

“Visual Style in early works of Douglas Fairbanks”

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ABSTRACT

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Douglas Fairbanks, the actor, the star, and the artist, has been the subject of many scholarly articles and books. However, little has been written about Fairbanks as an auteur. While some scholars have referred to him as an auteur, the designation is generally reserved for directors rather than actors and producers. The present thesis, through a systematic analysis of the visual style in Fairbanks' films from 1915 to 1918, demonstrates how some unique characteristics of his films—such as the Average Shot Length and use of Camera Movements, Intertitles, etc.—follow a systematic trend over time and with various directors at the helm, while at the same time deviating from its contemporary industry trends. The only common denominator among the 18 films studied in this sample is Fairbanks, as opposed to a director, writer, cinematographer, or even studio. The findings of this study, coupled with historical accounts painting Fairbanks as the man in charge, suggest that the term *auteur* is an appropriate designation for this silent-era star.

Dedicated to my mom

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Introduction

The present thesis studies the evolution of visual style in Douglas Fairbanks' films from 1915 to 1918. In doing so, the thesis uses statistical analysis of different parameters of the film including Average Shot Length (ASL), type of the shot, camera movement, pace of editing, and the stylistic characteristics of films, among other things. The method was first introduced by Barry Salt (1974). This method was selected because it allows film scholars to empirically evaluate the aesthetic and stylistic decisions made by filmmakers and draw data-driven conclusions.

Douglas Fairbanks was selected as the subject of the present study as he, along with Charlie Chaplin, D. W. Griffith and Mary Pickford founded United Artists in mid 1919, which gave them more creative control over their films afterwards. However, Fairbanks made his reputation prior to establishment of United Artists; therefore, the present study focuses on his work in a period when he did not have the financial backing and the creative control that comes with co-owning a studio.

Stardom and Auteur theory are at the heart of the present study. The aim of the present thesis is to investigate Fairbank's authorship by analyzing the visual style in the work of this silent-era star. The present study attempts to answer the overarching question, "Could Douglas Fairbanks be considered an auteur?" To address this question, first the concept of auteur needs to be explicated and the criteria for evaluating authorship need to be explored. Following a discussion of authorship and auteurism in Chapter 1 of the

present thesis, the research question will be broken down into three parts and each part will be addressed separately.

These parts include establishing a meaningful contribution on the part of Douglas Fairbanks to the stylistic and aesthetic decision-making process behind the camera. After all, if he has not been involved in any such processes, the end result cannot be attributed to him. Then, it needs to be established that there are some stylistic similarities (norms) between his films, otherwise the visual style could be attributed to random chance—or if they change depending on the director of each film—to the director rather than Fairbanks himself. Another factor that needs to be considered is how much of an influence the overall industry trend had on Fairbanks' films and how often did his films break the mold.

To have a better understanding of the data and to place it in a broader context of that era of cinema, it would be necessary to study why Fairbanks managed to find his personal style and how he achieved it. To study the history and the context in which Fairbanks was active, the present thesis will review the literature on authorship and auteur theory, the history of silent-era films and movie studios as well as normative accounts of how Fairbanks conducted business. To that end the present study will review production documents, as well as interviews and memoirs of Fairbanks' contemporaries and those familiar with his work to gain insight on Fairbanks' vision, his level of involvement in the production process, and how he was viewed by others.

Furthermore, Cinemetrics statistics—an online tool, created by Yuri Tsivian for measuring the shots and average length of shots of films—will be used to compare the data of this study to other films and figures of that period of cinema. Such comparison is

necessary in order to identify Fairbanks' personal style and consistency in his films among others who may or may not have been auteurs.

Chapter 1

Literature Review:

Auteur theory and an introduction to Douglas Fairbanks

Auteur theory has undergone numerous revisions since its introduction. The term “auteur” was first used by Jean Epstein in 1921 (Epstein, 1946) but it did not gain momentum until after the publication of Alexandre Astruc's "la camera-stylo" in *Ecran Français*, No.144, in 1948. Astruc posited that the silent cinema's attempt at conveying meaning through symbolic associations—for example, the depiction of falling leaves to convey passage of time—is unnecessary as meanings exist “within the image itself” (Astruc, 1948). He went on to say that it is possible to produce cinematic works that rival the works of authors such as William Faulkner and Albert Camus in their complexity and profundity of meaning. As a result, auteur theory became the focus of debates through *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s where they recognized film directors as the distinctive authorial voice of a film's creative vision. In 1957, André Bazin defined auteurism as “choosing in the artistic creation the personal factor as a criterion of reference, and then postulating its permanence and even its progress from one work to the next” (Stam, 2000).

For years the term auteur was closely associated with directors, with Peter Wollen rejecting the notion that the director could be “subordinate” to another auteur as the “process of performance, [and] the treatment of a subject, conceals the latent production of a quite new text, the production of the director as an auteur” (Wollen, 1996, p. 113). Maule (2008) believes that auteurism is not only closely related to the director, but also the film culture of the director's country of origin. Since the mid-1950s the auteur represents “a

symbolic figure associated with modes of film production and reception as well as discursive formations that view cinema as a cultural practice and an important sector of the cultural patrimony” (p. 14).

However, the concept of auteurism has become increasingly contentious in recent years as many critics and contemporary filmmakers have come to acknowledge the collaborative nature of film production. In Hollywood, Rist (1988) argues, the cinematographer controls the camera; therefore, the meaningful style elements in the work of cameramen complicate the issue of visual authorship. Advances in modern filmmaking technology such as computer-generated imagery (CGI) emphasize the role of the visual effects department and deemphasize the role of director and *mise-en-scène*. Such advances also undermine the notion that the director is the only authority and visionary behind film. Barrett Hodsdon (2017), for example, points to the extensive use of CGI in contemporary Hollywood blockbusters and argues that unlike in the heyday of auteurism, *mise-en-scène* in today’s discussions of auteurism is no longer relevant. In Hodsdon’s view, however, the media plays an important role in auteur identification (Hodsdon, 2017).

The challenge to the notion of director as the primary ‘author’ of a film also has its roots in arguments made by critics and scholars who believe screenwriters also deserve authorship credit (Goldman, 1984). For example, Pauline Kael (1980) questions the authorship of Orson Welles in his seminal film *Citizen Kane* (1941) by arguing that screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz should receive equal credit as ‘author’ of the film.

Another scholar rejecting the idea of director as auteur is Mark Gallagher, who views authorship as a “collaborative” effort in contemporary cinema. Authority, in his view, is one of the qualities of authorship that requires collaborative decision making among the

production teams as “authorship involves processes of creation, management, negotiation, and recognition” (Gallagher, 2014). Some of the examples of such team efforts are long time collaboration among directors such as Soderbergh, Scorsese, Eastwood with their cinematographers, editors, sound designers and other craftspeople.

David Andrews makes a distinction between auteur theory and auteurism, which he defines as “an attitude toward film authorship that has been with us since the silent period” (Andrews, 2014). He finds the attack on auteur theory by critics over the years unwarranted, arguing that “academically speaking, auteurism as a practical phenomenon never really left the scene.” Andrews believes “auteurism is one of art cinema’s most basic building blocks” and reserved the use of auteurism only for studying art-cinema which is “modeled on the auteur critics’ original application of the auteur theory to Hollywood directors of genre films” (Andrews, 2014). He argues that even without historical and contextual evidence, one could label a “cult director an ‘auteur’ and a cult movie an ‘art movie’ based on their use of motifs and techniques” (Andrews, 2014).

Thomas Elsaesser (1995) acknowledges that the notion of auteur during the Hollywood studio system was different than it is today. He estimated that “from 1915-1945” the producer of the film was the most powerful man in terms of selecting the cast and crew including the director of the picture, and directors were just one of the members of the team like any other roles which were under the contract of the studios. Aljean Harmetz shares this view and cites it as the reason why auteur theory “collapses against the reality of the studio system” (Harmetz, 2002, p. 29).

Christopher Beach (2015) also advocates a new direction in auteur studies by shifting the discourse from director as the auteur to the collaborative relationship between the director and other members in particular the role of cinematographers in creation and development of stylistic results in the film. Beach cites the collaboration between director D.W. Griffith and cinematographer G.W. Bitzer, which resulted in more than 500 motion pictures in the early 20th century and argues that it was Bitzer, who “provided [Griffith] with the brilliant images out of which he was able to fashion his powerful visual narratives” (Beach, 2015, p. 19).

To the same degree that shots filmed on location have the visual style of the person who operates the camera (Rist, 1988), or that of the director, or the producer who may have authority over everyone else (Harmetz, 2002), it can be argued that the star of the film may also have a say in the overall style of the film as well. After all examples of actors cashing in on their star image to influence the film industry is an all too familiar sight (Cohan, 2000) from actors improvising on the set (Waxman, 1980) to actors holding veto power over “the film's screenplay, director, and co-stars” (DailyTelegraph, 2010; Diniz, 2008).

One notable early example of stars exerting authority over the creative directions of their films is Charles Spencer (Charlie) Chaplin. Prior to being listed as a director, Chaplin exercised a great deal of control over the films he starred in which led to his eventual departure from Keystone to join Essanay (“S and A” for co-founders Spoon and Anderson) in 1914 (Neibaur, 2000). By Chaplin’s own account the condition of Essanay Studios was far from “inspiring,” but “it didn’t worry” him because he was promised “the full cooperation of the studio staff and carte blanche for all their facilities” (Chaplin &

Robinson, 2012). The other early example is Douglas Fairbanks, who along with Chaplin and others founded United Artists a few years later. The following section will discuss Fairbanks' star image and demonstrates how he could have used this image to exert creative control on his movies.

Fairbanks the Star

Douglas Fairbanks was among the most popular stars of the 1920s. He was named the top favorite actor by male high school students in a 1923 survey and was one of the two "most consistently popular stars" along with Harold Lloyd, according to a 1922-1927 study by James Mark Purcell (Koszarski, 1994, p.33). Even before his film career, Fairbanks was a successful Broadway actor and his extraordinary success is attributed to his ability to modulate his stage persona to the then new medium as well as his likeability (Curtis, 2011).

When Fairbanks moved to Hollywood, the star system was just beginning to form and did not exist as it does today, but Fairbanks knew how to manipulate his star persona to appeal to the masses unlike many of his contemporaries who had allowed others to take charge of these matters to their own detriment (Schickel, 1974, p. 5).

Richard Dyer talks about the notion of 'charisma' within the discourse of stardom and points to an early attempt by Alistair Cook in analyzing Fairbanks' star image, where Cook "accounts for Fairbanks' stardom in terms of the appropriateness of his 'Americanness' to the contemporary situation of America" (Dyer & McDonald, 1998, p.31).

Fairbanks' popularity was not limited to America. Anupama Kapse acknowledges Fairbanks' star-image and screen charisma, and points to his influence in India's film industry where Indian stunt films were inspired by him for many years (Bean, Kapse, & Horak, 2014). Fairbanks' popularity among other Hollywood stars influenced the

development of the Japanese star system (Hole, Jelača, Kaplan, & Petro, 2017). Fairbanks had fan bases in the United Kingdom, France, and Russia and was “one of the most popular American stars throughout the period of silent features” (Koszarski, 1994, p. 268).

Fairbanks has been inspiring artists for over a century. According to Michael Sragow, Victor Fleming’s biographer, Douglas Fairbanks had a major influence on Fleming and many other stars. “He inspired not only musical stars like Gene Kelly, comedy stars like Cary Grant, and action stars like Errol Flynn, Tyrone Power, Burt Lancaster, and Jackie Chan but also the creators of Superman and Batman” (Sragow, 2013, p. 43). According to Sragow, Fleming considered Fairbanks to be even better than Shakespeare (Sragow, 2013, p. 44).

Fairbanks started his screen career by joining the Triangle Film Corp which hired many well-known artists including Griffith and Mack Sennett (Bean, 2011). The Triangle Film Corporation was a new company at the time with Griffith serving as a producer/supervisor. Griffith didn’t believe in Fairbanks, but his first film at Triangle, *The Lamb* (1915), was such a huge success that it led to Fairbanks teaming up with Anita Loos (writer) and John Emerson (director) to make a series of popular comedies (Koszarski, 1994, p. 270).

According to Fairbanks’ son, while working with Loos and Emerson, Douglas Fairbanks insisted that “the final decision as to what to do always rested with him.” With the exception of *The Lamb*, and *Double Trouble*, Fairbanks was always the “de facto ‘boss’ of the production” on the films he was in (Schickel, 1974, p. 43).

By 1916, Fairbanks’ salary had risen from \$2,000 a week to \$10,000 a week. Griffith, on the other hand, was busy with other projects and never actually directed anything for

Triangle. He later described the company as the “worst managed business in film history” (Koszarski, 1994, p. 68).

After a couple of years, when Triangle started to fail and its key producers moved to Paramount, Fairbanks left the company to join Artcraft where his public persona, an important component of his star image, was maintained. “During the Artcraft era, certain aspects of the Fairbanks persona were adjusted and became prominent. His youthfulness and athleticism were adapted to stress good health, exercise, and clean living, while his optimism was easily translated into good humor in the face of obstacles” (Bean, 2011).

In the early stages of stardom, Barry King writes, “the tendency is to construct the persona of the star through symbols tied to social conventions. Essence is not in personal details but in social standing” (King, 2015). Thus, it was important for Fairbanks to present an image of himself that would be perceived by audiences to be in high social standing. Masculinity and “manliness” were the characteristics that could get him there.

Michael Williams compares Fairbanks’ masculinity to Herculean heroes and points out Fairbanks’ attention to his physique by citing articles by Fairbanks which appeared in *Picture Show* in 1920 where he addressed his readers with “physical rather than artistic struggle.” Fairbanks also wrote for *Photoplay* from 1917 to 1918. The purpose of it, according to King, was to “display Fairbanks’ own version of robust masculinity, providing wisdom and insight on the ways of manhood for, principally, young male readers” (Williams, 2013).

Scott Curtis (2011) cites Fairbanks’s hard work, business acumen, publicity strategy, and “his ability to surround himself with top talents” as the reasons behind his success. In

addition to making thirty movies from 1915 up to 1920, Fairbanks co-founded United Artists, published books and articles, and helped the war effort by selling bonds.

Perhaps this energetic, even indefatigable star became so popular because he projected an image of Americans as they wanted to see themselves, and as they still want to see themselves: as youthful and athletic, optimistic and adventurous, decisive and democratic. Ultimately, at a crucial point in the nation's entry on the world stage, Fairbanks gave his domestic and worldwide audience a pleasing vision of what it meant to be American (Curtis, 2011, p. 219).

With a robust star image and a global fan base, Fairbanks had the directors of his films to go out of their way to push limits. As Jeffrey Vance, Robert Cushman, and Tony Maietta in their book *Douglas Fairbanks* note, Fairbanks was the “real force” behind and in front of the camera. “[Fairbanks] was a cinema auteur over thirty years before the concept was developed” (Vance, Maietta, & Cushman, 2008a). Vance et al. made this claim based mostly on anecdotal accounts of how Fairbanks made an effort to influence other cast and crew during the production.

According to Kevin Brownlow, quite a few directors created their best work under Fairbanks' control, but failed to replicate their success independent of him (Goessel, 2016). Douglas Fairbanks Junior claims that his father had great respect for those directors, who he characterized as “largely friends who would carry out exactly what he wanted” (Goessel, 2016, p. 102). Junior referred to them as “super-assistants,” who while knowledgeable and intelligent, served merely as coordinators and executives on the set and were “clearly required to follow my father's instructions” (Sragow, 2013, p. 46).

Tracy Goessel cites *The Good Bad Man*, as the first film to be largely influenced by the star from the script to direction. He had a significant say in the making of this film, and it shows” (Goessel, 2016, p. 105). Despite writing the script for most of his films, Fairbanks did not seek credit for his efforts as he “disdained the annoying habit of some egocentric producers to slather their names all over the credits: Produced by... Directed by... Written by... and Starring...” (Fairbanks & Leigh, 2006, p. xvi). Instead, Fairbanks often gave screenplay credits to others such as his secretary or shared credit under an alias. “Of his many pseudonyms, the one most frequently used on his screenplays is Elton Thomas, which is actually comprised of his two middle names. (*His birth name was Douglas Elton Thomas Ulman. The last name was later changed to Fairbanks*)” (Fairbanks & Leigh, 2006, p. xvi).

The idea for Triangle was to produce high quality movies so they signed big names like Griffith, Ince and Sennett to supervise the big Broadway stars that they had lured into the movie business. However it failed to make memorable pictures bar from the films that came out of the collaboration between Fairbanks, director John Emerson and writer Anita Loos, (Lahue, 1971). After *The Americano*, Fairbanks left Triangle. While he had his own production unit, he did not have a distribution arm until he co-founded United Artists.

