



Auteur discourse and the cultural consecration of American films

Alexander Hicks*, Velina Petrova

Emory University, Department of Sociology, 225 Tarbutton Hall, 1555 Dickey Dr., Atlanta, GA 30322, USA

Abstract

This work builds on explanatory theories of cultural consecration that stress institutional agency and its discourse, in particular upon Allen and Lincoln's (2004) study of the 1990s consecration of some American sound films. It contributes new analyses of the role of *auteur* theory in such consecration by means of novel measures of directorial status grounded in Sarris (1968). Directorial status emerges as consequential for the volume of discourse on a film's director and on consecration itself. Directorial effects are prominent not only for *auteurs* but for directors regaled for excessive accommodation to the Hollywood system. Findings and theoretical lacunae focus attention in new directions, for example, toward the study of producer status and new dimensions of film discourse.

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1. Introduction

Sociologists of culture have asked how people come to “consecrate” creators and works as “best” or “great.” They have addressed this question by means of theory and research concerning explanatory roles of institutions and agents and the cultural and cognitive lenses that these employ.

Theory and research on artistic valorization (the social construction of reputation, prestige, canonization/consecration, and the like) provide guidelines for answering the question of “consecration.” In Bourdieu (1977, 1980, 1983, 1984), the assignment of value to cultural products involves the collective action of organizational and individual agents of institutions of the material and symbolic production, the distribution and reception of the cultural products in question, and conceptions of “culture as these are used by members of institutions not only to plan their actions but also to justify or rationalize their decisions” (van Rees and Dorleijn, 2001, p. 332).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 404 727 0832; fax: +1 404 727 7532.

E-mail addresses: ahicks@emory.edu (A. Hicks), vpetrov@emory.edu (V. Petrova).

Key to literary products are authors and publishing firms involved in symbolic and material production and distribution, associations of these, literary critics and educators involved in cultural perception, and readers themselves (van Rees and Vermunt, 1996, p. 320). Key literary critics might be journalistic reviewers, essayists, and academic critics and scholars (van Rees, 1983); a key critical conception, might be mimetic realism (Auerbach, 1968).

Applying this underlying Bourdieuan model to institutions of film production and criticism, we might by analogy focus on film producing corporations and their productive personnel, associations of these such as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, newspaper and periodical reviewers such as those of the National Board of Review, the essayists and scholars of the academic journals and presses, and viewers themselves.

Recently, Allen and Lincoln (2004) addressed the question of consecration with this Bourdieuan emphasis on institutional agents and their conceptual tools for the case of 1990s film consecrations of the American sound film. More specifically, they directed attention to the formal consecration of U.S. films by means of the deliberate construction of distinguished listings by the gatekeeping personnel and consultants of the American Film Institute (AFI) and the National Film Registry (NFR), two cinematic “halls of fame.” Their study creatively distinguishes between contemporaneously and retrospectively endowed reputation. It establishes that the early forms of recognition accorded a film shortly following its release (“contemporaneous recognition”) and retrospective critical and scholarly “discourse” on film are two prime causes of a film’s retrospective consecration. It proposes that consecration, its discursive component in particular, is influenced by “the availability of certain cultural schemas.” “*Auteur* theory,” in particular, is proposed as the key cultural schema shaping U.S. film discourse and its consecrational effects. This theory, as we shall see in some detail, is one of film quality that centers on the director as author (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 871), that stresses directorial productivity and expressivity (e.g., stylistic flair, thematic consistency), and that serves “to privilege certain directors over others” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 871).

In investigating *auteur* theory’s role, Allen and Lincoln (2004) invoke a function for *auteur* theory within film discourse that they do not much investigate. Thus, we question the rationales provided by Allen and Lincoln for their conclusions about the relevance of “*auteur* theory.” On the basis of direct measures of whom the *auteurs* were – evidence lacking in Allen and Lincoln (2004) – we arrive at better substantiated conclusions about the relation of *auteurist* cultural schema to the film consecrations of the AFI and NFR by drawing on Sarris (1968), both as a measure of institutionalized *auteurist* classification of American directors and as a seminal and enduring source of such classification.¹ Indeed, we arrive at some new conclusions and substantiate conclusions previously advanced on little more than impressionistic grounds. As for new conclusions, we find that U.S. film consecration is influenced by the volume of critical and scholarly “discourse” on the films studied, but (Allen and Lincoln to the contrary) not the volume on the directors of these films. We identify a non-*auteur* grouping of directors derided by *auteur* theorists but apparently influential with the cinematic “Colleges of Cardinals” whose members canonize select works and creators. As for propositions placed on firmer grounds, we find that direction by an *auteur* emerges as a cause of a film’s retrospective consecration, indeed

¹ Elaborating the “art worlds” tradition of Becker (1982), Kapsis (1992) stresses “genre meaning systems” as well as general discourse. Elaborating a branch of Bourdieuan status theory that stresses the ranking of genres, DiMaggio (1982, 1987) and others (Peterson, 1996; Baumann, 2001; Dowd et al., 2002) have addressed what might be called “*genre* consecration.” We turn to Kapsis (1992) and DiMaggio (1982, 1987) with our conclusion.

does so most emphatically once the varieties of film scholarship that might directly impact on consecration are left as an empirical black box. We conclude that the influence of *auteur* directors on film consecration highlights the importance for this consecration of *critics*, who actually create and, in good part, apply theories like *auteur* theory (cf. DiMaggio, 1982 on music; van Rees, 1983 on literature; Kapsis, 1992 on film). In short, this paper furthers work on institutional agency and culture conception in cinematic consecration by clarifying the role of *auteur* theory as a conceptual lens, most specifically by drawing on work by Andrew Sarris, whom Kapsis (1992, p. 100) has dubbed “the key figure in spreading *auteurism* to the United States.”

We next review and critique Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) hypotheses and findings in further detail, expositing *auteur* theory at some length along the way. This leads to some new hypotheses, measures and statistical analyses. Our conclusions revise as well as substantiate Allen and Lincoln (2004) on the role of *auteur* theory while reaffirming their punch lines on most else. Where *auteur* theory is involved, we either place earlier conclusions on firmer grounds, or provide revised or novel conclusions. For example, we bring news on the extent to which effects of “critical discourse” upon consecration convey influences of *auteur* directors; and we assess direct effects of directorial classification (conceived in terms of *auteur* theory) upon consecration.

2. Review and reformulation: Allen and Lincoln, *Auteur* theory elaboration, and critique

2.1. Allen and Lincoln

Allen and Lincoln (2004) focus on two types of consecration, selection onto the AFI’s 1996 list of the Greatest American Films and selection into the National Film Repository in the 1991–2001 period. They seek to explain consecrations in terms of a few hypotheses. They first focus on the extent of *contemporaneous recognition*, which they summarize as follows: “the extent of professional, critical and even popular recognition that a film receives at the time of its release has a positive effect on the likelihood of it being retrospectively consecrated” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 878). Empirically, they address contemporaneous *professional* recognition with operational attention to the Oscar nominations of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts (AMPAS). They address contemporaneous *critical* recognition by directing operational attention to the journalistic praise accorded films selected onto annual “Best 10” lists of the *New York Times* and the National Board of Review (NBR) or granted best film, best director or best actor awards by the New York Film Critics Circle (NYCC). They address contemporaneous *commercial* recognition with a measure of early commercial success. While such aspects of the institutions and agents of culture as the prestige of production and distribution corporations are neglected, they still show a fairly extensive utilization of past theoretical leads regarding institutions and agents that is admirable. These come from the likes of Bourdieu (1977, 1983), Kapsis (1992) and van Rees and collaborators (e.g., van Rees and Dorleijn, 2001).

Allen and Lincoln (2004) then turn to a set of hypotheses involving critical discourse. At a rather general level, they write that “. . . the extent of critical discourse produced about a film has a positive effect on its likelihood of being retrospectively consecrated” (2004, p. 878). Operationally, they eventually specify their “extent of critical discourse produced” to counts of books on films and on directors, specifying these distinct hypotheses: *the number of books about a film has a positive effect on its likelihood of being retrospectively consecrated and the number of books about a film’s director has a positive effect on its likelihood of being retrospectively*

consecrated. They proceed to single out the role of *auteur* theory within critical discourse to the point of specifying some distinctly *auteurist* propositions.

Most clearly relevant to the explanation of consecrations is this one: “*films directed by directors identified as auteurs by film critics and scholars are more likely to be retrospectively consecrated than other*” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 879). Although this proposition might be interpreted as an auxiliary one used to help ground the proposition that “the extent of critical discourse produced about a film has a positive effect on its likelihood of being retrospectively consecrated” and derivative hypotheses concerning books about films and directors, it can be judged a hypothesis in its own right. Although not operationalized for use in Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) principal, logistical-regression analyses, the proposition is statistically assessed in Allen and Lincoln’s Table 5. Moreover, *auteurs* seem highlighted as a source of film discourse where Allen and Lincoln (2004, p. 871) write about the importance of a director’s *auteurs* status in *auteurs* theory (which “privileges certain directors over others”) and the importance, in turn, of *auteurs* theory for film discourse (“ascendancy of ‘*auteurs* theory’ as a discourse of value within film studies”).

