2.3.1

Film

Authorship, versions and revisions

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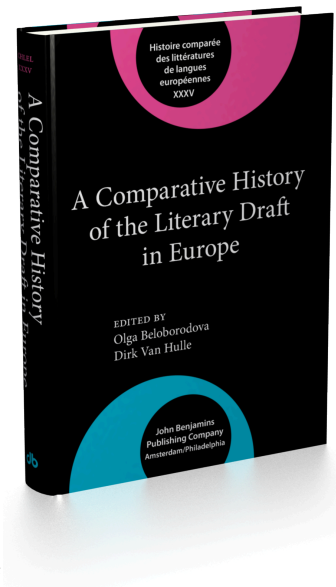

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2.3.1 Film

Authorship, versions and revisions

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This chapter aims to test the saliency of textual or genetic criticism for film studies. My suggestions take two directions: on the one hand, I propose that the philological task of the genetic critic to compare different versions of a literary text, finds an equivalent in the job of the film preservationist. In a second move, I look at the problematic of creative control in an art rooted from the beginning in an industrial model. Considering the American "auteur" cinema of the 1970s, I argue that the filmmaker's newly-won right of "final cut" led to endless revisions and the "modernist" sense that the "text" can never be finished.

Keywords: Film as ontological and material object, film authorship, film distribution and recutting

Any comparison between the creation of a literary manuscript, in its multiple versions, and the production of a film will have trouble getting out of the starting gate because obviously, a film is not, or at least not exclusively or perhaps even primarily, a text. It is just as legitimate to treat a film as a picture or as a performance, given that the medium historically drew as much from the performing and visual arts as from literature. Also, at a more philosophical level, there is a fundamental ontological difference at play not only with literature, or with text in general, but with the visual and performing arts as well, one that is often hidden from view by treating film primarily as a cultural or social phenomenon or by laying the focus of inquiry squarely on sociological or cognitive processes of reception. That is, films are not read, performed or exhibited (although we speak of film *exhibitors* and the first American film screening[1] was advertised by an image of a gilded picture frame), but screened and viewed.

The philosopher Stanley Cavell, in his ontological study of film, *The World Viewed* (1971), draws massive conclusions from this singular fact, asking the question of where it is that the film can be said to actually exist (Cavell 1979). Is the film a recording, in the sense that we can say that a "record" of a musical performance has the same sense data as that performance? But an image was *seen* and so fundamentally differs from the object seen, in the same sense that a photograph *is not* the person or object photographed (otherwise there would be no way of telling them apart). We do not need to concern ourselves here with the finer points of Cavell's argument, nor do we have to accept it, well, on sight. It only has bearing on the content of this chapter in that it asks the question of the original, the place of origin of a film: *is* the film the projection,

1. The premiere of Thomas Edison's "Vitascope" took place at Koster and Bial's Music Hall on Broadway and 34th Street on 23 April,1896.

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the images recorded on the film stock, or the performance of the actors (or the existence of an object or landscape) before the camera? The question is crucial, of course, when we want to test the saliency of textual or genetic criticism for film studies and not limit ourselves to the actual textual basis of a film. To gauge the "draft" or preliminary condition of a film, it would not suffice to look at the revised versions of the screenplay; you would have to look at lighting, colour or lens tests, at screen tests, costume and make-up tests. But these would garner you very little insight into the process of filmmaking, given that tests usually involve only a limited number of personnel and equipment, and in that regard they are not representative at all for the coming into being of the work (which is after all what genetic criticism is concerned with).

Let me propose one final difference between a film and a (literary) text. Cavell develops his argument on film lacking a clear "original" in the context of Walter Benjamin's argument on the reproducibility of the artwork in the modern era and its consequent loss of cultic value or "aura" (which Benjamin, as a Marxist, primarily, but not unambiguously, sees as a good thing) (Benjamin 2015). Any print of a film, Cavell says, "is as full and authentic an instance of [a film] as any other, so long as it is fair and complete. It is not a substitute for an original, but its manifestation [...] It is everything a commodity should be: equal instances available to all" (1979: 183). Film is the primary subject of Benjamin's essay, and in many ways it has come to be seen as the art form most reflective of industrial modernity and mass culture. Although similar generic distinctions can be seen to apply in film and literature between the mass-market popular "genre" novel and the art novel or non-narrative avant-garde work, film, almost from its very inception, was rooted in an industrial model: it took less than a decade after the birth of cinema for entrepreneurs on both sides of the Atlantic to discover its potential as a commodity, to start curtailing a spirit of discovery and experiment by imposing rules and strictures both at the level of form (narrative), mode of production (industrial) and distribution (commercial). A manuscript, whatever its destination, is private as it is written (although scholars have had a lot to say about the difference between the private, confidential and public nature of a manuscript). A film, from the first stages of the pre-production process is, in all cases excepting the self-financed mom-and-pop approach of the avant-garde or "Underground", a *product*, the result of *collective* labour controlled, to a greater or lesser extent, by a manager or managing committee.

