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Early Cinema and the Historiographic Impulse: Scholarly Positionality Then and Now

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Abstract

This free-form essay reflects on the historiography of early cinema from W. K. L. Dickson's early accounts to the 1978 Brighton FIAF Conference on Cinema 1900-1906, which brought together young scholars and veteran archivist in a congenial, collaborative setting. It examines the contemporary moment in which its study has been expanded and institutionalized within academia, characterized by numerous biennial conferences and yearly gatherings such as the Giornate del Cinema Muto. Tied to this are debates about the relationship of broad historiographic characterizations to sustained, in-depth research. Historians continue to disagree about the rise and dominance of story films, and this essay investigates the nature of evaluative criteria and the kind of theoretical models that they deployed. Finally, it reflects on recent historiographic trends that move beyond these narrow concerns with the economic engine that produced rapidly changing film practices to questions of race and gender—and most recent uses of counterfactual speculations to shake up.

The Media Ecology Project and Metadata

The Early Cinema Compendium not only asks us to reflect on the current state of the questions in regard to the study of early cinema—variously defined as projected motion pictures until 1908, 1914, 1918, and even 1920—but on where we have been, which is to say how we got to our present circumstances. How much this can tell us about future directions for this area of study is an open question, but we can certainly speculate. To undertake such a task, I face serious challenges. How to write a history of which I am a part? The temptation is to be broadly expansive and inclusive yet also extensively autobiographical. I tried to limit both excesses with the recognition, which scholars and filmmakers well understand, that it is impossible to be strictly neutral or "objective," particularly under such circumstances. To be more inclusive, I may aspire to greater objectivity but will necessarily fall short while overwhelming the reader with endless details. To be more personal without becoming self-absorbed or even self-aggrandizing may be equally fraught. So my apologies in advance! Whatever the inevitable shortcomings, I have tried to be consistent across the different sections of this essay, even when they display a change of focus and tone. I hope this will provide some partial redemption.

As I write this essay, three biennial conferences are taking place in North America over a one-month period: the eleventh Women and the Silent Screen conference at Columbia University and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), June 1 through 5; the seventeenth International Domitor Conference, occurring online but originally scheduled for the Library of Congress (LOC) in Culpeper,

"Not only a turning point in the study of early cinema, it was a real-life catalyst for fundamental changes in the interplay of scholarly and archival practices which were just beginning to gather steam."

Virginia, June 9 through 12; and the thirteenth Orphan Film Symposium in Montréal, Canada, June 15 through 18. Outside North America, the University of Southampton is hosting an online conference entitled "The 'Little Apparatus': 100 years of 9.5mm Film," June 16 through 18, while the annual Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna, Italy, runs from June 25 to July 3. For all of these gatherings, and still others such as the Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone, Italy, the 1978 International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) conference in Brighton, England, on "Cinema, 1900–1906" has directly or indirectly provided a foundational impetus.

I. The Brighton Conference in Historical Context

The Brighton conference ran from May 28 to June 2, 1978, and involved four days of intensive screenings of fiction films made between 1900 and 1906. Not only a turning point in the study of early cinema, it was a real-life catalyst for fundamental changes in the interplay of scholarly and archival practices which were just beginning to gather steam. Over the next dozen years, the study of early cinema became a vibrant academic subfield within the film studies discipline. As an active participant in this process, returning to that moment and putting it in context continues to feel important.

In retrospect, our cohort group might be considered a fifth generation of early film scholars, for we were preceded by several generations of cineastes interested in this subject. Just focusing on the American side, the first generation was composed of "film pioneers," most notably W. K. L. Dickson, who wrote *The History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope, and Kinetophonograph* (1895) with his sister Antonia Dickson. He followed this up with *The Biograph in Battle* (1901). C. Francis Jenkins published *Picture Ribbons* (1897), *Animated Pictures* (1898), and, with Oscar B. Depue, *Handbook for Motion Picture and Stereopticon Operators* (1908). Most decisively, this history was also being written in the courts around patents—ensuring that technology and precedent were foregrounded.

A second generation of historians emerged in the 1910s. These were people who worked or had worked in the entertainment industries, particularly motion pictures. Their writings often appeared in trade journals, but their books include Robert Grau's *The Business Man in the Amusement World* (1910) and *The Theatre of Science* (1914), Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights* (1926), Benjamin Hampton's *A History of the Movies* (1931), and perhaps Will H. Hays's *See and Hear: A Brief History of Motion Pictures and the Development of Sound* (1931).

A third generation of US historians emerged in the 1930s whose interests were more and more focused on cinema as an art form—often with a social and ideological inflection. Some of these also worked in the realm of independent and documentary film, such as Lewis Jacobs, whose *The Rise of the American Film: A Critical History* (1939) featured a shot-by-shot analysis of what would prove to be a modernized version of Edwin S. Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1903). [1] Others included Theodore Huff, Seymour Stern, Iris Barry, and Herman Weinberg. [2] Jay Leyda, whose first film-related publication was "Tips on Topicals," for *MovieMaker* in 1931, wrote *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (1960). [3] Leyda would eventually start the seminal Griffith–Biograph seminar at New York University in 1973; not only systematic methodological rigor but its efforts to bring together the archives and scholars in training laid out principles that would be given further impetus

for what became known as the Brighton Project. In fact, Leyda, who worked in several archives from the late 1930s to the late 1960s, could also be counted as a member of the fourth generation.

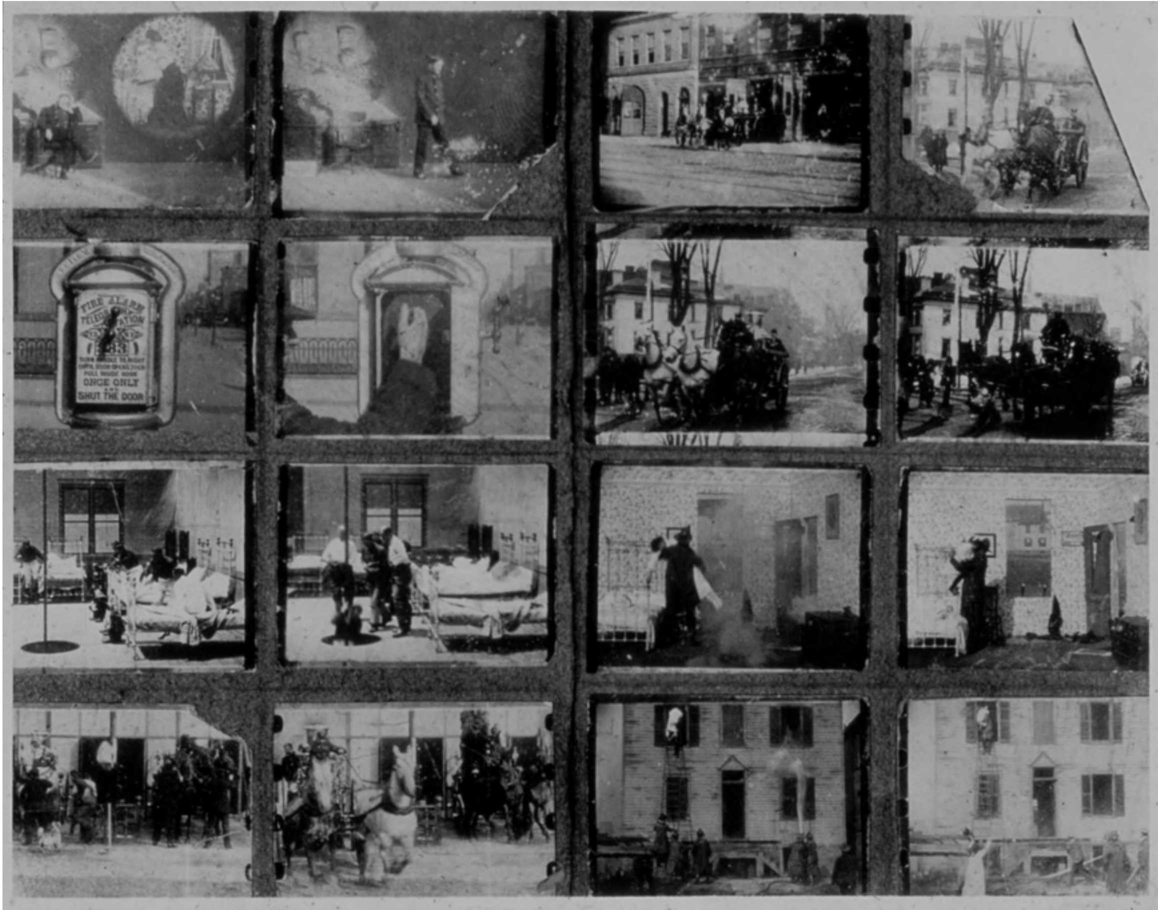


Figure 1. Composite frames from Edison's *Life of An American Fireman* (1903).

This fourth generation of early cinema scholarship in the US operated around a group of archivists and independent scholars: Gordon Hendricks with *The Edison Motion Picture Myth* (1961), *Beginnings of the Biograph: The Story of the Invention of the Mutoscope and the Biograph and Their Supplying Camera* (1964), and *The Kinetoscope: America's First Commercially Successful Motion Picture Exhibitor* (1966); George Pratt with numerous articles such as "A Myth Is As Good As a Milestone" (1957) and "Firsting the Firsts" (1971) as well as his book *Spellbound in Darkness* (1966)[4]; C. W. Ceram with *Archaeology of the Cinema* (1965); Kemp R. Niver with *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection: 1894–1912* (1967), *The First Twenty Years: A Segment of Film History* (1968), and *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* (1971); Eileen Bowser, who edited *Biograph Bulletins, 1908–1912* (1973); and Paul Spehr with *The Movies Begin: Making Movies in New Jersey, 1887–1920* (1977) and *The Man Who Made Movies: W. K. L. Dickson* (2008). John Fell, a professor at San Francisco State University, offered *Film and the Narrative Tradition* (1974).

There is no doubt that the anticommunist Red Scare of the 1950s impacted historical work on the cinema in the United States, adversely affecting archivists such as Barry and scholars such as Leyda. It also influenced how authors could approach or think about the cinema. Walter Kerr's *The Silent Clowns* (1975) sought to rescue Charlie Chaplin from those who would brand him as a Communist "Red" by depoliticizing his work and turning his screen persona into an existential tramp.

Meanwhile, one-volume histories of cinema became a recognizable genre, sometimes to be used as text in introductory film courses. Not surprisingly, as the early years of cinema became more temporally distant, these one-volume comprehensive histories spent less and less time on cinema before *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Their authors also did limited amounts of primary source research beyond watching a set of iconic films available at archives such as the one at MoMA. Many were written by critics who also taught in universities, including Arthur Knight's *The Liveliest Art* (1957) and Richard Schickel's *Movies: The History of an Art and an Institution* (1964). Kenneth Macgowan must be considered a special case; after an illustrious career in theater and film, he became the first chair of the Department of Theater Arts at UCLA in 1946 and later wrote *Behind the Screen: The History and Techniques of the Motion Picture* (1964). This was also increasingly the period of memoirs, such as Adolph Zukor's *The Public Is Never Wrong* (1953). Many—such as Albert E. Smith's *Two Reels and a Crank* (1952)—were highly inaccurate.

A later group of single-volume histories were written by academics trained in such fields as English—Gerald Mast's *A Short History of the Movies* (1971); history—Garth Jowett's *Film: The Democratic Art* (1976); and American studies—Robert Sklar's *Movie-Made America* (1976).

International Counterparts

To be sure, this periodization is rough and does not work so neatly for film historiography in a broader international context. Early cinema scholarship in the US did not always have a simple correspondence with what was being produced in Europe and Asia. French film critic Léon Moussinac, who was closely associated with French Impressionist filmmakers of the 1920s, wrote *Naissance du cinéma* (1925). Lumping him in with Ramsaye can only go so far. In the post–World War II period, European film historians were more advanced than their American counterparts, with Georges Sadoul's multivolume *Histoire générale du cinéma,* including *L'Invention du cinéma, 1832–1897* (1948) and *Les Pionniers du cinéma: De Méliès à Pathé, 1897–1909* (1947–48). Like Sadoul, British Film Institute (BFI) researcher and librarian Rachael Low might be considered part of the third generation. She authored *The History of the British Film, 1906–1914* (1949) and *The History of the British Film, 1896–1906* (1948)—the latter with Roger Manvell. David Robinson, film critic for *The Times*, was in some respects a British counterpart to Arthur Knight and Walter Kerr, publishing *The History of World Cinema* (1973), the impeccably researched *Chaplin: His Life and Art* (1985) and *From Peep Show to Palace: The Birth of American Film* (1995).

Counterparts to the fourth generation of American early film scholars would certainly include David Francis, who became deputy curator of BFI's National Film Archive in 1962, left to work for BBC in 1965, and then returned to head the National Film Archive from 1974 to 1989. Francis's efforts at scholarly engagement were often directed toward public presentations of the optical lantern in various forms. These included live performances, a few appearances on BBC, collaborations with David Robinson on museum-like exhibitions, and so forth. One of his early publications was "Pictures on the Christmas Wall: 250 Years of the Magic Lantern" (1967).[5] Likewise, John Barnes, who opened the Barnes Museum of Cinematography in Cornwall, England, with his brother William in 1963, published *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England* in 1976. It was the first volume in his history of early cinema in England. The precocious Kevin Brownlow could be included in this group with *The Parade's Gone By* (1968) and *Hollywood, the Pioneers* (1979). Jacques Deslandes's *Histoire comparée du cinéma: Vol 1: De la Cinématographie au cinématographe 1826–1896* (1966) and *Vol. 2: Du Cinématographe au cinéma 1896–1906* (1968) and Jean Mitry's five-volume *Histoire du cinéma* (1967–1980) might fit here as well. Both Deslandes and Mitry saw themselves as

challenging the work of Sadoul.

Film Archivists as Catalysts

The 1978 FIAF conference was a transformative moment in the study of early cinema and film history more generally.[6] If FIAF had developed an international network of archivists, no comparable forum or institution really existed among film scholars. Perhaps the first international gatherings of academic film scholars and archivists, Brighton incidentally served as a starting point for international collaboration among film scholars as well. As a FIAF-sponsored event in which film archives from around the world provided prints of their films for these marathon screenings, it is hardly surprising that archivists played a key role in making the event a success.

David Francis, who had become the National Film Archive director a few years before Brighton, hosted the event. He saw it as an extension of his earlier efforts at public outreach. I had been introduced to him through David Brooke, the director of the Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire, which had premiered my documentary *An American Potter* (1976). Brooke had shown me *Bob the Fireman*, a set of nineteenth-century lantern slides that told the story of a fire rescue, which had many intriguing parallels to *Life of an American Fireman*. It was this intersection that sparked my interest in thinking about cinema as part of the history of screen practice.[7] Both Francis and Brooke were interested in magic lantern shows, but Francis was also very much interested in the continuities between late-nineteenth-century optical lantern practices and early cinema—the lantern industry's use of life models and the ways their stories were refigured in the cinema. I was in London screening my documentary and looking for a potential distributor in 1977: this trip enabled me to also do some early cinema research at the BFI and meet up with Francis. We had several inspiring conversations, and he told me about his plans for the upcoming Brighton conference. Then and there, I was determined to attend.

Eileen Bowser and Paul Spehr organized an important pre-Brighton screening of American films from MoMA and LOC, which occurred in MoMA's small screening room on the third floor and also on some of its flatbeds. Because the LOC Paper Print collection and MoMA's own collection of Biograph and Edison negatives were so extensive, this was a significant aspect of the Brighton Project for those who could attend. Bowser, who had a master's in art history, worked briefly at MoMA before becoming a secretary for Film Department curator Richard Griffith in January 1955. She then was promoted to associate curator of the film archive in 1966 and finally full curator in 1976, where she remained until her retirement in 1998. I had become friendly with the Film Department, aided by an introduction by my undergraduate teacher Jay Leyda. My first visit to the Film Study Center also coincided with Charles Silver's arrival as its head in 1970—he always remembered me as one of his first "clients."[8]

Because I was subsequently working as a film editor, Bob Summers, the head of Film Circulation, hired me to assemble some of the silent films that were being added to the circulation collection in 16mm, such as Kuleshov's *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), which needed English intertitles to be spliced into the 16mm printing negative. Adding some early Edison films as well as Griffith–Biograph titles to the museum's circulating film collection was a logical next step. Ultimately I restored and curated a four-part program of Porter–Edison films at the museum in January 1979.

