar</i>	D. Ross Lederman	02/09/1929	4878	01/13/1929	5561
<i>Fancy Baggage</i>	John G. Adolphi	02/23/1929	5983	01/26/1929	6447
<i>The Greyhound Limited</i>	Howard Bretherton	03/23/1929	4696	02/09/1929	6114
<i>One Stolen Night</i>	Scott R. Dunlap	04/20/1929	4797	03/16/1929	5243
<i>No Defense</i>	Lloyd Bacon	05/11/1929	4712	04/06/1929	5558
<i>The Gamblers</i>	Michael Curtiz	08/02/1929	4844	06/29/1929	6611

Figure 1.9 – First National Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Weary River</i>	Frank Lloyd	04/07/1929	7565	02/10/1929	7978
<i>His Captive Woman</i>	George Fitzmaurice	02/03/1929	7692	04/07/1929	7992
<i>The Divine Lady</i>	Frank Lloyd	04/14/1929	8993	03/31/1929	9914
<i>Hot Stuff</i>	Mervyn LeRoy	04/21/1929	7466	05/05/1929	6774
<i>Prisoners</i>	William A. Seiter	05/05/1929	7383	05/19/1929	7857
<i>Man and the Moment</i>	George Fitzmaurice	03/17/1929	6539	07/07/1929	7086

Figure 1.10 – Universal Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Give and Take</i>	William Beaudine	12/23/1928	6552	12/23/1928	7089

<i>The Last Warning</i>	Paul Leni	01/06/1929	7731	01/06/1929	7980
<i>Lonesome</i>	Paul Fejos	01/20/1929	6142	01/20/1929	6761
<i>The Girl on the Barge</i>	Edward Sloman	02/03/1929	6908	02/03/1929	7510
<i>The Cohens and Kelleys In Atlantic City</i>	William James Craft	03/17/1929	7752	03/17/1929	7400
<i>The Charlatan</i>	George Melford	04/07/1929	5972	04/14/1929	6097
<i>His Lucky Day</i>	Edward Cline	06/02/1929	5630	06/02/1929	6731
<i>College Love</i>	Nat Ross	07/07/1929	6145	07/07/1929	6864
<i>Show Boat</i>	Harry Pollard	07/28/1929	10,290	07/28/1929	11,650
<i>Love Trap</i>	William Wyler	08/04/1929	6349	08/04/1929	6233
<i>The Drake Case</i>	Edward Laemmle	09/01/1929	5688	09/01/1929	6448
<i>Broadway</i>	Paul Fejos	05/27/1929	5729	05/27/1929	9350

Figure 1.11 – Paramount Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Varsity</i>	Frank Tuttle	10/27/1928	6063	10/27/1928	6348
<i>Sins of the Fathers</i>	Ludwig Berger	12/09/1928	7724	12/29/1928	7845
<i>Abie's Irish Rose</i>	Victor Fleming	01/06/1929	10,187	01/05/1929	10,471
<i>The Interference</i>	Lothar Mendes	01/05/1929	6643	01/05/1929	7487
<i>The Shopworn Angel</i>	Richard Wallace	01/12/1929	7112	01/12/1929	7373
<i>The Wolf of Wall Street</i>	Rowland V. Lee	02/09/1929	6396	02/09/1929	6810
<i>The Canary Murder Case</i>	Malcolm St. Clair	02/18/1929	6,943	02/16/1929	7,171
<i>The Carnation Kid</i>	E. Mason Hopper	03/02/1929	7156	03/02/1929	6290
<i>The Letter</i>	Jean De Limur	04/13/1929	5490	04/13/1929	5886
<i>The Studio Murder Mystery</i>	Frank Tuttle	06/01/1929	6070	06/01/1929	6500
<i>Thunderbolt</i>	Josef von Sternberg	06/22/1929	7311	06/22/1929	8571
<i>The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu</i>	Rowland V. Lee	08/10/1929	7695	08/10/1929	7267

Figure 1.12 – Fox Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet

<i>Masked Emotions</i>	David Butler/ Kenneth Hawks	06/23/1929	5389	06/23/1929	5419
<i>Lucky Star</i>	Frank Borzage	08/18/1929	8725	08/18/1929	8784
<i>Christina</i>	William K. Howard	03/30/1929	6955	12/15/1929	7911/7651
<i>The River</i>	Frank Borzage	10/13/1929	7704	10/13/1929	6590
<i>Not Quite Decent</i>	Irving Cummings	04/04/1929	4653	04/04/1929	4965
<i>Making the Grade</i>	Alfred E. Green	02/17/1929	5024	02/17/1929	5903

Figure 1.13 – MGM Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Alias Jimmy Valentine</i>	Jack Conway	01/26/1929	7142	01/26/1929	7803
<i>Duke Steps Out, The</i>	James Cruze	03/16/1929	6201	03/16/1929	6236
<i>Bridge of San Luis Rey</i>	Charles Brabin	03/30/1929	?	03/30/1929	7980
<i>Pagan</i>	W. S. Van Dyke	04/27/1929	7359	04/27/1929	7459
<i>Thunder</i>	William Nigh	07/20/1929	7883	06/25/1929	7783
<i>Voice of the City</i>	Willard Mack	04/13/1929	5319	04/13/1929	7427
<i>Last of Mrs. Cheyney</i>	Sidney Franklin	07/06/1929	6484	07/06/1929	8651
<i>The Wonder of Women</i>	Clarence Brown	07/13/1929	6835	07/13/1929	8796
<i>Dynamite</i>	Cecil B. Demille	12/13/1929	10,771	12/13/1929	11,550

Figure 1.14 – Columbia Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Lone Wolf's Daughter</i>	Albert Rogell	02/18/1929	6214	02/18/1929	6339
<i>Younger Generation</i>	Frank Capra	03/04/1929	7394	03/04/1929	8217
<i>Father and Son</i>	Erle C. Kenton	06/05/1929	6903	06/05/1929	6439
<i>College Coquette</i>	George Archainbaud	08/05/1929	5566	08/05/1929	6149
<i>Mexicali Rose</i>	Erle C. Kenton	12/26/1929	5126	12/26/1929	5738

Figure 1.15 – United Artists Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1928-29)

Title	Director	Silent Version		Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet

<i>Lady of the Pavements</i>	D. W. Griffith	02/16/1929	7495	02/16/1929	8329
<i>Iron Mask, The</i>	Allan Dwan	03/09/1929	8659	03/09/1929	8855
<i>Alibi</i>	Roland West	04/20/1929	7253	04/20/1929	8167
<i>She Goes to War</i>	Henry King	07/13/1929	8841	07/13/1929	8864

In conjunction with the much larger volume of multi-version releases during 1928-29, marketing campaigns similarly begin to acknowledge and disseminate information about the existence of a picture in both sound and silent versions. Posters, brochures, magazine images, etc. for in-theater or upcoming multi-version titles now openly advertise the fact that the film can appear with synchronized sound or without. An advertisement for MGM's *White Shadows in the South Seas* proclaims: "Sound or Silent – The Greatest Picture on the Market Today!"¹²⁶ There is also the ad for Pathe's *Captain Swagger*, which in addition to featuring stamped "Sound or Silent" proclamation, uses bold letters to inform the reader about the "THRILLING SOUND VERSION" that is playing in Chicago.¹²⁷ Three in-magazine ads for Paramount's *The Patriot*, *Wings*, and *The Wedding March* all proudly state "Available SILENT or with SOUND." Even Warner Bros., despite maintaining a sequential release strategy, would become more open about the multi-version nature of its "sound films" in advertising. For instance, a page promoting multiple Warner features includes what resembles a trademark saying "2 Negatives, One With Vitaphone, One Without."¹²⁸ Their utilization evinces that distributors now generally approached sound-related variation with a degree of openness that was not there at the beginning of the transition.

126. *Motion Picture News*, 11 August 1928.

127. *Ibid.*, 17 November 1928. Original emphasis.

128. *Ibid.*, 8 September 1928.

In turn, newspapers, film magazines, and other related publications throughout the second half of 1928 begin to report stories about the production and distribution of different versions of the same picture, cover them in release databases, or provide critical reviews that specify which versions they are based on. For instance, *Motion Picture News* adopts in its August 25 issue of that year a revised form of the “Complete Release Chart” for film exhibitors to cover pictures synchronized for sound. Using symbols next to the name of a picture, it designates the types of acoustic elements the picture has,

breaking them down into synchronized music, sound effects, and “voice” elements, such as dialogue and song. A month later, its

release charts also begin to provide separate entries on the silent and sound versions of some multi-version pictures, such as *Loves of an Actress*, including comparative release dates.¹²⁹

Overall then, sound-related film variation had a higher level of public visibility by the end of 1929 than at the outset of the transition. Unfortunately, this visibility wouldn’t last much longer.

1930-1931: A Return to Concealment

Without a doubt, 1929 was a turning point in the history of sound versions. While a peak year for multi-version silent/sound film releases, it was also the year that most studios formally chose the talkie as the new base variant, with some even releasing a few titles without silent versions. This indicates that talkie versions had become profitable enough to stand alone, giving producers and distributors had much less incentive to maintain multi-version productions. After

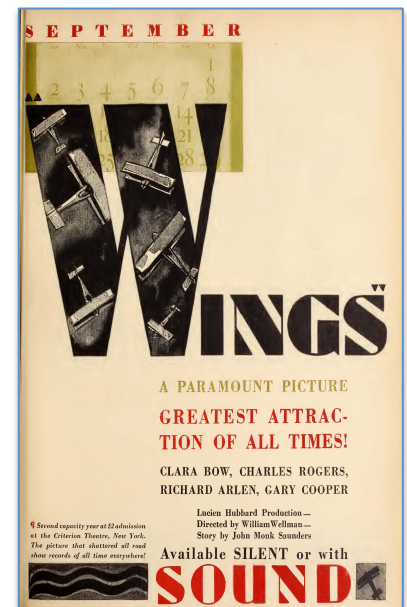


Figure 1.16 – Poster of *Wings* (1928)

Source: *Motion Picture News*, 8 September 1928.

¹²⁹ *Motion Picture News*, 25 August 1928, 601. Ibid., 22 September 1928, 952. According to the magazine, film producers themselves supply this release information to publications.

1929, the volume of silent versions in production began to actively decline, which occurred in conjunction with the shrinking of the number of venues capable of screening them. This is evident from the differences in the planned studio release schedules for the 1929-30 and 1930-31 film seasons, as reported by *The Film Daily* and *Motion Picture News* respectively.¹³⁰ Naturally, planned schedules are subject to change, depending on the developments of the market, and don't fully correspond to the actual releases of a given distributor. But they offer insight into the general state of studio attitudes at a given point in time.

For the 1929-30 season, talkie and silent films constituted less than a third of all productions. Between the eight studios I have covered in this chapter, out of 306 total pictures planned for the 1929-30 season, there were 230 multi-version silent/sound films. 85 titles were to not receive a silent version, while only 8 were to appear without a sound version. For a number of both major and minor studios, including First National, Columbia, Warner, and Universal, multi-version distribution was essentially standard practice. All of them exhibited a one-to-one ratio between silent and talkie versions. With the exception of Universal, none of them even made any silent films. MGM, Paramount, and United Artists all would be releasing the majority of their features in both versions as well. At the time of the report, the only major studio to not have any planned silent versions was Fox. However, Fox would return in August to a policy of "silent and talking versions of all films, and disc and optical sound tracks for all talking films."¹³¹ So, the coming of synch sound led to a period of time, when producers and distributors had to craft at least two base versions of almost every picture for domestic release alone.

130. A film year or "season" counts as the interval between September 1 of the current year and August 31 of the following year. See *Motion Picture News*, 4 October 1930, 59.

131. Crafton, *The Talkies*, 170.

By comparison, the 1930-31 season would be largely bereft of multi-version productions. As the *Motion Picture News* April 1930 report observes, as a result of the rapid rise of wired theaters, 12 national distributors were “paying little or no attention to silents, or silent versions of talkers in their new production schedules.” Counting First National, MGM, United Artists, and Columbia, about 62 out of 306 planned pictures were to be multi-version silent/talkie films. At least 117 were going to be full-talkies. And none of those with planned talkie films were going to be releasing any silent films. Several other distributors, including Paramount, Universal, and Warner Bros. at the time had not declared their stance on silent films or versions. Fox had a planned 52 talkie films, though only two months earlier it had announced a policy of having silent versions for every feature, meaning each 1930-31 release was planned as a multi-version silent/talkie picture.¹³² Evidently, Fox had changed its mind on silent versions by April.

In a similar manner, over the next few months, both declared and undeclared studios formally announced a new policy without silent versions. By the third of June, Columbia would no longer be interested in releasing any silent versions at all in 1930-31.¹³³ Similarly, MGM officials claimed that “nearly one half of the new schedule will have silent versions” amidst predominantly talkie films for 1930-31. But the plan changed by June 21, when the studio announced that it would make no more silent versions. Any previous plans to create silent versions via desynchronization of talkies for domestic or international markets “have been abandoned.”¹³⁴ Paramount would finally announce a month after the report that the studio would also have no silent

132. *The Film Daily*, 6 February 1930, 1. *Motion Picture News*, 26 April, 1930, 17-18.

133. *The Film Daily*, 3 June 1930, 4.

134. *Motion Picture News*, 26 April 1930, 17; *Ibid.*, 24 May 1930, 100. *Ibid.*, 21 June 1930, 19.

versions on its 1930-31 schedule.¹³⁵ Universal announced on that it would continue silent version production.¹³⁶ However, it will have quit silent versions sometime before the 1931-32 season.

In addition to this precipitous decline in silent versions, advertising in 1930-31 generally no longer foregrounds the existence of multiple versions, while film publications such as *Motion Picture News* largely stop reporting durations and release dates of different versions. While one could view this as merely reflecting the decline of silent productions, it is just as likely the result of no longer supplying the information to the publication. As such, even though silent versions exist for many films released by these studios in 1930, only information about their talkie counterparts is available. As a result, the overall visibility of sound-related variation began to actively diminish in the US, with the industry returning to a policy of concealment by the middle of 1931. One can read this as an intentional attempt on the part of multiple studios to remove silent versions not only from circulation but from visibility and so deliberately devalue them, elevating talkie versions in the process. The following series of charts, covering seven distributors, whose domestic release information for the year 1930 was available, will show this diminishment.¹³⁷

Figure 1.17 – Warner Brothers Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet
<i>Second Choice</i>	Howard Bretherton	01/04/1930	6150
<i>General Crack</i>	Alan Crosland	01/25/1930	9809
<i>She Couldn't Say No</i>	Lloyd Bacon	02/15/1930	6413
<i>The Green Goddess</i>	Alfred Green	03/08/1930	6653
<i>Under a Texas Moon</i>	Michael Curtiz	04/01/1930	7498
<i>Those Who Dance</i>	William Beaudine	04/19/1930	6876

135. Ibid., 26 April 1930, 17. *The Film Daily*, 18 May 1930, 1.

136. *Motion Picture News*, 3 May 1930, 26.

137. For Figures 1.17-1.23, data is adapted from adapted from *Exhibitor's Herald World*, 13 December 1930, 5-15; *The 1931 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures*, 67-160.

<i>Hold Everything</i>	Roy Del Ruth	05/01/1930	7513
<i>Mammy</i>	Michael Curtiz	05/31/1930	7570
<i>Recaptured Love</i>	John G. Adolphi	06/14/1930	5993

Figure 1.18 – First National Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet
<i>Lilies of the Field</i>	Alexander Korda	01/05/1930	5996
<i>Loose Ankles</i>	Ted Wilde	02/02/1930	6190
<i>Son of the Gods</i>	Frank Lloyd	03/09/1930	8344
<i>Show Girl in Hollywood</i>	Mervyn LeRoy	04/20/1930	7213
<i>Song of the Flame</i>	Alan Crosland	05/25/1930	6503
<i>Road to Paradise</i>	William Beaudine	07/20/1930	6926

Figure 1.19 – Columbia Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version	
		Date	Feet
<i>Murder on the Roof</i>	George B. Seitz	01/19/1930	5400
<i>Personality</i>	Victor Heerman	02/14/1930	6304
<i>Vengeance</i>	Archie Mayo	02/22/1930	6160
<i>Guilty?</i>	George B. Seitz	03/03/1930	6371
<i>Royal Romance</i>	Erle C. Kenton	03/17/1930	6359
<i>Prince of Diamonds</i>	Karl Brown, A. H. Van Buren	03/26/1930	6418
<i>Call of the West</i>	Albert Ray	04/15/1930	6506
<i>Ladies of Leisure</i>	Frank Capra	04/19/1930	9118
<i>Around the Corner</i>	Bert Glennon	04/25/1930	6419
<i>Brothers</i>	Walter Lang	11/14/1930	7319

Figure 1.20 – Fox Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version		Silent Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Lone Star Ranger</i>	A. F. Erickson	01/05/1930	5736/5904	?	5948
<i>City Girl</i>	F. W. Murnau	02/16/1930	6171/6240	?	8217

<i>Such Men Are Dangerous</i>	Kenneth Hawks	03/10/1930	7400	?	?
<i>Crazy That Way</i>	Hamilton MacFadden	03/30/1930	5800	?	?
<i>Temple Tower</i>	Donald Gallaher	04/06/1930	5200/6200		
<i>Double Cross Roads</i>	Alfred L. Werker	04/20/1930	5800	?	?
<i>The Arizona Kid</i>	Alfred Santell	04/27/1930	7902	?	?
<i>Born Reckless</i>	John Ford	05/11/1930	7123	?	?
<i>On the Level</i>	Irving Cummings	05/18/1930	5813	?	?
<i>One Mad Kiss</i>	Marcel Silver, James Tinling	07/13/1930	5766	?	?

Figure 1.21 – MGM Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version		Silent Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>The Bishop Murder Case</i>	Nick Grindé	01/03/1930	7901	01/03/1930	5727
<i>Chasing Rainbows</i>	Charles F. Reisner	01/19/1930	8100	01/19/1930	?
<i>Anna Christie</i>	Clarence Brown	02/21/1930	6700	02/21/1930	?
<i>The Girl Said No</i>	Sam Wood	03/15/1930	8382	03/15/1930	5722
<i>Free and Easy</i>	Edward Sedgwick	03/22/1930	8413	03/22/1930	5240
<i>Redemption</i>	Fred Niblo	04/05/1930	6019	04/05/1930	6819
<i>Children of Pleasure</i>	Harry Beaumont	04/12/1930	6400	04/12/1930	?
<i>The Divorcee</i>	Robert Z. Leonard	04/26/1930	7533	04/26/1930	?
<i>The Florodora Girl</i>	Harry Beaumont	05/31/1930	7260	05/31/1930	?
<i>The Unholy Three</i>	Jack Conway	07/12/1930	6300	07/12/1930	?

Figure 1.22 – Paramount Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version		Silent Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Applause</i>	Rouben Mamoulian	01/04/1930	7096	01/04/1930	6896
<i>Kibitzer</i>	Edward Sloman	01/11/1930	7273	01/11/1930	6569
<i>The Love Parade</i>	Ernst Lubitsch	01/18/1930	10,022	01/18/1930	7094
<i>Burning Up</i>	A. Edward Sutherland	02/01/1930	5251	02/01/1930	5338
<i>Street of Chance</i>	John Cromwell	02/08/1930	7023	02/08/1930	5962

<i>Dangerous Paradise</i>	William Wellman	02/22/1930	5244	02/22/1930	5434
<i>Slightly Scarlet</i>	Louis Gasnier, Edwin H. Knopf	02/22/1930	6204	02/22/1930	5234
<i>Sarah and Son</i>	Dorothy Arzner	03/02/1930	6868	03/02/1930	?
<i>Young Eagles</i>	William Wellman	04/05/1930	8406	04/05/1930	6710
<i>The Light of Western Stars</i>	Otto Brower, Edwin Knopf	04/19/1930	6213	04/19/1930	5035

Figure 1.23 – Universal Silent/Talkie Multi-Version Films (1930)

Title	Director	Talkie Version		Silent Version	
		Date	Feet	Date	Feet
<i>Hell's Heroes</i>	William Wyler	01/05/1930	6148/6289	01/05/1930	5836
<i>The Climax</i>	Renaud Hoffman	01/26/1930	5846/5974	01/26/1930	5013
<i>Embarrassing Moments</i>	William James Craft	02/02/1930	5230/5330	02/02/1930	5521
<i>Dames Ahoy</i>	William James Craft	02/09/1930	5773/5895	02/09/1930	5271
<i>Cohens and Kellys in Scotland</i>	William James Craft	03/17/1930	7400	03/17/1930	7752
<i>Trailin' Trouble</i>	Arthur Rosson	03/23/1930	5198/5354	03/23/1930	5336
<i>Captain of the Guard</i>	John S. Robertson, Paul Fejos	04/20/1930	7513/7519	04/20/1930	5913
<i>The Fighting Legion</i>	Harry J. Brown	04/28/1930	6763	04/28/1930	6937
<i>Little Accident</i>	William James Craft	09/01/1930	7897	09/01/1930	7289
<i>Outside the Law</i>	Tod Browning	09/18/1930	7116	09/18/1930	7276

However, it is difficult to say, when precisely studios truly discontinued synch and silent versions due to the industry's lack of a standard and economically viable method of translating talkie versions, and the relatively slow conversion of foreign houses to synch sound. In this context, silent and synch versions with foreign intertitles were a cheaper alternative to the "multi-language version" (MLV), which was, despite its name, a type of foreign talkie remake for non-English-speaking territories.¹³⁸ MLVs lacked American stars and were relatively expensive to

138. Nornes, *Cinema Babel*, 137-141.

produce.¹³⁹ Despite reportedly being the first company to forsake silent production, on December 16, 1930, Fox announced a plan to make 26 silent versions for unwired foreign houses and countries, where MLVs made no profits. In February, similar reports began to surface about MGM, which was one of several studios that considered dumping foreign remakes and returning to silent prints of talkies with “spliced-in titles, plus synchronized scores and sound effects...”¹⁴⁰ So, multiple studios that had quit silent and synch versions domestically had incentive to continue producing and distributing them in 1930-31 exclusively for overseas markets.

In a similar manner, foreign talkie films could play in new synch versions produced for “American foreign spots.”¹⁴¹ Presumably, they would be translated into English via intertitles. For a short while then, de-synchronization and intertitle alteration had the potential to become a standard translation method. But this ultimately wouldn’t come to pass, with most companies choosing dubbing and subtitling sometime over the course of 1931. According to a May 23, 1931 article by *Motion Picture Herald*, for instance, Fox announced that it would curtail making silent versions for new productions, as by then “the wiring of foreign houses has advanced to a point making exportation of silent versions no longer worth while.” Other studios were expected to follow. This ties into reports that studios had no plans at all for silent versions on their 1931-32 season schedules.¹⁴² So, silent versions would likely be gone for certain by Fall 1931. Contrary to the prevailing discourses of reproduction, however, sound-related film variation remained in the American film industry long after the transition to synch sound concluded.

139. *Motion Picture News*, 11 October 1930, 49. *Variety*, 7 January 1931, 7.

140. *Ibid.*, 17 December 1930, 5. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1931, 13.

141. *Ibid.*, 27 May 1931, 51.

142. *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 May 1931, 24. *Variety*, 20 October 1931, 62.

IV. Post-Transition: Variation Practices and the Sound Film

The transition gave rise to at least three variation practices that have continued to be in use well past 1931. The first two, subbing and dubbing, are a direct result of the standardization of talkie versions in the domestic market and fall into the wider category of translation. Since approximately the end of 1931 then, American talkie pictures have had at least two standard alternate versions for every foreign language: a subbed version and dubbed version.¹⁴³ Their circulation thus contradicts the notion that the talkie film is stable and evinces that synch sound standardized variation, bringing it firmly under the control of producers and distributors. At the same time, it attests to the fact that the foreign market demand ensured that translation constituted an intrinsic part of American film distribution, serving as a point of connection between the pre-transition, transition, and post-transition periods.

The third practice, post-synchronization, which became thoroughly intertwined with reissuing after 1931, further bolsters this connection. Multiple producers and distributors continued to reissue older silent pictures with new synchronized soundtracks long after the talkie became dominant. Universal, for instance, reportedly planned about 12 synch reissues of silent pictures for foreign markets in June 1931.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Charlie Chaplin in 1942 released a sound version of the 1925 silent film *The Gold Rush* with alternate editing, a voice-over narration and no inter-titles.¹⁴⁵ Post-synchronization also paved the way for major and independent studios alike to create parodic reissues of pre-existing films through the dubbing of new dialogue or voiceover.

143. Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment*, 163.

144. *Variety*, 2 June 1931, 11.

145. Stefan Drossler, "The Notion of the "Director's Cut" Between Independent Filmmaking and a New Business Model," in *Multiversions*, ed. Esteve Rimbau (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Cultura, 2012), 121.

In 1937, for example, indie distributors dubbed dialogue and/or voiceover commentaries into silent pictures, such as the Greta Garbo vehicle *Streets of Sorrow* (1923, dir. G.W. Pabst), wherein characters spoke with different dialects. Stars like Chaplin reportedly attempted to prevent the reissuing of their pictures in such a manner by scooping up the rights.¹⁴⁶ Such alterations are direct precursors the practice of “mock-dubbing,” which has resulted in parodic films like *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* (1973), not to mention numerous videos on channels like YouTube.

There are many other ways, in which the coming of synch sound continues to stimulate the production and circulation of new versions, particularly when it comes to contemporary viewing platforms. DVD, Blu-Ray, and streaming services such as iTunes regularly offer multiple soundtrack options for both classic and contemporary pictures. Silent films like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* regularly have a variety of music scores available on disc, resulting in different versions differentiated by accompaniment. Given that these accompaniments are all pre-recorded, this means that one can only view a silent picture in a synch version on video. More recent pictures, meanwhile, can stimulate the silent experience through the use of “isolated” score features, which allow viewing a film like *The Matrix* with only the music being audible.

By considering all this in context with the textual fluidity of the transition-to-sound period, we can see that producers and distributors have never striven to stabilize the film text, as traditional accounts lead one to believe. Rather, they have consistently participated in the creation of multiple versions of the same picture throughout film history. The only true difference between the pre-transition and post-transition periods then is that exhibitors have little to no influence over the variation of the text in the latter case. The industry’s transition to synch sound therefore did not lead to variation giving way to reproduction, but rather coming under strict

146. "Pictures: Reissues of Oldies Ridicule Film Art; Chaplin, Pickford Nix Past Pix, Others can't Control," *Variety* 128, no. 12 (Dec 01, 1937): 27. Notably, Chaplin himself would later reissue a number of his silent works as talkies, such as *The Gold Rush* (1925), which appeared in 1942 with music, effects, and voiceover.

studio control. In other words, the coming of sound has resulted in the industrial standardization of variation. Understanding this is key to unraveling other industrial and cultural myths pertaining to the subjects of variation and reproduction. In particular, it evinces that variation then is not a temporary disturbance to the state of reproduction but the default state of film.

The emergence of multi-version silent/sound films ultimately brings to mind Charles Musser's statement on technological change. As he puts it, "Change creates new necessities, new opportunities, and new practices even as it eliminates old ones."¹⁴⁷ One could say that adopting new technology in this case has led to new necessities, new opportunities, and new variation practices, and so new film versions. At the same time, it has resulted in the discontinuation and cultural invisibility of older practices and versions or version types. As future chapters will demonstrate, this is a fairly common occurrence. That is, at every point of major technological change in the history of film, new variation practices and types of versions arise and become standardized in the film industry. But their standardization can easily lead to the cultural and/or commercial devaluation of other versions.

147. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 7.

CHAPTER 2

Screen Size Matters: Broadcast Versions, Ratio Variation, And Widescreen

Post-theatrical exhibition of theatrical feature films, as exemplified by television, is regularly associated with the loss of authenticity and cultural legitimacy within industrial, scholarly, and critical discourses. Chapter 2 will challenge this premise by showing that many distinctions between film and television that are thought to be essentialist are actually temporally specific and prone to change. The first section will establish how negative evaluations of broadcast versions based on their editing and aspect ratio differences from theatrical versions reflect essentialist distinctions between their respective media and exhibition contexts. “Pre-Transition” then shows that broadcast re-editing and ratio conversion equates contemporary theatrical features films to older cinematic storytelling forms like silent films and film serials. Locating concepts considered essential to television, such as segmentation and flow, in theatrical exhibition will disprove the notion that television presentation fundamentally alters a theatrical film’s identity.

“In-Transition” then disproves the dominant perception of ratio singularity as a defining characteristic of film in contradistinction to television by examining theatrical ratio variation practices pertaining to “flat” widescreen systems that emerged due to the industry’s transition to widescreen in 1953-1956. Demonstrating that numerous pictures circulated theatrically in different aspect ratios will establish that ratio variation is not antithetical to theatrical exhibition and so does not devalue a picture artistically and culturally. This will also allow for a re-assessment of the widescreen transition’s impact on the relation between film and television. Finally, the “Post-Transition” section will provide a brief overview of how cultural discourses surrounding ratio variation have informed and been informed by other post-theatrical exhibition contexts and technologies, such as DVD and Blu-Ray. Altogether, this will show that variation reflects how

historical, industrial, cultural, and other changes to a media industry can redefine its boundaries or relations with other media and their respective exhibition contexts.

In the process, “Screen Size Matters” will respond to the general lack of analytic and historical research of non-anamorphic widescreen practices, as well as theatrical versions differentiated by aspect ratio. It will show that the widescreen transition was both a cause of theatrical ratio variation and served as an impetus for the mass dissemination of theatrical films on television. For purposes of brevity, the chapter primarily focuses on flat widescreen processes and broadcast versions of theatrical feature films. It will mention but not examine more well-known widescreen systems, such as CinemaScope and VistaVision and exclude the “telefilm,” which have all received a good deal of attention within historic and academic studies. On a final note, the chapter extensively discusses “broadcast television,” which in this context denotes local independent stations and networks, such as ABC, NBC, and FOX. Many of the chapter’s arguments and conclusions about broadcast television should also apply to basic cable networks, but not to “premium cable” channels, which will be a key subject of Chapter 3.

Broadcast versus Theatrical Versions

Broadcast television represents the first major post-theatrical market for Hollywood feature films, having provided audiences with access to theatrical motion pictures since at least the mid-1950s. Long before the advent of home video formats like VHS, television was one of the only means of experiencing a feature film within the comfort of one’s own home. Appearing on the small screen requires movies to conform to the structural, aesthetic, and other standards of TV broadcasting. The resulting “broadcast versions,” as I refer to them, are different from their corresponding theatrical releases primarily in terms of editing and “aspect ratio,” the relation of an image’s width to its height. Because television must, among other things, feature commercial

breaks that are at odds with the theatrical assemblage, editorial changes are virtually inevitable. Ratio changes, meanwhile, occur when the theatrical version has a different ratio from the television standard, which used to be 1.33:1 until the beginning of the 21st century. A later section will delve into the specifics. For now, it is important to establish that cultural perceptions of broadcast versions tend to be negative due to their differences from theatrical releases.

Many prominent Hollywood film directors have disparaged broadcast versions of films they themselves directed. In 1965, for example Otto Preminger sued Columbia Pictures over the airing of *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), while George Stevens began a similar suit against NBC over the telecasting of *A Place in the Sun* (1951). Both wished to withdraw or prevent the airing of their respective films primarily as they would be re-edited for broadcast to include commercial breaks, which the directors claimed would damage or weaken the pictures artistically. While the lawsuits did not prove successful in the short term, they did open the door for talent guild contract negotiations over director's rights over editing for broadcast. Moreover, they led to a great deal of press coverage over the issue, popularizing the notion that re-editing a picture for television was tantamount to mutilation and dismemberment.¹ Such rhetoric positions a feature film as an extension of a director's body, as though the two should be inextricable from one another.

Scholars and critics similarly tend to denounce any alteration that goes against the artistic intentions of the filmmakers. Broadcast re-editing in general, and for commercial interruptions in particular, are seen as damaging to a picture, at least in terms of narrative incoherence, if not artistic integrity. A common argument is that classic theatrical films like *Citizen Kane* or *Singin in*

1. Peter Decherney, *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 124-126.

the Rain are not constructed to accommodate ad breaks, unlike telefilms.² The mutilation rhetoric also is invoked, though usually in connection with a widescreen film's full-frame presentation on television. Comparative examples from pictures like *The Graduate* (1967), *Ghostbusters* (1984), *He Said, She Said* (1991), and others in these cases serve to illustrate how reframing for 1.33:1 leads to "loss," "ruination," "injury," or "damage" of the widescreen images.³ Such critiques parallel comparative evaluations of the two media on the basis of image quality, screen size, exhibition space, as well as the overall "experience" they create for the viewer. These suggest that the differences between versions stem from their respective modes of exhibition.

In a now famous essay, Barthes romanticizes the public space of the movie theater, describing the "darkness of the cinema" as essential to the production of a film's hypnotic effect on viewers. He elevates this experience by comparing it with that "of TV, which also shows films: nothing, no fascination, the darkness is dissolved, then anonymity repressed, the space is familiar..."⁴ Exhibition in a well-lit private space on a TV set in this schema robs films of their power, meaning that television is fundamentally the wrong platform for showing them. Mast similarly considers "enveloping darkness" to be essential to the "cinema experience" and its power.⁵ But unlike Barthes, he has a different emphasis, stating that television transmission's differences from theatrical projection "produce the reduced clarity, subtlety, luminosity, density, and... size

2. Jeremy Butler, *Television Critical Methods and Applications: Third Edition* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007), 31-32. Michael Kerbel, "EDITED FOR TELEVISION II: Unkindest Cuts," *Film Comment* 13, no. 4 (Jul, 1977): 38-40.

3. John Belton, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 225; Butler, *Television Critical Methods*, 186; Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press), 1992, 259; William Lafferty, "Feature Films on Prime-Time Television," in *Hollywood in the Age of Television*, ed. Tino Balio (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 253.

4. Roland Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theatre," in *The Rustle of Language*, transl. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 346.

5. Gerald Mast, "Projection," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 342.

of the television image.”⁶ Either way, it seems that broadcast versions devalue films because the domestic space of the home lacks the essential conditions of the movie theater.

All this ties into the general perception among media scholars of television constituting a fundamentally inferior medium. Within film studies especially, TV has often held the status of a “bad object” and a “low other,” as Hilmes puts it, in relation to which film has been positioned as a work of art.⁷ Newman and Levine’s study of contemporary television similarly find that a program’s legitimacy is often measured in relation to movies, which “have long been elevated culturally above television...”⁸ In a way then, television constitutes a lesser medium due to its inability to reproduce the theatrical experience when screening movies. The regular debasement of a broadcast version on the basis of its differences from the theatrical reflects and reaffirms this perception, elevating film over television and the idealized theatrical experience over home viewing. But this rhetoric remains plausible only as long as one disregards how film and television modes of exhibition change over time, especially in response to new technologies. The film industry’s transition to widescreen in 1953-1956 in particular impacted cinema’s relation to television.

Theaters had to adopt new screens and projection technologies, which helped normalize the “widescreen” aspect ratio, such as 1.85:1 or 2.35:1, as an essential element of a feature film’s theatrical version. In turn, the 1.33:1 ratio gradually became seen as another sign of television’s distinction from and inferiority to the cinema. Prior to this, film and TV were thought to have the same ratio, though this wasn’t exactly true. To clarify, 1.33:1 used to be the standard theatrical film ratio during the silent film era. The sound transition eventually led to a new standard that

6. Ibid., 340.

7. Michele Hilmes, "The Bad Object: Television in the American Academy," *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 1 (2005), 112.

8. Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 5.

accommodated the addition of synchronized soundtracks to filmstrips. In 1932, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences officially declared the new standard ratio to be 1.37:1, which then became known as the “Academy ratio” and remained the standard until 1952.⁹ Because of this, pre-1932 theatrical films appeared on television without any image loss, while those produced between 1932 and 1952 incurred some loss from the sides when broadcast.

Despite this difference, film scholars, critics, and industry professionals often conflate the two, using 1.33:1 in place of 1.37:1. Lafferty makes no mention of the change to 1.37:1 when he discusses how television in the 1930s “adopted Hollywood's standard aspect ratio, 4:3...” Lev meanwhile repeatedly refers to the “Academy ratio” as 1.33:1 in his chapter on the widescreen transition.¹⁰ In his 1992 book *Widescreen Cinema*, Belton asserts that cameramen and projectionists still refer to 1.37:1 as “1.33:1” in the film industry, as they “regard the Academy ratio as a perpetuation of the silent aspect ratio.”¹¹ Despite detailing the history of the two ratios, he himself promotes their interchangeability by referring to the Academy ratio as “1.33/7.”¹² A number of SMPTE articles point out that the perception of the two as one and the same is a misconception, for the 1.37:1 aperture is wider, resulting in an overall 3.2 percent difference in terms of picture.¹³ So, the 1.33 broadcast version of a given film from 1932-1952 should retain only 96.8 percent of the 1.37 theatrical version’s projected image area. Though minor, this is an important distinction to consider when discussing broadcast alteration and ratio variation practices.

9. Mark Schubin, "Searching for the Perfect Aspect Ratio," *SMPTE Journal*, vol. 105, no. 8 (Aug. 1996): 476, doi: 10.5594/J09548.

10. Lafferty, “Feature Films on Prime-Time,” 253. Peter Lev, *Transforming the Screen* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003), 112-125.

11. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 247.

12. *Ibid.*, 45.

13. David Richards and Edmund DiGiulio. "Film-to-Video Transfers: Time for a Change," *SMPTE Journal*, vol. 103, no. 2 (Feb. 1994): 90. Schubin, “Perfect Aspect Ratio,” 476.

In any case, the history of the widescreen transition evinces that theatrical films are not widescreen by definition, a fact that directly contradicts the idea that theatrical exhibition possesses inherent distinctions from television exhibition, and that broadcast versions devalue films. But rather than challenge these essentialist perspectives, film historians transpose them onto the post-transition period by linking them to a narrative, according to which Hollywood specifically adopted widescreen to “differentiate” film from television.¹⁴ Some even claim that this occurred because television was the root cause of decline in theatrical exhibition during the 50s, meaning the adoption of widescreen was a means to attract viewers back to cinema. As Gomery states in his critique, this scenario assumes that TV could provide “a far cheaper substitute for watching narratives composed of visual images and sounds.”¹⁵ Whether television was directly responsible for the decline or not, it follows from all these readings that no essential distinctions between film and television texts had existed until the coming of widescreen.

1.33:1 in this context embodies the notion that the two media used to be nearly identical. Retaining this ratio has equated television to the cinematic past. Television then is equivalent to narrow-screen cinema but technologically, aesthetically, and culturally distinct from contemporary wide-screen cinema. A prominent advocate of this perspective is John Belton, who credits widescreen technologies with redefining the relationship between film and audience. In contrast to traditional entertainment like narrow-screen pictures and television, widescreen cinema fostered a much stronger sense of participation and so turned traditionally passive viewers into active spectators. It achieved this by presenting films on wider screens in much larger images.¹⁶

14. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 66. Lev, *Transforming the Screen*, 3-6; Kerry Segrave, *Movies at Home: How Hollywood Came to Television* (Jefferson: Mcfarland, 1999), 11-12.

15. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press), 1992, 83-84.

16. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 190-196.

Unsurprisingly, Belton later claims that showing widescreen films on smaller television screens in cropped versions diminished the participatory experience of the theatrical widescreen presentation.¹⁷ According to this schema, the adoption of widescreen elevated film above television and its own past self, at least in terms of audience experience. Television then was not always a lesser medium, but it became lesser once film distanced itself from the 1.33:1 ratio.

Playing into this scenario is the general exclusion of ratio variation from the history of the widescreen transition. Film scholars and historians of the period largely fail to mention that many films released between 1953 and 1956 actually circulated in both narrow-screen and wide-screen versions. For the most part, this was possible, because at the outset of 1953 many studios adopted “flat” or “non-anamorphic” widescreen systems¹⁸ that entailed masking camera and projection apertures, resulting in what I will refer to as “multi-ratio filmmaking.” Cinematographers now could simultaneously compose a picture for theatrical exhibition in multiple aspect ratios, including 1.37:1, 1.66:1, and 1.85:1. This had a long-term economic benefit, as it was rather easy and inexpensive to derive a 1.33:1 broadcast version from a pre-existent 1.37:1 theatrical version. In part because of this, filmmakers continued adhering to multi-ratio filmmaking practices long after the end of the transition period. Despite this, they often receive only minor coverage in media studies, primarily as a means of creating 1.33 versions for the television market.

In conjunction with this, the non-anamorphic widescreen systems that have enabled them have similarly merited only cursory analysis. Belton devotes less than a page-and-a-half in *Wide-screen Cinema* to the subject of these systems, while derogatorily referring to them as “ersatz

17. Ibid., 211.

18. A later section will explain the difference between “anamorphic” and “non-anamorphic” systems. But basically, the former can be said to refer primarily to the special lenses of the CinemaScope process.

widescreen” to underline their application to studio backlogs shot and composed in 1.37:1.¹⁹ The author posits that, as these pictures were not composed or intended for widescreen presentation at the outset, their widescreen versions are not authentic. Curiously, he doesn’t mention the many new multi-ratio pictures that were composed for widescreen and so did not fit the “ersatz” label. Implicit in this evaluative statement is also the idea that “true” widescreen systems are the ones the book extensively examines, namely Cinerama, CinemaScope, and Todd-AO. The author credits them with creating “a spectator-screen relationship that both exceeded and undermined that of traditional cinema.”²⁰ Such unfavorable comparisons suggest that these systems are worthy of analysis because they improved upon and broke away from the cinematic past.

In a similar fashion, Carr and Hayes briefly mention Paramount’s “Panoramic Screen” system in a larger article on the successor format VistaVision.²¹ Meanwhile, Vincent focuses on VistaVision, discussing how the new format had improved upon the problems and flaws of its predecessor and reiterating the “ersatz widescreen” designation.²² It would seem then that the early non-anamorphic formats are historically insignificant approximations of already legitimate widescreen systems. So, either ratio variation did not occur during the transition at all or if it did occur, it was not attributable to “true” widescreen. Alongside historical exclusions, these evaluative judgments posit that ratio singularity was a defining characteristic of the essential film experience of theatrical exhibition. Ratio variation then can only be a sign of the devaluation of film

19. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 116.

20. *Ibid.*, 195.

21. Robert E. Carr and R. M. Hayes, *Wide Screen Movies: A History and Filmography of Wide Gauge Filmmaking* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1988), 144.

22. Tom Vincent, “Standing Tall and Wide: the selling of VistaVision,” in *Widescreen Worldwide*, eds. John Belton, Sheldon Hall, and Stephen Neale (New Barnet, U.K.: John Libbey, 2010), 26-27.

by television. A new account of the historic impact of widescreen on film and TV that rejects the essentialist perception of the latter as an inferior medium is clearly necessary.

I. Pre-Transition: Broadcast Versions and the Cinematic Past

The convergence of film and television

Theatrical feature films have been appearing on television since at least the early 1930s, with most titles initially being independent productions.²³ But it wasn't until the beginning of 1956 that major Hollywood studios, including Columbia, Warner Bros., Fox, and MGM began licensing their libraries to local television stations. This resulted in over 2700 features becoming available for broadcast, which was over ten times that of the previous year.²⁴ There are many different reasons, as to why studios withheld their libraries until this point in time. However, what it comes down to is that distributors primarily measured the value of the television market against the theatrical reissue market. Prior to the widescreen transition, distributors and exhibitors alike benefited immensely from reissues. By the end of the 1940s, studios had turned their film libraries into what Hoyt describes as "low-cost, low-risk profit centers."²⁵ So, from their perspective, there was little incentive to sell old features to television until stations could offer prices high enough to overcome revenue from their theatrical re-releases.²⁶ Complicating the matter was the general association of broadcast versions with the obsolescence of the theatrical market.

Exhibitors claimed that broadcast versions would lead to unfair competition, as audiences would rather stay at home to watch a film for free than go to the movies, while distributors were

23. Amy Schnapper, "The Distribution of Theatrical Feature Films to Television," Order No. 7528816 (The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1975), 49.

24. Schnapper, "Feature Films to Television," 87-94.

25. Eric Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault: Film Libraries before Home Video* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 139.

26. Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault*, 149; Schnapper, "Feature Films to Television," 67-68.

of the impression that releasing an older picture on television would destroy its theatrical reissue value.²⁷ Altogether, a given film's broadcast version was imagined as a commercial competitor to both its theatrical reissue counterpart and to other films as well. By the mid-50s, however, studio perceptions of broadcast versions had changed. Now convinced the television market for feature films was commercially viable, they began portray them not as a cause of, but rather as a reaction against theatrical obsolescence. At least in part, this was attributable to the proliferation of new technologies in the theatrical cinema between 1953 and 1956, which is why the mass licensing of film libraries began towards the widescreen transition's end. Implementing a new process like CinemaScope helped renew waning audience interest in theatrical film viewing.

But this also created competition between pictures adhering to the new emerging styles and approaches of the transition and those that followed established conventions and standards. A general sense formed that the popularity of widescreen films and versions eventually would lead to the theatrical obsolescence of 1.37 films and versions. In April 1953, president Spyros Skouras announced that 20th Century Fox would likely begin releasing its older library of 900 sound films to television, as theatrical demand for them was anticipated to greatly decline due to the popularity of films in "CinemaScope and other new techniques." He cited the fact that the studio occasionally reissued these pictures in theaters as one of the reasons why it had previously held back from licensing them for broadcast.²⁸ A few days later, he clarified that Fox would only license its library after its current films have become "obsolete" and 700-800 stations were on

27. Jennifer Porst, "United States v. Twentieth Century-Fox, Et Al. and Hollywood's Feature Films on Early Television," *Film History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 122-129.

28. *Motion Picture Daily*, 14 April 1953, 4.

the air, which would likely occur in about 3-4 years.²⁹ According to this schema, widescreen's effects on the theatrical market justified releasing narrow-screen films to television.

Essentially, Fox outlined a general strategy of creating release windows between theatrical and post-theatrical exhibition to maximize a given title's overall profit. By waiting until all of its 1.37:1-framed titles had exhausted their theatrical value before selling them to stations, one could obviate the potential of broadcast versions to commercially devalue theatrical reissues.³⁰ Columbia put this into practice at the beginning of November 1954, when it began selling to stations a number of short films consisting of old westerns and cartoons. President Jack Cohn stated that the decision to release these texts to television was legitimate as they had "outlived" their theatrical exhibition value, and so had "no further potential for reissues."³¹ Although Cohn didn't mention widescreen as a factor in this decision, it is not difficult to infer this to be the case. Implicitly, while the Academy ratio was becoming obsolete in theaters, it was not obsolete on TV. Broadcasting 1.37 films following their theatrical deaths then commercially renewed them and so demonstrated that television did not fundamentally oppose film.

Already by May 1953, exhibitors were beginning to favor widescreen and 3-D films over narrow-screen and 2-D films. Rising demand for the new style was predicted to negatively affect the market value of films adhering to the old style.³² By the middle of March 1956, Skouras' predictions had seemingly come to pass. Broadcast versions were on the rise, while theatrical reissues conversely faced discontinuation. *Variety* reported that there was reluctance on the part of

29. *Motion Picture Daily*, 17 April 1953, 1.

30. Naturally, this raises the question of how exactly a distributor determined when a picture has exhausted its theatrical potential. It is entirely possible that releasing films to television may have helped accelerate the theatrical devaluation of films begun by widescreen.

31. *Variety*, 10 November 1954, 13.

32. Arthur Gavin, "2-D, 3-D, Widescreen, Or All Three...", *American Cinematographer* 36, no. 5 (May 1953): 211.

major studios to release reissues and on the part of exhibitors to buy them, as they had been “rendered obsolete by the new screen processes.”³³ The more exhibitors embraced widescreen, the more commercial incentive there was for studios to license older narrow-screen films to stations. From all this, it follows that widescreen led to a reconceptualization of the television as both a substitute for and a follow-up to the narrow-screen theatrical market, one that fit nicely in with the fact that the broadcast ratio was virtually identical to that of a then-conventional theater.

The mass dissemination of broadcast versions, while benefitting the film industry financially, made television a more viable competitor for audiences. That the new screen processes prompted a textual convergence of the two media conflicts with the dominant cultural and historic narratives, according to which widescreen helped film to better oppose television in the commercial sense. Even as widescreen fostered aesthetic and other distinctions between theatrical and broadcast images, it also made television capable of offering viewers theatrical films within the comforts of their homes. So, if telecasting films indeed results in their artistic and cultural diminishment, then the widescreen transition is actually responsible for the devaluation of cinema, rather than its elevation. Altogether then, within the industrial discourses of the transition, television emerges as paradoxically a cause of and a reaction against theatrical narrow-screen film’s obsolescence. This reflects what the next section will show to be a central characteristic of broadcast versions – the ability to simultaneously modernize and antique a feature film.

Broadcast Ratio Variation and Image Loss

In order to be telecast, feature films had to undergo a film-to-video transfer or “scan” via a telecine device. The scanner operating the device derived a 1.33:1 image from the projected image area of the source negative, converting its celluloid film images into video images, as well as tailoring them to the 1.33:1 broadcast ratio in the process. Depending on the aspect ratio of the

33. *Variety*, 14 March 1956, 75.

source footage then, the conversion from the theatrical version to the broadcast version could result in a certain amount of image loss. Pre-1932 films presumably didn't lose any imagery, as their aspect ratio was equivalent to the 1.33:1 target ratio of the scan. As their aspect ratio was slightly wider at 1.37:1, 1932-1952 films would lose about 3.2 percent. Transitional and post-transitional films adhering to the non-anamorphic widescreen processes had been produced with 1.37 versions. They served as the basis for broadcast, and so would also lose about 3.2 percent.³⁴ Finally, transitional and post-transitional films adhering to anamorphic widescreen typically had no 1.37 versions, meaning the transfer would be conducted from the widescreen print.

Loss in such a case is substantial, since 2.35:1 is the narrowest anamorphic format. So as to facilitate the telecasting of its CinemaScope features, Fox developed a variant of the process called "pan-and-scan" that could add camera movement to pre-existing footage. As Neale succinctly summarizes, it recomposes widescreen images "by reframing shots, by re-editing sequences and shots, and by altering the pattern of still and moving shots used in the original film."³⁵ The operator or scanner selects the area that will make up a new full-screen shot in the broadcast, including in the frame what he considers to be important on-screen action while excluding the irrelevant action. He can create movement from one portion of a still shot to another, replicating the pan of a camera during the shooting.³⁶ So, a still shot from the theatrical release can become a moving shot in the broadcast, or a single long shot can turn into multiple close-ups.

34. In practice, scanners could adhere to specific standards that affected this difference. SMPTE Standard 96, for example, stipulates that the width of the scanned film image for television "shall be 92% of the width of the 35mm image, or 96% of what is normally projected in a theater..." Adhering to this would result in a 4 percent loss from the left and right sides of the screen. See Richards and DiGiulio, "Film-to-Video Transfers," 87.

35. Neale, "Widescreen Composition," 131.

36. Michael Kerbel, "EDITED FOR TELEVISION I: Scanning," *Film Comment* 13, no. 3 (May, 1977): 28; Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 216-217; Lafferty, "Feature Films on Prime-Time," 253.

First implemented in 1961 for *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), pan-and-scan went on to become a standard component of broadcasting features with anamorphic widescreen prints and ratios such as 2.35:1 and 2.55:1.³⁷ Throughout the second half of the 20th century then, virtually all features that appeared on television had undergone scanning but only anamorphic ones had undergone panning-and-scanning. Despite this, pan-and-scan became emblematic of the deleterious effects of television on film in general. Its usage has led to a conflation of ratio variation and image loss within cultural discourses, popularizing the erroneous view that a broadcast version would perfectly reproduce the theatrical picture, were it not for the conversion to 1.33:1. Such proclamations, however, are problematic and misrepresent the effects of scanning in general and pan-and-scan in particular. First of all, the essentialist discourses these claims are based on disregard potential causes of image loss that have no direct connection to the aspect ratio.

