4

Early American film

Tom Gunning

Early cinema as a challenge to film history and theory

Since the early 1970s the study of early American cinema (from its origins until about 1916) has transformed conceptions of film history and of the relation between theory and history. When this research began in the late 1970s film history was a neglected field. Previous film historians had only limited access to films or other primary materials from the early period, and usually operated under implicit teleological assumptions, chronicling film's gradual technical and aesthetic maturation. Cinema's beginnings were viewed as immature babblings, followed by precocious discoveries and a growing mastery of editing and storytelling. Historians who began working in the 1970s questioned this teleological approach, benefiting from increased access to archival collections of films and other primary materials. These scholars abandoned the pejorative connotations of describing early film as 'primitive', maintaining that this era possessed a different approach to filmmaking than that of later cinema, so often considered the norm.

Under the dominance of apparatus theory (see Creed, Part 1, Chapter 9), which marked film studies in the decade of the 1970s, film theorists tended to view history with suspicion. From an amalgam of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Althusserian critique of ideology, a systematic model of the way cinema operated had been fashioned that owed little to historical research. Film history as it had been practised was viewed as an empirical gathering of facts that could hardly shed light on the deep structures of the way the cinematic apparatus constructed its spectator as subject—a process, theorists claimed, which embodied ideologies endemic to Western thought at least since Plato. How could chronicling changes in industrial practices reveal anything of deep significance?

New approaches to early cinema emerged, however, not so much in opposition to film theory as in dialogue with it, and from a desire to test some of its propositions. Apparatus theory constructed a model of cinema based on a number of assumptions about cinematic form and text–spectator relations: the centring of the film spectator as master of a visual field and decoder of narrative puzzles, and a viewing process in which the spectator remains immobile and loses all sense of surroundings, in thrall to an illusion of reality deriving from psychological regression (Baudry 1986). Investigating early cinema, historians could ask whether these assumptions functioned during cinema's first decades.

Early cinema as a different sort of cinema

Work on early cinema took on historical and theoretical tasks. As models of new research methods and increased rigour, Gordon Hendricks, George C. Pratt, and Jay Leyda provided inspiration for the systematic use of archives, drawing on contemporary documents and looking more thoroughly at archival films. The event which many scholars see as the origin of the rethinking of early cinema, the conference *Cinema 1900–1906* (Holmann 1982), held by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in Brighton in 1978, was devised by a group of forward-looking archivists (particularly Eileen Bowser, David Francis, and Paul Spehr) to pull early films out of the vault and have them examined by scholars. In many ways the renaissance of early-film studies was begun by film archivists (Cherchi Usai 1994). Around the same time seminal works, such as Robert C. Allen's (1980) dissertation on the interrelation between vaudeville and early film, exemplified new carefully focused research projects.

Realizing that early cinema could offer new theoretical insights was primarily the inspiration of Noël Burch, whose interest in oppositional film practices led him to approach early films in a radical manner (Burch 1990). Burch located the significance of early film in its differences from the way films were made and understood within the dominant mode of filmmaking, which he termed the IMR, the institutional mode of representation, exemplified by Hollywood film, but international in scope. He described early cinema as an alternative approach, a PMR, or primitive mode of representation. The PMR consisted of a number of unfamiliar structures: a spatial approach combining frontality with non-centred composition and distant camera placement to create a 'primitive externality'; a lack of narrative coherence, linearity, and closure; and an underdevelopment of character.

Burch's view of the relation of this PMR to the later IMR was complex and ambivalent. At points, he related the different approaches of early films to the working-class background of early cinema's audience and of at least some of its showmen producers. The IMR, in contrast, introduced bourgeois values of coherence and subjectivity into this originally primitive and popular mode of entertainment. Burch raised what has remained a vexed issue in the history of early cinema: the role of class in its development and the class make-up of its audiences. However, he stressed that his interest in the PMR lay primarily in the light it could shed on the IMR, the dominant cinema as it was described by apparatus theory. As a contrast to IMR, PMR allowed Burch to denaturalize this dominant mode, revealing it as the product of historical development rather than the discovery of the natural language of cinema, as teleological film history had assumed. In this respect Burch launched a strong critique of linear teleological film history. But he also resisted any conception of early cinema as a 'lost paradise', claiming (particularly in his later work) that early cinema was less rich and complex than IMR. For Burch an assumption of progressive development remained, and he retained the term 'primitive' partly to indicate that in his view this early mode remained underdeveloped. Burch's analysis of early film often does not stress its difference from the IMR as much as the way early film techniques anticipate many of IMR's basic assumptions in a primitive fashion. He therefore saw early cinema as rehearsing a variety of elements essential to IMR and the apparatus theory of the cinema. Thus, the evolution of early cinema strives to *overcome* the primitive externality that marks the PMR. The centred masterful spectator of apparatus theory appeared in the PMR in a number of precocious yet underdeveloped ways. This classical spectator acted as a goal which impelled the development of centred compositions and continuity editing strategies, but it also appeared in a number of seemingly deviant features, as later practices appeared in 'infantile' versions. For instance, Burch claimed that the frequent theme in trick films of a body that explodes into fragments (as in Cecil Hepworth's *Explosion of a Motor Car*, 1900) anticipated the later schema of fragmentation through editing. Following from the assumptions of the apparatus theory that the cinema in its basic apparatuses (the camera, the projector, and the movie theatre) reproduces the Western ideology of subject formation, Burch found that early cinema already held the seeds for these later structures. Although he added a historical dimension to his analysis, the determination of theoretical structures provided the ultimate significance of early cinema.

Burch's approach to early cinema received swift criticism from David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (1983). The authors offered a critique of the linear and teleological assumptions of traditional film history, inspired by Jean-Louis Comolli's call for a materialist history of film, based on discontinuities and ruptures rather than a schema of evolution. While Comolli never

applied an example of materialist history, the authors found that Burch attempted one, but, in their view, failed. Much of their criticism targeted a cavalier attitude towards research and verification in Burch's work, but they also criticized his theoretical assumptions. The authors questioned the role of working-class culture in early cinema's formal difference from traditonal bourgeois forms, pointing out that the first audiences for film in the United States were in vaudeville theatres, a basically middle-class form, while the working-class nickelodeon appeared only as the codes of the IMR were emerging. In addition, Bordwell and Thompson rejected Burch's return to linearity in his belief that the basic assumptions of the IMR are present in embryonic form in early film.

In a key work in revisionist film history *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985), written jointly by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, Thompson developed a view of early film which also accentuated its difference from later filmmaking practice. Maintaining that from 1917 until the 1960s American mainstream commercial cinema shows a remarkable stability in its style and mode of production (the 'classical Hollywood cinema' of the title), Thompson saw the age of early cinema as a time when films were so fundamentally different as to be incomprehensible' (Bordwell *et al.* 1985: 157). Early cinema can be understood as 'pre-classical', standing in varying degrees outside the codes of spatial and temporal relations that define the stability of the classical Hollywood film. The authors' definition of the classical system, although in some ways parallel to (and possibly inspired by) Burch's IMR, made little use of the apparatus theory of subject construction. Instead, Thompson placed storytelling at the centre of the classical system and saw primitive cinema struggling to harness cinematic space and time to this dominant function. Thompson's emphasis on narrative allowed the difference between early cinema and classical cinema to gain more clarity. Since the basic apparatus, the camera, the projector, the darkened room, was the same in both periods, an approach founded in the ideological effect of the basic apparatus would be hard-pressed to discover significant differences between periods.

Thompson applied the principles articulated in Bordwell and Thompson (1983), and investigated the transformation between primitive cinema (she retained this term, although with misgivings) and classical Hollywood forms by investigating the economic and cultural determinants of this change. Retaining Burch's description of the exteriority of early cinema, she related this to the dominant influence of vaudeville on early cinema both economically and as a model. Thompson claims primitive cinema transformed itself by taking up the task of storytelling, overcoming the exteriority of the vaudeville spectator and replacing it by a spectator immersed in the narrative space of the film.