I also visited the Library of Congress as an undergraduate in 1971 and again in 1972. A student of Leyda at Yale, I was then interested in film comedies of the 1910s, particularly those of Fatty Arbuckle, and also saw some very early comedies such as Biograph's *Personal* (1904). I later

returned in fall 1976 with Ismail Xavier, a Fulbright scholar from Brazil who was getting his PhD from NYU's Cinema Studies Department. We were in Leyda's Griffith–Biograph seminar but wondered what was being done before Griffith's involvement with motion pictures. I ended up looking at Porter–Edison films made before *Rescued from the Eagle's Nest* (1908) while he looked at the pre-Griffith Biograph films. That research trip sparked the idea for my documentary *Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin S. Porter*. In the process I became friendly with Spehr, who had worked at the Motion Picture Section since 1958. He often served in the role of acting chief, which was the case in this period after the departure of John Kuiper and before the arrival of Erik Barnouw. [9]

Unfortunately, I missed the pre-Brighton screenings at MoMA, as I was working as a producer-editor in Los Angeles on the documentary television series *Between the Wars*. Jon Gartenberg, then assistant film curator at MoMA, was an active participant and later reported that "the North American researchers prescreened and studied together nearly seven hundred films from the collections of The Library of Congress, the George Eastman House, and the Museum of Modern Art; one hundred and eighty-nine of them were selected for inclusion in the Brighton showings." [10] Patrick Loughney, who was newly employed by LOC, also attended, but as he ruefully recalls:

> I did not go to Brighton for all the screenings, which I regret to this day. I couldn't afford the plane ticket. I do remember, at Paul Spehr's request, spending weeks with a colleague, prior to the Brighton conference, splicing together all the available 16mm prints of the Kemp Niver copies of the Paper Prints.[11]

Other participants at these MoMA screenings included John Fell, Russell Merritt, John Hagan, and David Levy, who would soon produce a dissertation on Porter.[12] As Levy had to remind me:

> You & I met in the seventies 76/77 in Manhattan. . . . My interest in Porter was the result of a university research assignment. Which led me to MOMA. I believe it was Charles Silver at MOMA who mentioned your interest in Porter & gave me the phone number at your place of work. We had lunch at a Cuban-Chinese place. Very much liked the food. You ordered a Cuban sandwich, left a dime tip . . . des temps perdus. [13]

David and Jon would both go on to attend the Brighton screenings.

Of course, the Brighton FIAF conference was attended by senior curators from around the world. There I met Jacques Ledoux, who founded the Musée du cinéma du Bruxelles in 1962, and other archivists. Was George Pratt, curator of film at the George Eastman House, at the conference? Perhaps, but not at the screenings. Leyda did not attend, though he may have attended some of the MoMA pre-Brighton screenings, but he had a long history of employment in film archives: MoMA in the late 1930s, the French Cinémathèque in the 1950s, in China until the Cultural Revolution, and then at the East German archive in Berlin until his return to the US in 1968. Directly and indirectly, this group of senior curators set the agenda for those of us at the Brighton conference screenings who would constitute the next generation of early cinema scholars. [14]

A Fifth Generation of Early Film Scholars

Figure 2. Photograph of Brighton attendees. From left to right: Tom Gunning, John Gartenberg, André Gaudreault, Esther Pelletier, and Jan-Christopher Horak.

The Archivists

How to characterize this fifth generation of early cinema scholars, putting aside issues of gender, race, and perhaps class? (At least initially, we were predominantly men of European heritage.) One group consisted of younger archivists. Gartenberg was taking graduate courses at NYU, including an independent study with Leyda on Griffith, but was not enrolled in his workshop.

> In the mid-1970's, I worked with Eileen on various aspects of the D. W. Griffith retrospective, in which we printed up and assembled many new Biograph films from the original negatives and fine grain masters; Tom Gunning and Ron Mottram wrote the program notes for them. So, I became immersed in the art of Griffith's filmmaking practice, and of course, his use of crosscutting. I wrote a lengthy article for *Films in Review* on the history of Griffith at MoMA, including the 3 exhibitions in 1940, 1965, and 1975. [15]

Gartenberg attended the Brighton conference and presented his paper on "Camera Movement in Edison and Biograph Films, 1900–1906," which was published by FIAF as a record of the proceedings and won the Society for Cinema Studies Student Award for Scholarly Writing in 1979, a year after my essay "The Early Cinema of Edwin S. Porter." [16] Loughney earned his PhD in American studies from George Washington University in 1988 with a dissertation on the Paper Print

collection at LOC.[17] Jan-Christopher Horak recalls:

> I was a post-graduate intern at [the George] Eastman [House] in 1975–76, on an NEA fellowship, the first formal film archival training in the US, then moved to Italy. I started my PhD. in Muenster in March 1978, but then applied for a position at the AFI. Larry Karr suggested he interview me in Brighton at FIAF, so I went and attended the symposium. Didn't get the job, but finished my dissertation before returning in 1984 as George Pratt's successor.[18]

Horak's "interest in early cinema began in Brighton" and led to a conference paper in Germany that was published as "The Magic Lantern Moves: Early Cinema Reappraised" in 1985.[19] He would go on to be the director of the Filmmuseum, Münchner Stadtmuseum, Munich, Germany, from 1994 to 1998 and the UCLA Film and Television Archive from 2007 to 2019.

Elaine Burrows was already working at the BFI. As she recalls:

> Brighton! Well, well. I was still a lowly cataloguer in those days, and I and my three colleagues in the department (but not the Chief Cataloguer) were drafted in to do all sorts of backroom tasks—like Letrasetting name-plates for the Congress delegates! We were each allowed to go to one session of the actual screenings in Brighton, but that was pretty well it. . . . .
>
> We also got to look at some of the films that were coming in from other FIAF archives before the Congress started. I recall going through a bunch of titles from Bulgaria, all of which were evidently well outside the 1900–1906 period—from the 1920s for the most part—and thus helping to streamline the viewings.[20]

Michelle Aubert was head of the Stills Department at BFI between 1975 and 1985, after which she worked as Francis's deputy before leaving in 1989 to become curator of the Archives françaises du film du CNC in Bois d'Arcy. Having died in 2016, she cannot tell us if she followed Burrows's example and snuck into one or more of the Brighton screenings; however, her commitment to early cinema was evident as coauthor of the impressive *La Production cinématographique des frères Lumière* (1996).

Stephen Herbert was another Brit with an archival bent who showed up at Brighton for a day. He recalls:

> I attended the 1978 conference for one day, with my friend David Wyatt. We were very much amateurs amongst professionals. I have fond memories of the event. I sat near John and Bill Barnes and Denis Gifford, and remember the conversation between John/Bill/Denis. I had visited John's Museum in 1971 and would be introduced to Bill a year or two after the conference, so I didn't really know them to speak to that day, but they would soon become lifelong friends. I had previously met Denis in connection with his magazine Ally Sloper, and later (in the 1990s) programmed his talks into MOMI (London).
>
> I started playing with my grandfather's Midas 9.5mm camera/projector around 1962, and very soon afterwards got a toy Japanese 8mm projector and started buying short silent films. I was a projectionist at the National Film Theatre 1970-72, and a member of the Vintage Film

> Circle from 1972. I was an occasional contributor to Classic Images from about 1973 (very poor pieces). From 1976 David Wyatt and I ran an amateur fanzine called Film Collecting, in which I had published a talk given by Audrey Wadowski (Melbourne Cooper) about her father. Audrey was at the Conference, and we had lunch with her.[21]

One of the side controversies at the Brighton screenings involved Audrey Wadowski, the daughter of filmmaker Arthur Melbourne Cooper, who insisted that various films attributed to G. A. Smith were in fact made by her father.[22]

Younger archivists would follow in these people's footsteps, developing a passion for early cinema. As Luke McKernan remarked:

> I wasn't around for Brighton, but I joined the BFI in 1986 and became interested in early films quite soon after that. My first book, on the Topical Budget silent era newsreel, was published in 1992, then I got heavily involved in the BFI's early cinema collections leading up to the centenary of cinema preparations. I think I first went to Pordenone in 1995. I haven't been to the Giornate for a few years now, but may get back into the habit.[23]

Cooper C. Graham, a member of Leyda's Griffith–Biograph seminar, received his PhD at NYU in 1984 and became an archivist at LOC, where he continued to publish work on pre-1920 cinema.[24] Other young scholar-archivists impacted by the Brighton conference include Paolo Cherchi Usai, Frank Gray, Bryony Dixon, and Casper Tybjerg.[25]

The Filmmaker-Scholars

A second group of individuals at the Brighton screenings were experienced filmmakers committed to exploring the relationship between theory and practice. These included Noël Burch, whose *Theory of Film Practice* (1973) was a touchstone for many of us. His essays on early cinema were immediately influential, and shortly after Brighton, he made the essay film *Correction, Please, or How We Got into Pictures* (1979).[26] Michael Chanan, who produced a six-part television series on philosophical issues entitled *Logic Lane* in 1972—it can be seen today on YouTube—published *The Dream That Kicks*, his book about early cinema, in 1980. Barry Salt, a dancer turned filmmaker, offered *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis* in 1983. The Barnes brothers were filmmakers who became interested in the early years of motion pictures. Brownlow and David Gill were two other filmmakers at the Brighton screenings. I had wrongly assumed Brownlow had not been in attendance. When queried, he responded: "Oh, but we did. David Gill and I were working flat out on the HOLLYWOOD series, but somehow we managed to steal a day or two and shoot off to Brighton."[27] I fit into this group as well; my documentary *Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin S. Porter* premiered in 1982.

The Graduate Students

I would nevertheless place myself in a third group consisting of relatively young graduate students. Many were from NYU and members of Leyda's Griffith–Biograph seminar, which was an immediate antecedent in its commitment to viewing unseen films from the archives. Tom Gunning entered NYU's graduate program in 1970, earned an MA in 1974, and joined the seminar soon after Leyda arrived at NYU in 1973.[28] As he recalls:

> Although we know it is tricky to trust people's memories rather than sources like the registrar. But I am fairly sure Jay's first class at NYU (which was a visit for a semester I think before he came permanently) was 1908 Biograph and I believe that was in 74, though you would have to check the year.[29]

Further consultation and fact-checking suggests the year was 1973. Gunning came to early (pre-1908) cinema not only through his work on D. W. Griffith's filmmaking but through his interest in American avant-garde cinema. For his 1986 dissertation on the films Griffith made at Biograph, he used Gerard Genette's structural narratology. As he noted, "The work of literary critic Gerard Genette has focused precisely on narrative discourse, the telling of storytelling, and will form my recurrent reference."[30] It was revised and eventually published as *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (1991). Gunning would become the group's official scholarly representative at the Brighton conference with his essay "The Non-continuous Style of Early Film." [31] Tom also met his frequent collaborator André Gaudreault at Brighton.

Gaudreault received his baccalauréat en cinéma et histoire de l'art at l'Université Laval in 1975. That year he began to teach at the Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel. As he has explained, "between 1976 and 1980, I was lecturer (chargé de cours) for courses in cinema at Université Laval (4 different courses, as much as a professor, but without the status) and I was acting also as the coordinator of the practical aspects of the courses of production." [32] He would not resume formal graduate work until 1980, graduating with a doctorat en cinéma from l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle–Paris 3 in 1983 with a dissertation titled "Récit scriptural, récit théâtral, récit filmique: prolégomènes à une théorie narratologique du cinéma." Christian Metz and Genette were key intellectual reference points. Gaudreault was in touch with MoMA in the second half of 1977, pursuing an interest in *Life of an American Fireman*. In November Bowser suggested he contact Francis about the forthcoming Brighton conference. Francis invited Gaudreault, and it was there that he met both Gunning and me for the first time. [33]

"[Brighton participants were] interested in cinema as a mode of representation rather than in style or its aesthetics."

I took a somewhat later iteration of Leyda's Griffith–Biograph seminar in fall 1976 and spring 1977. Leyda was restarting the seminar with screenings that began with *The Adventures of Dollie* (June 1908) and moved forward in time. My intellectual foundations paralleled Gunning's and Gaudreault's, with some notable differences. After two years working in the cutting room on *Hearts and Minds*, I spent the summer of 1974 catching up on some reading. Three books stick out in my mind: the first volume of Marx's *Capital*, Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (1974), and Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* (1969). When I returned to Yale that fall to complete my undergraduate degree, I renewed my earlier interest in the intersections of literary theory with classical film theory. My senior thesis examined Russian formalism and early Soviet film theory, ultimately convincing my skeptical advisor, Peter Demetz, that they were integrally related. [34] Thanks to Robert Sklar, Raymond Williams became a later theoretical addition, while Leyda's model of a systematic approach to film history—the idea of looking at every Griffith film in chronological order, not just the great ones—provided a foundational research methodology. A casual review of my film historical writing should make this evident: working in series by watching every available Edison film, even the most banal; reading journals and newspapers one week after the next for multiple years; tracking down all the court cases involving motion pictures before 1909; and so forth.

Griffith-Biograph

The Brighton conference was about cinema before Griffith, but if we think about early cinema as extending to even 1915, then Leyda's Griffith–Biograph seminars were prescient. There were two significant differences, however: first, although concerned with authorship, early cinema scholarship was generally not as "auteurist" in its orientation; second, it was not particularly concerned with film as an art form. It was interested in cinema as a mode of representation rather than its style or aesthetics. While Leyda's seminars provided many of the Brighton Project participants, other seminar members stayed home and pursued publication on Griffith's Biograph films. Steven Higgins, who would become the head film archivist at MoMA after Eileen Bowser retired, took the second iteration of Leyda's Griffith–Biograph course in 1975 and 1976 before completing his MA and leaving the program. When he returned as a PhD student in 1978, he rejoined the seminar, which included João Luiz Vieira, Elaine Mancini, and Cooper C. Graham. They eventually published *D. W. Griffith and the Biograph Company* in 1985. As Graham recalls:

> We started the project in 1978 and worked on it off and on through 1984. We worked on it hot and heavy for the first two years, but then we did not work on it as intensively for a while, since we had other things intervening—children, jobs, dissertations and so forth. It was only that we got a publisher that we started working on the project intensively, and Steven remembers sending some proof corrections to Anthony Slide, so work, or at least revisions, went on until the publication.[35]

Joyce E. Jesionowski's *Thinking in Pictures: Dramatic Structure in D. W. Griffith's Biograph Films* appeared in 1987. Roberta Pearson took Leyda's Griffith–Biograph seminar for a semester in the 1981–82 school year, a few years after Brighton. Her fondest memory of the course is meeting Blanche Sweet.[36] Perhaps not surprisingly, her 1986 dissertation was on "The Modesty of Nature: Performance in Griffith's Biographs," subsequently published as *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* in 1992, one year after Gunning's *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*. Pearson's work on early cinema soon moved beyond Griffith. She and her frequent collaborator William Uricchio were inspired by a season of Vitagraph films that screened at Pordenone in 1986 and subsequently wrote *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (1993).[37]

Brighton as a Site of Intellectual Ferment

The Brighton conference was not only an opportunity to view numerous fiction films made between 1900 and 1906, it was a place for scholars and cineastes to meet and interact with people of similar interests. David Levy, for instance, recalls the intellectual friction between Barry Salt and Noël Burch that unfurled in the screening room over those four days.[38] My happy, special memory from the event was playing the coin waterfall arcade game with Noël on the Brighton Pier. Nevertheless, the most unexpected and notable event, at least for me, was that three of us—each based in a different country—showed up at the Brighton conference with papers that focused on *Life of an American Fireman* (Edison, 1903): Burch (Paris), Andre Gaudreault (Québec), and me (New York).[39] We had never met and were surprised to find that others had been working on the same topic, though, it should be said, with significantly different approaches.

Burch correctly assumed that the LOC Paper Print copy, with substantial repetitions and overlaps, was the original version and then placed the film in the context of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903), *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), and *Life of a Cowboy* (1906). In these films, he sees "pictures reflecting, 'in form and content,' the infantilism of the working classes" and goes on to describe what he characterizes as the primitive mode of representation. [40] Gaudreault used the catalog description to imagine the possibility of a third version of Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* in an article I co-translated—the beginning of a lifelong friendship. My article sought to prove the validity of the LOC Paper Print version (versus the modernized print at MoMA) by analyzing factors such as the film's advertised length and Porter's use of overlapping action and narrative repetition in his prior films, notably *How They Do Things on the Bowery* (1902). Besides arguing for an understanding of his strategies in terms of the ongoing shift in editorial control, I eventually argued that *Life of an American Fireman* was an expression of an old middle-class worldview in terms of its mode of production, representation, and subject matter. One aspect of this was the opportunity to present and share papers that would be compiled by Roger Holman as *Cinema 1900–1906: An Analytical Study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives, Vol. 1: Brighton Symposium, 1978* (1982).

Figure 3. Frame enlargement from Porter's *Life of a Cowboy* (1906).

Brighton was a catalyst, but many people who became part of what I have characterized as the fifth generation of early cinema scholars were not in attendance. Generally, they were university trained, and most would have tenure or tenure-track positions in film departments that were establishing themselves around the world. Donald Crafton recalls, "I had been invited to Brighton by Eileen, but (stupidly?) declined because I was in the throes of submitting my Emile Cohl diss, and then I was caring for my one-month-old daughter during the actual time of the conference."

Crafton wrote his dissertation in Yale's History of Art Department. He adds, "I first met you

when you contacted me at Yale. We chatted in the old Art Library (in the hideous Paul Rudolf building). It must have been early in my appointment as an Asst prof, i.e. 1978-ish."[41] Crafton, a young assistant professor at Yale, was working in the trenches of early cinema alongside the Brighton group. His book *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898–1928* was published in 1982.

"Brighton also spawned a variety of conferences and intensive screenings that brought together early film scholars in a variety of configurations. Eileen Bowser and MoMA continued to play an important role."