Unfortunately, Allen and Lincoln theoretically oversimplify the *auteurist* treatment of directors, virtually limiting this to a privileging of the directorial role (2004, p. 878) and a vague privileging of “certain directors over others.” Operationally, they provide no measures of *auteur* directors for their logistical regression analyses of consecrations, confining themselves to the designation of a handful of directorial giants (2004, pp. 888–889). We return to a critique of Allen and Lincoln on these matters after (re)introducing the reader to *auteur* theory.

2.2. *Auteur* theory

This theory is a prominent intellectual force within the discourse of film scholars and critics, journalistic, literary and academic (Kapsis, 1992; Hillier, 1985; Sarris, 1962–1963, 1968; Truffaut, 1954, 2000; Baumann, 2001; Haberski, 2001). It is singled out for explanatory importance in Kapsis’ (1992) study of directorial reputation and in Baumann’s (2001) study of film’s artistic status, as well as in Allen and Lincoln (2004) and elsewhere (Cook, 1990; Thompson and Bordwell, 1994, pp. 492–523, 709–721).

Auteur theory is a theory that designates “the director as the author of a film, the one who gives it a distinctive character” (Sarris, 1962–1963, 1968, p. 33) and distinguishes “the director as the primary creative agent in film production” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 871). In distinguishing “some directors over others” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 871), *auteurism* does not merely single out select *auteurs* in contrast to all others (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 871). If French *auteurism* is largely a polemic against the directors of *la tradition de qualité* (Claude Autant-Lara and Jean Delonney as opposed, say, to René Clair or Jean Renoir), Andrew Sarris’ *auteurism* is a polemic against such “Less than Meets the Eye” directors as William Wellman and Fred Zinneman. Although Allen and Lincoln (2004, p. 871) see *auteur* theory privileging “certain directors over others,” their core analysis makes this a distinction without a difference because it sidesteps any systematic categorization and accounting of *auteurs* or of directors more generally as seen through the lens of *auteur* theory. To redress this oversight, we here elaborate Sarris’ (1968) directorial categorization in *The American Cinema*. (We later operationalize some key *auteurist* categories and incorporate them into analyses.)

A comprehensive review of *auteur* theory would encompass the work of Bazin (1958) and Truffaut (1954) and the flock of authors associated with *Les Cahiers Du Cinéma*, as well as writings by a world-wide set of *auteurist* authors and their commentators. However, for purposes of assessing *auteur* theory as it has influenced thinking in the United States, a focus on Andrew

Sarris (1962–1963, 1968) is central. As Kapsis (1992, p. 100) has written, “Sarris was the key figure in spreading *auteurism* to the United States.” Sarris (1968) contains the only attempt to exhaustively classify directors in terms of *auteur* theory. In texts on film history, no North American *auteur* theorist appears to be cited as often as Andrew Sarris. Not even Truffaut’s seminal papers of 1953 and 1954 on *auteur* theory appear to be as frequently cited within the academic journals literature as Sarris’ (1968) *The American Cinema*. Within the critical institutions of U.S. film, Sarris has been the foremost agent of *auteur* theory and its use as a critical lens; and *The American Cinema* is his main act. No one but Sarris (1968) has attempted an exhaustive categorization of U.S. directors in terms of *auteur* theory, though some discuss favored *auteurs*, whether over the long term (Wollen, 1969) or a particular period (Cook, 1990).

In the early 1990s, when the processes of film classification described here were ongoing, the three most widely sold works of film history were, if memory and film studies colleagues serve well, Cook (1990), Allen and Gomery (1985), and Thompson and Bordwell (1994). In these, Sarris is mentioned more than such other leading English language *auteurist* authors as Peter Bogdanovitch, Peter Wollen and James Wood: five times in Cook, four in Allen and Gomery and seven in Thompson and Bordwell (as opposed to one and two times for the rest in these works). In one of two comparably popular history texts of recent origin, Nowell-Smith (1999), Sarris and Bogdanovitch (as critics) are each mentioned once and Wollen and Woods not at all. In the other, David Parkinson (1996), only U.S. film *makers* are referenced. Moreover, a turn to the ISI Web of Science Citation Indexes for the arts and humanities and the social sciences on 12 November 2004 found that Sarris’ (1968) *The American Cinema* was cited 100 times, while Truffaut’s (1954) seminal “*Politiques des auteurs*” was cited only 12 times in the periodical literature and his set of 1953–1954 papers in *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* was cited only 39 times. Of noted works on *auteur* theory only Peter Wollen’s (1969) *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* appears to be more cited (154 times). However, this work, which devoted only its second chapter (“The *Auteur* Theory”) to *auteur* theory, is at least as much a work of semiological theory as of *auteur* theory. In the most prominent scholarly work on artistic reputation in film by a sociologist, Kapsis (1992) cites Sarris on more pages of text and in more footnotes than he cites any other films scholar, though Pauline Kael comes close and Peter Bogdanovitch, Vincent Canby, Bowsley Crowther, David Denby, Francois Truffaut, and Robin Wood also fall within his purview. Moreover, Sarris’ (1968) influence is even manifested in the work of dissenters from *auteur* theory like Schatz (1989), or from Sarris’ variant of it, such as Wollen (1972, p. 74) and Andrews (1993).²

Sarris (1968) groups *auteurs* into three sets. First come the “Pantheon” directors, “who have transcended their technical problems with a personal vision” and who have been “fortunate enough to find the proper conditions and collaborators for the full expression of their talents” (Sarris, 1968, p. 39). Here we have Charles Chaplin, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Orson Welles and the rest of the directors listed in Table 1 (along with examples of their films). Second are those who inhabit “The Far Side of Paradise,” who fall short of the Pantheon, “either because of a fragmentation of their personal vision or because of disruptive career problems” (Sarris, 1968, p. 83). Here we have not Chaplin but Capra, not John Ford but Robert Aldrich (see Table 1).³

² Why Sarris became a practitioner and proponent of *auteur* theory is beyond our scope. The citation counts for works of Sarris, Wollen, Truffaut and Wood writing on *auteur* theory were done with the help of the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (<http://www.isinet.com/products/citation/ahci/>).

³ Sarris includes silent film directors (e.g., Keaton) and foreign directors with U.S. productions (Renoir) in his Pantheon of top *auteurs*.

Table 1
Some directorial statuses from Sarris (1968)

Pantheon		Far-Side-of-Paradise		Less than Meets the Eye
Charles Chaplin (<i>Modern Times</i> , 1936)	Buster Keaton (with Clyde Bruckman) (<i>The General</i> , 1927)	Cecil B. DeMille (<i>Ten Commandments</i> 1923, 1956)	King Vidor (<i>Crowd</i> , 1929)	John Huston (<i>The Maltese Falcon</i> , 1941)
Robert Flaherty (<i>Louisiana Story</i> , 1948)	Fritz Lang (<i>The Big Heat</i>)	Frank Capra (<i>It's A Wonderful Life</i> , 1946)	Raoul Walsh (<i>White Heat</i> , 1949)	Elia Kazan (<i>On the Waterfront</i> , 1954)
John Ford (<i>Stagecoach</i> , 1939)	Ernst Lubitsch (<i>Ninotchka</i> , 1939)	George Cukor (<i>Philadelphia Story</i> , 1940)	Frank Borzage (<i>Moonrise</i> , 1938)	Rouben Mamoulian (<i>Queen Christina</i> , 1933)
D.W. Griffith (<i>Birth of a Nation</i> , 1915)	F.W. Murnau (<i>Sunrise</i> , 1927)	Leo McCarey (<i>The Awful Truth</i> , 1937)	Blake Edward (<i>Victor/Victoria</i> , 1982)	Joseph L. Mankiewicz (<i>All About Eve</i> , 1950)
Howard Hawks (<i>Red River</i> , 1948)	Jean Renoir (<i>Rules of the Game</i> , 1939)	Preston Sturges (<i>Lady Eve</i> , 1941)	Samuel Fuller (<i>Shock Corridor</i> , 1962)	Lewis Milestone (<i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> , 1930)
Alfred Hitchcock (<i>Vertigo</i> , 1958)	Josef von Sternberg (<i>Scarlet Empress</i> , 1935)	Robert Aldrich (<i>Dirty Dozen</i> , 1964)	Gregory La Cava (<i>My Man Godfrey</i> , 1936)	Carol Reed (<i>The Third Man</i> , 1949)
	Orson Welles (<i>Citizen Kane</i> , 1941)	Anthony Mann (<i>Winchester 73</i> , 1950)	Joseph Losey (<i>The Servant</i> , 1962)	William Wellman (<i>Public Enemy</i> , 1931)
		George Stevens (<i>Shane</i> , 1953)	Vincente Minnelli (<i>Gigi</i> , 1958)	Billy Wilder (<i>The Apartment</i> , 1959)
		Otto Preminger (<i>Laura</i> , 1944)	Nicholas Ray (<i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> , 1955)	William Wyler (<i>Dodsworths</i> , 1936)
		Douglas Sirk (<i>Imitation of Life</i> , 1959)		Fred Zinnemann (<i>High Noon</i> , 1952)

