EDITED BY JENNIFER M. BEAN AND DIANE NEGRA

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Toward a Feminist Historiography of Early Cinema

Feminism . . . must resist the impulse to reproduce only what
it thinks it already knows; it must challenge the compulsion
to repeat.—Robyn Wiegman[1]

Historical coherence and grand narratives are now riddled
not only by holes, gaps, and omissions in our historical
knowledge that once we might have tried to cover over or fill
in, but they are also riddled by the questions and investments
of past and present *desire.*—Vivian Sobchack[2]

The early years of the twenty-first century are a critical period for femi-
nist reflection on the cinema of the early twentieth century. The access to
historical materials fostered by the digital age, the increased readiness for
collaboration among the members of the Fédération Internationale des Ar-
chives du Film (FIAF), and the recent escalation in the public sphere of a
qualitatively new interest in silent cinema has made visible the remark-
able number of roles played by early women producers, directors, stars,
and writers in the formation of the young industry. The rush to distrib-
ute videos featuring "First Movie Ladies" has been matched by a spate of
cable-channel documentaries on women and early cinema.[3] The month-
long celebration of "Women Film Pioneers" on Turner Classic Movies in
August 2000 is a notable signpost of this initiative, not only for the bol-
stered visibility of previously obscure early films to the general population,
but also for the prominent position allotted to feminist scholars like Jane
Gaines and Alison McMahan, who were included as introductory and re-
search commentators, on prime-time television.[4] The merger of academic
and public venues also shaped the festival at the American Museum of the
Moving Image in May 2000, which featured the careers of Mabel Normand,
Federica Maas, Nell Shipman, and Helen Gardner, as well as two ground-
breaking international conferences on "Gender and Silent Cinema"—the

first organized by Annette Förster and Eva Warth at Utrecht University in October 1999; the second organized by Amelie Hastie and Shelley Stamp at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in November 2001. We are witnessing an era fueled by the energies of a feminist film archaeological project that has only just begun to explore the array of prints previously assumed lost and the cultural documents previously understood as forgotten. It is an age of discovery in which the inaugural phases of cinematic novelty and narrative development—a period predating the consolidated monopoly of the major Hollywood studios, the rise of technicians' unions restricted to men, and the fiscal quandaries associated with the coming of sound technology—increasingly appear as rich terrain for assessing women's participation in the aesthetic, industrial, and cultural shape of the cinema.[5]

For contemporary film feminism, the excitement generated by these acts of recovery is inexorably bound to a series of questions concerning the production of historical and disciplinary knowledge. How might we resist the temptation to cast a nostalgic gaze at the past, to celebrate the early period as a comforting zone of protofeminist possibility? How can we assert the presence of female film pioneers without simply amalgamating a revised set of early cinema's finest hits, of remarkable "firsts," of isolated, explanatory contributions? How might the prominent sign of "woman" in the period, her role in not only the production but also the reception of early film, be taken up in terms beyond those of a gender paradigm that has never been comprehensive enough, never able to account for the production of whiteness or blackness—indeed of race of any kind—much less ethnicity, nationality, and the distinctions of class? These questions are not new to us, but they exert a new insistence as we rush forward to recover women's roles in the early industry. This project, in turn, cannot easily be disentangled from the perceived crisis in academic feminism. Vitiated by an ongoing public and institutional backlash, contemporary feminism has experienced a dispersal that some are ready to blame as a crisis of our own making. In its worst incarnation, the scenario of feminism's intellectual decline is cast as the story of a lost (female) object, betrayed by the critical interrogation of essentialism as well as the hostile advances of poststructuralist and performance studies.[6] The disciplinary predicament of what has sometimes been called a "postfeminist" moment is compounded in film studies by the alarm sounded over other lost objects; in this case film itself, a medium struggling for survival in a digital age that seems poised to herald the end of the age of analogue.[7] Viewed across the vanishing horizon of the sign "woman" and the medium "film," the impulse to excavate the equa-

tion linking women and early cinema may seem suspect indeed: a dubious return to past guarantees.

Rather than abandon the urgency of our preservation and recovery agendas, this reader brings together the efforts of twenty individuals whose work collectively lays the ground, in both theoretical and historical terms, for a feminist account of early cinema. The historiographies and agendas gathered under this cover are animated by a self-critical, self-reflexive scrutiny that rejects any epistemological guarantee suggested by the past in favor of embracing its complexity and, in so doing, producing new knowledge and knowledge formations. Taken together, these essays demonstrate a strong commitment to archival research, merging analyses of film form with a wide array of documents that comprise the basis of our inherited film culture: written memoirs, fan magazines, audience studies, advertisements, and screenplays. All of the essays arise from the premise that mapping a history of women's engagements with early film means being willing to fully explore the range of sites in which women produced, consumed, and performed in the growing industry. It also means being willing to engage interdisciplinary frameworks; to bring the insights of postcolonial and racial studies, dance scholarship, literary analysis, philosophies of the body, modernist, and even postmodernist, debates to bear on the variables of gender and film. What emerges is a complex array of theories on the ontology, psychology, and epistemology of cinema in its relation to identity, history, and the aesthetic realm.

It is tempting to ascribe the impact of this volume in terms of a new generation of feminist film scholarship—an era heralded by radical breaks with established methodologies as well as with the canon of key films and figures most often imbued with explanatory power. Insofar as all the essays included here were written in the final years of the twentieth century, the connotations of a millennial awakening hold true. Yet the critical project of "looking back" that the reader engages encompasses, in important ways, the generative matrix of feminism's critical legacies from the heady 1970s. Feminists' historical work from the period may not be the first to come to mind, but we would be remiss in not noting the publication of Sumiko Higashi's *Virgins, Vamps, and Flappers,* with its typology of silent-era female stars and roles, or even Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus,* which circulated the names of Lois Weber, Anita Loos, and Frances Marion, among others. By the end of the decade Anthony Slide offered us *Early Women Directors,* and Patricia Erens's edited collection, *Sexual Stratagems,* printed materials on Esfir Shub and Alice Guy-Blaché.[8] Such accounts remain rich resources for contemporary revisions of the early period, but at the time of their re-

lease the appeal to history went largely unnoticed in academic circles. As we know, the 1970s was more fertile ground for those dedicated to psychoanalysis and political philosophy as a means of illuminating cinema's participation in the cultural construction of women. Methodologically this entailed a shift from the categorical scrutiny of individual careers and what is often called image studies to a focus on the metapsychology of the viewing process. The resultant apparatus, or "gaze" theory, proved especially useful to feminists for pinpointing the mechanisms through which mainstream cinema perpetuates social arrangements of power. In the process of illuminating the male-oriented address of film discourse, however, and repeatedly reading the systematic exclusion of the female subject from cinematic pleasures, feminists were alarmed to discover their work was becoming complicit with the system they had set out to critique. Writing in 1990, Mary Ann Doane drew attention to the deadlock ironically brought about by theory's highly critical stance toward historicism. As she put it, in order to investigate the psychical drama of the female spectator, apparatus theory "had to posit a vast synchrony of the cinema—the cinema happens all at once (as, precisely, an apparatus)."[9] Theory thus participated in producing an ahistorical, abstracted female subject: a generalizable Woman.

The temptation to invoke history as a way out of theory's conceptual dilemmas can never be an acceptable answer for film feminism. If the momentum building throughout the 1990s has driven home the imperative of historical methodologies, then these are historiographies catalyzed by questions of spectatorship, ideological coding, and cultural interpolation that persist from earlier conversations. Several contributions to this volume, for instance, relentlessly interrogate modalities of the gaze. Drawing on sources as diverse as imperial discourse, reformers' pamphlets, discussions of flânerie, and modern kinaesthetics, essays by Kristen Whissel, Constance Balides, Kristine Butler, and Lori Landay refuse the monolithic map of a psychoanalytic paradigm in favor of emphasizing the vicissitudes of historically distinct modes of pleasurable looking. Psychoanalysis itself appears as in need of historical revision, especially the suggestion that Freud's theories may be particularly apposite to analyses of cinema given the historical coincidence of their respective births. Rather than vaunting psychoanalysis as the "key to understanding the cinematic apparatus," as Linda Williams observes, it is imperative to situate Freud's interpretive models as "simply . . . another late-nineteenth-century discourse of sexuality, another apparatus for aligning socially produced sexual desires with oedipal and familial norms."[10] The question that lingers concerns the degree to which cinema and psychoanalysis become mutually reinforcing "mechanisms of

power and pleasure" in the modern age.[11] The response that appears in this collection — pointedly in essays by Jennifer Bean, Angela Dalle Vacche, Zhang Zhen, and Mary Ann Doane — takes shape as a rigorous remapping of early-twentieth-century scientific and popular discussions concerning the function and formation of the human psyche. It was an era witnessing a shift from pathology understood as rooted in biological or genetic traits (as inherited), to a burgeoning apprehension of the ways in which psychic and social factors are necessarily interactive. Insofar as these new aspects of psychological life were engendered by the particularities of an urban-industrial modernity, then questions concerning bodily sensation, spatial-temporal geometries, and mechanical power take priority in ways that exceed the formulations of a Freudian paradigm. As a result of this inquiry, alternative models emerge for conceiving not only the cinema's production of gender and sexual difference, but also the very basis and terms by which we account for identity.

To this reader's impact on film feminism's theoretical traditions should be added its reorientation of the methodologies and categories espoused by historical film studies. In many ways this collection brings to fruition Tom Gunning's earlier observation that "much of the exciting new work being done in film history is being done by . . . scholars [who] have undertaken a rediscovery of women's experience of cinema which has led to a fundamental questioning of the established concerns of history and its dominant methods."[12] It would of course be a regrettable mistake to claim that feminists are alone in questioning film history's concerns and methods; the conversations gathered here owe much to a broader disciplinary surge of renewed interest in the silent era and to the ongoing efforts of scholars such as Gunning, Richard Abel, Charles Musser, and Thomas Elsaesser, among others. Running parallel to the advancement of knowledge generated by earlier feminist models, revisionist approaches to early cinema also reach back to the 1970s, stemming especially from the 1978 Brighton Conference, where the excitement of viewing previously forgotten films made between 1900 and 1906 initiated the dethronement of D. W. Griffith and the institutional framework of Hollywood as the twin monarchs of cinematic invention. Over the past decade two collections in particular stand out as challenges to conventional views of early film history: Thomas Elsaesser's *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* and Richard Abel's *Silent Cinema*.[13] Taken together, these books demonstrate a developing commitment to the urgency of early cinema's archival agendas, to the recovery of fragile and erstwhile illegitimate prints, as well as to the promotion of a sophisticated reading practice concerned with the relationship between

film texts and their social and industrial contexts. These discussions have had far-reaching implications, not the least of which is the undermining of teleological models of progress whereby the history of cinema is seen as advancing from an embryonic or infantile state in the early years toward its maturation in the adulthood of a classical, narrative system.

The present volume builds on the work of the new film history, yet the focus on gender as an analytic variable augurs an unmistakable shift in praxis. In some essays this shift appears through the choice of which films are considered important; in others it appears through the choice of what counts as evidence. The editors have elected to foreground a broader shift by reconceptualizing the historical and critical category known as early cinema to be somewhat congruent with the first thirty-five years of cinema. It should be clear that the choice to do so does not imply or infer homogeneity across this three-and-a-half-decade span. A projection viewed in a Paris café, a Berlin *Kientopp,* and a New York moving-picture palace, for instance, bear little resemblance to one another at the level of either technologies, constituencies, or semiotics. Then again, the textual differences between an inaugural phase dominated by attractions and actualities and a later period of narrative integration, or, even beyond that, the differences between an emergent classical style and a European avant-garde, present a constellation of radically heterogeneous film forms and styles. Briefly, then, the choice to bracket slightly more than three decades of cinema with the term "early" has little to do with intimating resemblance and similitude and everything to do with claiming dissonance and difference as, precisely, the early period's unifying trademark.