My own work also defined the difference between early cinema and the later classical mode in terms of its relation to narrative. The work of my colleague and collaborator André Gaudreault, analysing the structures of early cinema through structuralist narrative theory, differentiated cinematic *narrators* (cinematic devices which narrated a story) and *monstrators* who, instead of telling a story, displayed or showed things (Gaudreault 1988, 1990). For Gaudreault, these two different functions in cinema corresponded to the narrating function of an edited sequence and the monstrative display of the single shot. Early cinema, particularly in its very earliest period in which films most often consisted of a single shot (before 1904), related more to monstration than to narration. In my work, this contrast between formal devices of storytelling and display became less a matter of a contrast between the single shot and the edited sequence than a broadly based address to the spectator in early cinema, which I termed the cinema of attractions (Gunning 1990).

While Thompson had shown that early cinema differed from the classical model primarily through its lack of narrative dominance, there remained the question of how to describe what early cinema *was*, rather than what it *wasn't*. Burch's ideas about exteriority and Gaudreault's concept of monstration were useful guides. Taking a cue from Sergei Eisenstein's theatrical work in the 1920s, I felt that the essential gesture of early cinema (which could not be described simply as an incomplete mastery of the task of storytelling) lay in its aggressive address to the spectator's attention. The spectator addressed by early cinema was very different from the spectator of classical cinema, absorbed in a coherent fictional world, attentive to character cues and immersed in following a story. The exteriority noted by Burch and Thompson corresponded to an outward address of the films themselves, a sort of hailing of the viewer, most obvious in the look at the camera and the bows and gestures directed at the audience so common in early cinema (as in such films as *From Show Girl to Burlesque Queen*, Biograph,

1903, or nearly any Méliès films, e.g. *The Man with the Rubber Head*, 1902) but taboo in most genres in classical cinema.

The exteriority of early cinema expresses the basis of the cinema of attractions: the act of display of something to a viewer. The attraction itself is aware of the viewer's gaze, is constructed to attract it. Rather than narrative development based on active characters within detailed fictional environments, the cinema of attractions presented a series of curious or novel views to a spectator. These views could be non-fictional actualities (current events, human oddities, natural wonders), vaudeville acts (dances, acrobatics, gags), famous fragments (peak moments from famous plays, realizations of well-known paintings), or trick films (magical transformations and illusions). In contrast to the temporal development inherent in narrative, the cinema of attractions presented bursts of interest, such as the rapid transformations in a magic film, or the succession of sights in a scenic film (Gunning 1995a). In this cinema, characterization was unimportant and the spatial and temporal relations essential to narrative development were basically irrelevant.

The exteriority of early cinema expresses the basis of the cinema of attractions: the act of display of something to a viewer. The attraction itself is aware of the viewer's gaze, is constructed to attract it. Rather than narrative development based on active characters within detailed fictional environments, the cinema of attractions presented a series of curious or novel views to a spectator. These views could be non-fictional actualities (current events, human oddities, natural wonders), vaudeville acts (dances, acrobatics, gags), famous fragments (peak moments from famous plays, realizations of well-known paintings), or trick films (magical transformations and illusions).

Although there are differences and even contradictions between these models of early cinema, they all emphasize the difference between the early period of film history and the cinema which eventually became dominant. These models were primarily focused on the formal aspects of early films. Further discoveries came as historians broadened the focus from films to the contexts in which they were shown.

From early film to early cinema: exhibitors, audiences, and the public sphere

The new generation of historians of early film investigated not only the films themselves, but also the way they were shown and understood. This involved a shift, to use the terms suggested by Christian Metz, from early *films* to early *cinema*, the culture surrounding films, including their industry, their theatres, and their audiences. Of course, cinema culture and actual films are inseparable, the one implying and enlightening the other. Charles Musser's (1991) work on Edwin Porter and other early American filmmakers emphasized that simply looking at archival prints of early films, while essential, was not sufficient for a full understanding of early cinema. Not only editing, compositional techniques, and narrative strategies differed in early cinema, classical cinema had also transformed the ways films were presented and the means audiences used for understanding them.

Research into primary sources about the presentation of early film led Musser to stress the role of the exhibitor. In cinema's first decade, particularly before 1903, the person showing the film took over important roles in what is now termed post-production, which would later be under the control of film producers. Since many films consisted of a single shot, the exhibitor assembled them into a programme. This could be done with great ingenuity, joining individual films together to stress similarity or contrast; interspersing other material, such as lantern slides or recitations; adding music or other sound effects; and frequently narrating the whole with a spoken commentary or lecture. The exhibitor therefore endowed each film with aesthetic effects and meanings, becoming the author of the film programme (Musser 1991; Musser and Nelson 1991). Buttressed by research into the importance in this era of the film lecturer (the performer who spoke a commentary as the film was projected) by Gaudreault

(1988), Burch (1990), Martin Sopocy (1978), and others, Musser showed that formal analysis of films alone was not sufficient for understanding the meanings and pleasures derived from them by early audiences.

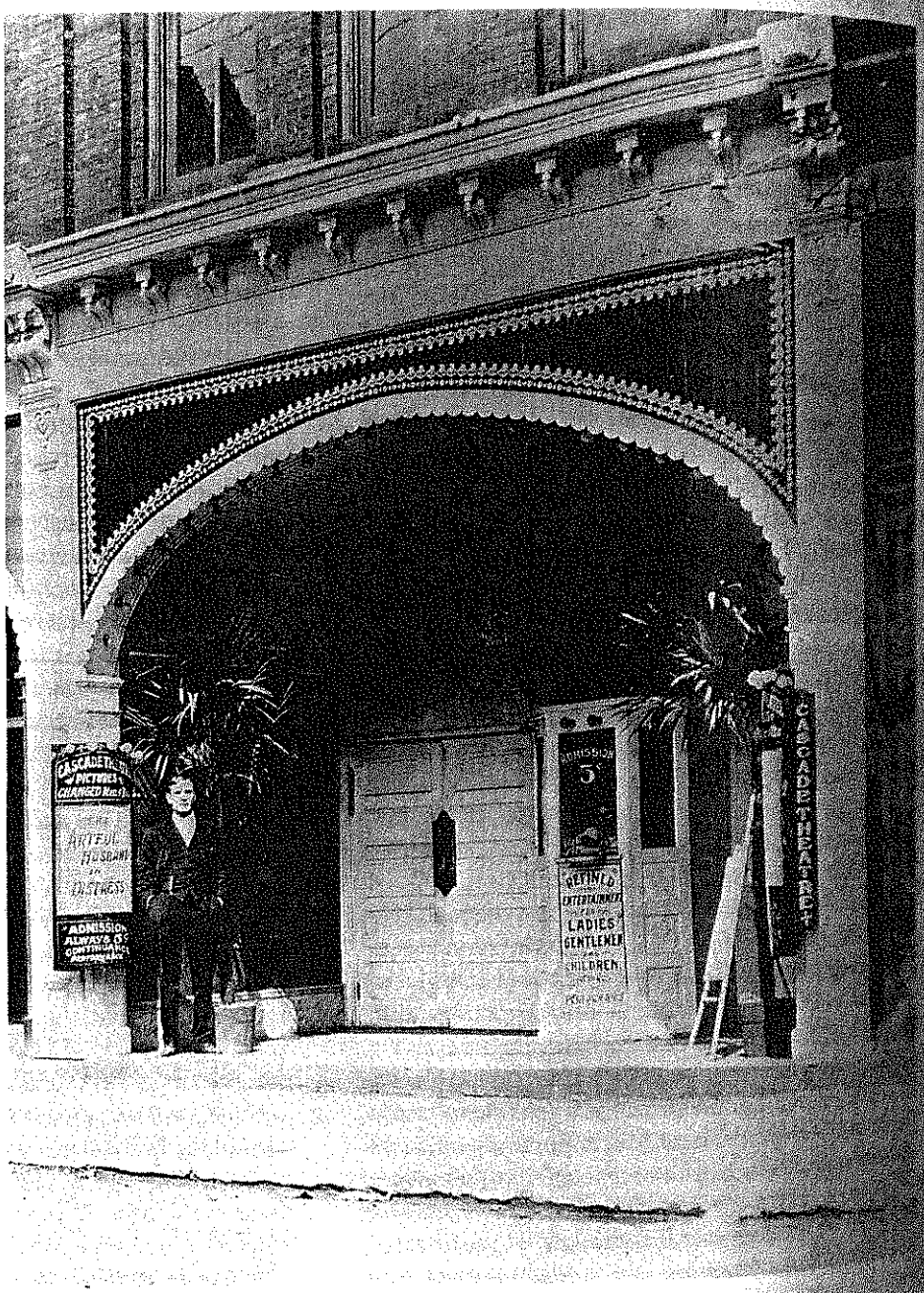
In contrast to classical films, early film had a more open form. As Burch had indicated, their narratives were not as complete and finalized as the films of the IMR. However, this openness was not an avant-garde love of ambiguity. Narrative coherence was supplied in the act of reception, rather than inherent in the film itself. Filmmakers frequently relied on familiar stories or current events well known to their audiences, who could fill in gaps in the narrative or supply significance. These cultural contexts outside film—like the magic-lantern narratives of fire rescues discussed by Musser (1991) which influenced Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1903), or the theatrical performances of the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* cited by Janet Staiger (1992) which contextualize Porter's 1903 film *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—could explain some formal differences in early films. Staiger claims that early film narratives were less divergent from classical practices than they may seem—they simply used other means to make themselves comprehensible. However, if audience foreknowledge or other extrafilmic aids did supply narrative coherence, the means of achieving it remained different from classical cinema, which supplies the necessary narrative information within the film itself. Early films seem less aberrant and irrational when foreknowledge or other aids are factored in, but their difference from later practice also becomes highlighted.

