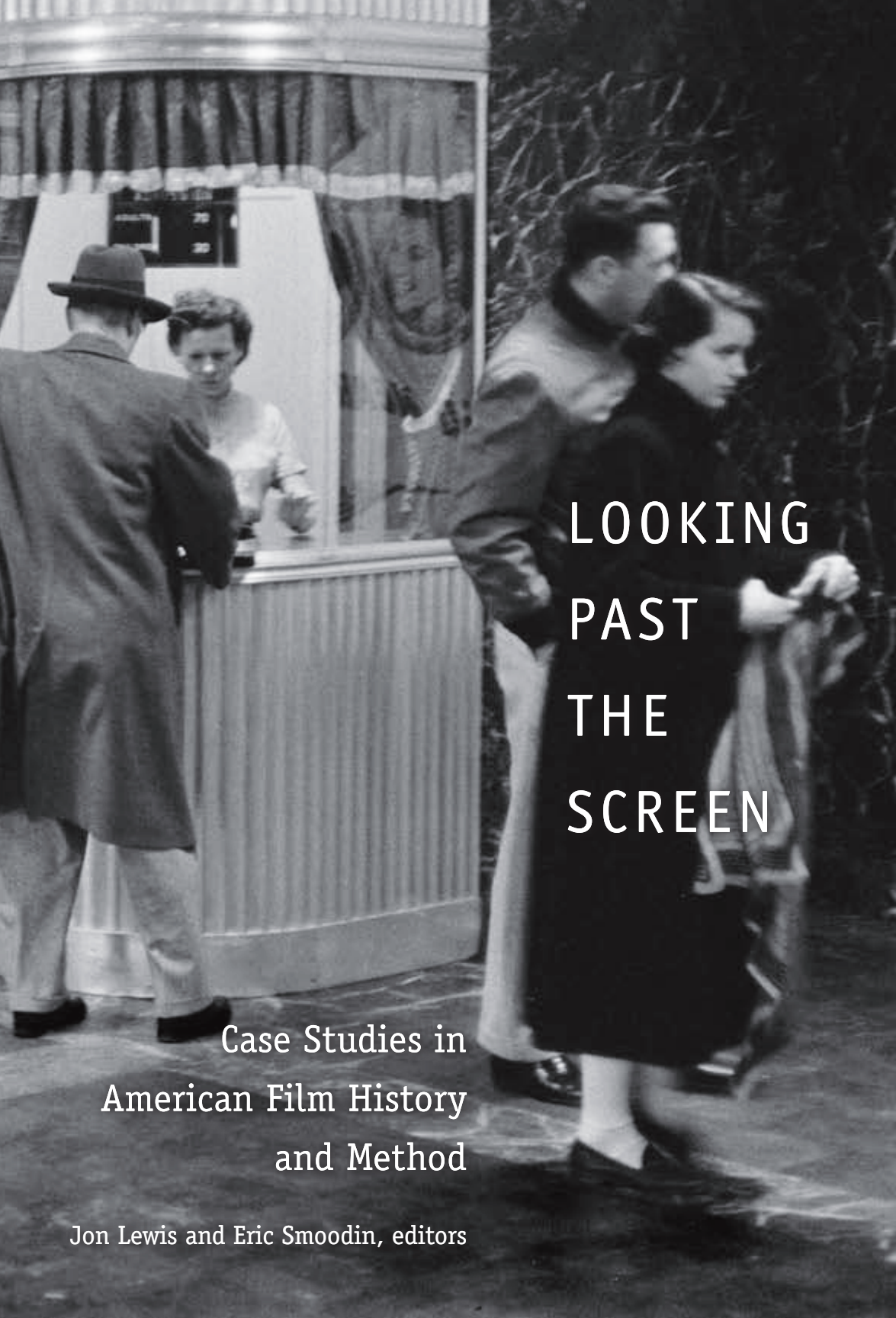

LOOKING PAST THE SCREEN

Case Studies in American Film History and Method

Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin, editors

Looking Past the Screen

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Edited by Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin

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For Richard deCordova, 1956–1996

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Richard was our colleague in graduate school and a close friend for many years. He died all too young in 1996. His scholarship was very much the inspiration for this collection, and we are pleased to include this example of his work here. We dedicate this book to his memory.

INTRODUCTION

The History of Film History

Eric Smoodin

There are other people who make the movies besides the artists and technicians in Hollywood. Eighty-five million Americans go to see a picture every week . . . [and] it is undoubtedly true that no art has ever been so shaped and influenced by its audience as the art of cinema.

So began Margaret Farrand Thorp in her 1939 sociological study *America at the Movies*.[1] We can learn a great deal about Thorp's methodology from the title of her book as well as the chapters in it—for example, "Eighty-Five Million a Week," "What Movie Tonight?" "Glamour," "Cinema Fashions," "The Industry," and "Reforming the Movies." For Thorp, the proper study of cinema was the audience, the relationships between films and consumers, and the practices of the film industry. With her frontispiece photograph of a theater full of viewers watching a movie she turned the audience into the stars of her book.

At about the same time as Thorp's study, Robert Gessner at New York University began teaching a class titled "History and Appreciation of the Cinema" (the syllabus I found dates from 1938). Gessner examined a different facet of cinema each week, with such

headings as "The Early American Spectacle," "Legend and Fantasy in Germany," "The Moving Camera in Germany," "The Psychological Film," "Contemporary Soviet Naturalism," "The American Film of Protest," and "An American Classic" (*It Happened One Night*). The title of the class and the topic headings give a strong indication of Gessner's approach, which clearly appears to be centered on the history of texts, on the films themselves, and on ways of making meaning from them by clustering them around national and generic concerns, differentiating one film from the other, and ranking them.[2]

Thus film scholars might speak of the possibility of alternative film historiographies, that is, the prospect that in 1910 or 1925 or 1940 the study of cinema, at least in the United States, might have gone one way instead of another. Robert Gessner's approach, which owes much to art history and literary history, has become the dominant mode for the practice of film scholarship in the United States. Thorp's methodology had ample scholarly precedents, but the social science model of *America at the Movies*, which deemphasized the film text and stressed issues of industry and consumption, did not become the primary model for organizing the study of the cinema or for understanding its history.

This is not to say that an analytical method owing more to the social sciences than to the humanities has simply vanished from film studies. Instead, we can find a number of examples, many of them from the last twenty years or so. Neither is it to romanticize a lost historiographic option, one that would have provided unimaginable possibilities for film scholars. Instead, we want to point out that film scholarship most broadly, and the analysis of film history more narrowly, has at least since the mid-1950s been dominated by the study of the film itself, often organized around genre, nation, or authorship in much the same manner as Gessner's class. The essays in this collection together demonstrate the possibility for film scholarship without films; for using primary materials other than films themselves for examining the history of the cinema in the United States.

This volume addresses shifts in film studies, specifically with the writing of film history—a project that connects the essays here to the efforts of those made fifty, sixty, and seventy years ago. It is important to point out that at the time of Thorp, Gessner, and others, scholars clearly understood that film did possess a history, and one well worth studying. Indeed, Gessner's overtly historical approach, moving from early short films to silent

feature films to sound films, and charting narrative and aesthetic developments, would have struck no one interested in film as at all odd. In the case of Thorp, while her concerns were sociological—that is, with the effects of cinema on Depression-era consumers—her methodology was largely historical given that most of her chapters have some sense of chronology and development. In "The Industry," for example, Thorp compares the number of directors working in Hollywood in 1926 with the number in 1937 (246 vs. 234) and then measures this finding against the number of feature films (743 vs. 484).[3] But in addition to such historical anecdotes Thorp insists on fully understanding the long view. Her chapter "Reforming the Movies," for instance, begins in 1897 with the famous fire at the Bazaar de la Charitè screening outside Paris, and then moves carefully through various projects aimed at making movie screenings safe in terms of protecting patrons from physical harm and also emotional damage.[4]

The period of these scholarly concerns was also an era for the creation of institutions that would both safeguard and produce film history. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences founded its research library in 1928, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York formed its film library in 1935. As Iris Barry, the museum's film curator for many years, wrote in 1946, the film library's founding was based on the notion that the cinema has a history worth preserving, analyzing, and viewing. With this in mind, such Hollywood dignitaries as Will Hays, Walt Disney, Sam Goldwyn, and Mary Pickford promised "to contribute to the collection of outstanding films of the past which the Museum planned to amass," so that "films may be studied and enjoyed as any one of the other arts is studied and enjoyed."[5] In fact, the first films to be deposited at the library were Harold Lloyd's silent comedies *Grandma's Boy* and *The Freshman*.[6] A few years later, in 1942, the Library of Congress, in "recognizing the importance of motion pictures and the need to preserve them as a historical record," began collecting films rather than just requiring descriptive material relating to individual motion pictures.[7] The birth of the film archive, then, along with the scholarly developments from the same period, show the consolidation of the idea of film history and of film history itself being a significant aspect of film studies.