Our use of the category "early" strategically builds from the term's current ideological and methodological associations. Generally speaking, "early cinema" has come to refer to the years between 1895 and 1917, but its semantic status is far from a neutral chronological indicator. Vigorous debates over historical periodization in the silent era have gravitated toward the fin de siècle transition, or lack thereof, from a cinema ruled by attractions to one predominantly narrative in design. The focus of interest remains insistently on the turn of the century, where the hype over attractions has accentuated a film form potentially dominated by exhibitionism rather than voyeurism, by surprise rather than suspense, and by spectacle rather than story. The concept of attractions is, admittedly, seductive for feminists, especially insofar as it removes the cinema from the totalizing terms of a controlling and gendered gaze. Yet, as Judith Mayne observes, it behooves us to remain wary of any simple opposition between exhibitionism

and voyeurism, especially when the promotion of the former as a mode of spectatorial pleasure elides gender as a category with "signifying authority" in the early years.[14] As essays by Kristen Whissel and Mary Ann Doane in this volume demonstrate, the negotiations between attractions and narrative in fin de siècle cinema may look quite different when our inquiry privileges the articulation of sexual and racial difference. At the same time, the dynamic intertextual reading method employed in these essays shares kinship with the ongoing revisionist efforts of early film historians. Where film studies' traditional bias toward narrative economy and the universalizing efficacy of film language once marked late-nineteenth- and turn-of-the-century cinema as a "primitive" period (guttural, subverbal, barbaric, unrefined), the new orientation in historical film scholarship has found in the early years a vital source for revisiting the epistemological ground of film language as an utterance significantly shaped by meaning-making processes situated "outside" the films themselves. It is this "reassessment and reclaiming of the archive," as Vicki Callahan puts it, that has the potential to "work in concert" with feminist efforts to "question and expand the kinds of historical materials investigated in understanding spectatorship."[15]

"Early cinema" thus broadly signifies not only a historical period but also, importantly, a critical category. Current use of the term emphatically underscores the medium's intimate ties to the practices of exhibition as well as its dependency on media intertexts and shared cultural mores—especially where the formal techniques of an early cinema are positioned as consistent with the shock, stimuli, and spiraling degrees of sensation associated with modern life. Such perspectives have encouraged a shift backward in our conceptualization of the period, so that the protean composition of early cinema is increasingly traced and conceived via its tangled roots in nineteenth-century modes of entertainment and cultural expression. Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz's collection, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life,* signposts this methodological and conceptual shift by focusing on the ways in which early film can be seen as a crucible in which modern debates over perception, referentiality, and the body combine, one commensurate with a wide range of urban-cultural practices: including but not limited to amusement parks, wax museums, public morgues, shopping arcades, and department stores.[16] Such pre- and paracinematic venues inflect our conception of a transforming public sphere that catered to—and constructed—female spectators in alternative, often antagonistic ways: a multivocal field of address from which early cinema draws and responds.

This reader embraces the complexity of this period shift backward and encourages a similar shift forward. Rudely put, the question is this: when, and why, might a feminist historiography delineate the end of the "early"?

The assumption that early cinema is entirely the affair of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries up until the year 1917 obviates our hard-won gains over traditional biases about film history. Baldly speaking, the 1917 signpost is extrapolated—or better yet *assumed*—from projects concerned with pinpointing the longevity of a stable classical system rather than those engaged by the potent irregularities of the early.[17] Perhaps more than any other publication, David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Janet Staiger's *Classical Hollywood Cinema* has ensconced 1917 as the definitive moment when a dominant mode of cinematic storytelling finally and irrevocably coalesced, giving way to the production of a seamless fictional world understood as self-sufficient, capable of organizing viewer perception through an intricate manipulation of space and time without the messy interference of extrinsic signifying systems.[18] To uncritically adopt this period marker seriously limits new film historical discourse. Moreover, to the degree that the distinctive aesthetics and effects of the classical model are conceived as concomitant with the institutionalization of patriarchal structures of looking, and to the degree that this model's flourishing is said to parallel the incursion of Hollywood's hegemonic control over international markets, it is clear that contemporary feminism has much to gain by troubling the period break between early cinema and cinematic classicism, by refusing to toe the 1917 line. The point is not to replace one date with another and shift the moment of transition from 1917 to, say, 1922, or 1927, or 1934. The paucity of celluloid documents from the silent era, especially from the years following the advent of copyright protection for moving images in the early 1910s—thus ending the practice of photographic duplication of frames that bequeathed to us the wealth of a "paper print collection" for assessing cinema's first fifteen years—must obviate attempts to specify the date and time of an allegedly wholesale shift to a systematic application of classically defined formal means. The lack of textual evidence demands that we remain agnostic about the efficacy of rigidified period breaks. More importantly we must scrutinize the hermeneutics of our critical enterprise, since choices about historical demarcations raise important ideological and methodological questions for film feminism.

By choosing to employ "early cinema" as a term more or less coextensive with silent cinema, this collection insists on the longevity of heterogeneous, aleatory modes of address and reception across the whole of cinema's silent parts. It also reinstates the imperative of advancing interpretive models

capable of juggling the intricacies of film form relative to the plurality of its adjacent discourses. This is in keeping with Miriam Hansen's call for an alternative history of film culture that would trace the paradox of female subjectivity in its relation to dominant cinema.[19] If it is true that dominant cinema's optical field increasingly limits its address to women by the late 1910s and early 1920s, then this collection teases out a far more hapless geometry shaping audience response to the image machine. Star personae, magazine fiction, art nouveau, medical histories, legal discourse, nativist debates, international expansion, racism, youth culture, literary production, modernity, the new woman: all are seen as intersecting film's textual systems in ways that complicate the assumed parity between the so-called rise of classicism and patriarchal systems of knowledge management. Seen in light of such a methodological incursion, systems appear not so systematic after all.

A focus on methodology, however, does not satisfactorily answer the question of terminology until its effects are understood in relation to the present moment. Choosing "early cinema" over "silent cinema" is designed to ameliorate tendencies that approach the pretalkie years as a period that drops out of view following the advance of synchronized sound technologies. "Early cinema" undoes the rigid mark of a technological invention and denotes the sense of an era in transition; it also suggests that the heterogeneous and dissonant models at work in the period before film found its voice, as well as the methodologies we develop to discuss them, may bear some relation to and have some impact on our current experience of "late" cinema. I echo Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey (echoing Alison Butler, echoing Walter Benjamin) in reminding us that "rather than being simply 'about the past' in any straightforward way, screen histories are of necessity concerned with past-present relations with a view to the future."[20] It is possible, for instance, to see Bordwell, Thompson, and Staiger's fix on 1917 as a direct response to the constraints and concerns of film studies in the 1980s. The burden of legitimizing film studies as an academic discipline in the 1960s and 1970s was met by an ardent attempt to secure, outline, and theorize *the* unique object of our inquiry. A hegemonic model of classicism, the term itself embedded in the ethos of legitimacy, was the result, replete with formalist diagrams, theories of psychological effects, and demarcated historical boundaries. "Classical" cinema's practices and products were never as stable as its critics would suggest, but while debates linger over the efficacy of those paradigms for assessing a period potentially circumscribed by the advent of the New Deal and the onset of the cold war, no one among us can deny that the past two decades have brought

an epistemic shift in the object(s) of our study. Digital imaging technologies have altered film discourse and language in direct proportion to the palpable effects of electronic media technologies on the distribution and exhibition of visual culture. Part of the terror inspired by this sea change is the thought that film per se might disappear forever; part of the excitement is the inevitable rendering of erstwhile pat critical paradigms.

Feminists in particular have found sustenance for rethinking classical models of looking, especially the construct of a transcendent spectator, by drawing parallels between what appears to be a more heterogeneous, embodied, socially configured viewer mobilized in early cinema and late cinema. Some of the most generative scholarship from the 1990s has contemplated this ground, noticeably in projects undertaken by Hansen, Anne Friedberg, and Giuliana Bruno, whose work collectively constitutes what Catherine Russell in this volume calls a "parallax historiography."[21] For these writers the parallels between early and late realms focus most clearly around modes of film consumption, and terms such as "intertextuality," "interactivity," and "mobility" have begun to jockey for prominence in the traditional lineup of more usual suspects such as mastery, fantasy, and transcendence. The risk of a parallax historiography, as Russell notes, is that of producing a seductive feminist utopia that obliterates large-scale historical differences between radically discrete poles of the twentieth century. Only through a committed, abreactive approach to the matrices of the early cinema—a need to which this volume responds—will we find ourselves able to assess the ways in which a contemporary media culture may be characterized by similar expansions and possibilities as well as by similar constraints and repressive mechanisms.

The province of early cinema found here thus insists that our studies of the past must always be determined by present concerns and written with a self-conscious sense of our contingent temporality. Yet critically connected to the resignification of an early cinema is also the way we conceptualize and make relative the geographical and cultural coordinates of historical praxis. This means taking seriously Alison Butler's caveat that revisionist historiographies must engage the "politics of location." As she observes,

> it is precise to say that history takes *place*. The corollary would seem to be that the less film historians acknowledge their place, the more their work will be invaded by its concerns. The limit case of this will be those histories which assume the universality of either their object or their approach. These histories, produced in the West, will tend strongly to imperialism of one kind or another.[22]

Butler's reservations about the locatedness (an awkward but useful neologism, I submit) of revisionist film histories are well taken. The cry for historical specificity in film studies is too easily, too often, blithely rendered as a corrective to the universalizing metanarratives posited by earlier semiotic and psychoanalytic-based reading theories. Many of its proponents remain blind to our disciplines' ongoing replication of a governing paradigm that reiterates and confirms Hollywood's "universal" position of economic power. The 1917 cusp is, once again, a case in point. There should be little doubt that trademarks characterizing any noticeable transition in film form at that time accrue in a geographically specific space: that of the United States and, to some degree, Western Europe. What might "early cinema" signify in the context of Eastern Europe, much less of Asia or Africa?

In the Chinese context, as Zhang Zhen notes in her essay here, "the term 'early cinema' (*zaoqi dianying*) serves loosely as a common reference to the cinema before 1949, when the Communists drove the Nationalists to the island of Taiwan and founded the People's Republic of China on the mainland." Zhang joins recent Chinese scholars in making "finer periodizations within that long 'early' period," and does so by placing the Shanghai industry between the 1910s and the 1930s in conversation with issues of gender and modernity that Western scholars have brought to bear on early Euro-American products. Although Zhang's essay remains the single project on non-Western cinemas found under this cover, the inclusion of Kristine Butler's look at early French serials and Angela Dalle Vacche's work on Italian diva films, as well as the national hyphens under scrutiny in Diane Negra's study of imported stars from Eastern Europe (such as Pola Negri) and Patricia White's excavation of a European avant-garde's cross-pollination with Hollywood in the work of Alla Nazimova, all mark this reader's interest in cross-cultural research. Much more work remains to be done in order to alter the geographical and cultural biases of our periodizing categories.[23] What seems clear on all fronts is that feminists must no longer work in national isolation from one another; only then can we begin to "make good," to follow Robyn Wiegman, "on academic feminism's longtime goal of transforming . . . the institution, its organization of knowledge, and the way in which we understand both the intellectual composition and possible histories of feminism itself."[24] As we work to ensure feminism's future as a multiply situated political enterprise, it may be that the vibrancy of early cinema's international lexicon provides the very substance and ground for developing critical models that traverse and interrogate nation-bound rubrics.

For all the salutary effects promised by this reader's use of the category early cinema, the flexibility stressed here is not without its problems. It is possible, for instance, to carry expansion too far, and so lose the legibility of "early" altogether. Would we dare to imagine a history written at the end of the twenty-first or even twenty-second century that refers to twentieth-century cinema as one extended moment of the "early"? Perhaps so, though such imaginings need occupy little of our time. The excessiveness of such an extreme case simply illustrates the point that period constructions are what David Perkins calls "necessary fictions" that, themselves, have a history, and that can be rewritten in a variety of ways, depending on what it is we seek to order and classify and why.[25] The choices we make have immediately felt effects, impacting not only the texts available (and deemed worthy) for study, but also the institutionalized contours of our course offerings, hiring decisions, graduate exams, book projects, professional organizations, and so on.[26] In favor of making apparent the particularity, discontinuity, and fluctuation of the materials and dates under study, this reader avoids writing the history of early cinema under the sign of unification. If doing so leaves this volume particularly vulnerable to the charge of indeterminate expansion, then a willing vulnerability may be the necessary position from which to galvanize the very powerful ideological move that underlies this enterprise: namely, a desire to puzzle over the necessity of period questions and implications without reinforcing their hold over our thinking.

