

E A R L Y
.....
CINEMA

S P A C E
f r a m e
NARRATIVE



Edited by
THOMAS ELSAESSER

E A R L Y

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CINEMA

E A R L Y

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C I N E M A

S P A C E

f r a m e

N A R R A T I V E

Edited by

T H O M A S E L S A E S S E R

with

A D A M B A R K E R



B F I P u b l i s h i n g

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General Introduction

Early Cinema : From Linear History to Mass Media Archaeology

Cinema: the Script of Life

As the centenary approaches of the first public exhibitions of projected moving images, it has become commonplace to discuss the cinema in terms that acknowledge its cultural function: of having introduced a radically new, universally comprehensible and yet deeply contradictory logic of the visible. The quantum leap taken by the audio-visual media not just as entertainment, but in public life, politics, education and science also alerts us to the historical role of cinema in the more general transformation of the ways knowledge is stored and disseminated, social experience is recorded and subjectivity constructed. Some of this was already recognised by proselytising film-makers like D.W. Griffith¹ or early theorists like Hugo Münsterberg.² Inspired perhaps by Lenin's famous dictum, Walter Benjamin was convinced that the very existence of the cinema necessitated a new archeology of the art work, because of the fundamental changes film had brought to the notion of time, space and material culture.³

The cinematographe, bioscope or vitascope, despite their many antecedents and an almost total dependence on technologies typical of the 19th century, were right from the start recognised to convey a wholly modern experience. By involving the spectator with an uncanny directness and immediacy, by investing the world with presence, and the technological apparatus with a taboo-breaking power over life and death, a metaphysical wager seemed to have been entered that was reflected in the very name given to the invention. A direct line can be drawn from Prometheus, Faust, and Dr Frankenstein to Thomas A. Edison – all obsessed with the integral (re)production of life, which in turn needs to be juxtaposed to the desire for a new script, a mode of writing with images, associated with a scientific urge to analyse movement and break it down into constituent parts.⁴

A Historical Conjecture

This Reader wants to be an introduction to some of the work laying the ground, both historically and theoretically, for a systematic account of early cinema: a precondition also for a cultural archeology of the new medium. Apart from Noël Burch and Michael Chanan (both influenced by Benjamin), there is perhaps not much evidence that interest in early cinema was prompted by reflections such as those above. Yet the renewed attention paid to its first manifestations and complex developments unquestionably springs from very diverse sources. Local

initiatives, practical needs, individual enthusiasm have intersected with several critical debates. Some can be listed fairly briefly, others may only emerge as research is becoming surveyable in book form.

As far as a more popular interest in early cinema goes, one influence was, paradoxically, television. Kevin Brownlow and David Gill's restoration of Abel Gance's *Napoleon* for Thames Television brought seemingly esoteric issues such as print quality, preservation techniques and proper aspect ratios to the attention of a general public. Their previous series *Hollywood*⁵ had already proven that a televisual history of the cinema could make for lively viewing. David Robinson was surely right, when he wrote

Through these snatched extracts of films and fragments of old men's memories, the makers [of *Hollywood*] have nevertheless succeeded triumphantly in their broader aim, which was to capture and convey the mood, the atmosphere, the excitement, the essence of the era. It is indeed the first time since the actual demise of the silent film that so large a public has been brought so close to the actual experience of the silent cinema as our fathers and grandfathers knew it.⁶

No loving recreation or nostalgic celebration of a bygone age was in the minds of Jean Louis Comolli, Jean Louis Baudry and others when they set out to challenge André Bazin's influential realist ontology, in the name of a new epistemological, anti-teleological and 'materialist' history of the cinema. This critical agenda is most evident in Burch's essays devoted to early cinema. 'Porter or Ambivalence' marked for many in film studies their first encounter with a decisively different way of conceptualising the origins and early forms of cinema.⁷

Burch's paper, as it happens, was written for an event that will remain a key date for locating the beginning of a new era of research, the 1978 FIAF conference held in Brighton which brought together for the first time archivists and film scholars around a common purpose.⁸ The spirit of cooperation, even of a crusade has continued, not least thanks to the annual Pordenone 'Giornate del cinema muto'. The Brighton meeting was itself symptomatic of a new urgency felt by film archives about the preservation and accessibility of materials from the early period. The urgency was partly in response to specific crises (the Langlois affair in 1968, various disastrous fires, the lifespan of nitrate film coming to an end), and also reflected the increased call made on all kinds of audio-visual records by television, with its appetite for authentic archive footage in political, documentary, biographical, educational programming.

The demand for preservation and access put a strain on the resources of all but the largest archives. Filmic and non-filmic material had to be processed, new ways of reliably identifying films had to be found, and thus methods of dating, attributing, periodising films and especially film-fragments. Hence the need for an internationalisation of research, and collaboration between archivists and scholars. For the latter it implied a change of focus: not aesthetic excellence and artistic value were at issue, but normative and comparative criteria had to be found. Here the work of Barry Salt, who for some time

prior to the FIAF congress had worked on the possibilities of statistical and comparative style analysis, proved ground-breaking.

A New Historicism

One major effort in re-writing this history has been directed at establishing verifiable data, deciding not only what is verifiable, but what is pertinent. Are we to rely on the films alone, given how each surviving print has its own problematic history; are we to treat as fact what contemporary sources say about particular films and the often anecdotal histories of their production? The tendency in recent years has been to distrust received wisdom and widely held assumptions, to 'suspect every biography and check every monograph', as Robert Allen put it.⁹

A new generation of film historians mainly in the United States took up this task, and began a thorough re-examination of those accounts which told the history of the cinema as the story of fearless pioneers, of 'firsts', of adventure and discovery, of great masters and masterpieces. Gomery, Allen, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, Charles Musser and Russell Merritt among others queried the textbooks in the name of different determinants (mainly demographic, economic, industrial, technological). They also proved how intimately the cinema in America fed on and was implicated in the history of above all vaudeville, but also other popular entertainments, such as penny arcades, medicine tent shows and Hale's tours: a history that runs counter to traditional 'theoretical' speculations about the cinema's relation to the novel and the theatre.

The media-intertext of early cinema, the industrialisation of entertainment and leisure turned out to be a rich source of insight, as well as opening up entirely new areas of research. It showed, for instance, that the study of the exhibition context could be the key to answering questions about production, as well as the development of film form. In the process, it suggested a quite different argument regarding the crucial transformations between early cinema and 'Hollywood' from those given by, say, Terry Ramsaye or Lewis Jacobs. The result was a revision of what counts as evidence in film history (local records, city planning ordinances, business files, law-suits and patent infringements) and a demotion of intrinsic filmic evidence. Gomery and Allen were not afraid of being blunt: 'For certain investigations, film viewing is really an inappropriate research method.'¹⁰ In the case of early cinema, the combination of these new kinds of evidence with new conceptual models of cultural history have fundamentally changed our view of the period, especially that between 1905 to 1917. As so often in historiography, new criteria of pertinence necessarily affect the hypotheses historians forge, consciously or unconsciously, about the data in question.¹¹

If much of the new film history has focussed on early cinema because here the claim was strongest that the models for understanding the cinema as a whole were inadequate, contradictory or based on unsound scholarship, there was a similarly strong sense that traditionally film scholars had misconstrued the meaning of the films themselves. Burch had indicated one possible direction by

positing the so-called 'primitive cinema' as a distinct 'mode of representation' (the PMR), based on a different logic of the relation between viewer and film, on a different thinking about images and their presentation, on a different conception of space and narrative, when compared to the 'institutional mode' (the IMR). As the Reader makes clear, Burch's distinction has also led to some very productive reformulations, most notably perhaps those of Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault. Gunning's 'cinema of attractions' and 'cinema of narrative integration' pinpoint the dissatisfaction felt with traditional premises:

These terms are an attempt to overcome the two primary approaches of the previous generation to understanding the change which occurs in film-making prior to the introduction of feature films. One (the most discredited now) has been the simple progress explanation which sees a movement, basically due to trial and error and the intervention of certain men of genius, from 'primitive' film-making to the foundation of the later narrative style. The other (somewhat more sophisticated, but we feel equally misleading) explanation has described this change as a movement from a reliance on theatrical models to a more cinematic approach to narrative.¹²

The Sense of and Ending of (Classical) Cinema?

There is also another more diffuse, but nonetheless important conjuncture. When Burch championed Edwin Porter over D.W. Griffith, it was clear that he also spoke on behalf of an avant garde who had recourse to early cinema in order to displace, at least conceptually, the hegemony of Hollywood.¹³ The rediscovery of the 'primitives' seemed like a vindication of the avant garde's fifty-year struggle to rethink the foundations of 'film language', and dispel the idea that the cinema's turn to fictional narrative or adoption of illusionist representational forms was its inevitable destiny.

These polemics seemed the more timely, since the 1970s began to speculate on the demise of the classical cinema's hegemony from a quite different perspective. The transformation of film viewing, the re-privatisation of consumption of audiovisual material through television, videotape and other recent technologies of storage and reproduction were obliging historians to try and integrate the history of the cinema into the wider cultural and economic context of the entertainment and consciousness industries. In other words, important developments in the contemporary cinema itself appeared to have significant analogies with early cinema. Looking at the increasing predominance of technology and special effects in providing the primary audience attraction, and considering the resurgence (through television and popular music) of performative and spectacle modes, as against purely narrative modes, classical cinema may yet come to be seen as itself a 'transitional' stage in the overall history of the audio-visual media and the technologies of mechanical recording and reproduction.

As one would expect, such diverse motives do not make for unanimity. There is a perceptible tension between scholars with an interest in early

cinema as part of a 'cultural' or ideological-theoretical history, and scholars who are simply concerned with 'facts' and micro-analyses, some of whom would not be offended at being called 'revisionists' or 'neo-empiricists'. It is nonetheless remarkable – and a sign of the vigour in this field of research – that the diverse contributions do actually form part of recognisable debates, perhaps even of a project. One of the premises of this Reader is that a perceptible coherence exists, which the diversity of approaches only helps to underline. Whether the collection manages to represent these debates in both their diversity and cogency is of course another matter.

