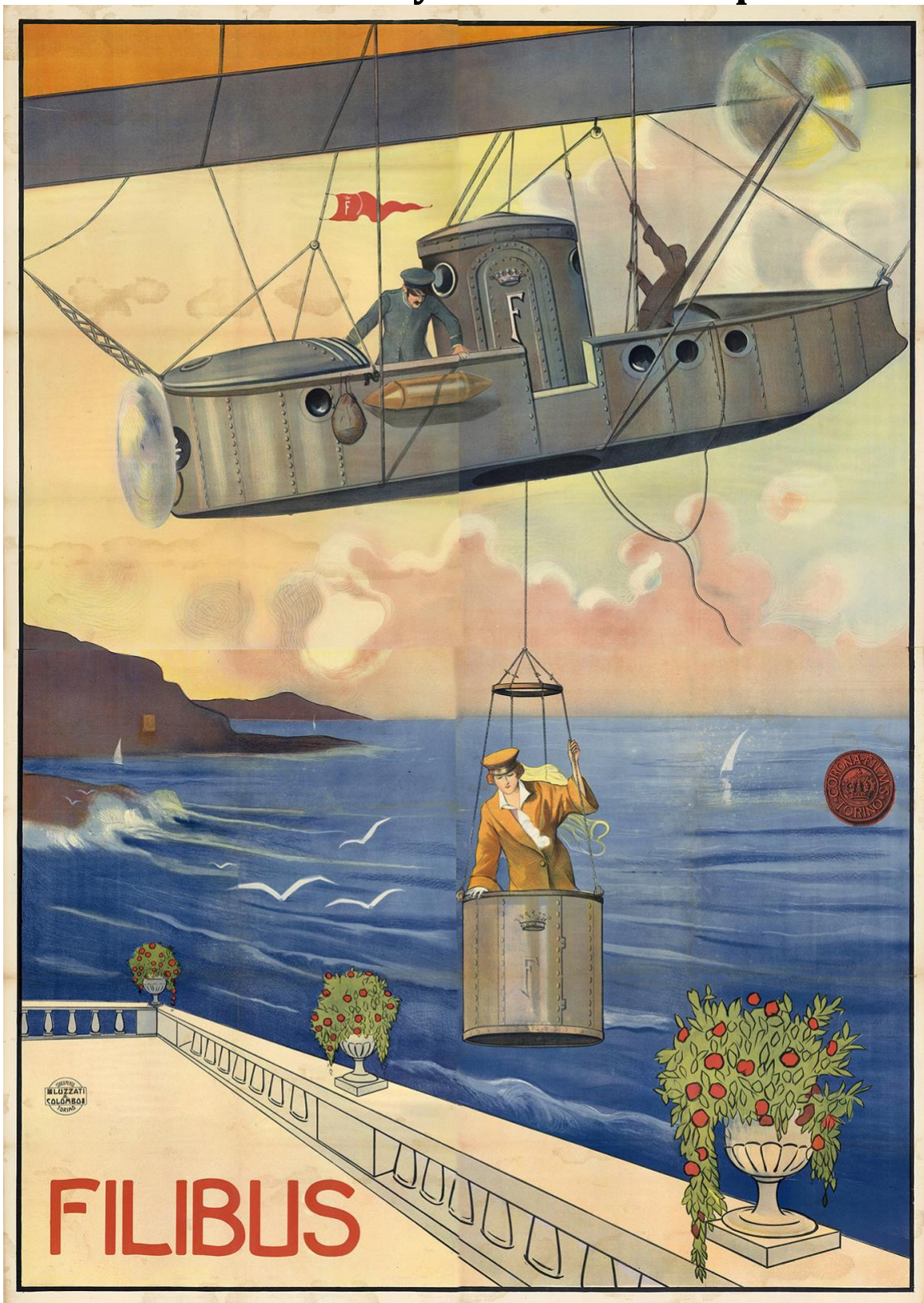


Milestone Film & Eye Filmmuseum present



www.filibus.net / www.milestonefilms.com

Crew and Cast

DirectorMario Roncoroni
WriterGiovanni Bertinetti
Cinematographer.....Luigi Fiorio
ProducerCorona Film, Torino, Italy

CAST

Filibus/Baroness Troixmond/Count de la Brive.....Valeria Creti
LeonoraCristina Ruspoli
Detective Kutt-Hendy.....Giovanni Spano
Police inspector.....Mario Mariani
Leo SandyFilippo Vallino (most likely)

Release Date: April 4, 1915 Italy. Running Time: 70 minutes.
2K SCAN from a restored negative, tints exactly matched to the original 1915 Desmet tinted-and-toned
35mm nitrate print.

Restored by Eye Filmmuseum

Annike Kross
Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi
Frank Roumen
Giovanna Fossati
Jan Scholten
Jeroen de Mol
Leenke Ripmeester

Font design: Allen Perkins
Intertitles: Austin Renna

New Restoration Version produced by Dennis Doros & Amy Heller, Milestone Film & Video

Thank you to:
David Emery
Luyao Ma
Marcello Seregni
Letizia Gatti, Reading Bloom
Ivo Blom
Jay Weissberg

And
The Association of Moving Image Archivists

**Musical score compiled from historic photoplay music by
The Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra**

Britt Swenson, violin
David Short, cello
Dawn Kramer, trumpet
Brian Collins, clarinet
Rodney Sauer, piano

Second Musical Score composed by Donald Sosin

Lyrics by Joanna Seaton
Donald Sosin, piano. Joanna Seaton, vocals.

Synopsis

Baroness de Troixmond (Filibus in disguise) is reading an article in the newspaper about a recent robbery that has taken place. She learns that a reward is being offered to anyone who can track down the true identity of Filibus and bring them to Detective Kutt-Hendy. She decides to pay a visit to the Magistrate in charge of the reward and asks to compete for the reward as well. Moments later, Detective Kutt-Hendy arrives at the notary's office. Filibus quickly hatches a devilish plan: she tells the detective that *he* is in fact Filibus and that she will come to prove it in time. As she is leaving with her chauffeur, she catches sight of Kutt-Hendy's sister Léonora, and contemplates how she might be of use to her.

Soon after, Filibus uses a heliograph (a signaling device involving a movable mirror to create flashes using sunlight) to signal to her airship that she wants to come up. Her loyal crew lowers a gondola down that allows her to ascend to the airship. She continues her plot. Meanwhile at Kutt-Hendy's villa, Leo Sandy, an antiquities collector and friend of the detective, is unsuccessfully trying to court Léonora. While Kutt-Hendy is alone, Filibus uses her airship to descend to the balcony of his villa and put him to sleep with a sedative. She seizes this opportunity to make an identical imprint of the detective's hand to use in her scheme. Filibus quietly slips away as Kutt-Hendy awakens without suspecting a thing.

A few days later Léonora goes out riding on her horse. Filibus, disguised as the Count de la Brive, uses her henchman to stage a kidnapping Léonora and take her away by car. The Count chases after her and "rescues" her. The two go to Kutt-Hendy's villa where Léonora details the heroic actions of Count de la Brive to the detective. Kutt-Hendy is thankful and invites the Count to stay at the villa for a few days. Leo Sandy on a visit, meets the Count and invites them all to a party that night.

At the party, the guests gather around in wonderment at Leo Sandy's prized possession: an ancient Egyptian statue of a cat with priceless diamond eyes. Leo Sandy turns the lights off, so everyone can see the glow of the eyes better, but when the lights come back on, a circular breach in the glass display case has appeared. Inside there's a note signed by Filibus, saying that by tonight the diamonds will be in her possession. Thinking someone must have the cut-out glass, Kutt-Hendy asks to search the guests, volunteering to be first. He is astonished to find the glass in his own pocket. Seeing a handprint on the glass, he takes the handprints of everyone at the party, so he can find out who was behind this charade. You see the Count removing the glove before "his" handprint is given.

Back at his house, and on examination of the handprints, he discovers to his own horror that the prints on the glass are actually his own. Fearing that he is going mad, the detective goes to consult his friend Dr. Derby. He is assured that he is not insane. Afterwards, decides to set a trap — he calls Leo Sandy and requests to make an alteration to his Egyptian cat statue at once.

Desperate to capture Filibus, Kutt-Hendy places a tiny spy camera in one of the eyes of the Egyptian cat and replaces the real diamond eyes with fake ones. While this is happening, Count de la Brive attempts to court Léonora. Later that night, Filibus flies to Leo Sandy's

villa, kidnaps him, puts Kutt-Hendy under a sedative, and arrives at the statue. Filibus realizes the detective's ploy of the fake diamond, spots the spy camera, and locates the real diamonds. Having her henchman carry the knocked-out detective, Filibus stages the robbery so that the hidden camera captures Kutt-Hendy's face instead of hers.

Filibus brings Kutt-Hendy back home, plants one of diamonds on his desk, and then calls the police to alert them of the crime. The police go and examine the crime scene and start to believe that Kutt-Hendy might indeed be Filibus. They question him, but he remembers the spy camera and is assured that this will absolve him of any guilt. He develops the picture and to his surprise he sees his own portrait. Meanwhile, on the airship, Leo Sandy steals a parachute and escapes from Filibus' airship. Landing in the sea, he is rescued by a passing car. He then learns that Kutt-Hendy is in custody and rushes to his aide. They scheme with Léonora on the best way to capture Filibus.

Kutt-Hendy announces in the newspapers that he has returned to his villa in Abruzzo. Filibus decides this is a perfect time to pin another crime on him: a robbery of the International Bank. Guessing that Filibus is sure to come to him first, Kutt-Hendy takes precautions against any sedative. When Filibus enters and attempts to dust him with the knock-out dust, he seizes her. Recognizing her as the Count de la Brive, he ties her up and goes to get the police. By the time he returns, Filibus has managed to get to a window, signal for her airship, and escape into the sky with the help of her henchmen.