The industrial model for film production was introduced, most film scholars agree, around the early 1910s, at a time when film studios started expanding, rationalising their production activities and turning to principles of scientific management, i.e. Taylorism (see Bordwell et al 1985, especially 85–155). That film production would be subjected to a standardised organisational model was, in a way, inevitable, even regardless of all commercial ambitions, given the highly technologised nature of the work, the amount of labour involved, and the corresponding order of investment. The industrialisation of film production entailed not only an assembly-line type of production but a strict division of labour, which ended up separating conception from production.

The writer, one would expect, would occupy a central role at the conception stage. In fact, the writer was considered one of the least important assets in the production chain. To under-

stand this, we have to distinguish between the writer of a *scenario*, a brief synopsis of story which in the early days could fit on a paper napkin, and a *screenplay* or *script*. The latter provided a full numbered breakdown of action by narrative event, a list of events according to the locations in which they were to be filmed, and additional information for post-production (intertitles, colour tinting and toning instructions). Employees in the scenario departments came up with stories, but they were mainly concerned with turning them into scripts. As films got longer, the work on the *continuity script*, which was basically a complete blueprint for and record of a film shoot (it contained shooting dates, highly detailed breakdowns of the filmic action, footage estimations for each shot, complete budgetary data, etc.), giving the producer full control over the production, became a specialised job almost entirely separate from the conceiving of the original story. As sound came in and dialogue writers were eagerly sought, big-name literary authors (Dorothy Parker, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, the list goes on) flocked to Hollywood to earn an extra buck. But even then, the idea that films were written by a committee was more than a generally shared impression. So, on the one hand, you have the manuscript of the story scenario written by a professional and, in many cases, "literary" writer, which often had very little to do with the finished film, and on the other, you have the continuity script, which hardly has any literary value at all. Where is the interest for the textual critic, even if scripts are available in different stages of revision, when the object of inquiry is the film itself and not its literary-textual basis?

The practice of collective writing processes changed after the end of the studio era in that today's screenwriters are no longer in a company's employ and function as independent contractors trying to sell a "spec" (short for "speculative") script (basically a synopsis or treatment) to a studio or production company. This practice already existed in the studio era but has now become the rule. On the other hand, the Hollywood model was not in effect in all film-producing countries. In France, for instance, which, in the thirties and forties especially, had a less centralised film production system, heavily reliant on one-off patronal investment, the film scripts by Jean Cocteau, Jacques Prévert and others were accorded the same literary prestige as their other writing. Not coincidentally, therefore, it is in France that the conception of the film director as "auteur" will emerge (ironically enough under the aegis of a protest against the creative power accorded the literary screenwriter), the combined result of a nostalgic look back at the maverick figures of the silent film (D.W. Griffith, Erich von Stroheim, Abel Gance), the vigorous, inspiring work of independent filmmakers like Jean Renoir and Jean Vigo during the thirties, and the promise of a new "young" cinema that arose from the post-war ruins of Italy.

The conception of filmic "auteurism" – and its associated ethos of authorial intention and free will – will prove crucial to the present chapter. I will not be focusing, however, on the *independent* film artist, like Jean-Luc Godard or Pier-Paolo Pasolini, who, supported by eccentric small-budget producers like Georges de Beauregard and Alfredo Bini, explicitly modelled their practice on that of the novelist, poet or painter, and as such offer abundant material for the textual or genetic critic, even in the form of actual filmed "notes" or "sketches."[2] I will steer clear

2. Pasolini made a documentary about location hunting for his *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo, Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1965). This was followed by a series of "sketches" – *Appunti*

of such rather facile comparison, and will concentrate on a more generalised practice, in which the filmmaker is seen as a craftsman subjected to constraints, without final creative control over the finished artefact or the different versions that are put on the market. On the other hand, within the confines of this tradition, I will be looking principally at the (seeming) exceptions. First, however, I want to linger a while longer on both Cavell's question about a film's "original" and the institutional reality of filmmaking as laid out above. When Cavell says that any print of a film "is as full and authentic an instance of (a film) as any other, so long as it is fair and complete", he is making an historiographical error (1979: 183). There is an *original*, if only in the technical sense. This is the camera negative, the film as it was exposed in the camera during production, which is the final point of origin of all extant positive prints. In film historiographical practice, the camera negative counts as the holy grail, given that in many cases, especially of those films made during the first half of the twentieth century, those negatives are missing (see Cherchi Usai 2000). This does not necessarily imply that the *film* no longer exists: positive prints of a film can be found to be extant in varying states of conservation, which can then serve as the source for a new duplicate negative. But over three fourths of the silent film output has not survived. All we are left with in these cases are "rumours" or "echoes": synopses, scripts or other written production or promotion materials, or testimonies of contemporary viewers or critics in books or articles. The main reason for this gaping void in the film-historical record is that prior to the creation of film archives in the 1930s, there was no effective policy of preservation. While film prints were deposited by production companies for copyright purposes with national libraries from about 1912 onwards, these deposits mostly ended up being returned to the claimant. The reason was that film was made on highly flammable nitrate stock, which no library was equipped to deal with. The chemical instability of the nitrate base made it not only a safety risk (nitrate fires also account for a substantial part of the films lost) but required storage in a relatively dry and cool environment and the kind of specific care that only specialised archives could provide.