Brighton and After

In this last respect the present volume differs from the publications that followed the 1978 FIAF meeting in Brighton, *Cinema 1900–1906: An Analytical Study* and John Fell's *Film before Griffith*, both of which this Reader tries to complement rather than duplicate. *Ce que je vois de mon ciné* (edited by André Gaudreault) and the American Federation of Arts' *Before Hollywood* are two other recent collections of essays, accompanying exhibitions and programmes of screenings, to which must be added the impressive catalogues edited by the organisers of the Pordenone festival.¹⁴ By foregrounding the need to retrace the intellectual repercussions of the FIAF conference, the Reader wants to bring together some of the crucial contributions since Brighton, respecting the arguments in their complexity, as befits primary research, but also focussing on a range of circumscribed issues. The aim is to encourage the current generation of film scholars to study and teach more early cinema. With this in mind, it has seemed a risk worth taking, to weave, via the introductions, a kind of story, in the hope that the debates around early cinema will seem to recast film history, and also help reformulate a number of problems in traditional film theory. This story has two salient strands, which to a greater or lesser degree act as explanatory foils for each other: the first is the cinema's turn to narrative as its main form of textual and ideological support, and the second is the industrialisation and commodification of its standard product, the feature film. In one sense, this might seem an inadmissibly restrictive focus, running the danger of reproducing all the teleological and deterministic moves which the new history is trying to deconstruct. In another sense, it is the very intertwining of mode (narrative) and material support (commodity) that makes the cinema such a complex cultural force, and the history of early cinema in particular a site of shifts and struggles, of roads not taken and paths unexpectedly crossing.

For, finally, the double historical moment – that of the cinema between 1896 and 1917, and of its rediscovery in the late 1970s – does situate early cinema in a particular context, the one opened up by the revitalisation of film theory during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and its subsequent (post-Saussurean, post-Lacanian, post-modern) crises in the 1980s. Hence, several sets of questions have influenced the selection. Firstly, how did the diverse technical processes and economic pressures feeding into early film production undergo the kind of integration that was necessary before film-making became an industry? Secondly, how did this industrial logic impose itself to the point of

becoming inextricably bound up with the narrative logic of the cinema we call 'classical'? Thirdly, and perhaps most intriguingly, given that the cinema manifests a unique combination of the drives towards pleasure and towards intelligibility, what is its psychic dimension, its cognitive role, its connection with the desire to picture the world in images and to experience it as doubled and mirrored, offering spectators idealised images of themselves, and therefore also letting us see other audiences' self images?

The Reader is organised into three parts: 'Early Film Form – Articulations of Space and Time', 'The Institution of Cinema: Industry, Commodity, Audiences', and 'The Continuity System: Griffith and Beyond'. The first part addresses the question whether early cinema in its manifest otherness demonstrates a coherence of its own, or whether its contradictory logic demands a wider analytic framework. The second part asks whether such a framework can be derived from its specific historical, economic and technological development. The last part is concerned with the emergence of continuity cinema and cinematic subjectivity, and the role played by Griffith's work, representative but also a-typical, amenable to so many different interpretations and applications, and thus prototype of alternative or nationally distinct variants to continuity cinema and its imaginary. Several themes, however, run through the collection as a whole, of which the most important one is how the cinema came to develop a particular kind of narrational logic. The research presented here into the formal articulation of cinematic space, into the questions of narration, into the material determinants shaping the cinema seem to me to provide new answers by pointing to hitherto neglected connections. One conclusion might be that the issue of the primitiveness or otherness of early cinema needs to be recast: not in a binary opposition to the classical, but as a signpost on the way to the increasing detachment of images from their material referents, 'freeing' them for narrative, for becoming bearers of cultural and social identities, which in turn support an industry. If only for this reason the history of early cinema has implications for a general history of the cinema, and of any medium dependent on a mass public and subject to technological change as well as institutional transformations.

As with any Reader, the choice of what to include was easy, what to finally exclude a painful one, since so much that is both pertinent and excellent is not present. Some essays were unfortunately not available for republication; in one or two instances the originals were slightly shortened. Even at a relatively late stage in the selection process, almost a quarter of the material had to be cut out for reasons of space. The rather lengthy introductions to the individual sections cannot hope to make up for the gaps, but they are an attempt, however inadequate, to synthesise issues and provide contexts. They also want to point in the directions where more relevant material can be found, as does the bibliography which lays no claim to being complete or exhaustive.

The idea and title for this Reader were first conceived in 1982, when Film Studies at the University of East Anglia organised its own post-Brighton conference on early cinema. Although the papers presented there still await publication, I want to thank all the participants for their contributions, as well as my colleagues Charles Barr and Don Ranvaud, who, together with Andrew

Higson and Helen McNeil, have over the years made teaching Early Cinema such exciting journeys of discovery. To their enthusiasm, and that of our students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, both past and future, this volume is dedicated. As editor, however, my thanks go to the authors, including those from whose work and cooperation I have benefited without being finally able to represent them here. Adam Barker, during the time he was associated with the project, contributed generously with ideas and practical assistance. His first draft of the introduction to the Griffith section has been very helpful, and I trust he recognises his formulations without objecting too much to the direction in which I have taken them. Barry Salt has always found time to answer queries and has given invaluable help by producing framestills for Leon Hunt's article as well as for his own. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith at the BFI proved to be a steady source of sound advice, patience and encouragement, especially in the belief that the subtle and self-evident pleasures of early films can be celebrated in many ways, of which scholarly debate and academic argument are certainly not the only, though neither the least passionate ones.

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Thomas Elsaesser

Notes

1. See D.W. Griffith, 'Some Prophecies', in Harry M. Geduld (ed.), *Focus on D.W. Griffith* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 34–7, and Anne Friedberg, '“A Properly Adjusted Window”: Vision and Sanity', below, pp. 326–35.
2. Hugo Munsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover 1969; first published 1916).
3. 'The social significance (of film), particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage.' Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations* (London: Collins/Fontana Books, 1973), p. 223.
4. This genealogy is drawn up by Noël Burch in at least two essays: 'A Parenthesis on Film History' in *To the Distant Observer* (London: Scholar Press, 1980), chapter 5, and 'Charles Baudelaire vs. Dr. Frankenstein', *Afterimage* no. 8/9, Winter 1980/81, esp. pp. 5–13.
5. The impact was greatly increased by Brownlow's books *The Parade's Gone By* (London: Paladin, 1968) and *Hollywood the Pioneers* (London: Collins, 1979). See also *Making Better Movies* vol. 3, no. 7, July 1987, pp. 327–9; *Film Comment* vol. 23, no. 4, July–August 1987, pp. 66–9, and my 'Innocence Restored', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, December 1984, p. 366.
6. David Robinson, 'Hollywood', *Sight and Sound* vol. 49, no. 3, Summer 1980, p. 159.
7. 'Porter or Ambivalence' (*Screen* vol. 19, no. 4, Winter 1978/9, pp. 91–105) also allowed one to read Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* differently. For a critique of Comolli's and Burch's critique, see David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, 'Linearity, materialism and the Study of the Early American Cinema', *Wide Angle* vol. 5, no. 3, 1983, pp. 4–15.
8. Jon Gartenberg, in 'The Brighton Project: The Archives and Research', *Iris* vol. 2, no. 1, 1984, p. 6 has detailed the background to this collaboration.
9. Robert C. Allen, 'Film History Study File', *AFI Newsletter*, January/February 1980.
10. See their chapter 'Reading as Questioning' in Douglas Gomery, Robert C. Allen, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), p. 38.
11. See, for instance, Pierre Sorlin, 'Promenade de Rome', *Iris* vol. 2, no. 2, 1984, pp. 4–8.
12. Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Narrative Integration', in Paolo Cherchi Usai (ed.), *Vitagraph Co of America* (here quoted from the author's typescript, p. 4).
13. The case for connecting early cinema with avant garde cinema is most forcefully made in Rod Stoneman, 'Perspective Correction', *Afterimage* no. 8/9, Winter 80/81, pp. 50–63, and by Werner Nekes in *Film before Film: What Really Happened Between the Images*. But see also entries under Burch, Gunning, Wyborny in the bibliography.
14. See entries under Paolo Cherchi Usai in bibliography for details of volumes that have appeared to date.

I

EARLY FILM FORM

Articulations of Space and Time

Introduction

Film Form

This section of the Reader focuses on how the cinema developed its codes of intelligibility, and why it became a predominantly narrative medium. The essays are organised by formal categories but they also concentrate on film-makers whose work is likely to be best known and most accessible (Lumière, Méliès, Porter); what follows is intended to stake out the common ground uniting the various contributors in dialogue. In addressing the core issues, a term is revived familiar from film theory rather than film history: that of film form.¹ It was Barry Salt, in two articles published in 1976 and 1978 who gave the concept a new currency and helped to create a serviceable terminology for discussing early cinema.² More overtly than in the film form debates of Eisenstein and the Russian avant garde (largely based on linguistic models and on the compositional properties of the image and the shot),³ Salt argues from what at first appear to be technical parameters. He begins pragmatically with a film-maker's problems: questions about staging, methods of lighting, of figure positioning in space, use of reverse-angle shots, analytical editing and scene-dissection. These aspects have always been part of the criteria for discussing film style, and Salt does, in a sense, no more than ask of early cinema some of the traditional questions of *mise en scène* criticism.⁴

Editing in particular has often been seen as the motor of change and the criterion of differentiation. Ever since Frank Woods' articles in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* boasted of the superiority of the American cinema over its European rivals thanks to faster cutting, and held up the work of Griffith as exemplary in this respect, shot length and editing speed have been the hallmarks of cinematic sophistication and modernity.⁵ Nowhere more so than when Soviet directors immersed themselves in the productions of Griffith and other Americans, partly in order to learn from them, and to improve on their models, by devising ever more complex editing patterns.

For Salt, the crucial markers for the emergence of successive styles are cutting rate and shot length. But he sees these as functional values, not as ends in themselves, bound together by a non-specific, non-intrinsic priority, such as optimal efficiency in putting across a story.⁶ Thus, it is match-cutting and diegetic unity which are the consequences of 'the pressures on evolution and development', as in the codification of screen direction (the plotting of scene entrances and exits), itself a consequence of the move from single-shot films to multi-scene filming.⁷ Consistency in screen direction, however, also

indicates increasing reliance on studio work as opposed to location shooting.⁸ While both multi-scene films and studio work were determined by *external* factors, the coherent plotting of adjacent spaces laid the basis for continuity editing, a crucial element in the *internal* development of film form.⁹ One of its features, the cut on action, became the commonest form of shot transition via the early cinema's most typical genre, the chase film, the pressure on form emanating in this case also from the subject matter. The pro-filmic, the internal and the contextual all emerge as determinants without aligning themselves in a causal hierarchy.