The investigation of early cinema must consider the broader cultural context in which films were made, exhibited, and understood. The importance of vaudeville for early cinema, both as an exhibition outlet and as a model, had received renewed attention. But what about the nickelodeon, the theatre of the masses, which traditional histories saw as defining the early American cinematic experience? How did the nickelodeon appear, who was its audience, and how did it relate to changes in early films? The nickelodeon era (which began in 1905, became widespread in 1906, and was ending by 1912) began with the rise of story films, while the end of that era saw the first development of classical traits such as characterization and narrative closure. Did the nickelodeon encourage the growth of story films, or, as Musser (1991) claims, were they a pre-condition for it?

The nickelodeon remains an area of controversy. Musser has pointed out that, even before the nickelodeon, a range of contexts existed in which films were shown, including not only the middle-class vaudeville palaces, but also fairground exhibitors, travelling tent shows, sponsored entertainments in local opera-houses or other public halls, educational exhibitions in schools and even churches (Musser, 1990). As Robert C. Allen (1980) found, vaudeville possessed a range of levels, moving from palaces to purveyors of 'cheap vaudeville', which also offered motion pictures at a price considerably below that of high-class vaudeville. While the audiences for motion pictures when they premièred as the latest novelties were undoubtedly middle class, patrons of all classes had seen films before 1905. But the nickelodeon, with its low admission price of 5 cents, specifically targeted new entertainment seekers, the working class, whose gains in the early twentieth century of a bit more leisure time and disposable income provided an opportunity for small-time entertainment entrepreneurs. But were the working class the main patrons of the nickelodeon?

Doubt was cast on this traditional thesis by a number of scholars. Russell Merritt (1976), Douglas Gomery (1982), and Robert C. Allen (1983) investigated Boston and New York City and decided that the location of nickelodeons in those cities actually avoided working-class neighbourhoods in favour of more central commercial districts, areas frequented by middle-class shoppers as well as working-class patrons. The patrons of these cheap theatres might well have been more frequently middle class than traditonal histories had assumed. Further, as Merritt in particular emphasized, the nickelodeon operators wooed middle-class patrons, seeming uncomfortable with their identity as 'democracy's theatre', and anxious for middle-class respectability. But scholars have also rushed to revise these revisionists. Robert Sklar objected to Allen's and Merritt's thesis, maintaining the importance of working-class culture to the development of the nickelodeon and to our understanding of the role of film in working-class experience (Sklar 1990). Recently Ben Singer (1995*b*) has returned to the site of Allen's research, New York City, and found that nickelodeons were more prevalent in working-class neighbourhoods than Allen had indicated. Clearly this is an area of continuing debate, as recent exchanges between Allen and Singer indicate (Allen 1996; Singer 1996).

At issue, however, is more than the accurate description of the class make-up of New York neighbourhoods or the number of film theatres. The effect of class



The theatre of the masses—the nickelodeon

antagonism and class definition on early American cinema remains a vital issue. The work of social historian Roy Rosenzweig showed that the relation between film theatres and working-class culture cannot simply be dismissed as a sentimental myth of traditional historians. It is not necessary to attribute early American cinema to the domain of a single class. Rather, the most valuable approach sees cinema as one of the areas in which turn-of-the-century America defined class relations, culture, and dominance. Preliminary work by J. A. Lindstrom (1996) on nickelodeons in Chicago has centred less on attributing theatres to specific classes than on the way film theatres inspired new systems of zoning and regulation, as leisure time and entertainment became an aspect of municipal control and class struggle.

The history of film exhibition has become one of the liveliest areas of film scholarship. It occupies important sections of the carefully researched and conceived volumes in the History of American Cinema series [illegible]

Musser (1990) and Eileen Bowser (1990) and is exemplified by the fine work of Douglas Gomery (1992), showing early cinema's vanguard position in framing and pursuing innovative questions in film history. Gregory Waller's (1995) work on exhibition in a smaller city, Lexington, Kentucky, demonstrated the value in investigating exhibition contexts beyond the metropolis. His work also investigates African-American exhibition and audience patterns, an area all too often ignored in favour of immigrant populations. Waller places early cinema within pre-existing patterns of entertainment, including not only vaudeville, but the multi-purpose opera-house, the amusement park, and local fairs. Robert Allen (1996) has theorized that such viewing locations in small-town and rural America were different from the urban nickelodeon in tems of class and surroundings.

The most broadly conceived attempt to theorize the social basis of the nickelodeon came in Miriam Hansen's (1991a) conception of the nickelodeon as a working-class public sphere. The concept of the public sphere was introduced by Jurgen Habermas's (1991) consideration of the rise of bourgeois democracy, in which certain contexts of public discussion—coffee-houses, newspapers, literary discussion groups—formed an ideal of equitable exchange and reasonable debate. The public sphere provided Hansen with a historical model of the manner in which institutions and discourse created new forms of subjectivity quite different from the ahistorical model of subject formation offered by apparatus theory. However, for Habermas, the classical public sphere was almost immediately compromised by the rise of capitalism, which undermined the claim of a realm of free discussion divorced from economic power. Further, for Habermas, the modern commercialized technological forms of media have seriously undermined the classical terms of debate and participation through techniques of manipulation and opinion management.

Hansen draws on critical reformulations of Habermas's concept. Emphasizing that the classical public sphere had always excluded certain groups (obviously the working class, but also women), critics such as Negt and Kluge (1993) developed the idea of oppositional or proletarian public spheres. The key issue here is less public discussion or overt political action than what Hansen describes as the 'experience' of the participants, 'that which mediates individual perception with social meaning, conscious with unconscious processes, loss of self with self reflexivity' (Hansen 1991a: 12). Negt and Kluge claim the collective viewing of films, the way they could speak to viewers' experience, opened the possibility of cinema as an oppositional public sphere.

For Hansen this possibility became a historical tool for approaching not only the stylistic alterity of early films (as in her analysis of Porter's 1907 film *The 'Teddy' Bears*), but also its specific modes of exhibition and relation to its audience. Hansen theorized that early cinema may have provided 'an alternative horizon of experience' for groups excluded from the classical public sphere, such as working-class and immigrant audiences and women. Following the research of social historian Kathy Peiss (1986), Hansen showed that the nickelodeon moved away from a homosocial, gender-specific world of male entertainment which excluded women, to a heterosocial world of commercial entertainment where women not only attended, but frequently made up the majority.

The importance of cinema as a new public sphere for women has become a key issue in early cinema research, with such scholars as Lauren Rabinovitz (1990), Janet Staiger (1995), Judith Mayne (1990), Constance Balides (1993), and Shelley Stamp Lindsey (1996) exploring the role of female spectators and at points testing the feminist understanding of apparatus theory which saw the cinema as embodying a male gaze. While the patriarchal and even sexist content of early cinema is unquestionable (see such films as Thomas Edison's 1901 *Trapeze Disrobing Act*, or Porter's 1903 film *The Gay Shoe Clerk*), women patrons attending this new medium could transform these male-oriented films in unexpected ways, as in Hansen's famous example of the women who flocked to early boxing films, breaching a former male bastion.