Very broadly speaking, we can identify four general categories for practicing and teaching this history. The first is that of industrial systems. This category includes modes of making films—for example, the producer sys-

tems introduced into Hollywood during the 1920s or the more artisanal models from the era just before the 1920s. Such studies also concentrate on studios or on the manner in which star systems organized production, or they focus on labor issues or on the divisions of labor particular to various forms, from feature films to animation. Another consideration is technological development, for instance in color or in sound, and the ways in which that development affected filmmaking. Such a category, then, takes in all manner of film production, but it also includes studying modes of distribution and exhibition. Examples here include Douglas Gomery's monograph on the studios, Richard deCordova's examination of the development of the star system, Kristin Thompson's analysis of the distribution of American films abroad, and John Belton's history of the widescreen film.[8]

The second category involves the regulatory systems that have so much control over content, industry structure, audience, and so on. Typically, a study of regulation has meant a study of censorship, but it can also include an analysis of the tax laws that facilitated certain production styles and practices (the American emphasis on overseas epics in the 1950s, for instance). The *Mutual Film Corporation v. Ohio*'s first amendment case of 1915 could also be studied here, or the various stages of the Paramount case, or foreign quota systems. Lea Jacobs's *The Wages of Sin* stands out in this category, as does Ruth Vasey's *The World According to Hollywood*, and Jon Lewis's *Hollywood v. Hard Core*.[9] Numerous shorter studies also come to mind, for example William Boddy's examination of congressional concern over television violence in the 1960s and the governmental discussion about controlling television content.[10]

The third category is reception—that is, the audiences who watched films, where they saw them, and how they made sense of them. This option helps to give us an idea of how audiences differ (and, in some cases, stay the same) in relation to location, gender, race, class, age, and other categories, and in relation to different kinds of film. The exemplary work here has been done by Janet Staiger and, probably most significantly, by Jackie Stacey in her study of the relationships between female fans and stars.[11]

The final category is that of representation—the images and narratives that make up the text. This is precisely the interest of most textual analysis, which charts strategies of representation in different genres, directors, studios, and so on. This is also the mode of film study that has dominated the discipline since the 1950s.

Industry, regulation, reception, and representation: none of these categories necessarily excludes the others, and each concerns itself with distinct but sometimes overlapping primary materials. Censorship reports, for instance, some of the basic materials for the study of regulation, might provide excellent information about reception. While studying representation, we might also use the evidence of lighting and mise-en-scène to help us understand issues related to industrial practice. In the most brute terms, however, the primary materials for studying industry, regulation, and reception cannot be the films themselves. Instead, they will most typically be on paper (and on microfilm and the Internet) as the material evidence left, for instance, by fans, censors, critics, and government officials; in other words, the very materials most often studied by historians working in other disciplines.

THE HISTORY OF FILM STUDIES

Evidence exists that shows that as soon as intellectuals began taking the cinema seriously they focused on broad institutional issues. As early as 1909 Jane Addams, in *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets*, paid far more attention to theaters than to the films themselves. This interest was very much in keeping with the era's reformist concern over the sites of children's leisure; not only movie theaters but also schools and playgrounds come to mind here.[12] About twenty years later, film fully entered the academy, not only as a humanities discipline related to literature and art but also as a practice in the social sciences. During the late 1920s the Harvard Business School began its lecture series on the economics of film, and the sociologists Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd produced their study of Muncie, Indiana—the famous *Middletown*—in which filmgoing habits and other modern consumer activities received significant attention.

Shortly after the Lynds, issues of reception came to dominate film studies with the publication of the research sponsored by the Payne Fund, which concentrated on the effects of the cinema on children and adolescents. Then, in 1939, Thorp published her volume, which analyzed industrial structures, advertising, exhibition, reception, and other related areas. During World War II, film studies largely became the domain of psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists. Working primarily for the government, these social scientists, influenced as they were by progressive New Deal ideology, believed in the cinema, especially the documentary, as

the best means to a liberal postwar modernism. These were the men who conducted research on the recruits watching Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* films. Hoping to determine the films' pedagogical powers—their ability to convince soldiers of the rightness of the war effort—these experts sought to use their findings about Capra's films to establish the possibility for a postwar documentary practice that might help viewers unlearn racism, class biases, and hypernationalism.[13]

In 1950, in something of an apotheosis of these various projects, Leo Handel published *Hollywood Looks at Its Audience*, a work that still stands out as the most thorough analysis of reception in the United States. Just two years later, David Riesman and Evelyn T. Riesman's "Movies and Audiences" appeared in *American Quarterly*, the journal of the American Studies Association.[14] Although the Riesmans called for a thorough examination of how various audiences interact with the movies they see, the moment for this kind of research had already begun to pass.

Around this time the intellectual discourse on film shifted toward more literary concerns, and film studies came to occupy a place in the academy alongside disciplines in the humanities rather than those in the social sciences. The reasons for this development remain unclear, but they may have had something to do with the diversification of English departments in universities during the period, with film classes becoming something of a staple and popular offering. In just one example of this disciplinary shift, the postwar period witnessed an extraordinary movement in American studies. The professoriate finally started to include scholars whose connection to elite culture was somewhat tenuous—Jews, for instance, or those who had attended state universities rather than private institutions—and whose main interests were more regional, vernacular, and popular. The emergence of vast state systems of university education in Wisconsin, California, and elsewhere also led to a determination to study the regional and to examine the ideological connection between artistic production and the project of building the nation. Most of this movement was a literary one largely focused on finding distinctive American voices in Whitman, Stowe, Twain, and others. The movies, along with other such apparently "American" aesthetic practices as jazz, seemed the perfect match for these interests. Hence, the movies themselves, rather than their modes of production, their audiences, or other institutional practices, seemed to merit the most serious study.

The history of the most enduring film journal in the United States exemplifies these shifts. In 1945 a group of Southern California leftist intellectuals and Hollywood studio workers founded the *Hollywood Quarterly*, which until 1957 was published in cooperation with the University of California Press. The journal's editors hoped that the *Quarterly* might become a forum for advancing a politicized, socially responsible cinema, one that was freed from what they called in an opening editorial statement the "'pure entertainment' myth which had served to camouflage the social irresponsibility and creative impotence of much of the material presented on the screen and over the air" both before and during the war.[15]

Film needed to teach, to enlighten, to persuade. The *Hollywood Quarterly*'s editors, in their opening statement of principles, stressed not only their desire to understand the "aesthetic" principles of film and other media but also the "social" and "educational" possibilities of these forms. In so saying, the editors aligned themselves with the war era's social science approach to film studies as well as to Gessner's auteurist, textual analysis model. The formation of the editorial board itself also demonstrated this methodological mixture; Franklin Fearing, for instance, who specialized in the effects of mass communication, as well as the literary historian Franklin Rolfe, the Paramount producer and UCLA film school founder Kenneth Macgowan, and the hard-line communist (and soon to be blacklisted) screenwriter John Howard Lawson.