Salt's pragmatism allows him to break with one of the most persistent fallacies of the 'film grammar' school of theory, by showing that certain technical devices or shot transitions do not have stable, one-to-one meanings, but must be understood as relative: dissolves in Méliès for instance do not signify inner character states such as dreams, nor do they connote time lapses (as was the case from the 1920s onwards), but may simply indicate a change of location. By defining film language as use, Salt shares ground with more explicitly formalist theories, although he does not attach ideological significance to these emerging conventions and specific codes governing the articulation of filmic time and space.¹⁰

The significance of Salt's concept of film form, though biased towards aspects of early cinema that were to prove decisive in the transition from 'primitive' to 'classical' cinema,¹¹ is that it is sensitive to the construction of a space – through staging, lighting and shot scales and shot transitions – which is typical of the cinema and irreducible to any theatrical or even music hall antecedents. Secondly, Salt brings an historically informed knowledge of film technology to bear on his evolution of formal criteria. What is perhaps needed is a clearer idea whether these style parameters change separately and thus function in isolation from each other, or whether convention and use constitute a historical paradigm only when seen as interdependent variables together making up a style. Subsequent research has treated film forms more as systems of self-regulation or functional equivalence: this is true for Ben Brewster,¹² and also for David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson.¹³ Their work implies a more sophisticated and explicit theory of narrative space, narrative structure and narration.

The Organisation of Space and Time: Theatricality and Deep Staging

Different film forms would seem to be determined by a film-maker's ability to construct space and time – the two dimensions simultaneously present in filmic representation – in a comprehensible manner. Such a logic of the visible depends on (an idea of) continuity: rendering spatio-temporal and causal relations coherently and consistently. The impression of intelligibility of an action is not so much a question of how real that which is being filmed actually is (i.e. the documentary value of what is before the camera), but whether the system that governs its representation is intelligible to the viewer. An often-quoted case is G. A. Smith and James A. Williamson's 1899 *Henley Regatta*,

where shots of boats taken from the river bank are intercut with shots of crowds waving, obviously filmed from mid-river.¹⁴ The decision to alternate these shots creates a causal relation – a diegetic space – (the crowds are cheering the boats visible in the preceding and subsequent frames) which exists independent of the reality of the event.¹⁵

Several questions are raised by such an example, beyond drawing attention to the difference between single-shot films and multi-shot films. Smith and Williamson did not merely join individual shots, but brought them together by virtue of a specific causal logic which implies definite temporal and spatial relations. Does this mean they had an idea not only of what we would now call 'editing', but of continuity editing? Basing the causal logic on the alternation of seeing/seen/seeing would suggest it.¹⁶ But as John Fell pointed out, there are instances from other British and American films where a single shot setup allows for several 'simultaneous playing areas' (either by a cross-sectional view or by a division of the frame into foreground and background)¹⁷ thus maintaining continuity and spatial coherence, without necessarily creating new causal relationships.¹⁸

'Simultaneous playing areas' and 'editing within the frame' are features of early cinema that have increasingly become the object of attention. First, because they refer to and reformulate the oldest (and usually pejorative) distinction made between primitive and classical cinema: the charge that early films were 'theatrical'.¹⁹ But as Fell's examples above already show, the formal features of early cinema cannot be equated with its presumed debts to the theatre. Second, tableau scenes and other forms of elaborate staging are not necessarily the sign of 'primitive' or 'retarded' practice. Rather, they are specific choices or strategies, available as alternatives to editing. In particular, staging in depth – along with frontal staging the most obviously 'theatrical' trait – has come to be regarded as a crucial formal parameter for distinguishing both within American films and European from American productions.

The debate about theatricality, prominent in Jean Mitry and revived by Noël Burch,²⁰ has been taken up most vigorously by André Gaudreault²¹ and Tom Gunning.²² Gaudreault wants to extend the notions of narrative and narration, in order to subsume what to Mitry and countless other historians appeared to be practices borrowed from the stage. Gunning puts forward a distinction (possibly inspired by Burch's presentational vs. representational arts)²³ which overcomes the a-historicity of calling everything in early cinema that does not fit the later ideal of narrative continuity 'theatrical'. He posits a 'cinema of attractions' as distinct from a 'cinema of narrative integration'. Early cinema displays events and actions rather than narrates them; it addresses spectators directly, and as a physical collectivity; it has different kinds of closure, not all of which are textual; its unit is the autonomous shot or scene, where actions and events are continuous by virtue of some conceptual or narrational category, to which the autonomy of the shot becomes subordinated. These oppositions seem particularly fertile in a number of ways: they throw into relief the fact that one of the attractions of early cinema was the cinematic apparatus itself, quite apart from what it showed; secondly, that pleasure both for film-

makers and audiences resided in all the objects, views, events the cinema could show, which need not necessarily have been in story form; thirdly, a 'cinema of attractions' underlines the fact that film producers were often show-men (and -women); fourthly, that interaction between characters on screen and audiences was frequently based on the performers' self-conscious, pleasurable exhibitionism, rather than, as in 'classical' cinema, determined by the spectators' unacknowledged voyeurism. Finally, it reminds us that in contemporary cinema and television, the performative mode (the 'show') exists as distinct but not separate from the pervasive narrativisation of all information.

Ben Brewster's article also takes up the case of 'theatricality'. His contention is not only that the cinema is fundamentally distinguished from the theatre by the construction of a single point-of-view for all spectators, irrespective of their position in the auditorium.²⁴ By examining Pathé, Vitagraph and some Scandinavian productions, he is able to isolate a consistent practice in staging which constitutes a historically and perhaps even nationally distinct alternative to a mode based on editing and scene dissection. Deep space cinematography emerges as a very complex, varied and heterogeneous phenomenon in early cinema, ranging from relatively direct reproduction of theatrical tableaux in some of the French *films d'art*, to very sophisticated dramatic manipulation of camera position, as in Perret's *Le roman d'un mousse* (1913). Even more exciting, though also more speculative, is his suggestion of a typology of staging, which together with other variables (camera position, lighting, shot scales and editing speeds) could form style paradigms distinct in period, production company or national provenance: in short, a much more sophisticated version of Salt's statistical style analysis based on 'average shot length'. The basic alternatives would then be between deep staging and slow cutting (European), and shallow staging and fast cutting (American). If among the films giving priority to staging in depth, French *films d'art* (deep space/slow cutting) and Scandinavian films (deep space, cued by lighting) find themselves on the same side of the divide with certain Vitagraph films (deep space, lower camera, emphasis on foreground as a distinct action space), then this introduces a further variable, namely prestige and quality productions, which in the United States at least, points to the desire to attract a better class of (or better-paying) patrons.

Gunning and Brewster implicitly argue against using the term film form other than in the context of the Soviet experiments. Despite an interest in staging, Salt for instance pays little attention to films as performative acts, based on spectacle-attraction; on the other hand, his instinctive preference for a narrative cinema (of editing, causal relations, diegetic unity and narrative economy) has not extended to any interest in or theoretical awareness of narration.²⁵ As a result, he has concentrated much more on multi-shot films, neglecting the internal dynamics of the individual shot or scene. By contrast, Brewster, Burch, Gaudreault and Musser have found the single-shot film very rewarding for the study of early cinema. Brewster's point about the interrelation of deep staging and production values throws into relief that Salt's style history is wholly producer- and product-oriented (the director, the cameraman and the

set designer are the agents of change),²⁶ missing out the economic and ideological determinations emanating from audiences or exhibitors, so crucial to Burch or Musser.²⁷ Narrative efficiency and intelligibility are themselves not fixed and stable categories. As Yuri Tsivian shows in his essay on the Kuleshov effect and early cinema audiences, intelligibility may involve cultural variables such as class, ethnicity, gender and education.²⁸ It may also vary from one spectator to the next, because film is a constant negotiation of the flow of information and the uneven distribution of knowledge, which the spectator has to 'motivate', make sense of and integrate: all of which are processes generally subsumed under the term 'narration'.

Film Form and 'Patterning': Reconsidering the Lumières' Films

As a test-case for the interpenetration and inseparability of staging, editing and narration one might conveniently take the example of the single-scene film, excluded from consideration at the Brighton conference and which in Salt's early account is 'of no interest as far as film construction is concerned'.²⁹ Yet so-called 'non-edited' film has been discussed extensively in recent years, especially when trying to clarify one of the most basic aspects of cinema: the relation of the pro-filmic to the filmic, often discussed under the heading of realism. It has, not surprisingly, led to a thorough re-examination of the work of the Lumières, both for their films' formal organisation, and in terms of the underlying ideological and social contexts.

In 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films' Marshall Deutelbaum argues that *Sortie d'usine*, *Arrivée d'un train*, *Demolition d'un mur*, *Barque sortant du port* and other well-known single-scene films are not, as traditional film history has it, 'plotless' or 'the recording of unadjusted, unarranged, untampered reality', but highly structured wholes 'reflecting a number of carefully chosen decisions about sequential narrative'.³⁰ By attending especially to the beginning and the ending, Deutelbaum is able to show that most Lumière films record actions and events in which the end either rejoins or inversely mirrors the beginning (opening and closing the factory gates in *Sortie d'usine*) thus providing a very effective narrative closure. Alternatively, their films enact what Deutelbaum calls 'operational processes' such as the breaking up of a slab of coke, the firing of a canon, the demolition of a wall: in each case, the film's temporal and spatial organisation foregrounds the causal or functional logic of the event, making the beginning of the action coincide with and mirror the beginning of the film. Furthermore, Deutelbaum argues that scope and duration of the actions are signalled in the films themselves, providing a form of narrative suspense and anticipation which generates active spectatorial involvement. In films like *Course en sac*, *Scieurs de Bois* and others, Deutelbaum finds evidence of a very complex 'structural use of space', doubling of protagonists, repetition of action, movement within the frame, and 'arrangement in depth' which indicates a sophisticated formal sense inflecting the apparently artless presentation of 'simple content'. Framing and camera-placing are chosen to heighten closure, balance, symmetry and thus, according to Deutelbaum 'impart a shape to the

action depicted'. In Gunning's terms, the Lumière films' 'patterning' of events represent particularly sophisticated examples of the 'cinema of attractions'.