The physical enclosures of older television receivers often obscured parts of the 1.33:1 video transmission. The un-obscured portion visible to most viewers is referred to as the “safe action area,” while the loss stemming from the difference between the scanned video image and the safe action area is called “overscan.”³⁸ Preset picture adjustment settings could also affect the visibility of the image. Early cathode ray tubes had a circular shape that prevented them from showing the entirety of transmissions framed for 4:3. Television consultant and producer Rudy Bretz found in his 1950 study that circular screens showed only 55-59 percent of the transmitted picture area to the viewer. Due to the small safe action area and manufacturers expanding the

37. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 261.

38. David Richards and Edmund DiGiulio, "Results of a New Receiver Overscan Survey," *SMPTE Journal*, vol. 103, no. 2 (Feb. 1994): 94.

height and width of the rectangular transmission to fit the circle, overscan loss could constitute up to 45 percent.³⁹ Such losses applied to all programming shown on television, not just to films.

Bretz correctly predicted that adopting tubes that matched the rectangular shape of the transmission would help mitigate these effects. 1971 saw the introduction of “ultra-rectangular” sets that still possessed “substantial curvature at the top, bottom, and sides.” By 1993, rectangular sets with “straight sides and 90° corners” were the norm.⁴⁰ As screens transitioned towards a rectangular shape, the contours of safe action areas changed accordingly. The safe action area now should’ve been equal to the standard 1.33:1 screen, which no longer had anything to physically obscure it, in turn meaning a large reduction in overscan. Richards and DiGiulio’s 1993 survey shows, however, that despite changes in standard screen shape and overall advancements in technology, the average overscan loss remained largely unchanged from 1957 at about 20%. The authors concluded that receiver manufacturers were now basing picture size adjustment settings around outdated 1957 measurements of the safe action area.⁴¹ Clearly, image loss could have many potential variables and was not always attributable solely to broadcast ratio variation.

Second, the essentialist discourses also disregard how the standard theatrical aspect ratio has changed over the course of film history. As previously established, 1.33:1 was the standard in the early and silent periods, meaning it was a defining characteristic of the film medium long before its association with TV. That receivers came to have the same ratio as conventional theater screens was not a happy accident. Reportedly, this was an intentional early design choice that

39. Rudy Bretz, "The Shape of the Television Screen," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*, vol. 54, no. 5 (May 1950): 545-547.

40. Richards and DiGiulio, "Overscan Survey," 95.

41. *Ibid.*, 97-99.

anticipated film becoming “a significant source of program material.”⁴² 1.33:1 then was initially intended to be a point of overlap between the two media. Its presence in a broadcast version then signifies not the loss of a feature’s cinematic identity, but its alignment with older forms of theatrical exhibition. A talkie film produced and released between 1932 and 1952 becomes closer in shape to a pre-1932 silent film on TV, for instance. From this perspective, alteration of aspect ratio via processes like pan-and-scan doesn’t result in essential aesthetic, cultural, or historical distinctions between broadcast and theatrical versions. Instead, they demonstrate the differences between cinema’s past and present, showing how much film itself has changed over time.

Broadcast re-editing practices and the Feature Film

In addition to ratio change, theatrical feature films must typically undergo editorial alteration prior to broadcast that align them structurally, aesthetically, and culturally with television programs. The new assemblage is the result of three interconnected re-editing practices. The first of these is “censorship,” which entails removing elements from a picture that a specific station or network as an exhibitor deems unacceptable for its audiences. These changes are symptomatic of the fact that the television industry possesses different cultural, political, or social standards from the film industry and in turn different regulations of audio-visual material. Various social groups, sponsors, or even individual viewers may influence broadcast censorship. But the primary enforcer is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Its representatives, according to producer Peter Dunne, by “using threats of fines and suspended licenses,” are able to “dictate program-

42. Roland J. Zavada, "Report on Home Receiver Image Area Test," *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 83, no. 4 (April 1974): 304.

ming models under the guise of modesty and fairness.”⁴³ So, television producers must follow certain rules in order to ensure their broadcast programs and telefilms are permitted to air.

Most fictional network series are obligated to exclude anything the FCC may judge to be “obscene,” “indecent,” or “profane” content, which includes explicit depictions of violence, sex, and audible profanity. While obscene elements are prohibited from ever airing, indecent and profane ones are prohibited “between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., when there is a reasonable risk that children may be in the audience.” The specific qualifications of obscene, indecent, and profane can be highly subjective, however, and must meet the requirements of a test by the Supreme Court. A viewer must usually first complain about a certain onscreen moment for the FCC to begin evaluating, whether or not it is in violation of the law.⁴⁴ All this influences when theatrical features, which are never produced with broadcast regulations in mind, are shown and to what extent they are modified to become acceptable. R-rated films especially are prone to including what the FCC deems illicit and so undergo extensive re-editing for broadcast. Daytime screenings can be more heavily re-edited than evening ones due to the possibility of younger audiences watching a film.

There are two types of censorial reediting. The first is subtraction of unacceptable audiovisual material. Profanity can be bleeped out, synched out, or redubbed, with new words making the dialogue less harsh and ‘offensive’ to audiences. Scenes of sex or violence can be cut entirely or reedited so as to remove only specific shots or images that are explicit while otherwise leaving the scene intact.⁴⁵ The second method is substitution: less profane dialogue is dubbed into scenes of swearing, while alternate scenes devoid of sex and violence are edited into a picture in lieu of

43. Peter Dunne, “Inside American Television Drama: Quality is not What is Produced, But What it Produces,” in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, eds. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 109.

44. “Obscene, Indecent and Profane Broadcasts.” *FCC Consumer Guides*. September 13, 2017. <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/obscene-indecnt-and-profane-broadcasts>

45. Schnapper, “Feature Films to Television,” 249-250.

the offensive theatrical material. Filmmakers have to shoot alternate footage during production for this to happen, effectively preparing two cuts of the picture at the same time.⁴⁶ Though it is difficult to say just how widespread this policy is today, Universal reportedly adopted this as standard practice for all its films in 1969.⁴⁷ So, it is not uncommon for broadcast versions to include footage that had never previously appeared in the theatrical release.

Although directors usually shoot alternate scenes or sequences for the broadcast version, they generally aren't able to participate in its assemblage. Networks tend to employ their own editors from the standards and practices department to recut a given film, but distributors can also revise it beforehand to meet broadcast requirements.⁴⁸ Because standards and practices differ from network to network, the same film can circulate on TV in multiple broadcast versions with different censorship. Other policies can contribute to this variability. For instance, a syndicator typically re-airs the broadcast version of a picture produced by a network. But it has been also documented that when a theatrical film premieres in syndication, it can play uncensored and in its full length, as syndicators may not have contractual rights to re-edit the film for content.⁴⁹ All such measures mean to broaden a film's potential target audience to include the entire family, so a picture unacceptable for children in theaters may become acceptable for them on TV.

The second re-editing practice can be called "partition," as it refers to the breakdown of a feature into distinct parts that disrupt its classical construction, most commonly via the insertion of commercials. The resulting assemblage displays a characteristic called "segmentation," which

46. Laurent Bouzereau, *Cutting Room Floor: Movies Scenes Which Never Made It to the Screen* (New York: Citadel Press Book, 1994), 25; Schnapper, "Feature Films to Television," 251.

47. Segrave, *Movies at Home*, 99.

48. Bouzereau, *Cutting Room Floor*, 24-25. Kerbel, "Unkindest Cuts," 40.

49. However, they can get permission from distributors. Schnapper, "Feature Films to Television," 252-253.

scholars consider essential to television as a medium and so key to its distinction from film. First proposed by scholar John Ellis, segmentation refers to the concept that all broadcast television texts consist of multiple audio-visual segments of short duration that can function in concert with one another or as discrete units.⁵⁰ By this rationale, a given episode of a show, the commercials dividing it into specific acts, and even the acts themselves all qualify as segments. Segmentation also characterizes television's narrative forms – the “series” and the “serial.” This is crucial to the author's formal distinction of a television text from a “film,” which he defines as a singular, distinct, and complete text approximately two hours long.⁵¹ In the “series,” an episode provides a self-contained narrative with a distinct beginning, middle and end in accordance with a strict formula, resetting its narrative by the conclusion. By contrast, the “serial” develops a narrative over multiple episodes, emphasizing continuous change and progression. Events do not necessarily resolve by the end of one episode, but enter a state of suspension before resuming with the next. Closure can arrive after a set number of episodes or can be endlessly deferred.⁵² By this rationale, television replaces the singularity of the theatrical version with multiplicity.

Many other scholars, including Butler, Feuer, and Fiske, reiterate Ellis' conclusions about segmentation as a basic principle of television, in contrast to film.⁵³ Some posit that seriality in particular is emblematic of the distinction between the two. Allen and Dunleavy's respective histories of the soap opera, for instance, reference radio soap operas as precursors to the televised

50. John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 111-116.

51. Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, 1-30.

52. Trisha Dunleavy, *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation* (Basingstoke, Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 50-56.

53. Butler, *Television Critical Methods*, 47; Jane Feuer, “Narrative Form in American network television,” in *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. Colin MacCabe (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1986), 101-102; John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987), 94.

daytime soaps that emerged in the 50s.⁵⁴ But neither considers the film serials that were dominant productions for theatrical exhibition from the 1900s up to the 30s as potential predecessors to TV's soaps or other serials.⁵⁵ While conceding that seriality used to be prevalent in other arts, Thompson explicitly asserts that it "marks a crucial difference between television and film" in her comparative study of narrative storytelling.⁵⁶ Exceptions to this have emerged over time but seriality still remains largely absent from film history, normalizing the perception of a "film" as a self-contained narrative feature. The segmented structure of a broadcast version in this light should evince how a theatrical feature has transformed into a television program.

Combining prerecorded film footage with a distinct set of commercials, each telecast of a feature film constitutes a unique variation of the text. A theatrical feature film becomes comparable to a live performance in the course of television airing. Segmentation then is symptomatic of "liveness," a term that usually refers to mean television's ability to broadcast real-life events as they occur. On-the-ground news coverage in programs like *Good Morning America* exemplify this ability. Both film and television theorists describe film as being devoid of liveness, for it presents prerecorded audiovisual material. Cinematic images purportedly have temporal gaps from the event they record, providing a record of a past event, while television images are linked to the present of the event depicted, meaning they exist in a constant state of change.⁵⁷ Such a sche-

54. Robert Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 96-129; Dunleavy, *Television Drama*, 97-102.

55. Roger Hagedorn, "Technology and Economic Exploitation: The Serial as a Form of Narrative Presentation," *Wide Angle* 10, no. 4 (1988): 9-11.

56. Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), 104.

57. Dudley Andrew, "Introduction: André Bazin Meets the New Media of the 1950s," in *André Bazin's New Media*, ed. and trans. Dudley Andrew (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 8; Herbert Zettl, "The Rare Case of Television Aesthetics," *Journal of the University film Association* Vol. 30 No. 2 (Spring 1978): 5.

ma doesn't account for how television regularly recirculates prerecorded audiovisual texts that are shot and edited long in advance of broadcast, such as fictional series and theatrical films.

Focusing on this aspect of the television industry in *Rerun Nation*, Kompare argues that repetition "is actually the primary structuring factor of commercial television..." His work traces the history of reruns and directly opposes the presumed centrality of liveness to television, especially on the grounds that most so-called "live" TV consists of recorded and edited images. He proposes that, instead of connecting viewers to a perpetual present of real-life events, television is capable of "continually presenting and representing "the past" as an interminable array of feature films, short subjects, cartoons, news-reel clips, and cancelled network series."⁵⁸ According to his historical account, first-run syndication of theatrical films on local stations helped legitimize and standardize re-airing of existing television texts during the late 40s and early 50s.⁵⁹ Film actually supports television, which is able to indeed provide records of past events.

Kompare makes excellent points about the centrality of preexisting media to broadcasts. But the ubiquity of repetition doesn't necessarily conflict with the status of liveness as a defining characteristic of television as a medium. For one thing, as the author notes, "liveness" can refer to the simultaneous participation of audiences in the viewing of a televised image. Prerecorded episodes of series are thus live in the sense that audiences experience them together.⁶⁰ For another, there exist various ways of endowing a given program with a sense of liveness, such as via the use of direct address to the viewer, which is a standard convention of commercials. In the context of live programs like news reports, it can mask the fact that such segments are filmed and

58. Derek Kompare, *Rerun Nation: How Repeats Invented American Television* (New York: Routledge, 2005), xi.

59. Kompare, *Rerun Nation*, 40-45.

60. *Ibid.*, xi.

edited in advance, disguising their construction. By contrast, it contradicts the illusionist aesthetic of fictional films, where acknowledging the audience points to the construction of the picture.⁶¹ Broadcast versions therefore alternate between illusionist film segments that adhere to classical storytelling and anti-illusionist commercial segments that address the viewer.

The final re-editing practice is called “duration adjustment,” which is necessary to ensure that a given picture in conjunction with commercial breaks fits it into a predetermined time slot on the larger broadcasting schedule. If the picture is longer than the time slot, editors typically excise footage from the theatrical version until it is short enough to fit. Conversely, if it’s shorter than the time slot, then editors must add footage or commercials to extend the running time until it reaches the length of the slot. So a lot depends on how long the film’s theatrical release is versus how long the time slot is, as well as how many commercials the station or network plans to include during the transmission. In the 60s and 70s, for instance, a typical two-hour broadcast slot reportedly allotted only 90-97 minutes to the picture.⁶² So, a 125-minute film would lose 28-35 minutes, while a 90-minute film might not lose anything, at least not due to duration adjustment requirements. Both broadcast versions would then have a final duration of 120 minutes.

Even after a film’s been adjusted to fit a specific time slot, it can be reedited again to fit another one on the same channel. A 1960 SMPTE study found that the same picture can have a first run in a slot allowing its entire length, a second run months later in a slot of an hour-and-a-half, and a third run in a matinee slot of one hour.⁶³ Each new run would be shorter from the last, illustrating how broadcast subtraction is more common than extension. Instances of the latter do

61. Robert Stam, “Television News and Its Spectator,” in *Regarding Television*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Frederick, MD: AFI, 1983), 25-38.

62. Kerbel, “Unkindest Cuts,” 38; Schnapper, “Feature Films to Television,” 247.

63. John Lee Wiegand, “Cutting Feature Films for Television,” in *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 69, no. 7 (July 1960): 465.

occur, however, especially when a film is scheduled over multiple nights in serial episodes, each of which will have its own individual time slot. In the early 70s, networks NBC, ABC, and CBS all regularly scheduled pictures in two parts.⁶⁴ The cumulative duration of these slots often necessitated extending the film portions by adding footage that had not previously appeared in theaters, a technique Universal reportedly specialized in.⁶⁵ It would be fair to say then that television can sometimes provide viewers access to more of the picture than the theater.

Altogether, such editorial alterations allow a film to essentially qualify as a television program and so become part of what Raymond Williams termed as “flow.” His theory proposes that all news programs, fictional series, commercials, short and feature films, etc. appearing on TV function as components of planned sequences that join together into a continuous broadcast or “flow” of audio-visual material.⁶⁶ As each segment functions with others as a unified whole there is no clear boundary between different texts and their source media. Theatrical films then do not retain their identities as individual discrete texts when broadcast, but instead transform through intersections with other texts or segments. The author underlines that commercials playing during a feature film aren’t interruptions but also parts of the same flow.⁶⁷ Despite being specific to broadcasting then, flow can paradoxically also transform texts from other media into television. Figure 2.1 illustrates this by providing a summary of ABC’s February 2, 1968

broadcast of *Shane*, which featured 39 commercials for a total duration of 141 min. and 42 sec.

64. Schnapper, “Feature Films to Television,” 133-134.

65. Some of its titles, such as *Earthquake* (1974) and *Airport '77* (1977), featured new scenes filmed specifically for television long after the production of the theatrical release. Others were initially produced with the intention of appearing on TV in two parts. *McArthur* (1977) had a 132-minute theatrical release and a broadcast version that ran 195 minutes without commercials. Finally, there were instances, where reincorporated deleted scenes helped fill the double time slot, such as in the case of *King Kong* (1976) or *The Deep* (1977). See Segrave, *Movies at Home*, 129-131.

66. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Routledge Classics ed. (Taylor & Francis, 2003), 86-91.

67. *Ibid.*, 90-92.

Figure 2.1 – *Shane* Broadcast Version Summary

#	Segment Description	Air Time	Duration
1	Opening: New opening sequence – footage from <i>Shane</i> with main actors; “The Sunday Night Movie” billboard; Commercials (Gillette Razors, Gillette Foam)	9:00:00	1:40
2	FILM: Original Credits deleted; new ABC credits superimposed over opening sequence; shot of Shane through deer antlers cut)	9:01:40	12:49
3	INTERRUPTION #1: Commercials (Paper-Mate Flair Pens; Gillette Razors)	9:14:29	1:07
4	FILM: Some footage cut from beginning of segment	9:15:36	15:59
5	INTERRUPTION #2: Commercials (Mini-Mist Shampoo; Nytol Sleeping Tablets; Kent Cigarettes)	9:31:35	2:17
6	FILM	9:33:52	17:47
7	INTERRUPTION #3: Commercials (Fab Detergent; Ultra-Bright Toothpaste)	9:51:39	1:06
8	FILM: Approx. 8 sec of sound cut at end of segment	9:52:45	8:16
9	INTERRUPTION #4: ABC Movie Promos (eg. <i>Flame Over In-dia</i>), Commercials (eg. Winston Cigarettes), <i>Peyton Place</i> Promo	10:01:01	4:32
10	FILM: Medium Long Shot of Crowd gathered around picnic and dialogue cut at end of segment	10:05:33	9:33
11	INTERRUPTION #5: Commercials (Schlitz Beer; Lady Crairol Hair Color; multiple others.)	10:15:06	2:07
12	FILM	10:17:13	14:54
13	INTERRUPTION #6: Commercials (Camel Cigarettes, etc.), “Fail Safe” Movie Promo; Station Identification	10:32:07	3:31
14	FILM	10:35:38	9:32
15	INTERRUPTION #7: Commercials (Carnation Slender)	10:45:10	1:06
16	FILM	10:46:16	15:47
17	INTERRUPTION #8: Commercials (Excedrin Tablets, etc.), “Fail Safe” Movie Promo; Station Identification	11:02:03	3:31
18	FILM	11:05:34	11:19
19	INTERRUPTION #9: Commercials (Libby’s Peas, etc.), Wednesday Night Movie Promo; “Hot Rods to Hell” Movie Promo)	11:16:53	3:03

20	FILM – BEGINNING CREDITS	11:19:56	1:46
----	--------------------------	----------	------

Sources: “Recap Summary: The Sunday Night Movie – ABC TV – “Shane” 2/18/68 9 PM,” 1968. Folder 3002. George Stevens Collection, 256.f-3001. Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.

Structurally, the broadcast version in its entirety resembles a television text, rather than a single uninterrupted film. Not counting each individual commercial, it is divisible into 20 distinct segments. The first two segments signal the film’s transformation into a television program, specifically into an episode of “The Sunday Night Movie.” The new opening blurs distinctions between film and TV elements by repurposing theatrical footage alongside the program title before cutting to commercials. The replacement of the theatrical credits specifically marks the picture as an ABC-network text, and so makes it less distinguishable from other television shows. Only six seconds were cut from the theatrical release, which was 117 min. and 48 sec. long. However, the broadcast version is actually 24 minutes longer than the theatrical release due to the numerous commercials, movie promos, and other television texts that air during the nine interruptions.

The broadcast version itself arguably qualifies as a planned audiovisual sequence, as it alternates between film and TV-specific segments without a discernible consistency, contributing to a lack of distinction between them. Segment 10 lasts 9.5 minutes, while Segment 6 is almost 18. Commercials endow the prerecorded elements with a sense of liveness, as though the film occurs in real time. This specific version of the film also feels live, in that it would never appear on the channel again, capturing a specific moment in the history of ABC as a channel. Commercials also point to a larger planned flow. While it is unknown what aired before and after the film on the network, it is safe to assume that some commercials would follow the end of the telecast until 11:30 pm in accordance with the division of programs into 30-minute time blocks. All this would seem to confirm that segmentation, liveness, and flow are essential characteristics of television that are absent in theatrical film. But this is only true in relation to the classic feature.

The changing conventions of Film

The term “theatrical film” did not always refer to a long self-contained feature adhering to the classical narrative paradigm. The earliest motion pictures, which circulated predominantly first in vaudeville theaters (approximately 1896-1906) and then in Nickelodeons (approximately 1907-1915), consisted mainly of standalone single shot scenes. Because of this, a single reel of a 1000 feet could contain what is typically described as a “program” of discrete “films” that had no narrative, thematic, or other connections. Rather, they provided a variety of subjects, including real-life events, vaudeville performances, and gags.⁶⁸ Multiple historians describe exhibitors of early and silent films as “programmers,” for it was their job to arrange the multiple films into specific orders. Managers could remove a movie from a planned program or switch its placement in it, depending on the demands of the exhibition venue.⁶⁹ Essentially, early films constituted short visual segments, while the programs they were part of - planned sequences.

The emphasis on diversity may very well reflect the role of vaudeville as a primary site of film exhibition. A standard vaudeville presentation by 1896-97 consisted of 8-10 self-contained “acts,” each approximately 10-20 minutes long. The point was to attract as many audiences as possible with a variety of different performances, such as slapstick comedy, trained animal acts, magic lantern slides, and illustrated songs among others. The earliest motion pictures courtesy of companies like Biograph and Vitagraph fit this demand fairly well, with a program of films often ta-king up a single vaudeville act.⁷⁰ Vaudeville acts could also play in between different reels if

68. Tom Gunning, ““Now You See It, Now You Don’t.” The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions,” in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. Lee Grieveson (London: Routledge, 2004), 42-43.

69. Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment*, 9; Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*, 297.

70. Robert Allen, “The Movies in Vaudeville: Historical Context of the Movies as Popular Entertainment,” in *The American Film Industry: Revised Edition*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 61-62; Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 96-99.

more than one reel or sequence of films was shown.⁷¹ In this sense, they occupied the gaps between projected images, similar to how commercials appear between broadcast film segments.

Despite lacking continuity, the discrete elements composing vaudeville sequences had a degree of unification. Exhibitors reportedly positioned the least interesting acts first and the most interesting ones last in order to gradually build and then sustain audience interest throughout the duration before ending the sequence with “a rousing conclusion.” Because of this, movies often appeared only in the first or last slots of a program.⁷² Alongside the other acts, movies therefore contributed to a larger planned entertainment experience, which fits well with the idea of “flow” as blurring boundaries between different segments and the media they represent. Including live vaudeville acts in turn allowed nickelodeons, which succeeded the vaudeville theaters as the dominant film exhibition venues, to appeal to a wider audience as well as to avoid quickly running out of film titles.⁷³ Despite making prerecorded pictures their focal center, they continued to circulate them as segments of larger flows, strengthening film’s extant perception as vaudeville.

The general lack of distinction between prerecorded motion pictures and live performances during the early and silent film periods fits with Gunning’s designation of films released up to 1908 as a “cinema of attractions.” Central to the attraction’s distinction from classical narrative film, which emphasizes storytelling and maintaining an illusion of reality, is its direct acknowledgement of the viewer. Not only does this foreground the effects of film technology, it also makes a picture feel unpredictable and immediate.⁷⁴ The semblance between attractions and live TV broadcasts indicates that a “film” can maintain its identity while possessing a sense of live-

71. Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 199.

72. Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 100-101.

73. Allen, “The Movies in Vaudeville,” 79.

74. Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” 42-44.

ness. If one considers the live performance elements intrinsic to early and silent films as carrying a sense of liveness as well, then liveness was a film convention up to the end of the 1920s.

Segmentation has constituted a film convention even longer. In addition to characterizing early and silent films, it was a key element of film serials, which were exhibited theatrically from the early 20th century up to approximately 1956. Typically, a serial featured 12-16 episodes or “chapters” about 1-2 reels long, equivalent to a film program of the early cinema.⁷⁵ Studies of film serials suggest they became popular during 1912-1916 in part because they provided a middle ground between the feature film and the variety program. Many exhibitors were at this point used to releasing single-reel variety programs and for technical, monetary, or other reasons did not wish to shift to exhibiting multi-reel features.⁷⁶ Serials were a fitting compromise, providing extended stories that fit into preexisting conditions of film exhibition. Despite their naming, not all serials were bound to continuous storytelling. *The Hazards of Helen* (1914-1917) had “unconnected and interchangeable episodes” that made it popular for exhibitors, as they could book the episodes in any order.⁷⁷ Still, the majority attempted a semblance of an overarching plot.

Adhering to the genre of the “sensational melodrama”, their action-oriented narratives provided key roles to female stars and focused on their characters’ conflicts with male villains. Episodes ended with a “cliffhanger”, a moment that suspended the narrative action, often by leaving the main characters’ lives in danger, and so encouraged viewers to return to the theater to see the resolution. Companies accordingly distributed episodes within close proximity of one

75. Ilka Brasch, *Film Serials and the American Cinema, 1910-1940: Operational Detection* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 288; Carolyn Jess-Cooke, *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice From Hollywood to Bollywood* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 16.

76. Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 212-213; Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), 110-111.

77. Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*, 111.

another, usually weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, fostering a regular attendance in theaters.⁷⁸ In terms of their structure, exhibition, and effects then, film serials can be seen as direct precursors to contemporary TV serials, especially soap operas, which also feature extensive serialization, melodrama, and a focus on female characters.⁷⁹ The history of the film serial affirms the idea that serial storytelling is intermedial, while working against the traditional conception of a “film” as a singular feature that has always provided a seamless, undisrupted viewing experience.

In fact, segmentation characterized many initial “feature” films as well. At the outset, the term “feature” was a marketing tool that could justify higher ticket pricing by designating some films as “special” in relation to standard productions due to greater duration or expense. Many of them were adaptations of famous novels and plays. The longer a film was, the more accurately an adaptation could reproduce the source material’s narrative and so appeal to its built-in middle-class audience.⁸⁰ The average duration of a film in 1909-1910 was reportedly between 200 and 1000 feet.⁸¹ So, a feature in 1909 meant an exceptional film that tended to take up the length of the entire reel. However, during 1910-1915, it designated virtually any film that was longer than one reel, with most landing in-between two and eight.⁸² But despite its greater length and larger narrative emphasis, an early multi-reel feature did not necessarily play as a single whole. Instead, it could appear as a series of interconnected yet self-contained segments, like an episode of a fictional television series, due to the relations between production, distribution, and exhibition.

78. Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 198-227. Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*, 111-112.

79. Dunleavy, *Television Drama*, 97-98.

80. Janet Staiger, “Blueprints for Feature Films: Hollywood’s Continuity Scripts,” in *The American Film Industry: Revised Edition*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 186-188.

81. Bowser, *Transformation of Cinema*, 56. Exact temporal durations were, of course, variable due to the lack of standard shooting and projection speeds.

82. *Ibid.*, 191-192.

Distributors could circulate features in partitioned form. A common strategy in 1909-10, for instance, was to distribute one reel of a feature per week. Vitagraph released *Les Misérables*, *The Life of George Washington*, and *Life of Moses* in this manner during 1909. Even if a multi-reel feature were released in its entirety, it could still be partitioned during a screening. Many Nickelodeon exhibitors were used to showing one-reel programs and so carried a single film projector, making it physically impossible for them to screen a long feature in one sitting without stopping to change reels. In response to this, filmmakers up to 1913 commonly constructed the feature so that each reel functioned as a self-contained film segment with its own conclusion. At that point, newer venues began employing a two-projector system to account for reel changes, presumably paving the way for a more seamless presentation that allowed a feature to play as a single whole.⁸³ These developments indicate that segmentation arguably used to be intrinsic to the feature, regardless of narrative construction, because it was divisible into physical film reels.

Tashiro gives credence to this, arguing that segmentation is imperceptible only because theatrical exhibition “represses the disruption of reel breaks by quick changeovers of projectors, producing an illusion of continuous action.”⁸⁴ Assuming this is true, the feature film technically was segmented at least up to the industry’s transition from photochemical to digital film. In addition, the circulation of what Schnapper terms “compilation features” further evinces that seriality and segmentation are not antithetical to the film text. Such features consist of “episodes of television series which are edited into feature length versions.” Three hour-long episodes from the se-

83. Ibid., 195-200. Salt, *Film Style and Technology*, 119.

84. Charles Shiro Tashiro, "Videophilia: What Happens When You Wait for It on Video" in *Film Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1991): 11.

ries *Laredo* (1965), for example, served as source material for a 99-minute theatrical film called *Three Guns for Texas* (1968), one of many compilation films produced by Universal in the 60s.⁸⁵ One can extend this practice to encompass re-editing of film serials, such as when 26 Republic film serials from the 1930s-40s appeared on stations in 1966 in 100-minute feature versions.⁸⁶

Compilation features then are inter-medial forms that highlight a lack of strict boundaries between the feature form and the serial form, and in turn between film and TV. Segmented by commercials and endowed with liveness, the feature no longer provides a seamless experience thought to have always been essential to cinema. Instead, it recalls a time, when films were experienced with interruptions and commentaries, or alongside live performances, or ended without immediate resolution. The context it most directly evokes is that of the silent period, when exhibition ensured films were inherently variable and akin to live performances. Much like theatrical exhibitors of that time, broadcasters have extensive control over a film text's assemblage, duration, and sound accompaniment. With this in mind, broadcast versions can be seen as contemporary equivalents of theatrical exhibitor versions. In modernizing theatrical features and turning them into components of television sequences and flows then, partition and duration adjustment simultaneously antique them, make them similar to older forms of theatrical storytelling.

The history of industrial film regulation suggests that broadcast censorial re-editing similarly affects the contemporary film text. From approximately 1934 until its replacement with the MPAA ratings system in 1968, the Motion Picture Production Code informed the production of theatrical features in the American film industry.⁸⁷ Films had to treat subjects, such as "sex," "crime," "brutality," and "obscenity" in a manner that upheld the dominant social and moral

85. Schnapper, "Feature Films to Television," 194.

86. Brasch, *Film Serials and the American Cinema*, 297.

87. Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 55.

standards of the time. Scripts were proof-checked for any potentially illicit elements and the final picture would be subject to a review. Failure to make necessary alterations, if illicit elements were detected, could lead to a film not receiving a seal of approval, which could threaten the commercial prospects of its theatrical release.⁸⁸ Considerable restrictions ensued in regard to what was acceptable on theatrical screens, especially when it came to sex and violence.

Just as in the case of aspect ratio, the semblance between broadcast and film censorship is not a mere coincidence. Television, in fact, directly emulated film's self-regulation model. Famous film censor Joseph Breen played a key role in this process, leading broadcasters to create their own voluntary Television Code in 1953, using the Production Code as a basis.⁸⁹ That TV censorship originated in and largely reproduced theatrical censorship means that it brings motion pictures in line with the values and norms of the period during which the Production Code came into enforcement.⁹⁰ Devoid of the explicit elements that became acceptable in theaters decades after the demise of the Production Code, the assemblage of an R-rated feature from the 1970s or 80s becomes comparable to that of a film from the 30s or 40s when airing on a broadcast station or network. Editorial differences between versions then can point to how much film regulation has been affected by historical, social, political, and other changes in American culture. So in addition to being its own medium, television, also functions as a repository of cinema's past.

In conjunction with the fact that 1.33:1 used to be a theatrical ratio up to 1932, all this evinces that broadcast versions renew films by aligning them with past standards, conventions,

88. Richard S. Randall, *Censorship of the Movies: The Social and Political Control of a Mass Medium* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 204-205; Murray Schumach, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor* (New York: Morrow, 1964), 33-41.

89. Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 342-343; Schumach, *Cutting Room Floor*, 228.

90. To clarify, the Television Code was discontinued in 1983. But the Broadcast Standards and Practices that succeeded it largely adhere to the same principles when it comes to contemporary censorship.

and values of theatrical exhibition. So the cultural denigration of broadcast versions on the basis of their editorial and ratio differences from theatrical versions elevates cinema's present by delegitimizing its past. In that regard, claims that 1.33:1 presentations devalue features and that widescreen led to essential distinctions between film and television end up carrying the assumption that widescreen films have always been better than narrow-screen ones. Implicit in the negative discourses surrounding broadcast variation practices then is a teleological narrative of the widescreen transition being necessary for film's improvement upon and distinction from its past self. Examining these discourses in relation to a broader historical context reveals that many of the defining distinctions between film and television are actually relative to specific periods of time and liable to change. With this mind, we can disprove what is considered to be another fundamental trait of theatrical film in contradistinction to television: the absence of ratio variation.

II. In-Transition: Multi-Ratio Pictures and Theatrical Exhibition (1953-1956)

Ratio Variation and The Widescreen Transition

Theatrical ratio variation during the transition period was primarily the result of multiple Hollywood studios adopting flat widescreen processes in response to Fox's CinemaScope, which itself came on the heels of the commercial success of *This is Cinerama*, a travelogue film that premiered on September 30 1952.⁹¹ It introduced the titular Cinerama process, which had an aspect ratio of 2.72:1 and entailed using three cameras and projectors "to create a panoramic image that was projected on a large, curved screen."⁹² Hollywood producers realized that widescreen films could renew public interest in film viewing. The problem was that Cinerama was largely incompatible with the preexisting norms of production, distribution, and exhibition. Among other

91. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 113-117; Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 238-240.

92. Lev, *Transforming the Screen*, 112.

things, it required existing theaters to make considerably expensive alterations to their screens. Consequently, many Cinerama-capable venues had to be built from scratch and only 22 existed globally by 1959.⁹³ The common desire to reconcile the new possibilities of Cinerama with existing standards resulted in the formation of more cost-effective widescreen processes.

Ahead of the curve was 20th Century Fox. On February 2, 1953, the studio announced that, as of February 16, all new productions would be made in the studio's new "anamorphic widescreen" process called CinemaScope. The technology was sold as compatible with extant 35mm camera and projection equipment. However, it also required the installation of new special anamorphic lenses for both cameras and projectors. The cinematographer would capture a distorted image onto the film print and then the projector would decompress it. In addition, to accommodate the new image, theaters would have to install "curved, wide screens" and rewire their sound to make use of the new stereophonic sound that accompanied the system. And only new titles could appear in CinemaScope, which was to premiere with *The Robe* on October 1, while complete films from the studio's backlog had to remain in the 1.37:1 ratio.⁹⁴ So, while not as radical a departure from narrow-screen as Cinerama, it was not highly compatible either.

The advent of CinemaScope led other majors, like Paramount and Columbia, to announce their own systems a month later. The majority of them would be classified as "non-anamorphic" or "flat" widescreen. Unlike CinemaScope, they did not rely on special anamorphic lenses to distort the image, and were backwards compatible with narrow-screen exhibition. All of them, as Salt describes, "involved projecting 35 mm. film with a wider-angle lens" while "simultaneously

93. Ibid., 114-115.

94. *Motion Picture Daily*, 2 February 1953, 1-2.

masking off the top and bottom of the image in the projector aperture gate.”⁹⁵ This made it possible to renew older 1.37:1-framed pictures with new widescreen versions, as well as produce new titles for release in multiple widescreen ratios alongside the Academy standard. Rather than necessitate the replacement of the Academy ratio and its related practices, they allowed for their integration with new practices into a form of multi-ratio filmmaking. Alongside backwards compatibility, ratio variation would be a key point of difference between them and CinemaScope, providing flat widescreen formats with several economic advantages over anamorphic.

For one thing, virtually any film produced in the traditional format could be released in a flat widescreen version, which meant a faster and cheaper method of capitalizing on the novelty of the format. A key selling point in particular was the promise of premiering unreleased 1.37:1 backlogs in widescreen versions. For another, a new picture shot in flat widescreen could screen virtually anywhere, while a CinemaScope picture could only appear in theaters specifically converted for anamorphic playback, considerably limiting its potential box office at the outset of the transition. In that regard, flat widescreen allowed for maximizing a film’s potential revenue. Finally, producing an alternate 1.37 version of a picture shot in CinemaScope for conventional theaters, though possible, was far more time consuming and expensive than it was more derive a flat widescreen version from a 1.37:1 print.⁹⁶ For many producers and exhibitors alike then, masking was the most cost-effective means of achieving widescreen presentation.

Its application highlights how a given feature film’s aspect ratio could differ from production to exhibition. For the sake of clarity then, it is necessary to break down aspect ratio into

95. Salt, *Film Style and Technology*, 275.

96. Alternate flat versions – presumably developed from the anamorphic print – of multiple Scope titles had appeared in the domestic cinemas up to 1954 and, due to slower conversion to CinemaScope overseas, up to 1955 in international cinemas. In some cases, studios shot fully separate 1.37 versions of pictures like *The Robe* to maximize revenue. See Sheldon Hall, “Alternative versions in the early years of CinemaScope,” in *Widescreen Worldwide*, eds. John Belton, Sheldon Hall, and Stephen Neale (New Barnet, U.K.: John Libbey, 2010, 114-117.

three distinct categories. The “filming ratio” designates the ratio of the camera aperture used during production. The “composition ratio” refers to the ratio the cinematographer uses to compose a given picture’s images. Finally, the “exhibition ratio” is the one, in which the picture is shown to audiences. Between 1932 and 1952, all three types were equivalent to 1.37:1 in a standard feature, meaning that the ratio remained singular and unchanged as a picture went from shooting to theatrical release. By contrast, from 1953 to 1956, the ratios frequently varied, each distinct entry defining a specific version of the film that could have differences from others in terms of the size of the image area, shot composition, and in some cases even editing.⁹⁷ Numerous titles especially appeared in both widescreen and Academy versions across different theaters. Any theatrical feature that has more than one ratio across the three types is referred to as a “multi-ratio feature,” in distinction to the “narrow-screen features” and “widescreen features” that do not.

It is also crucial to clarify that there are actually two flat widescreen masking techniques. The “soft matte” technique entails creating the widescreen ratio at the stage of exhibition. In this case, the camera viewfinder must have marks that designate the boundaries of the 1.85:1, 1.66:1, or other selected wide ratio in the course of filming. Later, projectionists add horizontal bands or “mattes” to the print, resulting in black bars that obscure the top and bottom of the image and correspond to the ratio it had been composed for. By contrast, the “hard matte” technique entails creating the ratio at the stage of production. Here, the filmmaker mattes out the 1.37:1 aperture in the camera and then shoots the picture with black bars at the top and bottom.⁹⁸ Unlike the soft matte technique then, hard matte does not allow for ratio variation during projection, nor does it

97. All this is not even counting the effects of 3D, which could further divide each variant into “standard” and “3D” subcategories. Though it would be outside the scope of this work to consider the effects of 3D, it is worth mentioning as yet another instance of new technology making film variation highly visible for a period of time.

98. Butler, *Television Critical Methods*, 183-187; David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979* (New York: C. Scribner, 2000), xxi.

have the compositional benefits and effects of anamorphic widescreen. Likely then, usage of the technique is rather rare, but it is difficult to say for certain, as little information is available regarding the circulation of hard-matted widescreen films.⁹⁹ In any case, going forward, this section will focus on the soft matte technique when discussing flat widescreen.

To elaborate on an earlier point, the subject of flat widescreen primarily arises in studies of broadcast versions. Primarily, this occurs because post-1956 theatrical films produced with the soft matte technique arrive on television without the widescreen mask, in what is now commonly described as the “open matte” format. The full 1.37:1 print in such cases undergoes the telecine scan and so serves as the basis for the 1.33:1 broadcast version. Though this can lead to some image loss due to the difference between the 1.33:1 and 1.37:1 ratios, for the most part it actually results in the image gaining visual information at the top and bottom. As it doesn’t result in re-editing or re-composition of the theatrical version, open matte generally has a more positive critical reputation than the largely reviled pan-and-scan process.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the evaluative discourses surrounding open matte do not challenge the ascription of ratio variation to television, nor its association with the cultural devaluation of the film text.

By default, they accept the widescreen exhibition ratio of the theatrical release as the only true ratio of the picture, viewing the 1.37:1 filming ratio as a byproduct of broadcasting. No consideration is allotted to the possibility that the widescreen ratio is itself the product of alteration, which would imply that television provides a more authentic experience of the film than theaters. Furthering the premise of flat widescreen’s illegitimacy are its associations with “protection” for

99. As unmasking a hard-matted film would be impossible, pan-and-scan could be a viable option for deriving a 1.33:1 version for television. Belton, however, states that hard matted films are “blown up to full frame and cropped on the sides, resulting in a loss of approximately 30 percent of the original image.” Though he distinguishes this process from the pan-and-scan, it similarly involves magnification and cropping of the theatrical image in lieu of unmasking. See Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 219.

100. Kerbel, “Scanning,” 28; Neale, “Widescreen Composition,” 139-140; Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 126.

exhibition in multiple ratios. Protecting a picture shot in flat widescreen means ensuring that the full image area captured during production excludes any extra-diegetic elements that can influence the viewing of the picture in open matte. This includes boom microphones, camera tracks, lights, and frame lines from the top and bottom of the celluloid strip, all of which can potentially break audience immersion within the picture's reality. Their presence has led to negative criticisms of open matte for revealing what filmmakers never intended for viewers to see.¹⁰¹

Protecting anamorphic widescreen pictures, meanwhile, means defending the onscreen action against future image cropping, in which case cinematographers plan their compositions in such a way as to mitigate the effects of pan-and-scan.¹⁰² Either way, to protect a picture for the 1.37:1 or 1.33:1 image areas is to film it in such a way that ensures it can be screened successfully in an alternate version with either the 1.37:1 or 1.33:1 ratio. The need to satisfy multiple ratios and exhibition standards, however, imposes restrictions in terms of lighting, framing, mise-en-scene, etc. Filmmakers, for instance, must keep characters and important onscreen action closer to the center of the frame and avoid the edges when shooting. As a consequence, a common argument against protection is that it leaves directors and cinematographers unable to realize the full the creative potential of widescreen filmmaking.¹⁰³ Protection and therefore ratio variation then apparently diminish widescreen film composition. Such a perspective fits nicely with the perception of how the television market negatively impacts the theatrical film image.

Belton, who specifically views protection as a measure against the panning-and-scanning of anamorphic widescreen films, claims that it illustrates how “the theatrical film and the video

101. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 218-219; Butler, *Television Critical Methods*, 187-88; Tashiro, "Video-philia," 14; Richards and DiGiulio, "Film-to-Video Transfers," 91.

102. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 139. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 260.

103. Schubin, "Perfect Aspect Ratio," 462; Peter Ward, *Picture Composition for Film and Television*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Focal Press, 2005), 114.

version are combined into one, especially in the case of widescreen works.” Citing an article in *American Cinematographer*, the author provides a brief history of film protection to support his argument, stating that filmmakers specifically began protecting features in 1962. At the time, the Research and Education Committee of the American Society of Cinematographers defined television’s “safe action area.” Composing for it guaranteed that nothing essential of the theatrical image would be lost in the broadcast version. In time, the commercial benefits of the television market eventually made the protection technique into a norm among directors and cameramen.¹⁰⁴ Were it not for the demands of television then, cinematographers and directors would be free to realize the true revolutionary potential of anamorphic widescreen composition.

While he doesn’t explicitly mention flat widescreen, it follows from all this that the only reason anyone one would possibly want to film a picture in a flat, rather than anamorphic, format is to satisfy the demands of the television market. The problem is that this account conflates protecting a film for the 1.33:1 ratio with composing for television’s safe action area. While the safe action area of a typical 90s straight-sided TV set’s screen may be equivalent to the 1.33:1 image, this was not the case during the 1960s, when circular and curved screens were still fairly common. Moreover, television cameramen took safe action areas into account since at least 1950, when average receiver screens displayed a little over half the transmitted video image. At the CBS network, for example, oval celluloid sheets covered both monitors and camera viewfinders, so that all “absolutely essential” elements of a program, commercial, etc. would appear during the broadcast.¹⁰⁵ Composing for the safe action area accommodated image loss stemming from the physical shape of the receiver, rather than from the 1.33:1 ratio.

104. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 225.

105. Bretz, “The Shape of Television Screen,” 550.

Belton also curiously makes no mention of how the article he cites discusses protection only in relation to flat widescreen formats, rather than pan-and-scan, and denotes the TV safe action area with curved lines.¹⁰⁶ In addition to not distinguishing anamorphic and flat prints, such omissions conflate the television screen's displayed image with the 1.33:1 transmitted image, as though receivers have had from their inception a rectangular screen shape equivalent to the pre-1932 Academy ratio.¹⁰⁷ The history of television's technological transformations, alongside that of flat widescreen formats, is effectively omitted in order to sustain the dominant narrative of film's devaluation by an inferior medium. There can be no doubt that image loss has consistently differentiated broadcast versions of feature films from their theatrical counterparts. But this was far from always attributable to differences between each media's respective ratio standards.

In the same vein, protecting a picture for ratio variation does not actually evince that cinema is subordinate to the demands of television or that the theatrical and broadcast versions are combined. As will soon be clear, the protection technique and its related ratio variation practices originated not in 1962 with the distribution of anamorphic films to television but in 1953 with the diffusion of flat widescreen processes in the theatrical cinema. The desires of distributors and exhibitors for a cost-effective and backwards compatible widescreen format would lead to their normalization by 1956. That flat widescreen, protection, and ratio variation practices were intrinsic to theatrical exhibition signifies that, contrary to the popular belief, they were legitimate practices within the industry. Disproving that broadcast image alteration devalues feature films will

106. Walter Beyer, "TV Safe Action Limits for Wide Screen Films," *American Cinematographer* 43, no. 6 (June 1962): 366-367.

107. The article does discuss towards the end a new process for producing new "flat extraction prints for TV" from an anamorphic print developed by Panavision, Inc. Basically, it entails composing for 1.85:1 and using it as the essential action area while filming in 2.35:1 anamorphic widescreen. This may very well be the protection method described by Gomery, Belton, and Enticknap, but it is never actually referred to as "protection" within the context of the article itself. See Beyer, "TV Safe Action Limits," 382-384.

help illustrate that non-theatrical exhibition in general is not fundamentally inferior to theatrical, as well as that relations between these contexts are fluid and constantly shifting.

Studio Choose Flat Widescreen Ratios (1953)

The CinemaScope announcement left the other majors to play catchup. Paramount took the lead by making surprise showings to 300 theatrical exhibitors in Hollywood at its Coast studios of a new unnamed widescreen process on March 21, at the same time as Fox demonstrated CinemaScope. Articles surrounding the demonstration highlight a key difference between Fox's anamorphic format and the Paramount widescreen system: the latter was basically designed to enhance conventional films. A picture shot in the Academy format could thus gain "greater scope and illusion of depth" and grow in size by having its images expanded over a larger area. Achieving this required attaching a wide-angle lens to standard projectors and installing a concave screen in the theater. Footage from four of Paramount's backlog pictures – *Shane*, *War of the Worlds*, *Forever Female*, and *Here Come the Girls* – alongside the Columbia picture *Salome* served to demonstrate how this would work.¹⁰⁸ Having entered production prior to Cinerama popularizing widescreen, all backlogs had filming and composition ratios equivalent to 1.37:1.

In connection with this, Paramount vice president Y. Frank Freeman implored exhibitors to not discard the "conventional film" too quickly in light of the various new filmmaking and exhibition technologies, such as widescreen and 3D. Emphasizing how a radical technological shift could lead to economic problems and hurt everyone in the industry, he suggested a "gradual merger" of the new and old instead. He also noted that the major studios had an existing inventory of pictures costing \$325,000,000 that could have an income value of 800,000,000 if a "practical"

108. *Motion Picture Daily*, 24 March 1953, 3; *Motion Picture Exhibitor*, 25 March 1953, 11; *New York Times*, 22 Mar 1953, 84.

means of enhancing their exhibition value is found.¹⁰⁹ Evidently, flat widescreen is the practical means of enhancement Freeman refers to, meaning a key selling point is its ability to maximize the commercial value of extant material, which the entire industry would benefit from.

Three days after the demonstration, Freeman announced that from March 24 onwards all new Paramount productions would be photographed for 1.66:1, but could also be presented on standard screens.¹¹⁰ More accurately, all future titles would be composed for 1.66:1, while the camera aperture remained unchanged from the pre-widescreen period. Older 1.37:1-framed films could appear in modernized widescreen versions, while new 1.66:1-framed titles could conversely appear in older style narrow-screen versions. In contrast to CinemaScope then, the Paramount system promised to renew the cinematic past by enabling the production, distribution, and exhibition of multi-ratio features. Shortly thereafter, other major studios unveiled their own specific flat wide-screen processes. As Figure 2.2 illustrates, Universal-International (UI), MGM, and Columbia announced their systems within two weeks of Paramount. Both promised that their future productions would all be composed for the new flat widescreen ratio used on backlogs.

Figure 2.2 – Major Studios and Flat Widescreen Ratios (March-April 1953)

Studio	Widescreen Ratio	Recommended Screen Size	Announcement
Paramount	1.66:1	50 x 30 feet	March 21
UI	1.85:1, 2:1	50 x 25 feet	March 31
MGM	1.75:1	32 x 18 feet	April 2
Columbia	1.85:1	Unknown, possibly 50 x 30 feet	April 6

Sources: *Motion Picture Daily*, April 1953; *American Cinematographer*, May 1953.

109. *Motion Picture Daily*, 24 March 1953, 3.

110. *Ibid.*, 25 March 1953, 1.

All four majors were attempting to create what Arthur Gavin describes as an “all-purpose system” based around the alteration of a picture’s ratio in the course of projection.¹¹¹ Though each had a different ratio and recommended screen size, it also advertised its system as adaptable to other formats and technologies. The U-I system, for example, was said to be compatible with all existing processes at the time, including 3-D, standard film, color, or black-and-white.¹¹² And the Columbia Vitascope system entailed the usage of a new camera that allowed for up to four different versions of the same picture to be produced from one shoot: 2-D 1.37:1, 3-D 1.37:1, 2-D Widescreen, and 3-D Widescreen.¹¹³ Not counting its intersections with other potential technologies, such as 3-D or stereophonic sound, the flat widescreen processes allowed a single picture to circulate in at least two different versions, normalizing ratio variation. Furthering the idea of compatibility, studios promoted the adoption of larger panoramic screens by existing theaters.

By the end of April 1953, for example, about 25 exhibitors announced their intention to install a large screen to support the 1.66:1 Paramount ratio, in line with the specifications of the screen size at the Music Hall. The showing of *Shane* has proven instrumental then in the selling of the Paramount-type large screen.¹¹⁴ While these screens were linked to the new widescreen processes, they were consistently advertised as “all-purpose” screens. Universal-International’s new screen was ostensibly able to show all types of film formats, including standard 1.37:1 versions and 3-D variations.¹¹⁵ Similarly, a key selling point of the MGM screen was that it accommodated past, present, and future films, “whether filmed in conventional size, MGM’s wide-

111. Gavin, “2-D, 3-D, Widescreen, Or All Three...,” 210.

112. *Motion Picture Daily*, 1 April 1953, 2. *Motion Picture Daily*, 2 April 1953, 10.

113. See note 21.

114. *Motion Picture Daily*, 30 April 1953, 3.

115. *Motion Picture Exhibitor*, 27 May 1953, PT-6.

screen process, CinemaScope, or 3-D.”¹¹⁶ Panoramic screens were recommended but not technically necessary to project pictures in wide-screen. Much larger than the conventional screens already installed in most of the theaters in the country, they specifically were meant to provide the onscreen image with more depth and dimension than their predecessors.¹¹⁷ In theory then, an exhibitor could easily project a picture with a widescreen mask on an older screen.¹¹⁸

In any case, flat widescreen emerged out of a desire to bridge the gap between cinema’s past and present by integrating narrow-screen and widescreen technologies and aesthetics. This was in stark contrast to CinemaScope, which promoted a clean aesthetic if not technological distinction between past and present. That the first widely released “widescreen” features following the Cinerama premiere were unreleased titles initially intended for traditional exhibition underscores this aspect. Paramount introduced audiences to their format with *Shane*, which premiered at Radio City Music Hall on April 23, 1953, playing on a screen measuring 50 feet in width and 30 feet in height.¹¹⁹ As Figure 2.3 illustrates, other studios followed in using backlog titles to premiere their widescreen formats, converting them to play on large or panoramic screens.¹²⁰

Figure 2.3 – 1953 Studio Backlogs Released in Flat Widescreen

Title	Release	Distributor	Ratio		
			Filming	Composition	Exhibition
<i>Desert Legion</i>	04/20	UI	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.85:1

116. Ibid., PT-20.

117. *Motion Picture Daily*, 19 May 1953, 8.