Subscriptions languished for many years, with the editorial board and the University of California Press seeing the problem largely in terms of content. Ellen Seacoat, the periodicals manager at the press, in a 1954 memo to press director August Frugé, worried precisely about a kind of disciplinary unpredictability built into the journal. "I feel frustrated," she wrote, adding, "Who is sufficiently interested in all or most of these subjects [covered by the journal] to pay for a subscription?" Seacoat wondered whether "the person primarily interested in social science articles [would] be willing to pay for the other types of articles in which he is not particularly interested?" She then commended the direction of recent issues, with "their heavy emphasis on Shakespeare and literature as brought to the public through mass media," which apparently convinced many readers teaching in universities and other schools to think of the journal "as an exciting adjunct to the teaching of English and related subjects."[16]

Frugé himself worried about the continued influence of the social sci-

ences in the journal, lamenting that, throughout the 1950s, the journal "continued . . . running gradually down . . . as the emphasis became more sociological and less cinematic."[17] Indeed, in 1958 the press reconfigured the journal into *Film Quarterly*, which is still published today. The new journal was modeled on the British *Sight and Sound* and the French *Cahiers du cinéma*—that is, according to Frugé, it was "devoted to film as an art and not as communication."[18] In American film studies this development as much as anything marked the disciplinary shift, placing cinema scholarship firmly within the realm of the humanities.

Over the next two decades film studies doctoral programs were founded at several American universities, and scholarly publishing on film proliferated in both the United States and the United Kingdom. These programs and this scholarship generally reflected the literary nature of film studies, with textual analysis serving as the primary methodological practice. Certainly the *Cahiers du cinéma* analysis of *Young Mr. Lincoln* published in 1970 marked the maturation of this mode of film study, with the journal's editorial collective demonstrating the manner in which the film rendered visible or suppressed the popular front politics of the 1930s.[19] We can trace the importance of the *Cahiers* work through many of the most significant contributions to the field published in the subsequent ten-year period; for example, in the essays by Raymond Bellour, Thierry Kuntzell, Stephen Heath, and Nick Browne and in the analyses of directors such as Douglas Sirk, Alfred Hitchcock, and Fritz Lang who became particularly important to the era's scholars.[20]

This scholarship served the absolutely central purpose of demonstrating the workings of the textual systems of American and European classical-era cinema. This is not to say, however, that scholars with different priorities were not doing other kinds of work. At the risk of dramatically reducing the history of the discipline from the period, one issue of one journal pointed out both the options available to film scholars and the choices that they made. During the 1970s, in large part because of how it adapted the French film studies tradition of the 1960s and also combined European and American models, the British publication *Screen* emerged as the most significant film journal, at least in the United States and the United Kingdom. In volume 16, number 3, from autumn 1975, *Screen* published the essay that has become almost certainly the most cited and most influential contribution to film studies over the last thirty years, Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."[21]

Mulvey's essay has been celebrated and critiqued for the manner in which it details identificatory relationships between spectator and image. In the same issue, though, *Screen* also published Edward Buscombe's *Notes on Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1926–1941*.[22] Using Frank Capra's films and the studio for which Capra worked as his objects of study, Buscombe sought to interrogate the relationships between the structure of the Hollywood film industry and the films that Hollywood produced. In so doing, he discussed the reductionist impulse of even the most sophisticated, progressive textual analysis (*Cahiers du cinéma* on *Young Mr. Lincoln*, among others), which assumed, for example, that films unproblematically reflected the corporate interests of the studios that made them. Buscombe also warned that even the most ingenious reading of a film often did more to demonstrate the virtuosity of the scholar rather than the "meaning" of a movie. "Surely," he wrote, "it would have to be demonstrated that such a reading was available to an audience at the time."[23]

Thus Buscombe called for a type of film study and historiography that has inspired the contributors to the present collection. But he also served notice as to why, at least in the mid-1970s, this kind of scholarship proved so difficult. Buscombe noted that a general neglect of industry history among scholars was "not only a consequence of critical attitudes and priorities," but was "also the result of very real practical problems." He further explained that "many of the basic materials that would be needed" to produce this sort of scholarship "are simply not available."[24] Studios typically provided very little assistance, even if they maintained records, and there were few archival sources available with pertinent primary materials.

Nevertheless, Buscombe's call for a different emphasis in film studies was part of a movement in a number of scholarly fields—a movement against the literariness of so many humanities disciplines that began at least in the early to mid 1970s. Although we think of that period as being marked in film studies and other fields by semiotic, Marxist, and psychoanalytic approaches to texts, as well as by other, perhaps less rigorously applied, versions of textual analysis, some significant theorists already seemed wary of such methodologies. In 1973, Michel Foucault and a team of editors produced *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother*, a virtuoso compilation of primary materials documenting, as the rest of the title indicates, "a case of parricide in the nineteenth century." In explaining their approaches to the material, the editors insisted that "the outdated academic methods of textual analysis and all the concepts

which are the appanage of the dreary and scholastic prestige of writing on writing can very well be eschewed in studying" the evidence around Rivière's case.[25] Thus the editors placed the emphasis on collection and presentation; on providing as complete a dossier as possible of the materials of the case, from newspapers, court records, medical reports, and other sources. Of course, the editors did not believe that these sources simply presented themselves—indeed, they provide commentaries at the end of their project. But to the extent that these practices can be kept separate, the commentaries produce a historiography of crime, judgment, and punishment through the materials rather than analyzing the materials themselves. Foucault's project takes on particular interest because it is precisely an interdisciplinary one, examining as it does standard literary and historical texts (memoir, court proceedings, etc.) in order to determine relations of power between such institutions as legal systems, journalism, science, and the family.

During this time there were, of course, film scholars who made extremely sophisticated historiographic interventions in the field through the use of primary materials. Garth Jowett's *Film: The Democratic Art*, from 1976, still stands out as an important social history of the cinema, one in which American cinematic institutions—regulatory, educational, governmental, etc.—come to be examined through an intensive analysis of the documents produced by those institutions. The book also presents a modest effort to make some of those documents available to the reader, with the publication, in appendices, of a variety of censorship materials, including the Production Code of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (better known as the Hays Code), which starting in 1930 governed Hollywood representational and narrative practices.[26]

Almost ten years later, in 1985, Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery's co-written *Film History: Theory and Practice* appeared.[27] To my knowledge, this was one of the first books published in the United States to take motion picture historiography as its subject, rather than the history of a particular aspect of cinema. Thus while Jowett's book was a history of the social impact of the cinema in the United States, Allen and Gomery's project asked questions and developed ideas about historical methodologies that might be applied to a number of film-related topics.

Allen and Gomery provided chapters on different kinds of film history—aesthetic, technological, and economic, for example—as well as on

the problems of researching that history. Here they discussed, quite understandably, "film evidence," that is, the films themselves. But they also proposed the study of what they called "nonfilmic evidence," by which they meant primary materials such as trade papers and secondary materials such as the various film encyclopedias.[28] As they noted, "For certain investigations, film viewing is really an inappropriate research method," and in so doing they helped to coalesce a historical movement around documentary evidence rather than the movies themselves.[29]

Many of the film histories of the next decade emphasized such nonfilmic evidence, and in fact brought film studies closer to the kind of project endorsed by Foucault in *I, Pierre Rivière*. Jowett and those he influenced used documentary evidence to produce broad narrative histories. In the case of *Film: The Democratic Art*, that narrative was of the industrial growth of the cinema and its perceived effects on audiences. Gomery and Allen outlined the broad contours of a theory of film history that would include primary materials, but the film historians who followed looked at specific historical cases and the documents they produced in order to theorize histories of power relations and discursive practices.