Finally come the practitioners of “Expressive Esoterica,” “unsung directors with difficult styles” whose “deeper virtues are often obscured by irritating idiosyncrasies,” but revealed in “seriousness and grace” (Sarris, 1968, p. 124). This is a much less heralded bunch at the margins of Sarris’ praise and far less likely than his “Pantheon,” or even his “Far Side of Paradise” directors to figure among those directors elevated within critical opinion and among its listeners, by *auteur* theory.⁴

The set of conventionally regarded Hollywood successes who do not make the grade for Sarris is also interesting: they may provide a good identification of directors who have high status preceding the *auteurist* wave yet were left behind by it. It would be interesting to see whether the neglect of *auteur* theory spoiled their reputations. Principal among the directors singled out by Sarris as less than *auteurs* are his “Less than Meets the Eye” directors. These are defined as directors with “reputation in excess of inspiration” and “personal signatures” written with “invisible ink” (Sarris, 1968, p. 155); they include John Huston, Elia Kazan, William Wyler, Fred Zinneman and others listed in Table 1. Inspired by Epstein’s (1990) reference to writer-director Ben Hecht as a “hack genius,” we dub these directors the “Star Hacks.” The “Less than Meets the Eye” set is comprised of highly esteemed directors whom Sarris sees as too impersonal to qualify as *auteurs*, but as the most skilled and successful of the “hacks” who excessively accommodate other producers. Less markedly “successful” non-*auteurs* singled out by Sarris are the “Lightly Likable” and “Strained Seriousness” sets of directors.⁵

We turn to the measurement and analysis of directorial status and consecration, and to a critique of Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) hypotheses and findings, *auteur-related ones in particular*, that frames our original hypotheses and investigation.

2.3. Critique

We do not contest Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) case for the relevance of contemporaneous professional, critical or commercial recognition (or film age) to U.S. film consecration of U.S. films. Neither do we contest their case for the relevance of “critical discourse” as such. What we do contest is their theoretical and empirical treatment of the importance of the *auteur* aspect of film discourse for film consecration. Let us turn, then, to Allen and Lincoln’s theorizing about *auteurism* and consecration.

The proposition that “films directed by directors identified as *auteurs* by film critics and scholars are more likely to be retrospectively consecrated than others” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 878) merits detailed attention. After they find consistent evidence for effects of books about directors (albeit lesser effects than they find for film anthologies), Allen and Lincoln turn an eye

⁴ “Expressive Esoterica” directors include Budd Boetticher, Andre DeToth, Stanley Donen, and nearly two dozen more (Sarris, 1968, p. 10).

⁵ The second and third grouping capture the “Lightly Likable,” characterized as “talented but uneven directors with the saving grace of unpretentiousness” (Sarris, 1968, p. 171) and “Strained Seriousness”—which indicates “talented but uneven directors with the mortal sin of pretentiousness” (Sarris, 1968, p. 189). The “Lightly Likable” set consists of Busby Berkeley, Michael Curtiz and over a dozen more (Sarris, 1968, p. 11). The “Strained Seriousness” one consists of Richard Brooks, Jack Clayton, and over a dozen more (Sarris, 1968, p. 12). These last two categories are composed of less broadly acclaimed artistic (or commercial) successes, though a few – e.g., the “Likable” Michael Curtiz of *Casablanca* fame and the “Serious” Stanley Kubrick of *2001* fame – evoke celebrated works. Inclusion of these directors in analyses does not yield significant results. Other categories of directors used by Sarris (1968, pp. 9–14) without denoting *auteurs* or great “successes” include “Oddities, One Shots and Newcomers” and “Clowns.”

to drawing implications for the influence of *auteur* discourse. To do this they discuss a table (Table 5 in their article) listing numbers of (a) consecrated films (both AFI and NFR), (b) best director Oscar nominations, and (c) books about directors in their sample of the “consecrated” films. However, this discussion is rather speculative if not impressionistic. Principally, Allen and Lincoln note that *auteur* theory as a cultural schema serves only to “privilege the contributions of directors over those of their collaborators” and that “many” of the retrospectively consecrated films were “directed by *auteur* directors” (2004, pp. 887–889). In support of the first claim, Allen and Lincoln note that “the number of Award nominations received by these directors is also closely related to the number of their films selected by the American Film Institute (.533),” but they also note, by way of “family capital” as a type of “social capital” qualification, that this number “is not closely related to the number of their films selected by the National Film Registry (.178).” In support of the second claim, they note that “The two [directors] with the most consecrated films, John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock, have been the subjects of several books and were identified by one influential proponent of *auteur* theory as ‘pantheon directors’” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 889). However, they go on, “two other ‘pantheon directors’ on Sarris’ list, Orson Welles and Howard Hawks, have been the subjects of several books even though they received only one best director nomination each during their careers.”

These correlations and observations support the claim that *auteur* theory privileges “certain directors over others.” One statement of this claim is that “Once certain directors have been identified as *auteurs* it is difficult for film critics and scholars to ignore them or their films” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 890). Another is that “*auteur* theory (Sarris, 1968) has had a profound effect on the artistic reputations of certain directors and their films” (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 890). In so stating, Allen and Lincoln refer to “the ascendancy of *auteur* theory as the dominant form of discourse in film studies and film criticism” (2004, p. 890). For the U.S. case, they refer to the importance of Andrew Sarris for U.S. film theory, *auteur* theory in particular (e.g., Kapsis, 1992, pp. 100–101; Thompson and Bordwell, 1994, pp. 492–523, 709–721). The impact of *auteur* status on consecration can be better assessed by a reanalysis of Allen and Lincoln’s data that includes an *auteurist* classification of directors, both favored and disfavored.

As we have seen, Allen and Lincoln (2004) also appear to think that *auteur status is a source of discursive attention by film critics and scholars*. For example, they have written both that “discourse associated with the director of a film has a positive effect on its likelihood of being retrospectively consecrated” (2004, p. 878) and that “once certain directors have been identified as *auteurs*, it is difficult for film critics and scholars to ignore them or their films” (2004, p. 890). Here too, an *auteurist* classification of directors is wanted.

Let us turn, then, to the measurement of peer and critical attributions of films, of directorial status as classified by Sarris (1968) and to the statistical analysis of retrospective consecration. This will enable us to test the following focal propositions, as well as other propositions already tested by Allen and Lincoln (2004):

- Proposition 1: *Films directed by directors with auteur status are more likely sources of discursive attention by film critics and scholars than films directed by other directors;*
 Proposition 2: *Films directed by directors identified as auteurs by film critics and scholars are more likely to be retrospectively consecrated than other directors’ films.*

In addition, the following hypotheses can be used to examine whether once successful directors earmarked by *auteur* theorists for demotion have maintained some degree of high status relative, at least, to non-*auteur* directors:

Proposition 3: *Films directed by directors identified by auteurist film critics as once successful (“Star Hacks”) are more likely sources of discursive attention by film critics and scholars than films directed by other directors;*

Proposition 4: *Films directed by directors identified by auteurist film critics as once successful (“Star Hacks”) are more likely to be retrospectively consecrated than other directors’ films, auteurs aside.*

3. Methods

3.1. Measures and data

We perform analyses using data generously provided by Allen and Lincoln, plus new data. Allen and Lincoln (2004, pp. 879–881) focus on 1277 live-action, narrative sound films released in 1929 through 1991 that they judge sufficient to establish a film’s notable chances of eventual consecration. These 1277 films include 83 of the AFI’s top 100 and 131 of those selected by the National Film Registry. A film’s inclusion on each of these lists (scored 1 as opposed to 0) constitutes the film’s score on each of Allen and Lincoln’s key dependent variables. The process of film selection involved in generating these scores took place during the 1989–2001 period for the NFR and c. 1995 for the AFI’s “100 best.”

Our principal new data code directorial status viewed from an *auteur* theory perspective (although data on actual best director Oscars were also compiled for one ancillary analysis). Ideal measures of directorial status from the perspective of *auteur* theory would be of two sorts. One would index information from an extensive survey of those “gatekeeping” persons (or a sample of such persons) involved in AFI and NFR consecration. The second would index information from a content analysis of some sample of publications judged to provide a valid window into the minds of those making decisions on AFI and NFR honor rolls, our “gatekeepers.” Each strategy would face obstacles however. The former “survey” strategy would face obstacles involving the identification of the relevant gatekeeper population, population (or sample) access, survey-item construction in the face of hundreds of relevant directors, and funding—obstacles beyond the resources of the present effort. Similarly, the “content analysis” strategy would entail a large enterprise that would need to overcome similar challenges of population identification for relevant documents, access to relevant documents, information extraction and indexing. Again comprehensiveness, especially historical reach, would present special problems, for example, for the comparability of materials across relatively distant years.