118. However, this was unlikely, as it would result in the shrinking of the image, effectively losing a key selling point of “widescreen” and “new style” modes of viewing.

119. *Motion Picture Daily*, 24 April 1963, 1-3.

120. Some of these pictures, including *Shane* and the MGM titles, may have also appeared on conventional screens in 1.37:1 theatrically. Publications reference that these pictures had been prepared for standard screen presentation, but I haven’t been able to find precise release information of conventional versions.

<i>Shane</i>	04/23	Paramount	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.66:1
<i>Thunder Bay</i>	05/19	UI	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.85:1
<i>City That Never Sleeps</i>	05/21	Republic Pictures	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.66:1
<i>Young Bess</i>	05/21	MGM	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.66:1
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	06/03	MGM	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.75:1
<i>Fair Wind to Java</i>	06/22	Republic Pictures	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.66:1
<i>Take the High Ground</i>	10/30	MGM	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.75:1
<i>Easy to Love</i>	12/25	MGM	1.37:1	1.37:1	1.75:1

Sources: *Motion Picture Daily* Volume 73 (April-June 1953); *Exhibitor* Volume 50 (August-October 1953); *Kinematograph Yearbook 1954*.

The presentation of the backlogs in widescreen demonstrated that the Academy ratio and the narrow-screen style of shooting, image composition, etc. could continue to exist in the post-Cinerama environment. But at the same time, it seemed to paradoxically corroborate the majors' belief that, alongside other new 50s technologies, widescreen would soon render standard versions aesthetically and thus commercially obsolete. This is because there was a combination of high demand for and low supply of "new style" films featuring wide ratios, stereophonic sound, and/or 3D. Producing widescreen versions helped sell backlog pictures as "new style," allowing them to better compete commercially with those already in release.¹²¹ The fact that these titles had not previously been released likely contributed to their perception as "new style" by audiences. At the very least, it marked the widescreen version of titles like *Shane* as the primary or "original" version from an exhibition and distribution standpoint.¹²² Altogether, such releases promoted the Academy ratio style, even as they furthered its obsolescence.

At the same time, they served as a kind-of testing ground for the future production of new multi-ratio features. Studios and exhibitors alike paid close attention to the critical and cultural

121. Gavin, "2-D, 3-D, Widescreen, Or All Three....," 211.

122. It is notable that relatively few pre-widescreen films had been theatrically reissued in widescreen versions during the 50s. *Gone With the Wind* was a notable exception.

reception of the backlogs in order to determine, whether or not they had chosen the “correct” flat widescreen standard. What exactly constituted the “correct” standard could differ depending on the studio and the context but one common criterion was whether or not the widescreen version of a backlog picture properly displayed the 1.37 frame’s essential action. Because the widescreen image was the result of masking, there was always the potential for a mismatch between the projection and the composition. 1.66:1, for example, removed 10% from the top and bottom of Academy-framed pictures, while 1.85 removed about 12%. So, a Paramount picture would lose 20% of its total projected image area, while one from UI would lose about 24%.

Let’s suppose that the 1.37 version features a shot, where a character’s face appears at the very top of the frame. The widescreen version then would crop the face out of the picture. Studios obviously wanted to avoid such issues and most, if not all, reportedly conducted internal test screenings on their backlogs to determine how a widescreen mask would affect the pre-existing 1.37:1 composition’s essential action. Some studios such as Universal reportedly chose the wide ratio based on how well the backlogs played in widescreen version.¹²³ Conversely, MGM was reportedly among those that first chose the ratio and only then conducted tests to see how well backlogs played in the new format.¹²⁴ Despite studios’ assurances to the contrary, however, the reception of flat widescreen versions indicates that masking backlogs at least in some cases led to loss of essential action, specifically when it came to characters heads and feet.

A viewer’s letter to the editor at *New York Times* remarked that, due to the showing of films on panoramic screens, “we are treated to the sight of headless and footless torsos march-marching about. I never saw a dream walking but I have seen any number of torsos talking. And

123. *Motion Picture Daily*, 7 April 1953, 1.

124. Gavin, “2-D, 3-D, Widescreen, Or All Three...,” 233.

it ain't good.”¹²⁵ Similarly, after Lucian Pope of Fox Midwest Theatres installed a large screen and tested the 1.85:1 ratio, viewer reactions confirmed his belief that “the cutting off of the heads and feet was more damaging than any benefits gained by Increased width.” After a few days, the exhibitor tested the 1.75:1 ratio “with little better results” before finally settling on 1.66:1, which would be used on “all regular 2-D and 3-D large screen presentations.”¹²⁶ It is not known which films Pope tested, but the progression from 1.85 to 1.66 evinces that the wider the ratio was, the more heads and feet from the tested films were adversely affected. On the whole then, 1.66:1 would’ve been the most compatible ratio with conventional narrow-screen titles.

One can infer that studios may have intentionally concealed or downplayed the adverse effects of masking on some of their titles in order to sell flat widescreen as fully compatible with the imagery of older titles. After all, each initially wanted their chosen ratio to be seen as the one that would help narrow-screen films realize their full commercial potential. Whatever the case was, backlogs helped the majors introduce and fine-tune their flat widescreen processes to exhibitors and audiences. By gauging their reception, they could avoid similar issues as they shifted away from using flat widescreen to revise existing titles to produce new films. Studios may very well have given up on flat widescreen processes and fully embraced CinemaScope, had the “ersatz widescreen” backlogs not been commercially successful.

New Multi-Ratio Films (1953-1956)

Releasing a new picture in multiple versions distinguished by aspect ratio required several changes to the production process. Filmmakers had to figure out how to set up the mise-en-scene, compose the action within the frame and photograph the picture in such a way that its

125. Dorothy Ross, “Wide-Screen Blues,” in *New York Times* (Oct 25, 1953): X5.

126. “Findings on Use of 3-D, Wide-Screen, Stereophonic Sound, Other Systems,” in *Boxoffice* (Dec 05, 1953), 12, 14.

images were presentable with and without aperture masking. A central concern was avoiding image compatibility issues of backlogs. Studios partially resolved this by retaining 1.37:1 as the filming ratio but having filmmakers compose for their new respective widescreen standard. Accomplishing this required outfitting cameras with new hairlines or ground glass markings that denoted the intended composition area's limits in relation to the larger Academy image area.¹²⁷ By October 1953, such methods had either become practice among studios or were "contemplated among major American producers, constituting the basis of "wide-screen" technique..."¹²⁸ Evidently, the demands of theatrical exhibition directly influenced production when it came to flat widescreen. It is erroneous to attribute this solely to television.

The May 1953 issue of *American Cinematographer* details how cameramen working on pictures with flat widescreen versions had to compose scenes to avoid cutting off "important detail or action..." At the same time, the picture had to be shot in such a way that its composition would hold up in the 1.37 version. Key to this was placing transparent masks that outlined the new contours of the widescreen image inside the traditional camera viewfinders.¹²⁹ The article provides a general illustration of these contours, defining them as "Critical Limits for Wide-Screen Composition." It makes clear that because each studio had its own specific standard ratio, it had a different critical limit area. As long as the onscreen action remained inside the critical limit area, the audience could see it without issue in both the widescreen and narrow-screen

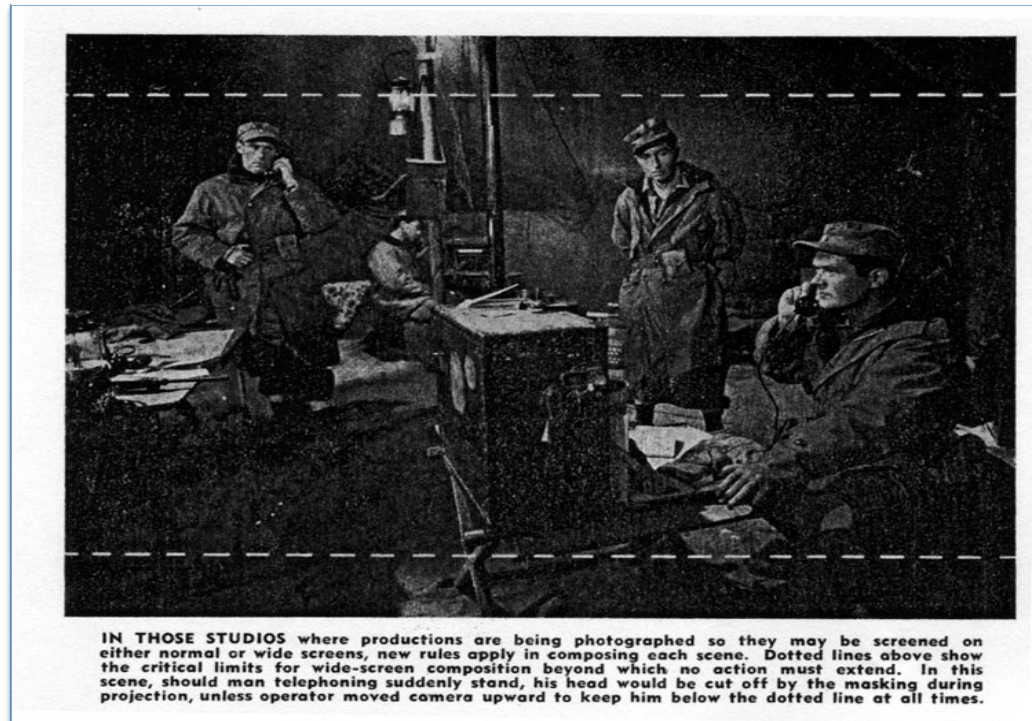
127. For instance, Republic Pictures announced its adoption of 1.66:1 for all new productions at the beginning of August 1953, specifying that it had not changed the camera frame. Instead, it altered the composition of the action so that "artists' heads and important subject matter within the picture frame will not be cut off" during a screening. See *Motion Picture Daily*, 3 August 1953, 5.

128. George Schutz, "Why New Aspect Ratios?," in *New Screen Techniques*, ed. Martin Quigley Jr. (New York: Quigley, 1953), 207.

129. Gavin, "2-D, 3-D, Widescreen, Or All Three...", 211.

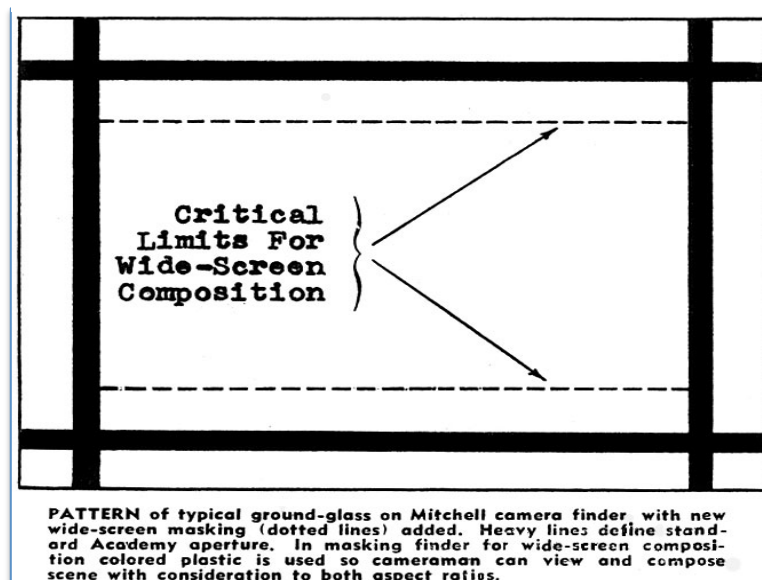
versions. To clarify how the widescreen composition fits inside the narrow-screen frame, I am including the article's illustrations in Figures 2.4a and 2.4b.

Figure 2.4a – Critical Limits for Widescreen Composition in Film Image



Sources: *American Cinematographer* 36, no. 5 (May 1953): 212;
http://www.3dfilmarchive.com/_/rsrc/1365573068517/home/widescreen-documentation/ACWS.jpg?height=333&width=400

Figure 2.4b – Critical Limits for Widescreen Composition in Camera



Sources: *American Cinematographer* 36, no. 5 (May 1953): 212;
http://www.3dfilmarchive.com/_/rsrc/1365573068516/home/widescreen-documentation/ACMitchell.jpg?height=357&width=400

What the article doesn't specify, however, is how directors of photography protected the 1.37:1 image of the narrow-screen version. According to a later 1963 article by Walter Beyer, protecting the picture for narrow-screen meant ensuring that microphones and lights remained "outside the so-called "protection" areas by constructing sets with higher walls than was actually necessary for 1.85:1 composition."¹³⁰ Naturally, were any objects to remain above the composition lines but inside the larger filmed image area, then they would be visible to viewers of the unmasked standard presentation and so could break their immersion. However, even when the objects themselves did not appear, mike and gobo shadows were still a potential risk in the 1.37 version. Beyer emphasizes that this was especially the case with those studios that opened up the camera aperture to the "the full, standard aperture of the camera," which was slightly larger than the Academy size, yet still protected only the areas above and below the critical limit area.¹³¹ As these articles makes clear, such multi-ratio filmmaking techniques were specifically developed in order to accommodate the demands of the theatrical market, not the television market.

These techniques grew in importance as distributors shifted away from using new titles to support a single wide standard towards tailoring them to multiple non-anamorphic wide formats. MGM was perhaps the first distributor to adopt such a policy. At the start of May, studio head Dore Schary announced the company planned on releasing 34 features over 18 months in a program emphasizing new style technologies, including 3-D and stereophonic sound. The studio's widescreen process would be its "backbone," as it was "adaptable to every motion picture house in the world." In line with this, future films would be available "in sizes from the standard screen up to the screen designed for a two-to-one ratio." Additionally, at least two films, *Knights of the*

130. Although the article discusses protection for the standard aperture specifically in relation to 1.85:1, other flat formats from the transition period should follow the same principles. Walter Beyer, "Wide Screen Films and Television," *American Cinematographer* 44, no. 6 (June 1963): 351.

131. Ibid.

Round Table and *Rose Marie*, would be released in both the MGM process and CinemaScope.¹³²

So a new MGM picture from this point forward was intended to circulate in up to four different flat widescreen ratios - 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1, and 2:1 – in addition to the conventional 1.37:1.

Later in May, executive Arthur Lowe reiterated the company's future plans and used the word "flexibility" to characterize them. He claimed that MGM "is not wedded to any one filming or screen technique... Our plans take in all of the new screen techniques, while at the same time providing product for the exhibitors who must continue to operate with standard screen and projector equipment." His belief was that the public would ultimately decide which screen process is the best.¹³³ Following MGM's example, other studios like Republic and Paramount chose to have a set widescreen composition ratio, but expanded the number of exhibition ratios to encompass virtually all other rival standards.¹³⁴ By 1954, as Figure 2.5 shows, nearly every studio that ascribed to non-anamorphic widescreen adopted a policy of ratio flexibility. Theatrical exhibitors in turn gained the freedom to customize pictures to the ratio and screen size they desired. As a general rule, the wider a new title's composition ratio was, the more ratios or versions it was possible to successfully screen it in without incurring any image loss.

Figure 2.5 – Flat Widescreen Formats and New Multi-Ratio Titles (1954-1956)

Studio	Filming Ratio	Composition Ratio(s)	Exhibition Ratios
Paramount	1.37:1	1.66:1, 1.85:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1
UI	1.37:1	1.85:1, 2:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1, 2:1
MGM	1.37:1	1.75:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1, 2:1
Columbia	1.37:1	1.85:1, 1.66:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1

132. *Motion Picture Daily*, 5 May 1953, 1-4.

133. *Motion Picture Exhibitor*, 27 May 1953, PT-20.

134. *Motion Picture Daily*, 3 August 1953, 1-5; *Motion Picture Daily*, 19 August 1953, 1.

Warner Bros.	1.37:1	1.85:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1
Allied Artists	1.37:1	1.85:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1
RKO	1.37:1	1.66:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1
Republic	1.37:1	1.66:1	1.37:1, 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1

Sources: *American Cinematographer* 36, no. 5 (May 1953); *Motion Picture Daily* 73 (April-June 1953); *Motion Picture Daily* 74 (July-September 1953); *Motion Picture Exhibitor* 52 (May-July 1954)

Composing for 1.85:1 allowed it to simultaneously appear without issue in the narrower 1.66:1 and 1.75:1 formats, assuming the DP protected the 1.37:1 image area while shooting. A film's composition ratio didn't necessarily determine the widest possible version, in which it could appear, however. It was possible by 1954 to protect new titles for both wider and narrower formats at the same time, so a picture like *On The Waterfront* could circulate in 1.85:1 and 1.37:1 in addition to the 1.66:1 ratio it was composed for.¹³⁵ Its three theatrical versions evince a common desire among producers, distributors, and exhibitors to ensure compatibility between cinema's past and present standards, thereby maximizing revenue. Articles on aspect ratio history commonly posit that the end of the transition corresponds to the standardization of 1.85:1.¹³⁶ The fact that most Hollywood films after 1956 circulated theatrically only in widescreen versions, even those produced with the non-anamorphic processes, would seem to support this conclusion.

The fact that 1.85:1 eventually became the standard flat widescreen ratio indicates that, of the available formats, it was perceived to be the most flexible and compatible. Already on February 8, 1954, Paramount declared its intention to switch to 1.85:1 composition, citing "greater flexibility" with "dimensions between 1.66-to-1 and 2-to-1 or over" as the cause. Shortly after, it

135. Criterioncollection, "On the Waterfront – Aspect Ratio Visual Essay," *Youtube* (Feb 19, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7-aMi4Rr-4>.

136. Beyer, "Wide Screen Films and Television," 350-352. Richards and DiGiulio, "Film-to-Video Transfers," 86.

announced a new process called “VistaVision,” which would use 1.85:1 for composition.¹³⁷ At the end of October 1956, chief of projection at MGM studios Merle Chamberlain reported on the industry at large that, “while not all pictures are projected at 1.85 to 1, wide-screen product is being photographically composed at that ratio.”¹³⁸ One would think that the end of the transition signifies the end of theatrical ratio variation. However, foreign theaters could still tailor 1.85:1 films to fit their own standard ratio, such as 1.66:1, which reportedly remained widely used in Europe and Asia up to the end of the 1990s.¹³⁹ Not to mention that the multi-ratio production practices established for flat widescreen in 1953 remained in use long after the end of 1956.

1.85:1 may have become the flat widescreen composition and exhibition standard but 1.37:1 remained the filming standard. It ensured that a picture would have a 1.37:1 version that could later serve as the basis of broadcast version with nearly identical images and composition. From a production standpoint then, post-1956 films composed for 1.85:1 flat widescreen are multi-ratio pictures. But they are erroneously defined as widescreen films because their narrow-screen versions do not have theatrical releases. Several conclusions can be drawn from the industry’s adoption of multi-ratio filmmaking practices about the interconnected histories of ratio variation, widescreen, and television. Ratio variation did not begin with the television circulation of anamorphic films in the 1960s. Instead, it began in 1953 with the advent of new widescreen technologies and became an industrial norm by the end of 1956, leading to diminished visibility.

Television then continued the ratio variation begun by the cinema, both in the sense that it necessitated converting widescreen films to the 1.33:1 broadcast ratio and that it enabled studios to continue utilizing flat widescreen production and exhibition practices. Ratio variation

137. *Motion Picture Daily*, 9 February 1954, 4; *Motion Picture Daily*, 25 March 1954, 5.

138. *Motion Picture Daily*, 30 October 1956, 1-2.

139. Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology*, 65; Schubert, “Perfect Aspect Ratio,” 476.

then constitutes a point of overlap and continuity between film and television. Essentialist critiques of broadcast versions based on ratio variation, screen size or image loss then are based on a misunderstanding of the history of the industry's transition to widescreen. By not accounting for the emergence of flat widescreen practices and their impact on film production and exhibition, they reinforce their exclusion from film history.

If variations in ratio, screen size, image, etc. are not antithetical to theatrical presentation, it follows that no authentic or essential cinematic experience can possibly exist. Or, from another perspective, what counts as essential to the experience is subject to change. The widescreen transition and the consequent emergence of ratio variation in this regard was an important turning point in the relations between film and television, as it redefined their textual, aesthetic, cultural, ideological, and other boundaries. And because technological change is ongoing in both media industries, those boundaries are in a continuous state of redefinition. The emergence of new film viewing platforms, such as video, DVD, Blu-Ray, and technological shifts in the television set among other changes in the post-transition years would contribute to this redefinition, sometimes in contradictory and confusing ways. But interestingly enough, certain essentialist discourses, especially those concerning the valuation of aspect ratio, would remain remarkably consistent.

III. Post-Transition: The Legacy of Broadcast Versions

Broadcast versions played a key role in determining the cultural status of post-theatrical exhibition sites for motion pictures, with a key criterion being whether or not the site's respective version reproduced the theatrical aspect ratio. Interestingly enough, the fact that a film could appear in more than one ratio was not, at the time of the transition, nor during the following decade a subject of controversy. In fact, it is difficult to determine precisely when ratio variation became widely recognized as a marker of illegitimacy on the level of broadcast re-editing. A possible tur-

ning point was the series of court hearings during the early 1990s revolving around recent new media technologies, such as home video, that caused visible alteration to theatrical films. This occurred courtesy of prominent Hollywood directors, including Spielberg, Lucas, and Scorsese, who formed a non-profit organization called the “Artists Rights Foundation” (ARF) in 1990. ARF was dedicated to legitimating filmmakers as artists and defending their moral rights.¹⁴⁰

Key to this was raising consumer awareness of variation and fostering a negative public perception of post-theatrical versions created without filmmaker input, especially for broadcast. So, the organization lobbied Congress in 1991-1995 to pass the “Film Disclosure Act,” a legal amendment to the earlier Lanham Act, enacted in 1946 to “to provide for the registration and protection of trademarks used in commerce...”¹⁴¹ Amending it would legally obligate non-theatrical exhibitors to label their presentations as having been altered from the theatrical release, describe the changes, and state that the filmmakers did not endorse or participate in the alterations. Its larger purpose was to legitimize directors, screenwriters, and cinematographers as the “artistic authors” of the motion picture.¹⁴² Though unable to prevent variation, they’d gain the contractual right to officially designate, which versions of the picture were artistically legitimate. From their perspective, not disclosing that a film had been subject to practices like pan-and-scan, re-editing, and colorization misrepresented of their work and constituted false advertisement.¹⁴³

140. *Los Angeles Times*, 09 Apr 1990: 2.

141 United States Congress, House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration, Film Disclosure Act of 1991: hearing before the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, One Hundred Second Congress, second session, on H.R. 3051 ... March 5, 1992 (Washington: U.S. G.P.O.: 1993): 2.

142. United States Congress, “Film Disclosure Act,” 32.

143. Unmasking of films adhering to flat widescreen is consistently absent from court documents pertaining to these hearings, evincing that the artistic authors did not perceive it as an alteration practice.

Though ARF didn't succeed in getting the bills enacted, its efforts pressured the MPAA to adopt a voluntary labeling system on October 30 1993 that informed viewers about the alteration films undergo for broadcast, cable, video, etc. According to MPAA president Jack Valenti, every major Hollywood studio and a few other film companies had agreed to this process.¹⁴⁴ Labeling became the responsibility of the distributor, with the specific text depending on the nature of the changes. If a post-theatrical version featured pan-and-scanning, the text stated: "This film has been modified from its original version. It has been formatted to fit your TV." If it also included re-editing, the disclaimer had to add "...and edited for content and to run in the time allotted." Many filmmakers were disappointed that such labels did not express their lack of affiliation with the changes, nor detail differences from the theatrical version.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, they contributed to marking ratio variation as an element of post-theatrical exhibition, and informed the cultural discourses surrounding the platforms that succeeded VHS, especially DVD.

DVD has allowed audiences to own both widescreen and full-screen editions of the same picture, sometimes on a single disc. In that sense, it has helped to make ratio variation visible and opposed the popular dichotomies between film and TV or widescreen and narrow-screen. At the same time, DVD has arguably helped perpetuate the idea that a film can have only one correct aspect ratio, a notion especially prominent among avid cinephiles that valorize the theatrical experience and attempt to recreate its conditions in the domestic setting. These "home theater enthusiasts," as Kendrick refers to them, associate DVD releases with the "original" version of the picture and view any alteration of its "original" aspect ratio as going against its integrity.¹⁴⁶ Their

144. *Los Angeles Times*, 29 Oct 1993: F2

145. *Los Angeles Times*, 29 Oct 1993: F2, F10.

146. James Kendrick, "Aspect Ratios and Joe Six-Packs: Home Theater Enthusiasts' Battle to Legitimize the DVD Experience," *The Velvet Light Trap - A Critical Journal of Film and Television* (Fall, 2005): 64.

tastes and interests, which have been known to influence the decisions of media companies, appear to generally align themselves with those of the “artistic authors.” Consequently, the question of what the “proper,” “correct,” or “authentic” aspect ratio of a given picture is has become intrinsic to the cultural and commercial valuation of many DVD – and later Blu-Ray – releases.

Given that the theatrical ratio is often assumed to be widescreen by default, it should be unsurprising that enthusiasts commonly hold in contempt pan-and-scan and even open-matte variations. Kendrick finds that, while many arguments define the original aspect ratio or “OAR” in terms of directorial intention, the majority ultimately relies on the essentialist perspective that the correct ratio matches the one used during a film’s theatrical exhibition, regardless of what the director has stated. For him, this evinces how enthusiasts perceive the theatrical space as “the ultimate arbiter of authenticity...”¹⁴⁷ Filmmakers, historians, archivists, and film critics similarly tend to advocate essentialist perspectives that legitimize versions that closely reproduce theatrical releases over those that don’t. Because of this combination of factors, non-theatrical releases of titles lacking a singular ratio can become sources of controversy.

Shane provides a particularly interesting case of how the cultural attitudes towards ratio variation can influence the circulation of multi-ratio pictures and vice versa. As Figure 2.6 summarizes, the picture has appeared across various platforms since the 1950s in approximately four different ratios. Initially shot and composed for 1.37:1 in 1951, it was primarily seen in 1.66:1 in the course of its 1953 theatrical release.¹⁴⁸ At the time, director George Stevens advocated the 1.66:1 presentation of *Shane*, as it allowed for it to be seen in the sort of large screen format that

147. Kendrick, "Aspect Ratios and Joe Six-Packs," 65.

148. The 1.37 version did reportedly receive theatrical exhibition in certain “neighborhoods and small towns,” according to Bob Furmanek. See Bob Furmanek, “Shane Blu-Ray in 1.66?,” *Home Theater Forum*, April 10, 2013, <https://www.hometheaterforum.com/community/threads/shane-blu-ray-in-1-66.322187/page-14>.

he had been a proponent of for years. In fact, he defined the Paramount process as a form of “big-screen” exhibition in contrast to the “widescreen” of CinemaScope. The latter, he claimed, robbed film of its status as art, for it lacked “vertical” composition aspects, forcing directors to imitate the theatrical stage.¹⁴⁹ As part of the publicity plan, Stevens planned to screen it on giant screens and promote it as the picture he had conceived.¹⁵⁰ The director evidently did not fully oppose to the alteration of the film’s ratio during exhibition for commercial purposes.

Figure 2.6 – *Shane* Version Release Chart

Exhibition Platform	Ratio/Version	Release
Movie Theaters	1.66:1	1953
	1.37:1	1953
	1.85:1	1966
Broadcast Television	1.33:1	1968
Video	1.33:1	1980
DVD	1.33:1	2000
Blu-Ray	1.37:1	2013
	1.66:1	2015
	1.66:1 Re-Master	2015

Sources: Jack Theakston and Bob Furmanek, “The New Era of Screen Dimensions,” *3D Film Archive*, April 2013, <http://www.3dfilmarchive.com/home/widescreen-documentation>; Masters of Cinema, *Shane*, Blu-Ray, 2015.

His comments on CinemaScope indicate that he did not perceive the 1.66:1 version of *Shane* as a “widescreen” version in the first place, which lines up with the way his son, George

149. *Motion Picture Daily*, 14 April 1953, 1-4. Richard Dyer MacCann, "George Stevens Criticizes System on Artistic Grounds," *The Christian Science Monitor*: 6, Apr 14, 1953.

150. Carle, Teet and Staff. “Exploitation and Pre-release Publicity Ideas for “Shane,”” N.D. Folder 3009. George Stevens Collection, 257.f-3013. Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.

Stevens Jr., would describe his father's position on the 1.66:1 version nearly fifty years later: "It wasn't ideal, but my father went along with it for the initial release because of the competition from CinemaScope and the climate of people wanting the big screen."¹⁵¹ Even though it was different from what Stevens initially filmed and planned for viewers to see, the 1.66:1 version was in line with the director's intention to provide audiences with a "big-screen" experience. There's also the fact that Stevens' much publicized lawsuit against NBC and Paramount in 1965 over the broadcast alteration of three films he directed under an earlier 1946 contract with Liberty Films did not concern image loss stemming from the ratio conversion to 1.33:1 and overscan. Instead, the issue was exclusively with the re-editing of *Something to Live For* (1952), *A Place in the Sun*, and *Shane* for commercials, which Stevens claimed violated his rights to final cut, damaged the work's artistic integrity, and misrepresented it to the public.¹⁵² Directors at the time then did not view the exhibition of films in different ratios as tantamount to mutilation.

Based on this, one can infer that he likely didn't mind the changes *Shane* underwent for its 1966 theatrical reissue, which was reportedly exhibited in the 1.85:1 ratio, meaning it would have 12% of the image cut from the top and bottom. By contrast, he likely disapproved of the 1.33 broadcast version that ABC telecast on Feb 2, 1968, as it had a total of nine interruptions, and so went against his interest in having the television release replicate the theatrical assemblage. Indeed, had his lawsuit been successful, this version would not exist in the first place. Subsequent releases on VHS and DVD in 1980 and 2000 respectively also featured the 1.33:1 ratio but not the interruptions and cuts for broadcast. After having been issued in different wide-screen

151. Lou Lumenick, "George Stevens Jr. speaks out on the 'Shane' controversy," *New York Post*, April 24, 2013, https://nypost.com/2013/04/24/george-stevens-jr-speaks-out-on-the-shane-controversy/?_ga=1.241215552.318230952.1535563469#.

152. While *A Place in the Sun* had been shown on NBC already in March 1965, the other two films had not yet been broadcast. Either way, Stevens wanted to prevent their re-editing. *Variety*, 8 June 1966, 26-38.

ratios throughout its various theatrical presentations over the years, *Shane* appeared in the 1.33:1 ratio for its post-theatrical exhibition as per the technical standards of TV sets. Despite these distinctions, the film did not really become the subject of ratio controversy until March 2013.

Former *LATimes* reporter Jeffrey Wells revealed on his blog *Hollywood Elsewhere* that Paramount and Warner Home Video (WHV) were planning to release the 1.66:1 version in a new Blu-Ray edition later that year. This was to be the first time a home video release would represent the film's theatrical exhibition ratio. A staunch advocate of "correct" aspect ratio presentation, Wells wrote to George Stevens Jr., who supervised the new digital transfer, arguing that releasing only the 1.66 version would bet-ray the artistic intent of his father, who "certainly didn't compose" for 1.66:1 with his DP during the film's production in 1951. He informed him and WHV of his plans to start a petition with major archivists and preservations to "urge that the original aspect ratio of this American classic be respected by Warner Home Video ... that 1.37 be respected above all, but that a dual aspect ratio release would also work."¹⁵³ The petition basically advocated that the 1.66:1 was secondary and inessential in contrast to the 1.37:1 version.

Wells' campaign brought public attention to the film's circulation history and quickly gained supporters, including director Woody Allen, archivist Bob Furmanek, and film historian Joseph McBride.¹⁵⁴ It also kicked off a discussion on the influential Home Theater Forum (HTF). Although most participants argued that WHV should release both of *Shane* versions on Blu-ray, they did not believe the widescreen version deserved to be released in lieu of the narrow-screen version, reiterating Well's argument that the 1.66:1 version went against the director's inten-

153. Jeffrey Wells, "Shane Aspect Ratio Conflict," *Hollywood Elsewhere*, March 3, 2013, <http://hollywood-elsewhere.com/2013/03/shane-aspect-ratio-conflict/>.

154. Ibid., "A Little Woody Reminder," *Hollywood Elsewhere*, July 30, 2018, <http://hollywood-elsewhere.com/2013/03/shane-aspect-ratio-conflict/>.

tions.¹⁵⁵ Of course, there were some dissenters. Film archivist Robert Harris was in favor of the reframed 1.66:1 version, as it was “originally screened at 1.66.” He believed it version had legitimacy due to its historical reception by audiences and that the new transfer by Stevens Jr. could improve on the 1953 release quality-wise.¹⁵⁶ But the general consensus was still that the 1.66:1 version was less legitimate than the 1.37:1, a rare exception to the rule that theatrical exhibition wins out over directorial intention as the final determinant of a film’s OAR.

On April 17, the *New York Post* reported that Wells’ campaign apparently succeeded. WHV was now cancelling the restored 1.66 version and delaying the release to properly master the 1.37:1 for the Blu-Ray, though the company did not directly acknowledge the campaign as the cause. TCM, which had planned to show a digital print of the 1.66 remaster at its annual Classic Film Festival, followed course as well.¹⁵⁷ By delegitimizing the widescreen version of *Shane* as an ersatz version that the director never intended, Wells and other ratio essentialists effectively censored it. Its exclusion from circulation portrays 1.37:1 as the only ratio *Shane* had ever appeared in, defining it as a narrow-screen picture. Such treatment is not uncommon. Many transitional films circulate on contemporary home viewing platforms as either “widescreen” or “narrow-screen” titles, leaving audiences unaware of their history as multi-ratio pictures.¹⁵⁸ A post-transitional lens that equates ratio variation to the loss of authenticity filters the cinematic past.

Elevating one ratio by delegitimizing another goes in hand with the conflation of 1.33:1

155. “Shane Blu-ray... in 1.66?,” in *Home Theater Forum*, March 22, 2013, <http://www.hometheaterforum.com/community/threads/shane-blu-ray-in-1-66.322187/>

156. Robert Harris, “Shane Blu-ray... in 1.66?,” *Home Theater Forum*, Mar 31, 2013. <https://www.hometheaterforum.com/community/threads/shane-blu-ray-in-1-66.322187/page-8#post-3942792>

157. Lou Lumenick, “DVD Extra Extra: ‘Shane’ Blu-ray now going out at 1:37,” *New York Post*, April 17, 2013, <https://nypost.com/2013/04/17/dvd-extra-extra-shane-blu-ray-now-going-out-at-137/>.

158. *Shane* would eventually receive a European Region B Blu-Ray two-disc set by Masters of Cinema in 2015 that features three versions of the picture: the 1.37 version, the theatrical 1.66 version, and the reframed 1.66 version supervised by George Stevens Jr.. However, as this was only a limited edition marketed to film collectors, significantly limiting its circulation and exposure, it has relatively little effect on the picture’s dominant perception.

and 1.37:1. Indeed, Wells' initial claim that the *Shane* Blu-Ray should privilege the 1.37:1 version was partially based on the premise that the picture has been shown in the proper ratio for decades "on broadcast TV, VHS, laser disc and DVD." The Blu-Ray would diminish the film by "going back to the old fake standard" so as to better fit the contours of contemporary 16:9 television screens.¹⁵⁹ Broadcast and video versions, according to this premise, were superior to the theatrical, as they reproduced the composition ratio that the director intended for viewers to see. In actuality, previous releases must've cropped some of the visible image from the sides of the 1.37:1 version. That they were not exactly true to those intentions after all contradicts the essentialist position that Wells and his supporters advocate. The cumulative effect of all this is a distortion of history, both that of the individual film and the larger context of its creation. There is a pretense that television adopted the revised Academy ratio, rather than the pre-1932 1.33:1, and an elision of the development of flat widescreen as a backwards-compatible theatrical format.

The privileging of one ratio over another continues to persevere, affecting the modern circulation of multi-ratio films and their internal histories and so continuing the depiction of ratio variation as a product of post-theatrical exhibition contexts. The versions emerging from those contexts in turn are still judged based on how well they adhere to an idealized form of theatrical exhibition that is assumed to have always existed, yet is actually historically and culturally specific. The cinematic past is then reproduced in accordance with how the present has defined the boundaries and limitations of theatrical film. Such a view does not allow for the possibility that all aspect ratios a film appears in are authentic, nor that they can stand apart and be evaluated on their own terms. This is because the size and relative amount of film image that one sees is always determined by the inherently unstable conditions of its exhibition.

159. Jeffrey Wells, "Shane Aspect Ratio Conflict," *Hollywood Elsewhere*, March 3 1953, <http://hollywood-elsewhere.com/2013/03/shane-aspect-ratio-conflict/>.

The notion that the 1.66:1 version of *Shane* was meant to capitalize on the contemporary 16:9 standard television ratio is a case in point. It highlights the fact that television has also transitioned to widescreen, narrowing the perceived ratio gap, and so diminishing the aesthetic and cultural boundaries between itself and film. One could connect this to the mass dissemination of broadcast versions led to it effectively becoming a repository for the cinematic past and renewing the narrow-screen market to suggest that broadcasting has come to function as an extension of theatrical exhibition. Taking this line of thought further indicates that the film industry's transition to widescreen really didn't end in 1956 but continued until the standardization of the 1.78:1 or 16:9 ratio for television in the mid-late 1990s. A key reason for choosing this particular ratio was its close proximity to the 1.85:1 flat standard, allowing for relatively more accurate reproduction of theatrical film images. High-definition television images became synonymous with widescreen.¹⁶⁰ Aesthetic differences between theatrical and broadcast versions then diminished.

The changeover to 16:9 in turn meant that contemporary television screens became wider in shape to match the new ratio, invalidating the term "full-screen," which designated the 1.33:1 ratio image filling the entire screen of a rectangular receiver. On a high-definition 16:9 set, the picture area of a film with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio also occupies the entirety of the screen, meaning full-screen has become widescreen. In turn, 1.33:1 and 1.37:1-framed images tend to appear with horizontal black bars on its left and right side of a 16:9 screen, a mode of presentation called "pillar boxing." Essentially the contemporary equivalent to letterboxing, pillar boxing allows a film or program filmed in 1.33:1 or to retain its ratio and so appear without any change to composition.¹⁶¹ Despite this, audience reception of pillar-boxing has been negative. Cardwell found

160. Newman and Levine, *Legitimizing Television*, 119-12. Richards and DiGiulio, "Film-to-Video Transfers," 85-86.

161. Butler, *Television Critical Methods*, 188.

that it has come to connote lower quality, outdated work, and smaller image size, with audiences preferring that the image fill the screen, and so not minding alteration.¹⁶² So, the 1.33:1 aspect ratio continues to carry a negative cultural perception, but ironically because its images no longer fit the entirety of the television screen. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Nowadays, it is possible to utilize streaming platforms to view the same picture on computers, phones, and touchscreen devices in addition to televisions. Each can affect the picture in its own way, be it in terms of image size, quality, color, brightness, aspect ratio, etc. There is nothing fundamentally different in the variability the film is subject to in these post-theatrical contexts than in available movie theaters, where it can be projected on an average multiplex screen, in IMAX, and/or 3-D. As the number of post-theatrical exhibition venues, platforms, and technologies expands in the future, the number of versions a given film can appear in will considerably increase. Rejecting their authenticity invalidates the exhibition contexts that allow them to exist, and so helps erase them from film history. Greater accuracy will follow once historical accounts stop maintaining the cultural primacy of theatrical exhibition over the post-theatrical and recognize that variation has always been a normal aspect of film viewing.

162. Sarah Cardwell, "A Sense of Proportion: Aspect Ratio and the Framing of Television Space," *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 2015): 86-87.

CHAPTER 3

Art vs. Commerce: Alternate Cuts And The New Technologies Of The 80s

Scholarly accounts of home video and cable's impact on the film industry generally paint a portrait of film's mass commercialization and aesthetic decline. However, this is based primarily on the assumption that ancillary markets reproduce the theatrical film. By examining the production and distribution of alternate cuts via the new analog platforms, this chapter argues that video and cable allow for transference of art and auteurism into ancillary markets in response to the commercialization of the theatrical cinema. The first section will establish the dominant academic positions on the effects of ancillary markets on film as an art form, showing that they rely primarily on the absence of variation. "Pre-Transition" will then establish the relation between art and editing within the context of Hollywood filmmaking, illustrating that various developments in the 60s and 70s, especially the establishment of the right to "director's cut," popularized the notion that a film was a true work of art only when the director had absolute control over the assemblage of the theatrical release.

"In-Transition" will then examine four primary categories of alternate cuts that emerged on the video and pay-cable markets from 1983 to 1989, showing how variation of assemblage associated film with art via ideological opposition to theatrical releases. In the process, it will link the end of the New Hollywood period and the curbing of directorial control over theatrical assemblage to the rise of auteurism in the ancillaries. Finally, "Post-Transition" will use *Manhunter* as a case study to show how the digital platform of DVD remediated cable and video, responding to the pervading fallacy that DVD originated alternate cuts, resulting in the destabilization of the film text. All this will help clarify the history of alternate cuts, their relation to film and video, and the role they play in shaping contemporary media culture.

I. Home Video, Cable and the Commercialization of Film

Media historians tend to portray the 1980s as a period when the American film industry underwent a shift away from art towards commerce. A primary cause is perceived to be the rise of ancillary markets, especially those of home video and pay-cable technologies. One way, in which this happens, is that movies lose their individual identity, becoming “increasingly manufactured as one item in a multimedia package.”¹ Wasser links this lack of autonomy to the notion of medium specificity, stating “When films were still specific to one medium, producers respected films enough to encourage the craft of filmmaking...” Because films can now appear in different media platforms and markets, especially video, producers apparently care much less about the craft and more about the economic benefits of distribution. So, video alongside other markets is responsible “for ushering in an era when market values have totally subsumed cultural values.”² In that sense, the very fact that movies no longer circulate exclusively on celluloid is a sign of film’s commercialization and artistic degradation.

Seemingly corroborating this was degradation in image quality occurring as a result of a picture being transferred to video. Charles Tashiro specifically critiques the video image as “acceptable within the limitations of the medium but unsatisfactory as a reproduction of the film image.”³ This leads him to equate both videocassettes and discs to “large shards-hints of the original” and question whether the preservation of the original text can even be possible, given

1. Richard Matlby, *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Metuchen, NJ, 1983), 322. Cited in David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979* (New York: C. Scribner, 2000), 335.

2. Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 2001), 199.

3. Charles Shiro Tashiro, "Videophilia: What Happens When You Wait for It on Video" in *Film Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1991), 9.

the inherent “distortion” that occur during the video-transfer process.⁴ Stephen Prince offers a similar perspective, defining differences of image contrast, color, brightness, resolution and other elements as “aesthetic problems of film-to-video transfers.”⁵ These attitudes suggest that there is an aesthetic purity to movies appearing on film, as though their appearance on anything but celluloid goes against the essential qualities of the art form. But they also indicate that the main issue isn’t so much that video reproduces movies, but that it doesn’t reproduce them accurately, making it culturally inferior by virtue of fostering differences from the original.

So, any deviation from a movie’s theatrical variant becomes coded as an inherent flaw of the technology, as well as a sign of mass access and commercialization. This in line with what one can describe as the “cinophile rhetoric,” according to which video devalued film artistically by bringing about the death of “cinophilia.” Sontag defines as a “very specific kind of love that cinema inspired.”⁶ Essentially, classic cinephilia associated movie watching with brevity and scarcity. A film, as Sconce points out, was perceived to be “a rare and fleeting experience” rather than an object “to own, access and manipulate at will” as it is in the era of mass access enabled by home video technology.⁷ According to Keathley, these aspects rendered each trip to the cinema special and every movie a unique “event.” Referencing Benjamin’s theory of reproduction, he describes the pre-video era, as one where the film experience possessed an “auratic” quality, in the sense of there being a uniqueness of time and space for films due to their

4. Ibid., 10

5. Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 124-132.

6. Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *New York Times Magazine* (Feb 25, 1996): 660.
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/03/12/specials/sontag-cinema.html>

7. Jeffrey Sconce, "The (Depressingly) Attainable Text," *Framework* 45, no. 2 (Fall, 2004): 71.

“restricted conditions of distribution and exhibition.”⁸ By this logic, mass access, repeat viewings, and close textual engagement enabled by video work against the ephemerality of the film experience and so make films more identifiable with commercial products.

Decreased image quality then is a sign of a film no longer being a rare experience shared with a public, but a private object that can be re-viewed, rewound, paused, stopped or deleted within the comfort of one’s own home. Apparently then, reproduction of movies on celluloid does not diminish film as an art form, while reproduction on video does. An inferior video “copy” of a film text corroborates the celluloid original’s status as an unchanging artwork. Such distinction essentially elevates film through the diminishment of video, positioning it as devoid of any value beside the commercial. The central problem with this rhetoric is that it presumes reproduction to be the singular goal and purpose of an ancillary platform, failing to recognize that video actually always produces new versions of movies that deserve their own criteria of evaluation. Lucas Hilderbrand is one of the few scholars, who take exception to this view, arguing that videotape can be seen as a distinct medium and makes a case for it possessing an aesthetic specificity, which he defines as “aesthetics of access.”⁹

Similar to how Usai theorizes variability in connection with film print decay, Hilderbrand points to how every act of videotape transfer can have a unique effect on the film text, resulting in new artifacts of decay and difference. So, “the altered look and sound of a text through its reduced resolution present both a trade-off for our ability to engage with it and indexical

8. Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, Or, The Wind In the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 21

9. Lucas Hilderbrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 5.

evidence of its circulation and use.”¹⁰ Consequently, “each cassette becomes a singular text that contains and compounds its own history.”¹¹ From this perspective, every time a movie is transferred to video from a film print or a movie is copied from one tape to another, a new video-specific version of the work comes into existence. And every subsequent copy actually produces a unique variant that builds on all that preceded it.

In addition to this, there are other format-related alterations that the theatrical film would regularly undergo for home viewing. As the new technologies relied on the television set, they had to utilize the derided pan-and-scan process to reformat widescreen movies. Consequently, the majority of prerecorded videotape and cable versions typically combined the undisrupted assemblage of the theatrical release with the televisual 4:3 aspect ratio, blurring then established aesthetic distinctions between film and television.¹² As early tapes typically had enough space for only 90-120 minutes of audio-video, distributors would also occasionally alter long films fit the allotted limit via either re-editing or the technique of “time compression,” meaning a 127-minute film like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* would run 118 minutes on VHS.¹³ The movie would, in effect, grow shorter and faster. Another format-related alteration has to do with projection speed or, rather, frame rate. Since the standardization of talkie pictures, movies have been projected theatrically at 24 frames-per-second (fps).

Video and television, by contrast, necessitate 30 fps for the American NTSC format or 25 fps for the PAL format in Europe and the SECAM format in countries like France and Russia. Conversion from 24 to 30 fps requires a “3-2 pulldown” transfer process, which was developed

10. Ibid., 15

11. Ibid., 180

12. Laserdisc was an exception and so earned distinction from other video-based formats for retraining the original aspect ratio. However, its audience was far more limited.

13. Les Paul Robley, “Movies on Tape,” *American Film (Archive: 1975-1992)* 7, no. 6 (Apr 01, 1982): 24.

by the mid-70s. In essence, it involves not speeding up a movie, but alternating between applying three fields of video and two fields of video to every film frame.¹⁴ A field is the “smallest unit of video timing.” NTSC has 60 fields per second. This results in the video version’s every other frame possessing one additional field than the other, but causes no durational difference between the theatrical and video releases, making theatrical projection and NTSC virtually indistinguishable. Conversion from 24 to 25 fps, by contrast, results in a difference of about 4 percent, which “makes movies last 2m24s less for every hour of the original film, and it makes all voices almost a half-tone higher.”¹⁵ Despite possessing an assemblage identical to their NTSC counterparts, PAL/SECAM variants therefore move at a faster pace from shot-to-shot.

Unsurprisingly, such differences have also raised ire from commentators on the grounds of authenticity. Film editor Russ Kingston, for example, indicts video conversions from NTSC to PAL as a “horror show” that “destroys a film’s aesthetic values,” comparing the acceleration of the editing to colorization, pan-and-scanning, as well as television censorship.¹⁶ Clearly then, a film’s translation to analog video can produce an array of differences that, while recognized, are often seen in a negative light. The denigration of format-produced aesthetic variation goes in hand with the consistent absence of alternate cuts – versions of movies differentiated from the standard theatrical and video releases by assemblage – from historical accounts and academic studies of cable and video’s impact on Hollywood. This is surprising, given that numerous films circulated in re-edited form on premium cable, tape, and laserdisc throughout the 80s.

14. Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 294.

15. Henrik Herranen, “How Film is Transferred to Video.” January 8 1995.
<https://www.modeemi.fi/~leopold/AV/FilmToVideo/>

16. Russ Kingston, “Nobody’s PAL,” *Artists Rights Foundation*. January 1998.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20010725223736/http://www.artistsrights.org/cf/news/detail.cfm?QID=15>

Many of them were produced by or under the auspices of directors, especially established auteurs, appearing under various labels, such as “director’s cut” and “unrated version.” Whereas directors tended to react negatively towards the re-editing of the pictures they worked on by other individuals, many embraced home video and pay cable upon realizing that these new formats allowed them to circulate versions they themselves preferred over the theatrical releases. Changes in assemblage meant differences in running time, as well as narrative, pace, shot-to-shot relation, and many others. Unlike broadcast television versions, these cuts mostly add, rather than subtract footage, making them longer than the theatrical release. Otherwise, their technical presentation mirrors those of the standard video version: no commercials or standards and practices, but all the format-mandated modifications. Scholars, however, tend to foster an overall impression that cable and video throughout the 80s virtually always reproduces the theatrical cut.

For one thing, they commonly define premium cable presentation of movies in opposition to that of network television. Gomery praises pay-cable movie channels, because they “jettisoned the advertisements and ran the films intact only months after they had disappeared from movie theatres.”¹⁷ Segrave describes HBO airing films “unedited and uninterrupted by commercials.”¹⁸ Donahue describes Pay-TV as offering movies “to people in their own home, free of commercials and censorship.”¹⁹ Such an approach suggests that pay-cable had higher cultural value than television because it better replicated the theatrical experience in the home by permitting material that would be censored on broadcast networks, such as violence, sex, and profanity. For

17. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 268.

18. Kerry Segrave, *Movies at Home: How Hollywood Came to Television* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2009), 160.

19. Suzanne Mary Donahue, *American Film Distribution: The Changing Marketplace* (Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1987), 159.

another, there is usually no discussion of differences in assemblage between pre-recorded video and network versions, as though the former is equivalent to the theatrical by default.

In their discussions of ancillary markets, for instance, neither Donahue, nor Segrave refer to alternate cuts produced for or re-circulated by video.²⁰ Even when the subject does arise, it usually receives a fleeting mention that positions them as negligible exceptions to the rule. Gomery briefly discusses “uncut” and “director’s cut” versions of movies like *Heaven’s Gate* airing describing the Z-Channel, an alternative premium movie channel to the likes of HBO and Showtime.²¹ However, he never elaborates on what these “uncut” versions are, how they are distinct from theatrical ones or what their significance is in relation to the film medium. Prince similarly alludes to unrated video versions, positioning it as a byproduct of the adult video industry’s impact on mainstream filmmakers, but never really delves into what the differences between standard and unrated releases are or what they signify.²² Indeed, his choice of words suggests that the two are identical or interchangeable.