Artefact-based archival research in film studies has up to now almost exclusively been the terrain of *silent* film studies. This is logical, given that the further removed the artefact is in time, the more exciting the research becomes into its "original" form. The main challenge for film archives and archival researchers has been precisely to decide on the identity and completeness of preserved films. The job of the archival film researcher is to decide on the status of the extant prints; this is a task close to philology not only in that final judgement is based on textual sources (production materials, books, contemporary articles, posters, etc.), but also because the final goal is to "excavate" a "correct text" from different, possibly conflicting versions. The film preservationist's job is to decide on the right restoration approach for prints that

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per un film sull'India (1968), *Appunti per un romanzo dell'immondizia* (1970), *Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana* (1970) – for proposed films that were never made. Godard, after discovering video technology, made filmed "notes" on the feature films he was preparing, like *Quelques remarques sur la réalisation et la production du film 'Sauve qui peut (la vie)'* (1979), *Passion, le travail et l'amour: introduction à un scénario, ou Troisième état du scénario du film Passion* (1982), *Scénario du film Passion* (1982), *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue, Marie* (1983).

show "lacunae", that are missing frames, shots, sequences or entire reels, a task closer to that of the art restorer. I strongly believe that it is in the attention to the temporal and material aspects of the artwork that textual criticism can offer the most salient possibilities for film studies. A possible gain from the rapprochement between (film) archival and (literary) textual criticism would be the comparison between the techniques, protocols and ethics of archival research in general, and more specifically, between the history and policies of film archives and other types of national libraries, or between different copyright regulations.

The existence of different versions of a film is not exclusively the result of material-historical factors; just as important are the institutional circumstances. When I first started researching the films of the American director John Ford, a print had just been discovered of a Ford film assumed to be lost. A print of *Straight Shooting* (1917), Ford's first feature film, a five-reel B-western made for Universal, had been found in the Národní filmový archiv of the Czech Republic. The Museum of Modern Art promptly made a duplicate of the Czech print, as did the Cinémathèque française. As a special event, the version with French subtitles was screened on French television in the "Cinéma de minuit" series on 26 December 1993 under the title, *Le Ranch Diavolo*. So the version I saw had French subtitles on Czech intertitles, which in several instances showed only a tangential connection to the original storyline as preserved in the script. The moral of the story, however, is that the film has lived on thanks to foreign distribution. At the time Ford shot the film, the rule was to have two cameras shooting side by side: one negative was used to make prints for the domestic market, the other was often recut according to the specific requirements of the foreign market. Therefore the film I saw was definitely not *Straight Shooting* as American viewers saw it in 1917, if only because the camera's angle of view was slightly different. But it is the only one we have (for now). For foreign distribution, films were sometimes titled differently or only made available in an untinted black-and-white version. More radically, if certain scenes, like for instance a film's ending, were deemed inappropriate to public feeling in a particular country, alternative endings were made available.[3] In the most extreme cases, foreign distribution prints, even if adequately preserved, can be found to lack entire reels!

The variant versions of a film that the silent film researcher is confronted with, resulted from the same determining factors that still account for different existing versions of a film today, and here I also see a possible incentive towards future investigation (especially since archival research is hardly extant in those areas of film studies focusing on more contemporary practices). The existence of multiple versions of a film can usually be accredited to one or more of these three factors: (1) international distribution: in American film distribution especially, it is still common practice to add or remove culture-specific references, (2) censorship: again there is the precedent of the silent period for releasing films in different forms depending on

3. A typical example is the alternative ending shot for the Russian version of the Danish blockbuster *Atlantis* (dir. August Blom, 1913), which included a spectacular scene of the tragic sinking of an ocean liner, one year after the sinking of the Titanic. While the original ends with the main character reunited with his family, in the Russian version – tailored to the Slavic taste for sad endings – he dies.

local censorship laws; the difference is that, today, unrated or uncut versions, that diverge substantially from the original theatrical version, are made available for home media consumption, and (3) editorial intervention. This third factor will preoccupy us for the rest of this chapter, especially as it relates to revision practices.