Dai Vaughan, in 'Let There Be Lumière' also wants to account for the fascination still emanating from a film like *Barque sortant du port*, but in order to speculate on the minimal conditions of fiction in a non-edited film. Seemingly inclined to locate it in the intrusion of the fortuitous and accidental (the rustling leaves behind the baby in *Repas de Bébé*, or the sudden wave in *Barque sortant du port*) and the unresolved conflict between the spontaneous and the staged, Vaughan makes two points in passing that have important implications. Firstly, unlike other early films, such as Edison's, whose mode was presentational ('perceived as performance, as simply a new mode of self-presentation'), the unpredictable in the Lumière films integrates performance with narrative. Secondly, Vaughan raises, although only to reject it, the notion of motivation as crucial to the perception of fictionality. While apparently unaware of the complex formal organisation which Deutelbaum points out, Vaughan, like Deutelbaum, shifts the argument from the pro-filmic ('realism') to the filmic (the staging and framing), but goes beyond Deutelbaum's 'patterning' in regarding the frame as part of the act of showing, thus anticipating Gaudreault's notion of 'monstration' (see below) as a form of narration.

Deutelbaum and Vaughan implicitly operate with a more traditionally literary or art-historical concept of form. Form in this sense not only posits a relation between parts and whole, but considerations of 'patterning' and of formal structure inevitably raise the question of chance and intentionality, reality and artifice. For Salt, as indeed for Eisenstein or Kuleshov, film form is always the result of a construction and an intervention (if only of the filmic apparatus). This explains why Salt insists that only when one deals with a multi-shot film and the possibilities of editing can one begin to discuss film form. Deutelbaum and Vaughan's approach, on the other hand, has the advantage of addressing the single-shot film (the norm until at least 1900) and thereby focusing on the tensions between the random and the patterned as a condition of perceptible meaning, drawing attention to the active participation of the spectator in the creation of intelligibility. They are also aware of the complex status of staging, involving as it does performative-presentational as well as narrative-narrational modes. Richard de Cordova's 'From Lumière to Pathé: The Break-up of Perspectival Space' specifically addresses this latter point, namely how, already in the Lumière films, the spectator is bound into the film by the complex function played by the frame, and therefore by the awareness of off-frame space.³¹

Views, Topicals and Actualities: From Editing to Narrating

Does event determine form or does form create event? The question can also be studied through another aspect of the pro-filmic and the filmic that has come under scrutiny: the topicals or actualities as a key genre of early cinema. Here, too, the issues centre on the imbrication of staging, editing and narration. The Brighton project had selected only fictional subjects and multi-shot films. And although these criteria seem to give the minimal conditions for investigating

temporal and spatial construction, it is in practice often difficult to separate documentary from fiction, a difficulty largely arising from a conceptual impasse and a false dichotomy.

In a Brighton FIAF paper, 'Re-constructed Newsreels, Reenactments', David Levy discusses the confusion prevailing until 1907 in the area of newsreel-type actuality and of restaged or faked events. Although even then articles appeared describing the formal features that distinguished re-enactments from actual footage, the more interesting questions lie perhaps elsewhere. Levy cites research to the effect that 'a range of camera techniques including panning, tracking and dolly movements, tilts, long, medium and close shots of the same subject, reverse angles and continuity editing emerged accidentally from the efforts of early newsreel cameramen, working with unwieldy equipment in conditions over which they had limited control, to capture an actual event as it unfolded around them'.³² It is on the basis of these marks of authenticity and of a participating observer's presence that many of the faked Edison war films, notably of the Boer War, arrived at very sophisticated effects of staging. They exploited depth of field as well as extreme close shots for dramatic impact, especially in scenes involving horses and cavalry charges.³³ By staging spectacular action scenes within an overall chase format, films such as *Capture of the Boer Battery* are more obviously precursors of the fiction film than of *cinéma-vérité* documentary. For Levy, early newsreel illustrates the peculiar leapfrog logic of film history: devices and techniques which may have owed their existence to the contingencies of filming a real event became in turn, after being adopted by film-makers intent on exploiting the topical value of the subject matter, the very conventions of the fiction film.

The relation between pro-filmic coherence and narrative coherence is fundamental to Stephen Bottomore's 'Shots in the Dark'. Discussing the origins of editing, he re-examines what the intervention, accidental or deliberate, of the shaping and 'directing' power of the cut (either in the camera or of the film strip) means for film form. Bottomore's argument is that the first instances of editing can be found in actuality films. Shooting scenes or events which occur outdoors must have encouraged the use of action in depth, with movement towards and away from the camera. Such movement becomes a significant factor in introducing temporal ellipsis or spatial discontinuity. Actualities obliged the film-maker to create, even as he records an event, a specific sequential or spatial logic, which becomes in some sense the event's (intensified) abstracted representation, as opposed to reproducing its (extensive) duration. The discontinuity resulting from the constraints imposed on the film-maker when filming a live event (the fact that he cannot be everywhere at once, that the action is non-repeatable, that his magazine loads only a limited amount of film stock) thus introduces a kind of negative, involuntary choice, of which 'editing' could be seen as the positive, intentional form.

What, however, also needs to be taken into account are certain aspects not so much of the pro-filmic (as is usually argued in the context of realism) but of the subject matter and its articulation in time, which 'naturalise' or 'motivate' peculiarities of staging and editing. For it seems what determines

the filmic in actualities is not only the concern with the logic of the visible as the unfolding of an event, but also the logic of spectacle, as the deployment of a space (and point of view) in order to create a certain effect on the spectator. The difference would then be less between edited and non-edited films (between non-continuity and continuity), and instead attention would shift to analytical editing (discontinuity), as the moment of specifically filmic narration. Analytical editing, or scene dissection, not only dramatises time and space differently, but breaks with the possibility of cinematic images being seen as records of (actual) objects or events. Instead, they become motivated views (implying an act of showing) and semiotic acts (elements of a discourse): evidence that the cinema's representational space is not given but constructed, existing in an imaginary as well as a perceptual dimension.

In thinking about early film form, a move seems necessary from the discussion of film form as a question of signification and intelligibility to one where both time and space are understood as 'organised' in view of certain effects for a viewer. Signification when discussed by itself remains a-historical: what is needed is both a dynamic conception of how a film made sense and gave pleasure to this or that audience in this or that place,³⁴ and a concept which sees the generation of meaning in the film-text itself as a continuous process: one located in the tension between presentation and narration, rather than of formal patterning or a fixed semiotic system.

This point is forcefully taken up by André Gaudreault, in 'Film, Narrative, Narration – The cinema of the Lumière Brothers'. Rejecting Deutelbaum's approach as too concerned with the unity of the pro-filmic and the coherence of the event, Gaudreault tries to identify different levels of narrativity in films like *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare*. Distinguishing between the mobility of the represented subjects, which regulates the succession of images, and the mobility of spatio-temporal segments, which governs the succession of shots, Gaudreault sees the two levels of narrativity (the one inherent in any moving image and the other initiated by any kind of shot-change) as dialectically intertwined. Although he insists that one can talk about filmic narration only if both levels are present, since every shot-change implies the intervention of a narrator, the single-shot film constitutes a mode which is already narrative, even if it is one without a narrator. This leads him to posit a narrating instance which he calls 'monstrator', and to 'monstration' as the mode of narration typical of early cinema.

For Gaudreault, too, the issue of actualities and their staging does not lead to a reiteration of the difference between documentary and fictional forms (the Lumière/Méliès divide) but centres on the question of narration. In order to comprehend film as a system, one has to see the articulation of space and time not in isolation from, but in conjunction with the question of narrativity, preferably by distinguishing the story or event level from the act and process of narration. Continuity at the story level is one of the most powerful ways of disguising discontinuity at the level of the filmic articulation, a discontinuity which introduces the marks of narration. Narration in this sense is the sum total of the devices by which discontinuity is motivated, since it is the force that pulls

the spectator into the action, even where the staging remains frontal and the space non-illusionist.

But Gaudreault's distinction has further ramifications. While Levy had already established a very sophisticated case for the emergence of the multi-shot film out of a combination of legal and industrial factors,³⁵ Gaudreault – using the same court material as Levy – in 'The Infringement of Copyright 1900–06' makes the case that the legal arguments around copyrighting as protecting either individual frames, or individual shots, or the entire film actually amount to a very instructive 'proto-theoretical' definition of the relation between the reality to be filmed and its filmic (he calls it 'filmographic') form in early cinema.³⁶ The difference that matters is thus neither between documentary and fiction, nor between edited and non-edited film, but between two kinds of discontinuity: one that emphasises the individual shot and its convergence with the scene, and one that starts with the logical or perceived unity of the scene, while ignoring the discontinuity of the individual shots.

Basic Paradigms: Non-Continuity, Discontinuity, Continuity

The most ambitious attempt to synthesise these problems and at the same time ground them historically is Gunning's 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films'. His objective, too, is to arrive via empirical evidence at a greater degree of theoretical rigour in defining early cinema, but also the classical paradigm, and even the avant garde, within a single conceptual model. For Gunning the prerequisites of a genuinely formal history which is also materialist history, are a uniform set of criteria, combined with a notion of narrative that is not functional, but dialectical.³⁷ an outlook and a term which brings his work close to that of Burch, for whom narrative, too, is not a given, but instead itself a historical variable.

Gunning distinguishes four cine-genres, the advantage of the term being that the marks of difference are not in the content or the iconography, but in the film forms, that is, in the treatment of time and space through the parameters of non-continuity, continuity and discontinuity. This model recasts significantly many of the preoccupations so far mentioned, notably the relation between the pro-filmic and filmic, but also the 'pressures' of content on form via the codification of time and space, which in turn can be rephrased as a question of how continuity, non-continuity and discontinuity can be motivated either diegetically or narratively, or both. With this, Gunning seems to have systematised and integrated the kinds of finding of Deutelbaum with regard to single-shot films, but also Gaudreault's arguments about narration, monstration, the narrator and the viewer's position of intelligibility.