Recent studies of MPAA ratings and policies provide more detailed examinations of alternate cuts on video, particularly unrated versions, but they focus almost exclusively on pictures from the early 1990s, such as *Basic Instinct*.²³ Lack of emphasis on 80s examples normalizes the perception that assemblage-related alterations of a film text on ancillary platforms were next to nonexistent throughout the 80s. In the process, they sponsor contemporary studies that position

20. Donahue, *American Film Distribution*, 164-169. Segrave, *Movies at Home*, 183-189. This omission is particularly glaring, as his preceding chapter extensively recounts how and why numerous pictures transformed on network television. See 123-158.

21. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 269.

22. Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 123.

23. Kevin S. Sandler, *The Naked Truth: Why Hollywood Doesn't Make X-Rated Movies* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 132-169. Stephen Vaughn, *Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 209-221.

alternate cuts alongside other variations as byproducts of the DVD and so mischaracterize the pre-DVD age as one where movies were defined by stability, singularity, and reproducibility.

Tryon argues that the presence of multiple versions evinces how DVD has ensured that a film “is never truly finished”, compelling consumers to collect as many editions of a film as possible out of a futile desire for completion.²⁴ Klinger similarly attributes the destabilization of the film text to DVD, finding that new cuts appearing on successive “special editions” are central to “repurposing” or reselling the same films.²⁵ In a chapter of his book on media distribution that focuses on DVD specifically, Jeffrey Ullin similarly claims that the video market can commercially reincarnate a film and so afford it more than one lifecycle “by inducing consumers to keep buying the same product again and again with each new technological upgrade.”²⁶ Positioning textual instability as little other than a side effect of financial repurposing, these studies not only distort media history via omission, they essentially reject textual variability by reducing all alternate video versions to the sole function of commercially replicating the standard releases.

Altogether, this suggests that DVD, by introducing variation of assemblage, continues the artistic devaluation of film begun by the ancillary markets that emerged in the 80s. Such a view completely disregards the possibility that alternate cuts might diversify a film’s potential audience or promote discourses that oppose the dominant ideology, resulting in contradictions and tensions. But more than that, it conflates different categories of alternate cuts, suggesting they are all interchangeable and devoid of any individual identity or aesthetic value. Jon Lewis’ claim regarding the NC-17 rating epitomizes such conflation. He states,

24. Chuck Tryon, *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media Convergence* (Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 27.

25. Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 72.

26. Jeffrey C. Ulin, *The Business of Media Distribution: Monetizing Film, TV and Video Content in an Online World* (New York and London: Focal Press, 2010), 160.

The NC-17 tag can be used to advantage in certain ancillary markets. So-called director's cuts or restored versions, often including just a minute or two of footage excised to satisfy CARA, offer additional reasons to rent or buy a video version of a film one may have already seen in a theater.... The most important thing the NC-17 classification has done for the studios is that it has given them the opportunity to release the same product twice...²⁷

Lewis clearly references the proliferation of "unrated editions" on home video, which are often equivalent in assemblage to an NC-17 cut of a motion picture. However, he interchangeably refers to them as both "director's cuts" and "restored versions," implying that such labels are all superficial, meaning there is no significant difference between them and the theatrical release.

This ties into his view that MPAA policies are a form of economic censorship that is contractually imposed upon filmmakers, obligating them to deliver a film with a proper rating to satisfy the demands of numerous ancillary markets.²⁸ Because of MPAA policies, from which not even the most powerful auteurs are free, "the art of cinema is institutionally subsumed by and/or rendered secondary to commerce."²⁹ All instances of assemblage-based variation on video then must be a sign of MPAA content regulation and the triumph of commerce over art. Yet, this does not hold up to scrutiny when one considers the specific circumstances under which the different types of cuts are produced and circulated, as well as the discourses they promote. Unrated editions appearing on VHS, laserdisc, DVD and other platforms indeed often result due to the MPAA rating system influencing the assemblage of the theatrical release.

As Sandler argues, they constitute "literal manifestations of the self-regulatory process kept secret by CARA."³⁰ Restored versions, on the other hand, generally designate catalog titles or classic films that pre-date the MPAA rating system. So their circulation couldn't possibly be a

27. Jon Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How The Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 297.

28. *Ibid.*, 285.

29. *Ibid.*, 3

30. Sandler, *The Naked Truth*, 6.

side effect of contemporary content regulation. All this indicates that the predominant academic and cinephile views of video and its relation to film are predicated on the absence or, more accurately, invisibility of variation. Variation then paradoxically either does not exist in the ancillary markets, or if it does, it is, an unintended side effect of commerce overtaking art in the film industry. Arguing against this, this chapter will show that variation was not merely a footnote in the 1980s, nor wholly subordinate to the dominant capitalist ideology.

In reality, it was a widespread practice intrinsic to the ancillary video market's popularity that brought together many distinct and at times conflicting interests, including financial, aesthetic, political, and historical, leading to ideological contradictions and tensions. Key to this was the fact that alternate cuts were usually recognized to be qualitatively and aesthetically superior in some way to the theatrical releases, especially on the grounds of authenticity. From this perspective, rather than causing the artistic devaluation of the medium, video actually helped elevate film artistically in reaction to its theatrical commercialization. Illustrating this requires making variation visible and showing how the production and circulation of alternate cuts legitimated video as a site of creative freedom.

II. Pre-Transition: Art and Commerce in the New Hollywood

New Hollywood, Editing, and the Work of Art

According to Noel King, the term "New Hollywood" is the subject of much contention in academic discourses, due to "competing accounts of the 'new' in relation to Hollywood."³¹ (60) But multiple scholars agree that a primary mark of New Hollywood was an overall, if temporary, elevation of directors to a primary position of control in the filmmaking process, which went in

31. Noel King, "New Hollywood," in *The Cinema Book*, 3rd ed., ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 60-67.

hand with an general surge of creative freedom. There were various interconnected industrial, political, and other factors that enabled this shift. By the 1960s, the classic studio system mode of production largely came apart, with major studios to following the example of United Artists (UA) and switching to contracting for individual works. Rivalry with the emerging independent producers compelled them to offer greater degrees of latitude to producers and directors.

Moreover, in 1968, the MPAA rating system replaced the original Production Code, loosening the self-censorship that previously determined the acceptability of on-screen content, especially when it came to sex and violence. All this intertwined with multiple social and political upheavals of the 60s, which were then reflected in the films' narratives.³² Finally, the early 60s saw a cultural re-conception of many directors as “auteurs” or film authors. The notion of the “auteur” emerged from the “auteur theory”, which postulated that a film could represent the singular and personal vision of the director that circulate across multiple works directed by the same individual. The theory grew popular among film scholars and critics, while also influencing upcoming New Hollywood filmmakers, especially those with film school degrees. Scorsese, DePalma, Milius, Lynch, Altman were reportedly among those who were familiar with or influenced by the auteur theory.³³ Many of them took inspiration from European art films, such as those by French filmmakers like Goddard and Truffaut.

Within this context, formally and narratively unconventional movies, be they studio efforts, such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), or independent productions like *Easy Rider* (1969), found commercial success with the burgeoning “youth” market – the new cine-literate audience

32. Stephen Powers, David J. Rothman, and Stanley Rothman, *Hollywood's America: Social and Political Themes in Motion Pictures* (Oxford: Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 22-26.

33. Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 88-89. James Bernardoni, *The New Hollywood: What the Movies Did with the New Freedoms of the Seventies* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1991), 8.

emerging in the counter-culture of the 60s. The potential of capturing this market compelled major studios to embrace new directors and their auteurist approach to filmmaking.³⁴

Conversely, this legitimated and popularized the public perception of the director as auteur. In comparison to the films of the studio system, the New Hollywood cinema, as Schatz argues, “was both more profit-minded but also more artistically motivated, more of a business strategy but also more of a genuine art form.” (28) That is, the rise of Hollywood auteurism reflected the period’s balance between the aesthetic interests of the directors and the commercial interests of studios. My contention is that the most crucial marker of this balance was the fact that directors began to receive a greater degree of control in shaping the assemblage of the theatrical release.³⁵

First and foremost, film editing is essentially a form of authorship, for it constitutes “the final process of determining the order in which events unfold on the screen and what information is revealed to the audience.”³⁶ In crafting a cut of a picture, the editor selects from the available footage a particular combination of elements – shots, scenes, sequences, lines of dialogue, etc. – that compose the text’s cause-and-effect chain of narrative events. Among other things, he can remove entire plot points, alter character motivation and revise the chronological order of the film’s events, basically revising or re-authoring the picture. As a picture goes through successive “cuts” in post before release, even minute alterations to a single scene or sequence can affect the film’s narrative whole. An editor then qualifies as an author.

34. Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 67-69. Thomas Schatz, *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood: Ritual, Art and Industry* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Press, 1983), 197.

35. This is not to say that auteurs were always able to secure their desired assemblage but that studios became generally more amenable to their intentions. Multiple films directed by Sam Peckinpah during this period, such as *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), were reportedly edited without his participation.

36. Jane Stadler and Kelly McWilliam. *Screen Media: Analysing Film and Television* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009), 93.

But in a broader sense, authorship is a form of editing. Barthes' rejection of the traditional notion of the author, for example, suggests that a work is created from selection and composition of preexisting cultural materials. In a similar vein, Howard Becker positions editing as central to the creation of any artwork, whether it be in film, photography, painting, literature, etc. He states, "Artists consider themes, materials, sequences and combinations, and lengths and sizes, and choose among them. They may choose one possibility in this work and an alternative in a later version..."³⁷ So, anybody who edits or re-edits a work, making specific selections from a large body of possibilities, qualifies as an artist. This notion is central to Becker's theorization of artworks as products of collective, as opposed to individual activity, affected by numerous individuals that work together as part of an "art world."³⁸ He correctly emphasizes that, while a single individual is usually designated as an artist and receives all the blame or credit for a work, there are many other individuals that perform an editorial function.

Distributors of artworks, including curators, publishers, and film producers, in particular are notable for their editorial choices, for they can influence whether or not a work actually becomes accessible and if it undergoes alteration for distribution. Audiences too can influence the decisions that go into the editing of a work.³⁹ Becker's model is especially relevant to the dynamics surrounding editing in the American film industry, because in addition to the designated film editor, many different people can impact the assemblage of a theatrical release.⁴⁰ Some directors prefer to personally edit the films they work on, while others issue instructions to

37. Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds*, 25th Anniversary ed. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008), 197.

38. Ibid., 34-35.

39. Ibid., 210-214.

40. This is without counting all the actors, set decorators, gaffers, and other individuals that contribute to the construction of the picture as part of the collective that is the art world.

the editor. A producer can overrule a director and make demands of the editor himself. And exhibitors may require changes to the picture for release in specific markets. And yet, out of the many individuals that can shape a single film, there is often a tendency to single out a lone individual as the picture's author, especially the director.

Reflective of this is documentary filmmaker Laurent Bouzereau. In the introduction to his book about how the re-editing of Hollywood movies "can affect a director's original intentions". At the same time, he emphasizes that there are numerous entities that can affect a film's assemblage and therefore shape or alter the director's vision, such as the MPAA ratings board, test audiences, television networks, and airlines. According to him, "Whoever gets the power of replacing, deleting, or adding images can mean for a movie the difference between life and death."⁴¹ While Bouzereau doesn't specify what he means by the "life and death" of a movie, his words indicate that editing endows one with a God-like power over the text. Because of this and the fact that many individuals work on a single project, control over assemblage can become fraught with conflict. Most prominently, fights revolve around ownership of the "final cut" – the right to determine the cut of the film that viewers ultimately see in theaters.⁴²

From Final Cut to Director's Cut

Comments by journalists and filmmakers suggest that possession of final cut signifies one's status as an artist and author. Director James Ivory describes final cut as "basic to any kind of personal expression" in a director's films. Without it in his contract, the director will typically lose control over assemblage to individuals that hold a financial interest in the picture.⁴³ He then

41. Laurent Bouzereau, *The Cutting Room Floor* (New York: Carol Pub. Group, 1994), ix.

42. Note that "final cut" can refer to both the right to make such a version and the version itself. The word "final" underlines how the cinema was perceived to be the only space of film exhibition.

43. James Ivory, "Hollywood versus Hollywood," in *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader*, ed. Ruth Petrie (London: Cassell, 1997), 5.

defines those who re-edit a film against a director's wishes as "frustrated 'artists' who are thereby given a chance to meddle with the work of genuine artists."⁴⁴ By this rationale, the director qualifies as an auteur when the editorial influences of other entities or individuals are minimized. Such a view is fairly common. A 2005 *VLIFE* article, for instance, illustrates that many contemporary filmmakers view final cut as "a director's Holy Grail, proof that the helmer is a genuine auteur and freed from such things as test screenings and focus groups."⁴⁵ This means a film can be a work of art only if the director has final cut.

Otherwise, the work will not conform to personal expression and will instead reflect the collective intentions of false artists, making it a commercial product, as though collective influence is inherently detrimental to the artistic value of a film. Unsurprisingly, final cut has historically been long desired by Hollywood directors. Balio states that a director's right to final cut existed in the days of silent cinema, but came to an end by the 1930s, when producers assumed primary control over editing following the standardization of film production.⁴⁶ Sarris similarly states that final cut was a rare privilege for directors in the 30s and 40s during the dominance of the studio system that did not translate from one project to another.⁴⁷ In 1964, however, a Director's Guild of America (DGA) subcommittee, led by Elliot Silverstein, proposed a bill of

44. Ibid., 5-6

45. Cathy Dunkley, "The Curse of the Final Cut," *VLIFE* 397, no. 3 (Dec 2004/Jan 2005): 106.

46. Tino Balio. *Grand Design: Hollywood As a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (New York: Scribner, 1993), 77-79.

47. Andrew Sarris, "Towards a Theory of Film History," in *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 1: 246.

“creative rights” for film and television directors in during negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP).⁴⁸

At the time, many DGA members reportedly felt “that the producer interferes too much” and desired “more autonomy during actual production and editing.”⁴⁹ The April 1964 proposal meant to change the status of the director to that of “someone who should take part in all aspects of the motion picture process.” Silverstein himself stated, “We wanted to cast ourselves as the people who made the films... Everything else was stuff on the palette. But we were making the painting.” In essence, Silverstein and his colleagues sought to redefine the director as an artist, legitimating him as the individual creative authority responsible for the film in its totality. Central to this was the establishment of the “director’s cut,” a contractual right to edit the film without any outside interference for as long as necessary to assemble a finished cut.

As Silverstein describes it, the director's cut was supposed to represent the purest expression of the director’s personal vision. Free from any outside influence, it “was to be definitive” and what the director ideally “wanted to appear on the screen.”⁵⁰ From these descriptions, it is clear that the proposed director’s cut was the equivalent of final cut. Had the AMPTP accepted the DGA’s terms as proposed, any Hollywood director with a standard DGA-based contract would have the right to final cut by default, maximizing directorial control over the theatrical release, while minimizing that of everyone else. Naturally, the producers rejected the proposed redefinition of the director on the grounds that it was “all-encompassing” and neglected the roles

48. Lyndon Stambler, “Director’s Cut,” *Director’s Guild of America*, Spring 2011, <http://www.dga.org/CreativeRightsBill>.

49. *Variety*, 26 Feb 1964, 5.

50. *Ibid.*

of other participants in the filmmaking process, such as the producer and editor. But eventually they agreed to make the right to a director's cut a standard part of contracts in autumn of 1964.⁵¹ The ratification of the director's cut thus normalized the perceptions that a director is a true artist and the film is a true work of art only when he is able to release his definitive cut of the film.

However, the new contractual right was a compromise that left the last word over a theatrical release's assemblage to the studio, rather than a guarantee of absolute authority over editing. Article 7 in the latest iteration of the DGA Basic Agreement, which focuses on the creative rights of the director, makes clear that the director's cut is only the first cut the director presents to the studio before it undergoes revisions with input from other individuals, such as producers, studio executives, and preview audiences. It is also notably far from "complete" in the sense that other aspects of post-production, such as sound mixing and visual effects, are missing or subject to change. And while the director has legal right to make this cut without any interference, he must achieve this within a pre-determined amount of time, such as ten weeks after the end of principle photography.⁵² Rather than be standardized, final cut became subject to contractual negotiations between producer, director, and distributor on a case-by-case basis.⁵³

Still, from the moment of its ratification, any DGA member working in Hollywood was now contractually guaranteed at least a measure of editorial influence and final credit on the main titles.⁵⁴ In the beginning of the 80s, however, studios began actively curtailing editorial

51. Robert Markowitz, "Visual History with Elliott Silverstein," *Director's Guild of America*, May 17, 2002. <https://www.dga.org/Craft/VisualHistory/Interviews/Elliott-Silverstein.aspx?Filter=Full%20Interview>

52. "Article 7, Section 7-500: Editing and Post-Production," *Director's Guild of America Basic Agreement of 2014*, 72-88. <https://www.dga.org/Contracts/Agreements/Basic2014.aspx>

53. John W. Cones, *The Feature Film Distribution Deal: A Critical Analysis of the Single Most Important Film Industry Agreement* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), 86-87.

54. Steve Pond, "A Guild is Born," *DGA Quarterly* 2, no.4 (Winter 2006), <https://www.dga.org/Craft/DGAQ/All-Articles/0604-Winter2006-07/Features-A-Guild-is-Born.aspx>.

control over theatrical releases. The turning point was the dissolution of UA in 1981 following the critical and commercial failure of *Heaven's Gate*. Directed by New Hollywood filmmaker Michael Cimino, the Western epic reportedly cost about 44 million dollars and had two theatrical runs, both of which failed at the box office.⁵⁵ Crucial to the lack of success was the film's association in the media with budgetary excess and directorial indulgence. The first theatrical cut of the film was three-hours and thirty-nine minutes long. Following highly negative critical reactions to the initial press screening in 1980, Cimino and UA pulled the film out of theaters and re-edited it for a re-release down to about two-and-a-half hours.⁵⁶

Reviews of the shorter 1981 cut were more positive than those of the 1980 cut, but the reception was still predominantly negative.⁵⁷ Thus, *Heaven's Gate* became a cautionary tale of what happens when a director has too much freedom. Actor Kris Kristofferson has stated in the documentary *Final Cut: The Making of Heaven's Gate and the Unmaking of a Studio* (2007) that he believes the film "was used by powers that be to stop a way of filmmaking, where the author was the director and was in control of the money." One can surmise that this perception partially stemmed from the fact that UA "had built its reputation on giving directors the right to work without intervention."⁵⁸ In the aftermath, major studios refrained from offering directors the type of creative freedom that they enjoyed throughout the 60s and 70s. While cases differed, theatrical cuts now commonly reflected the vision and intentions of the studio, rather than the director. By

55. Tino Balio, *United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 340.

56. Steven Bach, *Final Cut: Dreams and Disaster in the Making of Heaven's Gate* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 348-376.

57. Ibid., 397-400

58 Ibid., 340

the logic that a film's status as art is predicated on the director having total control over assemblage, the closer a theatrical release is to the director's intention, the closer it is to a work of art.

Theatrical releases were thus generally closer to art in the 60s and 70s than in the 80s, because studios were more amenable to providing directors with editorial control. Multiple 80s pictures would subsequently become famous due to behind-the-scenes conflict between studios and auteurs, such as Terry Gilliam and Ridley Scott, over the theatrical assemblage.⁵⁹ By 1988, many directors lamented the general lack of final cut in a "film industry increasingly dominated by corporate business executives." Conversely, studio producers worried that those "directorial "madmen" with final cut would overspend and make interminable movies."⁶⁰ Based on all this, the New Hollywood period can be defined as a time when directors possessed greater editorial influence over their films than before or after. In connection with this, the theatrical cinema achieved a balance between art and commerce that came apart at the beginning of the 80s.

III. In-Transition: Alternate Cuts and Creative Freedom (1983-1989)

The loss of this editorial control in the aftermath of *Heaven's Gate* compelled numerous filmmakers, especially established auteurs, to embrace ancillary platforms, as they did not have many of the assemblage-related restrictions of theatrical exhibition. Variation then became key to the expression of auteurism. By fostering the production and circulation of alternate cuts that reflected the director's intention, cable and video allowed filmmakers to express their authorship over film texts and position them as works of art. Predominantly four different types of alternate cuts came to be standardized in ancillary markets from approximately 1983 to 1989: "pre-ancillary cuts," "authorial revisions," "restorations," and "unrated versions." While they each

59. See Paul M. Sammon, *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* (New York, NY: HarperPrism, 1999). Also, Jack Mathews, Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard, and Charles McKeown, *The Battle of Brazil* (New York: Applause Books, 1998).

60. San Francisco Chronicle, 04 Jan 1988, F1.

possess specific conventions of production, circulation, and revision, they commonly express ideological opposition to theatrical releases. Often, this is expressed through reiteration of what David Andrews terms as the “bad old story,” which refers to any narrative that presumes a binary opposition between distributors and “cinematic artists, especially auteurs.”⁶¹

Auteurs specifically tend to utilize it to complain about “having to modify their movies to suit distributors. At the rhetorical level, auteurs resist such demands or at least cast them in a negative light...”⁶² This promotes the distributor’s preferred cut as a work of commerce and the director’s preferred cut as a work of art. Despite this, all alternate cuts also support the film industry commercially, such as through sales and rentals of videotapes or television ratings. In this sense, each in their own way restores the New Hollywood balance between art and commerce, illustrating how different modes of cinematic distribution and exhibition can “variously operate parallel to, in tandem with, and in opposition to one another.”⁶³ Altogether, they legitimate ancillary markets as the sites of creative freedom, authorship, and originality.

Pre-Ancillary Cuts

The earliest alternate cuts to become accessible in the US via the new technologies of the 80s do not actually originate in the ancillary markets yet remain largely invisible to American audiences until their remediation by pay-cable or home video. One can refer to such versions as “pre-ancillary cuts” to accentuate that they were not specifically constructed for home viewing. This broad category breaks down into several smaller sub-categories, depending on the other venue or context, in which the cut has been exhibited, such as international theaters, test

61. David Andrews, *Theorizing Art Cinemas: Foreign, Cult, Avant Guard, and Beyond* (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 2013), 191.

62. *Ibid.*, 201

63. Erika Balsom, "Original Copies: How Film and Video Became Art Objects" *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 1 (2013), 117.

screenings, and film festivals. Chronologically then, the initial exhibition of these cuts can actually precede the film's wide release in American cinemas. From this perspective, a pre-ancillary cut can constitute the "original" relative to the US theatrical release of the same film. There are also cases when the exhibition of a pre-ancillary cut occurs simultaneously or almost simultaneously with that of the US theatrical cut, such as when European pictures are released with a different assemblage and running time in American cinemas and vice versa.

Consequently, the same movie possesses a European Theatrical Cut and an American Theatrical Cut, which compete with one another for recognition as the original, definitive, and superior version of the film. When this occurs, a director's endorsement and recitation of a bad old story can support one variant's claim to originality over that of the other. Both *1900* (1976) and *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984) fit into this schema, with Bernardo Bertolucci and Sergio Leone criticizing their respective US distributors in the popular press for producing and releasing shorter revisions of the epic-length features. Each auteur promoted the European releases as the qualitatively superior variants, effectively disowning the shorter US cuts.⁶⁴ When a pre-ancillary cut represents the version over whose assemblage the director had the most editorial control, its differences from the US theatrical cut evince the gap between distributor and director interests, aligning the former with commerce and the latter with art.

The theatrical circulations of the two cuts in different territories and markets then reflects different conceptions of the audience by distributors, with American viewers being presumed to be less tolerant towards longer running time than European ones. Ancillary markets can then bridge the gaps between different territories and viewers by making a previously unseen cut available to both those who have seen only one variant and those who have seen neither. Viewers

64. Adam Knee, "Notions of Authorship and the Reception of 'Once Upon a Time in America'," *Film Criticism* 10, no. 1 (1985): 3-17. *New York Times*, 13 Oct 1985, H24.

that watch movies exclusively in the home, for instance, may be introduced to the work through one cut, rather than the other, especially if only one is available in a given territory. Rather than merely reselling the film then, home-viewing platforms can sell a film for the first time, in opposition to or in competition with the American theatrical release. Coding a pre-ancillary cut as both old and new, alteration of assemblage can then reshape the cultural reception and status of a film that had been initially formed by a theatrical cut.

In this regard, an exemplary film was *Heaven's Gate*, the same picture that helped bring about the end of auteur control over theatrical releases. Following the critical and commercial failure of both theatrical releases, it gained a new life upon the release of its "original" long cut on Z Channel (1974-1989), a pay-cable network that predominantly catered to a niche audience of influential cinephiles, including "studio execs, directors, writers and producers."⁶⁵ Network head Jerry Harvey specifically wanted to air the 219-minute cut that previously appeared theatrically for a week. MGM/UA Home Entertainment licensed it to the Z-Channel in November 1982 for airing from December 24-30. While the premium channel had only about 90,000-100,000 subscribers, the television premiere garnered good ratings, leading other TV systems began to offer the 219-minute cut as "a pay-per-view option," further increasing its visibility and audience.⁶⁶ But more importantly, the once-derided long version had a much more positive reception, both in comparison to its theatrical run and to its shorter, more widely seen reissue.

Gradually, thanks to its remediation by pay-cable, *Heaven's Gate* transformed "from "unqualified disaster" to unequivocal "masterpiece".⁶⁷ The picture's re-legitimation retroactive-

65. Andrew Berg, "The Strange Life and Tragic Death of Z Channel," *VLife* 394, no. 8 (Apr/May 2004): 60.

66. Ben Brown, "SCANLINES: CABLE HEAVEN FOR CIMINO'S GATE?," *American Film* 8, no. 5 (Mar 01, 1983): 28; *Los Angeles Times*, 19 Nov 1982, J22.

67. Steven Bach, *Final Cut*, 415.

ly validated Michael Cimino as an auteur. But it also solidified the brand identity of Z-Channel, which continually garnered prestige and adulation by providing American audiences over the next few years with access to alternate pre-ancillary cuts of other auteur films that had been similarly re-edited for US cinemas. Among others, this included the aforementioned *1900* and *Once Upon a Time in America* but also titles that didn't necessarily have a bad old story, such as *Fanny and Alexander*, which originated as a television miniseries. Typically using the labels "original" and "uncut," Z Channel consistently advertised them via references to authenticity and comparative evaluation. Such an approach effectively denounced the US theatrical cuts of these films as lesser or derivative variants.

Figure 3.1 illustrates this by providing a list of 1980s and pre-1980s pictures, whose alternate pre-ancillary cuts would appear on cable and video throughout the decade.⁶⁸ Many of them, as the chart illustrates, are considerably longer than the theatrical release, reflecting how ancillary markets didn't have the durational restrictions inherent to American cinema. Their association with authenticity thus creates correspondence between cultural status and duration. Specifically, they foster the impression that the longer a film is, the smaller its commercial prospects and the greater its potential qualification as a work of art. By airing their comparatively more legitimate variants then, the Z-Channel contradicted the notion that television could only provide a lesser reproduction of a film and so diminish a filmmaker's vision. Instead, it positioned premium cable as a potential site of creative freedom for auteur filmmakers.

68. Please note that "RT" designates the running time of a given variant and appears in minutes. This will be the standard for all such Figures throughout the chapter.

Figure 3.1 – Pre-Ancillary Cuts On Cable and Video

Title	Director	US Cut		Re-circulated Pre-Ancillary Cut				
		Date	RT	Label(s)	Date	RT	Platform (s)	Previous Venue
<i>Dressed to Kill</i>	Brian DePalma	1980	106	<i>Uncensored International Version</i>	1981	106	VHS, Laserdisc	International Theaters
<i>Heaven's Gate</i>	Michael Cimino	1980	149	<i>The Original, Uncut Version</i>	1982	219	Pay Cable (Z)	US Theaters (1 week-run)
<i>Fanny and Alexander</i>	Ingmar Bergman	1983	188	<i>Complete 5 ½ hour version</i>	1984	312	Pay Cable (Z)	Swedish Television
<i>1900</i>	Bernardo Bertolucci	1976	247	<i>Original 5 ¼ hour Italian Version</i>	1984	317	Pay Cable (Z)	International Theaters
<i>The Wild Bunch</i>	Sam Peckinpah	1969	135	<i>Uncut Version</i>	1985	144	VHS; Pay-Cable (Z)	Preview Screenings
<i>Das Boot</i>	Wolfgang Petersen	1982	150	<i>Original Uncut Version</i>	1985	330	Pay Cable (Z)	German Television
<i>Once Upon a Time in America</i>	Sergio Leone	1984	143	<i>Uncut Version</i>	1985	226	Pay Cable (Z)	International Theaters
<i>Blade Runner</i>	Ridley Scott	1982	116	<i>International Theatrical Cut</i>	1986	116	VHS, Laserdisc	International Theaters
<i>Touch of Evil</i>	Orson Welles	1958	95	<i>Restored Version</i>	1987	109	VHS	Preview Screenings
<i>Ludwig</i>	Luchino Visconti	1973	184	<i>Uncut Version</i>	1988	235	Pay-Cable (Z)	European Theaters
<i>The Sicilian</i>	Michael Cimino	1987	115	<i>Director's Cut; European Cut</i>	1988	146	VHS, Laserdisc	International Theaters
<i>Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid</i>	Sam Peckinpah	1973	106	<i>Restored Uncut Version</i>	1989	122	VHS, Laserdisc	Preview Screenings

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* Magazine articles; Historic Newspaper Articles; *Z-Channel: A Magnificent Obsession* DVD Booklet

So, while these variants had a commercial purpose, they also challenged the aesthetic legitimacy of the theatrical release, as well as the primacy of theatrical distribution. Many pre-ancillary cuts that premiered on Z-Channel would later be remediated by the US video market. MGM/UA released the long cut of *Heaven's Gate* on tape in 1986, for example, leading Robert Sklar to praise the growing popularity of home video for “bringing films like *Heaven's Gate* back into the realm of critical and political discourse.”⁶⁹ While Sklar’s commentary over-looks the fact that, in this particular case at least, pay-cable had preceded video, it reflects the centrality of variation to the cultural renewal of movies in ancillary markets. Perhaps this is why Z Channel is occasionally touted as the source of the “director’s cut,” which is a staple of video. This is illustrative of the larger tendency to place all alternate cuts under one umbrella term.⁷⁰

A *Variety* article, for instance, claims that “showing director’s cuts” was one of Harvey’s innovations and refers to the long cut of *Heaven's Gate* as an early director’s cut that preceded contemporary DVD releases.⁷¹ Corrigan, meanwhile, positions the *Gate* “director’s cut” as specifically originating on video and so allowing the film to “act out the often repeated contemporary formula of redemption through the extended market of home video...”⁷² Such claims disregard the fact that a director’s cut is a post-theatrical revision meant for exhibition on an ancillary platform and that Z Channel never utilized the term “director’s cut” to the variants it re-circulated. Rather, it brought visibility to and helped establish demand for alternate cuts in general by normalizing the airing of pre-ancillary cuts. From all this, one can infer that Z

69. Robert Sklar, "HOMEVIDEO," *Cinéaste* 14, no. 4 (1986): 60.

70. Distributors do not help matters when they advertise pre-ancillary cuts under the “director’s cut” label, such as in the case of *The Sicilian*.

71. Berg, “Z-Channel,” 60.

72. Timothy Corrigan, “Auteurs and the New Hollywood” in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). 45.

Channel contributed to, if not precipitated the production of authorial revisions, restorations, and unrated versions, as well as set the stage for the formula Corrigan mentions.

Authorial Revisions

Typically appearing under the “director’s cut” label, these variants are revisions of the theatrical cut that specifically promote the director as film author. Like pre-ancillary cuts, they inform and are informed by the notion that the more control a director has over a film’s assemblage, the more it qualifies as a work of art. There are, however, key differences between the two categories. First, the majority of the cuts in this category are produced primarily for home video, rather than cable. Second, their claim to represent the “original” text directly conflicts with the fact that they are constructed after a film’s theatrical release. Finally, while specific rationales for producing such revisions can differ from film to film, their appearance on video often signifies that the filmmaker never managed to craft a version that he recognized as the representation of his personal vision for theatrical release in the first place.

However, they wouldn’t exist if they didn’t hold financial appeal to video distributors. By the end of 1986, Saul Melnick, vice-president of sales and marketing for MGM/UA Home Video, suggested that the growing multiplicity of film versions is attributable to the multiplicity of media for watching movies. He states: “You have to create for the medium you’re in... have to look at programming for home video as a unique market.”⁷³ In this sense, competition between cable, home video, network television, and cinema for viewers fostered the need for difference and distinction between film versions. This runs counter to the notion that consumers were primarily motivated by video’s ability to reproduce the theatrical text. Instead, it suggests that it is video’s capacity for variation and accessibility that was key to attracting audiences. This intersected with the common disappointment of Hollywood auteurs with theatrical releases.

73. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 30 Nov 1986, 57.

Joe Dante, who considered the theatrical cut of *Explorers* (1985) an unfinished film due to a rushed production schedule, re-edited it for its VHS release, bringing it closer to a “finished” form, which was actually shorter than the theatrical by two minutes.⁷⁴ David Lynch, meanwhile, sought to improve on the theatrical release of *Dune* via extension. Stating that the 140-minute duration of the theatrical cut “was not sufficient to do justice to the story,” he announced plans for a four-hour video edition in September 1986.⁷⁵ While Lynch’s plans never came to fruition, the very fact that a new cut was in development highlights how video allowed for a New Hollywood-esque synchronicity between the interests of studios and directors.

Fittingly, Paramount Home Video senior VP Tim Clott described video in March 1987 as “an aftermarket that allows filmmakers to improve on a project if they want to.”⁷⁶ Admittedly, that directors saw video as a venue to release a new, qualitatively superior revision would not become widely evident until the early-mid 1990s, which saw a considerable surge of authorial revisions on VHS and laserdisc. The following three charts will illustrate this. Figure 3.2 lists pre-1980s films that receive a revision in the 80s and 90s. Figure 3.3 lists 1980s films that receive a revision in the 80s-90s. And Figure 3.4 lists 1990s films that receive a revision in the same decade, up to the year 1996. These lists evince how prominent the authorial alternate cuts were prior to the release of the DVD format in 1997. In particular, one can see that the temporal gap between the release of a theatrical cut and a “director’s cut” shortens considerably during the early 90s. Their proliferation inspired much debate among film journalists regarding what the director’s cut represents, especially in relation to film history and art.

74. *Los Angeles Times*, 24 Oct 1986, H19; *Ibid.*, 04 Dec 1994, 76.

75. Richard Gold, "Pictures: Lynch Confident about 'Velvet,' Plans 4-Hour 'Dune' Videocassette." *Variety* 324, no. 9 (Sep 24, 1986): 5.

76. Frank Lovece, "Home Video: 'Special Home Versions': Are they so Special?" *Billboard* 99, no. 13 (Mar 28, 1987): 53.

Figure 3.2 – Authorial Revisions on Video I

Title	Director	Theatrical Version		Revisionist Authorial Cut			
		Date	RT	Labels/Subtitles	Date	RT	Platform
<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	Elia Kazan	1951	122	<i>The Original Director's Version</i>	1994	125	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	David Lean	1962	202	<i>Restored Director's Cut</i>	1989	216	VHS
<i>Isadora</i>	Karel Reisz	1968	132	<i>Restored 3-hour Version</i>	1987	153	Pay-Cable (Z)
<i>The Godfather/ The Godfather Part II</i>	Francis Ford Coppolla	1970/ 1974	177/ 200	<i>1902-1959: The Complete Epic</i>	1981	386	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>The Last Picture Show</i>	Peter Bogdanovich	1971	119	<i>Director's Cut</i>	1992	127	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Dark Star</i>	John Carpenter	1974	83	<i>Special Edition</i>	1987	91	VHS
<i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i>	Steven Spielberg	1977	135	<i>Special Edition</i>	1980	132	Laserdisc
<i>Star Wars</i>	George Lucas	1977	122	<i>Special Edition</i>	1997	125	VHS

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* magazine articles; *Variety* magazine articles; Various Newspaper articles.

Figure 3.3 – Authorial Revisions on Video II

Title	Director	US Theatrical Version		Revisionist Authorial Cut			
		Date	RT	Labels/Subtitles	Date	RT	Platform
<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>	Irvin Kershner	1980	124	<i>Special Edition</i>	1997	127	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Thief</i>	Michael Mann	1981	123	<i>Special Director's Edition</i>	1995	124	Laserdisc
<i>Das Boot</i>	Wolfgang Petersen	1982	150	<i>The Director's Cut</i>	1997	208	Laserdisc, VHS, DVD
<i>Blade Runner</i>	Ridley Scott	1982	116	<i>Director's Cut</i>	1992	117	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Return of the Jedi</i>	Richard Marquand	1983	132	<i>Special Edition</i>	1997	135	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Brazil</i>	Terry Gilliam	1985	131	<i>Final Cut; Director's Cut</i>	1996	142	Laserdisc
<i>Explorers</i>	Joe Dante	1985	109	Unlabeled	1985	107	VHS
<i>Manhunter</i>	Michael Mann	1986	120	<i>Director's Cut</i>	1987	122	Pay-Cable (Showtime)
<i>Aliens</i>	James Cameron	1986	137	<i>Special Edition</i>	1992	154	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Robocop</i>	Paul Verhoeven	1987	99	<i>Unrated Director's Cut</i>	1996	103	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>The Abyss</i>	James Cameron	1989	140	<i>Special Edition</i>	1993	171	VHS, Laserdisc

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* magazine articles; *Variety* magazine articles; Various Newspaper articles.

Figure 3.4 – Authorial Revisions on Video III

Title	Director	US Theatrical Version		Revisionist Authorial Cut			
		Date	RT	Labels/Subtitles	Date	RT	Platform
<i>Highlander 2: The Quickening</i>	Russel Mulcahy	1990	90	<i>Renegade Version: The Director's Cut</i>	1996	109	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>JFK</i>	Oliver Stone	1991	189	<i>Director's Cut</i>	1992	206	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Terminator 2: Judgment Day</i>	James Cameron	1991	137	<i>Special Edition</i>	1993	153	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Lawnmower Man</i>	Brett Leonard	1992	103	<i>Unrated Director's Cut</i>	1995	141	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Wyatt Earp</i>	Lawrence Kasdan	1992	192	<i>Director's Cut</i>	1995	212	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>True Romance</i>	Tony Scott	1993	118	<i>Unrated Director's Cut</i>	1994	120	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Natural Born Killers</i>	Oliver Stone	1994	119	<i>Unrated Director's Cut</i>	1996	122	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Color of Night</i>	Richard Rush	1994	125	<i>Exclusive Director's Cut</i>	1995	140	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Nixon</i>	Oliver Stone	1995	192	<i>Director's Cut</i>	1996	212	VHS, Laserdisc
<i>Lord of Illusions</i>	Clive Barker	1995	109	<i>Unrated Director's Cut</i>	1996	120	VHS, Laserdisc

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* magazine articles; *Variety* magazine articles; Various Newspaper articles.

Illustrative of this was the reception of the revised *Blade Runner*. Despite its arrival in 1992, the authorial revision is regularly positioned as either the “first” director’s cut or the first to make studios realize the commercial potential of authorial revisions.⁷⁷ Bolstering this assumed primacy is the fact that relatively few scholarly discussions pertaining to the subject of the director’s cut almost inevitably focus on or refer to *Blade Runner*, with little to no mention of other works.⁷⁸ Upon its release, multiple journalists praised its changes, such as the removal of Harrison Ford’s voiceover, for restoring the original vision of the director, citing them as aesthetic

77. Ethan Alter, “Blade Runner: The Director’s Cut,” in *Film Firsts: The 25 Movies that Created Contemporary American Cinema* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2014), 89.

78. The French academic collection “The Myth of the Director’s Cut” uses the film in at least three of its essays; additionally, there are many individual works devoted to discussing the film’s transformation, including Brooker’s “All of Our Variant Futures,” Gray’s “Scanning the Replicant text” and Matt Hills’ specific study of the film in his book of the same name for the “Cultographies” series.

improvements upon the theatrical cut.⁷⁹ But the new cut also had detractors, such as Gregory Solman, who decried the changes as inessential alterations that diminished the “original” theatrical release, which was already a work of art. This supported his argument that the increasingly industrialized director’s cut as a whole represents an alteration of film history, art and art history, as well as the triumph of commerce over art.⁸⁰ Such diametrically opposed perceptions of authorial revisions were quite common for this period.

For some, the director’s cut on video constituted the restoration of the “original” text and triumph of art over commerce, the “the victory of what is true over what is popular.”⁸¹ For others, it was little more than a commercial revision prompted by distributors and marketing that merely resold the same film to an unsuspecting audience.⁸² Both positions, however, reiterate the popular belief in a model version of a film that is singular, original, and definitive, supporting the prevailing cultural view that films are art and so should not be changed. The former merely posits that an original should always reflect the intentions of its director, whereas the latter takes the initial theatrical release, regardless of whether the filmmaker had final cut, as a point of authority. In essence then, the promotion of the director’s cut as the “true” version justifies authorial revision by claiming that the theatrical cut is already altered by someone other than the director, such as studio executives, producers, or distributors.

By reversing the changes made for mass commercial distribution, the director’s cut purportedly restores the film to the status of a work of art or, more accurately, art cinema. This ties

79. Kenneth Turan, "A Prime Cut," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 13, 1992. Owen Gleiberman, "Blade Runner: The Director's Cut," *Entertainment Weekly*, October 2, 1992. <http://ew.com/article/1992/10/02/blade-runner-2/>

80. Greg Solman, "Uncertain Glory" *Film Comment* 29, no. 3 (1993): 19-20.

81. Tim Lucas, "The Kindest Cut of All," *Film Comment* 27, no. 3 (05, 1991): 50.

82. Daniel Cerone, "Not 'the End': TV, Cable, Video, Laser Give Films a New Afterlife," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 18, 1992. Michael Blowen, "Is the 'Restored' Footage really Worth Restoring?" *The Sun*, Sep 03, 1989.

into the perception of the author as a cultural construct. Bordwell defines the auteur as a formal component within the art cinema that unifies the text in lieu of the formal conventions of the commercial Hollywood cinema. Central to this creation of unity is the “notion that the art-film director has a creative freedom denied to her/his Hollywood counterpart.”⁸³ Corrigan’s study of the connection between auteurism and commerce in the New Hollywood and beyond similarly points to the auteur as a construct “that asks and insists that readers and audiences see the work as whole, complete and beyond individual differences and inconsistencies.”⁸⁴ In this sense, the director’s cut, in granting editorial freedom previously lacking, fits the film properly into the auteur’s repertoire and so fosters the sense that the work is complete and finalized.

This ties into Jonathan Rosenbaum’s argument that the notion of reselling often attributed to the director’s cut is based on a mythology, according to which, “every film has two versions, a correct one and an incorrect one.” He states that a “better paraphrase of this mythology would be... that every film has at least two versions – a correct one and a more correct one.”⁸⁵ Rosenbaum means that, while a director’s cut is often coded as the definitive or “correct” version, it really only gains this status in relation to another variant, which is seen as incorrect. However, he points out that a director’s cut is never really singular, which is evinced by the fact that new cuts are released all the time, any of which can be seen as comparatively more correct in relation to its predecessor. As he puts it, the notion “that any version might be incorrect is one that belongs to history and aesthetics, but not to business.”⁸⁶ From this perspective, the co-existence of a

83. David Bordwell, “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 777.

84. Corrigan, “Auteurs and the New Hollywood,” 41.

85. Jonathan Rosenbaum, “Potential Perils of the Director’s Cut,” in *Goodbye Cinema, Hello Cinephilia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 14.

86. *Ibid.*, 23.

theatrical cut and a director's cut of the same picture in an ancillary market doesn't oppose textual stability, but rather elevates the latter version as definitive or "correct" over the former.

The mythology of the correct/incorrect can very well apply to all instances when two different cuts circulate concurrently, indicating that it is not until more than two cuts become accessible that the inherent fluidity of a film in terms of assemblage becomes evident. Established auteurs tend to normalize perception of the director's cut as definitive by promoting the revision as possessing only artistic value. In this vein, Ridley Scott claimed that the *Blade Runner* director's cut "doesn't mean any-thing to me one way or another, financially or otherwise... It's purely artistic."⁸⁷ His words mirror Wolfgang Petersen's description of the *Das Boot* director's cut as having been made "with no commercial constraints" and from "a purely creative point of view."⁸⁸ Such proclamations suggest that video itself is not bound to the logic of commerce and allows for the expression of an unadulterated art cinema. Naturally, that video also circulates commercialized theatrical cuts directly conflicts with this perception, as does the fact that the distribution of a director's cut actually generates revenue for the distributor.

As Geoff King asserts then, a director's cut can be both a "return to the original vision of the auteur-director, freed from whatever compromises were involved in the initial release" and "a cynical marketing ploy."⁸⁹ But while King similarly utilizes the director's cut as a point of continuity between the New Hollywood period and video distribution, he does so to further his argument that auteurism itself must be seen within the larger commercial context of industrial Hollywood production. His implication is that auteurism could very much be a construct of media pro-

87. Ann Hornaday, "Now Starring on Video: The Director's Cut." *New York Times*, May 16, 1993, H23.

88. Liese Spencer, "Wide Angle: Submerged Passion," *Independent*, Jan 17 1998, <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/wide-angle-submerged-passion-1139126.html>

89. King, *New Hollywood Cinema*, 111-112.

ducers.⁹⁰ While not disagreeing this perspective, I would instead stress how the circulation of the director's cut, in advancing commercial interests, nonetheless has furthered the creative aspirations of many filmmakers. Rather than artistically devaluing film as a whole by annulling the singularity of film texts then, home video can be seen as enriching it by allowing for the circulation of variants that have a stronger claim to art than theatrical releases.

In this regard, the post-theatrical director's cut takes on the meaning of the "final cut" the DGA intended for it in the mid-60s, positioning itself as the product of a single individual, while denigrating the theatrical as the product of a collective body that might be referred to as "the studio." If a director qualifies as an artist when he has complete control over assemblage, then any director can become an auteur by crafting a director's cut for home viewing. Implicit in this division is the notion that art is better or purer when molded by one person, rather than a network of interconnected individuals. A director's cut is, of course, not truly beyond the activity of multiple individuals. In addition to directors and distributors, one could view editors, producers, and even film fans, whose demand helps realize the new cut could count as representatives of the art world that contribute to the work. But its circulation still promotes the specific variant and, with that, the work as a whole as the result of a sole artist's creativity.

Restorations

Of the many alternative editions distributed on home video in the 80s, restored versions of classic films generally had the most positive reception, earning praise from critics, archivists and audiences alike, despite the commercial underpinning of their distribution. As preservationist Ronald Haver points out, studios became "increasingly willing to restore missing footage from

90. Ibid.,112

classic films..." due to the economic success of the home market.⁹¹ Their circulation led critics to praise video as a "godsend" for incomplete films,⁹² as well as a "blessing" for film buffs.⁹³ Despite the cost of producing them, restored versions, created "via remastering via pristine prints at original film lengths," appealed to an "increasing segment of buyers and renters."⁹⁴ In turn, this helped convince studios to better preserve film materials, such as negatives, deleted scenes and outtakes, for potential future exploitation. Until the success of the home market, studios often would discard or destroy secondary materials, seeing little potential value in them.⁹⁵

A *Newsday* article positioned the increasing amount of restorations as "one of the most important trends in the video revolution" for it meant that film preservation would now no longer be "an issue of interest chiefly to archivists" as a result of "growing audience for the original, unabridged version of the classics."⁹⁶ These are all important aspects that contributed to the legitimization of video as a site of the resurrection of the artistic side of film. Illustrating this point requires explaining what constituted "restored" versions and their connection to discourses of originality. Restoration can generally be defined as "the set of technical, editorial and intellectual procedures aimed at compensating for the loss or degradation of the moving image artifact, thus

91. Steven Smith, "RESTORER LAUDS N.Y. FILM WORK" *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 29, 1985.

92. John Hartl, "VIDEOS GIVE FILM FANS A CHANCE TO SEE RESTORED FOOTAGE IN MOVIES." *Seattle Times*, Nov 09, 1985.

93. Tom Shales, "RESTORATION OF FAVORITE MOVIES," *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 08, 1986.

94. Jim Bessman, "Home Video: Restorations Judged an (Un)Cut Above." *Billboard* 101, no. 30 (Jul 29, 1989): 54.

95. Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (New York; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 38.

96. Joseph Gelmis, "Video Trends: it's Bigger on the Small Screen. Lawrence of Arabia' and Other Classic Films are being Re-Released in Restored Versions that Offer 'missing' Footage, Alternate Endings, Improved Sound and Other Enticements," *Newsday*, Oct 15, 1989.

bringing it back to a state as close as possible to its original condition.”⁹⁷ A restored version then is the product of these procedures, a new variant that replicates a past variant within the present.

Composed from multiple surviving materials, such as previous film negatives, foreign prints, and outtakes, it evinces that “the complete form of a film, in which it is known or believed to have once existed, does not survive in any one surviving element...”⁹⁸ Laying claim to authenticity, despite being produced after a film’s initial theatrical release, it bears resemblance to an authorial revision. Preservation scholars correctly note that a central issue for a film restorer then becomes determining precisely what constitutes the “original” condition or version a given film, especially since what qualifies as the “original” can vary depending on context. An “original” may refer to the initial version that aired in cinemas or the one that best adheres to the director’s intentions prior to censorship or re-editing by the studio. The camera negative of a motion picture can be seen as the original of the film prints produced from it.⁹⁹ Movies released in different cuts simultaneously or in quick succession one after the other can have multiple contenders for the status of the “original”.

Finally, as Fossati argues, restored works are both new versions and new originals, for “they become the only remaining sign of what originally existed...”¹⁰⁰ In this regard, restoration constructs an original version retroactively. The result attests to that which is lost, while attempting to essentially supplant it. Naturally, this raises the question of why the original is lost in the first place. There are many potential reasons for this, which may intertwine and inter-sect

97. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 66.

98. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 39.

99. Ibid., 18-21. Giovanna Fossati, “Multiple Originals: The (Digital) Restoration and Exhibition of Early Films” in *A Companion to Early Cinema* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), eds. Nicolas Dulac, André Gaudreault, and Santiago Hidalgo, 552. Accessed November 8, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central.

100. Fossati, “Multiple Originals,” 550.

in individual cases. First and foremost, physical celluloid film materials age and naturally decay over time. Lack of preservation, unforeseen disasters, deliberate destruction and censorship can aid this decay.¹⁰¹ And as the case study of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in the first chapter illustrated, commercial rationales can result in a film being altered for theatrical reissue long after their initial run in the cinema. Throughout the forties and fifties in particular, when reissues of older movies were popular, “many films were cut to fit double bills.”¹⁰² Restored versions therefore are byproducts of earlier transformations of a motion picture, their production attesting to a film text’s natural decay or circulation in different cuts over the course of its lifetime(s).

In attempting to undo or render invisible the transformations undergone by the film print over time, they come to embody its internal version history and contribute to it at the same time.¹⁰³ In the 80s, as mentioned previously, film restoration came to have a close relationship with the video market, which both enabled the production and distribution of restored versions. Even though translation to video would lead to a drop in audiovisual quality, many titles were restored with the intention of being shown in the home, rather than the cinema. *Frankenstein* (1931), for instance, required acquiring footage from foreign vaults and working with damaged negatives for the video release.¹⁰⁴ By contrast, other restoration projects, such as *Gone With the Wind*, received theatrical re-releases prior to their translation to video.¹⁰⁵ In any case, VHS was

101. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 24-43.

102. William Stevenson, "Cutting Remarks," *Film Comment* 26, no. 4 (07, 1990): 73.

103. The prototypical case of this would be *Metropolis*, a film whose 152-minute “complete” form was only seen once in 1927 before it was disseminated in many shorter distinct cuts due to distributor concerns with runtime, censorship, etc. Several attempted restorations of the original cut contributed to its textual multiplicity.