A few days later, Leo Sandy proposes to Léonora and she accepts. As Kutt-Hendy is congratulating them, a letter from Filibus falls from the sky, telling him that this isn't their last encounter. High in the sky, Filibus laughs over her haul of jewels, possibly from the International Bank.

The Inspiration for *Filibus*

To begin with, it helps to know that the root word of Filibus derives from the Italian word *filibustiere*, meaning pirate or rogue. Used in different forms in many European languages, it is the origin of the English word filibuster.

The plot of *Filibus* comes out of the *feuilleton* tradition. Originally from the French word meaning a small scrap of paper, these newspaper and magazine supplements started out in 1800 as notes of local news, gossip, and criticism (somewhat like the *New Yorker* magazine's "Talk of the Town" section). The practice spread to England, where it came to mean an installment of a serial story printed in the newspaper. In fact, the original *Filibus*, was meant to be seen either as a feature *or* a serial in five parts. (That is the reason this restoration has retained the "Part" titles intact.)

It is also important to acknowledge the influence of Edgar Allan Poe's character C. Auguste Dupin, who appeared in what is considered the very first detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," 1841 as well as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes ("A Study in Scarlet," 1887). The success of these fictional detectives spawned hundreds of rivals over

the next 180 years. The first woman detective appeared in Andrew Forrester's serialized *The Female Detective* (1864), featuring Mrs. Gladden as an undercover police agent. That same year, William Stephens Hayward's serial *Lady Detective* featured the even bolder Mrs. Paschal, who "smokes, carries a revolver and discards her crinoline to go down a sewer, but also shows the sort of clinical reasoning that Sherlock Holmes would display decades later" (from www.Crimefictionlover.com). Leonard Merrick's *Mr. Bazalgette's Agent* in 1888 may have been the first British *novel* featuring a female detective. In this, fiction was far ahead of fact as the first policewoman in London was hired in 1923.

With the rise of the detective hero's enormous popularity, there were bound to be variations on the theme and one was the master criminal. The first great "Gentleman Thief" was created by A. Conan Doyle's brother-in-law, E. W. Hornung. A. J. Raffles and his "almost" Watson-like associate Bunny first appeared in *The Ides of March* in 1898. Raffles was such a hit that the character spawned 25 more short stories, two plays and a novel. In France, the stylish Arsène Lupin was introduced in the serialization *The Arrest of Arsène Lupin* published in the July 15, 1905 magazine *Je sais tout*. Lupin was an enormous hit for his creator Maurice Leblanc, who followed his exploits in 17 novels and 34 novellas. Raffles and Lupin inspired generations of authors including Louis Joseph Vance (*The Lone Wolf*, 1914) and Leslie Charteris (*The Saint*, 1928).

In history, there have been documented girl gangs, going back to the late 1700s, the most noted being London's Forty Elephants (aka Forty Thieves) who worked alongside the infamous Elephant and Castle gang. The all-female Forty Elephants, run by a "queen," was perhaps the largest shoplifting operation in England. They had specially tailored clothing with hidden pockets (even in their bloomers, hats and muffs) to stow away stolen goods. The gang lasted well into the 1950s.

There also was a long tradition of women criminals in literature, including the most famous of all, Sherlock Holmes' rival Irene Adler. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller writes in *Framed: The New Woman Criminal in British Culture at the Fin de Siècle* that these fictional criminals were more glamorous than the reality of impoverished women who committed petty thefts or acts of violence against their families.

The new crime genres of the fin de siècle engendered a character that I call the "New Woman Criminal." Like the figurative "New Woman" who emerged in 1890s cultural discourse, the New Woman Criminal represents a specifically public form of femininity for a culture that was redefining and redistricting "public" and "private" amid modern social change. The New Woman Criminals populating crime narrative have very little to do with real, historical female criminals of the period.

The New Woman Criminal's distinction from "real" female criminals indicates that she was a figure of fantasy rather than a reproduction of the headlines. She was not a realistic representation of a subject in her society, but an imaginative creation within a wildly expanding popular culture of crime narrative. The disjunction between real and fictional female criminals raises key questions: Why did authors write about New Woman Criminals? Why did

audiences enjoy them? Unlike most male criminals of the period, fictional female criminals tend to be attractive, successful, and alluring. Unlike Mr. Hyde or imaginative depictions of Jack the Ripper in the late-Victorian press, fictional female criminals cannot be classified or labeled within the criminological taxonomy that social scientists of the era had invented. The figure of the female criminal was in many ways a contradictory fictional persona: in a culture increasingly fixated on detectives and policing, she seems to represent not the new circumscriptions of modern society, but its new freedoms.

From the very start, Nickelodeon owners sought to legitimize what society condemned as theaters of scandalous themes, populated by dangerous “immigrants.” Convincing women to attend would be the sign of cultural acceptance, and to entice them, filmmakers created dramas featuring the “modern woman.” These heroines were adventurous, bold, did not take a back seat to men, and, they were on *both* side of the law.

In 1906, actress Florence Lawrence’s first film role was in J. Stuart Blackton’s *The Automobile Thieves*, playing a criminal. In 1909, 19-year-old American director René Plaissetty (living in France) created the two-reeler *Les Aventures de Harry Wilson*, where a detective chases a beautiful woman jewel thief through St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw (all shot on location), finally catching her aboard a train heading back to Paris. As the suffrage movement took hold in the 1910s, the action heroine became a popular genre. Mary Fuller (*What Happened to Mary?*), Helen Gibson, Musidora, Ruth Roland, and Pearl White were some of the most popular stars of the day.

As Monica Nolan’s fine article (see below) suggests, the creation of *Filibus* was most likely influenced by Louis Feuillade’s *Fantômas* including the opening introduction of actors and a scene where a fingerprint is re-created using a glove. However, *Filibus*’s *joie de vivre*, her good-natured battle with the authorities, her sense of humor, and her enjoyment in her stolen riches more closely aligns with Arsène Lupin. The script’s choice of a *woman* thief, however, probably leads back to America and the actress Grace Cunard.

Lauded as making the most “popular” of films, Cunard’s stories tend toward the fantastic, and her female characters tend toward the fantastically unconventional. In 1914 Cunard created “My Lady Raffles,” a jewel thief with a delightfully reckless charm who first appeared in short films like The Mysterious Leopard Lady (1914) and The Mystery of the White Car (1914). Cunard costarred in the Raffles films with Ford, and then joined Ford in directing and starring in The Twins’ Double series (1914), described by Photoplay in 1914 as “remarkable photoplay successes” in which “Miss Cunard not only takes the part of twin sisters, but of an adventuress who impersonates them as well, and she appears in several scenes as all three at once” (Shaw 38). The disarming nature of Cunard’s role as “at once” twin sisters as well as their impersonation reveals her fascination with stories of split, hypnotized, or double personalities.” — Grace Cunard – Women Film Pioneers Project

Thankfully, one of her films was recently discovered. It is also possible that the character of Count de Brive in *Filibus* was inspired by actress Gene Gautier’s cross-dressing *Girl Spy*

series for the Kalem Company that started in 1909. Finally, it should be noted that in January 1913, Italy had its first aviatrix in the person of Rosina Ferrario — a flyer who received a fair amount of press for her daring demonstrations and exhibition flights around Italy. Withstanding her fame, the next Italian aviatrix was licensed in the late 1920s.



One interesting note — the Parisian poet Max Jacob playfully references *Filibus* in his 1923 *Filibuth ou La Montre en or*. The poem is based on the travels of a gold watch as it changes hands, and plays with the processes of the serial novel. But the title works here as a decoy, as Filibuth never appears and the “hero” remains elusive and impossible to identify. Did Max Jacob see this Italian film? It is possible, especially as his good friend André Salmon refers to this film in *his* poem *The Age of Humanity*:

“C’est Fantômas ! C’est Filibus !
Tous les voleurs ont des gibus.”

It’s Fantômas! It’s Filibus!
All thieves have gibus.”

(A *gibus* is a collapsible top hat.)

The Inspiration for *Filibus*, Part 2

How the 'Queen of Thieves' Conned French Riviera Wealthy

The cat burglar and fake countess swindled and stole her way through La Belle Époque.
BY [CAROLINE ELENOWITZ-HESS](#) MAY 4, 2021 ATLAS OBSCURA

How the 'Queen of Thieves' Conned French Riviera Wealthy



The French Riviera has been synonymous with glitz and glamour for well over a century, including in 1880, when this image of its famed promenade was taken. [BOUDET EDITEUR 38, AV. DE LA GARE/PUBLIC DOMAIN](#)

IN THE PREDAWN HOURS OF March 8, 1908, Nice's famed Promenade des Anglais, bustling during the day, was quiet. So too were the corridors of the Hôtel Impérial nearby. Down one plush hallway, a woman in black moved noiselessly in felt-soled shoes, melting into the shadows. She wore a black veil that shrouded her features, and carried a set of silver lockpicks. After years of pursuit, French police were about to catch the so-called Comtesse de Monteil in the act. The "pseudocomtesse," as newspapers dubbed her, was a jewel thief, cat burglar, and con artist, as well as the alleged leader of a ring of thieves that stretched across the Mediterranean's most opulent tourist destinations.