Post-Brighton Early Cinema Conferences and Screenings

Brighton also spawned a variety of conferences and intensive screenings that brought together early film scholars in a variety of configurations. Bowser and MoMA continued to play an important role. As Gartenberg reminds us, "For three consecutive days in January 1979, the North American group of scholars from the Brighton Project reconvened at The Museum of Modern Art to screen 1907 and 1908 films made up to Griffith's debut as a director at Biograph." This involved "a systematic viewing of Biograph, Edison, Vitagraph, and of Pathé, Hepworth and other foreign productions."[42] Many of us at Brighton saw this as a crucial follow-up, me included. One problem: few 1908 non-Biograph fiction films were then available for viewing. Virtually all Edison films from 1908 to 1910 are lost. This was true for other American production companies as well. Because of this hole in the record, Griffith retained an undue prominence. How the film industry in general moved from one system of representation to another was not easy to pin down. It was only gradually—in the decades ahead—that a greater diversity of films from this period would be found and restored.

Georges Méliès was also a filmmaker of great interest, particularly in France. Swiss film historian Roland Cosandey recalls:

> The first Méliès Conference took place in 1981. I was in the audience, well prepared, discussed a lot, angrily or happily depending the lecturer, came back with a lot of thought and wrote a little about the experience, met people such as Paolo Cherchi Usai, Jacques Malthête, John Frazer, André Gaudreault, people I am still, connected with (except Frazer of whom I lost sight).[43]

Stephen Bottomore, a founder of Domitor, the international society for the study of early cinema, briefly attended the Brighton conference but did not join the 1900 to 1906 screenings. As he explained:

> Ironically I became interested [in early cinema] the following year, started writing about it for *Sight and Sound*, and then attended the colloque international at l'Institut Jean Vigo in 1984 in Perpignan. I met Paolo [Cherchi Usai] and maybe Tom [Gunning] there and you could say Domitor was conceived at that conference. Then I think all the 5 founder members—including Emmanuelle Toulet—met in Berkhamsted and Pordenone where we formally started Domitor.
>
> By the way, the proceedings of the Perpignan conference were published in 1985 as "Les premiers ans du cinéma français" (including my own contribution).[44]

Both conferences took place on the continent and gathered recruits from outside the Anglo-American community. I attended neither as I was busy balancing my scholarly pursuits with filmmaking and earning a living.

Long before the internet, word about the Brighton conference seems to have spread quickly. As Paolo Cherchi Usai recalled some ten years later, “The news about what happened in Brighton came to Italy as a sort of tornado.”[45] Asked to elaborate in a recent email, he wrote:

> It was precisely Angelo R. Humouda who broke the news. I can even remember the moment—it was at his home (the Cineteca Griffith) located at 14, via Luccoli in Genoa; Angelo was on a roll, talking behind his desk about all that was happening in the world in the field of early cinema studies, and he mentioned this as if it was the new big thing (which it was). He reiterated this on many public occasions (at other symposia in Salsomaggiore, Pesaro, Sestri Levante), whenever he had a chance to show his 16mm prints of early films. This really made a big stir, like the distant but clear echo of a powerful game changer. Where and how he heard about it, I don’t know, but—young and eager as I was—I was very impressed; so were Davide Turconi and, to a lesser extent, Aldo Bernardini, who also heard from Angelo.[46]

Humouda, who did not attend Brighton, likely heard about it from Burrows at BFI or Gartenberg.[47] As Cherchi Usai has noted, “Brighton was a starting point for Pordenone’s Giornate del Cinema Muto,” which had its first iteration in 1982.[48] Pordenone, in turn, quickly became a regular meeting place for Brighton alums and early cinema aficionados.

A full litany of names and corresponding achievements that built on the Brighton experience would resemble a modern-day version of Ramsaye recounting the recruitment of the original film pioneers. To gain a better, if still incomplete, sense of the state of early cinema historiography and its active participants in those first two decades, one can examine Emmanuelle Toulet’s *Domitor bibliographie internationale du cinéma des premiers temps: Travaux des members* (1987) and a second edition compiled by Toulet and Elena Degrada in 1995.[49] Certainly, the group of early cinema aficionados expanded rapidly. Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk provided an early outlet for articles on early cinema in their journal *KINtop*. In response to a query, Lenk wrote:

> In 1983–1984 I wrote my Maîtrise d’Études Théâtrales directed by Michel Colin et Anne Ubersfeld at Paris III and treated the discussion of the intelligentsia about early cinema in Germany from 1907 to 1914. . . . After that I wrote my PhD thesis between 1985 and 1988 on the “battle” between cinema and theatre before 1914 in France.[50]

Kessler wrote:

> Sabine got into early cinema a few years before me. I first got interested in early cinema in 1986 when I attended my first Giornate on Scandinavian Cinema. My first article on early cinema (the use of letters in Juve contre Fantômas [1913]) dates from 1988. It was the German retrospective at the Giornate that did indeed inspire us to create KINtop together with Martin [Loiperdinger]. I had written an article for the catalogue and our first idea simply was to publish a volume with German translations of the catalogue contributions. But the publisher, KD Wolff suggested we should think about a periodical.[51]

Similar kinds of stories could be told by Laurent Manonni, Livio Jacob, Piera Patat, David Robinson, Richard Abel, Ben Singer, Charlie Keil, Martin Loiperdinger, Dan Streible, Miriam Hansen, Ben Brewster, Lea Jacobs, John Fullerton, Jan Olsson, Vanessa Toulmin, Richard Brown, Barry Anthony, Jane Gaines, Alison McMahan, Nick Deocampo, Jackie Stewart, Antonia Lant, Cara Caddoo, Mark Cooper, and Allyson Nadia Field. The list could and should go on and on.

We should also keep in mind a group of film scholars whose work on silent cinema focused on the post-1915 period, after *The Birth of a Nation*. Brownlow, who readily acknowledges that his "pet period is still 1915 (Tourneur etc.) to 1928," has brought innumerable restorations to Pordenone—a legendary figure I was too shy to approach for decades. Richard Koszarski, who wrote *The Man You Loved To Hate: Erich Von Stroheim and Hollywood* (1983) and *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928* (1990), published numerous articles on early cinema in his journal *Film History*, bringing his demanding editorial eye to each submitted manuscript. Tami Williams has published groundbreaking work on Germaine Dulac, whose film career spanned 1915 to 1935; she has also served as president of Domitor, the international society for the study of early cinema, for close to a decade.

"Academia's embrace of early cinema as a legitimate and vital area of the film studies discipline was a protracted and sometimes difficult process that was deeply indebted to Thomas Elsaesser."

II. When Early Cinema Became A Respected Field of Study

Academia's embrace of early cinema as a legitimate and vital area of the film studies discipline was a protracted and sometimes difficult process that was deeply indebted to Thomas Elsaesser. My first professor in graduate school—okay, it was Annette Michelson—once told me I had been a promising graduate student but thrown it all away on early cinema. Although her colleague Noël Burch challenged that assumption, he could be dismissed as a cinema eccentric—weren't we all? She had organized the Jay Leyda Prize under the auspices of Anthology Film Archives, and it was awarded to Elsaesser for his book *New German Cinema: A History* (1989). I had first bonded with Elsaesser when he was teaching a film history course at University of East Anglia in the fall semester of 1983. I visited his class, screened my documentary *Before the Nickelodeon*, and delivered a presentation on some of Porter's overlooked work. He also handed me a course reader which many of my US colleagues were eager to borrow. By 1986 Elsaesser was writing enthusiastically about "the new film history" and had become a Pordenone regular. [52] The year after receiving the Leyda Prize, he published his influential *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* (1990), for which the course reader was a kind of template. Featuring articles written by many members of the Brighton group, it did much to affirm the importance of our burgeoning subfield.

The year 1990 was a turning point for the study of early cinema: Elsaesser's book was only one component. Burch published his collection of essays on early cinema titled *Life to Those Shadows* (1990), while Princeton University Press offered an elegantly produced book of Crafton's revised dissertation, *Emile Cohl, Caricature, and Film*, that same year. I published a trilogy of books in 1990 and 1991. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (1990) was first—it was recognized with the Leyda Prize, after which Michelson saw fit to terminate the prize, perhaps out of frustration. It was also published with two other volumes in the History of American Cinema project organized by Charles Harpole: Bowser's *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907–1915* and

Koszarski's *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928*, which collectively won the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Katherine Singer Kovács Book Award.

My other two books, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* and *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920*, with Carol Nelson, were both tied to documentaries and came out early in 1991. As already mentioned, Gunning published *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* in 1991. That same year, Miriam Hansen offered *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the Cineteca del Friuli published an annual collection of essays related to the theme of its Giornate del Cinema Muto and also had a journal, *Griffithiana*, focused on silent cinema. In 1994 it published a special issue devoted to international cinema in 1913. Indeed, the network of interactions involving conferences, conversations, papers, articles, and books was exceedingly rich and not practical to fully document.

The Giornate del Cinema Muto quickly become a site for global gatherings. Hiroshi Komatsu, an early cinema scholar from Japan, first came to the silent film festival in 1985. [53] Even before the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, Yuri Tsivian and Natalia Noussinova journeyed to Pordenone from the Soviet Union for the festival. As Tsivian recalls:

> My first Pordenone was 1988, following a year or so after Lorenzo Codelli contacted me on behalf of the Giornate (which worked on Robinson's suggestion) to put together a prerev Russian program. Come and look how it runs, they said. There was little left of the true iron curtain at the time, so I went. Next year my colleagues from Moscow and I brought the Russian set, and it was around that time that I learned about the Brighton breakthrough. [54]

This program of prerevolutionary Russian films also resulted in a catalog: *Silent Witnesses: Russian Film 1908–1919*.[55] Soon after, Tsivian published *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception* (1994).

Circa 1990 was a pivotal moment for those engaged in the study of early cinema. The first Domitor conference, on early cinema and religion, was organized by Gaudreault in Montréal in June 1990.[56] At about this time, the Oscar Micheaux Society for the study of African American and Race Cinema was formed under the leadership of Charlene Regester and Jane Gaines, film professors at University of North Carolina and Duke, respectively.[57] David Francis left BFI in 1990 and became head of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at LOC in 1991. He subsequently found funding for and set up the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center at LOC's Packard Campus in Culpeper, Virginia.

The study of early cinema would experience future turns and metamorphoses. One of the most notable was the Orphan Film Movement, which had its formative conference under the leadership of head Orphanista Dan Streible, though he had crucial support from Francis, Cherchi Usai, and other archivists. Early cinema had been neglected for so long because its films were "orphaned" almost by definition. Streible, whose 1994 dissertation was on early fight films, fully appreciated this confluence and offered a new, more expansive framework for examining these works. Like other early cinema scholars, Tom Gunning and I attended "Orphans of the Storm: Saving 'Orphan Films' in the Digital Age" at University of South Carolina in September 1999. This event was soon followed by the biennial Women and the Silent Screen conference, which had its first iteration under the guidance of Shelly Stamp at University of California, Santa Cruz, in November 2001—I presented a paper on *La Souriante Madame Beudet*. The early cinema field had not diminished, but after twenty years, it had matured, and its disruptive force was reemerging elsewhere. [58]

Passions, Theories, Debates

Members of the Brighton group shared a passion for cinema, but were we cinephiles—lovers of cinema? The term "cinephilia" had not yet become popular, but for many of us, the term would not have quite fit. As a group we were committed to the cinema as our life's work, but perhaps not always in the same way. I always remember a statement by Eileen Bowser, curator of the film collection at MoMA. Its commitment was to film as art, with Griffith always hailed as providing its initial substantiation. One day, she noted that our investigation into cinema before 1906—that is, before film became an art—was somewhat at odds with the museum's official mission. Noting that irony, she shrugged her shoulders, and we moved on. By exploring early cinema's mode of representation rather than its "style," we were less preoccupied with film as art. Although film was considered "the art form of the twentieth century," we studied many forms of cinema that would not be considered art. For instance, many early motion pictures were advertising films or involved product placement. Others were industrials, newsfilm, or lecture films. [59] We were studying something more than an art form—we were studying a media form.

We went to Brighton eager to see a large number of films from the first years of the twentieth century. What distinguished us from many earlier historians was the excitement and pleasure we felt from these immersive screenings. Our reactions to the pre-1903 or even pre-Griffith period differed somewhat from that of Jacobs, who wrote:

"Members of the Brighton group shared a passion for cinema, but were we cinephiles—lovers of cinema?"

> By 1902 Porter had a long list of films to his credit. But neither he nor other American producers had yet learned to tell a story. They were busy with elementary, one-shot news events (*President McKinley's Inauguration*, *McKinley's Funeral Cortege*, *The Columbia and Shamrock Yacht Races*, *The Jeffries–Rhulin Sparring Contest*, *The Galveston Cyclone*), with humorous bits (*Grandma and Grandpa* series, *Happy Hooligan* series, *Old Maid* series), with vaudeville skits (cooch dancers, magicians, acrobats), scenic views (*A Trip Through the Columbia Exposition*), and local topics (parades, fire departments in action, shoppers in the streets). None of these productions stood out from the general; literal and unimaginative, they are significant today mainly as social documents. [60]

"Making strange"

We tended to greet these films with great affection and even greater interest. There were various reasons for this. For one, the post-WWII American avant-garde was making films that challenged our familiar ways of seeing and thinking. Tom Gunning's iconic article "Cinema of Attractions" begins by citing Ferdinand Léger and the European avant-garde of the 1920s and concludes with the "underground" filmmaker and performance artist Jack Smith (1932–1989). The professor who first whetted my interest in early and silent cinema as an undergraduate was Standish Lawder, himself an important avant-garde filmmaker. Many of us had studied and been influenced by Russian formalism, so it is not surprising that we were eager to explore early cinema in terms of its form and the distinctive nature of its style—or its mode of representation. Certainly, Victor Shklovsky's emphasis on the artistic technique of *ostranenie*—defamiliarization, or "making

strange"—was a touchstone. As young film scholars, we were attracted to the pre-Griffith cinema, which often appeared "strange" as it violated the rules and logic of Hollywood storytelling. Rather than thinking of such films as mistakes or naïve experiments, we needed to understand their own logic. In this respect, Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* provided a road map to make sense of its representational methods.

Modes of representation

How was the spatial-temporal world constructed in early film? To what extent did it offer a coherent, if ephemeral, system of representation, and to what extent was it an eclectic group of experiments? Noël Burch characterized it as a primitive mode of representation (PMR), as opposed to the institutional mode of representation (IMR). The terms proposed by Gunning were first "the non-continuous style" and then "cinema of attractions." These terms defined a set of films and a period of cinema through their representational methods.

I embraced the term "early cinema," which I characterized—too loosely, I'm afraid—as cinema before 1908, for it was that year that cinema became a system of mass communication and entertainment. It was an alternative term to the one deployed by John Fell—"film before Griffith"—but designed to avoid the "great man" approach to cinema and art more generally. It also was meant to avoid defining a period of cinema through its system of representation. On one hand, the pre-Griffith cinema was much more than a system of representation. Crucially, it was also a mode of production—not just negative production, but production in the broadest sense, which involved exhibition and reception. On the other hand, the nature of representation in the pre-1908 period should properly be an open question subjected to sustained investigation, debate, and revision. For instance, I rejected the notion of early cinema being noncontinuous. It had, I argue, its own system of continuity that was different from the classical style and understood as such. Porter argued that with *Life of an American Fireman* and the like, he was telling a story in "continuity form." Despite such disagreements, our serious interest in film form and a close reading of texts are what distinguished the Brighton group, for all our differences, from scholars such as Robert C. Allen, who consistently avoided close analyses of films in terms of cinematic representation.

III. Pursuing a Theoretically Informed Film History

"If cinema was, as Lenin believed, 'for us the most important art,' how did it begin?"

Our diverse experiences, including distinct though overlapping commitments to theoretical and critical texts, reflected and informed our different approaches. I was coming out of a two-year stint working as the first assistant editor on the Oscar-winning documentary *Hearts and Minds* (Davis, 1974). I was particularly attuned to the ways that shots and scenes were put together. Documentary, moreover, is not really a cinephilic mode. While it certainly involves artistry and participated in the "cinema as the art form of the twentieth century" phenomenon, documentary is also an ideological endeavor and a powerful mode of communication. It often foregrounds rhetoric over aesthetics.

I was working on a film which involved daily encounters with scenes of political prisoners in tiger cages, mothers at funerals climbing into the graves of their soldier sons, amputees in veterans' hospitals, and so forth. Such images were not designed to make one a lover of cinema in any simple sense. Immersion in this whirlwind of pictures twelve hours a day, six days a week was in some

sense traumatizing but also central to my encounter with what was then the world's most pressing conflict. *Hearts and Minds* also provided a meeting place for nonfiction filmmakers on the left, including those that had been affiliated with Newsreel, a New Left film collective that had largely unraveled just as I arrived in New York. Through them, I learned how to analyze a film or a scene, albeit from the perspective of a filmmaker. How does one cut together a scene or build an entire film to generate certain meanings and clarity? Other members of the Brighton group were also immersed in documentary practice. Irrespective of our backgrounds, however, we were not only interested in how cinema operated in the present day but historically and inevitably in its origins as a mode of expression. If it was, as Lenin believed, "for us the most important art," how did it begin? The cutting-edge work in 1970s cinema studies was feminist psychoanalytic film theory. It was the domain of scholars such as Laura Mulvey, Janet Bergstrom, Sandy Flitterman, Constance Penley, Mary Ann Doane, E. Ann Kaplan, Gaylyn Studlar, Christine Gledhill, and Kaja Silverman, to name a few. Feminist film theory provided women with a wedge into a male-dominated academic field, functioning in a way that African American and African diaspora cinema have functioned more recently as a necessary wedge for diversification of viewpoints and subject matter. [61] At the same time, as Tom Gunning has noted, contemporary film theorists such as Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Pierre Oudart, Stephen Heath, and Jean-Louis Comolli, steeped in apparatus theory and Lacanian psychoanalytic methods, were deeply skeptical of film historical endeavors, often dismissing them as filling in the blanks. [62]

At our best, members of the Brighton group were pursuing a theoretically informed film history. Approaches informed by Russian formalist literary theory, early Soviet film theory, and Bazin were common, thanks in part to neoformalist David Bordwell and Bazin scholar Dudley Andrew. However, while some looked to Genette and other literary theories, Elsaesser, Hansen, and others looked to the Frankfurt School and Foucault. My relatively limited methodological arsenal, which was the flip side to an immersive experience in the world of production and postproduction, provided the basis for what I would characterize as my somewhat crude historical engagement with the first decades of cinema. In this respect, I am sometimes reassured by Bertolt Brecht's remark, relayed by Walter Benjamin, that "Nothing is *more important* than *learning* to *think crudely*." As Benjamin elaborates, "Crude thoughts belong to the household of dialectical thinking precisely because they represent nothing other than the application of theory to practice." [63] Or practice to theory. In wanting to know how film practice began, I was interested in the nature and history of editing, which Pudovkin, Eisenstein, and Vertov saw as central to storytelling and a Marxist understanding of the world. What was the first cut? When did filmmakers start sequencing shots into more complicated films?

