

D. W. Griffith's INTOLERANCE

Reconstructing an Unattainable Text

by Russell Merritt

Abstract The recent restoration of D. W. Griffith's INTOLERANCE (Wark, 1916) by the New York Museum of Modern Art is an effort to recreate this film as it existed on the opening night, 5 September 1916. The author critiques this new version based on his own reading of the available primary materials, including some sources not utilized in the restoration. The notion that the original negative was disassembled during 1919-1920 to such a degree that Griffith was unable to fully restore it for future use is questioned. While no single edition of this film may be seen as definitive, the version presented by Griffith in 1926 may be seen as the one with which he himself was most satisfied.

Film reconstruction and restoration have generally been prompted by the need to correct one of three conditions. Most commonly, preservationists work to reverse the ravages of time, trying to salvage or replace footage threatened by the corrosive forces of unstable film chemicals. Or they try to restore a film that has been mutilated, whether by a studio front office or by various forces of censorship. Or, finally, they work to complete a film that, because of early storage procedures, lacks intertitles or survives with shots and sequences out of order.

The singularity of the recent reconstruction of INTOLERANCE (Wark, 1916), co-sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art and the Library of Congress, is that the reconstruction has been prompted by none of these criteria. This is not an instance of a film tampered with by anonymous gremlins within a studio, nor has the incentive been to restore a film that suffered from either censorship or chemical deterioration. The 35-mm negatives and prints available from the Museum of Modern Art, the George Eastman House, the Library of Congress, Killiam Shows, and Raymond Rohauer are in pristine or near-pristine condition, retaining all the shots and sequences that originally provoked municipal and state censor boards. Further, these prints constitute the version of INTOLERANCE that was shaped and controlled by the director himself, his last word on a film that he had worked over, on and off, for 10 years. Film historians and critics can be reasonably confident that the familiar prints represent the version that the director wanted audiences to see, remember, and study.

The goal of the reconstruction has been to resurrect a version of INTOLERANCE that Griffith wanted to replace: the print put together for the opening night audience in New York on 5 September 1916. If the familiar versions approximate Griffith's final word on INTOLERANCE, the reconstruction, it was argued, would represent his original conception.¹

Even before considering the procedures used for such a reconstruction, the impulse itself is worth considering for what it reveals about our assumptions governing "original versions" and "authentic texts." Like many grand operas and Broadway shows ranging from *Fidelio and Madama Butterfly* to *Ben-Hur* and *Show Boat*, INTOLERANCE was a production in constant flux both before and after its opening, the premiere representing little more than an arbitrary point in a work that was constantly evolving. True, as I will be arguing presently, the changes made after the New York opening were less drastic than those made in the preceding months, but they remain significant nonetheless. As a practical matter, the New York premiere has a remarkably circumscribed significance. It can tell us what an opening night audience saw, but not what was shown to those who came to the Liberty Theater a week or month later; it is even less reliable in telling us what audiences in other cities saw when Griffith took the film on a nationwide tour. And by the time INTOLERANCE was circulated to the Soviet Union and continental Europe, where it exerted its greatest influence, the New York premiere was at least as remote from those reedited foreign editions as are our current standard prints. The painful fact is that we still don't know precisely what European and Russian audiences saw (mainly they saw pirated prints); but all available evidence suggests drastically altered versions that were reedited not only by the Griffith home office, but also by individual foreign distributors, exhibitors, and censor boards.

Yet the mystique of the premiere survives. Issues of influence aside, the official debut of a film holds great authority as a textual source - authority seldom given to preview versions or official copyright prints, or even to an original negative - analogous to the first edition of a novel or the first exhibition of a painting. In the strange case of INTOLERANCE, the New York print used for the premiere was one-of-a-kind: It matches neither the copyright frames (registered with the Library of Congress on 24 June 1916), the try-out editions in California, or the original negative which, safe in the West Coast, was spared the

¹ The fullest statements on the rationale for the INTOLERANCE reconstruction can be found in Gillian Anderson, "No Music Until Cue": The Reconstruction of David W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, *Griffithiana* 38/39 (Ottobre 1990): 154-169; Eileen Bowser, "Some Principles of Film Restoration," *Griffithiana* 38/39 (Ottobre 1990): 172-173; Peter Williamson, "The Reconstruction of *Intolerance*," *Sightlines* (Spring 1990): 4; and Richard Harrington's interview with Williamson and Anderson: "The Arduous Road to 'Intolerance,'" *The Washington Post*, Style Section, 2 October 1989, pp. B 1, B 10.

last-minute changes imposed on the New York print. The effort to recover the New York premiere is, of course, one example among many of the perpetual search for "firsts" and "essences" that recent film histories have continually called into question; the search for INTOLERANCE's original "appearance" is a case study of all the pitfalls that such quests entail. Yet for all the exhortations to see history as a complex process of development rather than a succession of events, the love of the official debut endures. The Museum has been open and forthright in acknowledging that its reconstruction is a composite film, an amalgam of the various versions of INTOLERANCE that Griffith assembled from June 1916 through summer 1917.² But by unnecessarily labeling the result an "approximation of the premiere," the reconstructionists have let in important inconsistencies and anachronisms.

That treacherous mystique has also colored the Museum's perception of Griffith's legitimate provenance as the creator of INTOLERANCE. The changes Griffith made before the New York premiere are considered legitimate, the authorized turf of an author pruning and refining his work. The changes made *after* the New York debut, however, become the work of a well-meaning vandal who pandered to audiences by altering scenes that didn't play well. No distinctions are made between the director traveling with his film across the country in 1916 and 1917 and the quasi-comical figure in 1940 who is supposed to have charged into a projection booth at the Museum of Modern Art, scissors in hand, to be stopped in his tracks by the Museum's curator. The reconstructionists, in fact, see themselves as part of the same heroic curatorial tradition, helping to rescue the film from its own creator, putting back what he has taken out, disassembling his changes, working to identify and prune out everything not shown to New York first nighters. Sequences Griffith tolled hardest to get straight - "Belshazzar's Feast of Babylon," "The Modern Strike," and "The Bacchanal" - are chopped up and reorganized to - approximate "the premiere."

The exciting news about the Museum's reconstruction is that it has drawn renewed attention to Griffith's film and revitalized the debate about archival restoration work.³ For anyone interested in studying the evolution of INTOLERANCE, the reconstruction provides a synthesis of early drafts against which to measure Griffith's continuing, even obsessive refinements. Traces of these early versions that survive only as a title list, frame clippings, a piano score, and various orchestral parts, have been compressed into a single, linear motion-picture hybrid. The reconstruction also provides the unique opportunity to hear Joseph Carl Breil's original orchestral score, unperformed for at least 60 years. The music frequently underscores INTOLERANCE in startling, disconcerting ways that add immeasurably to an understanding of early audiences' reactions to the film and to the state of contemporary musical accompaniment.

The reconstruction, however, should be studied with great caution. The danger is that it will be used as a substitute for the study of documents that record more precisely and more accurately Griffith's progress, that is, the copyright registration frames, the early title list, the 1917 print, the musical parts, and assorted production stills.⁴ An important weakness of the reconstruction as a scholarly tool is that it

² Interviews and articles, particularly Anderson "No Music Until Cue," have been important guides to the procedural history of the reconstruction. In light of the critical remarks that follow, I would like to acknowledge the gracious assistance both the Museum of Modern Art and the Library of Congress provided in answering questions about their work.

³ For the range of critical response in the popular press, see Vincent Canby, "Seeing 'Intolerance' is Hard Work," *New York Times*, Sect. 6, 29 October 1989, pp. 15, 17; Lawrence Cohn, "Reconstructed 'Intolerance' Prems at Gotham Film Fest to Standing Ovation," *Variety* (October 11-17, 1989); David Edelstein, "Epic Tapestry of History," *New York Post*, 4 October 1989, p. 25; Kevin Thomas, "Restored 'Intolerance' Launches Festival of Preservation," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 July 1990, p. F 10; and Judy Stone, "Rare Chance to See 'Intolerance,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 January 1990, p. E 5.

For important, widely divergent reactions to the reconstruction in film journals, see Miriam Hansen, "Griffith's Real Intolerance," *Film Comment* (September-October 1989): 28-29; Paolo Cherchi Usai, "Un Intolerance Così Non Lo Avete Mai Visto," *Segnocinema* (January 1990): 55-56; and William K. Everson, "Intolerance," *Films in Review* 41 (January/February 1990): 16-20.

⁴ For those interested in studying the original documents, a large selection of the registration frames and the complete 1916-1917 title list are included in the Image Entertainment laser disc recording of INTOLERANCE.

The original registration frames are at the Motion Picture Division of the Library of Congress.

The Richard Wallace 1916-1917 title list was donated to the Directors Guild of America in Los Angeles by Wallace's daughter. Copies exist at the Museum of Modern Art and U.C.L.A.

Two copies of the Joseph Carl Breil INTOLERANCE piano score survive, both incomplete. One is at the Music Division of the Library of Congress, the other in the Nicola Donatelli collection at the Seaport Village Band, San Diego, California. The Library of Congress also has an incomplete set of the original orchestral parts. A detailed illustrated description and analysis of the score is provided in Anderson, "No Music Until Cue."

The 1917 print of INTOLERANCE is available on 16-mm film from Film Preservation Associates, but this too should be studied with caution. At several points in the first half of the film, shots and sequences missing from the 1917 original have been interpolated from a standard print of the film. Other prints of the 1917 version are available at Det Danske Filmmuseum, Copenhagen, the George Eastman House, The Museum of Modern Art, and the Library of Congress. Republic Films sold a videotape of the "Venezuela" version until 1990. In early 1991 this version was withdrawn; they now sell a "standard" version on both videotape and laser disc.

The 1917 print is the earliest version of INTOLERANCE currently available. Although it shares the identical overall design of Griffith's final cut, the wording of titles that Griffith later reworked is virtually identical to the 1916-1917 Richard Wallace title list, and several shots (including the restoration of the Dear One's baby) that Griffith subsequently dropped, are retained here.

The unusually tangled career of this print may be worth summarizing, especially since so many misconceptions have sprung into print. It was one of four INTOLERANCE 35-mm nitrate prints that Griffith kept at Lloyd's Storage Company after he returned to live in New York in 1930. In length it corresponds down to the foot with the 11,304 ft. print identified as print #3 in Lloyd's correspondence with Griffith on 8 November 1933. For some reason, it stayed behind at Lloyds when the rest of the Griffith

combines and conflates an assortment of artifacts that were generated at various points in the film's early odyssey ; telescoped into a single text, each of these elements has been distorted. The most distracting example is the defacement of the " Sacred Dance " at Belshazzar's court where the Babylon crane shot is slowed down and syncopated by freeze-framing and stretch-printing. The crane develops hiccups, while in accompanying track shots, the dancers are cold-cocked by optically printed freeze frames - all in order that the print can be dragged out to fit a music score originally written for a different arrangement of these shots. Less conspicuously, in scenes like the modern courtroom sequence and the Babylonian marriage auction, registration frames from a June 1916 print have been interpolated with shots from a 1917 print where not only actions have been rearranged but actors redirected.⁵

Further, none of these documents derive from the print actually screened on 5 September 1916. Instead, the reconstruction is based on various records created over the 1 1/2-year span of the premiere. Strangely, the documents that most precisely record the appearance of the opening night Print - the opening night reviews and articles, with accompanying, published stills - have been skimmed over in the reconstruction. The *New York Sun*, 27 August 1916, for instance, published a still showing Christ healing the blind ; the *Motion Picture Mail*, 26 August 1916 includes another of " the death of Charles IX of France " with Catherine in mourning ; an advertisement in the *New York Evening Journal*, 2 September 1916, proclaiming " What you will see ! " Includes " the Miracle of St. Veronica " among the wonders. None of these images, several of which are preserved in the Museum's stills collection, make it into the film.