Gunning's 'Primitive Cinema: A Frame-up or The Trick is on Us' can be regarded as a specific application of this theory of genres to the films of Méliès. Interestingly, he takes up a similar issue as Bottomore, but he differs in his assessment of the importance of splicing in early Méliès films, as opposed to camera stoppage. While for Bottomore the splicing of the film strip can still be considered as an extension of the theatre and the magic trick or stunt, for

Gunning the evidence of splicing indicates that even in the films where Méliès' transformations, displacements and disappearances are achieved by means of camera stoppage, his work already belongs to the genre of narrational discontinuity. What is crucial in Méliès is the relation (the 'trick') between spatial continuity and perceptual discontinuity, which is a deceiving of the eye in its own way as 'narrational' as invisible editing is in classical cinema.

Multi-Shot Films, Non-Continuity and Continuous Action

From Gunning's argument it is clear that the question of actualities cannot be discussed in isolation from, first, a closer consideration of the development of multi-shot films, and thus of the question of discontinuity, and second, from that of genre in early cinema, as both an issue of what constitutes original film subjects and as a question of the determinations exerted by a given subject on film form.

Charles Musser, in 'The Travel Genre in 1903–1904: Moving Towards Fictional Narrative' convincingly shows that Porter's *Great Train Robbery*, which historians like Kenneth McGowan or William Everson see as the prototypical Western, must in fact be placed within a different context in respect of both genre and subject: not only did Porter adapt a stage melodrama of the same title and imitate such highly successful British Films as *Daring Daylight Burglary* or *Desperate Poaching Affair*, he also responded to the topical interest in newspaper reports of hold-ups and the growing vogue for railway travel. Thus, if the logic of an event or process determined 'form' in the Lumière films, and the conditions of filming affected actualities and their stylisations into genre; if social customs and increased mobility can be read off the railway films, then the travel genre affords a useful opportunity to summarise the pressures exerted by the profilmic generally, and by subject matter, genre and social context in particular, on film form and the articulation of spatial relations. For what makes the travel genre and especially the railway films important for the history of the cinema is the experience of separation. As Musser notes, referring to Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century*, 'The traveler's world is mediated by the railroad, not only by the compartment window with its frame but by telegraph wires which intercede between the passenger and the landscape. The sensation of separation which the traveler feels on viewing the rapidly passing landscape has much in common with the theatrical experience of the spectator.'³⁸ Separation joins discontinuity as one of the fundamental conditions of the new mode of perception which the cinema was to introduce into modern society and help to institutionalise as 'natural'.³⁹

Similarly, a re-examination of the chase film might be said to have done the same for the experience of temporality, naturalising the conflation of logical relations with chronology, as in the famous 'post hoc, ergo propter hoc' principle. Burch, in 'Passion, Pursuite', has used the chase film as one of the models for understanding the development of coherent narratives of longer duration, which retain the spatio-temporal unity of the tableau shot while exploring the tableau's narrative potential.⁴⁰ This leads Burch to link the chase film with filmed versions of the Passion, on the basis of their set pieces and

tableaux, as the dialectically intertwined genres crucial for the development of narrative forms prior to analytical editing, cross-cutting and other linking effects typical of classical cinema. Because the narrative of the Passion was 'universally known', the order of successive tableaux and the logic of their 'concatenation' did not require the individual images to encode any kind of linear trajectory in the representation of staging of events, nor clarify the spatial (contiguous/distant) or temporal (successive/simultaneous) relations from one scene to the next. Filmed passions could dispense with centering the action, or hierarchising the characters via lighting or spatial depth typical of the classical mode, while nonetheless disturbing neither intelligibility nor causality, except to the modern viewer. From this, Burch concludes that early cinema is characterised by what he calls a 'topological complexity' that demands a scanning of the image for salient information, requiring from the spectator a special kind of attention. Such a practice has nothing to do with lack of technical expertise, but points to early cinema encoding a mode of perception dating back to the middle ages and coexisting alongside post-Renaissance perspectival vision in the popular arts well into the 20th century.

Central to 'Passion, Pursuite' is the attempt to explain what was involved in the shift from non-continuous film to continuity editing. Burch's preferred term for this change, which he sees as a gradual but contradictory one, is 'linearisation', the need to construct (and for the audience to read) successive shots within unambiguous spatio-temporal coordinates. Burch distinguishes two kinds of linearisation, because of the historical discrepancy between their introduction and codification. One is narrative linearisation, relatively quickly acquired, as in the case of the Passion films, because supported by knowledge already in the spectators' possession. The other he calls the 'linearisation of the iconographic signifier' which took 'twenty years to find its stable articulation'. These two kinds of linearisation can be discussed under several headings, each of fundamental importance for film form.

Narrative linearisation can be studied above all in the chase films, such as *Stop Thief!* (Williamson, 1901) where the spatio-temporal relations are organised unambiguously on the level of narrative without there being an equally unambiguous filmic articulation, either in terms of screen direction or match cutting.⁴¹ The most telling sign for Burch that early chase films manifest the coexistence of two filmic systems is the fact that even in pursuits involving a large number of characters, the scene is held until the very last character exits the frame, thus creating a tension between the narrative trajectory demanding the next shot, and the tableau-like scene, having its own narrative-dramatic momentum. Although the chase thus motivates the action moving through different setups, while also ensuring narrative closure (in *Stop Thief!*, the retrieval of the sausages by the butcher), the cinema's ability to generate narrative momentum out of simple succession seems better solved for Burch in films using animals to dramatise at one and the same time an open topology and the narrative concatenation which leads to closure: for Burch *Rescued by Rover* (Fitzhamon/Hepworth, 1905) is the classic example of a film's subject matter motivating and at the same time demonstrating the filmic process itself.

Two devices above all are indicative of the linearisation of the iconic signifier: the history of the close up, and the development of cross-cutting. Burch argues that early examples of close-up, as in *The Little Doctor* (Smith, 1900), *The Gay Shoe Clerk* (Porter, 1903) or *Mary Jane's Mishap* (Smith, 1903) must not be mistaken for point-of-view shots, but 'serve exclusively in order to privilege a significant detail'.⁴² The insert close-up thus has little to do with the scopoc drive, but belongs more properly to a narrational logic developed independently from the codes of visual continuity.⁴³ As an example of a film relying on the primacy of spatial coherence and topological complexity, in preference to using an inserted close-up, Burch cites Griffith's *Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912), where a particularly abrupt change in the action is motivated by the villain spiking the heroine's drink: the action is staged in a way that makes it barely visible within the overall composition of the scene.

Burch here raises several general issues: firstly, he wants to define the mode of perception which would correspond to the early cinema's respect for the autonomy of the scene, where all information contained in the shot is potentially relevant for intelligibility and narrative developments. Secondly, Burch wants to assign a specific function to spectatorial foreknowledge and familiarity with the subject matter, because of their importance for generating continuity within non-continuous films. But these two crucial features of early cinema may have to be examined separately. For instance, Musser in 'The Nickelodeon Era Begins' (see below) has taken up the question of foreknowledge as part of a complementary argument about the dependence of the film-text on the context (cultural, local, ethnic) of its reception, arguing that much of early cinema is rooted in the fact that the films, as it were, come into the life-world of the spectators, rather than taking them out of it, which is why the travel genre and the separation it inaugurates constitute for Musser something of an epistemic break in the history of early film and its turn to narrative.

Similarly, while scanning and the non-centred image are perhaps typical for the crammed frame of the tableau shot, they are not altogether satisfactory descriptions of the mode of perception required for films such as the Lumières'. As Burch himself has pointed out, the Lumière output modelled itself on the genre of the photographic or stereoscopic view, which quite self-consciously worked with composition and perspective, and if one follows Deutelbaum, the 'operational processes' depicted in say, *Firing a Canon* also direct the eye and focus attention by building on, but also complicating the contemplation of a pictorial view. In addition, the peculiar fascination that Vaughan notes and tries to account for, suggests not the scanning of the frame in more or less random order, but the kind of spectatorial involvement we usually call suspense and associate with feature films. Richard de Cordova's article very persuasively argues that due to a permanent movement into off-frame, the spectator implied in the Lumière films becomes the spectator par excellence of the cinema, distinct from the 'materially unrestricted time of contemplation' available to the spectator of a painting or still photography. Equally important are his observations about the frame itself, and the function of camera movement in centering the eye and at the same time containing movement, initiating

a play of masking and doubling which makes the Lumière cinematographe as much a machine of 'magic and illusionism' as it is in the Méliès films, rather than supporting 'any notion of . . . referential transparency'. By discussing the relation of frame to movement in early film, de Cordova is able to show how the spectator is 'constituted in a movement of sense' and thus drawn into the representation in a way that is both different from traditional perspectival space, but also different from the 'suturing' effect of classical point-of-view structure. The spectator-positioning of *Demolition d'un mur* or the Pathé chase film *Policeman's Little Run* thus has to be understood as already part of the narrational process of the film.

What one might want to add is that the kind of involvement solicited by the Lumière films needs to be conceived in several dimensions as it were: not only the specular seduction exerted by the framing, or the use of staging, with its symmetries, repetitions and alternations within the frame, but also the spectatorial anticipation of and participation in the logic of the action portrayed, the involvement, in other words, which comes from typically narrational processes such as cueing and inferring, perceptual patterning, disequilibrium and closure. In this respect, the single shot film and the multi-shot film are not a crucial division, but part of a continuum insofar as certain forms of discontinuity and opposition within the individual frame and the single scene can be seen to extend to the multi-shot film. One way of describing these processes might be to discuss both staging and editing in terms of what could be called the question of motivation: narrative and spectator involvement are dependent on the degree to which the elements of a scene or of a sequence of scenes are either visually or cognitively linked, which is to say, perceived as motivated, whether on the basis of perceptual patterning and symmetry, conflict or suspense, or logical or chronological anticipation (and thus involving a more abstract, narrational coherence). This point has been debated much more fully – by Brewster and Gunning, among others – in relation to Griffith, and his use (or-non-use) of point-of-view structures (see below).