Two of the significant histories following Gomery and Allen's project—Jacobs's *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942*, which was published in 1991, and Danae Clark's 1995 volume *Negotiating Hollywood: The Cultural Politics of Actors' Labor*—provide interesting examples and also, finally, attest to the entrenched power of textual analysis in film studies during the 1980s and early 1990s.[30] Jacobs took the case of a cycle of films and the mechanisms of Hollywood censorship in her examination of the files on individual movies from the Hays Office. Jacobs's project was "to reconstruct the grounds on which . . . [certain films] had been defined and experienced as offensive."[31] Additionally, she analyzed the manner in which censorship, as practiced by the Hays Office, was itself productive by creating, in debate and discussion with filmmakers, acceptable representational practices. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Jacobs's work, both in practical and historiographic terms. First, *The Wages of Sin* presented primary materials, those from the Hays Office, that scholars had not yet examined. Second, Jacobs's book provided us with a methodology for studying the discourses of censorship in order to determine the relationships between industrial practice, representational systems, and beliefs about the effects of movies on the film audience.

With its interdisciplinarity and analysis of intersecting discourses, Jacobs's book helped introduce contemporary cultural studies to film studies and film history. Of course, part of this project might well have been that of showing the relationships between this kind of analysis and traditional textual analysis. And Jacobs does indeed provide sections of just such analysis—for example, her extended examination of a few shots in the 1935 Greta Garbo film *Anna Karenina*, which demonstrates the connections between visual style and Hays Office edicts. But it is also true that a film studies monograph from this period would be almost unthinkable without this kind of analysis. That is, textual analysis was a methodological requirement, even in a book focusing on primary materials from the Production Code Administration.

This requirement becomes even clearer in Clark's *Negotiating Hollywood*, which examines actors' labor under the studio system and pays special attention to the formation of the Screen Actors Guild. In so doing, Clark theorizes and historicizes the role of the actor "outside" of the cinema, that is, as an employee, as an organizer, and as a commodity. In conducting this analysis, her evidence comes from *Variety*, various newspapers, the *Screen Guilds Magazine*, and other primary materials. But Clark also includes a chapter called "Labor and the Film Narrative," which is largely an examination of acting as a profession in such films as *42nd Street* and *Morning Glory*. Of the six chapters in the book, only "Labor and the Film Narrative" employs typical textual and narrative analysis; as such it seems to stand out from the other chapters, which take as their evidence the primary materials of actors' labor. But as with *The Wages of Sin*, Clark's book was both conceived and published during an era in film studies when at least some acknowledgment of textual analysis was a virtual requirement of any monograph taking seriously theory and history. Thus, although these are vitally important books because of how they advance the possibilities of the field, they also tell us about the structure of knowledge in the field at a specific time. At least through the early 1990s, sophisticated historiographic work usually needed to include at least some gesture toward traditional textual analysis.

Other scholars have noted these tensions. In a 1990 essay (reprinted in this collection) about the history of the construction of children as film audiences, Richard deCordova wrote that in 1970s film theory, "an abstract, psychoanalytically-inflected notion of the textual subject . . . permitted a

way of theorizing spectatorship without straying from what was largely a theory of textual determinism." He then added that "textual processes placed a pliant spectator in a position from which sense could emerge." DeCordova goes on to argue that contemporary ethnographic research might provide a way of "challenging this abstract and deterministic view" by giving us access to "the concrete evidence of the ways audiences make sense of texts."[32]

The approaches taken by Jacobs, Clark, deCordova, and others have still only been fully accepted by film studies in fits and starts. Judith Mayne, in her 1993 work *Cinema and Spectatorship*, laments the "excessive emphasis on cinematic textuality in film studies," by which she means the emphasis on the analysis of individual films. Annette Kuhn, writing more recently in her 2002 project on the relationships between memory and film viewing, writes that "a humanities-based study of cinema . . . will take films as the starting point for exploring the cinema-consumer relationship," and she adds that "as a discipline, film studies models itself largely on literary studies, and to this extent is predominantly text-centred: films as texts are its primary objects of inquiry, and textual analysis its method of preference." Then, echoing deCordova more than a decade earlier, Kuhn writes that "even debates within film studies concerning the nature of spectatorship in the cinema are predominantly about a spectator addressed or constructed by the film text."[33]

A recent debate in *Screen* underscores the centrality of the method that Kuhn describes and also addresses some of the tensions between text-centered projects and those that take a broader view of evidence. In two issues, published in 2001 and 2003, *Screen* devoted its "Reports and Debates" section to a discussion titled "Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the Debate."[34] Trauma studies, of course, had by this time become significant to literary theory, intellectual history, philosophy, and historiography, through the work of Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Shoshana Felman, and others. In *Screen*, scholars from film studies and other fields responded to the questions of why, as noted by Susannah Radstone, "so many of us are sharing this fascination [with memory and trauma] and what this might mean . . . intellectually, historically and culturally."[35]

In the essay that opened the debate, Radstone provided some of the ground rules for considering the relations between film studies and the analysis of trauma, and she did so in ways that centered squarely on

the film text: "Should such analysis take its impetus from texts, and if so, should the focus fall primarily on narration, or on mise-en-scène or on editing and so on? Or does trauma make itself felt in . . . these media in the relation between their texts and their spectators—and if so, then how?"[36] For Radstone, then, the proper study of trauma and cinema relies either on films themselves—their stories, editing, and staging—or, in the manner of much 1970s-style film theory, on a describable, precise interaction between those films and the undifferentiated viewers who watch them.

Most of the work that followed tacitly accepted these precepts and asked questions about representation or about the audience-text relationship. E. Ann Kaplan examined the ways in which melodrama introduces the spectator to trauma—namely how "the spectator" is vicariously traumatized" by melodrama or "positioned as a voyeur" or "addressed as a 'witness.'"[37] Maureen Turim looked at the representation and narrativization of trauma in *The Pawnbroker* (1965) and other films. Janet Walker wrote about the links between traumatic memory and a series of women's experimental autobiographical documentaries; Peter Thomas provided an extended analysis of *Memento* (2000); and Daniel Humphrey examined Derek Jarman's *The Last of England* (1987).[38]

Here I am hardly doing justice to the complexity of these and other contributions, and certainly film scholars must theorize both representation and spectatorship. Only one of the scholars participating in the debate, however, chose to explore the relationships between cinema and trauma through an examination of primary materials. Michael Hammond, in "Laughter during Wartime: Comedy and the Language of Trauma in British Cinema Regulation, 1917," directly tied the terms of trauma to British World War I–era debates about film regulation and reception, two of the categories that have motivated so much of the significant historical work of the last twenty years.[39] Hammond sought to explore "the etiology of trauma and the stresses of everyday life in the discursive practices that underpinned debates on the social function of entertainment and, specifically, cinema."[40] In so doing, he examined reports from the National Council of Public Morals' Cinema Commission in order to determine an official British understanding of the merits of showing both war films and escapist comedies to the public. This is not necessarily a superior approach to that of Radstone, Jarman, Walker, or any of the other contributors. But it does demonstrate a different kind of historiographic practice, one that

is based on a broader sense of film culture and not just on the films themselves. Trauma might be read in films, but it can also be examined in the documentary evidence surrounding those films and the attempts to regulate them and judge their effects on audiences.

This is, of course, more of an imbalance than balance, where Hammond is the only scholar looking at nonfilmic evidence. But we can see these methodological tensions played out more evenly in perhaps the most significant historical project of the last two decades in film studies—the *History of American Cinema* multivolume series copublished by Macmillan and the University of California Press. Each volume in the series to date examines both films and the documentary evidence that they produced, although to varying degrees. Eileen Bowser's volume on the cinema from 1907 to 1915 largely addresses the films themselves.[41] Donald Crafton, however, in the 1999 volume *The Talkies*, explains early on that his emphasis is "more on end-use than on production," that is, on the manner in which the new technology of synchronized sound came to be understood, appreciated, or dismissed by a variety of audiences.[42] As a result, Crafton decided to study primarily "one form of documentation, the exhibitors' trade news, which provides a roundabout clue to how audiences in general received the talkies."[43] I would suggest that this marks a significant moment in the practice of film history; a volume written by a major film historian and designed to provide a broad range of readers, from undergraduates to film scholars, with an introduction to one of the more significant periods in cinema history, places its emphasis on documentary evidence rather than on a selection of films.