But what is most lamentable about the Museum's reconstruction is that it perpetuates rather than corrects several of the most corroded myths about INTOLERANCE. Given the widespread distribution and publicity the reconstruction has received, it practically guarantees that even in the specialized circles of silent-film scholarship, these myths will never quite be dispelled.

Foremost among them are the intertwined notions that when INTOLERANCE debuted in New York, it was significantly longer than Griffith's final version, and that Griffith behaved with erratic compulsion in cutting and re-cutting his film, leaving behind a litter of butchered prints and a negative so cut up that the film could never be properly reassembled. The commonly circulated version of INTOLERANCE, according to this tale, the one Griffith reassembled in the 1920s, is the mangled result : gelded and incomplete, missing " almost two reels, " with shots out of order- a wizened crookback.⁶

The truth is that for its first public performance, INTOLERANCE ran about as long as it runs today, perhaps a few minutes less, and that even after re-cutting his negative for THE MOTHER AND THE LAW and THE FALL OF BABYLON, Griffith had little or no difficulty in reassembling his original film. Most importantly, the changes Griffith did make when he made his final revisions in 1926 for a 10th anniversary revival were completed not in a bungled attempt at recreating a 14 reel chimera, but in a final effort at improving an exasperating film that had preoccupied its director intermittently for 10 years.

collection went to the Museum of Modern Art, but finally surfaced when the George Eastman House purchased it from Lloyd's shortly after Griffith's death. The nitrate original stayed at Eastman House for only a few years ; in 1954, the Eastman House bartered it to the Danske Filmmuseum. But before shipping it off, the House had the John E. Allen Laboratory in Park Ridge, New Jersey provide a dupe negative. From that negative at least two prints were struck, the first for the Eastman House, the other for the collector's market. A second print was sold in the mid-1950s to collector-distributor Georges Korda in Caracas, Venezuela.

The Korda copy was what teaching assistant David Shepard found in 1963 while on vacation in Caracas. Shepard purchased the Venezuela print, and five years later arranged for a 16-mm dupe negative to be made for the American Film Institute (AFI). The AFI transferred both negative and print to the Library of Congress, where they are currently stored.

Meanwhile, in 1973, Blackhawk Films decided to market the Venezuela print commercially, adding an original music score by Gaylord Carter and an introduction by Griffith scholar Arthur Lennig. In addition, Blackhawk modified the Venezuela footage itself with new tints, and with shots interpolated from a standard print that were missing in the Venezuela original. This modified print is what circulates on videotape through the Blackhawk Company today.

For this account, I am indebted to interviews and correspondence with David Shepard, James Card, Ib Monty, and Eileen Bowser.

There are several versions of the 1919 THE FALL OF BABYLON available, the fullest prints deriving from the Museum of Modern Art. Judging from the severely mutilated versions at Blackhawk and Emgee Films, it appears that their source print was used to feed an early restoration of INTOLERANCE.

Prints of THE MOTHER AND THE LAW are widely available, from the Museum, Blackhawk Video, Emgee Films, and elsewhere.

⁵ For difficulties in conflating the artifacts, compare Williamson, "Reconstruction," "In at least two cases, the music cues in the Huguenot story followed the copyright frame order. Therefore, the final inter-cutting in the reconstruction had to follow the order of Griffith's work print even though it was clearly a preliminary work print that Griffith altered before he cut the negative for the premiere.... In the end, over two hundred freeze-frames were included and it was found that the music cues indicated short running times for many of the scenes which only survived in the frames thus keeping the freeze-frames brief enough to be acceptable" (p. 4).

Anderson, " 'No Music,' " 160-162 describes the difficulties of combining the piano/conductor score for INTOLERANCE with the instrumental parts, which themselves evidently derive from a different performance. Anderson also lists assorted telltale clues which indicate that the piano score was printed substantially after the September premiere.

It is not known when the score was printed, when interpolated pages were added to the score, and when changes were made in various instrumental parts. But internal evidence indicates that the original piano score was published sometime early 1917 - after the Wallace title list and before, the Danske Filmmuseum, " Venezuela " print.

The inclusion of " The Star-Spangled Banner " at the end of the original score may point to a post-April 6, 1917 publication date. It became common for American theaters in wartime to conclude performances with this song, recently designated the national anthem by executive order of Woodrow Wilson in late 1916.

⁶ Williamson, " Reconstruction, " p. 4 ; Compare Anderson, " 'No Music,' " p. 158 ; Hansen, " Griffith's Real *Intolerance*, " p. 28.

It is this last point that deserves the most emphasis : When Griffith reassembled his negative after finishing with THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW, he had available all the materials that were at the disposal of the reconstructionists - considerably more material, in fact - and he created a close approximation of the versions commonly circulated today.

HOW LONG WAS INTOLERANCE ?

Above all, the restoration relies on the notion of a mammoth 14 reel original, measuring 13,800 ft. or so and lasting up to four hours. This was the supposed monument that Griffith hacked away at and whittled down, and then found himself unable to restore. In fact, there is good reason Griffith never restored such a version : It never existed.

When INTOLERANCE debuted in New York's Liberty Theater on 5 September 1916, the entire program lasted at most 3 hours and 10 minutes, including two intermissions that totaled eight minutes or more, and a brief first-act curtain speech by the director. Throughout its first run, the film's length stayed remarkably consistent from one city to the next, with entire performances (including the intermissions) lasting an even three hours. To be even more precise, the best evidence indicates that the road show prints measured 11,663 ft., which (accounting for ways modern archives measure films versus the ways laboratories measure and bill for film) comes out to the length of today's prints. Or, to put it yet another way, the Museum's reconstructed version is too long by at least a reel, and moreover, is being projected at the wrong speed.⁷

This, of course, contradicts many longstanding claims about INTOLERANCE that have become part of its lore. But the primary evidence is overwhelming. From its three preview screenings in Southern California through its road-show runs that extended from October 1916 through June 1917, INTOLERANCE was reviewed, publicized, and described more fully than virtually any other film of its time. Only THE BIRTH OF A NATION (Epoch, 1915), received more attention. Griffith's triumph with his Civil War epic made him a magnet for journalists, and Griffith took full advantage of the public interest. If scholars in the Middle Ages debated the number of angels that could stand on the head of a pin, Griffith's camp followers could identify not only the precise number of angels Griffith used in his second epic, but also the extras who played those angels, and if pressed, provide their current addresses.

Griffith's clipping service filled at least three oversize INTOLERANCE scrapbooks, and each of the 11 road shows that toured across the country generated its own pile of correspondence, invoices, and receipts. Much of this ended up at the Museum of Modern Art ; much of it is buried in newspaper and magazine files around the country. But pieced together, it provides an extraordinarily detailed account of INTOLERANCE's road-show progress, including information about running times, orchestras, sound effects trucks, theater lighting effects, the expenses and earnings of individual companies, and the day-to-day adventures of ballyhooing and presenting a film to a country on the brink of war. The picture that emerges differs dramatically from the film the Museum has reconstructed.

SNEAK PREVIEWS

INTOLERANCE first saw the light of day at the Orpheum Theater in Riverside, California on 4 August 1916, where it had a two-day run under the rather grandiose title, THE DOWNFALL OF ALL NATIONS, or HATRED THE OPPRESSOR directed by one Dante Guilio - a " famous Italian director, " according to news accounts, " who is now held a prisoner by the Austrians in Vienna. " According to the advertisements, Dante Guilio's epic-self-proclaimed a - " GREATER THAN 'THE CLANSMAN.', 'CABERIA,' (sic) and 'BEN HUR' COMBINED "- played in 11 reels.⁸

There is some evidence that the film ran longer than its advertised 170 minutes duration, although local papers reported nothing unusual about the film's length. The *Riverside Press* came the closest, noting that " this man Dante Guilio, a prototype of the great and only D. W. Griffith... will need to, cut and polish his film before it is eventually released. "

This was the famous performance that drained at least two members of the audience with its soporific titles and tedious detail ; and in retrospect, these two assigned it Wagnerian running times. In the 1920s, Lillian Gish remembered it as an exhausting experience that seemed to last " forever. " Stanford University president David Starr Jordan, recalling the preview six months after he saw it,

⁷ The Museum of Modern Art (hereafter referred to as MoMA) reconstruction measures 12,540 ft. and, projected at a fixed 16 frames per second (60 ft./min.), lasts 3 hrs. and 29 min.

Current archival practice is to measure film " image to image, " that is, to count from the first frame meant for projection until the last. For billing purposes, laboratories measured films to include both head and tail leaders. For tinting, the Majestic lab had INTOLERANCE wound on 50-200 ft. rolls, the rolls arranged according to tint. The roll identification markings are still visible on the leaders of the nitrate print as UCLA, indicating at least 111 tinting rolls. Assuming 114 tinting rolls and 10 ft. leaders (the original head and tail leaders retained in the last six reels of the INTOLERANCE print at UCLA measure 5 ft. apiece), the leader would have taken up at maximum of 1140 ft., leaving an " image to image " negative of 10,523 ft. Compare this with the lengths of prints that commonly circulate today. A MoMA black-and-white print measures 10,897 ft. ; its color-tinted print 10,659 ft. ; the Rohauer color print 10,957 ft. ; the Packard-UCLA print 10,872 ft.

⁸ " At the Orpheum Tonight, " *Riverside Press* (4 August 1916) : 3.

imagined that it went on for some six hours, though he admitted that he sat through only the first part of it.⁹

The complaints and exaggerations were not new even by the time of INTOLERANCE's first public review. The film's longeurs and colossal size had been translated into tales of fabulous running lengths even when the film was still in postproduction. The first run-offs of INTOLERANCE had taken place in June and July inside Griffith's small projection shed on the Fine Arts lot, where on several occasions he screened rough cuts for his senior staff, publicity people, and favored newspaper reporters. They, too, tended to find the film perplexing and over-long (" I must be honest and say I thought DW had lost his mind, " Anita Loos remembered after one such session). Those who dared approach Griffith with criticism complained about the happy ending of the " Modern " story, the truncated " French " story, the preachiness, and in general chorus, the over-long titles.¹⁰

But what is of particular interest is the length of these rough-cuts that they reported. Julian Johnston at Photoplay who saw the film with other reporters in mid-July, later wrote grandly of seeing " thousands upon thousands of feet " that were later deleted, of " at least half a dozen complete minor stories [that] were cut off. " Another reporter noted that " captions had been set and changed close to 2,000 times. " Lillian Gish in her 1969 autobiography remembered the film at this point as " approximately eight hours long " ¹¹

But, as it happens, we have a record of what at least one rough-cut version looked like. On 24 June 1916, Griffith sent a scrapbook of 2203 frames clipped from each shot and title to the Library of Congress for copyright, each frame affixed to the scrapbook with a straight pin. These mutilated frames survive, and in fact play a vital role in the Museum's reconstruction.

They show the state of Griffith's film after the first two months of editing, when it was still a rough approximation of his preview print. They are altogether fascinating, revealing a film only partially formed. By June, Griffith had yet to devise the mother rocking her cradle and the allegorical ending. The introduction of Brown Eyes, the great siege of Babylon, the Mountain Girl's adventure at the marriage market, Belshazzar's Feast, and the assorted last-minute rescue attempts are all arranged in drastically different order. Many other scenes are compiled from alternate takes, notably Christ protecting the woman taken in adultery, the mourning of the Dear One's father, the killing of the Musketeer, the Boy's trial, and his rescue from the gallows. Expository sequences that were later scissored out of the film proliferate in the first part of the film. And practically all the intertitles are worded differently.