We rest our measurement on Sarris’ (1968) listing of directors by categories of directorial status in *The American Cinema*. Sarris (1968) is chosen both because of its prominence as an expression of *auteur* theory on the topic of American directors and because of its uniqueness as an attempt to systematically classify directors in terms of *auteur* and non-*auteur* status. Sarris’ classification provides what should be both a considerable reflection of *auteurist* opinion on a directorial status c.1968 and an even more important source of opinion formation at that time. Methodologically, a better “unobtrusive indicator” of a phenomenon (Sechrest, 1979) can hardly be imagined. Moreover, a historic document like Sarris (1968) merits an analysis of its consequences insofar as discourse and consecration are concrete historical phenomena (Wuthnow, 1989; Somers, 1996; Fuchs, 2001). Indeed, “effects” of such a classification take on additional meaning as indicators of “eventful” causation, as

indicators useful for assessing the impacts of singularly important events within historical developments (Sewell, 1996a, 1996b). In particular, Sarris (1968) might emerge as relevant to Somers' (1996) call for a "historical sociology of concept formation," as well as Sewell's (1996a, 1996b) heavily *cultural* call for attention to top causal events.

Of course, a 1968 measure of a historically evolving opinion regarding directorial status is imperfect. For one thing, Sarris' (1968) classification will be incomplete, omitting directors who were not yet salient for him as of his writing. However, here Sarris' post-1968 lack of directorial coverage is easily addressed by confining analyses to films released before 1968. Second, missed directors aside, the classification will at best capture a consolidation of opinion at 1968. The classification's scoring of directorial status will deviate from the score of "true" canonical gatekeepers around 1990 under a couple of conditions. For one, it will deviate from a "true" 1990 gatekeepers' score to whatever extent Sarris' assessments of directorial status might be unstable over time, for example, should Sarris have reclassified John Huston from a "Less than Meets the Eye" to a Pantheon *auteur* in the 1980s. (He did *not* so reclassify Huston.) Second, the score will deviate from a "true" 1990 gatekeepers' score to whatever extent a true 1990 Sarris score might differ from that of an average 1990 AFI or NFR gatekeeper—say a 1990 NFR gatekeeper who judges John Huston a true Pantheon *auteur*. We think of the first case, which involves possible unobserved shifts in Sarris' judgment between 1968 and the dates of AFI and NFR gatekeeper acts of consecration, as "within-Sarris" error.⁶ We think of the latter case, which involves possible discrepancies between gatekeeper judgments at consecration and Sarris' supposedly influential and telling judgment, as "gatekeeper-Sarris" error.

In terms of conventional measurement theory (e.g., Carmines and Zeller, 1979), we establish a degree of validity for Sarris' (1968) classification if, following the preceding discussion of measurement error, we consider the classification as a *component* of an optimal score. Also, the question of the degree of invalidity of the Sarris (1968) classification is redefined and placed in a constructive new light if we regard the Sarris-based measure not simply as a *component* of an optimal measure but also as a *cause* of perceived directorial status. In short, Sarris (1968) serves here as an indicator of the U.S. critical establishment's *auteurist* conceptions of directorial worth and as a causally eventful moment in the formation of these conceptions. Although Sarris (1968) may never have measured up as a one-person critical institution, his 1968 classification of directors provides a promising indicator of the *auteurist* classification of directors within the U.S. film community. In addition, it constitutes a seminal intervention into the classificatory understandings of this film community.

We construct 0–1 dummy measures of measurement of "Star Hacks" as well as of top *auteurs* in ways still to be fully specified. Stress on the latter is obvious; and we address the former because repudiated directors are as important for Sarris' (1968) *auteur* thinking as the directors of the French *tradition de qualité* were to the seminal *auteurists* of *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*. We principally use these measures to reanalyze Allen and Lincoln's (2004) models of consecration. A hypothesis involving a "Pantheon," "Less than Meets the Eye" or "Star Hacks" director is

⁶ We have reason to believe that the "within-Sarris" error is small, for only Billy Wilder, entered by Sarris (1991) into the Pantheon, has been the object of a specific post-1968 designation as *auteur* and only William Wyler has been entertained for any other reclassification—into apparently "Far Side" *auteurship* (see Sarris, 1998). Sarris (1998, pp. 346, 349) describes Wyler as a "great producer among directors" and as a director with "no thematic thread." (See also footnote 15.)

principally assessed by testing for the difference of the slope estimate for the directorial category in question from zero.⁷

Allen and Lincoln (2004, pp. 879–882) operationalize their explanatory variables as follows. They operationalize “contemporaneous *critical* recognition” with distinct dummy variables for “Best 10” accolades from the *New York Times* and from the National Board of Review, as well as for best film, best director and best actor awards of the New York Film Critics Circle (NYCC). They operationalize professional recognition with dummies for nominations for Oscars for each of the following award categories of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences: film, direction, screenwriting cinematography art direction, editing and musical score. Their operational hypotheses for “contemporaneous recognition” stipulate that the above indicators all are positively related to AFI and NFR consecration.

Allen and Lincoln operationalize the “film” and directorial dimensions, respectively, of “critical discourse” in terms of a film’s number of mentions in a selection of “film anthologies” or the number of books written about a film’s director (Allen and Lincoln, 2004, p. 880). (More specifically, to adjust for skewness, square roots of these numbers are used.) They hypothesize that these book measures positively relate to AFI and NFR consecrations. They operationalize “popular recognition” by means of a dummy variable for whether or not a film was among its year’s most popular and “age” as years since release. They hypothesize that “age” and “gross earnings,” respectively, are negatively and positively related to consecration.

3.2. Analysis

Analyses are complicated by two aspects of the data. One involves the fact that awards from the New York Critics Circle were not given before 1935: analyses that include measures of the NYCC awards begin in 1935. The other complication involves, to repeat ourselves, the fact that Sarris’ (1968) categorization of directors stops in 1967 and becomes progressively less and less comprehensive as movie releases after 1967 are considered and new, unidentified *auteurs* presumably emerge that the categorization ignores.

Analyses are confined to pre-1968 films, and these vary across two periods, 1929–1967 (without NYCC award information), and 1935–1967 (with NYCC award information). We sometimes analyze consecrations with “reduced form” models that delete controls for “film anthology” and “director book” variable. The “reduced form” models that exclude discourse “book” variables are ones for which estimates of retained variables, such as ones measuring directorial status, have this property: they are summary estimates both of the *direct* effects of retained variables *net* of other included (“control”) variables *and additionally* of *indirect* effects (of retained variables) that are channeled via the excluded, and by assumption intervening, variables (Alwin and Hauser, 1975; Greene, 2000, Chap. 16). For example, an estimated “reduced form” effect of Pantheon *auteur* status indexes the direct effect of this status on

⁷ An estimate for one of the three categorical dummy variables in question gauges how much greater an average outcome (e.g., log odds of consecration) is for the dummy (e.g., “Pantheon” director) than the average outcome for directors in none of the three categories (i.e., in the so-called “left out” category). However, we also make some comparisons (some impressionistic, some statistically assessed) of the relative magnitudes of estimates for Pantheon, “Less than Meets the Eye” and “Star Hack” dummies.

Table 2

Tobit (censored regression) analyses of counts of films mentioned in books about directors and in film anthologies, 1929–1967

Variable names	Films mentioned in books about directors		Films referenced in film anthologies	
	1929–1967		1929–1967	
	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value
Age	–.003	.529	.003	.696
Top 10 gross	.079	.489	.046	.754
NBR top 10	–.087	.450	.263	.073
NYT top 10	.194	.093	.238	.107
Oscar nomination best film	.040	.792	.273	.147
Oscar nomination best director	.325	.050	.122	.555
Oscar nomination best actor	.007	.907	.288	.000
Oscar nomination writing	.048	.706	.230	.160
Oscar nomination cinematography	.209	.100	.034	.838
Oscar nomination art direction	.321	.019	.031	.860
Oscar nomination editing	–.059	.703	.040	.837
Oscar nomination music	–.057	.658	.110	.500
Pantheon	3.446	.000	1.628	.000
Far-Side-of-Paradise	1.739	.000	.864	.000
Star Hacks	1.914	.000	.717	.000
Constant	–.005	.986	–1.442	.000
Sigma	1.323		1.561	
Pseudo R^2	.170		.088	
<i>N</i>	782		782	

consecration plus any indirect effects of Pantheon status exercised via “book” variables. In analyses of consecrations presented in Tables 4 and 5, estimates for both routine (“full”) and “reduced form” models are presented; and estimates of effects of directorial status on “book” variables (effects useful for the interpretation of indirect components of reduced forms) are presented in Table 2. Before testing the proposition (number 1) that “films directed by directors identified as *auteurs* by film critics and scholars are more likely to be retrospectively consecrated than other films,” we assess the proposition (2) about whether “*auteur* status is a source of discursive attention by film critics and scholars.” We do this using Tobit estimates of effects of directorial status on numbers of film anthologies and directorial studies. Tobit is a technique that allows adjustment for the fact that numbers of film anthologies and directorial studies are outcomes that will have large proportions of 0 scores (Greene, 2000, pp. 908–912). We estimate effects of directorial status (and control variables) on retrospective consecration by means of logistic regression. This is suited to the estimation of effects on dichotomous dependent variables like “consecrated or not-consecrated.” “Logit” estimates estimate the change in the natural logarithm of the odds of the outcome occurring versus its not occurring – of consecrations/non-consecrations – for a unit change in an independent variable (Greene, 2000, pp. 812–819). Estimating effects of book discourse helps us assess the degree to which effects of book discourse on consecrations reflect directorial status and, thus, the extent to which effects of this discourse on consecration entail *indirect* effects of directorial status on consecrations (see Section 3.2 on “reduced forms”).