104. George Turner, "Restoration... Slowly but Surely," *American Cinematographer* 67, no. 4 (04, 1986): 128.

105. Aljean Harmetz. "Hollywood's Truly Golden Oldies." *New York Times*, Aug 12, 1989, Late Edition.

“an important first step in bringing the results of archival film restoration to a broader public.”¹⁰⁶

Figure 3.5 will illustrate how the duration and assemblage of a number of older American films that received a restoration from the mid-80s to early 90s shifted between different cuts.¹⁰⁷

Figure 3.5 – Archival Titles and Restored Versions

Title	Director	Theatrical Cut		Reissued Cut		Restored Cut	
		Date	RT	Date	RT	Date	RT
<i>Intolerance</i>	D.W. Griffith	1916	190	1926	?	1991	175
<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i>	Lewis Milestone	1930	132	1939	95	1987	132
<i>Frankenstein</i>	James Whale	1931	71	1938	?	1986	71
<i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>	Rouben Mamoulian	1932	98	1932	90	1989	98
<i>King Kong</i>	Merian Cooper	1933	100	1952	?	1984	100
<i>Lost Horizon</i>	Frank Capra	1937	133	1952	95	1986	132
<i>Gunga Din</i>	George Stevens	1939	117	1954	94	1986	117
<i>The Devil and Daniel Webster</i>	William Dieterle	1941	107	1952	85	1985	107
<i>A Star is Born</i>	George Cukor	1954	181	1954	154	1985	176
<i>Spartacus</i>	Stanley Kubrick	1960	189	1967	161	1991	196
<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i>	David Lean	1963	202	1971	187	1989	216
<i>Cheyenne Autumn</i>	John Ford	1964	158	1966	145	1985	158

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* magazine articles; *Variety* magazine articles; Various Newspaper articles.

Primarily, such changes were necessitated by censors that desired to make a picture conform to new cultural standards of decency and morality or distributors seeking extra screenings to boost the film’s commercial prospects, often in opposition to the creative choices of the director. Many of the restored editions approximate the running time, as well as the assemblage of an earlier incarnation of the picture, countering the film’s previous revisions. Reinstatement of deleted footage in such cases then can be seen as promoting anti-censorship, anti-commercialism, as well as directorial control over assemblage. Consequently, the proliferation of restored versions on video often leads to comparisons or confluations with other alternate cuts that incorporate

106. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 144.

107. For the sake of simplicity, the chart does not differentiate between versions specifically produced for and re-circulated on video, nor does it list all theatrical reissues or re-edits of a film. It also references the video release date of the restoration, not accounting for whether the title may have had theatrical release prior.

previously unseen footage and achieve similar effects.¹⁰⁸ One of the best examples of this is a 1986 *American Film* article called “Director’s Cut,” which praises video as a platform with the potential to “restore the original vision” of auteurs like Peckinpah, Cimino, Scott or Ford.¹⁰⁹

Fostering the impression that all restored versions are director’s cuts and vice versa, it links the lack of directorial control over the assemblage of 80s movies, such as *Heaven’s Gate* and *Blade Runner*, with the revisions of classic films by censors or distributors from the 20s-70s, including *King Kong*, *A Star is Born*, and *The Wild Bunch*. This is in line with a *Billboard* article on special home video versions from 1987 that discusses numerous titles, be it classics like *Lost Horizon* or more recent works such as *Star Trek: The Movie* (1979), that were restored on video, “often with the intent of recreating the director’s original cut, prior to alteration by producer, studio or censor.”¹¹⁰ Both overlook distinctions between restorations and authorial revisions, as well as elide the former’s ideological contradictions.

First of all, restoration projects tend to develop without a director’s participation or consent, spearheaded by film archivists and historians, such as Ronald Haver, Robert Harris, Kevin Brownlow, and Martin Koerber. These individuals locate the materials necessary for the reconstruction of the lost variant, assemble the picture, as well as foster the creation of new film prints. As we discussed earlier, editing confers authorship, meaning that the archivist becomes comparable to the author by virtue of composing the new cut. His hand in the (re)construction of the text becomes evident, when precise restoration is not possible due to lack of viable footage or

108. Not all restorations actually reinstate missing footage. In this case, the “restored” film doesn’t have unviable or lost footage that required restoration, but merely deteriorated image or sound. The 50th anniversary video restored version of *The Wizard of Oz* (1989), for example, had no difference of assemblage from a preceding release, but did restore missing color tones to some scenes that were lost upon its previous reissues.

109. Michael Barson, “COLLECTOR’S CHOICE: Director’s Cut,” *American Film* 12, no. 3 (Dec 01, 1986): 57.

110. Chris McGowan, “Classic Video: Restored Footage Restores Original Vision and Demand,” *Billboard* 99, no. 22 (May 30, 1987): C9.

sound materials. Illustrating this are the cases of the restored *A Star is Born* (1983) and *Lost Horizon* (1986), which utilize still photos linked to a soundtrack in lieu of available footage. The result is a lack of seamlessness within the assemblage of certain scenes and evident distinctions from the originals they emulate. Such instances reveal the process of restoration to the audience.

The result is a betrayal of the restored version's status as a new variant. Jones states that the use of stills is standard practice for filling in visual and narrative gaps that "enables viewers to more closely experience the film's original intention, as it is specifically understood by the restorationist." She then adds that this is also "a cinematic disruption that changes a film's meaning."¹¹¹ While Jones appears to imply that a film's "meaning" is predetermined by the text's construction and overlooks reception, her observation is useful for considering how a restored film filters the "original intention" of a picture through the specific interpretation of the archivist. In that sense, the archivist always transforms the text to some degree, even if he is faithful to the director's intended editing, positioning him as a co-author, if not the author of the new variant. Finally, it is important to consider that the aim of a restoration project can be to recreate a cut that stands apart from the intentions of a director.

D.W. Griffith himself famously revised and re-released *Intolerance*, leading to scholarly and critical debates over whether or not the 1989 MOMA reconstruction of the film's 1916 premiere was true to his intentions.¹¹² Suffice it to say, a director's cut is not necessarily equivalent to a restored version and vice versa. Rather than automatically affirm the director as the singular author of a film, restoration can allow for several different, even conflicting interpretations. One

111. Janna Jones, *The Past Is a Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century On Film* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 145.

112. Gillian B. Anderson, "D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*: Revisiting a Reconstructed Text," *Film History: An International Journal* 25, no. 3 (2013): 57-89; Russell Merritt, "D. W. Griffith's INTOLERANCE: Reconstructing an Unattainable Text," *Film History* 4, no. 4 (1990): 337-375.

can alternately read the director and archivist as author or accept a plural form of authorship, as opposed to a singular one. Even if the director might be seen as the author of the original variant being approximated by the restorer, it is difficult to attribute authorship over the restored version solely to the filmmaker, especially given the temporal gaps separating one from the other.

Discourses equating restoration with authorial revision tend to overlook these differences, blurring the distinction between classics that are considered culturally or historically significant and contemporary films that have been altered against the wishes of the director. This evinces that restoration in and of itself can impact a film's cultural status, especially in relation to its other variants. Corroborating this is film critic and director Bahman Maghsoudlou, who lauded video for providing "film lovers, historians, and students the opportunity to see a classic film in its uncut, original form" and proclaimed that classic films "that come out in video in a short form aren't valid as art."¹¹³ Maghsoudlou suggests a classic film no longer qualifies as art if it doesn't circulate on video in its restored, or rather original form, as though the distribution of its un-restored variants would culturally delegitimize it.

From the perspective that the restored version represents the original, restoration is intrinsic to maintaining the high cultural status of a classic film as a work of art. But from the perspective that a restored version is a new variant, it actually elevates classic films to art status. That is, it confers legitimacy on an already technically and thus culturally degraded text via its associations with values of authenticity, anti-commercialism, and anti-censorship. So, any film that is "restored" from an earlier state, whether a 1920s silent film or a 80s film with digital computer effects, becomes comparable to a work of art or a masterpiece. In this regard, restored versions, much like authorial revisions, strengthen the perception of video as the site for the more artistic versions of movies within the historical, cultural, and political contexts of the 1980s. This runs

113. Bessman, "Home Video: Restorations," 54.

counter to the popular perception that video diminishes film artistically by circulating movies en masse in degraded audiovisual form. In fact, by promoting restoration and preservation, video actually led to many classic movies to be theatrically re-reissued in improved audiovisual form.

This points to how the cinephile promotion of theatrical film as a “singular” or ephemeral experience completely disregards the many instances of when movies are theatrically reissued, allowing extant audiences to re-view them and new audiences to experience them for the first time.¹¹⁴ Video also highlights a fundamental paradox inherent to restoration, which, as Beck argues, means to maintain the sacred status of an object or thing against the natural changes that take place over time. This makes it an oxymoron, for the thing “must be changed in order to keep it the same.”¹¹⁵ (10) Film restoration then seemingly opposes textual, and therefore historical, cultural, or political revision of movies, through the creation of new variants. Video can thus support and undermine textual reproduction and stability at the same time.

Unrated Versions

As established previously, scholarly and industrial discourses define home video and pay-cable versions as bereft of the censorship intrinsic to network television. By default then, the new platforms of the 80s should reaffirm the binary opposition between film and television, promoting the theatrical cut as the uncut and uninterrupted variant, while denigrating the television cut as the censored, segmented, and impoverished alternative. In actuality, however, they produce ideologically complex and at times contradictory relationships between film, censorship, and television. This is because video came to distribute versions of the same film differentiated by MPAA ratings, resulting in “unrated” cuts circulating alongside theatrical R-rated editions. Ra-

114. For more information on the history of reissues, see Eric Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault: Film Libraries before Home Video* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). Hoyt contests the dispensability of old films prior to the 80s, using theatrical reissues as examples in his argument that film libraries predated video.

115. Bernard Beck, “Inglorious Color,” *Society* 24, no. 4 (May 1987): 10.

tings are instrumental to a title's theatrical distribution and resulting box office, as they segment audiences into specific age groups and guide them towards film titles based on the presence of elements, such as sex and violence. The underlying assumption is that the higher and more restrictive a film's rating is, the smaller its potential viewing audience will be.

Removing aforementioned elements from a picture then, in accordance with instructions from the MPAA and/or its affiliate CARA, can qualify a film for a less restrictive rating and make it accessible to a larger demographic. Technically, rating-based alteration of films is voluntary. However, various factors, such as a director's desire for commercial success or contractual obligation to adhere to a certain rating, will often compel filmmakers to alter a movie's assemblage. Based on this, film scholars commonly equate the MPAA policies of self-regulation with censorship, indicating that they run counter to the creative intentions of filmmakers.¹¹⁶ Directors, in turn, can corroborate the notion that the MPAA restricts freedom of expression by recounting a variation of the bad old story, wherein the MPAA affiliate CARA forces them to recut a film against their will by granting it an X rating, which signified "sex, violence, profanity and other themes deemed inappropriate to anyone under sixteen (later seventeen)."¹¹⁷ A 1990 essay called "Industry and Hypocrisy" by Pedro Almodovar, where the director reflects on his experiences with the MPAA over *Tie Me up, Tie Me Down* (1990), showcases this tactic.

Almodovar argues that MPAA ratings are a form of censorship, as they're not truly voluntary. Should a film be found to contain "images or sounds deserving of an X certificate," then the "author has no recourse but to obey" the studio's demands to remove them because of his contractual obligation to deliver an R-rated picture. If the changes prove unsatisfactory, the

116. Donahue, *American Film Distribution*, 43; Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core*, 284-296; Sandler, *The Naked Truth*, 14-18.

117. Vaughn, *Freedom and Entertainment*, 2.

studio “takes over the mutilation.”¹¹⁸ His rhetoric is similar to that of the Hollywood filmmakers protesting television alteration in the 60s. Promoting the director as an author and the film as “his” work, it asserts that any act of editing by anyone other than the director is an act of “mutilation.” These are but some of the numerous stories about conflicts over MPAA/CARA classifications that have become public since the advent of the rating system in 1968. Interviews with filmmakers like John Waters, Kimberly Peirce, and Kevin Smith in the documentary *This Film is Not Yet Rated* (2006) evince that rating disputes are common to distribution.

Altogether, they normalize the perception that R-rated films usually arrive in American theaters, having been censored in some way prior to release. This stems, in part, from the X rating’s association with hardcore pornography in the 70s.¹¹⁹ The X rating resulted in a lack of both newspaper advertising and exhibition by certain theaters, so it could mean “a film’s commercial death”. To circumvent such issues, some distributors chose to release films that would receive an X without a rating. This was often the case with highly violent and gory 80s horror films, such as *Zombie* and *Maniac*.¹²⁰ The “unrated” label then simultaneously functioned as a stand-in for the X and a less restrictive alternative. Video distributors replicated this strategy by releasing unrated editions of theatrically pre-censored titles, such as *9 ½ Weeks* and *Stealing Heaven*, whose new assemblage corresponded to that of the pre-release X version.

Figure 3.6 provides several examples of such instances from 1980-1990, showing that the practice becomes increasingly widespread from 1985-1989, especially among horror films and thrillers. Temporal gaps between the theatrical and video releases were often quite short, while the release of the unrated cut on video was often simultaneous with that of the standard video

118. Pedro Almodovar, “Industry and Hypocrisy,” in *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader*, ed. Ruth Petrie (London; Washington: Cassell, 1997): 119.

119. Sandler, *The Naked Truth*, 47-53.

120. Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 366.

version, recalling the dual releases of the transition-to-sound period. Differences between the versions, which can sometimes amount to a few seconds of new sexually explicit or violent footage that exceeds the acceptable limit of the “R” rating, inform the audience of how and why the picture had been pre-censored. By virtue of comparison to the pre-censored theatrical cut, the unrated video version takes on the characteristics of “uncut” and “uncensored.”

Figure 3.6 – R-Rated and Unrated Cuts I

Title	Director	R-rated Theatrical Cut			Unrated Video Cut		
		Date	RT	Genre	Date	RT	Extra footage
<i>Dressed to Kill</i>	Brian DePalma	1980	106	Thriller	1981	106	Sex/Violence
<i>Crimes of Passion</i>	Ken Russell	1984	101	Thriller	1985	107	Sex
<i>Thief of Hearts</i>	Douglas Day Stewart	1984	100	Thriller	1985	106	Sex
<i>9 ½ Weeks</i>	Adrian Lyne	1986	113	Drama	1987-1989	117	Sex
<i>Angel Heart</i>	Alan Parker	1987	113	Horror	1987	113	Sex/Violence
<i>Hellbound: Hellraiser 2</i>	Tony Randel	1988	93	Horror	1989	98	Violence
<i>Stealing Heaven</i>	Clive Donner	1988	108	Drama	1989	115	Sex
<i>Unmasked: Part 25</i>	Anders Palm	1989	80	Horror	1989	85	Violence
<i>Scandal</i>	Michael Caton-Jones	1989	106	Drama	1989	115	Sex

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* magazine articles; *Variety* magazine articles; Various Newspaper articles.

In many such cases, the unrated cut also better reflected the aesthetic desires and intentions of filmmakers, promoting video as free from MPAA restrictions. Alan Parker, for example, was forced to cut 10 seconds of sexual footage from *Angel Heart* (1987) to secure an R-rating for American theatrical release.¹²¹ Subsequently, the ten seconds were reinstated for the US video release later that year.¹²² This is illustrative of the circumstances, under which an unrated cut also

121. "Pictures: 'Angel Heart' Trimmed for R Rating; Complete Cut for O'Seas Release." *Variety* 326, no. 6 (Mar 04, 1987): 7-7, 42.

122. Richard Gold, "Pictures: Seven 'New' Minutes Set for Vid of 'Colors;' Rating Not at Issue," *Variety* 333, no. 3 (Nov 09, 1988): 6.

qualifies as a “director’s cut.”¹²³ On first glance, this establishes a clear dichotomy between film and video, associating the former with censorship and the latter with creative freedom. This is in line with Vaughn’s description of how new technologies signified a general weakening of film regulation and/or censorship standards. Vaughn points out that movies “edited to get an R would have the original X-rated material restored to the cassette version,” in the course of illustrating how violence or sex became more widely acceptable in the home.¹²⁴ However, he doesn’t specify that these new cuts emerging throughout the 1980s are unrated, or that they circulate alongside standard R-rated video versions, as though the unrated cuts replaced the theatrical ones on video.

Conversely, he doesn’t consider instances when unrated movies released in theaters subsequently receive a new R-rated cut on video, allowing it to circulate via retailers that had a policy of not carrying unrated or X-rated films/versions. Vestron Video, for example, prepared an R-rated cut of *Re-Animator* in coordination with director Stuart Gordon alongside its unrated theatrical cut for video in 1986. Most retailers across the country then carried only one of the two cuts.¹²⁵ Such a technique was a common way for distributors to maximize the commercial potential and accessibility of X-rated or unrated movies. Rather contractually obligated by the MPAA, the R-rated cut in this scenario is borne from the lack of a singular policy towards unrated content among theaters and video retailers. So, the video market was not necessarily free from or opposed to censorship. Figure 3.7 corroborates this by providing a sampling of unrated movies that received an R-rated cut on video from the mid-80s to the end of the decade.

123. The intersection becomes especially pronounced in the early 90s. When pictures directed by auteurs like Oliver Stone and Tony Scott would receive a video version that reinstated footage excised to secure an R-Rating, the result usually appeared under the label “Unrated Director’s Cut.” See Figures 3.1-3.3.

124. Vaughn, *Freedom and Entertainment*, 118-119.

125. Lovece, “Special Home Versions,” 54.

Figure 3.7 – R-Rated and Unrated Cuts II

Title	Director	Unrated Theatrical Cut			R-Rated Video Cut		
		Date	RT	Genre	Date	RT	Cut footage
<i>Last House on the Left</i>	Wes Craven	1972	84	Horror	1985	82	Violence
<i>Caligula</i>	Bob Guccione	1980	148	Drama/ Porn	1984	101	Sex/violence
<i>Splatter University</i>	Richard Haines	1984	79	Horror	1985	78	Violence
<i>Re-Animator</i>	Stuart Gordon	1985	89	Horror/ Comedy	1986	95	Sex/violence
<i>Scandal</i>	Michael Caton-Jones	1989	106	Drama	1989	115	Sex
<i>The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover</i>	Peter Greenaway	1990	122	Drama	1992	95	Sex

Sources: VHS Cover Art; *Billboard* magazine articles; *Variety* magazine articles; Various Newspaper articles.

The *Re-Animator* revision also indicates that ancillary platforms are more open to variability of assemblage than the cinema, because the MPAA has considerably less control over them. When the picture officially received its new R rating, the unrated cut could no longer be shown legally in theaters “under the MPAA rule which says the same film cannot be represented in the marketplace at the same time by versions with different ratings...” But video distributors had no such limitation, making it possible to simultaneously release both versions on the same format, as opposed to one over the other.¹²⁶ In this sense, video literally legitimizes a theatrically illegitimate distribution practice. Doing so evinces that, while unrated or X-rated releases were largely un-commercial and un-distributable within the public space of the cinemas, they could have great commercial value in the private space of the home. In fact, unrated cuts regularly outsold their R-rated counterparts, regardless of which constituted the theatrical release.

By 1988, the new cut of *Angel Heart* reportedly sold four times as many copies as the theatrical, while the unrated *Crimes of Passion* doubled the sales of its standard video version.¹²⁷

126 "Pictures: Edited 'Re-Animator' Garners an R Rating." *Variety* 323, no. 8 (Jun 18, 1986): 7-7, 17.

127. *Variety*, 09 Nov 1988, 6.

Towards 1989, releasing R-rated and Unrated versions was becoming “standard operating procedure” for many independent distributors.¹²⁸ Given that far from all video stores accepted unrated movies, such details mean the alternate cut produced for video would be the first and only version of a film purchased by a substantial percentage of consumers. By enticing new audiences, alternate cuts then actively contradict the resale logic and the binary opposition between film and video. Further blurring the assumed distinction between the two media is the fact that unrated video editions regularly received theatrical distribution outside of the US.

Brian De Palma’s *Dressed to Kill* constitutes one of the earliest examples of distributors using video to show a “non-U.S. theatrical version.”¹²⁹ The aforementioned *Angel Heart* similarly circulated in international cinemas with X-rated footage intact.¹³⁰ Evidently, footage deemed too sexually explicit for an American big-screen audience was not too explicit for non-American ones. This recalls how the post-war European art films of directors like Bergman and Fellini distinguished themselves from mainstream Hollywood through relatively explicit sexual imagery. Elsaesser, for instance, in discussing *Rome, Open City* states that to American audiences “the labels “art” and “European” began to connote a very particular kind of realism, to do with explicit depiction of sex and drugs rather than political or aesthetic commitment.”¹³¹ Andrews similarly points to the connections between art films and pornography, arguing that art films tends to legitimate culturally debased elements, such as explicit sex, that are often linked to the X

128. Lawrence Cohn, "Unrated Pic Versions on Cassette: Selling the Sizzle, Not the Steak," *Variety* 334, no. 11 (Apr 05, 1989): 1.

129. Tony Seideman, "HomeVideo: Mull Pros and Cons of Adding Footage to Videocassette Pics," *Variety* 309, no. 10 (Jan 05, 1983): 29.

130. Sandler, *The Naked Truth*, 47-53.

131. Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 146.

and NC-17 rating. He connects this to the proliferation of both softcore art films in the US during New Hollywood period and rise of theatrically unrated art movies from 1995-2009.¹³²

The presence of X-rated footage in unrated video versions can thus be seen as culturally elevating auteur-directed Hollywood movies, such as *9 ½ Weeks* and *Dressed to Kill*, to the status of European art cinema. Strengthening this is are instances of horror films circulating unrated in US theaters but arriving censored for violence and gore in foreign countries. Hence, the re-editing of many “video nasties” in Great Britain led Mark Kermode to praise the American video market as a “saving grace for horror movies,” because “distributors remain free to release unrated, uncut movies on videotape.”¹³³ In relation to the American cut, the European variant of a sexual thriller can be considered uncensored, but with a violent horror film, the reverse is often true. The “unrated” label becomes a marker of cultural distinction. The differences between the R-Rated and Unrated variants therefore reflect distinctions between American and foreign cultural standards, particularly when it comes to on-screen sex and violence.

Video foregrounds and bridges those standards, equating American audiences with foreign audiences and vice versa, while shifting one’s perception of what qualifies as “censored” and “uncensored.” Rather than merely supporting the commercial reproduction of the standard video version, unrated editions evince, among other things, the intersection of MPAA content regulation policies with the aesthetic desires of directors and the financial interests of video distributors. In the process, they contribute to the image of the video as a market and technology that offers considerably more freedom to Hollywood auteurs than the theatrical cinema, while blurring the perceived textual distinctions between film, television, and video. Much as a

132. Andrews, *Theorizing Art Cinemas*, 87-94.

133. Mark Kermode, “Horror: On the Edge of Taste,” in *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader*, ed. Ruth Petrie (London; Washington: Cassell, 1997), 157.

network television version may be censored in relation to the theatrical, so can the theatrical be censored in relation to video, meaning that within the context of multiple platforms of distribution, film censorship is a matter of relation and degree.

End of Transition

By the beginning of the 90s, the distribution of pre-ancillary cuts, authorial revisions, restorations, and unrated editions had become normalized, solidifying labels like the “director’s cut” into something akin to film genres. More than promoting the new version of a movie, labels attributed specific characteristics and associations, shaping audience impressions and expectations. Like the standard video versions, alternate cuts had great monetary value, yet they also advocated creative autonomy from the commercial, durational, cultural, political, and other restrictions of Hollywood filmmaking. Rather than merely lesser copies of the theatrical or original film that resold it to the same customer, all were distinct variants that simultaneously opposed and supported the dominant capitalist ideology of the American film industry. Their circulation inspired conflicting discourses and reactions that promoted one variant at the expense of the other on the basis of authenticity. By fostering ancillary markets, where films could appear in alternate forms that realized their full artistic potential, the new technologies of the 80s gained legitimacy.

Conversely, they legitimated the new cuts and the various individuals of the art worlds, whose interests and influences helped bring them into circulation, including video distributors, archivists, retailers, film buffs, members of CARA, etc. Of all of them, however, they primarily singled out directors, establishing or re-establishing them as artists. Altogether then, home video and pay-cable variation revives the art/commerce balance between directors and studios that was characteristic of the New Hollywood period. Failure to recognize these connections supports the myth of textual stability, resulting in an oversimplified account of film history and culture that

positions variation as either the cause of film's artistic decline or a product of digital media.

Ancillaries then could have a far more complex relationship with film than traditionally believed, one that suggests art and commerce exist on a spectrum.

Different versions of the same picture gravitate towards different ends of this spectrum, with alternate video cuts usually falling closer to the art end and theatrical cuts coming in closer to the commerce end. In connection with this, while the movie theater became more affiliated with studio control and commerce, the home became correspondingly more aligned with directorial control and art. One would think all this would lead to a growing public awareness of the fact that films are inherently fluid texts. After all, since the mid-80s viewers and scholars alike could potentially collect and read different cuts with, across, and against each other. But as previously mentioned, alternate cuts could paradoxically support textual stability. The dual release strategies of the 80s merely shift perception of the film's definitive or "correct" version from the theatrical to the alternate cut. As the case study will illustrate, the real effect of DVD would be to render visible the fact that movies could have numerous, potentially infinite variations.

Post-Transition Case Study: *Manhunter*

Manhunter (1986) constitutes the first Hollywood adaption of the Thomas Harris novel *Red Dragon*, famous for introducing audiences to Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Bryan Cox), a cannibal and serial killer, who would become one of the most popular villains in American pop culture.¹³⁴ The plot focuses on Will Graham (Matthew Petersen), an FBI profiler who comes out of retirement to help capture serial killer Francis Dollarhyde (Tom Noonan), also known as "The Tooth Fairy," before he murders his next victims. The fourth feature film directed by Michael Mann, *Manhunter* has accumulated multiple variations on television and home video. Between its initial

134. In contrast to all other adaptations, *Manhunter* spells his name as "Lecktor."

theatrical release and its most recent re-issue on DVD, at least six versions of the film have appeared under the “director’s cut” label. Yet no two of them are exactly alike, featuring differences in assemblage, aspect ratio, audiovisual quality, or various combinations of the three. *Manhunter* is also far from the only film, whose assemblage Mann has revised.

Indeed, the majority of titles in his oeuvre feature at least one alternate cut, the label of which is a derivative of the term “director’s cut.” By recounting the revision history of *Manhunter* and examining some of the differences between the various versions, this study will show how DVD both builds on and remediates VHS, cable, and laserdisc. And by linking this to the wider context of Mann’s career, it will illustrate that DVD overturns the myth that a film can have a definitive alternate cut, while redefining an auteur as a director that can continuously revise a film. Figure 3.8 provides a quick reference to the many versions of *Manhunter* that are pertinent to this case study, showing some of the basic differences between the various editions. Figure 3.9, meanwhile, illustrates the director’s penchant for re-editing his films in general by providing a list of the alternate cuts of the other films Mann has worked on.

Figure 3.8 – *Manhunter* Versions

Version	Short	Date	Platform	RT	Aspect Ratio	A/V Quality	Rating
<i>Theatrical Version</i>	TC	1986	Theaters	120’	2:35:1	N/A	R
<i>Showtime Director’s Cut - 1</i>	SDC-1	1987	Pay-Cable	122’	4:3	Low	N/A
<i>Showtime Director’s Cut - 2</i>	SDC-2	1988-1992	Pay-Cable	122’	4:3	Low	N/A
<i>Showtime Director’s Cut - 3</i>	SDC-3	1988-1992	Pay-Cable	124’ 40’’	4:3	Low	N/A
<i>Anchor Bay Theatrical Cut</i>	AB-TC	2001	DVD, VHS	121’	2:35:1	Standard	R
<i>Anchor Bay Director’s Cut</i>	AB-DC	2001	DVD, VHS	124’ 40’’	Reframed 2:35:1	Standard	Unrated
<i>Restored Director’s Cut</i>	RDC	2003	DVD	124’ 20’’	2:35:1	Mixed	Unrated

Sources: Multiple Newspaper Articles; *Manhunter* DVD Cover art; Tim Lucas, “Michael Mann’s MANHUNTER: Spread Your Wings and Learn to Die,” *Video Watchdog* 13 (Sept/Oct 1992): 24-29.

Figure 3.9 – Alternate Cuts by Michael Mann

Title	US Theatrical Cut		Revisionist Authorial Cut			
	Date	RT	Labels/Subtitles	Date	RT	Platform (s)
<i>Thief</i>	1981	124	<i>Special Director's Edition</i>	1996	122	VHS, Laserdisc
			<i>Director's Cut</i>	2015	122	Blu-Ray
<i>Last of the Mohicans</i>	1992	114	<i>Director's Expanded Edition</i>	1999	117	DVD
			<i>Director's Definitive Cut</i>	2010	114	Blu-Ray
<i>Heat</i>	1995	171	<i>Director's Definitive Edition</i>	2017	171	Blu-Ray
<i>Ali</i>	2001	157	<i>Director's Cut</i>	2004	165	DVD
			<i>Commemorative Edition</i>	2017	151	Blu-Ray
<i>Miami Vice</i>	2006	132	<i>Unrated Director's Edition</i>	2006	139	DVD
<i>Blackhat</i>	2015	133	<i>Director's Cut</i>	2017	?	Basic Cable (FX)

Sources: Web articles from *Movie-Censorship.com* and *dvd-compare.net*; DVD and Blu-Ray cover art.

From Theater to Television

In March 1986, Dino DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG) entered into an exclusive 10-film licensing agreement with premium cable television channel, Showtime-The Movie Channel (S-TMC). This meant that several of its recent films, including *Raw Deal*, *Blue Velvet*, and *Manhunter* would then circulate only on S-TMC throughout 1987-1988.¹³⁵ When *Manhunter* premiered on the first Sunday of January 1988, it appeared in revised form as the first entry in a new “occasional Movie Channel feature” program called “Director’s Cut.”¹³⁶ As the title indicates, it provided filmmakers with “the opportunity to re-edit their theatrical releases so that they closely resemble the director's original vision.”¹³⁷ Why S-TMC began this “Director’s Cut” program is unclear, but it is likely the S-TMC management noticed the growing popularity of alternate cuts on its pay-cable rival Z-Channel and in the video market. Judging from the title

135. "Pictures: DEG, Showtime Pact." *Variety* 323, no. 17 (Jun 11, 1986): 5.

136. "'Manhunter' on TMC." *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 31, 1987.

137. Jim Emerson, "Trailers," *Orange County Register*, Jan 10, 1988.

and description of the feature, one would think it intended to capitalize on the many instances of studio directors not having editorial control over theatrical releases in the 80s.

But from the outset, *Manhunter* was an outlier. According to Mann himself, he had full control over the film, with the exception of the title, having had to change it to *Manhunter* to *Red Dragon* at the insistence of producer Dino DeLaurentiis.¹³⁸ In that sense, the theatrical version was already true to Mann's intentions and so constituted a director's cut. The reason he decided to release a new director's cut on cable was because he saw an opportunity to "go back to the editing room and take advantage of hindsight."¹³⁹ He claims to have added scenes that enhanced the film, "making the characters more complex with more of an emotional life..."¹⁴⁰ In other words, Mann's intentions had changed, resulting in a new vision of *Manhunter*, which he promoted as qualitatively superior to its predecessor. This conflicts with the traditional association of directorial intention with originality and textual stability.

As one critic stated in his review of the 1992 *Blade Runner* director's cut, the notion "that a film should be seen as its director intended... makes no allowance for the possibility that the director might have had second thoughts or not enough thoughts in the first place..."¹⁴¹ Rather than embody the gap between the intentions of the director and the studio then, the differences between the theatrical cut and the director's cut in this case evince the evolution of the director's vision. Evidently, *Manhunter* did not garner high ratings, for the "Director's Cut" feature never again appeared on S-TMC. But it would not be the last iteration of *Manhunter* to appear on

138. Michael Mann, "Audio Commentary," *Manhunter: Restored Director's Cut*, DVD, directed by Michael Mann (Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2003).

139. John J. O'Connor, "TV VIEW; TV's Film Editors Giveth as Well as Taketh," *New York Times*, Jun 12, 1988, Late Edition (East Coast).

140. See note 138.

141. Philip Strick, "Blade Runner: Telling the Difference," *Sight and Sound* 2, no. 8 (12, 1992): 8.

Showtime. Over the next few years, two more cuts under the “director’s cut” label appeared on Showtime. The second Showtime Director’s Cut (SDC-2) reportedly only added scenes to the first SDC, while the third (SDC-3) trimmed some of the theatrical footage while also adding several new sequences.¹⁴² None of these cuts, however, immediately made it onto home video.

From Television to DVD

The SDC-3 remained the last “director’s cut” of *Manhunter* until 2001, at which point the four year-old DVD was supplanting VHS as the dominant format in the home video market. According to Klinger, the widespread acceptance of the DVD stems from its perception as the “aesthetic equivalent” of the theatrical cinema. Because it “offers film images with good resolution in widescreen formats and, sound that performs well through surround systems, DVD approximates the theatrical experience,” providing far more accurate reproduction than “previous distribution venues.”¹⁴³ If videotape versions are perceived to be inferior copies of the theatrical, then DVD versions are seen as perfect or near-perfect copies from the perspective of audiovisual quality. But at the same time, as previously mentioned, DVD is often linked to the destabilization of the film text via the production and circulation of alternate cuts. This suggests that DVD combines technical fidelity to the theatrical cut with infidelity of assemblage.

The reality is far more complicated. Rather than only produce new platform-exclusive cuts, DVDs actually remediate many preexistent versions from older formats like VHS and laserdisc, including theatrical and alternate cuts in both full-screen and widescreen iterations. Among the earliest DVDs in fact, were the authorial revisions of *Blade Runner*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *JFK* by Warner Home Video. Their commercial successes contributed to the

142. Ibid., and Mann, “Audio Commentary,” DVD.

143. Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 61.

studios' decision to expand the number of titles available in the format.¹⁴⁴ New films and versions were released concurrently on both VHS and DVD until around 2006, which saw the release of *A History of Violence*, arguably the last major VHS release from Hollywood.¹⁴⁵ If the releases of alternate cuts indeed destabilized the film text, then to attribute this solely to DVD then is to completely ignore the history of VHS, laserdisc and cable, on which DVD has built on.

Moreover, audiovisual quality tends to vary, depending on various factors, such as the specific source footage used to transfer the film, the technology used to create it, and the budget allotted by the distributor. Indeed, it is not uncommon for distributors to re-transfer or re-master the same film on DVD, resulting in different editions with distinctions in audiovisual quality, some of which can closely resemble the appearance of a VHS or television version. And as Paul McDonald correctly argues, the notion that DVD replicates the theatrical release is illusory, insofar that it requires still transferring film to video and involves various processes that result in loss of information.¹⁴⁶ From this perspective, "...DVD mastering *mediates* the original, passing it through a series of intervening phases which subtly transform sound and image."¹⁴⁷ Any film on DVD in terms of sound and image then is a fundamentally distinct version from the theatrical film, regardless of resemblance. All this came to factor into the production, distribution, and reception of the various *Manhunter* DVD editions.

On January 30, 2001, *Manhunter* appeared on DVD courtesy of Anchor Bay Entertainment, a Michigan-based distributor celebrated for "resurrecting titles that have fallen out of

144. "Major Studios Take DVD Nationwide," *Business Wire*, Jul 08, 1997.

145. *Chicago Tribune*, 28 Dec 2008, 12.

146. Paul McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 60-62.

147. *Ibid.*, 62

circulation” in the new DVD format.¹⁴⁸ The \$24.98 regular one-disc edition would contain the film’s theatrical cut, while the \$39.98 two-disc “limited edition” would feature both the theatrical cut on disc one and the director’s cut on disc two, along with additional exclusive special features.¹⁴⁹ The two-disc set was only limited in the sense that only 100,000 copies of it were produced.¹⁵⁰ This provided it with distinction from the mass-produced one-disc edition, while justifying its higher price tag. Highlighting this is the fact that Anchor Bay had released the “Director’s Cut” on VHS as a separate item from the Theatrical Cut and made it a mass release, as opposed to a limited one. Because the VHS disseminated it in a much larger number of copies, it was all the more rare on DVD, especially in relation to the theatrical cut.

Anchor Bay’s distribution strategy reflects the synergy between art and commerce in the video market. In remediating older titles now absent on VHS or laserdisc, the company highlights how certain works may circulate in numerous copies for a period of time before becoming rare, out-of-print or cult objects. At the same time, it demonstrates how imposing artificial scarcity upon a release can “generate an aura of quasi uniqueness” for “limited” editions of art objects that distinguishes them from mass circulating copies and so generates greater cultural and commercial value.¹⁵¹ Running counter to the cinephile rhetoric, the distribution of *Manhunter* shows that scarcity is neither antithetical to video, nor fundamentally opposed to commerce.

The presence of two different cuts together in the same set reflects how DVDs tend to literally prepackage and collect multiple variants for the consumer, making the combination of

148. Peter M. Nichols, "Old Favorites in a New Format," *New York Times*, Jan 04, 2002.

149. Ralph Tribbey, "'Manhunter' Accompanies 'Hannibal' Release," *Video Store Magazine* 23, no. 1 (Jan 1-Jan 6, 2001): 12.

150. Enrique Rivero, "A Feast for Anchor Bay," *Video Business* 21, no. 8 (Feb 19, 2001): 38.

151. Balsom, "Original Copies," 101.

two or more versions a key part of its appeal. A potential customer, especially a collector, then no longer has to seek out distinct versions by himself. One can link this to how many DVDs offer multiple language and sound options, isolated scores and commentary tracks, as well as different cuts of a film on the same disc.¹⁵² A key appeal of many DVDs, therefore, is not so much their capacity for the reproduction of the theatrical version of a given film, but their ability to agglomerate many distinct variants of it. Selling films and/or DVDs based on their textual variability can, in turn, promote the act of collecting multiple versions as a general practice, as well as encourage comparative viewing and evaluation.

But while critics usually view a director's cut as inherently superior to the theatrical, they did quite the opposite in the case of the *Manhunter* DVD. Multiple critics praised the quality of the anamorphic widescreen transfer and new Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround soundtrack of the Anchor Bay Theatrical Cut (AB-TC) but denigrated the Anchor Bay Director's Cut (AB-DC) for being of lower audio-video quality. This was despite the fact that it turned out that the DVD did not actually contain the 120-minute theatrical cut, but rather a 121-minute cut distinct from any previous iteration of the picture, while the Anchor Bay Director's Cut (AB-DC) was equivalent to the SDC-3 in terms of assemblage.¹⁵³ Essentially, the inferiority of the AB-DC stemmed from its technical presentation, rather than its assemblage and directorial intention.

Rivero, for instance, asserts that the AB-TC comes in "in a clean THX-certified video transfer with a 5.1 audio remix that should delight," while the latter would disappoint fans as it is

152. For instance, the double-sided 1997 *Terminator 2 Ultimate Edition* DVD allows one to select from three different cuts with multiple audio options, and wide-screen and full-screen.

153. Peter M Bracke, "Manhunter," *DVDFILE.COM The Cut List*, January 30, 2000, https://web.archive.org/web/20030610172826/http://dvdfile.com/software/review/dvd-video_2/manhunter.html. Andrew Holland, "There are several versions of Manhunter," *Manhunter: The Complete Resource Site*, <http://manhunter1986.com/miss00.html>

“fuzzy and washed out and includes only Dolby Digital 2.0 sound.”¹⁵⁴ Pizzello corroborates that while the disc includes a “sharply detailed transfer” of the AB-TC, the AB-DC is “marred by horrible, sub-VHS visual quality.”¹⁵⁵ Moreover, while AB-DC retains the 2:35:1 aspect ratio, the frame seems magnified, with visual information missing on the sides, the top, and bottom. This led one critic to remark how, “Not a single shot of the DC is framed correctly... Essentially it looks like they took a pan and scan frame and simply matted it for 2.35:1.”¹⁵⁶ Joshua Zyber would go so far as to reject the “director’s cut” label altogether, primarily on the basis of it being a version “put together for The Movie Channel.” In his mind, a true director’s cut “ought to include the best parts of all versions, and so far such a thing has not been assembled.”¹⁵⁷

Drawing on the established hierarchy between film, television, and video, such reactions suggest that a director’s cut should have audiovisual quality equal to, if not greater than, the theatrical cut on DVD. One can infer that in the DVD era, a new cut can’t gain legitimacy by means of assemblage alone. Rather, it must also adhere to prescribed standards of audiovisual quality. This clearly demonstrates what Klinger terms as “the hardware aesthetic”—the tendency to evaluate films in relation to their utilization of the technological capabilities of the platform they appear on. Particularly central to the critical discourses surrounding films on DVD, the hardware aesthetic shifts attention from the text to its technical presentation. Movies on disc are now rated “for how they fulfill digital standards of sound and picture” and “for how their

154. Enrique Rivero, “Find Me a Killer,” *Video Business* 21, no. 4 (Jan 22, 2001): 18.

155. Chris Pizzello, “DVD Playback: ‘Manhunter,’” *American Cinematographer* 82, no. 5 (May 2001): 16.

156. Colin Jacobson, “Manhunter: Limited Edition (1986) Review,” *DVD Movie Guide*, <http://www.dvdmag.com/manhunterle.shtml>. No date.

157. Joshua Zyber, “Manhunter: Director’s Cut,” *DVDFILE.COM Disc Review*, July 18, 2003, https://web.archive.org/web/20030801143136/http://www.dvdfile.com/software/review/dvd-video_6/manhunter_dc.html.

reissues realize to the fullest extent the physical capacity of the disc itself...’’¹⁵⁸ The higher a film’s audio-visual quality then, the more positive its critical evaluation. Essentially, the inferior imagery, stereo soundtrack, and incorrect framing evince the origination of the director’s cut in television. The AB-DC may be standard among other pre-DVD video releases, but it does look poor in the context of DVD, and especially in relation to other director’s cut releases.

Its reception thus reflects how the perceptions of “good” or “high” quality on home video have changed between the pre-DVD and post-DVD periods, meaning that DVD had retroactively delegitimized the look of video typical of VHS, pay-cable, and laserdisc. In that regard, DVD gains value at the expense of the preceding platforms, with the new DVD-specific versions remediating, supplanting, and so devaluing older ones. The new AB-TC effectively replaces the initial theatrical version, while the AB-DC stands in for the SDC-3 as the director’s cut. Neither DVD version entirely or accurately reproduces the one it supplants, the resulting divergences between evincing how alteration can occur in the course of remediation. So, an alternative cut on VHS or laserdisc that qualifies as definitive in contrast to the theatrical on the basis of authenticity stops being definitive when a new DVD version remediates it. While this occurs across formats, it can also occur in the same format, with new DVD versions supplanting older ones. This is demonstrated by yet another “director’s cut” of *Manhunter*.

Towards Higher Definition

In April 2003, Video Store Magazine announced in an article that Mann and Anchor Bay would collaborate on a new “*Manhunter Restored Director's Edition*, sporting the supplier's first-ever transfer from a high definition master as well as a new cut...” for release on June 10. Referencing the negative reception of the previous release, the article specifically stresses that the new edition will present a new director’s cut with a new video transfer, now with Mann’s

¹⁵⁸ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 80.

direct supervision. Mann himself touts the new cut as an improvement on the previous one on the basis that it is made “from a much superior master,” distinguishing it from the previous edition, which was made from an “inferior one-inch master.”¹⁵⁹ Moreover, Anchor Bay intended for the new edition to kick off the company’s new line of DVDs called “DIVIMAX,” which entailed the process of creating a new high-definition “24-progressive-scan-frame transfer yielding 1,080 lines of resolution”¹⁶⁰ allowing for higher video quality than previous DVD editions.

In essence, one can view DIVIMAX as a precursor to Blu-Ray and HD-DVD in terms of digital video “quality,” which is typically measured by resolution. The RDC thus was poised to be a technical equal of a theatrical release, confirming that its authenticity is now based less on assemblage than on audiovisual quality. By denigrating the previous edition and promoting new technology to create a DVD-exclusive director-approved version, Mann and Anchor Bay were already legitimating what would ultimately be called the “Restored Director’s Cut” (RDC) as the new definitive version of *Manhunter*. However, whereas both the AB-TC and AB-DC had consistent quality from shot-to-shot, the RDC vacillates between the glossy look characteristic of the former and the grainier, more VHS-like quality of the latter, preventing the possibility of a seamless viewing experience. Reviews commonly evaluated the transfer of the new cut as stronger overall in comparison to that of the previous edition, but pointed to how the director’s cut footage looked inferior to the theatrical, evincing grain and damage.¹⁶¹

An introductory message that admits to the qualitative difference of the new footage appears on the new DVD, stating that it “was mastered from the best available elements. We

159. Enrique Rivero, "'Dragon' Predecessor 'Manhunter' is Redone," *Video Store Magazine* 25, no. 14 (Mar, 2003): 8.

160. Enrique Rivero, "Michael Myers Returns in New Edition of John Carpenter's Classic 'Halloween'," *Video Store Magazine* 25, no. 33 (Aug, 2003): 24.

161. Zyber, “Manhunter: Director’s Cut,” *DVDFILE.COM Disc Review*. Jason Bovberg, “Manhunter: Restored Director’s Cut (DiViMax Edition) Review,” *DVDTalk.com DVD Video reviews*, July 11, 2003, <http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/6878/manhunter-restored-directors-cut-divimax-edition/>

hope any imperfections you observe will not detract from your enjoyment.” In the audio commentary, Mann further explains that the inconsistency in video quality was caused by the absence of the film’s original negative, which was not preserved by the distributor. In order to re-insert many missing scenes, he had to gather footage from the “one-inch masters from The Movie Channel version.” In that sense, Mann’s claim that the new cut was made from a superior master was only partially true, illustrating the construction of a director’s cut is not actually free of limitations. The resulting visual inconsistencies and juxtapositions evince the lack of preservation of the original negative for the deleted footage.

The RDC then becomes akin to restorations of classic movies that similarly combined multiple sources, such as *Metropolis* or *A Star is Born*, preserving a sense of assemblage at the cost of consistency.¹⁶² In that sense, it fails to achieve the technical authenticity demanded of a director’s cut on DVD. Based on the reactions then, the TC, against which the RDC is judged, should qualify as the definitive director’s cut, despite not having this designation or actually appearing on DVD.¹⁶³ But this notion conflicts with the fact that 6 different director’s cuts of *Manhunter* accumulate by 2003 across the various domestic distribution platforms: the TC, the three SDCs, the AB-TC, and the RDC. Each of them can be seen as authentic for various reasons and definitive at a certain point in time. The availability of three such cuts on a single format thus suggests that a definitive cut of the film does not truly exist. Differences of assemblage between the cuts corroborate this. Not only do they expose how the film is constructed editorially, but they also show a continuous evolution of the director’s vision from cut to cut.

Comparative Analysis

162. Moreover, it qualifies as a restored version, a director’s cut, and an unrated cut all at once, showing how conventions of these categories can intertwine and overlap in a single project.

163. The 2015 Blu-Ray release of *Manhunter* furthers this perception by presenting a theatrical cut that combines the assemblage of the 1986 theatrical release with a new high-definition digital video transfer.

Rather than making highly visible changes to the picture, such as by adding or removing entire scenes or sequences, Mann primarily makes many subtle, sometimes almost imperceptible alterations to numerous scenes, pruning or extending specific moments or shots without breaking away from continuity editing. The RDC is thus virtually identical to the AB-DC, the sole difference being that the latter features an exclusive 20-second scene, where Graham has an interview with Dr. Chilton prior to first meeting with Dr. Lecktor. Both are about 4 minutes longer than the TC, but this difference stems from the fact that, while the director's cut adds about 10 minutes of new footage, it also subtracts about 6 minutes of theatrical footage. Lounds' interrogation, Graham's walk with a ballistics expert, and Will and Jack's discussion of the killer's childhood are trimmed. Conversely, Graham and Lecktor's first meeting features a few new lines of dialogue, as does the conversation between Graham and Crawford after the Lounds interview.

Some scenes are completely new, such as the nearly three-minute long briefing room scene, and the new love scene between Graham and Molly. Their complete absence from the theatrical cut makes them easier to notice than the extensions when watching the two cuts back-to-back. By far the most evident addition, however, comes at the end of the film. Following Dolarhyde's death, Graham visits the Sherman family, the killer's next potential victims, and tells them that he wanted to "see" them. In contrast to the TC, which ends with Graham killing Dolarhyde and showing no lingering effects on his mental state, this new scene clearly suggests Graham himself might become a killer due to his empathy with the Tooth Fairy. The result is a more ambiguous and less conventionally happy ending to the story.

The Sherman family scene is notable for being the only director's cut scene that comes up in scholarly essays that discuss *Manhunter* in relation to Michael Mann's auteurism. Phillips references it in his argument that the film thematically is about depiction the very notion of

vision and its potential dangers. Claiming the theatrical cut “offers a far too simplistic answer to the complex questions of vision raised by the film,” he positions the director’s cut as offering a more ambiguous and proper take on the notion of vision, “thereby unsettling the film’s final moments of apparent redemption.”¹⁶⁴ Rybin, by contrast, suggests that this ambiguity is actually present in the theatrical version but the director’s cut more strongly supports a reading of the film’s ending as indicating the family’s potential vulnerability. This ties *Manhunter* to the larger recurring theme of familial disintegration in Mann’s films, making the new cut truer to Mann’s oeuvre as a whole.¹⁶⁵ In each case, the director’s cut supports the notion that Mann is an auteur, as it fits better the recurring themes of Mann’s work than the theatrical.

However, with the exception of this one scene, each essay utilizes the theatrical cut for its analysis of the work as a whole, neglecting to consider how the other differences between the cuts can contradict their reading of the film and so their view of Mann as an auteur. Rybin’s essay, in this regard, is particularly illustrative, as it signals no awareness on the part of the author that his textual analysis is based on the AB-TC, rather than the theatrical version. One can deduce this from the description he provides of the colors in the opening shot of *Manhunter*. He states that “... the vehicle’s lights are a sickly burnt-orange color; the green-brick wall on the upper left side of the frame is reflected on the straight surfaces of the van’s roof.”¹⁶⁶ The colors in the TC are quite different: the lamps of the van are not burnt-orange and the wall appears a drab gray. Though this reading is applicable to the AB-TC, it doesn’t apply to any other version.

Similarly, it doesn’t account for how changes of assemblage alter a film’s narrative whole. In the TC, Graham doesn’t meet with Chilton, introduces himself to Reba, doesn’t visit

164. Kendall R. Phillips, "Redeeming the Visual: Aesthetic Questions in Michael Mann's *Manhunter*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2003): 14.

165. Steven Rybin, *The Cinema of Michael Mann* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 89-90.

166. *Ibid.*, 79.

the Sherman family. In the SDC-3, Graham meets with Chilton, doesn't introduce himself to Reba and sees the Shermans. In the RDC, Graham doesn't meet with Chilton, nor introduce himself to Reba but still visits the Shermans. Such distinctions evince that his vision for the film is in a consistent state of flux. The Chilton/Graham scene especially is illustrative of how directorial intention can change over the course many years. Mann thought it did not belong in the film at the time of the 1986 theatrical release, changed his mind and reinstated it for the 1988-1992 pay-cable revision, then reconsidered its inclusion yet again for the 2003 DVD. His authorial revisions thus indicate that the *Manhunter* text is never truly finished and that the director's cut does not bring about an end to a movie's potential variation.