HISTORICAL PEDAGOGIES AND PRACTICES

In the broadest terms, however, and in a return to that 1975 issue of *Screen*, film studies and the practice of film history have followed in a Mulveyan mode focused on the film text rather than in the style advocated by Buscombe. To justify this, one might argue that the cinema as a medium is relentlessly textual, providing us with fairly easy access to films. Movies are available for classroom use and for extended study in 16mm format, in video, in laser disc, in DVD, and also on the Internet. And frequently these movies come directly to us, without the viewer having to leave the house. We can watch movies on broadcast television. We can, with increasingly

greater ease, download them from the Internet. We can also have DVDs sent directly to us by mail order rental companies. Of course, other film-related texts are more and more readily available, often on the Internet; many FBI files can be found there, for instance, as well as some clippings files (from the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, for example).[44] But the relative ease with which we can see films certainly influences the kind of scholarship we produce. In addition, many film scholars, at least in the United States, work at institutions with extensive video and DVD holdings, while other forms of text might be harder to come by. Many of these same institutions, however, have newspapers on microfilm or have access to university databases, and they also have other kinds of records that often relate directly to cinema—for instance, records from the Department of State either in published volumes or on microfilm. We assume and expect the availability of film texts, but we also might be surprised to learn about the accessibility of so many other records that teach us the history of cinema.

Primary materials of all kinds have been available at some sites for decades, but particularly over the last twenty-five years more archives have been developed and more collections opened to the public.[45] The Library of Congress, for instance, opened its researcher-friendly Motion Picture Reading Room in 1983, and USC became a significant archival resource with its Warner Bros. Collection, which was deposited at the university in 1977. The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences Library acquired the Hays Office records in 1983, allowing for a much more nuanced understanding of American regulatory practices, and even some individual studios, such as Disney, have begun to realize the potential importance of their holdings. To the extent, then, that institutional attitudes toward paper collections can influence intellectual work, these improvements have lead to important shifts in film studies scholarship and in the writing of film history. These institutional shifts themselves have led to more sophisticated practices among film historians, who now, with a greater emphasis on a variety of primary materials, have moved the discipline far closer to traditional historical practices and away from literary criticism.

But even while film scholars during this period have shown the possibilities for film history and other historical practices to merge, historians from more traditional fields seem determined to show their bona fides as film critics. Such, then, is the influence of the humanities-based film study of the last forty or fifty years. All too commonly, when these historians

try to talk about a film's relationship to "history," for instance, they do so through the rather useless binary of text versus context; that is, history is "out there," all around a film, and the film in some manner or other "reflects" it. So, to understand "history" we need only to interpret the film.

When the American Historical Association makes an institutional foray into film studies, as just one example, the results are often depressingly stodgy. In the organization's professional newsletter, *Perspectives*, scholars periodically weigh in on the manner in which history has been represented in cinema. The AHA's rightly respected journal, the *American Historical Review*, usually discusses the cinema only in order to review individual films, and then only when they deal specifically with a historical subject, so that a movie's "accuracy" may be judged (*The Tuskegee Airmen*, for instance). Or, in special sections, the *Review* will give historians space to engage in the requisite scholarly handwringing over how well or how poorly a film like *JFK* depicts the past.[46] These scholars seem most interested in the relationship of a film to history, rather than in advancing the practices of film historiography.

Attempts to shift methodologies and practices for any scholar interested in doing so run into the problem of the formation of film studies within the academy. University film studies classes, in history, literature, or other fields, tend to be taught in theater-type spaces and are given time slots—three to four hours—that are appropriate for showing movies. My own experiences at three institutions seem representative; four-hour classes meeting twice a week, seventy-five-minute classes that meet two times a week with an evening screening time, and two-to-three-hour classes that meet once or twice a week. Thus film studies classes in which films are not shown or that form a secondary part of the curriculum seem unthinkable, primarily because of the architecture of the classroom and the time devoted to each class. Similarly, most of the standard textbooks teach students how to read films, to understand genres, to appreciate issues of authorship, and to consider film movements. Film history thus largely becomes the history of styles, aesthetic practices, and narrative structures.

Even in the ideal setting, what would a revised pedagogical and intellectual project look like? In part because of the documentary evidence that has been made available about the cinema, a number of film historians have adapted the recent work of such intellectual and cultural historians as Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, and Natalie Zemon Davis, who have

been instrumental in developing the possibility of treating all discursive practices—and for film studies this means fan magazines, theater manager reports, studio memos, and of course films—as worthy of being "read" as texts, thereby creating meaning through interrelationship rather than in isolation. This method of reading has, in fact, become part of a broad cultural studies project that includes film as well as other disciplines. I point here to the work of Jackie Stacey in sociology, John Bodnar and Mary Ryan in urban history, and Jane Gaines in such hybrid fields as critical legal theory and film studies.

Such practices are not opposed to textual interpretation, the primary goal of so many methodologies associated with film studies. The very status of interpretation has become a vexing one in film studies, often in terms of whether different methodologies view films through rigid grids or more flexible ones. The contributors to this collection, however, and scholars concerned with similar issues, view interpretation as possible only with the help of a variety of different kinds of evidence, in addition to or often excluding films themselves. The goal, of course, is not for "truth" or for absolute certainty through exhaustive research. Instead, these scholars seek to expand the number of interpretable texts and to begin to chart the relationships between, and make meaning from, various discursive practices. Pedagogically, this means, of course, getting film students into libraries and other archives; intellectually, it means getting them to understand that films do not "reflect" culture, or history, or attitudes, as well as teaching them to treat movies as aspects of a complex system of cultural production.

This collection proceeds through a series of case studies. For the last forty years or so, the case study—based on materials from archival collections, case files, dossiers, and so on—has become the dominant genre among social historians. As Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson have stated, such scholars typically seek "the recovery of the lives of those individuals and groups . . . traditionally dismissed or ignored as marginal, inarticulate, and powerless."[47] Film scholars, and the contributors to this book are no exception, have taken part in the same project. But another kind of recovery has been going on as well—namely, the recovery of often neglected materials, at least in relation to film, including censorship reports, government documents, trade journals, fan mail, and the like. Thus the multiple project of this collection is to show how our understanding of what consti-

tutes film history has expanded over the last twenty-five years, to increase our sense of the participants in that history, and to provide methodologies for the uses of a variety of primary materials that, in some cases, may have seemed only tangentially connected to the cinema.

A look at these primary materials as used by the contributors to this volume provides a sense of the possibilities for historical research. These materials fall broadly into eight categories:

1 Collections of personal papers. The contributors to this volume examined the collections of Mark Hellinger, Cecil B. DeMille, Robert Flaherty, F. W. Murnau, and others. These collections include personal correspondence, drafts of scripts, contracts, etc.
2 Newspapers and magazines. Popular journalism serves as wonderful primary material about movies. Sources range from the obvious (the *Los Angeles Times*) to the less so (the *Tulsa Daily World*) and also include such staples as *Life* magazine.
3 Trade materials. Such journalism, including *Film Daily*, *Moving Picture World*, and *Variety*, is specifically about the film industry and thus directed to an industry audience.
4 Fan magazines. *Photoplay* and similar publications offer valuable information about the ways that fans learned about movies and movie stars.
5 Studio publications. These materials, such as *Paramount News*, *Fox Folks*, and *Universal Weekly*, designed for internal use or to alert exhibitors about future movies, tell us how the movie companies described themselves and their products.
6 Industry records. The Production Code Administration files, for instance, explain classical-era censorship practices.
7 Educational materials and research publications. Textbooks about film have been published at least since the 1920s, while publications in related fields, such as the *Research Memorandum on Recreation in the Depression*, explore a number of film-related topics.
8 Government records. Large government organizations such as the Department of State, along with the small ones such as the short-lived pornography commissions, often deal with the cinema or with issues directly connected to film production, distribution, and consumption.

To examine these and other materials, the contributors to this volume went to a variety of institutional sites, including, among others, the National Archives, the National Museum of American History, the Margaret Herrick

Library, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, the Oklahoma Historical Society in Oklahoma City, the New York State Appellate Court Law Library in Rochester, the New York Public Library, and the Bibliothèque du Film in Paris.