For Hansen, early cinema's difference from classical cinema reflects its role as an oppositional public sphere, allowing viewer relationships that would become suppressed in the classical paradigm. The diversity of display evident in the cinema of attractions did not entice viewers to lose their sense of being present in a public space. The direct address of the cinema of attractions encouraged a recognition of the viewer as part of an audience, rather than as an atomized consumer absorbed into the coherent fictional world of the classical paradigm. The lack of devices channelling spectator attention into following a narrative meant that the cinema of attractions allowed its viewer more imaginative freedom. Further, the less controlled modes of nickelodeon exhibition, with live

music, occasional use of a lecturer, egalitarian seating, variety format, and continuous admission, gave it 'a margin of participation and unpredictability' (Hansen 1991: 43) lacking in classical cinema. The alternative public sphere of the nickelodeon gave way to the domesticating of audience behaviour within the elaborate picture palaces which became the premier show-place for films in the middle to late 1910s. This change in exhibition, along with the adoption of the classical paradigm in the feature film, eliminated most elements of earlier film culture in favour of a universal address to a film spectator unspecific in class or gender.

For Hansen, early cinema's difference from classical cinema reflects its role as an oppositional public sphere, allowing viewer relationships that would become suppressed in the classical paradigm. The diversity of display evident in the cinema of attractions did not entice viewers to lose their sense of being present in a public space. The direct address of the cinema of attractions encouraged a recognition of the viewer as part of an audience, rather than as an atomized consumer absorbed into the coherent fictional world of the classical paradigm. The lack of devices channelling spectator attention into following a narrative meant that the cinema of attractions allowed its viewer more imaginative freedom.

Periodization and transitional stages

However they might differ in dividing them up, scholars of early cinema agree that in a relatively short amount of time (two decades or so) so much change occurs that several distinct periods exist. This stands in stark contrast to the classical Hollywood cinema, which for Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (1985) remained stable for more than four decades. The period of early cinema stretches from the origins of motion pictures in the late nineteenth century to around 1916. The year given by Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson for the consolidation of the classical Hollywood cinema is 1917, so this end-date marks early cinema as pre-classical. Around 1913 to 1915 the American film industry moved definitively to the production of longer feature films (from one to several hours) as the new basis of the industry, exiling one- or two-reel films to marginal theatres, or to 'added attractions' in a feature programme. The middle 1910s witnessed new institutions (feature films, the star system, the picture palace, new studios, and systems of distribution) essential to the classical Hollywood cinema.

Exhibition, production, and distribution underwent a series of reorganizations in the two decades of 'early cinema'. Originally films and projection machines were produced by the same company, and these were offered to vaudeville theatres as a complete package. By the turn of the century, both films and machines were sold publicly, and entrepreneurs acquired them and became exhibitors, marking the first differentiation within the industry. Around 1905 the next essential differentiation occurred as exchanges appeared: middlemen who purchased films from production companies and rented them to exhibitors. This increased the availability of films to an exhibitor and led to the nickelodeon explosion. The multiplication of cheap theatres showing new films on a daily basis created a demand for films the American producers could not initially fulfil, and the French company Pathé took up much of the slack. Around 1909 American producers attempted to seize control of the industry again, and submit the exchanges and exhibitors to a series of regulations. The organ for this was the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), in which Edison and Biograph tried to exert control through their ownership of patents. Opposition to the MPPC arose with 'independent' producers, but even they soon adopted its methods of control over distribution through regulation of release dates and price schedules. By 1913 the power of the MPPC had waned, as well as the popularity of the one-reel film, replaced by longer feature films and the rise of new 'independent' companies, such as Universal, Famous Players in Famous Plays, and Mutual. Exhibition became dominated by large urban picture palaces, some of which were already owned by production studios, paving the way for the later vertical integration of the industry. While changes in film style

cannot be neatly tied to all these changes, the volatile nature of the industry explains why there is probably more transformation in the way films were made and conceived (both by producers and audiences) in this period than in the rest of film history.

Changes in film style can be divided into periods partly in terms of the opposition between the cinema of attractions and narrative form. Like all binary oppositions, the contrast between attractions and narrative can lead to unfortunate simplification. These aspects should never be seen as mutually exclusive, but need to be dialectically interrelated. While there are films (particularly in the first decade of cinema) which function purely as attractions with no narrative structure, many early films (especially after 1902) show an interaction between the two aspects. I claim that the cinema of attraction works as a 'dominant' up to about 1905, employing forms of direct address, punctual temporality, and surprise rather than narrative development.

The concept of the dominant comes from the literary analysis of the Russian Formalists and has been applied to film by Kristin Thompson (1988). It recognizes that, though various elements might coexist in a work, one element may organize the others. In the classical style, narrative structures act as the dominant, so that, even though attractions persist (such as special effects, the physical attraction of stars, spectacular sets, or musical numbers), they are subordinated to a narrative structure. Likewise, although certain fairy films of Méliès or Pathé, such as *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) or *The Red Spectre* (1907) have stories, they basically serve as show-cases for the dominant attractions of camera tricks, costumes, elaborate sets, and stencil colouring. Certain early films, particularly from the years around 1903 to 1907 (such as Pathé's *A Policeman's Tour of the World* from 1906), appear as almost equal contests between the claims of attractions and narrative, veering from one logic to the other. One basic arc of stylistic transformation traces the increasing dominance of narrative structures, leading to structures that are clear harbingers of later classical forms. From 1906 more films were made with narrative structures as their dominant. By 1908 films became increasing narrativized and were provided with volitional characters. However, 'narrative' is an expansive term, including many styles of storytelling. The difference that early films show when compared to films of the classical style should not be reduced simply to a contrast between narrative and non-narrative forms. Even the narrative films of this early period tell stories differently from the classical paradigm.

The non-classical narrative forms of early cinema make up a series of genres. Closest to the form of attractions are fragment narratives. This minimally narrative genre consisted of a single fragment or series of fragments, often famous moments from a play or famous events, to be completed by the viewer's understanding of previous (non-film) versions. Biograph's 1903 production of the famous temperance play *Ten Nights in a Barroom* consisted simply of five key scenes (or rather moments from the well-known play: *Death of Little Mary*; *Death of Slade*; *The Fatal Blow*; *Murder of Willie*; and *Vision of Mary*)—to someone unfamiliar with the play these brief films would be incomprehensible. Such fragments could be more or less incomplete. The versions of the Passion play produced both in the United States and France showed the range of possibilities, from early discontinuous and highly fragmented films to later, nearly narratively coherent, versions. In their lack of temporal development the fragment narratives are close to attractions.

Perhaps the earliest complete narrative form was the gag, the brief visual joke, often centred around physical pranks, which had a minimum essential narrative development: a set-up for the gag and a pay-off as the gag (usually some minor disaster) takes place, creating the fundamental narrative roles of prankster and victim. Early American companies produced scores of such films, and a few titles from American Mutoscope and Biograph in 1903 give some sense of their flavour: *How Buttons Got Even with the Butler*; *Pulling off the Bed Clothes*; *You will Send me to Bed, Eh?* Their disaster structure gives them a brief and punctual temporality—like an exploding cigar—as well as an often highly visual pay-off which makes them resemble attractions. In the period of multi-shot films, Edison

Perhaps the earliest complete narrative form was the gag, the brief visual joke, often centred around physical pranks, which had a minimum essential narrative development: a set-up for the gag and a pay-off as the gag (usually some minor disaster) takes place, creating the fundamental narrative roles of prankster and victim.

music, occasional use of a lecturer, egalitarian seating, variety format, and continuous admission, gave it 'a margin of participation and unpredictability' (Hansen 1991: 43) lacking in classical cinema. The alternative public sphere of the nickelodeon gave way to the domesticating of audience behaviour within the elaborate picture palaces which became the premier show-place for films in the middle to late 1910s. This change in exhibition, along with the adoption of the classical paradigm in the feature film, eliminated most elements of earlier film culture in favour of a universal address to a film spectator unspecific in class or gender.