During the classical period of the Hollywood studio system, a film director was an employee like any other, with little or no say over the final product. They were higher up in the hierarchy, although not by much, than the writer and the cameraperson, but came a long way behind the producer. Film history is rife with stories about visionary directors like D.W. Griffith and Erich von Stroheim going to war with producers and the monied interests they represent because they felt their creative freedom was restrained (a frustration leading to – in most cases – short-lived experiments with setting up talent-led production companies).[4] A kindred figure like Orson Welles was the first of the post-war studio era directors to reclaim the kind of freedom that Griffith and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau had when they made *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Sunrise* (1927) respectively. Given carte blanche by RKO Pictures (one of the big five US production companies at the time) on his first film, *Citizen Kane* (1940), because of the notoriety he had achieved as the wonderboy of American radio and theatre (and with the 1938 broadcast of his "live" version of *War of the Worlds* especially), Welles ended up a Stroheim-like martyr, whose second and third feature films were taken away from him and recut by the studio, just as had happened with Stroheim's *Greed* (1924).[5] It can hardly be considered coincidental, therefore, that Welles was idolised by the French auteurists, together with free spirits of the past like Griffith, Murnau and Stroheim. The plight of another visionary filmmaker under the thumb of philistine producers, Fritz Lang, whose *Metropolis* (1927) was entirely recut by the studio, was immortalised by Godard in *Le mépris* (1963).[6] Godard was inspired by the example of Lang who, like Welles, had finally turned away from big studio

4. Griffith joined forces with producer-directors Mack Sennett and Thomas Ince in the Triangle Film Corporation, which was founded in July 1915 by Griffith's producer partner Harry Aitken. It folded seven years later in 1922.

5. Welles' Booth Tarkington adaptation, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), was brought in at RKO at a length of 135 minutes. After this version tested poorly, Welles agreed to remove several minutes. Because he had given up his right to final cut that had come with the *Citizen Kane* deal over a film he was supposed to make for RKO but never did, the studio took the film away from him, cutting over 40 minutes and reshooting the ending. The negatives for the excised sections of the film were destroyed. In the case of *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), made at Columbia, studio boss Harry Cohn ordered extensive editing and re-shoots. After heavy editing by the studio, approximately one hour of Welles's first cut was removed, including much of a climactic confrontation scene in an amusement park funhouse.

6. *Metropolis* was produced by UFA but distributed by Parufamet, a joint corporation of the German studio with Paramount and MGM. The distribution deal with the American companies entitled them to make changes to UFA films to ensure profitability. Finding *Metropolis* too long and unwieldy, Parufamet commissioned American playwright Channing Pollock to write a simpler version of the film that could be assembled using the existing material. A damaged print of Lang's original cut of the film was discovered in 2008 in Argentina.

financing to embrace the B-movie resources of "poverty row" studios. When he made his first New Wave films, it was with Welles', Lang's or Roberto Rossellini's hustler approach to film financing in mind.[7]

The spirit of the "new wave" found fertile ground in the imagination of the young American filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s. They found themselves in the historically unprecedented situation that the decline of the studio system had made way not only for young talent but for an auteurist approach. The new kind of Hollywood mogul, often with little to no knowledge of the film business, left the reins to young, inexperienced producers and were willing to try anything to secure the new youth audience that had made such an unexpected hit out of *Easy Rider* (dir. Dennis Hopper, 1969). Aspiring American *auteurs* like Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, therefore found themselves in the enviable position to be able to make their "art" films with full backing of what remained of the studio's resources. Other than the particularity of the historical moment, their other advantage over a non-conformist like Welles, was that they were willing to make what were essentially still genre films, having been raised, like the New Wave *cinéastes*, on a steady diet of gangster and noir films, thrillers, screwball comedies, westerns, or musicals, associated with towering figures like Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, Ford and Vincente Minnelli. They were even eager to try their hand at the kind of material these older figures would have scoffed at: the B-movie staples of horror and science fiction associated – before Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) – with an independent producer like Roger Corman. This story is important to our purposes because the power these young filmmakers achieved after their films struck gold occasioned the new phenomenon of the "director's cut".

After Stroheim's *Greed* (1924) was recut from its original epic eight-hour length to two-and-a-half hours, or when Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) was shortened and entirely restructured, neither filmmaker dreamt of ever seeing the day when the studio itself would release the "full" version of their films – their only hope was posterity (which in Stroheim's case was confronted with the insurmountable reality that the excess reels of *Greed* were presumably sold by the studio as landfill for the M3 motorway). But this is exactly what happened with Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) – a film typical in its hybridisation of French auteurism and Hollywood genre films in that it was a big science fiction film that featured François Truffaut as one of the scientists. Spielberg had gained enormous clout after *Jaws* (1975) and was courted by Columbia Pictures with the offer to realise one of his dream projects, a script he had written himself about visiting extraterrestrials.[8] *Close Encounters* became another financial success, grossing over $ 300 million worldwide. During the final stretch of

7. *A Bout de souffle* (1960) (which was dedicated to B-movies) was financed and distributed by a patron, producer Georges de Beauregard, while *Les 400 Coups* (dir. François Truffaut, 1959) was made through Truffaut's own production company, Les Films du Carrosse.