4. Findings

What are the effects of directorial status on film *discourse*? More specifically, what are the effects of the number of film anthologies that mention a film and the number of books about a film's director? Results of the Tobit analysis of Table 2 address this expectation by estimating the effects of a film director's top *auteur*, "Far Side" *auteur*, "hack" or "other" classification on whether or not the director is the subject of books about directors (Table 2, Cols. 1 and 2) or the film is mentioned in film anthologies (Table 2, Cols. 3 and 4). Analyses are performed for 1929–1967 to match the principal time span of analyses of consecrations; and control variables in these analyses are measures of age and gross earnings, NBR and NYT "top 10" status, and Oscar nominations.

Results indicate that Pantheon *auteurs*, "Far Side" *auteurs* and "Star Hacks" all are likely (relative to other directors) to be the subjects of books on directors. They further indicate that the mean of (the square root of) the number of book about a film's director is nearly twice as great for Pantheon *auteurs* (3.44) as it is for either "Far Side" *auteurs* (1.73) or "Star Hacks" (1.90).⁸

Results also indicate that films of Pantheon *auteurs*, as well as ones of more equivocal "Far Side" *auteurs* and "Star Hacks," are *significantly* more likely (at the .01 test level) than films of other directors to be mentioned in film anthologies (Table 2). They further indicate that the mean of (the square root of) the number of mentions in film anthologies is roughly two to three times as great for Pantheon *auteurs* (1.628) as for both "Far Side" directors (.864) and "Star Hacks" (.559).⁹ In short, *film discourse conceived and measured in terms of scholarly and critical books heavily focuses on auteurs in line with "Proposition 1" and on "Star Hack" directors in line with "Proposition 2," and it stresses Pantheon auteurs above all*. Interestingly, discourse reflects *auteur* and "Star Hack" directors more than other attributes of films (e.g., award nominations) analyzed here.¹⁰

This information on relations of directorial status to discourse may be useful for understanding the mechanisms whereby directorial status affects retrospective consecration, but information on the relation of directorial status to early recognition of film quality, what Allen and Lincoln (2004) term "contemporaneous recognition," might also be useful for comprehending such mechanisms. For example, if retrospective consecrators recall films that

⁸ The equations at issue control for Allen and Lincoln's (2004) measures of film age and commercial recognition, as well as for their measures of contemporaneous recognition; some controls prove relevant to directorial recognition in books. A film's inclusion in the *New York Times* "top 10" lists and its nominations for Oscars for direction and art direction prove to be statistically significant predictors of "books about directors," suggesting that early critical recognition of films and professional recognition of directors and art directors promotes consecration. Equations including information on NYCC awards are not presented because findings for them (a) for NYCC measures were altogether insignificant at even the one-tailed, .10 test level and (b) were quasi-identical for other regressors, with or without the NYCC variables.

⁹ Here, a film's nominations for Oscars for best acting are a very significant predictor of inclusion in books on films, suggesting that a strong, non-*auteur* criterion is at work. Both a film's inclusion in "top 10" lists of the *New York Times* and its nomination for best writing Oscars also seem to support some non-*auteur* criteria, although findings here are statistically less robust.

¹⁰ In detail, these analyses indicate that (a) Pantheon *auteurs* are the most likely directors to be the subject of books about *directors*; (b) both minor ("Far Side") *auteurs* and "Star Hacks" also are (similarly) likely to be the subject of books about directors; (c) directorial status better predicts numbers of books about *films* than directors; and (d) discourse effects of directorial status – Pantheon in particular – are so strong that *auteur* discourse may be regarded as indicator of film discourse.

Table 3

Logistic regression analyses of awards for directors by three of Sarris' *Auteurist* director types: Oscar nominations for best director, Oscars for best director, and best director (New York Critics Circle), 1929–1967

Types of directors and years	Oscar nominations for best director	Oscars for best director	Best director (New York Critics Circle)
Pantheon <i>Auteurs</i>	.606 (1.833)*	1.063 (2.896)*	1.463 (4.320)**
Far-Side-of-Paradise <i>Auteurs</i>	.659 (1.932)***	1.418 (4.130)***	.544 (1.723)
Star Hacks	1.516 (4.556)***	1.867 (6.469)***	2.120 (8.333)***

* Significant at .10.

** Significant at .05.

*** Significant at .01.

reaped early praise despite direction by mere “Star Hacks,” they might be more inclined to consecrate films by such non-*auteurs*. Thus, before turning to the analysis of direct effects of *auteur* theory on consecration, we turn to some simple analyses of relations of directorial status to measures of directorial peer recognition (best director Oscar nominations and awards) and critical recognition (NYBR best director awards). In particular, we turn to logistic regressions of best director Oscar nominations and awards and of NYCC best director awards on our measures of directorial status. Results, presented in Table 3, are consistent with Sarris' (1968, p. 155) conception of “Less than Meets the Eye” directors as ones of notable “reputation” before he wrote. They reveal coefficients for “Star Hacks” that are consistently larger and more consistently significant than those for *auteurs*.

But what of effects of *auteur* theory on consecration? To address this question, we estimate effects of top *auteurs* and “Star Hacks” (versus other directors) on measures of consecration. We use logistic regressions of AFI and NFR measures of consecration on Allen and Lincoln's (2004) regressors, plus the measures of Pantheon, “Far Side” and “Star Hack” directors. For each measure of consecration we do this for all combinations of models (a) with and without measures of New York Circle Critics awards (which cause us to truncate 1929–1934 observations), and (b) with and without controls for book measures of film discourse (which, when included, will control away indirect effects of contemporaneous recognition and directorial type that are channeled via discourse). Once again, we call models that include these intermediate “discourse” variables “full” models and those that do not, “reduced form” models. We present models of AFI consecrations in Table 4 and of NFR consecration, in Table 5.

In “full” AFI models that include measures of “critical discourse,” discourse effects arise for some aspects of discourse and of directorial status and not others (see Table 4). First, significant estimates arise for books on Films (Allen and Lincoln's “film anthologies”) but not for books on directors. (Here recall that Table 2's analyses allow us to say that film anthologies reflect *auteur* status as much as books about directors do.) As for directorial estimates, in the presence of controls for “discourse,” only those for “Star Hacks” are consistently significant. Indeed, “Star Hack” estimates are consistently significant only in the “full” equation for 1929–1967 and at the .10 test level; the only significant *auteur* estimate is for “Far Side” *auteurs* at this level: apparently “discourse” controls away some indirect effects of directorial status (see Section 3.2 on “reduced forms”). Here, controlling for discourse, which heavily reflects both *auteurs* and their work, it is the “Star Hacks” that most affect consecrations. As regards “full” AFI models that only consider directorial status effects net of discourse, support is greater for “Proposition 4” than “Proposition 2.” “Star Hack” effects depend less on discourse

Table 4

Logistic regression analyses of films canonized by the American Film Institute: full and reduced form models, pre-1968

Variable names	Full (with book measures)				Reduced form (without books)			
	1929–1967		1935–1967		1929–1967		1935–1967	
	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value
Age	-.046	.087	-.098	.009	-.028	.158	-.044	.078
Top 10 gross	2.069	.000	3.236	.000	1.23	.002	1.627	.000
NBR top 10	.113	.830	-.155	.820	.208	.632	.073	.882
NYT top 10	-1.60	.008	-.42	.000	-.36	.403	-.905	.076
Oscar nomination film	.889	.210	1.65	.080	.775	.159	1.014	.110
Oscar nomination director	2.545	.000	3.28	.000	2.05	.000	2.284	.000
Oscar nomination actor	-.005	.981	.084	.734	.236	.132	.333	.056
Oscar nomination writer	1.182	.040	1.46	.045	1.02	.037	1.023	.066
Oscar nomination cinematography	-.204	.694	-.234	.721	-.11	.793	-.141	.757
Oscar nomination art director	.557	.311	.655	.359	.167	.696	.328	.504
Oscar nomination editing	.048	.930	-.058	.931	-.25	.563	-.504	.323
Oscar nomination music	.687	.183	1.113	.090	.712	.087	.850	.074
NYCC best picture			2.708	.010			1.113	.112
NYCC best actor			-.668	.435			-.882	.112
NYCC best director			-1.06	.300			-.049	.947
Number books on director	.211	.333	.230	.367				
Number books on films	1.963	.000	2.620	.000				
Pantheon	-.974	.422	.438	.767	1.94	.002	2.709	.000
Far-Side-of-Paradise	.880	.213	2.015	.029	1.36	.010	1.866	.002
Star Hacks	1.186	.073	1.799	.044	1.40	.003	1.626	.003
Constant	-7.56	.000	-8.85	.000	-5.56	.000	-5.67	.000
-2 log-likelihood	140.013		96.423		219.504		179.082	
Cox and Snell R^2	.261		.306		.182		.214	
<i>N</i>	782		620		782		620	

for their transmission than are *auteur* effects. Also, scholarship on films, not directors, emerges as the crucial area of discourse once one controls for directorial status.