One of the reasons that the Fairbanks-Loos-Emerson team parted ways was Fairbanks’ authority and demand over his future films. According to *Exhibitors Herald* “the disagreement arose over the type of stories which Fairbanks was to do in the future. Fairbanks, the two say, wishes to appear in romantic comedy-drama rather than in the comedy satires which have made him famous”. This also enabled Allan Dwan to step in as the director of some of Fairbanks’ films. The article continues, “Artcraft announces that the

future Fairbanks productions will be directed by Allan Dwan” (“Anita Loos Quits Douglas Fairbanks; Emerson Also Free,” 1917). Dwan was an engineer and his first job in film industry was supervising the lights that he had built and sold to a studio. He had later become responsible for lighting some of Fairbanks’ pictures before directing *The Habit of Happiness* in 1916 (Brownlow, 1968, p. 97).

While the evidence presented point to undeniable influence by Douglas Fairbanks on his pictures, the notion of Fairbanks as auteur is not widely accepted and the evidence offered by Vance and colleagues in *Douglas Fairbanks* does not, by itself, merit the use of the term auteur to refer to Fairbanks. To substantiate this claim, the present study attempts to view historical documents in conjunction with a systematic technical analysis of Fairbanks’ early films to address the following research question:

RQ: Could Douglas Fairbanks be considered an auteur?

Given the various aspects of the concept of auteur, discussed earlier in this chapter, several questions need to be addressed before a determination can be made about whether one is an auteur. Therefore, the following questions will also be addressed in the present thesis:

- To what extent was Fairbanks involved in the aesthetic and stylistic decision-making processes of his films?
- To what extent are the styles of Fairbanks’ films (made between 1915 and 1920) similar? And what are the stylistic and aesthetic similarities and/or differences between those films?
- To what extent does the style of Fairbanks’ films conform to, or deviate from, the style of other films made in the same era?

The first of the three sub-questions will be addressed through a through historical analysis while the latter two will be addressed through empirical analysis of Fairbanks' films.

Chapter 2

Method

The present study attempts to determine whether Douglas Fairbanks can be considered an auteur. To that end the present study should first identify the presence (or absence) of systematic patterns in Fairbanks' work. This chapter documents the steps taken to study such patterns through statistical analysis.

Statistical analysis provides three objectives. The first is "to offer a quantitative analysis of style" by gathering data of formal stylistic parameters of films, second "for the purposes of authorship attribution" in which the frequency of stylistic choices within an artist's body of work is collected regardless of the subject of the films—which helps to recognize the artist's personal style, and third "for purposes of identifying the chronology of works" by using statistical changes in an author's body of work that can be measured, and where a pattern in chronological order can be extracted (Elsaesser & Buckland, 2002).

As detailed in Chapter 1, while scholars may have different views about what constitutes authorship and auteurism, they all seem to be in agreement about one thing, historicity and patterns. An auteur has to demonstrate authorship over a period of time and through various works, as one masterpiece does not an auteur make. Therefore, through gathering data on formal stylistic parameters and frequency of stylistic choices in conjunction with data on the chronology of these choices, the presence or absence of patterns can be studied. Therefore, a statistical approach to the early works of Douglas Fairbanks can shed light on whether his style was a deliberate attempt informed by his unique point of view, or a fluke and a result of whimsical decisions that lack consistency over time.

Salt (1974) argues that “the obvious approach in searching for individual characteristics in the formal side of a director’s films is to consider those variables that are most directly under the director’s control; also to a certain extent those that are easiest to quantify.” The most important variable that are studied in statistical style analysis is the duration of shots as some directors prefer to shoot shorter takes whereas others prefer longer ones. Determining the duration of each shot is the first step in identifying the average shot length (ASL) of a picture. The nature of the shots is also important in terms of whether a shot is a big close-up, close-up, medium close shot, etc. Another set of variables that are studied in statistical style analysis include camera movements and camera angles such as pans, dolly-shots, tilts, and low and high angle (Salt, 1974, p .13).

Using Salt’s method, scholars have analyzed hundreds of films over the years to characterize various directors and eras in the history of cinema, relying mostly on ASL and how its average range has changed from filmmaker to filmmaker and decade to decade. Salt demonstrated that the rate of cuts increased between 1912 and 1926, and declined between 1928 and 1939, while remaining relatively stable during the forties and fifties, before increasing again in the 1960s to the 1980s. Bordwell found that between 1990 and 2006 Hollywood films continued to pick up pace, with the fastest of them reaching an ASL of less than 2 seconds (Tsivian, 2009, p.95).

The method is hailed as a means to extract “film grammar,” or the expressive elements and the form of story narration in films. For example, the use of a low camera angle to invoke fear is reflected in the data gathered (Adams, Dorai, & Venkatesh, 2002). Such nuanced elements allow for “the immersion of the filmmaker in the mind of his character” and make up the language of cinema (Pasolini, Barnett, & Lawton, 2005).

Speaking of the validity of this method, Agustín Rubio Alcover and Adrián Tomás Samit (2013) argue that statistical analysis of style and “more specifically, an Average Shot Length study... appears to us an objective and, consequently, literally unobjectionable criterion” (p. 297). While scholars agree with “ASL data work, we need to keep in mind that these data are relational. It is useful to know how long the average shot of a film is compared to figures obtained for other films, but ASL can become misleading if you treat it as an index of the film’s dynamic quality” (Tsivian, 2009, p. 95). Therefore, once the data is gathered, Fairbanks’s stylistic choices will be compared with the work of his contemporaries. Cinemetric’s database holds records of similar data collected by users on other artists. This comparison adds to the field’s understanding of the early 1900s cinema. By using this method, one could find consistency in an artist’s style and identify a moment of change in style across the artist’s body of work, in this case Douglas Fairbanks.

Sample

To address the questions posed in Chapter 1, eighteen films featuring Douglas Fairbanks were selected for analysis. These films were selected based on their release date and availability. As explained earlier, of interest to the present study were films made prior to the establishment of United Artists in 1919. The films included in the sample are: *The Lamb* (1915), *Double Trouble* (1915), *His Picture in the Papers* (1916), *The Habit of Happiness* (1916), *The Good Bad Man* (1916), *Reggie Mixes In* (1916), *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (1916), *Flirting with Fate* (1916), *The Half-Breed* (1916), *Manhattan Madness* (1916), *American Aristocracy* (1916), *The Matrimaniac* (1916), *The Americano* (1916), *Wild and*

Woolly (1917), *Down to Earth* (1917), *The Man from Painted Post* (1917), *Reaching for the Moon* (1917), and *A Modern Musketeer* (1917).

Procedure

For analysis of the titles in the sample, digital copies of the films were used. One important note to consider about the results of the present, and similar studies using digital copies of older films, is the format and the frame rate of the copy being used. For years scholars used actual film reels and measured them on a Steenbeck or similar devices which allows frame by frame playback of the reels. An argument can be made in favor of the accuracy of this method, because it deals with the actual number of frames before frames were added to conform to modern-day standards. However, when converted to digital copies all films fall under two major categories of 30 (29.97) frames per second (FPS) and 24 (23.97) FPS, which are the standards for most digital copies. For example, the reel of a film shot in 16 FPS would still have only 16 frames in a second, whereas the same film on DVD would have up to 14 extra (repeated) frames that did not originally exist. In other words, the drawback of using digital copies is that they tend to repeat a number of frames which varies from title to title, but in the case of most silent films the number of frames are almost doubled—if we consider a typical 16 FPS film converted to 30 FPS.

For each of the 18 titles in the sample, the DVD of the film was acquired and ripped to MP4 format using a software called Handbrake 1.1. Handbrake allows users keep the frame rate “same as source” and encode the content using a variety of codecs, of which H264 was used in this study. Sixteen of the DVDs in the sample had a frame rate of 29.97 frames per second (FPS), while the frame rate of the other two—i.e. *The Good Bad Man*

(1916) and *The Half-Breed* (1916)— stood at 23.97 FPS. The conversion process allowed the films to be imported into a Non-Linear Editing (NLE) software. Adobe Premier Pro CC 9.0 was used to mark the cuts in the timeline. Premier Pro’s user interface contains a timeline at the bottom of the screen that displays the length of the video content both in a visual bar representation and numerical timestamps in the following format: hh:mm:ss:ff. Users can scrub the timeline back and forth between different times, or use the more traditional media controls such as the Fast Forward, Rewinds, etc. to find the exact spot they want to cut.

Utilizing the Razor tool in Premier, I cut the shots in each film at the same spot Frairbanks’ films were originally cut. To improve accuracy all the extra title cards that were not part of the original film were omitted from analysis. The extra title cards were generally added to the beginning, or the end, of the film by the company that had restored the film and/or produced the DVD.

Once the cutting process was complete, the duration of each shot was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and each shot was coded for the variables recommended by Salt (1974). Table 2-1 displays the variables used in analysis of each film in the sample along with the abbreviation and description of the variable.

Table 2-1: Abbreviation and Description of the Variables Used in Analysis

Variable	Abbreviation	Description
Big Close Up	BCU	Shows head only
Close Up	CU	Shows head and shoulders
Medium Close Up	MCU	Includes body from the waist up
Medium Shot	MS	Includes from just below the hip to above the head of upright actors

Medium Long Shot	MLS	Shows the body from the knee upwards
Long Shot	LS	Shows at least the full height of the body
Very Long Shot	VLS	Shows the actors small in the frame
N/A*	Title credits	Whether shot contains credit titles
N/A	Intertitle	Whether shot contains intertitles
N/A	Length	Length of the shot
N/A	Type of transition	Whether Fade, dissolve, or cut is used
Point of View	POV	Shot from the actor's point of view
Insert	INS	Shots inserted between master shots Shot from the opposite side of the previous shot
Reverse Angle	RA	
N/A	Reframing	Change in camera angle without a cut
N/A	Pan	Horizontal pan
N/A	Tilt	Vertical pan
N/A	Pan with Tilt	Vertical and horizontal pan
N/A	Track	Camera move across a plane
N/A	Track with pan	Camera moves across a plane and pans
N/A	Crane	Camera moves vertically
N/A	Zoom	Camera Zooms in or out
N/A	Zoom with Pan	Camera Zooms in or out and pans

* Not Applicable (N/A) denotes that an abbreviation was not used for the variable in analysis.

After completion of the coding process for each title, the Average Shot Length (ASL) for each film was determined by calculating the arithmetic mean of the “Length” variable. The following chapter presents the results of this analysis first, in a case-by-case manner, and then in aggregate across all films in the sample, and finally by comparing the results with the findings of other studies conducted on the same period. After the results are presented, the research question of the present study will be addressed.

Chapter 3

Analysis

The primary objective of the present study is to address a research question regarding the appropriateness of the term *auteur* in reference to Douglas Fairbanks. As mentioned in Chapter 1, any such determination is subject to establishing Fairbanks' involvement in the aesthetic and stylistic decision-making processes of his films, patterns of similarities in his work (to demonstrate that the aesthetics and style were intentional rather than haphazard), and similarities and differences between his work and the work of his contemporaries. To that end 18 films released between 1915 and 1919, when Fairbanks co-founded United Artists, were analyzed using statistical style analysis as explained in Chapter 2. The results of the analysis for each title are presented in the following pages along with a brief introduction and some information about the films in order of their release date.

1-*The Lamb* (1915)¹

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: W. Christy Cabanne

Supervision: D. W. Griffith

Frame rate: 30 FPS

¹ Source: Grapevine Video DVD-R

The Lamb was so successful upon its release that the *New York Tribune* ironically compared it with Griffith's arguably most famous work. "*The Lamb* outdoes *Birth of a Nation* in its thrills", however, as noted by Russel Merritt, except for the "last-minute rescue" there is no other resemblance in the film that could link it to Griffith (Cherchi Usai & Bowser, 2004, p.126). While *The Lamb* enjoyed success upon its release, it is among Fairbanks' lesser known works. John C. Tibbetts claims that the reason behind lower interest in the film is partly the titles, which were not written by Anita Loos, something that Fairbanks rectified in his next pictures. "[T]he sharp and satiric scenarist Anita Loos will join the Fairbanks team and save his next films from this sort of floridly rhetorical embarrassment" (Tibbetts & Welsh, 2014, p. 21).

From a stylistic point of view, *The Lamb* contains many instances of cutting back and forth to a closer and wider shot of the same action and even cutting to a different angle of the same shot. The majority of *The Lamb* is shot in exterior locations which benefits from using natural sunlight as the entire film takes place in daytime.

Transitions are used sparingly in *The Lamb*, which only has a few Iris-ins and fades to black. A total of eight shots have camera movements with four instances of pan shots, two tilt shots and two tracking shots. In addition, seven other shots have slight movements but not enough to be considered planned camera movements. These shots mostly use movement for reframing to keep the actors in the shot.

The Lamb contains three POV Shots, 19 Insert Shots, 13 Close Ups, 47 Medium Close Ups, 78 Medium Shots, 154 Medium Long Shots, 117 Long Shots, 70 Very Long Shots, and 59 Intertitles. See Table 3-1. The total number of shots with intertitles and title credits stand at 561, with an Average Shot Length (ASL) of 6.02 seconds.

Table 3-1: Descriptive Statistics of *The Lamb (1915)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	13	2.3
MCU	47	8.4
MS	78	13.9
MLS	154	27.5
LS	117	20.9
VLS	70	12.5
Title credits	4	0.7
Intertitle	59	10.5
POV	3	0.5
INS	19	3.4
RA	61	10.9
Reframing	6	1.1
Pan	4	0.7
Tilt	2	0.4
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	2	0.4
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

2-Double Trouble (1915)²

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: W. Christy Cabanne

Supervision: D. W. Griffith

Frame rate: 30 FPS

Double Trouble, for the most part, lacks the athletic antics of *The Lamb*, with the exception of a brief bar fight sequence. Gone are the long shots and crowded compositions of *The Lamb* to make room for more medium and close shots and nuanced gestures.

“*Double Trouble* is a pleasant reminder of [Fairbanks’] pleasant Broadway days and his growing assurance in front of the camera” (Tibbetts & Welsh, 2014, p. 29).

In this film, the camera is mostly static with some shots cut on movement, an editing technique that draws Rist’s attention, “what is especially interesting about the editing of most of this series of films is that, with Fairbanks being so energetic, the only way the camera can keep up with him is by cutting on his movements” (Rist, 2013). For example, Figure 3-1 shows a match cut from a close shot to a wider shot. In this scene once Brassfield puts his hand in his pocket, the medium close up is cut to a medium shot. This technique was ahead of its time as it would not become popular until a few years later. While this might be a sign that Fairbanks and other people involved in the making of

² Source: Alpha Video (2016) DVD-R is taken from a 8mm reduction print copied from a 35mm Enterprise Distributing Corporation re-release print (19xx).

Double Trouble set a new standard, there is no definitive proof that they intentionally made overuse of this technique.



Figure 3-1: Match cut from a medium close up (L) to a medium shot (R) in *Double Trouble*.

Most of the transitions in *Double Trouble* are fade-ins and -outs, with iris-ins and -outs used to suggest flashback or dream sequences. *Double Trouble* includes many exterior scenes, however the exterior scenes in *The Lamb* exceed those of *Double Trouble*. The interior scenes resemble theatre in terms of mise-en-scène.

Double Trouble contains two pan shots with two tilts and five tracking shots in addition to three shots with reframing movements, as well as 12 POV Shots and 14 Insert shots. Th film has six Close Ups, 47 Medium Close Ups, 49 Medium Shots, 136 Medium Long Shots, 51 Long Shots, 11 Very Long Shots, and 78 Intertitles. See Table 3-2. The total Number of shots with Intertitle and title credits stands at 395 with an ASL of 8.02 seconds.

Table 3-2: Descriptive Statistics of *Double Trouble* (1915)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	6	1.5

MCU	47	11.9
MS	49	12.4
MLS	136	34.4
LS	51	12.9
VLS	11	2.8
Title credits	2	0.5
Intertitle	78	19.7
POV	12	3.0
INS	14	3.5
RA	47	11.9
Reframing	3	0.8
Pan	2	0.5
Tilt	2	0.5
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	5	1.3
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

3-*His Picture in the Papers* (1916)³

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: John Emerson

Frame rate: 30 FPS

“Griffith’s own influences are hard to find in *His Picture in the Papers*, but it is clear that Triangle had recruited a sparkling personality and potential box office powerhouse that the company would continue to exploit through re-release even after Fairbanks had left,” read an article by Joyece Jesionowski on *His Picture in the Papers* (Cherchi Usai & Bowser, 2004). Fairbanks was praised for his role in the film with reviewers commenting, “Douglas Fairbanks again forcibly brings to mind that he is destined to be one of the greatest favorites with the film-seeing public. The manner in which he works in this picture will surely endear him to those who have already seen him in pictures and those that are seeing him for the first time” (Variety, 1916a).