But the frames also give a rough idea of the film's length, months before the Riverside preview. Curiously, even with all the additional expository scenes, the difference between the copyright print and a standard version measured in the late 1930s by Theodore Huff totals 170 shots and titles – far too few images to match the " thousands and thousands " of additional feet the fan magazines reported. The Huff print, with the equivalent of 2036 registration frames, measured approximately 11,000 ft., or 5.4 ft. per shot. Assuming similar shot lengths, the 2203 copyright frames come to 11,896 ft. This means that even allowing for extra footage to accommodate the wordier intertitles, the June 1916 rough cut was probably no longer than 12,000 or 12,500 ft.¹²

The Riverside screening was only the first of INTOLERANCE's public previews. Griffith traveled back to Los Angeles to rework both his titles and continuity, and 10 days later previewed the film again, this time in Pomona, California. The film was still THE DOWNFALL OF ALL NATIONS ; Griffith was still calling himself Dante Giulio ; but now the film was advertised at 12 reels and described by the man at the Pomona Progress as lasting " almost three hours. " The film, performed with an eight piece " symphony orchestra, " drew a front-page rave, but the production was clearly still in trouble.¹³

Behind the scenes, assistant director Joseph Henabery recalled the sense of disillusion he and others felt at this second tryout. " I was utterly confused by the picture, " he said. " I was so discouraged and disappointed.... He just had too much material.... But the thing that disturbed me more than anything else was the subtitles. " ¹⁴

The local press picked up the cry. The *Pomona Progress* reported, " The only human interest in the drama is in the scenes where the poor little mother shows her devotion to her baby and her persecuted husband. " After interviewing Griffith, another reporter wrote, " There is to be a rearrangement of the thousands of scenes, a lot of work in cutting out of unnecessary scenes, and the music is to be yet made appropriate to the scenes - the reaching of climaxes in proper shape and fitting of music to the

⁹ W. L. Leamon, " Downfall of All Nations, " *Riverside Press* (August 1916) : 3. Lillian Gish to Nell Dorr in Albert Bigelow Paine, *Life and Lillian Gish* (New York : MacMillan, 1932), 122. David Starr Jordan, letter to the *Chicago Post*, 21 January 1917.

¹⁰ For accounts of these private screenings, see Henry Gordon, " The Real Story of *Intolerance*, " *Photoplay* (November 1916) : 30-31, 34 ; Harry Carr, " Magnificent Film Spectacle Holds Thousands Entranced, " *Los Angeles Times*, Editorial Section, 18 October 1916, p. 1 ; Anita Loos, *A Girl Like I* (New York : Viking, 1966), 102-103.

¹¹ Julian Johnston, " The Shadow Stage, " *Photoplay* (December 1916) : 78 ; Gordon, " Real Story, " p. 37 ; Lillian Gish, *The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me* (Prentice-Hall, 1969), 79.

¹² The Huff print lists 1712 shots and 324 titles.

¹³ " \$500,000 Motion Picture Will Be Shown Here First, " *Pomona Progress*, 15 August 1916, p. 6 ; " Greatest of Movies Here Well Received, " *Pomona Progress*, 17 August 1916, p. 3. For front-page headline review, " Powerful 'Mystery' Picture Thrills Pomonans : Greatest Picture Ever Made Shown Here While Noted Stars See Their Work, " *Pomona Bulletin*, 17 August 1916, p. 1.

¹⁴ Joseph Henabery in Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* (New York : Knopf, 1968), 62-63.

character of the scene. Mr. Griffith has many a long day of hard work yet to do on his immense drama before it is ready for the public."¹⁵

Griffith reworked his film once again, had a third preview in San Luis Obispo, followed by a private press screening, at Tally's Broadway Theater in Los Angeles ; then finally took his film to New York for its formal debut.¹⁶

THE INTOLERANCE DEBUT

Opening night at the Liberty provided a spectacle all its own. Griffith's art director had the theater made over into an Assyrian temple, with incense burning in a lobby festooned with Oriental decor and carpets. Female ushers were dressed as Babylonian priestesses, while male ushers were decked out in red and black satin tuxedos. Preparing for the performance, Griffith lived in the theater for 10 days, supervising rehearsals not only of the 40 pieces orchestra and chorus, but also a specially designed lighting system to tint the screen various colors, and a baggage carload of sound effects machinery that, according to Press reports, was so large it had to be crammed into the Liberty's back-stage. **Projectionists, too, were kept on call 18 hours per day to rehearse the various speeds required to synch the picture to the sound effects and music.** All told, *The Moving Picture World* estimated 134 people were involved in the theater presentation, including seven men responsible for " the considerable amount of explosives " used with the battle scenes.¹⁷

Projection provided special problems. As was their custom, Bitzer and his crews had shot Griffith's film at no fixed rate of speed. Since the Pathé studio model cameras used on INTOLERANCE had no film-speed indicators, it was impossible for Bitzer or any of his eight or nine camera assistants to know their exact cranking speeds, and on the Griffith lot in particular, footage was ground out at many different rates. With THE BIRTH OF A NATION, for instance, operators cranked some sections as low as 35 ft. per min. (9.3 frames per sec.), other sections as high as 65. For HOME SWEET HOME (Majestic, 1914), Griffith recommended projection speeds between 62 and 76, but cautioned that " the last reel should be run slowly from the beginning of the allegorical part to the end." ¹⁸

The speeds for INTOLERANCE were more consistent than that, but the peculiar complication of this production was that cranking rates were changed while the film was in mid-production and now, apparently, Griffith was attempting to smooth the speeds out.

When Griffith started shooting his film as a three-reeler in October 1914, he released through the Mutual Film Company, a distribution syndicate with no fixed policy about camera speeds. However, when Griffith left Mutual nine months later for the more **exclusive Triangle Film Corporation, uniform projection speed became a matter of front-office concern. Triangle marketed their Griffith-Ince-Sennett films as integrated packages, and used " unvaried Projection " as a Triangle selling point.**

Cameramen on the Griffith lot, used to cranking anywhere between 45 and 65, were now instructed to crank at " about 70 " to assure flicker-free projection speeds that would also bring them into conformity with the Ince and Keystone product. INTOLERANCE was caught in the middle, the " Modern "

¹⁵ " New 12-Reeler is Here Tonight, " *Pomona Bulletin*, 17 August 1916, p. 10 ; " Greatest of Movies Here Well Received," *Pomona Progress*, 17 August 1916, p. 3.

¹⁶ The San Luis Obispo and Tally Broadway Theater previews went unadvertised and unreviewed. They are referred to in the Cost Sheets for INTOLERANCE, filed in the D. W. Griffith Papers at the Museum of Modern Art under 1916 General : " TRIAL EXHIBITIONS (at Riverside, San Luis Obispo, Pomona, and Tally's) : \$1,012.62. "

The press screening at Tally's would have been held at the end of August, shortly before Griffith's departure for New York. Curiously, four blocks away at Clune's Auditorium, the Griffith showcase theater at the time owned by one of Griffith's principal investors, Franz Kleinschmidt, was presenting his film, TWO YEARS IN THE TRENCHES OF EUROPE (Kleinschmidt, 1916). Kleinschmidt's film would soon be driven off the screen as pro-German propaganda, and then sold to Griffith at a dollar a foot. Griffith represented Kleinschmidt's battle footage as his own in HEARTS OF THE WORLD (D. W. Griffith, 1918).

¹⁷ For the most complete descriptions of the New York opening, " The Making of a Masterpiece, " *Moving Picture World* (30 September 1916) : 2084. For a description of the orchestra, *Moving Picture Mail* (26 August 1916) ; and *Brooklyn Citizen* (27 August 1916) in INTOLERANCE New York Scrapbook, MoMA.

The sound effects machinery is described in *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 September 1916. According to *Movie Picture News*, 2 September 1916, Griffith postponed INTOLERANCE's opening for two weeks (the Liberty premiere was originally scheduled for 22 August 1916) because of delays in the delivery of the sound effects and lighting equipment.

¹⁸ *Moving Picture World* (20 June 1914) : 652, cited in Kevin Brownlow, " Silent Films : What Was the Right Speed ? " *Sight and Sound* 49 (Summer 1980) : 166. For THE BIRTH OF A NATION speeds, Brownlow, " Silent Films, " p. 165 and Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, Vol. 3, *The History of the American Cinema* (New York : Scribner's, 1990), 58. Brownlow (and Koszarski following him) cite a low of 12 fps (45 ft./min.) for THE BIRTH OF A NATION, but David Gill found that in the experiments he and Kevin Brownlow conducted for their HOLLYWOOD series, individual scenes of THE BIRTH OF A NATION were even slower : " I remember that on one sequence, where Gish and Walthall are sharing their love with a dove, we dropped down to something like 6 to 8 fps [22-30 ft. per min.]. Because he was shooting against a strong evening light, we guessed Bitzer might have cranked far slower than usual, and in order to emphasize the gentle, lyrical feel of the shot we took a little license ourselves. I don't think I'd recommend dropping to such a low speed during normal projection in a theatre ! ... Remember, too, that when you are running excerpts within a documentary you do not necessarily arrive at speeds you'd choose for a continuous run of the whole film. " David Gill, in a letter to author, 29 November 1990.

" THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SET CAMERA SPEED. The correct speed of projection is the speed at which each individual scene was taken which may - and often does - vary wildly. " Frank H. Richardson, *Handbook of Projection for Managers and Projectionists* (New York : Chalmers Publishing Co., 1916).

story shot at the old speeds, the other episodes shot at the new speeds when Griffith returned to start shooting them in September 1915.¹⁹

The Pomona tryout showed what happened when INTOLERANCE was projected at a rigidly fixed rate, presumably 70 ft. per min. " The play is too much hurried, " wrote the *Pomona Progress*.

It has not one moment of repose, from start to finish. It is a continuous round of quicksteps. Everybody is on the qui vive. The armies are always in a rush... and the way the poor people in the tenements run up and down stairs and fight and make love is so rapid that the man in the audience longs to see someone take a rest once a while.²⁰

By the time the film reached New York, Griffith was rehearsing his projectionists in considerable detail on how to vary projector speed. He told the *Moving Picture World* : " The rate of speed at which each reel is unwound is very important " because each story had to be told " at the same tempo. " It is impossible to know exactly how fast individual scenes were played - as Kevin Brownlow and Richard Koszarski have shown, it is not even certain that projection speeds, particularly in the last-minute rescue efforts, were always meant to match the camera speed. In the frenzied climatic scenes, Griffith may have wanted his scenes filmed slower than they were projected to create crisp, sharp movements. Other scenes such as the comic encounters between the Mountain Girl and the Rhapsode, the marriage at Cana, or Prosper's courtship of Brown Eyes drag miserably when projected too slowly. Work done by Brownlow and David Gill on a Polygon variable speed Telecine and, more recently, on the Rank-Cintel Mark III indicates that, in general, cranking speeds on INTOLERANCE ranged from 60 to 68 (i.e., from 16 to 18 frames per sec.).²¹

Parenthetically, the Museum's reconstruction, choosing the slower fixed speed of 16 fps (60 ft. per min.), distorts the film in the opposite way from the Pomona preview. The 16-fps rate is fair to most parts of the " Modern " story, but it makes the other two-thirds of the film drag, further exaggerating INTOLERANCE's length. The difference between 16 and 18 fps may seem infinitesimal, but stretched over an evening, the gap becomes significant. Projected properly at variable speeds, current standard prints run about 2 hours and 50 minutes. Were the Museum of Modern Art's reconstruction projected at these rates, it would run approximately 3 hours 15 minutes, still too long by 15-20 minutes. But at its current fixed rate, it lasts a full 3 hours 30 minutes. What this means is that certain sequences have been artificially stretched out with freeze frames and step printing ; it also means that parts of the Breil score are dragging at tempi significantly too slow. The reader with a variable-speed turntable can get a rough idea of the effect by playing a 33 1/3 recording of " The Ride of the Valkyries " at 28 1/3 rpm.²²

¹⁹ For the number of camera crews working on INTOLERANCE, one news account reported that " eight cameras working at the same time was no unusual sight during the making of 'Intolerance.' " " Wonderful Color Effects, " *The Brooklyn Citizen* (6 November 1916) in INTOLERANCE New York Scrapbook, MoMA.

