

a genuine “thinking Romanticism otherwise” (14). But this book is certainly an intriguing and successful-on-its-own-terms beginning to such a project.

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SIMON BROWN. *Cecil Hepworth and the Rise of the British Film Industry 1899–1911*. Exeter Studies in Film History. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2016. Pp. 256. \$100.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.213

In *Cecil Hepworth and the Rise of the British Film Industry 1899–1911*, Simon Brown paints a portrait of early filmmaker and producer Cecil M. Hepworth and a picture of the emerging British film industry during the Edwardian era. Apprehensive of broad approaches to film history, Brown instead equips himself with a fine brush, similar to those used in the early days of cinema for coloring films frame by frame. This strategy allows him to fill in the minute details and highlight the peripheral areas in historical accounts that otherwise might be easily (dis)missed. Brown’s chosen mode aligns well with such methodologies as Foucauldian genealogy and media archaeology (Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka), a turn to “the new film history,” and a recent approach to “film history as media archaeology” (Thomas Elsaesser). These trends offer novel perspectives, dislocating accepted conceptions of history and revealing inconsistencies in evolutionary outlines of cultural ontogenesis. Similarly, in this book and his other writings, Brown attempts to complicate our notions of history, searching for absences, gaps, and suppressions in the historical chart. His revisionist methodology resists explanatory grand narratives, bringing to light minor histories and micro-stories.

In *Cecil Hepworth*, Brown focuses in particular on the period in British film from 1904 to 1911, years declared “depressing” and “stagnant” by such film historians as Georges Sadoul, Rachael Low, and Charles Barr. According to Barr, British film pioneers “ran the first lap, passed on the baton to the Americans, and then stopped exhausted” (“Before *Blackmail*: Silent British Cinema,” in *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy, 2009, 148). Brown, who quotes Barr’s statement in an opening epigraph, argues that this account is far from exhaustive, reinstating a vision of 1904–11 as a period of important changes and setting out to prove that the British film industry during these formative years was marked by its own pace. Brown further suggests that the pejorative attitude dominating the discussions of this phase can be partially attributed to the perpetuation of the *pioneer myth*. Early filmmakers, such as James Williamson, Robert Paul, George Albert Smith, and Cecil Hepworth have been cast as visionary but amateurish innovators. Hepworth, the son of a magic-lanternist, reinforced this conception of himself in his memoirs, *Came the Dawn: Memories of a Film Pioneer* (1951). Contrary to this somewhat biased account, Brown chooses to describe the “Master Mind of the House of Hepworth” (to borrow a 1919 title from Gertrude M. Allen) as much more practical and pragmatic. Hepworth started his company in 1899 and went out of business by 1924. As opposed to Williamson and Paul, who were forced to leave film production due to its crisis, Hepworth persevered and tried to adapt his business to the changing industry. In order to espouse this redemptive vision of Hepworth, Brown describes the role of his company, Hepworth Manufacturing Company, Ltd., within the three sectors of the film industry: production, distribution, and exhibition.

Brown’s opening chapter offers a balanced account of Hepworth’s activities in film production. The profits from early actualities such as *Funeral of Queen Victoria* (1901) and *The Coronation of King Edward VII* (1902) prompted the company’s move to more active film production. Hepworth’s London sales office in Cecil Court (nicknamed Flicker Alley due to

the congregation of film businesses in this street) was opened in 1902. Although this office stayed the same, Hepworth's studios in Walton-on-Thames underwent two prominent waves of expansion. The successes of *Rescued by Rover* (1905), an important milestone in narrative filmmaking, and the Tilly girls comedic series launched in 1910 cemented the development of Hepworth's company.

In the second and third chapters, we encounter a wide-ranging examination of film distribution. As Brown explains in chapter 2, the arrival of the rental sector in 1905–10 marked a turning point in distribution. The development of film rental versus direct sales led to the formation of the tripartite structure of the film industry but also generated a crisis in the sphere of production. In chapter 3 Brown explores how Hepworth's company adjusted to these changes and analyzes its strategies to encourage sales. The highlight of this chapter is its discussion of genre in early film. Brown acknowledges the problem with the notion of genre, which grew out of our understanding of the subsequent development of film. Brown regards Rick Altman's approach to genre as a discursive category to be consonant with Hepworth's special catalogue strategies of linking films by content. As such, Hepworth already "spoke" the language of genre by highlighting the recognizable subject matter in his catalogues.

Brown centers the fourth chapter of the book on exhibition. He persuasively argues that to have a full picture of the film industry one needs to consider the number of screenings and the length of films in circulation as opposed to counting only the number of releases. To trace Hepworth's role in this sphere, Brown examines special columns in such contemporary journals as *Bioscope* and *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, in which exhibitors were invited to publish information about their showings. Brown provides here a case study of Hepworth's films produced in March 1909 to demonstrate how they circulated within the market.

Brown's study is an illuminating and substantial addition to British and global film scholarship, an impressive combination of solid academic research and theoretical insights. He deploys ample evidence from a variety of sources, and his reference to previous works of scholarship serves as a valid basis for the departures of his own analysis, such as revisiting the "pioneer myth" and the concept of genre in early cinema. There are some shortcomings to the book, though they do not take away from its unquestionable quality. Brown guides the reader through a complex picture of the film industry with clarity and precision, but he sometimes falls into repetition. Regrettably, Brown chooses not to discuss Hepworth's Vivaphone shorts. He notes in the first appendix that only scattered references to these shorts can be traced today, which is why he does not include them in Hepworth's filmography. Given Brown's methodology, however, this should not prevent him from integrating them more fully into his investigation. For example, Hepworth's early synchronized recordings of political speeches by Andrew Bonar Law and F. E. Smith deserve special mention. Brown briefly states that Hepworth worked on the invention of the Vivaphone sound system but does not attempt to elaborate on how this technology affected his business. Hepworth's exploration of sound-image relations responded to the wave of interest in sound synchronization in the market and could have been inspected with respect to his strategies in the sphere of production or exhibition. One hopes this neglect does not originate from the tendency in film studies sometimes to relegate sound to a secondary aspect and that Brown might undertake a separate redux study of this phenomenon elsewhere.

Hepworth opened his memoirs by saying, "This is the story of a man whose life was devoted to the making of films, but it is *not* a categorical account of the film industry, although the two stories ran parallel for many years" (9). In the spirit of parallelism, I will close this review by observing that Simon Brown has managed to furnish a masterful account of the early British film industry accompanied by the fascinating story of Cecil Hepworth, the dedicated moviemaker.

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