8. As an adaptation of a pulp bestseller, *Jaws* was typical of the openness of the New American Cinema to genre work (see also Roman Polanski *Rosemary's Baby* 1968, Coppola's *The Godfather* 1972, and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* 1973), completely different from the ambition of a Stroheim or Welles to bring respected literary classics like Booth Tarkington and Frank Norris to the screen.

shooting, however, the studio, in precarious financial health at the time and largely dependent on outside investors, had gotten nervous because of time and budget overruns. Taking seven weeks out of the allotted post-production schedule, already conservatively estimated given the complex and extensive special effects work on the film, the studio finally took the film away from its director and released it in a version Spielberg considered "a work in progress that had never been finished" (McBride 1997: 287). After the film proved a hit, Columbia tried to appease their boy genius by proposing a sequel. They also gave Spielberg $ 1,5 million to go back and finish his version of *Close Encounters*. Their only condition was that the Special Edition of the film include shots of the interior of the alien mothership that had not been seen in the original. Spielberg refused the sequel opportunity, but jumped at the chance to revisit *Close Encounters*, dropping scenes that he did not like and reinserting others that Columbia had made him drop. The Special Edition was released in August 1980: proving three minutes shorter than the original, this was the version released on home video and was considered for many years the only authoritative version. Did this precedent mean that the industry had officially changed their policy and accorded the "final cut" privilege to their most successful directors? *1941* (1979), the film that Spielberg was shooting as he was retooling *Close Encounters*, a war spoof so costly it took two studios, Columbia and Universal, to produce, proved that this was not the case. The film, once again over-schedule and over-budget, had disastrous test screenings, after which the studios felt it needed "surgery": Spielberg agreed to trim the film's length from two-and-a-half hours to two hours, thereby hoping to fix the pace of the comedy. Many of the discarded scenes were later reinserted in an expanded television version made for ABC and for the laserdisc version released in 1996. Despite his unprecedented box office record, even Spielberg had no way to negotiate final cut privileges in a system that had only superficially broken with the policies of the old studio regime.[9]

In most cases, the recutting of a film, thereby effectively creating an alternate version, occurred in response to disappointing test screenings: examples range from potential blockbusters released during the eighties or early nineties, like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), James Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989), or David Fincher's *Alien 3* (1992), to more recent cases like Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (2004) or Terrence Malick's *The New World* (2005); all have one thing in common – they are films made by established "visionary" directors working on an exceptionally large canvas. Test screenings were organised as early as 1928 and became standard practice during the late forties and fifties. They were given new saliency, however, when the rise in creative ambition of the new golden boys of Hollywood was no longer backed up by box office numbers. The cautionary tale that made the studios start second-guessing their most commercially viable and critically respected filmmakers was twice-told. First there was Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), a projected five-month shoot that went on for over a year.

9. Final cut became a negotiable part of a contract when directors became free agents making individual deals with film companies. Directors like Michael Mann, Terrence Malick, Clint Eastwood, and Robert Redford routinely demand it.

The planned release of the film was further delayed by Coppola having to edit close to a million feet of film (nearly 200 hours of recorded material). A three-hour version of the film was finally unveiled as a "work in progress" at the Cannes film festival on 19 May. On 15 August, the film was released for an exclusive run at three North American theatres equipped to play the Dolby Stereo 70mm prints with surround sound, at a length of 147 minutes. The same version opened wide on 35mm on 10 October, supported by a $ 9 million advertising campaign that ensured the film a respectable box office take of $ 40 million domestically (the film went on to gross over $ 100 million worldwide).

Still, word was out that *auteurs* were going loco on location and endangering the studio's investment, especially now that Michael Cimino, the Oscar-winning director of *The Deer Hunter* (1978), who was effectively given carte blanche by United Artists for his epic western *Heaven's Gate* (1980), was deflecting the studio's calls on location in Montana and Idaho. Budgeted at $ 11,6 million, the film would end up costing three times that amount, matching the cost of *Apocalypse Now*. Cimino had also managed to rival Coppola in shooting 1,3 million feet (400,000 metres; nearly 220 hours) of footage, which, after much drama, he was willing to whittle down to a five-and-a-half-hour film (for a full account of the film's production, see Bach 1985). After more and stronger protest from the studio, the director made a final offer of a premiere length of 219 minutes. But where the premiere of *Apocalypse Now* at Cannes had been a success, crowned with the prestigious Palme d'or, the New York premiere of *Heaven's Gate* was a disaster. Butchered by the critics, the film was pulled after a brief theatrical release in November 1980, and re-released in a much shorter version in April 1981. The last-minute intervention did not stop the bleeding: the film earned only $ 3,5 million domestically against a production cost now tallied at $ 44 million. It was one of the biggest box office failures of all time, one that dragged an entire studio with it, and effectively ended the era of the American *auteur*.