What Burch has rightly emphasised is that only after parallel editing, cross-cutting, and what Metz called alternating syntagms were in place was it possible to use the close-up as an internally motivated, diegetically integrated element of a scene.⁴⁴ This alternation was itself a consequence of the kind of succession typical of the chase film, except that a succession of two shots had to be read not only as signifying temporal successiveness and relative spatial proximity, but as potentially also signifying an inverse relation: that of temporal simultaneity and spatial distance. In the classical cinema, it is the latter which eventually absorbs the former, to the point where analytical editing itself generally articulates shots according to a principle of alternation.⁴⁵ It confirms Gunning's point, namely that with parallel editing the function of continuity, non-continuity and discontinuity changes fundamentally, putting the burden on the viewer to construct different kinds of discontinuity as motivated from within the film itself, rather than in relation to a pro-filmic logic, be it spatial coherence, autonomy of the event, or audience foreknowledge of the subject matter. Thus, it becomes clear that the question of signification immediately

raises the question of narrative, which in turn means that 'realism', as we saw in the case of the Lumière films is, right from the start, a matter of monstration/narration: evidence that the division montage vs. realism, semiotic vs. mimetic is an untenable one (see also Afterword, below, p. 407).

Edwin S. Porter

The formal characteristics of Burch's 'primitive mode of representation' in their most abstract manifestations can now be briefly summarised: single shot scene, tableau composition, frontal staging; no scene dissection, and instead, emblematic shot or insert, which does not function as a close up, but a (re)focusing of spectatorial interest; action overlap motivated by the autonomy of event; camera movement motivated by reframing and centering (external agency), rather than by character look or character knowledge (internal agency); the performer makes eye contact with spectator; narrative coherence supplied by spectatorial foreknowledge. Most aspects of the PMR thus seem to be in the service of one overriding necessity: to preserve the autonomy of the shot/scene and thus the coherence of space over that of time or causality. The principle has been most forcefully put by Gaudreault:

Early film-makers were more or less consciously considering each shot as an autonomus self-reliant unit; the shot's objective was to present, not a small temporal segment of action but rather, the totality of an action unfolding in a homogeneous space. Between unity of pov and unity of temporal continuity, the former took precedent. Before releasing the camera to a subsequent space, everything occurring in the first location is necessarily shown. Spatial anchorage prevails over temporal logic. Stability, persistence and uniqueness of point of view remain so important that they supersede anachronism.⁴⁶

This spatial coherence is eventually taken in charge by narrative logic, which is a differential logic (the logic of signification, abstraction from the signified) but also a logic of the subject and the spectator. The special interest for scholars of chase films, of the travel genre, of keyhole films, of the penetration of space as exemplified by Hale's Tours, of action overlaps, of the crowded frame, of left-right patterns in early Griffith and other formal features derives from their ambiguous articulation within early and transitional modes.

As Burch has shown, no other director embodies these contradictions and conceptual ambiguities as consistently as Edwin S. Porter. He is the key figure around which one can discuss not only the absolute difference or the mutual coexistence of the primitive, the transitional and the classical mode: his films have also required scholars to declare their hand, and show whether they read them as 'still' primitive or 'already' classical. Certain formal features, such as linearity and temporal articulation, the use of dual-focus space, parallel editing and a clear narrative logic seems to make a film like *The Great Train Robbery* almost the epitome of the classical system. On the other hand, the action overlap in *Life of an American Fireman* or the extremely opaque temporal articulation of *Life of an American Cowboy* make Porter one of the most sophisticated prac-

tioners of the PMR, because the latter films have virtues (derived from their non-linearity and extreme non-continuity) which the former lacks.

Several possibilities offer themselves in order to deal with the Porter paradoxes. Gaudreault, by comparing different versions of *Life of an American Fireman* (one of which he regards as inauthentic) raises fundamental issues about temporality in early cinema, and the logic that might have determined cinematic thinking around 1904. 'Porter' for Gaudreault becomes in some sense the convenient name for asking whether a film-maker is interested in articulating time or not, whether he thinks in terms of succession, simultaneity, implications, causality, relative hierarchy in the importance of actions, or whether, rather like a sports commentator today, he gives the spectator 'action replays' because what we are witnessing is a demonstration, not an internally generated narration. Elsewhere Gaudreault discusses Porter in relation to non-continuity generally, once again making it revolve around the status of the individual shot as autonomous, and the consequences this has for staging, especially of chase films,⁴⁷ where the difference is that in one mode (the presentational) the characters exit the frame before we move to another scene, whereas in another mode (notably that made popular by Griffith) pursuer and pursued are separated into different shots and the action can cut to another space at any point.⁴⁸ A further ramification of Porter's film practice, for instance, in *Life of an American Cowboy*, is that the question of screen direction (screen exits and entrances) does not resolve itself by a definition of what is correct and what is not, but has to be seen in the context of the narrational mode one decides the film belongs to.

Does this mean that whether one reads Porter 'backwards' or 'forwards' is entirely in the eye of the beholder? In the case of the Lumière films, what to some appears to be pure flux and process, is to others multiple patterning; since patterning depends on perceptible separation, discontinuity, difference, it could be argued that it is the result of what any spectator can make of it, a kind of Rorschach test for early cinema. In the case of *Life of an American Cowboy*, precisely because its temporal logic is ambiguous, many kinds of patterns can be discerned: there are enough referents in play, as it were, to support several binary systems of relevant oppositions: good (reservation) Indian/good White; bad (wild) Indian/bad (drunk) Mexican; bad Mexican/bad White; bad Indian/good Mexican. The Whites are furthermore divided between East and West, townfolks/cowboys, and the horses between those belonging to the Indians, and those belonging to the Whites. Finally, the male/female division leads to the formation of a couple: all the elements of classical narrative and of the Western as genre are already assembled. The narrative progresses from tableau scenes to action narrative. Rich though such a reading might turn out to be, it strikes one as a-historical. Just as our knowledge that the Lumière films derive from the photographic view and are single shot films puts constraints on our reading, so the knowledge we have about the theatre intertext, or the Wild West shows, or the actuality genre in Porter's films makes us want to relate *Life of an American Cowboy* as much to lantern slides (with which the film share both the moralising theme – temperance – and the documentary/edu-

cational pretensions) as to classical narrative, without it detracting from what is so original and exciting about the film, namely its dramatisation of open spaces and the final chase.

Another way of approaching the Porter phenomenon is via the multi-shot film generally, and the issues it raises for a history of film form. Porter's work has become the touchstone and test-case for the more general significance of a cinema of non-continuity and its relation to narrative, for in his work, one finds the first systematic application of the practical distinction between the shot and the scene, giving rise to the theoretically so momentous realisation that a scene can be composed of several shots, intensifying rather than disrupting the coherence of an action. With this, the basic unit of filmic construction, the building block of classical narrative, so to speak, becomes the sequence, and the relation between shot and scene.

With the introduction of multiple action spaces comes the importance of rules, guidelines, conventions, expository techniques, but also unambiguous screen directions, the use of off-screen, which in turn formalises character movement. We are at the point of analytical editing, which means that space, even where there is frontal staging, is neither a theatrical space, nor the space of early cinema, but a narrational space. The 'cutting' into an action in progress affects the meaning of what is shown in every respect and introduces a specifically spatial logic (spatial cues, eyeline match, point-of-view structure) but it also introduces a different temporal logic (ellipsis of time) which together make up the typically narrative logic of the cinema (establishing shot, long shot, reverse angle), which allows one to talk about 'narrative integration' and the omnipresent, but invisible narrator. If we call early cinema a cinema of spatial coherence, and contrast it to a transitional cinema of articulated temporality, we could then distinguish them from classical cinema as a cinema of narrational logic superseding both.

The Janus-faced character of Porter is ultimately not in the director, but in the possibilities we have of understanding his work: whether from the 'autonomy' of the primitive mode towards what was to follow, or retrospectively, looking back at the primitive mode from the vantage point and the agenda of the classical mode. If we do the latter, we would actually start not with space or time, but with narrative (and assume narrative to be the terminal point). We would look at the development of diegetic unity which Porter's films establish across non-continuous shots and spaces, whether this be via repetition and juxtaposition of autonomous shots, or via match cutting and scene dissection.

Yet finally, there may be another, more historically precise way of looking at this momentous move, the severing of spatial coherence in favour of making both space and time the function of another logic – that of narrative causality and 'continuous action'. This would be to see the move as reactive: the response to very diverse (economic, cultural, ideological) pressures and the result of contending forces. Such is the approach adopted by Musser, for whom monstration and narration are neither formal opposites nor historical phases, but moments in a struggle for authority and control that join the textual and the

extratextual in a kind of dialectic. If the (economic) use of individual scenes as single shots (as exemplified by the outlaw firing his gun in *The Great Train Robbery*) allowed the exhibitor to put together his own film, narrative authority was not with the producer/director/cameraman, but with the distributor/exhibitor/showman/lecturer. Non-continuity thus becomes an important historical marker of a stage in the development not just of film form, but of the cinematic institution, where 'editorial control' (Musser's term) must have been, for a time, floating between two aspects of what is to become a radical division: the production and the exhibition side of cinema. This development will be the subject of the second section.