His Picture in the Papers contains many inserts, mostly of the fictitious “prindle” products named after main character’s family. Although cutting back and forth to a closer and wider shot was not something new in this film, there are some interesting cuts that defied the norm at the time. For example, as seen in Figure 3-2 when Fairbanks attempts to remove an olive from a bottle, we see a cut to the insert shot of his hand getting the olive and then a cut back to the wider shot of him putting the olive into his glass—which at the same time is a cut on action as well.

³ Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD is possibly copied from 16mm or 28mm reduction prints, although the Flicker Alley notes say it is from an original [nitrate] 35mm release print, by Film Preservation Associates.

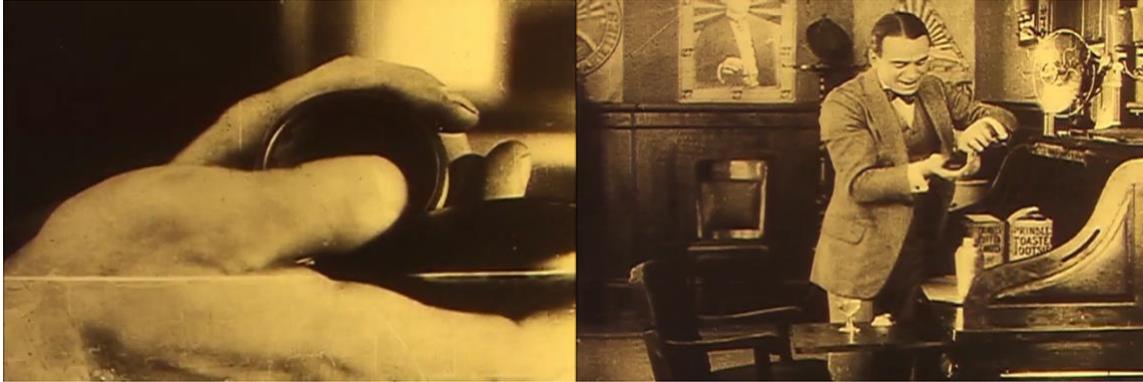


Figure 3-2: An insert of Fairbanks removing an olive (L) is cut to him putting it in a glass (R).

Similar to the previous two pictures, *His Picture in the Papers* has a crowd of hundreds in some scenes. However, compared to the previous two films, *His Picture in the Papers* contains more shots that are constructed in depth. There are very few Iris and fade transitions, but there is an interesting dissolve superimposition in this film—used to suggest Fairbanks dreaming about his girl, which eventually fades into the girl playing the piano and dissolves back to Fairbanks through the same superimposition. See Figure 3-3.



Figure 3-3: The dream sequence begins with a medium shot of Fairbanks (Top Left) and continues with a superimposed dissolve (Top Right) to Jean Temple (Bottom Left).

Parallel editing is used to a great extent throughout the film, although here it does not have as much of a dramatic effect as it did in the last minute rescue in *The Lamb* but it is used much more than in *The Lamb*. Parallel editing in *His Picture in the Papers* is used extensively for storytelling purposes rather than dramatic effects.

Moreover, Fairbanks explores his athleticism in this picture much more than he did in the previous two. Many of his antics come in exterior scenes, which are more diverse than the other two. *His Picture in the Papers* has cars crashing down the cliff, Fairbanks climbing buildings, railroad scenes, and even a scene involving a jump from the boat to the ocean and swimming to the shore of the sea. *His Picture in the Papers* marks the beginning of neorealism in the silent cinema in terms of on-location shooting. Figure 3-4 depicts an example of a cut on action when Fairbanks smashed his enemy's head with a bottle on a moving train car.



Figure 3-4: A long shot of Fairbanks hitting his enemy in the head with a bottle (L) is cut to a very long shot of his opponent falling (R).

His Picture in the Papers is akin to a road trip feature and like other early Fairbanks' films is filled with large crowds in some scenes which indicates Triangle Film Corporation

was not shy about spending big money on each project—something they did to attract well-known stars from the stage.

Beside the two pan shots and three tracking shots there is not much camera movement in this film. However, there are five shots with reframing movement. With 67 Insert shots, this film has the highest number of inserts among the films reviewed in the present study. It also contains 23 POV Shots which is also among the highest. The type of shot distribution is as follows: Two Close Up Shots, 22 Medium Close Ups, 41 Medium Shots, 122 Medium Long Shots, 220 Long Shots, and 29 Very Long Shots. In addition, 85 Intertitles were used in *His Picture in the Papers*. See Table 3-3. The film has total of 596 shots, with an ASL of 6.26 seconds.

Table 3-3: Descriptive Statistics of *His Picture in the Papers* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	2	0.3
MCU	22	3.7
MS	41	6.9
MLS	122	20.4
LS	220	36.9
VLS	29	4.9
Title credits	3	0.5
Intertitle	85	14.2
POV	23	3.9
INS	67	11.2
RA	95	15.9
Reframing	5	0.8

Pan	2	0.3
Tilt	0	0.0
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	3	0.5
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

According to Tibbetts, Victor Fleming served as an uncredited cinematographer on *His Picture in the Papers* (Tibbetts & Welsh, 2014, p. 42).

4- *The Habit of Happiness* (1916)⁴

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: Allan Dwan (John Emerson?)

Script: Anita Loos

Supervised by: D. W. Griffith

Frame rate: 30 FPS

The Habit of Happiness, although not one of Fairbanks' better pictures, generally received positive reviews upon its release in 1916, with critics especially praising his athleticism. "*The Habit of Happiness*, a new Triangle Fine Arts feature photoplay, once again affords a demonstration of the athletic prowess of Douglas Fairbanks. In

The Habit of Happiness Douglas Fairbanks has the fitting profession of making people laugh," wrote the *Hartford Courant* (1916) at the time and *The Postal Record* (1916) called it "better than all the pills and medicine and good advice in the world" (p. 162).

The 96 intertitles in *The Habit of Happiness*, the highest among the titles discussed so far, are mostly used for dialogues. The film is shot mostly in interior locations unlike the previous films in this study. There are no camera movements except for one shot, where movement is used for reframing. *The Habit of Happiness* has six Close Ups, 164 Medium Close Ups, 41 Medium Shots, 150 Medium Long Shots, 85 Long Shots, and four Very Long Shots. See Table 3-4. Sixteen shots in *The Habit of Happiness* have transition effects with one wipe—which is the first instance of such effect so far among the films in this sample.

⁴ Source: Grapevine (2007) DVD-R is copied from a 16mm reduction print of the incomplete Boltions Trading Corp., 1922 incomplete re-release.

There is only one POV Shot and seven insert shots which are indicating that this film is not as fluid as the others discussed so far. However, the pace of editing in *The Habit of Happiness* is very fast—in fact, among the fastest in this study. The ASL stands at 3.99 seconds and the total number of shots is 558.

Table 3-4: Descriptive Statistics of *The Habit of Happiness* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	6	1.1
MCU	164	29.4
MS	41	7.3
MLS	150	26.9
LS	85	15.2
VLS	4	0.7
Title credits	4	0.7
Intertitle	96	17.2
POV	1	0.2
INS	7	1.3
RA	117	21.0
Reframing	1	0.2
Pan	0	0.0
Tilt	0	0.0
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	0	0.0
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

Although Fairbanks was praised for his acrobatic movements in *The Habit of Happiness*, the frequency and intensity of such moves are reduced compared to the previous pictures, but the pace of cutting has increased dramatically. The initial positive reception of the film is somewhat surprising given that it was panned by critics in later years.

The fast pace of the cuts is the only redeeming quality of this film according to Yuri Tsivian (1999). “Disappointingly, in *The Habit of Happiness* Fairbanks does not do any jumping. In terms of direction, there is nothing noteworthy about this film (except perhaps for its fast cutting rate). One may even have doubts whether Griffith did a lot about supervising it (we know there was a lack of mutual admiration between Griffith and Fairbanks)”(Tsivian, 1999, p. 540).

There are also questions about the credits of the movie. While Emerson is listed as the director, Allan Dwan has claimed credit for making *The Habit of Happiness* (Bogdanovich, 1971, pp. 40–42). Moreover, While Loos is credited for the script, *The Moving Picture World*, 22 April 1916, lists Dwan and Shannon Fife as the writers.

5-*The Good Bad Man* (1916)⁵

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: Allan Dwan

Supervised by: D. W. Griffith

Story by : Douglas Fairbanks

Frame rate: 24 FPS

The Good Bad Man is Fairbanks' first Western picture with exceptionally good low-key lighting scenes shot at night and lit by the fire and café light. See Figure 3-5.

Indianapolis Star (1916a) described Fairbanks "at his best in the character of 'Passin' Through,' an eccentric outlaw," and *Arizona Republican* (1916) called *The Good Bad Man*, "an exceptional feature."



Figure 3-5: Scenes lit using campfire (L) and Café lights (R)

⁵ Source: Kino Classics (2019) DVD, is a digital transfer of a 2014 restoration by the Cinémathèque Française for the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, from a 35mm copy of the 1923 Tri-Stone release.

The Good Bad Man is one of the first movies in this study to make use of shots constructed in depth, thanks to high contrast natural light and occlusion. Figure 3-6 displays two examples of depth in *The Good Bad Man*.



Figure 3-6: High contrast lighting (L) and occlusion (R) used to add depth in *The Good Bad Man*.

In addition to lighting and depth, camera movements seem to be well-thought-out and planned in advance. For example, the camera pans to follow certain characters from one side of the café to the other. Unlike the camera work in the previous titles in the present study where movements were mostly a last-ditch effort at reframing to keep the characters in the shot, the cinematography in *The Good Bad Man* takes a leap forward to add dynamism. The cinematography also benefits from very good shot compositions, that follow the rule of thirds, placing actors at the sides of the frame rather than center to capture the surrounding environment (see Figure 3-7) or constructing symmetric shots (see Figure 3-8).

The cuts are mostly hard in *The Good Bad Man* and fade-outs are used to represent flashbacks. The majority of intertitles are dialogue, brief and to the point. They are timed better than the those of the previous films in this study, in that they appear on screen

during the actual conversations rather than all before or after. This make them easier to follow and more engaging.



Figure 3-7: An example of a well-constructed shot using the rule of thirds in *the Good Bad Man*.

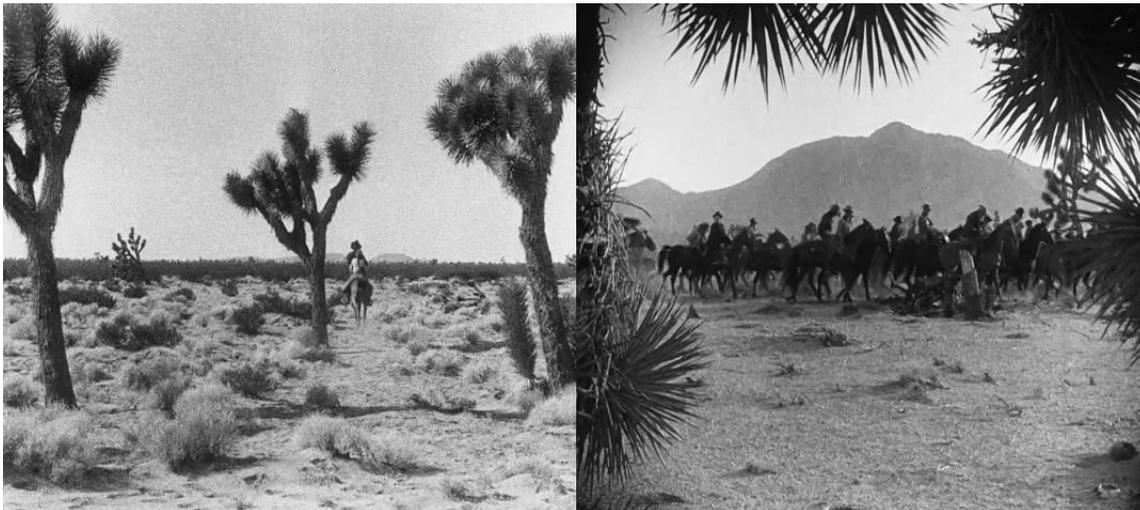


Figure 3-8: Examples of symmetrical composition in *the Good Bad Man*.

The army of extras return for *The Good Bad Man* as the film involves a large number of riders in some scenes. Perhaps, the most interesting shot of the film from a stylistic point of view is when the villain looks directly into the camera as if he is addressing Fairbanks' "Passin' Through," marking the first instance of such shots in this sample. While in modern

films it is customary to cut to the reverse angle, *The Good Bad Man* cuts to a close up shot of Fairbanks from his side. See Figure 3-9.



Figure 3-9: The villain looking directly into the camera (L) is cut an angled close up of the protagonist.

The Good Bad Man has 10 shots with camera movement. Seven Pan shots, two Tilts, and one Tracking Shot. It has 119 intertitles, nine POV Shots, 22 Insert Shots, 31 Close Ups, 61 Medium Close Ups, 50 Medium Shots, 160 Medium Long Shots, 124 Long Shots, and 27 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-5. The ASL for this film is 4.93 seconds with total of 604 shots.

Table 3-5: Descriptive Statistics of *The Good Bad Man* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	31	5.1
MCU	61	10.1
MS	50	8.3
MLS	160	26.5
LS	124	20.5
VLS	27	4.5
Title credits	7	1.2
Intertitle	119	19.7
POV	9	1.5

INS	22	3.6
RA	151	25.0
Reframing	1	0.2
Pan	7	1.2
Tilt	2	0.3
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	1	0.2
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

6- *Reggie Mixes In* (1916)⁶

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: W. Christy Cabanne

Story by : Roy Somerville

Frame rate: 30 FPS

Reggie Mixes In is marred by continuity errors early on. For example, Fairbanks is seen hiding behind the bushes and once the man he is hiding from passes, Fairbanks is seen sitting on a bench with the girl he was watching from the earlier shot (Bessie Love). There is no footage of him coming out of the bushes and walking to the bench. Another continuity error occurs when Fairbanks is standing alone in the middle of a café, and in the next shot he is seen standing next to Love. Regardless, Fairbanks was again praised for his role in *Reggie Mixes In*, especially for his stunts during the fight scenes.

“His method is infinitely varied. Sometimes he catches them swiftly around the neck and whips them over his shoulder, and again a stiff jab to the jaw does the work, but always they go down in a most lifelike manner,” wrote *The New York Times* (1916a) in its review at the time. The paper even joked that if the movie industry had more actors like Fairbanks, “the Boxing Commission would be made film censors” (p. 9).

The intertitles in *Reggie Mixes In* are mostly descriptive and nothing about the mise-en-scène and the compositions stands out. One notable stylistic choice is the frequency of close-ups of Love for the purpose of showing her anxiety and emotions about the events

⁶ Source: Alpha Video (2012) DVD-R is taken from a 8mm reduction print.

happening around her. See Figure 3-10. Love tries hard to act in the close up shots— something that was not common in 1916, and received criticism at the time. “Miss Love has some skill to commend her as a movie actress, but she should learn that panting in a close-up doesn’t resemble deep emotion,” wrote *The New York Times* (1916a).



Figure 3-10: Bessie Love attempting to display her character’s emotions in close-up shots in *Reggie Mixes In* (1916).

Reggie Mixes In has 62 Intertitles, four POV shots and 12 Insert Shots, with no camera movements. It has 17 shots with transitions, all of which are fades—mostly used for flashback and daydreaming scenes. There are 25 Close Ups, 124 Medium Close Ups, 73 Medium Shots, 102 Medium Long Shots, and 39 Long Shots in the film. See Table 3-6. The ASL stands at 6.07 seconds with a total of 441 shots.

Table 3-6: Descriptive Statistics of *Reggie Mixes In* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	25	5.7
MCU	124	28.1
MS	73	16.6
MLS	102	23.1
LS	39	8.8
VLS	0	0.0
Title credits	3	0.7
Intertitle	62	14.1
POV	4	0.9
INS	12	2.7
RA	150	34.0
Reframing	1	0.2
Pan	0	0.0
Tilt	0	0.0
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	0	0.0
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

7- *The Mystery of a Leaping Fish* (1916)⁷

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Directed by: John Emerson

Story by: Tod Browning

Frame rate: 30 FPS

With a run time of just 26 minutes, *The Mystery of a Leaping Fish* is among Fairbanks' shortest films and one of the first films to begin with the ending—a method that filmmakers and editors continue to use today. *The Mystery of a Leaping Fish* incorporates elements of fantasy with the make-up design and set decoration (e.g. Coke Ennyday's office) reflecting the surreal nature of the film. The clock on the wall has “drinks,” “sleep,” “eats,” and “dope” on its face instead of digits (See Figure 3-11) to emphasize this point and add a hint of satire. Detective Coke Ennyday's (Fairbanks') mustache and his syringe bandolier, as well as the outfit of his assistance are other examples emphasizing the fantastic nature of the film.