By then the age of the "new media" had started. Television had long had an impact on film distribution, not only in that it provided studios with a new source of revenue for their back catalogue, but also in its demand for modified versions of a film: as theatrical films began to air on television, networks successfully sought permission to air shortened versions in which entire scenes were sometimes cut out to provide a length that would fit within a fixed time slot; scenes deemed unsuitable for television, depicting sexual activity or graphic violence, were also deleted or trimmed. Conversely, networks would also *add* existing footage to the theatrical release to pad out the film's running time. Finally, theatrical films were also re-edited as miniseries: this happened with Coppola's *The Godfather* and *The Godfather II*, which were reinvented for television as *The Godfather Saga*. The series, which originally aired on NBC over four consecutive nights in November 1977, was a seven-hour cut that put scenes from both films in chronological order, and toned down the violence, sex, and language for a television audience. Stressing the connection to the Mario Puzo book, *The Godfather* was renamed *The Complete Novel for Television (The Godfather: A Novel for Television, The Godfather Novella)*. The serialised television version of *The Godfather* was one example where footage not included in the original films was added: over 75 minutes of footage was put in, including important scenes like that of Vito Corleone's first encounter with Hyman Roth, Michael Corleone's reunion with

his father after his return from Sicily, and Michael's vengeance upon Fabrizio for killing Apollonia (Cowie 1994: 113). This was the version released to video in 1981 and for a long time was considered the "official" version of the films, until a reduced 386-minute version was released in 1990 as *The Godfather 1902–1959: The Complete Epic*.

With the democratisation of video cassettes and the introduction of home viewing, film studios found yet another means to generate new income from old products. As with the recut *Godfather* series, video also created the opportunity to release alternate versions of a film, catered to a specialised audience. To take up the *Close Encounters* example again, while the Special Edition was released on video in 1980 unchanged, the specialty label The Criterion Collection offered two versions of the film for its 1990 laserdisc: one was the Special Edition, the other was the original 1977 version, with subtle edits made by Spielberg for the occasion. In general, video was used to make available longer or "uncut" versions of a film which were marketed as the "director's cut". An "uncut" version should be understood as having material restored that was excised upon a film's release on the demand of censorship boards (either industry committees or official government bodies). "Uncut" versions of controversial films like Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969)[10] or Ken Russell's *The Devils* (1971),[11] expensive studio films which had been threatened with the dreaded "X" rating, assured these works a second life on video, but also put them in the same category as horror films like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (dir. Tobe Hooper 1974) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (dir. Wes Craven 1977).[12]

While "uncut" versions amounted to restoring excised material, video also allowed for more far-reaching restructuring. The afterlife of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) on VHS and other formats is an interesting case, not only because it exemplifies the potential transformation of a failed commodity into a "cult" success, but because it seemed to offer proof to the argument that a film had failed *because of* the studio's tinkering. In the case of *Blade Runner*, a disastrous test screening had led the producer, Alan Ladd Jr. (who had also produced Scott's *Alien*) and the distributor Warner Brothers to drastically change the tone of the dystopian sci-fi drama by adding a happy ending and an explanatory voice-over by Harrison Ford. The original video release was this studio-approved version, with the addition of three violent action scenes that had only been seen in the European release print. After an original workprint of the film shown at a San Diego film festival in 1990 had aroused new interest in the film, Warner Broth-

10. In the case of Peckinpah's film, the "Uncut" version is the same as the "Director's Cut", which was restored to its original playing time of 143 minutes, shortened not only because of censorship but also to allow more screenings of the film.

11. Russell's adaptation of Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun* (1952) had been commanded by United Artists, who had been impressed with the American success of the director's D. H. Lawrence adaptation, *Women in Love* (1969). When they read the script, UA no longer wanted anything to do with the film, which was then adopted by Warner Brothers.

12. Both films were rated "X". After several minutes were cut, they were resubmitted to the MPAA ratings board and received an "R" rating. A distributor apparently restored the offending material in *Chainsaw*, and at least one theater presented the full version under an "R". The deleted material from *Hills* was only made available on video in 2003.

ers started work on a Ridley Scott-approved "Director's Cut". The new version, which removed both the voice-over and the studio-imposed happy ending, was released theatrically in the US in 1992, but was particularly geared towards the home video market. A new generation of fans now became intrigued by stories about other extant versions of the film – like a nearly four-hour early cut shown only to studio personnel – making the quest for an "original" *Blade Runner* part of film history lore about waiting-to-be-discovered versions of *Greed, Metropolis*, Abel Gance's *Napoléon*, or *The Magnificent Ambersons*.