Postproduction: Its Shift from Exhibitor to Production Company

I quickly came to realize that before cinema and in the first years of projected motion pictures, editing—the sequencing of images, shots, and scenes, or postproduction—was already well developed and under the control of individual exhibitors, not the production companies. Braverman provided an apt model for understanding this reorganization of labor: when postproduction shifted to the production company, it created opportunities for greater creative potential for a few and the degradation of work for the rest. [64] This creative control newly centralized in the production company was transformative. Within twenty-five years, this process would lead to the establishment of the classical Hollywood studio system of production and representation.

Janet Staiger also felt Braverman provided a productive approach to understanding the rapid

changes in the pre-Hollywood industry—the dialectics between production and representation was something I shared with Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, and their *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (1985). However, despite working from similar models and impulses, we came to different insights and conclusions. They focused on film production—what was then called negative production—while I thought more holistically in terms of the production of cinema, which includes everything from preproduction and filming to postproduction, the making and assembling of prints, and their distribution and exhibition. [65]

Particularly in examining the pre-1908 period, it is imperative to see the ways in which production and exhibition were intertwined. The shift in editorial control and postproduction from the exhibitor to the production company in the 1901–03 period for key forms of cinema was crucial, for it coincided with or led to an array of subsequent changes in the modes of both representation and production. But if one looks at film production in isolation, the rapid appearance of editing technique seems to be an innovation that fits neatly into a biological mode in which cinema was "born" and developed organically. From this perspective film editing and, more generally, the succession of shots had no real history, making it seem more purely experimental than integral to a radical change in long-standing screen practices. Of course, the production company performed certain kinds of edits from the outset—editing internal to the shot, as with Edison's *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots* (1895). But this kind of editing had its precinema counterparts in slip slides for the lantern. But such localized exceptions had their own logic; like the lanternist who acquired a variety of slides and arranged them in succession, early exhibitors acquired films—and often made their own title slides—and arranged them in an order. Whether or not they offered a well-developed or simple succession, the slides or films provided a temporal unfolding.

"Pieces of primary source research slowly came together and revealed that film production—or negative production as it was then called—was generally conceived of as a collaborative process modeled on nineteenth-century models of business partnership."

Exhibitors in the 1890s and early 1900s were simultaneously acting as programmers and editors. Certainly exhibitors could show an eclectic series of unrelated films that epitomized the cinema of attraction paradigm, but these short films also could be organized into larger units, including larger narratives. The distinction between programming and editing became much more differentiated around 1903; as already mentioned, in most situations the editing process shifted to the production company and made possible the filmmaker, who was responsible for both production and postproduction—with the notable exception of sound, which remained the province of the exhibitor. [66] Many of these filmmakers—Edwin S. Porter, James Williamson, Méliès, Albert E. Smith, and J. Stuart Blackton—had been exhibitors in the 1890s and were familiar with postproduction. Other old-line exhibitors turned distributors and, to some extent, assumed the role of programmers as they assembled groups of films into film reels that they then rented to vaudeville houses and other venues. This idea of renting a reel of film to a circuit of theaters rather than providing them with an exhibition service—in which the service included a projector and projectionist—became common in 1903, a year of profound change.

Collaborative Filmmaking Based on Partnership

From my perspective, a Marxist understanding of labor became a necessary starting point for thinking about not only representation but authorship. None of this was self-evident. I too began by

assuming early cinema had its solitary auteurs, of which Edwin S. Porter was one. Pieces of primary source research slowly came together and revealed that film production—or negative production, as it was then called—was generally conceived of as a collaborative process patterned on nineteenth-century models of business partnership. Porter worked with a whole series of collaborators, from George S. Fleming (1901–02) to J. Searle Dawley (1907–08) to Hugh Ford (1913–15). But other film producers, such as Vitagraph's Blackton and Smith, did as well.

Partnership or a collaborative mode of production was dominant until roughly 1908 to 1909, when the rapid increase in demand for films encouraged hierarchal arrangements of work under the producer system, though exceptions continued.[67] Griffith as producer-director provided one version of this model, but not everyone was on board. Porter continued his collaborative methods until retiring. He also trained Lois Weber and Philip Smalley, who, like many other couples working in the moving picture world, applied the model of companionate marriage and partnership to filmmaking—and vice versa, applying filmmaking as partnership to marriage.

Revisionist History; or, Was Lewis Jacobs on the Right Track?

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the fifth generation of early cinema scholars were primarily graduate students—young Turks—who were determined to rewrite its history. We were bursting with self-confidence. It is perhaps sobering to remember that we were cutting our teeth at the 1978 Brighton conference some forty-five years ago. Jacobs's *Rise of the American Film* had been published in 1939, less than forty years before Brighton. Hopefully, today's graduate students will be more generous with us.

James Banner, Jr.: "In the modern era, historians' understanding of major subjects has almost never stood still; new views have rarely gone long without objection and challenge; and even professional historians seldom escape the struggle to keep up with new knowledge and readjust their understanding of what they think they know."

Might we have examined Jacobs's efforts with a certain amount of critical sympathy? Of course, he had few films to examine, and those early films he saw were—though he could not have easily known this—modernized. I remember seeing Jacobs at a Society for Cinema Studies conference in the early 1980s. Saw him—I didn't meet him. Having this relic from the past in attendance—the whipping boy of revisionist history and theory—seemed hopelessly awkward. He should have known better than to appear at such a venue. Didn't he realize that he was wrong, wrong, and WRONG?! And out of date! *We* were the ones who were going to get it right and lay the foundations on which a new and proper history of cinema could be built. As scholars, we may sometimes be too eager to throw out past historiographic efforts.

James M. Banner Jr. has pointed out that all historical writing is, in some sense, revisionist:

> In the modern era, historians' understanding of major subjects has almost never stood still; new views have rarely gone long without objection and challenge; and even professional historians seldom escape the struggle to keep up with new knowledge and readjust their understanding of what they think they know.[68]

Contemporary historical efforts, when well done, bring together new documentation and new

insights that revise our understanding of the past. Yet the term “revisionist history” has most often been applied to those who:

> challenged the dominance of, and occasionally replaced, previously unassailed historical worldviews. They attacked what had come to be orthodox ideas about the past. They dissented from conventional interpretation. They brought to bear evidence that strategically and powerfully claimed to undermine what had been earlier believed to be complete and valid knowledge.[69]

In this regard, the leading revisionist historian of early cinema had been Robert C. Allen.

Allen was not interested in film form, but he was interested in the engine of change that repeatedly transformed the film industry in its first two decades. He rewrote film’s early history in ways that had profound implications for the field, by which I mean he challenged the familiar sequence of events and the traditional understandings of cause and effect epitomized by Jacobs. When I first started going to film studies conferences, speakers constantly invoked his “Contra the Chaser Theory” article as a model of scholarship.[70] I remember that Garth Jowett stood up and admitted that the old histories were wrong to assert that early films had, in some sense, “chased” audience out of vaudeville houses and did a *mea culpa* for repeating earlier conclusions. But was Jacobs, or for that matter, Jowett, wrong? If one looks closely at Jacobs’s *Rise of the American Film*, one should be impressed by the extent of his primary sources and footnotes for this early period. His focus was limited, and he didn’t get everything exactly right, but his work should not be dismissed out of hand.

Allen’s dismissal of the chaser in early cinema effectively dismissed the crisis facing the motion picture industry in 1901–03. It offers a smooth trajectory of cinema’s growth. Moreover, if there was no crisis, there was no need for the shift to story films. Yet clearly the shift happened at some point. When and why? He saw the shift happening after 1906 and attributed it to the rise of movie theaters and the need for increased product. He even went so far as to suggest actualities cost more than fiction films but were also more popular, and so turning to fiction films was a last resort. In making these radical assertions, one must be surprised by the limited nature of his research. To be sure, Allen did extensive and often impressive research, but his dissertation focused on vaudeville–cinema interactions that were not pertinent to the radical reordering of cause and effect that he offered in a series of articles. In arguing that fiction films did not become dominant until 1907, Allen based his assertion on comparing the number of copyrighted nonfiction—or shall we say non-acted—films to the number of copyrighted acted, or fiction films.[71] Nonfiction films were more plentiful before 1906. He then concluded that the industry’s shift to story films only came about because the nickelodeon theaters had an increased need for product, which only fiction filmmaking could supply.

The fallacy of this becomes evident through a more in-depth, sustained examination. Since the Edison company was copyrighting most of its films from 1897 to 1918, Edison films provide an appropriate example—one on which Allen implicitly relied. As I showed in *Before the Nickelodeon*, (1) Edison copyrighted forty-nine actualities or nonfiction films in 1906 and only twelve fiction films. Here Allen would seem to be on safe ground, except (2) if we consider the respective amount of negative footage devoted to these two types of films, then the number is almost even, with 47 percent being actualities and 53 percent fiction (7,715 feet versus 8,750 feet). (3) Crucially, we also know how many copies of these films were sold by Edison in this period: 85 percent of the footage sold was from fiction films (741,490 feet) and only 15 percent (118,438 feet) was nonfiction. This six-

to-one ratio was remarkably consistent between 1904 and 1906. [72]

Were these longer story films not real narratives but just excuses for cobbling together a group of attractions? The motion picture business has always been about attractions. This is why trailers are often presented as "coming attractions." To be sure, the nature and presentation of these attractions change over time. Griffith's films lacked the familiar attractions of the pre-1908 period but offered new ones—not only the suspense of last-minute rescues but ethereal actresses such as Florence Lawrence, Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, and Blanche Sweet. Tracing that changing relationship between attractions and narrative should be an important goal of the film scholar—as is, likewise, the changing mode of representation. What happened in the 1907–09 period—centered in 1908, when Griffith first started directing—was a profound change in storytelling methods, in the mode of representation. Intertitles ensured the story could be understood without relying on lectures or the audience's insider cultural knowledge—for instance, Porter's *Life of a Cowboy* (1906) is more easily understood if one knows the play on which it draws: Edwin Milton Royle's *The Squaw Man* (1905). Fiction films became self-contained units in which complex, original stories were told in a linear fashion unless clearly marked as flashbacks or dreams. This linearity allowed for cross-cutting and the tension of the last-minute rescue.

1903: A Pivotal Year in Cinema History

Story films became the dominant product of the motion picture industry in 1903 in a shift that was fairly abrupt. This six-to-one ratio almost certainly held true for Edison films made in the second half of 1903, with the release of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (July 1903), *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (August 1903), and *The Great Train Robbery* (December 1903). The shift to fiction filmmaking also coincided with the introduction of the three-blade shutter, which reduced flicker and made film watching more pleasurable. Fiction, one could argue, is about narrative pleasure, and so, in that respect, the three-blade shutter encouraged fiction film—and perhaps vice versa. It was at this moment—mid-1903—that Edison films and no doubt others had their head titles and intertitles incorporated into the film print, while previously exhibitors had shown titles using lantern slides. This change was necessary if exhibitors-turned-distributors were to rent a reel of film. Only after 1903 did most showmen project a reel of films rather than a combination of slides and film. This led, of course, to the simplification of the projectionist's task—one more feature in a degradation of work as postproduction shifted from exhibitor to production company. The exhibitor became much more of an entrepreneur and less the creative author of the program shown on the screen.

The year 1903 was a crucial moment of transformation for the cinema, but it would be wrong to ignore the seeds of this shift in an earlier time frame. When Méliès's *Blue Beard* (1901) and *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), Pathé–Zecca's *Histoire d'un crime* (1901), as well as Edison films such as *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1902) and *What Happened on the Bowery* (1902) appeared, they were popular even though they lacked the image quality of Biograph's 68mm/70mm motion picture system, which provided a better-quality image as its films unspooled at a much faster rate of projection. Biograph, however, had been forbidden to make films other than news and actualities until Edison's court case against the corporation for patent infringement ended in 1902. The introduction of the three-blade shutter in mid-1903 ensured the demise of Biograph's exhibition service using large-format films shot at a high number of frames per second. As a result, Biograph embraced the standard 35mm, which proved more conducive for story films. By late 1903, it was screening British Gaumont's *The Runaway Match, or Marriage by Motor*. Edison, in particular, might have made more story films in 1901–02, but its executives were reluctant to become involved in expensive negative production,

particularly when they could just sell dupes of pirated European productions that were not being copyrighted. It was a profitable way to make money with minimal investment. This adversely impacted all aspects of the motion picture business—Eastman Kodak saw a decrease in the amount of raw stock being sold. However, the resumption of competition after Thomas A. Edison's legal failings in March 1902 left Edison company executives no choice but to become more active in production.

The main problem with Allen's revisionist history is that it became embedded in many scholarly studies of early cinema. Somewhat surprisingly, it was accepted with very little scrutiny by Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*. Tom Gunning also relied on Allen in suggesting that the cinema of attractions remained dominant over film narratives until 1906. When narrative appeared—as with *A Trip to the Moon* or *The Gay Shoe Clerk*—Gunning has argued that the storyline was just an excuse for providing a series of attractions. But is that so unusual? And what do we mean by attractions? Star vehicles are exactly that—a story film that provides audiences with an excuse to look at a stunning actor. *A Trip to the Moon* has a strong storyline, which Méliès used to lampoon popular accounts of colonial conquest. [73]

By watching early films immersively for many years, have I become more accustomed to the expectations and sensitivities of those early spectators? I suspect so. For a long time, I have been moved to tears by *The Ex-Convict* (1904). An unemployed ex-convict has been caught robbing the home of a well-to-do family and is about to go to jail, which will surely devastate his family. At that moment a little girl comes downstairs to get her teddy bear and recognizes the ex-convict as the man who had earlier saved her life. I always cry at that scene. It is the story and how it is told that do this to me. More recently I find myself being deeply moved by the ending of *Life of an American Fireman* as the mother waits outside the burning house, hoping her child will be rescued. When the fireman puts the girl in her arms, I cry. It resonates with some deep, personal sense of loss. But that sense of loss is something many must have felt when the film was first shown. It is the story—and how it is told—that makes these two moments so powerful, at least to me. Moreover, I react to Griffith's *The Old Actor* (1912) in a somewhat similar way, admittedly even more intensely. Griffith was certainly effective in establishing mood and creating emotional reactions in his audiences, but Porter was a skilled storyteller within the framework of the pre-1908 mode of representation.

"By downplaying the narrative element of films made before 1906, Tom Gunning associated Griffith and his early years at Biograph with 'the Origins of American Narrative Film.' Three years before Gunning submitted his dissertation, David Levy submitted his dissertation with an uncannily similar title: 'Edwin S. Porter and the Origins of the American Narrative Film, 1894-1907.'"

By downplaying the narrative element of films made before 1906, Tom Gunning associated Griffith and his early years at Biograph with "The Origins of American Narrative Film." Three years before Gunning submitted his dissertation, David Levy submitted his dissertation with an uncannily similar title: "Edwin S. Porter and the Origins of the American Narrative Film, 1894–1907." [74] Between 1903 and 1908, acted narratives dominated American filmmaking, which had its own mode of production and representation that was distinct from what followed.

This shift in filmmaking practices is not surprising because the nickelodeon boom, which led to cinema becoming a mass media with a standard release schedule in 1908, was on such a scale that it required new systems of both representation and production. Griffith is so important because he was arguably the most creative and extreme practitioner working in this new system of

representation and production. Porter was one of several filmmakers working in an earlier system but certainly the most prominent in the United States from 1902 to 1903, due to Edison's ability to disrupt the filmmaking activities of rival motion picture companies. Nonetheless, by mid-1904 Edison was being challenged by the American Mutoscope & Biograph Company, among others. Biograph had begun regular "feature" production by mid-1904. With Wallace McCutcheon acting as producer, Biograph's staff made *Personal* in June, *The Moonshiner* in July, *The Widow and the Only Man* in August, *The Hero of Liao Yang* in September, and *The Lost Child* and *The Suburbanite* in October.