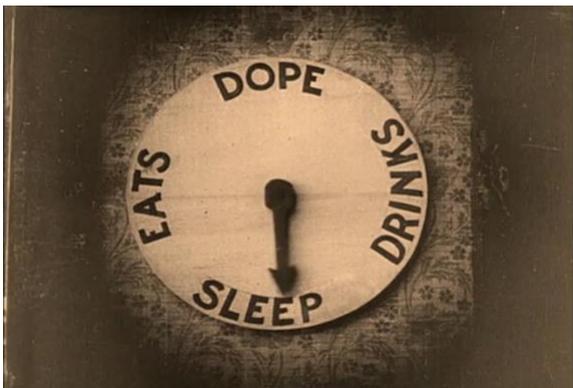


Figure 3-11: The face of the clock in *the Mystery of a Leaping Fish* reads “drinks,” “sleep,” “eats,” and “dope.”

⁷ Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD, is apparently transferred from an original 35mm [nitrate] print, “with a few shots interpolated from other sources and with reset original-text intertitles,” although in 2005 (*The Griffith Project: Volume 9*), the only archival sources were 16mm prints.



Figure 3-12: Detective Ennyday with an unusual mustache is seen wearing a syringe bandolier, presumably filled with “dope” (L), while his assistant donning a strange costume is fixing a drink with a syringe (R).

The Mystery of a Leaping Fish was considered a forgettable title at the time and was mostly ignored by the press. The few publications that talked about it did not have words kinder than “burlesque” and “amusing” to describe it (*The Sun*, 1916). Fairbanks reportedly wanted the film withdrawn from circulation, but over the years *The Mystery of a Leaping Fish* has garnered a cult following (Vance et al., 2008a, p.36).

The film was ahead of its time for exploring themes like drug induced hallucinations and its use of futuristic gadgets like the “scientific periscope,” which works like a modern-day doorbell camera, that displays the image of visitors on the device. See Figure 3-13.



Figure 3-13: Ennyday’s “scientific periscope” functions like a doorbell camera.

Considering its short runtime, *The Mystery of a Leaping Fish* has relatively high number of camera movements with 18 shots, five Pan Shots, four Tilts, and nine Tracking Shots. The film has one Close Up, 14 Medium Close Ups, 27 Medium Shots, 50 Medium Long Shots, 158 Long Shots, six Very Long Shots, 41 Intertitles, 11 POV Shots, and 11 Inserts. See Table 3-7. Total number of shots stands at 312 and the average shot length is 5.1 seconds.

Table 3-7: Descriptive Statistics of *The Mystery of a Leaping Fish* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	1	0.3
MCU	14	4.5
MS	27	8.7
MLS	50	16.0
LS	158	50.6
VLS	6	1.9
Title credits	3	1.0
Intertitle	41	13.1
POV	11	3.5
INS	11	3.5
RA	54	17.3
Reframing	7	2.2
Pan	5	1.6
Tilt	4	1.3
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	9	2.9
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

8- Flirting with Fate (1916)⁸

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: W. Christy Cabanne

Story by: Robert M Baker

Frame rate: 30 FPS

In *Flirting with Fate*, Fairbanks returned to his comedic roots and once again received praise from critics. *The Indianapolis Star* (1916b) called it “as funny a film as one could wish for,” and the *New York Tribune* (1916a) described the film as “ingenious” and Fairbanks as “the best comedian in pictures.”

There are multiple scenes in *Flirting with Fate*, where Fairbanks’ character gets afraid and starts wondering about the hitman he hired to kill him and imagining different ways that he might do it. These dream sequences always start with a fade and are shot against a black background distinguishing them from other scenes. In many of them the assassin looks directly into the camera and poses like he is about to shoot, which reminds the viewers of the famous scene in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). See Figure 3-14.

⁸ Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD, is apparently derived from a “fine grain [nitrate] master [probably from the George Eastman House] printed from the original camera negative.



Figure 3-14: The dream sequences are shot against a black background and the assassin looks directly into the camera—an homage to *The Great Train Robbery* (1903).

Flirting with Fate is perhaps the best Cabanne-Fairbanks collaboration so far in this sample. It has a variety of shot compositions, a more mature mise-en-scène and good editing. However, the narrative is seemingly split into two parts: The first part is concerned with Fairbanks' interest in the girl portrayed by Jewel Carmen, and the second part with him trying to run away from the assassin. By the end of the film, the love story is dropped entirely.

The film contains 38 Transitions, most of them Fades with a few Iris transitions, 15 shots with movement, five Pans, seven Tilts, two Track Shots, one Track with Pan, 74 Intertitles, nine POVs, 13 Inserts, three Close Ups, 84 Medium Close Ups, 75 Medium Shots, 182 Medium Long Shots, and 70 Long Shots. See Table 3-8. *Flirting with Fate* has 505 total shots with an ASL of 6.82 seconds.

Table 3-8: Descriptive Statistics of *Flirting with Fate* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	3	0.6
MCU	84	16.6
MS	75	14.9
MLS	182	36.0
LS	70	13.9
VLS	0	0.0
Title credits	3	0.6
Intertitle	74	14.7
POV	9	1.8
INS	13	2.6
RA	159	31.5
Reframing	8	1.6
Pan	5	1.0
Tilt	7	1.4
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	2	0.4
Track with pan	1	0.2
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

9- *The Half-Breed* (1916)⁹

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: Allan Dwan

Supervised by : D. W. Griffith

Cinematographer: Victor Fleming

Scenario and Titles: Anita Loos

Production: Fine Arts film company

Frame rate: 24 FPS

Half-breed, which is now considered a derogatory term used to describe anyone who is half Native American and half European/white, was once a ubiquitous term in the United States. While there had been many examples of “good” native Americans in literature and film, in the early 20th century, “half-breeds” were generally depicted as individuals who inherited only the worst qualities of either race. In that regard, *The Half-Breed*, marked a new era in the American culture as it featured a “half-breed” protagonist.

This paradigm shift was not lost on the *New York Tribute* (1916b), which wrote about the film, “while the remainder of the male characters devote themselves to wine and women, Lo Dorman lives among giant trees and studies botany. And it’s a refreshing departure.”

⁹ Source: Kino Classics (2019) DVD, is a digital transfer of a 2013 restoration by the Cinémathèque Française for the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, 90% from a 1924 Boltions Trading Corp. 35mm re-release, and the rest from a Library of Congress 35mm nitrate positive (Dawson City, 1978 find), and a Lobster Films’ 16mm abridged print.

The Half-Breed has a lot of transitions (fades) in the beginning, but instead of using them to suggest flashbacks, they are mainly used to suggest passage of time between the shots. In this Dwan-Fairbanks film, again we can see a lot of movement in the background. See Figure 3-15. The intertitles, especially at the beginning, are more descriptive and serve to announce new characters.



Figure 3-15: *The Half-Breed* incorporates a lot of extras whose movement in the background is an ever present feature of the film.

Nellie's introduction in particular is shot very uniquely, the shot starts with a slow iris-in from her foot stepping down the staircase and as the iris opens to cover the entire screen we slowly see her upper body and finally her face, she stares into the camera for a few seconds and then looks away and leaves. See Figure 3-16. The shot lasts 36 seconds. "The introduction of the characters and settings appears to be accomplished in scenes of action. In contrast, Griffith tended to introduce all his characters in static situations," Kristin Thompson (1999, p. 117) commented on the film comparing Fairbanks to Griffith who supposedly supervised all Triangle films.



Figure 3-16: Introduction of Nellie begins with an iris-in of her foot (L) that expands over 36 seconds to show her face (R).

From a stylistic perspective, *The Half-Breed* uses some low-key lighting in the night scenes that are well lit (see Figure 3-17) and incorporates long shots of characters centered alone in nature. See Figure 3-18.



Figure 3-17: The night scenes in *the Half-Breed* lit with low key lighting.

Although only one pan shot was recorded for the film (five other shots have movements mainly for reframing purposes and were coded as such), the cinematography of *The Half-Breed* is commendable with aesthetically pleasing framing and lighting—especially in the night scenes. The quality of Fairbanks films appears not to be correlated

with any specific director, but rather with Fairbanks himself. “Stylistically, *The Half-Breed* displays much of the sophistication that characterizes most of Fairbanks’ 1910s films, no matter who their director is” (Thompson, 1999, p. 118).



Figure 3-18: *The Half-Breed* contains many long shots of characters in nature.

The total number of shots is 653, with 157 Intertitles, five POVs, nine Insert Shots and an ASL of 6.32 seconds. *The Half-Breed* has 21 Close Ups, 29 Medium Close Ups, 28

Medium Shots, 234 Medium Long Shots, 152 Long Shots, and 18 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-9.

Table 3-9: Descriptive Statistics of *The Half-Breed (1916)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	21	3.2
MCU	29	4.4
MS	28	4.3
MLS	234	35.8
LS	152	23.3
VLS	18	2.8
Title credits	4	0.6
Intertitle	157	24
POV	5	0.8
INS	9	1.4
RA	123	18.8
Reframing	5	0.8
Pan	1	0.2
Tilt	0	0.0
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	0	0.0
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

10- *Manhattan Madness* (1916)¹⁰

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Director: Allan Dwan

Story by: E.V. Durling

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Production: Fine Arts Film Company

Frame rate: 30 FPS

Manhattan Madness broke the traditional mold of using parallel editing to create suspense and mystery. The fast cuts in action sequences are mostly cuts on continuous action rather than crosscutting. The innovative approach of *Manhattan Madness* to editing prompted Tom Gunning to describe it as “a very sophisticated film, adept in cutting on action within a single location, aware of playing with genre conventions, but also not totally given over to a classical diegesis, aware of its parody nature in a self-conscious manner” (Cherchi Usai & Bowser, 1999, p. 134).

While today *Manhattan Madness* is remembered for its stylistic choices and the juxtapositions of rural and urban, Western and Eastern, past and present, as well as action and mystery; at the time of its release, the media and critics mostly praised just one aspect of the film—Douglas Fairbanks. The Austin-based *American Statesman* wrote in its evening edition, “It’s a Fairbanks picture. No other description is really needed of ‘*Manhattan Madness*’ the new Fine Arts feature” (Evening Statesman, 1916). The *New York Tribune*

¹⁰ Source: Grapevine Video (2007) DVD-R, which “has been mastered from an incomplete 16mm reduction print.”

(1916c) joked that people who think they do not like movies “should see Douglas Fairbanks in ‘*Manhattan Madness*,’” before proceeding to describe him as “one of the most pleasing of all movie stars.”

After the introduction of the Fairbanks’ character, fast fade in/fade outs are used to distinguish flashbacks. The number of shots used in *Manhattan Madness* (561) is notable—especially, given its 30-minute runtime—Eight of those shots are accompanied by camera movements. There are 82 Intertitles, three POV Shots, 19 Insert Shots, four Pan Shots, three Tilts and a Track Shot. Another notable thing about *Manhattan Madness* is the use of transition effects mostly fades in 42 shots. Moreover, there are three Big Close Ups, 14 Close Ups, 120 Medium Close Ups, 44 Medium Shots, 184 Medium Long Shots, 74 Long Shots, 19 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-10. The film’s average shot length stands at 3.21 seconds.

Table 3-10: Descriptive Statistics of *Manhattan Madness* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	3	0.5
CU	14	2.1
MCU	120	21.4
MS	44	7.8
MLS	184	32.8
LS	74	13.2
VLS	19	3.4
Title credits	3	0.5
Intertitle	82	14.6
POV	3	0.5
INS	19	3.4
RA	118	21

Reframing	5	0.9
Pan	4	0.7
Tilt	3	0.5
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	1	0.2
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

11- *American Aristocracy* (1916)¹¹

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Story by: Anita Loos

Direction by: Lloyd Ingraham

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Frame rate: 30 FPS

Like most other releases in this sample, *American Aristocracy* was dealt with at face value by most critics of its time. The *New York Tribune* (1916d) described the “delightful” Fairbanks’ stunts in great detail, praising him for doing “things that would be quite impossible for the ordinary human being.” Grace Kingsley (1916) of *The Los Angeles Times* described it as a “good-natured satire” and wondered “why aren’t we given more pungent screen comedy like ‘*American Aristocracy*.’” However, there is more to this feature than brawn and laughs, namely the innovative editing pattern in many of the conversation scenes involving two people. The way it is presented is first by showing a two shot of the characters then by cutting to the close up of each one by one. See Figure 3-19 and Figure 3-20.

Another interesting aspect is its use of different angles to convey different meanings in line with the theme of the film. The high angle shots of Fairbanks and low angle shots of the rich man subtly, but surely reinforce preconceived notions about their status, class, and

¹¹ Source: Alpha Video DVD-R, “has likely been mastered from a 16mm reduction print.”

power. See Figure 3-21. While this technique is now ubiquitous, and even considered a cliché by modern standards, in the 1910s it was a rather novel approach.



Figure 3-19: The conversations in *American Aristocracy* begin with a two shot (top left), followed by close up shots of each of the two characters in the conversation.



Figure 3-20: The conversations in *American Aristocracy* begin with a two shot (top left), followed by close up shots of each of the two characters in the conversation.



Figure 3-21: The high angle shots of Fairbanks (L) and low angle shots of the rich (R) reinforce preconceived notions about their status in *American Aristocracy*.

In terms of setting, the film is relatively diverse. There are car driving scenes, a boat scene, one with an airplane and a combination of indoor and outdoor locations. The film

contains 80 Intertitles, nine POV Shots, and 32 Inserts. See Table 3-11. The Total number of shots stands at 523, with an ASL of 5.43 seconds. This film has the highest number of camera movement in a Fairbanks film with 26 shots with movements, of which eight are Pans, one is Tilt, one is a Pan with Tilt, one is a Track with Tilt and 15 are Track Shots. *American Aristocracy* contains four Big Close Ups, 15 Close Ups, 42 Medium Close Ups, 20 Medium Shots, 173 Medium Long Shots, 136 Long Shots, 18 Very Long Shots.

Table 3-11: Descriptive Statistics of *American Aristocracy (1916)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	4	0.8
CU	15	2.8
MCU	42	8.0
MS	20	3.8
MLS	173	33.0
LS	136	26.0
VLS	18	3.4
Title credits	3	0.6
Intertitle	80	15.3
POV	9	1.7
INS	32	6.1
RA	167	32.0
Reframing	7	1.3
Pan	8	1.5
Tilt	1	0.2
Pan with Tilt	1	0.2
Track	15	2.9
Track with pan	1	0.2
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

12- *The Matrimaniac* (1916)¹²

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Story by: Octavus Roy Cohen & J.U. Giesy

Directed by: Paul Powell

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Frame rate: 30 FPS

The Matrimaniac is an entertaining road trip movie—a cat and mouse action comedy—that at the time of its release received mixed reviews. *Variety* (1916b) called it “tiresome,” and better suited as a “two-reel Keystone” rather than five reels. Mae Tinee (1916) of *Chicago Daily Tribune* acknowledged that *the Matrimaniac* pales in comparison to the likes of *American Aristocracy* and *Flirting with Faith*, but still maintained that the picture “affords able support to Fairbanks’ funmaking.” *The New York Times* (1916b) on the other hand praised the film for Fairbanks’ agility and performance. Similarly, the *New York Tribune* (1916e), again, called him “delightful.”

Silent cinema expert Lea Jacobs, disagrees that “the film has been padded out to five reels” (Cherchi Usai & Bowser, 1999, p. 146). Jacobs cites the film’s three “cleverly interwoven” story lines and Anita Loos’ intertitles as evidence. She also praises how in *The Matrimaniac* “the figures of authority are outwitted but never treated with disrespect.”

Although *The Matrimaniac* marks the first Powell-Fairbanks collaboration, from a stylistic point of view, the film conforms to earlier Fairbanks titles in this sample as it

¹² Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD “is made from a dupe negative prepared around 1960 from an original 28mm release print.” (Flicker Alley notes) This may have been the George Eastman House “diacetate positive” in *The Griffith Project* (p. 143)

contains only a few, 13 shots with camera movement, two Pans, one Tilt and 10 Track Shots in a total of 561 shots. It has 56 Intertitles, 10 POV Shots, 26 Inserts, 37 Medium Close Ups, 59 Medium Shots, 192 Medium Long Shots, 171 Long Shots, and 18 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-12. *The Matrimaniac's* ASL stands at 4.95 seconds and it only contains five shots with fade transitions.