A related danger to this reader's approach is that of methodological dispersion. As mentioned above, expanding the category early cinema means expanding the types of discourses and objects deemed relevant for study. By attending to these multiple arenas some might say we risk enforcing a depreciated "cultural studies" model quite capable of eclipsing the centrality and specificity of film as the province of our discipline. As Janet Bergstrom has noted, " 'cultural studies' has come to be used so broadly that it can encompass almost any approach or subject matter" and "sometimes functions as a leveling device." The attending irony of this observation is that, at the very moment in which a "critical mass of scholars finally exists in adjacent academic fields," it has become increasingly difficult to sustain detailed investigations of the "depth" of cinematic and visual media.[27] This point should give us pause. Though Bergstrom does not clarify what forms of critical scrutiny may have turned shallow, her contention conspicuously follows a recounting of "the lasting significance" of founding film semioticians, including Jean-Louis Baudry, Therry Kuntzel, and Christian Metz, and highlights projects like Raymond Bellour's 115-page study of *North by Northwest,* "Le blocage symbolique," which she describes as a "magiste-

rial demonstration of multilayered textual analysis."[28] The assumption is that the conjoining of ideological questions with detailed textual analyses so prevalent in the 1970s constitute—to indulge the metaphor—a depth-of-our-field that has since strayed out of focus. We return to this point momentarily, but first let us underline an important caution regarding the leveling effects of cultural studies models. The interdisciplinary configurations of current work on film carry with them the potential to decimate the (carefully allocated) measures whereby cinema, or film and video, or media programs have finally gained an institutional foothold. The effects of dispersal are manifest in the diminished presence and power of film journals that no longer focus, in Bergstrom's words, on "polemics or even issues in the way that they did in the 1970s and early 1980s" and that may increasingly appear in other institutionalized loci with especially dire repercussions for feminism.[29]

In order to engage these concerns, we must scrutinize that fundamental assumption behind Bergstrom's complaint and ask what we want to mean when we talk about depth in cinema and related media studies. If we are to prepare ourselves for the battles that must be waged in the name of departmental budgets and program allocations, then a definition of cinematic "depth" is imperative. The call for doing so must loudly disclaim a return to a methodology premised on the isolation of a single film as emblematizing the textual density of cinematic language. While the disciplinary and epistemological gains of earlier critical engagements with the structural configuration of film texts remain crucial to our intellectual history and to the heuristics we pose in our introductory classrooms, the very concept of cinematic depth in such models is a severely truncated and idealized version of film space, one unable to account for the wider psychical and semiotic landscape from which film viewing draws meaning. Nowhere is the deficiency of this model more apparent than in our encounters with early cinema in which the paucity of entire film cycles, the very state of cinema's textual remnants, mandates a shift to encompass and in fact build from a topographical epistemology of film's "deep" cultural space. Giuliana Bruno's recovery of Italian film pioneer Elvira Notari's career elegantly articulates the desirable dilemmas of "working on lacunae." As she puts it, an analysis determined to explain a "lost" film exposes the degree to which "texts in general are built on 'the second degree,'" grafted onto and situated within an intertextual field of citations and meaning. Confronted with the "ruined maps" of cinema's past, we can either retreat to the safety of film's textual guarantees—essentially resting on our canonical laurels—or innovate a "kinetic analytic" that, as Bruno observes, "parallels film's own visual

topography."[30] Many of the essays that follow lead us on what Bruno (trailing Umberto Eco) calls "inferential walks" through cinema's past, enacting in their methodological mobility the very modes through which women have often experienced their relationship with cinema.[31] These maps not only provide new approaches to the historical category of early cinema, but also serve as cartographic realignments for the glorious ruins of our disciplinary terrain.

A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema is divided into five parts: "Reflecting Film Authorship," "Ways of Looking," "Cultural Inversions," "Performing Bodies," and "The Problem with Periodization." These sections have been chosen to foreground cinematic categories such as authorship, spectatorship, historical topicality, stardom, and periodicity. Across these latitudes, however, other equally significant social and cultural categories provide points of connection, shared points of reference that might readily function as alternative organizing frameworks. The new woman, for instance, appears in multiple guises, alternately garbed as childish tomboy, *garçonne,* athletic star, enigmatic vamp, languid diva, working girl, kinetic flapper, and primitive exotic — all in various national, economic, and even chronological forms. A section organized around the gestalt of modern womanhood would usefully illustrate the vectors of continuity and change in early-twentieth-century constructions of identity. Similarly, a section foregrounding the fears and fantasies associated with technological modernity and urban congestion, and the results of this incursion on the representation and perception of gender, would be equally possible and equally productive. The alternative organizational structures are, if not endless, then enticingly multiple, and we leave it to future readers to provide the new dialogues by which our discipline will be sounded.

Part I, "Reflecting Film Authorship," highlights the key roles played by women directors and producers in the international field of early cinema. The historical cast alone is impressive, totaling more than 120 women whose individual creative outputs, in cases like that of Alice Guy-Blaché, often amounted to hundreds of films. Rather than approach this list in a positivist manner, however, contributors here examine women's roles in early film production as a way of questioning prevailing theories of authorship. In "Circuits of Memory and History: *The Memoirs of Alice Guy-Blaché,*" Amelie Hastie explores the relation between writing and filmmaking as two interrelated authorial modes. By synthesizing the extant remnants of Guy-Blaché's directorial career with her written memoirs (themselves an attempt to reconstruct history through recollective pro-

cesses), Hastie at once proposes and demonstrates a radically different approach to authorship, one that encompasses the multiple media forms through which a film author's "voice" is produced and disseminated.

For Patricia White, the "queer" voice that vibrates across Alla Nazimova's role as writer, producer, performer, and de facto director of *Salome* (1922) provides an instance for admonishing our nostalgic desire to pinpoint the locus of authorship in early cinema. In "Nazimova's Veils: *Salome* at the Intersection of Film Histories," White reads the 1922 film as a palimpsest of aesthetic, historical, and signature trades: a lesbian film auteur borrows the *author*ity (and notoriety) of Oscar Wilde; a mass-cultural American film product absorbs the stylistic effects of a European avant-garde; a modern film star (known for her boyish good looks) plays a biblical priestess (known for her vamplike sexuality). Here, the metaphor of "veiling" emerges as a historiographical incursion employed to emphasize how particular aspects of authorship and aesthetics "appear or disappear under different critical gazes." The critical refusal to disrobe, disclose, or "unveil" a singular authorial body is shared by Jane Gaines, who argues in "Of Cabbages and Authors" that the project of recovering a film author is predicated on the fantasy of discovering an "analyzable subject" hidden behind or within the cinematic text. Even as Gaines refuses the politics and epistemology of such a fantasy, she is concerned with resuscitating those women whose films have been undervalued and overlooked. To this end her scrutiny of Guy-Blaché's *The Cabbage Fairy* (1896) commemorates the female presence in the production of early film while highlighting the contingency of what can too easily be construed as "individual" (humanistic) vision—illuminating, in turn, how that construction so often results from the antimaterialist desire to detach film language from the very machines that produce it.

These opening essays make clear that the particularities of historical evidence—including, ironically, a lack thereof—in early cinema demand that we question what we mean by the category of director/author. In "Re-evaluating Footnotes: Women Directors of the Silent Era," Radha Vatsal turns this question into one of scholarly praxis, arguing that the project of recovering previously marginalized figures and films demands that we also recover and reconstruct the marginalized form of our research and writing: that of the "footnote." Vatsal underscores the ontological frailty of early film prints; every print has a history, she notes, often with differing credit sequences and just as often lacking credit listings per se. Then again, film prints associated with or attributed to numerous female pioneers have disappeared altogether, leaving us to trace the vestiges left in

written and other visual sources that, themselves, occasion epistemological dispute. Concluding with a case study of her "preliminary research" on the elusive producer/director/writer Madeline Brandeis, Vatsal's deconstructive approach to the veracity of women film pioneers paradoxically acts as a challenge to feminist scholars to trouble the scholarly fetish for the armored argument, to make our supporting marginalia a site for tracking the vicissitudes of knowledge on which our central claims inevitably depend.

Part II of the reader, "Ways of Looking," turns from questions of authorship to questions of spectatorship. At issue in each essay gathered here are the effects of moving images on what might be called a historical spectator. Taken together, the essays map radically distinct models of looking. Even so, the vitality of this section emerges from a shared methodological approach that conjoins readings of film form with readings of adjacent textual forms. The turn toward historical accounts and materials need not deter us, these analyses show, from reflecting on broader theorizations about the effects of moving images on subjectivity.

Kristen Whissel's "The Gender of Empire: American Modernity, Masculinity, and Edison's War Actualities" opens this section with a detailed reading of an 1898 war film series produced by the Edison Manufacturing Company. Whissel demonstrates that Spanish-American War actualities were coextensive with an imperial ideology that sought to discipline and produce an especially virile form of national masculinity at the turn of the century. By reading early films alongside their accompanying catalog descriptions, Whissel argues that Edison's actualities elaborated a coherent narrative discourse, replete with a structuring point of view, that promoted spectacles of controlled white masculinity. Ironically, as Whissel points out, this optical field was constructed at the expense of "new" forms of womanhood, as well as African American masculinity, but nonetheless can be seen addressing female spectators (though specifically not black viewers) as an emergent constituent of the filmgoing public. The strategies of a disciplinary gaze similarly resonate in Constance Balides's investigation. In "Making Ends Meet: 'Welfare Films' and the Politics of Consumption during the Progressive Era," Balides argues that films like *The Cup of Life* (1915) and *Shoes* (1916) are characterized by textual strategies that place the spectator in the position of reformer in relation to the dilemma of a modern lifestyle associated with urbanization, consumerism, and heterosexual amusements. The concept of controlled consumption is crucial here. For Balides, cinema's textual strategies rearticulate reformers' studies and trade union leaders' rhetoric about consumption and working-class women, thus creating a shared perspectival field that sub-

jected women wage earners to "normative definitions of what it meant to be a consumer." Ultimately, Balides offers both an analysis of the "narrator systems" at work in several overlooked films from the 1910s as well as a caution to feminists that broad claims about women's mobility in relation to the rise of consumerism come at the cost of locally produced meanings of terms like "consumer" and "consumption."

Recent accounts of women's visual and physical mobility in early-twentieth-century urban centers—often condensed in the figure of the alleged flâneuse—are further complicated by Kristine Butler's reading of Louis Feuillade's *Les Vampires* (1915). In "Irma Vep, Vamp in the City: Mapping the Criminal Feminine in Early French Serials," Butler underscores *Les Vampires*'s complex narrative, which obsessively circulates around the figure of the female criminal, Irma Vep, whom Butler describes as an "uncanny *tache*," a stain on the screen that motivates the detective work of the protagonist, Philippe Guérande, as well as the deciphering work of the spectator. To the degree that Irma Vep is ultimately contained or made legible, *Les Vampires* capitalizes on a conservative discourse of female deviance and fear of the moral decadence of the city. According to Butler, however, the serial's ultimate resolution of the feminine enigma is simply not comprehensive enough to undermine the visual pleasures associated with female empowerment and feminine scopophilic desire activated across the whole of the weekly episodes by Irma Vep's daring exploits. Butler's analysis, as a result, opens onto a theoretical model that articulates the female both as subject and as object. This model of possibility is also explored in Lori Landay's essay, "The Flapper Film: Comedy, Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics." Here, Landay shifts the terrain of analysis back to American film products, specifically to a group of 1920s films featuring flapper personalities Joan Crawford, Colleen Moore, and Clara Bow. It is true, Landay notes, that the construction of the flapper persona in these films can be viewed as an attempt to encourage women's self-objectification through the narcissistic mirror of the screen. The weight of Landay's analysis, however, argues for the coextensive construction of a "ludic embodiment of femininity that transcends the limited subjectivity of self-commodification, and encourages the flapper spectator to imagine and emulate a playful subjectivity that is not simply enslaved to commodity culture." The dizzying mobility that Landay attributes to flapper femininity connects to other modern forms of unrestrained bodily movement—especially the kinetic and individualistic gesticulations of the Jazz Age Charleston, the black bottom, and the turkey trot. While acknowledging the symbolic import of dance in the films under discussion, Landay's

analyis centers its inquiry through close readings of the flapper girl's mobile modes of looking: her eyes that comically cross, wink, blink, or, alternately, measure in full the (male) object of her desire.

It may be a truism to claim that any attempt to account for the nascent years of narrative cinema must acknowledge the ways in which the young industry protested its respectability, countering accusations of depravity and immorality. The sense that this protest resulted in either a totalizing cooptation or an equally coherent dissidence fails to take into account historical vicissitude. As we see in part III, "Cultural Inversions," the industry's bid for greater respectability induced more rather than less complex practices and policies, particularly in the address to and representation of women. For both Shelley Stamp and Siobhan B. Somerville, the treatment of controversial subject matter such as birth control, abortion, and female "inversion" by directors whose reputations were associated with high-quality feature films and middle-class mores are indicative of the period's contradictory strategies.

In Stamp's essay, "Taking Precautions, or Regulating Early Birth-Control Films," the 1916–1917 debates surrounding films like *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* and *Where Are My Children?* become source studies for tracing the knotty relations in which middle-class women encountered the use of film as a technology for educating the public on contraception. Stamp's analysis illustrates how newly instituted censorship policies ignited battles over cinema's status as an educational versus entertainment medium; as such, the commercial viability of birth control films altered radically depending less on what was said than how it was represented.

In "The Queer Career of Jim Crow: Racial and Sexual Transformation in *A Florida Enchantment*," Somerville's analysis of the 1914 Vitagraph film complicates matters further. In this "conventional" form of comedy (relative, that is, to slapstick antics), the titillating expansion of sexual possibilities for a white middle-class female protagonist trades on the compression and erasure of black female identity. As Somerville notes, it is unlikely that the audience that enjoyed such genteel comedies in the 1910s would have questioned the film's logic of race and racial sexuality. It is precisely that silence which Somerville takes up as a site of scrutiny, a reflection of "deep cultural anxieties" attending the "emergence of lesbian and gay identities and an increasingly racially segregated culture."