As for explanatory variables from Allen and Lincoln (2004), we find that effects of popular recognition as tapped by “top grosses” and of professional recognition as tapped by Oscar nominations for best director and best writer always attain significance at the two-tailed .05 test level or better.¹¹ Further, if .10 test levels are allowed, after all not a great stretch where signs are as predicted and tests are two-tailed, consistent evidence emerges for consecration effects of Oscar nominations for writing and music. Moreover, estimates for Pantheon *auteurs*

¹¹ Negative estimates appear for “NYT top 10,” presumably because of multicollinearity, that run contrary to prediction. In both “full” models, as well as one “reduced form” model, of Table 5, the specter of imprecision and sign flips due to multicollinearity (inflated standard errors and cross-estimate covariances, respectively) seems palpable. Overall, the negative “NYT” estimates are best regarded as artifactually rooted anomalies with little negative spill-over for other estimates. Perhaps they are best so regarded with the caveat that the tastes of 1929–1967 NYT reviewers might conceivably have run seriously enough out of line with those of 1990s AFI gatekeepers to provoke a negative reaction decades later. A fuller analysis of this issue is available on request.

Table 5

Logistic regression analyses of films canonized by the National Film Registry: full and reduced form models, pre-1968

Variable names	Full (with book measures)				Reduced form (without books)			
	1929–1967		1935–1967		1929–1967		1935–1967	
	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i> -value
Age	.008	.578	.008	.673	.009	.513	.012	.456
Top 10 gross	.384	.215	.411	.219	.380	.170	.379	.211
NBR top 10	.437	.162	.202	.559	.472	.092	.239	.450
NYT top 10	-.163	.611	-.221	.544	.073	.795	.007	.983
Oscar nomination film	.620	.092	.529	.195	.681	.044	.664	.079
Oscar nomination director	.542	.151	.570	.167	.550	.105	.555	.142
Oscar nomination actor	-.039	.786	-.107	.494	.169	.176	.104	.449
Oscar nomination writer	.930	.006	.976	.008	.890	.003	.955	.005
Oscar nomination cinematography	-.170	.610	-.088	.804	-.186	.539	-.116	.719
Oscar nomination art director	.833	.015	1.037	.004	.589	.055	.796	.016
Oscar nomination editing	-.062	.871	-.157	.687	-.179	.599	-.279	.439
Oscar nomination music	-.441	.211	-.472	.190	-.187	.546	-.263	.421
NYCC best picture			.366	.551			.277	.611
NYCC best actor			.394	.355			.252	.512
NYCC best director			.494	.427			.562	.314
Number books on director	-.112	.429	-.111	.459				
Number books on films	1.324	.000	1.174	.000				
Pantheon	1.027	.092	1.183	.085	1.760	.000	1.879	.000
Far-Side-of-Paradise	.828	.046	1.142	.009	1.025	.003	1.240	.001
Star Hacks	.724	.086	.748	.097	.808	.018	.757	.038
Constant	-5.19	.000	-5.10	.000	-4.50	.000	-4.66	.000
-2 log-likelihood	359.444		312.605		441.399		370.165	
Cox and Snell R^2	.233		.237		.148		.169	
<i>N</i>	782		620		782		620	

vie with those for best director Oscar nominations for these equations' largest effect estimates.¹²

In the “reduced form” models that exclude “discourse” variables and capture fuller effects of other regressors' estimates, effects of directorial status, *auteur* status above all, are preminent. Estimates for “Far Side” *auteurs*, though only two-thirds as large as those for Pantheon directors, also are always highly significant. Further, “Star Hack” effects are comparable in scale and precision to “Far Side” effects. Direction by the foils, as well as well the favorites, of *auteur* theory advances chances of AFI consecration. As regards “reduced form” AFI models that pick up total effects of directorial status, support is strong both for “Proposition 2” and “Proposition 4.”

¹² Arguing that consecrations will be confined to works that “last” or survive the test of “banalization” and forgetting that result from overly familiar artistic conventions, Allen and Lincoln (2004, p. 878) hypothesize that age decreases the likelihood of retrospective consecration. In these models, age always registers the hypothesized negative effect at the two-tailed .10 test level or better, indicating that “banalization” of films seemed to erode their value over time for AFI gatekeepers.

Table 5 presents results for NFR consecrations. In “full” models for NFR consecrations (as for AFI ones), a film’s mentions in “books on films” prove highly and reliably consequential, though the number of books on directors does not. In “reduced form” models for NFR consecrations, estimates for directorial status are always substantial (with estimates of .724 to 1.729) and statistically robust (at no less than the one-tailed .05 level).¹³

As for explanatory variables from Allen and Lincoln (2004) in NFR models, age and “popular recognition” appear to be inconsequential. A film’s prospects seem not to erode at all with time, and commercial success confers no advantage vetted by statistical tests. Critical accolades involving reviewers’ Top-10 lists and NYCC awards also appear inconsequential. However, Oscar nominations support the idea that professional recognition plays a canonizing role as regards nominations for writing (always significantly related to consecration), for art direction (always significant at the .05 level for at least one-tailed tests) and for best picture (always at least around a borderline .10 and/or a one-tailed .05 significance level).

What stands out as persistently significant for both AFI and NFR “full” models is the importance of “books on films”. (Nominations for “best writing” Oscars show a little persistence too.) What stands out as persistently significant for both AFI and NFR “reduced form” models is the importance of directorial classification as *auteur*. In “reduced form” models of Pantheon and “Far Side” *auteur*ship, *auteur* status always positively impacts upon consecration at the .01 test level or better. (Pantheon odd ratios vary from 5.8 to 15.0 and “Far Side” ones, from 2.8 to 6.5.)

Theoretically, *auteur* theory looks about as influential as Allen and Lincoln (2004) indicated. Consecration is responsive to book discourse on *films* if not on directors. This discourse is responsive to directors highlighted by Sarris’ classifications—to Pantheon *auteurs* above all, but to lesser, “Far Side” *auteurs* and “Star Hacks” as well. As regards the crucial hypothesis that “films directed by directors identified as *auteurs* by film critics and scholars are more likely to be retrospectively consecrated than others,” this appears to be the case—at least so far as Sarris (1968) captures “directors identified as *auteurs* by film critics and scholars.” Thus, our “Proposition 2” on *auteurs* and consecration is supported in the crucial case of “reduced form” models that allow for total causal effects: *auteurs* matter for consecration, albeit largely as they affect it via discourse on films. However, our “Proposition 4” on “Star Hacks” and consecration is supported for models with or without controls for the intermediary of book discourse on films: “Star Hacks” matter even net of controls for book discourse on films.

5. Conclusions and discussion

This analysis of 1990s film consecrations of the American Film Institute (AFI) and the National Film Repository (NFR) largely reaffirms Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) explanatory stress on both “contemporaneous recognition” shortly following a film’s release and on subsequent

¹³ Estimates for the three directorial dummies never are significantly different from each other at a two-tailed, .05 test level. However, in NFR reduced form models, the Pantheon *auteur* effects are greater than “Far Side” and “Star Hack” effects at least at, the one-tailed, .05 level. In analyses without “Star Hack” regressors, the basic finding of significant *auteur* effects in “reduced form” equations holds. Findings remain significant at two-tailed, .05 test level for seven of eight *auteur* estimates: in the AFI equation without NYCC controls, the estimate for “Far Side” *auteurs* only attains one-tailed, .05 significance. In “full” equations, estimates for *auteur* regressors remain insignificant for AFI consecrations and lose significance for NFR ones.

critical and scholarly discourse. Additionally, it brings fresh news regarding *auteurist* discourse. On “contemporaneous recognition,” we find as Allen and Lincoln did that critical and professional recognition granted filmmakers is an important cause of retrospective consecration. On “discourse” as empirically analyzed by Allen and Lincoln (2004) in terms of mentions in books on movies, one of Allen and Lincoln’s two predictions is supported. A film’s mentions in anthologies of papers on particular films are found to boost the film’s chances of consecration. However, contrary to Allen and Lincoln (2004), a film’s mentions in book-length studies of directors prove not to be statistically related to consecrations in the face of our new controls for directorial status. This exception to our reinforcement of Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) findings, suggests that the power of *auteur* theory has not been so great as to elevate discourse on directors to the level of discourse on films as an influence on what is, after all, *film* consecration, not directorial canonization. These findings on “contemporaneous recognition” and discourse on film bolster Allen and Lincoln’s (2004) Bourdieuan stress on institutional agents and, to an extent, their discourse (Bourdieu, 1983; van Rees and Dorleijn, 2001).