Let us now consider the methodological practices that these primary materials facilitate. As a term, methodology can be understood, in the sense that Bill Nichols has explained it, as "a conceptual model or framework that helps organize individual impressions," and that helps us make "assumptions about how we should . . . punctuate an undifferentiated universe of experience in order to make better sense of it." These methodologies "offer explanatory or descriptive concepts," so that Andrew Sarris, writing in the late 1960s, might propose an auteurist analysis for understanding not only individual films but the process of film history, or that Garth Jowett, just a few years later, will suggest ways of studying interactions between films and audiences that created, between about 1895 and 1950, fundamentally new forms of social interaction.[48]

For understanding American film and American film history, the contributors to this volume take the usual question, posed most famously by Bazin, of "What is cinema?" and rework it into "What is cinema culture?" That is, they propose a conceptual model of history and of understanding films that lessens the priority of the film text itself. These scholars, of course, understand that cinema culture includes individual movies and groups of them, and also the thematic and aesthetic considerations that would be familiar to Sarris and others. But they also consider that which took place in theaters before and after screenings, such as theater architecture, the business decisions of movie companies, or movie ballyhoo. In addition, moving somewhat further afield from the experience of seeing movies, they examine the interaction of other institutions with the cinema, including the government, the library, the school, the museum, and so on. An understanding of film culture acknowledges that fan magazines, censorship reports, State Department documents about overseas film markets, and other such materials are as deserving of analysis as the movies themselves.

The questions emphasized by the contributors include: What other modes of consumption took place in theaters? How did government action, or inaction, develop audiences for movies? In what ways did journalism and other forms of writing create awareness about films and filmmakers? How

has the film industry imagined the child and adolescent audiences? These and other similar questions require a conceptual framework both varied and specific, and the essays in this volume provide a multidisciplinary approach to evidence and history. For example, Richard deCordova's work about the development of children as consumers might most properly be considered anthropological; David Lugowski's analysis of the understanding of gay subtexts in films owes much to recent queer cultural theory; and Shelley Stamp's consideration of Lois Weber's stardom owes a debt to feminist historiography. However, all of the contributors assume that the questions they raise and the frameworks they pose for answering these questions require an analysis of a broad textual field of various primary materials.

The contributors to this volume view movies as multiple sites of interpretation. Interpretation can, of course, be produced by the films themselves, but it can also occur through other means—publicity, fan magazines, and so on. The scholars here understand that film audiences occupy competing and contradictory positions; positions that are themselves influenced by different forms of exposure to film culture. Moreover, possible interpretations can be made through texts such as government documents, newspapers, trade journals, and other sources.

Most of the essays here in some way or other deal with the classical Hollywood cinema—that mode of studio production developed and perfected from about 1915 to 1960. But these essays also acknowledge that there may be alternative practices and ideologies at work within that system; practices that might become apparent only through an analysis of a variety of primary materials. Such an analysis tends to break down the absolute hegemony of the classical system, so that, for example, in the case of Mark Anderson's essay, independent production during the silent era falls well outside Hollywood's ability to control it, or, in the case of Lugowski's work, queer interpretations of major studio sound films seem accessible to many audiences.

The major concern of this collection, of course, is the practice of film history, and so the volume begins with essays on "institutional histories," which still is an area of general neglect in the field. One essay deals broadly with the formation of film studies as a discipline, while another proposes a case study of the manner in which film history came to be written during a fairly brief period. From this analysis of practices, the contributors turn to

practicing film history itself and in relation to three broad but central areas of interest.

The analysis of stars has been something of a subfield of film history. In particular over the last decade, however, "star studies," which forms the second section of this volume, has depended upon an examination of an array of materials beyond films in order to understand the connections of stardom to journalism, publicity, and advertising, as well as to fans. Thus this subfield of film studies stands out as one of the primary means for carrying out a different kind of film history, one that is interested in the cinema as a network of practices.

The next sections move toward a consideration of those areas discussed above that can be deemed central to historiographic examinations of primary material relating to cinema in the United States: regulation, reception, and production. Regulation, the first such section, has most often been examined in terms of the practices of the Production Code and also of local governmental censorship organizations. The essays here follow in this mode but also show the global reach of negotiations over censorship as well as the more loosely organized grassroots efforts at domestic control. Regulatory activity emerges here as a significant practice among a number of institutions working cooperatively at times and also, just as often, in conflict. The next section of the collection deals with reception, which was perhaps the principal area of concern in the social science based film studies of the 1930s and 1940s. This interest, however, centered on influence; the capacity for gangster films to turn young boys into criminals or for wartime training films to explain as convincingly as possible the reasons for combat. More recent work on audiences has understood that viewers are not quite so passive and that movies are not nearly so powerful, at least in terms of influence. This work does not attempt to reconstruct the "real" audience, as if that might ever be possible. Instead, the current work on reception, and the work in this volume, seeks to understand the variety of relationships between spectators and the cinema as an institution. Finally, the contributors examine the primary evidence of production. The case studies here provide a focused look at one director's films over a short period and also an extended analysis of the development of a genre. In so doing, these studies show how the evidence of production can serve as the primary material of artistic inspiration as well as of narrative and representational histories.

INSTITUTIONAL HISTORIES

One of the embarrassments of film studies, and something that separates it from many other humanities and social science disciplines, is the lack of attention paid by scholars to the history of the discipline itself. Many in the field assume that film studies began in the 1950s and 1960s, and to my knowledge there are few if any regular classes on the subject taught in film studies doctoral programs. To help us understand the history of the discipline, Dana Polan, in "The Beginnings of American Film Study," examines the entrance of film study into the academy. This is, of course, a complicated history, and much of it is impossible to know because so much of the evidence, ranging from syllabi to course schedules to lecture notes to records of discussions within departments and between institutions, has disappeared. What Polan's essay makes clear, however, is that even before 1930 there existed a significant movement to teach film studies at all educational levels and to the general public. In addition, there were ideological and institutional relationships between such sites as Stanford, Harvard, and USC, the Museum of Modern Art in New York as well as other museums, the newly formed Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Hays Office, and the studios, which led to the formation of specific forms of film study. Polan's essay corresponds to, expands upon, and differs from the history of the discipline that I relate here. In each instance, though, we understand that the discipline cannot be practiced effectively if we make little effort to understand its history and the connections between the discipline and other scholarly fields, research organizations, and professional pursuits. A historiographic method that diminishes the significance of the films themselves makes little sense if we fail to understand how and why certain emphases in film studies developed.

Much of the historiographic work on American cinema from the last twenty years has concentrated on the classical period, particularly the eras before 1940. Thus we have a much more complex understanding of the beginnings of cinema in the United States, or of the workings of censorship during the Depression. Far fewer historians have paid attention to the last thirty years, which is precisely the period that Jon Lewis covers in his essay "The Perfect Money Machine(s): George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Auteurism in the New Hollywood." Lewis uses film journalism as his primary source material in exploring how at least some "expert" observers understood the arrival and acceptance of auteurist cinema to Hollywood

in the early 1970s, and then the arrival of the blockbuster ethos just ten or fifteen years later. Most critics, Lewis observes, wax nostalgic for the personal cinema of Scorsese and Coppola from the 1970s and hold up Steven Spielberg and George Lucas as a combined "public enemy number one" responsible for the demise of sophisticated motion pictures. In other words, in order to understand the prevalent narrative of the development of the American cinema from the last few decades, Lewis writes the history of the people constructing film history. This becomes, as well, the story of institutional relationships, with the contemporary motion picture studios often controlled by the same corporations that run the print sources that most frequently report on films and filmmakers.