The "Final Cut" of *Blade Runner* was the only version over which Ridley Scott had complete artistic control, since his contribution to the "Director's Cut" had been limited to providing notes and consultation to film preservationist Michael Arick, who was put in charge by Warners of restoring the film. The case of the filmmaker himself making modifications to a work makes for another problem or point of discussion than when the changes have been commissioned by an institution. In the latter case, the reactions of those friendly to the artist's work are almost always negative. In the former, the matter acquires more shades and concerns a fundamentally moral question of whether an artist has a right to change a work he or she had considered to be "finished". A related question concerns the ontology of the artwork: if a work of art is to be seen as the product of a particular artistic process, then if a work undergoes a process that is not part of the original process, the resulting work is no longer part of the original but effectively becomes a new work. In this sense the reaction of legendary critic Pauline Kael to the Special Edition of *Close Encounters* is telling. A fan of the film, Kael expressed the hope that the new version would not replace the original; remembering a small moment she had cherished in the film that had now been removed, she writes: "It may not seem like a big loss, but when you remember something in a movie with pleasure and it's gone, you feel as if your memories had been mugged" (Kael 1984: 53). The controversy surrounding the "Special Editions" George Lucas made of the *Star Wars* films offers proof of the same sentiment. Having long envied Spielberg's Special Edition of *Close Encounters*, Lucas in 1997 took the opportunity of experimenting with new digital post-production technology needed for a new planned trilogy to do a polish-up of his original series. He did more, however, than replace shoddy special effects or add new ones: he also changed a scene between Han Solo and bounty hunter Greedo in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) in which the original version had made it seem that Solo had shot his opponent in cold blood; by adding footage and ricochet sound effects, Lucas now underlined that the bounty hunter had fired first.[13] It was this "softening" of Solo's character in particular that drew the fans' ire.

13. Additions include: Han Solo's confrontation with Jabba the Hut in the Mos Eisley spaceport in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977); new shots of Cloud City, and of a snow monster in *The Empire Strikes Back*; a more elaborate version of Jabba's palace and a final composite shot in *Return of the Jedi* (Baxter 1999: 391–93). The case of James Cameron, in most respects, is similar to that of Lucas. After the technological advances of *Terminator 2* (1991), he returned to *The Abyss* (1989) and allowed special effects technicians to update and complete the work they had begun years earlier. For the "Twentieth Anniversary" theatrical re-release of *Titanic* (1997) he remastered the entire film in the high-definition Dolby Vision format.

A striking aspect of the conversation surrounding the new trilogy, shot entirely with digital cameras, is that Lucas was now comparing his craft to that of the painter, whereas in the past he had always emphasised his talent as a storyteller or myth-maker.[14] By analogy, the work on the original trilogy was presented as a job of restoration, of cleaning and touching up. The parallel Lucas possibly had in mind was to J.M.W. Turner's habit to retouch his paintings while they were already exhibited at the Royal Academy. The question then becomes at what point in time further retouching will be needed, or more precisely, when a work is actually finished, given that Lucas revised some of his changes for the 2004 DVD release and the 2011 Blu-ray release of the original trilogy. Similarly, Spielberg, in 1998, hot on the heels of Lucas' restoration work, had created a third cut of *Close Encounters*, that removed the interior spaceship shots ordered by Columbia while retaining other changes. But the most extreme case is that of *Apocalypse Now*. In 2001, Coppola created *Apocalypse Now Redux*, a version that reinstated deleted scenes and reordered scenes in the release version, extending the film's running time (despite its title) from the original release length of 147 minutes to 196 minutes. For the film's fortieth anniversary in 2019, Coppola recut *Apocalypse Now* again for what was now called "The Final Cut". This version removed some of the sequences added into *Redux*, bringing the running time back to 182 minutes. Coppola's hesitation about the proper form for his film had already been apparent in 1979, as four different endings had screened to the film's original reviewers: the early rough cut shown to industry and press had ended on a ground and air assault on Kurtz's compound similar to the images on the opening credits; in the Cannes festival "answer print" (a work print still to be corrected for brightness and colour balance), Willard kills Kurtz but instead of ordering an air strike contemplates taking the renegade colonel's place at the head of the Montagnards' temple; in the American premiere version and some prints of the "first-run" release on 70mm, Willard is seen exiting the compound but in a state of shock, unable to do anything; in the wide 35mm release, finally, Willard exiting the compound is overlaid with the same apocalyptic bombing footage from the first version (Lewis 1995: 51).