Paul Moore Brings a "Distant Reading" to the Chaser Controversy

Paul S. Moore is one of the few contemporary scholars who has returned to the question of nonfiction cinema in relation to fiction film production in the 1903–06 era, as he reengages the Allen–Musser debates on the chaser phenomenon in "A 'Distant Reading' of the 'Chaser Theory': Local Views and the Digital Generation of New Cinema History."[75] It is somewhat flattering but also, one hopes, productive to see these issues addressed afresh. Certainly, random word access of digitized newspapers, books, and other printed materials has transformed the way we can do history. So what does Moore find, and what does he do with it? In general, he uses his idea of a "distant reading" to emphasize points of intersection that Allen and I shared in our research—for instance, the way cinema was often conceived as "a visual newspaper." The term was reasonably common in period discourse, so this is hardly surprising. What might merit further reflection is how this conception of pre-1903 American cinema as a visual newspaper meshes with Tom Gunning's cinema of attraction paradigm.

What strikes me as still urgent—and more significant—is what Allen did with his research in terms of historical causality. Allen's dismissal of the chaser period as a symptom as well as a synecdochic label for this period of crisis (1901–03) in the motion picture industry bars an accurate, full understanding of cinema's early history because it has resulted in a rearrangement of cause and effect. This is what seems most important, and yet it has been almost completely ignored by early cinema scholarship.[76]

Lewis Jacobs rightly asserted that the story film offered a way out of this crisis, though again this "way out" involved other factors such as the three-blade shutter, the new rental system, and the courts' momentary dismissal of Edison's patent claims, which allowed motion picture companies to renew production. Moore seems to be looking for a happy middle ground, suggesting "If the fiction story film is emergent in 1903, its predominance is not obvious until the daily ads for nickelodeons that start in 1906."[77] I would argue, to use Raymond Williams's terminology, that story films were emergent in 1901 to early 1903 but became dominant in the second half of 1903—at a six-to-one ratio, moreover. Once again, it is the research and data one gathers and how one interprets it. Moore uses the activities of Vitagraph's traveling exhibition companies, particularly one that was touring northeastern Canada and deploying a cameramen to make local views, as his key piece of evidence. Of course, I found this data quite interesting, for it complements, expands on, and enriches work I have done on traveling exhibitions. Vitagraph had four such units in 1904 and 1905. I had previously focused on the unit touring the Connecticut area and was delighted to learn about the company's activities in northeastern Canada.[78]

Vitagraph's Traveling Exhibition Service: What Does the Evidence Tell Us?

For Moore, Vitagraph's screenings of local views and other newsworthy films seems to

"Vitagraph's strategy for making its exhibition service appealing to both urban theaters and small-town audiences with its traveling shows was to offer news films and other forms of nonfiction pictures that its rivals could not show since they generally lacked production capabilities."

suggest a longer life for the popularity of nonfiction. Certainly to say that story films became the dominant product after mid-1903 does not mean that nonfiction was systematically banished from the screen. After all, we should remember that 15 percent of the print footage sold by Edison was nonfiction, often newsfilm. The real question is how did Vitagraph's efforts—and those of Lyman H. Howe and other established traveling showmen——fit into our overall understanding of the American motion picture industry in this period? Vitagraph's use of local views must be understood in terms of the company's overall business strategies at that time. As I pointed out in *The Emergence of Cinema*, Vitagraph did not embrace the move from exhibition service to rental system in 1903–04—or even into 1905—as had Percival Waters with his Kinetograph Company, George Spoor with his Kinodrome Film Service, and other companies. The less expensive rental services took vaudeville customers away from Vitagraph's exhibition service, which may explain the company's belated move into traveling exhibition.[79]

Vitagraph's strategy for making its exhibition service appealing to both urban theaters and small-town audiences with its traveling shows was to offer newsfilm and other forms of nonfiction pictures that its rivals could not show since they generally lacked production capabilities. Since fiction films were much more expensive to produce than nonfiction, contra Allen's suggestion, Vitagraph chose not to pursue fiction filmmaking within this business model. Blackton and Smith were certainly showing fiction films via their service, buying them from the same available sources as other exhibitors. It was their newsfilm and local views that made their service special and so what they tended to advertise in these circumstances. Local views provided a way to break into these small-town markets. Although it made sense for Vitagraph to promote the timely topics that only it could offer, a look at Vitagraph's programs for these exhibitions would likely reveal that story films provided a very substantial portion of its shows. Indeed, Vitagraph's Summer 1903 catalog strongly emphasized fiction films, starting with Méliès's *Gulliver's Travels*, Pathé's *Sleeping Beauty and the Beast*, and G. A. Smith's *Mary Jane's Mishap*.[80]

Let's imagine Vitagraph's traveling unit in Canada shot one thousand feet of negative in a given town. Vitagraph would have made one print and screened it a handful of times in that town. However, while such local views could be a big selling point for Vitagraph's exhibition service, their commercial value was limited to the town itself and quickly faded. Few patrons would want to see the local views a second or third time. Moreover, the gimmick of making local views was not something that could be quickly repeated in the same town. It is hardly surprising, then, that Vitagraph recognized the limits to this strategy and radically shifted its business model, moving into fiction film production in August 1905.[81] If Vitagraph's clever application of an increasingly residual practice points to an area where nonfiction persisted, Martin Johnson reminds us that taking and exploiting local views continued to be popular into the 1950s.[82] Focusing on a handful of traveling exhibitors who exploited local views does not, in itself, indicate a middle ground between our two positions, as Moore suggests.

I agree with much of Moore's findings, for it is true that many of the traveling showmen in 1904–05 were cognizant of their more religiously conservative patrons and so tended to include a larger percentage of nonfiction subjects such as *The Salmon Fishing Industry* or *Life Savers at Work*. His essay is more or less consistent with what I present in *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman*

H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920. Nevertheless, by focusing on one small area of the motion picture industry, Moore seeks to draw broader conclusions. Unfortunately, this is similar to what Allen did when arguing for the dominance of nonfiction films until 1906 by simply looking at copyright deposits. There were many other components to the motion picture industry in 1903–05. William Selig continued to offer local views for his Polyscope service, but again, from 1903 to 1906, he was producing an array of fiction films, including *Tracked by Bloodhounds; or a Lynching at Cripple Creek* (July 1904) and *The Hold-up of the Leadville Stage* (October 1904).

Local Views versus Dupes of European Fiction Films

Lubin and Biograph had similar profiles to Edison in terms of the balance between nonfiction and staged or acted fiction production in 1903–05, but all three were duping films by Pathé and Méliès—at least until the latter opened a New York office in March 1903—which were overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, fiction. Admittedly the figure cited above (85 percent of the print footage involved copyrighted acted or fiction films) fails to include Vitagraph's local views, but it also fails to account for the many European story films that had not been copyrighted in the US and were widely sold as dupes. To what extent was the deployment of local scenes and news footage balanced by the sale of fiction films by Méliès and Pathé? [83] That is hard to pinpoint, but it must be acknowledged. Granted that the balance varied from exhibitor to exhibitor and rental service to rental service, but looking at the industry as a whole, somewhere between 80 percent and 90 percent of the films being shown from 1904 to 1906 were acted or fiction. [84]

In thinking about the engine of history that was generating rapid change in the American motion picture industry, the fiction films made between 1903 and 1905 were initially purchased to screen in vaudeville and by traveling exhibitors, but they also provided an essential reservoir of films for distributors renting to the nickelodeons. We must remember that *The Great Train Robbery* was often the first film screened in a new nickelodeon, and at least some of them owned a copy so that if there was a problem with the shipping of a film from their distributor, they had something to screen. Older fiction films did not date nearly as quickly as older newsfilm. In short, the extensive production of story films from 1903 to 1906 was a key precondition for the nickelodeon boom, rather than, as Allen would have it, the nickelodeon boom being a precondition for a major shift in the quantity of fiction films vis-à-vis their nonfiction counterparts.

An increase in the rate of negative production certainly occurred as the nickelodeon took off, but did the ratio of fiction to nonfiction increase after 1907? It seems likely, but we should keep in mind that Pathé newsreels first appeared in 1909. Producers such as Keystone would often include a topical film on a split reel as a way to fill out a program at a reduced price and maintain a sense of variety. The rise of the nickelodeons not only demanded a further, rapid increase in the number of films being made but, as discussed, necessitated a new mode of representation and production. A distant reading requires a full consideration of all the elements and factors operating in the film industry at a given

"Here is a simple assertion for which I may be guilty of crude thinking. When editorial control shifted to the production company and creative control became centralized, everything changed. Among other things, it produced the filmmaker—even though the filmmaker was often a filmmaking partnership shaped by corporate constraints."

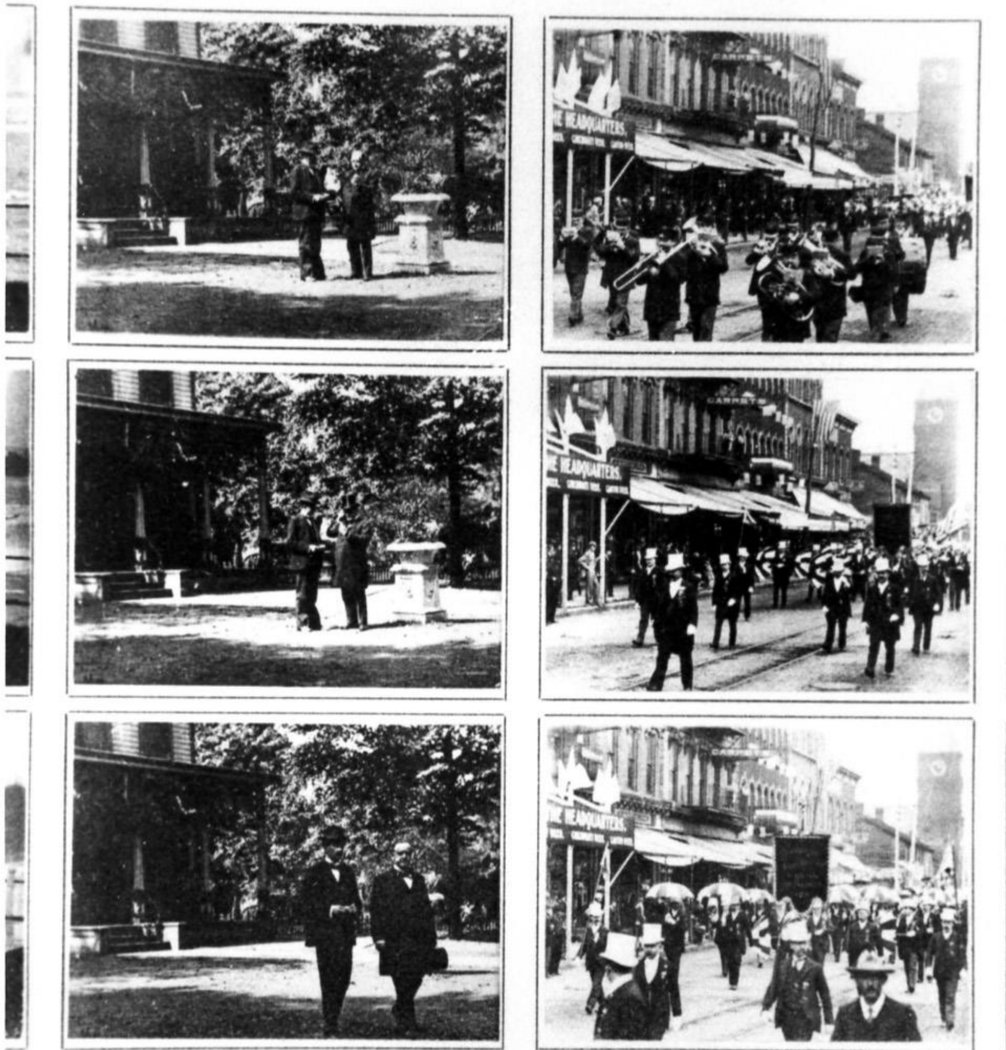
moment.[85]

The Impact of Centralization of Creative Control Within the Production Company

Here is a simple assertion for which I may be guilty of crude thinking. When editorial control shifted to the production company and creative control became centralized, everything changed. Among other things, it produced the filmmaker—even though the filmmaker was often a filmmaking partnership shaped by corporate constraints. The concentration of creative control and the resulting authorship also produced a narrator, providing: “the image of the author within the text. As a series of intentions it recalls the narrative’s nature as a unified manufactured object, the product of human labor.”[86] I remain deeply indebted to Gunning’s work in this area, including his deployment of Paul Ricoeur’s assertion that “the reader does not ascribe this unification to the rules of composition alone but extends it to the choices and to the norms that make the text, precisely, the work of some speaker, hence a work produced by someone and not by nature.”[87]

A filmmaker, even one working in a derivative manner, generates some kind of narrator and so a specific system of narration. To offer a test case: Lubin’s *The Great Train Robbery* remade Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery*, but it eliminated certain scenes, such as the passengers disembarking from the train and being lined up so the bandits could collect their valuables. It was also shot at fewer frames per second and sold at a lower cost per foot. The Lubin camerawork was internally consistent and differed somewhat from Porter’s camerawork. The 600-foot film could be purchased for $66, while Edison’s 740-foot original version was $111. As a remake, it is a distinctive one that bears specific marks of authorship in the text as well as alongside it.

Questions that swirl around terms or concepts such as “filmmaker,” “author,” “work,” the work’s “narrator,” and its “system of narration” are complex ones and extend back to the beginnings of cinema. Between approximately 1896 and 1902, Biograph shot and exclusively exhibited its own films in 68mm/70mm. As I have argued elsewhere, Biograph’s official debut, unveiled at Hammerstein’s Music Hall on October 12, 1896, was a carefully constructed program that combined patriotic images with a pro-McKinley message in a manner that was consistent with what Eisenstein characterized as a “montage of attractions.” Yet it is also fair to say that this was for a special occasion and that Biograph did not usually pursue similar methods in later postelection programs.



No. 72
Title *McKinley at Home, Canton, Ohio.*
Length *198 ft.*
Code Word *Molleggia.*

No. 73
Title *Parade, American Club of Canton, Ohio.*
Length *161 ft.*
Code Word *Mollerada.*

Figure 4. Frames from *Biograph Picture Catalog* (1896).

Many subsequent programs clearly functioned within a cinema of attractions paradigm involving a variety format. However, when the occasion arose—for instance, after the sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor, Biograph again mobilized sophisticated editing techniques to further its prowar, America first, imperialist agenda. How we might think about these categories—filmmaker, author, narrator, and narrational system—is complex and nuanced. As both producer and exhibitor, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company maintained creative control under its auspices.

Individuals—W. K. L. Dickson for the 1896 McKinley program and McCutcheon for the Spanish-American War programs—might be considered the authors of these two sets of carefully composed programs, but were they filmmakers in the ways that Porter or Griffith were filmmakers? I am not at all sure. Programs were made and remade. They were highly intentional, creative works, and yet production and postproduction were not integrated but remained separate, distinct processes. Were these select Biograph programs specific mobilizations of the cinema of attractions paradigm as delineated by Gunning, or were they counterparts to it—even their dialectic opposite? Perhaps, in some sense, they were both, as Biograph presentations fluctuated between what we would now understand to be editing and programming. Biograph, however, was an exception—very few exhibitors had substantial production capabilities. Méliès, another notable exception, made films and then screened them at his Théâtre Robert-Houdin, though he also sold them on the open market. Blackton and Smith at Vitagraph made *The Battle of Santiago Bay* (1898) by filming miniatures in a tub; they also claimed authorship of other films that quickly proved to be dupes of copyrighted Edison films shot by William Paley. Like most exhibitors, they purchased films from a variety of sources and then combined them into programs under their own banner, asserting authorship of their programs through advertising and in the course of exhibition. If the exhibitor was the author, Blackton and Smith also claimed authorship of films that were not their own.

Even after postproduction moved to the production company, exhibitors such as Howe claimed authorship as programmers and through the characteristics and quality of their exhibitions. In short, cinema of the 1890s and early 1900s was a cultural practice wherein the relationship between filmmaker, author, narrative, narrator, and narrational system was complex. Nevertheless, once production and postproduction (editing) were substantially centralized in a given production company, they tended to align in a more recognizable, if not always straightforward, fashion.

IV. Where Are We Going from Here?: The Micro and the Macro

What is the state of early cinema scholarship going forward? Where are we headed? Rehashing many of the debates that came out of the Brighton Project has long felt like a case of diminishing returns, even though some of the basic contours of cinema's first twenty years still need to be better understood. There would seem to be two ways to move forward. One involves ongoing levels of in-depth research that are now facilitated by digital research strategies, even if sustained engagements with the archives remain critical. The other is to explore new historiographic issues and their potential implications. These are generally complementary but not necessarily self-evidently interconnected.