There were fourteen Fine Arts cameramen during the Triangle period, all of whom would have been available to Bitzer between their program assignments. Those known to have worked on INTOLERANCE : Karl Brown, William Fildew, Victor Fleming, John Leezer, and Philip R. Dubois.

For Triangle camera speeds, R. L. Merritt, " The Griffith Third : D. W. Griffith at Triangle, " *Sulla via di Hollywood*, 1911-1920, Eds., Paolo Cherchi Usai e Lorenzo Codelli (Pordenone : Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine, 1988), 252-256, 260-262. *The Triangle* 1 (19 October 1915) : 3 ; J. C. Jessen, n.t., *Moving Picture News* [n.d. ; ca 27 September 1915] INTOLERANCE press clippings, Motion Picture Service Film Record Library [Warren Dunham Foster Collection], New York Public Library (hereafter Foster Collection, NYPL).

For Those trying to keep track of the production chronology : the three-reel version of the Modern Story was shot in November-December 1914 ; then Griffith turned his attention to the exhibition of THE BIRTH OF A NATION, which kept him touring the country from February through July. Triangle was formed 20 July 1915, and a month later Griffith returned to THE MOTHER AND THE LAW, revising and enlarging his modern story. He added the strike, the Jenkins ballroom and mill-worker dance scenes in mid-August, then reshot Harron's trial scenes and individual prison scenes in early September.

The historical episodes were begun in September 1915 and lasted through the following April. Griffith shot the French story first (September-October), continued with Judea (November-December), and spent four months shooting Babylon (January-April 1916).

²⁰ *Pomona Progress*, 17 August 1916, p. 10. The 70 ft. per min. is an educated guess, based on the known lengths and advertised running times of other feature films that played Pomona's Belvedere Theater in spring and summer, 1916.

²¹ Griffith quote from " The Making of a Masterpiece, " *Moving Picture World* (30 September 1916) : 2084. " The projectionist, said Griffith, 'in a large measure is compelled to redirect the photoplay,' " *Moving Picture World* (20 June 1914) : 652. See also Koszarski, *An Evenings Entertainment*, 56-59.

But there are exceptions even to the variable 60-68 ft. per min. For instance, Brownlow and Gill report that the militia's arrival in INTOLERANCE was cranked at so far below 16 fps (between 6 and 8) as to risk setting any nitrate film running through an arc lamp projector on fire ! Brownlow to author, 12 November 1990.

²² For the mathematically curious, the Modern Story takes up approximately 4385 ft. of the standard INTOLERANCE prints measured by Theodore Huff and Eileen Bowser ; the balance of the film (allowing for the small discrepancies between the Huff print and surviving standard prints) measures approximately 6570 ft. Projecting the Modern Story at the 16 fps average (i.e., 60 ft. per min.) totals 70 min. Averaging 18 fps (67 1/2 ft. per min.) for the other footage totals 98 min.

The calculation for the corrected timing of the MoMA reconstruction assumes that the interpolated materials were distributed proportionately between the Modern Story and the rest of the film, so that in the restoration the Modern Story still constitutes one-third of the entire film.

The Museum's decision to project INTOLERANCE at a fixed rate is a bad mistake. However, that decision is preferable to the current French practice of projecting INTOLERANCE at 20 fps when performing the new Antoine Duhamel/Pierre Jansen score.

All in all, one way or another, the first-night New York critics were stunned. Not so stunned, however, that they didn't check their watches. The curtain went up no earlier than 8:10, the announced curtain time, and according to a reporter sent up by the *Philadelphia Record*, " No one left the crowded theater until the spectacle had been shown in entirety and it was then 20 minutes after eleven o'clock. " ²³

Much of what the critics reported reveals the fallibility of even first-hand testimony. The man at the *New York Times*, for instance, referred to Griffith's " eight or nine reels of film " that made up the evening ; the *Herald* reporter thought that the one reel of Babylonian battle footage lasted over an hour. Yet the commentators remain remarkably consistent in claiming that the evening, complete with intermissions and Griffith's first-act curtain speech, lasted little more than three hours.²⁴

The most precise information, however, comes from an invoice submitted by the Majestic Company's film laboratory, billing Griffith's Wark Corporation for two prints of INTOLERANCE that were printed in October 1916, when Griffith was preparing for his next two premieres, one in San Francisco, the other in Los Angeles. The Majestic invoice specifies that the lab printed up 23,326 ft. at .01 per ft. for a bill totaling \$233. These two " commercial prints " of INTOLERANCE, measuring 11,663 ft. apiece, would have played either in California, if they were shipped early enough, or in Chicago, which started INTOLERANCE in late November.²⁵ Regardless, whether filing from Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Chicago, reporters reviewing the opening night performances refer to a show that lasted " about three hours. " The important exception is the *Wids* report, published 7 September 1916, which specifies that the film itself, stripped of intermission and interlude, ran for 2 hours and 30 minutes.²⁶

INTOLERANCE's advertisements tend to confirm a three-hour program. When the film opened in Los Angeles and Chicago, Griffith, with his eye perpetually on the carriage trade, inserted a note that his film was " STARTING TONIGHT AT 8:10 pm. MOTORS AT 11:00 pm. " Even allowing for a high-handed treatment of taxi cab drivers and chauffeurs, drivers were probably not being asked to show up more than 15 minutes early.²⁷

And so it went as Griffith opened his film across the country in Brooklyn, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and then Milwaukee, and St. Louis. Griffith certainly modified and refined the performance, adjusting parts of his film as he went along. Among other things, he and his company enlarged the vocal chorus when the film came to Chicago and Pittsburgh ; in Washington, D.C., he experimented with soloists, rather than a chorus, singing the songs of Babylon and the music of France. When he sold nationwide distribution rights to INTOLERANCE in June 1917, he put in the proviso that the distributor " gives his entire attention to *Intolerance* and *experiment with a lecturer* " (italics added).²⁸

JOSEPH CARL BREIL'S INTOLERANCE

The role that Griffith's coworkers played in all this remains something of a mystery. For instance, how involved was composer Joseph Carl Breil ? And were the revisions made in Breil's original score cumulative - the changes made in Chicago worked into the Pittsburgh score, the Chicago-Pittsburgh changes then carried over to Washington, D.C., and so, forth ? Or did each city make its own revisions based on the original score ?

There is evidence that Griffith was dissatisfied with Breil's score, and that Breil left the Griffith company in high dudgeon shortly after the New York debut. Critics who had raved over Breil's score for THE BIRTH OF A NATION generally singled out his music for INTOLERANCE as the worst part of the movie. Griffith's own reaction is unknown, but the actions he took are ominous.

With THE BIRTH OF A NATION. Breil had not only arranged and adapted the score, he had also toured with the film alongside Griffith, conducting orchestras in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and elsewhere. With INTOLERANCE, on the other hand, he suddenly vanished after the lukewarm Pomona preview, reportedly " heading for San Francisco to take a vacation from writing music for *Intolerance*. " He never resurfaced. His contract with Griffith's Fine Arts studio as music director was allowed to expire later that month.²⁹

²³ *Philadelphia Record*, 10 September 1916.

²⁴ *New York Times*, 6 September 1916, p. 7 ; *New York Herald*, 6 September 1916, p. 10. For samples of other reviewers who refer to the three-hour duration, see *Variety* (8 September 1916) ; *New York Sunday Tribune*, 7 September 1916, p. 5 ; *New York Evening Sun*, 6 September 1916. These may all be found in INTOLERANCE New York scrapbook, MoMA.

²⁵ Majestic invoice to Wark, 15 February 1917 (Griffith Papers).

²⁶ For three-hour show, *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 October 1916, p. 6 ; *Boston Evening Transcript* Pt. II, 2 January 1918, p. 9 ; *Seattle Intelligencer*, 19 December 1916 ; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 December 1916 ; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Drama Section, 5 May 1918, p. 1.

²⁷ Carriage trade ads, *Los Angeles Express*, 8 November 1916 ; *Chicago Tribune*, 28 November 1916.

²⁸ Enlarging vocal chorus in Chicago and Pittsburgh ; multiple soloists in Washington, D.C. *Chicago Post*, 17 December 1916 ; Mae Tinee, " Wonderful ! But What's It All About, " *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 November 1916 ; Charles Bregg, *Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegram*, 23 December 1916 ; *Washington [D.C.] Post*, 9 January 1917, p. 4 ; and " At the Local Theaters, " *Washington [D.C.] Post*, 7 May 1917, p. 8.

²⁹ The best and fullest account of Breil and THE BIRTH OF A NATION is Clyde Allen, " Notes " for the recording, " D. W. Griffith's THE BIRTH OF A NATION " (New Zealand: Label X, 1985). See also Martin Marks, " Film Music of the Silent Period, 1895-1924, " Ph. D. thesis, Harvard University, 1989.

The severance in itself is inconclusive - Griffith himself was disengaging from Triangle, and Breil may have resigned from the business of supervising music for the Griffith-produced Triangle projects in order to devote his full energies to the nerve-racking business of keeping up with the ever-changing INTOLERANCE. But if he stayed with INTOLERANCE beyond Pomona, there is no trace of him. Although scheduled to rehearse and conduct the New York premiere, he was replaced by Frederick Arundel. When INTOLERANCE toured, it invariably opened without him. When it reached Los Angeles, it was Albert Pesce, not Breil, who conducted and "drilled several orchestras and choruses for the various [California] cities in which 'Intolerance' is to be shown." Even more curious, when INTOLERANCE opened in Pittsburgh, Breil's hometown, the native son was invisible in the press and missing from the Griffith entourage.³⁰

By all indications, Breil was dissatisfied with his score too. He published an article in *Metronome* two months after INTOLERANCE's premiere where he took jabs at an unnamed producer with Philistine musical tastes who imposes impossible deadlines :

[THE BIRTH OF A NATION and INTOLERANCE] contain about fifty per-cent of original music. But the perfect moving picture score, for which I am aiming, is the one which will be entirely original in composition and construction. It is not quite possible for me to say when that will arrive. An important factor towards such an event will be that the composer is given ample time in which to do his work and... producers of the great photo-plays gradually realize that a mixing up of all the good and bad composers of the past and present is not at all interesting to the audience. Uniformity in design and construction is impossible especially when the film producer prefers 'pretty' music, while the composer believes that red-blooded, dramatic music is the proper thing. Since the film producer pays 'the piper,' conditions are hard to change. However, some day a thorough artist-producer will arise who will tell his composer, 'as far as the music is concerned that is entirely up to you.'³¹

Breil was pushed further to the background when INTOLERANCE went overseas. On 4 April 1917, the film had its European debut in London, and Griffith had a new score commissioned compiled by a certain A. J. Beard that toured the British Isles. This and other scores were used in continental Europe where, according to contract, each foreign distributor was expected to supply his own music. And when in late 1918 the film was reedited into THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW, Griffith commissioned yet another score, compiled and arranged by Louis E Gottschalk.³²

INTOLERANCE ON TOUR

As for the film itself, for the most part, Griffith pruned. There is no hard evidence that Griffith added any pictorial footage after the New York premiere, but if he did, it would have been within days of the debut. One of the prices the Museum of Modern Art reconstruction pays for making a fetish of the New York first night is that its version deletes two important sequences - the Temple of Love scene and the Dance of Tammuz - on the grounds that these shots may have been edited into the film shortly after the premiere. Those shots played an important part in INTOLERANCE's 1916-1917 road show history, and they are also part of the earliest surviving prints of the film, not to mention the surviving 1916-1917 title list.