STAR STUDIES

In "Lois Weber and the Celebrity of Matronly Respectability," Shelley Stamp uses press materials, primarily from fan magazines and trade journals, to understand the construction of the director Lois Weber's public persona and the manner in which that persona may have influenced readings of Weber's films and worked through World War I–era concerns about femininity, feminism, and marriage. Of course, the fan magazine industry has always been viewed as one of the least respectable aspects of the American film industry, where it is deemed the domain of fictional publicity that attends mostly to the desires of young, undereducated women. As a result, such publications tend not to be collected and archived by libraries and other institutions. Stamp, then, has helped to accomplish a major task of scholarly retrieval, as she shows how *Photoplay*, *Movie Pictorial*, and other fan magazines worked as partners with movies themselves in the development of what Richard deCordova called "picture personalities." Although Weber was not a movie star in the sense of Mary Pickford or Lillian Gish, Stamp shows that as a director from the period Weber entered into the industry's star machinery. Indeed, directors such as Weber, perhaps to a greater extent than the performers themselves, might have been viewed in relation to significant political discourses—including companionate marriage, gender equality, and the movies' responsibility to engage with serious ideas.

Mark Anderson examines a different kind of female star construction in his essay on the career of Clara Smith Hamon. Scholars interested in

celebrity have routinely looked at how film companies developed stars—to produce publicity, regularize production, standardize reception practices, and so on. But Anderson analyzes a kind of star production that is at odds with the film industry's perception of its own best interests, and he further argues that movie companies sought to regulate stardom in the same manner that they sought to regulate film content. If Clara Smith Hamon, who murdered her lover, could become a star based solely on her criminal notoriety—a notoriety enhanced in an unsanctioned, "runaway" film production—then the established film companies would almost certainly lose their battle to establish the cinema as the approved leisure preoccupation for children and other audiences. Through his reading of newspapers, trade journals, and community political activity, Anderson demonstrates the fluidity of stardom during the period, from the courthouse to the movie theater. He also shows how different kinds of institutional activity—journalism and cinema as just two examples—create stars but also come into conflict with each other over the development of celebrity. Finally, the case of Clara Smith Hamon amply underscores that, even before the Fatty Arbuckle case, Hollywood sought to claim movie stardom as the sole province of the studios and aimed to regulate as carefully as possible the development of film celebrity in America.

Andrea Slane's "The Crafting of a Political Icon: Lola Lola on Paper" demonstrates how nonfilmic materials make both a film and its star "readable" to audiences, and it shows the ways that industrial activity influenced representational strategies. Paramount capitalized on Marlene Dietrich's most famous starring role, as Lola Lola in *The Blue Angel* (1930), in its publicity for the star's 1948 film *A Foreign Affair*. Thus Dietrich's last and greatest German film became the means, almost twenty years later, to influence the reception of her postwar return to Berlin. Just as the studio worked to produce Dietrich's star image, so too did the Hays Office, the overseer of the motion picture production code. But while studio publicity attempted to bridge an almost two-decade divide, the regulatory activity around *A Foreign Affair* typified the breaks in the Hollywood censorship system. Following upon Lea Jacobs's findings in *The Wages of Sin*, Slane shows that while the production code was preoccupied with representations of sexuality in the prewar era, after the war the issue of politics became just as important, and the Hays Office's concerns over Dietrich's film were almost exclusively directed at the depiction of fascism.

REGULATION

Hollywood films served as significant international commodities, and as such they entered into trade negotiations between governments in the United States and those in other countries. My essay on Frank Capra's *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1932) analyzes the balance between Hollywood autonomy, the studios' relationships with the federal government, and the influence of foreign governments on American films. Through an examination of the State Department records from the period, the essay shows that censorship occurred at international levels, and that as a result a Hollywood film might be a very different product from country to country. Indeed, the Hollywood studios hardly cared. Their concern with content was always overshadowed by their interest in access. Other countries—in this case, China—typically threatened to bar a studio's entire product if changes were not made to a particular film. After routine minor protests, from filmmakers and from the State Department, Hollywood almost always complied.

Eric Schaefer examines a more localized and less organized form of regulatory activity in "Plain Brown Wrapper: Adult Films for the Home Market, 1930–1969." In his reading of trade journals, men's magazines, Supreme Court cases, and other materials, Schaefer studies an alternative mode of production—soft-core pornography—and the grassroots as well as more formal legal efforts to control it. The films that Schaeffer discusses tended to be shown in clubs, smokers, bars, and, of course, in private homes. He finds that regulatory efforts seemed to be in inverse proportion to these films' visibility and public acceptance. The more underground the film, the more diligent was the work on the part of arbiters of propriety and moral well-being.

RECEPTION

In "Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office, and Saturday Matinees," Richard deCordova examines a single, very large audience and a specific industry practice. DeCordova himself, of course, was one of the scholars who helped to develop the new interest in film history through his work on early stardom, and this essay first appeared in the second of two extraordinary volumes of *Camera Obscura* focusing on

film history and leisure activity that helped establish the terms of current historiographic practice.[49] DeCordova's essay demonstrates the range of relations between institutions, audiences, and an era's social and political discussions. In this case the links between the motion picture industry, developments in child psychology during the period after World War I, and the concerns of parents, teachers, and reformers over children's leisure activities worked to make the movie matinee of the 1920s the site of attempts at both control and uplift in relation to the child audience, and thus a primary location for working out the very definitions of childhood and adolescence.

We understand that Hollywood films mobilized audience desires and fantasies, and that filmmakers endeavored to keep viewers coming back for more. But Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, in her "Dish Night at the Movies: Exhibitor Promotions and Female Audiences during the Great Depression," explains that the institution of the cinema produced desires and created audiences in ways unrelated to the content of the movies themselves. During the Depression, these audiences showed up for dinnerware—for the plates and saucers and gravy boats distributed by theaters. The site of exhibition thus came to construct a gendered narrative of consumption, with female patrons completing their collections from week to week. Despite an apparent orderliness, dish nights and other giveaways from the period also created a potentially angry audience, or at least the perception of one. Fuller-Seeley's reading of trade reports and advertising materials shows the period's concern, on the part of exhibitors and some authorities, with audiences motivated to mob action not by the films that they saw but by their disappointment over not being awarded any money on bank night or by a theater running out of china. From Fuller-Seeley's account, we can come to a more complete understanding of what it meant to "go to the movies" during the 1930s, including the full range of activities available to audience members and the relationships and tensions between the cinema and other institutions and consumption practices.

A significant contribution of queer theory to film studies has been to show that the representational strategies of numerous mainstream, classical-era Hollywood films might be queered, that is, understood as engaging either openly or covertly with images ostensibly condemned by the Production Code. David Lugowski, in "'A Treatise on Decay': Liberal and Leftist Critics and Their Queer Readings of Depression-Era U.S. Film,"

has retrieved and analyzed the "voices" of a select group of viewers to show that such interpretations are not simply the inventions of contemporary scholars but rather were readily available to classical period audiences. Lugowski's primary materials are film reviews from identifiably right-wing and leftist sources, as well as memos from the Production Code Administration. These reviews and memos are astonishingly sensitive to the sexual politics of films like *Stage Door* and to characterizations like those of Mae West and Franklin Pangborn. But film reception is never monolithic, and Lugowski's essay demonstrates the range of interpretation available even after audiences may have accepted the queer possibilities of Hollywood films. Those interpretations varied from assertions of immorality and ethnic and political depravity by the Right to connections of "deviant" sexuality with decaying capitalism by the Left.

PRODUCTION

Janet Bergstrom, in "Murnau in America: Chronicle of Lost Films (*4 Devils* and *City Girl*)," examines the intense negotiations between the famous emigré director F. W. Murnau and those with whom he worked at Fox Studio (including William Fox himself). In her essay Bergstrom's aim is not to add to the history and mythology of the European artist betrayed by an American assembly-line system of production, but rather to examine the place of the director—as a celebrity, commodity, and acknowledged artist—in the economy of the film studio. Murnau's movies for Fox figured prominently in the studio's expansionist practices of the late silent period and in its determination to produce films that could be considered art as well as be perfectly suitable to a global mass audience. From Murnau's career at Fox we can understand the period's frequent conflation of art film and popular cinema. Over the last eighty years, Murnau has earned a reputation as a sort of cinematic visionary; at the end of the 1920s, however, Fox saw no contradiction between such aesthetic practice and the idea of the super-production designed to establish the studio's reputation and guarantee its financial stability.

