

University of Theatre and Film Arts
Doctoral School, PhD Course

Film Restoration Ethics

Theses of the doctoral dissertation

Pintér Gábor

2019

Consultant: Dr. Báron György, professor

ABSTRACT

This PhD dissertation explores a series of ethical questions a professional film restorer encounters throughout the entire process of film restoration. From the very early questions or dilemmas¹ to the more proactive interventions: ethical actions. From the first step of selecting the title to be restored, to the very end, the moment of projecting the final master copy of an ethically restored film.

I will identify and examine the most crucial ethical actions required in the seven phases of film restoration and during sound restoration too. Moreover, I will examine, identify and examine further areas that require ethical actions as schematically shown in the Figure.

In this dissertation, ethics is understood as a manner of behaviour towards the film and towards an original piece of art, both towards its integrity as a piece of art and towards its physical representation, whatever the materiality that the original source or sources may be. Somewhat pioneering, I consider ethical every action that contributes to the desired restoration outcome and also helps prevent any harm to the resulting ethical restoration or to the original IS, the irreplaceable source (material).

These considerations are all in line with the general criteria of ethics in art restoration, as they are commonly understood in art restoration theory: authenticity, reversibility and transparency; i.e. to be truthful to its integrity and the original. In the case of film, to recreate the “experience of the first opening night in picture and sound” is how obeying the principle of authenticity is generally understood. The attention to prevent any possible damage to the source material ensures the obeying of the principle of reversibility. By using ethical methods, (non-aggressive, non-damaging interventions), which can be proven by adequately documenting the entire restoration procedure, the restorer obeys the third principle of ethical art restoration: transparency.

Nevertheless, in my dissertation, I advocate an understanding of the notion of ethics in broader terms than those in which it is usually understood and applied in the current academic discourse. Ethics and ethical film restoration are primarily an attitude, behaviour, conduct, or behaviour based on knowledge, experience, expertise, and inherent deep respect and appreciation towards film materials, film history, and film art. In short, without such an approach—being brave, curious, and devoted—numerous existing ethical restorations would not have been born in the first place.

I intend to describe the technical processes in a limited manner, only to the extent that the ethical decisions can be put in the context of the complexities of digital and analogue film restoration.

In my dissertation, I am making an active intervention in the existing discourse. I am reassessing the inevitable ethical decisions or dilemmas to define them as ethical actions. For that purpose, I have two major proposals, that constitute my two main theses:

MAIN THESIS 1 – PROPOSAL: THE INTRODUCTION OF A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM OF ETHICAL ACTIONS

Modern film restoration needs a written, commonly agreed-upon classification system of ethical actions instituted and approved by the ethical committee of a commonly accepted and supported an authoritative organisation like The International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF). Similar to the Dolby licence approval, a film restoration would need to comply with several accurately defined ethical criteria, standardised documentation and to a further list of strictly defined criteria, in a way, also similar to the detailed criteria that the Cataloguing Committee of FIAF recommends.

MAIN THESIS 2 – PROPOSAL: THE INTRODUCTION OF THREE CATEGORIES OF ETHICAL ACTIONS

I propose the creation of a new classification system of film restoration ethics, e.g. ethical questions or dilemmas, proactively turned into ethical actions. I propose a further subdivision of the advocated classification system into C1, C2 and C3 type of ethical actions.

C1 - CATEGORY ONE ETHICAL ACTIONS

C1 ethical actions are primarily fundamental ethical dilemmas and actions. C1 ethical actions are predominantly the most subjective ones, challenging to canonise, but mandatory for ethical restorations like the colour correction or the sound restoration processes. For instance: when can a colour correction be considered ethical?

C1 actions require the highest level of professional expertise, knowledge, and training. The category encompasses directors of photography, film directors, film historians, archivists, technicians, lab professionals, restoration artists, and colourists with their respective actions.

C2 - CATEGORY TWO ETHICAL ACTIONS

C2 ethical actions are easier to canonise in technical terms. These actions require post-production and other super-specialised film professionals too, but it is easier to set strict technical criteria for them. Such examples are the use of lossless compressions or approved aspect ratio conversions.