The main exemplar of such "conceptual hesitation" is the American filmmaker perhaps most admired by Spielberg and Coppola's generation, Stanley Kubrick.[15] Kubrick enjoyed an unusual working relation with Warner Brothers which, in return for the prestige the Kubrick name accorded the studio, essentially allowed him final cut on all of his films. Starting with the director's radical request to withdraw *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) from British distribution (after it had been cited as having inspired copycat acts of violence), not a single Warners-

14. Talking to Gavin Smith of *Film Comment*, Lucas characterised the evolution from analogue to digital shooting as "similar to going from the era of fresco painting to the era of oil paint." More generally, he argued that "You're going from a photographic medium to a painterly medium. That is a big difference. Even if you're still capturing images with a digital camera, your ability to work with them is truly painterly" (Lucas 2002: 31).

15. Coppola also admired other epic filmmakers like Abel Gance and Akira Kurosawa. He presented film historian Kevin Brownlow's restoration of *Napoléon* with a full symphonic orchestra playing a new score by his father, Carmine Coppola, at Radio City Music Hall in 1980. That same year he served as executive producer (with George Lucas) on Kurosawa's *Kagemusha*.

Kubrick film was released without significant revisions, caveats or curtailments ordered by the filmmaker himself. The case of *The Shining* (1980) is typical in this regard. A week after the film's opening, Kubrick had every existing print of the film yanked from theatres and cut out the last two minutes, a scene in which the manager of the Overlook hotel visits Wendy Torrance in hospital to explain to her that Jack's body has not been recovered. For the European version he removed another 25 minutes from the 146-minute American release print.[16] Having rejected the sound mix on the first prints of the film, he also insisted on changing the lettering on the credit titles. The trade magazine *Variety* reported, only partly in jest, that "a Kubrick-anointed film editor was bicycled around theatres on both coasts to do on-the-spot cutting" (Baxter 1997: 327–328).

All this offers proof of little more than Kubrick's perfectionism, with all its coeval neuroses. But the seemingly endless process of revision, of tinkering with a film's length or narrative structure, pruning or changing shots and special effects, playing with colour, sound etc. unhindered by the constraints of the theatrical release schedule, also hints at something else. In *The Work of Revision* (2013), Hannah Sullivan has made two valuable suggestions with which I want to close. First, she makes the useful suggestion that revision itself is an historical phenomenon, prompted by material developments at the turn of the twentieth century, such as the increasing availability and lower cost of paper and ink, technological improvements in the publishing process, the invention of the personal typewriter, and a culture of patronage that allowed time for multiple proofs and a relative lack of concern for economic profit. The typewriter especially fostered the ideal tool for self-scrutiny and revision. The equivalent in film is the evolution of editing tools from simple tape splicers to video editing and computer-based editing systems, or more generally the arrival of digital post-production technologies. The culture of patronage, in the American film-industrial context, is limited to exceptional cases like Kubrick, or, at the same studio but on the other end of the budget scale, Woody Allen.[17]

Sullivan's second suggestion is that processes of negation, correction and substitution denote a "revisionary aesthetic", an approach to the literary text that favours the provisional over the conclusive: the text is always inadequate, always in need of improvement and correction. Authorial anxiety and obstruction become the organising principles of a text that is, finally, unfinishable. This is, Sullivan proposes, a fundamentally modern(ist) approach, one that thrives on the writer's condition of doubt, the anxiety about her own abilities and gifts or the limitations of the medium and of language in general (Sullivan 2013).[18] The same impulse to touch up or correct that can be seen in *auteurs* like Spielberg, Coppola and Malick, would turn them into modernists on the model of Kubrick (the closest modern film has to a Thomas

16. Kubrick's radical shortening of his film after a less than successful premiere had started with *2001: A Space Odyssey*, when he removed nineteen of the film's original 161 minutes.

17. By creating "Specialty Divisions" to cater to the booming independent film market, studios like Fox (with Fox Searchlight), Universal (Focus Features), Sony (with Sony Pictures Classics) and others offered a more hospitable environment for auteurs like Terrence Malick, Spike Lee, Todd Haynes, Sofia Coppola, Jim Jarmusch, Paul Thomas Anderson and others.

18. See also Chapter 1.3.2 in this volume.

Mann or a T.S. Eliot), rather than the spontaneous Romantics both their fans and the industry held them to be, if only because their endless shuffling, excisions and additions will inevitably produce a (not always warranted) sense of modernist fragmentation and ellipsis. Finally, if revisionary zeal appears, in our story, as a particularly masculine, not to say macho trait, then this too will need to be researched in what appears to be a most fruitful terrain for the application of the more theoretical tools of genetic criticism to the field of film studies.

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