On specifically *auteurist* discourse, we bring fresh empirical news, some of it never even theoretically implied in Allen and Lincoln (2004). In particular, systematic measurement and analysis of directorial status viewed through the lens of *auteur* theory and the directorial categorizations of Sarris (1968) reveals that scholarly discourse is less dominated by *auteur* theory than Allen and Lincoln (2004) suggest, that film anthologies are more influential for consecrations than directorial studies, and that effects of *auteur* theory on consecrations work largely through their impacts on which films film anthologies scrutinize. A clear funneling of *auteurist* influence through the pages of edited volumes on films emerges for directors designated *auteurs* by *auteur* theorists (most especially for consecrations by the AFI); and direct, consecrating effects of *auteur* status also emerge (though mainly for consecrations by the NFR). So, we find support for “Propositions 1” and “2” of Section 3.2. These propose *auteur* advantage where discursive attention and consecration, respectively, are concerned. They are propositions at least strongly implied, though never tested, by Allen and Lincoln (2004). In addition, being a director earmarked by *auteur* theory for demotion from high standing preceding the advent of *auteur* theory—being one of our “Star Hacks”—also bolsters chances of consecration. This supports our “Propositions “3” and “4” proposing similarly advantageous access to discursive attention and consecration for “Star Hacks.” These are propositions never remotely entertained by Allen and Lincoln (2004). Clearly, film scholars are well disposed to films whose directors have been designated *auteurs*. Yet, it appears that the influence of *auteur* theory has not sufficed to erase regard for directors critiqued by *auteur* theory or to block retrospective recognition of such directors, a matter to which we soon return.

This influence of *auteur* status holds for AFI and NFR consecrations if we focus on effects of director status that include effects channeled via scholarly and critical discourse embodied in books. It is also the case for NFR consecrations even if we *control* for book discourse, suggesting that NFR gatekeepers involved in canonical decisions hold *auteurist* status in particularly high esteem. Interestingly, a film’s direction by one of the directors singled out for demotion by Sarris as “Star Hacks” also boosts the film’s likelihood of consecration to some extent whether or not the film is also a focus of film scholarship in books.

Although *auteur* theory proves influential, consecrations single out the “Star Hack” directors earmarked for demotion by *auteur* theory as well as those *auteurs* singled out for canonization. Moreover, although the discourse in film anthologies is attentive to “Star Hacks” as well as *auteurs*, canonizing responses to “Star Hacks” appear to be less filtered through attention in the

sort of scholarly and critical discourse captured by film anthologies than do responses to *auteurs*.¹⁴

Clearly the U.S. cinema's AFI and NFR "Colleges of Cardinals" are attentive to so-called *auteurs* when they make canonical judgments. But why do those who canonize direct such notable attention to the "Star Hacks"? It might be that they actually do not attend to "Star Hacks," that Sarris simply misclassified true *auteurs* as "Less than Meets the Eyes" directors. However, this is unlikely. Empirically, Peter Wollen's (1969) *Signs and Meaning* is the closest competitor to Sarris' (1968) *The American Cinema* as a focused discussion of *auteurs*. Although it contains no explicit categorization of directors, Wollen (1969, Chap. 2) does indicate whom he regards as *auteurs*. He explicitly earmarks directors Charles Chaplin, John Ford and Orson Welles, all Pantheon directors in Sarris (1968), as *auteurs*. Apparently referring to other directors in proportion to their interest to him as *auteurs*, he does mention (Pantheon) *auteur* Howard Hawkes more than any other director (30 times) and several of Sarris' other *auteurs* (e.g., Fritz Lang, Joseph Von Sternberg) more than once. Yet, he barely mentions the "Less than Meets the Eye" directors. Of the nine "Less than Meets the Eye" directors of Table 1, he mentions only four directors (Mankiewicz, Wellman, Wilder and Wyler), each only once.¹⁵

Theoretically, no compelling theoretical or factual case restricts AFI and NFR gatekeepers to the consecration of films directed by *auteurs*; and none exists for an absolutely hegemony of *auteur* theory in film discourse. True, *auteur* theory, as a conception of directorial quality that stresses directorial creative responsibility and contests other conceptions of directorial quality, contests the merits of certain directors. However, those conferring canonical status very likely are aware of such other accounts of responsibility for film quality as that stressing a *collective character for cultural production* (Kael, 1984; Becker, 1982; Griswold, 1994). They are very likely aware of accounts stressing the collective character of Hollywood film production during the era of the Hollywood studio system (Carringer, 1985; Schatz, 1988), an era extending into the mid-1950s and covering about two-thirds of our 1929–1967 empirical focus.¹⁶ The key formulation of systemic credit for Hollywood production and the quality of its product is Schatz's (1988) *The Genius of the System*. This looks to the "genius" of the sheer Hollywood studio wealth of film-making resources – script writers, cameras and film stocks, lights and sets, booms and tracks, technicians and actors, experienced producers and directors, plus organizational powers for the productive disposition of such resources and the distribution of their products – as the sources of great films. It sees film production by the Hollywood studio system as "among the greatest cultural accomplishments in an age when art and industry, commerce and technology are so inexorably wed" (Schatz, 1988, p. 492).

¹⁴ Again, books about films per se appear to be more influential than ones about directors per se in shaping conceptions of what the great films are.

¹⁵ Sarris (1991) does lift up Billy Wilder from "Star Hack" status for belated entry into the Pantheon. Yet analyses performed with Wilder transposed from a "Star Hack" to a Pantheon *auteur* do not notably differ. Sarris' (1998, Chap. 3) re-visitation of the Hollywood directors through 1949 stresses *two* directors not in his Pantheon or "Far Side" sets, namely William Wyler as well as Wilder. Analyses performed with both Wilder as Pantheon *auteur* and William Wyler transposed from "Star Hack" status to the "Far Side" status (as judged plausible in note 6) entail few changes. A fuller analysis of slight modifications of findings with Wilder classified as Pantheon *auteur* and/or Wyler as a "Far Side" one is available on request.

¹⁶ Bordwell, et al. (1985) and Schatz (1988) each extend their coverage of the studio system to 1960 although the former sees a 1955 emergence of a "package-unit" mode of production and Schatz sees 1947–1960 as a period of system decline. If we use 1954 as the end of the Hollywood studio system, which entails a strict reading of Bordwell and Thompson and splits the Schatz period of decline down the middle, 67% of our years of coverage are captured by the studio era.

Indeed, the “Star Hacks” tended to be directors prominent for high standing with the classical studios or closely associated with the successful upscale independent producers of the studio era: John Huston with Warner Brothers, Rouben Mamoulian with Paramount and Fox, Joseph Mankiewicz with Fox, Lewis Milestone with Universal, William Wellman with David O. Selznick and Warner Brothers, Billy Wilder with Paramount, and William Wyler with Selznick and Samuel Goldwyn as well as Warner Brothers (Cook, 1990; Schatz, 1988). Also, as we saw in the discussion of findings from Table 3, “Star Hacks” tended to be more successful as recipients of contemporaneous recognition than *auteurs*.¹⁷ With the support of both a strong record of professional and critical recognition and of a history of scholarly recognition of the collective character of film making, we not only should not be surprised to find “Star Hack” and other directors who had found favor with in the Hollywood system of film production, vying with *auteurs* for consecration.

Indeed, competition between *auteurs* and “Star Hacks” is theoretically suggestive as well as illuminated by theory. It suggests the relevance of such non-*auteurist* film discourses as “collective production” to film valorization. It also suggests that attention should be directed to possible consequences of producer status and a film project’s (directors, distributors) status within the production system. Attention also should be directed to discourses that may shape or reflect canonizing forces that are strong beyond the worlds of scholarly and critical publishing. For example, Kapsis (1992) suggests one mid-century evaluative school of thought, noting that for “pre-*auteur* critics writing in the 1940s and 1950s what counted as ‘art’ were films of ‘social significance’”; and Kauffmann (1966, 2001) suggests a contemporaneous one stressing standards of seriousness adopted from literature and literary criticism. Further, the history of such key sources of “contemporaneous recognition” as the Oscars is conveyed in works of popular hagiography (Osborn, 2003). The history of those aspects of cinematic creation, like writing and acting, that lack extensive theoretical blessing is conveyed in coffee table books and popular periodicals about the movies (but see Corliss, 1974 and Bogdanovitch, 2004). In short, competition between *auteurs* and “Star Hacks” suggests that cultural discourse seems to tend toward heterogeneity (Fuchs, 2001).