C3 - CATEGORY THREE ETHICAL ACTIONS

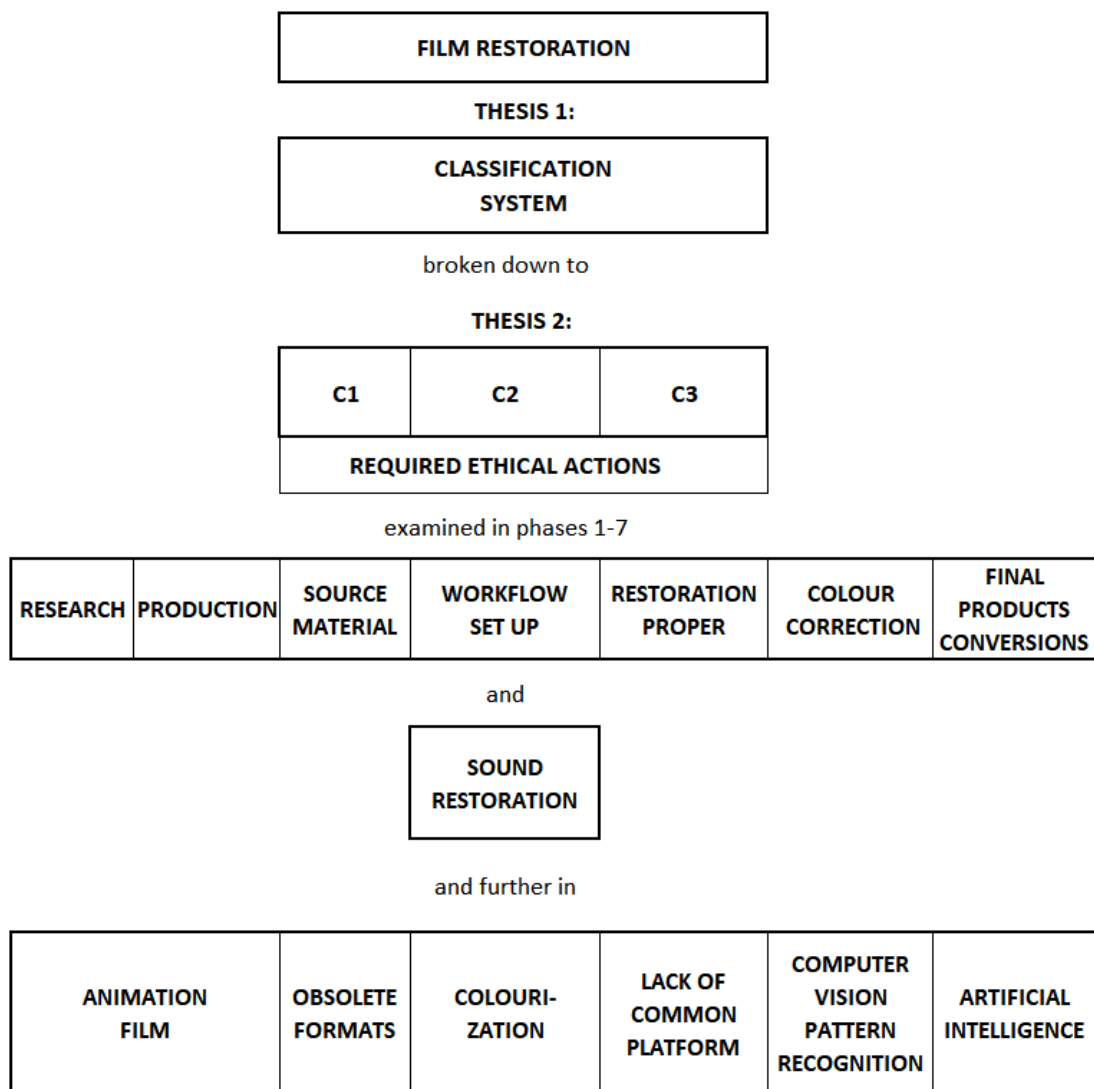
Seemingly far-fetched at first sight, I advocate including under ethics (category three) several criteria and actions, that were not commonly dealt under ethics up to now, but for which experience proved that they could have a significant impact on the ethical level of film restoration. C3 ethical actions are those that one would not perhaps consider ethical questions in the first place, but by ignoring them, the whole process of ethical restoration can be at risk.

These are the decisions and actions taken in order to prevent any possible damage or loss to the film, and primarily, these actions enable the birth of ethical restorations. Some are project management decisions, some are of the highest strategic level, like whom to trust for which

process or making sure that all departments are provided sufficient time to complete their respective tasks. Assuring safe transport and safe storage of the irreplaceable source material are also C3 ethical actions.

Therefore, in my dissertation, I will identify and examine the above mentioned C1, C2 and C3 type of most crucial ethical actions required in the seven phases of film restoration, during sound restoration and further six territories of the film restoration process.

Besides the two main theses, I have examined several minor theses as well.