All this would appear to signify that Mann is not an auteur and that the release of a director's cut can actually oppose the director's status as an author. However, this view belies the fact that numerous established auteurs, including Ridley Scott, Peter Jackson, James Cameron, Francis Ford Coppola, Brian De Palma, Oliver Stone, George Lucas, David Fincher, and Guillermo Del Toro, have a tendency to retroactively modify their works for home video. His approach to re-editing *Manhunter* over the years is also in line with his approach to revising films in general. Kenji Fujishima, comparing the director's cut of *Blackhat* to that of *Mohicans* and *Miami Vice*, similarly notes that most changes are "are fairly minor: lines of dialogue are removed, scenes are shortened, the audio mix is reworked, and the like." But he adds that cumulatively, the alterations "add up to a more propulsive picture."¹⁶⁷ Such a consistent approach to revision then can be seen as a stylistic trait of Mann's authorial signature.

167. Kenji Fujishima, "Breaking Down Michael Mann's Sharper Director's Cut Of 'Blackhat'," *IndieWire.com*, Feb. 11, 2016, <http://www.indiewire.com/2016/02/breaking-down-michael-manns-sharper-directors-cut-of-blackhat-272478/>.

In that sense, the very notion that he is the film's author is expressed not in any individual variant of the film, but rather in the act of revision itself and in the changes from cut to cut. By continuously altering the assemblage of the pictures he directs, a director can then express his authority over them. Just as the director's intentions change with time, so does the film. Mann's collaboration with Anchor Bay, which regularly encouraged "the active involvement of the artists"¹⁶⁸ in its special edition releases, thus illustrates how DVD continues the art/commerce balance between directors and distributors initiated by video and cable in the 80s. But it ruptures the popular myth of an alternate cut being definitive by remediating previous versions and creating new ones, while providing better opportunities for audiences to access them.

That is, if pay-cable and video led to the popular perception that there are two versions of the film – a correct one and an incorrect one – then the DVD greatly made visible the notion that no version was definitive, not even a director's cut. Rather than destabilize the film text then, DVD foregrounds its inherent variability. In the process, it alters the notion of what it means to be an auteur. Whereas the new technologies of the 80s defined an auteur as someone who could release an alternate cut in the ancillary markets that reflected his intentions, DVD defines him by the ability to repeatedly revise the film text. Instability, as opposed to a singularity of vision, then begins to define contemporary auteurism, meaning a work of art is never truly finished.

¹⁶⁸ Ralph Tribbey, "Anchor Bay Just Wants to have DVD Fun," *Video Store Magazine* 22, no. 49 (Dec, 2000): 12.

CHAPTER 4

Lost In (Digital) Transition: Modernization And Replacement Of Versions

Studies suggest that variation, renewal, and obsolescence are some of the defining characteristics of digital or “new” media. In conjunction with this, digital preservation scholars point to how a digital media object must be continuously modernized in order to remain accessible, resulting in its existence in multiple versions. According to popular wisdom, however, this doesn’t apply to film texts, as digital technologies ostensibly foster perfect reproduction of moving images without loss of quality, allowing them to transcend the limitations of their analog carriers. Chapter 4 argues that film is not an exception to the logic of digital preservation, nor has it truly transcended the loss of physical carriers by showing that such perfect reproduction is merely a popular construct masking an ongoing process of technological modernization and obsolescence that occurs to films in the video market. Key to this will be a focus on a variation practice called “digital remastering,” which became central to the modernization of films and the legitimization of video platforms as technologies of reproduction following its emergence in the 1980s.

In the beginning, it will establish how the linkage between modernization, obsolescence and replacement intrinsic to new media has been largely excluded from discourses surrounding the effects of digital technologies on film. Alongside the exclusion of modernization from film preservation in discourses of film archiving, this helps foster the impression that films are always perfectly reproduced by digital technologies. The “Pre-Transition” section that follows will illustrate how digitally modernized video versions pass for reproductions, effectively concealing the process of modernization itself. It achieves this by examining the practice of digital remastering itself and linking it to the cultural construction of “quality” that distinguishes different video versions, such as those of VHS and Laserdisc, from one another. The “In-Transition” section

then makes visible how continuous digital modernization of films for video leads to continuous loss of versions by chronicling the role of digital remastering in the film industry's transition from VHS to DVD. It contends that modernization helped legitimize DVD as a superior reproductive format to VHS, resulting in the obsolescence and loss of VHS versions.

Finally, the "Post-Transition" section will focus on how and why the invisibility of continuous digital modernization and loss is maintained by examining the relationship of Blu-Ray to digital remastering and another digital modernization practice called "CGI Revision." Using a case study of the internal revision history of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982, dir. Steven Spielberg), it will demonstrate how the diminishment of the latter practice's visibility was key to the maintaining the imperceptibility of digital modernization as a whole and to promoting Blu-Ray as a superior reproductive format to DVD. Essentially, the less visible Blu-Ray made digital modernization, the more it promoted itself as a technology of reproduction. Altogether, this will contribute to a better understanding of how films in the digital age are regularly accessed en masse through their modernizations and that preserving them and their history, in this sense, requires constantly changing them. It will show the role technology, technological modernization, and the perception that technological progression leads to qualitative improvement play in the construction and interpretation of collective film history.

Before any extensive study of digital modernization can begin, however, it is necessary to clarify the use of this term throughout the chapter. In the broadest sense, "modernization" will describe the use of contemporary technology to produce new versions of an existing media text. Meanwhile, "digital modernization" will refer to the production of new versions of a text specifically with computers or related technologies, which usually see the media text transform at some point into digital data or video. Furthermore, the chapter will also distinguish between "imper-

ceptible” and “accentuated” forms of digital modernization. The former utilizes techniques that seek to conceal the act of modernization within the text, meaning the new version has changes that strive to be invisible to the audience. By contrast, the latter employ techniques that mean to produce visible differences that attract attention to the text’s having been modernized with contemporary technology. An inherent limitation of the chapter is that it focuses on celluloid-born films, as in titles initially shot on physical film negative, distributed in release prints and presented to audiences with film projectors. Consequently, its findings may not necessarily apply to theatrical features shot on digital cameras and from the outset transmitted as data.

I. Discourses on Digital Preservation

Obsolescence, New Media, and Digital Preservation

“Obsolescence” is a word that often arises in accounts of technological transition, especially when it pertains to media. One can often find it characterizing “old media,” a vague and nebulous term often associated with the equally nebulous “new media,” to which it functions as an antithesis. For instance, Natale opens her interrogation of “old media” with a discussion of media as artifacts, stating that the “notion of old media might be used to indicate artifacts that are old or obsolete... an old book, or a radio in your basement which has long ceased to work.”¹ To be obsolete then is analogous to being old, as opposed to “new.” Yet, as Natale’s reference to the radio that has stopped working indicates, obsolescence is relative to usage, meaning an object qualifies as obsolete when it has lost its use.

Uricchio describes obsolescence-as-uselessness as the result of a process “replacement,” which refers to when something new serves in place of the old, effectively taking over its usage. It is manifest in the ways that new technologies take up the functions and uses of already-existent

1. Natale Simone Natale, “There Are No Old Media,” *Journal of Communication*, Volume 66, Issue 4 August 2016: 5, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12235>.

ones.² Tied to the notion of progress, technological replacement carries the promise of the new improving on its predecessor when it comes to quality and performance of the established cultural practice. The consumer replaces to reach “an elusive state of perfection.”³ It posits that the predecessor technology is no longer necessary to fulfill its function, which often goes in hand with the fact that it has been in use long enough to qualify as relatively old in terms of age.⁴

Arguably, this is why obsolescence is usually synonymous with death and destruction, especially within studies of new media. For example, when discussing Internet protocol, Galloway claims that the web can maintain continuity by enforcing a prohibition on “dead media,” which he defines as “media that have fallen out of use... everything from dead hardware (Commodore 64, Apple II)... to dead media formats (Sony Betamax, 8-track cassette).”⁵ Similarly, in her argument that updates are central to the life and death of new media, Chun states: “Things no longer updated are things no longer used, useable, or cared for, even though updates often ‘save’ things by literally destroying – that is, writing over the things they resuscitate.”⁶ The conflation of media obsolescence with death positions technological changes as a means of reviving dead media and so staving off its obsolescence. This perspective builds on and so reinforces the view that new media is “new” insofar as it repurposes and modernizes preexistent media, endowing it with new uses, meanings, and values.

2. William Uricchio, “Replacement, Displacement, and Obsolescence in the Digital Age,” in *Cultures of Obsolescence: History, Materiality, and the Digital Age*, eds. Babette B. Tischleder and Sarah L. Wasserman (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 99.

3. Ibid., 100.

4. Computers, for example, came to replace the typewriter by taking up the function of producing and distributing written documents only after the typewriter had been in use for nearly a century.

5. Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 68.

6. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016), 2.

Indeed, the very use of the word “new,” as Chun states in her analysis of “new media” as a term, signifies “the transformation of something already known and familiar into something wonderful.”⁷ In that sense, new media transforms the old and familiar into the new. But this transformation also results in obsolescence or loss of the old. Focusing on this, Acland positions “new media” as an outdated term that designates a place where we experience “the rapid obsolescing and remaking of things and skills, where typing becomes data entry...”⁸ Sterne similarly emphasizes how new media, which include computers and digital media, are “defined by their own future decomposition.”⁹ He points out that in the past, they used to be new in relation to other media, but now they “are “new” primarily with reference to themselves.”¹⁰ Hence, computers have to be disposable, so that newer models and versions can replace them.

New media then appears to draw extensively on the old to define itself as new against it. This is central to Bolter and Grusin’s concept of “remediation,” which refers to the “representation of one medium in another” and so constitutes “a defining characteristic of the new digital media.”¹¹ While each medium remediates or repurposes that which precedes it, the new digital media of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are especially reliant on remediation of older pre-digital media forms and texts. Their uniqueness lies in their “particular strategies for remediating television, film, photography, and painting.”¹² This remediation can take on different forms and

7. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, “Introduction: Did Somebody Say New Media?” in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, ed. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

8. Charles R. Acland, “Introduction: Residual Media,” in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), xviii.

9. Jonathan Sterne, “Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media,” in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 17.

10. *Ibid.*, 19.

11. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000), 45.

12. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 50.

so create different potential relations between the old and the new. But what is clear is that the act of remediation always produces some degree of difference between the new digital version of a media object and its predecessor, making visible the computer alteration of the source material.¹³ New media therefore transforms pre-existing media by modernizing them, creating new versions of source texts.

These new versions can then go on to become seen as improvements over the older ones, bolstering the potential of the new digital medium for commercial success. In turn, this plays into the idea that a new medium “has to find its economic place by replacing or supplementing what is already available...”¹⁴ So while not explicitly mentioned, obsolescence is implicit in the commercial function of remediation, and directly connected with the processes of modernization and variation. New media, by this rationale, are actually modernized old media. To make new means to modernize and so to supposedly improve technically, qualitatively, and culturally. Textual variation, as a product of technological and cultural modernization, then seemingly opposes obsolescence by creating modernized digital versions of old media texts. However, modernization can also produce obsolescence, which is illustrated by the fact that many media become obsolete long before the end of their physical lifecycles.

All media, including digital media, naturally begin to degrade sooner or later, but their gradual decay doesn’t always correspond directly to a loss of usage and use value. According to Rothenberg’s estimates, for example, an optical disk has a physical lifetime of 30 years, meaning that 30 years would pass without it suffering any data loss. But the disk’s obsolescence would arrive in only 10 years, meaning that a new technology or format would likely come to replace

13. Ibid., 45-47.

14. Ibid., 68.

and/or remediate it.¹⁵ Often, as its replacement arrives faster than the old one fully degrades, a working technology or medium becomes retroactively rendered obsolete. That is, instead of the new modernized version emerging because the previous had become obsolete or dead, the previous version becomes obsolete because of the new version's emergence.¹⁶ The labeling of a media or media object as obsolete then attests to the existence of a more modern version of it.

Taking this into consideration highlights the cyclical relation between modernization and obsolescence. The rise of new or renewed technologies renders older ones obsolete, creating a potential for the introduction of yet more new or for the old to become renewed. Uricchio's description of the "self-fulfilling logic" of the replacement process seems particularly apt for the effects of modernization on old media. As he puts it, "obsolescence provokes replacement and replacement creates obsolescence."¹⁷ Applying this to new media, we could say obsolescence, in conjunction with natural decay, provokes digital modernization of pre-existing media. In turn, digital modernization retroactively renders pre-existing media and their respective versions obsolete. Newness must be continually re-asserted in comparison to the old and obsolete. While this holds true for all types of consumer technologies, this is arguably most pronounced in digital media, which features a much higher rate of obsolescence than its analogue predecessors.

According to Parks, this is attributable to the fact that "structured obsolescence" – the deliberate construction of consumer items so that they will require replacement prior to their full potential exploitation – intersected with Moore's Law at the end of the 1990s. Rapid progression in chips and speed of computer-related hardware means that, due to its intrinsic connection to

15. Jeff Rothenberg, "Ensuring the Longevity of Digital Documents," *Scientific American* 272, no. 1 (1995): 44. Similar distinctions exist for magnetic tapes, videotapes and magnetic disks.

16. Even then, a media object that is in a state of qualitative and technical decline, such as an aged but still functioning VHS tape, can be put to use.

17. Uricchio, "Replacement, Displacement, and Obsolescence," 99.

computer electronics, new media age much faster than traditional consumer items, technologies, and past media, to the extent that it may be considered “old” before even emerging in the market.¹⁸ The result is that digital modernization has become essentially standard practice for new media. As digital modernization results in new versions, obsolescence can be considered both cause and effect of textual variation.

Accentuating this connection is the fact that digital media objects carry high risks of potential data and access loss due to degradation and obsolescence of the various components that compose them. To clarify, a “digital object” is never just one particular element, but rather a multitude of constituent elements working together. Harvey defines the digital object as a combination of bit-stream, hardware, and software.¹⁹ The “bit-stream” is the specific sequence of data that represents the object or file digitally in terms of binary digits, namely zeroes and ones. Rothenberg designates it as an “an intended, meaningful sequence of bits, with no intervening spaces, punctuation or formatting....”²⁰ “Hardware” refers to the physical storage devices, also known as carrier technologies that the bit-stream is inscribed upon. That is, they are the material that the digital data of an object is recorded unto.²¹ Finally, “software” means the programs or applications that exist on the storage or related computer device that processes and interprets the bit-stream, allowing users to access the encoded information.

Preservation of the digital object, according to Harvey, therefore entails saving “not merely the bitstream, but also the means to process that bit-stream,” including the hardware and

18. Lisa Parks, “Falling Apart: Electronics Salvaging and the Global Media Economy,” in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 35.

19. Ross Harvey, *Preserving Digital Materials* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2011), 77.

20. Rothenberg, “Longevity of Digital Documents,” 42-43.

21. Examples of these include “diskettes, CDs, magnetic tapes, hard drives and flash drives.” See Harvey, *Preserving Digital Materials*, 43.

software, as well as documentation about that software and contextual information “that is essential to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the information.”²² Changes to any of the core components can alter the digital object, resulting in a new variation of it. A bit-stream might undergo data compression when a user attempts to copy the object, which can result in the new version having less data and translates into a different representation when the object is interpreted.²³ And if the object is created with one specific hardware/software combination, then reading it with another one can lead to differences in its appearance and behavior. In other words, it can similarly create an alternate version of the digital object.²⁴ As bit-stream, hardware, and software are susceptible to change, degradation, and obsolescence, so is the digital object. The consistent production of new versions of hardware and software in particular often require continuous preservation of digital objects for access purposes.

Two of the most common practices of digital preservation are migration and emulation. Migration basically entails transferring digital objects to newer, more recent media technology, typically after the hardware, software, or other technology with which it is currently associated has become obsolete. In the process, the object undergoes alteration in order to fit the new format standards and characteristics of the target platform. The physical inscription of the data changes, as does its digital encoding or bit-stream. Much like repeatedly duplicating a VHS tape introduces new changes and artifacts, migrating a data file from one technology to another yields successive changes that gradually accumulate. So a digital object that has undergone multiple migrations may have highly evident differences between its earliest and latest versions.²⁵

22. Ibid., 51.

23. Harvey, *Preserving Digital Materials*, 52; Rothenberg, “Digital Documents,” 47.

24. Harvey, *Preserving Digital Materials*, 77.

25. Kenneth Thibodeau, “Overview of Technological Approaches to Digital Preservation and Challenges in Coming Years,” in *The State of Digital Preservation: An International Perspective* (Washington, DC: Council on

Essentially then, migration preserves the digital object by creating a new version of it that has evident differences from its predecessor that betray its technological modernization.

Emulation, meanwhile, refers to situations wherein a newer, more advanced platform or target technology with different formatting attempts to process and make accessible a digital object without altering its digital encoding. For this, software called an “emulator” is necessary “to translate instructions from original software to execute on newer platforms.”²⁶ A well-known emulator was the Mac “Classic” mode, which allowed users to run pre-Mac OS X programs by emulating OS 9. Since its discontinuation as of OS 10.5, there has been no official emulator thus far allowing users to run programs designed for OS 9.²⁷ Proponents of emulation suggest that it is the better preservation practice to migration, because it means no alteration of the original digital object. Rothenberg in particular has advocated emulation, as it constitutes “the only reliable way to recreate a digital document’s original functionality, look, and feel.”²⁸ By this rationale, emulation can be considered as the reproduction of a previous or original version of the digital object by the new platform, involving no technological or format-mandated change.

However, this perspective has been challenged on the grounds that emulation itself is capable of producing noticeable differences from the source. Hedstrom and Lampe’s comparative study, for instance, found that videogame players who played the original hardware version, a migrated version, and an emulated version of the same videogame did not find the emulated

Library and Information Resources, 2002), 12-23; Carl Fleischhauer, “Looking at Preservation from the Digital Library Perspective,” *The Moving Image* 3, no. 2 (2003), 98-99.

26. Thibodeau, “Technological Approaches to Digital Preservation,” 19.

27. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 123. By extension then, many data formats for OS 9-designed applications are similarly inaccessible.

28. Jeff Rothenberg, “Avoiding technological quicksand: Finding a viable technical foundation for Digital Preservation,” in *CLIR Report* (January 1999): 17, Council on Library and Information Resources, <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/rothenberg/contents.html>.

version to be “more like the original.” Differences in the technical aspects pertaining to the specificity of the physical hardware especially stood out to them. This included “differences between the quasi-mechanical BBC Micro keyboard and the modern PC keyboard” and “in the screen display, including aspect ratio, size, resolution, and flickering.”²⁹ So, both the migrated and emulated versions ultimately had a different look and feel from the hardware version. Furthermore, Thibodeau points to how emulation itself “entails a form of migration” and attributes this to the obsolescence and replacement of emulator software itself.³⁰

From this, it can be inferred that emulation is merely a less visible form of modernization than migration, one that attempts to conceal from the user that there are differences between the emulated and the emulation. Migration and emulation together exemplify what Thibodeau considers to be a fundamental paradox of digital preservation, which is that its goal is to prevent any alteration, yet the process makes that impossible. Conversely, the need to keep digital objects unaltered clashes with the need to maintain their usefulness and accessibility.³¹ Preserving digital texts or objects always changes them in one way or another, resulting in multiple versions existing across different physical carriers, software, formats, and so on. Differences between them evince the effects of the interplay between obsolescence and modernization upon the digital object. Variation is consequently an intrinsic aspect of digital preservation, which is equivalent in this context to modernization. To preserve a digital media object, one has to constantly make it new again by creating a new version and in turn rendering the current one obsolete. Therefore,

29. Margaret Hedstrom and Clifford Lampe, “Emulation vs. Migration: Do Users Care?” *RLG DigiNews* Volume 5, Number 6 (December 15, 2001), <https://web.archive.org/web/20050218014346/http://www.rlg.org/legacy/preserv/diginews/diginews5-6.html#feature1>.

30. Thibodeau, “Technological Approaches to Digital Preservation,” 20.

31. *Ibid.*, 28.

the reciprocal relationship between consistent modernization and obsolescence, which results in new versions replacing the old, can be seen as a defining characteristic of new media.

New media effects on film

It logically follows that when a film appears on a new media platform or as part of a digital object, it should similarly be subject to modernization, obsolescence, and replacement. Despite being central to new media in general, however, discussions of the interplay between these elements tend to be surprisingly absent from scholarly works concerning the effects of digital media and/or technology on the film industry. Obsolescence instead arises in relation to issues of materiality and ontological questions concerning the identity of “film” when it is no longer shot on physical celluloid. A prominent recurring perspective is that the digital transition separates film from physical carriers yet does not render the text obsolete. This can be seen in Jenkins’ argument in *Convergence Culture* that the emergence of new media and/or technologies leads to functional and contextual shifts for existing media yet does not obsolete or result in their death. The author’s claim is predicated on the differentiation between “media content” and its “delivery technology.” The former is posited as the actual “media,” such as film or recorded sound, whereas the latter refers to the physical carriers and means of storage, such as Beta cassette tapes. It’s the delivery technologies that are subject to obsolescence, replacement, and death.³²

In this view, owing to their roles within social and cultural contexts, media are essentially immortal, while their hardware is not.³³ Other theorists similarly suggest that films either are or have become distinct from their physical carriers in the digital age. Bordwell claims that it is thanks to the digital turn that films are becoming “content,” which is related to their status as

32. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, rev. ed. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 13.

33. *Ibid.*, 14.

files, rather than physical film prints.³⁴ Peters, in discussing the data migration aspect of new media, proclaims that hardware like VHS tapes and vinyl records “may be functionally dead... but the movies and music they once held are not gone – they have been reformatted into the latest storage medium...”³⁵ So, it would seem that the film medium’s “content,” by which we might understand its audiovisual transmission on a screen, transcends its physical carrier’s ephemerality. According to this perspective, then, new media are leading not to the obsolescence of film texts, but merely the obsolescence of their celluloid versions, which are recorded upon physical film prints. The means of access change, but the film remains the same.

The rhetoric of separation between media and carrier intersects with the idealization of digital technologies as a means of perfect film reproduction that ensures a new copy has suffered no loss in terms of technical quality. One can see this in the works of Rombes, Vesna, Enticknap, and others.³⁶ Rombes provides a direct link between digital reproduction and the digital archive, describing it as a place where film texts no longer face obsolescence or degradation but “instead remain clear and clean in their cool digital zeroes and ones.” Public access and preservation guarantees that the cinematic past is always present, that “nothing ever really gets old.”³⁷ Digital versions of celluloid-born films then should constitute perfect reproductions of the celluloid versions. They ought to be distinct from the source only in the sense that they are immaterial data

34. David Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies* (Madison, Wisconsin: The Irvington Way Press, 2012), 7-8.

35. John Durham Peters, “Proliferation and Obsolescence of the Historical Record in the Digital Era,” in *Cultures of Obsolescence: History, Materiality, and the Digital Age*, eds. Babette B. Tischleder and Sarah L. Wasserman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 85.

36. Leo Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 203-204; Victoria Vesna Bulajić, *Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overflow*. (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xiii; Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, revised ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), xx-xxi.

37. Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, 37.

that can be controlled by software. Their circulation in turn reflects how new media perpetually renew films and so prevents them from degradation or obsolescence. Film texts then should not age or die in the age of new media, but remain forever available and accessible.

Taken together, these discourses indicate that new media don't alter films, which runs counter to the notion that modernization is intrinsic to digital preservation. In congruence with this, scholars that examine the effects of new media on film archiving, preservation, and restoration practices admit to the fragility and ephemerality of modern digital film carriers, yet do not bring up how changing them transforms the film versions recorded on them. In fact, most do not detail the actual digital preservation process, leaving data migration, emulation, and other practices vague and unspecified.³⁸ Perhaps the most comprehensive examination of new media's effects on film preservation appears in Fosatti's *From Grain to Pixel*, which links the use of digital technologies in archiving practices to industrial post-production. But while Fosatti details the migration and emulation strategies, as well as links them with cinema, she makes no mention of how these strategies should result in a modernized version of the digital object, and therefore, of the digital film.³⁹ Implicitly then, whatever changes occur to bit-stream, hardware, and software, the actual film text remains unaffected. Factoring into this perception is the way that the modernization of film texts is defined in relation to their "restoration" and "preservation."

Modernization and Film Archiving

As previously discussed in chapter 3, film restoration is a paradoxical variation practice. Academic definitions commonly suggest that it is a combination of technical processes or

38. Markos Hadjioannou, *From Light to Byte: Toward an Ethics of Digital Cinema* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 95-97; Stephen Prince, *Digital Cinema* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 157-159; Sperb, *Flickers of Film*, 74-76; Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2001; Reprint, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 122.

39. Giovanna Fosatti, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 66-70.

procedures aiming to recreate a pre-viously existing version of the picture that can be defined as the “original.” Natural degradation, as well as intentional alteration for commercial, cultural, or political purposes result in changes to the physical film object that restoration subsequently tries to undo.⁴⁰ In that sense, restoration seeks to oppose textual variation and support pure reproduction by accurately replicating the cinematic past within the present. Preservation, while often used almost interchangeably with restoration, can be described as the procedures and techniques necessary to maintain a film object’s “original” condition, preventing it from undergoing any more change or degradation.⁴¹ So, one might say, that preservation can encompass restoration, such as when the latter is necessary to bring an altered or decaying film back to its original state.

It is in opposition to these activities that scholars commonly bring up modernization as an example of what film archivists should not do. Julia Wallmüller, for example, invokes modernization when proposing ethical limits to digital restoration. She states that the result of a restoration “shall not be a commercialized, “altered for the better,” or modernized product that caters to the viewing habits of contemporary audiences.” In this context, modernization connotes technological improvement or enhancement of a film text’s image quality that goes beyond the acceptable limits of the restoration process, which she describes as a “falsification” and “sharpening the image to a brilliance never attained before.”⁴² One can infer from this that modernization occurs when a restorer exceeds the demands of undoing loss and reproducing the designated ori-

40. Andreas Busche. "Just Another Form of Ideology? Ethical and Methodological Principles in Film Restoration," *The Moving Image* 6, no. 2 (2006): 3-4; Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (New York; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 185, 24-43; Michael Friend, "Film / Digital / Film," *Journal of Film Preservation* 24, no. 50 (03, 1995): 39-40; Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema. An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 66.

41. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 183. Usai, *Silent Cinema*, 66-67.

42. Julia Wallmüller, "Criteria for the Use of Digital Technology in Moving Image Restoration," *The Moving Image* 7, no. 1 (2007): 87.

ginal, meaning restoration should improve a film only until it returns to its initial level of audio-visual quality. Improving it beyond that is unethical, for it means actively changing and so contemporizing the past. Furthermore, Walmuller suggests a distinction based on the presumed cultural opposition between art and commerce.

Enticknap similarly links restoration with artistic intentions, and modernization with economic interests. Citing restorer Robert Gitt, he states that restoration seeks to recreate “the subjective experience of a film’s technical and aesthetic properties in a condition for which claims of originality and/or authenticity are made,” while modernization primarily carries a commercial imperative to make a film “acceptable to a contemporary, mainstream audience.”⁴³ Colorization of black-and-white films, panning-and-scanning of widescreen features, and the remixing of soundtracks serve as the author’s examples of variation practices that modernize films.⁴⁴ Based on this description, modernization constitutes the intentional alteration of a past film to fit the commercial demands of the present and lacks restoration’s essential characteristics, such as its claims to authenticity and historic verisimilitude. The changes of a modernized version then should be analogous to damage to or loss that necessitates reproducing the original.

A specific example the scholar cites to illustrate the distinction is the 1984 version of *Metropolis* (1927, dir. Fritz Lang). Produced by Giorgio Moroder to appeal to a 1980s audience, the new version had a controversial reception, especially among film archivists, many of whom condemned it for flagrantly violating the ethics of film restoration. Enticknap appears to support this perspective, stating that in terms of recreating an authentic earlier form of a film, the Moro-

43. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 41.

44. *Ibid.*, 41-43.

der version “fails this test on almost every imaginable criterion.”⁴⁵ Moroder intentionally made no attempt to approximate what audiences saw at its initial 1927 Berlin premiere. In addition to re-editing it for a faster pace, he colorized some of the b/w scenes, and added a popular 80s soundtrack to the silent footage, additions that stand out against the background of silent film elements and mark the Moro-der version as distinct from its source material. Such an example suggests that a modernized version should always feature evident differences that accentuate its status as “new” and so distinguish it from a reproduction of a pre-existing authoritative variant.

We can conclude that modernization is considered an unethical and culturally illegitimate practice that runs counter to the principles and goals of film restoration and, in turn, those of preservation and reproduction. Even if modernization occurs in the course of restoration, it still apparently devalues the work as a whole by making the past fit the present, which is why restorers should strive to keep a safe distance from modernizing in the course of improving the quality of moving images. A vastly different portrait of the relationship between modernization and preservation emerges. In the context of digital media, the processes of modernization and preservation were considered to be essentially one and the same. But in the context of film, they are thought to be not only disconnected processes, but radically opposed ones as well. It is possible to view this as a sign of fundamental distinction between the preservation of digital objects and that of films, at least when it comes to the celluloid-born ones. But the differences begin to fall away when one considers how the exhibition of celluloid-born films, restored or otherwise, is often mediated by other technologies, especially video delivery platforms.

The fact that some of these platforms, such as DVD, are least partially digital technologies, already suggests that celluloid films should also be susceptible to the paradox of digital

45. Leo Enticknap, “*Metropolis* (Fritz Lang Germany 1927) - Multiple Editions,” *Science Fiction Film and Television* 6, no. 3 (2013): 425.

preservation. But even barring that, there is the fact that ensuring accessibility on such platforms requires a multi-stage process of migration from celluloid to video, at any point of which a film may be and often is deliberately modified with the latest available technology for optimum presentation on or compatibility with the most recent home viewing formats. Such modifications of the cinematic past can be considered a form of audiovisual “improvement” or “enhancement” relative to earlier presentations and so qualify as examples of technological modernization. For a mass consumer audience then, the only way to access a restoration of a celluloid film may be through its modernized version on home video. In turn, the commercial potential of video circulation can serve as an impetus to restore a film in the first place. From this standpoint, restoration can serve as the basis of modernization and vice versa, which in turn suggests that the need for access conflicts with the archival goal to support reproduction and textual stability.

One could potentially argue against this by claiming that modernization occurs specifically due to the film’s commercial distribution in a secondary market and so should be considered unrelated to the activities of film archivists. But I would note that provision of access to a film text is considered by multiple scholars to be an intrinsic aspect of film preservation.⁴⁶ Archivists restore and preserve films, so that they may be seen later. And video versions constitute one of the means by which this happens. Problematically, that video platforms modernize films remains largely unrecognized. Instead, the common assumption is that they merely reproduce them, albeit to various degrees of accuracy. DVD and Blu-Ray versions especially tend to be perceived as perfect “reproductions” of the original in academic, industrial, and cultural discourses. The rhetoric of opposition between modernization and restoration, coupled with the lack of considera-

46. Karen F. Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 98-99; Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*, 3rd ed. (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), 23, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243973>; Usai, *Silent Cinema*, 66.

tion for how access technologies can modernize films, thus plays into the idea that films in the digital age are immortal and never subject to modernization.

Disproving it then requires showing that modernization has essentially become intrinsic to the creation of a standard video version in the digital age and therefore can be seen as a natural result of celluloid film preservation. This will serve to illustrate that films have become locked into an interplay between obsolescence and digital modernization, with emerging computer technologies and their related practices consistently stimulating the production of new versions of pre-existing films that are in line with contemporary format standards. Rather than a pure digital reproduction of an “original” version then, the result is what this chapter refers to as a “digitally modernized version.”⁴⁷ Its arrival typically signals to the consumer that a preceding version, be it contained on a celluloid print, a VHS tape, an earlier DVD or Blu-Ray disc, is obsolete and so must be replaced. The two are then typically subject to qualitative comparisons that position the modernized version as “new” and so technically, aesthetically, and culturally superior. To this end, it is necessary to examine the historical role of digital remastering.

II. Pre-Transition: The Emergence of Digital Remastering

Digital Remastering as a Variation Practice

Though fairly common in contemporary promotional and cultural discourses, the term “digital remastering” has remained largely unexamined by film scholars and archivists. In his latest edition of *Silent Cinema*, Usai states that “remastering” used to describe the “process of improving sound quality” in audio recordings but in the context of film became “...most often applied to the transfer of image and sound from a photochemical film to digital.” He also points out that it functions as an umbrella term that conflates digitization, digital preservation, and digi-

47. Note that this refers to any version of a feature film produced with the aid of computer technologies. It doesn’t necessarily signify that a film appears in the form of data or is distributed through a digital platform. As we shall see, many such versions were first released theatrically on celluloid film or on analogue television and video.

tal restoration “in the commercial and advertising sectors,” so its application leads consumers to believe that a picture has been improved.⁴⁸ In Enticknap’s in-depth study of film restoration, the term makes a brief appearance in the glossary section, which states that it’s “intended to describe the practice of producing a new copy derived from original, or best surviving elements of a given film, incorporating significant technical modifications...” This can be taken to imply that remastering might be a modernization practice in the archival sense. But it leaves unclear, as to how exactly this practice relates to or is distinct from restoration.⁴⁹ Magnifying the potential confusion is the fact that the author previously defined the final result of the restoration process as “a new master film element,” suggesting that the two may be one and the same.⁵⁰

In reality, though often accompanying restoration, digital remastering originated as a distinct practice that built on the process of video mastering, during which a complete theatrical feature film is transferred to video and then recorded onto a physical tape. The result is a physical “master” copy of the film for home video.⁵¹ The term “master” generally designates the pre-release copy of a media text that serves as the base for the mass production and distribution of secondary access copies. The product of an analog restoration is called an “archival master.” Not intended for theatrical exhibition, it instead serves as a complete print, from which distributors

48. Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: A Guide to Study, Research and Exhibition* (London: Bloomsbury on behalf of the British Film Institute, 2019), 12.

49. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 185.

50. Ibid., 125-130.

51. Because of the close association between video mastering and film-to-video transferring, the two processes are sometimes used interchangeably within industrial and cultural discourses. Unlike masters, film-to-video transfers in the pre-transition period could alternatively play a role in a theatrical feature’s post-production and so were not tied specifically to the video market. By the mid-80s, any work shot on film, be it a motion picture or a television program, to be edited as well as color-corrected on video, which was both less expensive and time consuming than working solely on celluloid. See Emory M. Cohen, “Volatile Video Transfer Scene,” *American Cinematographer* 70, no. 2 (Feb 1989): 79-80 and Frank Reinking, “Film to Tape Mysteries Unraveled,” *American Cinematographer* 70, no. 9 (Sept 1989): 74.

can derive new theatrical projection prints.⁵² In the same way, a video master was a complete copy that distributors used to create video versions for platforms like VHS and laserdisc. Video mastering thus entailed preparing a complete theatrical film for post-theatrical distribution.

First, distributors would select the filmic source material to use for the transfer. Second, they would have the source scanned, converted to video, and then recorded onto a physical storage unit, such as a cassette tape, that served as a master copy. Finally, they repeatedly duplicated the master onto a physical a delivery format like VHS or Laserdisc, creating commercial release copies. A certain amount of technical alteration inevitably occurred at each stage, meaning the released video version was not identical to the video master, which itself imperfectly replicated the source material. But the extent of this alteration depended on many different factors, such as the quality of the source material, the transfer and storage technology used to create the master, and the technical parameters of the delivery format. All of this directly impacted the perceived audiovisual quality of the video version, whether it was standard analog, digitally remastered or colorized, that audiences ultimately saw at home. In turn, the version's reception could affect the cultural legitimacy of the variation practices and technologies that led to its creation.

Above all else, the audiovisual quality of the video version is directly proportionate to the quality of the filmic source material that serves as the basis of the master. According to preservationists like Michael Friend, the source with the highest possible quality is the original camera negative, which is a first generation print.⁵³ If the original negative is unavailable, an alternative source is used to produce the video master. In the latter half of the 20th century, producers have taken to conserve the negative due to its fragility and susceptibility to alteration, leading them to develop secondary or intermediate source materials for mass reproduction, such as the "duplicate

52. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 126; Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 74.

53. Friend, "Film / Digital / Film," 37.

negative” and the “interpositive” film used to derive the duplicate from the original negative.⁵⁴ In general, assuming all other factors in the migration chain remain the same, the further removed the source is from the camera negative, the lower the quality of the images is perceived to be in the resulting video version. This could serve as incentive for distributors to restore a film prior to mastering it for video, as restoration ensured the availability of high quality source material.⁵⁵

Whether or not the “quality” of a video version derived from post-first generation prints is actually inferior to that of the original camera negative is open to debate and dependent on how one defines “quality” in the first place. Prior to 1977, film-to-video transfers were commonly conducted from projection prints. Using negatives at the time was considered too risky, given the available technology.⁵⁶ According to Reinking, their video transfers and masters looked differently from those based on negatives or inter-positives. The author describes them as being “snappier” and possessing “more color saturation and less noise – the latter being the video equivalent of grain.” But on the other hand, he adds that they lose more detail “in both highlight and shadow areas.”⁵⁷ In this case, a version based on a second-generation print may have higher quality in some aspects and lower quality in others than one based on a first-generation print. Image color was especially prone to change during migration due to the different technical capabilities of film and video.

Anderson notes in an excerpt from *Video Editing* that television has a much narrower contrast ratio than film. The smaller degree of separation between “the lightest and darkest

54. Reinking, “Film to Tape Mysteries Unraveled,” 76.

55. An example: *The Phantom of the Opera* (1926) had to be restored before it could be digitally remastered for laserdisc release in 1990 due to the fact that no complete print of sufficient quality was available. See McGowan, *Billboard*, June 9, 1990, 63.

56. Reinking, “Film to Tape Mysteries Unraveled,” 73-74.

57. *Ibid.*, 77.

picture elements” means that “the TV image simply can’t reproduce all the subtle shades and shadows present in the film image.” According to him, this is why film producers commonly complain that theatrical versions “look more crisp and vibrant” than video versions.⁵⁸ In 1983, Eastman Color a special type of film print was created in order to compensate for “the inability of television systems to reproduce the entire tonal range of a normal motion picture print.” Video masters derived from these prints retained more detail than those from regular prints.⁵⁹ In that sense, they can be described as being of relatively higher quality.

This highlights the fact that “quality” is often subjective, and can sometimes be measured only via comparison of different versions, such as a video version and the designated “original” theatrical version or perhaps the new version and an older version. DVD and Blu-Ray discs of classic features like *Wizard of Oz*, for instance, regularly include a supplement called a “restoration demonstration” that places images from a restored and un-restored film print side-by-side. This allows for “before” and “after” comparisons of the same image that strive to legitimize the new version over the old and so sell audiences on the idea that restoring the film has resulted in qualitative improvement over the old.⁶⁰ The new version’s differences from the old, in making visible the modernization process, actually shows how much closer the new version has become to the original. This was a prominent technique in the video market as far back as the mid-80s, when distributors began to use quality and technological improvement of quality as selling points, especially in the marketing of digitally remastered versions.

58. Gary Anderson, “Preparing for Post Production,” *Back Stage* 26, no. 49 (Dec 06, 1985): 26B.

59. Reinking, “Film to Tape Mysteries Unraveled,” 74.

60. Nathan Carroll, “Unwrapping Archives: DVD Restoration Demonstrations and the Marketing of Authenticity,” *Velvet Light Trap* no. 56 (Fall, 2005): 20.

Where mastering a theatrical film for home video for the first time results in a video master, mastering it again results in a “remaster.” From a technical standpoint then, “digital remastering” can be understood as the process of mastering a previously mastered film again by using computer technology and encoding it into bits of information.⁶¹ The qualification of a master copy as a “remaster” then is contingent on what one accepts as the very first master in a film’s lifecycle. A difficulty can arise due to the simple fact that the same texts can appear across different media platforms. Were one to count the archival master of a restored film as the first master, then video master of the restoration would then qualify as a remaster. For the sake of convenience, the rest of the chapter will refer to all digital masters as “remasters,” regardless of whether or not they constitute the very first time a picture has been mastered for video. New versions derived from these copies were often described in press, marketing, and cover art materials as “digitally remastered,” though this did not usually appear as an official label.

Digital Remastering and Improved Reproduction

The term came to signify a higher level of fidelity to the original theatrical image and so a higher level of “quality” relative to a preceding version of the same picture. In essence, the digitally remastered version was thought of as an improved video reproduction. There were many reasons for this. For one thing, digitally remastered versions were primarily derived from negatives and interpositives, a factor that was regularly taken to mean that they had better source material than their predecessors. An *American Cinematographer* article on the 1992 *Jason and The Argonauts* (1963) remaster describes its digital transfer, developed from two interpositives, as one that “makes previous transfers look pale in comparison” and “as perfect a transfer as pos-

61. In fact, digital remasters as a whole could still be described as predominantly analog. The digital video transfer was stored on a physical tape, rather than on a computer hard drive. Moreover, the mass produced video versions derived from the digital tape could not actually show digital video, meaning that the digital transfer still had to be converted into analog video.

sible.”⁶² Similar comments can be found in a 1993 *New York Times* article that details the digital remastering of restored classic films like *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and *The African Queen* (1962) for home video. While the masters of these pictures “are digitally recorded,” the new videotape versions “are analog, and of lower quality.” Despite this, Sony Senior Vice President William Huphrey said that “picture and sound are still markedly better than they were on old tapes because the process began with restored negatives.”⁶³ This highlights how digital video remastering often went in hand with film restoration in the case of archival and classic titles, which may very well be a reason for the conflation of the two practices in contemporary discourses on digital media.

In addition to different types of source material, digital remasters were differentiated by the new technology used to produce and store the master copy, which permitted a greater degree of fidelity to the source material. 1977 saw the debut of telecine devices that used “flying spot scanners” that allowed video transfers from camera negatives, rather than projection prints.⁶⁴ In contrast to the mechanical scanners that preceded it, the new systems used “a continuously moving electron beam to scan the film as it rolls.” This alleviated the stress on the physical film during transfer.⁶⁵ From 1977 onwards then, the video version of a prerecorded theatrical feature could draw on a first generation print as the source material. Ten years later, the leading company in telecine devices, Rank Cintel, introduced a new type of telecine capable of converting film

62. Paul Mandell and Marji Rhea, “Jason on Laserdisc,” *American Cinematographer* 73, no. 12 (Dec 1992): 12.

63. Peter M. Nichols, “Home Video: Remastered Special Editions of Celebrated Films make the Old Classics New again,” *New York Times*, Oct 22, 1993, B18. The author repeatedly uses the term “master print” when referring to the “video master” created via film-to-video transfer and recording. He apparently conflated the film restoration “archival master” with the video master.

64. Reinking, Frank. “Film to Tape Mysteries Unraveled,” 73.

65. Anderson, “Preparing for Post Production,” 23B.

images to digital video and recording them onto digital videotape. The MkIII Digiscan 4:2:2 was capable of “the direct 4:2:2 transfer of film stock to digital videotape or disc.” Such a process reportedly improved picture quality.⁶⁶ Broadcast industry consultant Bob Paulson compared the new device to a computer, stating that its operation of moving the film “past a line by line digital video scanner” allowed for noise reduction and color correction, as well as removal of film artifacts like sprocket weave, vertical jitter, and film grain.⁶⁷ While the MkIII Digiscan marked the point of inception for digital video remastering as a variation practice, it was hardly its pinnacle.

By July 1989, Rank Cintel released a follow-up digital telecine called URSA. Among its new features was the fact that it converted analogue film images signals into digital signals, allowing them to directly undergo color correction and other manipulation without loss of quality, before reconverting them into analogue video for broadcast.⁶⁸ And in contrast to the Mark III, it had a higher contrast ratio of 1000 to 1, rather than 300 to 1, as well as an improved light source that removed noise and flare from the transfer. Reportedly, all these features allowed for clearer, more detailed video images than was possible before. The difference was especially visible when one looked at night-time scenes in films like *Die Hard* (1988). 20th Century Fox went so far as to use the URSA to remaster over 60 titles for video between 1990 and 1991, including recent films like *Home Alone* (1990), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), and *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), as well as catalog titles such as *Daddy Long Legs* (1955) and *Anastasia* (1956).⁶⁹ So, the more ad-

66. Diana Frampton, "FACILITIES: Rank Cintel Launches Top Digital Telecine," *Broadcast* (Jun 12, 1987): 11.

67. Bob Paulson, "Selling, Entertaining and Informing using Television: A Technocreative Process in Chaos!" *Back Stage* 28, no. 49 (Dec 04, 1987): 1987, 83.

68. "FILM VIDEO SOUND 89: Video," *Screen International* no. 713 (Jul 15, 1989): 21.

69. Keith Gayhart, "Rank Ursa Telecine Brightens the Post Picture," *American Cinematographer* 72, no. 9 (Sep 1991): 14.

vanced telecine transfer technology became, the better digital remasters and the versions derived from them looked. And their advancement continuously obsoleted older masters and versions.

The first digital remasters replaced the analog masters of the same film. Afterwards, each new digital remaster would replace the one that came before it, closing the gap further between derivative and source. Multiple successive remasters could even be derived from the same source print, mirroring the re-restoration of older pictures, in which case image differences between versions would be determined by the technical capabilities of their constitutive telecine technology. Friend's research on film and video preservation indicates telecine transfers from the mid-80s to the mid-90s "improved continually, making transfers obsolete in as little as two or three years."⁷⁰ Aiding this process was the concurrent shift of video storage technology in the digital direction. Sony introduced the D-1 digital videotape, a physical format capable of recording and storing digital video and audio, in 1987. More digital tape formats were soon unveiled, such as D-2, D-3, DCT, and Digital Betacam. By 1997, it had gone up to D-6.⁷¹ One of its touted improvements over analog videotape formats is that it ostensibly avoided the continuous quality degradation that occurred in the course of cassette reproduction, meaning that each subsequent copy could be of equal quality to the master tape.⁷² Together, the new transfer and storage capabilities helped present the modernization practice as a form of improved reproduction.

By 1991, digital remastering became "the code term for tapes and discs that have been upgraded with the latest technology...." Many older titles previously released on tape or disc,

70. Friend, "Film/Digital/Film," 43.

71. Letitia Forgas, "The Preservation of Videotape: Review and Implications for Libraries and Archives," *Libri* 47, no. 1 (1997): 47.

72. Forgas, "The Preservation of Videotape," 53; Robert Paulson, "SMPTE: Exploring the Why's, What's and Therefore's of Digital Videotape Recording Options," *Back Stage* 30, no. 42 (Oct 20, 1989): 64-65.

such as *Robin Hood* (1973) or *The Band Wagon* (1953), were now being reissued.⁷³ Despite their designation, the resulting versions were not truly “digital,” in that they were bound to analog delivery technology. Until 1997, VHS and laserdisc remained the two main delivery platforms for film on video, and neither one was compatible with digital video.⁷⁴ Instead, they adhered to the NTSC standard used in television broadcasting since at least the 1950s.⁷⁵ Because of this, the recording on a digital master tape had to be reconverted into analog composite video to be actually shown on television via a playback device.

The extent to which a carrier could replicate the digital remaster’s video image depended on a variety of factors, but arguably the most important was its level of image resolution, which was measured in the number of horizontal (and/or vertical) scan lines.⁷⁶ Resolution is somewhat difficult to explain as a concept but it basically constitutes one of the ways the media industry quantifies the quality of a video image. As a rule, the higher an image’s level of resolution is, the higher its quality. Multiple video versions could be derived from the same digital video remaster, each corresponding to a different platform and a different resolution. Laserdiscs had a resolution of 425 lines, while tapes carried about 240 lines.⁷⁷ When migrating from celluloid to Laserdisc then, a film text loses less quality than when it migrates to VHS. So, although all digitally

73. *The Seattle Times*, June 23, 1991, L4.

74. It should be noted, however, that laserdiscs were able to record digital audio, so laserdisc versions could combine analog video with digital audio.

75. David Katz, "High Definition Television Technology and its Implications for Theatrical Motion Picture Production," *Journal of Film and Video* 41, no. 3 (Fall, 1989): 3-4.

76. Note that this is for analog and composite television, not digital, where resolution is more often measured in terms of pixels.

77. Jim Taylor, *DVD Demystified*, 2nd ed. (Blacklick, USA: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing, 2001), 293.

remastered versions constituted an improvement in relation to older analog mastered versions, those appearing on laserdisc arguably surpassed those of VHS versions.

Laserdisc accordingly became more prominently associated with digital remastering, which contributed to its cultural perception as the superior delivery technology. MGM/UA Home Video director of programming George Feltenstein, in discussing the differences in quality between VHS and laserdisc versions, was quoted as saying: “We’re now doing digital video [mastering] because when you go on disk it has to be the best it can be.”⁷⁸ His comparison suggests that VHS did not require the picture to be its best, marking it as a technically inferior carrier. A 1996 *Entertainment Weekly* article offers a similar relative evaluation, praising laserdisc for its ability to “show off the spruce-up work” of a digital remaster “in much more detail than tape can, with resolution nearly twice as sharp and color accuracy that puts tape to shame.”⁷⁹ In a way then, Laserdisc was a superior platform to VHS because it could better replicate and so realize the quality potential of a digital remaster. In this regard, remastering a film with ever improving technology every 2-3 years continuously narrowed the gap between the laserdisc version and the original. But at the same time, it attested to the fact that perfectly replicating the celluloid source material was an unattainable ideal, that there was no quality threshold for either celluloid or video.

Indeed, ongoing technological change at every step of the image migration, preservation, and restoration processes makes it possible indefinitely to “improve” the quality of source elements and derivative video versions alike. All this reflects how, as Friend asserts, “there is no final state of preservation.”⁸⁰ Moreover, transfer and migration procedures always entail a degree

78. Jim Bessman, “Home Video: Restorations Judged an (Un)Cut Above,” *Billboard* 101, no. 30 (Jul 29, 1989): 55.

79. Steve Daly and David Everitt, “Are the digitally remastered classics worth the money?” *Entertainment Weekly*, Oct 04, 1996, <https://ew.com/article/1996/10/04/are-digitally-remastered-classics-worth-money/>

80. Friend, “Film/Digital/Film,” 37.

of subjectivity. Tashiro remarks that the very existence of differences between transfers of the same film served to “acknowledge tacitly the subjective procedures involved in a technical process, and thus the impossibility of a perfectly “faithful” transfer.”” This is central to his claim that laserdisc collecting entails replacing older video versions. He asserts that discs became popular once they began offering “better film-to-video transfers” than videotape, but this led to an industrial trend of improving video transfers constantly so as to create a “potentially perfect copy....”⁸¹ Laserdisc thus illustrates how technological change ensures that new and improved yet imperfect video “reproductions” of a theatrical film text could be produced indefinitely.

Modernization and obsolescence then are ongoing because video technology is constantly changing, promising improvement in quality of audiovisual reproduction and reshaping audience tastes and expectations. Past theatrical films have to be constantly modernized in order to remain accessible as well as commercially and culturally viable in the video market. And the act of modernizing them produces new versions at the cost of obsoleting older ones. Digital remastering then can be seen as a response to larger technological, industrial, cultural, and other changes in the video industry. However, these changes do not occur in isolation from those in the film and television industries, due to the interconnections between the media. For each new digitally remastered video version, a preceding one retroactively becomes marked as inferior, outdated, and worthy of replacement, reflecting the devaluation of the technologies that produced it. But even if its technical procedures introduced new visual artifacts unique to the latest variation, the digital modernization of film by video in such cases remained largely imperceptible, at least in relation to the source material or the theatrical celluloid version of the picture.

81. Charles Tashiro, "The Contradictions of Video Collecting," *Film Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (Winter, 1997): 16.

By default, the majority of audiences would not be able to discern the visual differences between a digitally remastered version and the original, nor would they have a film print available for close comparison. This is attributable to both the subjective nature of audience perception and to the efforts of the media industries to guide it. Repeatedly viewing films in a certain format conditions one to perceive a particular “look” as natural or correct. Technological changes in a medium and its presentation, in affecting the look of a film, can in turn reshape public taste.⁸² Viewers exposed to film primarily through video are conditioned to perceive elements that distinguish video versions from theatrical releases, such as lower image brightness, clarity, and aliasing, as natural to how films were supposed to look. Further, none of the changes made to the image via remastering tended to attract attention to themselves. Only in juxtaposition to earlier video versions do the changes become explicitly visible. Even then, they are naturalized by filmmaker, critical, marketing, or other discourses as signs of improved reproduction. At least in part, this is why remastering will have remained an ongoing and habitual modernization practice well after the end of the video industry’s digital transition.