Film and media scholars have been regularly bringing new research and documentation to light. Alison McMahan's sustained work on Alice Guy Blaché and Shelley Stamp's publications on Lois Weber were part of a much larger reassessment of women's involvement and impact on early and silent film. The discovery and analysis of individual films—for example, Stamp's active involvement in the restoration and examination of Lois Weber's *Shoes* (1916)—can have a surprisingly strong impact. American early cinema has often been characterized as an unrelenting series of racially demeaning stereotypes, from *Chicken Thieves* (Edison, 1896) to *The Watermelon Patch* (Edison, 1905) and beyond. The recent discovery of two versions of Selig's *Something Good Negro Kiss* (1898) has complicated those assumptions, at least to a degree. [88] Such efforts, which give a new depth of appreciation for individual films, always have broader implications. In this regard, Streible has been particularly impressive in his laser- focused research on such films as *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (Edison, 1894), *The Haverstraw Tunnel* (American Mutoscope Co., 1897), and *Three*

American Beauties (Edison, 1906).[89]

Updating *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900: An Annotated Filmography*

I would like this contribution to the Early Cinema Compendium to further this process of fine-grain scholarship. One essential, if undervalued and inevitably frustrating, task for the film scholar is the building of filmographies—something this larger Early Cinema Compendium project is committed to in a variety of ways, particularly as it incorporates and makes accessible *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* and material of a similar nature for the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company. Paolo Cherchi Usai has remarked that filmographies are the necessary starting point for any historical undertaking in film studies.[90] It was certainly an important element of Leyda's Griffith–Biograph class and FIAF's published filmography of fiction films screened at Brighton, under the supervision of Gaudreault.[91] In this respect, the Early Cinema Compendium is very much in the spirit of Brighton. All too often filmographies are afterthoughts that appear at the back of the book—an appendix to a filmmaker's biography or the history of a production company. This is unfortunate, for these seemingly innocuous inventories reveal patterns and provide road maps that are never obvious. Crucial gaps and mysteries emerge that must be explored lest what is hidden remain hidden.

The reality is that filmographies are always works in progress. Certainly, this holds true for *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900*, which appeared in printed form some twenty-five years ago in 1997. The Early Cinema Compendium now offers a rare chance to update and make it more readily available in an interactive form.[92] This update focuses on two occasions. First, in 2005 Vanessa Toulmin and I presented a program titled "Incunabula" at the twenty-fifth Pordenone Silent Film Festival. Ten of the films were made by or for the Edison Manufacturing Company, seven of which were listed as lost, while one of them was previously unknown—not listed in the catalog. Thus, eight films were not known to survive at the time that the catalog was printed in 1997. The second occasion involves the "discovery" of a catalog of Edison films, which lists some previously unknown films as well as new information about films already in the filmography.

PRICE LIST
OF
EDISON'S MARVELLOUS PROJECTOSCOPE
AND
EDISON PHOTOGRAPHIC FILMS
FOR USE ON
Kinetoscopes and Projecting Machines
MADE BY
EDISON MANUFACTURING CO.
EXPRESSLY FOR
MAGUIRE & BAUCUS, Ltd.,
44, PINE STREET, NEW YORK. 9, NEW BROAD STREET, LONDON.

OWING to the number of different uses to which films are now applied, we carry in stock a full line of opaque and transparent strips. The opaque strips are made in 50 foot lengths only, and are best adapted for exhibition upon Kinetoscopes and other non-projecting instruments of similar character. The Transparent or clear stock strips are made specially for use on projecting machines, and as the substance on which the pictures are printed offers the least possible obstruction to the rays of light, the results obtained are most satisfactory.

Many interesting and entertaining subjects cannot be shown in the small time limit afforded by the shorter films and we, therefore, recommend to exhibitors of projecting machines the use of the longer strips as best adapted to their purpose.

We have endeavoured herein to tabulate and concisely describe each subject in a manner which will enable our patrons to select intelligently from our list, those pictures which are best suited to the tastes of their audiences.

Figure 5. Page 1 of *Price List of Edison's Marvelous Projectoscope and Edison Photographic Films for Use on Kinetoscopes and Projecting Machines Made by the Edison Manufacturing Co.*

"*Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900* was constructed out of an array of miscellaneous sources, of which catalogs by Edison and its distributors, such as Maguire & Baucus, were crucial. Inevitably, new archival materials of this kind come to light."

Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900 offered a listing of close to a thousand films made or copyrighted under Edison's auspices in the nineteenth century. They were presented in rough chronological order, with each given an entry number. They were grouped in such a manner that the arrangement was not always strictly linear since two or even three cameramen were active at the same time. Films made by a particular cinematographer or production unit were kept together. The handling of additional films was established late in the process of putting together the published annotated filmography, when we realized that Dickson and William Heise had taken three different negatives of Sandow during his visit to the Black Maria studio in Orange, New Jersey, on March 6, 1894. The well-known print of Sandow has been designated as entry 26. We entered the two additional variants as 26.1. and 26.2. Carmencita was the next performer to appear before the Kinetoscope, roughly a week later. The print of *Carmencita* that survives in the National Film Archive was designated entry 28. This new variant print should therefore be listed as entry 28.1, *Carmencita [no. 2]*. The revised Edison filmography in this compendium updates the listing so that the three Sandow films are now

Early Cinema Compendium (ECC) 26, 27, and 28. *Carmencita* is ECC 30, and *Carmencita [no. 2]* is ECC 31.

The Early Cinema Compendium has thus assigned each film a new number, which adjusts for new entries while retaining entry numbers from the published filmography. The eight previously "lost" Edison films which Toulmin and I showed at Pordenone were entry 26.1, *Sandow [no. 2]*; entry 28.1, *Carmencita [no. 2]*; entry 43, *Ruth Dennis* (1894); a round of entry 68, *The Hornbacker–Murphy Fight* (1894); entry 110, *New Bar Room Scene* (1895); entry 652, *Battle of San Juan Hill* (1899); entry 901, *Circular Panoramic View of Niagara Falls*; and entry 902, *Circular Panoramic View of American Falls*.

Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900 was constructed out of an array of miscellaneous sources, of which catalogs by Edison and its distributors, such as Maguire & Baucus, were crucial. Inevitably, new archival materials of this kind come to light. Indeed, this new catalog, titled *Price List of Edison's Marvelous Projectoscope and Edison Photographic Films for Use on Kinetoscopes and Projecting Machines Made by the Edison Manufacturing Co, Expressly for Maguire & Baucus, Ltd.*, appeared in a facsimile edition from the W. D. Slade archive and was sent to me by Stephen Herbert after the filmography was in print. It lists a number of films that were not included in the printed filmography. My task for the compendium is to integrate them as effectively as possible. The Maguire & Baucus catalog lists four "Military Scenes" that were shot at Peekskill, New York, in July 1896. *Edison Motion Pictures* lists three scenes taken on that same occasion. One of them, entry 196, *Mess Call*, survives in the MoMA collection and also appears in the Maguire & Baucus catalog but as a 150-foot subject, while my filmography lists the length as 50 feet—no doubt based on the MoMA print. The other two scenes listed in *Edison Motion Pictures* are of artillery: entry 194, *Firing of Cannon at Peekskill by the Battery of Artillery*, and entry 195, [Artillery Scene at Peekskill]. So this leaves three films in the Maguire & Baucus *Price List* that need to be added: entry 196.1, *Dress Parade*, with the description "23rd Regiment marching, showing Mounted Staff Officers, &c," could be bought in lengths of 50 or 150 feet; entry 196.2, *Relief of Sentry*, with "camp in the back ground"; and entry 196.3, *Skirmish Drill*, "in which one of the men is injured. Ambulance corps comes to the rescue, and he is removed from the field on a stretcher." These latter two films were both listed for sale only at 150 feet.

The Maguire & Baucus price list is eight pages, six of which list Edison films. The second and third pages list thirty-three films, all of which were included in *Edison Motion Pictures* and for which there is little need for revision. Not so the fourth page, which lists fourteen films. It offers a number of potentially new films. *The Camera Fiend* (150 feet) is a new subject showing "a young man of this species is seen preparing to take a snap shop [sic] at a Hay Load, upon which a number of children are grouped, when an enterprising small boy tosses a large fire cracker under the camera and causes considerable confusion." It is an early example of a bad-boy film (see entry 187, *Bad Boy and the Gardner*). It also seems in the same spirit as several 150-foot comedies made in the late summer of 1896: entry 224, *The Lone Fisherman*; and entry 225, *Interrupted Lovers*. It has been inserted as entry 225.1, *The Camera Fiend*.

DANCES.

	LENGTH FEET.	PRICE PER FILM. OPAQUE. £	s.	d.	CLEAR. £	s.	d.
†CARNIVAL, An attractive skirt dance by a trio of young ladies of the "London Gaiety Girl" Company.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†BUTTERFLY, These dances by the famous Annabelle are among the finest for effects of graceful motion, costume, light and shade. Especially fine when coloured.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†SERPENTINE,	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†SUN,	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†LUCY MURRAY, Pas Suel by an attractive member of the "London Gaiety Girl" Company.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†TRIO, A lively eccentric dance by Frank Lawton and the Misses France and Williamson of Hoyt's "Milk White Flag" Company. The ladies in Vivandiere Costume.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
*CYCLONE, Two characteristic dances by Senorita Lola Yberri, the well known Spanish Dancer. Especially fine in colours.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
*FAN,	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†UMBRELLA, An attractive and very effective dance by the Leigh Sisters, in which a large umbrella figures quite prominently. Costumes white on back ground black. Especially fine in colours.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
PICKANINNIES, A characteristic southern break down executed by three lively negro boys from "The Passing Show" Company.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†ELSIE JONES, The "Little Magnet" in her famous Buck Dance.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†JAPANESE DANCE, By three Imperial Japanese Lady Dancers in full native costume. Fine colour effect.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
WILSON AND WARING, A lively and eccentric dance from "Little Christopher Columbus" by John Wilson, the famous "Tramp," and Miss Bertha Waring.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
JAMIES, A burlesque Sketch Dance, in Highland Costume and Pipes, by Richard Carroll and the Jamies from Whitney Opera Company's "Rob Roy."	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
BUCK AND WING DANCE, A characteristic performance from "South before the War."	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†DANCING DOG, A "serpentine" dance, performed by one of Prof. Tschernoff's marvelous trained dogs, in costume.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†PADDLE DANCE, Native dances by Samoan Islanders.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†DANCE OF REJOICING,	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†SILVER DANCE, By Natives of Ceylon.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0
†SHORT STICK DANCE, By Natives of India.	50	3	2	0	4	0	0

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Figure 6. Page 2 from *Price List of Edison's Marvelous Projectoscope and Edison Photographic Films for Use on Kinetoscopes and Projecting Machines Made by the Edison Manufacturing Co.*

One of the bigger challenges in constructing the Edison filmography was dealing with scenes taken at the beach in the summer of 1896. Entry 206, *Sea Beach Scene*, was described as: "Under the big umbrella at Atlantic City. A fine beach scene." *Under the Big Umbrella* in *Price List* is undoubtedly this film, and again it is noted that the scene was taken in Atlantic City. But was it? The Edison crew had also been filming *Baby Parade at Asbury Park*. A beach scene at Asbury Park could likely pass for Atlantic City. But did *Ocean Promenade*, which depicted "the 'Board Walk' at Atlantic City, showing throngs passing to and fro" also involve the same geographical sleight of hand—passing off a scene from a baby parade as a busy scene on the boardwalk? With these additional titles, it seems less likely. Edison cameramen were always looking for reasons to film at beach resorts during the summer—a businessman's holiday. With these additional titles, a separate visit to Atlantic City seems more credible.

Maguire & Baucus also listed several other beach scenes that do not appear in *Edison Motion Pictures*. Let's group them together as follows: entry 206.1, *Ocean Promenade*; entry 206.2, *Life Boat Scene*, showing "boat pulling for the Shore through the Breakers"; and entry 206.3, *The Old Breakwater*, "showing Surf breaking against it." The Maguire & Baucus price list grouped all four films together. *A Watermelon Race* shows "a typical Southern Negro contest in which two small Pickanninies each with a large slice of the luscious fruit are striving for a prize." This could be entry 207, *Watermelon Eating Contest*, but not only is the title different, the description suggests the contest is between two boys, not two adults ("members of the colored gentry"). And it could be purchased in lengths of either 50 or 150 feet. It should be treated as a new film—entry 207.1,

Watermelon Race. Another new title is *Train Scene on the New York Central*, a 150-foot subject that shows “the arrival of Local Express at Peekskill, and the passing of trains North and South.” It would seem this was likely taken at the time James White and William Heise were filming military scenes in Peekskill. However, it is not grouped with them and likely could be entry 235, *Fast Trains*, which also shows “express trains passing North and South on the H.R.R.R.” Peekskill is, in fact, on the Harlem River Railroad line. Rather than endlessly proliferate entries, we will add this as a variant title.

UNDER THE BIG UMBRELLA, A scene from the Beach, Atlantic City, N. J.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
BATHING SCENE, Showing a number of Bathers in the Surf.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
	150		10 0 0
LIFE BOAT SCENE, Boat pulling for the Shore through the Breakers.	50	3 2 0	10 0 0
THE OLD BREAKWATER, Showing Surf breaking against it.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
OCEAN PROMENADE, The "Board Walk" at Atlantic City, showing throngs passing to and fro.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
	150		10 0 0
BOAT RESCUE, Three small boys chased by a Guard, jump from a pier into the river and are rescued by a passing Row Boat.	150		10 0 0
TRAIN SCENE ON THE NEW YORK CENTRAL, The arrival of Local Express at Peekskill, and the passing of trains North and South.	150		10 0 0
PASSAIC FALLS, An artistic and attractive falling water effect showing the beautiful falls of the Passaic River, at Paterson, N. J.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
OFF BATTERY PARK, Showing ferry boat approaching slip, and tugs, steamers, yachts, &c., passing. Also gives fine water effects.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
BOWLING GREEN, A street scene showing cable cars, drays, street sprinklers, pedestrians, &c.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
EDISON LABORATORY, Showing gate house with people passing, electric car, and man sprinkling the street with hose.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0

COMBATS, ETC.

'GLENROY BROTHERS, In a one round burlesque boxing bout.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
MEXICAN KNIFE DUEL, Between Pedro Esquirel and Dionecio Gonzales. Full of action.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
HORNBACKER & MURPHY, A five round glove contest, showing knockdown in the third and fifth rounds. Lively sparring throughout.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0
BILLY EDWARDS AND THE UNKNOWN, A spirited five round sparring contest between this well known pugilist and a skillful antagonist.	50	3 2 0	4 0 0

NOTE.—Each film of the above fights contains one round.

List continued on other side.

Figure 7. Page 5 from *Price List of Edison’s Marvelous Projectoscope and Edison Photographic Films for Use on Kinetoscopes and Projecting Machines Made by the Edison Manufacturing Co.*

One film listed in the Maguire & Baucus catalog is *Exciting Debate*, a variant title for entry 100, *Topack and Steele*. Its description is also more complete: “Represents Messrs. Topack & Steele in a lively political discussion, which progresses from words to blows. Burlesque.” The *Price List* also offers a variant title and new description for entry 142, *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots—Execution Scene*: “Representing the beheading of Mary, Queen of Scots. This scene is marvelously realistic and effective. The spectator sees the ill fated Queen place her head upon the Block and the axe of the executioner sever it from the body. Guards, nobles, clergy, &C, in full costume of the period.” There are also more elaborate descriptions of entry 149, *Lynching Scene*: “Depicting the summary method employed on the Frontier of dealing justice to Horse Thieves. The victim is swung up to a limb of a tree and then riddled with bullets by his captors,” and entry 150, *Indian Scalping Scene*: “This scene, taken in a forest, is startling and attractive. A white settler pursued by Indians, is captured and scalped.” Likewise, there is a new description for entry 224, *The Lone Fisherman*.

Maguire & Baucus also offers the film *Off Battery Park*, which would seem to be a variant title for entry 169, *Battery Park*. On page 6, *Broadsword Combat* is a previously unknown alternative title

for entry 114, *Gladiatorial Contest*. Perhaps the different title, which appeared in later Maguire & Baucus catalogs, was an effort to avoid confusion with entry 67, *Lady Fencers*, in which the Englehart sisters also used broadswords.

Incorporating the Maguire & Baucus price list thus adds another eight films to the Edison filmography, plus a number of new alternative titles and descriptions. Not earth-shattering, perhaps, but Vitascope licensees were complaining of the lack of new titles in the summer of 1896. *Edison Motion Pictures* lists seventy-nine titles made between entry 156, *Cissy Fitzgerald*, shot in early May 1896, and entry 235, *Fast Trains*, likely shot in late September. Seventy-nine films shot over five months is a modest number, but the Maguire & Baucus catalog increases the number by at least 10 percent to eighty-eight. These were not random—more military scenes in response to Lumière scenes of the French military, which had proved extremely popular in East Coast vaudeville houses; more beach and ocean scenes that might be of particular interest to many who did not live near the sea; and two more comedies. The added military scenes at Peekskill make clear that Heise and White were ready and able to take a substantial group of related films on a particular expedition. These additional films suggest that production practices were somewhat less fragmented and random.

Shifting Approaches to Early Cinema: Race and Gender

Research and attention on the micro level needs to be balanced by broader analysis, interpretation, and historiographic theory on the macro level. As previously suggested, two significant areas in which this has happened are race and gender. Daniel Bernardi explores the ways in which Griffith's narrational system was inculcated with his racial ideology in "The Voices of Whiteness: D. W. Griffith's Biograph films (1908–1913)."[93] While scholars of Oscar Micheaux and his contemporaries produced an array of books on silent cinema in the classical era, there have been others that have dealt with African American production and representation in the preclassical era. These include Jacqueline Stewart's *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (2005), Cara Caddoo's *Envisioning Freedom: Cinema and the Building of Modern Black Life* (2014), and Allyson Nadia Field's *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (2015). The number of articles and books on women, feminism, and American cinema before 1920 is immense. Although this essay only gestures toward this body of work by referring readers to the Women Film Pioneer's Project, it should be noted that Laura Horak, among others, has further enriched this topic with her groundbreaking *Girls Will Be Boys: Cross-Dressed Women, Lesbians, and American Cinema, 1908–1934* (2016).[94]

Historical Speculation and the "Counterfactual Speculation": Reexamining Historiography

While work engaging issues of race and gender has been transformative, other recent theoretical approaches to historiography also deserve our attention. Pordenone regular Jane Gaines, for instance, has chosen to foreground highly speculative and imaginative historiography. Elements of her refusal to be limited by the documentary record are evident in her most recent book, *Pink-Slipped: What*

Allyson Nadia Fields: "an emphasis on the question, 'what if?,' expands what constitutes scholarly inquiry and, importantly, the outcomes it produces. Speculation is such a powerful tool precisely because of its irreverence toward established methods, evidentiary norms, and disciplinary conventions."

Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries? (2018), in which she meditates on: "the limits that historiography imposes on scholars. Pondering how silent-era women have become absent in the abstract while present in reality, Gaines sees a need for a methodological approach to these artists' pasts that relates their aspirations to those of contemporary women." [95] A special issue of *Feminist Media Histories* edited by Allyson Nadia Field on "Acts of Speculation" follow up on these concerns. Field argues:

> Loosening our commitments to what was to ask what might have been? And what might be? Allows for repressed narratives to surface and alternative possibilities to emerge. This is especially vital for people and subjects excluded from or denigrated by the historical record and thereby the act of writing history. Indeed, an emphasis on the question, "what if?," expands what constitutes scholarly inquiry and, importantly, the outcomes it produces. Speculation is such a powerful tool precisely because of its irreverence toward established methods, evidentiary norms, and disciplinary conventions. [96]

Appropriately, the lead article by Gaines is entitled "Counterfactual Speculation: What If Antonia Dickson Had Invented the Kinetoscope?" She starts by asking a series of questions:

> We can begin with the hypothetical question asked relative to the event that never happened: "What if it had?" The question "What if ?" is sometimes taken to be synonymous with the term "counterfactual." But there is more to be gained from counterfactuality than "what if ?" when we theorize it as the mode in which we shift away from established fact. Before we go too far, however, I'd like to accentuate this inquisitive aspect of the mode, so I'm calling "What if?" the counterfactual question that signals such a shift. This is the modality in which we wonder to ourselves "What if things had turned out differently?" Or, "What if it had never happened at all?" And, finally, in the same vein: "What if the achievements of one person had been attributed to another?" [97]

Gaines is pursuing an approach advocated by Catherine Gallagher. [98] Her counterfactual speculation offers a radically new assessment of Antonia Dickson. Gordon Hendricks and others have often characterized her as a sad spinster and a burden on her brother, who had to support her and provide her with various cowriting projects. Gaines imagines her as the possible inventor of the Kinetoscope. If nothing else, Gaines has taken this demeaning characterization and shown her to be a talented artist and lively intellectual. Who knows what kinds of exchanges took place at the Dickson dinner table? Though we will never know, perhaps she offered some keen insights to her brother.

History often requires a counterfactual imagination. Allen wondered what if there wasn't a chaser period. The title of his essay is telling: "Contra the Chaser Period." And what if story films were less expensive to make than nonfiction? What if the shift in story films resulted from the boom in storefront movie houses rather than the rise of story films being a crucial precondition for the nickelodeon era? I confess that I initially had the same thought vis-à-vis the chaser period. Perhaps we share a contrarian personality? After all, since motion picture technology was steadily improving and workers were becoming more experienced with the new medium, shouldn't we expect consistent improvement?

But the data and primary source evidence did not support any of those counterfactual speculations. Rather, research revealed more and more evidence to support the chaser concept,

such as a decrease in the amount of film footage sold by Eastman Kodak in 1901 and 1902—a reduction of more than 25 percent compared to 1899 and 1900. [99] Or a report from Harry Davis's Pittsburgh vaudeville house: As the screening began, the film caught fire. Apparently clearing the house of patrons was not a problem because most audience members were already in the process of leaving, as was their custom when the films were projected—though apparently, the movies even then had a small but devoted coterie of fans. Likewise, only someone who was completely unfamiliar with the basic economics of filmmaking would think fiction films would cost less than actualities.

The value of these counterfactual premises is that they compel—or should compel—a more in-depth, careful analysis. It allows us to rearrange the pieces of evidence that we know and look for new kinds of documentation that have been previously overlooked. This comes at a time when we have more resources and far easier access to materials than Lewis Jacobs could have ever imagined.

Pursuing the counterfactual necessitates greater levels of research. When it came to the chaser period, did the evidence support the counterfactual? The answer proved to be no, but that did not mean that we simply repeat Jacobs. Court records and other documents make clear just how difficult the 1901–1902 period was for almost everyone in the American film industry. Lubin fled to Germany. Biograph could only make nonfiction films, and only under court supervision. Errol Morris imagined the counterfactual in *The Thin Blue Line* (1988): What if Randall Adams was innocent and did not murder Officer Woods? To prove Adams was innocent—and to identify the actual killer—required years of investigation and a revelatory organization of that evidence into a remarkable film. *What if?*

As historians—and particularly as historians of early and silent cinema—we are constantly immersed in the counterfactual. What if those who characterized Edwin S. Porter as an inept storyteller were wrong? What if Micheaux was a brilliant filmmaker, contra those who praised him as a pioneering Black showman whose films were something of an embarrassment? The counterfactual has been particularly valuable for feminist histories, as Field and Gaines have pointed out. My most radical revisionism as a film scholar probably focused on early cinema in the Philippines. Local film historians celebrated Jose Nepomuceno as the father of Filipino cinema, beginning with *Dalagang Bukid* ([Country Maiden], 1919). They completely dismissed and condemned the early feature films produced by Edward Meyer Gross, such as *The Life and Death of Dr. Jose Rizal* (1912). His wife, the actress Antonia Molina, was assumed to be subservient to this American imperialist—little more than a concubine. But what if she was an accomplished actress and feminist who was Gross's filmmaking partner? What if they were collaborators along the lines of Lois Weber and Philip Smalley or Clara Kimball Young and James Young?

What if Gross was one of many Americans who opposed US imperialism? What if he didn't fleece Filipino moviegoers of their pesos and then flee to the United States to enjoy his ill-gotten gains? What if Gross, who was born in Eastern Europe and remained in the Philippines until his death, considered it to be his adopted country? What if Gross and Molina's films did not offer distorted, pro-American versions of the nation's most sacred stories but used his status as an American citizen with First Amendment rights to make movies that advocated for Philippine independence, something that would have landed a Filipino in jail? What if Gross was just an eager and adoring front for his wife's radical militancy, to flip the familiar historical account in a way that would, I believe, more accurately characterize Gross? To my mind, the evidence better fits the counterfactual than the established histories. [100]

For me, the counterfactual has generally been the counterinterpretive: what if the established narrative account is not just wrong but was purposefully designed, however unconsciously, to

conceal its uncomfortable opposite—for instance, that feminism was alive and well in the Philippines even in the 1910s?[101] Key facts, as Gaines points out, are often hiding in plain sight, and the irony is that so-called counterfactual speculation brings out the facts that have often been ignored because they don't fit the narrative that historians have been determined to tell. In this regard Field and Gaines are explicitly theorizing what is, for many historians, an everyday practice. In fact, one might argue that the Brighton screenings of early films was based on a counterfactual premise: what if these films from 1900 to 1906, dismissed for decades in favor of later silents, were actually worth looking at? This is where counterfactual speculation (Gallagher) and revisionism (Banner) often become two sides of the same coin.

How Media History Can Change the Way We Look at Cinema

I want to conclude this essay with some of my own speculations and efforts to pursue early cinema within a new or different framework. Specifically, I am interested in the ways that pursuing media history has been providing fresh perspectives and insights of early cinema—and perhaps of cinema more generally. This has taken two directions. The first investigates the value of pursuing synchronic, horizontal connections across media in the same time frame. Rather than provide the history of different and successive media forms, what if we imagined a more integrated history? What if we did more than look at cinema in an intermedial context? What if we were to treat it as just one of many new media forms? This is what I pursued in *Politicking and Emergent Media: US Presidential Elections of the 1890s*. How were the two main political parties using different media for campaign purposes in the months leading up to a given presidential election? It was clear that the Republicans were particularly eager to exploit the full battery of new media—the stereopticon, telephone, motion pictures, and phonograph—to counter what they saw as the Democratic Party's dominance of the nation's sole mass media, the press—specifically the big-city newspapers that had powered Democrat Grover Cleveland to the US presidency in 1884. By 1896, in the midst of a severe economic depression, the Republicans embraced technological innovation as the pathway to prosperity and used these new media forms as both demonstration and inspiration. Examined synchronically, there was substantial media confluence. And how did this media nexus change every four years—from one presidential election to the next? How did it change diachronically? [102]

The second direction emphasizes the historical or diachronic over a much longer time span—over several centuries and across numerous media forms. In this respect it is indebted to the Annales School. This began with my interest in the documentary tradition and what I now call its *longue durée*. For a long time, it was clear to me that the documentary tradition developed and changed with the introduction of a succession of new media forms. My starting point was the illustrated lecture, which went through a series of transformations in its mode of production and representation such that it became known as "documentary." Illustrated lectures in the 1880s and early 1890s relied heavily on lantern slides to provide essential visuals. Exhibitors had no problem gradually inserting films into their programs, and by the mid-1900s and more widely by the early 1910s, many illustrated lectures consisted solely of motion pictures. Commercial imperatives were such, particularly in the midst of World War I, that the lecture for these programs was replaced by intertitles. To maximize profits and impact, a given illustrated lecture needed multiple units. Yet finding the right lecturers was not always easy, and they required advance preparation. In any case, they were expensive. Such programs also required theatrical venues operating outside the system of regular motion picture theaters. The lecture was thus replaced by intertitles. *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), which was released in numerous theaters simultaneously, was a success and for

some a model.

3508 MOTION PICTURE NEWS Vol. 14. No. 22

"KITCHENER'S GREAT ARMY

IN

THE BATTLE

OF THE SOMME"

(THE ONLY "OFFICIAL" WAR PICTURE EVER SHOWN IN AMERICA)

Record:

2 Weeks at the STRAND (NEW YORK) ABSOLUTE CAPACITY

THEN THREE SHUBERT THEATRES

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Nov. 15th PRINCESS Theatre 39th St. and Broadway

Nov. 19th 44th St. Theatre 44th St. and Broadway

THE ONLY MOTION PICTURE EVER SHOWN IN

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Mr. Lee Shubert knew this great picture would pack his Broadway Theatres—IT HAS done so—YOU KNOW it will pack your Theatre

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Patriot Film Corporation

Figure 8. Advertisement for *The Battle of the Somme*: *Motion Picture News*, 2 December 1916.

Robert Flaherty had given illustrated-lecture presentations of his encounters with the Inuit in the 1910s, but when he offered *Nanook* (1922), he wisely used intertitles, which allowed for multiple copies of a standardized, self-contained product to be circulated around the globe. There was no longer a lecture, so it was no longer an illustrated lecture. Reviews at the time of its release make clear that no one knew what to call it. Eventually it became considered—retrospectively, to be sure—a documentary.

More recently I returned to an examination of the illustrated lecture using random word searches and discovered that the term "illustrated lecture" only began to appear in the 1850s and the illustrations had not always relied on lantern slides. Indeed, before the term "illustrated lecture" was codified, such a program would often be referred to as a "lecture with illustrations." It soon became evident that the documentary tradition—its longue durée from lecture with illustrations to illustrated lecture to documentary—extended back to the beginnings of the Enlightenment, around 1700 in England and somewhat later (1730s) in the English colonies of North America. The initial lectures with illustrations centered on science. One of the key questions was how to reconcile (or reject) religious truth—a literal interpretation of the bible—with scientific truth. The documentary tradition, which began as a truth-obsessed project, was a product of the Enlightenment.

Those presenting these lectures were soon using all kinds of media to provide illustrations: models, scientific experiments, large paintings, even handouts. They became so common that George A. Stevens spoofed the lecture with illustrations with his famous performance *A Lecture on Heads* (1764). Moving panoramas, which began to appear around 1800, became a popular means of providing the necessary visuals for lectures with illustration. It was only really in the 1850s that the term "illustrated lecture" appeared with any frequency, and again a diverse range of media were deployed for the visual accompaniment. Although exhibitions of photographic lantern slides became immensely popular in the 1860s under the banner of the "Stereopticon exhibition," they were not really used for illustrated lectures until the 1870s, which can be considered a transitional decade. It should be obvious that the projected photographic lantern slide had many advantages over other media forms. They were much cheaper to make than paintings. They were seen as more accurate and scientific in what they depicted. Multiple copies of the same image could be quickly made, and the slides themselves were generally more portable. But it was not really until the 1880s that the illustrated lecture was generally assumed to include lantern slides. This concept of documentary's longue durée challenges historical approaches to documentary as suddenly emerging at a certain stage in the history of motion pictures with *Nanook of the North*, or perhaps *The Battle of the Somme*. To be sure, motion pictures had a huge impact on the documentary tradition, but it existed before—and of course after—celluloid motion picture film was replaced by digital media. [103] Thinking about documentary's longue durée is one way to engage early cinema without getting bogged down in never-ending arguments about attractions versus narrative, if only because such debates have seemingly produced a fruitless stalemate. Between the 1880s and 1916, most evening-length illustrated lectures were travel related and had a well-established narrative in which the traveler—usually the lecturer—retraced their voyage. E. Burton Holmes and Dwight Elmendorf were among the most visible, but they had numerous colleagues. Other illustrated lectures traced the progress of wars or, as with *The Tariff Illustrated* (1888, 1892), the history of the tariff in the United States from the point of view of a pro-tariff Republican in the midst of a political campaign. As Brian Winston argues, narrative seems a crucial component of most documentaries, even though the narratives are not as tight as is the case with most fiction films. [104]

Three Different Modes: Documentary, Fiction, Experimental

". . . I am convinced that the history of acted films in the late 1890s and the 1900s—never mind the 1910s—would be much richer if historians worked across media forms (stage and screen) rather than within them."

In the realm of film pedagogy and scholarship, our courses tend to treat three different modes: fiction, documentary, and experimental. Digital media has complicated these categories, but they remain relevant. Would it not be possible to think about the cinema as one component in the history of theatrical entertainment? Performances that are live on stage and those that become virtual on the screen are just two different kinds of theatrical presentation. In short, what if we escape the straitjacket of media specificity? Porter's *The Ex-Convict* was a film adaptation of a popular vaudeville playlet by Robert Hilliard and Edwin Holland, *Number 973*. It too, of course, was shown in vaudeville.

Personally, I am convinced that the history of acted films in the late 1890s and the 1900s—never mind the 1910s—would be much richer if historians worked across media forms (stage and screen) rather than within them. To offer but one example, audience appreciation for *The May–Irwin Kiss* (1986) cannot begin to be understood independently from theatrical culture—not just the musical comedy *The Widow Jones*, from which the kiss scene was extracted, but other dramas such as Olga Nethersole's *Carmen*, in which kissing played a central, controversial role. Even so, this was just the tip of the iceberg. Although this proposal resonates with A. Nicholas Vardac's *Stage to Screen: Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith*, an exploration of theatrical culture that integrated stage and screen would be much less linear.[105] Directors, actors, and many audience members—most particularly those middle-class, bourgeois audiences many scholars of filmgoing in the 1910s dwell upon at considerable length—were more or less fluent in the two different modes (live and filmed) of theatrical production. Moreover, the documentary tradition from 1700 onward embraced a strong antitheatrical prejudice, ignoring the fact that the lecturer was also a performer, also an entertainer. It is precisely this contradiction that *A Lecture on Heads* both savors and mocks. Thus, the relationship between the documentary's longue durée and theatrical culture from the eighteenth century forward is itself a rich and dynamic one.

There remains, then, the third mode of the experimental or avant-garde. Tom Gunning framed the cinema of attractions in relation to Léger on one hand and Jack Smith on the other. Is there a third way, between documentary and theatrical fiction, that can be united and engaged with to benefit from such a historical umbrella? One thing for sure is that there was constant experimentation within and across media forms both old and new, going back to some unnamed person and currently unknown date. One might consider the Eidophusikon, which debuted in 1781. The nineteenth century is littered with such instances—for example, John A. Whipple's *Wonders of Modern Science*, presented in Boston in 1850.[106] It would be challenging, but also fun, to construct such a history. This is not to banish histories that operate within media-specific frameworks or were proposed as a rejection of film history as such. But as we move further and further into the twenty-first century, other kinds of histories will open up new possibilities, new perspectives, and new insights. The field of early cinema is a rich one, and exploring ways to resituate and reimagine it will be crucial to its future vitality. Do we need to know its history? Yes. Do we need to find ways that move us beyond protracted debates into new territory and new ways of researching and analysis? Yes, yes, and YES.

A list of relevant external links for this essay can be found here.[107]

About the Author

Charles Musser is a professor of Film & Media Studies, American Studies and Theater, Dance & Performance Studies at Yale University. He has published extensively on early and silent cinema. His book *The Emergence of Cinema* (1990) received the Katherine Kovacs Prize in Film and Media Studies as well as several other awards. His documentary *Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin S. Porter* premiered at the 1982 New York Film Festival. With Pearl Bowser and Jane Gaines, he co-edited *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle: African American Filmmaking and Race Cinema of the Silent Era* (2001). More recently he wrote *Politicking and Emergent Media: US Presidential Elections of the 1890s* (2016).