The capture of the Comtesse de Monteil was an immediate media sensation, making international headlines. Reports emphasized her beauty and cunning, calling her “The Spider” and “Queen of Thieves.” Exhaustive coverage detailed her lavish lace evening gowns and state-of-the-art luggage, which transformed into a full-size armoire. It’s no surprise that the arrest, and most of her crimes, took place in Nice, one of the most famous cities of the Côte d’Azur, which includes the principality of Monaco and French Riviera, “a sunny place for shady people,” as novelist W. Somerset Maugham called it. For a jewel thief and con artist, the atmosphere at the time would have been irresistible, full of wealthy marks attracted by the area’s popularity with royals—Queen Victoria visited nine times—and the casino at Monaco’s Monte Carlo. During this period, casinos were banned in several neighboring countries, and Monte Carlo created “this ethos for elite people to aspire to, which is not only are you able to move freely, but by doing so you are able to flout the laws of your home country,” says Mark Braude, historian and author of *Making Monte Carlo: A History of Speculation and Spectacle*. “And that’s not seen as dishonorable, that’s seen as enviable. And glamorous.”



The Comtesse de Monteil, born Amélie Condemine, in an undated photo published shortly after her arrest in 1908. © ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS/MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

The glamour of the Côte d'Azur was a far cry from where the future queen of thieves, born Amélie Condemine, grew up. Her father was a butcher in the rural town of Mâcon, in the Saône-et-Loire region of Central France, which is chiefly known for its vineyards. At 18, she married Ulysses Portal, a wine merchant 14 years her senior, and the couple moved to Paris. Little is known about this period of her life, but the press reported that, after ten years of marriage, the couple separated and she moved to the United States. The only clues to her activities there are photographs police later found among her belongings, which showed her in the company of New York's elite—and even aloft in a hot air balloon—according to news reports. In 1888, she returned to France, calling herself the Comtesse de Monteil. She lived in a Paris apartment for part of the year, but apparently restricted her criminal activity to locales associated with elegant leisure travel: Geneva, Alexandria, Monte Carlo, and, chiefly, the towns of the French Riviera. At the time, French nobility were a “very closed society,” says Caroline Weber, a historian at Barnard College who studies French society during the Belle Époque. The pseudocomtesse risked giving herself away “just by not knowing how to pronounce a particular name,” Weber says. The aristocracy rarely visited the Riviera during this period, so she could execute her deception undetected. In fact, hoteliers and wealthy foreign tourists welcomed the Comtesse de Monteil, delighted to host a supposed member of the elite who deigned to rub elbows with them.

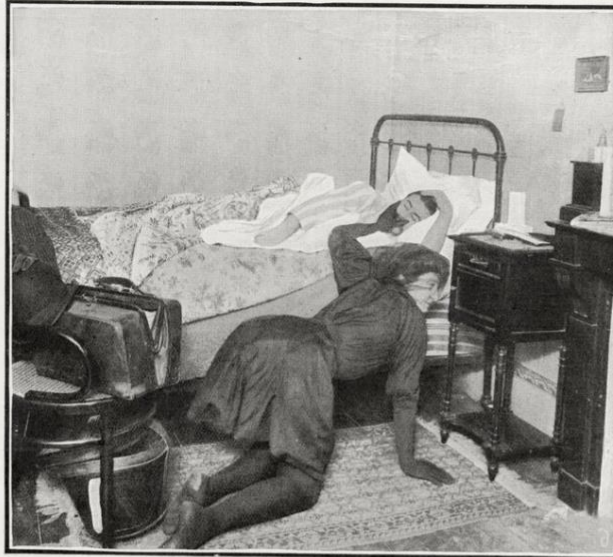


Nice's Hôtel Impérial, site of the Comtesse de Monteil's arrest. The building is now a high school. ARCHIVES DES ALPES MARITIMES/PUBLIC DOMAIN

By 1892, the Comtesse de Monteil had come to the attention of the French police due to strangely coincidental thefts at hotels where she was a guest. Despite that, this stylish swindler continued to operate around the Mediterranean for another sixteen years before her arrest. She reportedly controlled a group of thieves who took on similarly grand identities, posing as an Italian diplomat or the son of a wealthy shipowner. While staying in a hotel or traveling on a steamship, she would observe fellow travelers and calculate their value as targets—a notebook detailing her assessments was discovered in a search of her Paris apartment following her arrest. In the wee hours of the morning, she would break into her target's hotel room, pocket their valuables, and then slip out again, entirely undetected. At trial, none of the jewels in her possession were identified as stolen, suggesting that she and her network of thieves worked with underground jewelers who would either buy the stolen goods or place the gems in new settings unrecognizable to their owners.

After her arrest, the comtesse became something of a folk hero in the media. Newspapers emphasized her pluck and daring, such as when she robbed the same Swiss banker three times. The third time, he awoke and raised the alarm, but she sprinted back to her room, where she pretended to be asleep and was never suspected. On another occasion, in Alexandria, the hotel accused her and an accomplice of theft; the pair fought the accusation in court and won a defamation suit against the hotel. While she was a criminal conning the wealthy, she was also portrayed as a woman of the people. *Le Petit Parisien* noted that her maid liked and respected her, and that she was a generous tipper.

A "HOTEL RAT" AT WORK.



We gave in a former issue a portrait of the notorious hotel thief—she called herself the Comtesse de Monteil—who was arrested a short time ago at Monte Carlo. The accompanying pictures show the "hotel rat's" method of work. Arraying herself in a workmanlike short black dress and stockings she quietly steals along the corridors, and our first picture shows her softly entering the room of her intended victim. Crawling carefully across the floor—in the method depicted in our second picture—she places a handkerchief soaked with chloroform over his mouth until the slumberer is rendered insensible



Then, after having rifled his bag of the valuables it contains, she steals quietly away with her spoils, creeping close to the wall to avoid observation, as is shown in the right-hand bottom picture. The left-hand bottom picture shows the "rat's" almost unavoidable fate—she is suspected, followed, and captured red-handed

37

b

In April 1908, *The Tatler* published a detailed reenactment of the pseudocomtesse's M.O. and arrest—erroneously described here as taking place in Monte Carlo. © ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS/MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Income inequality in turn-of-the-century France may have colored her image. “It seems like every time society is in a state of economic crisis and flux, the burglar suddenly becomes this iconic, glamorous villain character,” says historian Eloise Moss. “I think it acts as a really important political commentary, a dissatisfaction with economic inequality, and also a way of imagining yourself into a different, more illicit, adventurous lifestyle.”

The pseudocomtesse never confessed to her crimes, insisting throughout her trial that her jewels and money were gifts from a Spanish grandee and an Egyptian pasha, among others. After being convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison, she slipped out of public consciousness and back into the shadows. Although records confirm that she was released from prison in 1918, her fate is unknown. The once-grand Hôtel Impérial where she practiced her craft, and was finally arrested, is now a public high school.

Who is Filibus?



The Italian ads and poster for the film asked, “Who is Filibus???” but that tagline has now taken on an ironic overtone thanks to a case of mistaken identity.

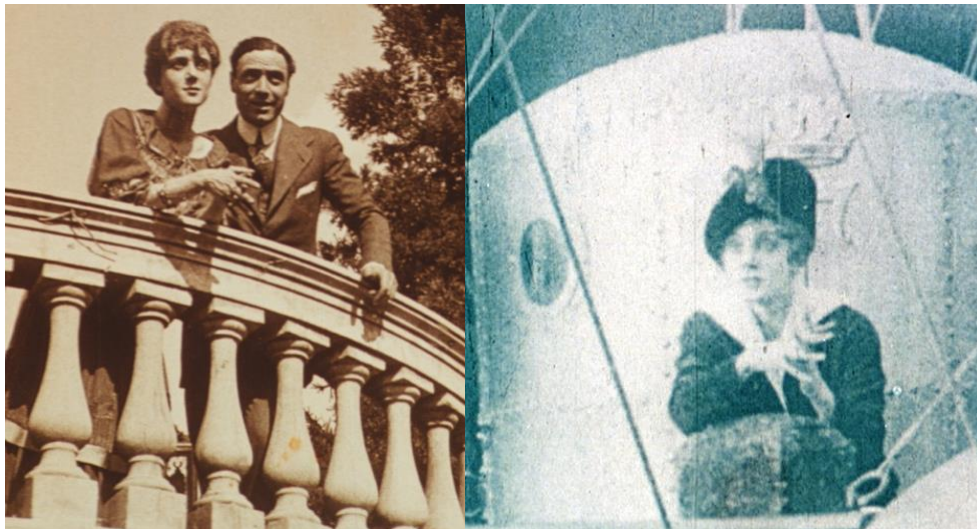
For decades, it had been assumed and asserted in many books that the role of Filibus was played by actress Cristina Ruspoli. The brilliant film scholar Vittorio Martinelli, who was responsible for identifying many early Italian films and actors, was probably the first to identify her as Filibus. Enter Ryerson University student David Emery who was interning at the EYE Filmmuseum in 2018. He was assigned, at Milestone’s request, to work on researching the history of *Filibus* and the little-known actress Ruspoli. He turned to the incredible resources at EYE including the legendary Desmet paper collection. Jean Desmet owned the company that originally released *Filibus* in the Netherlands and the care of his film and paper landed at the Dutch film archive after his death. Emery went from film intern to film detective when he compared photos of Ruspoli with the film itself.

First, Emery found a photo of Ruspoli from a 1913 issue of *Moving Picture News* (left) and then compared her appearance in the 1913 epic film *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Comparing those two images to our film, it became quickly obvious to Emery that Ruspoli is *not* the infamous Filibus, but the sister of Detective Kutt-Hendy, Léonora (right)!



So, who was Filibus!!!!