III. In-Transition: DVD and VHS Versions

The Rise of DVD

A 2007 study by Jan-Christopher Horak finds that many titles, especially from the silent era, became lost in the transition from VHS to DVD due to the perceived necessity of digitally remastering them for release on the latter platform. For distributors, the cost of such remasters made the creation of a DVD version commercially unviable.⁸³ The economics surrounding DVD and digital remastering in effect rescinded the mass access provided by VHS to films, such as

82. Bordwell, *Pandora’s Digital Box*, 203; Friend, “Film / Digital / Film,” 45.

83. Jan-Christopher Horak, “The Gap between 1 and 0: Digital Video and the Omissions of Film History.” *Spectator - the University of Southern California Journal of Film and Television* 27, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 35-36.

Four Sons (1928, dir. John Ford), *Noah's Ark* (1928, dir. Michael Curtiz), *The Wedding March* (1928, dir. Erich von Stroheim).⁸⁴ Horak cites their lack of availability to illustrate how format transitions essentially restrict access to what can be considered “our collective film history” and so provides students with a “fragmented, incomplete, and distorted view” of it.⁸⁵ Based on this, a new media delivery technology can heavily revise what consumers are able to access at a given time due to technical, commercial, or other factors and so alters understanding of film history in the process. The absence of a remastered version is equated to a loss or distortion of film history.

Conversely, this would mean that the reissuing of a title on a new platform can be seen as continuing to provide and preserve access to film history. However, the author's study perceives remastering as an inherent aspect of DVD reproduction and also does not account how each new format affects the film text inscribed on it, resulting in a unique version with specific artefacts owing to the carrier's technical parameters.⁸⁶ When one takes this into consideration, it becomes evident that modernization is a necessary step in maintaining continuous mass access to a film, which always suffers a loss when migrating to a new platform. A version of the picture specific to the older carrier remains left behind, while a newer one takes its place in the flow of commercial circulation, contributing to collective film history in the process. It follows that this history is distorted not when a title fails to transition to a new carrier but when the old carrier and its corresponding version become inaccessible due to obsolescence or physical death.⁸⁷

84. Ibid. 36-37.

85. Ibid, 39.

86. As we've discussed previously, a standard video version, in contrast to a theatrical film print, appears with diminished image quality and every subsequent act of tape duplication further de-grades the image, effectively fostering a new version of the picture.

87. Of course, this presumes we set aside the notion that we can never have access to the entirety of all the films ever made and so cannot possibly be privy to a complete, undistorted record of collective film history.

It is in this context that the transition from VHS to DVD needs to be examined. The new digital video platform, in supplanting its analog predecessor, heralded the reissuing of numerous celluloid-born films already available on tape.⁸⁸ Consequently, a new DVD version typically featuring a higher level of image resolution, brightness, and clarity released between 1997 and 2005 would eventually replace a VHS version of the same picture, redefining it as a disposable commodity. This could occur in several different ways: retailers stock DVD versions in lieu of available VHS versions, distributors stop manufacturing the VHS versions in favor of DVD versions, and finally, consumers purchase the DVD versions, rather than the VHS ones, even when both may be available on shelves at the same time. Briefly then, it is worth documenting this process of transition, which saw the videotapes lose their cultural legitimacy and become disposable commodities, despite years of having served as collectible items.

The earliest DVDs, as the last chapter established, arrived on the market in 1997. In about 6 years, it would manage to penetrate about 40% of households, becoming an increasingly common fixture of media consumers by January 2003.⁸⁹ The earliest instances of DVD replacing VHS began as early as January 2000 at the retail level. VHS was still selling well, but DVD had become popular enough in demand and market penetration that video retailers and chains, like Virgin Megastore and Best Buy, began removing VHS copies of older catalog titles in order to provide shelf space for films available in the new format. Evidently, there was literally not enough room for both tapes and discs on retailer shelves.⁹⁰ So, the VHS version of one title

88. VHS tapes might still be viewable and so the specific version of the picture it carries is accessible but the technology necessary to actually play the tape, such as a VCR, the wires to connect it to the television set, the remote control to tune things to the proper video channel, is discontinued.

89. Knight Rider Tribune Business News, 24 Jan 2003, 1.

90. Diane Garrett, "Shelf Space Under Pressure," *Video Business* 20, no. 3 (Jan 17, 2000): 1.

could be replaced by the DVD version of another. In any case, analog video versions became less accessible to the public, while digital video versions conversely became more accessible.

DVD's overall progression was much faster than expected. 2001 was a breakout year for the format, which was predicted to reach 24 million households by year's end.⁹¹ And by April 2002, DVD overtook VHS "as the biggest money-earner in home video."⁹² Much as some retailers stopped stocking older titles in VHS versions, studios soon stopped the manufacture or reduplication of them. At the start of 2003, older titles like *The Producers* (1967), and *A Shot in the Dark* (1964) as well as more recent ones like *Get Shorty* (1995), all of which had previously received VHS versions from MGM, would now appear exclusively in DVD versions. Movies Unlimited, a company specializing in VHS releases, at the time listed on its official website over 50,000 titles as having been discontinued.⁹³ By the end of 2004, DVD players had become relatively cheap, with many selling at \$40 or less. DVD exclusivity was also ramping up for new films and TV shows.⁹⁴ These factors led to a commercial and cultural devaluation of VHS, with most consumers abandoning tapes entirely in favor of DVDs, rather sustaining both formats.

Numerous VHS owners including video collectors reportedly parted with their tapes in 2005. Many were reportedly donating them in large quantities to Goodwill stores or pawnbrokers, allowing for them to be resold at cheaper prices.⁹⁵ VHS at this point in time was becoming increasingly consigned to the margins of formal circulation. It was becoming physically rare, but rather than growing in value, it instead grew more closely associated with garbage, a trait

91. Kurt Indvik, "Managing the DVD Transition," *Video Store Magazine* 23, no. 51 (Dec, 2001): 6.

92. "VHS Still Holding on in Shadow of DVD," *DSN Retailing Today* 41, no. 7 (Apr 08, 2002): 38.

93. Knight Rider Tribune Business News, 24 Jan 2003, 1.

94. *The Gazette*, 19 Dec 2004, A1.

95. Knight Ridder Tribune Business News, 31 May 2005, 1.

arguably characteristic of contemporary new media. If anything, this played into the already pre-existent perception of VHS as a low-quality reproductive format.

Rather than make their way to landfills, however, thousands of discarded tapes wound up being shipped by independent companies to Mexico where other companies would then “break down the cassettes... by stripping the plastic and screws off the tapes.” Whatever visual information previously recorded on such tapes then underwent “degaussing” – a process that erased the information and prepared a newly blank tape for resale.⁹⁶ Thus, the value of the tape was now in the physical space available on it, rather than in the audiovisual recording that it stored. With that, video versions of films went en masse from precious items that consumers purchased, owned, preserved, and accessed at will to ephemeral objects. In a way, one could say that this returned to films or, rather, to specific iterations of them the ephemeral qualities they had purportedly lost with the emergence of the video market.

VHS would not be completely phased out for several years more, though it’s difficult to say with certainty when exactly one should count as the final end of the VHS era. Ostensibly, one of the last major new VHS releases was in 2006 for the film *A History of Violence* (dir. David Cronenberg).⁹⁷ Of course, the media industry was already preparing to begin a new transition into the realm of high-definition video platforms. 2006 would see the initial launches of both HD-DVD and Blu-Ray, which is a key reason, as to why 2005 can be seen as the end of the VHS-DVD transition.⁹⁸ With the new format having established its supremacy, distributors were already beginning to prepare a successor that would enable continuing the habitual modernization and obsolescence of film texts through the practice of digital remastering.

96. *Journal - Gazette*, 17 Nov 2005, 4D.

97. *Los Angeles Times*, 22 Dec 2008, A.1.

98. Paul McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 165.

DVD Quality and Digitally Remastered Versions

What was it about the new platform that made some consumers willing to dispense with the VHS copy of a given title and replace it with a DVD version? A 2003 news article reports about retailers agreeing that an “increase in DVD purchases is due to enhanced picture quality. The quality of the DVD is more digitally advanced than VHS tapes, and there are more viewing options.”⁹⁹ A later article discussing how the advent of DVD technology in 1997 has led to a concurrent diminishment of VHS popularity similarly notes that digital discs “offer higher quality video and sound and hold more material -- not to mention they take up less shelf space.”¹⁰⁰ Scholar Paul McDonald boils the appeal of DVD down to its differentiating itself from VCRs and videocassettes via the creation of “an innovative home media commodity which promised consumers improved sound and image quality, together with new flexible options for accessing media content.”¹⁰¹ One can infer that, of the characteristics setting DVD apart from VHS, including smaller physical unit size and the presence of supplemental materials, higher audiovisual quality was considered the key selling point.

Higher quality was also a key marker of distinction between DVD and Laserdisc. Prior to 1997, laserdisc was the platform most capable of realizing the qualitative potential of a digital remaster, which went in hand with its replication of the theatrical aspect ratio to position it as the closest reproduction of the “original” version in the home. Though it similarly presented films in widescreen, DVD possessed a higher level of resolution, offering approximately 500-540 scan lines of horizontal resolution per picture height on a then-standard rectangular TV receiver, in

99. *Journal - Gazette*, 07 Jul 2003, 1C.

100. *The Gazette*, 19 Dec 2004, A1.

101. McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries*, 59.

contrast to the 425 lines of a laserdisc and 240 of a regular VHS.¹⁰² Pixel-wise, this was equal to an NTSC resolution of 720 x 480.¹⁰³ Arguably a more significant point of distinction between the two types of discs was the fact that DVD circumvented the need to reconvert the recording of a digital remaster into analog video. Instead, it utilized “component digital video,” which is “near studio master quality when encoded properly and carefully.”¹⁰⁴ The new platform’s use of “true” digital video could easily result in image quality differences becoming visible in the course of comparing the DVD version to an analog video version of the same film. The difference would be especially pronounced in comparisons with VHS due to the large gap in resolution.

It is worth reiterating that quality is highly subjective and it is often only through contrast and comparison that disparities in quality between different variations of the same text become apparent to the viewer. Media industries themselves have been known to use such comparisons, as exemplified by restoration or remastering demonstrations that promote a new video version as a qualitative equivalent of the original, in order to influence cultural perception and shape viewer taste. This highlights how DVD quality, as McDonald astutely puts it, ultimately constitutes “a comparative concept measured less by the relationship of the copy to the original than by the reproductive capabilities of DVD when measured against other home entertainment media like the videocassette or VCD.”¹⁰⁵ It would not be unfair then to suppose that quality didn’t become an issue or a criterion of film evaluation for many home viewers until digitally remastered versions threw into relief the quality of analog video versions. Only against the backdrop of the DVD and the reissuing of migrated titles in new remastered versions did a typical consumer

102. Taylor, *DVD Demystified*, 293.

103. *Ibid.*, 362.

104. *Ibid.*, 357-358.

105. McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries*, 62.

begin to perceive the VHS version's analog presentation as aesthetically incorrect and qualitatively subpar. Through its close connection with DVD quality then, the practice of digital remastering became a marker of distinction between analog and digital video versions.

Continually modernizing films and so fostering the migration of titles released on its home video predecessors in this manner led to a cultural reassessment of VHS as a technically insufficient delivery technology for viewing movies. Mainstream consumers that previously did not care about the quality of pre-recorded tapes and were happy to view films in versions that ascribed to the aesthetics of access gradually became closer in their taste to discerning home video cinephiles. The desire for relatively high audiovisual quality as represented by DVD compelled them to see VHS tapes and/or the analog video versions they carried as outdated products to be resold, reused, recycled, or trashed, rather than collected, cherished, and re-viewed. For a long time, videotapes carried well-known negative connotations of trash. Now, thanks to digital modernization, they alongside the versions they carried were literally being treated as physical refuse. The film text's renewal during this period thus became coupled with its obsolescence.

A crucial thing to keep in mind is that, despite its frequent association with authenticity, DVD could provide near-perfect reproduction of the digital remaster, but not the source material constituting the remaster's basis.¹⁰⁶ According to Enticknap, a 35mm film color print would require approximately 5000 lines of resolution, while a source negative – 7000 lines. Because of this, a 4K Blu-Ray would have a resolution level relatively close to that of a release print, but still a notable step down from the negative.¹⁰⁷ From the perspective that the source material constitutes the “original” of a home video version, the DVD version is similar to a VHS version.

106. It remains a matter of debate, as to how much resolution and storage would be necessary to fully encode the original negative of a theatrical 35mm film print to digital video. Scholars have cited figures ranging between 1.5 and 7.5 terabytes of memory. See Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 65 and Friend, "Film/Digital/ Film," 43.

107. Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 199.

It too constitutes a unique variant, whose distinctions primarily lie in its audiovisual quality as determined by the format's technical parameters, not to mention the changes accumulated in the course of the film image's migration from the source material to a digital video master copy.

A key step in the production of a DVD version from a digital remaster involves video compression, which basically creates a new digital video file that retains much of the source, but lowers the number of bits of memory required to store and transmit it. De Lancie succinctly explains why it's impossible to fit a digital remaster onto a DVD without compressing it first:

Uncompressed "studio quality" video... generates data at a rate of over 200 Mb per second, which vastly exceeds the speed at which a DVD player can retrieve program information (video, audio, and subtitles) from a disc (9.8 Mbps). Storing a two-hour program at this rate takes over 200 GB, while the storage capacity of DVD ranges from 4.7 to 17 GB. The answer to this dilemma is MPEG compression.¹⁰⁸

Given that an uncompressed video source may take up to 50 or so times as much memory than a compressed result, it may be tempting to think that compression should considerably diminish the quality of a remaster. But compression, or more specifically, "lossy compression" works by deleting unnecessary information from as well as more compactly storing redundant information of digitized motion pictures, a change that greatly reduces the volume of data the video file takes up but is often imperceptible when viewing it.¹⁰⁹ In theory then, then, one should not notice much, if any difference between the uncompressed remaster and the final DVD presentation.

In practice, however, the amount of quality retained most directly depends on the data or bit rate of the resulting file and whether or not scenes in the film have motion or are static. As a rule, the higher the rate of bits-per-second (bps) is, the greater the audiovisual quality of the compressed result is. But the greater the bit rate, the more memory in turn the file takes up, a factor

108. Philip De Lancie, "Video for DVD: Understanding MPEG-2 Compression," *Millimeter - the Magazine of Motion Picture and Television Production* 28, no. 1 (Jan 2000): 103.

109. De Lancie, "Video for DVD," 103; Taylor, *DVD Demystified*, 91.

that runs up against the storage limitations of DVDs. Moreover, a film can contain multiple audio options in addition to the video, not to mention supplemental features that can also contain their own sounds and images, all of which also take up some portion of a disc's storage space.¹¹⁰ And, of course, the amount of space on the disc itself can differ. DVD discs can hold 4.4-15.9 GB, depending on the number of layers they have.¹¹¹ All of these aspects can affect the extent to which one compresses a remaster in the production of a physical DVD, thereby determining the final data rate of the picture. Because of all these variables, compression can potentially produce visible artifacts in the end result that may be interpreted as a loss of quality.

One such artifact is "macroblocking," which is "a lack of smoothness in the density of the black areas of an image that is manifested in fuzzy pixel blocks..." According to Solman, however, the most common DVD artifact is "The Gibbs effect," which is "a white blur rimming sharp edges, especially when there is high contrast in the picture..." This likely results from exaggerated compression that seeks to increase the sharpness of the picture.¹¹² Such artifacts then distinguish the DVD version from the remaster and foreground its status as a digital object. Ideally then, compression should not introduce any artifacts and so make the act of compression visible. However, Taylor argues that there is an erroneous tendency to attribute almost all DVD artifacts to compression, even though this is rarely the actual case. In actuality, there are many other potential causes of artifacts such as "film-to-video conversion, analog-to-digital conversion, noise reduction, digital enhancement, digital encoding, digital decoding..."¹¹³ Quite simply then, there can be numerous reasons for the DVD version to look less than a perfect copy.

110. Gregory Solman, "Picture Perfect?" *Film Comment* 37, no. 3 (May, 2001): 54.

111. Taylor, *DVD Demystified*, 176.

112. Solman, "Picture Perfect?" 56.

113. Taylor, *DVD Demystified*, 170.

In some cases, in fact, the DVD version accurately reproduces the digital remaster, but its high level of resolution comes with consequence of accentuating pre-existing elements and/or artifacts previously occluded by theatrical or analog video exhibition. Certain details become magnified, allowing them to be scrutinized up close in a manner that could never have been foreseen when the picture was first produced. DVD versions can make more pronounced the “artificial quality” of instances when a film switches from between exterior and interior locations, or make plainly visible the use of wires in old special effects sequences.¹¹⁴ Evidently, films that exhibit such issues were shot using techniques that are not fully compatible with contemporary delivery technology. By rendering them visible, digital modernization redefines them as errors that mar the picture’s quality by threatening to expose the picture’s construction to the audience and in that sense diminish the quality of particular scenes, sequences, and shots.

The desire to reconcile such differences and so ensure accurate reproduction of the film as it appeared during its initial exhibition may then justify further acts of digital modernization. Computer-related technologies and techniques can be used to readjust the specific elements of an image, such as the level of grain, sharpness, contrast, and color, or to remove scratches, dirt, and other undesirable elements and artifacts. These constitute acts of imperceptible modernization, in that they are intended to be invisible and to support audience immersion by removing elements that can draw attention to the picture’s artificiality. Telecine operators and MPEG encoders consequently may find themselves in the same quandary as restorers and archivists, wondering whether or not it is ethical to digitally ‘improve’ a picture by correcting perceived flaws that could very well be intrinsic to a film’s original experience. Compounding this, what counts as an internal issue or flaw must be constantly reassessed due to ongoing technological change, which signifies that improvement may count as reproduction in some instances and alteration in others.

114. Solman, “Picture Perfect?” 55.

Older films using what were, for their time, practical special effects (SFX) in particular are prone to suffering from this, as contemporary digital platforms foreground the effects' artificiality. Visible wires holding up miniature airplanes were a topic of concern for the archivists responsible for the 2006 digital restoration of *Dr. Strangelove*. Though they could've removed the wires with a technique Fossati terms "digital effacing" and so go beyond what is "ethically acceptable" in restoration, they ultimately chose not to. And yet, there apparently exist some restorations where such wire removal has occurred.¹¹⁵ As they rely on the willful use of digital visual effects (DVFX) to modernize of a film for contemporary exhibition, these restorations can qualify as examples of CGI Revision. While this practice will be examined later in the chapter, what should be of note is that the very act of restoration or remastering can make it necessary to revise it with CGI. All this points to how there isn't always a clear distinction between imperceptible and accentuated forms of modernization, nor between modernization and restoration. All these practices aim to improve a film by creating new versions that replace older ones.

Remastering and Loss of Earlier Versions

Let us suppose that audiovisual quality as determined by the technical parameters of a delivery technology is ultimately negligible to truly differentiate the VHS and DVD iterations of the same picture, meaning that its DVD version for all intents and purposes counts an identical copy of the VHS version. Even under this condition, there are many versions that remain exclusive to VHS and feature non-technical differences from their DVD counterparts, such as in terms of assemblage, aspect ratio, and color grade. Perhaps the rarest of these are theatrical or alternate cuts of certain popular titles. In general, DVDs tend to retain or collect all the cuts of a migrated title available on its predecessor formats, but occasionally some exceptions occur. For instance, the R-rated cut of *Re-Animator*, produced in order to make the film acceptable to video stores

115. Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 223.

that did not circulate unrated films, to date still has not been released on DVD. Another example is the theatrical cut of *Highlander 2: The Quickening* (1992, dir. Russel Mulachy). Though long available on VHS alongside a director's cut that features an additional 19 minutes of footage, the theatrical version has still not merited a DVD release, in contrast to the authorial revision. Given DVD's association with authenticity, the absence of these cuts suggests that producers and distributors do not view them as authentic or worthy of inclusion via remastering.

Anybody hoping to view them would have to track down a copy of the obsolete VHS format. By implication then, only some variations of a film are worthy of digital modernization and contemporary access, while others are outdated and so should be forgotten. Reiterating this notion is the distributor policy of excluding 1.33:1 video versions from DVD, which was fairly common during the early years of the format's lifecycle. Most likely, this had to do with the initial marketing of DVD as a high-end format to video collectors and cinephiles, essentially in an effort to appeal to the laserdisc audience. But as the format became more popular, distributors began changing their policies to appeal to mass consumers that preferred the image fill up the then-rectangular TV screen. Already in 1999, multiple companies including New Line, MGM, and Universal were releasing both widescreen and full-screen versions of the same picture on DVD either on the same disc or across separate discs. This approach became increasingly normalized for a period of time.¹¹⁶ By the end of 2004, though some titles on DVD still appeared exclusively in widescreen as parts of "special collector's editions," multi-ratio releasing was standard practice. In part, this helped ensure the DVD's acceptance by the mainstream home viewing

116. Kevin Brass, "Widescreen Policies Under Studio Scrutiny," *Video Store Magazine* 21, no. 16 (Apr, 1999), 9.

audience.¹¹⁷ As widescreen became normalized, however, studios gradually began to exclude the 1.33:1 ratio from DVD releases. Reinstating VHS as the exclusive platform for full-screen versions of migrated titles made them appear inferior and inaccessible.

By far, the greatest loss that occurred in the analog-to-digital video transition was that of colorized versions of classic black-and-white (b/w) films. Their exclusion built on and reinstated their already low cultural status and perceived lack of commercial potential following the controversy that ensued in the mid-80s. Despite the fact that colorization, similar to remastering, was a digital modernization practice that linked technology to qualitative improvement, its results faced rejection on moral, historical, ethical, and aesthetic grounds. With support from numerous film archivists, scholars, critics, as well as various organizations and interest groups, prominent Hollywood directors equated the act of colorizing a film to the defacement of art and butchering of history. A central argument on the part of Allen, Capra, Lucas, and Scorsese, and others was that a theatrical film's b/w version constituted the "original" work of art, so releasing a color version misrepresented the artist and damaged his reputation.¹¹⁸ This went in line with the rationale that the industry's control over distribution and access meant newer audiences would only know classic films through their modernized misrepresentations. So, the colorized version eventually "would replace the original version in the public memory," resulting in "severe consequences for any real understanding of film history and cinematic tradition."¹¹⁹ Filmmakers portrayed colorization as a threat to legitimate b/w versions that would normalize the misrepresentation of works

117. Jessica Wolf, "Home Theater Pushing Widescreen Acceptance," *Video Store Magazine* 26, no. 44 (Oct, 2004): 38.

118. Paul Grainge, "Reclaiming Heritage: Colourization, Culture Wars and the Politics of Nostalgia," *Cultural Studies* 13, no. 4 (October 1999): 623-627, doi:10.1080/095023899335077.

119. Grainge, "Reclaiming Heritage," 627.

of art and the artists that made them. Their accusations, however, presumed that new audiences would never be able to access a b/w version or have any awareness of its existence.

In actuality, it was difficult for the viewer of a colorized version to not become aware at one point or another of a picture's alteration history. After all, colorizers like president Wilson Markle of CI and Executive VP Charles M. Powell of CST made no attempt to hide the fact that colorization modernized a film and actively changed the cinematic past to make b/w films accessible to a new audience that would otherwise never see it on video and television.¹²⁰ So, color was used to sell the new version as a contemporary product of the 80s.¹²¹ Furthermore, b/w versions of colorized films tended to be available on videotape before and after the new version's release. As with alternate cuts, the concurrent presence of the same film in color and b/w helped maximize its potential audience and, with that, awareness of its variability. The profitability of both versions as a result could very well depend on the audience being aware of the picture originating as a b/w theatrical film before undergoing digital re-coloring. Some scholars, in fact, believe that the commercial appeal of colorized versions lay in the novelty of its addition, in the act of "digital alteration" itself.¹²² In turn, there are claims that the circulation of colorized

120. Robert S. Birchard, "'My Hair is Red, My Eyes are Blue . . .'" *American Cinematographer* 66, no. 10 (October 1985): 75-76.

121. Such a perception was rooted in the belief that the b/w style of filmmaking became outdated and economically unviable after the film industry standardized all-color production in tandem with television transitioning to color in the late 60s. Early films were photographed in black-and-white, with color often being a potential addition in post-production through the use of tinting and toning. Color film stock came into use as early as the 1920s via Technicolor. But filming an entire feature in color was not a popular practice until the mid-1950s, when Eastman Color negative "had become the industry leader." See Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press), 1992, 237.

122. Grainge, "Reclaiming Heritage," 625; *Newsday*, 22 Oct 1989, 06.

versions actually helped generate consumer interest in corresponding b/w variants.¹²³ For all these reasons, colorization was unlikely to replace b/w versions in public memory.

Contrary to prognostications, colorized versions quickly became commercially outdated. Admittedly, tape sales of the earliest colorizations were reportedly much higher than those of their counterparts. The colorized *Topper* (1947), the first feature to undergo conversion, had generated \$1 million in sales from 1985-1987, considerably exceeding the \$35,000 the b/w tape accumulated in 10 years of distribution.¹²⁴ But these considerably diminished by the end of the decade. By October 1989 there had been multiple cases, wherein b/w versions outsold colorized releases.¹²⁵ Within 5 years, many distributors had given up on colorization due to relatively small profit margins.¹²⁶ Demand for color versions had also fallen in the broadcast market, and little demand existed in the cable market, with channels specializing in old movies showing b/w versions only so as to appeal to film buffs. As of December 1994, some studios like Fox were reportedly still colorizing films, but Turner Broadcasting System had discontinued its operation.¹²⁷ Colorization at this point ceased to be a regular industrial variation practice.

Subsequently, few if any colorized versions created prior to 1997 ever saw release on the DVD platform, especially those commissioned by Turner enterprises, such as the 1988 colorized version of *Casablanca* (1942, dir. Frank Capra). Instead, classic films for which colorized video versions were available appeared only in digitally remastered b/w versions. Their exclusion from

123. Library of Congress, *Technological Alterations to Motion Pictures: a Report of the Register of Copyrights* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Copyright Office, 1989), 57-60.

124. *Chicago Tribune*, 12 Apr 1987.

125. For instance, *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) sold 30,000 b/w copies versus about 5,000 colorized copies. See *Newsday*, 22 Oct 1989, 06.

126. Grainge, "Reclaiming Heritage," 625; Peter Decherney, *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 150.

127. *New York Times*, 19 Dec 1994, D10.

DVD further diminished them, while the subsequent obsolescence of VHS as a physical carrier rendered them essentially inaccessible and so erased them from collective film history.¹²⁸ The lack of VHS-era colorized versions on DVD is telling. Not reissuing earlier colorized versions on DVD prevents these them from becoming more accessible and gaining potential legitimacy, which could in turn elevate accentuated modernization. This contributes to the overall invisibility of digital modernization and so plays into the myth that digital media does not technologically modernize films but offers perfect reproduction of the cinematic past.

Digital remastering then functions as a means of access, being central to determining which versions receive emulation and which do not. The advent of DVD helped render colorized versions alongside all other video versions as obsolete and disposable objects. If access is indeed central to preserving film history and modernization is necessary for access purposes on contemporary platforms, then films must be paradoxically modernized on a regular basis in order to represent film history properly. The losses of versions incurred in the transition from analog to digital video, not to mention the changes and artefacts that a new version demonstrates, therefore can be seen as indicative of film becoming new media and so subject to the paradoxes of digital preservation. As a form of imperceptible modernization, digital remastering, though not perfectly, arguably corresponds to the emulation strategy. It constantly changes a film so that it appears the same but better. It legitimizes some variants at the cost of delegitimizing others. And as the next section will show, even when accentuated modernizations appear on a modern platform, modernization still remains largely imperceptible.

IV. Post-Transition: Accentuated Modernization and Visible Loss

Digital Remastering and Blu-Ray

128. This is not to say that no colorized versions are available on DVD at all. *It's a Wonderful Life*, for instance, is an exception.

As mentioned previously, Blu-Ray first emerged as a potential successor format to DVD in 2006. Following a relatively shortlived format war with HD-DVD, it became the primary new disc-based format for a new generation of home video technology by 2007-08.¹²⁹ One could potentially fill a much longer article on how the standardization of Blu-Ray led to the obsolescence and discontinuation of HD-DVD versions of films. But of immediate interest is the relation of Blu-Ray to DVD, digital remastering, and the quality threshold of accurate reproduction following the end of the VHS-to-DVD transition. Naturally, Blu-Ray did not immediately replace DVD as the dominant home video platform.¹³⁰ Some of the premiere Blu-Ray versions released on May 23, 2006 were reissues of popular celluloid-born Hollywood films like *Terminator 2* (1991, dir. James Cameron), *The Fifth Element* (1997, dir. Luc Besson), *Robocop* (1987, dir. Paul Verhoeven), and *XXX* (2002, dir. Rob Cohen).¹³¹ Distributors thus directly invited comparative evaluations between these new variants and their older DVD predecessors.

From a technical standpoint, like all standard DVD versions, Blu-Ray versions of celluloid-born films constitute digital modernizations created through the film-to-video transfer and mastering procedures. In turn, how Blu-Ray versions ultimately appear before the audience and whether or not they have any visible digital artifacts depends on the quality of the source material, the transfer and mastering technologies, and so on. So, it should not be surprising that Blu-Ray versions can also contain visible artifacts, such as those resulting from lossy compression, inconsistent source footage, or technical issues inherent to the production, that position them as

129. "Blu-Ray Vs. DVD," *Empire* no. 240 (Jun 2009): 202-203.

130. Indeed, which video platform should be considered dominant today is debatable, given the wideranging proliferation of streaming services like Netflix.

131. *Wall Street Journal*, 01 Mar 2006, D.5.

contemporary products of digital technology.¹³² A 2008 thinkpiece by archivist Robert Harris indicates that a problem of many early Blu-Ray releases in particular was the absence of film grain, courtesy of the individuals working on the digital remasters of the films applying too much digital noise reduction or “DNR” to smooth out the image for contemporary viewing. He cites the recent release of the film *Patton* (1970, dir. Franklin J. Schaffner) as an example of how completely removing the grain, rather than simply reducing it, results in Blu-Ray images having very evident digital differences from the celluloid source material.

According to him, “Faces were waxy, background detail was gone, clothing, walls, dirt on Jeeps was all missing high frequency information, and the image appeared dead, much like a video game.” *The Patton* Blu-Ray version thus failed reproducing “the look of cine-ma” due to the flaws of its digital remastering.¹³³ Harris’ critique points to an interesting conflict between contemporary expectations of how films should “look” in a digital format, which presumes imagery as sharp and clear as possible, and the historical accuracy of their appearance. The absence of grain in a Blu-Ray version’s imagery therefore qualify as signs of digital modernization in some instances and flawless digital reproduction in others.

Despite potentially carrying visible artifacts of their remastering, standard Blu-Ray versions are nonetheless typically recognized as better reproductions of the theatrical film than their DVD predecessors. For the most part, this is attributable to their technical distinction on the basis of the video image’s “definition,” a relative term that is synonymous with resolution. As Butler succinctly summarizes, the greater the clarity of an image, “the higher that image’s definition or

132. In Chapter 3, I discussed how the presentation of the *Manhunter* director’s cut on Blu-Ray alternated between HD and SD footage, making immersion impossible, due to the original negative materials for the extra footage director Michael Mann wanted to include being sourced from a video master. Blu-Ray magnified the visible gap between the source materials.

133. Robert Harris, “DNR... and Other Things That Go Bump in the Night,” *The Digital Bits*, 06 Jun 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080628110639/http://www.thedigitalbits.com/articles/robertharris/harris062408.html>.

resolution is said to be.”¹³⁴ Blu-Ray offers “high-definition” (HD) video and a standard resolution of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, which generally approximates a typical 35mm film print.¹³⁵ This is a considerably higher level of resolution than that of DVD, which is “a technology designed for standard-definition television.”¹³⁶ Accordingly, Blu-Ray has a much larger storage capacity, being able to carry between 25 and 50 GB of memory.¹³⁷ Because of this, Blu-Ray versions transmit images at higher bit-rates and could be said provide a higher level of “quality” when measured by image resolution, definition, or bit-rate than DVD versions.¹³⁸ So, much like DVD promised higher quality relative to VHS and Laserdisc, so did Blu-Ray promise higher quality relative to DVD, supporting the paradoxical notion that the more technically advanced a video version is, the more accurately it reproduces the celluloid original.

The practice of digital remastering subsequently became closely associated with Blu-Ray versions, helping to promote them as accurate reproductions of the celluloid source, rather than digital modernizations, even as it continued to often serve as the basis of DVD versions as well. As discussed in the previous chapters, HD digital remasters existed as early as 2003. DVDs, however, could not realize the full capacity of HD transfers in 1,080 lines of resolution. When derived from the same remaster, the Blu-Ray version will suffer less loss during encoding and compression onto the disc. The result of this was a shift in the perceived quality threshold for video versions, which gradually redefined what constituted an accurate reproduction of a theatrical film. Previously, DVD versions had emerged as qualitative equivalents of theatrical releases in

134. Jeremy Butler, *Television Critical Methods and Applications: Third Edition* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007), 166.

135. For more information, see Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 147-148.

136. McDonald, Video and DVD Industries, 165.

137. McDonald, Video and DVD Industries, 166.

138. Accordingly, one would need to view them on High-Definition Television (HDTV) sets.

the video market. Now, the distribution of Blu-Ray versions was retroactively positioning them as imperfect copies or lesser reproductions that presented films in “standard” definition. Producers would subsequently strengthen the perception that Blu-Ray was a superior reproductive technology by diminishing its association with CGI revision, another digital modernization practice that came into prominence during the VHS-to-DVD transition.

Accentuated Modernization: CGI Revisions on Home Video

As the name indicates, CGI Revision entailed altering a celluloid-born film with DVFX, aka computer-generated imagery (CGI). If digital remastering corresponded roughly to the emulation strategy of preserving digital objects, then CGI Revision may qualify as an equivalent of the migration strategy. The resulting version, which will also be called a “CGI Revision” (CGR) in the course of this chapter, tends to openly flaunt its differences from the corresponding theatrical release and draw viewer attention to its status as a digital modernization. Rather than function only as unobtrusive elements subordinate to narrative storytelling then, the new DVFX-based changes stand out and express the idea that the film has become new and improved thanks to modern technology. In the process, they retroactively paint the previous version as technically lesser, at least when it comes to the quality of its effects, and threaten to potentially reveal the film itself to be a textual construct by undermining viewer immersion within its diegesis.

Two different techniques of CGI Revision exist. To borrow and slightly revise Fossati’s terminology, “digital effacement” entails using CGI to remove undesirable elements from an image and in turn replace them with desirable ones. It is important to emphasize replacement, for as McClean notes, “when removing elements from an image, it becomes necessary to add back to the image – either by painting over the unwanted element or by compositing another image in

its place.”¹³⁹ Meanwhile, “digital supplementation” refers to the addition of either new digital elements to pre-existing shots or wholly new digital shots to a film. Whereas the former in and of itself arguably means to imperceptibly alter the film, it is often subordinate to the latter’s attempt to accentuate and foreground the picture’s digital modernization for contemporary audiences.

It is difficult to say when exactly these techniques were first utilized in the production of a new version. Instances of digitally improving an image by filling or removing unwanted holes, blemishes, and scratches etc. reportedly occurred as early as the mid-80s in the course of colorization.¹⁴⁰ But there can be no doubt that the trendsetters when it came to CGI Revision were the three installments of the first *Star Wars* trilogy, which were all reissued as “special editions” for brief theatrical runs in 1997 before making their way to video. The three CGRs had a largely positive critical reception, but more importantly, they made a considerable amount of money for theatrical reissues. *Star Wars* alone reportedly grossed over 36.2 million at the box office in its first weekend.¹⁴¹ As Figure 4.1 indicates, the use of DVFX to reissue older titles for theaters or home video followed the commercial success of *Star Wars*. However, despite its profitability, the practice never grew as prominent or commonplace as digital remastering. Much like colorization, following a period of initial cultural acceptance, CGI Revision would face a backlash on aesthetic and historical grounds before being more or less retired by the film industry.

Figure 4.1 – Films Reissued in CGR (1997-2017)

Film	Director	Theatrical Version		CGI Revision		
		Release	RT	Label/Subtitle	Release	RT

139. Shilo T. McClean, *Digital Storytelling: The Narrative Power of Visual Effects in Film*. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007), 45.

140. Mark A. Fischetti, "The silver screen blossoms into color: *Like it or not, old favorites like The Maltese Falcon are being colorized; here's how it's done*," *IEEE Spectrum* 24, no. 8 (Aug. 1987): 54, doi: 10.1109/MSPEC.1987.6448227.

141. *New York Times*, 3 Feb 1997, C13.

<i>Star Wars</i>	George Lucas	1977	122	<i>Special Edition</i>	1997	125
<i>Eyes Wide Shut</i>	Stanley Kubrick	1999	159	No label (R-Rated)	1999	159
<i>The Exorcist</i>	William Friedkin	1973	122	<i>The Version You've Never Seen</i>	2000	132
<i>E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial</i>	Steven Spielberg	1982	114	<i>20th Anniversary Edition</i>	2002	120
<i>THX 1138</i>	George Lucas	1971	84	<i>George Lucas Director's Cut</i>	2004	88
<i>Highlander 2</i>	Russel Mulcahy	1990	90	<i>Special Edition</i>	2004	108
<i>Star Wars</i>	George Lucas	1977	122	No label	2004	125
<i>Dark City</i>	Alex Proyas	1998	100	<i>Director's Cut</i>	2008	112
<i>Star Wars</i>	George Lucas	1977	122	No label	2011	125
<i>Terminator 2</i>	James Cameron	1991	137	<i>Remastered, 3D</i>	2017	137

Sources: DVD and VHS Cover Art; *Video Store Magazine* news articles

For the most part, the backlash was a consequence of the release strategy employed by George Lucas in the distribution of the *Star Wars* special editions, which led to the belief that CGRs could very well lead to the obsolescence and replacement of versions widely recognized as the originals. In 1995, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment began a limited run of the films' theatrical cuts in new digitally remastered VHS versions adhering to Lucasfilm's THX "digital mastering" standards.¹⁴² Fox announced that they would only be available until January 31, 1996. The moratorium strategy went in hand with the claim that, as of this release, the trilogy was "available for the last time in its original form."¹⁴³ Discontinuing the theatrical cuts and marking them for obsolescence ensured that the special editions would become the primary and, eventually, only means of accessing the films from 1997 onward. In a later interview, Lucas more or less corroborated that this was the plan. He alluded to the idea that the DVD versions of the trilogy would be based on the special editions and represent the "final cut" of the films. Moreover, he believed the DVD versions would remain alive in public memory, while other

142. Philadelphia Inquirer, 24 Aug 1995, E5.

143. San Francisco Examiner, 31 Aug 1995, C2.

versions would fade away as videotape would physically deteriorate within 30-40 years.¹⁴⁴

Evidently, the intention at the time was to never reproduce the theatrical cuts on digital media.

Given that the *Star Wars* films were already among the most well-known and celebrated blockbusters in American popular culture, it should not be surprising that there was considerable demand for the inclusion of the theatrical versions on DVD. Following the announcement of the trilogy's upcoming 2004 DVD release, a petition emerged on fan website originaltrilogy.com in 2003 that demanded the "original versions" alongside the special editions in the new box set. Organizer Jay Silvester believed this would help preserve the trilogy, claiming that its fans didn't want it "to disappear." It garnered support from multiple video-centric publications and websites, including *DVD File* and *The Digital Bits*.¹⁴⁵ The common desire of fans, cinephiles, critics, and others for a high quality DVD presentation of the older versions doubled as a desire for the canonicity of those same versions. As scholar and *Star Wars* fan Will Brooker argues, presenting the theatrical cuts in comparable quality to the special edition on DVD would provide it with equal cultural status.¹⁴⁶ DVD, after all, carried a close association with authenticity, so including the theatrical cuts on the new format would signal that they were just as legitimate as the special editions from industrial, historical, and cultural standpoints.

Despite the high level of demand, Lucas nonetheless excluded the theatrical cuts from the trilogy DVD box set when it came out in September 2004, much to the disappointment of many

144. Ron Magid, "An Expanded Universe," *American Cinematographer* 78, no. 02 (Feb 1997): 70.

145. Enrique Rivero, "Fans Petition Lucas to Release Original 'Wars'," *Video Store Magazine* 25, no. 13 (Mar, 2003): 16.

146. Derek Johnson and Will Brooker, "Star Wars Fans, DVD, and Cultural Ownership: An Interview with Will Brooker," *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (2005): 42. doi:10.1353/vlt.2006.0007.

fans and critics alike.¹⁴⁷ But surprisingly enough, he also excluded the 1997 special editions. Rather than reproduce those versions in higher quality, the DVD release introduced many new DVFX-based and other changes on top of those already present in the 1997 editions, making the 2004 DVD versions easily distinguishable from their predecessors.¹⁴⁸ This positioned the 1997 special editions alongside the theatrical cuts as videotape exclusives that would soon disappear along with their carrier. Rather than affirming that the special editions were indeed final cuts adhering to a stable preexistent vision, the 2004 DVD versions instead showed that they were merely the results of retroactive revision made possible by new technology. The fact that Lucas again produced platform-exclusive modernizations that accentuated their transformation by and for the new physical carrier created anticipation that he would revise them again in the future following the emergence of another new technology.¹⁴⁹

Essentially, the *Star Wars* home video distribution corresponds to the migration strategy. Releasing a new version with evident differences from the last for each new combination of hardware and software attests to how digital technologies subject a film to an ongoing process of modernization and obsolescence. Lucas' use of the strategy during the VHS-to-DVD transition not only informed the reception of other CGRs, but also impacted the approach of producers and distributors to CGRs in the future. Following the end of the transition period, new CGRs would

147. The initial plan was to release all six *Star Wars* films in one box set following the 2005 theatrical release of *Revenge of the Sith*, chronologically the third film in the growing franchise and the final prequel episode. The change was apparently prompted by the spread of pirated disc copies of the three films, which was believed to damage the potential sales of official copies. See Lou Lumenick, "The Empire's New Clothes - Tinker-crazy Lucas creates fan firestorm with long-awaited 'Star Wars' DVD set," *New York Post*, Sep 19, 2004.

148. Examples include the contemporary incarnation of The Emperor (Ian McDiarmid) replacing the earlier 1980 incarnation voiced by Clive Reville in ESB or the appearance of Hayden Christensen as Anakin Skywalker in ROTJ in place of Sebastian Shaw.

149. Booker was off by one year in his 2005 prediction that "an improved technology would, in 2010, ensure that an even newer *Star Wars* "original" trilogy would effectively replace the 2004 *Star Wars* DVD." 2011 will have seen the release of the Blu-Ray versions, which used the DVD versions as a base yet featured even more DVFX-based changes on top of the ones conducted previously. See Johnson and Brooker, "Star Wars Fans, DVD, and Cultural Ownership," 43.

become relatively rare and the promotional discourses surrounding them would largely refrain from advertising their distinctions from previous releases. Meanwhile, already available CGRs would be either excluded from new Blu-Ray releases or packaged alongside theatrical cuts. As a result, Blu-Ray would have considerably less association with CGRs and the overt alteration of the past that they embody and promote than DVD. Offering the best illustration of the industry's shift in policy towards the accentuated modernization practice is the home video circulation history of the classic sci-fi film *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, which received a CGR in 2002.

Elevation through Exclusion: A Case Study of *E.T.*

Formally billed as the “20th Anniversary Edition,” the new version featured numerous changes from the 1982 theatrical cut, including two additional scenes courtesy of re-editing and enhanced image and sound quality as a result of digital remastering. Its most notable difference by far was the replacement of many of the 1982 theatrical version's practical and optical FX with DVFX. Multiple scenes and shots in the 2002 edition feature then-contemporary computer graphics appearing in old footage, marking the film paradoxically as a product of both the 1980s and the 2000s. Some of these instances, particularly those featuring FX shots where the titular alien demonstrates dynamic movements and facial expressions, actively draw attention to themselves. One of the best examples can be found in the scene, where young Gertie (Drew Barrymore) first encounters the alien and begins screaming. The scene preceding it has Elliot (Henry Thomas) introduce E.T. to his older brother Michael (Robert MacNaughton). The first shot shows Michael waiting in the foreground, as Elliot brings E.T. out into the open behind him. Here, E.T. is clearly a live-action puppet, a detail underlined by his inflexible movement.

In the next shot Michael turns around, with the third shot being a medium shot of E.T. standing next to Elliot. Once again, the physicality of the puppet is fairly evident. The next

couple of shots feature the brothers exchanging glances. But then the next shot shows Gertie come in and see it. The camera suddenly swish-pans from Gertie to a close-up of E.T., showing the alien's face suddenly pop up and open its mouth in shock. In this, and the following three shots, where E.T. and Gertie begin screaming at each other, the alien is clearly a digital character. His face, neck, mouth, and arms all move in a livelier, faster, and more fluid manner than in the corresponding shots of the 1982 theatrical cut as a result of the practical and stiff E.T. puppet being painted over with a livelier digital double.

Even if one doesn't view the 1982 version for comparison, switching between E.T.'s physical and digital forms in the same scene throws into relief the disparity between animatronic puppetry and computer graphics. That is, E.T. literally seems more animated in the later shots, as he doesn't seem animated in the opening shots. This applies to the film as a whole, for it often alternates between the practical and digital E.T. forms. Their collision additionally reflects the production differences between an FX-heavy 80s film in contrast to one from the 2000s. Whereas the former relied on practical SFX during production, the latter were largely filmed with the intention of adding DVFX in post-production. Consequently, the appearance of the new E.T. arguably signals to the audience that the film has been modernized with contemporary computer technology and so has become more aligned with mainstream films from the 2000s. It attests to it having undergone a combination of digital effacement and supplementation.

Of course, there are other instances of effacement and supplementation that are subtle and virtually impossible to notice within the text. However, the visibility of these changes can be bolstered by industrial and cultural paratexts that "can actively shape the reception and historical consolidation of a film text as a cultural object."¹⁵⁰ The trailer of the 2002 version declares that

150. Dan North, Bob Rehak and Michael S. Duffy, "Introduction," in *Special Effects: New Histories/Theories/Contexts*, eds. Dan R. North, Bob Rehak, and Michael S. Duffy (London: Palgrave, 2015), 8.

the film returns to theaters “like you’ve never experienced it before” courtesy of “enhanced visual effects, never before seen footage and a digitally remastered soundtrack.”¹⁵¹ Interspersing select images of some of the new and altered scenes, it advertised the new version’s differences from the theatrical release to audiences, positioning them as a key incentive to see the 20th anniversary edition in theaters and subsequently perhaps purchase it on video.

Consider the fact that FBI agents carry radios in their hands in place of guns, a decision Spielberg attributed to his regret at placing guns in the film and something he apparently planned to digitally remove as early as 1995.¹⁵² McClean is correct when he states that, had the change “not been so well-known,” it “would pass as an Invisible use of effects.”¹⁵³ The replacement of guns by walkie-talkies has been noted repeatedly in various reviews, interviews, documentaries, and home video special features surrounding the film. It’s even become a subject of parody in an episode of the animated dark comedy series *South Park* called “Free Hat.”¹⁵⁴ All these texts publicized the change to the extent that it has become over time one of the most famous differences between the theatrical cut and the CGR. The CGR’s DVD presentation in particular surrounds the film with paratexts that implore the audience to anticipate changes, to know when and where to locate them, as well guide interpretations and assessments of the act of modernization.

A short video introduction to the Bonus Materials that plays automatically when a user selects the option intercuts clips from the CGR with an interview with director Steven Spielberg, who openly states that he had “pet peeve” shots and wished he had more time with the practical

151. See the trailer for the 2002 version of *E.T.* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYAETtIIClk>

152. *Los Angeles Times*, 5 Nov 2001, F9.

153. McClean, *Digital Storytelling*, 189.

154. The plot follows the main characters as they embark on a mission to prevent Steven Spielberg from digitally revising *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and makes overt references to the differences between the new and old variations of *E.T.* At one point, guards attempt to stop the boys while armed with walkie-talkies.

FX sequences to get what he wanted during the original production of the picture. The “digital universe,” he claims, allowed him to take these shots “and correct them digitally.” This legitimizes the digital changes as acts of revision that correspond to the director’s pre-existing authorial intention, as well as seeks to inform the viewer’s evaluation of the anniversary edition ahead of his seeing it. A featurette called “The Making of E.T.” then provides multiple visual comparisons of the same scenes in the 1982 and 2002 versions. Spielberg again appears to discuss how the new version is the “same film” but it is “enhanced” by “current technology” that he would’ve used, had it been available in 1981. The DVD release thus promotes the *E.T.* CGR as relatively better iteration of the film than the theatrical, encouraging further CGI Revision in the future.

In presenting CGI as a corrective to the technical problems inherent to the production of the theatrical release, Spielberg demonstrates how filmmakers that produced CGRs strive to sell consumers on that idea that accentuated digital modernization can improve a film technically, qualitatively, and culturally. However, his efforts were apparently not very successful, as the CGR of *E.T.* inspired an online backlash, primarily from fans and purists that believed the changes were detrimental to the picture and constituted a distortion of history. While concrete information that details the negative fan reactions is somewhat scarce, it is possible to glean certain things from Spielberg’s responses to them. In a telling 2012 interview, Spielberg stated that he would no longer make any digital changes to his films, claiming that he was “no longer a digital revisionist.” He attributed this specifically to his experience with the backlash towards *E.T.*, claiming that he “learned from the fans.”¹⁵⁵ He would reiterate this during a press conference for *Ready Player One* in 2018, describing the online reactions to the changes of the movie as an

155. Dave Itzkoff, “That’s a Big Boulder, Indy: Steven Spielberg on the Imax Rerelease of ‘Raiders of the Lost Ark,’” *New York Times Blog Arts Beat*, 14 Aug 2012, <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/14/raiders-of-the-lost-ark-to-receive-imax-re-release/>

eruption “in a loud negative voice saying, “How could you ruin our favorite childhood film?””
This would apparently be the last time he “ever decided to mess with the past.”¹⁵⁶

In both interviews, Spielberg also distances himself from the revisionism of George Lucas, suggesting that negative reception of the continuous modernization of the *Star Wars* films was a factor in his decision. Furthermore, at a panel in 2011, he claimed he now regretted having ever altered *E.T.* in the first place and from this point forward would only include the theatrical cut on home video in the future.¹⁵⁷ One can infer that the fan reactions to CGI Revision in general and *E.T.* in particular were strong enough to convince Spielberg to stop supporting accentuated modernization of older films and to legitimize the imperceptible form instead. The distribution of the revised *E.T.* across DVD and Blu-Ray reflects his change of stance. In June 2002, Universal announced plans to release multiple DVD editions of *E.T.* on October 22, both of which would go out of print after December 31. Not counting the bonus features, the “Limited Collector’s Edition” 2-disc set was to include only the 20th anniversary CGR. Meanwhile, the more expensive “Ultimate Collector’s Gift Set” featuring 3 DVDs and a soundtrack CD would include both the CGR and a digitally remastered theatrical cut.¹⁵⁸ This plan positioned the CGR as the preeminent version and the theatrical cut as a bonus for collectors willing to pay extra.

But the week of the film’s release on the 2-disc set, Universal and Spielberg altered the release to also include the theatrical cut and remove a number of bonus materials, a change that

156. Christina Radish, “Steven Spielberg on ‘Ready Player One’ and Why He’ll Never Rework His Own Movies Again,” *Collider*, March 28, 2018. <https://collider.com/steven-spielberg-interview-ready-player-one/#nostalgia>

157. Russ Fischer, “Steven Spielberg Regrets Altering ‘E.T.’; Will Release ‘E.T.’ and ‘Raiders’ on Blu-ray in Original Forms,” *SlashFilm*, September 14 2011, <https://www.slashfilm.com/steven-spielberg-regrets-altering-et-raiders-hit-bluray-original-forms>.