What emerges most forcefully from the essays that open part III is an understanding of the complex negotiations in which a series of ostensibly structuring binaries—old/new, modernity/tradition, female/male, white/

black, highbrow/lowbrow — are terms of mediation rather than static positions. Sumiko Higashi thus approaches the period as a heuristic for contemporary feminists who might seize on representations of female social and sexual liberation as an unmediated fantasy of historical possibility. In "The New Woman and Consumer Culture: Cecil B. DeMille's Sex Comedies," Higashi's analysis of late 1910s and early 1920s comedies about divorce and remarriage offers, instead, a cautionary note, asking us to approach incarnations of the new woman in these films as an alluring mirage. Higashi engages DeMille's new woman as a figure increasingly open to objectification by a male gaze, a conservative momentum intimately bound up with the conventions of consumer culture that led women to gaze in narcissistic rapture at their fashion-conscious "self-made" reflections.

The section's opening survey of film representations is complemented by the work of Anne Morey, who closes part III with a focus on the textual mechanisms of the fan magazine. That the fan magazine develops in the 1920s as a prosthetic mouthpiece for the industry's project of maintaining respectability is well known. Indeed it was the policy of magazines like *Photoplay* to avoid discussions of scandal and represent Hollywood as a "sane" community. In " 'So Real as to Seem Like Life Itself': The *Photoplay* Fiction of Adela Rogers St. Johns," however, Morey argues that magazine serial fiction about Hollywood — especially that of one of its main female producers during the 1920s — tells a different story. As she puts it, "serial fiction allowed the commentator a freer hand in the frank depiction of personalities and situations," precisely because it was presented as fiction. Morey usefully complicates the conventional view that fan magazines served simply as propagandistic devices for Hollywood, drawing our attention to important lapses in the discursive parity of film and film culture.

Part IV, "Performing Bodies," concentrates on the discourse and various venues that synchronically mobilized the complex semiotics of film stardom. Given Mary Pickford's long-standing position in both critical and cultural memories as an American national icon of the silent era and figure of demure and diminutive femininity, this section opens with Gaylyn Studlar's scrutiny of the Pickford persona. Drawing from advertising, publicity, fan responses, critical reviews, and Pickford films, Studlar's essay, "Oh, 'Doll Divine': Mary Pickford, Masquerade, and the Pedophilic Gaze," uncovers a youthful femininity constructed for what she calls, as her title suggests, a "pedophilic gaze." Studlar is careful to clarify that her use of this volatile term is not meant to suggest men's sexual interest in children, but

rather to model a fetishistic fascination with a female figure that is safely distanced from the threatening adulthood and agency putatively granted to women in the period.

If Pickford exemplifies the most visible incarnation of the reification of girlishness, the structuring terms of femininity in the representational environment of Hollywood in the 1920s necessitated the invention of other stars associated with a deadly womanliness. Early ethnic stars were also highly functional in America's national imaginary, but in quite different ways from the canonization of Pickford. In "Immigrant Stardom in Imperial America: Pola Negri and the Problem of Typology," Diane Negra provides a case study of the probationary whiteness and troublesome femininity of the Polish-born film star who was Hollywood's first celebrated import, tracking Paramount's efforts to Americanize the ethnic "vamp" whose femininity was consistently defined as serious, sexual, and fully adult. She argues that Negri's "failure" to be Americanized became "proof" that residual anxieties about the assimilatability of new immigrants were, in fact, legitimate. Taken together, the essays by Studlar and Negra provide a sharp contrast between two very differently nationalized bodies as well as a historical sketch of Hollywood's tendency to embrace white American girls while expunging ethnic others.

The focus on the status of the body as providing a set of terms—at once enabling and inexorable—continues with the section's subsequent essays, which argue that the modalities of early stardom cannot be conceived outside the context of modernity's obsessions with the body's materiality. In "Technologies of Early Stardom and the Extraordinary Body," I place Pearl White and other action-oriented female celebrities of the 1910s at the center of an emergent star system in America. Flaunting views of potential catastrophe and narrowly avoided disaster "behind the scenes," the machinery of stardom promotes a phenomenology of performance founded on the concepts of improvisation and unpredictability—the terms of a "realness" set in opposition to the continuity and regulation increasingly afforded by cinema's mechanistic base. My interest in the "revised bodies" of American women stars intersects with Angela Dalle Vacche's work on early Italian divas like Lyda Borelli and muscle-bound "amazons of the air" such as Astrea, Linda Albertini, Emilie Samson, and Gisaliana Doria. In "Femininity in Flight: Androgyny and Gynandry in Early Silent Italian Cinema," Dalle Vacche scrutinizes Italian celebrities of the 1910s whose personae and performances enact the fantasies of a weightless, airborne, and decidedly modern physicality. The metaphoric use of the airplane and

the curvilinear arabesque of flight patterns are well known in the iconography of art nouveau, but Dalle Vacche links this aesthetic system with a particular performative style that hinges on women's fantasies of gender and class transcendence. The rhyme between the modern and the nouveau anticipates Lucy Fischer's reading of Greta Garbo's figuration in a series of American film melodramas that employ the art deco aesthetic: *The Torrent* (1925), *Wild Orchids* (1928), *The Kiss* (1929), and *The Single Standard* (1929). In "Greta Garbo and Silent Cinema: The Actress as Art Deco Icon," Fischer shows how elements of mise-en-scène — costuming, sets, decor — as well as narrative discourse in these films, construct an isomorphic relation between Garbo's rise to stardom and cultural fascination with the glittery, glamorous, exotic surfaces of the *style moderne.* Garbo's association with the deco-style works in tandem with the iconographic significance of Garbo as an independent new woman — a female as dangerously avant-garde as the stylistic domain she inhabits.

Part V, "The Problem with Periodization," focuses directly on the issue of early cinema's boundary distinctions and how such delineations may no longer hold in the context of feminist historiographical inquiry. In one fashion or another, each of the essays tackles the most rigid of period lines: that which marks the "end" of the silent era in the late 1920s, the point at which the industry changes to technologies of producing and exhibiting synchronized sound. Zhang Zhen's "*An Amorous History of the Silver Screen:* The Actress as Vernacular Embodiment in Early Chinese Film Culture" engages textual analysis of a self-referential docudrama about the history of early Shanghai cinema. Notable as one of nine silent films produced by the Mingxing studio in 1931, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen* is a nodal point through which the explosive transitions in the Chinese industry of the early 1930s as well as a history of Chinese women's relationship to cinema (as both performers and spectators) can be read. Significantly, Zhang's analysis promotes the specificity of what an early cinema and an early film culture might look like in the Chinese context. Her account employs a comparativist lens that alerts us to the unwitting parallels as well as the striking unevenness between the history she traces and a cinematic modernity alternately developing in the Euro-American context. At the center of this reading is the female screen actress and her counterpart — the woman in the theater — whom Zhang understands as both newly liberated and newly commodified through film technologies. Zhang's assessment of this ambivalence resonates with many of the analyses of modern femininity that appear elsewhere in this reader, but her insights into these

shared points of reference reminds us that the act of unbinding one's feet, for instance, and that of shortening one's skirt remain discrete material, political, and epistemological acts.

The critical move to "look back" similarly informs Mary Ann Doane's essay, "Technology's Body: Cinematic Vision in Modernity," in which a Hollywood-produced "classical" film—*Golddiggers of 1935*—appears as an index of, and response to, cultural, philosophical, and cinematic discourses in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Doane explores the cultural anxieties induced by technological modernity, particularly those attendant on its accelerated temporality: shock, trauma, and perceptual disorientation. Within this constellation of effects early cinema functions as a compensatory prosthesis for the modern subject by increasingly distancing the (male) spectator from the aggressive impact of technology, an effect achieved through a "technically intricate manipulation of space" that takes as its "principal content" the spectacle of the female body. The literally nerve-racking effects of technologically induced sensation are, according to Doane, countered by cinema's ability to project that aggression onto the female body. She traces the development of this prosthetic apparatus from early one-shot films that fix a single stare at the female figure through the more complex spatial arrangements in Busby Berkeley's musicals, thus arguing for a visual logic that transcends the fractious transformation to sound and that offers a conceptual model capable of addressing a wide range of filmic effects.

If the two essays that open this section establish the terms by which histories of early cinema impact our assessments of later modes, the final essay, by Catherine Russell, "Parallax Historiography: The Flâneuse as Cyberfeminist," takes up the subject in earnest. Russell's work draws our attention to a dialogue that scholars such as Miriam Hansen, Anne Friedberg, and Giuliana Bruno have initiated, and that Russell terms "parallax historiography." Her useful neologism illuminates an emergent mode of historiographical reflection that recovers the radical changes that marked early cinema to better understand those that have transformed our own cinema over the past two decades. While "parallax" denotes the concept of parallelism, it also insists on perspectivism; indeed, questioning contemporary feminism's "ways of looking" at early cinema is at the heart of Russell's project. She makes clear that the "virtual, mobile" gaze increasingly attributed to female spectators in early and late forms of cinematic consumption may also reflexively function as a model for the methodologies and sight lines of contemporary feminist practice. The ability to recognize our own ideological reflections in the mirror of our analyses may be the most pro-

ductive enactment of Laura Mulvey's call for the "passionate detachment" that film feminism has long sought to achieve.

While cognizant of the risks of representation, the reader—and this introduction—thus concludes with a call for the delicate balance between ideological investment and historical scrutiny, a balance between recognition and attachment, a project that we present to the readers as at once complete and gestural. In doing so, we trust this collection will demonstrate the imperative of continuing feminists' self-reflexive intervention in the recovery and consideration of early cinema's multiple histories—a project animated, after all, by the desire to assess and intervene in our own present "period" of critical experimental, and representational flux.

Notes

1   Robyn Wiegman, "What Ails Feminist Criticism? A Second Opinion," *Critical Inquiry* 25 (winter 1999): 371.

2   Vivian Sobchack, "What Is Film History?, or, The Riddle of the Sphinxes," in *Reinventing Film Studies,* ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 303–304.

3   I borrow the allusion from Kino International Video's collection title: "First Ladies: Early Women Filmmakers, 1915–1925." Released in September 2000, this collection makes available previously obscure copies of films by Lois Weber, Cleo Madison, Alice Guy-Blaché, Ruth Ann Baldwin, and Dorothy Davenport Reid; it is complemented by Milestone Film and Video's simultaneous release of the "Women of Cinema—The Filmmakers" series, which includes titles by Nell Shipman and Frances Marion. Of the cable-channel documentaries now available on women and early cinema, see in particular *Reel Models: The Women of Early Film* (produced by Sue and Chris Koch), which aired on American Movie Classics on 30 May 2000, and again on 1 August 2000.

4   The Turner Classic Movies series resulted largely from the efforts of the Women Film Pioneers Project, based at Duke University, directed by Jane Gaines and coordinated by Radha Vatsal (initially by Jennifer Parchesky). Throughout the August 2000 series Gaines provided introductory commentaries on the films and discussed the roles of women directors and producers in the early period. Alison McMahan appeared in the series as a research specialist on Alice Guy-Blaché in *The Lost Garden: The Life and Cinema of Alice Guy-Blaché* (originally produced as *Le jardin oubliè: La vie et oeuvre d'Alice Guy-Blaché,* by Marquise Lepage for the National Film Board of Canada, 1995).

5   Kay Armatage lists a similar constellation of historical effects that might explain the drastic reduction in women's directorial efforts following the advent

of sound technologies. At the same time, Armatage usefully reminds us that "it would be foolish to argue that [silent] cinema was anything like a 'free zone' for women" but, at least, it "had not yet begun to effect the deliberate exclusion of women found in the other more established arts such as poetry, music, and painting." Armatage, "Nell Shipman: A Case of Heroic Femininity," in *Feminisms in the Cinema,* ed. Laura Pietropaolo and Ada Testaferri (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 127.

6   By far the most vitriolic and lamentable articulation of such a perspective, one written from a position self-professed as feminism, is Susan Gubar's "What Ails Feminist Criticism?," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (summer 1998): 878–902. Robyn Wiegman's response to Gubar, cited above, should be applauded as a healthy repudiation of Gubar's complaints and ignominious concerns.

7   For a thoughtful discussion of what it may mean to talk about the "end of cinema," and how the post-analogue era forces new conceptualizations of film history, see Anne Friedberg, "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change," in *Reinventing Film Studies,* 438–452.

8   Sumiko Higashi, *Virgins, Vamps, and Flappers: The American Silent Movie Heroine* (St. Albans, Vt.: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1978); Marjorie Rosen, *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, and the American Dream* (New York: Avon Books, 1973); Anthony Slide, *Early Women Directors* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977); Patricia Erens, ed., *Sexual Stratagems: The World of Women in Film* (New York: Horizon Press, 1979). I am grateful to Jane Gaines for reminding me of this earlier work on the period.