Table 3-12: Descriptive Statistics of *The Matrimaniac (1916)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	0	0.0
MCU	37	6.6
MS	59	10.5
MLS	192	34.2
LS	171	30.5
VLS	18	3.2
Title credits	2	0.4
Intertitle	56	10.0
POV	10	1.8
INS	26	4.6
RA	121	21.6
Reframing	2	0.4
Pan	2	0.4
Tilt	1	0.2
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	10	1.8
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

13 - *The Americano* (1916)¹³

Studio: Triangle Film Corporation

Written by: John Emerson & Anita Loos

Directed by: John Emerson

Supervised by: D. W. Griffith

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Frame rate: 30 FPS

Set in the fictitious Latin American country of Paragonia, with question marks over how well the location was researched, *The Americano* was praised for featuring some of “the most strenuous activity that Fairbanks has yet displayed” and deemed “one of his best pictures” (The Statesman, 1917). The film starts with long shots of the city followed by some closer, establishing shots depicting the environment and the culture. While modern reviewers have understandably and rightfully criticized the film’s “casual racism” for its depiction of “the stereotypical black man” (Obscure Hollywood, 2016), it is worth noting that even at the time, *The Americano* was compared to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) by the *Hartford Courant* (1917a), which declared that “some of the comedy is crude.”

The Americano, the third Fairbanks picture directed by Emerson, deviated from the established norm of displaying intertitles against a black backdrop, by displaying still graphics and logos in some intertitles, describing the Paragonia’s government officials and offices. See Figure 3-22.

¹³ Source: Alpha Video (2010) DVD “appears to be mastered from an older 16mm reduction print of the Tri-Stone Pictures, Incorporated, [1923] rerelease version.”



Figure 3-22: Some of the intertitles describing official Paragonian places, include a graphic background as opposed to the plain black backdrop.

Many scenes in *The Americano* open with an establishing long shot before cutting in to closer shots. Toward the end of the film three different situations—of which two eventually merge—are parallel edited to build tension and excitement. The film contains 130 Intertitles, 24 POV Shots, and 40 Insert Shots for a total of 802 shots and an ASL of 4.06 seconds. There is only one Tilt Shot, 25 shots with transition effects, 30 Close Ups, 178 Medium Close Ups, 133 Medium Shots, 160 Medium Long Shots, 89 Long Shots, and 37 Very Long Shots. See table 3-13.

The Americano is also notable because it is the last film Fairbanks made with Triangle. Unhappy with his wage—which incidentally stood at \$15,000 per week, and was the third-highest in the industry after Mary Pickford and Chaplin—Fairbanks cited a clause

in his contract that required Griffith to supervise all of his pictures. While Griffith did supervise *The Americano*, his failure to supervise a number of Fairbanks' earlier films provided grounds for termination of his contract (Vance, Maietta, & Cushman, 2008b, pp. 37–38).

Table 3-13: Descriptive Statistics of *The Americano* (1916)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	30	3.7
MCU	178	22.2
MS	133	16.6
MLS	160	20.0
LS	89	11.1
VLS	37	4.6
Title credits	2	0.2
Intertitle	130	16.2
POV	24	3.0
INS	40	5.0
RA	192	23.9
Reframing	1	0.1
Pan	0	0.0
Tilt	1	0.1
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	0	0.0
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

14 - *Wild and Woolly* (1917)¹⁴

Studio: Artcraft Pictures Corporation

Produced by: John Emerson

Directed by: John Emerson

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Photoplay by: Anita Loos

Frame rate: 30 FPS

The *Wild and Woolly* is Fairbanks' first post-Triangle film and his second for the Artcraft Pictures Corporation (Tibbetts & Welsh, 2014, p. 128). Fairbanks retained the help of his longtime collaborators, Anita Loos, John Emerson, and Victor Fleming. The film was met with unprecedented reception from audiences who packed theatres for weeks to see the feature. *Indianapolis Star* (1917) reported that "no performance given in America has created a greater sensation." Edwin Schallert (1917) of *The Los Angeles Times* called it a "riot of speed and fun."

The opening sequence of the *Wild and Woolly* is a masterclass of the time in terms of technique and style—although at the time it was divisive, with Mae Tinee (1917) of *Chicago Daily Tribune* commenting, "to be frank, the first scene left me unimpressed." The scene in question introduces Fairbanks' character with a then-unique track back shot. At first Fairbanks is seen sitting by a bonfire in full cowboy regalia, behind him is a tent and next to him a cactus—all of which suggest that he is in the West. However, the camera starts to track back slowly only to reveal that in fact, he is in his apartment and the whole

¹⁴ Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD, is "mastered from [a] print made in the early 1950s from [a] camera negative." (Flicker Alley notes)

thing was a ruse. See Figure 3-23. While there is not enough evidence to support the claim that this trick was the first of its kind in cinema, it is certainly the first instance of slow trackback being used to reveal something in a Fairbanks movie.



Figure 3-23: A trackback shot reveals that cowboy camp (L) was actually set up in an apartment (R).

Shortly after the backtrack shot reveals the interior of the apartment, a close shot of a painting on the wall, depicting two cowboys and a horse, dissolves into film as Fairbanks' character daydreams about being in the picture. See Figure 3-24.



Figure 3-24: A picture depicting cowboys and a horse (L) on the wall dissolves into a motion picture (R).

Wild and Woolly uses several cuts on actions, indicating that by then, filmmakers had realized the power of this technique and would use it purposefully rather than the few precarious match cuts that were observed in the earlier films of the sample. One particular interesting instance of the technique is when one action is axially cut into three different

shots with different scales while the action is happening. Figures 3-25, 3-26 and 3-27 demonstrate the use of this technique. Another editing feat accomplished in *Wild and Woolly* is how parallel editing ties the two storylines together in the end.



Figure 3-25: The action sequence begins with a medium close up.



Figure 3-26: The action continues with a cut to a medium long shot.



Figure 3-27: The action continues with a cut to close up.

Wild and Woolly contains 39 transitions, mostly fades, 31 Close Ups, 170 Medium Close Ups, 191 Medium Shots, 256 Medium Long Shots, 104 Long Shots, 45 Very Long Shots, three Pans, one Tilt, one Pan with Tilt, and two tracking shots. See Table 3-15. The film has 121 Intertitles, 11 POV Shots, 37 Insert Shots, for a total of 961 shots and an ASL of 4.5 seconds.

Table 3-14: Descriptive Statistics of *Wild and Woolly* (1917)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	31	3.2
MCU	170	17.7
MS	191	19.9
MLS	256	26.6
LS	104	10.8
VLS	45	4.7
Title credits	4	0.4
Intertitle	121	12.6
POV	11	1.1
INS	37	3.9
RA	289	30.1
Reframing	7	0.7
Pan	3	0.3
Tilt	1	0.1
Pan with Tilt	1	0.1
Track	2	0.2
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

15 - *Down to Earth* (1917)¹⁵

Studio: Artcraft Pictures Corporation

Produced by: John Emerson

Photoplay by: Anita Loos and John Emerson

Story by: Douglas Fairbanks

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Frame rate: 30 FPS

It was established in Chapter 2, through various accounts, that Douglas Fairbanks held a great deal of sway over his crew and is believed to have written many of his script without claiming credit. In *Down to Earth*, however, Fairbanks is credited for writing the story, which received critical acclaim. “In this film the energetic Fairbanks not only excels all his previous efforts on the screen, but at the same time proves his ability as an author, in which respect he is just as distinctive as in his acting” (Los Angeles Times, 1917).

Besides Fairbanks’ story, *Down to Earth* is noteworthy for its cinematography. Although Victor Fleming was an established and experienced cinematographer by this time in his career, the night scenes in *Down to Earth* are shot in the day. See Figure 3-28. Although it was a common practice to shoot night scenes during the day back then, we have already seen good examples of night scenes shot in the dark, particularly in *The Good bad Man* and *The Half Breed* which ironically were shot by Fleming himself. However, the decision to shoot night scene during the day suggests that perhaps Allan Dwan deserved most of the credit for the low-key shots in the earlier films. While it was uncommon for

¹⁵ Source: Alpha Video DVD-R

cinematographers—or head photographers, as Victor Fleming’s official title was called at the time (Atlanta Constitution, 1918)—to comment about the various aspects of filmmaking in the silent era, modern cinematographers do not shy away from disclosing the director’s influence on their work (O’Falt, 2018). Perhaps if Fleming was to comment, he would talk about Dwan’s engineering background and his experience in the lighting department as the major contributing factor to the successful shooting at night in the earlier titles.

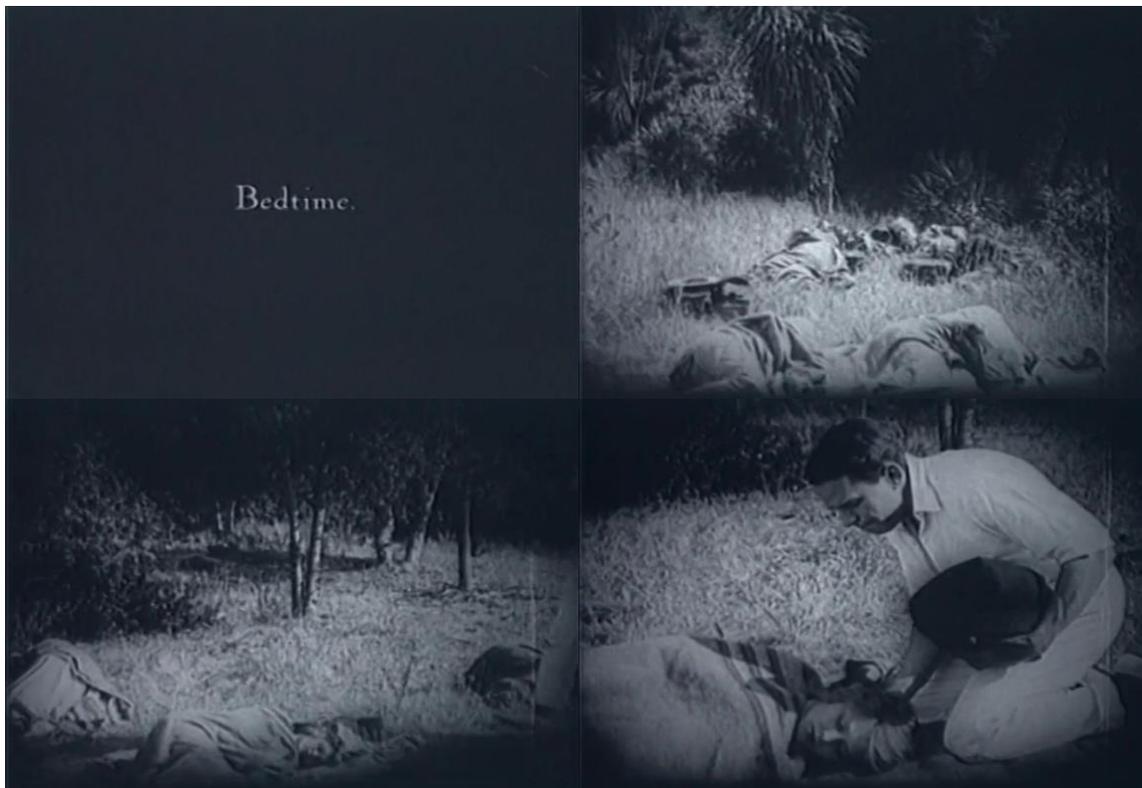


Figure 3-28: The night scenes in *Down to Earth* are shot in the day.

Down to Earth contains 151 intertitles, 17 POV Shots, and 31 Insert Shots. See Table 3-15. The total number of shots stands at 860 and the ASL at 3.88 seconds. The film makes use of eight Pan Shots, one Tilt, 47 Transitions—mostly fades with a couple of Irises—29

Close Ups, 158 Medium Close Ups, 121 Medium Shots, 222 Medium Long Shots, 121 Long Shots, and 24 Very Long Shots.

Table 3-15: Descriptive Statistics of *Down to Earth (1917)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	29	3.4
MCU	158	18.4
MS	121	14.1
MLS	222	25.8
LS	121	14.1
VLS	24	2.8
Title credits	4	0.5
Intertitle	151	17.5
POV	17	2.0
INS	31	3.6
RA	214	24.9
Reframing	7	0.8
Pan	8	0.9
Tilt	1	0.1
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	0	0.0
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

16 - *The Man from Painted Post* (1917)¹⁶

Studio: Artcraft Pictures Corporation

Directed by: Joseph Henabery

Cinematography: Victor Fleming

Story by: Jackson Gregory

Photoplay by: Douglas Fairbanks

Frame rate: 30 FPS

After trying a hand in writing the story, Fairbanks returned to writing this time with the photoplay for *The Man from Painted Post*. The film stands out from previous Fairbanks titles not for the number of intertitles (102), but for their length, making it one of the most dialogue-heavy films in Fairbanks' portfolio. See Figure 3-29.

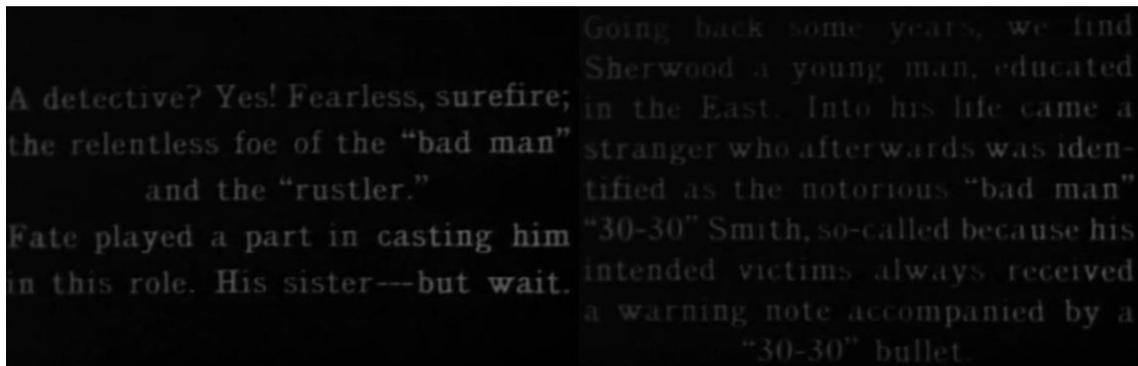


Figure 3-29: The intertitles in *The Man from Painted Post* tend to be very long.

As was the case with previous Fairbanks pictures, *The Man from Painted Post* opened to praise from the press with the *Detroit Free Press* (1917a) calling it “one of the

¹⁶ Source: Grapevine Video (2019) DVD-R was remastered in HD from “the same good 16mm reduction print that was utilized for Grapevine’s previous edition.”

best things the smiling actor has produced.” *The Hartford Courant* (1917b) once again complemented Fairbanks on his signature “athletic thrills.”

A notable aspect of *The Man from Painted Post* is the struggle to shoot low-key lighting scenes, as Figure 3-30 demonstrates, without Dwan’s expertise, Fleming seemed unable achieve the same level of success he had shooting the night scenes at night in *The Good bad Man* and *The Half Breed* as the actors almost invisible in the dark.