158. Kurt Indvik, “‘E.T.’ DVD Sails to Retail Oct. 22,” *Video Store Magazine* 24, no. 24 (Jun 2002): 1-1, 34.

was not even reflected on the packaging.¹⁵⁹ Though there was no official confirmation at the time, it is not difficult to see this change as a reaction to fan demand. Releasing the CGR as part of a larger collection that also includes the initial theatrical cut in a digitally remastered version essentially incorporated it into the emulation strategy. In downplaying the relative significance and accessibility of the modernized version, Spielberg and Universal conversely bolstered that of the initial theatrical release guaranteeing it greater public exposure. In doing so, they diminished the cultural status of the accentuated form of modernization but also made digital modernization as a whole less visible to the general audience.

Though having lost some of its legitimacy as a result of this change, the anniversary edition did not become obsolete and inaccessible until 2012, when *E.T.* arrived on Blu-Ray. Making good on his promise, Spielberg completely excluded the 2002 CGR from the new release, meaning the Blu-Ray presents only the theatrical cut. Having been derived from an HD transfer, the 2012 digitally remastered version passes a more accurate reproduction of the celluloid source material, relative to the 2002 edition. Both releases arguably reflect a larger shift in industrial policy towards accentuated modernization, which also factors into the cultural distinctions between DVD and Blu-Ray. For one thing, the exclusion of a CGR that had received a release on DVD from Blu-Ray was not uncommon. *Eyes Wide Shut* was a subject of controversy in 1999, due to the fact that it had been digitally altered to achieve an R-rating for US theatrical release.¹⁶⁰ Though initially available on a now out-of-print DVD, the US theatrical cut of *Eyes Wide Shut*

159. *Indianapolis Star*, 25 Oct 2002: G.14.

160. To circumvent reediting the film while also avoiding an NC-17 rating, Warner Bros. inserted CG characters into 67 seconds of footage and so obscured the more sexually explicit on-screen events that take place during a prolonged orgy sequence. In this case, digital supplementation helped efface or censor undesirable sex, resulting in an R-rated cut that was of the same duration as the unrated and also qualified as the “original version” due to its receiving theatrical exhibition in the US.

did not appear when the film premiered on Blu-Ray in 2007.¹⁶¹ The complete absence of a CGR positions it as a culturally illegitimate variant unworthy of inclusion on contemporary viewing platforms due to its blatant alteration of a film with DVFX. Making it inaccessible at the latest levels of quality demotes CGI Revision and the accentuated modernization it embodies.

For another, the latter platform saw greater incorporation of CGRs into the emulation strategy. One can see this in how the 2007 *Blade Runner* CGR called “The Final Cut” appeared in several multi-disc set variations, including a 2-disc set, a 4-disc set, and a 5-disc set.¹⁶² A key selling point of the latter sets was the presence of previous versions alongside the final cut, including the 1982 theatrical cut, the 1992 director’s cut, and even a “workprint” version. Allowing audiences to purchase both new and old versions at the same time in this manner offsets the overall visibility of modernization and obsolescence. The intention is to convince a consumer that he could now own both a digital reproduction and a digital modernization of the same picture, obscuring the fact that a remastered theatrical version is still a distinct variant and itself is the product of contemporary computer technology. Consequently, in comparison to DVD, Blu-Ray has been more closely associated with imperceptible, rather than accentuated modernization. From this perspective, if the DVD releases of films subject to CGI Revision generally promoted the idea that DVFX were superior to practical ones, then Blu-Ray releases of those same titles, with some exceptions, arguably suggest a triumph of SFX over DVFX.

161. Despite the packaging’s claim that the R-rated version is an available option, it instead presents only the unrated version, which is devoid of the CGI censorship that marked the US theatrical release. See Peter Bracke, ““Eyes Wide Shut” review,” *High-Def Digest*, Oct 24, 2007, <https://bluray.highdefdigest.com/273/eyeStarWarsideshut.html>.

162. In addition to featuring various minor changes in assemblage and an alternate digital color grade, was distinguishable from previous versions by its use of new DVFX to “fix” various sequences. The digital effacement technique, for example, was used to replace the face of a stunt double in a key sequence with that of actress Joanna Cassidy, correcting a continuity error inherent to the production of the picture. Other such modernizations are outlined and explained in the featurette “From Workprint to Final Cut.”

As DVD functioned as the primary format and market for CGRs in general, the distribution of the 2002 anniversary edition of *E.T.* helped position it as a site for not just reproducing the cinematic past within the present, but for actively revising the past to fit the standards of the present. Its advocacy for both the imperceptible modernization represented by remastering and the accentuated form represented by CGI Revision complicated and muddled the platform's traditional association with pure reproduction and authenticity. In effect, DVD made visible at least in some cases the fact that films were undergoing digital modernization. The absence of the anniversary edition from the Blu-Ray accordingly can be read as an attempt to make digital modernization less visible and in the process elevate Blu-Ray culturally over DVD. The less visible digital modernization was, the more Blu-Ray appeared to be a technology of reproduction. In that sense, the overall shift in policy towards CGI Revision helps reaffirm and normalize the idea that Blu-Ray, as a digital technology, always perfectly reproduces the cinematic past.

In reality, like its predecessors, Blu-Ray consistently participates in the imperceptible modernization and obsolescence of films. Every newly remastered HD version released on the platform is a modernization that tailors a film to the latest technical standards of audiovisual quality. But there is no mass recognition of this fact on the part of the audience and so little acknowledgement of how "quality" can constitute a considerable point of distinction between versions or a sign of film history having been altered. For the most part, digitally remastered versions continue to be perceived as reproductions. In this sense, the fan backlash towards *E.T.* and the campaign for the theatrical cuts of the *Star Wars* films to appear on DVD reflect a mass consumer preference for imperceptible modernization over the accentuated.

Demanding improved reproductions on the latest hardware of a presumed "original version" of a film supports the industrial policies that maintain the ongoing invisible modernization,

obsolescence, and loss of film versions. It follows that releasing a CGR is culturally acceptable, so long as the “original” remains an option, even as it may arrive with newly remixed audio, previously unreachable levels of resolution, and other elements that mark it as contemporary. Seen in the larger context of CGI Revision, the circulation history of *E.T.* reveals that one reason why version loss remains largely invisible is because the standardization of digital remastering in 2005 has conditioned audiences to uphold the myth of perfect digital reproduction and so reject accentuated modernization. The resulting diminishment of CGI Revision in the post-transition period has effectively ensured that digital modernization as a whole remains predominantly imperceptible, as does its corresponding obsolescence and loss. And this imperceptibility may very well be encouraging further modernization disguised as reproduction.

The study of digital modernization practices and their relation to home video delivery technologies like VHS, DVD, and Blu-Ray show that the very notion of what constitutes a perfect or accurate reproduction of a film is historically specific and so prone to change. Since the mid-80s, the film industry has been continuously subjecting film texts to digital modernization, reshaping viewer preferences and constantly redefining what constitutes a perfect reproduction of a film in the video market. In the process, they have conditioned consumers into habitually disposing of the film versions they already have in order to replace them with new versions that are purportedly of higher quality. But as transfer, production, and exhibition technology is constantly changing, new versions of films never stay new for long. By the time we acquire them, we already anticipate a future version with greater technical specs.

It is not difficult to imagine that many of the physical discs, hard drives and other devices we use to store films today will eventually end up alongside smartphones, computers, and other discarded technologies as parts of the electronic waste filling up landfills or recycle bins. With

that, versions that were once considered to be perfect reproductions and treasured collectibles will also be equated to trash, while exclusive variants specific to DVDs will become completely inaccessible. Through their delivery formats especially, films in the digital age are increasingly defined by their own renewal and obsolescence, with the quality of versions being measured in relation to that of other versions of themselves. As of this moment of writing, DVDs are still manufactured but are gradually being phased out of circulation to pave the way for Blu-Ray to become the sole active physical delivery platform for movies. Meanwhile, distributors have already begun releasing some titles in 4K Blu-Ray, a potential successor to the current regular Blu-Ray, which provides half as much resolution. It is logical to assume that at some point this decade we may see the advent of 8K or even 12K releases. But full reproduction of the source material in terms of quality will never be achieved, ensuring further modernization.

This potentially endless cycle attests to how preservation of and mass access to film history in the digital age paradoxically requires continuous modernization of that history. Contrary to the traditional rhetoric of film archiving then, modernization is often inextricably intertwined with or indistinguishable from the processes of reproduction, restoration, and preservation. To some extent, it is true commercial interests often shape modernization. But as this chapter has shown, modernization can be just as much a natural consequence of the desire to keep films accessible and preventing their loss. Rather than merely distorting film history, modernization can be intrinsic to maintaining film history, if by that we understand restoring lost or obsolete prints or keeping titles in mass circulation. Acts of restoration can often prompt modernization and vice versa, meaning the practice cannot always be segregated from the artistic, historic, and other intentions of archivists. Given all this, film preservation studies could benefit from more works that examine in detail the role that modernization can play in archival practices.

In connection with this, there needs to be more recognition in film studies of the fact that we often only know past films through their contemporary variants. By default, scholars tend to accept these modernizations as reproductions without acknowledging that what passes as for an authentic copy today will be considered an impure copy in the near future. And so they tacitly support the myths, according to which films either always have been immortal and unchanging texts or have become immortal thanks to digital technology. Films are not immortal in the digital age, at least in the sense that they suffer the loss of specific versions, which becomes especially evident during the transition from one standard delivery technology to another. To believe they are immortal is to reject how often it becomes necessary to change the physical carriers we use to access them and the exhibition technologies we utilize to interpret them.

It is to believe that they are somehow exceptions to the rules of digital preservation as though films will always be accessible and never subject to loss thanks to new technology. And by extension, it is to reject how inherent modernization is to other digital objects and so perpetuate misconceptions about the effects of digital technology. Namely, that digital media offers perfect reproduction, that no alteration or change occurs to the object in the course of its migration, or that the technical aspects of the hardware used to store and access an object do not affect the object itself. Understanding how digital media is impacting film then requires acknowledging that film texts are constantly gaining and losing new versions, constantly changing with the times. And for this to happen, it is crucial to recognize how the film industry blinds us to the fact of modernization and obsolescence with emulations of the cinematic past within the present.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of this dissertation, I have illustrated that textual variation is intrinsic to the production, distribution, and exhibition of a film text within the American film industry, and that this becomes evident during periods of technological transition. The ongoing emergence of new technologies occurs naturally alongside other changes and transformations in the industry over time, ensuring continuous dissemination of multiple versions of the same films. While some technologies and corresponding types of versions do not last long in the market, others become standardized. At the moment, theatrical exhibition alone offers at least four different formats for the viewing of mainstream films, such as “regular” 2D viewing, Imax, 3D, and Imax 3D. As the pace of technological change is increasing, it is likely an even greater number of standard formats will be available in the future. The 2010s, for example, have seen experimentation with the exhibition of films in high frame rates (HFR). It is not unreasonable then to expect a proliferation of theatrical versions differentiated by frame-rate in the course of the 2020s.

The textual differences between such versions can help sell new technologies, as well as legitimize their related standards and norms. Because of this, it is possible to view the history of the film industry overall as a history of how and why film texts change. One can connect this to the notion that, as Sarah Atkinson puts it, cinema “is and always has been in a perpetual state of becoming. Cinema as a concept, construct, and social activity is need of constant revision....”¹ Variability in this sense reflects cinema’s perpetual becoming and so should consequently be understood as the normal state of a film text. Recognizing this would require some changes in the general approach to writing about motion pictures. A potential starting point would be the

1. Sarah Atkinson, *Beyond the Screen: Emerging Cinema and Engaging Audiences* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 1.

development of citation standards that obligate specifying the version referenced in the course of analysis and providing detailed information about its carrier, release date, and so forth.

Normalizing these procedures would lead to greater visibility and wider acknowledgment of textual variation within film studies, potentially inspiring more scholars to research those differences, as well as the variation practices that give rise to them. There are many such practices, as well as related areas and topics, which have not been touched on in the course of this dissertation. Because of this, they may serve as potential topics for future study. By design, this work has largely refrained from examining the relation of variation to foreign film industries and global media flows, which is a crucial aspect of film history and has become increasingly important in certain areas of film scholarship. So, it would make sense to tackle these issues in more depth and consider the numerous factors that contribute to differences between multiple versions of the same film circulating in different countries. The subject of film translation can be easily linked to studies of authorship, globalization, and political censorship among others.

Comparative studies between multiple versions could then help provide insight into not only how films transform in the course of translation, but also how translation intersects with other types of changes. A foreign version can lose or gain footage in accordance with its translation, which tailors it to the demands of the local market, resulting in an assemblage that is specific to a certain geographic and cultural context. Translation can easily intersect with another variation practice that can be described as “parodic appropriation,” as it entails producing a new version of a film that constitutes a parody of the source material. Throughout film history, there have been instances when certain titles have been radically transformed through deliberate mistranslation, such as in the case of the Russian “mockdubs” of the *Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003, dir. Peter Jackson) trilogy. Differences between such versions can reflect ideological and

cultural differences between the countries in which they originate and the contexts in which they are remade. But they also raise questions concerning the international applicability of copyright law and fair use. One can also link these discourses to that of public domain access.

Any film within public domain can be legally appropriated and revised by anybody. In connection with this, it would make sense to examine the leakage of official versions never intended for commercial distribution through informal channels of film distribution. File-sharing websites regularly traffic in “pirated versions,” such as video copies of celluloid workprints, that serve as a means of access and exposure to variants that otherwise would never see the light of day. Of particular interest to me personally is the way that such informal channels can intersect with or influence official media flows, such as when an initially unauthorized release of a certain version generates commercial incentive for media producers to release a licensed equivalent. For instance, the “producer’s cut” of *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* (1995, dir. Joe Chappelle) circulated in pirated video copies for years before receiving an official release on Blu-Ray in 2017, complete with HD video quality. Such examples point to how, rather than merely resulting in theft, media piracy can commercially support the film industry.

Finally, there is “fan editing,” a relatively recent practice that specifically designates the unauthorized production and free internet distribution by fans of feature-length variants of mainstream films called “fan edits.”² Fan edits are fascinating, because they connect to a large variety of discourses, including media convergence, fan cultures, reception, fair use, and piracy. In terms of their duration, audiovisual resolution, and intention, they can rival official versions for cultural and commercial value. Many fan edits function as an expression of cultural criticism, demonstra-

2. The terminology may be somewhat confusing, given that most fan remixes tend to involve the appropriation and re-editing of copyrighted material. In this sense, one could view “fanvids” – short videos created from an audiovisual source text – as “fan edits” as well. The word “edit” in this case, however, functions as a synonym for “cut,” and so means to underline the feature-length duration of most such variants.

ting what they believe are the flaws of a picture by removing them from the assemblage. Others seek to recreate what they believe are the “true” or “authentic” versions that should exist, using such arguments as authorial intention as justification. Though there are already works already tackling the practice, the history of the fan edit community, as well as its interactions with the official policies of film producers, can provide an interesting area of research.

There have been instances, for example, where unauthorized versions created by fans, such as the “Restored International Cut” of *Superman II*, have stimulated the production of corresponding official releases from the film industry. Examining the history and internal dynamics of fan editors could further illuminate the complexity of the relations between fans and media producers, particularly as the fan edit community adopts unique internal rules and guidelines in order to support the formal circulation of media content within the film industry. The aim is to differentiate their actions from those of media pirates, even as they use many of the same means and methods of distribution, resulting in considerable ideological contradictions and tensions. Indeed, one can argue that fan editors are inspired to re-edit films due to their exposure to official alternate cuts, which are often used as the source material for the creation of their own variations. This evinces that authorized and unauthorized variation practices within American cinema do not exist within an ontological opposition, but can intertwine and complement each other.

Altogether, the sheer variety of potential film variation practices attests to the idea that films are fundamentally unstable texts and that adherence to the rhetoric of textual stability leads to an effacement of their internal histories. A potential inference from this is that variation, rather than pure reproduction, may very well define film as a medium and art form. However, I find this perspective somewhat reductive, as variation may very well be a common attribute of artworks and media texts in general. As studies by textual scholars like John Bryant and Jerome

McGann attest, print novels, poems and other literary texts regularly circulate in multiple versions.³ Similarly, according to Grigely, plastic art works like sculptures and paintings are also subject to variation as a result of the passage of time.⁴ Studying how and why film texts change over time then may very well provide insight into how audiovisual works in other media transform as well. If the existence of different versions attests to the fact that a film text has an internal history, then it stands to reason that variation may also be inherent to the histories of other media texts. Closely examining differences between multiple versions of print novels, television episodes, or perhaps even paintings then may provide insight into their internal histories and in turn the larger histories of the industries that produce and distribute them.

3. John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (University of Michigan Press, 2002), 1-3; Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 9-16.

4. Joseph Grigely, *Textuality: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 1-4, 59-67.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, Richard. "Early and Pre-Sound Cinema." In *The Cinema Book*, Third Edition, edited by Pam Cook, 3-11. London: British Film Institute, 2007.
- Acland, Charles R. "Introduction: Residual Media." In *Residual Media*, edited by Charles R. Acland, xiii-xxvii. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Allen, Robert. "The Movies in Vaudeville: Historical Context of the Movies as Popular Entertainment." In *The American Film Industry: Revised Edition*, edited by Tino Balio, 57-82. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Allen, Robert. *Speaking of Soap Operas*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Alter, Ethan. "Blade Runner: The Director's Cut." In *Film Firsts: The 25 Movies that Created Contemporary American Cinema*, 85-95. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2014.
- Altman, Rick. *Silent Film Sound*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Anderson, Gary. "Preparing for Post Production." *Back Stage* 26, no. 49 (Dec 06, 1985): 6B, 20B, 21B, 23B, 25B, 26B, 36B, 37B.
- Anderson, Gillian B. "D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*: Revisiting a Reconstructed Text." *Film History: An International Journal* 25, no. 3 (2013): 57-89.
- Andrew, Dudley. "Introduction: André Bazin Meets the New Media of the 1950s." In *André Bazin's New Media*, edited and translated by Dudley Andrew, 1-33. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014.
- Andrews, David. *Theorizing Art Cinemas: Foreign, Cult, Avant Guard, and Beyond*. Austin: University Of Texas Press, 2013.
- Anonymous. "Recap Summary: The Sunday Night Movie – ABC TV – "Shane" 2/18/68 9 PM," 1968. Folder 3002. George Stevens Collection, 256.f-3001. Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.
- Archival materials from George Stevens Collection, 256.f-3001. Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.
- Atkinson, David, and Steve Roud. *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America The Interface between Print and Oral Traditions*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014.

- Atkinson, Sarah. *Beyond the Screen: Emerging Cinema and Engaging Audiences*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.
- Bach, Steven. *Final Cut: Dreams and Disaster in the Making of Heaven's Gate*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985.
- Balio, Tino. *Grand Design: Hollywood As a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*. New York: Scribner, 1993.
- Balio, Tino. *United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.
- Balsom, Erika. "Original Copies: How Film and Video Became Art Objects." *Cinema Journal* 53.1 (2013): 97-118.
- Barr, Charles. "Blackmail: Silent And Sound." *Sight and Sound* 52, no. 2 (Spring, 1983): 122-126.
- Barson, Michael. "COLLECTOR'S CHOICE: Director's Cut." *American Film* 12, no. 3 (Dec 01, 1986): 57-60.
- Barthes, Roland. "Leaving the Movie Theatre." In *The Rustle of Language*. Translated by Richard Howard, 345-349. New York: Hill and Wang, 1986.
- Beck, Bernard. "Inglorious Color." *Society* 24, no. 4 (May 1987): 4-12.
doi:10.1007/BF02695783.
- Becker, Howard Saul. *Art Worlds*, 25th Anniversary ed. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008.
- Belton, John. "Awkward Transitions: Hitchcock's 'Blackmail' and the Dynamics of Early Film Sound." *The Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (1999): 227-246.
- Belton, John. *Widescreen Cinema*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (Second Version). In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol. 3, 1935-1938, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, transl. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others, 101-133. Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Berg, Andrew. "The Strange Life and Tragic Death of Z Channel." *VLife* 394, no. 8 (Apr/May 2004): 60.
- Bernardoni, James. *The New Hollywood: What the Movies Did with the New Freedoms of the Seventies*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1991.

- Bessman, Jim. "Home Video: Restorations Judged an (Un)Cut Above." *Billboard* 101, no. 30 (Jul 29, 1989): 54-55.
- Beyer, Walter. "TV Safe Action Limits for Wide Screen Films." *American Cinematographer* 43, no. 6 (June 1962): 366-367, 381-384.
- Beyer, Walter. "Wide Screen Films and Television." *American Cinematographer* 44, no. 6 (June 1963): 350-354.
- Birchard, Robert S. "'My Hair is Red, My Eyes are Blue . . .'" *American Cinematographer* 66, no. 10 (October 1985): 75-78.
- Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000.
- Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Bordwell, David. "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice." In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 774-782. 6th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Bordwell, David. *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies*. Madison, Wisconsin: The Irvington Way Press, 2012.
- Bouzereau, Laurent. *Cutting Room Floor: Movie Scenes Which Never Made It to the Screen*. New York: Citadel Press, 1994.
- Bovberg, Jason. "Manhunter: Restored Director's Cut (DiViMax Edition) Review." *DVDTalk.com DVD Video reviews*. July 11, 2003.
<http://www.dvdtalk.com/reviews/6878/manhunter-restored-directors-cut-divimax-edition/>
- Bowser, Eileen. *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915*. New York: Scribner, 1990.
- Bracke, Peter M. "Manhunter," *DVDFILE.COM The Cut List*. January 30, 2000.
https://web.archive.org/web/20030610172826/http://dvdfile.com/software/review/dvd-video_2/manhunter.html.
- Bracke, Peter. "'Eyes Wide Shut' review." *High-Def Digest*. Oct 24, 2007.
<https://bluray.highdefdigest.com/273/eyeswideshut.html>
- Brasch, Ilka. *Film Serials and the American Cinema, 1910-1940: Operational Detection*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018.
- Brass, Kevin. "Widescreen Policies Under Studio Scrutiny." *Video Store Magazine* 21, no. 16 (Apr, 1999): 1-1, 9.

- Bretz, Rudy. "The Shape of the Television Screen." *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*, vol. 54, no. 5 (May 1950): 545-553. doi: 10.5594/J05210.
- Brown, Ben. "Scanlines: Cable Heaven For Cimino's Gate?" *American Film* 8, no. 5 (Mar 01, 1983): 28.
- Brownlow, Kevin. "Silent Films: What Was The Right Speed?" *Sight and Sound* 49, no. 3 (Summer, 1980): 164-167.
- Bryant, John. *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen*. University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Buhler, James and Hannah Lewis. "Evolving Practices for Film Music and Sound, 1925-1935." In *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music*, edited by Mervyn Cooke and Fiona Ford, 7-29. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Bulajić, Victoria Vesna. *Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overflow*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Busche, Andreas. "Just Another Form of Ideology? Ethical and Methodological Principles in Film Restoration." *The Moving Image* 6, no. 2 (2006): 1-29.
- Butler, Jeremy. *Television Critical Methods and Applications: Third Edition*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007.
- Card, James. *Seductive Cinema: The Art of Silent Film*. New York: Knopf, 1994.
- Cardwell, Sarah. "A Sense of Proportion: Aspect Ratio and the Framing of Television Space". *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 2015): 83-100.
- Carle, Teet and Staff. "Exploitation and Pre-release Publicity Ideas for "Shane,"" N.D. Folder 3009. George Stevens Collection, 257.f-3013. Margaret Herrick Library Special Collections, Fairbanks Center for Motion Picture Study, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.
- Carr, Robert E., and R. M. Hayes. *Wide Screen Movies: A History and Filmography of Wide Gauge Filmmaking*. Jefferson: McFarland, 1988.
- Carroll, Nathan. "Unwrapping Archives: DVD Restoration Demonstrations and the Marketing of Authenticity." *Velvet Light Trap* no. 56 (Fall, 2005): 18-31.
- Chisholm, Brad. "Reading Intertitles." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 15, no. 3 (Fall, 1987): 137-142.

- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. "Introduction: Did Somebody Say New Media?" In *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, edited by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, 1-10. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016.
- Cohen, Emory M. "Volatile Video Transfer Scene." *American Cinematographer* 70, no. 2 (Feb 1989): 79-84.
- Colin Jacobson, "Manhunter: Limited Edition (1986) Review," *DVD Movie Guide*, <http://www.dvdmag.com/manhunterle.shtml>. No date.
- Cones, John W. *The Feature Film Distribution Deal: A Critical Analysis of the Single Most Important Film Industry Agreement*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997.
- Cook, David A. *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. New York: C. Scribner, 2000.
- Corrigan, Timothy. "Auteurs and the New Hollywood." In *The New American Cinema*, edited by Jon Lewis, 38-63. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Crafton, Donald. *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931*. New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997.
- Daly, Steve and David Everitt. "Are the digitally remastered classics worth the money?" *Entertainment Weekly*, Oct 04, 1996. <https://ew.com/article/1996/10/04/are-digitally-remastered-classics-worth-money/>
- De Lancie, Philip. "Video for DVD: Understanding MPEG-2 Compression." *Millimeter - the Magazine of Motion Picture and Television Production* 28, no. 1 (Jan 2000): 103-105.
- Decherney, Peter. *Hollywood's Copyright Wars: From Edison to the Internet*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Director's Guild of America*. "Article 7, Section 7-500: Editing and Post-Production." *Basic Agreement of 2014*, 72-88. <https://www.dga.org/Contracts/Agreements/Basic2014.aspx>.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space." In *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, 162-176. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Doherty, Thomas. *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & the Production Code Administration*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

- Donahue, Suzanne Mary. *American Film Distribution: The Changing Marketplace*. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1987.
- Drossler, Stefan. "The Notion of the "Director's Cut" Between Independent Filmmaking and a New Business Model." In *Multiversions*, edited by Esteve Riambau, 120-124. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament de Cultura, 2012.
- DSN Retailing Today*. "VHS Still Holding on in Shadow of DVD." Vol. 41, no. 7 (Apr 08, 2002): 38.
- Dunkley, Cathy. "The Curse of the Final Cut." *VLIFE* 397, no. 3 (Dec 2004/Jan 2005): 106-107.
- Dunleavy, Trisha. *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Dunne, Peter. "Inside American Television Drama: Quality is not What is Produced, But What it Produces." In *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, edited by Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, 98-110. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014.
- Edmondson, Ray. *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*. 3rd ed. Paris: UNESCO, 2016. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243973>
- Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*. London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.
- Empire*. "Blu-Ray Vs. DVD." No. 240 (Jun 2009): 202-203.
- Enticknap, Leo. *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage*. New York; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Enticknap, Leo. "Metropolis (Fritz Lang Germany 1927) - Multiple Editions." *Science Fiction Film and Television* 6, no. 3 (2013): 422-428.
- Enticknap, Leo. *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital*. London: Wallflower Press, 2005.
- Eyman, Scott. *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution, 1926-1930*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.
- Feuer, Jane. "Narrative Form in American network television." In *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, edited by Colin MacCabe, 101-114. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1986.

- Feuer, Jane. "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology." In *Regarding Television*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan, 12-22. Frederick, MD: AFI, 1983.
- Fischer, Russ. "Steven Spielberg Regrets Altering 'E.T.,' Will Release 'E.T.' and 'Raiders' on Blu-ray in Original Forms." *SlashFilm*. September 14, 2011. <https://www.slashfilm.com/steven-spielberg-regrets-altering-et-raiders-hit-bluray-original-forms>.
- Fischetti, Mark A. "The silver screen blossoms into color: *Like it or not, old favorites like The Maltese Falcon are being colorized; here's how it's done.*" *IEEE Spectrum* 24, no. 8 (Aug. 1987): 50-55. doi: 10.1109/MSPEC.1987.6448227.
- Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. London: Methuen, 1987.
- Fitzpatrick, Kathleen. *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
- Flannagan, Coke. "Servicing Sound Picture Projection Equipment in Theatres." In *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, vol. 13, no. 38 (May 1929): 293-297. doi: 10.5594/J13097
<http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=7239289&isnumber=7239282>
- Forgas, Letitia. "The Preservation of Videotape: Review and Implications for Libraries and Archives." *Libri* 47, no. 1 (1997): 43-56.
- Fossati, Giovanna. "Multiple Originals: The (Digital) Restoration and Exhibition of Early Films." In *A Companion to Early Cinema*, edited by Nicolas Dulac, André Gaudreault, and Santiago Hidalgo, 550-567. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012.
- Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.
- Frampton, Diana. "FACILITIES: Rank Cintel Launches Top Digital Telecine." *Broadcast* (Jun 12, 1987): 11.
- Franklin, Harold B. *Sound Motion Pictures, From the Laboratory to Their Presentation*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1929.
- Friend, Michael. "Film/Digital/Film." *Journal of Film Preservation* 24, no. 50 (03, 1995): 36-49.
- Fujishima, Kenji. "Breaking Down Michael Mann's Sharper Director's Cut Of 'Blackhat'." *IndieWire.com*. Feb. 11, 2016. <http://www.indiewire.com/2016/02/breaking-down-michael-manns-sharper-directors-cut-of-blackhat-272478/>.
- Galloway, Alexander R. *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

- Garrett, Diane. "Shelf Space Under Pressure." *Video Business* 20, no. 3 (Jan 17, 2000): 1.
- Gaudreault, André, and Tim Barnard. "Titles, Subtitles, and Intertitles: Factors of Autonomy, Factors of Concatenation." *Film History: An International Journal* 25, no. 1-2 (2013): 81-94. *MLA International Bibliography*.
- Gavin, Arthur. "2-D, 3-D, Widescreen, Or All Three...." *American Cinematographer* 36, no. 5 (May 1953): 210-212, 232-234.
- Gleiberman, Owen. "Blade Runner: The Director's Cut." *Entertainment Weekly*, October 2, 1992. <http://ew.com/article/1992/10/02/blade-runner-2/>
- Gomery, Douglas. *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.
- Gomery, Douglas. *The Coming of Sound: A History*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Gracy, Karen F. *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007.
- Grainge, Paul. "Reclaiming Heritage: Colourization, Culture Wars and the Politics of Nostalgia." *Cultural Studies* 13, no. 4 (October 1999): 621-638. doi:10.1080/095023899335077.
- Grigely, Joseph. *Textualterity: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- Gunning, Tom. "'Now You See It, Now You Don't': The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions." In *The Silent Cinema Reader*, edited by Lee Grieveson, 42-43. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Hadjioannou, Markos. *From Light to Byte: Toward an Ethics of Digital Cinema*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Hagedorn, Roger. "Technology and Economic Exploitation: The Serial as a Form of Narrative Presentation." *Wide Angle* 10, no. 4 (1988): 4-12.
- Hall, Sheldon. "Alternative versions in the early years of CinemaScope." In *Widescreen Worldwide*, edited by John Belton, Sheldon Hall, and Stephen Neale, 113-132. New Barnet, U.K.: John Libbey, 2010.
- Harris, Robert. "DNR... and Other Things That Go Bump in the Night." *The Digital Bits*. 06 Jun 2008. <https://web.archive.org/web/20080628110639/http://www.thedigitalbits.com/articles/robertharris/harris062408.html>.

- Harvey, Ross. *Preserving Digital Materials*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2011.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Hedstrom, Margaret and Clifford Lampe. "Emulation vs. Migration: Do Users Care?" *RLG DigiNews* Volume 5, Number 6 (December 15, 2001).
<https://web.archive.org/web/20050218014346/http://www.rlg.org/legacy/preserv/diginews/diginews5-6.html#feature1>
- Herranen, Henrik. "How Film is Transferred to Video." 1995.
<https://www.modeemi.fi/~leopold/AV/FilmToVideo/>
- Hilderbrand, Lucas. *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Hilmes, Michele. "The Bad Object: Television in the American Academy." *Cinema Journal* 45, no. 1 (2005): 111-17.
- Holland, Andrew. "There are several versions of Manhunter." *Manhunter: The Complete Resource Site*.
<http://manhunter1986.com/miss00.html>
- Horak, Jan-Christopher. "The Gap between 1 and 0: Digital Video and the Omissions of Film History." *Spectator - the University of Southern California Journal of Film and Television* 27, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 29-41.
- Hoyt, Eric. *Hollywood Vault Film Libraries Before Home Video*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.
- Indvik, Kurt. "'E.T.' DVD Sails to Retail Oct. 22." *Video Store Magazine* 24, no. 24 (Jun 2002): 1-1, 34.
- Indvik, Kurt. "Managing the DVD Transition." *Video Store Magazine* 23, no. 51 (Dec, 2001): 6.
- Itzkoff, Dave. "That's a Big Boulder, Indy: Steven Spielberg on the Imax Rerelease of 'Raiders of the Lost Ark.'" *New York Times Blog Arts Beat*. 14 Aug 2012,
<https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/14/raiders-of-the-lost-ark-to-receive-imax-release/>
- Ivory, James. "Hollywood versus Hollywood." In *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader*, edited by Ruth Petrie, 5-17. London: Cassell, 1997.
- Jacobson, Colin. "Manhunter: Limited Edition (1986) Review." *DVD Movie Guide*.
<http://www.dvdmg.com/manhunterle.shtml>. No date.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Rev. ed. New York and London: New York University Press, 2008.

- Johnson, Derek, and Will Brooker. "Star Wars Fans, DVD, and Cultural Ownership: An Interview with Will Brooker." *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (2005): 36-44. doi:10.1353/vlt.2006.0007.
- Jones, Janna. *The Past Is a Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century On Film*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012.
- Kalinak, Kathryn. "Classical Hollywood, 1928-1946." In *Sound: Dialogue, Music, and Effects*, edited by Kathryn Kalinak, 37-58. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015.
- Katz, David. "High Definition Television Technology and its Implications for Theatrical Motion Picture Production." *Journal of Film and Video* 41, no. 3 (Fall, 1989): 3-12.
- Keathley, Christian. *Cinephilia and History, Or, The Wind In the Trees*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Kendrick, James. "Aspect Ratios and Joe Six-Packs: Home Theater Enthusiasts' Battle to Legitimize the DVD Experience." *The Velvet Light Trap - A Critical Journal of Film and Television* (Fall, 2005): 58-70.
- Kerbel, Michael. "EDITED FOR TELEVISION I: Scanning." *Film Comment* 13, no. 3 (May, 1977): 28-30.
- Kerbel, Michael. "EDITED FOR TELEVISION II: Unkindest Cuts." *Film Comment* 13, no. 4 (Jul, 1977): 38-40.
- Kermode, Mark. "Horror: On the Edge of Taste." In *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader*, edited by Ruth Petrie, 155-160. London; Washington: Cassell, 1997.
- Kerr, Walter. *The Silent Clowns*. New York: Knopf, 1975.
- King, Geoff. *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- King, Noel. "New Hollywood." In *The Cinema Book*, 3rd ed., edited by Pam Cook, 60-67. London: British Film Institute, 2007.
- King, Rob. "The American Slapstick Short and the Coming of Sound." In *Companion to Film Comedy*, edited by Andrew Horton and Joanna E. Rapf, 61-84. Somerset: Wiley, 2012.
- Kingston, Russ. "Nobody's PAL." *Artists Rights Foundation*. January 1998. <https://web.archive.org/web/20010725223736/http://www.artistsrights.org/cf/news/detail.cfm?QID=15>
- Klinger, Barbara. *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

- Knee, Adam. "Notions of Authorship and the Reception of "Once Upon a Time in America"." *Film Criticism* 10, no. 1 (1985): 3-17.
- Knight, Arthur. "The Movies Learn to Talk: Ernst Lubitsch, Rene Clair, and Rouben Mamoulian." In *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, 213-220. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Kompare, Derek. *Rerun Nation: How Repeats Invented American Television*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Koszarski, Richard. *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915-1928*. New York: Schribner, 1990.
- Kozloff, Sarah. *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration In American Fiction Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Lafferty, William. "Feature Films on Prime-Time Television." In *Hollywood in the Age of Television*, edited by Tino Balio, 235-256. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Lastra, James. *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Lev, Peter. *Transforming the Screen 1950-1959*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003.
- Lewis, Hannah. "'The Music has Something to Say': The Musical Revisions of L'Atalante (1934)." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (Fall, 2015): 559 – 603.
- Lewis, Hannah. "The Realm of Serious Art": Henry Hadley's Involvement in Early Sound Film." *Journal Of The Society For American Music* 8, no. 3 (n.d.): 285-310. *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*.
- Lewis, Jon. *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How The Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.
- Library of Congress. *Technological Alterations to Motion Pictures: a Report of the Register of Copyrights*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Copyright Office, 1989.
- Lovece, Frank. "Home Video: 'Special Home Versions': Are they so Special?" *Billboard* 99, no. 13 (Mar 28, 1987): 53-54.
- Lucas, Tim. "The Kindest Cut of All." *Film Comment* 27, no. 3 (05, 1991): 47-50.

- Lucas, Tim. "Michael Mann's MANHUNTER: Spread Your Wings and Learn to Die." *Video Watchdog* 13 (Sept/Oct 1992): 24-29.
- Lumenick, Lou. "The Empire's New Clothes - Tinker-crazy Lucas creates fan firestorm with long-awaited 'Star Wars' DVD set." *New York Post*, Sep 19, 2004. <https://nypost.com/2004/09/19/the-empires-new-clothes-tinker-crazy-lucas-creates-fan-firestorm-with-long-awaited-star-wars-dvd-set/>
- Lumenick, Lou. "DVD Extra Extra: 'Shane' Blu-ray now going out at 1:37," *New York Post*, April 17, 2013. <https://nypost.com/2013/04/17/dvd-extra-extra-shane-blu-ray-now-going-out-at-137/>
- Lumenick, Lou. "George Stevens Jr. speaks out on the 'Shane' controversy." *New York Post*, April 24, 2013. https://nypost.com/2013/04/24/george-stevens-jr-speaks-out-on-the-shane-controversy/?_ga=1.241215552.318230952.1535563469#.
- Magid, Ron. "An Expanded Universe." *American Cinematographer* 78, no. 02 (Feb 1997): 60-62, 64-70.
- Markowitz, Robert. "Visual History with Elliott Silverstein." *Director's Guild of America*. May 17, 2002. <https://www.dga.org/Craft/VisualHistory/Interviews/Elliott-Silverstein.aspx?Filter=Full%20Interview>.
- Mast, Gerald. "Projection." In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 339-343. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Mathews, Jack, Terry Gilliam, Charles McKeown, and Tom Stoppard. *The Battle of Brazil; with the Director's Cut Screenplay Complete and Updated by Terry Gilliam, Tom Stoppard & Charles McKeown*. New York: Applause, 1998.
- McClean, Shilo T. *Digital Storytelling: The Narrative Power of Visual Effects in Film*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007.
- McDonald, Paul. *Video and DVD Industries*. London: British Film Institute, 2007.
- McGann, Jerome J. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- McGowan, Chris. "Classic Video: Restored Footage Restores Original Vision and Demand." *Billboard* 99, no. 22 (May 30, 1987): C9.
- Musser, Charles. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005.
- Natale, Simone. "There Are No Old Media," *Journal of Communication*, Volume 66, Issue 4 (August 2016): 585-603, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12235>.

- Neale, Steve. *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Neale, Steve. "Widescreen Composition in the Age of Television." In *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steve Neale and Murray Smith, 130-141. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Newman, Michael Z., and Elana Levine. *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status*. Oxon: Routledge, 2011.
- Nornes, Abé Mark. *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- North, Dan, Bob Rehak and Michael S. Duffy, "Introduction." In *Special Effects: New Histories/Theories/Contexts*, edited by Dan R. North, Bob Rehak, and Michael S. Duffy, 1-15. London: Palgrave, 2015.
- Parks, Lisa. "Falling Apart: Electronics Salvaging and the Global Media Economy." In *Residual Media*, edited by Charles R. Acland, 32-47. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Parrill, William B. *European Silent Films on Video: A Critical Guide*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2011.
- Pedro Almodovar, "Industry and Hypocrisy." In *Film and Censorship: The Index Reader*, edited by Ruth Petrie, 117-122. London; Washington: Cassell, 1997.
- Peters, John Durham. "Proliferation and Obsolescence of the Historical Record in the Digital Era." In *Cultures of Obsolescence: History, Materiality, and the Digital Age*, edited by Babette B. Tischleder and Sarah L. Wasserman, 79-96. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Phillips, Gene D. *Major Film Directors of the American and British Cinema*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1999.
- Phillips, Kendall R. "Redeeming the Visual: Aesthetic Questions in Michael Mann's *Manhunter*." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2003): 10-16.
- Pizzello, Chris. "DVD Playback: *Manhunter*." *American Cinematographer* 82, no. 5 (May 2001): 14, 16.
- Pond, Steve. "A Guild is Born." *DGA Quarterly* 2, no.4 (Winter 2006).
<https://www.dga.org/Craft/DGAQ/All-Articles/0604-Winter2006-07/Features-A-Guild-is-Born.aspx>

- Porst, Jennifer. "United States v. Twentieth Century-Fox, Et Al. and Hollywood's Feature Films on Early Television." *Film History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 114-42. doi:10.2979/filmhistory.25.4.114.
- Powers, Stephen, David J. Rothman, and Stanley Rothman. *Hollywood's America: Social and Political Themes in Motion Pictures*. Oxford; Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996.
- Prince, Stephen. *Digital Cinema*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2019.
- Prince, Stephen. *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Radish, Christina. "Steven Spielberg on 'Ready Player One' and Why He'll Never Rework His Own Movies Again." *Collider*. March 28, 2018. <https://collider.com/steven-spielberg-interview-ready-player-one/#nostalgia>
- Randall, Richard S. *Censorship of the Movies: The Social and Political Control of a Mass Medium*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968.
- Reinking, Frank. "Film to Tape Mysteries Unraveled." *American Cinematographer* 70, no. 9 (Sept 1989): 73-80.
- Richards, David and Edmund DiGiulio. "Results of a New Receiver Overscan Survey." *SMPTE Journal*, vol. 103, no. 2 (Feb. 1994): 94-99. doi: 10.5594/J03709.
- Rivero, Enrique. "'Dragon' Predecessor 'Manhunter' is Redone." *Video Store Magazine* 25, no. 14 (Mar 2003): 8, 35.
- Rivero, Enrique. "A Feast for Anchor Bay." *Video Business* 21, no. 8 (Feb 19, 2001): 38.
- Rivero, Enrique. "Fans Petition Lucas to Release Original 'Wars'." *Video Store Magazine* 25, no. 13 (Mar 2003): 16.
- Rivero, Enrique. "Find Me a Killer." *Video Business* 21, no. 4 (Jan 22, 2001): 18.
- Rivero, Enrique. "Michael Myers Returns in New Edition of John Carpenter's Classic 'Halloween'." *Video Store Magazine* 25, no. 33 (Aug 2003): 24.
- Robley, Les Paul. "Movies on Tape." *American Film* 7, no. 6 (Apr 01, 1982): 20-20, 22, 24.
- Rombes, Nicholas. *Cinema in the Digital Age*. Rev. ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
- Rosenbaum, Jonathan. "Potential Perils of the Director's Cut." In *Goodbye Cinema, Hello Cinephilia*, 12-24. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

- Rothenberg, Jeff. "Ensuring the Longevity of Digital Documents." *Scientific American* 272, no. 1 (1995): 42-47.
- Rothenberg, Jeff. "Avoiding Technological Quicksand: Finding a Viable Technical Foundation for Digital Preservation." In *CLIR Report* (January 1999), Council on Library and Information Resources, <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/rothenberg/contents.html>.
- Rubin, H. "Some Problems in the Projection of Sound Movies." In *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, vol. 12, no. 35 (Sept. 1928): 867-871. doi: 10.5594/J13145 <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=7239236&isnumber=7239164>
- Russell Merritt, "D. W. Griffith's INTOLERANCE: Reconstructing an Unattainable Text." *Film History* 4, no. 4 (1990): 337-375.
- Rybin, Steven. *The Cinema of Michael Mann*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007.
- Salt, Barry. *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*. London: Starword, 2009.
- Sammon, Paul M. *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner*. New York, NY: HarperPrism, 1999.
- Sandler, Kevin S. *The Naked Truth: Why Hollywood Doesn't Make X-Rated Movies*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007.
- Sarris, Andrew. "Towards a Theory of Film History." In *Movies and Methods* Vol. 1, edited by Bill Nichols, 237-251. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Schatz, Thomas. *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood: Ritual, Art and Industry*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Press, 1983.
- Schnapper, Amy. "The Distribution of Theatrical Feature Films to Television." Order No. 7528816, The University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1975.
- Schubin, Mark. "Searching for the Perfect Aspect Ratio," *SMPTE Journal*, vol. 105, no. 8 (Aug. 1996): 460-478. doi: 10.5594/J09548.
- Schumach, Murray. *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor*. New York: Morrow, 1964.
- Schutz, George. "Why New Aspect Ratios?" In *New Screen Techniques*, edited by Martin Quigley Jr., 204-208. New York: Quigley, 1953.
- Sconce, Jeffrey. "The (Depressingly) Attainable Text." *Framework* 45, no. 2 (Fall, 2004): 68-75.
- Screen International*. "FILM VIDEO SOUND 89: Video." No. 713 (Jul 15, 1989): 21.

- Segrave, Kerry. *American Films Abroad: Hoolywood's Domination of the World's Movie Screens from the 1890s to the Present*. Jefferson: McFarland, 1997.
- Segrave, Kerry. *Movies at Home: How Hollywood Came to Television*. Jefferson: McFarland, 1999.
- Serna, Laura Isabel. "Translations and Transportation: Toward a Transnational History of the Intertitle." In *Silent Cinema and the Politics of Space*, edited by Bean Jennifer M., Kapse Anupama, and Horak Laura, 121-46. Indiana University Press, 2014.
- Singer, Ben. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Sklar, Robert. "HOMEVIDEO." *Cinéaste* 14, no. 4 (1986): 29, 60.
- Solman, Greg. "Uncertain Glory." *Film Comment* 29, no. 3 (05, 1993): 19-27.
- Solman, Gregory. "Picture Perfect?" *Film Comment* 37, no. 3 (May, 2001): 52-57.
- Sontag, Susan. "The Decay of Cinema." *New York Times Magazine* (Feb 25, 1996): 660.
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/03/12/specials/sontag-cinema.html>
- Sperb, Jason. *Flickers of Film: Nostalgia in the Time of Digital Cinema*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2016.
- Stadler, Jane, and Kelly McWilliam. *Screen Media: Analysing Film and Television*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009.
- Staiger, Janet. "Blueprints for Feature Films: Hollywood's Continuity Scripts." In *The American Film Industry: Revised Edition*, edited by Tino Balio, 173-194. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
- Stam, Robert. "Television News and Its Spectator." In *Regarding Television*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan, 23-43. Frederick, MD: AFI, 1983.
- Stambler, Lyndon. "Director's Cut." *Director's Guild of America*. Spring 2011.
<http://www.dga.org/CreativeRightsBill>.
- Stamp, Shelley. *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Sterne, Jonathan. "Out with the Trash: On the Future of New Media." In *Residual Media*, edited by Charles R. Acland, 16-31. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Stevenson, William. "Cutting Remarks." *Film Comment* 26, no. 4 (Jul 1990): 70, 73-74.

- Strick, Philip. "Blade Runner: Telling The Difference." *Sight and Sound* 2, no. 8 (12, 1992): 8-9.
- Tashiro, Charles Shiro. "Videophilia: What Happens When You Wait for It on Video." *Film Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1991): 7-17. doi:10.2307/1212669.
- Tashiro, Charles. "The Contradictions of Video Collecting." *Film Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (Winter, 1997): 11-18.
- Taylor, Jim. *DVD Demystified*. 2nd ed. Blacklick, USA: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing, 2001.
- Thibodeau, Kenneth. "Overview of Technological Approaches to Digital Preservation and Challenges in Coming Years." In *The State of Digital Preservation: An International Perspective*, 4-31. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2002.
- Thompson, Kristin. *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907-34*. London: British Film Institute, 1985.
- Thompson, Kristin. *Storytelling in Film and Television*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Tribbey, Ralph. "'Manhunter' Accompanies 'Hannibal' Release." *Video Store Magazine* 23, no. 1 (Jan 1-Jan 6, 2001): 12, 30.
- Tribbey, Ralph. "Anchor Bay Just Wants to have DVD Fun." *Video Store Magazine* 22, no. 49 (Dec 2000): 12, 36.
- Tryon, Chuck. *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media Convergence*. Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Turner, George. "Restoration... Slowly but Surely." *American Cinematographer* 67, no. 4 (Apr 1986): 128.
- Ulin, Jeffrey C. *The Business of Media Distribution: Monetizing Film, TV and Video Content in an Online World*. New York and London: Focal Press, 2010.
- United States Congress. House Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration. *Film Disclosure Act of 1991: hearing before the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, One Hundred Second Congress, second session, on H.R. 3051 ... March 5, 1992*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O.: 1993.
- Uricchio, William. "Replacement, Displacement, and Obsolescence in the Digital Age." In *Cultures of Obsolescence: History, Materiality, and the Digital Age*, edited by Babette B. Tischleder and Sarah L. Wasserman, 97-110. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

- Usai, Paolo Cherchi. *Silent Cinema: A Guide to Study, Research and Exhibition*. London: Bloomsbury on behalf of the British Film Institute, 2019.
- Usai, Paolo Cherchi. *Silent Cinema. An Introduction*. London: British Film Institute, 2000.
- Vasey, Ruth. *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.08221.0001.001>.
- Vaughn, Stephen. *Freedom and Entertainment: Rating the Movies in an Age of New Media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Vincent, Tom. "Standing Tall and Wide: the selling of VistaVision." In *Widescreen Worldwide*, edited by John Belton, Sheldon Hall, and Stephen Neale, 25-39. New Barnet, U.K.: John Libbey, 2010.
- Wallmüller, Julia. "Criteria for the Use of Digital Technology in Moving Image Restoration." *The Moving Image* 7, no. 1 (2007): 78-91. doi:10.1353/mov.2007.0032.
- Ward, Peter. *Picture Composition for Film and Television*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Focal Press, 2005.
- Wasser, Frederick. *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Wells, Jeffrey. "A Little Woody Reminder." *Hollywood Elsewhere*, July 30, 2018. <http://hollywood-elsewhere.com/2013/03/shane-aspect-ratio-conflict/>.
- Wells, Jeffrey. "Shane Aspect Ratio Conflict." *Hollywood Elsewhere*, March 3 2013. <http://hollywood-elsewhere.com/2013/03/shane-aspect-ratio-conflict/>.
- Wiegand, John Lee. "Cutting Feature Films for Television." *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 69, no. 7 (July 1960): 465-469. doi: 10.5594/J15586.
- Williams, Alan. "Historical and Theoretical Issues in the coming of recorded sound to the Cinema." In *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, edited by Rick Altman, 126-137. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Williams, Raymond. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. Routledge Classics ed. London, New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Wolf, Jessica. "Home Theater Pushing Widescreen Acceptance." *Video Store Magazine* 26, no. 44 (Oct, 2004): 1-1, 38.
- Wurtzler, Steve J. *Electric Sounds: Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Zavada, Roland J. "Report on Home Receiver Image Area Test." *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 83, no. 4 (April 1974): 304-316. doi: 10.5594/J08795.

Zettl, Herbert. "'The Rare Case of Television Aesthetics,'" *Journal of the University film Association* Vol. 30 No. 2 (Spring 1978): 3-8.

Zyber, Joshua. "Manhunter: Director's Cut." *DVDFILE.COM Disc Review*. July 18, 2003.
https://web.archive.org/web/20030801143136/http://www.dvdfile.com/software/review/dvd-video_6/manhunter_dc.html.