Are there precise analogues in arts other than film to the “Star Hacks,” ones that can cast light on them or be enlightened by them? Perhaps not, for precise comparison seems difficult across arts, for example, arts as disparate in the collective character of their production as poetry and film. In particular, an analogue that were strictly true to “Star Hacks” would have to meet a stringent set of demands. As “Star Hacks” are designated by *auteurs* theory, it would require an aesthetic theory that specified a set of *avored creators* like *auteurs*, that also specified a set of demoted creators like the “Star Hacks” (as well as merely shunned creators), that is strongly preeminent, and that has strong implications for the consecration of artistic products. Such a very precise analogue does not come to mind for any art, yet discussion of why such analogues are elusive, as well as of broader analogues, might prove enlightening.

¹⁷ As “Star Hacks” have consistently stronger effects on AFI than NFR consecrations and as AFI consecrations are, unlike NFR ones, higher for “top grossing” films, “Star Hacks” might appear to benefit from great *commercial*, and thus popular, success. However, films of Pantheon, “Far Side” and “Star Hack” directors are all nominally less likely to be top grossing films than average “other” films (see “Top 10 gross” findings in Tables 4 and 5). Indeed, films by “Star Hacks” alone are significantly less likely to be top grossing films at the .05 test level; and films by our select classes of directors are less likely to be big grossing films than are other films. In short, “Star Hacks,” though prominent studio figures, were less likely than most directors (*auteurs* included) to have big commercial/popular success. Accordingly, “Star Hack” attractiveness to consecrators on popular as well as critical grounds find very qualified support in our data.

Take the case of literary fiction, for which no strict analogue comes to mind. Perhaps a feminist/multicultural aesthetic could be defined (albeit rather synthetically and stipulatively) that makes for an eligible analogue to *auteur* theory (Elliott, 2002). Such a construction could embrace a Willa Cather, help canonize *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, repudiate an Ernest Hemingway, and shun John O’Hara. However, it is unclear whether this composite feminist/multicultural aesthetic is sufficiently preeminent to attempt or accomplish a strong exclusionary role in the consecrational process: too many strong parallel discourses might be operative to expect a successful exclusion of, say, *The Sun Also Rises*.¹⁸

Perhaps a broader, looser analogy does better. For example, a “preeminent literary discourse” might be defined as a preeminent *family* of aesthetic discourses in an era—say the fiction authors singled out for some high level of praise by the markedly multicultural but eclectic *Columbia History of American Literature* (Elliott, 1988) might be regarded as the “favored,” while authors singled out by this text for demotion (whether explicitly or by comparison to earlier standards) might be regarded as the “disfavored.” Consecrated works might be found in honorific listings like “The 100 Best Novel” list compiled by Random House (www.randomhouse.com/modernlibrary/100bestnovels.html) for twentieth century English-language fiction. Analyses of novelistic consecrations paralleling the present one of film consecrations might be fruitful. More specifically, they might yield an analogue to our “Star Hacks,” for example, authors of perennial good sellers and enduring guilty pleasures like Raymond Chandler granted new respectability by decay of artistic hierarchies (DiMaggio, 1987).¹⁹ Though unimpeachable analogues across arts may be elusive, consideration of possible analogues reinforces our view that cultural discourse tends toward heterogeneity.

“Star Hacks” do not meet the standards of the *auteur* aesthetic. However, their works are consecrated because other aesthetic traditions coexist. Overall, findings involving the influence of “Star Hack” directorial status and “contemporaneous” awards for varied non-directorial accomplishments suggest that film does not finally escape the heterogeneity of discourse that characterizes other art forms like literature with its New Criticism (Brooks and Warren, 1949), mimetic realism (Auerbach, 1968), structuralism (Todorov, 1973), post-structuralism (Miller, 1982), multiculturalism (Elliott, 2002), and the like. In short, the present study not only provides new evidence for the power of *auteur* theory; it also points to the likely power of other discourses.

But what, finally, are the “Star Hacks”? By Sarris’ (1968, pp. 155–169) explicit definition, they are directors who had been marked by excessive success before the ascent of *auteur* standards among critics. In particular, these are standards of sustained stylistic flair and thematic consistency Sarris, 1968 (pp. 30–33). In terms of present analyses, they are recipients

¹⁸ Marxist literary criticism around the 1930s comes close to a strict analogy to *auteur* theory in the last decades of the twentieth century (Aaron, 1961). It could define both disfavored authors (e.g., “bourgeois decadents” like Booth Tarkington), define favored ones (like James T. Farrell) and canonize works like *Studs Lonergan*. However, Marxist criticism was not clearly preeminent, even in the 1930s, and its U.S. reign was of modest duration in comparison with that of *auteur* theory (say, 1932–1947 at most). Still, consideration of arts other than film reinforces our view that cultural discourse tends toward heterogeneity.

¹⁹ Time and space preclude a literary study inspired by such analogues here, but we proceed here with an eye to available data, the Random House “The 100 Best Novel” list (which consecrates both *Death Comes to the Archbishop* and *The Sun Also Rises*), Pulitzer prizes (e.g., Tarkington’s two) as indicators of early recognition, the author listings of The Library of America (at <http://www.loa.org> and also, alas, insufficiently multicultural to shun Hemingway if not O’Hara) as a proxy for Elliott (1988).

of high “contemporaneous recognition” and “ample retrospective consecration,” despite rejection by a preeminent aesthetic theory. “Consecration is accessible” to them because influential aesthetic discourses *other* than the most salient are, as usual, at work. In particular, these other discourses are ones stressing creators other than directors such as writers and, more generally, collective production (Corliss, 1974; Schatz, 1988; Bogdanovitch, 2004). “Star Hacks” like William Wyler may have lacked an *auteurist* virtue such as “thematic consistency” (Sarris, 1991, pp. 346–349). However, they appear to have had access to great production resources like those available to William Wyler via collaborations with producer Samuel Goldwyn (Schatz, 1988), in particular great artistic collective collaborators (e.g., Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh and writer Ben Hecht in *Wuthering Heights*; Betty Davis and writer Lillian Hellman in *The Little Foxes*; Fredric March and writer Robert Sherwood in *The Best Years of our Lives*; and cinematographer Greg Toland in all three). For even as precise a characterization as has been attempted here, “Star Hack” seems to depend on the unusually “collective” character of film production as well as on the perhaps universal character of discursive diversity within an artistic domain. Perhaps the specificity of artistic domains is as universal a cultural characteristic as the heterogeneity of discourses within a domain.

The effectiveness of Sarris (1968) as an indicator of *auteurist* categorizations of directors also points to the historicity of culture and to the potential cultural power of key cultural events (Wright, 1975, pp. 16–28; Peregrin, 2003; Sewell, 1996a, 1996b; Somers, 1996). Sewell (1996a, 1996b) has pointed to the salience of discrete events like the storming of the Bastille in France for political discourse (Sewell, 1996a, 1996b); and Margaret Somers (1996), mindful of the power of major cultural “events” as causal variables, has called for “a historical sociology of concept formation.” The present study documents Sarris’ (1968) *The American Cinema* as a conceptual factor in the consecration of U.S. films. It points to the promise of such works both as naturally occurring or “unobtrusive” indicators and as building blocks for more historicized accounts of culture.

In conclusion, we return to the Bourdieuan frame that we have drawn from Allen and Lincoln (2004) and elaborated. Our findings on film discourse underscore the reputation-making prominence of critics and scholars that has been previously claimed for music (DiMaggio, 1982), literature (van Rees, 1983) and film (Kapsis, 1992). Further, our contribution has an empirical scope beyond Kapsis’ (1992) study of Hitchcock and our empirical specification of the role of *auteur* discourse exceeds the reach of Allen and Lincoln (2004), albeit from atop their shoulders. To round off cinematic specification of the Bourdieuan framework, future investigation into consecration might consider producer and distributor firms as influential institutional organizations. It might look at individual producer/creators as well as directors—at writers, production designers, and “producers” long marginalized by prestigious film theories.

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Alexander Hicks (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, 1979) is Professor of Sociology (Associated Faculty, Political Science and Film Studies) at Emory University. His current research is on relations between class formation, political organization, social policy, and cultural forms. He is author of *Social Democracy and Welfare Capitalism*, as well as of numerous articles in the leading journals of Sociology and Political Science. He has co-edited *The Handbook of Political Sociology* with Robert Alford, Thomas Janoski and Mildred Schwartz; Cambridge University press), has twice served on the Editorial Board of *American Sociological Review* and is inaugural co-editor of the *Socioeconomics Review* (2003–2006).

Velina Petrova is a Ph.D. candidate and Woodruff Fellow in the Department of Sociology at Emory University. Her research interests include development, globalization, and comparative democratization. She is currently constructing a system-level analysis of foreign aid for development since the Marshall Plan, while trying to keep a passion from a previous life – film – alive.