The last sighting of Breil with INTOLERANCE is reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, 12 August 1916, and section 111, 20 August 1916, p.2.

³⁰ *Los Angeles Express*, 8 November 1916. The fullest accounts of Griffith and INTOLERANCE in Pittsburgh are in the *Pittsburgh Star*, 18 January 1917 and *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegram*, 23 December 1916. Other accounts may be found in undated and unidentified Pittsburgh clippings in INTOLERANCE Chicago scrapbook, MoMA.

However much the Breil score may have been revised, it was used exclusively through the U.S. road-show engagement and the first U.S. general release. The one-year contract that Wark signed with J. J. McCarthy and J. S. McSween for 37 states specifies that the distributors will do their best to get the Breil music played, and that Wark will supply two copies of the score with each print. INTOLERANCE lease agreement, 6 September 1917, MoMA.

³¹ Breil, "Moving Pictures of the Past and Present and the Music Provided For Same," *The Metronome* (November 1916) : 42.

³² L. Wortham, "Kinema Music During 1917," *Kinematograph Year Book, Film Diary and Director* (London : Go Magazine Ltd., 1918) : 83-84. Most contracts stipulated that each foreign distributor provide unspecified "appropriate musical accompaniment." Compare Wark agreement with Robertson-Cole, 8/27/18 ; Masters Productions 8/28/18 and 11/12/18 ; Gaytis & Moscow 9/30/18 ; Saenz and Mae, 11/1/18 at MoMA.

The Wark agreement with Theatro Films, Milan, 5/31/17, stipulates : "The Corporation agrees to supply the Hirer with one complete score of the music as played in connection with the showing of the Picture at [t]he Theatre Royal Drury Lane London ... " The notice for a four-city release of a drastically cut INTOLERANZ in Germany states that music has been written by kappellmeister/conductor Dr Felix Günther. L. Udelt, "Intoleranz," *Film-Kurier* (5 November 1924) : 2.

The Gottschalk scores for THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW survive at the Library of Congress, but await study.

According to a preliminary examination, the Gottschalk score for THE MOTHER AND THE LAW is another disunified pastiche of many composers' work, and draws on at least some of the Breil INTOLERANCE score. It retains "My Wild Irish Rose" as the Dear One's signature, for instance, and picks and chooses among Breil's assorted original themes. Breil's original music is kept for Mary Jenkins' ball ; and for the expository scenes in the big city and at the Boy's trial. On the other hand, the reformers get new music, so do the scenes leading up to the confiscation of the Dear One's baby, the killing of the Musketeer, and the climactic race to the gallows.

The shots in question are of the seminude women who pose in the Temple of Love and who are also cut into the Dance of Tammuz. Whether or not the Love Temple and Dance of Tammuz scenes that we now see appeared in time for the New York premiere is unknown. But we know the sequences were in place by mid-November because a New York enthusiast sent Griffith a 26-ft. scroll of doggerel verse that refers to them. We also know they were in the film when it played Chicago, because the Chicago board of supervisors insisted Griffith take them out. The seminudes survived that fight, as they had similar encounters in San Francisco and Los Angeles. They were also a target in the furious battle Griffith waged with the Pennsylvania censor board. In Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, the seminudes were used as bargaining chips or distractions to keep the censors away from the labor strike and the savage antireform satire that several boards considered defamatory.

Many of the censor brawls have the whiff of staged publicity stunts meant to draw attention both to the movie and the naked women. The way the Chicago scenario was played out, Cook County Commissioner Frank Ragen publicly denounced Griffith's film at a board meeting for its slander against Chicago's women's clubs and its depiction of indecently draped concubines. Ragen then introduced a censorship resolution " to determine whether said production of INTOLERANCE reflects or casts discredit upon the conduct of public charities of Chicago " or " displays even for historical purposes full or partially naked women. " In response, three female ushers attired in Babylonian priestess costumes invaded a subsequent meeting, inviting the commissioners to see INTOLERANCE for themselves, and then playfully kidnapped Ragen, force-marching him to the Colonial Theater for a special film screening. Chicago papers fueled the affair with a week of headlines, while more censorship resolutions were proposed, dropped, and countered. As for Ragen himself, he recanted. " The picture is right. I was wrong, " he said, and much to the disgust of the Chicago Women's Club, he urged everyone to see Griffith's film. " Upon investigation [of the proposed deletions], " *Variety* reported six weeks after INTOLERANCE's Chicago opening, " Nothing done."³³

Ragen and his kidnapers are worth remembering in light of the Museum of Modern Art's decision to eliminate the temple maidens. Their decision is apparently based on assistant director Joseph Henabery's interview with Kevin Brownlow in the early 1960s. Henabery, who claims to have shot much of the Love Temple sequence, implied to Brownlow that he was still filming the temple maidens on the West Coast while Griffith was rehearsing his film in New York - thereby suggesting that the footage was probably not ready by September 5th.

Even if this account could be verified, it would only mean that the footage was added several days later. But it is important to recall that Karl Brown, Bitzer's first assistant, remembered the scenes of the temple maidens being shot in Los Angeles weeks earlier, and, to complicate matters further, Henabery himself mentioned that Griffith was directing similar scenes in New York just before the premiere. This may have been the footage reported in *Motography* : " D. W. Griffith has been spending some time directing at Famous Players-Lasky New York studio. He claims he wants to add a scene to his big spectacle..."³⁴

Sacred virgins aside, the alterations Griffith made in his film from September 1916 through late February 1917, when he finally stopped attending the American INTOLERANCE debuts, were relatively small refinements in a strange unwieldy work that from the start had been developed as a mighty improvisation. Exactly when he deleted the expository shots from his Christ story, dropped the short distractive sequence of Coligny's assassination from the Huguenot slaughter, or altered this or that title is virtually impossible to chart because Griffith never stopped thinking of his film as an ongoing creation. The alterations continued through 27 February 1917, when in St. Louis, Griffith attended his last American road show premiere. After that, the original road-show version was finally locked into place - at least until the end of June when INTOLERANCE's road-show season ended.

At this point, INTOLERANCE's history divides into two, as Griffith began to circulate prints to international markets and plan his campaigns for the American general release. The international prints, struck from the 1917 INTOLERANCE negative, set out for their assorted destinations in London, Copenhagen, Rotterdam, Rome, and Cairo as identical twins, all graphic images intact, and all titles cut away except for two - and three - frame " flash titles, " which the distributors were expected to translate and replace. What happened to these prints when they finally reached their targets and went through the grinders of local exhibition customs, provides a juicy tangent and need concern us only in passing. All evidence points to drastically altered editions that were reedited not only by foreign censor bodies, but also by individual foreign distributors and exhibitors as well.

Then there were the alterations made by foreign film pirates. Aside from major road-show runs in the British Isles and an abortive run in Rome, INTOLERANCE officially never reached Europe's largest markets until the 1920s. Because of the war blockade, Griffith could distribute his film only in the small

³³ *Variety* (12 January 1917). See also *Variety* (29 December 1916) : 18 ; *Chicago American* (21 December 1916) ; and especially *Chicago Day Book* (4 January 1917). The Chicago accounts are contained in the INTOLERANCE Chicago scrapbook [#13], MoMA. Ragen's resolution is printed in its entirety in the *Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County* as part of the minutes of the 22 December 1916 meeting, on p. 104. His recantation is reported in the *Chicago Examiner*, 5 January 1917.

³⁴ Henabery's account of filming the seminude women for the temple scenes is contained in Brownlow, *The Parades Gone By*, 63-64. Karl Brown, *Adventures with D. W. Griffith* (New York : Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1973), 171-172 ; *Motography* (18 September 1916).

neutral countries of Northern Europe and in a smattering of miscellaneous markets such as Australia and North Africa. But pirates saw to it that unauthorized prints of INTOLERANCE got to Germany, Russia, Mexico, and Japan, where they were further trimmed to meet the requirements of the underground theaters.³⁵

INTOLERANCE's negative, of course, was unaffected by the assortment of mutilations and transformations endured by this first round of international tours. But the negative was demonstrably affected by Griffith's evolving domestic plans.

INTOLERANCE AND THE SPIN-OFFS

Despite the limited second-run release of INTOLERANCE in grind houses throughout the Midwest where the first-run companies had been the most profitable and the audiences most enthusiastic, Griffith fought the idea of putting his film into the conventional distribution pipeline where, along with such rival road shows as Herbert Brenon's A DAUGHTER OF THE GODS (Fox, 1916), C. B. DeMille's JOAN THE WOMAN (Cardinal, 1916), and Thomas Ince's CIVILIZATION (Ince, 1916), it would have been shortened and performed with cheap accompaniment. Instead he decided to excerpt his modern story and Babylonian sequences and present each of them individually as two new road-show attractions. THE FALL OF BABYLON, with an elaborate prologue and live acts interspersed between movie sequences, opened in Los Angeles on 19 January 1919 at Tally's Kinema, followed shortly by THE MOTHER AND THE LAW.

The remarkable history of INTOLERANCE's Babylonian spin-off need not detain us here, but what is relevant is Griffith's decision to cut into his original negative in order to carve out the pocket road shows. From this decision has grown the fanciful idea that once he had, disassembled INTOLERANCE, Griffith could never properly put it back together again.³⁶

Support for this claim comes from the wild days in late 1919 - and early 1920 when Griffith's staff was being driven mad trying to keep up with overseas orders for the original INTOLERANCE while simultaneously supplying American distributors with the newly produce THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW. To add to the confusion, Griffith insisted on touring with THE FALL OF BABYLON as he had with INTOLERANCE, adjusting and refining the new film as he had the old. Further, Griffith now had live acts to accommodate in his new road show.

His idea was to compound the glamour of the Babylonian spectacle by interspersing it at appropriate moments with a series of stage interludes that featured singers, a dance ensemble, specialty dance soloists and a narrator dressed as a Babylonian priest. These onstage routines changed constantly as THE FALL OF BABYLON toured, and as they changed, the sequences that bracketed the live acts were also altered. In a three-city tour, Griffith went through three different dance soloists, including Carol Dempster, before settling on his headliner, an exotic snake dancer from Poughkeepsie named Kyra. And by the time his road show finally ended, he had interpolated into the production

³⁵ The following three examples of the sorts of mutilations INTOLERANCE suffered abroad :

From Birmingham, England : " The judean period had almost vanished and the " Bride of Cana " (Bessie Love) never put her nose in the provinces at all. The most excellent example of intolerance, the episode of Christ saving Mary Magdalene from the jews ... the interesting little story of Henry of Navarre and his lover, and lots of minor episodes, all went with, I promise, the renter's scissors. " Anon. letter in *Pictures and the Picturegoer* (11-18 May 1918) : 475.

From Mexico City : " We saw the play after it had been 'arranged' by its wise owners and can find no words strong enough to protest against the artistic outrage that has been perpetrated. The 'arrangement' consists in a complete separation of the four themes that had a parallel and logical development in INTOLERANCE with the result that the philosophical idea on which Griffith's masterpiece is based has been entirely eliminated. " *Semana Cinematografica* n.d., cited in *Moving Picture World* (25 May 1918).

From Rome, Italy : " We have had a considerable amount of work in preparing the titles and cuttings the film [sic] which has been absolutely essential in order to obtain the approval of the censor, who was on the point of prohibiting the exhibition of the film. We have, however, been lucky in obtaining support and recommendation from high officials, whose influence induced the censor to force us to modify a few titles and cut some scenes of the modern story, as well as the Temple of Love only [*tagliate alcune scene del Tempio de l'Amore e dell'ultime bacchanale di Babilonia*].