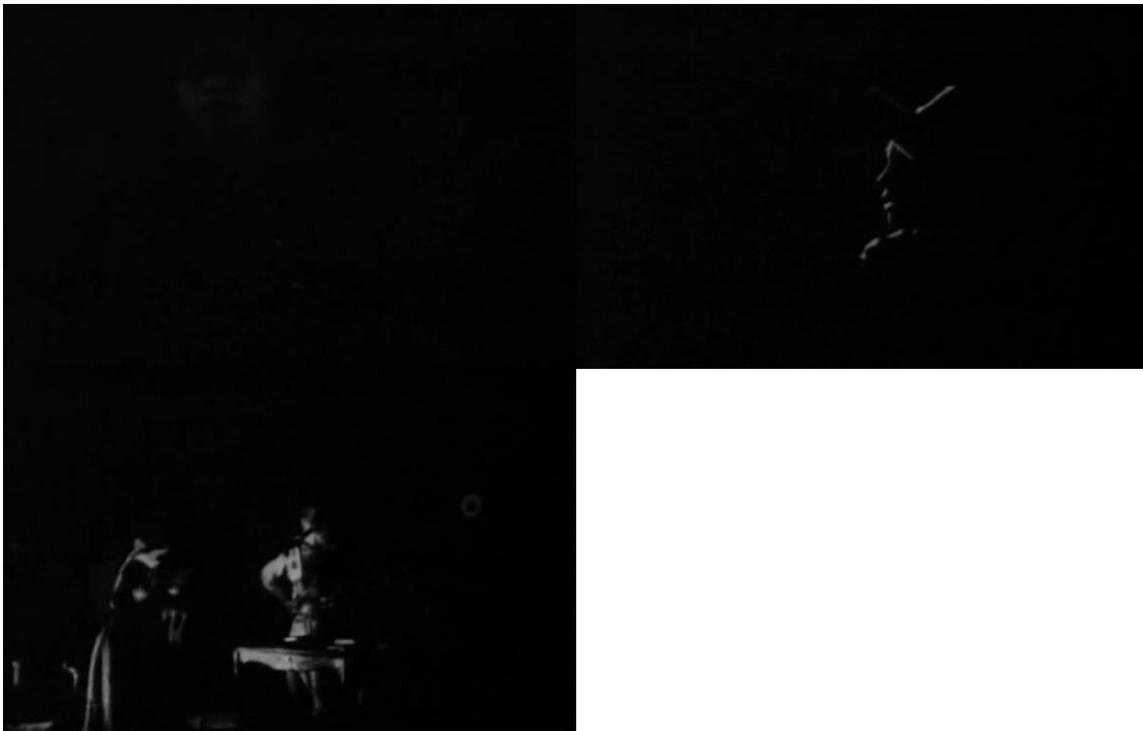


Figure 3-30: Insufficient lighting in the night scenes makes actors almost invisible in *the Man from Painted Post*.

The Man from Painted Post contains 102 Intertitles, 19 POV shots, and 42 Insert Shots for a total of 710 shots and an ASL of 4.89 seconds. The film contains four Pans, two Tilts, one Pan with Tilt, and one Track Shot. There are 41 Transitions—a few Irises but mostly fades—42 Close Ups, 103 Medium Close Ups, 87 Medium Shots, 149 Medium Long Shots, 146 Long Shots, and 32 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-16.

Table 3-16: Descriptive Statistics of *The Man from Painted Post (1917)**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	0	0.0
CU	42	5.9
MCU	103	14.5
MS	87	12.3
MLS	149	21.0
LS	146	20.6
VLS	32	4.5
Title credits	5	0.7
Intertitle	102	14.4
POV	19	2.7
INS	42	5.9
RA	198	27.9
Reframing	5	0.7
Pan	4	0.6
Tilt	2	0.3
Pan with Tilt	1	0.1
Track	1	0.1
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

17 - *Reaching for the Moon* (1917)¹⁷

Studio: Artcraft Pictures Corporation

Produced by: John Emerson

Photoplay by: Anita Loos and John Emerson

Set Design by: Wilfred Buckland

Cinematography: Victor Fleming & Sam Landers

Frame Rate: 30 FPS

John Emerson returned to directing a Fairbanks picture for the sixth and last time in *Reaching for the Moon* and Sam Landers was recruited to help Fleming behind the camera. *Reaching for the Moon* was admired for Fairbanks' "superb physical endowment" and for being "replete with thrills" (Detroit Free Press, 1917b). *The Hartford Courant* (1917c) called Loos and Emerson's story a parody of *The Sword of Damocles* saying the story "satirizes the popular belief in the constant terror in which kings are supposed to live."

The opening scene, right after the opening title credits, shows Fairbanks on top of a ladder trying to reach the moon. While unrelated to the rest of the film the scene is a nod to the title and a dramatization of the axiom that follows: "How often do you wish for something and want it very, very badly? The next time you do, make a mental picture of the object of your desire and hold it—concentrate!"

Reaching for the Moon is noteworthy for its clever use of transitions (i.e. dissolves) to peek into the imagination of the characters. Early in the film a medium close up of Fairbanks with his eyes closed dissolves into his imagination, and another dissolve takes us

¹⁷ Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD is "mastered from [a] print made in the early 1950s from [a] camera negative." (Flicker Alley notes)

back to him. See Figure 3-31. This trend is an ever-present theme in *Reaching for the Moon* and is applied to other characters as well.



Figure 3-31: A medium close up of Fairbanks (top left) dissolves (top right) into his imagination in which he is king (bottom left).

Another stylistic approach to *Reaching for the Moon* is the use of establishing shots. Wherever Fairbanks' character leaves a building an establishing shot depicts the exterior of the building and the street. And before he enters another building again an establishing shot of the exterior is used before a cut to interior. See Figure 3-32. The film uses 61 transitions in total, which is among the highest in this sample.



Figure 3-32: Establishing shots are a constant staple in *Reaching for the Moon*.

Reaching for the Moon shows exemplary effort in set design and costume. Part of the story is set in the fictitious Kingdom of Vulgaria which has its own unique look and fashion that sets it apart from generic royal courts and outfits. See Figure 3-33.

The film uses camera movements 23 times—one Pan, two Tilts, and 20 Track Shots. There is one Big Close Up, 16 Close Ups, 237 Medium Close Ups, 136 Medium Shots, 188 Medium Long Shots, 108 Long Shots, and 27 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-17. *Reaching for the Moon* has 128 Intertitles, 32 POV Shots, and 54 Insert Shots for a total of 900 shots and an ASL of 4.59 seconds.



Figure 3-33: The kingdom of Vulgaria has a unique look thanks to the costume and set design departments.

Table 3-17: Descriptive Statistics of *Reaching for the Moon* (1917)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	1	0.1
CU	16	1.8
MCU	237	26.3
MS	136	15.1
MLS	188	20.9
LS	108	12
VLS	27	3
Title credits	5	0.5
Intertitle	128	14.2
POV	32	3.5
INS	54	6
RA	290	32.2
Reframing	1	0.1
Pan	1	0.1
Tilt	2	0.2
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	20	2.2
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

18 - *A Modern Musketeer* (1917)¹⁸

Studio: Artcraft Pictures Corporation

Photoplay: Allan Dwan

Based on: *D'Artagnan of Kansas* by E. P. Lyle, Jr

Directed by: Allan Dwan

Photography by : Hugh McClung and Harry Thorpe

Artcraft Pictures Corporation

Frame Rate: 30 FPS

The last feature of the present sample, *A Modern Musketeer*, “is pronounced by the elites and the press of the country to be the best work of Fairbanks,” (The Nashville American, 1918). This time it wasn’t just Fairbanks’ athleticism and antics that won the critics over, but rather his “wit and humor” that made his portrayal of Ned Thacher on par, if not superior, to Dumas’ depiction of D’Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers* (New York Tribune, 1918).

Allan Dwan returned to the director’s chair for *A Modern Musketeer* and Hugh McClung and Harry Thorpe were recruited to shoot the film on location in Arizona. The film is notable for breaking the proverbial fourth wall with Fairbanks looking directly into the camera on two occasions. Once right before he enters the building as D’Artagnan and once again after the prologue where he stares into the camera as D’Artagnan and is dissolved into Ned standing in the same position and wearing a suite. See Figure 3-34. The dissolve

¹⁸ Source: Flicker Alley (2008) DVD is from a “new restoration by the Danish Film Institute based upon a 35mm print given by Douglas Fairbanks to the Museum of Modern Art in 1939 and another recently found at the Danish Film Institute.” (Flicker Alley notes)

has a particular purpose here. It is a clever way of transitioning between the D'Artagnan story and the Ned Thacher story.



Figure 3-34 Fairbanks stairs directly into the camera as D'Artagnan and Ned Thacher.

A Modern Musketeer made use of real practical effects rather than “faked” optical illusions, according to Fairbanks (The Hartford Courant, 1918). One interesting use of practical effects pertains to the tornado scene right before the birth of the child. It appears that a strong wind machine was used to forcefully blow air, throwing and smashing objects all over the set in these scenes. See Figure 3-35.



Figure 3-35: Actual wind turbines were used to create the tornado effect in *A Modern Musketeer*.

The camera movements in the film include eight Pans, five Tilts, and three Track shots. There are 145 Intertitles, seven POV Shots, and 54 Insert Shots, for a total of 993 shots and an ASL of 4.16 seconds. *A Modern Musketeer* uses 26 Transitions, one Big Close Up, 14 Close Ups, 97 Medium Close Ups, 67 Medium Shots, 305 Medium Long Shots, 261 Long Shots, and 45 Very Long Shots. See Table 3-18.

Table 3-18: Descriptive Statistics of *A Modern Musketeer* (1917)*

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
BCU	1	0.1
CU	14	1.4
MCU	97	9.8
MS	67	6.7
MLS	305	30.7
LS	261	26.3
VLS	45	4.5
Title credits	6	0.6
Intertitle	145	14.6
POV	7	0.7
INS	54	5.4
RA	364	36.6
Reframing	24	2.4
Pan	8	0.8
Tilt	5	0.5
Pan with Tilt	0	0.0
Track	3	0.3
Track with pan	0	0.0
Crane	0	0.0
Zoom	0	0.0
Zoom with Pan	0	0.0

* See Table 2-1 for description of variables.

Chapter 4

Results and Conclusions

The present study aimed to shed light on whether Douglas Fairbanks could be considered an auteur. To address this question, the present study attempted to establish the extent to which Fairbanks was involved in aesthetic and stylistic decision-making processes of his films, as well as the stylistic similarities and differences between his own films and among other films of his era. Eighteen Fairbanks films released between 1915 and 1918 were sampled for the present investigation. Historical accounts of the filmmaking process surrounding the titles in this sample were reviewed to address the questions about Fairbanks' involvement and influence behind the camera and the statistical approach was used for analysis of the films' aesthetics and formal construction.

Most historical accounts reviewed as part of this investigation (see Chapter 1 and 3) assert that Fairbanks was indeed a major decisionmaker, and one who exerted control over all aspects of filmmaking. Despite the contractual obligations of Griffith to supervise Fairbanks' movies, it is widely believed that he chose to stay away from Fairbanks' sets due to a rift between the two over Fairbanks' insistence on having the final say. Many familiar with Fairbanks have gone on the record claiming that Fairbanks wrote, and back-seat directed most of the films in this sample, but chose not to take credit for it. Based on these accounts, it is reasonable to assume Douglas Fairbanks was a major force in the aesthetics and stylistic choices made in his films, and therefore satisfying the first aspect of the research question of the present study. To address the stylistic similarities and differences

of his films, the results of the cinematics approach used in the present study will be discussed in detail. Tables 4-1 and 4-2 display a summary of the data collected in the present study, and Appendix B illustrates the shot scale histogram of the films.

Table 4-1: A Brief Summary of Some of the Cinematics Parameters from Douglas Fairbanks' Films Released Between 1915 and 1918

Title	Year	Director	Intertitle	POV	INSERT	RA	Reframe	Total Shots	ASL	Duration
The Lamb	1915	Christy Cabanne	59	3	19	61	7	561	6.02	0:55:55:18
Double Trouble	1915	Christy Cabanne	78	12	14	47	3	395	8.02	0:52:39:16
His Picture in the Papers	1916	John Emerson	85	23	67	95	5	596	6.26	1:01:54:00
The Habit of Happiness	1916	Allan Dwan	96	1	7	117	1	558	3.99	0:36:59:24
The Good Bad Man	1916	Allan Dwan	119	9	22	151	1	604	4.93	0:49:08:02
Reggie Mixes In	1916	Christy Cabanne	62	4	12	150	1	441	6.07	0:44:27:20
The Mystery of the Leaping Fish	1916	John Emerson	41	11	11	54	7	312	5.1	0:26:19:29
Flirting with Fate	1916	Christy Cabanne	74	9	13	159	8	505	6.82	0:57:16:29
The Half Breed	1916	Allan Dwan	157	5	9	123	5	653	6.32	1:08:18:08
Manhattan Madness	1916	Allan Dwan	82	3	19	118	5	561	3.21	0:29:48:11
American Aristocracy	1916	Lloyd Ingraham	80	9	32	167	7	523	5.43	0:47:10:29
The Matrimaniac	1916	Paul Powell	56	10	26	121	2	561	4.95	0:46:08:28
The Americano	1916	John Emerson	130	24	40	192	1	802	4.06	0:54:04:10
Wild and Woolly	1917	John Emerson	121	11	37	289	7	961	4.5	1:11:45:19
Down to Earth	1917	John Emerson	151	17	31	214	7	860	3.88	0:58:20:08
The Man from Painted Post	1917	Joseph Henabery	102	19	42	198	5	710	4.89	0:57:41:11
Reaching for the Moon	1917	John Emerson	128	32	54	290	1	900	4.59	01:08:30:00
A Modern Musketeer	1917	Allan Dwan	145	7	54	364	24	993	4.16	01:08:24:22

**Table 4-2: A Brief Summary of Camera Movement Data from Douglas Fairbanks'
Films Released Between 1915 and 1918**

Title	Year	Pan	Tilt	Pan with Tilt	Track	Track with Pan	Track with pan & Tilt	Crane	Zoom	Total
The Lamb	1915	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	8
Double Trouble	1915	2	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	9
His Picture in the Papers	1916	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5
The Habit of Happiness	1916	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Good Bad Man	1916	7	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	10
Reggie Mixes In	1916	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Mystery of the Leaping Fish	1916	5	4	0	9	0	0	0	0	18
Flirting with Fate	1916	5	7	0	2	1	0	0	0	15
The Half Breed	1916	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Manhattan Madness	1916	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
American Aristocracy	1916	8	1	1	15	1	0	0	0	26
The Matrimaniac	1916	2	1	0	10	0	0	0	0	13
The Americano	1916	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wild and Woolly	1917	3	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	7
Down to Earth	1917	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
The Man from Painted Post	1917	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	8
Reaching for the Moon	1917	1	2	0	20	0	0	0	0	23
A Modern Musketeer	1917	8	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	16

As explained in Chapter 3, to measure the cinematics parameters a Non-Linear Editing (NLE) software (Adobe Premier) was used. For each film in the sample, a digital

copy of the film was imported to the software’s timeline and all the extra title credits that were not part of the original film were removed—Some DVDs had extra title credits in the beginning and at the end of the movie. These title cards had been added by the company that restored and/or produced the DVD. Once all extra material was removed from the timeline, the film was recut into individual shots and the metadata (i.e. timestamps and length of each shot) were entered into a spread sheet, where I coded each shot using Barry Salt’s (1974) codebook. See Table 2-1 for abbreviations and definitions used in the coding process.

As Figure 4-1 illustrates, *Double Trouble* (1915) with an average shot length of 8.02 seconds had the lengthiest shots among the films in this sample, compared to *Manhattan Madness* (1916), which had the shortest with an ASL of 3.21 seconds. Overall, the ASL of Fairbanks movies in this period had a downward trend (the dotted line in Figure 4-1).

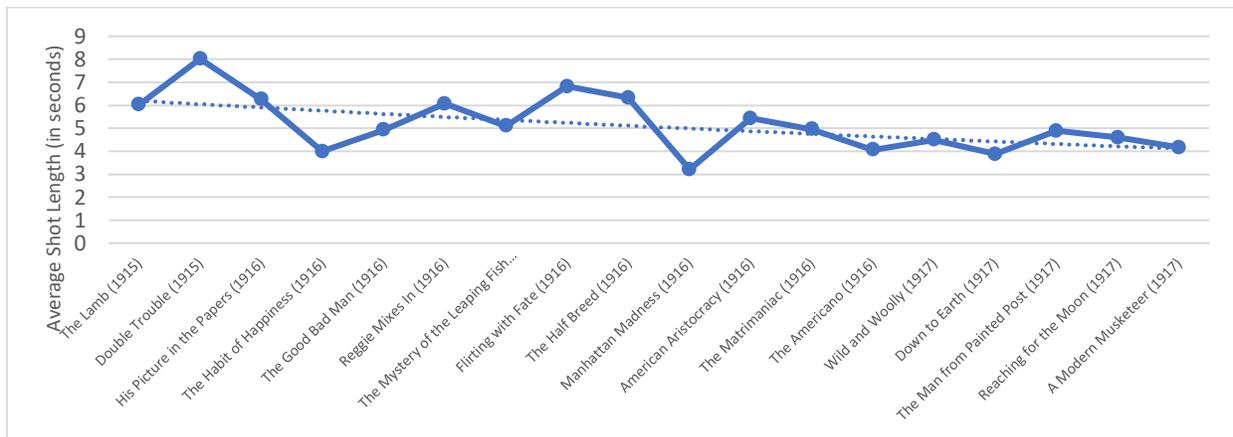


Figure 4-1: The Average Shot Length (ASL) in Douglas Fairbanks movies over time

To determine whether the change in the pace of Fairbanks’s films were systematic or haphazard a two-tailed Pearson correlation was conducted with ASL as the dependent variable and “release year” as the independent variable. As expected, there was a significant inverse correlation ($r = -.56, n = 18, p < .001$) between ASL and the films’ release

year, meaning that as the years progressed the ASL regressed (and the pace of editing increased).