He combed through the Desmet papers with no luck. However, the Desmet collection had two other films from the production company Corona Films. He immediately inspected them. It was in the 1916 film *Signori Giurati* (*Gentleman of the Jury*) that he made a great discovery. In a bit role of Heléne de Brian, he exposed the true Filibus!



From there it was simple. In the opening credits of the Dutch print of *Signori Giurati*, like *Filibus*, there is an introduction to the actors and their roles!



Going through the Italian ads of the day, you can see that Ruspoli and Creti often appeared in “dueling” releases, so perhaps this is where the original error was made.



All credit is due to David Emery for having the initiative and talent to go searching for Filibus ... and finding her.

Naming names

Although Vittorio Martinelli got the actress wrong for the character of Filibus, he did get many things right. He did list Giovanni Spano and Mario Mariani in the cast. However, with his demise, the exact identification of the male characters in the film remained unknown. It was up to Italian film scholar Marcello Seregni to go back and identify them. The first one he spotted was **Giovanni Spano** as Detective Kutt-Hendy.

Here is Giovanni Spano in *Capriccio di Millionaria Americana* (1913), *Il focolare domestico* (1914), and *Filibus* (1915).



The second one he spotted was Mario Mariani in the role of the Police Inspector who appears at minute 44 'of the film. Here is Mario Mariani in *Filibus* (first and second photos), *In Hoc Signo Vinces* (1913, as Saint Materno, bottom left) and *La Nave* (1921, as Monaco Traba, bottom right).



Luigi Fiorio

The cinematographer **Luigi Fiorio** (Torino, 23 December 1891 – Trofarello (Torino), 11 May 1981) is considered one of the first Italian film operators together with Vittorio Calcina, Luca Comerio, Roberto Omegna and Giovanni Vitrotti. Some of them, including Fiorio, "will constitute the basic professional frameworks for the launch of the industry capable of withstanding dignity to foreign competition" (Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il cinema muto italiano: da La presa di Roma a Sole. 1905-1929*, Laternza, 2008). During his long career, Fiorio had the honor of lighting Eleonora Duse when she tested for *Cenere* in 1917. When the Great War broke out, he was assigned to the photographic department of the Air Force.



Selected Filmography - Cinematographer: *Cenere* (Febo Mari, 1916), *La leggenda di Pierrette* (Gero Zambuto, 1916), *La presa della Bastiglia* (Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1916), *Le 2 orfanelle* (Giovanni Casaleggio, 1917), *Amleto* (Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1917), *Sara Felton* (Ugo De Simone, 1918).

Selected Filmography – Director: *Nel gorgo della sventura* (with Giuseppe Ciabattini, 1923), *La donna carnefice nel paese dell'oro* (with Mario Guaita, 1926).

(photo courtesy of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, Turin)

Filippo Vallino

There is not much information about the actor **Filippo Vallino**. To date, it has not been possible to recover images from his films. We know that he was hired by the *Corona Film* and later moved to the *La Donna Film* production house and in 1921 to the *Perla Film* production company.

Selected Filmography – Actor: *Le isole insanguinate* (François Hugon, 1919), *Amor che tace* (Vitale De Stefano, 1916).

Contemporary Press

"Among the immediate greatest hits of this Cinema, I will mention the Spartaco, the Bara di vetro and also to Filibus, despite the brilliant extravagances of the latter"

(Nicola Gabiani, *Dal Piemonte*, "La Vita Cinematografica", n. 15, 1915)

"Filibus, police film, interesting, well played, at some point the staging is a bit 'stretched"

(Flores, *Da Brescia*, "La Cinematografia Italiana ed Estera", n. 1, 1916)

"Sensational subjects are filmed at the Corona, by the pen of Giovanni Bertinetti, the friendly playwright of the dialect theater"

("La Cinematografia Italiana ed Estera", n. 179, 1914)

"Giovanni Bertinetti - the Italian Giulio Verne"

("Film", year IV, n. 3, 1919)

"First film. It's a new sensational and special series of police adventures."

("Il Maggese Cinematografico", n. 18, 1914)



Where is Filibus?

As the history of the making of *Filibus* has been lost, the folks at Milestone and our friends around the world have made an attempt to see how and where the film was made. Jay Weisberg (programmer of Le Giornate del Cinema Muto) and his friend Violante Balbo showed the photo on the left to a friend in Genoa, who replied, "Why, that's *my* house!" Although we won't identify which edifice is our source's home, the large building with the small crenulated tower, is a well-known landmark called Castello Türke, designed by late 19th-early 20th century architect Gino Coppedè. The location is Capo Santa Chiara, just east of Genoa.



Genoa is about a two-hour drive from Torino and is on the coast of the Ligurian Sea in Northeast Italy, so the scenes of Leo Sandy's escape and landing on the beach most likely shot there as well.

In fact, it appears that the entire film was shot in the Genoa area, despite Corona being a company in Torino. Vittorio Artom, the banker who is entrusted with the management of Corona, appeared in an interview for the magazine "La Cine-Fono" on 30 December 1914. In this interview, he explains that "*the studios will be built on Corso Vercelli 16,*" from which we can deduce that Corona's studios were still under construction and their films were shot in other places. There was interesting news on the number 2 of the Turin magazine "Il Muggese Cinematografico" released on 30 January 1915. The news is reported: "the Corona troupe is based in Genoa and works in the Isis Theater". The news is also reported in the magazine "La Cinematografia Italiana ed Estera" of 15 February 1915: "*La Corona Film produces in Genoa using the Theater of Isis*".

There is one title card where it says that the detective has been temporarily released and back home in his villa in Abruzzo. The village of Abruzzo is (today) an eight-hour drive from Torino and Genoa and so it's unlikely that it was used in the film.

What's in an ad?



What's in a simple ad from 1915 that can help a restoration?

First, you can discover that the distributor was Stefano Pittaluga who had offices in Genova and Torino. In 1920, Pittaluga either purchased or merged with Corona Films. You can see from current photos, that even then, the company was in very prosperous housing.



But there's a lot more! *Filibus* survives from a unique 35mm nitrate print preserved by the EYE Filmmuseum archive. Its intertitles were in Dutch and no information about the Italian original survives. But in this ad, you can find that the detective's original name was not Hardy as in the Dutch version, but Kutt-Hendy!

del celebre detective **Kutt-Hendy**.

Filibus

Essay by Monica Nolan, Courtesy of San Francisco Silent Film Festival

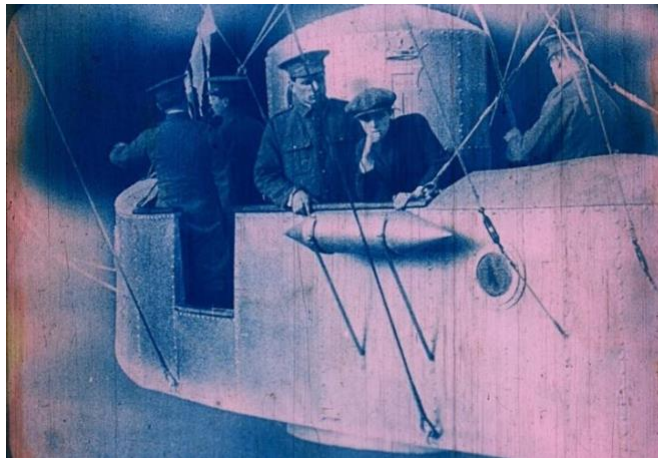
“No other crime thriller compares to *Filibus!*” trumpeted a double-page ad in the April 1915 edition of Italian film magazine *La Vita Cinematografica*. For once, studio PR was no exaggeration. *Filibus*, which follows the exploits of a futuristic female super-villain who pounces on her prey from a zeppelin manned by a crew of loyal henchman, is one of a kind. “Who is Filibus?” asks the ad. Contemporary viewers might also wonder how this cross-dressing antiheroine, heralded by some as cinema’s first lesbian, managed to emerge from an Italian cinema dominated by swooning divas and historical epics.

In the course of the serial’s five episodes Filibus plays cat-and-mouse with the great Detective Kutt-Hendy, pocketing some diamonds along the way. The film is a precursor to today’s gadget-driven techno-thrillers: in her various schemes Filibus employs not only her zeppelin but something called a heliograph, a tiny camera, a miniature gun, lots of soporific drugs, and a fake handprint. She commutes between zeppelin and terra firma in a kind of tin can (complete with phone), which Detective Kutt-Hendy fails to notice, even when it’s hovering over his terrace. The special effects are endearingly low-budget, but who cares, when the action is fast-paced and just plain fun?

Like any self-respecting super-villain, Filibus is a mistress of disguise, posing as the Baroness Troixmond for a visit to the detective and later insinuating herself into his household camouflaged as the aristocratic dandy Count de la Brive. This male impersonation was part of what film historian Angela Dalle Vacche describes as a widespread questioning of gender identity that, at the time, “was at the very center of Italy’s modern daily life.” Divas and socialites went to Futurist parties wearing “jupe-culottes,” and Francesca Bertini played the male lead in 1914’s *L’Histoire d’un Pierrot* (directed by Baldassarre Negroni). Filibus’s trim suit and newsboy cap give gender boundaries a fairly forceful push compared to the jupes-culottes (a pants-skirt hybrid); but still more radical is the way the film destabilizes appearances in general, constantly oscillating between reality and illusion, whether it’s diamonds, kidnappings, or wardrobe until it seems that all of life is one big masquerade. When Filibus, disguised as the Count, takes the detective’s sister for an evening stroll, it’s anybody’s guess whether the flirtation is opportunistic, genuine, or a combination of the two. Filibus bamboozles Kutt-Hendy so thoroughly that he questions the evidence of his own senses, and even his sanity.