The scheme of examining the ethical actions in film restoration in this dissertation

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Besser, Howard. „Digital Preservation of Moving Image Material.” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists*, 2001: 39-55.
- . „Howard Besser's Site.” *Ethics and Moving Image Preservation*. 2011. 11. 07. <http://besser.tsoa.nyu.edu/howard/Talks/11soima-ethics.pdf> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Borde, Raymond. „Film Restoration Ethical Problems.” *Les Cinémathèques*, 1986/1: 90-98.
- Bordwell, David. *On the History of Film Style*. MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Bouche, Andreas. „Just Another Form of Ideology? Ethical and Methodological.” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivist*, 2006/6: 1-29.
- Bowser, Eileen. „Alcuni principi del restauro del film.” *Griffithiana*, 1990/38/39: 172-173.
- Brandi, Cesare. *Theoria del restauro*. Torino: Einaudi, 1963.
- Canosa, Michele, Gian Luca Farinelli, és Nicola Mazzanti. „Nero su bianco. Note sul restauro cinematografico: la documentazione.” *Cinegrafie*, 1997/10: 191-202.
- Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *Silent Cinema. An Introduction*. London: British Film Institute, 2000.
- . *Smrt Filma*. Ljubljana: Slovenska kinoteka, 2012.
- . *The Death of Cinema, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age*. London: British Film Institute, 2001.
- Dixon, Bryony. „BFI Film Forever.” *Restoring Hitchcock #1: how a film restoration begins*. 2014. 04. 24. <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news/restoring-hitchcock-1-how-film-restoration-begins> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Edmonson, Ray. „Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy, Principles and Ethics.” *Girona.cat*. 2004. http://www.girona.cat/sgdap/docs/wkcg3y8edmonson_english.pdf (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09 18).
- Erdélyi, László Attila. *Analóg és digitális filmkidalgozás*. Budapest: HSC, 2008.
- Fairbairn, Natasha, Maria Assunta Pimpinelli, és Thelma Ross. „FIAF.” *The FIAF Moving Image Cataloguing Manual*. 2016. 04. <https://www.fiafnet.org/pages/E-Resources/Cataloguing-Manual.html> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Farinelli, Gian Luca, és Nicola Mazzanti. *Il cinema ritrovato. Teoria e metodologia*. Bologna: Grafis Edizioni, 1994.
- FIAF. „www.fiafnet.org.” *FIAF Code of Ethics*. 1998. <https://www.fiafnet.org/pages/Community/Code-Of-Ethics.html> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Flueckiger, Barbara. „DISTOR.” *Bridging The Gap Between Analog Film History and Digital Technology*. 2014.. 05. 08. <https://diastor.ch/results/#SCAN> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Fossati , Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel, The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

- Hediger, Vinzenz. „The Original is Always Lost. Film History, Copyright Industries and the Problem of Reconstruction .” *Cinephilia* (Amsterdam University Press), 2005: p. 144.
- Jamieson, Krista. „Ethics & Film Restoration Theor(ies): A Comparative Study of the Concept of “Original” in Restorations of *Le Voyage dans la Lune*.” *Ethics & Film Restoration Theor(ies): - UvA Scripties*. 2013. 06. 21.
<http://www.scriptiesonline.uba.uva.nl/document/498352> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Koerber, Martin. „Deutsche Kinemathek.” *Metropolis, a film that was mutilated, never disappeared, and finally is resurrected*. 01. 06 2010. <https://www.deutsche-kinemathek.de/publikationen/zu-ausstellungen/fritz-langs-metropolis> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 05 18).
- Kromer, Reto. „FIAF.” *Matroska and FFV1: One File Format for Film and Video Archiving?* 2017. 04. 15.
https://www.fiafnet.org/images/tinyUpload/Publications/Journal-Of-Film-Preservation/Matroska-and-FFV1_Kromer_JFP96.pdf (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Kukuljica, Mato. *Zaštita i restauracija filmskog gradiva*. Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2004.
- Malz, Andy. „The Digital Dilemma presentation of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Strategic Issues in Archiving and Accessing Digital Motion Picture Materials.” *The Odoropoulos*. 2007.
http://www.theodoropoulos.info/attachments/076_pdf-stc_digital_dilemma.pdf (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09 19).
- Meyer, Mark-Paul. „Traditional film projection in a digital age.” *Journal of Film Preservation*, 2005/70: p. 15-18.
- Ruivo, Céline, és Anne Gant. „FIAF.” *Digital Statement Part V - Survey on Long-term Digital Storage and Preservation*. 2019. 04. 15.
https://www.fiafnet.org/images/tinyUpload/2019/04/Preservation_Digital_Statement_Final.pdf (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- Stout, Andy. „Redshark News, Views, Know-How for Moving Image Professionals.” *This is ironic: using film to make your data last 500 years*. 2014. 11. 26.
<https://www.redsharknews.com/technology/item/2193-this-is-ironic-using-film-to-make-your-data-last-500-years> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09. 18.).
- „The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums San Francisco.” *National Film Preservation Foundation*. 2004.
<https://www.filmpreservation.org/preservation-basics/the-film-preservation-guide> (hozzáférés dátuma: 2019. 09 18).
- Wallmüller, Julia. „Criteria for the Use of Digital Technology in Moving Image.” *The Moving Image, The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists*, 2007/7: 78-79.