While the decline in the length of shots (and the increase in the editing pace) is consistent with the industry trends at the time, Fairbanks' films on average have a faster pace than those of his contemporaries. Although the present thesis did not independently study other films from the same era, Barry Salt (Salt, 2009) has provided a summary of ASL in the 1914-1919 films:

So we find that in 1914, D.W. Griffith's *The Avenging Conscience* has an Average Shot Length of 7.7 seconds, and there were other American filmmakers who were cutting just about as fast, as the ASL's for *The Italian* (7.5 sec.) and *A Florida Enchantment* (8 sec.) indicate. However, most directors were still using less shots in their films, as is suggested by the figure for *The Spoilers* (13.5 sec.), *The Wishing Ring* (11.5 sec.), *The Three Musketeers* (11.2).

A wide range of values was still to be found in 1915, such as; *The Cheat* (DeMille) – 13.5 seconds, *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith) – 7.1 seconds, *The Crowd* (Barker) -11 seconds, *David Harum* (Dwan) – 20 seconds, *Manhattan Butterfly* (Olcott) – 16 seconds, and *Playing Dead* (Sidney Drew) – 9 seconds.

But by 1918, because of the rapid formal evolution that continued through the war years in the United States, we find that values for the Average Shot Length had decreased substantially, as the following figures show: *The Hired Man* (Schertzing) – 5.5 seconds, *The Gun Woman* (Borzage) – 4.7 seconds, *A Modern Musketeer* (Dwan) – 4 seconds, *Stella Mars* (Neilan) – 7.5 seconds, *Old Wives for New* (DeMille) – 8.2 seconds, and *Till I*

Come Back To You (DeMille) – 8 seconds. To reinforce the point I shall add a few figures for 1919, as follows: *Broken Blossoms* (Griffith) – 7.5 seconds, *True Heart Susie* (Griffith) – 6 seconds, *When the Clouds Roll By* (Fleming) – 5seconds, and *Jubilo* (Badger) – 5.5seconds. (Salt, 2009, p. 161)

Figure 4-2 illustrates the average shot lengths of films from this era studied by Salt. As stated earlier, the ASL data from this study shows that Fairbanks' films had been faster from the majority of other films made during this period with all of Fairbanks' films recording an ASL of under 7 seconds—with the exception of *Double Trouble* which has the ASL of just over 8 seconds. This make Fairbanks' films even faster than those made by Griffith.

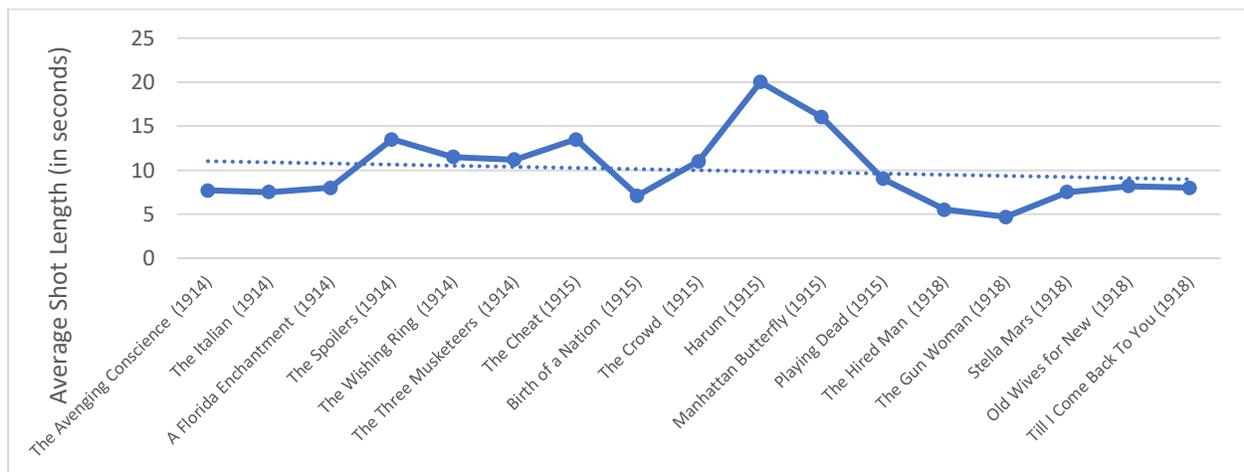


Figure 4-2: The Average Shot Length in the films made by Fairbanks' contemporaries between 1914 and 1918 based on data gathered by Salt (2006).

To establish whether the ASL difference between Fairbanks and his contemporaries could be attributed to chance or a conscious decision on his part, a one-sample t-test was conducted with the test value of 9.66, which is average ASL of films included in Figure 4-2. T-test is one of the most widely used methods of comparing the means of two groups. The test reveals the size of the differences (t-value) between the means of two sets of data—in

this case the ASL of Fairbanks' films and the ASL of the other films from his era—and the probability (p-value) that the difference could be due to chance rather than systematic differences between the two groups (Kim, 2015). T-test is usually expressed with the statement of the degree of freedom [$t_{(df)}$], which refers to the number of values used in the test. It is followed by a p-value, which is a decimal expression of the likelihood that that the difference is a fluke. Scientists call findings that are less than 5% (or $p < .05$) due to chance, a significant finding—i.e. highly improbable that the finding is random or by pure chance.

The outcome of the test indicated that the ASL in Fairbanks' films ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.23$)¹⁹ was lower than the ASL of other films in this period $t_{(18)} = -15.67$, $p < .001$. The finding indicates that Fairbanks films were faster than other films of his era in a statistically significant manner. Therefore, the pace of Fairbanks movies could not be merely chalked down to a change in the industry trend. Another significant finding of the ASL data is that the speed of the films Fairbanks' starred in was more or less constant—in that they follow a very particular and systematic trend—regardless of the director, from his first film *The Lamb* (1915) which is directed by Christy Cabanne to the last film in this study *A Modern Musketeer* (1917) which is directed by Allan Dwan, Fairbanks worked with 6 directors. Film historian William K. Everson drew attention to the pace of Fairbanks films, which he found to be even faster than those of Griffith's. "Fairbanks, always much influenced by Griffith, sometimes outdid Griffith (and even the later Eisenstein) in the number and brevity of his shots. Fairbanks' 1917 western spoof *Wild and Woolly* moved at a fantastic pace, many shots running for no more than five frames" (Everson, 1998, p. 8). The

¹⁹ M stands for arithmetic mean, and SD stands for standard deviation.

consistency in the pace of these films is another indication of Fairbanks' influence on the entire process of filmmaking, confirming accounts by his son and others to that effect.

While Salt's data provides a snapshot of the industry trends between 1914 and 1918, Cinemetric's database provides a more complete picture. See Appendix A. To improve the reliability of the findings of the present study, the ASL of the films in the sample of this study was compared against all the feature length titles and shorts available in the Cinemetric database. (Note: Cross listed titles, serial episodes, and duplicates were excluded from analysis.) According to the database, the average of the ASL of the titles released in 1915 year is 8.48. For 1916, the database lists 34 titles measured with the average ASL of 9.01; and for 1917, a total of 26 titles with the average ASL of 8.31 are listed, for a combined average of 8.58. A one-sample t-test with the test value of 8.58 yielded that the ASL in Fairbanks' films ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.23$) was lower than the ASL of other films listed in the Cinemetric database $t_{(18)} = -11.95$, $p < .001$.

The absolute value of the t-scores indicate that the difference in the pace of Fairbanks films compared to the movies included in Salt's analysis ($t_{(18)} = -15.67$) was slightly more pronounced than it was compared to the titles in the Cinemetric database ($t_{(18)} = -11.95$). As the trend (dotted) line in Figure 4.2 and the data in Appendix A demonstrate, there is no significant drop in the pace of the industry in this time period as there is in Fairbanks' films. Both analyses confirm that Fairbanks' movies were faster than the industry average—even with the inclusion of many short titles, which are usually faster than feature length titles.

Considering the other variables collected during this study, some of which are displayed in Table 4-3, it becomes apparent that Fairbanks' style evolved over time during

this period and since this evolution happened over time and with different directors, cinematographers, and even studios at the helm, rather than revolutionary (sudden erratic changes depending on who is producing and who is directing the feature), it is reasonable to attribute the change to Fairbanks himself.

**Table 4-3: A Brief Summary of Shot Types in Douglas Fairbanks' Films Released
Between 1915 and 1918**

Title	Year	BCU	CU	MCU	MS	MLS	LS	VLS
The Lamb	1915	0	13	47	78	154	117	70
Double Trouble	1915	0	6	47	49	136	51	11
His Picture in the Papers	1916	0	2	22	41	122	220	29
The Habit of Happiness	1916	0	6	164	41	150	85	4
The Good Bad Man	1916	0	31	61	50	160	124	27
Reggie Mixes In	1916	0	25	124	73	102	39	0
The Mystery of the Leaping Fish	1916	0	1	14	27	50	158	6
Flirting with Fate	1916	0	3	84	75	182	70	0
The Half Breed	1916	0	21	29	28	234	152	18
Manhattan Madness	1916	3	14	120	44	184	74	19
American Aristocracy	1916	4	15	42	20	173	136	18
The Matrimaniac	1916	0	0	37	59	192	171	18
The Americano	1916	0	30	178	133	160	89	37
Wild and Woolly	1917	0	31	170	191	256	104	45
Down to Earth	1917	0	29	158	121	222	121	24
The Man from Painted Post	1917	0	42	103	87	149	146	32
Reaching for the Moon	1917	1	16	237	136	188	108	27
A Modern Musketeer	1917	1	14	97	67	305	261	45

These changes in Fairbank's style all seem to have come in 1916, suggesting that Fairbanks may have gone through a transformation in that year. However, there are also some stylistic similarities among his films that seem to stay constant throughout the period under investigation. The percentages of Close Ups, Big Close Ups, Medium Close Ups, Medium Shots, Medium Long Shots, Long Shots and Very Long Shots (relative to the total number of shots) all seem to be consistent in this period. To test for the consistency of

these parameters, a variable called “release order” was created, corresponding to the order in which the films were released. Zero-order spearman correlations between these parameters and *release order* were all non-significant. A significant (i.e. a p-value smaller than .05) correlation between each of these elements and *release order* would have indicated a systematic increase, or decline (in case of a negative correlation), in the number of shots containing each parameter. Since the correlations are all non-significant, the null hypothesis of no change (in the number of shots containing each of the parameters over time) is supported. In other words, if the p-values were all significant ($p < .05$), it meant that these stylistic elements changed with time (release order) and had very little to do with Fairbanks’ vision, meaning that that there would have been no consistency in Fairbanks’ films. Table 4-4 displays the results of the correlations, while Figure 4-3 visualizes the fluctuation of some of these elements over time.

Table 4-4: Correlations between release order of Fairbanks’ films and the frequency of some of the aesthetic elements used in the films*

	Correlation coefficient	p Value
Big Close Ups	0.46	0.053
Close Ups	0.2	0.424
Medium Close Ups	0.15	0.534
Medium Shots	0.16	0.518
Medium Long Shots	0.02	0.933
Long Shots	-0.05	0.839
Very Long Shots	0.22	0.378

*Note: for a correlation to be significant the p value should not be equal to, or greater than .05.

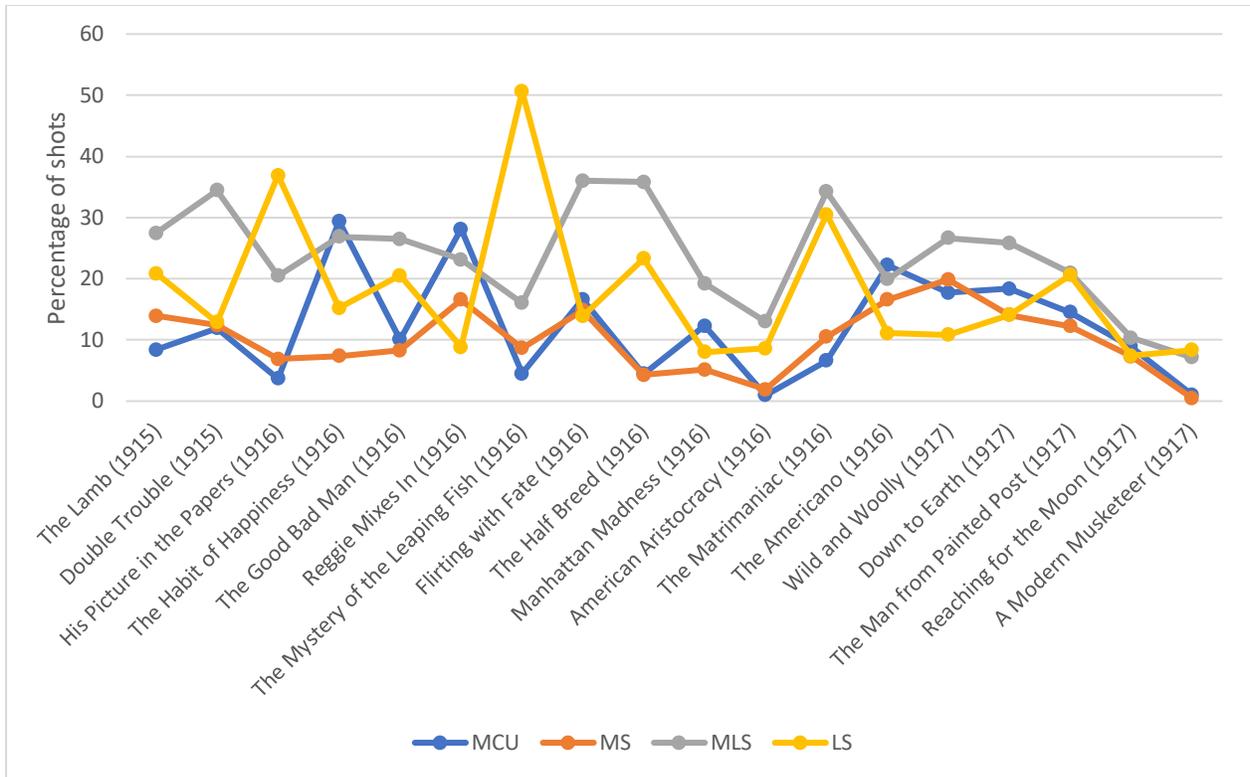


Figure 4-3: The fluctuation of the percentage of Medium Close Ups (MCU), Medium Shots (MS), Medium Long Shots (MLS), and Long Shots (LS) does not indicate a systematic change in style over time, but rather a constant flow.

While the general trend of Fairbanks films shows no sign of systematic change with time, the picture changes slightly when the films are broken down by directors. Although for the most part there is no visible change, Allan Dwan, who directed five Fairbanks pictures in the period under investigation, does show a tendency to use fewer Medium Close Ups, Medium Shots, Medium Long Shots, and Long Shots in his later films than he does in his earlier films. See Figure 4-4. However, John Emerson, who directed six films in this sample does not show the same tendency. See Figure 4-5. Due to the small number of films directed by Dwan, no meaningful statistical analysis can be conducted to establish whether this decline in shot scale is systematic or a fluke. Perhaps it is an indication that Dwan was something of an artist, while Fairbanks was the Auteur. However, Figures 4-3, 4-

4, and 4-5 demonstrate that Medium Long Shots—which the French call *Le plan américain*, or American Shot—tend to be among the most widely used shots in the films in this sample regardless of director, or cinematographer—something that certainly can be attributed to Fairbanks’ touch.