Sumiko Higashi, in her essay "The American Origins of Film Noir: Realism in Urban Art and *The Naked City*," investigates one of the givens of film history—that the film noir emerged more or less directly from German expressionism, with more marginal influences from French poetic

realism and American hard-boiled fiction. In its determination to emphasize the text/context binary, this history would also have it that film noir somehow reflected a pervasive late-1940s psychological malaise as a result of a weariness from war coupled with anxieties about modernity. Higashi, however, uses the Ashcan school paintings and the work of photographers from Jacob Riis to Weegee as evidence that demonstrates new and compelling antecedents to this cycle of movies. She also uses the studio correspondence about *The Naked City* (1948) to examine the very deliberate efforts of the production team to make a film that incorporated this American brand of realism. But Higashi's point is not simply to use these materials to make a nationalist claim for a popular grouping of films—there were, of course, multiple influences on these movies. The usual explanation of film noir tends to psychologize it, from Freud to Caligari to a victorious but uncertain postwar America. Higashi uses her materials to politicize the genre by showing that the American realist tradition, dating at least to the middle of the nineteenth century, sought to represent the urban scene in order to control it, particularly in order to control the racial and ethnic diversity that so marked the American city.

This volume is designed largely for use by undergraduates in film history classes and also by film scholars. It is our goal that the essays collected here will be instructive in terms of how to do historical research and how to examine and make sense of historical materials. In addition, we see the essays as contributing to an ongoing historiographic project in film studies, one that asks questions about methods in history and theories of historical understanding. In doing so, we do not propose either a return to a golden age in film studies or a rejection of the methods that have dominated the field since the 1950s. We do hope, however, that the essays here encourage film scholars and students to ask questions about methodologies and about film studies as a scholarly discipline, and to consider new subjects and modes of historical inquiry. We are not advocating removing the text from film studies, but instead we aim to develop the notion of the textuality of the historical field. Such a field includes a broad variety of primary materials, with movies holding a significant position but not always the central one.

This approach does not, then, insist on a final perfection of historical research. In fact, such a teleology works against everything that motivates these essays. All of us included in this project hope that our work con-

tributes to a continuing history of the history of film scholarship itself, so that we can properly understand the contributions of Thorp, Gessner, Buscombe, Jacobs, and others. These writers have taught us that films need not be the main object of study for film scholars, but in doing so they perhaps provide a link to, rather than a rejection of, more text-based studies.

One of the historical clichés of film studies is that the field only emerged in the academy in the 1960s and 1970s. This is certainly not true, as this introduction and several of the essays demonstrate. But it may well be true, as Jennifer Bean has written, that there was a crisis of legitimation of film studies during that period, with scholars meeting the crisis by attempting "to secure, outline, and theorize *the* unique object of . . . inquiry," the film itself, in order to justify the serious study of cinema.[50] As the current secure place of film studies in the academy attests, these attempts were successful. So now, more than three decades later, our very ability to critique the idea of the centrality of the film text is possible largely because of that notion itself as well as through the efforts of the scholars who proposed it.

NOTES

1 Margaret Farrand Thorp, *America at the Movies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1939), 1.

2 Gessner sent his syllabus to Frank Capra, because of his ranking of *It Happened One Night*, and Capra deposited it with his papers at the Cinema Archive at Wesleyan University. The fee for the class itself was fifteen dollars for all of the sessions or a one dollar fee for individual sessions, and because of this it seems to have been an adult education course or perhaps an extension course and not part of the regular university curriculum.

3 Thorp, *America at the Movies*, 144.

4 Ibid., 173–215.

5 Iris Barry, "Why Wait for Posterity?" in *Hollywood Quarterly: Film Culture in Postwar America, 1945–1957*, ed. Eric Smoodin and Ann Martin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 244. The article originally appeared in *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (January 1946): 131–37.

6 Ibid.

7 See the Web site for the Library of Congress Motion Picture and Television Reading Room at http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/.

8 Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986); Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); John Belton, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

9 Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Jon Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

10 William Boddy, "Approaching *The Untouchables*: Social Science and Moral Panics in Early Sixties Television," *Cinema Journal* 35, no. 4 (summer 1996): 70–87.

11 Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994).

12 Jane Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets* (New York: Macmillan, 1909).

13 For an examination of these uses of Capra's wartime documentary, see my *Regarding Frank Capra: Audience, Celebrity, and American Film Studies, 1930–1960* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004).

14 Leo A. Handel, *Hollywood Looks at Its Audience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950); David Riesman and Evelyn T. Riesman, "Movies and Audiences," *American Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (fall 1952): 195–202.

15 See the editorial statement at the beginning of *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1945). For a history of *Hollywood Quarterly* (*The Quarterly Review of Film, Radio, and Television*), see Eric Smoodin and Ann Martin, eds., *Hollywood Quarterly: Film Culture in Postwar America, 1945–1957* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

16 Ellen Seacoat, memo to August Frugé, "*Quarterly* Statement of Purposes and Principles," November 3, 1954. The memo is housed at the University of California Press.

17 August Frugé, *A Skeptic among Scholars: August Frugé on University Publishing* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 161.

18 Ibid.

19 The essay appeared originally in *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 223 (1970): 29–47. An English translation first appeared in *Screen* 13, no. 3 (autumn 1972): 5–44, and was reprinted in *Movies and Methods*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 493–529.

20 Raymond Bellour, "Alterner/raconter," in *Le cinèma american: Analyses de films*, vol. 1, ed. Raymond Bellour (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 69–88; Thierry Kuntzell, "Savoir, pouvoir, voir," in *Le cinèma american: Analyses de films*, vol. 1, 161–72; Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen* 17, no. 3, (autumn 1976): 68–112; Nick Browne, "The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*," *Film Quarterly* 29 (winter 1975–76): 26–38. For representative works on the directors, see Jon Halliday, ed., *Sirk on Sirk* (London: Secker and Warburg,

1971); for Hitchcock, see Heath, "Narrative Space"; for Lang, see Bellour, "On Fritz Lang," *Sub-Stance*, no. 9 (1974): 25–34.

21 Mulvey's essay appears on pp. 6–18 of the journal.

22 Buscombe's essay appears on pp. 65–82 of the journal. In my discussion of the essay, the numbers refer to the anthologized version in *The Studio System*, ed. Janet Staiger (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 17–36.

23 Ibid., 24.

24 Ibid., 20.

25 *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother . . . A Case of Parracide in the 19th Century*, ed. Michel Foucault (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982). The project first appeared in France, from Éditions Gallimard, in 1973.

26 Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976). For the Production Code, see appendix 4, 468–72.

27 Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

28 Allen and Gomery cite Roger Manwell, *The International Encyclopedia of Film* (New York: Crown, 1972); and Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia* (New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1979).

29 Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 38.

30 Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Danae Clark, *Negotiation Hollywood: The Cultural Politics of Actors' Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

31 Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin*, ix.

32 Richard deCordova, "Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees," *Camera Obscura*, no. 23 (May 1990): 91–106. The discussion of 1970s film theory and ethnography can be found on p. 92.

33 Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1993), 157; Annette Kuhn, *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 3–4.

34 "Special Debate: Trauma and Screen Studies," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (summer 2001): 188–216; "The Trauma Debate II," *Screen* 44, no. 2 (summer 2003): 200–28.

35 Susanna Radstone, "Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the Debate," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (summer 2001): 188.

36 Ibid., 189.

37 E. Ann Kaplan, "Melodrama, Cinema and Trauma," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (summer 2001): 204.

38 Maureen Turim, "The Trauma of History: Flashbacks upon Flashbacks," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (summer 2001): 205–10; Janet Walker, "Trauma Cinema: False Memories and True Experience," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (summer 2001): 211–16; Peter Thomas, "Victimage and Violence: *Memento* and Trauma Theory," *Screen* 44,