For Hansen, early cinema's difference from classical cinema reflects its role as an oppositional public sphere, allowing viewer relationships that would become suppressed in the classical paradigm. The diversity of display evident in the cinema of attractions did not entice viewers to lose their sense of being present in a public space. The direct address of the cinema of attractions encouraged a recognition of the viewer as part of an audience, rather than as an atomized consumer absorbed into the coherent fictional world of the classical paradigm. The lack of devices channelling spectator attention into following a narrative meant that the cinema of attractions allowed its viewer more imaginative freedom.

Periodization and transitional stages

However they might differ in dividing them up, scholars of early cinema agree that in a relatively short amount of time (two decades or so) so much change occurs that several distinct periods exist. This stands in stark contrast to the classical Hollywood cinema, which for Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson (1985) remained stable for more than four decades. The period of early cinema stretches from the origins of motion pictures in the late nineteenth century to around 1916. The year given by Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson for the consolidation of the classical Hollywood cinema is 1917, so this end-date marks early cinema as pre-classical. Around 1913 to 1915 the American film industry moved definitively to the production of longer feature films (from one to several hours) as the new basis of the industry, exiling one- or two-reel films to marginal theatres, or to 'added attractions' in a feature programme. The middle 1910s witnessed new institutions (feature films, the star system, the picture palace, new studios, and systems of distribution) essential to the classical Hollywood cinema.

Exhibition, production, and distribution underwent a series of reorganizations in the two decades of 'early cinema'. Originally films and projection machines were produced by the same company, and these were offered to vaudeville theatres as a complete package. By the turn of the century, both films and machines were sold publicly, and entrepreneurs acquired them and became exhibitors, marking the first differentiation within the industry. Around 1905 the next essential differentiation occurred as exchanges appeared: middlemen who purchased films from production companies and rented them to exhibitors. This increased the availability of films to an exhibitor and led to the nickelodeon explosion. The multiplication of cheap theatres showing new films on a daily basis created a demand for films the American producers could not initially fulfil, and the French company Pathé took up much of the slack. Around 1909 American producers attempted to seize control of the industry again, and submit the exchanges and exhibitors to a series of regulations. The organ for this was the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), in which Edison and Biograph tried to exert control through their ownership of patents. Opposition to the MPPC arose with 'independent' producers, but even they soon adopted its methods of control over distribution through regulation of release dates and price schedules. By 1913 the power of the MPPC had waned, as well as the popularity of the one-reel film, replaced by longer feature films and the rise of new 'independent' companies, such as Universal, Famous Players in Famous Plays, and Mutual. Exhibition became dominated by large urban picture palaces, some of which were already owned by production studios, paving the way for the later vertical integration of the industry. While changes in film style

and Biograph reworked such gags into longer films, as a bad boy or other trickster carried out a series of practical jokes (*The Truants*, Biograph, 1907; *The Terrible Kids*, Edison, 1906). This form of concatenation led to another simple narrative form, which I have called 'linked vignettes', consisting of a series of brief gags linked by a common character (Gunning 1994*b*).

As Burch and others have pointed out, the first extended self-contained narrative form in film was the chase. Burch (1990) saw the linearity of the chase as an anticipation of later classical narratives. In its earliest examples (*The Escaped Lunatic*, 1903; *Personal*, 1904, both Biograph) the chase created a continuous fictional space, rendered coherent by its methodical following of a single physical action. While chases often included attractions (such as dogs leaping fences and swimming streams, or ladies revealing legs as they slid down a hill), a single-minded focus on a pursuit through several shots created a new narrative dominance. However, unlike later classical films, the chase remained dependent entirely on physical action for its narrative structure. Figures running through various locales created the continuous geography of the film. The initiation of a pursuit provided the inciting incident of the film and capture marked its completion. This picks out a decidedly non-classical aspect of early film narrative, its lack of characterization or motivation behind action.

Around 1906 a number of films attempted stories with a greater degree of character and less physical action (such as Edison's *The Miller's Daughter*, 1905, or *Fireside Reminiscences*, 1908). Contemporary comments leave no doubt that many character-based films of this era were obscure to their contemporaneous audiences. Basic codes for conveying thoughts and emotions had not yet been devised by filmmakers, nor were they understood by audiences. Perhaps the greatest transformation of early film style came with the adoption of new narrative codes which conveyed character motives and organized storytelling devices. To some extent, this shift in narrative style parallels the attempts to regulate and rationalize the film industry which culminated in the formation of the MPPC in 1908 (Gunning 1991*a*). This large-scale transformation of American filmmaking has frequently been referred to as the 'transitional' period, marking its mediation between the radically different earlier cinema and the establishment of the classical paradigm. Narrative in the transitional period obeyed new rules: interior coherence (lack of reliance on audience foreknowledge or other extra-filmic aids); a strong narrative closure; and, especially, an emphasis on characterization, frequently building stories around changes in character or key decisions whose motivations are indicated within the film. Many of the Griffith one-reel dramas produced for the Biograph company display these qualities (such as *The Drunkard's Reformation*, 1909), as do the films produced by the Vitagraph Company (such as *An Official Appointment*, 1912, so well analysed by Ben Brewster (1991*a*)). This form differs sharply from the earlier forms based primarily in physical action, although many films united the two forms (including Griffith's Biograph melodramas, such as *The Lonedale Operator*, 1911).

However, this transitional period remained volatile and ambivalent, as the term suggests. While new narrative structures were evident in many films (particularly dramas from the Vitagraph, Biograph, and Edison studios), and were praised by trade journals devoted to the film industry (which began to appear around this time), variation occurs. Research by both Ben Singer (1993) and Charles Keil (1995) has stressed that the most advanced films by Griffith are not typical of the period. Films even as late as 1913 sometimes show uncertainty in conveying character psychology or even a coherent plot. Singer (1993) cites an episode from the Thanhouser Company's 1913 serial *Zudora* as an example of pure incoherence.

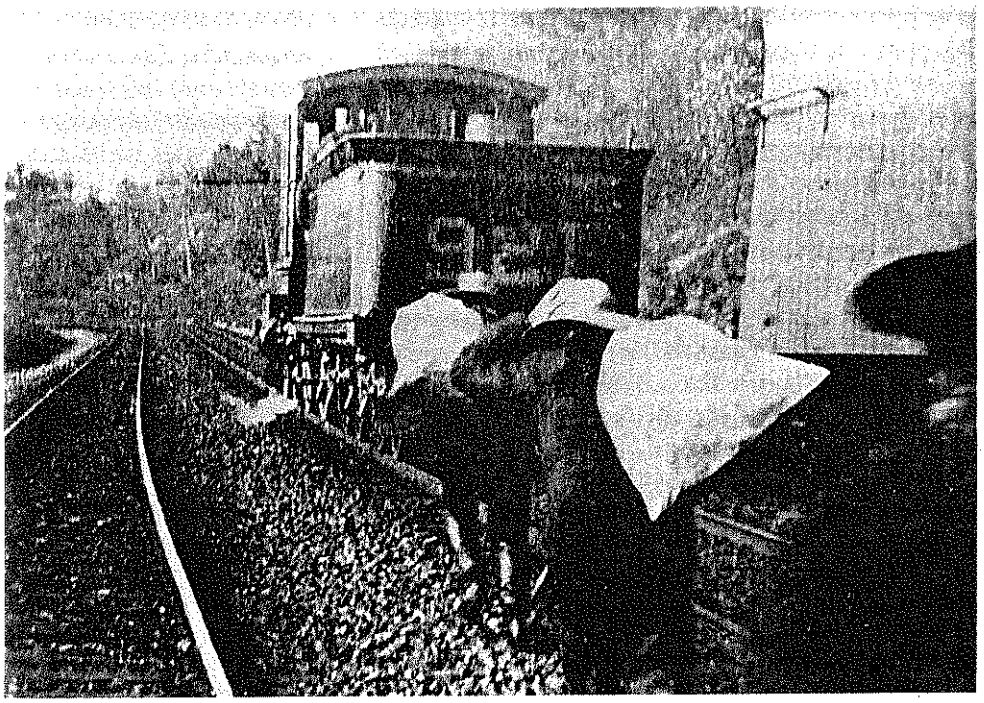
While actual achievements varied from studio to studio (or film to film), organizing films around clear stories and motivated, volitional characters was, nonetheless, an acknowledged value in this period. Of course, action genres like westerns and other sensational films still showed the importance of non-narrative attractions, but these were largely absorbed into character-driven plots. At the same time, while the narrative integration of the transitional period certainly looks forward to the later classical style, it maintained a unique style. Ben Brewster (1991*b*) and Charles Keil (1995) have stressed that the one-reel film standard of this period demanded narrative compression and encouraged patterns of recurrence. While these aspects are not contradictory to the classical style, they seem more endemic to short films than to features. Brewster (1991*b*) has pointed out that early features, such as the scandalous *Traffic in Souls* from 1913, often reflected the patterns of individual reels in their structure (partly due to the fact that many theatres owned only one projector, necessitating a pause between reels). Indeed, one of the earliest long film