9   Mary Ann Doane, "Remembering Women: Psychical and Historical Constructions in Film Theory," in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990), 48.

10   Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 46.

11   Ibid.

12   Tom Gunning, "Film History and Film Analysis: The Individual Film in the Course of Time," *Wide Angle* 12, 3 (1990): 14.

13   Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990); Richard Abel, ed., *Silent Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

14   Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 166.

15   See Vicki Callahan, "Screening Musidora: Inscribing Indeterminacy in Film History," *Camera Obscura* 48 (2002): 61.

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

17   For Tom Gunning, whose groundbreaking work introduced the concept of attractions, cinema's emphasis on "display rather than storytelling" predominates up until or around the nickelodeon boom (1905–1909). Gunning is careful to note that "attractions," per se, "should not be taken as a monolithic definition of early cinema," but rather seen as an integral part of a complex textual

fabric that has not yet hypostasized into a classical paradigm. Gunning is just as careful to avoid pinpointing the date of a wholesale transition, saying most simply that "early cinema" is a term that "forms a binary opposition with the narrative form of classical cinema." Nonetheless, in Thomas Elsaesser's influential volume, conspicuously titled *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative,* the life span of the period is carefully etched as the years between 1895 and 1917. See Gunning, " 'Now You See It, Now You Don't': The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions," in *Silent Cinema,* ed. Abel, 73.

18 David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Janet Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

19 See in particular Miriam Hansen, "Adventures of Goldilocks: Spectatorship, Consumerism, and Public Life," *Camera Obscura* 22 (1990): 51–72.

20 Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey, "Screen Histories: Introduction," in *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader,* ed. Kuhn and Stacey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9.

21 Respectively Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

22 Alison Butler, "New Film Histories and the Politics of Location," *Screen* 33, 4 (winter 1992): 425.

23 Feminism's future endeavors in this direction have the capacity to build from the remarkable energy of a large body of scholars, curators, and archivists whose stake in recovering and preserving silent-era cinema has mobilized a conversation of international proportions unprecedented in other areas of film studies. Though primarily devoted to the study of cinema prior to World War I, the flourishing of DOMITOR (the International Society for the Study of Early Cinema, formed in 1989) clearly marks this distinction, as do the recent activities of the FIAF, the Amsterdam Workshops held at the Nederlands Filmmuseum since 1994, and the prolific networking found at the annual Giornate del Cinema Muto. Elsewhere emergent digital media technologies have aided efforts to make erstwhile invisible or scattered national collections of early films more widely available. Yuri Tsivian's bilingual CD-ROM, *Immaterial Bodies: Cultural Anatomy of Early Russian Films* (1999), as well as Matsuda Film Productions' release of the *Masterpieces of Japanese Silent Cinema* DVD (2000), which includes scenes from forty-five films presented by benshi narrators, exemplify such advances.

24 Wiegman, "What Ails Feminist Criticism?", 376.

25 David Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 64. I would like to thank Marshall Brown for drawing my attention to Perkins' study, and for organizing the *Modern Language Quarterly* symposium on periodization in literary studies at the University of Washing-

ton (spring 2001). Both sources were invaluable aids for reflecting on the questions formulated in this introduction; a reminder that the issues we confront when writing film history are fruitfully thought in relation to debates taking place in surrounding disciplines. The papers presented at the spring event, including Brown's provocative introduction "Periods and Resistances," are now collected in a special issue of *Modern Language Quarterly* 62:4 (December 2001).

26 I have adapted this list from Robert J. Griffin's "A Critique of Romantic Periodization," in *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives,* ed. Lawrence Besserman (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1996), 143.

27 Janet Bergstrom, "Introduction: Parallel Lines," in her edited collection *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4.

28 Ibid., 3.

29 Ibid., 4.

30 Bruno, *Streetwalking,* 4.

31 Ibid., 3.

Reflecting Film Authorship **I**

AMELIE HASTIE

Circuits of Memory and History

The Memoirs of Alice Guy-Blaché

But for all that I now knew that I was not in any of the
houses of which the ignorance of the waking moment had,
in a flash, if not presented me with a distinct picture, at least
persuaded me of the possible presence, my memory had
been set in motion; as a rule I did not attempt to go to sleep
again at once, but used to spend the greater part of the night
recalling our life in the old days at Combray with my great-
aunt, at Balbec, Paris, Doncières, Venice, and the rest;
remembering again all the places and people I had known,
what I had actually seen of them, and what others had
told me.—Marcel Proust

Repeating, Remembering

The majority of the work concerning the world's first woman filmmaker,
Alice Guy-Blaché, has been produced under the rubric of remembering
her: writings and films about her seek to recollect and retrieve her lost work
and her "lost" place in history. For instance, one of the first essays to initiate
some revived interest in Guy-Blaché, by film historian Francis Lacassin, is
titled "Out of Oblivion: Alice Guy-Blaché." In this short piece, printed in
Sight and Sound in 1971, Lacassin declares: "Inaugurated in the prehistoric
period and over before the history of the cinema was born, Alice Guy's
career on both sides of the Atlantic has been either forgotten or attributed
to other people."[1] Gerald Peary's "Czarina of the Silent Screen: Solax's
Alice Blaché," originally published in the *Velvet Light Trap* in 1974, opens
similarly: "Look through Rotha or Jacobs or Knight or any of the standard
histories of the cinema and you will not find any reference to the existence
of Alice Guy-Blaché, though she directed approximately 270 films in the

early silent era."[2] In fact, she was responsible for the production of more than seven hundred films, most of which have also disappeared.

Moreover, as Peary's above statement illustrates, the breadth of Guy-Blaché's cinematic output is often contrasted in those works that lament her "disappearance" from history. So, in an open statement concerning "Woman and the Formal Film," issued in 1979, a group of feminist film-makers and scholars make the following proclamation: "Alice Guy is not represented in 'Film as Film' [a British film journal] and has scarcely been recognized anywhere. She was actively involved in film-making at the turn of the century, experimenting with narrative structures and the use of sound with film, but has long been forgotten by historians. Why are her films forgotten while those of Lumière and Méliès are used as standard texts?"[3] They then offer a general summons to women to fill such gaps in film history.[4] Other works stress the fact that no obituary appeared on Guy-Blaché's death in 1968 despite her tremendous labor.[5] Finally, a 1996 documentary about the early filmmaker, *The Lost Garden: The Life and Cinema of Alice Guy-Blaché* (dir. Marquise Lepage), comments on and corrects this lack of obituary. It ends with a printed coda that appears over an image of her gravestone in New Jersey: "Although she had been decorated by the French government and inducted into the Legion of Honour for her pioneering work in silent pictures, and went on to write, direct, and produce hundreds of films, becoming one of the most celebrated filmmakers in the early days of American cinema, Alice Guy-Blaché's contribution to the art of filmmaking was totally forgotten."

These concurrent losses — of films and position in history — are not necessarily coincidences. Indeed, I would contend that the loss of Guy-Blaché's place in history largely resulted from the loss of her films. That is, a primary reason why her contribution was "forgotten" is because most of the films she made were not preserved, or centrally archived, at the time of their production.[6] Those histories that do exist usually note this lack of availability of her films. At the same time, in their repeated emphases that Guy-Blaché's work and life have been forgotten, each of the above works attempts to correct this resultant historical amnesia: each strives to remember Guy-Blaché. They do so especially through her writings and the writings of others. In this essay, I consider the peculiarities of the construction of Guy-Blaché's history by bringing together written and cinematic forms. What, I ask, might we glean about film history and cinematic form through an analysis of words? Conversely, how might we read these words through film histories and theories of film form? These questions are particularly relevant

in a study of a figure like Guy-Blaché, whose cinematic works were largely lost and whose written words sought to recollect them.

Although Guy-Blaché has begun to appear in standard histories of the cinema since 1990, and her films are now being found throughout the world, acts of remembering, recollecting, and retrieving remain significant on several levels.[7] By definition, they imply a certain repetition: to re-member is to bring to mind again; to re-collect is to gather together again or to re-member; and to re-trieve is to get back, to re-store, to re-member. We can thus deduce two important—if somewhat obvious—points concerning this work of remembrance and Alice Guy-Blaché. If we are remembering her and recollecting her work, then her work (and our memory of her) has been lost, but at one point her work (and she herself) were in mind, or known. In other words, she had to have been in mind once to be brought to mind again. Indeed, this is the assertion repeatedly made by those who have attempted to restore Guy-Blaché's history.

In their works on autobiography, both Leigh Gilmore and Paul Freeman recognize that repetition, as well as the loss—or erasure—that necessitates it, are inherent in definitions of "remember" and "recollect" (respectively).[8] In *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation,* Gilmore emphasizes the repetition inherent in remembering as she scribes the word "re-member"; she then defines it as "both the act of memory and the restoration of erased persons and texts as bodies of evidence."[9] In *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative,* Freeman similarly focuses on the inherent repetition and loss inscribed in the word "recollection": "While the 're' makes reference to the past, 'collection' makes reference to a present act, an act . . . of gathering together what might have been dispersed or lost."[10] He then goes on to consider the relationship between recollection and writing. He asserts, "Framed another way, the word recollection holds within it reference to the two distinct ways we often speak about history: as the trail of past events or 'past presents' that have culminated in now and as the act of writing, the act of gathering them together, selectively and imaginatively, into a followable story."[11] For Freeman, then, the process of remembering is essential to writing histories. These notions about memory, autobiography, and writing have much to bear on the history of Guy-Blaché, since her writings and spoken words are at the fore of all the acts of remembering her.

Recognizing herself that her work and name had been practically erased from film history and thus endeavoring to re-place herself in this history, Guy-Blaché took on the task of writing her memoirs. These memoirs (and

spoken interviews with her) have now become the dominant history of Guy-Blaché; most works that treat her heavily depend on them for facts and the story of her life. So, as the generic name *memoirs* suggests, the history of Guy-Blaché is largely known through her work of remembrance and recollection.[12] This juxtaposition between memory and history is just one of many mergings between apparent oppositions in common representations of Guy-Blaché. Another such union exists between the private and public spaces of Guy-Blaché's life. Indeed, considering the fact that the process of remembering is normally a personal one, we also might recognize how Guy-Blaché's private history (necessarily) became a public one with the publication of her memoirs and their subsequent circulation in writings about her.[13]

The very title of Lepage's documentary, *The Lost Garden: The Life and Cinema of Alice Guy-Blaché,* exemplifies the common tropes in works on the filmmaker. As it rediscovers her "lost" work, it both separates and conjoins Guy-Blaché's "life" and "cinema," posing, then, an intermingling between a private and a public history, as well as the filmmaker's personal and professional status.[14] Such contrasts and connections are not uncommon in representations of women in particular, and they are certainly consistent in almost all texts on Guy-Blaché. In fact, as constructed via discursive forms ranging from her memoirs to *The Lost Garden* to her own filmic works (especially those produced with her production company, Solax), our understanding of Alice Guy-Blaché signifies a persistent merging of what might appear to be oppositional practices or spaces: public/private, professional/personal, institutional/familial,[15] history/memory, fact/fiction, and even image/word.

Moreover, the separate components of each of these sets might also be linked: history is often understood as providing a seemingly objective, institutionalized view that hence circulates in public and professional realms, whereas memory is more often understood as springing from a subjective and private position, one linked to personal and familial arenas. Tracing recent changes in the conception of these phenomena, Pierre Nora argues, "Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition."[16] He then details what positions them oppositionally, for instance, "memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority."[17] History thus appears to have the status of fact, whereas memory—owing to its subjective and hence fallible nature—appears potentially aligned with fiction.[18] Considering, however, that such a notion as history itself guards

memory, the movement between these oppositional domains becomes evident and even inevitable. At the same time, the fallibility of history, which often springs from its very institutionalization, suggests a further kinship with memory, as I later sketch. I would add, finally, that it might be her very consistent movement between these seeming oppositions that, for decades, had displaced Guy-Blaché from broader accounts of film history. As she moves between public and private, professional and personal, factual and fictional realms, we haven't known quite where or how to place her.

Although the image/word dichotomy might appear to be the most puzzling pair I have laid out here, I would like to turn to it now, as it does suggest a way to place Guy-Blaché in film history and film historiography. Indeed, it forces us to ask what happens when we seek to recreate a history of a filmmaker, the majority of whose films have been lost. One way to begin this work, as this essay shows, is through the re-collection of images in and from written forms.[19] That is, with the loss of and relative inaccessibility to her cinematic texts, I would suggest that we might read certain written works, like memoirs, not only as historical texts, but also as cinematic ones. In part, we can see the written work as an extension of the author's cinematic production. To this end, then, I am reading the memoirs as histories but also through particular theories of film form. In producing this sort of reading I do not mean to argue that the two forms (written and cinematic) are interchangeable; rather, I would like to suggest that seeing a provocative convergence of these forms can not only reveal insights into the history of the figures but can also suggest a renewed interest in the relation between writing and filmmaking. Finally, as these issues relate to the loss of images and the production of words, we can also see Guy-Blaché's memoir-writing as one authorial mode that seeks to recover another form of authorship.