Thomas Elsaesser

Notes

1. André Gaudreault has identified three areas which revitalised the study of early cinema towards the end of the 1970s: genesis of cinematic language, problems of narratology, evolution of editing. In the same paper he sees the 'evolution of film form' as a typically 'Anglo-Saxon' preoccupation. ('Le cinéma des premiers temps: l'histoire et la théorie en question', pp. 1–2.)
2. 'The Early Development of Film Form' in *Film Form* no. 1, 1976 and 'Film Form 1900–1906' in *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1978.
3. But see Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein* (London: British Film Institute, 1987) for a thorough reinvestigation of Eisenstein's notion of film form.
4. Thus, there is a good deal more similarity between Salt's criteria and those of Andrew Sarris or even Raymond Bellour than he might be prepared to admit.
5. See the extracts from *The New York Dramatic Mirror* in George C. Pratt (ed.), *Spellbound in Darkness, A History of the Silent Film* (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1973). Woods, of course, was not only the *Dramatic Mirror's* first film critic; he also wrote scripts for Griffith at Biograph. See Blair Ratsoy, *Frank E. Woods* (unpublished MA thesis, University of East Anglia, 1989).
6. See Barry Salt, 'Fresh Eyes', *BFI News*, July 1976, where one of the chief virtues of the Vitagraph company is 'smoothness' and 'matching' in their films.
7. The determinants of the shift from single-shot to multi-scene film are themselves, however, quite complex. See John Fell, *Film and the Narrative Tradition*, or Stephen Bottomore, 'Shots in the Dark: The Real Origins of Film Editing', below, pp. 104–113.
8. '... It was made slightly easier for Méliès to come to grips with this problem, because he was working in one place, his studio stage, whereas everyone else making multi-scene films was working in a number of different real locations in the one film, and these locations tended to put some pressures on the way the action in each shot should be staged.' (Barry Salt, 'Film Form 1900–1906', below p. 35).
9. See Salt's remarks about the importance of the Western: 'The capital innovation in the outdoor action film (was) the use of off-eye-line angle-reverse angle combinations of shots.' Barry Salt, 'The Early Development of Film Form', in J. Fell (ed.), *Film Before Griffith*, pp. 290–91.
10. See David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, 'Toward a Scientific Film History?', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Summer 1985, pp. 224–37.
11. Notably his predilection for 'smooth continuity', match-cutting and cut on action, reverse angles and what he calls 'filmic angles' (see also Mitry, quoted in Barry Salt, 'Fresh Eyes', *BFI News*, July 1976).
12. See 'Deep Staging in French Films', below, pp. 45–55 and 'A Scene at the "Movies"' below, pp. 318–25.

13. Notably in the introduction and first part of D. Bordwell, J. Staiger, K. Thompson, *Classical Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985) and D. Bordwell and K. Thompson, *Film Art*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1986).
14. See for instance, John Fell, *A History of Film* (New York, 1979), p. 34. 'Such an editing decision suggests early stirrings of film's capacity to create and to impose independent organising principles upon a world in which photography has required fidelity in the recording of experience'.
15. But see Bottomore (below), pp. 104–13, footnote 30).
16. The British pioneers (Williamson, Hepworth) occupy a special place in the discussion of early examples of continuity, since they seem to have been the first to organise consistently shots separate in time and space into 'coherent narrative patterns' (Fell). The importance of *Daring Daylight Robbery*, *Fire!*, and *Rescued by Rover* lies in the 'shot to shot movement' (Salt), the switching from place to place in response to a logic of question and answer, and the beginnings of parallel editing via a juxtaposition of scenes. In *Rescued by Rover* motion is used to bridge discontinuity in space in order to reinforce the illusion of continuity of action in time, as in the succession of locations (suburban avenue, river banks, narrow street in slum quarter) which Rover traverses in pursuit of the baby. *Rescued by Rover* also manifests the principle of repetition and repetition/variation which is to become one of the hallmarks of the classical cinema's concern with maintaining diegetic unity across different action spaces and temporal instances.
17. Fell, *A History of Film*, pp. 33–4.
18. See Fell's discussion of *Charge of the Boer Cavalry* (Edison, 1900) and *Blackmail* (American Mutoscope and Biograph, 1905) where framing and staging allow for clear divisions of the action into different phases. The issue becomes more complicated when individual views are either cut together to make up a longer film, or are projected together by an exhibitor, to give the impression of an event recorded in continuity, as in Robert Paul's 1898 *Colonial Troops Passing Westminster*, or the American Mutoscope and Biograph's 1904 *The Battle of Yalu*. According to Fell 'separate shots alternate camera angles, so that Japanese and Russian troops switch foreground-background relationships as if one shot were the reverse angle of its precedent'. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
19. Thus, Jean Mitry talks about 'filmmakers, hypnotized by the obvious analogy between filmic spectacle and theatrical representation'. *Histoire du cinéma*, vol. I (Paris, Editions universitaires, 1967), p. 400.
20. Noël Burch, 'Porter or ambivalence', *Screen*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978/79), p. 95.
21. André Gaudreault, 'Theatricality, Narrativity, and 'Trickality': Reevaluating the Cinema of Georges Méliès', *Journal of Popular Film and TV*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1987, pp. 110–19.
22. Tom Gunning, 'Primitive cinema – a Frame-up?', below, pp. 95–103.
23. Burch, 'Porter or Ambivalence', p. 97 (fn. 6).
24. Brewster sees this itself as subject to a historical shift in perception: '... two quotations from the trade press, in reply to queries from cinema owners as to the correct size of the screen. The first, from 1908, says the screen and lenses should be such as to ensure that the characters are life size on the screen; the second, from 1915, says that the size of the screen should vary in proportion to the size of the auditorium. Thus the earlier position has a literal, theatrical conception of the represented space, where the screen is a window immediately behind which the principal characters stand a measurable distance away from the spectators; while for the later one, the film image is treated as scalarly relative, so the distance of spectators from characters is entirely imaginary' (letter to the editor, April 6, 1988).
25. See the opening chapters of Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology, History and Analysis* (London: Starword, 1983), pp. 5–39.
26. See, for instance, Salt's interest in finding 'the missing link' like Reginald Barker (in 'Early Development of Film Form', Fell, *Film Before Griffith*, p. 293).
27. Charles Musser, 'The Eden Musée: Exhibitor as Creator', *Film and History* vol. 11, no. 4, December 1981, pp. 73–83, and 'Towards a History of Screen Practice', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, Winter 1984, pp. 59–69.
28. Yuri Tsivian, 'Notes historiques en marge de l'expérience de Koulechov' (first published in *Iris* vol. 4, no. 1, 1986, pp. 49–59), below, pp. 247–55.

29. See Barry Salt, 'Film Form 1900–1906', on pp. 31–44 below.
30. Marshall Deutelbaum, 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films', *Wide Angle* vol. 3, no. 1, 1979, p. 30.
31. One of the earliest descriptions of the film reflects this interest in spatial detail and concern with positionality and distance: 'A new picture was shown which represented the noon hour at the factory of the Messrs. Lumière in Lyons, France. As the whistle blew, the factory doors were thrown open and men, women and children came trooping out. Several employees had bicycles, which they mounted outside the gate, and rode off. A carryall, which the Lumières keep to transport those who live at a distance from the factory, came dashing out in the most natural manner imaginable. A lecturer was employed to explain the pictures as they were shown, but he was hardly necessary, as the views speak for themselves, eloquently.' *The New York Dramatic Mirror* (vol. 36, no. 915, July 11, 1896).
32. David Levy, 'Re-constructed Newsreels, Re-enactments', in Roger Holman (ed.), *Cinema 1900–1906, an analytical study* (Bruxelles: FIAF, 1982), p. 250.
33. Ben Brewster has drawn attention to the actuality effects achieved by staging in depth in Méliès' *Dreyfus*, but also warned against a conflation of deep staging with deep focus (see 'Deep staging in French Films' below, pp. 45–55).
34. See also Introduction to Part II, 'The Institution Cinema', below, pp. 153–75.
35. David Levy, 'Edison Sales Policy and the Continuous Action Film 1904–1906', in John Fell (ed.), *Film Before Griffith*, pp. 207–22.
36. André Gaudreault, 'The Infringement of Copyright Laws and its Effects (1900–1906)', below, pp. 114–22.
37. 'The importance of the elements I discussed is not primarily that they sketch an alternate approach to narrative than that of the classical style, but rather that they reveal how complex and dialectical the development of the classical style is. Rather than serving as markers on a deviant route in film history, the elements of non-continuity in early film punctuate the body of film history, becoming a series of blind spots.' Tom Gunning, 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity – A Theory of Genres in Early Films', below, pp. 86–94.
38. Charles Musser, 'The Travel Genre: Moving Towards Narrative', below, p. 127.
39. In recent film theory, and especially feminist film theory, the issue of separation has become crucial to definitions of subjectivity and gendered spectatorship through the concept of fetishism. See Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* vol. 16, no. 3, 1975, and Mary Anne Doane, *The Desire to Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 11–13. Stephen Heath, in 'Lessons from Brecht', *Screen* vol. 15, no. 2, 1974 had already pointed out the difference between (Brechtian) distanciation and (fetishistic) separation.
40. Noël Burch, 'Passion, poursuite: la linéarisation', *Communications* no. 38, 1983, pp. 30–50. See also Introduction to Part III, 'The Continuity System: Griffith and Beyond', below, pp. 293–317, where other aspects of Burch's essay are discussed.
41. Burch also sees a connection between the French chase film and the travel genre (e.g. Feuillade's 1906 *Un coup de vent*), where a chase becomes the diegetic motivation for a succession of autonomous views of Paris and the suburbs.
42. Burch, 'Passion, poursuite: la linéarisation', p. 40. Barry Salt would probably argue that two other famous examples of close-ups, *Grandma's Reading Glasses* (G.A. Smith, 1898) and *As seen through a Telescope* (1900) are clearly point-of-view shots, but he, too, makes a distinction between insert shots and close-ups (see 'Film Form 1900–1906', on pp. 31–44 below).
43. See Ben Brewster, 'A Scene at the "Movies"', below, pp. 318–25, for a fuller discussion of the difference between optical and narrational point of view.
44. But see André Gaudreault (ed.), *Ce que je vois de mon ciné* (Paris: Meridiens Klincksieck, 1988), where the key-hole films, 'primitive' point-of-view structure and its motivation via reading-glasses, telescopes, etc. receive extensive treatment in essays by Elena Dagrada, François Jost, Tom Gunning, Dana Polan, Yves Bédard, Thierry Lefebvre, Michel Marie, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Richard Abel and Gaudreault himself.
45. See Raymond Bellour, 'To Alternate/To Narrate', below, pp. 360–74, and the Introduction to Part III, 'The Continuity System: Griffith and Beyond'.

46. André Gaudreault, 'Temporality and Narrativity in Early Cinema: 1895–1908' in John L. Fell, *Film Before Griffith*, p. 210.
47. André Gaudreault, 'Le cinéma des premiers temps: l'histoire et la théorie en question' (unpublished paper), pp. 5–6.
48. See also Jacques Aumont, 'Griffith – the Frame, the Figure', below, pp. 348–59.