serials, the serial (appearing around 1912–13 with Edison's *What Happened to Mary*), literally spun out narrative reel by reel, as single-reel instalments were presented every week. The serial, with its strong emphasis on thrilling attractions, its often rather incoherent plotting, and its compromise between the single reel and the feature structure, may, as Singer (1993) claims, stand as an emblem of the often contradictory impulses of the transitional period.

If the transitional period corresponds to an attempt to bring order and regularity to film production and distribution (often through legally dubious practices, as the US courts decided when they ruled against the MPPC in an antitrust action in 1914), how does this new narratively integrated film structure relate to changes in exhibition and audience? A number of scholars, myself included (Gunning 1990), see the cinema of narrative integration as an element in a concerted attempt to attract a middle-class audience and gain respectability for the cinema. Production companies adapted literary classics, while filmmakers devised cinematic codes to tell stories of the type familiar from middle-class forms like the short-story magazine, apparently with such audiences in view.

However, this view of the bourgeoisification of cinema during the transitional period can be exaggerated, particularly if one relies on trade journals, whose desire for the imprimatur of respectability led them to exaggerate the number of middle-class patrons attending movies or the comfort and order of theatres. Careful reading of trade journals and industry publicity reveals a strong desire to retain working-class patrons, while the emphasis on signs of middle-class approval partly served to allay the attacks of reformers suspicious of the new form, rather than indicated real conditions. The only existing survey of film audiences indicates that in New York City the working class still made up nearly three-quarters of the audience in 1910, while a category called 'clerical', referring most likely to office workers (i.e. a newly emerging lower middle class), constituted most of the other quarter (Davis 1911; Singer 1996). However, small-town audiences may have had a different composition, as Allen (1996) stresses.

William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson's (1993) investigation of Vitagraph's 'quality films'—adaptations from Dante or Shakespeare (*Francesca di Rimini*, *Julius Caesar*, both 1908), or films on cultural figures such as Napoleon or Moses (*Napoleon, the Man of Destiny*, 1909; *The Life of Moses*, 1910)—found that while such films aimed at attracting an audience who might scorn typical nickelodeon fare, they were also carefully designed to be accessible to the working-class audience most exhibitors relied upon. This 'dual address' seems typical of this period and should alert us to the dangers of seeing the bourgeoisification of the cinema



A model for future westerns—*The Great Train Robbery* (1903)

at the end of early cinema as an established fact without complexity or resistance. The transitional period appears to be less a gradual fade into the classical paradigm than a period of ambivalence and contestation.

Early cinema and modernity

The study of early cinema has consistently expanded its area of investigation. Research into the exhibition of early films extended into a consideration of audiences and the role the nickelodeon played in American society. Uricchio and Pearson (1993) found that determining what audience producers aimed for, or how widely films were comprehensible to different classes, called for an investigation of the intertextual framework in which images of Napoleon or scenes from Shakespeare circulated outside cinema, from school textbooks to advertising cards.

Perhaps the most far-reaching (and possibly most controversial) extension of the study of early cinema relates techniques of early film, particularly the cinema of attractions, to large-scale transformations of daily experience in the era of urbanization and modernization. This approach draws inspiration from Walter Benjamin (1969) and Siegfried Kracauer (1995) as well as Miriam Hansen's (1987, 1991*b*, 1993, 1995) discussion of these authors' writings on the cinema. Benjamin, writing in the 1930s, related the shock of the rapidly changing experience of the urban environment and new technology to cinematic techniques, such as rapid montage, slow or fast motion, and huge close-ups. Kracauer, writing in the later 1920s, found that the visual stimulus of the picture palace captured the mechanization and surface character of the modern life as the pursuit of distraction. In my writings (Gunning 1994*a*, *c*, 1995*b*), I have claimed that Benjamin's and Kracauer's analyses could be used to describe the cinema of attractions with its aggressive viewer-confronting address and discontinuous structures.

Early films dealing with the railroad provide a powerful intersection of the aggressive address of the cinema of attractions and the technological transformations of modern life. The many early films taken from trains of the passing landscape (e.g. Biograph's *Into the Heart of the Catskills*, 1906) and the Hales Tours exhibition of films in theatres designed to imitate railroad cars (including sound effects and ticket takers) reveal early cinema's affinity with the railroad. Lynne Kirby's (1996) work on this subject, as well as works by Mary Ann Doane (1985) and myself (Gunning 1994*a*, 1995*a*) drew on the work of a contemporary Benjaminian, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, whose book *The Railway Journey* (1977) claimed that the experience of railway travel, with its speed and potential danger, was emblematic of modern perception. In films shot from moving trains Kirby found a fascination with what Schivelbusch calls 'panoramic perception', a view of the world in motion through a window or other framing device. The shocklike structure of the abrupt transitions and often aggressive imagery of the cinema of attractions also reflected for Kirby the sense of hysteria which the fear of the railway accident brought to modern consciousness. Eileen Bowser (1995), Yuri Tsivian (1994), and Gunning (1991*b*) have made a similar case for the telephone in early cinema, knitting together distant spaces and creating new dramatic situations.

Following Walter Benjamin's example, writers on early cinema have isolated a number of emblematic instances of modernity besides the railway and the telephone: the World Expositions, the department store, the city streets, the diorama and panorama, urban billboards. Anne Friedberg (1993) has related a number of these to the 'mobilized virtual gaze', the heightened involvement of a viewer in a visual illusion combined with motion which she sees as essential not only to the pre-history of cinema (in devices like the diorama and panorama), but also to the subjectivity of modernity. My writings (Gunning 1994*a*, *b*) have emphasized that such relations are embedded in the way early films embraced modern technology or new environments (such as the World Expositions or the amusement park) as subjects for films (Porter's *Coney Island at Night*, 1905; Biograph's *Panorama St Louis Exposition*, 1904). Ben Singer (1995*b*) has detailed how the most aggressive aspects of the cinema of attractions reflected both the experience of urban life with its threats and danger, and its portrayal in the sensationalist press. Lauren Rabinovitz's (1990) research on Chicago amusement parks sees these mechanized forms of amusement as another example of accelerated modern experience with a strong relation to early cinema, focusing as well on the way amusement parks shed light on female subjectivity, an issue central to many investigations of modernity, including the work of Hansen (1991*a*), Friedberg (1993), Bruno (1993), and Singer's (1995*a*) work on the serial queen, the powerful woman protagonist of the films of the

serial genre, such as Pathé's *The Perils of Pauline*, from 1914.

Feminist theory has provided a key motive for these investigations on multiple levels, not only as part of the vitally important project of bringing to light the neglected and often suppressed role of women in American history. One could claim that feminist film theory in the late 1970s both adopted the subjectivity of the apparatus theory of cinema and supplied its most radical critique. Laura Mulvey (1975) pointed out that the apparatus as constructed within this theory and as exemplified by classical Hollywood cinema embodied a male gaze. If this were so, not only did it marginalize and problematize female subjectivity, but it also traced a basic fissure in the theory's universal claims if one had to conceive the subject, not as a platonic entity, but as a gendered being. This introduction of gender difference opened the flood gates for a reconceptualization of the film spectator open to history and the play of gender and ethnic difference. While an attempt to reconcile this historical and cultural investigation of spectatorship with the assumptions of apparatus theory may encounter contradictions in method, the historical investigation of early cinema and modernity has sketched a model of a more fluid concept of subjectivity, along the lines of Hansen's (1991*a*) treatment of the public sphere of early cinema as providing a ground for processing new experiences.