The obvious model for Filibus is Louis Feuillade’s popular crime serials *Fantômas* (1913–1914). Contemporary reviewer Monsù Travet noted the pilfering “from certain detective masterpieces of French writers” in his 1915 review, concluding: “I would hate to see the director of *Filibus* sued for literary plagiarism.” *Filibus* copies *Fantômas*’s mask and use of multiple disguises, but as a modern-day reviewer for the online journal *À Voir à lire* notes, while she may be as intrepid as her French cousins, “her character is prankish rather than genuinely malevolent.” An even more pertinent predecessor, given its female protagonist, is Victorin Jasset’s *Protéa* (1913). *Protéa* is a kind of super-spy, chasing after a secret treaty (in the run-up to World War I spies and double agents began to proliferate on European screens). The opening credits introduce *Protéa*’s various covers—including a male

soldier—in a series of dissolves similar to the introduction of Filibus’s alternate personas at the beginning of *Filibus*. However, there are important differences between the two. *Filibus* has no Charlie’s Angels-type boss to call the shots and, where Protéa shares screen time with her male sidekick known as the Eel, *Filibus* is flanked by interchangeable male minions. Even more interesting, Protéa may disguise herself as a man, but when answering the telephone at home she’s dressed in skirt and blouse. In contrast, *Filibus* suggests that the Baroness’s skirts and ostrich-trimmed hat are as much a disguise as the Count’s evening clothes and monocle. Lounging on the zeppelin pondering her dastardly schemes, *Filibus* prefers her suit and cap.



While *Filibus* was flying over Italy in 1915, the women below were lagging behind their western European sisters when it came to civil rights. Married women couldn’t get divorced, they couldn’t inherit property, or even subscribe to a newspaper without their husband’s authorization, according to Dalle Vacche. Diva film melodramas depicting women driven out of their homes, losing custody of their children, shamed and suffering, were a gaudy reflection of this reality. But as Dalle

Vacche points out, lower profile, action-oriented shorts like *Nelly la Domatrice* (*Nelly the Lion-Tamer*, 1912) and *La Poliziotta* (*The Policewoman*, 1913) suggest another facet of female experience. If the diva genre reflected Italy’s victimization of women, then these short action films of women in charge reflected a new vision of female autonomy....

Producer Corona Films, founded by a group of Jewish shareholders including its principal owner Umberto Corona, had an equally short run; the Torino-based company made about twenty-six films between 1914 and 1919, “for the most part adventure and small-time features interpreted by second-rate actors,” according to Vittorio Martinelli’s Cinema Ritrovato’s 1997 festival program notes. By 1919, Corona joined the Società Anonima Stefano Pittaluga, who, starting out as an importer and distributor of German and American films, became one of the most important Italian distribution companies of the 1920s. Actor and director Mario Roncoroni had a longer, more eclectic career, directing *La Nave* (1921) with poet Gabriele d’Annunzio and then moving to Spain, where he continued to make films through the late 1920s.



An investigation into scenario writer Giovanni Bertinetti (right) yields intriguing fodder for speculation on *Filibus*’s origins. In addition to his film work, Bertinetti wrote children’s adventure stories featuring the gadgets and science-fiction fantasy elements that animate *Filibus*. Film historian Silvio Alovisio places him as part of Torino’s intellectual circles, then abuzz with the Futurist ideas

that Filippo Marinetti proclaimed in his 1909 manifesto: a love of technology and speed, a belief in the cleansing power of war and violence, a disdain for the past, and call to destroy museums and libraries. Marinetti might have been describing *Filibus* herself when he wrote, “the essential elements of our poetry will be courage, audacity and revolt.”

Futurism also called for the destruction of feminism, which complicates its connection to *Filibus*. It’s worth noting, however, that some women embraced Marinetti’s philosophy and tried to resolve the contradiction. Valentine de Saint-Point released the Manifesto of Futurist Women in 1912, rejecting Marinetti’s concept of superior man and inferior women (“It is absurd to divide humanity into men and women. It is composed only of femininity and masculinity.”) while echoing the Futurist call for an infusion of virility “lacking in women as in men.”

Here’s where Futurism begins to merge with the Italian craze for physical exercise, championed by Torino-based physiologist Angelo Mosso. Mosso, author of *La Fatica (Fatigue)*, argued for gymnastics in schools and specifically referred to women when he told a group of educators, “We must stop them on the downward and fatal slide toward hysteria.” Italy, like its divas, was enervated, languid, and in need of toughening up; strengthening on the individual level, Mosso suggested, would lead to a stronger civic body.

Scriptwriter Bertinetti seems to have agreed with Mosso. In addition to films and novels, he also wrote self-improvement books like *Il Mondo è tuo (The World Is Yours, 1907)* under the pseudonym Ellick Morn as well as an essay in 1918 for *La Vita Cinematografica*, “Il Cinema. Scuola di volontà e di energie” (“Cinema: School of Willpower and Energy”), in which he argues for cinema’s power to “solicit even the most passive individuals to act by imitating the deeds and actions projected on the screen.” Was *Filibus* possibly conceived as an inducement to the droopy divas to pull themselves off their chaise longues?

Although the final frames of *Filibus* hint at a sequel, it was not to be. A few months after the film was released, Italy declared war on Austro-Hungary and Italian film production dropped precipitously over the next few years—possibly explaining why Cristina Ruspoli’s credits seem to stop in 1916 and why Mario Roncoroni moved to Spain. By rights, a film as minor as *Filibus* should have vanished from history as quickly as its creators. That it has survived for us to watch, analyze, and marvel at is a small miracle.

Monica Nolan was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. She was educated at St. Jerome’s parochial school, St. Ignatius College Prep, Bryn Mawr College, and San Francisco State University, where she received an MFA in Cinema. Monica has lived and worked Alaska, New York, Chicago, and Ruthieres, France. She is the author of Lois Lenz, Lesbian Secretary and co-author with Alisa Surkis of The Big Book of Lesbian Horse Stories. She currently lives in San Francisco, California.

The Rise and Fall of Corona Films

translated from *Le fabbriche della fantasticheria* by Autori Vari

The "Corona Films Cinematographic Film Factory" was set up as a joint stock company on March 21, 1914. The 260.000 lira of the share capital were represented by 520 shares of 500 lira each but was then increased to 500.000 lira by due to a decision by the Board. There were 13 shareholders: the Isaia Levi industrial company with 200 shares (100.00 lira) followed by five shareholders with 40 shares each (Camillo Jona, Vittorio Sigismondi, Lelio Levi Gattinara, Guglielmo Olivetti, and Ernesto Fantini), and another five with 20 shares each (Giulio Sacerdote, Vittorio Artom, Angelo Donati, Alfredo Rostain and Francesco Ardizzone), while Donato Bachi and Alessandro Campana held 10 shares each.

[Guglielmo Olivetti graduated from the Polytechnic University of Torino in 1909. He was a designer and developer of various important works in the following years. In the film sector, he built the headquarters for Corona Films and that of Fert. In 1927, he then restructured the former Itala factories when they belonged to Pittaluga.]

Members of the Board of Directors of Corona Films were initially: Isaia Levi, Camillo Jona, Vittorio Artom, Lelio Levi Gattinara and Ferruccio Casati. Isaia Levi was also President, and Vittorio Artom and Francesco Bianco became directors. Artom, was appointed delegate counselor for four years; he and Bianco were responsible for the signature and social representation of the company.

Article 27 of the Articles of Association establishes that the company's net profits were to be divided as follows: 5% to the reserve fund (up to 5% of the share capital), 10% to the Board and then the remainder to the shareholders.

On September 22, 1915, an ordinary Shareholders' Meeting took place, in which twelve shareholders took part. The Council report reads as follows:

Dear Shareholders,

The news that you have been hearing represents the culmination of a year of crisis for our industry. Even the period of preparation that we undertake is longer and more laborious than other any industry. Our Council, in agreement with the Management, has taken all the measures it has deemed necessary to overcome this bad moment in our climate. Our significant reduction in expenses, coupled with the quality of goods now produced by our company, makes us hope that the expectation of better times should not cost any other sacrifices to our shareholders.

The Council's report states that unforeseen and unpredictable events prevented the results that were promised, and it is to be believed that, once the Company becomes financially organized, and that expenses are reduced, then a bright future can be uncovered. The financial statements disclosed as of June 30th, 1915 showed a loss of 130.000 lira, which the Board proposed to reinstate, so that this new entry of money could put the company in a better condition to overcome the critical moment they faced and put trust in a better future.

After releasing two films in 1914 (*Il castello del ragno* and *Il treno delle 12,35*), Corona then produced nine films in 1915. These included: *La danzatrice dei crisantemi*, *E salverà l'onore*, and *Il ritorno del pirata*.

The most famous director of the company was Mario Roncoroni, along with the actors: Domenico Pardi, Giovanni Spano, Mario Mariani and Cristina Ruspoli. The 1915–16 budget closed with a loss of 23.243,02 lira and, during the Shareholders' Meeting on September 25, 1916, the Board of Directors reported that they were taking into account the crisis that was running through the industry and affecting other film companies that have had long-standing positions. They expressed the belief that they would hope for a good fortune after the war. Directors Camillo Jona and Vittorio Sigismondi were also appointed during this.

Losses recorded in the following year amounted to 28.047 lira. Losses for the fiscal year 1917–18 went up as well in December 1918 (with the participation of Carlo Vincenzo Giordano, Carlo Tosetti, Levi Gattinara and Camillo Ottolenghi). Ottolenghi expressed his surprise in finding such a heavy deficit. The president answered: "The liabilities are mainly due to the devaluation that had to be made to the plant, furniture and tools to get closer to the sum that could be obtained from their sale." The Board of Directors' report tried to explain the difficult situation:

Dear Shareholders,

Due to the special conditions in which the work of the joint-stock company has taken place, we have determined that only the cessation of the war could have us come out with better hope for the future.