Setting Memory in Motion

Because they inaugurated the re-collection of her history, I focus my subsequent examination on Guy-Blaché's memoirs, which are clearly an attempt to reconstruct the author's history through her own recollective processes. The text generally follows a chronological line, if an incomplete, or at least interrupted, one. As the memoirs narrate, Guy-Blaché was born in France in 1873, raised briefly in Chile, and returned to France as a young girl for schooling. When her father lost his publishing business in Chile, he moved with the rest of his family back to France, and died soon after.

With the death of her brother and the marriages of her sisters, Alice became the primary support for her and her mother. She took stenography lessons (unusual for a woman of the time) and found a job with Léon Gaumont. When Gaumont began producing films to market with his burgeoning camera production, Guy asked permission to try to make some films as well; soon she became the sole director for the House of Gaumont. There she experimented with a variety of genres and techniques, including the chronophone (an early mechanism to produce sound films).

In 1907 she married Herbert Blaché, an agent for Gaumont, and moved to the United States. Blaché helped set up Gaumont's American business; Guy-Blaché initially assisted him with his work, gave birth to their first child (Simone), and then began a studio of her own, the Solax Company. She had her second child around the same time that she moved Solax from Long Island to Fort Lee, New Jersey. For Solax, she supervised hundreds of films, but the company was dissolved in early 1914. Guy-Blaché then went on to work for her husband's new company, Blaché Features, as a director and Blaché's assistant. Not long after Blaché ran off to Hollywood with one of his stars, Guy-Blaché followed him in an attempt to repair their marriage. Although she made a number of films for other companies, Guy-Blaché suffered great financial loss during this period. After the clear failure of her marriage, she returned to France with her children, where she unsuccessfully sought work in the film industry. She toiled to restore her reputation in film history; she could not retrieve any of her lost films during her lifetime, but she was awarded the Legion of Honor in 1955. Having traveled with her daughter Simone throughout the latter's diplomatic career, mother and daughter retired to the United States, where Guy-Blaché was also reunited with her son's family. She died in 1968.

Even though we get this image of Guy-Blaché's life, the memoirs seem incomplete. Moreover, the often tangential stories the author tells interrupt the chronological detailing of her life. In this sense, the text seems to exemplify Walter Benjamin's definition of an (anti)autobiography; that is, the memoirs are not an autobiography but a series of reminiscences. In relation to his brief memoirs, "A Berlin Chronicle," Benjamin writes:

> Reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not always amount to an autobiography. . . . For autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities. For even if months and years appear here, it is in the form they have at the moment of recollection. This strange form—it may be called fleeting or eternal—is in neither case the stuff that life is made of.[20]

Guy-Blaché's *Memoirs* are made up of such "moments and discontinuities": throughout the work, one brief story or image begets another and so on, often with seemingly little connection between them. A short text, it includes a series of sketches whose individual length, in a sense, resembles many of her early short films. The sketches tell stories about her life: her upbringing, her entry into film production, her marriage, her move to the United States, and, finally, her relative disappearance from historical records.

The stories Guy-Blaché tells are, obviously, narratives of her own history and the larger history that shaped her. Although many historians did not have access to the actual volume, the memoirs managed to set the scene for much of the historical work on Guy-Blaché done in the 1970s and 1980s, as those works draw from Guy-Blaché's words (whether in the form of her memoirs, extracts from that text, or interviews with her).[21] Yet the filmmaker's memoirs set a rather different scene for texts like Lepage's *The Lost Garden:* whereas the memoirs utilize memory to produce a history, the film's structure—and the history it produces—greatly resembles processes of memory.[22] Decrying what he sees as the newly emerging distinction between history and memory and the subsumption of one into the other, Pierre Nora proclaims that "History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it."[23] In the case of Guy-Blaché's memoirs (as well as many texts about her), it seems that memory is instead suspicious of history.

Since they did not include her, Guy-Blaché did not recognize the histories of the periods in which she worked as completely true; hence, she attempted to reconstruct, or transform, those histories through her memories. Nora sees this sort of activity as a necessary process. Further examining phenomenological trends in the transformation of both history and memory, he claims: "The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history. The task of remembering makes everyone his[/her] own historian."[24] Although this suggestion might seem a bit hyperbolic, through it Nora nicely stages the relation between history and memory that is made (and indeed reconnected) in memoirs like those of Guy-Blaché. The primary task of memoirs is often precisely to connect (or reconnect) history and memory via personal narrative. As Mark Freeman points out in consideration of the "truth" that autobiographies can tell, "the reality of living in time requires narrative reflection and that narrative reflection, in turn, opens the way toward a more comprehensive and expansive conception of truth itself."[25] While truth is often seen more as part of the purview of his-

tory rather than the more commonly fallible memory, we might see how transforming notions of what constitutes history, or histories, change our notions of the truth as well. Indeed, the inevitable narrativization of memory forms, in turn, narratives of history as well. So, considering memoirs—those narrativizations of memory and memories—as histories allows us to understand, or know, history, and the truths and nontruths that it produces, through a different lens.

Both the rediscovery and the production of alternative histories have been an important part of feminist scholarship, as this work seeks to bring to light new knowledge about women's lives that has been forgotten and/or made invisible. Still, explicitly elevating Guy-Blaché and her contemporaries to the status of historians might seem to be risky work, considering—as I discuss—the fallibility or fictionalizing function of memory. But in doing so, our knowledge of history, historiographical processes, and film culture can be valuably transformed. Not only can we again recognize the fallibility of institutionalized histories (and at this point in time, this seems common knowledge), but we can consider how active such women have always been in the production of histories.[26] Furthermore, this new form of authorship transcribes and illuminates the multiple roles as authors women have played in the film industry and in film culture more broadly. Finally, these works reveal, in sometimes unexpected and provocative ways, how narrative films—and histories of these films—always juggle and recombine fact and fiction, reality and fantasy.

The memoir and the autobiography hence constitute a sort of pivot between memory, history, and truth. Through the narrative process, they reveal the workings of the author's memory and tell an important history. While he argues against a conflation of memory and history (as I likewise would), Jacques LeGoff acknowledges that "Memory is the raw material of history. Whether mental, oral, or written, it is the living source from which historians draw."[27] He continues:

> Moreover, the discipline of history nourishes memory in turn, and enters into the great dialectical process of memory and forgetting experienced by individuals and societies. The historian must be there to render an account of these memories and of what is forgotten, to transform them into something that can be conceived, to make them knowable.[28]

Although LeGoff cautions against privileging memory over history, his remarks comment usefully on Guy-Blaché's project. Guy-Blaché would not entirely appear to be the objective historian that LeGoff insists on, yet she also acts as the historian he describes. Indeed, I would here emphasize

her role as a remembering historian: her memoirs are an account of (her own) memories, which had otherwise been forgotten, and she attempts to render them into a history that might be known. As "the raw material" of her own history—and that of early cinematic production—her memories are turned into a narrative that clearly displays the dialectical relationship between history and memory in the production of knowledge.

In her memoirs, Lillian Gish directly remarks on this sort of relation between history, memory, and truth. In a sense, her claims offer a commentary both on and counter to Guy-Blaché's circumstances. Gish writes:

> [D. W. Griffith's] claim that history books falsified actual happenings struck me as most peculiar. At that time I was too naive to think that history books would attempt to falsify anything. I've lived long enough now to know that the whole truth is never told in history texts. Only the people who lived through an era, who are the real participants in the drama as it occurs, know the truth. The people of each generation, it seems to me, are the most accurate historians of their time.[29]

Certainly I would not wholeheartedly agree with her assessment; though a very strategic point to make within an autobiography, her privileging of autobiographical history belies, as Shari Benstock, Paul Eakin, and others would point out, the synchronous fictional nature of autobiographies.[30] Yet the relation between history, memory, and even autobiography that she proposes—that is, that autobiographical accounts sown from memory might correct historical ones—is important to make, especially in the case of those autobiographical subjects who have been silenced, marginalized, or otherwise misrepresented in official histories. Indeed, LeGoff insists that we be careful in how we privilege memories and histories: "Memory, on which history draws and which it nourishes in return, seeks to save the past in order to serve the present and the future. Let us act in such a way that collective memory may serve the liberation and not the enslavement of human beings."[31]

The context of Gish's statement itself directs us to the inherent problems with granting certain memories the status of historical truth over others. Quite simply, she is making a case for historical truth in regard to early film pioneer D. W. Griffith. As is well documented, Griffith utilized his familial memories to produce an extremely racist depiction of history in *Birth of a Nation*.[32] The narration of his familial memories, and then American history as the logical offshoot of these memories, attempts to erase or legitimate the injustices produced by the American institutions of racism and slavery (not to mention cinema). Guy-Blaché, in contrast, depends on her

memories to illustrate (albeit, often indirectly) how institutionalized sexism has erased, or marginalized, her position in history; the writing of a new history through her memories is an attempt to make herself and her labor as a filmmaker visible and known.

These two very different cases thus point to the fact that arguments about truth are always political, ideological, and historical; because of the embedded and very complicated nature of these arguments, it is difficult to make a general case about the truth value of memoirs overall in the writing, or rewriting, of histories. While we must consider the potential veracity (or lack thereof) of these historical or remembered truths, my emphasis from here on is an investigation into how a history is constructed through memories and what various truths its facets of construction tell. To paraphrase Benjamin, I am not concerned merely with what is installed in the chamber of memory at its enigmatic center, but more with the many entrances leading into the interior.[33] Furthermore, I am interested in the way that the many entrances of memory shape the enigmatic center of history.

Technologies of Memory and Film

For Guy-Blaché, one of memory's entrances unsurprisingly lies at the entrance to the memoirs themselves. Indeed, in spite (or possibly because) of the evident recognition of seeming silenced or marginalized in history, Guy-Blaché's memoirs possess a rather humble beginning:

> In an era in which "retrospectives" are fashionable, perhaps the souvenirs of the eldest of women film directors may find some favor with the public. I have no pretense to making a work of literature, but simply to amuse, to interest the reader by anecdotes and personal memories concerning their great friend the cinema, at whose birth I assisted.[34]

This statement is significantly modest on a number of levels, and as such it opens up several important questions. First, the metaphor Guy-Blaché invokes asserts that she did not labor as the mother of the cinema but rather as an assistant: a doctor, perhaps, or a nurse or midwife.[35] Interestingly, these same metaphors—concerning the birth of the cinema as well as the assistant to its birth—circulate in other prominent writings on film, but perhaps most peculiarly in Christian Metz's *Imaginary Signifier*.[36] His particular innovation of birthing metaphors have a provocative bearing on both Guy-Blaché's wielding of the terms and her position in film studies. In "Story/Discourse: A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism," Metz writes:

> I'm at the cinema. I am present at the screening of the film. *I am present.* Like the midwife attending a birth who, simply by her presence, assists the woman in labour, I am present for the film in a double capacity (though they are really one and the same) as witness and as assistant: I watch, and I help. By watching the film I help it to be born, I help it to live, since only in me will it live, and since it is made for that purpose: to be watched, in other words to be brought into being by nothing other than the look.[37]

His misunderstanding of the labor of a midwife notwithstanding, the "double capacity" Metz describes here—which goes beyond the singular one Guy-Blaché takes for herself—is important to note, especially because he genders both the originator of film and the subsequent spectators of film as female. In so doing, he also takes up the position of woman himself.[38] While Guy-Blaché refuses the position of birth-mother of film itself—and takes only the position as assistant/witness—the double capacity Metz describes might instead characterize Guy-Blaché's role as historian. Telling the story of her labor as a filmmaker, Guy-Blaché is a creator of and a witness to history at once. Taking a cue from Metz, we might also see subsequent historians and theorists—a special brand of film "spectators"—also as witnesses. Most, though, as Guy-Blaché suggests, and as film history has until recently borne out, have *mis*recognized her work in the history of film production. In her memoirs, however modestly, she thus produces a new image, or story, that readers can themselves also "bring into being."

Oddly, though, in so doing, she also denies her labor as a writer, for she refuses the position of a "great" author; rather, she will "simply . . . amuse" her readers ("if I have any," she even notes later).[39] As she claims in the prologue, the memoirs are only an "anecdotal history."[40] Designating the memoirs as "souvenirs," moreover, also trivializes the work, for souvenirs are often considered to be mere trinkets. But more specifically, a souvenir is an object to help one remember travel through time and space. This travel is like that plotted for Guy-Blaché in *The Lost Garden,* and it also characterizes, of course, the movement and form of cinema in general. Hence, even as Guy-Blaché attempts to humbly belittle her work, her language inevitably connects—and makes visible—her authorship as a writer (an autobiographer, a historian) and a filmmaker.