Art historian Jonathan Crary provides one of the most far-reaching theories of the relation between modernity and historical subjectivities. Crary (1990) investigates psychological theories and accounts of the physiology of perception of the nineteenth century (such as those of Helmholtz and Fechner), claiming that these new models of perception switched focus from the accurate reflection of exterior phenomena to the physiology of the senses. This view found support in the perceptional illusions that optical devices, such as the phenakistiscope and the stereoscope (which are often seen as precursors to the cinema), make visible, but which do not actually exist other than in the observer's sensorium. Crary claims that the breakdown of representation in painting associated with modernism has its roots in this earlier technological and philosophical modernization of vision. Closer to Foucault than to apparatus theory, Crary sees subject formation as a historical process inscribed in techniques and institutions specific to different periods. He locates a major shift in the conception of visuality in the modern period. Although Crary discusses early cinema only in passing, his insights provide a basis for the historicization of perception and visual experience.

While an attempt to reconcile this historical and cultural investigation of spectatorship with the assumptions of apparatus theory may encounter contradictions in method, the historical investigation of early cinema and modernity has sketched a model of a more fluid concept of subjectivity, along the lines of Hansen's treatment of the public sphere of early cinema as providing a ground for processing new experiences.

What has been termed the 'modernity thesis' has recently been subjected to serious criticism, particularly by David Bordwell (1996*a*, *b*). As a cognitivist, Bordwell finds a 'history' of vision, perception, or experience a dubious concept, vague at best and absurd at its most extreme. 'It is highly unlikely that visual perception has changed over recorded human history,' he claims (1996: 23). Bordwell finds that the ultimate failure of the modernity thesis lies in its dubious attempt to tie stylistic aspects of early cinema to modern experience. Developing an objection also raised by Charles Keil (1995), Bordwell asks how one can relate the fragmentary, aggressive form of the cinema of attractions to abrasive modern experience in the street or to new modes of transportation, since these aspects of modernity continued, or even increased during the transitional period, which subordinated the more aggressive aspects of attractions to the coherence of narrative integration.

In many respects such criticism is well taken, but it may reflect irreconcilable positions about the nature of history and experience. Bordwell is aware that no theorist of modernity could responsibly claim a transformation in the perceptual hard wiring of human beings, so some of his objections seem to be based on a disingenuous *reductio ad absurdum*. However, there is no question that terms such as 'experience' or even the use of the word 'perception' remain in need of greater precision and discussion. Crary (1990: 6) states: 'Whether perception or vision actually change is ir-

relevant, for they have no autonomous history. What changes are the plural forces and rules composing the field in which perception occurs.' Thus what needs to be made more precise are the social mediations of experience, observable not only in works of art, but in the scientific and political discourse of the period.

Bordwell's contention that the experience of modernity remains irrelevant to the history of film style is more complex. There is no question that the relations drawn between the structures of modernity and those of early film frequently lack specificity and remain on the level of vague analogies. However, in tying the pace and abruptness of early films to modern experience, contemporary critics are not so much inventing an analogy as rediscovering one. Such connections were frequently made by the first commentators on the cinema, who recognized in the new media an experience related to modern city life. As a fact of discourse this is an important element of the history of film reception, one worth careful research and consideration. Bordwell's and Keil's claim that the modernity thesis cannot explain stylistic change is probably correct, but seems to defeat a claim that no scholar of early cinema ever made. The relations between modernity and early film need not be limited to the cinema of attractions. The thrill melodramas of the transitional period, such as Griffith's last-minute rescues in such films as *The Lonely Villa*, 1909, and *The Lonedale Operator*, 1911 (with their use of modern technology such as the telephone, the railway, and the telegraph to convey a new sense of urgency and danger), are prime examples of early film's relation to modernity. Reference to the broader contexts of modernity cannot, and does not desire to, explain everything. Changes in film style derive from many immanent causes: changes in technology, industry realignment, cycles of innovation and canonization, as well as transformations in film's relation to society—relations, I should add, that are fully mediated and traceable in contemporary discourse, and not a matter of a mystical reflection of a *Zeitgeist*.

Topics for further research

While the history of early cinema in the last two decades has seen a sudden growth that almost recalls the nickelodeon explosion, with many more scholars making important contributions than can be included in this summary, there are still many issues to explore. Many of these, such as the relation between social class and the nickelodeon, or the validity of the relation of early cinema to modernity, have already been discussed. I want briefly to add some others. Since this chapter treats early *American* cinema, I have not dealt with scholarship on early cinema in other countries. While the United States has served as a key area of investigation, it is hard to conceive of early cinema history without the work done on early French cinema by a large number of scholars in France as well as the United States, and increasingly in Italy, Germany, Britain, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, as well as work on film production and exhibition outside Europe and the United States. The period of early cinema marks a time when films circulated freely across borders and in which the concept of a national cinema was largely unarticulated. Richard Abel's recent research (1995*b*) on the effect of the French production company Pathé on American cinema shows that to examine even American cinema within a narrowly national context leads to distortion. Since Pathé films were the most widely shown and most successful films exhibited in the United States at the beginning of the transitional period (1906–9), Abel's claim that they had a definitive effect on the development of American film seems unquestionable. Pathé's early experiments in parallel editing certainly influenced Griffith's development of this technique at Biograph, as the comparison of Pathé's *Physician of the Castle* (1908) and Griffith's *The Lonely Villa* (1909) undertaken by both myself (Gunning 1991*b*) and Barry Salt (1985) demonstrates. In the transitional period the American film industry tried to define and produce an 'American film' in opposition to Europe, a goal that matched the MPPC's attempt to marginalize European producers. The construction of national cinema cultures began in early cinema and calls for more research.

An area of relative neglect in the study of the early cinema is non-fiction filmmaking. While this has gained more attention from European scholars such as Stephen Bottomore (1988) and the archivists at the Nederlands Filmmuseum (Hertogs and De Klerck 1994), it remains in need of more research and theorization from a US perspective. Until about 1905 the bulk of American production was non-fiction films, but these have not received the investigation that reflects their importance in this period.

The transitional period needs more research. Because of its limited focus my work on Griffith at Biograph during this period, while setting up issues of broad concern, cannot serve as an account of the

period in the US generally. Charles Keil's (1995) broader-based survey of the transitional period should answer a number of questions about the techniques of narrative integration. Even more neglected is the end of the transitional period, the era of early features. Perhaps the most important work being produced about this era comes from Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs's (1997) thorough discussion of early cinema's relation to theatrical practice. Although not restricted to the United States, this work traces the often surprising degree to which theatrical practice (including performance style, lighting techniques, and sensation scenes) inspired early feature films, while also undergoing strong transformations. Rather than repeating the simple account promulgated by Nicholas Vardac (1949), of cinema taking up the visual tradition of nineteenth-century theatre, Brewster and Jacobs tell a much more nuanced and detailed story of cross-media influence. The date that Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson selected for the beginning of the classical Hollywood cinema—1917—still seems a reasonable one for the period in which most American films show a mastery of the basic codes and conventions of fiction filmmaking. However, the selection of this date, several years after feature films had become the basic product of the American film industry, acknowledges that the early feature period itself saw a gradual spread of the codes of classical narration as well as competing alternatives. Further research on early features will undoubtedly find a number of stylistic approaches in terms of reliance on editing versus deep staging and the relative importance of intra-scene editing versus parallel editing. But by the end of the teens a basic narrative vocabulary is in place meriting Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson's term 'classical Hollywood cinema'.

Early cinema remains an area which grapples with crucial issues of film study. Besides providing a clearer picture of the earliest era of our medium through new research and historical models, the investigation of early cinema continues to explore and redefine encounters between spectator and screen, audience and film, cinema and social context. From the energy generated by such debates, early cinema has demonstrated that film studies still engages vital issues, and that cinema stands at the core of our understanding of the modern world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abel, Richard (ed.) (1995*a*), *Silent Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

—— (1995*b*), 'The Perils of Pathé; or, The Americanization of the American Cinema', in Charney and Schwartz (1995).