The particular conditions in which this joint-stock company was established is known to you, but with the construction of the social building on a not so solid ground, this circumstance has created a difficult situation, and along with the difficulties the war has created, all of this has prevented us from owning acres of our own land.

The liquidation of the company was therefore to impose itself and maintain the obligations towards the account holders. We believed to first consider, then accept, a proposal for the alienation of the building, machinery and theater that allowed us to pay our dues and to protect the interests and the good name of the company. After paying the debts, a certain number of negatives and goods will still belong to us which, liquidated with due diligence, will allow us to return to the offer and approve the sale of the establishment and theater and have two thirds of the share capital put towards the liquidation of the company.

The last Shareholders' Meeting was on September 25th, 1919. The share capital amounted to more than 78.000 lire: the Board of Directors informed everyone that as soon as they get a first advance on the capital, the liquidation of the company will be distributed to the shareholders.

The Desmet Collection

Filibus is a shining example of the “lost” treasures to be found in the Desmet Collection. On May 25, 2011, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) announced that the Desmet Collection had been selected as a cultural heritage for the Memory of the World Register. It was the first time that a film collection had earned



this distinction. The Register is a World Heritage list for “documentary heritage,” and includes books, archives, audiovisual recordings, and reports of exceptional historical significance.

The Desmet Collection consists of more than 900 films, about and 2,000 posters, photographs, programs, leaflets, and brochures, as well as the archive of the business run by theatre owner and film distributor Jean Desmet. the collection’s main focus is on the period 1907-1916, when Desmet worked as a travelling cinema operator and later as a cinema owner and distributor. But the archive also contains material from the years after 1916, (when Desmet was mainly active in the real estate industry), as well as documents about his private life.

In 1957, a year after Desmet’s death, the collection came into the possession of the former Dutch Film Museum. In 2011, the company archive and the publicity materials were digitized as part of the Metamorfoze project, which is a national digitization project for the conservation of paper-based heritage items.

The films, photographs, and posters have already been preserved and digitized, for example as part of the Beelden voor de Toekomst initiative. Many of the posters were restored and digitized from 1997-2000 as part of the large-scale Deltaplan voor cultuurbehoud, under the supervision of the Mondriaan Foundation.

The fact that collection has been included in the Memory of the World Register indicates its unique value. The collection is unrivalled in the world, due to its breadth and the fact that it contains the entire company archive. It provides unique insights into the film-screening and distribution practices of the 1910s. The film industry was undergoing major changes in that period, due to the emergence of permanent cinemas as places where films were shown, the introduction of film distribution, and the emergence of the long (feature) film.

Within a few years, film had grown from a relatively minor fairground attraction into the leading entertainment medium, with an audience of millions every year. On the basis of the sources in the collection, for example the cash ledgers, lease documents, purchase lists, invoices, and correspondence, we can gain a good understanding of the ins and outs of Desmet's film company.

For film historians as well, the collection is an almost inexhaustible source of research. Research into the collection has helped ensure that people's image of the film world in the 1910s, especially before the First World War, has been thoroughly revised. In 2000, film historian Ivo Blom received his PhD for research into the Desmet Collection, with the thesis "Pionierswerk: Jean Desmet en de vroege Nederlandse filmhandel en bioscoopexploitatie (1907-1916)." In 2003, the English-language trade edition of this dissertation was published as "Jean Desmet and Early Dutch Film Trade."

Desmet specialized in the prestige films from Italy and Germany, especially the films of German star Henny Porten. He bought the rights to *Filibus* from Corona in Torino shortly after it premiered in 1915 and the film seems to have been fair-sized success for his company. It was a title that he was still renting on a regular basis through 1924. The fact that this amazing film only exists because of the single print from its Dutch distributor is a sign of the fragility of a film's existence — and yet hope that are more like it to be discovered in the future.

Mario Roncoroni

(1881-?)

Mario Roncoroni Biography adapted from *Diccionario cine español Academia Cine*.

Mario Roncoroni with Cristina Ruspoli in *I due fratelli* (The Two Brothers)

Mario Roncoroni was born in Istria, a son of an actor. After a short career in "legit" theater, he was hired to perform in 1912 as the lieutenant in *La miniera di ferro* (The Iron Mine) and as Jesus Christ in *Erodiade* (Herodias). In 1913 he starred in *I due fratelli* (The Two Brothers) and in the next year, he was Torquato Tasso in the film of the same name by Roberto Danesi. In 1914 he moved to Corona Films where he portrays a detective in *Il mistero delle 12,35* (The mystery of 12.35) by Giuseppe Giusti. For Corona, in the years 1915 and 1916, he made his debut as a director, realizing and interpreting some films alongside Giusti. Roncoroni directed ten films during this period — including *Filibus* and *Zogar, pugno di ferro* (The story of a strongman,) as well as stories of romance and passion. After Corona closed in 1917, he went over to Gladiator Films where he directed *Ironie della vit* (The Irony of Life) and for Vay Film, *Intemperance* which had problems with censorship. In 1918 he moved to the Ambrosio to film two adventure serials based on the character of Saetta and collaborating with the famed Gabriellino D'Annunzio on the ambitious, sumptuous *La Nave* (released in 1921).



Both the crisis the Italian cinema faced and the restrictions that censorship imposed led Roncoroni to Valencia, Spain, where he accepted an offer from a group of Republicans who wanted to adapt *Cañas y barro*. This project was eventually cancelled, leaving Roncoroni without employment. Eventually a journalist linked to the Republican group helped produce the successful *Les barraques* (1925), marking the beginning of Roncoroni's relationship with the Spanish cinema in Valencia. Afterwards, he took on the artistic direction of the new PAC company (financed by the parents of two aspiring young actresses), directing *Muñecas y La Virgen del mar* (1926). He also worked with Levantina Films on *Rosa de Levante* (1926) and *Rocio D 'Albaicin* (1927). However, the financial weakness of these companies, and traditional Valencian industrial structures, meant that these jobs were not permanent and Roncoroni was forced to start his own production company.

In Madrid, under precarious conditions, he shot *Una mujer española* (1928). The difficulties that were present in the Spanish cinema in 1929 helped bring an end to his career, but it allowed some of his melodramas to be remembered, with their elegant metaphors, expressive tension, observational manners, and his tight direction of actresses. All of this implied an interesting Hispanic acclimatization of the Italian model of origin. The final years of his life have been a mystery – the last we hear of Mario Roncoroni is a January 1931 article in the newspaper *El Pueblo* where he is offering acting lessons in Valencia.

Selected Filmography:

1915: *Il delitto del lago; La signora dalla farfalla nera; Filibus*; 1916: *I misteri dell' Ambasciata; Ferro di cavallo; Il quadrifoglio rosso; Kappa, l'inafferrabile; La sorella del forzato; Il giustiziere invisibile; Zogar, pugno di ferro*; 1917: *Ironie della vita; Intemperance*; 1918: *Lagrima del popolo* (in due episodi: *La marea che sale/Il mendicante di via del Tempio*); 1919: *Il medico delle pazze* (in tre episodi: *Il mistero di un patibolo/Il manicomio di Auteuil/Luce che trionfa*); 1920: *Il gigante, i serpenti e la formica* (in due episodi: *Lunella/Il Duca Galaor*); *Te lo dirò domani*, regia: Gian Paolo Rosmino (assistente alla regia); 1921: *La nave* (coregia con Gabriellino D'Annunzio); *forte di Sherlock Holmes* (coregia con Domenico Gambino), *Saetta più forte di Sherlock Holmes* (coregia con Domenico Gambino); *Per guadagnare cento milioni*; 1925: *Hôtel Saint-Pol* (superv.: Febo Mari); *Nostradamus* (superv.: Febo Mari).

Roncoroni also appears as an actor in *I misteri dell' Ambasciata, La sorella del forzato, Il discepolo, Ferro di cavallo e Il giustiziere invisibile*.

Giovanni Bertinetti (1872-1950)

By Pompeo Vagliani

Giovanni Bertinetti was born in Torino on February 22, 1872 by Giuseppe and Maria Martinetti. Little is known of his private life: he had eleven children and lived in a country house in Borgaretto, a village not far from the castle of Stupinigi (Torino). Eclectic and protean, the young Bertinetti began writing in newspapers and magazines and was a participant of the literary and artistic environment of Torino.

Journalist for the "Gazzetta del popolo", he also collaborated with caricature and satire magazines ("Il Birichin" and "Il Due di coppe"), later becoming director of the "Pasquino" humorous journal. In those years he came into contact with people like Giovanni Cena, Guido Gozzano, Massimo Bontempelli, and Antonio Rubino.

In 1901 he founded the magazine "Forum" (which he directed until 1905), which had many young local contributors, but it also had writers of the caliber of Luigi Pirandello. On "Forum" Bertinetti had indulged in a whirlwind of pseudonyms as foreigners. Many of his main works from now onwards appeared frequently signed with fictitious names: from the beloved and very popular Donna Clara, author of cookbooks, home economics and fine manners (ex: *From the Kitchen To the Living Room*, 1906), to Marcus Alliston, Ettore Napione and Uncle Tom, up to the elusive American writer Ellick Morn, whose very fortunate *The World Is Yours* (1907), was reprinted up until the '40s.