Film Form 1900–1906

BARRY SALT

The 1978 annual conference of the International Federation of Film Archives, held at Brighton in May, has been the occasion for the first complete survey ever made of the surviving fiction films from one period of world production. Even from so remote a period as 1900–6, about 1,500 films are preserved thanks to the efforts of the world's film archives, although several times that many are lost for ever. So although films tended in those years to be very short, about four minutes in length on average, it was necessary to reduce the bulk of the material by selection for presentation at the conference by experts from several countries working on a collaborative basis. I have myself viewed what I believe to be a representative sample of about 700 titles, ignoring in particular the many hundreds of one-scene 'knockabouts' in the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, though not the more interesting dramatic films in that same place. On this basis, I have arrived at a picture of the development in the forms of films during this period which substantially revises the inadequate accounts given in existing film histories.

My overview of the rapid developments in the formal aspects of film in these early years sees some analogies with biological evolution, in the way that novel features which suddenly appear like mutations are sometimes rapidly taken up in other films, forming a line of descent, while on other occasions original devices die out because they have some unsuitability of a technical, commercial or artistic nature. This approach tends to put the emphasis on what most films come to be like, providing a descriptive norm. There are certainly other ways of looking at films from this and other periods, some of which will have been presented at the Brighton conference. For instance, other historians may take a quite different view of what I might loosely call 'evolutionary dead-ends'.

I should remark that although the subject and location of the conference acknowledged that at the beginning of the century the work of British film-makers was important in a way that was not to be the case again for thirty years, it would be futile to try to consider their work in isolation, since film production was already truly international, with complex interconnections between films made in the only significant producing countries: Britain, France and the United States.

Before the nickelodeon boom and subsequent world-wide increase in film production from 1906 onwards, the pressures on the evolution and development of the forms of film were low. The only absolute demand from audiences

was that films be photographed (and printed) sharply in focus and with the correct exposure. Even after 1900, there were still audiences somewhere for just about anything that moved on a screen. Around 1903 there began a definite trend towards longer, multi-scene films, although the number of titles produced did not increase that much. Despite the relative lack of competitive pressure, some cinematic devices were taken up gradually by many film-makers, while others were never repeated after their invention; one instance is a unique handling of parallel action with an inset image within part of the main scene in G. A. Smith's *Santa Claus* of 1898. Another instance that had some influence for only a short while derives from Georges Méliès' way of making shot transitions in *Cendrillon* (1899) and a number of subsequent films.

Shot Transitions

When there was no appropriate intertitle to separate successive scenes, Méliès used dissolves rather than cuts from one shot to the next in his early films – examples occur in *Barbe-Bleue* (1901), for instance, and *Le Voyage dans la lune* (1902). And despite examples of what was to become the standard approach available in the work of contemporary English film-makers, E. S. Porter and others took up this type of shot transition. The shots in Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1902) are all joined by dissolves, even though the film is basically an imitation of James Williamson's *Fire!* (1901), in which all the transitions are made with cuts. And in *Life Rescue at Long Branch*, presumably made by Porter or under his supervision at Edison in 1901, the transition from a very long shot of a beach resuscitation to a closer shot of the same is made with a dissolve.

In *Alice in Wonderland* (Hepworth, 1903) there are a number of transitions of this kind, with dissolves in to a closer shot, and also dissolves when the actress walks out of one shot into the next. This is despite the fact that the position matching from one shot to another is what would come to be considered fairly good many years later. (It must be emphasised that Méliès was *not* using the dissolve to indicate a time lapse between shots: many of the instances occur when there is no time lapse between characters walking out of one shot into a spatially adjoining one. In fact, the use of a dissolve to indicate a time lapse was not established as a convention until the later 1920s.)

The use of fades is extremely rare in the early years of the century; those that occur in *Alice in Wonderland* are probably unsuccessful attempts at making a dissolve in the camera by fading out, then winding back and fading in on the next shot. The earliest cameras did not have accurate footage counters, and a miscounting of the number of turns back with the crank handle could easily replace a dissolve with a fade-out and in. For this and other obvious reasons, the use of dissolves made in the camera between every shot was not an efficient procedure; neither was making dissolves in the printer by an equivalent process for every separate print of the film produced. So it is no great surprise that the usage disappeared after 1903.

And it was displaced by J. H. Williamson's creation of action moving from shot to shot cut directly together in *Stop Thief!* and *Fire!* of 1901. The first of

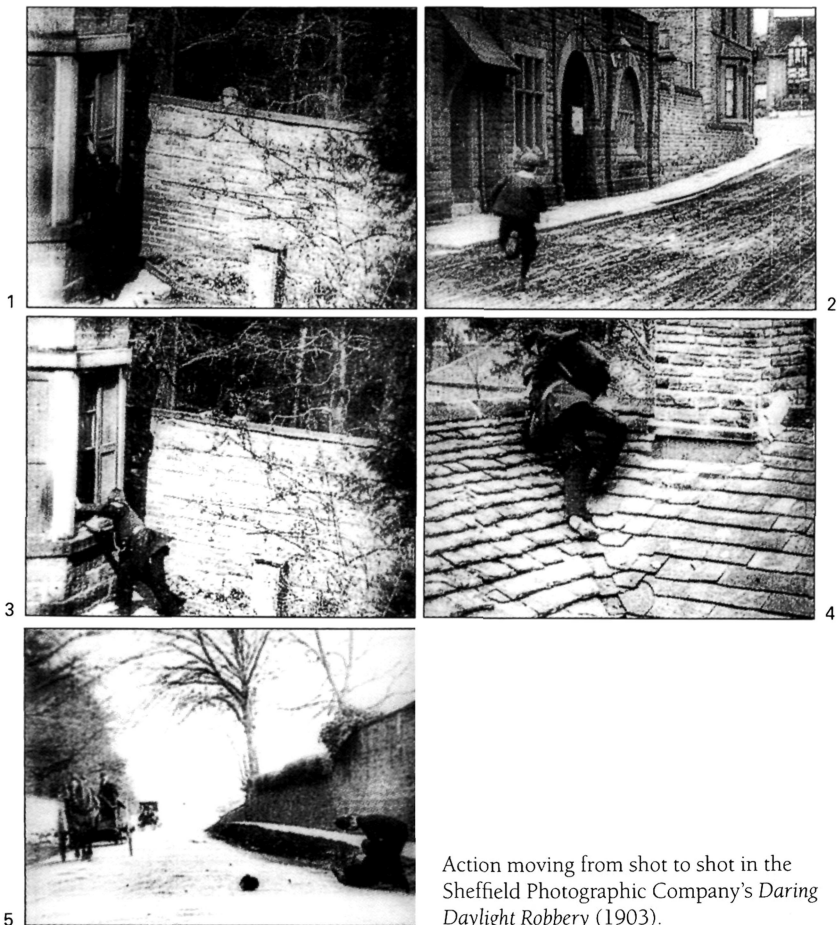
these is the source of the subsequent developments in 'chase' films, and has the characters moving out of the first shot into the second set in a different place and joined to the first with a straight cut, moving across that scene towards the camera, and then into the third and final shot. *Fire!* introduces this feature into a more complex construction. In this film an actor moves from a scene outside a burning building by exiting from a side of the frame and into a shot outside a fire station, then the fire cart moves out of this shot into the distant background of a shot of a street, advancing forward and out of the frame past the camera, and then into the original scene outside the burning house, all shots being joined by straight cuts, as are all the subsequent shots of the film. The next shot is of the interior of an upper room of the house, from which an occupant is rescued by a fireman who comes through the window. The next cut to the outside view is on the movement of rescuer and rescued through the window, though the continuity is imperfect, there being half a second of movement missing between the two shots. As with some of G. A. Smith's films, it seems that *Fire!* was modelled on narrative lantern slide sequences previously made by Bamforth on the same subject,* though obviously action continuity of the kind we have in the film was impossible in these.

Another contemporary example of 'outside to inside' cuts with time continuity occurs in *The Kiss in the Tunnel*, probably made for the Bamforth Company about 1900. This film shows a railway train going into a tunnel in extreme long shot, then the next shot shows the interior of a railway carriage compartment and then finally the train is seen coming out of the tunnel in very long shot.

So far no films repeating the continuous shot-to-shot movement of Williamson's films are known before 1903 and the appearance of *Daring Daylight Robbery*, made by the Sheffield Photographic Company. This film again has an onlooker moving from the first high-angle shot of a burglar breaking into the back of a house into a shot of a street elsewhere in which he alerts the police, and there is then a straight cut back to the original scene. The innovation in this film is that a chase then develops through a series of shots, so combining features of both *Fire!* and *Stop Thief!* into a whole that was one of the most commercially successful of all films made up to that date. *Daring Daylight Robbery* was made available for sale in America by the Edison Company under the title *Daylight Burglary*, and it seems fairly certain that Edwin S. Porter had seen it before making his *The Great Train Robbery* several months later.

In some respects *The Great Train Robbery* does represent an elaboration of its model. The most important of these was the addition of what might be called an 'emblematic' shot, which in this case shows a medium close-up of a cowboy bandit pointing a gun straight at the camera. This shot, which could be placed at either the beginning or end of the film by the exhibitor, does not represent any action that occurs in the film, but can be considered to indicate its general nature. At any rate, when the device was copied subsequently in many

* For the work of Bamforth and other Yorkshire film-makers, see Allan Sutherland's article in *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1976-7.



Action moving from shot to shot in the Sheffield Photographic Company's *Daring Daylight Robbery* (1903).

films, this is clearly the way it was used, as in *Raid on a Coiners' Den* (Alfred Collins, 1904), where the first shot shows a close-up insert of three hands coming into the frame from different directions; one holding a pistol, another with clenched fist, and the third holding a pair of handcuffs. A similar instance occurs in the famous *Rescued by Rover* (Hepworth, 1905), and various other films of these years, and the device continued to occur up to at least 1908, being used in some of Griffith's first films, among others. In a small number of cases the shot comes at the end of the film instead of the beginning. Since the emblematic shot may include characters present in the first true scene of the film narrative, it may not be immediately recognised as such, since it is always a close shot before the inevitable long shot framing of the first true scene, but the matter is clinched if there is wild positional mismatching between characters in the two shots and the rest of the film has fair continuity for the period.

The method of overall construction stemming from *Fire!* continued to be applied over and over again in the years after 1903; applied to new versions of the subjects already broached, and without much variation – though one later