Both this modest posture and a tension around the author's visibility are fairly typical within nineteenth-century traditions of women's writings, from which Guy-Blaché's work in part springs.[41] In *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America,* Mary Kelley sketches how attempts to separate the private from the public sphere cre-

ated a complicated situation for nineteenth-century women writers. Describing the scene that necessitated female authors' humble poses, Kelley writes:

> Unlike a male, a female's person was to be shielded from public scrutiny. Neither her ego nor her intellect was cultivated for future public vocation. After all, her proper sphere was the home. She was to stand in the background, out of the way. Even her exercise of moral, social, or personal influence was to be indirect, subtle, and symbolic. Her voice was to be soft, subdued, and soothing. In essence, hers was to remain an invisible presence.[42]

One way to remain "invisible," even as they were becoming published writers, Kelley documents, was for women to remain "secret writers," anonymous authors. Though not so invisible (at least in the sense Kelley invokes), the "voice" that opens Guy-Blaché's memoirs is just such a "soft, subdued, and soothing" one, unlikely to insist on her importance in the public field of history.

Continuing to draw on metaphors of visibility and the visual, Kelley goes on to acknowledge that even attempts at secrecy or anonymity could not hide women's entrance into the public sphere. As she notes, entering the public realm "suggested a new assertion of a woman's being, for, simply stated, to be a published writer was to have a visible influence, a public role beyond the home. It was to leave woman's private domestic sphere for man's, to meddle in the public affairs of men."[43] Clearly, then, such women were in a paradoxical position: they resisted the denial of their activity in the public sphere by entering the literary marketplace, but they often did so in secret: via anonymity or even in disguise as men. In fact, these acts of secrecy, paradoxically, unveiled the women's complicated and contradictory social positions. Kelley writes: "And it was ironic that to be a secret writer was also to announce that resistance, to call attention to it. To screen themselves, their being, in public, was inadvertently to dramatize in public the private subjugation of their lives."[44] Judith Fetterley also recognizes these inherent contradictions. In fact, she underscores how women writers themselves directly played with these contradictions. Contrary to Ann Douglas's claims that the tone adapted by nineteenth-century writers was one of "authorial innocence," Fetterley asserts that many women writers were "in conscious tension with the posture of 'innocence.'"[45] Surely aware of the complexities involved in being the first woman filmmaker, Guy-Blaché displays a similar "conscious tension" with "authorial innocence" in her memoirs. Thus, as the memoirs

move forward, Guy-Blaché subverts the image she paints early on, that the memoirs are purely anecdotal, written only for her readers' amusement.

Kelley's metaphors might direct us to the complex layers of Guy-Blaché's (visible) authorship. First, as I note above, we can see Guy-Blaché as an author in a dual sense: she is both a filmmaker and a writer. The issues of visibility and invisibility that Kelley raises certainly have bearing on both roles. As a director, Guy-Blaché was in some ways an "invisible" presence, for she almost always worked behind the scenes. At the same time, because she directed and produced these constructions of images, she was clearly not invisible in the sense Kelley describes. (As the trade journals of the day document, she was fairly well known in the filmmaking community.) In fact, Guy-Blaché's rather prominent position within an evolving technological industry producing the newly emerging visual culture might influence and alter the ways we know, or see, her in film history. Furthermore, the history she authored in her older age was precisely that of her authorship as a filmmaker. In other words, her literary authorship was an attempt by her to return to visibility after her film authorship had been made invisible. Her work in film production thus highlights the very particular and complex tension between visibility and invisibility that she experienced and that she describes, in part through a guise of "innocent" modesty.

Indeed, after their humble beginning, her memoirs attempt to illuminate not only her visible influence on and in film history but, more specifically, her influence on the visible: the world of cinematic production. We might thus consider another definition of "screening" oneself than that which Kelley offers above. Surely a screen does not just hide what is behind it; it also acts, as does a movie screen, to unveil images before it. Whereas nineteenth-century women writers had to screen themselves *from* the public, after her initial modesty (which is only a screen anyway — and an ephemeral one at that), Guy-Blaché tries to screen her history *in* public. That is, she tries to make it visible rather than hide it.

Her modesty is indeed undermined throughout the book by her repeated insistence on her presence in film history: many of the anecdotes and personal memories she offers illustrate her important role in history-making. Even though she later claims that "I make no pretense to undertake the history of cinema in the United States. I confine myself to reporting what I have seen and heard," what Guy-Blaché did see and hear was highly significant, especially since what she "saw" defined precisely her role as film author.[46] Moreover, she was not only an onlooker or eavesdropper to cinematic inventions in the United States or in France. She tells of her partici-

pation in the discovery of filmic "tricks" such as double exposures, fade-outs, the turning of films in reverse, and others, and of her use of "science" to produce effects of realism.[47] Guy-Blaché also asserts that she imported this same sort of technical and cinematic invention to her films made in the United States, where, she claims, she received "critical praise" for such ingenuity.[48]

Along with these declarations concerning the specifics of her technical work, Guy-Blaché records how she fought for her position at Gaumont:

> I had been left to work out alone the difficulties at the beginning, to break new ground, but when the affair became interesting, *doubtless lucrative,* my directorship was bitterly disputed. However, I was combative and thanks to president [Gustave] Eiffel, who always encouraged me with kindness, the whole Board of Directors, recognizing my efforts, decided to leave me at the head of the service.[49]

Guy-Blaché's battle for her position at Gaumont in one sense parallels her battle for recognition in film history. In fact, she refers directly to her attempts to retrieve her position in film history throughout the volume. For instance, she notes her contact with French historian Georges Sadoul over her relative absence in his work on French film history. She writes, "Sadoul . . . , misled, and doubtless in all good faith (he says himself that he is ignorant of that epoch and speaks only from hearsay), has attributed my first films to people who probably worked for the Gaumont studios only as actors, whose names I don't even know."[50] She emphasizes that, after meeting with her and seeing documents to prove that "the films in question" were her work, Sadoul agreed to make some changes to his text, though "his numbering still contains errors."[51] In the final chapter of her memoirs, Guy-Blaché also registers that for many decades her work was not even recorded in Gaumont's own company history. From what she says, she attempted to rectify this mistake early on, but Léon Gaumont died before he made the proper corrections to the history.

Thus, Guy-Blaché's initial modesty, and her tone throughout the book (which seems to derive from a refusal to assign culpability to particular persons), camouflages her attempt to intervene in a history that had, at the time, excluded her. But of course this intervention is still apparent, clearly countering Guy-Blaché's initial claims that the memoirs are meant "simply to amuse."[52] We see the seriousness of her venture not only in the passages in which she explicitly takes credit for discovering or utilizing certain cinematic inventions or in those in which she engages with the histories that had excluded her. In fact, we see the sincerity of her critical project even in

the anecdotes she tells. Many of these—which one would hardly call amusing—might serve to comment both on the recording of Guy-Blaché's history and on the impact of reading memoirs themselves as a form of history. In part they do so by revealing themselves as screen memories.

In Freud's essay "Screen Memories"—a work that, as editor James Strachey suggests, might itself be considered "autobiographical material only thinly disguised"—Freud maps out the workings of memory through his own self-analysis. That is, he includes a dialogue between patient and doctor, yet he occupies each role himself. He creates this discussion between his two divided selves in order to discover what is fictional about a particular remembered experience and what is real. His divided selves in effect enact the process of understanding a screen memory: since a screen memory is an amalgamation of two different fantasies (or, possibly, one real memory and one fictional one), it must be divided in order to be fully understood. In initially describing the memory in question, he thus tells himself, "You projected the two phantasies on to one another and made a childhood memory of them. . . . I can assure you that people often construct such things unconsciously—almost like works of fiction."[53] In attempting to explain what is nonetheless "genuine" about those fantasies, he goes on to define screen memory:

> There is in general no guarantee of the data produced by our memory. But I am ready to agree with you that the scene is genuine. If so, you selected it from innumerable others of a similar or another kind because, on account of its content (which in itself was indifferent) it was well adapted to represent the two phantasies, which were important enough to you. A recollection of this kind, whose value lies in the fact that it represents in the memory impression and thoughts of a later date whose content is connected with its own by symbolic or similar links, may appropriately be called a "*screen memory.*"[54]

Thus, as he says later, the screen memory is "one which owes its value as a memory not to its own content but to the relations existing between that content and some other, that has been suppressed."[55] As he implies in these definitions and states directly elsewhere in this essay (as well as in other works, including "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis," a somewhat similar autobiographical sketch), Freud understands the workings of memory to be inherently transformative. In remembering, we may construct a "remembered" experience that is in part fictional, but memories also reveal—if not an actual experience—our ideas of an experience.[56]

Certainly, considering the concept of the screen memory, like those visual metaphors that Kelley uses, can again highlight the fact that Guy-Blaché's

memories were, of course, of her work around the movie screen. Many of the stories in the volume are thus screen memories in this double sense: at once they hide and reveal an aspect of her history, and they narrate stories of the cinema. Yet the concept of the screen memory is not useful merely for its metaphorical possibilities for film historians and theorists. It also allows us to ponder how we might utilize memoirs in the production of history, for it at once admits to the fallibility of memory and asserts memory's reliability, often through its very complicated form. As a project of historical recovery, or what Gilmore might term "re-membering," many of Guy-Blaché's anecdotes and claims function as possible screen memories; that is, the director's genuine assertion that her place in film history was revoked seems to be projected onto stories of her film work throughout the text. Although it is impossible to prove the veracity of some of these claims or stories, their inclusion is telling. For instance, at the end of the volume, when Guy-Blaché describes the final straw that led her to leave the United States and return to France, she comments, "America, they say, always takes back everything she gives you."[57] And she ends the work with a recollection of a remark by Roosevelt: "It is hard to have failed, it is worse to have never tried."[58] These remarks serve to grant the autobiography a certain tone — both melancholic and angry — that we can see projected onto recollections of earlier times.

The melancholic and angry tone we see above is even more prominently projected in an apocalyptic story of the cinema — that is, an apocalyptic screen memory — that she tells early in the memoirs. At the end of chapter 2, which precedes the chapter in which she recalls her entrance into filmmaking and the "birth" of her first film, she recounts an early "disaster begun by the cinema" in which many people, including most members of an acquaintance's family (the Dillayes), were killed in a fire presumably started in a projection booth.

> Seventeen persons in this family which had never known sorrow perished in that terrible catastrophe. . . . Also, a year later, the eldest daughter of Dillaye, who had been separated from her mother, died of a kind of consumption. Dillaye had to wait long before he could return to his usual occupations.[59]

Aside from the memory of this family's tragedy, what other narratives does this story tell? For one, it seems possible that with this catastrophic story of the cinema, Guy-Blaché foreshadows the way in which her image will be extinguished from the cinematic record. To borrow a cliché, for Guy-Blaché, work in the film industry was both a blessing and a curse: she loved the labor but rightfully despised the fact that her work and her memory

seemed lost to film history. As a literal and figurative screen memory, the above recollection appears to foretell Guy-Blaché's (metaphorical) death in the discourse of film history. Moreover, it tells of two kinds of separations: the separation, or loss, that family members endured (and that the daughter in part died from) and the father's separation from his family and his career. This sort of story—devastating in its vision of work, family, history, and the loss thereof—seems to play out in various histories of Guy-Blaché.

Other seemingly disparate stories that Guy-Blaché tells might bear even clearer associations in their close proximity to each other. That is, the moments and discontinuities that make up the memoirs might be woven together in suggestive ways. In the memoirs, Guy-Blaché offers a series of reminiscences that, read in relation to one another, offer enlightening angles from which to view certain connections between her work, her personal life, and her place in film history. Such connections are precisely what define screen memories, whose value lies not in their own content but, as Freud states, in "the relations existing between that content and some other, that has been suppressed." Other theorists also suggest that memory both is structured and creates meaning through links between images and/or ideas. An especially provocative series of linked images and ideas appears in chapter 7 of the memoirs, where Guy-Blaché tells a number of stories about the research into various social institutions that she performed in order to provide effects of realism in her films. She follows these sketches with information about changes in the control of Solax, a brief mention of actress and director Lois Weber, a short story about the discovery of the North Pole, and other tales of early film production. The content of each of these stories is interesting in itself, but the meaning becomes even more provocative when we read the stories in terms of one another, as I attempt to do in what follows.