In this "manual of the art of success in all the manifestations of life", the Torino writer poured his interest (and his personal interpretation) towards the philosophy of Bergson and Blondel, marked by the principle of "vital momentum" and focused on force of will and self-suggestion, combined with physical strength, which were all characteristics of many characters in his books and his personal lifestyle. *A Il mondo è tua* followed



in 1909 and *Sorgi e cammin, The Art of Renewing the Soul and the Body*, was inspired by the same principles.

A longtime collaborator of the publisher Lattes, Bertinetti contributed to enrich the catalog with several texts of pleasant literature such as *Le orecchie di Meo* (1908), which was then followed by *Il rotoplano 3 bis* (1910). These were innovative texts in the panorama of literature for Italian childhood at the time. Both had vaguely futuristic content and the illustrations of Attilio Mussino. *The Luck of Meo* was very remarkable, so much so it urged Bertinetti to write a follow-up *The Fists of Meo* (1932), in addition to a substantial number of unpublished texts centered on the same character, following a meeting in 1945 with writer Andrea Viglongo.

Other novels that Bertinetti had published were *Meo in the Seven Countries of Meraviglie* (1938) and *Zozo: the Furfantello Turned into a Monkey* (1936), by the publisher Marietti, and *The Journey of a Balilla Around The World*, written with four hands and friend Carlo Dadone (1931), by the publisher Turin SEI.

Bertinetti showed a great interest in science and its achievements and they often acted as background or starting points to the paradoxical settings of his pseudo-scientific novels. He made ample use of humor in a simple and original way as with the case of Hypergenio, the "disinventor" of the 1930s. He was also one of the most prolific successors of the Salgarian opera, especially under the signing of Omar Salgari or Emilio Salgari himself, both with his own direct and original invention (for example, *Emilio Salgari Tells the Children the Story of Mago Magon* (1938), or *The New Amazing Adventures of Mago Magon Stronger Than The Leon* (1939) with splendid illustrations by Piero Bernardini), and with the many works that took characters and stories from the Salgarian cycles.

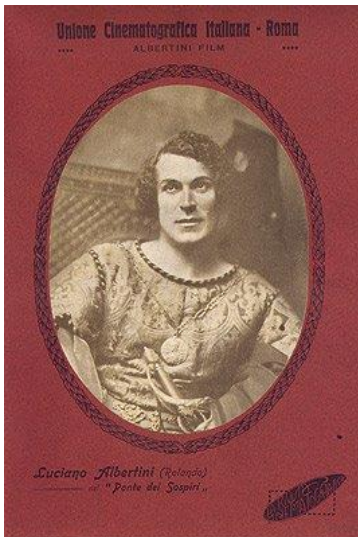
Finally, there were numerous dialectal comedies, theatrical dramas, and popular romances published in pantries and vaudeville (for the Casaleggio company). Confirming his nature as an industrious worker, Bertinetti wrote up to a few days before his death in Borgaretto on October 28, 1950.

Giovanni Bertinetti Photos courtesy of Viglongo Publishing

Giovanni Bertinetti in cinema

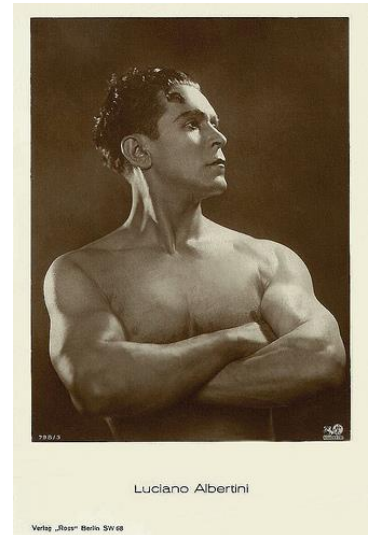
From 1915 to 1921, Bertinetti's activity with silent cinema in Torino was significant. First, he was a scriptwriter for Corona Film. His first known credit, Giuseppe Giusti's *La scure* (finished May 7, 1915) was for Corona and starred Valeria Creti and Giovanni Spano. A whodunit, focused on the *scure* (an ax) as murder weapon, an author is the hero. Both Creti and Spano would appear in his next film, *Filibus*.

In 1919, actor Luciano Albertini found a studio house founded by Bertinetti in 1919 to fully exploit the qualities of the action hero who embodied the myth of strength and will. The adventure of the new film company, Albertini Film, lasted only three years, with the production of 21 films, almost all of great success. Bertinetti wrote a series of eight films featuring the characters Sanson (Samson) and Sansonette, starring Luciano and an actress purported to be his wife, Linda. His last credited film — originally made for Pasquali and Company — was 1921's *Il ponte dei sospiri* (The Bridge of Sighs), also starring Luciano



Albertini. However, the film was actually shot in 1918 and was in long dispute before release and at one point, the negative and three prints had been seized. When it was finally released, the film was a great success.

A few months later, Albertini left for Berlin to spend the next ten years in German cinema. Since Bertinetti has no further credits, it's possible he retired from cinema at this point.



Selected Filmography – Scenarist and Screenwriter: *Filibus* (1915), *Il Re dell'abisso* (Riccardo Tolentino, 1918), *Un drama in Wagon lits* (Riccardo Tolentino, 1918), *Sansone e la ladra di atleti* (Amedeo Mustacchi, 1919), *Sansone e I rettili umani* (Amedeo Mustacchi, 1919), *Il protetto della morte* (Costamagna, 1919), *Sansonette. Amazzone dell'aria* (Giovanni Pezzinga, 1919), *Il ponte dei sospiri* (Domenico Gaido, 1920).

The art of writing a film

(unpublished text by Giovanni Bertinetti, found in the archives of the Viglongo editor, Turin, in autumn 2018)

Thank you to Marcello Seregni for the discovery!

The film begins its life from the screenplay. The subject undoubtedly has importance as a starting point for the film's creator; and the creator of the film is the writer. This statement can scandalize those who make the director the real star of the film. Of course, it would be absurd to diminish the value of the director in the so-called filmmaking, but his dependence on the script must also be evident.

Not that the director should follow frame-by-frame the development of the script; no, the director is often forced to change the picture according to the needs of the processing itself. Especially in the recovery of the exterior the director is often obliged to adapt the picture to the outside; the landscape often imagined by the script is not docile to be discovered by the director. But of this we will mention later talking about the duty of the writer. The director has a huge artistic responsibility; he must first identify the subject and the screenplay, assimilate in a certain way the unfolding of the plot and live previously the drama that express to the performers. The director is the first viewer of the film after the screenwriter.

But the director has no duty to invent the film, he is a performer often brilliant and exquisite taste, he is a psychologist and actor, is a painter and decorator. His knowledge must be vast and show a remarkable eclecticism. It must indeed be a small living encyclopedia and the success or failure of the film is entrusted to him.

But the responsibility of directing is always less than the responsibility of invention of the film. A film begins its existence from the screenplay. But what is meant by a film script?

In this regard there are many misconceptions. For example, a novelist who has many repetitive successes can be credited with writing a film. He is the victim of an illusion.

The theater writer is also a victim of this illusion. On the contrary, we will immediately say that the writer of the theater more easily falls into illusion and this is due to the mental habit of conceiving the film under the theatrical corner. The film is not theater like it is not a novel. The film is not even the set of two forms of art. *The film is* the film is a straight art from its particular canons that apparently are assimilated to those of the novel and the theater. This appearance creates many illusions and many mistakes in the making of a film. It is generally thought that speech should fatally assimilate cinema to theater. Mistake.

The cinematographic speech moves away does not approach the filmic composition to the theatrical one. He dismisses it because the theatrical scene has an autonomous development, a dialogic continuity that culminates in the line essential to its economy of the work complex. The scene of the film is an alternation of visions combined with visions accompanied by dialogue, which, by its very essence, must be synthetic.

The static nature of the theater, the fixed scene, its material of representation forces the author to a technique that is entirely dissimilar to the cinematographic one that has at its

disposal infinite expressive means. With this we do not want to assert that a good writer cannot also be a good novelist and a good theater author. But a good novelist and a good theater author must resign themselves to the task of training in the special film composition and should not expect to bring to the film their pure narrative and theatrical qualities. The screenplay of a film should not be conceived neither dramatically nor narratively. It must be conceived as a complex of visions that can be strengthened by the word for adventure.

The screenwriter, before putting himself at the table to dissect a subject with shooting formulas, must prepare his imagination for the most difficult job of his task: he must foresee the film. To foresee I mean the mental vision of the whole unfolding of the film on the screen of his imagination. From the first to the last painting he must attend this singular very first representation of the film.

It is not an easy job. To implement it the writer must live the subject in his chronological fragmentation: the mental projection must follow step by step the unfolding of the film. The writer must see with the eye of the mind.

The film's prediction is a state of excitement that empowers the creative faculty and determines in the scriptwriter flashes and inventive foundations that are then the real reason for his task. Each painting must be an invention both in dialogue and in recovery. Unfortunately, this gift of invention is rare, and it is therefore that good writers are also rare. To achieve the invention of recovery, one must first of all possess a certain technique practice, at least know the process of cinematographic shooting, know the possibilities of the cinematographic operator and not create problems of impossible solution. Generally, the novelist is influenced by the phrase that everything is possible at the cinema. Mistake. The cinematographic technique, even if it has achieved a marvelous perfection, has its limits marked by its own mechanics. All is not possible with the cinematographic operator. Nor should we believe that the makeup technique can answer certain pretensions of novelist. A first secret of the writer is not to rely too much on the possibilities of fiction of the cinema. Do not invent scenes that require new and not yet realized inventions of the cinema.