Allen, Robert C. (1980), *Vaudeville and Film 1895–1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press).

—— (1983), 'Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan 1906–1912: Beyond the Nickelodeon', in Fell (1993).

—— (1996), 'Manhattan Myopia; or, Oh! Iowa!', *Cinema Journal*, 35/3: 75–103.

Balides, Constance (1993), 'Scenarios of Exposure in Everyday Life: Women in the Cinema of Attractions', *Screen*, 34/1: 19–31 (Spring).

Baudry, Jean-Louis (1986), 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', in Rosen, 'Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology' (New York: Columbia University Press).

Benjamin, Walter (1969), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books).

Bordwell, David, (1996*a*), 'La Nouvelle Mission de Feuillade; or, What was Mise en Scène?', *The Velvet Light Trap*, 37: 10–29.

—— (1996*b*), *Visions of Cinema: On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

—— and **Kristin Thompson** (1983), 'Linearity, Materialism and the Study of Early American Cinema', *Wide Angle*, 5/3: 4–15.

—— **Janet Staiger,** and **Kristin Thompson** (1985), *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Bottomore, Stephen (1988), 'Shots in the Dark: The Real Origins of Film Editing', *Sight and Sound*, 57/3 (Summer), 200–4.

Bowser, Eileen (1990), *The Transformation of Cinema: History of the American Cinema, ii: 1907–1915* (New York: Scribner's).

—— (1995), 'The Telephone Thriller; or, The Terrors of Modern Technology', lecture given at the British Film Institute.

Brewster, Ben (1991*a*), 'A Bunch of Violets', paper presented to the Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Washington, June.

—— (1991*b*), '*Traffic in Souls*: An Experiment in Feature Length Narrative Construction', *Cinema Journal*, 31 (Fall).

*—— and **Lea Jacobs** (1997), *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Bruno, Giuliana (1993), *Streetwalking On a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Burch, Noël (1990), *Life to those Shadows* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Charney, Leo, and **Vanessa R. Schwartz** (eds.) (1995), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Cherchi Usai, Paolo (1994), *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema* (London: British Film Institute).

Crary, Jonathan (1990), *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).

Davis, Michael (1911), *The Exploitation of Pleasure: A Study of Commerical Recreations in New York City* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation).

Doane, Mary Ann (1985), 'When the Direction of the Force Acting on the Body is Changed: The Moving Image', *Wide Angle*, 7/2.

***Elsaesser, Thomas** (ed.) (1990), *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* (London: British Film Institute).

Fell, John (ed.) (1993), *Film before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Friedberg, Anne (1993), *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Gaudreault, André (1988) *Du littéraire au filmique: système du récit* (Paris: Meridians Klincksieck).

—— (1990), 'Film, Narrative, Narration: The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers', in Elsaesser (1990).

Gomery, Douglas (1982), 'Movie Audiences, Urban Geography and the History of American Film', *The Velvet Light Trap*, 19: 23–9.

—— (1992), *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press).

***Gunning, Tom** (1990), 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Specator and the Avant-Garde', in Elsaesser (1990).

—— (1991*a*), *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press).

—— (1991*b*), 'Heard over the Phone: *The Lonely Villa* and the De Lorde Tradition of Terrified Communication', *Screen*, 32/2 (Summer), 184–96.

—— (1994*a*), 'The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7/2 (Fall).

—— (1994*b*), 'Crazy Machines in the Garden of Forking Paths: Mischief Gags and the Origins of American Film Comedy', in Kristine Karnick and Henry Jenkins (eds.), *Classical Hollywood Comedy* (London: Routledge).

—— (1994*c*), 'The World as Object Lesson: Cinema Audiences, Visual Culture and the St Louis World's Fair', *Film History* 5/4 (Winter), 422–44.

—— (1995*a*), 'Now you See it, now you Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions', in Richard Abel (ed.), *Silent Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

—— (1995*b*), 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the [In]Credulous Spectator', in Linda Williams (ed.), *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Films* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

Habermas, Jurgen (1962/1991), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press).

Hansen, Miriam (1987), 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology', *New German Critique*, 40 (Winter), 179–224.

*—— (1991*a*), *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press).

—— (1991*b*), 'Decentric Perspectives: Kracauer's Early Writings on Film and Mass Culture', *New German Critique*, 54 (Fall), 47–76.

—— (1993), 'Of Mice and Ducks: Benjamin and Adorno on Disney', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 92/1 (Winter), 27–61.

—— (1995) 'America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity', in Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds.), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Hertogs, Daan, and **Nico De Klerck** (eds.) (1994), *Non-Fiction from the Teens* (Amsterdam: Nederlands Filmmuseum).

Holman, Roger (ed.) (1982), *Cinema 1900–1906: An Analytical Study* (Brussels: FIAF).

***Keil, Charles** (1995), 'American Cinema 1907–1913: The Nature of Transition', dissertation, University of Wisconsin at Madison.

*—— (1996), paper presented to the Society for Cinema Studies Conference, New York City, May.

Kirby, Lynne (1996), *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

Kracauer, Siegfried (1963/1995), *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

Lindsey, Shelley Stamp (1996), *Ladies' Night: Women and Movie Culture in America during the Transitional Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Lindstrom, J. A. (1996), ' "Class Hatred Seeds Sown": Zoning the Debate about Class and Early Film Exhibition in Chicago', paper presented to the Society for Cinema Studies Conference, New York City, May.

Mayne, Judith (1990) *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Woman's Cinema* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press).

Merritt, Russell (1976), 'Nickelodeon Theaters 1905–1914: Building an Audience for the Movies' in Tino Balio (ed.), *The American Film Industry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press).

Mulvey, Laura (1975), 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16/3: 6–27.

Musser, Charles (1990), *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907, History of the American Cinema*, i (New York: Scribner's).

—— (1991), *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

—— and **Carol Nelson** (1991), *High Class Motion Pictures: Lyman Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

—— (1994), 'Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity', *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 7/2 (Fall), 203–32.

Negt, Oskar, and **Alexander Kluge** (1993), *Public Sphere and Experience: Towards an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Peiss, Kathy (1986), *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).

Rabinovitz, Lauren (1990), 'Temptations of Pleasure: Nickelodeons, Amusement Parks and the Sights of Female Pleasure', *Camera Obscura*, 23: 71–90.

Rosenzweig, Roy (1983), *Eight Hours for what we Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Salt, Barry (1985), '*The Physician of the Castle*', *Sight and Sound*, 54/4 (Autumn), 284–5.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang (1977), *The Railway Journey* (New York: Urizen Press).

Singer, Ben (1993), 'Fiction Tie-ins and Narrative Intelligibility 1911–1918', *Film History*, 5/4: 489–504.

—— (1995a), 'Female Power in the Serial Queen Melodrama: The Etiology of an Anomaly', in Richard Abel (ed.), *Silent Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).

—— (1995b), 'Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibition', *Cinema Journal*, 34/3 (Spring), 5–35.

—— (1995c), 'Modernity, Hyperstimulus and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism', in Charney and Schwartz, (1995).

—— (1996), 'New York, just like I Pictured It . . .', *Cinema Journal*, 35/3: 104–28.

Sklar, Robert (1990), 'Oh! Althusser!: Historiography and the Rise of Cinema Studies', in Robert Sklar and Charles Musser (eds.), *Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).

Sopocy, Martin (1978), 'A Narrated Cinema: The Pioneer Story of James A. Williamson', *Cinema Journal*, 18/1 (Fall), 1–28.

Staiger, Janet (1992), *Interpeting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

—— (1995), *Bad Women: Controlling Sexuality in Early American Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Thompson, Kristin (1988), *Breaking the Glass Armour: Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Tsivian, Yuri (1994), 'Speeding the Bullet Message: Images of "Elsewheres" in the Age of Electronic Media', paper presented to the Domitor Conference, New York City, June.

Uricchio, William, and **Roberta Pearson** (1993), *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Vardac, Nicholas (1949), *Stage to Screen: Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

Waller, Gregory A. (1995), *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commerical Entertainment in a Southern City 1896–1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press).