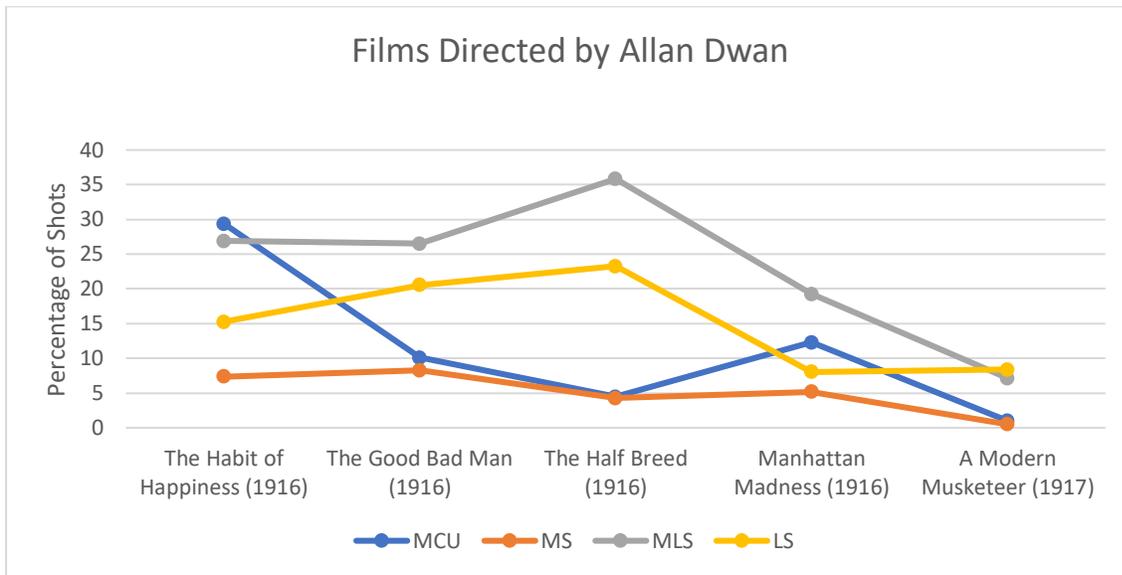


Figure 4-4: The fluctuation of the percentage of Medium Close Ups (MCU), Medium Shots (MS), Medium Long Shots (MLS), and Long Shots (LS) in Fairbanks films directed by Allan Dwan.

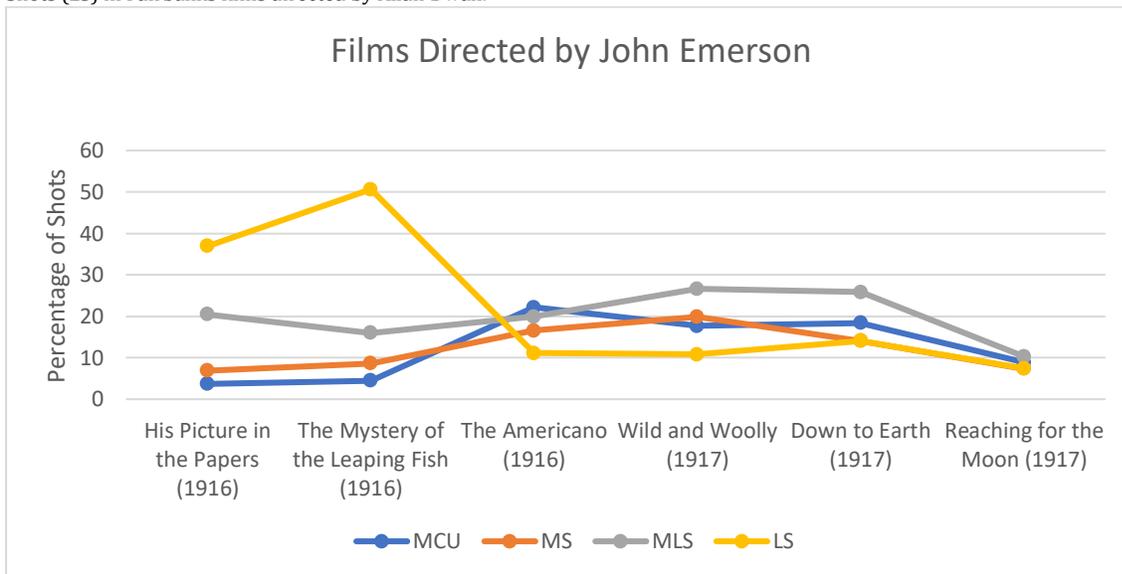


Figure 4-5: The fluctuation of the percentage of Medium Close Ups (MCU), Medium Shots (MS), Medium Long Shots (MLS), and Long Shots (LS) in Fairbanks films directed by John Emerson.

Limitations

As mention in Chapter 3, one important note to consider about the results of this and similar studies is the format and the frame rate of the copy used to analyze films. For years scholars used actual film reels and measured such parameters on a Steenbeck or similar devices which allows frame by frame playback of film reels. One could argue that this method would produce more accurate results as far as the frame rate is concerned. By using physical film, the actual number of frames are preserved. However, when converted to digital copies, all films generally fall under two major categories of 29.97 (often rounded up to 30) frame per second and 23.97 (often rounded to 24) FPS, which are the standards for most digital copies. The drawback of using digital copies is the fact that unless the original source was shot in the exact frame rate, a number of frames are bound to repeat, which varies from title to title, but in the case of most silent films it almost doubles—if we consider that a typical Silent era film is shot in 16 FPS, and the converted to 30 FPS for digital media. Sixteen of the 18 the DVD copies used for the purpose of this study had a frame rate of 30 FPS, while two had a frame rate of 24 fps (*The Good Bad Man* and *The Half-Breed*).

Costs and access made the use of reels unfeasible for the present study. While this limitation has affected the accuracy of the number of actual (versus repeated) frames in a shot, since the error introduced by the addition of repeated frames is a constant—in that all shots are affected by the same number of repeated frames—it has no bearing on the

accuracy of the analyses, correlations, and t-tests in the same manner that a number added to both sides of an equation does not affect the equation.

Another limitation of the present study, again, stems from access. a number of Fairbanks films had to be dropped from analysis because they were not preserved, or no copy was available at the time of analysis (of the missing films only one—*In Again, Out Again* (1917), directed by Emerson—has survived). While the absence of these titles from analysis is unlikely to drastically change the outcome, it prevents the present study from achieving its original goal—i.e. analyzing *all* Fairbanks films from 1915 to the formation of United Artists.

Finally, the present investigation only analyzed a portion of the films starring Douglas Fairbanks over a three-year period. While the sample size of the present study (N = 18) is enough for meaningful statistical analyses, auteurs are made over a lifetime rather than a few years. Future researchers are encouraged to build on the present study by using the same methodology to analyze the other Fairbanks films not included in the sample of the present study. Only after considering the entire body of Fairbanks' work, can it be definitively determined whether he should be considered an auteur.

Conclusion

The present thesis sought to address the research question, “could Douglas Fairbanks be considered an auteur?” Chapter 1 proposed that in order to establish whether he can be considered an auteur, the following questions need to be addressed first:

1. To what extent was Fairbanks involved in the aesthetic and stylistic decision-making processes of his films?

2. To what extent are the styles of Fairbanks' films (made between 1915 and 1920) similar? And what are the stylistic and aesthetic similarities and/or differences between those films?
3. To what extent does the style of Fairbanks' films conform to, or deviate from, the style of other films made in the same era?

The first question was addressed in depth in Chapters 2 and 3, and was elaborated on further in Chapter 4. Given the accounts of those close to him and the consistencies in his films across multiple directors and studios, the present investigation concludes that Fairbanks' involvement was substantial enough to merit consideration for other questions.

After conducting statistical analyses of the aesthetics and stylistic elements of his films between 1915 and 1918, it emerged that the use of Close Ups, Big Close Ups, Medium Close Ups, Medium Shots, Medium Long Shots, Long Shots and Very Long Shots is fairly consistent across the films in the sample of the present study. One thing to consider is, in order to be as objective as possible, the genre and subject matter of the films were not considered in the analysis inasmuch as those choices could definitely affect style. For example, it could be that there would have been more long shots in the western subject films than in the comedies set in New York.

To address the third question, the average shot length of Fairbanks' films were compared with the ASL of other films made in the same period. Statistical analysis showed that while Fairbanks' films and the industry as a whole was moving toward a faster pace at the time, there was enough differences between the pace of Fairbanks' films and those of his contemporaries to distinguish him from the others. While the data do not support a claim that Fairbanks "deviated" from the norms of his time, they certainly do support the

claim that he was ahead of the curve in many regards. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this investigation that there is enough evidence to consider Fairbanks an auteur as “[h]is ambitions were not only industrial but also artistic. Not satisfied with making the biggest movies, he also wanted to make the best and most beautiful movies,” (Patrice Petro & Curtis, 2010, p. 35).

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Appendix A: Cinemetric's ASL Data for Short and Feature-Length Titles from 1915 to 1917.

Film Title	Year	Director	ASL
A Jitney Elopement	1915	Charles Chaplin	9.2
A Night in the Show	1915	Charles Chaplin	7.4
A Stool-Pigeon Revenge	1915	John G. Blystone	4.9
A Submarine Pirate	1915	Charles Avery, Syd Chaplin	3.9
A Versatile Villain	1915	Frank Griffith	3.2
A Woman	1915	Charles Chaplin	8.1
After Death	1915	Yevgeni Bauer	21.2
Ahasver	1915	Jaroslav Kvapil	11.4
Ambrose's Fury	1915	Dell Henderson	3.5
Ambrose's Lofty Perch	1915		6.4
Ambrose's Nasty Temper	1915	Dell Henderson	3.1
Ambrose's Sour Grapes	1915	Walter Wright	5.2
Bank, The	1915	Charles Chaplin	8.1
Bezzakonie (The Lawless)	1915	Mikhail Martov [?] Boris Glagolin [?]	15.4
Birth of a Nation, The (187 min. version)	1915	D.W. Griffith	7
Bout-de-Zan et l'embusqu	1915	Louis Feuillade	13.2
By the Sea	1915	Charles Chaplin	9.2
Carmen	1915	Cecil B. DeMille	11.4
Champion, The	1915	Charles Chaplin	10.6
Coiffeur par Amour	1915	Max Linder	23.2
Crossed Love and Swords	1915	Frank Griffin	5.2
Day On The Force, A	1915	Arthur Hotaling	6.7
Daydreams	1915	Yevgeni Bauer	21.3
Desperate Scoundrel	1915	Charles Parrott	2
Droppington's Family Tree	1915	Walter Wright	6.8
Evangelie-mandens Liv (The Candle and the Moth)	1915	Holger-Madsen	30.2
Fatty and Mabel at the San Diego Exposition	1915	Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle	6.1
Fatty and Mabel's Simple Life	1915		4.2
Fatty's Chance Acquaintance	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	7.4
Fatty's Faithful Fido	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	3.7
Fatty's New Role	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	8
Fatty's Plucky Pup	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	5

Fatty's Reckless Fling	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	6.2
Fatty's Tintype Tangle	1915		4.1
Gussle'd Day of Rest	1915	F. Richard Jones	6.1
Gussle's Backward Way	1915		6.9
Gussle's Wayward Path	1915	Charles Avery, Syd Chaplin	6.8
Hash House Mashers	1915	unknown	4.2
He Resolves Not to Smoke	1915	Wallace A. Carlson	8.2
His Luckless Love (ASD)	1915	Dell Henderson	3.3
His New Job	1915	Charles Chaplin	10.3
His Regeneration	1915	Gilbert M. 'Broncho Billy' Anderson	12.2
Hogan's Wild Oats	1915	Charles Avery	7.3
In the Park	1915	Charles Chaplin	8.3
Jitney Elopement, A	1915	Charles Chaplin	9.1
Little Teacher	1915	Mack Sennett	5.7
Love, Loot and Crash	1915	Frank Griffin	3.4
Love, Speed and Thrills	1915	Mack Sennett	2.7
Mabel and Fatty's Married Life	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	4.3
Mabel and Fatty's Wash Day	1915	Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle	5.7
Mabel Lost and Won	1915	Mack Sennett (?), Mabel Normand (?)	5.1
Mabel, Fatty and the Law	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	5.9
Mabel's Jealous Romeo	1915		3.7
Mabel's Wilful Way	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	4.8
Maciste	1915	Luigi Romano Borgnetto, Vincenzo Denizot	13
Madness of Dr. Tube, The	1915	Abel Gance	24.8
Miss Fatty's Seaside Lovers	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	5
Night in the Show, A	1915	Charles Chaplin	6.5
Night Out, A	1915	Charles Chaplin	11.3
Nobleza Gaucha (Gaucho Nobility)	1915	Humberto Cairo, Ernesto Gunche, Eduardo Martinez de la Pera	9.2
Our Dare-Devil Chief	1915	Ford Sterling	4.1
Police	1915	Charles Chaplin	10.7
Regeneration	1915	Raoul Walsh	4.5
Settled at the Seaside	1915	Frank Griffin	3.7
Shanghaied	1915	Charles Chaplin	8.6
surprises de l'amour, Les	1915	Max Linder	25.8
That Little Band of Gold	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	8.6
The Bank	1915	Charles Chaplin	8.1
The Hypocrites	1915		14.2
Their Social Splash	1915		4.5

Those Bitter Sweets	1915	Dell Henderson	3.8
Tramp, The	1915	Charles Chaplin	9.7
Triple Trouble	1915	Charles Chaplin, Leo White	7.3
When Ambrose Dared Walrus	1915	Walter Wright	3.1
When Love Took Wings	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	3.9
Willful Ambrose	1915	David Kirkland	4.3
Wished on Mabel	1915	Fatty Arbuckle	5.5
Woman, A	1915	Charles Chaplin	8
Wonders of Magnetism, The	1915		27.1
Work	1915	Charles Chaplin	9.9
Young Romance	1915		15.6
Battle Royal	1916	Will Louis	4.5
Behind the Screen	1916	Charles Chaplin	6.9
Burlesque on Carmen	1916	Charles Chaplin	8.8
Christus	1916	Giulio Antamoro	12.5
Civilization	1916	James Cruze	6
Colonel Heeza Liar at the Bat Count, The	1916	John Randolph Bray	10.6
Dödskyssen (The Kiss of Death)	1916	Charles Chaplin	9.4
Fatty and Mabel Adrift	1916	Inga Adolfsson, Victor Sjöström	12
Fireman, The	1916		4.2
Fireman, The	1916	Charles Chaplin	6.9
Floorwalker, The	1916	Charles Chaplin	9.3
For the Children	1916	Louis Feuillade	6.7
Haevnens nat (Blind Justice)	1916	Benjamin Christensen	14
Hasta Despues de Muerta ('Til After her Death)	1916	Ernesto Gunche, Eduardo Martinez de la Pera	11
Hell's Hinges	1916	Charles Swickard	6.2
His Bitter Pill	1916	Fred Fishback	3.2
His Wife's Mistakes	1916	Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle	5.2
Intolerance	1916	D.W. Griffith	6
Jack the Giant Killer	1916	W.L. Glacken	4.6
Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse at Circus	1916		13.9
Krazy Kat, Bugologist	1916	George Herriman	11.6
Movie Star, A	1916	George Herriman	4.5
Natural Born Gambler, A	1916	Fred Fishback (Hibbard)	10.5
Nishchaya (The beggar woman)	1916	Bert Williams	13.6
One A.M.	1916	Yakov Protazanov	18.9

Pawnshop, The	1916	Charles Chaplin	12.8
Police	1916	Charles Chaplin	10.6
Rink, The	1916	Charles Chaplin	6.9
Snow Cure, The	1916	Arvid E. Gillstrom	1.8
The Surf Girl	1916	Harry Edwards	2.5
Vagabond, The	1916	Charles Chaplin	11.5
Verdens Undergang (The End of the World)	1916	August Blom	15.8
Where are My Children?	1916	Phillips Smalley, Lois Weber	12.7
Zlate srdecko	1916		11
Adventurer, The	1917	Charles Chaplin	5.6
Coney Island	1917	Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle	4.7
Cure, The	1917	Charles Chaplin	7.1
Easy Street	1917	Charles Chaplin	7.9
His Majesty's Visit to the Clyde	1917		12.4
His Wedding Night	1917	Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle	6.3
Immigrant, The	1917	Charles Chaplin	9.1
Korol' Parizha (King of Paris)	1917	Evgenii Bauer	6.7
Malombra	1917	Carmine Gallone	9.3
Man There Was, A	1917	Victor Sjostrom	12
Oh Doctor!	1917	Roscoe Arbuckle	5.9
Over the Fence	1917	Harold Lloyd	6.2
Polyarpovo zimni dobrodruzstvi	1917	Jan S. Kolar	5
Poor Little Rich Girl, The (excerpt)	1917	Maurice Tourneur	6.9
Prazsti adamite	1917	FencI Antonin	7.3
Rapsodia Satanica	1917		16.7
Revolutionary (Revolyutsioner)	1917	Yevgeni Bauer	17.8
Romance of the Redwoods, A	1917	Cecil B. DeMille	10.8
Rough House, The	1917	Fatty Arbuckle	4.4
Scrublady	1917	Vincent Bryan	4.6
Straight Shooting	1917	John Ford	7.2
Teddy at the Throttle	1917	Clarence G. Badger	3.2
Thais	1917	Anton Giulio Bragaglia	14.8
The Butcher Boy	1917	Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle	5.6
The Cure	1917		7.1
To Happiness (Za Shchastiem)	1917	Evgenii Bauer	11.7

Appendix B: Shot Scale Histogram Douglas Fairbanks' films