Moreover, relying on film fiction is almost always a demonstration of the writer's lack of inventiveness. The expression of the feeling that must always animate the characters of a film does not require mechanical complications. Instead it requires that sense of humanity that too often is lacking in the sensational screenwriter. A second secret for a good script is linked to time. The screenwriter must know the length of a scene, that is, how many minutes or seconds and how many meters must be in the projection. These are little technical knowledge, but they are essential to the development of the script. The division of the cinematographic scene into a long, medium, close-up, full-length, very close-up field is also simple. What is not simple is the need for an emotional crescendo of cine-drama or a cine-comedia. This *crescendo* expresses the interest of the spectator, who in the life of a film claims that emotions are always strong. The writer must therefore avoid the static nature of the film, whose dynamism is the very definition of cinema.

A fantastic flight.

Bertinetti and *Filibus*

By Marcello Seregni

Giovanni Bertinetti had in his imagination the theme of flight. A fantastic flight that could concern a child with big ears, like the protagonist of his famous novel, *Le orecchie di Meo* (Lattes, Torino, 1908), or a more adventurous flight with reckless inventions, like his other great work *Il Rotoplano 3 bis* (Lattes, Torino, 1910).

This passion for fantastic flight is also present in *Filibus* and there are some incredible similarities between the two books and the movie.

Here are some:



Cover of *Le orecchie di Meo* illustration inside the book

Cover of *Il rotoplano 3 bis* and four illustration inside the book



Valeria Creti



(Valeria Creti as the Baroness Troixmond — wearing the fox stole — and Filibus. Note that in European culture, the fox is a creature of cunning and trickery, and is sometimes associated with transformation.)

Sadly, there is almost nothing known about the actress Valeria Creti beyond her credits in the movies she appeared in. When Valeria Peretti married Vasco Creti (his sister was the actress Amelia Chellini), they soon became active in the film company Reiter-Carini. At the end of 1912 they were involved in the ephemeral experience of Torino Films. By the next year, they left for Savoia Films where Valeria was the protagonist of the dramas *Miarka Romanè* and *Il carnefice* (co-starring with Roncoroni), and played an important role in *Poor Children!* In 1914 they were among the first hired by Corona Films, where they worked together or separately - until 1916. Valeria performed in many films by Giuseppe Giusti, including *Il treno delle 12.35* (co-starring with Roncoroni), *Il ritorno del pirate*, *Il castell del ragno*, *La scure*, *Il promo comando*, *L'occhio di Deigo Trism*, *Signori giurati* and *Il delitto dell'opera*.

Along with *Filibus*, Creti's other films directed by Roncoroni were *Kappa*, *L'inafferrabile* and *Il quadrifoglio rosso*, *La sorella del forzato*, *Il giustiziere invisibile* (all four with her husband), *Ferro di cavallo* (also co-starring Roncoroni) in 1916. In 1916 the couple started collaborations with Savoia Films. There, Valeria is the star of *Il radium Vendicatore*. From 1917, they separated, at least in terms of work. In 1917 for Jupiter Film, Valeria has a role in the serial *Il delitto dell'opera* (directed by Eleuterio Rodolfi). For unknown reasons, there is a long interruption in her career. She reappears in 1921 with *La douloureuse* (directed by Augusto Genima) and the next year in the film *Dita di fata* by Nino Giannini (Vasco has a role in this film as well) and in 1922 she makes a final appearance in Milano Film's *Il fabbro del convento* directed by Vincenzo Denizot.



Valeria Creti in *Il castello del ragno* (1915)

Cristina Ruspoli

For many years, it was assumed that Cristina Ruspoli played the title role in *Filibus*, but it is clearly established now that her role was Leonora, the sister of Detective Kutt-Hendy. Ruspoli appeared in no fewer than 30 feature films from 1912 to 1916. Judging from the evidence of the surviving films, she was an actress of subtlety, grace and humor.

Ruspoli made her debut in cinema in 1912 with Savoia Films of Torino. She almost immediately started getting starring roles such as *La miniera di ferro* co-starring with Roncoroni. In 1913 she left to join Pasquali and Company, where she was launched as a prima donna by Ubaldo Del Colle in *I promessi sposi* and important figures in other successful films by Giovanni Enrico Vidali, such as the historical colossal *Jone, or The Last Days of Pompeii* (where she plays the title character) and *Spartacus* (The Gladiator of Thrace) where she plays Idamis, his sister. In 1914, she could be seen in Domenico Gaido's *Salambo* — one of the most famous early Italian epics that inspired the transition from short film to full-length features in the USA.



Cristina Ruspoli (Pasquali & C.)*

In 1914, in a referendum among the readers of the periodical "Film" of Naples, Ruspoli is reported in sixth place among the actresses most appreciated by the general public. In 1915 joined Corona for an adventurous film by Giuseppe Giusti as well as the detective's sister in *Filibus*.

In 1916 she appears in adventure films of Savoia (*L'avventura di Claudina* and *La città sottomarina*) and for the company owned by director Ernesto Maria Pasquali, *I misteri del Gran Circo*. In the latter, a critic particularly praises the contribution to the film by Ruspoli, "a formidable tightrope as well as being an excellent actress." Pasquali also involves her in the cast of a film that launched the new actress Diana Karenne, *La contessa Arsenia*. This is appearing to be last appearances on the big screen.

Milestone Film & Video

Milestone celebrates 29 years in business with a reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, new foreign films, groundbreaking documentaries and American independent features. Thanks to the company's early work in rediscovering and releasing important films such as Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, Kent Mackenzie's, *The Exiles*, Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*, Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, Milestone has long occupied a position as one of the country's most influential independent distributors.

As part of the Milestone's commitment to challenging the canon, Heller and Doros seek out films that have been lost, overlooked, and underappreciated — especially those that have been neglected because they were made by women, people of color, and LGBTQ filmmakers. They also seek out films that offer strong political and social content and that explore communities and history rarely seen in big-budget cinema. Milestone has been responsible for the discovery of Leo Hurwitz's *Strange Victory*, Kathleen Collins' *Losing Ground*, Billy Woodberry's *Bless Their Little Hearts*, and soon, Peter Adair and Rob Epstein's *The Aids Show*.

In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. In January 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award "to Dennis Doros and Amy Heller of Milestone Film & Video for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation." And in March 2008, Milestone became an Anthology Film Archive's Film Preservation honoree.

In 1995, Milestone received the first Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I Am Cuba*. Manohla Dargis, then at the *LA Weekly*, chose Milestone as the 1999 "Indie Distributor of the Year." In 2004, the National Society of Film Critics again awarded Milestone with a Film Heritage award. That same year the International Film Seminars presented the company its prestigious Leo Award and the New York Film Critics Circle voted a Special Award "in honor of 15 years of restoring classic films." In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. Milestone/Milliarium won Best Rediscovery from the Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Awards for its release of *Winter Soldier* in 2006 and again in 2010 for *The Exiles*. In 2015, the Il Cinema Ritrovato again awarded Milestone, this time for Best Blu-ray, for their series, *Project Shirley* (Clarke).

In January 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award to Doros and Heller of Milestone Film & Video "for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation." And in March 2008, Milestone became an Anthology Film Archive's Film Preservation honoree. In 2009, Dennis Doros was elected as one of the Directors of the Board of the Association of the Moving Image Archivists and established the organization's press office in 2010. He is currently serving his third term. In 2011, Milestone was the first distributor ever chosen for two Film Heritage Awards in the

same year by the National Society of Film Critics for the release of *On the Bowery* and *Word is Out*. The American Library Association also selected *Word is Out* for its Notable Videos for Adult, the first classic film ever so chosen.

In December 2012, Milestone became the first-ever two-time winner of the prestigious New York Film Critics' Circle's Special Award as well as another National Society of Film Critics Film Heritage Award, this time for its work in restoring, preserving and distributing the films of iconoclast director Shirley Clarke. Important contemporary artists who have co-presented Milestone restorations include Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Barbara Kopple, Woody Allen, Steven Soderbergh, Thelma Schoonmaker, Jonathan Demme, Dustin Hoffman, Charles Burnett and Sherman Alexie.

Doros was elected for three-term as a Board of Director for the Association of Moving Image Archivists, the winner of their William O'Farrell award in recognition for services to the field, and in 2017, was elected President of the [Association of Moving Image Archivists](#) and serves on the board of [Co-ordinating Council of Audio Visual Archives Associations](#). In 2018, Doros was named to the [National Film Preservation Board](#), that also serves to select the Library of Congress' National Film Registry every year. In 2019, Doros and Heller have been chosen as the third recipient of the [Art House Convergence](#)'s Spotlight Lifetime Achievement Award and the Denver Silent Film Festival's David Shepard Career Achievement Award.

Recently, Milestone has restored Mikhail Kalatozov's *I am Cuba*, David Hockney and Philip Haas' *A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China*, Gilbert & George and Philip Haas' *The World of Gilbert & George* and *The Singing Sculpture*.

Doros and Heller are currently working with the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Academy Film Archive to restore the great gospel documentary *Say Amen, Somebody* directed by George Nierenberg; the Eye Filmmuseum to restore the 1915 Italian feminist, steampunk, jewel thief, cross-dressing, aviatrix thriller *Filibus*; and with the Academy Film Archive and UCLA's Outfest Legacy Project to restore Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's Oscar®-winning documentary *Common Threads*.

In 2016, Milestone produced its first and only film, Ross Lipman's documentary essay *Notfilm*, named to over a dozen Best Ten Lists for the year. Amy and Dennis have a son, Adam, now 23 and graduating from Case Western Reserve University.

"They care and they love movies." — Martin Scorsese

"Milestone Film & Video is an art-film distributor that has released some of the most distinguished new movies (along with seldom-seen vintage movie classics) of the past decade."
— Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

Press kit written and researched by
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