" ... We regret to have to inform you that [the prints you have sent us] lack toning effects and many important scenes. " Letter from Domenico Cazzulino to Wark, anon. transl., London, 3 January 1918. Original letter and translation, MoMA.

For alterations in prints circulated in Russia, see Vance Kepley, " *Intolerance* and the Soviets : A Historical Investigation, " *Wide Angle* 3 (1979) : 24-26. The nine-reel print of INTOLERANCE currently at the GosFilmofond, Moscow, evidently dates back to the 1920s, lacks all shots of the Christ narrative, and has a lengthy introductory title added. Yuri Tsvian, letter to author, 15 January 1991.

An authorized INTOLERANCE was never shown in Germany, pirates having cannibalized the market in 1919. What was advertised as INTOLERANZ's official debut on 31 October 1924 was in fact an approximation of THE FALL OF BABYLON [INTOLERANZ : Teil I : DER UNTERGANG BABYLONS], reedited [" *sehr einschneidenden Bearbeitung* "] by one Joseph Stein. INTOLERANZ Teil II : TRIUMPH DER LIEBE, presumably a variant of THE MOTHER AND THE LAW, was also advertised, but it is unclear that it was ever exhibited. L. Udelt, " Intoleranz, " *Film-Kurier* (5 November 1924) : 2.

I am greatly indebted to Helmut Farber for sharing his INTOLERANZ research.

³⁶ This idea seems to originate in the foreword to Theodore Huff, *Intolerance Shot-by-Shot Analysis*, Ed., Eileen Bowser (New York : Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 3-4. For an illustration of how errors are carried from source to source, compare the entry for INTOLERANCE in *American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films 1911-1920* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1988), 459.

everything from footage of the New York skyline to footage of a construction crew demolishing his Babylon set.³⁷

Meanwhile, Griffith had moved his studio from Los Angeles to Mamaroneck, and his newly opened Mamaroneck laboratory was inundated with orders while he was still getting organized. Negatives and records were in transit from the West Coast, the new lab was only partially built, operating without electricity for over a month, and, to top it off, the lab's construction crew went on a two-week strike.

The telegrams exchanged between the New York front office and Griffith's near-defunct Los Angeles laboratory give an idea of the chaos :

From New York, 12 Dec. 1919 : " PLEASE ADVISE AT ONCE IF YOU HAVE ON HAND OR CAN PRINT UP IMMEDIATELY 4 OR 5 COPIES WITH FLASH TITLES OF THE ORIGINAL STORY OF INTOLERANCE AS WE HAVE AN ORDER FOR SUCH [A] PRINT. "

Los Angeles replies 15 Dec. 1919 : " Have no copies original story INTOLERANCE on hand and impossible to print them because cutting negatives BABYLON and MOTHER make it impossible to restore negative to original form. "

New York 17 Dec. 1919 : " Send at once all negative[s] of INTOLERANCE including cut outs [i.e., outtakes] so that we may assemble and make copies of old version here. "

Los Angeles 18 Dec. 1919 : " [Impossible.] To reassemble intolerance original story would destroy Babylon and mother and law stories... "³⁸

Then there was the Brazilian crisis. In February 1920, a distributor in Rio de Janeiro threatened to sue Griffith when his play date for INTOLERANCE neared and no film arrived. While Griffith's front office stalled, the laboratory scrambled to assemble an ersatz print from pieces of old returned copies. By 13 March 1920, three months after the original order, Griffith's international agent could report progress : " Mr. Reed is patching a print for Brazil. Only one piece missing, which he expects to get today from the studio. "³⁹

And even as late as December 1921, when THE FALL OF BABYLON was sold to grind house circuits and the Wark Production company finally succumbed to bankruptcy, the crises continued. " Emil Wertheimer [Wark's United Kingdom distributor] has requested two prints of INTOLERANCE in the form or nearly as the negative is now in existence to the original, production.... Do this immediately. We can be held for damages. "⁴⁰

In short, for over two years INTOLERANCE's negative lay partially disassembled, and for business reasons was not put back together again until after the market for THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW was exhausted. However, once Griffith decided to reassemble INTOLERANCE, all indications are that the restoration was completed quickly and without difficulty. For instance, the INTOLERANCE print that Griffith's lab processed on 31 December 1921, one week after the request for Emil Wertheimer's two British prints was submitted, came to 11,538 ft., within 125 ft. (or about two min.) of the prints circulated in 1916.⁴¹ Once the tug-of-war between INTOLERANCE and the short films stopped and Griffith had INTOLERANCE's negative reconstructed to fill further overseas and domestic orders, the footage counts remain remarkably consistent. And even as late as 1933, after another round of revivals and tentative plans for a reissue with a synchronized soundtrack, Griffith's storage company reported that the two longest prints in their possession measured 11,305 ft. and 11,203 ft., respectively. In other words, some 18 years after the premiere, after having been taken apart and put back together again, edited, re-titled, and revised, Griffith's film had lost less than 300 ft. of its footage—slightly under five minutes.⁴²

When Griffith had INTOLERANCE reassembled in December 1921, his film differed somewhat from the work he had taken apart in late 1918. In particular, 10 inter-titles that he had reworked for THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW returned to INTOLERANCE in their revised form. For the most part, these involved changes of phrasing imperceptible to a general audience. A title in the strike sequence that departed from the 1916-1917 movie as " The intolerant loom weaves death for 'the boy's' father, " [RWT 89M] returned as " The Loom of Fate weaves death for The Boy's Father " [H

³⁷ Some 65 ft. of the demolition footage used in later presentations of THE FALL OF BABYLON survives in a 1920 Screen Snap Shots newsreel at the British Film Institute, London. The newsreel makes use of several Griffith intertitles originally written for THE FALL OF BABYLON as well as, Snap Shots' own freshly made titles.

The fullest accounts of THE FALL OF BABYLON's progress are contained in *Los Angeles Times* 11, 20 January 1919, p. 4 ; *The Boston Evening Transcript*, 1 July 1919, p. 17 ; and *Detroit News*, Feat. sect., 30 May 1920, p. 11. See also THE FALL OF BABYLON press clippings, Foster Collection, NYPL for *New York Evening Globe* [n.d.] ; *New York Herald*, 22 July 1919 ; *New York Evening Sun*, 22 July 1919 ; and unidentified newspaper, 2 August 1919, that describes the opening shots projected on a huge globe. Other New York clippings can be found in MoMA, filed 7/22/19 as " Pasted-up clippings. "

³⁸ Correspondence between E. C. Bidwell, Los Angeles, and Albert Banzhaf, New York, at MoMA.

³⁹ Letter from Guy C. Smith to Albert Banzhaf, Griffith Papers. See also Arthur Ziehm to Wark, 2/24/20 ; McCarthy to Banzhaf, 2/27/20 ; Goldie & Glum to Banzhaf 3/5/20 ; Banzhaf to Albert Griffith 3/19/20, MoMA.

⁴⁰ Albert Banzhaf to E. C. Bidwell 12/23/21, MoMA.

⁴¹ Report of Lab work, D. W. Griffith studio, 12/31/21, MoMA.

⁴² The 1933 footage count is contained in the report from Lloyds Film Storage to D. W. Griffith, Inc., 8 November 1933, MoMA. As David Shepard has pointed out, footage differences this small could be accounted for by simple frame losses in the mechanics of resplicing.

256T] In Babylon's love temple, " Virgins of the Sacred Fires " [RWT 113B] turn into " Virgins of the Sacred Fires of Life " [H 354T]. Elsewhere, the reedited texts are simple efforts at condensation.⁴³

But even the simplest changes have curious nuances. For instance, the wicked High Priest's exultant cry after the overthrow of Belshazzar shifts from, " 'To Bel the glory' " to the more pointed, " 'To God the glory !' " Linguistic references to " intolerance " are pruned, while references to " fate " are multiplied⁴⁴ . The Rhapsode, described in the original titles as a spying " secret-agent " for the High Priest, in the new titles is turned into a misguided dupe, " " unaware of the [high-priest's] dastardly purpose " [H 940].

These, to repeat, were changes made in late 1918 when Griffith was preparing his INTOLERANCE spin-offs. There is absolutely no evidence that winter 1921 was the occasion for any new revisions. Griffith himself would not have had the time : He was off with his editors to New England, testing and revising ORPHANS OF THE STORM at sneak previews. In his absence, it is highly unlikely anyone would have dared meddle with INTOLERANCE on their own authority.

There is even less evidence that INTOLERANCE had to be reassembled " from memory " or that there was any lack of reference material on which to base the restoration. On the contrary, given the speed at which the work was done (no more than a week for the Wertheimer order) and the fact that the studio had at the very least one 1916-1917 print of INTOLERANCE at hand (the so-called Venezuela print, which Griffith kept in his storage vault until the end of his life), the 1921 reconstruction appears to have been little more than a routine, if tedious, mechanical exercise.

In this regard, the interlude provided by THE FALL OF BABYLON and THE MOTHER AND THE LAW is a non-event, a smoke screen that has obscured the true circumstance and nature of INTOLERANCE's final revision. Griffith certainly did make an important overhaul of INTOLERANCE in the 1920s, but if it was unconnected to the 1921 re-assembly of INTOLERANCE, what was the occasion ? And if the changes were deliberate, rather than part of a botched job done from memory, what were the nature of the alterations ? The questions are of interest, because those 1920s changes result in the familiar versions of INTOLERANCE we commonly study today.

THE 1926 INTOLERANCE REVIVAL

The occasion was INTOLERANCE's 1926 revival at the Cameo Theater for Symon Gould's Film Arts Guild, which was part of the first comprehensive Griffith retrospective. That year was also INTOLERANCE's 10th anniversary, and Griffith decided to use the Guild's retrospective as a showcase for his misappreciated film. A reporter sent to interview Griffith for his recently opened THE SORROWS OF SATAN (Paramount, 1926), visited him at the George M. Cohan theater where SORROWS was playing : " Most of the time he spends either Backstage [at the Cohan], or in the darkened auditorium cutting INTOLERANCE, " the paper reported. Reporter Dorothy Herzog sat in on another cutting session, this one at the Cameo Theater, interviewing Griffith while he supervised more alterations. His plan, she learned, was to use the revival at the Cameo as a springboard for a nationwide reissue of INTOLERANCE in early 1927.⁴⁵

The revised print debuted 3 November 1926 and played for six nights. As Griffith predicted to reporters, his film reached a new audience - the New York intelligentsia who wrote his film up in little magazines like *The American Mercury*, *The Little Review*, and *The Greenwich Village Quill*, as well as New York's embryonic art house film community that began comparing Griffith to younger European directors. As part of the Griffith festival, INTOLERANCE was written up as frequently as THE BIRTH OF A NATION and BROKEN BLOSSOMS (UA, 1919). But despite critical raves in the general press (Richard Watts compared INTOLERANCE to THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (Decla, 1920), calling it " a timeless masterpiece... [that] should make the producers of the expensive BEN-HUR [MGM, 1925] feel just a bit ashamed of themselves "), the nationwide tour never materialized. As late as 1929, Griffith kept his hopes alive, exploring the possibilities of a reissue, with a synchronized music and effects track recorded at the Victor studios in Camden, New Jersey. For the occasion, Griffith's business manager wired editor Jimmie Smith : " Ship immediately latest revised print [of] *Intolerance* " and then wired the Victor sound manager : " Since [there is] no satisfactory print of *Intolerance* [in New York], I have sent on

⁴³ Hence the deletion of a title introducing the Boy's trial (" The intolerant public clamor for an example to the lawless element " RWT 290M) and the rephrasing of a title explaining the Kindly officer's hunch (" Feeling the Boy wrongly convicted by some mischance of Fate ... " H1271).