Guy-Blaché declares at the end of chapter 6: "The trade of the cinematographer is not always a happy one. Concern for the truth obliges one to see and document sources which are sometimes tragic."[60] Chapter 7 then bears out this observation, beginning with the detailing of numerous visits Guy-Blaché took for film research: to an orphans' "asylum," a "hospital for the incurable," a "madhouse," a night court session, and a prison. Most of the stories expose broken and divided families, and some imply a culpability on the part of men. For instance, at the night court session, Guy-Blaché witnessed a fourteen-year-old girl, with no family or friends, found guilty of prostitution. After the girl was sentenced to a reformatory, Guy-Blaché reports, "A jailer came to take her; she followed quietly. Someone beside me murmured, 'What about the men?'"[61] Next she recounts the case of a

young mother of an infant sentenced to six months of detention because she was "afflicted with an acute case of venereal disease": "When her baby was taken from her arms, she cried out piercingly 'Leave me my baby, I beg you. Leave me my baby.' "[62] The next brief tale concerns a "poor idiot," a man incarcerated in Sing Sing for attempting to "kiss a woman against her will." While Guy-Blaché does not seem unsympathetic to this man's plight, her sympathies—as registered in part by comments she attributes to others—primarily lie with the women's experiences. These short narratives clearly reflect Guy-Blaché's recognition of women's disadvantaged social position in public and private spaces. And all of the (unamusing) anecdotes document and bemoan the plights of broken families; such a point of view is consistent with the rest of the memoirs, though it remains relatively tacit in relation to Guy-Blaché's own family and marriage.

The two sketches that follow the above are quite telling. The first concerns Guy-Blaché's visit to a prison, culminating in her stop at the electric chair. She describes this stay as such:

> The director was so kind as to invite me to sit in it. I did so. They put the manacles on me and the director said "now, there is nothing to do but make contact. . . ." I asked if death were instantaneous. "Around eleven seconds," he answered, "some resist longer." He even invited me to attend an execution which would take place the next day. I refused. I have kept a photograph which I never see without a shudder.[63]

Immediately following this story is first Guy-Blaché's recounting of significant changes at Solax and then her mention of Lois Weber's work. I reproduce both short passages in full here:

> My husband, having finished his contract with Gaumont, had taken the presidency of Solax. I abandoned the reins to him with pleasure. I never attended any of the conferences where the Sales Co. composed the programs; I would have embarrassed the men, said Herbert, who wanted to smoke their cigars and to spit at their ease while discussing business.[64]
> Herbert Blaché had directed, in the little Gaumont studio at Fort Lee, a singer named Lois Weber who recorded several songs for the chronophone. She had watched me direct the first little films and doubtless thought it was not difficult. She got a directing job and certain Americans pretend that she was the first woman director. My first film, of which I speak in the first part of these memoirs, dated from 1896.[65]

Next she describes an "imposter" who attempted to take credit for the discovery of the North Pole. After he filmed a recreation of the adventure,

"America swallowed it," Guy-Blaché contends, until "Peary arrived in his turn and took the crown." The sequence of these tales, and the relations inevitably intimated between them, is really rather astounding.

We might better understand these relations through philosophies of memory and film, particularly since the two phenomena structure Guy-Blaché's history in many ways. Indeed, as Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin, Frances Yates, Henri Bergson, and others have shown, memory flows through associations between images and ideas. For Benjamin, for instance, memory might be imagined as the streets of Berlin, so that one path leads to another; to Yates, the "art" of memory also has a spatial quality, in that in remembering we might move from one image to the next as from one room of a house to another.[66] Bergson offers a different sort of spatial metaphor to explain the workings of memory, as he imagines it operating as a series of electrical currents. Offering an image of embedded circles to illustrate the relation between memory and perception, Bergson writes: "We maintain, on the contrary, that reflective perception is a *circuit,* in which all the elements, including the perceived object itself, hold each other in a mutual state of tension as in an electrical circuit."[67] He continues:

> It is the whole of memory, as we shall see, that passes over into each of these circuits, since memory is always present; but that memory, capable, by reason of its elasticity, of expanding more and more, reflects upon the object a growing number of suggested images—sometimes the details of the object itself, sometimes concomitant details which may throw light upon it.[68]

Focusing on the embedded relationship between these circles and hence the way in which memory expands, Bergson's description here is quite like Benjamin's contention that acts of memory produce "endless interpolations into what has been."[69] Moreover, understanding memory as a kind of electrical current, Bergson illustrates here how memory itself might forge connections between images and ideas.

Film form inevitably shapes such links as well. Indeed, connected by Guy-Blaché's acts of remembering, each story has the effect of an afterimage on that which follows it, so that it is difficult to read the recollections in isolation from one another. Stressing that the mind itself creates an afterimage, Hugo Munsterberg discusses how precinematic games and devices help provoke visually and mentally the semblance of depth and movement. The "positive afterimage," he says, is "a real continuation of the first impression" in the second.[70] Such continuity is produced, for instance, by the thaumatrope, a nineteenth-century optical device that rapidly spins a two-sided card in order to merge the images on each side. Notes Munsterberg,

"As soon as the card is quickly revolved about a central axis, the two pictures fuse into one. If a horse is on one side and a rider on the other, or a cage is on one and a bird on the other, we see the rider on the horse and the bird in the cage."[71] In part what allows us to fuse the images is the "circuitry" of memory itself.

Certainly such contraptions like the thaumatrope, or the later zootrope, presaged the invention of film. Indeed, then, a more complex "fusion" takes place through cinematic montage, the welding together of images on film. For theorists like Sergei Eisenstein, montage defines the aesthetic, intellectual, and even political possibilities of film form. As Eisenstein declares, "Montage is an idea that arises from the collision of independent shots—shots even opposite to one another."[72] Thus the collision of two shots (or, in some cases, two images within a shot) creates a new idea. According to Eisenstein, montage can have an optical, emotional, or intellectual aim. (Of the three, he privileges the intellectual, for he believes it can lead to political change.) Through montage—and through the intellectual response of the spectator to the montage—film form can stimulate relations and associations between images and ideas.

Laid out next to each other on the page, Guy-Blaché's reminiscences suggest such a spatial and cinematic, as well as an intellectual or associative, relation to one another, so that one echoes in the next, and the next after that. Hence we might see how the description of sitting in the electric chair resonates—as an electrical current, like memory itself—in the filmmaker's comment that she "abandoned the reins" of Solax to her husband "with pleasure."[73] Indeed, through the collision of these two notions is borne the suggestion that Guy-Blaché lost control not only of her company, but also of her place in history. Again, the image of the electric chair, along with her husband's insistence that she would "embarrass the men" at business meetings, also resounds in her mention of Lois Weber, who, as Guy-Blaché claims here, received her start in her business through Herbert Blaché. Guy-Blaché thus emphasizes how recognition of another woman's work has displaced recognition of her own role as the first woman filmmaker in history. Moreover, following the mention of Weber with the story of the imposter who tried to credit himself with the discovery of the North Pole (indeed, through a cinematic reenactment of the event!) is also a significant rhetorical gesture. For Guy-Blaché, then, it seems even that Weber is an "imposter" who attempted to take her own rightful position. History has been reconstructed—much like many early "actualities" that merely "reenacted" historical events—to put Weber in Guy-Blaché's place. These

memoirs, then, represent Guy-Blaché's attempt, not unlike that of Peary, to "take the crown" for her achievements.

Similar to her modestly proclaiming that her memoirs are merely an attempt to amuse her readers, Guy-Blaché reveals a certain humility: at least she does not overtly cast blame regarding the end of her career. But like the early proclamation, the "modesty" inherent in this indirect approach is belied in the connections that readers themselves might make between colliding anecdotes, this montage of memories. Like an afterimage produced by optical devices or the more complicated process of cinematic form, the flow of memory, narrative, and even of thought demands forging at least some links between the stories she tells. It seems, too, that although the above passages are not cited in any historical works on Guy-Blaché, their tenor resounds in works that emphasize Guy-Blaché's loss (one might even say "death") from history and that also blame her husband—directly or indirectly—for the end of her career.[74] Thus the memoirs, structured in great part as memory itself is structured, influence subsequent written and filmic histories of Guy-Blaché in myriad ways: in their form, their tenor, and their recollection of her history.

Strange Fictions

Both memory and autobiography—a genre essentially based on the telling of memories—manifest rather precarious relations between fact and fiction. One defining characteristic of screen memories, for Freud, is that they are constructed "almost like works of fiction." In more general parlance, memory is frequently defined as "elusive"; part of its elusive nature is the often impossible task of determining its "truth." Yet critics of autobiography also focus on the genre's association with fact, or truth, as well as fiction. As Leigh Gilmore suggests, "Authority in autobiography springs from its proximity to the truth claim of the confession, a discourse that insists upon the possibility of telling the whole truth while paradoxically frustrating that goal through the structural demands placed on how one confesses."[75] A complex relationship between fact and fiction thus defines memory and autobiography; because of this condition, it is nearly impossible to unravel the intertwining of these elements. Surely the above examples from Guy-Blaché's memoirs illustrate a very complicated knot of such discursive parts, and they are especially provocative in light of the field they illuminate: the history of the production of visual images. I would, then, like to

conclude with a final example that is indeed "fictional," but that also comments on the inextricability of seemingly opposing categories—whether public and private, history and memory, or fact and fiction—in regard to Guy-Blaché's life and history.

In an early 1912 issue of *Moving Picture World,* fictional film narrative and the story of Guy-Blaché's life and work literally come together. In a section titled "Manufacturer's Advance Notes" is a parody of a film summary.[76] Called "A Solax Celebration," this parody tells the tale of a New Year's party at Solax. Listed as featured players in this drama are Madame Alice Blaché as "The Cause" and Herbert Blaché as "A Relative—but an outsider." The "Synopsis" is as follows:

> The good people living in the Solax community, realizing that they have cause to make merry and celebrate before the advent of a New Year, because the Almighty had been so fortunate as to guide their bread-winning footsteps in the direction of the happy atmosphere of the Solax Studio, banked together, like the big happy family which they are, and gave expression to their happiness in the form of a gift to the immediate cause of their good fortune and sunshine. . . . The plot is not a thick one, but the execution progresses smoothly and with "spirit." The events took the leading figure entirely by surprise, and her emotion and her gratitude brought forth a lump in her throat.[77]

The first two scenes describe the party, but in the third, titled "Jealousy," the plot thickens. It is narrated as follows: "A near relative to The Cause [Herbert Blaché] and a neighbor to us all was jealous of the aforesaid tribute paid to his kin, so, in order that he may not be outshone in hospitality, invited the mob to invade the sanctified quarters of the Gaumont Company, where he showed some wonderful Gaumont productions."[78] Though this parody hints at the way Herbert Blaché attempted to displace his wife within the production of film narratives and film history, parceling out what is historically accurate and what is fabricated about this story is an impossible task.

This example offers a movement between fact and fiction that enables us to read each in a different light: the plot summary reveals both the sometimes fictional character of history and the truthful nature of fiction.[79] In "A Solax Celebration," a seemingly factual event masquerades as fiction: at least, one narrative masquerades as another. This type of guise—which seems consistent with the narratives of many of Guy-Blaché's Solax films— brings together several elements concerning histories of Guy-Blaché (including, of course, her own). First of all, the very opposition between fact and fiction is one that often informs thinking about the relation between

history and memory; the line between the former two is here blurred much like that between the latter coupling. Moreover, while "A Solax Celebration" entwines fact and fiction, it also clearly intermixes Guy-Blaché's public and private spheres. It demonstrates Guy-Blaché's independence from her husband and at the same time suggests tension, or at least competition, between the two. More importantly, the narrative points to Guy-Blaché's abilities to manage a business — yet a business in the form of a family. As such, it attests to Guy-Blaché's skills at moving between public and private spheres, professional and personal life.

Finally, since "A Solax Celebration" is a fiction of a fictional film in written — rather than purely visual — form, this example brings us back to yet another set of distinct categories, or media, that also form our understanding of Guy-Blaché. Guy-Blaché was indeed a filmmaker and a writer. As such a dual author, she produced both cinematic narratives and a written history. But, of course, these textual forms are forever conjoined. Most obviously, the memoirs link these media because, in written form, they tell the history of her authorship as a filmmaker. Additionally, the filmmaker's writings have provoked historians to seek out her films so that her place in history is further secured. And finally, the memoirs, with her films, have helped in the construction of a (cinematic) documentary about her life and work. In this sense, Guy-Blaché's work has come full circle, a route whose nonlinearity is inevitable when one's history is structured through acts of remembering.

Notes

1   Francis Lacassin, "Out of Oblivion: Alice Guy-Blaché," *Sight and Sound* 40, 3 (summer 1971): 151.

2   Gerald Peary, "Czarina of the Silent Screen: Solax's Alice Blaché," *Velvet Light Trap* 6 (1974): 35.

3   Annabel Nicholson, Felicity Sparrow, Jane Clarke, Jeanette Iljon, Lis Rhodes, Mary Pat Leece, Pat Murphy, and Susan Stein, "Woman and the Formal Film," in *Films for Women,* ed. Charlotte Brunsdon (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 187.