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[1] Lewis Jacobs later published *The Documentary Tradition* (1968), which essentially dismissed the pre-1920 period, only briefly referring to a number of "precursors."

[2] Herman Weinberg, *Saint Cinema: Selected Writings 1929–1970* (London: Vision Press, 1970).

[3] Jay Leyda, "Tips on Topicals," *MovieMaker* 4, no. 1 (January 1931): 13–14.

[4] Both articles appear in Marshall Deutelbaum, ed., *"Image" on the Art and Evolution of the Film* (New York: Dover, 1979). See also "George Pratt's Published Writings: An Annotated Bibliography," *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 13–17.

[5] David Francis, email to Charles Musser, July 16, 2022; David Francis, "Pictures on the Christmas Wall: 250 Years of the Magic Lantern," *Country Life*, December 7, 1967, 1454–58.

[6] Thirty-Fourth Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives, Brighton, May 28–June 2, 1978, press release. https://www.fiafnet.org/images/tinyUpload/History/FIAF-Archives/Digitized%20docs/Congresses/1978-Brighton-press%20releases.pdf. Accessed August 23, 2022.

[7] Charles Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," *Quarterly Review of Cinema Studies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 59–69. See also chapter 1 of *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1990).

[8] Laurence Kardish, "Honoring Charles Silver, the Late Genius of MoMA's Film Study Center," *IndieWire*, January 22, 2016. https://www.indiewire.com/2016/01/honoring-charles-silver-the-late-genius-of-momas-film-study-center-32443/. Accessed August 6, 2022.

[9] The Motion Picture Section of the Prints and Photograph Division became integrated into its current configuration as part of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division in 1978 with the newly appointed Erik Barnouw as its head. For a history of motion pictures at the Library of Congress, see Patrick G. Loughney, "Thomas Jefferson's Movie Collection," *Film History* 12, no. 2 (2000): 174–86.

[10] Jon Gartenberg, "The Brighton Project," *IRIS* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 5.

[11] Patrick Loughney to Charles Musser, email correspondence, July 24, 2022.

[12] Tom Gunning to Charles Musser, email correspondence, July 20, 2022.

[13] David Levy to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 5 and 6, 2022.

[14] John Fell did not attend the Brighton conference. He was a senior scholar who supported our efforts. He edited and published a range of articles on early cinema in *Film before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), many by core members of the Brighton group, but others by scholars such as Marshall Deutelbaum and Robert C. Allen. Fell was an influential figure who retired in the 1980s.

[15] Jon Gartenberg to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 6, 2022; Jon Gartenberg, "From the D. W.

Griffith Collection at the Museum of Modern Art," *Films in Review*, February 1981, 91–104.

[16] Jon Gartenberg, "Camera Movement in Edison and Biograph Films, 1900–1906," *Cinema Journal* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 1–16.

[17] "Library of Congress Announces New Chief of the Packard Campus of the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center," *News from the Library of Congress*, September 16, 2008. https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-08-159/. Accessed August 22, 2008.
[18] Jan-Christopher Horak to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 29, 2022.

[19] Horak, email, August 29, 2022.

[20] Elaine Burrows to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 29, 2022.

[21] Stephen Herbert to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 31, 2022.

[22] These discussions eventually led to Tjitte de Vries and Ati Mul, *"They Thought It Was a Marvel": Arthur Melbourne-Cooper (1874–1961): Pioneer of Puppet Animation* (Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

[23] Luke McKernan to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 29, 2022.

[24] Dr. Cooper C. Graham. http://coopercgraham.net/home.html. Accessed August 22, 2022.

[25] Luke McKernan has a website that often deals with early cinema: https://lukemckernan.com. For Michelle Aubert (1942–2016), see her FIAF obituary: https://www.fiafnet.org/pages/News/Michelle-Aubert.html.

[26] *Theory of Film Practice* was originally published in French; Noël Burch, *Praxis du cinéma* (Paris: Gallimard 1969).

[27] Kevin Brownlow to Charles Musser, email correspondence, September 7, 2022.

[28] "Guide to the Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers TAM.083," Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive. http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/tamwag/tam_083/bioghist.html. Accessed August 29, 2022.

[29] Tom Gunning to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 24, 2022.

[30] Gunning cites two books by Genette in his bibliography: *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980) and *Figures of Literary Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[31] Tom Gunning, "The Non-continuous Style of Early Film," in *Cinema 1900–1906: An Analytical Study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives, Vol. 1: Brighton Symposium, 1978*, Roger Holman, compiler (1982), 219–30.

[32] André Gaudreault to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 9, 2022.

[33] André Gaudreault to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 8, 2022.

[34] Peter Demetz recently published *Diktatoren im Kino: Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, Goebbels, Stalin* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2019).

[35] Cooper Graham to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 24, 2022.

[36] Roberta Pearson to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 24, 2022.

[37] Stephen Higgins, Cooper C. Graham, João Luiz Vieira, and Elaine Mancini published *D. W. Griffith and the*

Biograph Company (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1985); Joyce E. Jesionowski, *Thinking in Pictures: Dramatic Structure in D. W. Griffith's Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Roberta Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). Uricchio had also worked with Leyda, primarily on his dissertation about city symphony films of the 1920s. As Griffith studies morphed into something else, many seminar members fell to the wayside: Vieira, like Ismail Xavier, went back to Brazil. Mancini went on to work on other topics. Higgins and Herb Reynolds, a protégé of George Pratt, undertook ambitious projects on Thomas Ince and the Kalem Film Company, respectively, but they never saw completion. Other scholars such as Pearl Bowser and Charlene Regester were, like Anthony Slide and Robert C. Allen, working in parallel but not deeply connected to this group.

[38] David Levy to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 4, 2022.

[39] Noël Burch, "Porter, or Ambivalence," *Screen* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 91–106; André Gaudreault, "Detours in Film Narrative: The Development of Cross-cutting," *Cinema Journal* 19 (Fall 1979): 39–59.

[40] Burch, "Porter, or Ambivalence," 93.

[41] Don Crafton to Charles Musser, email correspondence, May 23, 2022.

[42] Gartenberg, "Camera Movement," 14.

[43] Roland Cosandey to Charles Musser, email correspondence, May 26, 2022.

[44] Stephen Bottomore to Charles Musser, email correspondence, May 23, 2022. Bottomore only received his PhD in 2007 with a dissertation from Utrecht University on "Filming, Faking, and Propaganda: The Origins of the War Film 1897–1902." However, he received an academic training of a different kind: his father, Thomas Bottomore, was a prominent sociologist. Pierre Guibbert, ed., *Les premiers ans du cinéma Français* (Paris: Collection des Cahiers de la Cinémathèque, 1985).

[45] Jan-Christopher Horak, "FIAF Conference, Lisbon, 1989: The Brighton FIAF Conference (1978): Ten years after," *Historical Journal of Radio, TV and Film* 11, no. 3 (1990): 279–91.

[46] Paolo Cherchi Usai to Charles Musser, email correspondence, May 23, 2022.

[47] Cherchi Usai, email correspondence.

[48] Horak, "FIAF Conference."

[49] Emmanuelle Toulet, *Domitor bibliographie internationale du cinéma des premiers temps: Travaux des membres* (Laval, Québec: Domitor, 1987) and a second edition compiled by Toulet and Elena Degrada in 1995.

[50] Sabine Lenk to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 30, 2022.

[51] Frank Kessler to Charles Musser, email correspondence, August 30, 2022.

[52] Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History," *Sight and Sound* 55, no. 4 (1986), 246–51.

[53] Hiroshi Komatsu to Charles Musser, email correspondence, January 4, 2023. One of his early essays was "Stellan Rye No Nazo [The Mystery of Stellan Rye]," *Image Forum* (June 1984): 111–17 and (July 1984): 134–45. Komatsu noted that "my translation of Gaudreault-Gunning paper was my first contribution in Japan concerning early cinema." ("Eigashi no Hohoron," *Gendai Shiso* [November 1986]. The original title of this paper was "Le cinéma des premiers

temps: Un defi a l'histoire du cinéma?".)

[54] Yuri Tsivian to Charles Musser, email correspondence, October 10, 2022.

[55] Yuri Tsivian, *Silent Witnesses: Russian Film 1908–1919*, Paolo Cherchi Usai et al., eds. (Friuli-Venezia: Edizioni Biblioteca dell'immagine; London: British Film Institute, 1989).

[56] The conference produced a publication: Roland Cosandey et al., eds., *Une Invention du Diable?: Cinéma des Premiers Temps et Religion* (Québec City: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1992). Domitor would continue to publish a collection of essays from each of its subsequent conferences.

[57] Oscar Micheaux Society, papers, 1976–2004, Archives and Manuscripts Collection Guides, Duke University Libraries. https://archives.lib.duke.edu/catalog/micheauxsociety. Accessed January 3, 2023.

[58] Dan Streible, "Saving Orphan Films: A South Carolina Symposium," *International Documentary*, December 1999, reposted on *Orphan Film Symposium: Saving, studying, and screening neglected cinema and media artifacts*, August 15, 2014. https://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2014/08/15/saving99/. Other members of University of South Carolina's Film Department made that event a success: Susan Courtney, Cooper Graham, and Ina Rae Hark.

[59] Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, eds., *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2009); Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Nico de Klerk, Patrick Vonderau, and Bo Florin, eds., *Films That Sell: Moving Pictures and Advertising* (London: British Film Institute, 2016).

[60] Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), 36. Jacobs's understanding of pre-1903 cinema, while selective and somewhat limited, is still remarkably astute. For instance, he does not use the term "attraction" but calls these first projected motion pictures a "'marvelous sight' evoking awe and admiration for their faithfulness to true to life action." (4)

[61] When short-listed for a job at Harvard University in the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies in 1987, I was interviewed by a dozen senior faculty arrayed in a semicircle. They were all men. The need for gender diversity was obvious, and the position was eventually filled by Giuliana Bruno.

[62] Tom Gunning, "Early American Cinema," *Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 255–56.

[63] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 1977), 81.

[64] The process of shifting postproduction from exhibitor to production company was only completed with the introduction of synchronized recorded sound. When a silent film was shown, various musicians provided a range of sound accompaniment. In the sound era, there was one standardized musical track. Musicians in theaters played either before or after the films or were eliminated.

[65] As a result, our understanding of the production of motion pictures as factory-like is located in different places. They see it within the process of negative film production, while I would locate factory-like standardization in two phases: The first is in the assembly of prints in the 1910s. The women who spent their days splicing together shots in an order already established by the producer-director were quite literally working on an assembly line. The second area of standardization was in the process of exhibition as projectionists screened the same film again and again to audiences. Negative production was really the creation of a template. Filmmakers had their counterparts in those who designed cars, not those who assembled them.

[66] Long-form documentary-like programs were the exception, and a significant shift in this field of practice did not occur for another decade, until the early to mid-1910s.

[67] Charles Musser, "Pre-Classical American Cinema: Its Changing Modes of Film Production," in *Silent Film*, Richard Abel, ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 85–108.

[68] James M. Banner Jr., *The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History Is Revisionist History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 3.

[69] Banner, *Ever-Changing Past*, 11.

[70] Robert C. Allen, "Contra the Chaser Theory," *Wide Angle* 3, no. 1 (1979): 4–11.

[71] Robert C. Allen, "Film History: The Narrow Discourse," in *Film Studies Annual: Part 2, Film: Historical-Theoretical Speculations* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Redgrave Publishing, 1977), 13–16. The arguments in this brief article were widely propagated by the authoritative Bordwell, Staiger, and Kristin Thompson in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1988), 203. If the quantity of copyrighted films is the decisive factor in determining the balance of fiction and nonfiction, then Universal Film Manufacturing Company was really a newsreel company for much of its commercial life since it released a series of seven- to ten-minute newsreels twice a week between 1929 and 1967.

[72] Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 282–85.

[73] Matthew Solomon, *Fantastic Voyages of the Cinematic Imagination: Georges Méliès's Trip to the Moon* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

[74] David Levy, "Edwin S. Porter and the Origins of the American Narrative Film, 1894–1907" (PhD diss., McGill University, 1983).

[75] Paul S. Moore, "A 'Distant Reading' of the 'Chaser Theory': Local Views and the Digital Generation of New Cinema History," in *Technology and Film Scholarship: Experience, Study, Theory*, Santiago Hidalgo and André Gaudreault, eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 169–92.

[76] I examine the different elements of this crisis in *Emergence of Cinema*, 297–336.

[77] Moore, "A 'Distant Reading,'" 177.

[78] Charles Musser with Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 150–52, 156.

[79] Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 406–7.

[80] "The American Vitagraph" (Summer 1903), reprinted in Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 338.

[81] Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 406–7.

[82] Martin Johnson, *Main Street Movies: The History of Local Film in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

[83] Moreover, although prints of *The Great Train Robbery* in particular continued to be sold in 1904 and beyond, relevant data was not included in the aforementioned Edison document of film sales.

[84] My wish would be for Moore and others to read *The Emergence of Cinema* and challenge the evidence and analysis that it provides.

[85] Despite the now self-evident limitations of *Rise of the American Film*, I find myself more and more in the Jacobs

tradition of film studies. Perhaps this is not so surprising—Jay Leyda wrote a highly complimentary review of it.

[86] Gunning, *D. W. Griffith*, 24.

[87] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Vol. 3* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 162.

[88] Allyson Nadia Field, "The Cinema of Racialized Attraction(s): The John C. Rice–May Irwin Kiss and Something Good—Negro Kiss," *Discourse: Journal of Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 44, no. 1 (2022): 3–41; "No Blackface . . . Just #BlackLove," Snapshots (Domitor blog), October 7, 2019. https://domitor.org/no-blackface-just-blacklove/; Kiki Loveday, "The Kiss: Forgetting Film History," *Feminist Media Histories* 8, no. 3 (Summer 2022): 178–215.

[89] Dan Streible, "Fred Ott Sneezes Twice," Orphan Film Symposium website, May 8, 2014. wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2014/05/08/sneeze; Dan Streible, "More BEAUTIES of Early Cinema; or, Show me a rose," *Film Historiography: Researching the Media Ecology of Archival Film*. https://wp.nyu.edu/filmhist/2017/03/14/more-beauties-of-early-cinema-or-show-me-a-rose/. Accessed August 26, 2022; Dan Streible, "Haverstraw Restored," August 17, 2020. https://wp.nyu.edu/orphanfilm/2020/08/17/haverstraw3/.

[90] Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 90–103.

[91] *Cinema 1900–1906, Vol. 2: Analytical filmography (fiction films)*, under the supervision of André Gaudreault (Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 1982).

[92] *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900* was initially an interactive project using HyperCard, which could be readily updated. Unfortunately, HyperCard was not supported and became incompatible with Apple operating systems around 2004.

[93] Daniel Bernardi, "The Voices of Whiteness: D. W. Griffith's Biograph Films (1908–1913)," in *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of US Cinema* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 103–28.

[94] Women Film Pioneer's Project. https://wfpp.columbia.edu/.

[95] University of Illinois Press, "About the Book," *Pink-Slipped: What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?* https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=p083433.

[96] Allyson Nadia Field, "Acts of Speculation," *Feminist Media Histories* 8, no. 3 (Summer 2022): i.

[97] Jane Gaines, "Counterfactual Speculation: What If Antonia Dickson Had Invented the Kinetoscope?", *Feminist Media Histories* 8, no. 3 (2022): 8–34.

[98] Catherine Gallagher, *Telling It Like It Wasn't: The Counterfactual Imagination in History and Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 3.

[99] Reese V. Jenkins, *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry, 1839–1925* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 279.

[100] Charles Musser, "Nationalism, Contradiction, and Identity: or, A Reconsideration of Early Cinema in the Philippines," in *Origins of Cinema in Asia: Anthology of Writings on Early Cinema in Asia*, Nick Deocampo, ed. (Indiana University Press, 2017), 71–109.

[101] We should remember that two presidents and at least three vice presidents (one of which was elevated to the presidency) of the Philippines have been women. Although Filipino machismo is alive and well, gender dynamics are far more complicated and unstable.

[102] Charles Musser, *Politicking and Emergent Media: US Presidential Elections of the 1890s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

[103] Charles Musser, "Documentary's *longue durée*: Beginnings, formations, genealogies," *NECSUS* 9, no. 2 (Autumn 2020, #Method): 21–50.

[104] Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real II: Documentary: Grierson and Beyond*, second edition (London: BFI; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 107–27. Nonfiction shorts and topicals, in some cases, did not require a developed narrative but could rely on the beauty or novelty of the subject. See Tom Gunning, "Before Documentary: Early Non-Fiction Films and the 'View' Aesthetic," in *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Nonfiction Film*, Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk, eds. (Amsterdam: Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997).

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

[106] "Optical Wonders at the Melodeon," *Boston Herald*, March 13, 1850, 3.

[107] Links Relevant to "Early Cinema and the Historiographic Impulse":
Blog post on Brighton (written by Jan-Christopher Horak): https://cinema.ucla.edu/blogs/archival-spaces/2018/06/08/fiaf-brighton-1978
Life of an American Fireman (Edison, 1903): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyjceskGZIc
Life of a Cowboy (Porter, 1906): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiB5YD4Qvpw
Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900 (written by Musser, 1997): https://archive.org/details/edisonmotionpict0000muss/mode/2up
The Battle of the Somme (Malins & McDowell, 1916): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhHdZLioRZg

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