⁴⁴ The bracketed shot and title numbers derive from three documents that list the shots and/or titles for INTOLERANCE : Theodore Huff, *Intolerance ... Shot-by-Shot Analysis* ; the INTOLERANCE copyright registration frames, 24 June 1916 at the Library of Congress ; and the Richard Wallace title list, Directors Guild of America, Los Angeles. To minimize confusion, when shot numbers come from Huff, they are preceded by " H " ; registration frames are labeled " RF, " and titles in the Richard Wallace list by " RWT. "

The early (1917) print of INTOLERANCE that survives is most accurately called Det Danske Filmmuseum print, where it has been housed since 1954. However, it is most commonly called " the Venezuela print " because an identical print, now at the Library of Congress, was discovered in Caracas in 1963. Reference to shots in this print are preceded by " V. "

⁴⁵ Unidentified clipping, filed 11/xx/26 SORROWS OF SATAN Clippings, MoMA. Dorothy Herzog, " H. G. Wells Writes Drama for Griffith, " *New York Daily News*, 11 November 1926, MoMA.

to California for one (which I know will be in good condition. When you have had sufficient time to view these pictures, please advise about synchronization scores."⁴⁶

The sound track was never recorded, and after the disappointing runs of the sonorized *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* and *WAY DOWN EAST*, plans were permanently scrapped. What remained, however, was a silent version of *INTOLERANCE* that Griffith could finally live with. By the end of the 1920s, Griffith finally declared himself satisfied with it - or at least willing to leave it alone.

GRIFFITH'S INTOLERANCE REVISIONS

These are the revisions that the Museum has sought to disassemble in order to reconstruct their commercial debut print. The 1920s alterations have, in fact, been cast as mutilations - the source of those "drastically altered- versions marred by compulsive, crowd-pleasing and carelessly discarded footage. Vincent Canby called these prints "butchered,"⁴⁷

But this does a serious disservice to Griffith's work. Leaving aside the issue of textual "authenticity" momentarily, the 1920s *INTOLERANCE* deserves to be taken seriously as a skillful, even brilliant revision. It is arguable, in fact, that with these final changes, Griffith's protean film finally emerged in its richest, most resonant form. In any case, in light of the spreading notion that Griffith was capricious in creating his changes, it may be worth studying precisely what he did to his film.

But first a caveat: what Griffith changed in the mid-1920s cannot always be differentiated from what he altered in 1918-1919 because, intertitles excepted, we don't know precisely what *INTOLERANCE* looked like when it was reassembled from *THE FALL OF BABYLON* and *THE MOTHER AND THE LAW*. We know that all the new footage specifically shot for his two spin-offs was removed from the reassembled *INTOLERANCE*, so that no footage has ever existed in *INTOLERANCE* shot any later than autumn, 1916.⁴⁸ But we also know that Griffith kept revising intertitles as late as July 1919, when he finally opened *THE FALL OF BABYLON* and *THE MOTHER AND THE LAW* in New York and regarded them as locked into place. Ten of these reworked titles, as we have seen, worked their way into the reassembled *INTOLERANCE* print.

After that, all subsequent changes were matters of deletion and rearrangement of shots and titles. Nothing was re-shot or re-titled in 1926. Changes at this point become nuanced to the point of imperceptibility. Most of the shifts operate at the level of the individual shot. In one or two cases, a sequence is dropped. But otherwise, the new changes involve transposing, shortening, or lengthening shots. The net effect, however, is remarkable: in single strokes, Griffith's film becomes more tautly constructed, darker in tone, and less sentimental.

Most importantly, he deletes the restoration of the Dear One's baby, shortens the Babylonian battle, smooths out the Feast of Belshazzar, abbreviates the Utopian allegory, and revises the Modern Strike. He also gives increased attention to screen continuity. Many of his alterations, in fact, appear influenced by postwar Hollywood's general move to less disruptive continuity editing strategies. He rearranges many of his diegetically ambiguous and unclaimed shots, and introduces new editing combinations in order to render the delimited points-of-view of several screen characters.

It may come as a surprise that there are no thought-determined flashbacks in the earliest versions of *INTOLERANCE*. Although one of the original intertitles claimed that the film would "express thoughts as they might flash across the mind [RWT 7M]," the closest Griffith actually comes in his 1916-

⁴⁶ Richard Watts, Jr., "Glancing at Mr. Griffith's 'Intolerance' After Ten Years," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 7 Nov. 1926. Ray Klune to Jimmie Smith, 19 February 1929; Ray Klune to W. W. Clark, Victor Talking Machine Corp., 21 February 1929, MoMA.

Even after the plans for a sonorized *INTOLERANCE* collapsed, Griffith tried to reissue *THE FALL OF BABYLON* with a sound track. Compare the draft agreement with Actuality Films, Ltd., for distributing *THE FALL OF BABYLON* with synchronized score in Great Britain, 28 September 1935, in miscellaneous file, MoMA.

⁴⁷ Canby, "Seeing 'Intolerance,'" p. 15. See also Harrington, "The Arduous Road to 'Intolerance,'" p. B 10; Williamson, "The Reconstruction," p. 4.

⁴⁸ The additional live action for *THE FALL OF BABYLON* and *THE MOTHER AND THE LAW* was most likely shot in early fall 1918 when, taking advantage of the studio lull occasioned by the Spanish Flu epidemic (there was a four-week industry-wide ban on shooting any new production in October 1918), Griffith quickly recalled his principals for a few days of shooting. Evidence consists of a \$568 lab bill "in extending Babylonian Period of *INTOLERANCE* to one seven-reel picture" (Griffith Studio Journal, 10/9/18, MoMA), and scattered references to preserving the *INTOLERANCE* set and props for additional shooting (see especially Griffith to Banzhaf 8/31/17; Banzhaf to Bidwell 9/24/17; Bitzer to Banzhaf 10/6/17).

The difficulty with this chronology is that both Mae Marsh and Constance Talmadge had long left Griffith by fall 1918. Mae Marsh was filming for Goldwyn at the time; Talmadge was working for Joseph Schenck 3000 miles away in New York. It is also true that no payroll records mention the new shooting, but this is unsurprising. Stockholder reports indicate Griffith paid for all *FALL OF BABYLON/MOTHER AND THE LAW* production expenses personally.

It is possible that the new footage was shot as early as January or February 1917, just before Griffith left for Europe, at the time he first got the idea for the spin-offs and his players were still immediately available. Some support for this date comes from a trade article published a few months later: "Constance Talmadge is making up for some fresh scenes to be added to the Babylonian story of *INTOLERANCE*. Mr. Griffith has added many scenes to that part of the picture since its premiere." Grace Kingsley, "The Wild Woman of Babylon," *Photoplay* (May 1917): 80.

But there are problems here too. Although there is no direct evidence that any Babylon footage was shot after February, the correspondence throughout the rest of 1917 makes it sound as though Griffith still has plans for his Babylon sets. Bitzer directs that Babylon's "best walls" be saved (6/10/17), and as late as May 1918 *INTOLERANCE* props and costumes are being stored (Bitzer to Barry 5/12/18). So, the evidence for when this footage was shot is still inconclusive.

1917 versions are in two declamatory scenes. In the midst of Catherine De Medicis warning about the murderous Protestants at Nimes, he cuts back to Huguenot atrocities. And when the reformers list their complaints to Jenkins' sister (" There's dancing in the cafes, " "drinking in the saloons, " etc.), Griffith cuts to assorted mill-worker diversions. But these register less as images of private thoughts than as visual depictions of conversational topics.

In his postwar revisions, however, Griffith opens up INTOLERANCE with a wide variety of flashbacks and point-of-view shots derived from the private recollections of the Dear One, the Friendless One, the Boy, and the Mountain Girl. A particularly intriguing example of Griffith's vascillation between competing presentational options is the episode where the Mountain Girl peers through a doorway into Belshazzar's Hall to look at the feast and her beloved Belshazzar. Griffith reedited the sequence at least three times, and each new edition shows him trying in different ways to combine the increasingly archaic cinematic conventions of the dream vision (in the manner of a Melies *film truc*), wherein the dreamer both beholds and presents his dream, with a straightforward point-of-view glance-object formula.

In the earliest arrangement (the 1916 registration frames), the Mountain Girl, in close-up, peers screen right ; then the frame cuts to an extreme long shot of the Hall of Babylon, which crimes slightly forward.

What, a Hollywood editor would ask, is the Babylon crane shot doing there ? Plainly it does not represent the Mountain Girl's point-of-view. Instead, it returns us to an omniscient, bird's-eye overview of the spectacle. The Mountain Girl's glance simply motivates another comprehensive display of Babylon's splendor, irrespective of her perspective. The shot that follows, a mid-shot of Belshazzar on the royal divan, registers as an inserted detail of that display. It might also represent the deferred object of the Mountain Girl's gaze, except that when we return to the Mountain Girl in the final shot, she doesn't react, but simply walks away.

As he reworked the short sequence, first in the 1917 print, then in the 1918 THE FALL OF BABYLON, and finally in the 1926 revival, Griffith lurched back and forth in pursuing options. In a 1916-1917 revision, he simply expanded the back end of the sequence with one shot showing the Mountain Girl stepping forward before walking away. Then in 1918, he went all out for a banal glance-object-reaction combination, deleting the transgressive Hall of Babylon crane, and inserting freshly shot footage of the Mountain Girl blowing kisses at Belshazzar, winking, sighing, giggling, and shrugging as she sights her hero. In his final postwar version, however, he reversed himself, ripping out the new footage, reinserting the crane shot, and then motivating the Mountain Girl's final departure with a new shot of a palace guard shoeing her away.

But by far the most dramatic revision comes with the Feast of Belshazzar. Here, too, Griffith worked and reworked his film at least three times. Each version has its own important variants in shot ordering, title arrangement, and even choice of camera takes. Not until the final version does the sequence finally come together as a stylistically coherent whole. This is the rendition that opens with the best-known shot in INTOLERANCE : the graceful exploratory crane that glides clown and into Belshazzar's court. It then continues with a series of languorous tracks, tilts, and pan shots that reinforce the elegant, limpid introduction.

For some reason Griffith's famous aerial shot does not even appear in the surviving 1917 print, the version the Museum of Modern Art reconstruction uses. Instead, Griffith works with a shorter, more prosaic head-on track. And although the famous crane does exist both in the copyright frames and in THE FALL OF BABYLON, it is edited into the sequence differently. The earlier versions are defined by a rigid symmetrical structure, short, more frequently interrupted camera movements, and obtrusive jump cuts. Only in the final rendering does Griffith finally create his free-flowing open-ended display.

The modern strike episode underwent consequential change too. Griffith banished the timid disclaimer found in all earlier versions : The title that says the militia use only blank cartridges when shooting at the workers [RWT 87]. He also deleted the shot of a worker firing his pistol through a slatted gate the company guards, the action that originally triggers the company guards' bloody response. Further, he corrected crude spatial incongruities in the second half of the strike, where the company enforcers originally hopscotched back and forth between factory courtyard and the road outside. Finally, he moved several shots in which the strikers originally register no awareness of the bullets that the guards fire at them to more logical positions in the scene.

The Babylonian battle sequences were condensed with less happy effect, and in my judgment the Museum of Modern Art reconstruction is most successful in approximating Griffith's early design for his grand battle. The earliest version reveals a more coherent narrative and a more comprehensive analysis of warfare than do even the longest of the standard versions. In 1916, Griffith braided together several narrative lines that were subsequently chopped up. The earliest version shows how the Rhapsode first catches the eye of the treacherous High Priest, it motivates the Mighty Man of Valor's head-slicing rampage, and it more systematically juxtaposes the valiant Mountain Girl with the cringing Princess Beloved. The various stages of the battle itself - the ebb and flow of Cyrus' attack, culminating in the repulse by the flame-throwing tank - become more sharply defined. And through it all, Griffith the populist continually contrasts the splendor of the war spectacle with the sweaty labor that produces it. Haggard peasant women ladle boiling on from cauldrons on parapets ; foot soldiers get ground up in the

elephantine war machines they push and pull. Most impressive, the current of antiwar satire runs unusually deep. The appalling butchery of lopped-off limbs and mangled bodies speaks for itself, but just as remarkable, Griffith goes out of his way to implicate organized religion in the carnage. In the most devastating war scene he ever directed, Griffith juxtaposes an old peasant woman (Kate Bruce) making a humble offering to her God ("Ishtar, my offering – three turnips and a carrot") with three shots showing how her prayers are answered: a Persian soldier pulls an arrow out of his mouth, a Babylonian foot soldier buries his teeth in another man's neck, and blood gushes out of a third soldier's stomach as a spear is pushed into him [H 807-813].

Much of this is lost in the postwar condensation; remarkably, the rendition of the Babylonian battle that circulated during World War I was more horrifying and pacifistic than the shortened version that played in the isolationist 1920s.

The most controversial decision for modern audiences, though, was the decision to delete the restoration of the Dear One's baby. Literalists have frequently wondered what happened to the infant last seen neglected in a metal crib at the Jenkins Hospital, and modern audiences applaud loudly when it is returned to Mae Marsh and Bobby Harron safe and sound. Griffith himself kept changing his mind about how to dispose of the child. But the final decision to delete the baby's return is an interesting one. The trouble with the baby's restoration is that it makes the end of the Modern Story too tidy, smoothing over the prickly social issues that have been raised and the emotional trajectory of the reconstituted couple. With closure redoubled (the baby is restored immediately after the Boy had been rescued from the gallows), the Utopian allegory seems more tacked on than ever, and the catastrophic endings of the historic stories further undermined.

This summary of the changes Griffith made in his film and the kinds of problems he sought to correct does not do justice to the many nuances implicit in even the smallest alterations. Not all changes are equally felicitous. But none of them appear either capricious or careless. Indeed, were the chronology reversed – had Griffith started with his final edition and then changed his film to resemble the 1917 print by inserting the disclaimer that the militia used only blanks, then scrambling up locational orderings of the strike scene, expanding the titles with added verbiage, and substituting second-string takes in the Hall of Babylon sequence – then one could plausibly argue that Griffith had grown timid, had lost his skill as an editor, or had even "butchered" his original.

CONCLUSION

If this tangled history points to any moral, it is that any effort to find a definitive INTOLERANCE using only a historical spotlight is doomed. Other criteria than the simple chronological position of a text must be used. Inevitably in evaluating revisions, the claims of an original compete with the authority of the artist's final word. Ordinarily, the tendency is to treat the artist's final revisions as definitive, whether the post-publication revisions, take six years, as with James' *The Ambassadors*, or 36 years (and 13 editions) as with Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The reasoning is that the final version is the last to pass under the artist's scrutiny, and therefore, the one most likely to carry the author's own stamp of approval.

But the rule has many exceptions. There are special instances where editors have called the artist's first published text definitive, peeling away his later emendations. And unruly works, ranging from *Gluck's Orfeo ed Eurydice* to Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, have prompted editors to carve out genetic composite texts by tracing and collating various stages of the artist's actual composition. In film, the reconstructions of Gance's *NAPOLEON* (S.G.F., 1927), Capra's *LOST HORIZON* (Columbia, 1937), and Fritz Lang's *METROPOLIS* (Ufa, 1926), work from the genetic principle, endeavoring to restore the fullest versions of protean films that their directors altered on several occasions over an extended period.⁴⁹

But neither criteria – first edition or final revision – is in and of itself absolute. The knotty problem of what might constitute a "definitive" or "standard" INTOLERANCE, as with any text that has evolved gradually, must be treated as a critical as well as an archival issue – with all the foibles and idiosyncrasies inherent in subjective critical and aesthetic judgments. Were we to insist rigidly on the law of the director's last word, we confront Frank Capra's tentative authorization of a colorized *IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* (Liberty Film, 1946) in the early 1980s; if we insist absolutely on first editions, we are stuck with hastily edited opening night versions of 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (MGM, 1968) and *GODFATHER III* (Paramount, 1990) that the directors themselves disavowed and reedited.

The final criteria in determining which text to restore must necessarily combine subjective aesthetic judgments with archival research. Which text has the most to offer, which is the richest, which proves the most rewarding? In the case of INTOLERANCE, the burden of proof for using the New York opening as the copy text must be with those who claim, against all the historical data and the evidence within the film itself, that Griffith was operating with diminished resources when he made his final

⁴⁹ Alan Stanbrock, "As It Was In the Beginning," *Sight and Sound* (Winter, 1989/90): 28-32 evaluates the decisions such film restorations have made.

revisions and that the 1916 cut was the version Griffith meant, and failed, to restore. But trying to recover Griffith's 1926 version is fraught with difficulties of its own.

It has become customary to speak of the " standard " version of INTOLERANCE, but as the reader who has read this far may appreciate, there was never a single definitive circulating text. In fact, even in the 1930s and 1940s no two surviving prints were quite the same. Today, each of the " standard " INTOLERANCE prints lacks some minor scene or shot, and each one contains some scene, species of intertitle, cluster of shots, shot arrangement, or shot length, that none of the others have. The Rohauer print, for instance, bisects the middle of the " Babylonian Marriage Market " sequence with shots of the Dear One in her tenement. The Museum's circulation prints lack the Mountain Girl's lashing out at Bel's treacherous priests and the High Priest's subsequent condemnation of her to be whipped ; it also abbreviates the final moments of the Boy's rescue at the gallows. Griffith's own print (currently at UCLA) omits the introduction of the Princess Beloved. And the Museum of Modern Art print from which Theodore Huff compiled his shot analysis in the late 1930s differs from virtually all these survivors. The ways in which these prints vary are not always of great significance, but the unnerving proliferation of variant INTOLERANCES became in itself an important incentive to try to find an authoritative antecedent.⁵⁰

The Museum's response, to discredit the current versions and search for a 1916 original, distorts the evidence and dodges the issue. However useful the idea of reconstructing a 1916 debut print may be, it still leaves undone the task of creating a comprehensive version of Griffith's 1926 INTOLERANCE - the film he meant us to view. The 35-mm and 16-mm prints circulated by the Museum, Killiam Shows, Blackhawk Films, and Raymond Rohauer, are reasonable approximations, but each is flawed. By far, the most substantial effort at comparing and collating prints thus far has been the videotape/laser disc version produced by Film Preservation Associates, distributed by Kino International on video and by Image Entertainment on laser disc. But no comprehensive 16-mm or 35-mm master exists ; nor does Film Preservation Associates have access to the variety of prints available to the Museum.

No one should be naive enough to assume that a perfect " uncorrupted " text of INTOLERANCE, somehow free of critical judgments, upon which the entire body of Griffith scholars would agree, can be made. Given INTOLERANCE's long gestation period and the piecemeal way in which it was revised, this is not in the cards. Decisions have to be made ; balances of probability must be calculated. But it is certainly possible to create from the variety of archival materials a viable print that could serve as a " standard " text.

In a more rational world, the creation of such a text would have taken priority over the approximation of a rough draft. But the task remains - and will probably have to wait another decade or two. The Museum is in the unique position of being able to assemble such a print. But the danger is that having invested so heavily in its reconstruction (an estimated \$120,000) it will be discouraged from investing more money in INTOLERANCE to create yet another master print.

The Museum's reconstruction project represents far and away the most ambitious effort at reassembling INTOLERANCE thus far : the retrieval of a draft buried under various layers of revision. And if the reconstruction is seriously flawed, it is also full of interest. To see even an approximation of Griffith's original design for his Babylonian battle scenes is a revelation. And if, in general, the reconstruction resembles a rough cut, it opens the film up in a fascinating way with background details (particularly in the Huguenot and Biblical stories) that were later lost on the cutting room floor. At the same time the reconstruction makes the film look even more ragged, a frustrating skein of sketched-in detail and disappearing trails. It reinforces the feeling that viewers often have watching the final result:

⁵⁰ In helping to explain those variants, it may be useful to sketch in the rest of INTOLERANCE's exhibition history. In its revised form, INTOLERANCE was revived occasionally throughout the 1930s and 1940s, both commercially and as a museum artifact, while film historians and theorists started to include it in their pantheons of international film. The most influential of these screenings was sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art in the mid-1930s at the Dalton School Auditorium, which also marked the starting point of the momentous relationship between Griffith and the Museum's newly founded Film Department. As with the Film Theater Guild's retrospective 10 years earlier, the 1936 Dalton Auditorium screening triggered important articles on INTOLERANCE and essays on Griffith's work in general. (For reviews, Mark Van Doren, " Twenty Years After, " *Nation* (1 April 1936) ; Richard Watts, Jr., " DW Griffith, " *New Theatre* III (November 1936) : 6-8.)

Two years later Griffith made a gift of all his films to the Museum of Modern Art, and as part of that donation, gave the Museum two-tinted nitrate prints of INTOLERANCE, several thousand feet of outtakes, and the original camera negative. It was from this material that the Museum's first black and white 16-mm circulation prints were created, and its own 35-mm archive prints were formed. (Eileen Bowser letter to author, 6 November 1990 ; Anderson, " No Music, " p. 158.)

Meanwhile Griffith, who had become the sole legal owner of INTOLERANCE when he bought the film rights at Wark's 1921 bankruptcy auction, circulated INTOLERANCE on his own to commercial art house theaters in New York and Los Angeles. It was on one of these occasions that INTOLERANCE battled the censors one final time. When the 55th Street Playhouse exhibited the film in 1942, the New York Censor Board demanded it be modified. Twenty-five years after its premiere, the censors still found the women in the Love Temple offensive : " REEL 3 : Eliminate all views of girls where naked breasts are displayed. REASONS : Indecent. " (Letter to Joseph Balaber from Irwin Esmond, 3 September 1942. From INTOLERANCE file, State Education Department, University of the State of New York.)

Griffith's print stayed in the director's possession at the Knickerbocker Hotel in Hollywood. Shortly before his death, he made a gift of it to the hotel manager who eventually traded it to Los Angeles theater owner and film collector, John Hampton. Hampton in turn included INTOLERANCE in the 1988 sale of his collection to David Packard ; Griffith's personal print is currently part of the Packard collection at UCLA. (David Shepard to author ; David Packard to author.)

that plot lines look like they could go on more or less forever. In his ultimate perversity, Griffith piled up a mountain of detail and then set himself the task of driving through it, paring the film down where he could, rearranging shots when new comparisons or motifs caught his eye.

Part of the Museum's effort to reconstruct Griffith's film must be understood as a way of responding to this maddening, tantalizing work. In no other film has Griffith appeared as playful, experimental, or open-ended. *INTOLERANCE*, among other things, is a work that actively defies the notion of a fixed text. And, in a peculiar sense it is when the Museum's reconstruction grows most bizarre—as when it step-prints the Babylonian dancers and Belshazzar's Hall to look like footage out of a Ken Jacobs experimental short, or when it interrupts dizzying chases with mutilated registration frames even if the frames show only the darkness of a completed fadeout—it is at these moments that the reconstruction appears to be entering into the mad spirit of things with its response.

By forcing us to confront the issue of a suitable text, and by drawing attention to the shifts and rearrangements Griffith kept making in his film, the Museum has shown another way that *INTOLERANCE* can be approached and enjoyed. The game is a good one. •

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